

## M. in Hell 391

Chapter 391 - Found You

“Kang-Woo!” A blue-haired boy happily ran over as soon as Oh Kang-Woo arrived in Sant’Angelo.

Kang-Woo greeted Uriel with a smile. “Have you been well?”

Uriel shook his head. “It’s been a bit hectic because of the damage we suffered back then.”

He was referring to the attack on Sant’Angelo by Lucifer, the Lord of the Flies.

Uriel looked back at Sant’Angelo in sorrow and then turned to look up at Kang-Woo to ask, “Come to think of it, I heard the news. You fought against a Constellation of Evil all on your own, right?”

“Yeah, it just happened.”

“Just happened, my ass! What if I lost even...”

Uriel lowered his head while biting his lip. He thought about Raphael, who had been corrupted at the hands of Rakiel, the Constellation of Corruption. Kang-Woo smiled faintly in silence.

Uriel looked up and asked, “Oh, and I heard that you had acquired Deific Essence. Is that true?”

“Yeah.”

“A-A human who isn’t even an incarnation acquired Deific Essence...” Uriel touched Kang-Woo all over in disbelief. “What’s your Deific Name?”

“God of Splendor.”

“Hehe. It suits you.” Uriel nodded while grinning.

Kang-Woo had been chosen as the Protector of Light by Gaia herself. There was no better name than *God of Splendor* for him.

“That’s Oh Kang-Woo?” a woman asked.

Kang-Woo turned to the source of the voice to see a blonde woman whom angel wings could not suit any better. She had eight wings on her back, just like Uriel. The woman chugged a bottle of alcohol while walking Kang-Woo’s way. She reeked of alcohol.

“Gabriel,” Uriel muttered.

“Hihi. I was wondering who you were chatting away so happily with, but he’s rather ordinary,” Gabriel said as she took out a rectangular box from her pocket.

Inside the box was a long pipe. She stuffed tobacco leaves into the pipe and lit it.

“Fuuu, haaa. Dayum, that’s nice.”

Kang-Woo stared dumbfoundedly at the woman with a bottle of alcohol in one hand and a pipe in the other.

*'That's supposed to be an angel? I mean, I couldn't care less if she wants to drink and smoke, but you should at least keep up appearances.'*

Kang-Woo couldn't help but chuckle. It felt weird to see a woman with looks far surpassing Han Seol-Ah leisurely enjoying alcohol and tobacco.

*'Well, she's at least better than Raphael and Michael.'*

Kang-Woo preferred the easygoing Gabriel far more than the overly serious Raphael or the excessively courteous Michael.

He slightly turned his head toward Gabriel and replied, "Aren't I at least better than ordinary?"

"Hm?" Gabriel's eyes widened and then burst into laughter. "Hahaha! Yeah, I guess you do look like a bit of a scumbag!"

"Jeez, I don't think you should say that to someone you just met."

"Well, don't sweat the small stuff. Want a drink?"

"Give it here." Kang-Woo gulped down the bottle that Gabriel handed him. "Pfft!!" Kang-Woo spat it right out. "What the fuck?"

*'This isn't drinking alcohol.'*

Kang-Woo frowned and looked at Gabriel, who was bursting with laughter.

"It's a bit strong," she remarked.

"How strong?" he asked.

"96%."

"Are your taste buds nonexistent?"

*'That's more than most rubbing alcohol.'*

Gabriel sucked on her pipe again after laughing.

"Isn't this your first time meeting each other?" Uriel said as he stared at the two of them while dumbfounded.

They were getting along very well despite this being their first time meeting. Kang-Woo turned around and walked past Gabriel.

"Where's Lord Michael?" he asked.

"Mm. He's a bit busy right now... Oh, come to think of it, you should know about it too, so this is perfect timing," Uriel stated.

"Know about what?"

"Just a second. I was planning on contacting you about this."

Uriel turned around and took out a communication device. Kang-Woo thought that Uriel was going to contact Michael with it, but Uriel turned to Kang-Woo.

“Lord Michael said that he would take this opportunity to introduce you to them,” he remarked.

“To whom?”

“The incarnations.”

Kang-Woo’s eyes narrowed. He knew what incarnations were, but the problem was the timing of their appearance.

“Why incarnations all of a sudden?” he asked.

“The gods made incarnations in bulk this time.”

*‘I guess it wasn’t just Iris.’*

It meant that just like Iris was being made into an incarnation for a high elf to manifest into the physical world, the other gods had also made incarnations.

*‘I pretty much understand the situation, but...’*

Unlike Kang-Woo, the gods were unable to use their power as they liked because they were bound by the System’s restrictions. The only way for them to influence the physical world was to make incarnations and apostles. To make a simple comparison, it was like rerouting one’s IP to bypass firewalls. Just like how one’s internet speed was slowed after bouncing one’s IP, a god manifesting into the physical world through their incarnation considerably restricted their power.

*‘I heard that it consumes quite a lot of Divinity just to make one apostle.’*

Incarnations and apostles were different in that Deific Essence could be granted to incarnations. For example, Kang-Woo was Gaia’s apostle, while Layla was Gaia’s incarnation.

*‘Gods can each only make one incarnation.’*

And once that incarnation died, a large portion of the corresponding god’s Divinity would be lost. Worst-case scenario, their Deific Essence rank would be lowered, or it could be annihilated.

*‘The fact that they made incarnations in bulk despite those risks means...’*

The gods were likely trying to intervene in this incident.

*‘I don’t like it.’*

Kang-Woo frowned. The more the gods interfered, the less he would be able to act to his heart’s content. It was not welcome news at all for him since he was desperately anticipating his battle with the Constellations.

*‘They won’t try to steal my prey, would they?’*

They had better not, since Kang-Woo would kill them even if they were the incarnations of gods.

“Take me to the incarnations,” Kang-Woo said.

“Okay,” Uriel replied.

Uriel took the lead as Gabriel followed from the back while staring at Kang-Woo with interest.  
Click.

They entered a meeting room within Sant’Angelo. The meeting room about a thousand square feet wide was quite elegantly designed. As soon as they entered, they caught the attention of everyone in the room. Kang-Woo narrowed his eyes and scanned everyone in the meeting room.

*‘There are about thirty of them.’*

If they were all incarnations, then it was a considerably large number. Kang-Woo could feel the power of Divinity from every single one of the incarnations wearing various priest garments; they seemed to have been granted Deific Essence from their respective gods.

Michael, who was among the people in the room, approached Kang-Woo and said to the people, “This is Lady Gaia’s apostle, Oh Kang-Woo.”

“So that person is Lady Gaia’s apostle.”

The incarnations narrowed their eyes as they scanned Kang-Woo from head to toe. They seemed to be more wary of Kang-Woo than welcoming him.

A young man stood up and approached Kang-Woo. He had blond hair, a neat appearance, and seemed very gentle.

The man extended his hand toward Kang-Woo and said courteously, “It’s nice to meet you, Protector of Light. My name is Anduin. I was chosen as the incarnation of Lady Lumeria, the Goddess of Peace, and have been given the great honor of standing against great evil.”

*‘Why are you talking like that? Are you Reynald?’*

Kang-Woo suppressed his groan. It was far easier to speak to laid-back people like Gabriel than some chuunibyou hero like this man. He swallowed such thoughts and lightly bowed.

“Yes, it’s nice to meet you too, Sir Anduin. I am Oh Kang-Woo, an apostle of Lady Gaia.”

Anduin looked around for someone; it was not difficult to guess who he was looking for.

“Si-Hun isn’t here today,” Kang-Woo expressed.

“Oh, I see.” Anduin nodded.

He did not look disappointed; it seemed he did not particularly want to meet Kim Si-Hun.

Kang-Woo looked around the meeting room and asked, “Have you all become incarnations recently?”

“Yes, that’s right,” Anduin responded. “It was likely after the incorrigible demon Lucifer attacked Sant’Angelo. Lady Lumeria could not stand idly by as the continent was plunged deeper into fear, so she has given me the honor of being her disciple for her to exercise her power as well.”

“I see.”

*‘Thanks for the exposition. Yeah, characters like you are important for the plot. The period is similar to Iris.’*

However, Iris was still in bed without having become an incarnation yet.

*‘Maybe it’s because of the difference in Deific Essence.’*

It was either because the Deific Essence of the high elf trying to manifest through Iris was considerably high-ranked, or because the Deific Essence of the gods manifesting through Anduin and the other incarnations was low-ranked. It might also be both.

“We have decided to form an organization that we have named *Godly Pantheon*, its source purpose being to eradicate the demons threatening the continent per the will of the gods.”

*‘Godly Pantheon, huh?’*

It was similar to Guardians, although the two organizations were different in that they served different gods.

*‘I wonder if it will go well?’*

Although Aernor was polytheistic, it seemed difficult to run an organization of people that each served different gods. Kang-Woo quickly scanned the thirty incarnations; they did not seem in disagreement with joining the organization known as Godly Pantheon.

*‘Well, regardless...’*

Kang-Woo couldn’t care less as long as they didn’t meddle with his plan.

“And with that said...” Anduin bowed deeply. “Thank you for everything you’ve done thus far, Gaia’s apostle.”

Kang-Woo tilted his head in confusion. It was as if he was being told to clock out for the day since he was finished with his work. “I’m not sure what you mean...”

Anduin continued firmly, “Even if the continent is in grave danger, we cannot entrust the fate of Aernor in the hands of a goddess of another world. We will fight with our strength from here on out. We would like to ask you and Sir Kim Si-Hun to step back.”

The thirty incarnations drew out their Divinity as if they had prepared for this beforehand. They were trying to intimidate him.

Kang-Woo fell silent. He raised his head and looked up at the meeting room ceiling. The corners of his mouth rose unconsciously.

*‘I found my scout.’*

Chapter 392 - There’s No Need To Lie

“We’re sorry to have placed such a heavy burden on you all this time.” Anduin bowed deeply again.

Oh Kang-Woo smiled.

*‘I see how it is.’*

He more or less got an idea about why they were acting like this all of a sudden, as well as why the gods had made incarnations while taking the risk of their Deific Essence being demoted or annihilated, and why all the incarnations that served different gods had rallied together.

*‘Because their prey is about to be stolen from them.’*

Kang-Woo had orchestrated everything so that Kim Si-Hun could become the hero of the continent. Si-Hun’s status in Aernor likely could not be tolerated by the gods or the apostles that served them.

*‘For example...’*

How would the Korean public react to a crime that could not be resolved by the Korean police, being resolved with ease by foreign police authorities?

*‘There’s no need to even think about it.’*

The public would naturally curse the incompetence of the Korean police and demand reform, which was exactly what was happening right now in Aernor.

The churches, which had been raising taxes from the people with excuses that they would save the continent from the hands of demons, had not been able to do a single thing against Lucifer’s evildoings. It was only natural since everything had been planned by Kang-Woo. Si-Hun had appeared and resolved everything before they even had a chance to resolve anything.

As a result, Si-Hun had gained fame far surpassing that of any church. The more Si-Hun’s fame grew, so did the distrust of the people toward the churches. The people would naturally place more faith in the hero who was saving them from real danger than the incompetent gods who weren’t doing anything.

*‘Can’t entrust the fate of Aernor in the hands of a goddess of another world, huh?’*

It was absolute horseshit. They simply did not want the power that they had amassed so far to disappear. Hence, they joined forces to chase away the outsider who was a threat to their power.

Kang-Woo softly chuckled. Even in the despairing situation of Lucifer’s advent and the unsealing of the Constellations of Evil, desire did not stop. They were acting exactly like demons to the point that Kang-Woo thought humans, gods, and demons were not so different after all.

*‘That aside, I didn’t expect the gods to be this assertive.’*

Kang-Woo tilted his head. Making an incarnation was far more dangerous than it sounded. The god’s Deific Essence could be demoted in rank or even be annihilated just from the incarnation’s death. Despite that, did the gods have a reason to let the churches keep their power while taking such risks?

*‘To protect the world from collapse?’*

Kang-Woo shook his head. It was far too optimistic of a thought. He continued to think calmly. Why were the gods so afraid of the collapse in the first place?

*'Is Deific Essence... related to faith?'*

Kang-Woo had thought of Deific Essence simply as a great power given by the Titans. After all, most gods had been born with Deific Essence given to them by the Titans; it was not something gained through religious faith. Even Kang-Woo had acquired Deific Essence without anyone worshipping him religiously.

*'I'm not sure.'*

Even if he was the God of Splendor, he did not have any apostles or a religious organization worshipping him. He had simply been given the right to control the unorthodox power known as Divinity.

*'In any case...'*

What was important was that the gods were backing the Godly Pantheon to the point that they had taken risks to make incarnations and that they were also trying to exclude Kang-Woo and Si-Hun.

*'This is...'*

Kang-Woo smiled as his eyes gleamed like that of a starved beast.

*'Very good.'*

He had been searching for the perfect scout. Although they were not quite up to par, since they could use Divinity because they were incarnations, they still qualified as scouts.

"What the hell are you talking about?!" Uriel glared at Anduin. "You're going to do as you like when we should all be joining forces?"

Sparks crackled from Uriel's soaring hair. He slowly walked toward Anduin while exuding a ferocious aura.

"Uriel." Michael extended his hand to stop Uriel. "Calm down."

"B-But...!"

Uriel bit his lip in frustration and stared daggers at Anduin. Michael pulled Uriel back by the shoulder and then looked at Anduin and the other incarnations with sunken eyes.

"Is that truly what the Godly Pantheon believes?" he asked.

"Yes, it is." Anduin nodded without hesitation.

Michael slightly frowned and then glanced toward Kang-Woo, who was also staring at Anduin in perplexity.

"... Haaa," Kang-Woo sighed. He nodded as if it couldn't be helped. "I guess we have no choice if that is the will of the gods. I can't deny that we are outsiders."

“We hope you don’t take this personally. The decision has been made for both you and Sir Kim Si-Hun’s sakes. We have made you two... carry far too heavy of a burden on your shoulders.”

“I see.” Kang-Woo nodded and continued with a smile, “I am relieved to see that so many incarnations have gathered. With this, I think we can entrust our mission to you all.”

“Hahaha. I appreciate your understanding.”

Anduin extended his hand toward Kang-Woo with a smile. Kang-Woo shook Anduin’s hand and smiled brightly.

“Oh, right,” Kang-Woo remarked. “Come to think of it... I happened to obtain information about where the forces of evil are hiding.”

“Pardon?”

“I-Is that true?”

Anduin and Michael asked with their eyes widened. Michael, who had been searching fervently for the forces of evil after Lucifer stole the Demon God’s legacy kept in Sant’Angelo, was especially shocked.

Kang-Woo nodded. “I was able to figure out their location while fighting the Constellations of Evil not long ago.”

“Wha...”

“Are the forces of evil unaware of this?” Anduin asked with shining eyes.

If their enemy was unaware that they possessed this information, they would be able to ambush the enemy while they had their guard down. Ambushes brought about enormous strategic benefits to the point that they made it possible to emerge victorious over enemies three times as large in number. Anduin, who had experience fighting demons as a member of a church, was well aware of this.

Kang-Woo nodded. He continued calmly, “Yes, they are unaware. However, it is enemy lines. You should not approach it hastily.”

Michael gulped. “Kang-Woo is right. We should dispatch a survey team to figure out the extent of their forces.”

“There is a possibility that the forces of evil would prepare for an ambush at that rate,” Anduin replied as if he were hearing nonsense.

Michael fell into thought for a moment and then shook his head. “Even so, ambushing the enemy without knowing the extent of their strength is far too reckless.”

“...” Anduin’s expression stiffened, but only for a moment. He returned to his usual gentle expression and nodded. “I understand. We will postpone the ambush.”



Anduin stepped back and walked closer to Kang-Woo. "In that case, could you tell us where the forces of evil are located, Protector of Light?"

"..."

Kang-Woo remained silent. He could feel the desire in Anduin's eyes. Kang-Woo smiled.

"Yes, of course."

*'Of course I will. After all, only then will I be able to use you.'*

Kang-Woo smiled faintly. There was no question of what decision Anduin would make once Kang-Woo told him where the Constellations were.

*'I didn't lie, okay?'*

Kang-Woo had told the god-honest truth. He had found out where the forces of evil were hiding, the Constellations of Evil had no idea about it, and he had told Anduin that they shouldn't approach the area hastily.

*'But even so... I'm sure you'll go anyway.'*

After all, it was a great chance for them to retake the faith of the people that had turned to Si-Hun, and to recover the lost power of the churches. Rather, they would be able to obtain glory far more brilliant than before.

*'What reason could there possibly be for me to lie?'*

Things would go exactly as Kang-Woo wanted just by telling the truth.

*'Well, I guess I didn't tell them one thing.'*

Their ambush would not work as long as the barrier that severed space itself was up. The concept of an ambush itself was meaningless.

*'But I mean... I don't need to go out of my way to tell them that. Not saying the whole truth doesn't make it a lie.'*

Kang-Woo snickered.

"The forces of evil are located..." He pointed out the location where the Constellations of Evil were hiding on the map that he had prepared. "... Here."

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Kang-Woo positioned himself so that he could look down at a desolate valley between two giant mountains.

"Lilith, are you ready?"

"Yes, almost. I'll be done in just a bit, my king," Lilith replied as she drew a complicated magic circle on the ground.

Kang-Woo perched on a large rock and stared at the soldiers of the churches who were heading toward the valley.

“They sure brought a lot.”

In Aernor, the power of the churches was comparable to that of the emperor. It was only natural; the power of religion was already powerful enough on Earth, where gods had no actual influence, but gods in Aernor exercised their influence through their incarnation and apostles. The existence of gods had already been proven, so no one doubted them.

*‘But there is a difference between the two worlds in the notion of gods.’*

Gods of Aernor were not considered almighty beings; they were considered more to be powerful superhumans than gods.

*‘I guess they’re treated more like Greek gods.’*

Regardless...

“Break the barrier once they get close,” Kang-Woo said.

“Yes, my king,” Lilith responded with a smile.

Since the barrier that the Constellations were hiding within was isolating the space within from the rest of the world, there was no normal means to approach or see within it. To instigate a battle between the forces of the churches and the Constellations of Evil, the barrier needed to be destroyed at the perfect timing.

“My king, are you sure you don’t need *Paimon’s Eyes*?”

Paimon was one of the demons he had devoured.[1]

His eyes were very useful, so he had handed them to Lilith to use. Paimon’s Eyes were able to detect traces of demonic energy and quantify the enemy’s forces. It was the perfect item to use at times like this.

“There’s no need.” Kang-Woo shook his head while smiling. “I’m more accurate.”

Although it was a great item to use at times like this, it was no match for Kang-Woo’s capabilities.

Lilith smiled softly and nodded. “I understand.”

“Okay, come sit if you’re all done. Let’s watch together.”

There was nothing more entertaining than watching a fire or a fight. Kang-Woo looked down at the army advancing to the valley while munching on some popcorn that he had made himself using ingredients similar to corn.

“Hoho. It’s so nice being alone with you like this, my king.”

Lilith got closer to Kang-Woo while placing her head on his shoulder as if she had no interest in the battle. Kang-Woo laughed and turned his head toward the soldiers. They had almost arrived at the valley.

*‘That should be good.’*

Kang-Woo placed his feet on the magic circle that Lilith had prepared and drew out enormous amounts of demonic energy.

Crack.

Cracks resembling spider webs formed in the air along with the sound of the barrier shattering.

“Wh-What the—?!”

Kang-Woo could hear Anduin’s voice from a distance. Countless demonic beasts began to pour out from the crack in space, which was getting bigger and bigger. Kang-Woo looked down in amusement at the churches’ soldiers engaging with the demonic beasts.

*‘Now, kill each other.’*

Chapter 393 - For Aernor

Clang! Clang! Clang!

“H-Hurry up and heal...!”

“Arghh!”

“H-How did the forces of evil notice our approach?!”

“This isn’t the time to bother with that!”

Anduin stood at the forefront and swung the rays of light that poured out from both of his hands. The demonic beasts that were rushing toward him were swept into the storm of light imbued with Divinity and were reduced to ashes.

“All incarnations, scatter and eliminate the demonic beasts!”

Anduin bit his lip as he looked around to see the apostles being slaughtered by the demonic beasts pouring out from the Rift.

*‘How did demonic beasts come pouring out at such perfect timing?’*

They were trying to ambush the forces of evil, but they ended up being the ones to be ambushed instead. Anduin clenched his fists and burst the heads of the demonic beasts that were charging at him while roaring. There were far too many demonic beasts for him to focus on resolving the countless questions in his head.

“Haaaaaaaah!” Anduin swung down his mace while shouting.

Dozens of demonic beasts were blown into the air after getting struck with the mace.

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“The son of a bitch sure is strong despite looking like a priest,” said Oh Kang-Woo.

*‘Is he some sort of melee priest?’*

Kang-Woo was impressed by Anduin, who was bursting the heads of demonic beasts left and right at the forefront. He had expected Anduin to be a healer or buffer because of his gentle looks and long robe, but he was acting no different from any other warrior.

“I guess they live up to their title of incarnations. They fight demonic beasts very well,” said Lilith as she looked over the battlefield with shining eyes.

Kang-Woo nodded. He had expected things to turn out this way.

*‘After all, the incarnations can use Divinity.’*

Although they were not able to use the power to its full extent since their Deific Essence was only borrowed from the gods, it was Divinity nonetheless. Considering how powerful Layla had become after Gaia recovered a significant portion of her power, it was unthinkable for thirty incarnations to be defeated by such demonic beasts.

“Fights sure are fun to watch,” Kang-Woo said leisurely.

*Crunch.* He looked down at the battlefield excitedly while munching on a fistful of popcorn.

“Ah, you shouldn’t be doing that,” Kang-Woo mumbled in frustration as he watched over Anduin and the other incarnations. “Ah, ah! What the hell is that son of a bitch doing?”

One of the incarnations had advanced too deep into enemy lines and had gotten isolated from the rest. An enormous number of demonic beasts swarmed the incarnation like hundreds of Japanese honeybees attacking a giant hornet.

Demonic beasts invaded the formation of the churches’ army through the vacancy of the incarnation. Another incarnation tried to fill that vacancy, but they ended up getting isolated from the group as well. The demonic beasts that had fallen back due to Anduin’s attacks began to attack ferociously again.

“Sheesh, I could do better than that.”

Kang-Woo was backseating while clicking his tongue as he stared at the fumbling incarnations that weren’t even able to properly use such a broken power like Divinity. He looked exactly like a middle-aged man watching a soccer game from his couch and berating the players.

Lilith lightly giggled while covering her mouth. “Will you participate?”

“No. It’s a hassle.”

Kang-Woo scanned the demonic beasts uninterestedly. They certainly were powerful enough to be able to inhabit the Ninth Hell, but they were no longer appetizing enough for Kang-Woo, who had acquired Deific Essence.

*‘Rather, I would get even more hungry if I eat those small fry.’*

Those demonic beasts were like konjac jelly with almost no caloric value. Eating such things when his hunger and desire were at their peak would only sour his mood.

“That aside...” Kang-Woo looked down at the battle with sunken eyes. “How did they summon that many demonic beasts?”

It wasn't just their numbers; every one of them was on the strong side even among the demonic beasts of the Ninth Hell. There were easily over ten thousand of them, possibly even a hundred thousand. Such a large number of demonic beasts was hard to see even in the Ninth Hell.

*'Did they mass-breed demonic beasts or something?'*

Kang-Woo tilted his head in wonder. It was possible since demonic beasts had high reproductive potential, unlike demons.

*'But they wouldn't have been easy to control.'*

Kang-Woo narrowed his eyes as he stared at the demonic beasts. To mass-breed demonic beasts, they would have to be gathered into one area like fish in a tank and prompted to breed. Not even Kang-Woo would be able to perfectly control demonic beasts, monsters with only killing and madness in their minds.

*'Maybe one of the Constellations is specialized in controlling demonic beasts.'*

It would have been highly difficult to procure this many demonic beasts if that were not the case.

An enormous amount of energy spread from Kang-Woo's feet to the ground around him.

*'Authority of the Beholder.'*

The entire valley was drawn within his head as if he had gained a third eye on his forehead. He could vividly see the churches' army fighting the demonic beasts and hear Anduin's bellows. Kang-Woo was not interested in the soldiers; he focused his senses past the crack in the barrier that had formed in the air. He could feel the demonic beasts that were crouching within the barrier.

*'There are ancient demonic beasts as well.'*

Kang-Woo had seen the ancient demonic beasts when Sant'Angelo had been attacked. He could see them commanding the hundreds of thousands of unintelligent demonic beasts.

*'It seems I made the right choice not to charge in blind.'*

The forces of the Constellations of Evil were much larger than Kang-Woo had expected. Although numbers were of no consequence to him considering how powerful he had become, it would certainly be an annoyance; it would be like having a bunch of flies flying around him.

*'The nuisance will have to be cleaned up.'*

As for who would be cleaning them up, the soldiers of the churches would honorably sacrifice themselves for the task. If any remained, Balrog and his other comrades would finish them off.

*'Once the flies are disposed of, only the Constellations will remain.'*

Kang-Woo smiled widely. *Boom, boom.* His heart beat strongly. He could imagine the Constellation of Despair, who was likely watching over the battlefield from across the crack in the barrier.

He suppressed the impulse to storm in through the crack right this second. His hunger and thirst were so powerful that they were on the verge of overpowering him. He gulped to quell his overflowing desire.

"But aren't the incarnations being pushed back way too easily?" Lilith asked.

“I’ll say. The Constellations haven’t even come out yet. This won’t do.” Kang-Woo clicked his tongue as he looked down at the soldiers being pushed back.

He had more or less figured out the extent of the Constellations’ forces, but the soldiers needed to do more for him; they needed to reduce the demonic beast army’s numbers as much as possible.

*‘I guess their Deific Essences are low in rank.’*

The difference between them and Layla was far too large that it was laughable to even call them incarnations.

“At least pull your weight as incarnations,” Kang-Woo muttered as he frowned in disappointment.

Even if they were incarnations of lower gods, he couldn’t believe that they were being pushed back by mere demonic beasts when they were able to use the broken power known as Divinity.

“I can certainly tell that it hasn’t been very long since they’ve been chosen as incarnations,” Lilith mentioned.

“There’s that too, but the fact that they can’t work together is the bigger issue.”

Despite the grandiose name of their organization Godly Pantheon, it was ultimately made up of those who believed in different gods. The incarnations continued to be isolated from the group after not following Anduin’s orders, and the apostles were not able to prepare countermeasures for the demonic beasts’ attacks because they were all fighting as if it were a free-for-all. Poor teamwork was worse than fighting by oneself.

Kang-Woo shook his head in disappointment. “I need them to at least draw out the Constellations.”

The key to this plan was for him to confirm how many more Constellations there were besides the Constellation of Despair and Proserpine. However, the incarnations were falling apart so easily that Kang-Woo was worried that the battle would be over before the Constellations even showed up.

“Shall we intervene?” Lilith asked.

“I’m not sure.”

Kang-Woo looked down at the battlefield while deep in thought. At this rate, the Constellations would not come out unless he were to take action.

Boom—!!

Just then, a massive explosion rang out.

“Haaaaaaaap!!”

The hundreds of demonic beasts surrounding Anduin were caught in the giant burst of light and turned to ash. Anduin smashed his mace into the ground and panted heavily.

“Haaa, haaa, haaa.”

The battle was taking a turn for the worse. Anduin looked toward the apostles who were being toyed with by the demonic beasts. Blazing emotions surged from his heart.

“We cannot...” Anduin continued faintly with his head lowered. “We cannot... fall here.”

“Sir Anduin...” The expressions of the incarnations who heard him stiffened.

Heavy silence befell the battlefield momentarily. Anduin pulled himself up while clenching his mace as his legs trembled.

“If we were to fall here, the powerless people of the continent would be the next victims,” Anduin stated with a trembling voice.

He had indeed been greedy. He could not bear the cold gazes of the people toward the church as Kim Si-Hun continued to perform great accomplishments. Thinking about it now, he realized that he had made a truly idiotic choice. He should have attacked the enemy base with the help of Oh Kang-Woo, Kim Si-Hun, and the angels.

*‘It’s... too late for regret.’*

Anduin shut his eyes tight. He knew that it was too late and that he had made the wrong choice. However...

*‘I need to protect them.’*

He bit his lip to the point that it bled. He could not turn his back and run, since the fate of the continent was on his shoulders. He was the hope of countless lives.

“O Goddess of Peace, Lumeria,” Anduin prayed sincerely as he kneeled and clasped his hands together. “Grant me the courage to break through the darkness.”

Whoooooom.

Radiant light shone from his body. Enormous energy burst from him.

“A-Aaaahh.”

Anduin’s eyes widened. He was surging with Lumeria’s power. Anduin, who was now enveloped in light, stood firmly.

“Sir Anduin...”

“W-Wow...”

Anduin could see the apostles staring at him wide-eyed. He gripped his mace to the point that it could break. He knew that although they had come together as one through the Godly Pantheon, they were not able to work together since they each served different gods.

“We have each sworn our loyalty to different gods,” he stated.

“...” The incarnations remained silent.

“However!”

*Boom!* Anduin stomped on the ground as blinding light enveloped him.

“We share a common goal: to save the continent and to purge evil from this world. Everyone... Please. Please work together as one,” Anduin pleaded.

The incarnations looked at each other and then lowered their heads.

“I apologize, Father Anduin.”

“... We seemed to have forgotten the most important thing.”

The incarnations teared up. Anduin could feel their overflowing emotions. He gripped his mace tight and turned around.

“One for all, all for one!” Anduin raised his mace high. “Fight!”

His bellow echoed throughout the battlefield bursting with the forces of evil.

“For Aernor!”

Anduin charged at the horde of demonic beasts while exuding blinding light.

“Yeaaaahhhh!!”

At this moment, the apostles who each served different gods joined as one.

Chapter 394 - The Light Will Burn You

“For Aernorrrrr!”

The forces of the churches wiped out the demonic beasts with Anduin at the forefront. A wave of brilliant light swept across the battlefield.

Anduin lifted his mace high. “Die, depraved forces of evil!”

He swung down his mace as he bellowed. The shining mace split the earth, setting the hundreds of demonic beasts alight in its path.

“Yeaaaahhhh!!” The apostles were filled with morale as they watched Anduin wiping out hundreds of demonic beasts with one strike.

They continued their charge at an overwhelming pace.

“Haaaaahh!!”

Countless demonic beasts turned into ash every time Anduin swung his mace.

*‘With this power... With this great power granted to me by Lumeria... I’ll be able to protect them.’*

He would be able to protect the people of the continent suffering in fear from the schemes of the forces of evil. Anduin imagined himself being praised as a hero as he killed the demonic beasts. He would be even more popular than Kim Si-Hun.

*‘No, this isn’t the time.’*

Anduin shook his head. It was not the time to think about such pointless things. He had already made one terrible choice.



*'It's still not too late.'*

This was his chance to make up for the error he had made, blinded by his desire and temptation. Anduin swung his mace at the forces of evil as his eyes shone brightly.

“L-Lady Lumeria has manifested...”

“The Goddess of Peace has manifested.”

The apostles of the Church of Lumeria gasped as they watched the shining Anduin wiping out the demonic beasts.

“...”

The incarnations of the other churches clenched their fists in silence, likely having been influenced by Anduin. They looked at each other and then followed after Anduin to charge at the demonic beasts. The demonic beasts that had filled the valley were unable to handle the combined forces of all the churches.

“Haaa, haaa!” Anduin panted heavily.

He could barely catch his breath; he felt like he was about to collapse at any second. His vision blurred, and he was staggering. His condition could not be any worse, but his eyes were gleaming with hope. But then...

Crack.

A man walked out from a black Rift. The middle-aged man with a diagonal slash scar on his face stared expressionlessly at the combined forces of the churches.

“Tch, what the hell are these?”

“... Incarnations of the gods.”

Said a woman with black tentacles and a boy with blank eyes as they walked out from behind the man.

“You’re...” Anduin slurred as he stared at the beings that had come out from the Rift.

His limbs trembled as he suffocated within the energy that they were emitting.

“Incarnations? Have the gods started to make their move?” asked the woman with black tentacles while frowning, paying no attention to Anduin at all.

The boy with blank eyes nodded.

“Jeez, why now of all times? I’ve been busy thinking of a way to appeal myself to my darling.”

The woman with black tentacles glared in displeasure at Anduin, who got goosebumps because of the woman’s hideous looks.

“Quiet,” said the man with the scar.

The woman simply snorted at his words and asked, "More importantly, what happened with what you want to do? Was it... Tian Taihuang? You said that you were going to meet the human who possesses your disciple's soul."

"I told you to be quiet, Proserpine." Tai Wuji glared at Proserpine.

"..." Proserpine shrugged and averted her eyes from his gaze.

Although she didn't know everything about him despite being fellow Constellations of Evil, she at least knew that she shouldn't test Tai Wuji's patience right now.

"Lumeria's incarnation." Tai Wuji stared at Anduin with sunken eyes.

Anduin flinched. He retched while grabbing his chest, having a hard time breathing. He trembled without being able to do anything in the face of unfathomable evil.

Seeing that, Tai Wuji said expressionlessly, "Pathetic."

He unsheathed his sword from his waist, and dark blue flames traveled up the blade.

"A-Aaaahh," Anduin muttered in fear.

He collapsed to his knees on the spot. The light of hope in his eyes dyed with despair.

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"Kurgh! *Cough, cough!*"

Dark red blood permeated the ground. A blond young man crawled along the valley that had been destroyed as if a natural disaster had passed by. He was Anduin, the incarnation of Lumeria as well as the leader of the Godly Pantheon.

"Urgh..."

Tears flowed from his eyes. The combined forces of the churches had been defeated so one-sidedly that it was an understatement to call the power of their enemy overwhelming.

"H-How can someone be so..."

Anduin lowered his head while biting his lip. It had been an utterly miserable defeat.

Step, step.

Just then, he heard footsteps.

"... Huh?" Anduin looked up. He quickly shouted at the young man walking toward him, "S-Sir Oh Kang-Woo! You must be careful! There is a man who possesses unfathomable strength among the forces of—"

"I know," Kang-Woo answered with a smile.

"... Pardon?"

"I saw it all from up there. Dayum, he's such a delight. He's... the best," muttered Kang-Woo as his eyes gleamed with madness.

He exhaled heatedly. He shivered in ecstasy as he recalled the Constellation of Despair wiping out the soldiers of the churches.

*'He's insanely powerful.'*

Kang-Woo wasn't even sure that he would be able to defeat him.

"Ha... Haha," Kang-Woo laughed.

Irresistible desire fired him up.

"You... were watching...?" Anduin asked.

"Oh, yeah. Thanks, you were a lot of help." Kang-Woo softly laughed and continued, "I was able to find out the extent of the Constellations' forces, and even managed to confirm a Constellation that I didn't know about. Not just that, you reduced the number of demonic beasts for us. Man, you went above and beyond."

Kang-Woo nodded consecutively. He had made the right call to use the incarnations as scouts as well as bait. Not only had they allowed Kang-Woo to figure out the extent of the enemy's forces, but they had also culled a considerable number of the demonic beasts that would have been a nuisance to him.

"Wh-What are you... talking about?" Anduin asked with a trembling voice, unable to comprehend what Kang-Woo was saying.

Kang-Woo looked down at him with a smile. "What do you think I'm talking about?"

"..." Silence fell for a few moments. Anduin's face paled, a thought popping up in his head. "Could it be... you used us... as bait?"

"Hm?" Kang-Woo tilted his head. "Pfft, bwehehehehe! What do you mean, bait? You're the ones who came here on your own. Huh? I told you not to come here hastily, didn't I? Didn't I?"

"U-Urgh!!" Anduin turned red with fury. "Y-You planned for this to happen from the very beginning!"

Kang-Woo smiled and grabbed Anduin's head. "That's not true, is it, my friend?"

"... What?"

"You're the one who planned it all. All I did was give you the information necessary for you to make the choice."

"Bull! You didn't say a word about there being this many demonic b—"

"I sure didn't, because I didn't know."

"..."

“All I told you was where the forces of evil were hiding. I’m sure you know this, deep down in your heart.” Kang-Woo looked around the valley at the piles of corpses of apostles and incarnations. “You drove everyone here to their deaths of your own accord.”

“...” Anduin’s face paled. He shook his head and stuttered, “N-No.”

Kang-Woo cackled. “No, it was your fault,” he said firmly to the incarnation who was trying to avert his eyes from the truth. “You killed them all.”

“...” Anduin’s teeth clacked noisily. “I-I...”

“You realized that you were wrong? You tried to right your wrongs?” Kang-Woo lifted the collapsed Anduin by his hair. “You think your sins would be forgiven as long as you realize that you were wrong later? Is everything forgiven once you promise yourself that you’ll never do it again after driving your subordinates to their deaths?”

“N-No, I—”

“No, my ass. You heard me and Michael warning you not to come here.”

“...”

“But you still did regardless, with an entire army behind you, no less.”

“That’s...”

“I didn’t force you to. You made the choice. You took the risk and came here to regain the honor of the churches and the trust of the people that had been stolen from you by Kim Si-Hun. Isn’t that right?”

“...” Anduin bit his lip in silence.

He found Kang-Woo’s eyes, which looked as if they were looking into his soul, very unpleasant.

“Did you think you would look cool if you risked your lives for the people? Did you think they would revere you?”

“M-My intentions were purely for—”

“It doesn’t matter. What matters is that your choices have consequences. Don’t try to cover up your sins with pointless heroics. You killed them. You killed every single person here.”

“...”

Deathly silence fell. Anduin grabbed his head and trembled.

“A-Aaaahh,” he groaned while grimacing. Transparent tears flowed down his cheeks.

“H-Hurghhh.”

“Ahh...” Kang-Woo expressed.

*‘You’re making me feel bad, man.’*

Regardless of the process, Anduin had been of much help to him, so Kang-Woo felt bad seeing Anduin crying so miserably.

*‘You sure have softened, Oh Kang-Woo.’*

He was impressed by himself. Kang-Woo patted Anduin’s shoulder to console him.

“Come on, man. Don’t cry so much.”

“...”

“To be honest, it’s not entirely your fault. If you want to get to the nitty-gritty of it, I guess I incited you to come here by hiding the fact that an ambush would be pointless since there was a barrier.”

“... What?”

“Oh, and I was also the one who broke the barrier right when you arrived and caused the demonic beasts to pour out.”

“Y-You...”

“So, you know, cheer up! Don’t be so down since it’s not entirely your fault!”

“Y-You son of a bitch!”

Anduin trembled with his mouth agape. He raised his trembling arm and swung it at Kang-Woo, but it dropped without even reaching him.

“Hm? The hell? This is the thanks I get after I consoled you since it wasn’t entirely your fault?”

Kang-Woo frowned as if he couldn’t understand. Why was Anduin losing his temper when Kang-Woo consoled him while he was blaming himself for the whole thing?

“A-Aaaahh,” Anduin groaned. He coughed up blood as the life in his eyes was slowly dissipating. “Th-The...”

Anduin drew out what remained of his power. He bit his lip and raised his right arm. Radiant light emitted from his hand.

He said resentfully to the demon wearing human skin in front of him, “The light... will... burn... you.”

Kang-Woo smirked. “The hell are you on about?”

He grabbed Anduin’s shining right hand. Blinding golden light far brighter than Anduin’s light burst out.

“I am that very light, bro.”

## Chapter 395 - It's Nothing

[You have devoured a portion of the Deific Essence of Lumeria, Goddess of Peace.]

A blue message window popped up. The corpses of the incarnations killed by the Constellation of Despair melted down into the darkness. The Deific Essences of thirty individuals were pushed into the Demonic Sea.

[Activating the Trait 'Deific Essence Usurpation.']

[Deific Essence has been promoted from Lower Intermediate-rank to Intermediate-rank.]

"I guess they were lower gods like I had expected."

Oh Kang-Woo frowned as he read the message window. He had absorbed thirty Deific Essences, but his rank had only risen to Intermediate-rank. Not only that, but his level cap did not rise either.

*'I mean, I'm not surprised.'*

The Deific Essences that incarnations possessed were not the whole Deific Essences of the gods. Kang-Woo should be satisfied with just his Deific Essence rank rising.

*'Intermediate, huh?'*

He wondered how high the Constellation of Despair's Deific Essence rank was.

*'I'm sure it's at least High-rank or above.'*

He might even possess Top-rank Deific Essence like Gaia.

"Haaa," Kang-Woo sighed as his desire squirmed.

*'Just a little longer.'*

He had confirmed the enemy's numbers, and their forces had been reduced significantly as well. He was a little worried about Proserpine and the boy with blank eyes, but he was sure that Kim Si-Hun, Balrog, Han Seol-Ah, and Layla would be able to take them on. They did not even have to win.

*'Holding on until my battle with him ends is more than enough.'*

They should be more than capable of doing that. Kang-Woo looked around the devastated battlefield and then turned around.

"Lilith," he called.

"Yes, my king."

"Gather the others."

"Will you be attacking right away?"

"After I contact Michael."

"Mm... Would the angels take action right away?"

“I’m sure they would if I tell them that the forces of evil might retreat if we don’t strike now.”

It was more than possible that the Constellations of Evil would change the location of their hideout after being discovered. Since their barrier had been broken, there was no need for them to hide in this valley.

*‘We have to strike right away.’*

It would be a problem for Kang-Woo as well if they were to run. They needed to attack the Constellations as soon as possible.

“I understand. I will have them gather in your room.”

Lilith bowed deeply and went into the black Rift connected directly to Arnan’s imperial palace. Kang-Woo followed behind her and ended up in a familiar VIP room, the room that he was using in the palace.

*‘Let’s see.’*

Kang-Woo checked the power of his promoted Deific Essence while Lilith was gathering the party members. Since Divinity was able to mix with any form of energy, it did not take long to check.

*‘I wonder if I’d be able to face him without opening the Doors if I have Divinity?’*

Kang-Woo narrowed his eyes and thought about the Constellation of Despair. The man had massacred the incarnations with such power that even the word *overwhelming* was an understatement. Kang-Woo got chills as he thought about the man’s sword blazing with dark blue flames.

“I would probably...”

Kang-Woo looked up at the ceiling.

*‘Lose.’*

It was not even a question. It was not even a matter of the difference in their Deific Essence ranks. Even if Kang-Woo possessed Top-rank Deific Essence, he would not be able to defeat the Constellation of Despair; he was just that powerful.

*‘Martial arts sure is amazing.’*

Kang-Woo had reached extraordinary levels of demonic energy control, but the same could be said for the Constellation of Despair’s stage of martial arts. There was no way for Kang-Woo to face him without opening the Doors.

*‘No. Even if I open the Doors, I won’t be able to beat him.’*

Kang-Woo would not lose since he couldn’t die, but he would not be able to win either.

“Hah,” Kang-Woo laughed unconsciously.

He placed his hand on his crazily beating heart. Within it was a black sea that was struggling to break out into the world at any moment.

An unbeatable enemy...

*'How wonderful is that?'*

Kang-Woo smiled as excruciating hunger set him ablaze. It felt as if a lavish feast that he was not allowed to eat was in front of his eyes.

*'What should I do?'*

All sorts of thoughts stormed in his head as he suppressed the desire to rampage to his heart's content.

*'How can I win?'*

Kang-Woo thought of countless measures, but they were cut down all too easily by the dark blue sword, which only fired up Kang-Woo even more. He continued his thoughts while being set ablaze by his hunger and the dark blue flames.

*'Maybe...'* Kang-Woo looked down at his chest. *'Maybe...'*

Someone knocked on the door. Kang-Woo ceased his thoughts and turned his head. His comrades who had been contacted by Lilith entered his room.

*'It feels like it's been a while for some reason.'*

He looked at his party members one by one. He had been busy beyond belief after Proserpine infiltrated the imperial palace as well as the appearance of the Godly Pantheon.

*'Darling doesn't look too good either.'*

Possibly because they hadn't talked for the past few days, Seol-Ah's expression was dark, and her face was a little emaciated. She was staring at Kang-Woo with shaking eyes. As Kang-Woo was about to talk to her...

"Prepare to attack? What are you talking about all of a sudden?!" Cha Yeon-Joo's voice echoed throughout the room.

The other comrades behind her likely felt the same way; they were just not saying it. Kang-Woo lowered his head in silence. He slammed his hands on the table and pretended to be suppressing his rage.

"The Godly Pantheon... acted on their own," he said.

"... What?" Yeon-Joo asked.

"By Godly Pantheon, do you mean the gathering of the incarnations that you talked about before?" Layla asked.

"Yes, that's right." Kang-Woo nodded while putting on a distressed expression and clenching his fists. "Back when we met in Sant'Angelo, Lord Michael and I agreed with them that we should attack them after making ample preparations, but the Godly Pantheon ignored that."



“Meaning...”

“Yes. The soldiers of the churches attacked the base of the forces of evil.”

“...”

A heavy silence fell. Layla trembled subtly and shut her eyes tight as if she didn't want to imagine it.

She asked, “The soldiers...”

“They were... wiped out,” said Kang-Woo.

It was like a bolt from the blue. The joy that they had felt when they had heard the news about incarnations becoming their allies had been utterly shattered.

“Wh-What? Those fucking trolls... Why did they charge into enemy lines all by themselves?” Yeon-Joo asked.

“... I don't know.” Kang-Woo shook his head in confusion. “They surely said during the meeting a few days ago that they would wait until we were ready...”

They felt as if they had been betrayed. No, since the churches had acted on their own after they had agreed to stand by, it was a clear betrayal.

“Haaa.” Yeon-Joo frowned as if she couldn't believe what she was hearing.

“Then... What should we do now?” Seol-Ah asked seriously, understanding the gravity of the situation.

“We have no choice but to attack before they run away,” Kang-Woo stated.

“...” Layla nodded. “You're right... There's no other chance than now. We have to attack as quickly as possible before the enemies fully recover from the churches' attack.”

“Yes,” Kang-Woo agreed.

He liked that he could always get through to Layla.

Layla stood up and took a deep breath in. She drew out her power and stated, “Let's go right away, Kang-Woo.”

Although it was only a portion, the power of the Top-rank goddess Gaia was nothing to scoff at. Suffocatingly powerful energy surged from Layla.

“... Kang-Woo. Since we're going to enemy lines, will that woman from before be there as well?” asked Seol-Ah as she narrowed her eyes.

“Probably,” Kang-Woo answered.

“Hmm.” Chilling bloodlust filled Seol-Ah's eyes momentarily. She asked while touching her lips, “May I fight her on my own?”

“Not on your own.” Kang-Woo shook his head firmly.

Seol-Ah was also able to use Divinity because she had accepted Seraph’s soul, but her abilities were specialized toward buffing and healing rather than combat. Having her fight Proserpine on her own was highly inefficient.

*‘It’s also dangerous.’*

Even if Proserpine was not specialized in combat, Kang-Woo could not have Seol-Ah fight a Constellation of Evil by herself.

“Go with Layla and the others. I’ll leave Lilith in command. You don’t have to win. Just focus on buying time.”

“With everyone? What about you, then...?”

“I have someone to face,” said Kang-Woo calmly.

Si-Hun, who had been looking at Kang-Woo, flinched.

“Hm?” Kang-Woo turned to Si-Hun while tilting his head. “Is something wrong? You don’t look good at all.”

“Oh...” Si-Hun smiled awkwardly.

As Kang-Woo had said, Si-Hun’s expression was extremely gloomy. Even if he was nervous about facing the Constellations, there was no way that Si-Hun would make such a face. Rather than nervous, it was more apt to say that he looked as if he was in despair.

“...”

Silence continued. Si-Hun bit his lip as he stared at Kang-Woo. A memory popped up in his head.

*“We’ll become very good allies.”*

It was a familiar face and voice, but everything about it felt unfamiliar. It even felt grotesque. Si-Hun’s head was spinning as if he felt nauseous.

“... Hyung... nim.”

Si-Hun’s memories continued. This time, it was of the middle-aged man with a diagonal slash scar across his face.

The man said expressionlessly, *“You’ve been deceived by that monster all this time.”*

*‘No.’*

*“Everything he has shown you thus far has been nothing but a facade to hide the abominable truth.”*

*‘That’s impossible. Why would hyung-nim do such a thing to me?’*

*“To use you, of course. I’m sure even you realize the extraordinary talent you possess.”*

*‘Hyung-nim is strong. There’s no way he would need to use me.’*

*“I wonder about that? Are those of great wealth ever satisfied with the wealth they have? Desire is endless, especially if that man is a demon in nature.”*

*‘Hyung isn’t a demon anymore.’*

*“Hah, what a funny joke. No one befits the word demon more than that monster.”*

*‘Shut up.’*

*“Will you continue to be deceived by him? Do you plan on living as his puppet forever?”*

*‘I told you to shut up.’*

*“I will give you a chance to take your revenge. Soon, that monster will come to face me. When that time comes...”*

*‘Please, don’t say anything else.’*

*“Stab him.”*

“...” Si-Hun stared at Kang-Woo, who was looking at him worriedly.

His vision blurred. The current Kang-Woo and the Kang-Woo that Si-Hun had seen that night overlapped; they mixed and were squashed.

“Ah...”

Si-Hun felt his entire world shaking— no, crumbling. He unconsciously placed his hand on his chest. The memory of the day that Kang-Woo turned Si-Hun into his puppet by placing his hand on Si-Hun’s heart came back to him.

Si-Hun was able to tell now. The Kang-Woo he had known until now... Everything Kang-Woo had shown him... had all been a lie. He had been used by him all this time.

“...”

“Si-Hun?” called Kang-Woo while frowning at Si-Hun, who was simply staring at him blank-eyed.

“It’s nothing.” Si-Hun smiled as he looked like he would fall apart any second.

Chapter 396 - Prelude to War

“Alright, let’s depart as soon as I contact the angels. You guys can stand by in front of the Gate,” Oh Kang-Woo said as he stood up.

The party members nodded and left the room.

“Oh, and Si-Hun,” Kang-Woo called Kim Si-Hun, who was about to leave.

“Y-Yes?” Si-Hun stared at Kang-Woo while completely flustered.

His eyes were shaking and his lips were quivering.

Kang-Woo asked while tilting his head, "I'm not going to eat you up or anything. What's been with you since earlier?"

"Ah, hahaha. It's nothing. I'm just not feeling very well." Si-Hun scratched his head while smiling awkwardly.

Kang-Woo smirked. "I guess even you get like that sometimes. Are you nervous?"

"Yes, since we'll be fighting the Constellations of Evil head-on."

Kang-Woo put his hand on Si-Hun's shoulder and patted it lightly. "Don't worry too much and lighten up. I'll protect you when it comes down to it."

Si-Hun remained silent.

"Come to think of it, you said that people have gathered to join your fight, right?"

"Oh, yes." Si-Hun nodded in slight embarrassment.

After Si-Hun's name had spread throughout the continent, people who wanted to join the hero's adventure gathered in the empire. Most of them were swordsmen, but there were many mages, priests, and elementalists as well.

Kang-Woo had told Si-Hun to choose the most skilled among them and set up a task force similar to the Sirius Corps back on Earth. Although he had been worried that it would become a group of people wanting to play hero, the warriors who had gathered to join Si-Hun's adventure were more skilled than he had thought. There were even people who were head and shoulders above the rest.

"Bring them all as well," Kang-Woo stated.

"Understood." Si-Hun nodded. He knew that their help was more imperative now than ever. "In that case, I'll be taking my leave, hyung-nim."

"Sure."

Si-Hun bowed and left the room.

*'Now, then.'*

Kang-Woo took out a communication crystal orb. Since he had explained the situation to his party members, it was now time to have the angels participate in the operation. He called Uriel.

[What's up, Kang-Woo?] Uriel answered ecstatically.

Kang-Woo responded as if he was suppressing his rage, "The Godly Pantheon messed up."

[What?]

Kang-Woo repeated what he had explained to his party members. Uriel cursed and ran straight to Michael. Kang-Woo ended the call as soon as he got confirmation that the angels would head to the enemy's base right away as well. All he had left to do now was go to his party members who were waiting for him.

"My king," Balrog called as soon as Kang-Woo opened the door.

Kang-Woo turned his head. "Were you waiting for me?"

"Yes."

"Why? You should've just waited with the others in front of the Gate."

Balrog remained silent as he stared at Kang-Woo with sunken eyes. He said with a low voice, "Kim Si-Hun is—"

"Balrog," Kang-Woo interjected. "Shouldn't you be waiting in front of the Gate?"

Balrog closed his eyes. "You knew."

Kang-Woo smirked. "It's hard not to when it's that obvious."

He recalled Si-Hun's expression that had been on the verge of falling apart. There was no way that he wouldn't know after seeing that.

"Hah," Kang-Woo feigned laughter.

He had been prepared for this day to come since he knew that it would happen one day.

*'The day that everything came undone.'*

Kang-Woo closed his eyes.

"What will you do?" Balrog asked.

"I'm not gonna do anything," Kang-Woo answered without hesitation.

Balrog's eyes widened as if he had not expected that answer. "You will be able to erase his memories if you use the Authority of Subordination again."

"I know."

"Or you could just make him believe that those memories were an illusion. He would believe you without question."

"I know."

"If even that is unsatisfactory, I believe you could tell him the truth. I believe Kim Si-Hun would underst—"

"I know."

Kang-Woo stared at Balrog with deeply sunken eyes. Balrog flinched. He could feel the unending abyss within his king's eyes. It felt as if he was being devoured by the black sea.

"Kurgh..."

Balrog could barely breathe. He felt like a colossal energy was weighing down on him. He quickly lowered his head.

"I... apologize. I was out of line."

"As long as you know." Kang-Woo softly laughed and drew his energy back in.

Balrog was able to breathe again. Kang-Woo turned around.

“Let’s go.”

Balrog’s lips quivered as if he wanted to say something, but sighed and stood up. Kang-Woo walked in front of Balrog. He had a bitter taste in his mouth, so bitter that his tongue was numb.

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A boy with blank eyes on a desolate land covered in red sand turned his head.

“He’s coming.” The boy trembled slightly. “The monster of the Demonic Sea... is coming.”

Tai Wuji remained silent.

He placed one hand on the handle of his sword strapped to his waist, and the other in his pocket to grab the darkness that was squirming as if it was alive.

Tai Wuji asked as he looked down at the object, “What of our forces?”

“They’ve been reduced significantly.”

Tai Wuji turned to look at the army of demonic beasts gathered on the red earth. As the boy had said, the numbers of the demonic beasts had been reduced significantly compared to before.

“Have you still not managed to get in touch with that hunchback?” Proserpine asked while biting her lip.

The boy nodded.

“Shit. What the hell is that son of a bitch doing?” she mumbled while frowning. She turned to Tai Wuji and stated, “Let’s retreat for now. Give me a little more time and I’ll be able to charm that monst—”

“No.” Tai Wuji shook his head.

Proserpine glared at him with her eight eyes as her black tentacles squirmed aggressively. “What? You think I won’t be able to charm him?”

“That’s not what I mean.” Tai Wuji looked up in the air. He could see cracks forming on the barrier that they had just repaired. “They’re here.”

Crack!

Brilliant golden light seeped through the cracks in the barrier. Dozens of Rifts shining with golden light formed in the air, and out of them walked out angels, humans, and an army made up of the retainers of the gods. The first to come out was a boy with blue hair and eight wings.

“Shit... There’s so goddamn many of them.”

Crackle, crackle!

The blue-haired boy frowned. Blue electricity sparked from both of his hands.

“Hihihi. It’s better that way, isn’t it? This is gonna be fun!” A woman with a bottle of alcohol in one hand giggled. She chugged down the half-full bottle. “Kaaahh! That hits the spot!”

“Crazy bitch.” The blue-haired boy shook his head in exasperation.

“So it was you, Heavenly Dragon.” An angel with short blond hair glared at Tai Wuji.

Tai Wuji also knew the angel very well. “Michael.”

Michael took out a thick book of hundreds of pages, with each page shining radiantly.

“Th-These are the reduced numbers?” A red-haired woman stared at the demonic beast army in surprise.

There were easily thousands of them. If these were the numbers remaining after the battle against the soldiers of the churches, she couldn’t even imagine how many there had been originally.

“Huuu, huuu. Fuck, I should never have come to this goddamn world.” The red-haired woman grimaced as she panted heavily as if trying to calm herself.

Although she was panting heavily, her heart was surprisingly as calm as it could be. It was as unmoving as gum stuck on asphalt... Not even a dandelion seed would move an inch from how calm she—

“What the fuck? I’m feeling like shit all of a sudden,” someone said.

Cha Yeon-Joo frowned and picked her ears as if she had heard wrong. She looked around with fierce eyes and saw Han Seol-Ah walking toward her.

“Seol-Ah, did you just sw—”

“Haaa.” Seol-Ah ignored Yeon-Joo as she stared daggers at one person.

It was the woman with black tentacles for hair.

Grind, grind.

Seol-Ah glared at Proserpine with bloodlust while gritting her teeth.

“You’re going to... steal my Kang-Woo?”

It was unthinkable. She could not stand for it... ever. Enormous energy weighed down on everything around her as chilling bloodlust oozed from her gaze.

“Ahem,” Yeon-Joo quickly looked away from Seol-Ah.

She could instinctively tell that she shouldn’t talk to Seol-Ah right now.

Tai Wuji stared in silence at the army coming out from the golden Rifts.

There were so many of them that he did not know where they had all come from, but he was not focusing on anyone else but the monster wearing human skin.

“You’ve come.” Tai Wuji glared at the monster while gripping his sword.

He subtly trembled. He had no idea whether it was because he was thrilled about the battle that was about to take place, or if it was his unconscious fear of the monster. If there was one thing he knew...

*'I can't avoid a battle against him.'*

The battle between them almost felt inevitable.

"Yeah, I have," Kang-Woo said as he walked forward with a smile.

His heart beat crazily with each step he took. He stared at his enemy ecstatically.

All eyes focused on Kang-Woo the moment he walked forward. It was only natural since the man who seemed to be the enemy leader was staring straight at him, and so were the archangels.

"Hm?" Kang-Woo expressed confusion as all the attention was focused on him.

*'The hell?'*

Friends and foes alike were all staring at him.

*'Is this...'*

The atmosphere called for him to make some sort of battle cry.

*'Fuck, I can't think of anything when I'm put on the spot like this.'*

He had never used a battle cry when he had commanded demons in Hell since they fought all on their own even without him saying anything.

*'Shit.'*

Kang-Woo turned to Yeon-Joo. "Hey. The battle cry you did last time was pretty good. Why don't you do it this time as w—"

"Come on, don't be like that." Yeon-Joo snickered and continued, "Our Great Lord Kang-Woo should be the one to sound the battle cry in times like this. Something concise yet powerful, something that will send our morale through the roof!"

She was getting her revenge from the time in the Manchurian Plain when Kang-Woo had left her in charge of an entire army and disappeared somewhere. Yeon-Joo stared at him joyfully as if telling him to have a taste of his own medicine.

"Shit," Kang-Woo cursed lowly.

He had a feeling that he wouldn't be able to avoid it. The gears in his head turned in overdrive.

*'Oh, come to think of it...'*

He recalled watching a movie with Echidna while lazing on the couch. He had no idea what it meant, but it was an extremely cool battle cry.

*'Yeah, let's go with that.'*

Kang-Woo nodded and stomped his feet.



Boom—!!

The ground shook. Enormous golden light surged out from Kang-Woo as if the sun had appeared atop the red earth. It was a magnificent sight to behold.

Kang-Woo raised a golden sword high and shouted, “Avengers!!”

He then lowered the sword and pointed it at the enemies.

“Assemble.”

Chapter 397 - Could You Stop Calling Him Darling?

“The fuck?” Cha Yeon-Joo stared at Oh Kang-Woo dumbfoundedly. “Crazy son of a bitch!! Why did you plagiarize?!”

“Hm?” Kang-Woo tilted his head.

*‘What’s the problem?’*

Yeon-Joo put her hand on her neck as if she was getting a headache.

“God, that son of a bitch will be the end of me.”

It probably would have been better for her to do it. However, as if to say that her worries had been unfounded...

“Yeaaaahhhh!!!”

“See? They love it,” Kang-Woo said.

“The hell? Why did that raise their morale?”

Yeon-Joo stared dumbfoundedly at the angels and humans charging at the demonic beast army in a blaze of passion. They had not reacted to the battle cry, but rather the radiant golden light.

“Fuck it, I don’t care anymore.”

Yeon-Joo decided to pay it no mind and turned toward the countless demonic beasts charging their way while roaring.

Clatter!!

Chains with sharp thorns on them twisted and turned as if they were alive.

Boom!

She stomped her feet and unleashed the chains on the demonic beasts. The chains fiercely pierced the demonic beasts charging at her.

“Fucking cheater...” Yeon-Joo looked at Kang-Woo in displeasure even while killing demonic beasts.

Kang-Woo walked forward while ignoring her comment.

“Finally...”

He faced the despair that he had been waiting for all this time like a lovesick girl.

Tai Wuji unsheathed the blade strapped to his waist while staring at the monster with sunken eyes.

Tai Wuji and Oh Kang-Woo locked eyes.

“You’ve acquired Deific Essence,” said Tai Wuji in a low tone.

He could feel the Divinity mixed into the radiant golden light that the monster was emitting.

Kang-Woo smiled. “Thanks to you.”

He didn’t understand what Kang-Woo meant by that. Deific Essence was not something that could be acquired so easily thanks to someone else.

*‘No.’*

Tai Wuji shook his head. The monster had eaten the Constellation of Fear whole.

*‘If it’s that monster... It’s more than possible.’*

He could finally understand why Lucifer had been that desperate. That monster was an incomprehensible being.

*‘I have to kill him here.’*

If he didn’t, the monster would become a hindrance to the revival of his master, Demon God Bauli.

“Nothing will change even if you have acquired Deific Essence,” declared Tai Wuji.

Kang-Woo smirked and nodded. “I know, bro.”

He was already aware that he was no match for Tai Wuji just because he had Deific Essence now. Kang-Woo felt as if he was staring at an insurmountable wall as he looked at Tai Wuji. He felt breathless and he was trembling. Tai Wuji looked no different from a human in terms of outer appearance, but he was as overpowering as a giant dragon that covered the entire sky.

*‘Yeah, this is more like it. This is exactly what I wanted to feel.’*

Kang-Woo laughed as if he couldn’t be any happier. He gripped the golden sword tight and stomped on the ground.

Wham!!

He shot toward Tai Wuji like a golden arrow splitting the earth.

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“O Almighty Gaia,” prayed Layla while clasping her hands together.

She borrowed the power of a goddess as an incarnation. A portion of Gaia’s Deific Essence seeped into her, the massive power causing a storm around her.

“Urgh,” Layla grimaced.

The more Deific Essence she borrowed, the more burden was placed on her. The great power felt as if it would cause her to burst like a balloon overfilled with air.

*'It's not enough.'*

Layla would be facing the Constellations of Evil, the elite guards of the Demon God, beings who had massacred countless gods during the era of myths. Kang-Woo had asked them to buy as much time as they could, but buying time against Constellations of Evil was extremely difficult in and of itself.

“Grant your unworthy incarnation your power.”

Whoooooom.

Layla shone brightly; it was white, completely different from Kang-Woo's light. Befitting the Deific Essence of the Goddess of Parental Love, just looking at the light was enough to warm the heart. Layla slowly turned to Lilith, the one in command of the operation.

“First,” Lilith said calmly as she looked around the battlefield. “Balrog, Si-Hun, and the two children, please take care of them.”

Boom!

A massive demonic beast twenty meters tall appeared along with an explosive sound. It was Ouroboros, an ancient demonic beast in the form of a snake. The angels' gazes turned fierce the moment Ouroboros appeared. They emitted bloodlust at the demonic beast that had slaughtered countless angels during the attack on Sant' Angelo.

Ouroboros was not the only ancient demonic beast.

Rumble—!

The ground split as giant demonic beasts rose one by one while trampling on the demonic beasts in the area. One of them was a demonic beast covered in flames, who burned the angels that approached him to a crisp. It was Bul-Kathos, an ancient demonic beast enveloped in powerful flames that were on par with Prince Mammon's Authority of Blaze.

“Got it,” said Balrog as he walked forward while cracking his neck.

“Will Kang-Woo praise us if we kill them all?”

“R-Really? Then I'll k-kill them all.”

Echidna and Halcyon also stared at the ancient demonic beasts with great interest.

Kim Si-Hun, who had been staring at Kang-Woo while completely still, turned without a word.

Lilith tilted her head in wonder for a moment but turned away from Si-Hun after checking that he was charging toward the ancient demonic beasts along with Balrog and the others.

Lilith turned to Layla and Han Seol-Ah and said, “We will be facing that Constellation.”

She was pointing at the monster covered in black tentacles.

Layla frowned as she saw Proserpine's hideous looks. “... Is she a Constellation of Evil?”

“Yes,” replied Lilith. She glared at Proserpine and bit her nails anxiously. “How dare a bitch with no gloss on her tentacles whatsoever...”

Not only that, but she only had eight eyes. Lilith couldn't believe that Proserpine dared to proclaim herself as the Goddess of Succubuses.

*'Unforgivable.'*

Her looks probably were good enough back in the era of myths but were nothing now.

"Grannies past their prime should know their place," Lilith muttered.

"What did you say?" Proserpine narrowed her eyes sharply, having heard Lilith. Her tentacles squirmed fiercely. "I'm past my prime?"

"Far past, I would add. You look easily above a few dozen millennia old."

*Hohoho*, Lilith giggled while covering her mouth.

Since Proserpine had been active since the era of myths, she was indeed older than a few dozen millennia old.

"Hmph, age isn't everything in beauty, you know?" Proserpine argued.

"My, but being young is better for sure. Wouldn't you agree, granny?"

"You arrogant bitch..." Proserpine's eyes widened in fury.

She could endure anything else, but as the Goddess of Succubuses, she could not stand her beauty being mocked.

"Now, Seol-Ah. You can't lose Kang-Woo to a granny like that, can you?" Lilith asked.

Seol-Ah nodded, her eyes filled with bloodlust.

Proserpine feigned laughter in exasperation. "Hah. I guess I should deal with you all before I capture my darling's heart."

To make the monster hers, she needed to purge the parasites clinging to him first. Proserpine extended her tentacles while glaring at Lilith and Seol-Ah.

"I'm not sure what's happening, but..." Layla slurred.

She enveloped her hands with white light. She could at least tell that the *darling* Proserpine was referring to was Kang-Woo, and that she was trying to take him away from Seol-Ah and Lilith. .com

She frowned in displeasure. "NTR lovers must be exterminated."

Bam!

Layla extended her arms forward and shot a giant ball of light at Proserpine.

"Hmph," Proserpine snorted as if it were nothing.

Although she was not specialized in combat, she was not so weak that she would lose to a mere incarnation with borrowed Deific Essence. However...

"Blessing of the Celestial Goddess," Seol-Ah chanted.

“What?!”

Proserpine had not expected Seol-Ah to be an unexpected variable. Twelve wings sprouted from Seol-Ah’s back. Once she imbued her power into Layla, her half-baked Deific Essence gained its full form. The powers of Celestial Goddess Seraph and Gaia combined.

Rumble—!!

The light was bright enough to blind the eyes. An intense wave of heat set everything in the area ablaze.

“Kyaaaaahhh!” Proserpine screamed as her tentacles were burned by the intense heat.

She had expected Gaia’s incarnation, but could not have imagined a human who possessed Celestial Goddess Seraph’s power to join the battle.

*‘H-How?!’*

Proserpine’s mind stormed with fear and rage. There was no way that she would ever forget the cursed Celestial Goddess Seraph. She had spent hundreds of millennia sealed in a pitch-black space due to Seraph sealing the Constellations of Evil at the cost of her Divinity.

“Kurgh!” Proserpine grunted and turned her head.

She was about to ask Tai Wuji for assistance, but he did not seem to have the leeway to do so since he had begun his battle against the monster of the Demonic Sea.

*‘I-I have to run.’*

Proserpine bit her lip anxiously. There was also the Constellation of Nightmares, but that brat was not specialized in combat either. She needed to hide somewhere until Tai Wuji disposed of the monster. She turned around without hesitation.

“Where do you think you’re going?” Layla said as she chased after Proserpine.

Behind her was also Han Seol-Ah with twelve wings. Proserpine grimaced aggressively.

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“Argh, urgh...” Proserpine groaned as she blocked pus from spewing out of her severed tentacles. “Shit, shit, shit!”

She cursed as she stomped her feet.

*‘Crazy bitches.’*

Gaia’s incarnation and the human with Seraph’s power had stuck to her to no end. There had been chances for her to run away a few times, but Lilith had blocked those chances before Proserpine could use them.

“Haaa,” Proserpine sighed.

She had no choice but to unleash the Demon God’s Deific Essence. It had been highly risky, but she had successfully managed to incapacitate Gaia’s incarnation and successfully run away.

“Urgh,” Proserpine groaned and collapsed on the spot. She had escaped to the mountains quite a distance away from the valley. “This place should be safe.”

Proserpine hugged herself as she trembled. She could barely move due to the side effects of unleashing the Demon God’s Deific Essence.

*‘I’ll stay here until Tai Wuji wipes them all out.’*

Even if she were to stay out of the battle, Tai Wuji was there. However strong the monster of the Demonic Sea was or how large the army of angels and humans was...

*‘Tai Wuji will win.’*

He was so powerful that his defeat was not even imaginable.

Proserpine muttered in disappointment while hiding herself between two rocks, “But I prefer that my darling doesn’t die.”

Just then...

“Could you stop calling Kang-Woo your darling?”

“What?!” Proserpine quickly turned to the source of the voice.

There, a woman with twelve wings was looking down at her.

“You see, Kang-Woo...” The woman walked forward while glaring at Proserpine with lifeless eyes. “... Can only be touched, cared for, embraced, hugged, patted, fed, teased, kissed, and loved by me. He’s mine.”

The twelve pure-white wings flickered black.

Chapter 398 - It Was A Lie After All

“You...!” Proserpine glared at Han Seol-Ah while biting her lip. She did not expect Seol-Ah to follow her all the way here. “I guess you just left Gaia’s incarnation to die, huh?”

Proserpine had managed to escape after unleashing the Demon God’s Deific Essence and greatly injuring Gaia’s incarnation. If Seol-Ah had just left the incarnation to come here, it meant that Gaia’s incarnation would not survive.

“No,” Seol-Ah smirked and shook her head. “I’ve already given Layla first aid so that she wouldn’t die.”

*‘In that short of a time?’*

Proserpine bit her lip right as she was about to say that out loud.

*‘It’s possible for Seraph.’*

Although the human did not seem to be able to use Seraph’s power to its full extent, first aid would be simple even if she were able to use a portion of it. Proserpine panted heavily while grasping her

wound. The injury that she had inflicted on Gaia's incarnation was quite large. If the human had only administered first aid...

"Gaia's incarnation must be writhing in pain right now," Proserpine remarked.

"No need to worry. Lilith is taking good care of her. And..." Seol-Ah's eyes lit up crazily. "I'm sure Layla will understand. It's for the sake of killing a Constellation of Evil of all demons, after all."

Seol-Ah approached Proserpine while humming.

Proserpine chuckled as her hand that was grasping her injury trembled. "Hah. Do you seriously think you can kill me?"

Celestial Goddess Seraph had a fatal weakness. She possessed powerful buffs that could make an ordinary farmer into the greatest warrior, and healing magic so powerful that it seemed as if she could bring the dead back to life. No, she actually could revive the dead with the magic spell *Resurrection* if she were to use the entirety of her power. However, her abilities were so specialized toward buffing and healing that her combat prowess was laughably bad.

*'In other words, she can't do anything on her own.'*

Proserpine stared at Seol-Ah with narrowed eyes. Although she was in terrible condition, she wouldn't lose to a woman akin to a scarecrow with no combat ability.

"I'll make you regret your arrogance of coming here by yourself!" Proserpine shouted as she extended her arm.

Black tentacles shot toward Seol-Ah's neck, but...

Grip.

Seol-Ah easily caught the tentacles aiming for her neck. She twisted the tentacles and pulled them with all her might.

"Kyaaaaaahhh!" Proserpine screamed. "Wh-What?"

Proserpine stared at Seol-Ah incomprehensibly. If the human had inherited Seraph's soul, her combat ability should have been terrible.

"You dared to covet Kang-Woo..."

Seol-Ah looked down at the tentacles in her hand with disgust. Her wings continued to flicker black.

Rumble.

Darkness poured out from the wings and filled the surroundings along with a thunderous sound.

"... With these filthy tentacles."

Thousands of black feathers shot at Proserpine.

"Kyaaaaaahhh!" Proserpine screamed while scrunching up.

Thousands of feathers poured on Proserpine like a machine gun, tearing her skin and severing her tentacles.

“Haaa, haaa,” Proserpine opened her eyes while panting heavily after the storm of feathers died down. Fortunately, she was not greatly injured.

*‘N-No.’*

It was not fortunate. It meant one thing if she was only lightly injured after allowing herself to be attacked while completely defenseless.

*‘She... avoided my vitals on purpose.’*

Chills ran down Proserpine’s spine. She was overcome with fear as Seol-Ah looked down at her chillingly.

“I’ll make it so that... you can never even think about laying a hand on Kang-Woo,” Seol-Ah muttered as she slowly walked toward Proserpine.

Proserpine flinched. She gulped while trembling.

*‘Wh-What should I do?’*

She might have had a chance if she was in perfect form, but she was currently suffering from the side effects of unleashing the Demon God’s Deific Essence, so there was no way for her to face that insane human right now. Not only that, but she did not even have the strength to run anymore.

“Ngh...” Proserpine bit her lip.

She needed to think of a way out of this situation.

*‘Come to think of it, she seemed to be madly obsessed with that monster.’*

Her obsession was abnormally high, exactly like the men that had been charmed by Proserpine. She did not have to think very hard about why that was.

*‘If she possesses Seraph’s soul...’*

Proserpine knew about angels being driven by their obsessions. This female human’s obsession was likely the monster himself. If that was the case, her crazy obsession was understandable since there was no way that a mere human would be able to control an angel’s instincts, let alone Seraph’s.

*‘Shit, I sure have stirred up the hornet’s nest.’*

Proserpine frowned aggressively. It was unavoidable since there was no way for her to have known that Seraph’s soul dwelled within that human.

*‘But I still have a card to play.’*

Proserpine’s eyes lit up. If that human was unable to handle the instincts of an angel, she would just use it against her.

“Hmm, you won’t let me lay a hand on him, you say?” asked Proserpine while smiling seductively.



Seol-Ah casually nodded as she walked toward her. "Yes. I won't let you lay a hand on him."

"Ho... Hohohohoho!!" Proserpine burst into laughter while covering her mouth with one hand and staring at Seol-Ah as if she were unable to contain her joy.

"What's so funny?" Seol-Ah glared at the laughing Proserpine.

Proserpine twisted her body bewitchingly and answered, "I mean~ I just thought it might be a bit too late for that."

Deathly silence fell.

Seol-Ah asked while her eyes lit up crazily, "What do you... mean by that?"

"Hohohoho!" Proserpine burst into laughter again. She licked her lips with her snakelike tongue and asked, "You haven't been sleeping with darling lately, have you?"

Seol-Ah remained silent.

Kang-Woo had been away for the past few days, so they had not been able to spend the night together.

"Man, what a shame. You would've been able to see his disappointed face if you did."

"What?" Seol-Ah narrowed her eyes sharply. Kang-Woo being disappointed? Her heart beat strongly after hearing Proserpine's words that were implying something. "What are you... talking about?"

"I wonder what I'm talking about?" Proserpine giggled leisurely.

Boom!

Seol-Ah spread out her twelve wings and shot toward Proserpine, violently grabbing her by the hair.

"Kyaah!"

"I asked you what you were talking about."

"W-Wait! Th-That hurts! Let me go and then we'll talk!"

"Tell me now." Seol-Ah looked down at Proserpine terrifyingly.

Proserpine was smiling despite screaming. "It seems darling hasn't told you. Well, I doubt he had the heart to."

"A few days ago... Darling came to me."

"Kang-Woo... went to see you?"

Proserpine replied leisurely, "Yeah. I left my traces on my clone back then."

She had never done such a thing, but now was not the time to sweat the small stuff.

"Then..."

Seol-Ah's expression froze. She knew that Kang-Woo had headed to Sant'Angelo after following the trace left behind by Proserpine. However, what if Kang-Woo went somewhere else before heading to Sant'Angelo?

"Don't... lie," Seol-Ah said ferociously as she clenched Proserpine's hair harder.

"Hohoho! Why do you think it's a lie?"

"There's no way Kang-Woo would do such a thing."

"Why? Aren't all men the same?"

"Kang-Woo is different."

"No, he's the same," Proserpine replied while shaking her head firmly. She continued craftily, "His relationship status seemed to be all over the place, too. I'm sure he did it with that Lilith bitch. His relationship with that red hair seemed suspicious too."

"Lilith is different."

Lilith had spent a thousand years with Kang-Woo. She had given Seol-Ah all sorts of advice on how to advance her relationship with Kang-Woo, and they had even promised together that they would stay by Kang-Woo's side forever. Seol-Ah could never be jealous of Lilith of all people. After all, the one who had come between Kang-Woo and Lilith had been her; she had stolen Kang-Woo from Lilith, who had been devoted to Kang-Woo for the last thousand years.

"The first time is always the hardest. It gets easier the more you do it, wouldn't you agree?" Proserpine asked suggestively.

Seol-Ah clenched her fists. Proserpine was not wrong, but...

"There's no way... Kang-Woo would do such a thing."

Seol-Ah's strength left her hands.

"Fufu," Proserpine smiled widely as she widened the distance between them. She caressed her stomach and continued, "Then who was it that entered me that night?"

Proserpine continued while giggling, "Do you know what darling said to me that night? He said that no one had ever made him feel that good. You can't blame him. I wouldn't be known as the Constellation of Lust if I was the same as other women." She burst out lustful energy and licked her lips seductively. "He talked about you too. He said that you were no fun because you're so inexperienced."

"Wh-What?"

Seol-Ah's eyes widened and flinched as if Proserpine had hit the mark. She did indeed have no experience with anyone other than Kang-Woo.

"Hohoho! You do look like you'd be bad at it." Proserpine mocked her and sighed in relief in her mind at the same time.

*'I knew she'd be bad at it.'*

She was not the Constellation of Lust for nothing. She could tell just from the way Seol-Ah smelled that she was inexperienced. Seol-Ah was trembling in shock.

*'Hoho, it seems to have worked.'*

She could tell that her plan had succeeded.

*'Once I hammer the nail in the coffin...'*

That human's obsession would turn into fury, and then...

*'She'll use that fury to go tear the monster's groin apart.'*

One would normally doubt what they had been told, but that human was not in a normal condition at all.

*'I doubt she can even think properly.'*

People often believed even the craziest of things if their desire reached the breaking point. It could often be seen in impulsive gamblers who did incomprehensible things. The same could be said for obsession; once one's obsession reached its breaking point and turned into madness, one would barely have any leeway to make logical thoughts.

"Th-That's enough of your lies!"

As Proserpine had expected, Seol-Ah shouted in madness while clenching her hair. Proserpine smiled widely.

"Fufu. It's been a while since I had that much fun as well." She slowly placed her hand on her stomach. "Oh, and..." She giggled as she caressed her stomach. "I think... I'm pregnant."

"What... did you say?"

"Fufu. I'm pregnant." Proserpine looked down at her stomach lovingly. "With my darling's... precious child."

Seol-Ah's eyes widened. She was shocked to the point that blood vessels had protruded all over her body. Proserpine looked down victoriously at the despaired Seol-Ah.

*'Alright, now—'*

"Liar," Seol-Ah said chillingly.

The atmosphere completely changed.

"H-Huh?" Proserpine looked at Seol-Ah perplexedly.

She had a feeling that something had gone wrong.

"Liar..."

The light in Seol-Ah's eyes completely disappeared. Her eyes as dark as the abyss were staring right at Proserpine.

“Liar... Liar.”

“Wh-What the...” Proserpine got goosebumps.

The human's mad obsession had not changed into fury; it had simply amplified into even greater madness.

“W-Wait! C-Calm down! It was just a prank—”

Proserpine instinctively tried to get away, but...

Crack.

“Ack!!”

Seol-Ah flew toward Proserpine at the speed of light and got on top of her. She moved her arms without hesitation as her wings flickering black fluttered.

Crunch! Crunch! Crunch—!!

“Kyaaaaahhh!!” Proserpine screamed horrendously.

Seol-Ah tore Proserpine apart alive, and...

“Heh. Just as I thought, it was a lie after all.”

She looked down at the crevice she had made with her bloodied hands.

She muttered, “There's... nobody inside.”

Seol-Ah giggled brightly.

Chapter 399 - Stab Him

Boom!

Thunderous explosions rang out as Oh Kang-Woo was blown away. He violently tumbled across the ground while leaving a line on the ground along his path, then sprang back up. He raised the golden sword made with the Key of the Demonic Sea and swung it at Tai Wuji, who appeared in front of him out of nowhere. The two swords collided.

Bang—!!

Another explosion rang out.

“Cough!”

Kang-Woo panted heavily. His sword imbued with Divinity was cleaved into two all too easily. He jumped back.

“Dayum, I'm seriously no match for him.”

Kang-Woo smiled widely as he healed his torn hands with the Authority of Regeneration. He had infused Intermediate-rank Divinity into the Key of the Demonic Sea, but it was not enough to endure Tai Wuji's sword.

*'But it's at least better than before.'*

Unlike their first confrontation when the Key of the Demonic Sea shattered as soon as it clashed with Tai Wuji's sword, it could now handle a few blows.

*'That's good enough.'*

It was a meaningful change since it made it far easier for him to handle a battle against the despair in front of him. Kang-Woo restored the sword to its original form while smiling. He gripped the sword shining with golden light.

Tai Wuji stared at Kang-Woo with sunken eyes. He remarked while tapping on his sword handle, "You've changed from back then."

The man in front of him was completely different from the horrifying monster that seemed like it had been born from the Demonic Sea. The man looked magnificent; sublime, even.

"It does not suit you," Tai Wuji stated.

He recalled the first time he came across the monster. He had been the furthest thing from being magnificent and sublime; he had only exuded madness so powerful that it could devour the entire world whole.

"I haven't opened any Doors yet," Kang-Woo replied.

"Doors?" Tai Wuji tilted his head, unable to understand what the monster was talking about.

Kang-Woo smirked. "Don't rush me, man. I'll open them soon enough."

He lightly swung his sword. He was well aware that he would not be able to face Tai Wuji without opening the Doors—no, he was not certain that he would be able to win even after opening the Doors. He would not be able to lose since he couldn't die; it did not mean he would be able to win. Despite that, Kang-Woo was not opening them yet for one simple reason.

*'I can't use it infinitely.'*

Just because Kang-Woo didn't die while the Doors were open did not mean he was completely immortal. As he continuously died and his physical body was harmed, his mind would gradually be eaten up by the Demonic Sea. Even if he didn't die, just having the Doors open quickly ate away at his mind. Kang-Woo would open the Doors after shaving Tai Wuji's endurance as much as possible.

*'And...'*

Kang-Woo smiled. Sparks ran all over his body every time he clashed swords with Tai Wuji. The chilling sensation of the fact that he could be beheaded the moment he let his guard down stimulated him.

"Haaah," Kang-Woo exhaled heatedly.

He felt like he was going insane from the secretion of endorphins. The stimulating feeling of death being right around the corner could not be felt while the Doors were open. He wanted to relish in this feeling for just a little longer.

Tai Wuji frowned. He was able to read what the monster was feeling from just his eyes full of anticipation. He said emotionlessly “You’re insane.”

He couldn’t imagine someone acting this way when they could die at any time.

*‘It’s as if he’s living to die.’*

Tai Wuji gripped his sword while suppressing the displeasure surging from deep within his heart. He stared at the monster with cold eyes.

*‘That madness of yours will end today.’*

“Fuuu,” Tai Wuji inhaled deeply.

He gripped the sword tightly and stomped his feet.

*‘Heavenly Dragon Claws.’*

Tai Wuji swung his dark blue sword swiftly, resembling a dragon swinging down its claws. The sword was divided into five as it aimed for the monster’s neck. It was not an illusion; each sword slash contained enough power to split an entire mountain in half. The slashes resembling the claws of a beast aimed for Kang-Woo.

“Yeah, that’s more like it.”

Kang-Woo snickered as he swung his sword at the five condensed sword energies aiming for his neck. Sound so splitting that it could rupture one’s eardrums rang out as the ground underneath the two of them caved in.

Rumble—!

A giant sinkhole several hundred meters deep was formed. The demonic beasts and humans fighting in the area quickly ran away. Kang-Woo and Tai Wuji casually continued their battle while stepping on thin air as if they couldn’t care less that the ground had collapsed.

“Hup!” Tai Wuji’s eyes shone as he saw an opening.

He swung down his sword and cut off Kang-Woo’s right arm which had been holding the golden sword. Tai Wuji smiled faintly. Just then, Kang-Woo grabbed his right arm with his left and threw it at Tai Wuji.

Stab!

“Kurgh!”

The golden sword pierced Tai Wuji’s stomach.

Kang-Woo snickered. “It sure is nice to be able to use Divinity.”

Back when he did not have Divinity, he had to attack the same spot multiple times to be able to deal some damage due to the barrier of Divinity that his enemies possessed. However, now that he was

able to use Divinity, he was able to get through the Divinity barrier, which was always up like a passive skill, with ease.

“What... the...” Tai Wuji grimaced. He had not expected the monster to attack by throwing his arm that was holding his weapon. Such an attack could not be performed by a sane person.

Tai Wuji looked down at his bleeding stomach. The injury itself was not serious. He grabbed the monster’s right arm and threw it down on the ground. The monster without a right arm was staring at him leisurely. He saw the monster placing his left hand on his chest.

*‘That’s...’*

Chills ran down Tai Wuji’s back. It was the same sensation that he had felt back when he had faced the monster at the imperial palace. It was the fear that one would feel when staring into the abyss.

*‘I have to stop him from doing that.’*

Tai Wuji did not know what that motion meant, but he was sure that he would see that horrendous monster again if he didn’t stop him.

*‘In that case...’*

There was no better time to use the card that he had prepared. Tai Wuji slowly turned his head and sent a telepathic message to the young man who was staring at their battle blankly.

*“Now is the time.”*

The young man flinched.

*“Stab him.”*

Kim Si-Hun’s eyes quivered after getting the telepathic message.

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Rumble—!

The ground was being distorted. Si-Hun stopped cutting down the demonic beasts in front of him and turned to where the deafening sound came from. He could see the clashing of golden light and dark blue light.

Si-Hun shut his eyes tightly in silence. The memories came back to him once his eyes were closed. He could see himself collapsed in a dark alleyway and a smiling young man on top of him. The man’s face was familiar and unfamiliar to him at the same time.

*“We’ll become very good allies.”*

The man’s voice was imprinted in his mind along with his eyes twisted with malice. He had never seen that side of his hyung before.

*“You’ve been deceived by that monster all this time.”*

Tai Wuji’s words echoed in his mind. Si-Hun had told him to shut up, but he already knew deep down that he had been used and betrayed by the hyung that he had trusted unconditionally. No, it

could not even be called a betrayal, since the way that he felt about Kang-Woo was not the same as how Kang-Woo felt about him.

*'He... never thought of me as his little brother from the beginning.'*

All that Kang-Woo cared about was Si-Hun's talent. He was nothing more than a useful puppet to Kang-Woo.

*"There's this one thing that I keep thinking about,"* Si-Hun recalled his own words back when he had been sitting next to the bedridden Kang-Woo. *"About what would have happened in my life... if I had never met you."*

Si-Hun could not even imagine what would have happened if he had never met Kang-Woo. He could see nothing but a void.

*"I can't even imagine a life without you anymore, hyung-nim."*

What would have Kang-Woo felt after hearing those words? Would he have laughed at him? Would he have mocked him, who was saying such a thing while having no idea that he was being controlled? It was likely.

*'No, no. Don't think so pessimistically. He might have gotten attached to me after all this time. He might even care deeply for me now.'*

Si-Hun recalled a novel about a protagonist kidnapping a child to raise them as an assassin but ended up falling in love with them. Kang-Woo might also have ended up caring for him like his own brother... just like the protagonist of that novel.

"Argh, urgh." Si-Hun felt as if his head would explode. He teared up unconsciously. "A-Aaaahh."

His entire world had changed after meeting Kang-Woo. His world, which had been full of despair, had lit up brightly before he had realized it. And that world... had now collapsed completely.

"H-Hyung... Hyung..."

Si-Hun lowered his head while clenching his hair. The fact that the Kang-Woo he had known thus far had been a lie... That his gaze, actions, words, and everything had been a lie... The pain brought about by them was unbearable.

*"Now is the time."*

Si-Hun heard a voice and quickly looked up to see Tai Wuji looking down at him.

"N-No..." Si-Hun mumbled miserably since he knew what Tai Wuji would tell him to do.

*"Stab him."*

However, Tai Wuji brought him despair nonetheless as if to trample on his hopes.

"Haaa, haaa," Si-Hun panted heavily.



The sword in his hands felt hot to the touch. He could instinctively tell that there was no turning back. It was time to make his decision.

Si-Hun held the sword tightly and leaped into the air. He ran across the sky by making steps using Formless Sword.

*“We’ll become very good allies.”*

That voice was not leaving Si-Hun’s head. It would likely never disappear. Si-Hun felt nauseous from the horrible sense of betrayal. His vision blurred. He felt like he could barely hear anything around him. The world around him felt like it was crumbling. No, his world might have already been destroyed the day that he met Tai Wuji.

“H-Haaah.”

Si-Hun imbued his sword with power as the Qi from his dantian filled his entire body. And...

Pierce.

He stabbed without hesitation.

Chapter 400 - Why Did You Do That?

Kim Si-Hun’s mother was a barmaid, and one at a luxury bar that only served VIPs, at that. She had caught the attention of Si-Hun’s father, and they ended up sleeping together. That was how Si-Hun was born.

Si-Hun had no idea why a man like his father did not force his mother to abort the baby that had been an accident. Whatever the case, Si-Hun and his mother used to live with his father when he was very little.

He remembered being fairly close to his older brother at the time. He did not remember when, but he had once made a bet with his older brother about who would be able to juggle a soccer ball longer. At the time, his older brother had been full of confidence, but Si-Hun had ended up winning the bet by about five times the length of time. That had been his first time touching a soccer ball.

On that day, his older brother changed and the endless harassment began. At the time, Si-Hun had no idea why his older brother tormented him. He was just frustrated and sad. Only after he grew up did he realize that his brother tormented him out of jealousy. After realizing that fact, Si-Hun did everything worse than his brother on purpose. Whether it be studying, sports, or art, he praised his older brother for being good at everything.

The harassment then turned into mockery. His older brother called him the son of a prostitute. Si-Hun had no idea what that word meant when he first heard it, but the day he learned what it meant, he beat up his older brother to the point that his teeth fell out. A while after the incident, Si-Hun learned that his older brother’s cheekbones had almost shattered.

That incident marked the beginning of hell. Si-Hun and his mother were kicked out of the house. His mother tried her best to find a workplace to earn money, but she was not able to because of his father’s interference. Poverty was more despairing than all else, but Si-Hun was happy just to be together with his mother. Although he was hungry and tired all the time, he was happy. Or at least, that was what Si-Hun had thought.

One day, Si-Hun saw his mother sneaking out of the house. He followed after her and saw that she had come to his father's house and was begging for her and Si-Hun to be forgiven. His older brother came out of the house and laughed while kicking her. He spat on her while cackling. Si-Hun was not able to do anything to stop it.

On that day, his mother came back home with her face all bruised up and a handful of bills in her hand. She cried as she looked at Si-Hun and apologized to him while bawling her eyes out.

*"I'm sorry... for giving birth to you."*

Si-Hun found those words hurtful. They hurt so badly that he thought he would never be able to forget them.

*"Cough..."*

Si-Hun heard someone coughing up blood. He could feel the trembles of the person that he stabbed through the sword. He looked up.

Riiing.

[Assimilation with Martial God Tian Taihuang has reached 87%.]

[You have mastered Formless Sword!]

[You have realized a portion of the principle of Mind's Sword!]

"Haaa, haaa," Si-Hun panted heavily.

He felt like his head would explode. The Qi surging from his dantian and the principles of martial arts filled his brain. He twisted the blade. The wound widened along with the cracking of bones, and black blood flowed out from it.

"Why?" Tai Wuji looked down at the sword that had pierced his heart and then back at Si-Hun.

His eyes were wide open as if he couldn't understand.

Si-Hun shut his eyes tightly without answering.

"In the end, you've decided to remain as a puppet," Tai Wuji stated coldly.

He raised his sword as he stared at Si-Hun in disgust. Si-Hun did not answer this time either.

"Pathetic."

Tai Wuji grabbed the blade that pierced his heart. Cracks formed on Holy Sword Ludwig, and it completely shattered in his hands. Tai Wuji turned around and swung his sword.

Slash!

"Kurgh!"

The sword blazing with dark blue flames cut Si-Hun from his collarbone to his stomach, spewing dark red blood like a fountain. As Si-Hun fell to the ground like a bird that had lost its wings...

Tap.

Someone raced across the sky and caught Si-Hun.

“Ah...” Si-Hun expressed.

He raised his head and saw Oh Kang-Woo.

Kang-Woo was looking down at him with deeply sunken eyes. Si-Hun could see an endless black sea within Kang-Woo’s eyes.

“Why did you do that?” Kang-Woo asked.

Si-Hun smiled faintly as he looked up at Kang-Woo. “I guess... you knew.”

Kang-Woo had known that Si-Hun had regained his memories. Si-Hun couldn’t help but laugh after finding that out. He felt the heavy emotions weighing down on his heart lifting.

“Why did you do that?” Kang-Woo asked again.

Si-Hun organized his thoughts to come up with an answer. He slowly raised his trembling hand and grabbed Kang-Woo’s arm.

“Even if... everything you’ve shown me until now was a lie...”

Even if Si-Hun was nothing more than a puppet...

“To me...”

Tears flowed down Si-Hun’s cheeks. He recalled the day that Layla was captured by Satan’s subordinate, and what Kang-Woo had said to him back when he was on the verge of losing his sanity and becoming a demon.

*“Thanks... for staying as my little brother.”*

Kang-Woo probably had no idea how much those words had saved him. Even if those words had been a lie and had been nothing more than a trick to keep him as a puppet...

“Your lies were more precious to me... than any truth.”

Kang-Woo remained silent. He feigned laughter. “You dumbass.”

Si-Hun was truly an incorrigible dumbass.

“You’re making me cringe, dude,” Kang-Woo mentioned.

Classic Si-Hun; he was an expert at saying cringe lines.

“Haha,” Si-Hun laughed brightly.

He looked satisfied as if all his weights had been unloaded off his shoulders. Kang-Woo lightly smacked the laughing Si-Hun on the back of his head.

“Why are you laughing, dumbass?” he asked.

Si-Hun was truly a dumbass. He was thanking the one who had used him after turning him into a puppet while laughing. Kang-Woo wondered if Si-Hun even had a brain in that head of his.

“Seriously...” Kang-Woo slurred.

Si-Hun was so idiotic that Kang-Woo was boiling with rage.

“You’ve tamed him well. He doesn’t bite his master even without a leash on him,” said Tai Wuji as he looked at Si-Hun in contempt.

Kang-Woo said in a low tone, “So you were the one who restored Si-Hun’s memories.”

“That’s right.” Tai Wuji smirked. “How utterly pathetic. I did not expect the one to inherit the Heavenly Dragon’s martial arts to be this moroni—”

“Hey,” Kang-Woo said as he turned to Tai Wuji. “I get it, so shut up for a second.”

Tai Wuji frowned. Kang-Woo turned his head back to Si-Hun. He gathered some of the blood spewing from his severed right arm with his left hand and poured it into Si-Hun’s mouth.

“Hyung.”

“You shut up too.”

After administering first aid with the Authority of Regeneration, Kang-Woo lightly patted Si-Hun’s body. A golden barrier enveloped him, and he was lowered slowly to the ground.

“Haaa,” Kang-Woo sighed deeply.

He closed his eyes. For some reason, his irritation was through the roof, to the point that he could barely handle it.

“I mean, I was gonna kill you anyway even without this, but...” Kang-Woo slowly opened his eyes to reveal black scleras, yellow irises, and horizontal black pupils filled with fury. He turned to Tai Wuji and remarked, “You just gave me another reason to tear you apart.”

Tai Wuji raised his sword in silence. Kang-Woo could feel unconcealable anxiety in Tai Wuji’s eyes. Kang-Woo took a deep breath to the point that his lungs could burst. And...

“Raaaaaaaaaaaaahhh!!!”

The king’s roar shook the earth. Angels, demons, demonic beasts, and humans all held their breaths.

Kang-Woo bent forward and shot explosively toward Tai Wuji.

“Hup.” Tai Wuji positioned his sword forward.

Kang-Woo ended up right in front of Tai Wuji in the blink of an eye and extended his remaining left arm. Tai Wuji raised the sword to cut off the left arm.

“Move,” Kang-Woo spoke in Soul Speech.

The words imbued with power distorted the laws of physics, allowing Kang-Woo to overcome space itself and move behind Tai Wuji. He grabbed Tai Wuji’s neck, raised his right leg high, and swung it down as hard as he could.

Boom—!!!

The repelling force caused Tai Wuji and Kang-Woo to shoot toward the sky. They passed the blue sky and the clouds as the scenery changed rapidly. In the end, they went past the atmosphere and reached outer space. The two monsters ended up in a dark void where no life could survive.

“Kurgh!” Tai Wuji turned and swung his sword, cutting off Kang-Woo’s left hand that was holding him by the back of the neck. Red blood poured out from both of Kang-Woo’s arm stumps, but they stayed floating in space due to the absence of gravity.

“Did you think anything would change if you came all the way here?” Tai Wuji snorted.

Any normal life form would die as soon as they reached outer space, but Tai Wuji was a god, one who possessed Top-rank Deific Essence, no less. It was possible to breathe, speak, and move freely in outer space with the power of Divinity.

“Something does change,” Kang-Woo replied.

He looked up and saw only darkness. He tried to take a deep breath but naturally, nothing entered his lungs. Having his breathing cut off was slightly unpleasant, but such trivial issues did not matter.

“Here...”

The corners of Kang-Woo’s mouth rose. No, they did not just rise; the corners ripped, and his cheeks tore open as if they had been sliced with a knife. Sharp teeth of a beast protruded out from between them.

“I can go as wild as I like.”

Kang-Woo cackled. The red blood flowing out from his arm stumps slowly turned black.

“Haaa.” Kang-Woo exhaled what remained of the air in his lungs and then chanted, “First Door, open.”