

M. in Hell 401

Chapter 401 - Moth

The Door opened and out flooded the black sea. Immense power surged into Oh Kang-Woo. He felt like he was about to burst like a balloon overfilled with air.

Squelch.

His skin turned into black mucus and then returned to normal. Kang-Woo crouched and then stomped on thin air.

Boom!

A black wave spread out spherically. He was no longer emitting radiant golden energy; he was surrounded by darkness as thick as the abyss.

“You’ve finally shown your true colors,” Tai Wuji remarked lowly.

No way could sound be transmitted in outer space, but Tai Wuji could communicate by infusing his voice with Qi. He gripped his sword tighter and stared at the monster enveloped in darkness.

‘That’s... the monster of the Demonic Sea’s true form.’

He had a feeling that he could understand what the monster meant by opening the Doors. He got goosebumps when the monster’s body had turned into mucus momentarily.

“Fuuu,” Tai Wuji breathed in by using his Qi infused with Divinity.

He was not breathing in oxygen, but its effect was similar. He got fired up as he used Void Steps to move in outer space.

Swish!

Tai Wuji disappeared in a flash and appeared in front of Kang-Woo as if he had teleported.

‘Heavenly Dragon Rampage.’

Tai Wuji’s dark blue sword split into thousands of blades that filled the entirety of outer space.

Slash! Slash—!

Kang-Woo was split in half, and those halves were split in half. The dragon’s rampage continued to slash Kang-Woo’s body over and over again.

Squelch.

“What are you doing?”

However, Kang-Woo’s fragmented body turned into black mucus. He extended his arm which had returned to its normal shape, and a giant mouth appeared from the hand. Tai Wuji frowned.

“You know it’s pointless,” remarked Kang-Woo as he swung the extended arm horizontally, the giant mouth aiming for Tai Wuji.

Tai Wuji reflexively raised his sword, clashing with the monster’s teeth.

Although there was no sound, the shockwave was powerful enough to bend space. Intense heat was created from the clashing of monsters who had surpassed the limits of living organisms. Tai Wuji grimaced.

'It's uncomfortable.'

He had experienced many battles since the era of myths, but he had never fought in outer space before. Not only were there any footholds, but his limbs were not moving as he wanted them to, making the battle extremely uncomfortable.

'Moreover...'

Tai Wuji narrowed his eyes. He was able to make do with everything else, but as a martial artist, not being able to hear sound became a fatal disadvantage.

'I need to change locations.'

Tai Wuji turned upside down and leaped toward Aernor to go back to where they had been. He fell toward the ground like a meteor.

“Where do you think you’re going?” Kang-Woo stomped his feet.

Black mucus spread out like a net and fired at Tai Wuji.

“Kuh,” Tai Wuji grunted.

He gave up on getting to the ground due to the speed at which the black mucus was following him and turned around. He raised his sword.

Fwoosh!

The sword blazing with dark blue flames split the black mucus.

Splash!

Tai Wuji could hear the black mucus being slashed because they had entered the atmosphere. He gave up on going any lower and turned to face Kang-Woo.

Bam!

Thick clouds underneath him evaporated along with the sound of compressed air bursting. Tai Wuji raised his sword and severed the monster’s head and limbs, stabbed his heart, and carved out his organs.

Squelch.

“I told you... It’s... useless,” the monster said as he smiled.

Tai Wuji snorted as he looked at the monster. “I wouldn’t say it’s useless.” He continued as if mocking the monster, “I wonder for how long you can keep up that immortality?”

Although he had failed to damage the monster’s mind using Kim Si-Hun, it did not change the fact that the monster’s immortality was unstable.

Kang-Woo remained silent. “You...” He smiled. “You knew, huh?”

Tai Wuji seemed to have figured out what the weakness of the Doors was. The more Kang-Woo died, the more his sanity was devoured by the Demonic Sea. Tai Wuji knew that Kang-Woo's control over the Demonic Sea would fall apart and that he would disappear into the black sea.

"Haaah," Kang-Woo exhaled heatedly. His heart beat rapidly along with sparks of thrill spreading all over him. "Yeah, this is more like it."

If Tai Wuji thought that Kang-Woo's immortality was infinite, he would just give up on the fight since fighting an immortal enemy that never died was pointless. However, if Tai Wuji knew the limits of Kang-Woo's immortality and that it did not last forever...

'He wouldn't give up.'

Kang-Woo spread his arms out and split himself in half from the tip of his chin to his groin. Black mucus filled with sharp teeth and wide-open mouths burst out from the split areas and shot toward Tai Wuji.

"Fuuu," Tai Wuji inhaled.

He sheathed his sword and crouched. He pulled his butt back, widened his stance, and concentrated his Qi into a single point.

'I'll end it with this attack.'

"Heavenly Dragon Extinction," he muttered as he unsheathed his sword.

Dark blue light split the world in half. A wave of dark blue light swept along the path of the slash like a tsunami. The dark blue light in the form of a dragon devoured the black mucus.

Fwoosh!

The black mucus engulfed by the dark blue dragon turned to ash and dissipated in the air.

"I will kill you..." Tai Wuji charged while stepping on thin air and stabbed the monster who had split in half. He glared at the monster coldly and continued, "... Until you can no longer come back to life."

"Heh." The monster smiled as he was covered in dark blue flames and extended his arms which were smoking from the cycle of melting and regenerating. "I'm ready when you are."

Tai Wuji frowned at the monster's answer.

He looked up to see the monster's expression; he was smiling ecstatically while being burned alive by the flames as if he were eager to die.

'He's just like... a moth to a flame.'

"Crazy bastard," Tai Wuji muttered again.

There was no other way to describe this monster than that. He frowned in displeasure. He could not be any more disgusted by the monster.

Slash!!

Tai Wuji cut the monster again and slashed before the black mucus could regain its form.

Slash! Slash! Slash—!

He cut the monster over and over again to the point that he lost count of how many times he had swung his sword. The monster ended up in little pieces.

Squelch.

The monster no longer had the appearance of a human. The fragmented black mucus wriggled, and each piece of the monster's body trembled intermittently.

"A-Aaaahh," Kang-Woo groaned.

He was being cut apart before he could even get a hold of himself. He could only repeat the cycle of being slashed and regenerating. His remaining sanity was getting devoured by the Demonic Sea.

'Just as I thought...' Kang-Woo stared fixedly at Tai Wuji. *'He's strong.'*

The despair that he was facing was insanely powerful. Kang-Woo was dying over and over again without even having a chance to counterattack. At this rate, he would end up being devoured by the Demonic Sea without being able to do anything.

"In that case, how about it?"

Kang-Woo heard a voice; it was the same voice that he heard every time he opened the Doors. The voice was sweet enough to melt his brain. His desire surged to fill the space of his devoured sanity. A powerful sense of hunger set him alight. It felt like he was on fire; no, he felt like he had become fire itself. Kang-Woo smirked.

'Think.'

He needed to think of a way to defeat that despair. He needed a way to surpass his limits. He continued to think while being torn apart by Tai Wuji's sword. He couldn't face Tai Wuji with normal means that entailed no risks whatsoever.

'In that case, I'll have to take risks.'

Kang-Woo needed to jump into the flames burning him alive of his own accord. If he didn't he wouldn't be able to reach Tai Wuji. He spread out his arms and then clasped his hands together.

'Chaos.'

Burst.

A massive explosion that devoured even sound itself engulfed the surroundings.

"Kurgh!!" Tai Wuji grunted as he was swept into the explosion.

The sword that he had instinctively swung had slightly melted from the heat. If he had not swung his sword to block the explosion, it would have been himself that melted. Chills ran down Tai Wuji's back. He looked up at the monster.

"Argh, kurgh, urgh!" Kang-Woo grunted in pain while clenching his chest.

Tai Wuji had been the one attacked, but Kang-Woo's condition was worse off. He had used a Chaos skill while a Door was open; his control over the Demonic Sea that had already been running out had bottomed out.

"Haaa, haaa," Kang-Woo panted heavily.

His vision was blurring. His sanity had reached its limit and was screaming at him. The black sea was engulfing him whole.

"Cough!" Kang-Woo coughed up blood.

"You..." Tai Wuji glared at Kang-Woo. "I see." He nodded as if he understood. "You're like a moth."

He could tell from the monster's condition how much risk the monster had shouldered with that last attack. The monster had caused that explosion while resolving himself to die. He had jumped into the flames without hesitation.

'Crazy bastard.'

It was not something a sane person could do. Not even Tai Wuji, who had survived countless battles, was able to perform such suicide attacks so nonchalantly.

"Hah," Kang-Woo chuckled.

'A moth, huh?'

He recalled what Lilith had said to him angrily long ago.

"You know, my king... You're like a moth to a flame."

Tai Wuji happened to say the same thing.

"Pfft," Kang-Woo couldn't help but laugh.

He slowly raised his hand— no, what he raised could not even be called a hand. His body, which had been devoured by the Demonic Sea, had turned into something like black clay kneaded hideously.

"You're... wrong about that." Kang-Woo shook his head. He was nothing like a moth to a flame. That sounded like he was living the the sake of dying. "I'm not doing this shit to die, motherfucker."

He was not living or taking risks for the sake of dying. He had never once risked his life while desiring to die.

Kang-Woo placed the hand that he had raised on his heart.

"In that case, how about it?"

Kang-Woo heard the voice again. He closed his eyes. He was not jumping into the flames to die.

'I'm... jumping into the flames to become fire itself.'

Fire so colossal that it could burn the entire world whole.

“How about you open another Door?” the voice continued.

Kang-Woo smiled and answered the voice without hesitation, “Sure.”

‘Let’s open another one.’

The second Door opened.

Riiing.

[The System has identified an error.]

[An error has been detected in Player Oh Kang-Woo’s Deific Name.]

[The new Deific Name has been identified.]

[Granting Player Oh Kang-Woo with the Deific Name ‘Voracity.’]

[Promoting Deific Essence from Intermediate-rank to Top-rank.]

Chapter 402 - Flames of Voracity

“What the...”

Tai Wuji’s expression froze. Something changed once the monster, who had barely been able to maintain his form, placed his hand over his heart.

‘What happened?’

Tai Wuji stared at the monster incomprehensibly. Once he stopped attacking, the monster slowly returned to his human form. Nothing had changed about him, at least in outer appearance.

Tai Wuji gulped. His teeth were clacking and his hands and feet were trembling. He could barely even breathe properly. He was sure that nothing had changed; he had been one-sidedly driving the monster into a corner, but for some reason, he was feeling extremely scared.

“Haaa, haaa,” Tai Wuji panted heavily.

He bit his lip while tightly gripping his slightly melted sword blazing with dark blue flames. He lowered his stance anxiously. He thought that his emotions had completely dried up, but at this moment, he couldn’t breathe as if he was a frog that had come face to face with a snake.

“Hah, aaaahh.” The monster raised his head.

The clear sounds of bones cracking rang out from his body. The monster touched himself all over and then smiled.

“The second one is manageable too, I guess. I wonder if it’s because my Deific Essence rose?” Oh Kang-Woo mumbled.

Tai Wuji could not understand what the monster meant by the second one, but he was able to understand what he said after.

‘His Deific Essence... rose?’

That was impossible. Tai Wuji shook his head as if there was no way. The monster had eaten the Constellation of Fear and stolen his Deific Essence. However, he had done nothing this time that could have raised his Deific Essence. If his Deific Essence rose despite that...

'It means that he...'

It was only possible if the monster was of the same rank as him or beyond that.

Tai Wuji bit his lip anxiously. He focused Qi into his eyes and scanned the monster. "Hup!"

Tai Wuji opened his eyes widely. After seeing into the monster's body, he could see a black sea as endless as the abyss.

'No, that's not the important part.'

Tai Wuji trembled and gulped in pallor. The black sea was not the issue. He could see the monster scrunched up at the center of the black sea, and he was burning— no, he was not burning.

'He's... becoming fire itself.'

The monster was becoming a voracious fire that could burn down the entire world.

"What in the..." Tai Wuji could not finish his sentence.

His thought process paused due to the sense of fear running down his back. Just then, the monster's mouth split open.

"Now then, let's get back to it." The monster smiled.

Tai Wuji hurriedly raised his sword and enveloped the blade in dark blue flames.

Crack.

Black fragments of bone flew out from the monster's body along with the chilling sounds of bones breaking. Countless bone fragments enveloped the surroundings like a tsunami.

"This is..."

Tai Wuji looked around with shaking eyes. Black bone fragments covered everything around them. He felt like he was inside a giant beast's stomach. He gripped his sword tighter.

Clack, clack.

Each fragment was about the size of an index finger. Seeing countless bone fragments wriggling as if they were alive was unimaginably grotesque. It felt like they were surrounded by millions of cockroaches.

"This time... you won't be... able to run," someone stammered.

Tai Wuji turned to the source of the voice and saw a mouth.

"What the f..." Tai Wuji swore unconsciously.

The monster was covered in black bone fragments. White teeth could be seen between the wriggling bone fragments. It looked as if the monster had become one giant mouth.

Chills ran down Tai Wuji's back. He quickly adjusted his grip on his sword.

“Heavenly Dragon...”

He raised the sword over his head and focused his entire Qi on his sword. The condensed sword energy lengthened by a few hundred meters and clashed with the bone fragments around him.

Crackle—!!

Sparks flew from the fragments. Tai Wuji condensed the sword energy even further into a single point; the sword contained enough power to split the entire continent in half.

He shouted while swinging the sword down, “Flash!”

Rumble—!

The slash containing immense power traveled in a straight line, vaporizing the smoke storming around them due to the intense heat. Even space itself was distorted. It was truly apt to call the attack an absolute slash that was able to cut anything in the world, and that very attack with everything Tai Wuji had was shot at the monster who had turned into a giant mouth.

And then... It disappeared.

“What?”

Tai Wuji’s eyes widened. Something incomprehensible had happened before his eyes. His sword slash that not even Demon God Bauli had been able to take lightly back in the era of myths had disappeared as if it had evaporated. It was as if it had never been used in the first place.

“No... No,” Tai Wuji mumbled as he trembled uncontrollably. He continued in a voice filled with fear, “It didn’t... disappear.”

Tai Wuji stared at the monster with shaking eyes.

Crunch, munch.

The monster was chewing in delight. Tai Wuji’s face was dyed in shock.

“He... ate it?”

How could someone eat the attack of Heavenly Dragon Tai Wuji, one of the gods of the Triad along with Gaia and Seraph, and an attack performed with all his might, no less?

“How could...”

Chills ran all over Tai Wuji’s body. He panted heavily as he stared at the monster.

“*Munch, gulp.*” The monster in the form of a giant mouth turned back into a human. He smiled and pounded on his stomach as if he had enjoyed a lavish feast.

“*Burp.* Dayum, that was delicious. I love this refined taste of Qi so much.”

Kang-Woo licked his lips with a grin.

Tai Wuji was not able to close his mouth from the shock. “You... bastard. How did you...”

He had seen the monster eating the Constellation of Fear whole, but this was a different issue entirely. Eating a physical body and eating an attack made of pure energy were completely different. All forms of power were fundamentally physical; if the monster was able to eat power such as

Heavenly Dragon Flash that could distort space itself, it meant that there was practically no way to kill this monster.

“What the fuck?!” Tai Wuji swung his sword like a madman, launching a mass of dark blue sword energies at Kang-Woo.

“Nice,” said the monster. His body split in half from his collarbone area to his belly button, and from there came out a giant mouth. “After the main dish comes dessert.”

The dozens of condensed sword energies disappeared into the monster’s mouth.

“Kurgh!” Tai Wuji grunted.

He leaped toward the monster and stabbed him directly with the dark blue sword.

Crunch.

Half of the Heavenly Dragon Sword, the blade that Tai Wuji had used since the era of myths, was eaten by the monster. Tai Wuji’s face was dyed in shock.

“Impossible...”

He lost strength in his legs and his arms fell to his sides lifelessly. The fact that the monster didn’t die was not the issue; the issue was that attacking the monster itself was meaningless. Whatever attack he poured at the monster, they simply disappeared into the monster’s mouth.

Tai Wuji turned around in fear and began to run away.

“Shit! Shit!”

However, there was nowhere for him to go since he was surrounded by black bone fragments. The monster slowly walked toward him.

“What’s wrong? I’m sure there’s more you can do,” said the monster in a voice filled with madness, like the growls of a starved beast.

His eyes were blazing with desire, and he was staring at Tai Wuji as if criticizing and reproaching him.

“Fight harder. Drive me deeper into a corner. Go past your limits and try to trample me until the very end.”

The monster was staring at Tai Wuji in desperation. Tai Wuji clenched the broken Heavenly Dragon Sword and bit his lip. The words of the monster gave him goosebumps rather than humiliation. He was scared.

“Haaa,” the monster sighed deeply and shook his head in disappointment.

He slowly raised his hand, and black bone fragments gathered on top of it.

‘That’s...’

Tai Wuji’s eyes widened. Each of the bone fragments gathered on top of the monster’s hand contained power. Tai Wuji knew what those powers were.

'Demon... Authorities?'

Authorities that only select demons possessed were imbued within each of the bone fragments.

"How..."

How could one possess that many Authorities?

Crack, crunch.

The bone fragments collided on top of the monster's hand. Tai Wuji gulped.

'There are at least over six hundred of them.'

It was an absurd number. The hundreds of bone fragments each imbued with a different Authority gathered while colliding violently against each other. And then...

Fwoosh—!

The united Authorities turned into flames; the voracious fire that Tai Wuji had seen with the monster that could engulf the entire world whole.

'Flames of Voracity.'

Those words popped up in Tai Wuji's head unbeknownst to himself. He believed that there was no better name for flames that could set the entire world ablaze. The Flames of Voracity burning on top of the monster's hand traveled up his arm and then spread throughout his body. Just like that, the monster became one with the flames of gold and black.

Tai Wuji stepped backward. The monster had become fire itself, and only the monster's teeth remained within it.

'I can't win.'

Tai Wuji could not see himself winning no matter how many times he constructed an image of that monster with his transcendent senses.

'In that case...'

Tai Wuji loosened his grip on his sword.

"Huuu," he exhaled deeply and bit his lip.

He could no longer fight or run.

'I have no choice.'

He had sworn to himself that he would never use it even if he were to die, but there was no way to face that monster other than to become a monster himself.

"You wanted to fight some more, correct?" Tai Wuji asked coldly.

The monster, who had been walking toward Tai Wuji, stopped in his tracks and stared at Tai Wuji in anticipation.

“I will fulfill your wish,” said Tai Wuji as he placed his hand over his chest and closed his eyes.

He knew that there was no other choice, but he was still reluctant to do it. He was about to abandon the martial arts that he had trained his whole life and become a monster.

‘In the end...’

Tai Wuji slowly opened his eyes again and raised his head in sorrow. He had walked down the path of martial arts for ages, but he had not managed to reach the end of the path.

‘Kim Si-Hun, was it?’

Tai Wuji wondered if that human would be able to overcome the insurmountable wall that he had been stuck on and reach the end of the path of martial arts. He had no idea, but it was now pointless to wonder. After all, the moment he made this choice, he would never be able to reach it for the rest of his life.

Tai Wuji let go of his sword. “Unleash.”

Rumble—!!!

The Demon God’s Deific Essence was unleashed, and immense demonic energy stormed around Tai Wuji’s body.

Crack, crunch!

Goat horns appeared on Tai Wuji’s forehead, bat wings sprouted from his back, and a reptilian tail grew from above his butt.

“Hurgh, argh.” Tai Wuji trembled from the immense power surging from himself. “A-Aaaahh.”

Irresistible pleasure ran down his back and throughout the rest of his body.

“Why did I...”

Why had he denied this power for all this time? He had been turning his back on such great power because of his moronic resolution of wanting to reach the end of the path of martial arts.

“Haha... Hahahahaha!!” Tai Wuji burst into laughter while grabbing his stomach.

He was boiling with immense desire, and the world around him felt different. He felt so much joy that he had no idea why he had not become a demon this entire time.

“Die!” Tai Wuji shouted while clenching his fist ecstatically.

He had a feeling that he would be able to defeat the inexplicable monster in front of him with this immense power.

Boom!!

Tai Wuji leaped forward, and the bone fragments that he stepped on exploded. He punched the monster in the face, and then...

Crunch.

“Huh?”

Tai Wuji’s arm disappeared. He looked down blankly at his arm which had become a stump from the elbow down. His mind was a mess after experiencing something incomprehensible.

“*Munch, munch...* Huh?” The monster who had been chewing spat and frowned in displeasure. “The hell?”

The monster extended his arm and aggressively grabbed Tai Wuji’s horn while narrowing his eyes.

“Why did the taste change?”

‘Did he go bad?’

Chapter 403 - The Battle Is Already Over

“What the hell did you do?” Oh Kang-Woo asked as he frowned.

Tai Wuji tasted completely different from before. He had tasted as refined as the finest cuisine, but his energy suddenly turned crude and disorderly. Rather than change, it was more apt to say it had deteriorated.

Kang-Woo covered his face with his hands and pushed the blazing flames away to see.

“The hell?” He frowned after seeing what Tai Wuji had become. He saw bat wings on his back and goat horns on his forehead. Kang-Woo expressed in disappointment, “... No way. Did you become a demon?”

Kang-Woo gritted his teeth aggressively.

“What the f...” he cursed as he stomped his feet in dissatisfaction. “Why... Why did you become a demon, you dumbass?!”

Kang-Woo had been satiating himself within the priceless pleasure and madness brought by the great battle, but...

“If you became a demon...”

If Tai Wuji put down his sword and reduced himself to a demon...

“The battle is already over.”

Kang-Woo stared at Tai Wuji in disappointment— no, despair.

‘Just a little longer... If we had fought for just a little longer...’

Kang-Woo looked down at himself. He was covered in the Flames of Voracity, the gold and black fire created through the merging of every single Authority that he had gained through the eating of demons.

‘I would’ve been able to perfect it.’

The flames covering Kang-Woo were getting weaker. A feeling of vanity swept over him like a wet blanket. He looked down in disappointment at the Flames of Voracity, which had been reduced to a small ember.

The Authority of Blaze used by Prince Mammon could not even be compared to the Flames of Voracity, made through the merging of all the Authorities within the Demonic Sea, sacred power, and demonic energy. Not even the explosion that he had created through the Chaos skill could be compared to it.

Kang-Woo stared in disappointment as the flames powerful enough to burn the entire world to a crisp disappeared from his fingertips. He clicked his tongue.

'Well, at the very least...'

Kang-Woo lightly waved his hand, and it turned into gold and black flames.

'It hasn't disappeared completely.'

He was able to mimic the Flames of Voracity to an extent.

'This is good enough for now.'

Flames of this level were more than enough to face Tai Wuji; no, he honestly did not need the Flames of Voracity to face Tai Wuji anymore.

'With the way he is now...'

Kang-Woo was confident that he would be able to defeat him even with the second Door closed. That was how weak Tai Wuji felt to him.

"What... the..." Tai Wuji stared at Kang-Woo incomprehensibly as his eyes shook.

"Why...?"

He had surely become stronger; he was surging with power that had rushed into him through the unleashing of the Demon God's Deific Essence. He now possessed enough power to vaporize an entire star.

'So why...'

Why was he still no match for that monster? Tai Wuji trembled and bit his lip as he clenched what remained of his other arm after the monster ate it.

"What do you mean... the battle is already over?" Tai Wuji asked while glaring at Kang-Woo.

The battle was not over yet. He had gained power incomparable to what he had before unleashing the Deific Essence. He should be the one saying that the battle was already over.

"I mean exactly what I said," Kang-Woo answered uninterestedly. He stared at Tai Wuji, who had become a demon, deplorably and continued, "You were stronger before you turned into a demon."

Before turning into a demon, Tai Wuji had been magnificent and thrill-inducing. However...

"Now, you're nothing but a strong dumbass."

"Bullshit!"

Boom!

Tai Wuji aggressively stomped his feet. Suffocating power poured out from him; it was the power that Demon God Bauli had granted him. The Transcendent-rank Deific Essence only possessed by Titans, beings that have existed since before the era of myths, was now in his hands.

'A strong dumbass, you say?'

That was impossible. Tai Wuji refused to believe it was possible since he had to let go of the martial arts that he had spent all his life training to gain this power. He gritted his teeth and extended his remaining arm toward Kang-Woo.

“That’s impossible!!”

Rumble!!

A storm of black waves, formed by the immense demonic energy Tai Wuji had earned through unleashing the Demon God’s Deific Essence, shot at Kang-Woo. The wave of demonic energy was so powerful that it could vaporize the entire continent of Aernor. However...

“What’s so impossible about it, man?” Kang-Woo mentioned.

Poof.

The wave of demonic energy vanished without a trace. It brought about no change whatsoever as if one had poured a bucket of water into an ocean.

Kang-Woo spat in dissatisfaction. “See? It tastes like shit.”

Tai Wuji’s expression dyed in shock. The surging sense of vanity drained him of his strength. He collapsed down to his knees and lowered his head with blank eyes.

“Just... why?”

“Do you still not understand?” Kang-Woo stared at Tai Wuji in disdain. “Did you seriously think you were beating me because you were strong?”

Kang-Woo smirked and shook his head. The reason why he had not been able to surpass Tai Wuji was not just because Tai Wuji was strong. If that was the only reason, Kang-Woo would have won the moment he opened the first Door of the Demonic Sea since the power contained by the Demonic Sea was nearly infinite.

'But...'

He was not able to surpass Tai Wuji; he had lost so miserably that he had no choice but to open the second Door while risking his life. In the first place, Tai Wuji was not able to defeat him because he was strong.

“No, there’s no way that’s the case,” Kang-Woo remarked.

Tai Wuji had only been able to overpower Kang-Woo so one-sidedly because the realm of martial arts that he reached through endless training had been so incredibly high.

'I barely know martial arts.'

He had learned a little from Kim Si-Hun, but what he had learned was barely the tip of the iceberg. Compared to Tai Wuji's knowledge of martial arts, it was fair to say that Kang-Woo knew nothing about martial arts.

'Even if I dedicate my life to martial arts...'

He would never be able to reach the realm that Tai Wuji had reached; that was how impressive Tai Wuji had been.

"But you threw all that away?" Kang-Woo sighed deeply and clicked his tongue.

The moment Tai Wuji abandoned his sword and became a demon, he practically challenged Kang-Woo to a battle of pure strength using demonic energy.

'And...'

There was no way Kang-Woo would lose in such a battle.

"Fucking dumbass," Kang-Woo said in condemnation with no intent to mock Tai Wuji in any way.

Tai Wuji looked down at himself blankly in shock. He had gained this power by giving up everything that he had accumulated until now.

'But...'

He had lost the hope of being able to defeat that monster exactly because he had given everything up. His head was burning up, and he was having trouble breathing due to the horrible sense of regret. His vision blurred as he was filled with uncontrollable fury.

"Shut... up."

Tai Wuji stood up. He did not acknowledge— no, could not acknowledge his blunder. He had no choice but to become a monster himself to face that monster. There had been no other way than to let go of his sword.

"Let us see how long you can pretend to be in leisure," said Tai Wuji as he stood up while fluttering his bat wings.

Kang-Woo chuckled. "What, are you going so far as to fabricate your memories now?"

There was no way Tai Wuji wouldn't know that the gap between them had widened after he became a demon. Kang-Woo could easily guess why Tai Wuji was not acknowledging the fact that he had made the irreversible blunder of abandoning his martial arts.

"Sick bastard," Kang-Woo glared at Tai Wuji in contempt and shook his head in disappointment. "You just fabricate any memory that you don't like, huh?"

Tai Wuji was just consoling himself that he was not wrong and that he had made the right choice. It could not be any more pathetic. Tai Wuji's shamelessness disgusted Kang-Woo.

Riiing.

[I mean, you're not one to talk—]

“I’m disappointed in you, Tai Wuji.”

Kang-Woo clenched his fists.

Fwoosh.

The Flames of Voracity covered his fists; the gold and black flames burned fiercely as if they wanted to eat some more.

“How can one who barely knows himself ever hope to know his enemies?” Kang-Woo said as if criticizing Tai Wuji.

Riiing.

[Like I said, you’re not one to t—]

Bam!

Kang-Woo stomped his feet and swung his fist, and the Flames of Voracity extended in the direction of his swing.

“Grrrrrrrrr!!” Tai Wuji growled like a beast and raised his arm.

Rumble—!!

He burst with demonic energy while protecting himself with his bat wings.

Fwoosh!

“Kurgh!”

However, the surging demonic energy was all too easily devoured by the Flames of Voracity and disappeared.

‘What an insane technique...!’ Tai Wuji thought.

He stepped back in shock. The flames that the monster had made were monstrous beyond belief. Attacks were meaningless before those flames because they devoured everything in their path. It was as useless as shooting a water gun at a giant tsunami.

The Flames of Voracity grew larger after eating the demonic energy and continued to aim for Tai Wuji.

‘To get through those flames and kill that monster...’

There was no other way than to attack with power that the Flames of Voracity could not absorb all at once.

‘But how?’

Tai Wuji had not been able to overcome those flames with either the strongest sword attack he had or the power he had acquired after unleashing the Demon God’s Deific Essence.

‘There isn’t a way.’

Tai Wuji lowered his head. However much he thought, he could not think of a way to kill that monster. Just then...

Wriggle.

“Huh?”

Tai Wuji’s eyes widened. He could feel something squirming on his chest.

‘Could it be...?’

His eyes shone as he took out the object with his one remaining arm.

“A-Aaaahh.”

In his hand was a black lump squirming as if it was alive. The lump was absorbing the energy that was fiercely reverberating around them.

“The Key of the Demonic Sea...”

The Demon God’s legacy was on the verge of being completed. Tai Wuji stared at the pulsing black lump with shaking eyes. A ray of hope lit up his eyes.

‘If it’s the Demon God’s legacy... With this black lump that contains Demon God Bauli’s power... I’ll be able to kill that monster.’

Tai Wuji grasped the black lump while smiling ecstatically.

“Ha... Hahahahahaha!” he burst into laughter.

He could feel the overwhelming power from the Demon God’s legacy. Power even greater than what he had obtained after unleashing the Demon God’s Deific Essence flowed into him. It was so massive that he felt unbeatable. He had a feeling that he would be able to extinguish that monster’s flames with ease.

Tai Wuji tried to pull in the black lump while bursting into laughter, but...

“Huh?”

It was not budging. The black lump was squirming in his hand as if it was unhappy. Immense pressure spread his fingers apart.

“W-Wait!”

The Demon God’s legacy escaped Tai Wuji’s grasp and moved on its own in the air.

“N-No...”

The black lump flew toward Kang-Woo like a dog running to its owner. Tai Wuji’s face dyed with despair.

“Nooooooooo!!!”

Kang-Woo caught the black lump that flew toward him. It squirmed in Kang-Woo’s hand happily like a dog begging to be pet by its owner.

“The hell is this thing?” Kang-Woo tilted his head.

Chapter 404 - Stay In There Forever

“The hell is this thing?” Oh Kang-Woo tilted his head as he stared at the black lump in his hand.

It was squirming happily like a dog begging to be petted by its owner.

‘Huh?’

It felt extremely familiar for some reason as if he had found the missing half of a precious item. Kang-Woo narrowed his eyes as he stared at the black lump in his hand.

“Wh-Why...”

Tai Wuji collapsed to his knees in despair. After experiencing a moment of hope, the despair that came after was soul-crushing.

“How many goddamn times are you gonna say that?” Kang-Woo asked.

‘Are you trying to fill the page space?’

“Why do you have so many goddamn things to ask? Just accept things as they are.”

Kang-Woo smirked and walked toward Tai Wuji. Seeing the state he was in, extending the fight any longer seemed meaningless.

‘I’m not completely satisfied, but...’

Kang-Woo smiled as he recalled the sense of despair and vanity he felt when he first met Tai Wuji. The sparks of pleasure that he felt could not be compared to anything else.

‘I wonder how many more times I’ll be able to experience something like this?’

Kang-Woo smiled bitterly. It had been an extremely long time since he had faced his limits. He faced the despairingly insurmountable wall and then surpassed it like he had always done. The pleasure that came with surpassing his limits was so sweet that he felt like his brain was melting.

“Haaa,” Kang-Woo sighed.

His mind was unexpectedly clear despite opening two Doors.

‘What in the world is happening to me?’

Kang-Woo had no idea; he had long since become an unprecedented being. He was growing at an unfathomable rate. Not even he knew what would be waiting for him at the end of the road.

“Well, I guess it doesn’t matter.”

He didn’t care much about what would be waiting for him at the end. He would just move forward like he had always done.

“Let’s end this,” Kang-Woo stated as he slowly walked toward Tai Wuji, who had his head lowered while on his knees.

He raised his arm that burned fiercely with the Flames of Voracity. Just then...

Wriggle.

The black lump on his hand squirmed. It slowly moved toward the black ring on his right hand. Then, Kang-Woo's field of vision turned black.

'What the hell?'

He suddenly saw an endless black sea and was pulled into it.

Wriggle—!

The sea pulsed, and the world distorted. Something was trying to crawl out from the deepest part of the black sea.

[Finally, finally!]

The sea split in half. The first thing that Kang-Woo saw was the giant eye that spanned a kilometer, which he had seen before. Dozens of such eyes within pulsating darkness appeared from the split sea. It was a Titan so large that no words could describe its size.

'You're...'

Kang-Woo stared at the Titan with deeply sunken eyes.

The Titan shouted ecstatically, [The key that will free me has finally appeared!]

The Titan smiled and extended his arm toward Kang-Woo. Once he did, the ring on Kang-Woo's right hand was pulled out. The Key of the Demonic Sea combined with the black lump and slowly fell toward the Titan.

[Kehe, kahahahahahaha!!]

The Demon God's crazed laughter shook the Demonic Sea. Kang-Woo slowly looked down at the massive Titan and smiled.

"You're trying to crawl out again? I'm surprised you don't get tired of it," Kang-Woo remarked mockingly.

The Demon God blinked; just that was enough to cause massive waves in the sea.

[He... Hehehe. Cursed puppet. Do you have any idea how long the time of prophecy has been delayed because of you?]

"How should I fucking know? Forget that." Kang-Woo pointed at the falling Key of the Demonic Sea while staring at the Demon God. "Why don't you return what's mine first?"

[Hah! The Key of the Demonic Sea is yours, you say?]

The Demon God feigned laughter.

Boom!

The Demon God stomped his feet, shaking the entire Demonic Sea.

[I am the true owner of this key!]

The Demon God burst into laughter as he looked at the ring slowly falling toward him. His hand was getting closer to reaching the Key of the Demonic Sea.

[Finally... I can get out of the Abyss of the Demonic Sea.] He had been imprisoned here for far too long. He cackled as he stared at Kang-Woo. [I will make good use of your body.]

“Jesus, man.” Kang-Woo frowned. He had felt this when he met the Demon God for the first time, but... “Why are each of your lines so goddamn shitty?”

‘Are you from the DC Universe?’

“And you call yourself a final boss? Huh? Try to at least sound badass. There’s no tension in the story whatsoever because you’re being such a dickhead. Come up with some kind of cool persona like Tai Wuji. Barking like a mutt does nothing for you.”

Kang-Woo looked down at the Demon God in dissatisfaction. Having the character that was supposed to be the mastermind spouting lame lines like that completely killed the tension in the air.

The Demon God was lost for words. Rage filled his massive eyes. [A mere puppet dares—]

“There you go with the crap lines again.”

[Your leisurely attitude ends now!]

“Jesus Christ. You never learn.”

Kang-Woo sighed in disappointment. The Demon God extended his arm toward the Key of the Demonic Sea while gritting his teeth.

[Come!]

His thunderous voice shook the black sea. Kang-Woo looked down at him in silence and then slowly extended his arm as well.

Fwoosh.

The Flames of Voracity burned on his hand, and then the Key of the Demonic Sea that had been falling toward the Demon God stopped.

[What?]

The Demon God’s eyes shook. The black lump peeked out of the Key of the Demonic Sea and looked around like a lost puppy looking for its owner. It looked back and forth at Kang-Woo and the Demon God.

[Over here! I am your master!] the Demon God shouted.

Kang-Woo smiled faintly and waved around the Flames of Voracity as if he were waving food at a dog.

Wriggle. The black lump twisted around in confusion.

“What are you thinking so hard about?” Kang-Woo said as if persuading the black lump. “I am the master of this Demonic Sea.”

Wriggle. The black lump twisted as if it were tilting its head.

[Bull! I am the master of the Demonic Sea!]

“Big words for a dickhead who’s stuck here and can’t even get out.” Kang-Woo snickered.

Darkness was wrapped around the Demon God’s legs like tentacles to prevent him from getting out through the split sea. He was still imprisoned in the Abyss and was unable to get out of the Demonic Sea.

“I’m sure you can see— Well, I guess you can’t see since you don’t have eyes. Regardless, you can tell who the master of this sea is, can’t you?” Kang-Woo asked the black lump.

Wriggle. The black lump moved up and down as if it were nodding.

It slipped back into the ring and slowly floated up toward Kang-Woo.

[N-No!] the Demon God shouted anxiously. He glared at Kang-Woo in fury. [How dare a mere puppet proclaim to be the master of the Demonic Sea?!]

“What~?” Kang-Woo said while putting one hand behind his ear. “I can’t hear you because you’re stuck so far down in the Abyss like a fucking loser~!”

[You son of a bitch!!]

Rumble!!

The Demon God twisted and turned like a madman, which Kang-Woo laughed at as he watched.

The Demon God shouted while glaring at Kang-Woo, [I am your creator! I made you, and I raised you!]

“Wait, what? Then... You were my mom?”

[That is not what I meant!!]

“Mom.” Kang-Woo looked down at the Demon God with trembling eyes. “I wanted to meet you so much, Mom.”

[Son of a bitch!! I told you that is not what I meant!!]

“Oh, sorry. I guess you’re my dad, right?”

[Aaarrggghhh!!] The Demon God pounded on his chest in frustration.

He raised his colossal fist and swung it at Kang-Woo. It contained power so unfathomable that it could easily destroy a world. Kang-Woo did not dodge it— no, there was no need for him to.

Whoosh!

The fist stopped right before it hit Kang-Woo. Kang-Woo smirked as he looked at the fist that was at least a few kilometers wide.

“What? You’re not gonna kill me? If you’re so mad, why don’t you just do it?”

[U-Urghh.]

“Pfft! Bwehehehehe!!” Kang-Woo burst into laughter while gripping his stomach.
“Yeah, I guess you can’t. After all, if I die and my body is annihilated, you’ll be stuck here forever.”

The Demon God remained silent.

“Oh, but you’ll still be stuck here forever even if you don’t kill me.”

[Shut... up.]

“What a dipshit. If I were in your shoes, I would have punched me at least once out of irritation.”

[I told you... to shut up.]

“Well, I guess I’d die if I got hit by you even once. Why don’t you just kill me? Hm? Do you not even have a shred of pride? Just close your eyes and swing your fist! And then, you can just rot in here for the rest of your life.”

[I told you to shut up!!] the Demon God shouted crazily as he stared daggers at Kang-Woo. [You... are nothing!!] He clenched his fists tightly as he twisted around to get out of the Abyss. [You are nothing without me!!!]

“I could say the same to you.”

[Do you seriously believe you’d be able to maintain control of the Demonic Sea without me?!]

“What does that matter? You’ll never be getting out of here anyway.”

[You are nothing but my puppet!!]

Kang-Woo licked his lips.

‘A puppet, huh?’

That could be true. Based on what the Demon God said, he seemed to have created him for real. He did not know how it happened since he had no memories of the past. However, he knew that he was a doll created by the Demon God. It was likely because of him that Kang-Woo fell into Hell and possessed the Authority of Predation from the beginning.

“So? So what? Should I say shit like *“I-I’ve been a puppet all along?!”* while bawling my eyes out for you? Or does something like *“Th-That’s impossible!”* while falling into despair feel better for you? Fuck you. Who the hell do you think you are?”

Kang-Woo slowly raised his hand, and the Key of the Demonic Sea enveloped by the Demon God’s legacy was put on his right middle finger again.

“I am the master of the Demonic Sea.”

Fwoosh! Flames surged around them.

“I am not your puppet, you son of a bitch.”

The Flames of Voracity swallowed up the Demonic Sea to grow bigger.

“And I... am... Iron M— Oh Kang-Woo.”

[What?]

“Sorry, it was a bit embarrassing to say.”

Kang-Woo raised his hand with the Key of the Demonic Sea on it.

[The Demon God’s legacy has been absorbed into the Key of the Demonic Sea.]

[All functions of the ‘Key of the Demonic Sea’ have been unlocked.]

[The ‘Key of the Demonic Sea’ has chosen the ‘God of Voracity’ as its owner!]

Rumble—!!

The Demonic Sea shook. An unfathomable amount of power surged into Kang-Woo.

Fwoosh!

Kang-Woo was set ablaze with golden flames.

[N-No...]

The Demon God reached out his arm, but the Abyss that stuck itself to his legs did not let him go.

[Aaarrggghh!!] The Demon God’s screams echoed throughout the Demonic Sea.

The split sea slowly began to close.

“Stop bothering to try to come out.” Kang-Woo snickered as he looked down at the struggling Demon God. “Just stay in the forever.”

Kang-Woo snapped his finger. Flames of Voracity poured out of the Key of the Demonic Sea. They devoured the sea and created a long road, and Kang-Woo followed the road out of the Demonic Sea.

Chapter 405 - To My King

Fwoosh!

The nightmarish voracious flames powerful enough to engulf the entire world blazed.

“Why...” Tai Wuji’s eyes shook.

Oh Kang-Woo suddenly turned into a giant black sphere the moment the Demon God’s legacy stuck to him. Tai Wuji had no idea what was happening inside, but there was one thing he knew.

“Why... do I feel... his energy from...”

Tai Wuji could vividly feel from within the black sphere Demon God Bauli, his former enemy but now master to whom he had pledged his soul, imprisoned within an endless abyss. He could hear him struggling and roaring. Tai Wuji’s face paled from imagining an absurd possibility.

‘It’s as if... he’s been devoured by the monster.’

The Demon God was bellowing miserably within the monster.

“Why... Why... Why...?” Tai Wuji continued to ask.

He had no idea what the monster was, why the Demon God, whom he had been trying to revive, was inside the monster, and why the Demon God was unable to get out. The clashing of the information flowing into his brain and the logic that was already in there made him nauseous.

Crack.

And then, the black sphere slowly split open. Tai Wuji looked up with shining eyes, hoping that it was his master who had come out of the sphere.

“What a persistent fellow,” said the one who had come out of the sphere.

However, what came out of the sphere was not hope but bottomless despair.

“A-Aaaahh.” Tai Wuji trembled with his mouth agape.

He hoped that all of this was a lie and just a bad dream.

“Now, then.” Kang-Woo placed his hand on the trembling Tai Wuji’s shoulder. “Time to eat the rest.”

Split.

Kang-Woo widened his mouth and ate Tai Wuji whole before his hopes could be fulfilled.

Crunch.

Chilling sounds of bones breaking echoed.

“Haaa, haaa!” Cha Yeon-Joo panted heavily.

“Skree!”

A demonic beast that looked like a giant scorpion charged toward Yeon-Joo and shot its tail at her. However, the scorpion did not have a stinger at the end of its tail, but something that looked like a crocodile’s mouth.

“Guh...!” Yeon-Joo quickly twisted her body.

Snap!

The demonic beast’s tail just grazed her and slammed into the ground. A large hole formed on the ground as if it had been dug with an excavator.

“Shit!” Yeon-Joo cursed.

Clatter!

Chains poured out from her bracelets and coiled around the scorpion’s tail. She grabbed the chains like a certain spider hero and jumped behind the demonic beast.

‘Energy Drain.’

The demonic beast’s life force was rapidly absorbed through the chains. As long as she stayed like this, the demonic beast would become a dry corpse after some time.

“Grrrrrkk!”

“Kyaaaah!”

However, the demonic beast’s struggles were fiercer than Yeon-Joo had expected. The demonic beast violently swung its tail while trying to aim for Yeon-Joo with the crocodile mouth at the end of its tail. Yeon-Joo was flung around like the striking head of a flail.

“Urpp!” She covered her mouth with her hand to stop herself from vomiting.

She was slowly losing her grip on the chains.

‘Not good—’

Just as warning signals rang out inside her head, someone caught her.

“Bal...rog?”

It was Balrog, who was currently in the form of a tall brown-haired young man to hide his demon appearance. He reached for the chains before answering Yeon-Joo.

“Hey, wait—”

Energy Drain did not distinguish between friend and foe. If Balrog touched the chains, his life force would also be drained. However, he ignored Yeon-Joo’s warning and grabbed the chains.

Boom!

Balrog stomped his feet aggressively and pulled the chains.

“Skreeeee!”

The scorpion which was about a dozen meters tall was dragged toward Balrog. Balrog lowered his stance and raised his fist.

Ker-thunk.

A black gauntlet formed on his hand by summoning the Overlord Armor, and he swung down his fist like an ax.

Smash—!!

The giant scorpion’s head was crushed with just one blow. Green fluids splattered all over the place.

“Are you okay?” Balrog let go of the chains and turned toward Yeon-Joo.

Yeon-Joo’s mouth refused to close after witnessing such absurd strength.

“Skreee!”

More demonic beasts charged toward them. Balrog lightly twisted and swung his arm. Just that light motion was enough to mangle the demonic beasts and blow them back.

“Uhhh... They were called ancient demonic beasts, right? How did they even get here?” Yeon-Joo asked cautiously.

Balrog clicked his tongue and shook his head. “This isn’t good.”

“What do you mean?”

“Kim Si-Hun and Gaia’s incarnation have been incapacitated. The king’s woman has left the battlefield as well.”

“Wh-What?” Yeon-Joo’s eyes widened. She asked as her voice and lips trembled, “Are they... dead?”

“No, they’re not.” Balrog shook his head, at which Yeon-Joo expressed relief. Balrog continued in irritation, “But we’ve been put in a bad spot because of that.”

Leaving Gaia’s incarnation aside, Kim Si-Hun’s absence severely impacted their combat ability. There weren’t many people who were able to face ancient demonic beasts and there were far too many regular demonic beasts. Most importantly...

“The Constellation of Nightmares has joined the battle.”

The participation of the boy with blank eyes, who didn’t seem to have any use in combat, had completely flipped the momentum of the battle. Not only could the Constellation of Nightmares control demonic beasts, but he could also cast powerful buffs on them like Han Seol-Ah.

In addition to that, Halcyon and Echidna had also left the formation to retrieve Layla, who was injured during her battle against Proserpine, and Kim Si-Hun, who was left in the middle of the battlefield while enveloped in a golden barrier.

“The line would have been broken long ago if not for the angels,” Balrog said calmly.

However, the contents of his words were not things to take lightly. It meant that Balrog was here because he was going from place to place to hold the collapsing line as best as he could.

“W-Will we be able to hold out, then?” Yeon-Joo asked anxiously after hearing the gist of the situation.

Balrog shook his head. “I don’t know. One thing I know for sure is that we have to hold the line until the king returns.”

Balrog charged forward, and Yeon-Joo quickly followed behind him.

“Gaaaaaahhh!”

“Arghhh!”

“H-Help me!”

Screams echoed from all around them. A swarm of demonic beasts was massacring the humans and angels.

Bash! Crush!

“Roaaaar!”

Balrog arrived at the collapsing line and charged forward while wiping out demonic beasts with Overlord Armor gauntlets on both arms fuming like a steam engine. Chains spread out like a net and blocked the demonic beasts' escape route.

[Skreeeeeeeeeeee!]

Just then, a giant snake rose as the ground shook and split. Ouroboros, a twenty-meter-long snake glared at Balrog as it flicked its snakelike tongue.

“Step back,” Balrog said calmly to Yeon-Joo and raised his fists.

[Grrrrr.] Ouroboros stared at Balrog with its slit pupils. It stammered, [You... face me... dare... by yourself?]

Its sentence structure was also a little off. Although it possessed intelligence because it was an ancient demonic beast, it did not seem to possess full intelligence.

[A human... impertinent... you are.]

Ouroboros twisted its giant body and swung its thick tail.

Boom!

Balrog blocked the tail but was pushed back, lines forming on the ground as his feet dragged. However, that was only for a moment; Balrog grabbed Ouroboros's tail with both arms and smirked.

“I never imagined I would hear such a thing from a mere demonic beast.”

Crack!

Balrog's hands dug into the flesh of Ouroboros's tail.

[Graaaaaaaahh!]

“A demonic beast should...”

Boom!

Balrog stomped his feet and lifted Ouroboros with his absurd strength.

“Stick to roaring like a beast!”

Rumble—!!

Balrog flung the twenty-meter snake away.

[Skreeeeee!]

Ouroboros writhed in pain.

Fwoosh!

Just then, a giant demonic beast covered in flames jumped out from behind the collapsed Ouroboros. It was Bul-Kathos, a fire demonic beast referred to as the final form of demonic beasts like the Hell Hound and Cerberus. The giant lion glared at Balrog as its mane made of fire fluttered.

Balrog remained silent.

He was facing two ancient demonic beasts. Not only that, but they were many times stronger than usual thanks to receiving the power of the Constellation of Nightmares. It would be difficult to face even one, but now there were two of them.

‘This won’t be easy.’

That was an understatement; Balrog would not be able to win. He slowly walked forward.

“H-Hey! I-It’s dangerous!” Yeon-Joo shouted.

Balrog continued to walk forward firmly. He knew that he was no match for them both, but he walked forward regardless; no, he needed to.

Balrog saw his king’s familiar back. He turned around to see Yeon-Joo shouting at him. He could see his past self— no, his current self in her.

‘Was this... how you felt?’

If they failed to hold this line, the demonic beasts would invade the heart of their formation in an instant. There were the collapsed Gaia and Kim Si-Hun there, and likely Lilith as well.

“Kehehe,” Balrog laughed softly.

He had never felt this way before. He turned forward again to see Ouroboros and Bul-Kathos glaring at him. Just seeing those two was enough to make him hold his breath. He was filled with anxiety and fear. However...

‘Just like the king always does...’

He walked forward, toward the two ancient demonic beasts.

Ker-thunk.

The gauntlets on his arms slowly grew bigger. The sounds of cogs turning echoed within him. He raised his hand and touched his pendant. His human skin disappeared and he grew bigger, bursting muscles taking the place of his weak human body. Goat horns and bat wings grew from him as well.

“Hurghhh.”

Balrog was in his demon form for only a moment. Black armor began to wrap around him. They covered his chest, shoulders, stomach, thighs, and legs one by one. Metallic sounds echoed from between the gaps in the armor. Cogwheels filled the joint areas of the armor as if Balrog was wearing a robotic suit.

Pshhh—!

White vapor burst out from the gaps in the armor as the cogwheels turned quickly.

“Victory...” Balrog slowly clenched his fist. “To my king.”

Chapter 406 - I’ll Show You A Whole New World

Pshhhhh—!

White vapor burst out from the gaps in the armor. Balrog clenched his fists as his entire body surged with power. He lowered his stance and pulled one leg back.

Boom—!!

Balrog shot forward like a cannon toward the forehead of Bul-Kathos, the lion with a flaming mane. He twisted in midair, pulled his right fist as far back as possible, and punched with all his might.

Bash—!

[Grrrrr!]

Bul-Kathos scrunched up while growling in pain after getting hit right on the forehead. Flames poured out from its mane as it shook its head. The Overlord Armor covering Balrog glowed red hot.

“Kurgh,” Balrog grunted as he retreated.

His skin under the Overlord Armor was melting from the intense heat. Intense pain as if he was being seared on a hot iron spread throughout his body. Ouroboros’s giant tail whipped him before he even had a chance to get a hold of himself.

“Hup!”

Crash!

Balrog reflexively raised his arms to block the tail. His feet dragged along the ground while leaving marks.

[Weren’t... human... you,] Ouroboros stammered.

[Why has a demon sided with the humans?] Bul-Kathos spoke clearly.

“I am simply following my king’s command,” Balrog answered concisely as he retook a battle stance.

[King?]

[Who... King?]

Bul-Kathos and Ouroboros tilted their heads in wonder. Balrog pulled his right arm back without answering them.

Ker-thunk.

The sound of gears interlocking with each other rang. White vapor fumed from Balrog’s elbow.

“Sky...”

Bam!

He stomped his feet and punched forward.

“Breaker.”

Whoosh!

The white vapor compressed into a sphere and shot out like a cannon. Bul-Kathos opened its mouth widely and let out a flame breath like a dragon would. The vapor and the flames clashed.

Tsssss—!

Intense heat swept everything around them. The heat and vapor mixed to create a heat storm, melting everything in the area.

“Arghhh!”

“Skreee!”

A massive hole was formed in the eye of the heat storm. Humans, angels, and demonic beasts all ran away to not get caught in the storm.

“Kurgh.” Balrog scrunched up, having difficulty handling the heat as well.

[Hisssss!]

Ouroboros widened its giant mouth and charged at Balrog, purple liquid dripping from its sharp fangs.

“Kuh!”

Balrog quickly grabbed Ouroboros’s fangs and stomped on its bottom mouth to prevent it from swallowing him.

Tsssss—!

“Gurgh, argh.”

Ouroboros’s powerful venom melted the black armor around Balrog’s hands, exposing his skin. He screamed as horrible pain traveled up from his hands.

“A-Aaaarrrrrgggghhhh!”

He focused the power of the Overlord Armor on his arms, and the melting gauntlets were restored. Cracks formed on Ouroboros’s fangs.

[How... my fangs... did you...] Ouroboros stammered in bewilderment.

Balrog roared as his eyes lit up, “Raaaaaaaaahhh!!”

He pulled out Ouroboros’s fangs and purple venom poured out like a fountain. He quickly leaped away and tumbled to the ground.

[Skreeeeeeeee!!] Ouroboros screamed.

“Haaa, haaa.” Balrog stood up while panting heavily as the Overlord Armor on his hands melted and regenerated repeatedly. “Kurgh...”

Balrog staggered as his vision blurred; he felt his strength leaving his body. The Overlord Armor was manifested through his blood. The more the armor was damaged, the more blood he lost to restore it.

“Huff, huff,” Balrog caught his breath to calm down his trembling.

He had pulled out Ouroboros’s fangs, but there was one more enemy to worry about. Bul-Kathos was glaring at him while growling ferociously.

‘This isn’t good.’

He had known that facing two ancient demonic beasts would be difficult, but it felt nearly impossible after actually facing them. There was no way that he would be able to face them both at once without taking risks.

'I have to... put my life on the line.'

Just like what his king always did. Balrog chuckled as he recalled himself getting angry at his king, who constantly risked his life without a second thought.

'... I can see now that you had no choice.'

Kang-Woo had not risked his life for the sake of dying; he had simply done it because there was no other choice.

"... Hah," Balrog laughed unbeknownst to himself.

He was trembling and was having a hard time breathing. Fear crawled down his back and spread throughout his whole body. This was likely what his king had felt all this time while fighting.

'I thought I knew him well.'

Balrog had known nothing. The weight on his king's shoulders now felt unfathomable to him.

"Kehehehehe," he chuckled softly.

The fear sending chills all over him did not feel bad at all. He felt as if he was getting closer to his king.

"Fuuu."

Balrog took a deep breath and slowly brought his right arm toward his mouth. And then...

Crunch.

He bit into his forearm as hard as he could, black blood pouring out like a fountain.

"Come to me."

The spewing blood flowed down the black armor.

"Devour my flesh and become an unbreakable shield."

Clank, clank, clank, clank.

The sound of clanging metal echoed. The Overlord Armor grew bigger as it absorbed Balrog's blood. Black armor wrapped around the black armor. Balrog was situated within a giant armor as if he were piloting a giant robot. The armor grew over ten meters tall.

Rumble. Boom.

A dense metallic sound echoed with each step Balrog took. He lowered his stance as he spread out his arms.

Pshhhhhhh—!!

An enormous amount of vapor burst out of the armor and spread like fog. Balrog stood up and leaped fiercely toward the ancient demonic beasts.

Boooooom—!

“Raaaaaaaahhh!” Balrog roared as he charged forward.

Now that he was wearing the giant Overlord Armor, he was the same size as the ancient demonic beasts.

[Grrrrr!]

[Hisssss!]

Bul-Kathos and Ouroboros cried out fiercely. Ouroboros swung its giant tail like a whip.

Snatch!

[Hiss?]

Balrog caught the tail and pulled the Giant Ouroboros toward him while leaning back.

“Haaaaah!”

Balrog twisted his body as he swung Ouroboros around. Bul-Kathos quickly dodged the swing.

“Kehehe, my main weapon was a whip until a while ago,” Balrog laughed softly as he added strength to his arm and flicked his wrist.

Smash!

Ouroboros bounced and snapped Bul-Kathos like a whip.

[Roaaaaaar!]

Bul-Kathos collided with the giant Ouroboros and was flung into the air. It tumbled on the ground aggressively as it screamed in pain.

“Haaaaah!”

Balrog smashed Ouroboros down on Bul-Kathos repeatedly. Hazy smoke rose as the two ancient demonic beasts’ bodies made contact.

[Skreeeeeeee!!] Ouroboros screamed as it burned from Bul-Kathos’s flames.

The impact from being smashed into the ground as well as its flesh burning was difficult to endure even for a powerful demonic beast that had existed since ancient times.

Wham!

Balrog raised his arms over his head and smashed down Ouroboros with all his might. The two ancient demonic beasts screamed as they got entangled.

“Huff, huff, huff,” Balrog panted heavily. His vision was distorting and his body was screaming at him. “Hah.”

However, he could still laugh. He couldn’t care less about the state he was in.

[Demon, surrender, forgive!]

[Graaaaahh!]

Balrog ran toward the two shouting ancient demonic beasts. He grabbed Ouroboros by the neck with one hand and Bul-Kathos by the tail with the other and raised them.

[What... are you—]

“I’ll show you a whole new world.”

[W-Wai—]

Balrog shoved Ouroboros’s head up Bul-Kathos’s ass.

[Gaaaaaahhh!!]

Crazed screams echoed. Ouroboros’s head melted from Bul-Kathos’s heat, and Bul-Kathos was poisoned by Ouroboros’s venom that was pouring out from its broken fangs.

“Kahahahahaha!” Balrog burst into laughter as he trampled on the screaming entangled ancient demonic beasts. He suddenly staggered and crouched as he was laughing. “Kurgh.”

‘I guess I’ve reached my limit.’

He had used far too much blood to draw out the power of Overlord Armor to its maximum output. He looked down at his right forearm that he had bitten and saw that there was no blood pouring out of it, showing just how much blood he had used up.

Balrog looked up. He had dealt with Ouroboros and Bul-Kathos, but there were still an uncountable number of demonic beasts left. Not only that, but the Constellation of Nightmares remained.

“Kurgh, urgh.”

Clank, clank. Creak.

The Overlord Armor was quickly reducing in size as if it were a machine powering down. There was no other way to bring out the Overlord Armor again but to rip out his heart to make more blood.

“Kehehe. That doesn’t sound too bad either,” Balrog remarked as he placed his hand over his heart.

If he could shine brightly like a radiant fire for just a moment by ripping out his heart, it would be worth it.

Step.

Someone’s quiet steps echoed.

“What doesn’t sound too bad, you moron?”

Balrog heard a familiar voice. He was filled with thrill and delight.

“My... king.”

Balrog looked at Kang-Woo with shaking eyes. Kang-Woo slowly walked toward him and lightly smacked him on the back of the head.

“How dare you try to die without my permission?”

“Kehehe. I simply followed your example, my king.”

Kang-Woo frowned in displeasure. “I’ve never been as reckless as you, dammit.”

“Kahahaha! I could easily name ten instances off the top of my head that I had seen with my own eyes.”

Forget ten, he had seen it hundreds— no, thousands of times.

“Tsk,” Kang-Woo clicked his tongue.

‘This son of a bitch sure fought flashily.’

Balrog had taken off the human skin that had been prepared for him and had fought with all his might. Kang-Woo slowly extended his hand. Golden light poured out from his hand and wrapped around Balrog. It probably looked to others like he was finishing off a collapsed demon.

‘This probably won’t be enough.’

This would be nowhere near enough to clean up Balrog’s massive shit. He needed something so attention-grabbing that would blow away all thoughts about Balrog from the minds of the humans and angels.

Kang-Woo slowly walked past Balrog and toward the middle of the battlefield. He stared at the corpses of the two ancient demonic beasts with deeply sunken eyes. No, he stared past the corpses and at the entire battlefield.

Clang! Clang!

“Arghhh!”

“H-Help me!”

“Die, damn demonic beasts!!”

Kang-Woo could hear the ringing sounds of metal, explosions, and people’s screams. He could smell blood and the excrement flowing out from the corpses. He could see angels and humans fighting against the demonic beasts.

The elites of the continent that had followed Kim Si-Hun into the battlefield were stricken with fear as they were torn apart and eaten alive by the demonic beasts. The wings of angels who had jumped into the battlefield with nothing but revenge on their minds were drenched with the black blood of demonic beasts. The enormous number of demonic beasts were endlessly craving slaughter while walking over the corpses of fellow demonic beasts.

Madness surged, rampaged, and entangled.

“Fuuu.” Kang-Woo took a deep breath.

He lightly jumped up and slowly floated up into the air.

‘Now...’

It was time to end the war.

[Skreeeeeeeee!]

Giant demonic beasts charged at the floating Kang-Woo, causing the ground to shake. Kang-Woo slowly closed his eyes.

Whoooooom—!!

Golden light radiant enough to light the entire world illuminated the entire bloodied battlefield.

“Ah...”

People stopped fighting and looked up at the light.

Clatter.

The weapons that they dropped fell to the ground.

“This light...”

The angels, who had been so blinded by revenge that they were charging at the demonic beasts with no regard for their own lives, also looked up blankly at the light. All eyes on the battlefield were focused on Kang-Woo.

Kang-Woo slowly raised his arm and stated, “Those tainted by darkness...” He lowered the arm that he raised. “Receive the judgment of light.”

The demonic beasts charging toward Kang-Woo were suddenly covered by great flames the moment that Kang-Woo lowered his arm. Hundreds of thousands of demonic beasts were reduced to ashes before they even had a chance to scream.

“A-Aaaahh,” the people expressed.

This was the advent of the God of Splendor, which would be recorded in the history of Aernor for all of time.

Chapter 407 - It's Only Thanks To You That I Managed To Come This Far

The war against the Constellations of Evil came to an end and the one who had become the most famous after it was without a doubt Oh Kang-Woo. He was a hero who had appeared on the battlefield while it had been plunging into despair. He was enveloped in radiant light and had eradicated the entire demonic beast army in an instant.

The people of the continent worshiped Kang-Woo as the God of Splendor. After finding out that he and Kim Si-Hun were brothers, their fame skyrocketed. Even a church had been formed to worship the two of them like gods.

“O Messiah.”

“O Savior of Light.”

The people bowed in the direction of Arnan's imperial palace that Kang-Woo was residing in, at least three times a day. Kang-Woo sighed as he stared at his devotees praying while gathered around the palace.

"... Shit." He frowned while groaning.

'This wasn't my intention.'

Si-Hun needed to become the target of worship as per his original plan, but Kang-Woo ended up becoming more famous instead.

"Haaa," Kang-Woo sighed.

He had no choice but to do something to divert the people's attention from Balrog to himself, but it had worked a little too well. He had made a mistake.

'I got too worked up.'

He had gotten a bit too enraged after seeing Balrog on the verge of death and used way more power than necessary to kill the demonic beasts.

"The plan has gone a bit awry," Kang-Woo mumbled while leaning on his chair.

In the first place, he had appointed Si-Hun as the savior instead of himself to fool the high elves, who were able to detect all that was demonic.

'But I don't think I'd get caught now.'

Considering the abilities that he had gained after awakening as the God of Splendor, even a high elf might not be able to figure out his true identity.

'Even so...'

It was wise to take as little risks as possible. It would not end with just his plan failing if the manifested high elf found out his identity.

Kang-Woo stood up from the chair and looked at the mirror on the table. He could see his familiar face, one with sharp eyes and a ferocious appearance.

"..." He remained silent and closed his eyes.

'I wonder... how long I can remain human for?'

Kang-Woo placed his hand on his chest while smiling bitterly and felt the black sea within his heart.

'I didn't suffer side effects from opening the Doors this time.'

Nothing happened after he closed the Doors of the Ten Thousand Demon Core; he did not feel pain as if his soul was being torn apart or pressure as if his entire body was being squashed.

"Shit."

He could not welcome the fact that there had been no side effects. It was like feeling no pain when one smashed down a hammer on their finger. After all, the fact that there were no side effects meant that something important within him had broken.

“Ngh.”

Kang-Woo grabbed his forehead. Side effects occurred after opening the Doors because he forcibly pushed the immense power flooding into himself back into the Ten Thousand Demon Core. However, there had been no side effects this time.

‘I’m being eaten away by the Demonic Sea.’

It was even possible that he was becoming one with the Demonic Sea.

“I should leave it for the absolute worst-case scenarios.”

Whatever the case, it was true that his body was changing in unexpected ways. Although it couldn’t be helped if the situation called for it, he should refrain from opening the Doors as much as possible from now on.

‘Well, I can face most enemies even without opening the Doors now.’

Kang-Woo lightly snapped his finger.

Fwoosh.

Gold and black flames blazed from the end of his finger. It was the Flames of Voracity. He was not able to turn his entire body into flames like he had been able to while the Doors were open, but being able to use it was more than enough.

It was so powerful that the Authority of Blaze felt like child’s play. In terms of power, only the Chaos skills would be able to hold up to it, but using the Flames of Voracity was nowhere near as risky as the Chaos skills.

‘The only downside is that it stimulates my desire.’

However, Kang-Woo was more than able to handle the risk since he was confident in being able to keep his desire in check.

Someone knocked on the door.

“Come in,” Kang-Woo said.

Creak. Han Seol-Ah entered the room. She carefully approached Kang-Woo, embraced him, and then kissed him.

“How are Si-Hun and Layla?” Kang-Woo asked.

“They still haven’t woken up yet.”

“Same for Balrog?”

“Balrog woke up a little while ago.”

Kang-Woo nodded. Si-Hun and Layla had been the most gravely injured in the war. He had healed them using the Authority of Regeneration, but they were not regaining consciousness because their injuries were mostly internal.

“That aside, what happened with Proserpine? I heard you chased after her,” Kang-Woo asked.

He had heard that the Constellation of Lust had run away after injuring Layla. Since the Constellation of Nightmares had also run away once Kang-Woo arrived, two Constellations had survived the war. Although they wouldn’t take action in particular since their leader Tai Wuji had died, Kang-Woo did not like the fact that risk factors remained.

“Oh...” Seol-Ah lowered her head with a dark expression. “I’m sorry, Kang-Woo. I chased after her, but she managed to escape.”

“Really?” Kang-Woo clicked his tongue.

It was unfortunate, but it was already amazing enough that they had forced a Constellation of Evil to run away.

“Umm... Kang-Woo.” Seol-Ah hugged Kang-Woo tighter.

“Hm?”

“I have something to ask you.”

“What is it?”

“Have you met Proserpine privately after our first encounter with her?”

“...?” Kang-Woo tilted his head in wonder, unable to understand why she was asking such a question. “No, I haven’t met her since the encounter at the imperial palace.”

“Hehe,” Seol-Ah giggled after hearing his answer. She leaned her head on Kang-Woo's shoulder. “That’s a relief.”

“Hm? What is?”

“Nothing at all,” Seol-Ah said as she let go of Kang-Woo. “I’ll be getting back to Layla and Si-Hun.”

“Okay. Right, how is Iris doing?”

“She hasn’t regained consciousness either.”

“Tsk. Okay.”

Iris had been unconscious for almost a month but was showing no signs of waking up.

‘Is the high elf even gonna manifest?’

Kang-Woo was slightly anxious, but there was nothing else that he could do besides waiting.

“In that case, I’ll see you in the evening, Kang-Woo.”

Seol-Ah put her arms around Kang-Woo’s neck and kissed him. Kang-Woo could feel her tongue entering his mouth.

“Mmph,” Seol-Ah moaned.

Kang-Woo gulped. Seol-Ah felt far sexier than usual.

“Hehe. I love you, Kang-Woo.”

“Me too.”

Seol-Ah turned around while slightly flushed. Kang-Woo walked with her out to the door and went back into his room.

‘That aside...’

Kang-Woo raised his right hand, extended his fingers, and stared at the ring on his right middle finger.

“What’s with this thing?”

He saw the message window saying that all powers of the Key of the Demonic Sea had been unlocked after the Demon God’s legacy was absorbed into it as well as that it had chosen him as its owner.

‘But why have there been no changes whatsoever? It doesn’t feel like it weakened in any way at least.’

In terms of its capacity, it had gotten better; however, it was nowhere near as grand as what the message window had mentioned about its powers being fully unlocked. Kang-Woo looked down at the Key of the Demonic Sea and then back up. There was something else that he needed to do.

“I should get to digesting him,” he muttered while softly pounding his chest.

Things had been so hectic after the war that he had no time to digest Tai Wuji. Kang-Woo bent down and placed his hand on the ground. Golden light spread out from his hand and lit up the room.

“Alright.”

Kang-Woo walked toward the center of the room after creating a barrier and closed his eyes. He could feel Tai Wuji’s energy within the Demonic Sea. He focused his mind and controlled the demonic energy.

Riiing.

[You have acquired Top-rank Deific Essence.]

[Raising the level cap.]

[Level cap has risen from 93 to 100.]

[You have reached the Eleventh Awakening and obtained a new Trait.]

“Hell yeah.” Kang-Woo smiled as he looked at the message window in front of him.

‘Though I was hoping for it to rise a bit more.’

He thought absorbing Top-rank Deific Essence would get him up to his Twelfth Awakening, but unfortunately not.

‘At least I managed to get a new Trait.’

Traits were extremely useful for his growth. Kang-Woo checked the new message windows in anticipation.

[You have obtained the new Trait ‘Chaos Domination.’]

[Your control over Chaos skills has risen.]

“Hmm.” Kang-Woo tilted his head while stroking his chin.

It seemed to be an advanced version of his Ninth Awakening Trait ‘Chaos Control.’

“It’s good, but...”

He didn’t feel good about it. He would not have much need for Chaos skills anymore now that he had the Flames of Voracity. It boasted great power, but it came at a corresponding risk.

“Well, I’ll still give it a try.”

Kang-Woo drew out both demonic energy and sacred power and forcibly mixed the opposite powers.

Rumble—!

Just the mixing of the two powers caused everything around him to shake due to the immense power. Kang-Woo’s eyes shone as he was forming Chaos.

‘The recoil has lessened.’

The two energies that used to collide against each other crazily were now heeding his control. Kang-Woo smiled widely as he stared at the gray energy. Just then...

Fwoosh!

“What the...”

The Flames of Voracity appeared all of a sudden and began to devour the gray energy like a starved beast that had found its prey. The voracious flames swallowed the Chaos energy whole.

‘What’s with this thing?’

Kang-Woo frowned as he tried to control the Flames of Voracity, but it did not budge for some reason.

Fwoosh—!!!

“Kurgh!”

The flames blazed ferociously once they finished eating the Chaos energy. The fire grew so massive that not even Kang-Woo was able to handle it. He reflexively extended his arm.

Rumble—!!

The barrier made with the power of the Demonic Sea shook. The Flames of Voracity that had eaten the Chaos energy floated around him as if it were alive.

Riiing.

[You have learned 'Chaos - Blaze', an Intermediate-rank Chaos skill.]

A blue window appeared in front of Kang-Woo. And then...

[All conditions of 'Road to becoming a Demon God' have been fulfilled.]

"Hah," Kang-Woo chuckled.

Rather than thinking "*finally*", he was thinking "*just like that?*" instead. The Flames of Voracity floating around him was quivering as if it was giggling.

"... Well, regardless." Kang-Woo smiled.

He had finally completed the *Road to becoming a Demon God* quest.

'It took so god damn long.'

He had obtained many things throughout the quest, but it had taken an ungodly amount of time to fulfill all the conditions.

"Dayum, at least it's finally over."

Kang-Woo smiled as he waited for the reward that he would receive. A message window appeared moments later.

[The 'Road to becoming a Demon God' quest has been completed, but Player Oh Kang-Woo cannot obtain the Demon God's Deific Essence because he already possesses the Deific Essence of 'Voracity'.]

"What the fuck?"

After the time it had taken and the shit he had gone through to fulfill every single condition, he wouldn't be getting any rewards since he had already acquired Deific Essence?

"Motherf..." Kang-Woo grabbed the back of his neck as he boiled with rage. "Fucking garbage System! Just you wait, motherfucker. I know you expressed emotions before. You have an ego, don't you? In that case, I'm gonna come find you, got it? You can hear me, can't you? I said I'm gonna come find you. I don't know what the fuck the providence of the universe and the System are, but I'm gonna twist your head into a god damn question mark, you son of a bitch."

Kang-Woo threatened the System in the same way that he had pledged to do a very long time ago.

"You're a fucking useless, moronic, sorry excuse for a Sys—"

[Player Oh Kang-Woo has not been properly rewarded for completing the 'Road to Becoming a Demon God' quest. Hence, an alternate reward will be given.]

"—tem, but it's true that you've helped me a lot thus far. I wouldn't have been able to gain these Traits and levels if not for the System. I'm... always grateful to you. It's only thanks to you that I managed to come this far."

Kang-Woo smiled warmly as he stared at the blue message window.

Chapter 408 - Why Is It Cute?

[...]

A blue message window with just ellipses appeared as if the System was lost for words. Oh Kang-Woo coughed as he stared at the message window. A question popped up in his head.

'What in the world is this System?'

Gods like Gaia had referred to the System as the *providence*. The Gaia System that had sealed Kang-Woo's power when he first came back to Earth was a portion of the *providence* granted to Gaia, the chief god of Earth.

'In other words...'

A mere portion of the providence had been enough to seal the Demonic Sea within him.

'I mean, it's different from back then.'

That was an understatement; Kang-Woo was growing at an explosive rate ever since he had arrived on Earth, and the Demonic Sea was also expanding endlessly. The height that he had reached back in Hell could not even be compared to his current self.

'But even so...'

It did not change the fact that the Demonic Sea had been sealed with just a small portion of that providence.

[Calculating an alternate reward...]

'Just seeing these message windows makes it seem like some sort of machine, but...'

Kang-Woo stared at the message window that was filling up a bar like the loading screen of a game. It was not expressing any emotion at the moment, but...

'It has an ego.'

The System could think and make decisions, but it felt more like artificial intelligence rather than a real person.

'I wonder what it could be?'

Kang-Woo continued to think. Gaia had said that beings of other worlds were not able to meddle with Earth due to the Gaia System's protection.

'That's not the only thing it can do.'

Protection was merely but a portion of the providence's capabilities. The providence created Players and granted them power. It restricted the actions of gods and prevented them from recklessly intervening in the physical world. Its power was not only restricted to Earth and Aernor; it spanned throughout the entire universe and kept all worlds in check.

'As if... it's a law that someone made intentionally.'

[Excessive prying into the 'Law of Titans' has been detected.]

[Additional prying will result in the demotion of Deific Essence.]

A message window popped up along with a familiar bell chime. It was red, unlike the usual blue.

“Oh?” Kang-Woo smirked.

‘They’re warning me not to dig any deeper, huh?’

It was an interesting response. Kang-Woo stared at the red warning window with great interest. There was no need for him to risk his Deific Essence getting demoted by trying to earn information.

‘I got a general idea from that message.’

Kang-Woo stared at the words *Law of Titans*. Titans were the creators of the gods as well as the entire universe.

‘Titans are more like gods than the actual gods.’

Beings like Gaia and Tirion who possessed Deific Essence were different from the gods that one usually associated the word to. Gods were neither omnipotent nor omniscient; they were nothing but superhumans with a personality.

‘They’re like the immortals of martial arts novels.’

It was not an exact comparison since those like Kang-Woo who acquired Deific Essence through growth and achievements were extremely rare. Most gods were born with Deific Essence.

‘They’re closer to the gods of Greek mythology.’

It just so happened to be Gaia, one of the gods of Greek mythology, who was the chief god of Earth.

“There’s no way it’s a coincidence.”

There was likely some sort of connection between Gaia and Greek mythology.

‘In any case...’

The important thing was the words *Law of Titans* themselves. It was not difficult to figure out who had made the System just from those words.

‘The Titans, like Bauli.’

If that was the case, Kang-Woo could understand how just a mere portion of the power was able to seal the Demonic Sea.

“Titans, huh?”

Kang-Woo raised his head. His eyes glinted with madness as he stared into nothingness. A chilling smile lit up his face and he licked his lips. Titans... the beings who had created the gods and the universe...

‘I wonder how they taste?’

Kang-Woo gulped. His heart was beating like crazy. His body temperature rose as his blood circulated quickly. Suffocating thirst and gut-wrenching hunger took control over him.

“No, this isn’t the time.”

Kang-Woo shook his head and quelled his surging desire while taking deep breaths. Even if he acted true to his desire, he had no way of finding out where the Titans were and if they even existed.

‘*And...*’

Kang-Woo thought about Demon God Bauli, the Titan who was roaring madly while imprisoned in the Abyss. Kang-Woo had acted impertinently to him while as relaxed as he could be, but...

‘*I wouldn’t stand a chance whatsoever if we were to fight.*’

The only reason why Bauli did not kill Kang-Woo was because he needed his body. If Kang-Woo fought Bauli for real, he would 100% lose.

“*You are nothing without me!!!*”

Kang-Woo recalled what Bauli had shouted at him. He knew that there were no lies in Bauli’s words.

‘*If not for Bauli...*’

The Demonic Sea would fall apart because the keystone of the Demonic Sea was not Kang-Woo but Bauli.

“I should be prepared for this as well.”

He needed to bear in mind that he might need to face Bauli head-on in the future. Kang-Woo smiled bitterly and clicked his tongue.

Riiing.

Just then, he heard the bell chime that he had been waiting for.

[The reward of the ‘Road to Becoming a Demon God’ quest has been changed to the Trait ‘The Revered.’]

[The Player can convert faith directed at ‘Oh Kang-Woo’ into Divinity and absorb it. The Player’s Deific Essence will be promoted once a fixed amount of Divinity has been accumulated.]

Kang-Woo’s eyes shone as he read the blue message window in front of him.

“Faith, huh?”

He looked down from the imperial palace’s window and saw the people of the continent praying while on their knees. They were worshiping both him and Kim Si-Hun like gods after the war. The people of the continent had named the church that they had created the *Church of Splendor*. It was the perfect name to worship Kang-Woo, the God of Splendor.

Kang-Woo looked down at the devotees of the Church of Splendor while licking his lips.

“Not bad at all.”

No, it wasn’t just not bad; it was an incredible ability. Unlike demonic energy, sacred power, and mana, there was no way to accumulate Divinity. Kang-Woo was only able to accumulate it by eating those who possessed Deific Essence with the Authority of Predation.

'If I can change people's faith into Divinity...'

He would have a way to receive Divinity. It was as if a caveman, who only hunted for food, learned how to farm.

'Meat is the best, but...'

Procuring a stable supply of sustenance when he had no idea when he would be able to find his next prey was worthy of welcome.

'But how am I supposed to convert it?'

The basic usage instructions of a Trait usually flowed into one's mind once they learned it, but the method to convert faith into Divinity did not enter his brain no matter how long he waited. Then, a message window popped up as if to answer his question.

[Faith can be converted into Divinity through the 'Key of the Demonic Sea.']

"The Key of the Demonic Sea?"

Kang-Woo raised his right hand while tilting his head. Why did a function like that form on the Key of the Demonic Sea out of the blue?

Squelch.

"The hell?"

Something popped out of the black ring; it was the black lump known as the Demon God's legacy. The black lump, which had not come out of the ring since Kang-Woo came out of the Demonic Sea, traveled up Kang-Woo's arm to his shoulder and rubbed itself on his cheek. Unlike the sloppy sounds that it made every time it moved, it was as soft as a bouncy ball.

Squeak, squeak, squeak!

The black lump quivered in joy. Two yellow dots appeared on the lump.

'It even has eyes?'

Kang-Woo stared at the black lump in confusion. He felt as if he had been smacked on the back of the head with a sledgehammer after finding out that this was the Key of the Demonic Sea's true form. The black lump tilted its head in wonder as it stared at the wide-mouthed Kang-Woo.

"Grrrk?"

"You can even make sounds?" Kang-Woo asked.

The black lump jumped up and down on Kang-Woo's shoulder. Kang-Woo grabbed his forehead in confusion and stared at the black lump. It was slightly smaller than a soccer ball; its glossy skin and how it made waves on its skin whenever it moved made it look exactly like a generic slime.

"Grrrk! Grrrk!"

"Hah," Kang-Woo chuckled due to the absurdity.

'The hell is this? Did the author just force this thing into the story since protagonists of other fantasy novels all have cute pets? If you were gonna make one, at least put some thought into it. This thing is just a black slime.'

Kang-Woo glared at the black lump in silence.

It flinched and lowered its head like a dog getting scolded by its owner.

'The hell? Why is it cute?'

"Grrrk..."

The black lump's yellow eyes shook. Kang-Woo slowly reached for the black lump and touched it.

Squelch.

The sound was unpleasant, but its texture was not sloppy at all. Since it was soft and squishy, it felt nice to touch. It felt like a water balloon.

"Grrrk, grrrk."

The moment Kang-Woo touched the black lump, it narrowed its eyes as if it were smiling and rubbed itself on his hand.

"Ahh."

Kang-Woo had no choice but to admit it. He clenched his fists in frustration.

'This thing... is cute.'

"Why are you so damn cute for a slime?"

Kang-Woo frowned due to the discrepancy between what he saw and the logic in his head.

'No, it doesn't matter if it's cute or not.'

The black lump had a role to play.

"Absorb the faith of those people over there," Kang-Woo said to the black lump.

"Grrrk!" The black lump nodded as if saying to trust it.

Kang-Woo fell into thought while looking at the black lump.

'Come to think of it, the Demon God's legacy was able to absorb fear.'

The Constellations of Evil had come to Kang-Woo and Si-Hun in the first place because the fear that should have been directed toward them had been directed to Lucifer instead.

'Fear and faith, huh?'

Gods were objects for those to place their faith in, as well as beings to be feared and worshiped.

'Oh, that's why it's able to absorb faith.'

Kang-Woo nodded as if he understood now. The Demon God's legacy had been able to absorb emotions and convert them into Divinity from the very beginning, and it had simply been made available through the power of the System.

"Hmm," Kang-Woo looked at the black lump while nodding.

It was time to witness how an immaterial concept like faith was able to be converted into Divinity.

Squelch, squish.

The black lump came down from Kang-Woo's shoulder and bounced toward the window.

Split.

And then, the black lump opened up to reveal a hideous mouth filled with sharp teeth. The mouth grew bigger and bigger to a size that could easily swallow a person whole, and it ferociously bit the air.

Crunch, crunch!

Chilling sounds rang out. The black lump worked hard to eat something that couldn't be seen.

"..."

Kang-Woo's mouth was agape as if he couldn't believe it. The black lump that had been so cute had turned into a hideous monster in the blink of an eye.

[Converting the absorbed faith into Divinity through the Key of the Demonic Sea.']

"Grrrk!"

The black lump jumped onto Kang-Woo's hand after devouring the faith. Kang-Woo could feel Divinity flowing into his body as the black lump rubbed itself on the ring.

"Hmm."

As expected, it wasn't a lot.

'There's only about three hundred people at most who come to the imperial palace to pray, after all.'

Most of all, there was no way that an immaterial concept like faith could be converted into energy with 100% efficiency.

"Well, in any case..." Kang-Woo smiled in satisfaction. "Church of Splendor, huh?"

There was no better name for a church that worshiped the God of Splendor.

'Looks like I've gained a magnificent food source— I mean, some magnificent devotees.'

The seeds had been sown; all Kang-Woo needed to do now was to add just the right amount of fertilizer and water so that the crops could grow well.

"Hehe," Kang-Woo giggled as all sorts of plans popped up in his head.

He turned his head to the black lump, which was looking up at him with sparkling eyes as if it wanted to be praised.

“Come to think of it, I should give you a name.”

He couldn't keep calling it *black lump*.

“Hmmm...” Kang-Woo fell into thought and then snapped his finger as if he had thought of a great name. “Yeah.” He raised the black lump with his hands. “Your name will be Slushy.”

“Grrrk!”

Slushy bounced up and down as if it were happy.

Chapter 409 - I'm Sorry

“Now, then...”

Oh Kang-Woo stood up after a while. He couldn't be playing with Slushy forever.

'I might as well visit Balrog.'

Since Han Seol-Ah said he had regained consciousness, Kang-Woo should check up on him.

'I mean, I'm sure he's fine.'

It was Balrog of all people; there was probably no need for him to worry. But even so...

“Tsk, he's such a handful.” Kang-Woo turned around while complaining about how weak Balrog was for being unconscious for a few days just from losing a little blood. He grumbled while putting on a coat, “Sheesh, What's the point of being a giant when you have no backbone?”

Unlike his grumbling, Kang-Woo could not help himself from smiling.

“Grrrk...?” Slushy tilted its head as it looked up at Kang-Woo.

Kang-Woo reached out his hand toward Slushy. “You can come too.”

“Grrrk!”

Slushy jumped onto Kang-Woo's arm and bounced up to his shoulder. They headed to Balrog's room together. Kang-Woo easily passed through the magic barrier erected to hide Balrog's demon form and entered the room. An extremely muscular demon was lying in a bed large enough to fill the entire VIP room.

“I guess they had a bed size big enough for you,” Kang-Woo said as he snickered at the sight of Balrog lying in bed.

“Oh, my king!” Balrog exclaimed.

“Just stay in bed, man.”

Kang-Woo lightly flicked his finger at Balrog as he was trying to get up. An invisible pressure weighed down on Balrog.

“Kurgh!”

“Stop being such a baby.”

Kang-Woo walked up to Balrog and playfully punched his shoulder. Lilith giggled as she watched in silence.

“Mmm... What were they called again? Oh, right. You act like what the earthlings call *boomers*, Master Kang-Woo,” she remarked.

“What?” Kang-Woo stared at Lilith in puzzlement.

‘Me? A boomer? What are you talking about? I’m only a little over ten millennia years old. I’m still in my prime.’

Kang-Woo stared at Lilith as if he had been wrongfully accused.

“Hohoho. More importantly, what is that thing on your shoulder?” Lilith asked.

“Oh.” Kang-Woo lightly shrugged. Slushy fell in surprise and bounced on the ground.

“It’s the Demon God’s legacy.”

“... This thing?”

Lilith chuckled as if it was ridiculous. It was a natural response; there was no way that anyone would think of a black slime when they thought about what the Demon God’s legacy would look like.

“Grrrk?” Slushy looked around and then jumped on Lilith’s lap.

“Oh, my. Fufu, what a cute little thing,” Lilith remarked as she patted Slushy’s head.

Slushy squirmed around while extending itself as if stretching its arms. It looked like tentacles had come out of it.

“My, my.” Lilith’s eyes shone. She embraced Slushy while smiling widely. “No wonder it is called the Demon God’s legacy.”

“... What’s the reason?”

‘What convinced you exactly?’

Kang-Woo turned away, not wanting to ask any further, and sat on Balrog’s bed.

“Are you feeling better?” he asked.

“... I am ashamed to be in this condition.” Balrog lowered his head due to the humiliation. His eyes then widened as if something had come to mind. “Come to think of it, how can you move around, my king? I’m sure you opened the Doors this time as well...”

“Oh, the thing is...”

Kang-Woo explained his current condition to Balrog and Lilith. Their expressions hardened.

“That’s...”

“Dangerous.”

Kang-Woo’s body had changed in a way that not even he was aware of. Although the change itself was good, it was not something to be relieved about.

“You should never open the Doors again,” Balrog said as he grabbed Kang-Woo’s arm and stared at him as if to beg him.

Kang-Woo smiled bitterly. “I’ll take care of myself, so don’t worry about me, man.”

“...” Balrog bit his lip and then sighed deeply. “... I will trust that you will.”

“It doesn’t look like you do.”

“Can you blame me, considering what you’ve done thus far?”

Kang-Woo had no way to refute that.

“Well... You look fine,” he said as he looked down at the bedridden Balrog while smiling.

“You know that my constitution is the thing I’m most proud of.”

“Yeah, I can see that,” Kang-Woo remarked as he looked at Balrog’s bulging muscles as if he was genuinely impressed.

He turned to Lilith, who was patting Slushy. “Right, Lilith. I have a favor to ask you.”

“Anything for you, my king.”

“Could you gather information about the Church of Splendor?”

“The Church of Splendor?” Lilith’s eyes widened in wonder. “Are you referring to the new religious group that worships you and Si-Hun like gods?”

“Yeah. I want you to gather as much information as possible about its size, who leads the devotees, and stuff like that.”

“I understand, but may I ask why you want to investigate the Church of Splendor all of a sudden?” Lilith tilted her head as if she couldn’t understand.

Kang-Woo had acquired Deific Essence, but its power had no direct correlation to religion. If they were correlated, there was no way that the strongest god of Earth would be Gaia.

“It’s for farming,” Kang-Woo answered.

“Farming...?”

“Something like that.”

Kang-Woo smiled widely, but it felt somewhat creepy.

“Hmm...” Lilith expressed and then nodded.

Kang-Woo stood up from the bed and said to Balrog, “Get some more rest.”

“Are you leaving already?”

“What more do you want than me coming to visit you?” Kang-Woo replied curtly.

Lilith giggled. “I see you’re letting Balrog rest in silence.”

“I’m not.”

“Hoho. Okay, we can just leave it at that.”

Kang-Woo walked away from the giggling Lilith to the door.

“Oh right, Master Kang-Woo,” Lilith called as Kang-Woo was about to leave through the door. “I heard from Seol-Ah earlier. It seems he has woken up.”

“...” Kang-Woo remained silent.

He did not even need to ask who Lilith was referring to.

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

The faint voice echoed in Kang-Woo’s head. He felt stifled as if a giant rock was pushing down on his chest. He had no idea what to say when he met Kim Si-Hun. He found the conversation that he would need to have with Si-Hun far more difficult than his battle against Tai Wuji and his confrontation with the Demon God in the Demonic Sea.

“... Okay.”

Lilith asked in worry, “Will you be going?”

“Yeah.” Kang-Woo calmly nodded.

He couldn’t avoid him forever.

“...” Lilith stared at Kang-Woo with sunken eyes. She slowly walked toward him and placed her hands on his cheeks. “Do not be afraid, my king.”

“...”

Him? Afraid? Lilith’s words felt far too unfamiliar to Kang-Woo. His lips quivered as if he was about to refute something, but he shut his mouth. Seeing that, Lilith giggled.

“I’ll be off, then.” Kang-Woo turned around and left the room. Slushy followed after him while bouncing. “Haaa.” He sighed while grabbing Slushy and raised it into the air.

“Grrrk?!” Slushy flinched.

Kang-Woo placed it on his shoulder and walked with heavy steps.

“Shit.”

This was likely how a criminal felt when walking into a courthouse.

‘How did I even get this way?’

He felt stuffy as if he had eaten dozens of sweet potatoes without anything to drink. He would never have felt this way in the past.

‘I must be changing.’

Not only was his physical body changing, but his mind was as well.

“Tsk.”

He had no idea how it would turn out. It might end up being nothing special once it came down to it. However, even so... He had no idea.

‘Fuck it.’

Kang-Woo gave up on thinking; such thoughts did not suit him at all.

Clack. He opened the door.

“Oh, Kang-Woo. I was just about to contact you,” Seol-Ah greeted.

Beads of sweat had formed on her forehead; it seemed like she had been using healing magic on Si-Hun and Layla until just now. Kang-Woo greeted Seol-Ah by lightly nodding and entered the room.

“... Ah,” Si-Hun expressed while lying in bed.

“...”

“...”

Kang-Woo and Si-Hun remained silent, unable to say a word to each other. An awkward air filled the room.

“Did something happen between you two?” Seol-Ah asked while tilting her head, having no idea about what had happened between them.

“Darling. Could you go to Layla’s room for a bit?” Kang-Woo asked.

“Mmm. Okay.”

Seol-Ah was about to ask something but nodded soon after once she saw Kang-Woo’s eyes. She quietly closed the door and left.

“Are you feeling better now?” Kang-Woo asked.

“Oh, yes. I still have some internal injuries, but I’ll be fine,” Si-Hun replied as he touched the area that Tai Wuji had slashed.

The wound had completely disappeared without leaving any scars thanks to the Authority of Regeneration, but the pain remained.

“Urgh.” Si-Hun clenched his chest as he was trying to get up from the bed.

Kang-Woo frowned. “Just stay the hell in bed.”

“...” Si-Hun lightly nodded and laid back down.

Silence filled the room again.

“... Hyung-nim.” Si-Hun broke the silence first. “To be honest, I felt betrayed at first.”

“...”

Si-Hun smiled faintly. “I thought a lot about why you did such a thing and whether my memories of that night were real or not.”

“They were. I did everything that you remember about that night.”

“Haha,” Si-Hun laughed softly and nodded as if he felt refreshed. He slowly looked up and stared blankly at the ceiling. “I won’t ask you why, since... it’s already in the past.”

“...” Kang-Woo was lost for words.

The sin that he had committed on Si-Hun was far too grave to be glossed over in such a way.

‘Fucking moron.’

Kang-Woo got angry at how ridiculous Si-Hun was being. How nice did someone have to be to think something that moronic?

“You god damn pushov—”

“Hyung,” Si-Hun interjected as he turned to Kang-Woo. He smiled as he locked eyes with Kang-Woo. “Thank you... for staying as my older brother.”

“...”

Kang-Woo’s mind turned completely white as if he had been struck on the head with a sledgehammer. Feigned laughter and curses entangled along with countless emotions.

“...”

Silence fell once again. Kang-Woo lowered his head and thought about what to say. Whatever he said and whatever excuses he made, it would be meaningless.

After much thought, he carefully said, “... I’m sorry.”

That was the bittersweet phrase he had come up with.

Si-Hun softly laughed. He looked back up at the ceiling and said, “Hyung-nim. Would you like to go on a trip?”

“What?”

‘What’s with that out of the blue?’

"We haven't been able to take a break even once after coming to Aernor. I think it would be a good idea for everyone to go on a little trip."

"Hmm."

Kang-Woo fell into thought. The war against the Constellations of Evil was over, and Iris had yet to wake up.

'It's not a bad idea timing-wise.'

Kang-Woo honestly had a ton of things he needed to do. He needed to test the power of *Voracity*, which had risen to Top-rank in Deific Essence, and train the new Chaos skill and Flames of Voracity that he had learned. People had not yet forgotten completely about Balrog, who had run wild during the war, and most of all, he needed to put his focus on the Church of Splendor, his new farmland.

'But...'

Kang-Woo smiled faintly. He had so much to do, but his comrades also needed a break after working restlessly for all this time. Unlike himself, humans were unable to work without rest. Also, this was Si-Hun's effort to eliminate the awkward air that had formed between them.

"Yeah, sounds good." Kang-Woo nodded with a smile.

With that, their trip had been decided.

Chapter 410 - Kang-Woo, Did You Mate With Seol-Ah?

Bam!

A door burst open early in the morning.

"Hm! Hm!" Echidna snorted in excitement. She burst into Oh Kang-Woo's room with a huge bag. "Kang-Woo! Kang-Woo! It's morning! Wake up!"

The party had planned to go on a trip today. Echidna, who was as excited as an elementary schooler on the day of a field trip, had barged into Kang-Woo's room fully prepared.

"Mmm... What? What time is it?" Kang-Woo woke up while rubbing his eyes. He looked at the clock next to the bed and saw that it was only a little past 6 AM.

"I told you that we were leaving at ten."

"Hm! You need time to get ready!"

"I could even move houses if I have four hours." Kang-Woo chuckled.

Forget four hours, he could even move the entire imperial palace somewhere else in five minutes with his ability.

'Well, at least it's nice to see.'

He could tell that he had made the right choice to agree on the trip with how excited Echidna was. As he was about to pull away the blanket and get out of bed, he realized a crucial fact; he was completely naked, and his Francois was pitching a tent underneath the blanket.

'Oh shit. I'm fu—'

"Ummm. What's happening?" Han Seol-Ah, who had been sleeping next to him, got up while rubbing her eyes.

Kang-Woo's expression hardened. Seol-Ah was naturally completely naked as well. After seeing what was going on, Seol-Ah's eyes widened in pallor.

"Huh?" Echidna tilted her head while staring at the two of them.

She scanned them and then clapped her hands together as if she had figured out what happened.

"Kang-Woo," she called.

"Y-Yeah?" Kang-Woo answered anxiously.

He felt like a parent who had gotten caught by his child in the act.

Echidna, who likely had no idea what that felt like, asked casually, "Did you mate with Seol-Ah?"

'Whoa there, dear child. What the hell are you saying in an all-ages novel?'

Deathly silence fell.

"Grrrk."

"Mmrp!"

Slushy jumped up and stuck to Echidna's face and then looked back at Kang-Woo as if it were saying that it would leave the rest to him.

'Slushy, you son of a bitch... I love you, man.'

"Now, darling!"

"Okay!"

Kang-Woo and Seol-Ah jumped out of bed and put on their clothes laid on the ground at supersonic speed to the point that sonic booms rang out with each motion.

"Urghh!" Echidna smacked Slushy down on the ground.

Splat. Slushy flattened on the ground after it had done its job.

"Right, then. Let's go. Wow, how much did you pack?" said Kang-Woo as he walked over to Echidna, fully clothed.

Echidna stared at Kang-Woo incomprehensibly. "Kang-Woo, why are you acting like this all of a sudden? Mating isn't a big de—"

"Now, now. Let's stop talking about that."

'Any more and we'll be censored.'

"What's wrong with showing a p*****...?"

'See? We're already getting censored.'

Kang-Woo grabbed Echidna by the shoulders, turned her around, and left the room with her.

The flushed Seol-Ah ran past them and shouted, "I-I'll go prepare breakfast, Kang-Woo!"

Kang-Woo went back into the room with Echidna, dragging her by the arm.

"Alright, alright. Why don't we take a look at everything you prepared?"

"Hm! I packed a bunch of stuff since you said we were gonna have a barbecue party!"

Echidna began to show off everything in the giant bag, seemingly having forgotten about what had happened a few moments ago. Kang-Woo sighed in relief.

"Wow... Like you said, the scenery is to die for, hyung-nim," Kim Si-Hun remarked in astonishment.

They were on top of a massive mountain. The most striking part about the peak was that it was covered in dreamlike flowers that illuminated blue as if they were fireflies. Such a sight did not exist on Earth— no, it was hard to witness even in Aernor.

Kang-Woo had chosen a volcano known as Caldesann as their picnic spot. Although it was restricted to the people of the continent due to its steep terrain and the powerful monsters that inhabited it, none of such things mattered to Kang-Woo.

"It's awesome, isn't it?" Kang-Woo smiled as he looked around.

The luminescent flowers containing faint amounts of mana were shining blue, the wind was blowing refreshingly despite it being the peak of a giant mountain, and the weather was so nice that they could even take a nap. Kang-Woo had chosen the perfect place for a picnic if he could say so himself.

"How did you find a place like this?" Si-Hun asked as he nodded.

"I happened to see it while I was flying to Sant'Angelo a while ago."

Kang-Woo had no leeway to enjoy the view at the time due to the incident with Uriel and the Constellation of Agony, but this place naturally came to mind once they decided to go on a trip.

"Haha, it sure is nice." Si-Hun stretched as he laughed.

Seeing that, Kang-Woo also laughed.

"Mm. But it doesn't seem to be an ordinary place," Balrog mentioned as he got down on one knee and touched the flowers.

He was in his comfortable demon form since only the party members were present.

"Pretty cool, right?" Kang-Woo nodded as if agreeing with Balrog.

A place like this where it was covered in flowers containing mana would be difficult to find even in Aernor. No, it was their first time even seeing flowers like these in Aernor.

"Well, I don't think it makes a difference," Kang-Woo added.

"That I agree." Balrog nodded.

Whatever dangers existed on this mountain, Kang-Woo couldn't care less since the possibility of there being something too dangerous for him to handle was nearly nonexistent.

"What do you think, darling? Do you like it?"

"Yes. It's beautiful."

Seol-Ah looked around as if she was blown away by Caldesann's scenery. Kang-Woo smiled.

'I'm glad I left it as a surprise.'

He had kept the picnic location a secret because he was hoping for reactions like this. He had simply told his party members that he had found an amazing place for a picnic.

"Hm?"

Just then, Kang-Woo saw Echidna's expression as stiff as a rock; it was hard to believe considering she had been so excited this morning. It was as if she was dissatisfied with the picnic spot.

'What's going on?'

Echidna, who always smiled wherever she went as long as she was with Kang-Woo, was not smiling at all.

'Did I do something wrong?'

Kang-Woo was rather surprised by the lukewarm reaction despite having been highly confident in the location.

'What's so wrong about this place?'

A scenery like this was extremely difficult to find.

"Haaa..." Cha Yeon-Joo sighed deeply as she stared at Kang-Woo as if he was pathetic. "Do you seriously not know why she's like that? Tsk, tsk. What do you expect from the ten-millennia virgin?"

'What'd you call me, bitch?'

"What's wrong with this place?" Kang-Woo asked in frustration.

Was this not the perfect place to have a picnic? He had even wiped out the monsters in the area the day before so they wouldn't be interrupted.

"I'm severely disappointed in you, Kang-Woo." Even Layla criticized him.

Kang-Woo stared at the two of them as if he was being wrongfully accused.

"I trusted you... I was so looking forward to the trip..." Layla muttered.

"Wha..."

'Why are you two doing this to me?'

"What the hell is the problem?"

"Each party member prepared this as soon as you told us about the trip," Layla answered as she rummaged through the bag that she brought and took out...

"A swimsuit?" Kang-Woo asked.

"Yes!" Layla stomped on the ground while glaring at Kang-Woo and shouted, "Wouldn't the beach be the obvious choice with these members?! Do you even have eyes, Kang-Woo?!"

'That's a bit hurtful, Layla.'

"Look at Seol-Ah and Lilith! How could you make a brainless decision like going to a mountain when these two are here? Are you okay in the head?!"

'That's extremely hurtful, Layla.'

"Huh? What about me?" Yeon-Joo asked while pointing at herself.

'You stay out of this.'

"A-Aaaahh," Kang-Woo groaned.

Chills ran down his back. He clenched his fists as if he had been enlightened. He looked at the swimsuit in Layla's hand; just from the size, he could tell that it was Seol-Ah's.

'And... A bikini! Allow me to say it twice because it's important. A bikini!! To think I made such a blunder...'

Kang-Woo lowered his head. He could not refute Layla's criticisms in any way. Mystical flowers that glowed blue? Perfect weather? None of that mattered.

'I'm a moron.'

How could he not have realized the truth when it had been right in front of him this whole time? Kang-Woo bit his lip in anger.

"Haaa. I had high hopes for you, but you've disappointed me, Kang-Woo." Layla sighed.

"No." Kang-Woo shook his head. "It's not too late."

"Pardon?" Layla tilted her head in confusion. "Are you saying that you'll change locations?"

Kang-Woo shook his head. That was an option, but there was an even easier option.

"I'm going to create a lake here."

"Pardon?"

Kang-Woo walked past the dumbfounded Layla and placed his hands on the ground. Radiant golden light burst from his body.

Rumble—!!!

The earth split and upturned. The entire mountain was split in two, and from there...

Pshhhhhh—!

Hot spring water that had been lying dormant within the volcano was forcibly drawn out through Kang-Woo's power. An enormous amount of hot spring water filled with sulfur shot upward like a geyser.

'And now...'

He drew out his Top-rank Deific Essence. He eliminated the sulfur from the hot spring water and lowered the temperature of the water to the point that it was cool. Then, he combined the split mountain.

"Alright."

A perfect lake had been formed. Although it was nothing but a giant pool of water that contained no life, it didn't matter.

"What do you think, Layla?" Kang-Woo smiled as he turned to Layla.

"..."

Layla simply stared at Kang-Woo dumbfoundedly with her mouth agape, but only for a moment. She slowly walked up to Kang-Woo and raised her right hand.

Clap!

A clear sound rang out as Kang-Woo and Layla clapped their hands together.

"..."

Yeon-Joo looked back and forth at Kang-Woo and the lake that had formed on the peak of the mountain out of nowhere. She covered her face with her hands and recalled a fact that she had tried her hardest to forget.

"Why..." She wept in sorrow. "Why the hell did I... end up falling for this dumbass...?"

Her sobs continued for a while longer.