

# Level 4 Human in a Ruined World #Chapter 391 - Read

## Level 4 Human in a Ruined World Chapter 391

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Chapter 391: The Big Hand (1)

Lemu.

The Seeker, the Master of the Machine Tower, the Designer.

Look at those grand expressions that describe Lemu.

If there were a VIP list at Yeongwoo's wedding hall, Lemu's name would certainly be on it.

After all, he had once demonstrated overwhelming cash-wielding power in a contract competition against Chairman Dogo.

So, there was no need to explain just how wealthy Lemu was.

But was that all?

Lemu possessed an ability that was difficult to quantify in monetary terms—a glimpse into the future, or more precisely, insight into the Record.

For this reason, his visit carried great significance for Yeongwoo, as it suggested that their relationship hadn't completely deteriorated.

“Lemu-u-u-u……!”

As Yeongwoo repeatedly shouted “Lemu” and ran towards the clearing where the spaceship was landing, the aliens idly watching from the wedding hall lobby gaped one by one.

— It's really Lemu……?

— ...Kikik?

— Lemu came in person?

Lemu, the most well-known master of the Machine Tower in the universe, was also famous for rarely revealing himself.

He had too many enemies.

Lemu had entered the adult entertainment industry to amass large sums of cash and equip himself with facilities for exploring the Record.

However, what was meant to be merely a means to an end had become far too successful.

As a result, he had attracted countless competitors as well as enemies who despised “machines that produce adult content.”

And wasn't Lemu irreplaceable?

The Machine Tower.

A sacred place for machines seeking to decipher the Records.

But because Lemu held dominion over the Machine Tower, the universe was filled with powerful individuals who wanted to eliminate him and take control of it.

Once one gains strength and power, it's only natural to grow curious about one's own future—or even the future of the entire world.

KUUUUUNG!

At last, one side of the white cubic structure opened outward, revealing a tall mechanical figure inside.

“Huh...!”

A cape made of silver-white cables, and a silver suit of armor with fine circuits etched across its surface.

The machine body within was gray, but for some reason, it seemed even sturdier than the armor itself.

It was as if his entire body was woven with extremely dense mechanical muscles.

There was no doubt about it—the figure standing before Yeongwoo was...

‘A high-grade body...! President Lemu has come in person again!’

Lemu, the machine coveted by the entire universe.

Standing at a towering five meters, he held a white spear that was even longer than his own height.

'What the...? He brought a new weapon this time.'

As Yeongwoo stood about 50 meters from the spaceship, observing Lemu's form, the mechanical giant moved his sturdy jaw and spoke.

□ It has been a while, Jeong Yeongwoo-07.

A while...?

From Earth's perspective, it had only been a day.

But for Lemu, who had seen countless timelines through his exploration of the Records, perhaps it truly had been a long time.

Yeongwoo chose not to argue.

"It has been a while, President Lemu."

Since the Chairman hadn't arrived yet, Yeongwoo deeply bowed to show his respect.

'To be able to see this guy alive again is, in a way, a blessing.'

Then, Lemu gestured lightly toward the inside of the spaceship, giving some sort of command.

Whoosh.

Immediately, the mechanical knights who had been waiting inside lined up on either side of him in perfect formation.

□ Has Chairman Dogo not arrived yet?

Was Lemu mentally preparing himself to get beaten up again by the Chairman?

From inside the spaceship, Lemu scanned the wedding hall with keen eyes.

Sensing this, Yeongwoo stepped aside, signaling for him to proceed.

Clank.

"No, the Chairmen haven't arrived yet."

□ Chairmen, you say...? Today, both Dogo and Mara are coming, correct?

Perhaps it was because he was a machine with multiple lives, but Lemu didn't even use honorifics for Mara.

“Yes... We did receive floral tributes in advance.”

Yeongwoo pointed toward the row of alien floral arrangements set up along the side of the lobby.

Lemu smirked.

□ Typical of Dogo and Mara. They are not great businessmen, but they are excellent warriors.

Just from looking at the exterior of the floral tributes, he had already grasped their true function.

Then what about Lemu’s own floral tribute, which had briefly restored power to all of Seoul?

What did that mean?

“President.”

□ Speak.

“The floral tribute you sent... Is it true? Could it really supply power to all of Seoul?”

Lemu wiggled his long fingers as he answered.

□ Not just Seoul. It could restore the power grid for the entire planet.

Then, in a sly tone, he added.

He could deliberately restore power only to Seoul, making it the only illuminated city on Earth.

“.....!”

A terrifying thought.

But whether he restored power to the whole world or only to Seoul, bringing electricity back to this ruined planet was an undeniable benefit.

“Then... what’s the price? Why did you encode coordinates into the floral tribute? Aren’t they the coordinates of the Machine Tower?”

Lemu made an enigmatic expression and pointed a finger at the sky.

□ You will understand when you reach those coordinates.

“...Huh?”

Could it be that the coordinates in the floral tribute weren't for the Machine Tower after all?

As Yeongwoo prepared to ask another question, Lemu swung his arm dismissively, signaling that he had no more to say.

Whoosh!

At his command, electronic circuits began to spread out from the floor of his spaceship, laying down silver-white tiles for him to step on.

Tatatatang!

With a sound reminiscent of gunfire, the ten-meter-wide tiles rapidly extended all the way to the lobby.

'No matter how much this is now a level-3 city, shouldn't he at least get the mayor's approval for this?'

As Yeongwoo gaped at the installation of this silver carpet, the tiles suddenly extended sideways toward another direction.

'Oh...?'

Seeing where they were headed, Yeongwoo could only nod in understanding.

Tatata-tang!

As soon as the problematic tile arrived in the lobby, it was heading straight toward the congratulatory stand.

'If you know everyone's desires, you can captivate anyone. As expected of the President.'

According to what the tile had shown in advance, President Lemu planned to head straight to the congratulatory stand as soon as he arrived in the lobby.

And soon enough—

Clack!

The first VIP of this ceremony, Lemu, began to walk, stepping on the silver-white tile.

He was escorted by mechanical knights.

Yeongwoo, following Lemu, spoke.

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“President, I have a confession to make.”

At this, Lemu, who was walking ahead, looked to the side for the first time with an expression of interest.

□ A confession. That's an interesting choice of words.

“There's a ranking for congratulatory gifts at this ceremony.”

□ Is that so.

Lemu showed no sign of surprise.

So Yeongwoo quickly added more words.

“If you become the top ranker in congratulatory gifts, you can expel any guest you wish from the hall.”

At this, Lemu finally stopped walking for a moment.

Then he stroked his chin with his fingertips.

□ I have no intention of spending money to provoke Chairman Dogo.

As expected, Lemu was not someone to be underestimated.

He saw through Yeongwoo's intentions as soon as he heard the rules.

But wasn't this something Yeongwoo had anticipated?

“It might be presumptuous to say, but the top rank in the congratulatory gifts ranking isn't prepared for you, President. Your spot is separate.”

□ What do you mean?

“Third place in the ranking. It's the only position where expulsion is impossible.”

Lemu laughed loudly and flicked his cloak.

□ Ha! You're trying to pit the Chairman against Mara.

“Yes, will that be possible?”

Incredibly, Yeongwoo asked for Lemu’s opinion.

But even this was part of the protocol Yeongwoo had prepared.

Even though Chairman Dogo scorned Lemu as a mere being of flesh, Yeongwoo subtly conveyed that their side saw things quite differently.

□ If you dare to take Mara’s place, the Chairman will be quite furious. But that’s not a bad development either.

As Lemu said this, he touched his right waist.

It was where he had been struck by a body hook during his last encounter with Dogo.

Though he had brought a new body, the memory of that day lingered.

Seeing this, Yeongwoo cautiously added his words.

“It is about time the Chairman faced some harsh consequences, isn’t it?”

Then he opened his palm, pointed forward, and finished his sentence.

“The congratulatory stand is that way, President.”

\* \* \*

Lemu, an existence of Grade 4 under cosmic law.

Though he was merely a prized trophy in front of the Grade 3 existence Chairman Dogo, at this moment, he was an absolute being.

Currently, the only guests in the lobby were cosmic loan sharks and wandering merchants.

-L, Lemu...!

-We greet the Great Designer!

-...Gii!

In front of a meeting that might happen once in a lifetime, all guests from the universe showed their utmost respect according to their customs.

Clank!

The wandering merchants of Voltak, as soon as they saw Lemu, dropped their weapons and knelt, and the weapon merchant of the giant wheel, Cheok, prostrated with his long antennae lowered.

Even the hammer of Kwaya, who had met several famous figures—

Thunk!

He pounded the metal armor on his face with both hands and stretched his arms upward.

For the prison designers, meeting Lemu in person was an honor.

‘What... Is this guy really this much?’

Maybe it was because his first sponsor happened to be ‘Dogo’ that his standards had risen too high.

As he was seeing now, Lemu was also a tremendously influential presence in the universe.

Yet here was Yeongwoo, a mere mortal, daring to walk alongside him.

“Pr... President, I knew you were impressive, but this is extraordinary.”

□ Living as a famous machine in this universe isn’t easy.

It sounded like humble words, but that was the reality.

The reverence of lower beings didn’t shield him from Dogo’s blade.

As a machine, and a fairly prominent one at that, Lemu was constantly under threat of assassination from fundamentalists like Dogo.

‘No, actually, since he’s not alive in the first place, can it even be called a life?’

At least, according to the Chairman’s view, it was so.

—Lemu is a machine. So even in a sacred duel, he doesn’t wager his life. Because he has no life to lose in the first place.

But watching Lemu up close like this...

‘No matter how I look at it, President Lemu seems like a complete being too? He even has his own emotions, and more than anything, he’s giving a congratulatory gift.’

The thought that this human-like Lemu might get hit again when the Chairman arrives made Yeongwoo's heart ache.

In fact, the tiles they were stepping on were not for decoration but to mitigate any surprise attacks that might come at any time.

"President! I sincerely hope you give a large congratulatory gift and don't get expelled by the Chairman!"

As Yeongwoo shouted this, Lemu, who had just arrived at the congratulatory stand, turned and asked.

Cash.

"...Pardon?"

Chairman and Mara will bring a lot of cash, won't they?

"Well... Yes, I suppose so, but I'm not exactly sure what you mean."

With that, Lemu placed the white spear he had been holding onto the congratulatory stand.

Thunk!

I'm curious how much this will be appraised at. You do accept equipment as gifts, don't you?

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Chapter 392: The Big Hand (2)

"The equipment gift? Of course, sir!"

Yeongwoo responded enthusiastically, and Lemu nodded as if he had expected that answer.

Very well.

Then, he reached out toward the steel signature plate prepared beside the gift table.

Swoosh.

It seemed like he had intended to pull the plate toward him remotely.

— I-I'll bring it for you!

Out of nowhere, Kobu appeared, hastily lifting the signature plate, preventing everyone from witnessing Lemu's telekinetic abilities.

— I apologize for the slow response! I didn't expect you to arrive so early...

Kobu spoke as if he had committed a grave sin, leaving Yeongwoo tilting his head in confusion.

'No, but how strong is a Rank 4 for him to be acting like this?'

It was understandable for other guests to be making a fuss, but wasn't kwaya's Hammer a fairly formidable corporation?

They designed cosmic prisons, and their parent organization was none other than kwaya, the Lord of the Abyss.

'That means Kobu, Tobu, and Chobu should all be of fairly high rank... So why are they being this submissive?'

Yeongwoo glanced at Lemu with newfound curiosity.

Maybe, under universal law, as a Rank 7 entity, he should be groveling on the floor alongside Kobu.

'Well, I suppose I was never properly educated about cosmic beings.'

The only thing Yeongwoo knew for sure was that mentioning the names of Rank 2 beings or higher was strictly forbidden.

Then, what kind of terrifying existence were the Rank 3 beings, like the Chairman and Mara?

Had they been just one rank higher, Yeongwoo wouldn't have been able to even speak their names.

'And right below them is Lemu, the President.'

His mind went blank.

'Lemu must not be an ordinary Rank 4. Considering he constantly challenges a Rank 3 being like the Chairman, that says a lot.'

There was no doubt—Lemu must be at the absolute top of the Rank 4 spectrum.

That would explain why Kobu was trembling and treating him with such extreme reverence.

— Please, sign here...!

Kobu held the signature plate up with both hands as he pleaded.

Lemu casually flicked his fingers.

□ You don't know how I sign, do you? It would be wise to step back.

— Huh...?

Kobu barely had time to respond before the steel signature plate in his hands started glowing red-hot.

Fwoooosh!

— Ack!

Startled, Kobu pulled his hands back and stumbled away.

But the plate never hit the ground.

Lemu was holding it in midair—without even touching it.

— L-Lemu, sir!

— Incredible!

The alien guests watching burst into another round of exclamations.

And then—

Sssshk.

Lemu pressed a few fingers against the now half-melted plate.

The outline of his fingertips, along with the shape of the ring he wore, was imprinted into the molten steel.

“Oh.”

So this was how Lemu signed.

A stark contrast to Chairman Dogo, who left his mark by wildly slashing with a sword.

‘How do beings like these even coexist in the same universe?’

It was truly one of the universe’s mysteries.

With Lemu’s signature verified, the gift-handling team officially accepted his equipment gift.

<Designer: Lemu>

「Gift contribution complete!」

‘Wait, it actually worked? So how do they determine the price?’

Yeongwoo widened his eyes, eagerly awaiting the next message.

Then, for the first time in this ceremony, the value of an equipment gift was revealed.

「To celebrate the wedding of Strongest Sword Jeong Yeongwoo’s parents, Kim Jeonggu and Song Jiseon, a token of goodwill worth 1.6 billion has been delivered in the form of ‘Lightning Rod.’」

“What?”

1.6 billion...!

Yeongwoo felt the blood in his temples swirl.

‘Damn, this is what you call a wedding gift. The ceremony’s prestige just skyrocketed.’

With Lemu’s contribution, the ranking of gift values was now fully universalized.

[Top Gift Rankings]

[1st] Lemu, Lightning Rod 「1.6 billion」

[2nd] kwaya’s Hammer, Confidential

[3rd] Cheok, 90 million

[4th] Osaek Credit, 50 million

[5th] Voltak, 40 million

“Sir... You’ve done something truly incredible. Thank you...”

Yeongwoo instinctively bowed his head.

And since he was already at it, he went all the way down, curling himself into a near-perfect ball.

Thanks to Lemu, the minimum gift value for the soon-to-arrive Chairman and Mara had now been set at 1.6 billion.

‘Wait, but what kind of equipment is worth that much?’

This wasn’t even a price Lemu had set—it was something the gift-handling team had evaluated on their own.

“Sir, if you don’t mind... May I touch the equipment you gifted, just for a moment?”

Before the ceremony’s formal gift reveal was even finished, Yeongwoo dared to make a request.

Lemu, as if expecting this, immediately grabbed the spear and handed it to him.

□ Of course.

And the moment Yeongwoo laid eyes on it, he immediately understood why Lemu was so willing to let him hold it.

「Lightning Rod」 - Legendary Spear

【Lightning Fire】

【Lemu's Seal】

【Lightning Rod】

【Lightning Fire】

| Doubles the lightning damage you possess.

【Lightning Rod】

| When hit by lightning damage, attack power increases by 15%.

### 【Lemu's Seal】

| Every time you pronounce 'Lemu,' you receive a thrilling jolt of lightning damage and gain favor with machines.

'...What kind of insane weapon is this?'

For some reason, it felt unsettling.

But at the same time, he instinctively knew—it was a gift he could never refuse.

### 【Lightning Fire】

| Doubles the lightning damage you possess.

'Damn, this effect is ridiculous.'

Its meaning was clear.

It would double the effect of Coffin's Thunder Dragon, a power he had obtained as compensation for his second uncle's funeral rites.

### 【Thunder Dragon in the Coffin】

| Grants additional lightning damage equal to 20% of final attack power.

In simple terms, wielding this spear would grant him lightning damage equal to 40% of his final attack power.

And that wasn't all.

The moment he took lightning damage, his attack power would instantly increase by 15%.

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And he didn't even need to look elsewhere for a source of lightning damage—simply pronouncing 'Lemu' would trigger it automatically.

### 【Lemu's Seal】

| Every time you pronounce 'Lemu,' you receive a thrilling jolt of lightning damage and gain favor with machines.

‘This is basically just forcing me to call his name instead of our Chairman’s.’

But Youngwoo had no need to actually say ‘Lemu’ to take lightning damage.

Thanks to his second uncle, all of his attacks carried lightning damage, meaning he could simply harm himself instead.

Of course, there was no way Lemu, the one who had handed him this weapon, was unaware of that fact.

‘What exactly is he thinking? Not that I mind, but...’

As Youngwoo looked at Lemu with eyes full of uncertainty, the master of the Grand Machine Tower moved his gray jaw.

□ Do you like it?

“...Yes. I like it very much.”

□ That’s a relief. The "Lightning Rod" is both my wedding gift and an apology for my previous discourtesy.

“Ah.”

□ Of course, the moment you take possession of the "Lightning Rod," you’ll no longer be able to call my name so easily.

As expected, Lemu had already seen through what Yeongwoo had only thought in his mind.

“I’m sorry, but that’s true.”

When Yeongwoo responded confidently with a determined expression, Lemu let out a sly smile.

□ I will finally become someone you cannot speak of carelessly.

“.....!”

Hearing this, Yeongwoo felt as if he had been struck on the back of his head and involuntarily opened his mouth in shock.

‘No way, what the hell?’

Technically, it wasn’t wrong.

Just as one couldn't carelessly mention beings of Rank 2 or higher, Yeongwoo would now have to be extra careful when speaking about Lemu.

Moreover, from now on, whenever he talked about Lemu, he would have to think twice.

If he carelessly uttered Lemu's name, not only would he suffer a "shocking" lightning strike, but he would also offend the Chairman.

'This bastard... He really is a mastermind...!'

Yeongwoo could already feel his mind becoming completely preoccupied with Lemu.

He had stepped right into the trap set by this crazy machine.

But was he going to give up such an overwhelming weapon?

That was simply not an option.

'This damn universe doesn't have a single pushover.'

Reaching a conclusion of sorts, Yeongwoo placed the "Lightning Rod" back onto the gift stand and spoke as if he had no choice.

"Hmph... Normally, gifts at my wedding ceremony are at least Mythic-grade, but I'll make an exception for you, President. After all, you said it was an apology."

Besides, the Lightning Rod Lemu had given him was only classified as Legendary in rank, but in terms of appraisal and performance, it was undoubtedly comparable to Mythic-grade gear.

'No, seriously, where the hell do you even find a Legendary weapon worth 1.6 billion?'

And that was just its base price.

If it were actually put up for sale, its market value would likely soar well beyond 1.6 billion.

"President, how do you even acquire such equipment? You didn't make this yourself... But it has your seal on it."

As Yeongwoo stared at the Lightning Rod on the gift stand and asked, Lemu raised a finger and pointed to the sky.

□ You'll understand when you become a greater existence than you are now.

'A greater existence than I am now....'

Following Lemu's gesture, Yeongwoo also turned his gaze to the sky.

Contextually, Lemu must have been referring to reaching Rank 4, like himself.

In other words, under cosmic law, once one reached Rank 4, they gained the authority to imprint their seal onto existing equipment and alter them.

'Is that even possible? Is Rank 4 really that high up?'

Having rapidly ascended to Rank 7 after catching the attention of Dogo, Yeongwoo couldn't quite grasp the significance of Rank 4.

Though, considering how other aliens bowed their heads in front of Lemu, it was clear that Rank 4 was a prestigious status.

"President, if a Rank 4 being can alter existing equipment to such a degree, then... What about Rank 3?"

Rank 3.

To be honest, Rank 3 beings often just seemed like brutish powerhouses.

But what kind of status and authority did they actually possess?

As Yeongwoo thought of the most prominent Rank 3 being—the Chairman, Dogo—he was about to ask Lemu when—

A deafening roar echoed from beyond the skies of Metal Seoul.

—WOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO—

A sound reminiscent of a massive ship's horn.

The moment the noise rang out, Kobu, who had been bowing in front of Lemu, jerked his head up.

Then, without hesitation, he abandoned Lemu and dashed off somewhere.

At the same time—

—RUMBLE...!

The four great gates of Seoul rose up and transformed into extermination units, kneeling down as they turned their gaze skyward.

'What the...'

Metal Seoul had activated its extermination units on its own—without an order from the Mayor.

‘No way...’

Sensing something, Yeongwoo quickly shifted his gaze back to the sky.

Then—

—WOOOOOOOOOO...!

A monstrous ship, shaped like a massive tombstone, emerged from the clouds with an endlessly trailing resonance.

The Chairman of Rank 3, Dogo, had arrived at the wedding venue.

“...Chairman!”

Just as Yeongwoo gasped in awe, Kobu, who had already dashed far ahead, cried out with all his might.

“The Lord of Hundred Thousand Swords, the King of Destruction has arrived...!”

At that moment, all lower-ranked aliens in the hall pressed their heads to the ground in reverence.

Even the Strongest Swords of Seoul, sensing the atmosphere, lay flat on the ground.

Among everyone present under Rank 3, only two beings remained standing tall—Yeongwoo07 and the mastermind, Lemu.

‘Lemu... You just love getting yourself beaten up, don’t you?’

Yeongwoo clicked his tongue and glared at Lemu.

But there was one more.

Someone else who had not bowed before Dogo.

—CLANK!

“Huh...?”

At the sudden metallic sound, Yeongwoo turned his head.

A floral wreath at the outskirts of the wedding hall’s lobby was unfolding its "head."

“...What?”

Realizing something crucial, Yeongwoo’s eyes widened.

Then, the wreath sent by Mara aimed a laser cannon at Dogo’s ship and fired.

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Chapter 393: The Big Hand (3)

KWOAAAAAH!

As soon as Mara's Wreath fired a laser as if it had been waiting for the moment, every being in the venue’s lobby snapped their heads up.

— Huh?!

— W-What the hell?!

Who in their right mind would dare to interfere with the descent of a Level-3 being?

More than just being blasphemous, this was an extremely rare spectacle—something one might not witness even twice in a lifetime.

After all, when else would one get to see a Level-3 being ambushed?

So, everyone in the room, especially those from outer space, focused with all their might, eyes wide open.

— ...Ah!

— My god.

At last, the laser reached Dogo’s warship, and in the next moment, a dazzling light erupted, overwhelming their vision.

FWOOOOOSH!

The guests, who had been lying low with their heads raised, were forced to bury their faces back into the ground.

Even Yeongwoo, who had been standing and looking up at the sky, wasn't spared.

'Ugh! I should've brought sunglasses.'

Unable to withstand the sheer intensity of the light, he clenched his eyes shut.

However, being a Level-4 existence, Lemu seemed to be able to see through the radiance and spoke in a voice clear enough for Yeongwoo to hear.

◇ Impressive.

What exactly was so impressive?

Just as Yeongwoo was about to ask, the overwhelming light that had filled the area suddenly vanished.

FLASH!

".....!"

Yeongwoo quickly raised his head and saw Dogo's warship descending in altitude, completely enveloped by a hexagonal barrier.

Naturally, the warship's body was utterly unscathed.

◇ The chairman's specialty is placing stolen resources in their optimal locations. You should learn from him—there's not much else worth learning from him, after all.

Lemu suddenly started using honorifics when referring to Chairman Dogo.

He was well aware that he had entered the chairman's attack range.

"You're saying that shield is made of stolen resources? Then whose technology was that originally?"

Instead of answering, Lemu simply rubbed his thumb and index finger together, making the rings on his fingers rotate once.

Seeing this, Yeongwoo nodded silently.

'Of course. It must be from the Machine Tower.'

Had he not witnessed it before?

The chairman had once beaten Lemu to death and confiscated both his warship and body.

There was no way that had been the only time.

Clearly, Lemu had been stripped of numerous assets and technologies by the chairman over time.

“...Why does our chairman hate the president so much? Is it really just because he’s a machine?”

Yeongwoo couldn't quite understand and asked again.

For the first time, Lemu looked at him with an expression resembling that of a human.

◇ Hate, you say...? How could I possibly evoke hatred from the chairman? I am an object of contempt.”\

“Contempt?”

◇ The chairman is a truly exceptional warrior. He reveres martial prowess to the point of foolishness, and as such, he sees death—the ultimate expression of battle—as something sacred.

Was that a compliment or an insult?

Either way, given what Yeongwoo had seen and heard so far, he could roughly grasp the meaning.

“Ah. But since the president is a machine and cannot truly experience death, the chairman doesn’t see him as a worthy opponent for battle?”

◇ Indeed... You will surpass the chairman as a businessman one day.

Yeongwoo had guessed correctly.

And as a reward, he caught a fleeting glimpse of Lemu smiling.

◇ The chairman has arrived. Go and do what you must.

Lemu pointed toward the open area ahead.

There, the chairman’s warship had descended closer to the ground and was now dropping its anchor.

CHAAAARRRK—THUD!

The massive steel anchor slammed into the ground, sending a tremendous shockwave rippling through the venue’s lobby, making even Lemu’s cable mantle billow wildly.

‘Ah, now that I think about it, the chairman’s warship never actually touches the ground.’

Having never seen so many alien warships at once, Yeongwoo only now realized this detail.

Among all the guest ships, only the chairman’s remained hovering, never making direct contact with the earth.

The only thing that ever touched the planet was that signature steel anchor.

That massive gravestone of a ship had never once actually landed.

KWOOM!

Then, the lower section of the warship opened, and from within emerged the Destroyer King, Dogo.

— YEONGWOO!

A thunderous voice called out to him.

Hearing it, Yeongwoo dashed away from Lemu toward the chairman’s ship, raising his ceremonial dagger high as he shouted:

“CHAIRMANNN! It is my utmost honor to have you at this humble ceremony! 「 DOGOOOOOOOO」 !”

At that moment, the Dogo emblem shone brightly on the upper right arm of Yeongwoo’s Vesedel Armor.

Frankly, it was hard to find anything Yeongwoo had achieved or possessed that wasn’t influenced by Dogo.

No matter how much Lemu tried to buy favor with an extravagant wedding gift, it could never compare to the blessings Yeongwoo had received from Chairman Dogo.

“Chairman...!”

Brimming with emotion, Yeongwoo ran toward the warship, stopping near its hovering base.

Dogo, descending through the air, lowered himself to about three meters above the ground.

Then, he turned his gaze toward Lemu’s parked warship, and beyond it, to Lemu himself, who was standing stiffly.

— So the wretched thing arrived in a hurry, I see.

Yet, wasn't it Dogo himself who had arrived much earlier than the scheduled ceremony time?

Of course, Yeongwoo remained silent.

Meanwhile, Jiseon came running in a hurry from behind, prostrating herself at Dogo's feet.

— Chairman! It is an indescribable honor to meet you again!

Observing the reactions of the other extraterrestrial guests, Jiseon quickly realized that Chairman Dogo's status was far greater than she had initially imagined.

And finally, Jeonggu arrived, drenched in sweat, dropping to his knees beside his bride-to-be.

“C-Chairman...!”

Dogo nodded in acknowledgment before turning back to Lemu and muttering in a low voice.

— Under normal circumstances, that thing would have been removed from my sight. However, as today is your ceremony, I shall not draw my blade.

Which meant that if Chairman Dogo were to contribute the highest wedding gift, Lemu would undoubtedly be exiled.

"The president better put in some real effort. But with 1.6 billion, third place should be guaranteed at least."

Then, Dogo lifted his helmeted head and gazed at the sky.

“.....!”

Dogo looking up at the sky...

It was such a rare sight that Yeongwoo's eyes widened in surprise.

And then, Chairman Dogo uttered a most ominous statement.

—How many human guests are there?

"I'm not sure exactly... but it seems to be dozens."

Dogo then turned his gaze toward the wedding hall and spoke.

—Order the Hammers to prepare human-only seating and reinforce their stability. If Mara brings even a fraction of its true form, all the humans will perish.

Human-only seating and stability reinforcement.

These were unfamiliar terms, but Yeongwoo could somewhat infer their meaning.

Given that humans would perish the moment Mara's true form appeared here, "stability" likely referred to the ability to withstand its overwhelming presence.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Wasn't it the same when Yeongwoo first met Dogo's shareholders?

Even the nearby security personnel had struggled to breathe.

'So basically... he's telling us to quickly arrange human guest seating with reinforced stability, right?'

After all, no one knew when or how Mara might appear.

And there were already quite a number of human guests present here.

Even now, guests from Earth were emerging from the distant passageway.

"Chairman, is Mara's presence truly that overwhelming? In the end, isn't it of the same universal rank as you?"

Yeongwoo asked, unable to believe it.

In truth, it was also a question meant to gauge whether the chairman or Mara was the "stronger Level 3."

But his opponent was, after all, the chairman of an intergalactic corporation.

—Mara is arrogant and does not conceal its presence. It's no different from me not wearing my helmet.

Dogo subtly hinted that if he, too, discarded his helmet, mere humans would die simply from his presence.

'Wait, what? The chairman's helmet is some kind of seal? Does it shoot lasers from his eyes or something?'

Regardless, one thing was clear: unlike the chairman, who restrained himself, Mara would cause a catastrophe if it arrived at the venue as it was.

Yeongwoo glanced toward the ceremonial reception area and saw Kobu still lying flat on the ground. Then he spoke to the chairman.

"Let's head to the wedding hall first. We've prepared a ceremonial table for you!"

—I already know. Your intentions are obvious.

With that, Dogo curled his right hand into a fist.

Crunch.

At that moment, the long stretch of Lemu's circuit tiles leading to the wedding hall shattered in sequence.

Only after that did Dogo begin to move.

Swoosh...

He leisurely flew over the shattered Lemu tiles.

□ .....

Of course, the Level 4 machine Lemu, who had dared to oppose a Level 3 being, remained utterly unfazed as it watched Chairman Dogo approach.

And finally—

Flash!

The moment Chairman Dogo entered the lobby, Lemu slowly stepped back for the first time.

□ Chairman, we meet again.

—We've been seeing each other quite often lately.

It was as if invisible blades were clashing between the two beings.

Meanwhile, everyone else in the room remained utterly silent, pressing their heads against the floor.

The only one presumptuous enough to still stand on two feet was Yeongwoo.

'Wait? When did...?'

Only now did he realize that Jiseon and Jeonggu, who had followed him to the lobby, were also bowing with their heads pressed to the floor.

—Yeongwoo.

When Dogo, having reached the ceremonial table, called Yeongwoo's name, Kobu scurried behind the table, seemingly ready to receive the chairman's gift.

"Yes, Chairman."

—How much do you want? Name your desired gift.

'There he goes, showing off again.'

Yeongwoo sighed inwardly.

Of course, considering the occasion, the chairman must have come with a thick wallet.

But Yeongwoo knew very well that Dogo's cash flow couldn't compare to Lemu's.

Besides, once they passed through here and entered the main venue, the second ceremonial table would be waiting with even bigger spenders.

'And after this, he still has to face Mara... Is he really confident?'

With that thought, Yeongwoo cautiously spoke.

"To me, the strongest in the universe is none other than you, Chairman... so if you could be the best guest at this wedding as well, I would have no greater wish."

As Yeongwoo bowed his head and gestured toward the ceremonial table with both hands, Kobu, right on cue, straightened up from behind it.

—It is an honor to meet you, Chairman! I am a nameless servant who serves the Abyssal Lord, Kwaya!

At this moment, Kobu refrained from using the name Yeongwoo had given him.

To Yeongwoo's surprise, the chairman acknowledged Kobu.

—I have heard of the Hammers' reputation. Wasn't Buata's Grand Citadel your work?

—Y-Yes, that is correct.

Kobu shrank back excessively.

The reason soon became clear.

—Impressive craftsmanship. This is what I received while escaping from Buata.

Thunk.

The chairman tapped his left shoulder armor with a finger.

A deep gouge, as if from an axe blade, marred the surface.

—I-I apologize.

Though Yeongwoo didn't know exactly what Buata's Grand Citadel was, it had managed to leave a scar on Chairman Dogo's armor.

—It was a fascinating experience. You are worthy of receiving my signature. Present it.

Sssshhh!

Dogo drew his longsword from his waist.

Kobu trembled violently but raised a steel signing plate with both hands.

—Chairman! I am ready!

Kobu shouted with a courage that seemed more suited to facing execution than receiving a signature.

Chairman Dogo briefly turned his head to glance at the ceremonial gift ranking projected onto the main hall.

Then—

Slash!

Without a moment's hesitation, he swung his sword, leaving a massive slash mark across the signing plate.

Sizzle!

As the chairman's blade cut through steel, pure white flames scattered in the air.

And then, a never-before-seen inscription appeared on the ranking board.

<The King of Destruction, Dogo> has claimed the top spot on the ceremonial gift ranking!

‘...What?’

Immediately after, the rankings updated without listing any smaller amounts.

Flash!

[1st] Dogo – 「3 billion」

[2nd] Lemu, Lightning Rod – 「1.6 billion」

[3rd] Kwaya’s Hammer – Undisclosed

[4th] Cheok – 90 million

[5th] Osaek Credit – 50 million

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 394: Big Hand (4)

‘Wha... 3 billion?’

Yeongwoo’s eyes widened.

It was 3 billion karma in cash, not even discreetly handled.

It was essentially a congratulatory gift thrown out for Lemu to see.

‘W-Well, it’s definitely good, but... what is he planning for the second round?’

Knowing the chairman’s personality through the cards, Yeongwoo couldn’t help but worry.

Saving Face

<The power value is adjusted to always be higher than the opponent's. However, the power of the next round's card will decrease by the increased amount.>

As the characteristic of the chairman's "Dogo Card" suggested, the real chairman was highly sensitive to immediate victories.

There was no way such a chairman would show weakness at an event like this.

If anything, he would keep up the competition of congratulatory money even if it meant bankrupting the company.

Of course, the host would make an enormous amount of money, but to Yeongwoo, who now considered Dogo as "his company," this was not a welcome development.

'My company and the chairman aren't just money sources. They're my backing.'

If the company's situation worsened, what would happen?

Naturally, the cosmic standing of "Jeong Yeongwoo07" would weaken.

—Th... Three billion! Thank you very much.

Kobu received the signed receipt with great reverence, then spread his left hand to indicate the main building.

At the entrance, Chobu and Tobu were politely waiting for Dogo.

—The wedding hall preparations are complete. Guests may enter according to the ranking of their congratulatory money.

At that moment, a series of numbers appeared above everyone's heads.

Pa-pa-pa-pat!

It was a kind of numbering system.

It represented both the order of entry into the main hall and the ranking of their financial contributions.

—Already time to enter, huh?

Having bought the "1" spot above his head with a staggering 3 billion, Dogo nodded slightly and began moving towards the main hall.

Watching this, Yeongwoo grabbed Kobu, who was following the chairman, and whispered very softly.

“Wait. There’s still something to do.”

Kobu tried to shake him off and follow Dogo.

—P-Please don’t do this! This puts me in a difficult position...!

For Kobu, attending to the level 3 entity Dogo was far more important than following the host’s instructions.

Yeongwoo had anticipated this.

“It’s a direct order from the chairman.”

—R-Really?

Kobu stopped in his tracks and turned to Yeongwoo.

—What did the chairman order? Please tell me.

“Homeostasis.”

—.....?

“The guests from Earth won’t be able to withstand Mara’s presence. He said to reinforce homeostasis by creating a human-only seating area.”

Yeongwoo vaguely pointed somewhere in the main building.

Kobu nodded.

—As expected, the chairman is most considerate. Just as I have heard.

‘...What the hell has he heard? Has he lost his mind from nervousness...?’

Yeongwoo couldn’t relate, but Kobu was already moving to the next step.

—Rumors say that beings below grade 9 will perish when Mara descends.

“...What? Below grade 9?”

That meant every guest below grade 10 at today’s wedding was destined to die.

Even now, extraterrestrial guests were descending from their ships lined up in the sky.

The main ceremony was approaching.

“Isn’t grade 9 too high a threshold? That means just sparing humans isn’t enough.”

Yeongwoo said, incredulous.

Kobu nodded.

—That is correct.

“What?”

—This is precisely why it’s almost unheard of to invite the King of Ten Thousand Demons as a guest.

“...Shit, that makes sense.”

Yeongwoo scratched his cheek.

But they had already invited him—what now?

Moreover, Mara was the only running mate for the level 3 chairman.

Among the level 3 beings Yeongwoo knew, only Dogo and Mara existed.

“In that case, instead of a human-only seating area, we need a Mara Spectator Zone, right?”

—A seating area for beings below grade 9?

“Yes. Regardless of species, all guests should be able to watch Mara without dying.”

—That would require significant structural reinforcement.

Now it was Kobu’s turn to sound troubled.

—We would need a considerable additional payment...

“How much?”

There was no time for drawn-out negotiations, so Yeongwoo cut straight to the point.

“How much will it cost to protect all beings below grade 9? Give me the total sum.”

Kobu flicked his fingers as he calculated, then answered.

—48 million Karma.

“...What?”

—Based on the guest list we have received, we need a minimum of 48 million Karma.

“This is insane... That’s over 30% of the wedding venue’s remaining balance.”

Big business came with big risks.

‘No way. I still have to upgrade the city, and I’ll need a lot of money.’

Besides, if they failed to break through the wedding gift threshold, that money would become pure debt.

What to do?

“...!”

A flash of inspiration struck Yeongwoo’s mind.

“Let’s sell it.”

—What...?

“We’ll create the seating area first and then sell the seats. Who says only the top-ranked seat can be sold?”

—Are you suggesting selling the seats for beings below grade 9 separately?

Hearing this, Jiseon, who had been listening, interjected.

—That’s crazy. You’ve already sold the seats by accepting their congratulatory money.

Yeongwoo was ready for this.

“Exactly. So, those who made a contribution get to sit. However, if they’re below grade 9, they’ll die the moment they see Mara.”

—.....?

“That’s why they need to buy a ticket for a reinforced seat, where they can safely witness the ceremony and experience a once-in-a-lifetime Mara viewing.”

In other words, he was selling exclusive “Mara Spectator Seats.”

It was another premium product following the congratulatory money ranking seats.

“Kobu, if we divide 48 million Karma among all the guests below grade 9, how much does each need to pay?”

Kobu flicked his fingers again.

—According to the guest list, there are 61 beings below grade 9, including humans.

“...That’s more than I expected.”

—If we divide the additional cost among them equally...

Click.

Kobu finished his calculation.

—Each would need to pay approximately 7.87 million Karma.

“What? That’s cheap. ‘United we stand, divided we fall’ couldn’t be truer.”

Satisfied, Yeongwoo felt relieved.

Faced with a choice between life and death, most guests would pay whatever it took.

Moreover, it wasn’t just extortion—they were being given the chance to witness Mara firsthand, something they might never get again.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

“Then, let’s set the Mara Spectator Seat price at 7.87 million Karma. Keep the change.”

As Yeongwoo concluded the matter, Kobu hesitated for a moment before nodding.

—...Understood. I will proceed with the arrangements immediately.

Meanwhile, more and more alien guests continued to arrive.

The first merchant Yeongwoo had met since the Reset, the representative of the Five Rocks trading company, Chargo, arrived in a massive rock vessel.

Following him, the potter from Pegua, who had once sold Yeongwoo a tattoo, and the president of Guppy Express, a subsidiary of Dogo, also appeared in the lobby.

Business is booming.

As Yeongwoo smiled in satisfaction at the growing crowd of guests filling the lobby, someone spoke to him from behind.

「...Congratulations.」

“...Huh?”

Yeongwoo turned around, sensing an unfamiliar voice.

There stood a massive man with a crow’s head, holding a scythe.

“Oh?”

Yeongwoo’s pupils naturally dilated.

Then, after a moment of hesitation, he recalled the man’s name.

“The... Unbeliever?”

The renowned surgeon, valued at 45 million in karmic debt, who had once operated on Yeongwoo’s heart, had arrived as a guest.

“Aren’t you supposed to be on the run from the Chairman? Are you okay?”

When Yeongwoo asked this, the Mistrust Doctor opened his large beak.

「The Chairman sent an assassin to inform me that I would be granted amnesty for today’s ceremony.」

“.....?”

The words didn’t quite make sense, but Yeongwoo decided to let it slide.

He had just spotted Bantubangtong emerging from the corridor, dusting off his shoulders.

“Doctor, I really appreciate this.”

After hastily shaking the Mistrust Doctor’s scythe in gratitude, Yeongwoo rushed toward Lord Bang, who was looking around.

“Lord Bang...!”

—Ah, little foot.

Bantubangtong raised a hand in greeting, and behind him stood three particularly muscular members of the Red Foot tribe.

As Yeongwoo turned his gaze toward them, Lord Bang spoke.

—These are the greatest generals of our tribe.

“I see. But why have the best generals come here...?”

—Little foot, have you already forgotten what day it is today?

“Well, isn’t it my parents’ wedding cerem—”

Yeongwoo suddenly felt a searing heat on the back of his neck and stopped speaking mid-sentence.

“...I momentarily forgot what’s truly important.”

What kind of day was today?

It was the wedding day of Jiseon and Jeonggu.

But at the same time, it was also the day when they would finally see their tribe’s nemesis, Mara, in the flesh.

“Mara. He’ll be here today.”

—Then we must raise two toasts. One for Jiseon and Jeonggu, and another...

Lord Bang looked up at the sky.

—To celebrate Mara’s death in advance.

Mara’s death.

Could it really happen?

But Yeongwoo had already made a promise to the brothers—to help them seek their revenge.

They had become stars in the sky believing in that promise.

How could he betray them now?

Today, he might meet Mara as a guest at the ceremony, but next time, they might cross swords.

'No... if I think about it, I might end up being the one on the run. After all, I plan to take Mara's wedding gift and flee, and I must carry out my brothers' revenge one way or another.'

As Yeongwoo steeled his resolve, the rankings of wedding contributions, mostly filled with alien names, once again saw an entry from Earth.

Ping!

[1st place] Dogo, 「3 billion」

[2nd place] Lemu, Lightning Rod 「1.6 billion」

[3rd place] Kwaya's Hammer, Private

[4th place] Bantubangtong, 「100 million」

[5th place] Cheok, 90 million

"Huh, Lord Bang?"

A whole 100 million karma gifted.

He was dead serious about witnessing Mara in person today and firming up his resolve.

That meant the money was essentially the price for confronting Mara.

If, by any chance, Mara doesn't show up...

As Yeongwoo considered the worst possible scenario, his fears were quickly put to rest.

Rumble...!

The sky darkened to an ashen hue, and the congratulatory wreath sent from Dogo started to unlock its restraints.

Clank!

"...No way."

As Yeongwoo muttered in a low voice, Lord Bang suddenly drew his sword.

—Little foot, is it him? A disgusting stench fills the air.

He then looked up at the sky with a face full of resentment.

—I still have to look up at him. Can you understand how that makes me feel?

Grit.

Lord Bang ground his teeth.

Then, at last—

—Ah.

—This is...

The generals behind him furrowed their brows and clenched their teeth.

They too had caught the disgusting stench that Lord Bang spoke of.

What kind of smell are they talking about?

Yeongwoo, however, couldn't sense the smell they referred to.

Instead—

Fwoooooosh!

The already darkened sky grew even more intensely gray, waves of ashen color rippling outward.

It looked almost like—

“...Huh?”

Yeongwoo's eyes widened as he sensed something.

At the same moment, he turned his gaze toward the main hall of the ceremony.

Shhhhhhh!

A torrential downpour of ashen rain suddenly started pouring from the sky.

Before Mara even descended, the void matter was already surging forth.

“Mara is here! If you want to live, take cover inside the ceremony hall!”

Yeongwoo shouted, and the raindrops that had just begun striking the guests' heads suddenly froze in place.

Whoosh!

As if time itself had stopped—or rather, as if time had almost stopped.

The entire area around the ceremony hall had been swallowed by the domain of the void.

‘I’m... I’m screwed.’

Sensing an ominous turn of events, Yeongwoo darted his eyes around, and then—

From beyond the ashen downpour, a chilling voice resonated.

「The groom must show due respect before the Void.」

At that moment, an overwhelming pressure crashed down onto Yeongwoo’s knees.

The suffocating energy blanketing the area was forcing him to kneel.

Yeongwoo gritted his teeth, barely resisting the bizarre force, and finally managed to speak.

“I have yet to kneel even before my Chairman. If I were to show courtesy to the Void first, I would be dishonoring my Chairman.”

But Mara was not one to be swayed by words.

Shhhhhh!

Instead of answering, the pressure on Yeongwoo’s knees intensified.

‘Hurk...?’

If he refused to kneel, then his knees would simply be crushed until he collapsed.

Shit.

Just as Yeongwoo braced himself to make a decision—

—Mara!

A thunderous voice boomed from inside the ceremony hall.

—Enough of your nonsense! Come and see my throne already!

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 395: The Big Hand (5)

The Throne.

In Yeongwoo's wedding hall, there was only one throne.

It was the seat reserved for the number one contributor in the congratulatory gift ranking.

As a token of appreciation, the highest-ranking guest was given an iron throne that never touched the ground and could freely adjust its altitude and position.

Additionally, whoever sat on this throne had the authority to expel anyone from the venue—except for the third-ranked contributor.

So how could Mara, the so-called King of Ten Thousand Demons, have ever imagined that such a rule would exist at a wedding he was attending?

「The throne...?」

As expected, when Dogo urged him to come and take a look at the throne, Mara expressed his confusion.

And at that moment, the immense pressure that had been weighing down on Yeongwoo's knees vanished entirely.

'...Huh? Could it be that the chairman's words actually worked?'

Perhaps beings of a third-class existence only communicated properly with others of their level.

At the same time, the halted time within the wedding hall gradually resumed its natural flow.

Sssshhh!

Void rain struck the heads of the guests, dispersing a pungent energy, and the sky was now filled with an even darker shade of gray than before.

"Lord Bang, Mara will truly manifest soon. Hurry and take shelter in the hall!"

Yeongwoo pointed toward the main building, where reinforcement work was likely underway, but Lord Bang shook his head.

—I cannot turn my back on him again.

"What?"

—Give me Aratubank. I must stand here and face him.

Swish.

Lord Bang extended his red hand.

He was asking for help—to be allowed to face Mara directly.

Aratubank was a shield capable of blocking nearly all mental attacks.

By holding it, he could at least partially withstand Mara's overwhelming presence.

'Wait, then what about me?'

Yeongwoo wanted to refuse, but he knew he couldn't deny Lord Bang's request.

'...Damn it.'

After all, Aratubank was originally a sacred relic of Lord Bang and his brethren.

It must have been infuriating enough to merely have to look up at his mortal enemy, let alone be deprived of the very artifact meant for moments like this.

Yeongwoo could hardly fathom his emotions.

"...It wouldn't make sense to run twice."

Yeongwoo ultimately decided to hand over Aratubank to Lord Bang.

And the moment the sacred relic left Yeongwoo and returned to its rightful owner—

Fwoooosh!

"Urgh...!"

An overwhelming chill seized Yeongwoo.

This was the energy the void rain had been pressing down upon him all along.

'So I was able to keep my knees up thanks to Aratubank?!'

The realization struck him just as Lord Bang, now holding the relic, wore a sorrowful expression.

He had been freed from the void's energy the moment he grasped Aratubank, but instead of relief, he was overcome with grief.

Despite possessing such an incredible artifact, he and his kin had still lacked the power to protect their homeworld.

Even in exile, they had failed to keep this sacred relic safe.

—Little Foot, grow stronger. I hope you never come to understand the feeling I have right now.

"Lord Bang... I'll remember that."

Yeongwoo said the words, but in truth, he wanted nothing more than to bash Lord Bang on the head and take Aratubank back.

The void's energy surrounding the area was intensifying with every passing moment.

It was like suffering from an extreme fever—his entire body, no, even his mind, felt like it was convulsing.

His head was filled with chills, his vision swam with dizziness, and a needle-like pain pierced through him relentlessly.

'Is... is this what they call homeostasis deterioration? Can I even fight in this state?'

As Yeongwoo writhed in undeniable agony, Bantubangtong, who had been staring at the ashen sky, suddenly gasped.

—...Ah!

The sky had transformed into a grotesque gray stone wall, and at its center, a massive wrinkle began to form.

Creak.

Then, from that spot, five enormous tentacles emerged, intertwining as they descended toward the ground.

They took the shape of horns rising from the earth.

—Little Foot!

At Lord Bang's warning, Yeongwoo raised his head—just in time to witness something being formed at the ends of the tentacles, which had now descended 100 meters above the ground.

Slither.

At first, it was merely a gray droplet, like condensation at the tip of an icicle.

Then—

Slick!

In the blink of an eye, it took on the form of a gaunt human figure.

"...Huh."

Its skin had an uncanny, wax-like texture.

Though its skull bore a human-like shape, it had no facial features—just a vertical slit running from its forehead to its chin in place of eyes, nose, and mouth.

'Is that... Mara?'

The moment Yeongwoo fully took in Mara's grotesque appearance, it descended.

".....!"

There was no friction.

Not even the faintest sound of air splitting.

In absolute silence, its form cut through the ashen space, and an overwhelming presence crushed everyone who laid eyes upon it.

'H-holy...!'

It felt as if the mass of an entire planet had been crammed into that small body.

Its physical form was not large, but its perceived volume was beyond comprehension.

It was as if—

'Its... its shadow is expanding infinitely...!'

Overwhelmed by the sheer presence of the being before him, Yeongwoo wasn't even aware that he was forming coherent thoughts.

And the others—those hiding behind Aratubank—were no different.

—Hrrrk...!

—Uaargh!

They let out pitiful groans, collapsing onto the ground, unable to lift their heads.

All except for one.

—Raise your heads, Red Feet! Our tribe's enemy stands before us!

With blood-stained cries, Bantubangtong shouted desperately, his voice filled with both rage and despair.

For he had now fully realized the vast difference in power.

Their entire tribe could be resurrected thousands, even tens of thousands of times, and still not so much as graze this opponent.

—Maraaa...!

A name called out in a mixture of wrath, fear, and hatred.

But Mara did not respond.

He did not even spare a glance at the orc he considered a mere insect.

Instead—

「Dogo.」

He spoke the name of the only being present who stood on a comparable level.

「I have come to claim your proxy.」

Dogo's proxy.

That meant Yeongwoo.

Of course, Yeongwoo had previously told Mara something along those lines.

That if he came to the wedding and offered a congratulatory gift, he would consider changing sponsors.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

But while Yeongwoo had meant ‘consider,’ Mara had interpreted it as a confirmed contract.

‘If I had known a third-class existence was this powerful, I never would have said that...!’

Only now did he truly understand how much the chairman—a fellow third-class entity—had been holding back when dealing with Yeongwoo and the insignificant beings of Earth.

Yet, how could two third-class beings feel so utterly different?

—Claim my proxy? What nonsense. I’ve heard nothing of the sort.

Feigning ignorance, despite fully understanding why Mara had come, Dogo casually countered.

Then, he subtly proposed a competition of congratulations.

—In any case, doesn’t the validity of this so-called contract depend on full participation in the ceremony?

In other words, he was telling Mara to offer his gift and properly enter the wedding hall first.

「.....」

Instead of answering, Mara suddenly looked around.

‘...What is this?’

A sense of foreboding crept over him.

And, as expected, Dogo immediately intervened to stop Mara’s sudden action.

—The development rights dispute isn’t over yet. So it’d be best not to cross the line.

“.....!”

It seemed that Mara had just attempted to kill all the guests.

‘What the hell is wrong with this bastard?’

Were all third-class beings like this?

For a moment, Yeongwoo was overwhelmed with mixed emotions, thinking that Chairman Dogo might actually be the most reasonable among them.

And finally—

「Things are getting troublesome.」

Mara lowered his altitude slightly and moved closer to the lobby.

Clack!

At that moment, Dogo’s wreath, which had been loaded and waiting, shifted its aim.

“Huh?”

As Yeongwoo turned his head toward the wreath, sensing its movement—

Piaaaat!

A crimson projectile shot out from the wreath, heading straight for Mara.

‘Chairman...? A pincer attack strategy?’

Startled, Yeongwoo instinctively reached for Bastard at his waist, preparing for the worst.

Seeing this, Mara let out a scoffing sound, almost a laugh.

「What a ridiculous fool.」

Then, he extended countless arms from his back, grabbing hold of the projectile.

Kwoooaak!

‘These lunatics...’

Yeongwoo’s eyes widened at the sight of the mass of arms, which resembled butterfly wings.

Pwoooooosh!

The projectile exploded midair, scattering bright red powder everywhere.

Now it was clear—the projectile was never meant to deal damage.

It was simply a means to disperse the powder.

Tssssssss...!

The crimson powder reacted with the ashen space, erasing the void that had been engulfing the wedding hall.

—Were you planning to kill all the guests before the ceremony even started?

「You're overstepping, Dogo.」

—This is my event too. Look at the congratulatory gift rankings.

「...What?」

Congratulatory gift rankings.

Mara seemed momentarily thrown off by the unfamiliar term.

He moved through the air a little faster than before, heading toward the gift table.

There, cowering near the gift table, a pitiful Kobu trembled as he manipulated a device with shaking hands.

Tap!

Soon, a hologram was projected from the gift table, displaying the ranking board on the main building's exterior wall.

[Gift Rankings]

[1st] Dogo – 「3 billion」

[2nd] Lemu, Lightning Rod – 「1.6 billion」

[3rd] Hammer of Kwaya – Private

[4th] Bantubangtong – 100 million

[5th] Cheok – 90 million

「.....?」

Mara looked at the ranking in disbelief.

「What is this?」

—It's like ownership shares in the event. Right now, I am the king of this wedding hall.

At that, Dogo could no longer contain himself.

He left the main building, still seated on his throne.

Fwaaaash!

—Only I have the right to fly inside that hall.

For the first time since arriving on Earth, Mara displayed emotion.

「What did you say?」

It was brief, but clearly a moment of outrage.

‘Wait... Is the right to fly considered a basic right for third-class beings?’

While Yeongwoo tilted his head in confusion, Mara approached the gift table and placed his hand on the surface, as if unable to believe what he was hearing.

Thud.

Immediately, a detailed holographic text explaining the wedding's ranking system appeared above the gift table.

Mara read it, then turned his gaze toward Dogo, who was now hovering higher than him.

「All but the top three can be expelled...? What kind of wedding is this?」

At that moment, the current rank one in gift contributions, Dogo, looked down at Mara with an arrogant expression from his throne.

—Winner takes all... That is the way of Earth. Are you afraid?

Dogo's voice echoed from within his armor, a low and mocking tone.

Hearing this, Mara let out a sinister chuckle through the gaps in his head.

「Fool. Your contribution is public information. Which means soon, it will be you groveling on the ground!」

Then, he turned to Kobu at the gift table and barked an order.

「Is the Void Slate ready? If not, I will inscribe it upon your flesh instead.」

—V-Void Slate! It is ready!

Thankfully, Yeongwoo had purchased a special signature slate in advance, sparing Kobu's life.

Finally, Kobu retrieved the Void Slate from inside the gift table.

At that moment, Mara spoke in his eerie, chilling voice.

「Delegate, what do you desire as your gift? Choose.」

“...Pardon? You mean that seriously?”

Yeongwoo asked in disbelief, but Mara ignored him and instead began reciting a list of words.

「Eyes, arms, legs.」

‘What the hell is he saying? This psycho...’

But Mara seemed completely serious.

「Consider it an honor that the Void even acknowledges your wretched body.」

“What... Are you seriously talking about bodily gifts?”

Mara repeated the words once again.

「Eyes, arms, legs.」

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 396: Big Hand (6)

The axis of the body.

While there was some hope that the "big shots" might bless him with high-end equipment, he had never expected them to replace parts of his body.

'Eyes, arms, legs? Can't they just give me some ridiculously powerful necklace or something...?'

Though Yeongwoo found it unsettling, he wasn't oblivious.

His opponent was the embodiment of tyranny itself.

There was no way negotiation or flattery would work on someone like this.

'This bastard... If he gets the slightest bit annoyed, he'll probably throw a fit and act like his nonexistent eyeballs are rolling back again. Better to just go along with it quietly.'

Even the most infamous troublemaker in the universe was forced to take a step back in front of this overwhelming presence... The true king of the Thousand Demons, indeed.

「You think too much for a mere insect. Do not make me wait.」

As expected, Mara urged Yeongwoo to make his decision.

His temper was as foul as his personality was impatient.

"...I just choose one, right?"

「.....」

Of course, Mara didn't answer.

Yeongwoo could only furrow his brows.

'Shit... What the hell am I supposed to choose?'

Eyes, arms, legs.

Each option likely had completely different effects.

His first instinct was to go with an arm, but after thinking it through, he realized that was a mistake.

'I need to consider the effects of bodily loss. If worse comes to worst, I might have to cut it off again. An arm is too valuable to waste on a blessing like this.'

「Body Deficiency」 - Epic Breastplate

【Power increases up to 80% depending on the degree of limb loss.】

Then what about a leg?

‘Same problem. Losing a leg is troublesome. If, for some reason, it gets taken away, that would be the most annoying to deal with.’

Losing an arm might still be manageable, but losing a leg would be much harder to overcome.

That left only one option.

‘...An eye? I really wanted to avoid this.’

Replacing his eye with something gifted by the master of the Void... It was a deeply unsettling thought.

Even just wearing a transformed lens cornea had given him chills all over his body—what would happen with an eyeball born from the Void itself?

‘And what if it gets taken away? Do I just go blind then?’

Thinking this far, Yeongwoo carefully asked,

“If I choose an eye, do I get both?”

Mara stared at him with that eerie face.

「Do you wish for both? If your body can endure it, I will grant them.」

“N-No, one is enough.”

That was actually a relief.

No more hesitation was needed.

“Then... I'll take the eye.”

The moment Yeongwoo made his choice, Mara moved a single finger in the air.

Swoosh.

A void opened over the blessing platform, and from within, a small object wrapped in smoke dropped down with a soft plop.

‘W-Wait, is that...?’

No matter how he looked at it, it was the size of a human eyeball.

As Yeongwoo instinctively moved toward it, Mara gave a nod, signaling his approval.

「Your curiosity is only natural. Go and see for yourself—the power of the Void’s gift.」

“M-Master Mara!”

With official permission granted, Yeongwoo rushed to the blessing platform and carefully picked up the smoke-wrapped eye.

Squelch.

“...Huh?”

Contrary to its appearance, the eye was incredibly hard and cold.

Almost as if it were made of metal.

Yeongwoo lifted it, disbelief written all over his face.

“This... This is...”

Soon, after Jiseon and Jeonggu successfully broke through their tribulations, this would replace Yeongwoo’s eye.

As expected, it was an eyeball forged from the Void itself.

「Ominous Eye」 – Void Eyeball

【Insight ability increased by 50%.】

【Sensory stats increased by 40%.】

【Ashen Gaze】

【Ashen Gaze】

|Allows you to perceive through the Void.|

‘This is real?’

Yeongwoo blinked in disbelief at its absurd abilities.

The sensory stat boost alone was ridiculous.

【Sensory stats increased by 40%.】

‘40 percent? If my sensory stat is 10,000, that’s an extra 4,000?’

If this was the effect of an eye, what kind of buffs did the arm or leg provide?

This wasn’t just an item—it was a piece of overwhelming power.

‘If I serve under Master Mara, I’d become insanely strong, wouldn’t I?’

If this was the power granted just from a single eye, how much more would he receive as Mara’s proxy?

And the first option in the description wasn’t ordinary either.

【Insight ability increased by 50%.】

‘Insight ability... It must refer to something like a holographic battle guide.’

Most martial arts contained a built-in combat guidance system.

So "insight ability" likely referred to enhancing that system’s effectiveness.

It was similar to the effect of 「Illusion」 - Unique Shoes, which allowed him to evade enemy detection in combat by disrupting their battle guides.

「Illusion」 - Unique Shoes

【30% chance of detection evasion.】

‘How much does this one eye boost my combat power? Those bastards probably have stuff like this all over them, huh?’

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Yeongwoo glanced at the two high-ranking beings nearby.

Just then, the blessing platform suddenly flashed, displaying a notification.

Flash!

<King of the Myriad Demons, Mara, has forcefully claimed the top ranking for blessings!>

'Huh? Top ranking forcibly claimed?'

The wording was different from when President Dogo received his blessing.

'Wait... This platform actually changes its wording depending on who it's dealing with?'

Yeongwoo finally realized that even the blessing platform itself adjusted its behavior based on the rank of the recipient.

And then, at last—

Ping!

The top ranking in the registry changed to Mara.

[Rank 1] Mara, Ominous Eye [Private]

[Rank 2] Dogo, [3 Billion]

[Rank 3] Lemu, Lightning Rod [1.6 Billion]

[Rank 4] Kwaya's Hammer, Private

[Rank 5] Cheok, 90 Million

'What? That one eyeball is worth more than 3 billion?'

Yeongwoo's mouth dropped open.

Well, considering that the Lightning Rod, which absurdly increased lightning resistance, was worth 1.6 billion, it wasn't too surprising that an eye capable of enhancing sensory perception and insight would be worth tens of billions.

'This is a completely different world. How do they even make equipment like that?'

Yeongwoo gazed at the registry rankings with awe.

It was shocking enough that such outrageously expensive equipment existed, but even more significant was the fact that someone was actually creating them.

Master Mara could craft equipment with the [Void] grade, and Chairman Dogo also produced equipment marked with [◇ Dogo]...

'Wait, no. [◇ Dogo] is company equipment. I don't think I've ever seen the chairman's personal equipment.'

His mind snapped into focus.

Come to think of it, every piece of Dogo equipment he had seen so far carried the manufacturing mark [◇], indicating company production.

If the chairman was a Rank 3 being like Mara, then he should have the authority and ability to create his own unique gear, yet Yeongwoo had never seen it.

‘Or... is the Vesedel equipment actually the chairman’s personal gear?’

It was impossible to know.

The only way to find out would be to ask the chairman directly...

“Ah.”

But that didn’t seem possible at the moment.

Because, as soon as the top ranking changed, the Iron Throne that had been supporting Chairman Dogo vanished.

Pop!

— ...Unbelievable.

For just a brief moment, Chairman Dogo’s body lost balance under the pull of gravity, and Mara, noticing this slip, pointed a finger at him and laughed.

「Look at that! Dogo is floundering!」

Then, pressing a hand against the newly materialized Iron Throne in front of him, Mara turned to look at Yeongwoo.

「Today, I have given you a new eye, and now you get to witness something precious.」

His voice was still chilling, yet his tone carried an unfamiliar kindness.

Mara was truly enjoying himself.

‘...These guys, if I push them just a little more, they might start throwing money around like crazy.’

As Yeongwoo teetered on the edge of an epiphany, Mara settled himself onto his own throne.

Then, passing above Dogo, who was now lower in altitude, Mara entered the ceremonial hall first.

Inside, a grand virgin road stretching hundreds of meters and rows of guest seats awaited, with Lemu seated in the third-place seat at the far end.

「Ah, Lemu. Cleverly seated in the third-place spot, I see.」

Mara tapped his chin with a long finger as he spoke.

In response, Lemu rose from his seat and bowed toward the King of Ten Thousand Demons.

□ I did not expect the Void himself to make an appearance.

「Dogo essentially summoned me. That bastard provokes me, does he not?」

He was referring to the competition for Earth's development rights.

Originally, Mara would have overwhelmed the other companies with sheer force, but the unexpected arrival of Dogo, another Rank 3 entity, had complicated matters.

Meanwhile, outside the ceremonial hall, Dogo, now throne-less thanks to Mara, was watching Yeongwoo from above.

— The time for the dowry breakthrough is approaching. Do you have anyone to assist Jiseon and Jeonggu?

Yeongwoo tilted his head in confusion.

“Huh...? Assist them?”

— Many guests will try to obstruct the dowry breakthrough.

“Well, that makes sense...”

— But some guests may choose to assist. Do you not have such people?

“Guests... helping with the dowry breakthrough? You're saying that some guests might fight off the ones interfering?”

— Exactly.

Simply put, even the guests could engage in physical combat.

Of course, considering Yeongwoo's long history of accumulating bad karma, it was unlikely that any of his guests would willingly forfeit their chance to reclaim their registry contributions.

“Ah... Unfortunately, I don't think I have any crazy guests like that...”

Just as Yeongwoo was reflecting on his guest list, filled with nothing but bad karma—

Bwoooong...!

A deep, resounding ship horn echoed powerfully from far away.

“W-What is that?”

Even Yeongwoo, the host of the event, looked puzzled at this completely different type of entrance.

And for good reason—along with the horn's blaring, the sky itself began to turn golden.

Fwaaah!

Though it didn't fully push back the dense void matter covering the sky, it managed to carve out just enough space for a ship to appear.

That alone was impressive.

Bwoooong!

The same sound rang out again.

It carried a strangely reverent aura, prompting some of the guests already inside the venue to step outside for a look.

And then, finally—

Fwaaaah!

From within the golden waves that had taken over a portion of the sky, a massive, porcelain-like white ship emerged.

“...What.”

Yeongwoo's eyes widened in shock as a booming voice resounded from the ship.

「Prince Aldo of the Shelbir Royal Family has arrived...!」

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

## Chapter 397: Gift Breakthrough (1)

"Aldo...!"

Yeongwoo's eyes widened even more than when he had seen Mara, the King of Ten Thousand Demons.

Because that man—Aldo—was...

—Why, why? Who is it?

Jiseon, who had stepped outside the wedding hall, was startled by Yeongwoo's reaction and asked in confusion.

Yeongwoo, wearing a dazed expression, opened his mouth.

"...It's Prince Aldo."

—Prince Aldo? Are you saying there's another prince you know besides the chairman?

Of course, Jiseon had no idea about what had happened at the Promotion Halls.

So, Yeongwoo had no choice but to explain.

That a crazy saint from the stars had come to his wedding.

"The Shelbir Royal Family of Planet Doatel... They've done so much good that they're called the Intergalactic Relief Center."

—...What? Then why are they here?

To be precise, the question was how Yeongwoo had become involved with such noble people.

Jiseon was well aware of the kinds of things her son, Jeong Yeongwoo, had been doing both on and off Earth.

"...We were comrades."

—Comrades?

"Promotion training peers. Strictly speaking, they received a lot of help from me."

At the same time, it was true that Yeongwoo had also received some help from them.

Though, in terms of overall influence, Yeongwoo's presence had been overwhelmingly dominant.

—Then... isn't this a good thing?

"Well... He's crazy in a different way, too."

Aldo, the second prince of the Shelbir Royal Family.

Yeongwoo had indeed handed him a wedding invitation at the Promotion Halls, but he hadn't seriously considered the possibility of his visit.

And understandably so—just look at the lineup of guests who had arrived before him.

The venue was packed with people radiating an overwhelming aura of villainy, so much so that someone as gentle as Aldo had long since slipped from Yeongwoo's mind.

But Aldo, having received the invitation, had crossed the vast expanse of space to keep his promise.

And at last, he had arrived on Earth, the home planet of Jeong Yeongwoo07, the Number One Sword of the Promotion.

BAAAAAANG...!

A deep, resonant sound echoed again—a combination of grandeur and solemnity.

Then, through the golden waves unfurled by the Shelbir Royal Family, several small ships descended in an orderly line.

"Huh."

Only now did Yeongwoo realize—some guests had been unable to enter because Mara's void energy had blocked their way.

And now, they were slipping through the passage Aldo's fleet had opened.

'Wait, so guests were still stuck outside? No wonder it felt like a few were missing.'

Realizing that Mara had been an enormous nuisance, Yeongwoo shot a glare toward the main wedding venue.

And then—

"Your Highness...!"

He spread his arms wide and ran toward Prince Aldo's descending ship.

KWAAAAAAAAAH!

The Shelbir Royal Family's ship, now hovering just 100 meters above the ground, was truly a sight to behold.

Not only was it three times the size of an average battleship, but its docking position was also unusual.

Because—

'...Wait, is that okay?'

They had chosen to dock right next to Chairman Dogo's tomb-ship.

Unlike every other guest who had steered clear of Dogo's vessel, Aldo's ship was parked boldly beside it.

"Wow, Your Highness?"

To dare to share a docking site with a Tier 3 entity... And given that the two ships were similar in size, it almost looked like two equal-tier beings had stationed their ships side by side.

SHAAAAAAAAA!

Next, from the bottom of the Shelbir ship, an arched bridge extended gracefully to the ground.

THUMP! THUMP!

It was a sort of landing support system.

"What the...?"

Noticing the bridge's smooth, porcelain-like material, Yeongwoo slowly lifted his gaze to look at the lower section of the ship.

Then, a rectangular opening appeared, revealing a pristine white staircase descending all the way to the ground.

SWOOOSH!

One by one, imposing figures stepped onto the stairs.

"Oh, Prince Aldo...."

Just as Yeongwoo recognized a familiar silhouette and was about to wave, a booming voice rang out from within the ship.

-The host must show proper respect before the prince!

"Ah, for crying out loud, who the hell is saying that?"

Annoyed, Yeongwoo snapped his head up—just in time to see "someone" stepping down the stairs.

CLANK, CLANK!

The footsteps were heavy, armored, and imposing.

The figure was a towering knight clad in full white armor.

He was about 8 meters tall.

Like Aldo, he was a member of the caramel race.

The proof?

The yellow caramel protruding from the top of his helmet.

However, unlike Aldo's typically gooey appearance, this knight's caramel had hardened into a rigid, rectangular shape.

'...A royal knight?'

Perhaps the toughest, most unyielding caramel in the entire Shelbir Royal Family—maybe even all of Planet Doatel.

-Are you the host, Jeong Yeongwoo07?

The caramel knight, now halfway down the stairs, looked down at Yeongwoo and asked.

He had no eyes, nose, or mouth—no facial expressions at all.

And yet, Yeongwoo could tell.

This guy was looking at him with sheer arrogance.

"Yeah, I'm Jeong Yeongwoo07, the Strongest Sword of the Korean Peninsula and the mayor of Metal Seoul in Dogo Special City."

Hearing this rather grandiose introduction, the knight's smooth, featureless head subtly twitched.

Then, he twirled the long flagpole in his right hand and declared—

-I am Domtao, a special knight of the Shelbir Royal Family. Host, why do you not pay your respects beneath the royal flag?

"The royal flag?"

Only then did Yeongwoo look up at the beige flag atop the pole.

There, emblazoned on it, was an emblem resembling the Shelbir ship—a round, jar-like symbol.

"Oh, so that's the Shelbir flag. How exactly am I supposed to show respect to it?"

To answer, Special Knight Domtao demonstrated the proper gesture.

CLANK.

He dropped to one knee, lifted his upper body, and fixed his gaze on the royal emblem atop the flagpole.

Then, stretching out his left arm, he solemnly proclaimed—

-Glory to the Shelbir Royal Family!

"Ah. That's enough. Let's keep it brief."

Seeing Domtao's display, Yeongwoo grimaced and simply nodded toward the Shelbir emblem.

"Glory to the Shelbir Royal Family."

Then, he stepped onto the white stairs, probably to call Aldo, who was inside the ship.

Swoosh.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

At that moment, Domtao, standing at a towering 8 meters, moved with a massive presence, blocking Yeongwoo's path.

-Hey, Earthling. Move your foot. This is Shelbir territory. Wait outside.

The message was clear—he was not to set foot on the royal family's ship.

"...What?"

Yeongwoo chuckled dryly at the unexpected toughness.

Then, peering past Domtao's arm and waist to glance up the stairs, he muttered:

"So, not all caramel people are soft. Was it just our prince who was an exception?"

Domtao snapped back with an indignant tone.

-You insolent wretch!

But though he twisted his body menacingly, he did not actually strike or push Yeongwoo.

"Hmm."

In the end, this royal special knight was still from the peaceful planet Doatel—violence and cruelty were far from his nature.

'No, but if even the royal knights are like this, how do they expect to protect this planet?'

Clicking his tongue inwardly, Yeongwoo stepped off the ship's stairs, complying with Domtao's demand.

After all, these were honored guests who had traveled across the vastness of space.

Even if they weren't of royal blood, as the host, he had to show them respect.

BAAAAANG...!

Soon, the distinctive horn of the ship sounded again, and Domtao turned toward the rear, raising his voice.

-Prince! Everything is ready!

Then, he knelt on one knee toward the top of the stairs.

At that moment, the silhouettes at the end of the stairs began to move slowly.

"Oh..."

The figures gradually emerged into view.

As expected, at the forefront stood Prince Aldo, a giant at 5 meters tall with broad shoulders.

Flanking him were knights clad in white armor, each about 6 meters tall, wielding massive one-handed war hammers, standing in formation as his honor guard.

'Royal families have significant prestige no matter the planet's rank, huh? Pretty impressive for a caramel royal family.'

As Yeongwoo observed the imposing sight of Aldo's escort, Domtao quietly made a request—more of a plea.

-Jeong Yeongwoo 07, I have heard much of your infamous reputation.

"...Huh?"

-But I implore you, please do nothing to disgrace His Highness's honor.

"No, I mean—"

Yeongwoo was about to retort that coming to this planet in the first place had already been a huge mistake.

But he didn't get the chance.

Before he could finish speaking, Aldo raised his arm in greeting.

—Oh, Sir Yeongwoo!

As Aldo lifted his enormous arm, another familiar face appeared under his armpit.

"Wait, that's—"

It was none other than Amana, the guardian of the Sacred Planet Sutral.

And not just her—beside her stood Taru, an elemental-immune golem from Pigot Planet.

Prince Aldo had brought both of them along on his ship.

"What the... How did all three of you end up together?"

When Yeongwoo expressed his surprise, Aldo responded with a bright smile, shaping his head into a round circle.

—Is this not a grand occasion for you, Sir Yeongwoo? Celebrations hold more meaning when shared. We gathered here to offer our heartfelt congratulations!

However, unlike the cheerful Aldo, Amana and Taru seemed to sense something deeply unsettling about this planet.

—Ugh, where is that rotten stench coming from?

Amana covered her beak's nostrils with her hand.

Taru wrapped his arms around himself, shivering.

—I... I feel uneasy. There's no natural energy in the atmosphere.

Indeed, this was Earth—the planet that had birthed Supreme Evil.

To the two veteran warriors, Earth was nothing more than a horrifying den of wickedness.

Even Domtao, the royal knight, seemed to sense something amiss.

-Jeong Yeongwoo 07, if there is anything we should be cautious of, speak now. Everything—leave nothing out.

Yeongwoo subtly glanced at the grand hall, where a thick, acrid energy was emanating.

"First, be sure to show proper respect. Many kings are gathered inside."

-...Kings?

"And most importantly... try not to offer any congratulatory gifts."

Hearing this, Aldo's face suddenly brightened.

—Oh! A congratulatory gift!

"...?"

—I almost forgot. We brought a wedding gift!

Then, in a regal voice, Aldo called toward the interior of the ship.

—Bring forth the wedding gift!

A series of heavy clanking sounds echoed, followed by synchronized, rhythmic footsteps.

Clank! Clank! Clank!

It was like a military parade—knights in white armor marching in perfect formation.

Each group of four carried an enormous palanquin filled to the brim with blue coins.

'Wait... blue coins?'

Yeongwoo blinked in disbelief.

Blue coins were rare, only awarded for extraordinary achievements, each worth 50,000 Karma.

And yet, here were caramel knights, carrying palanquins overflowing with them.

Clank! Clank! Clank!

More knights emerged from the ship—endlessly.

'No way... This bastard—no, His Highness...'

Faced with this overwhelming tide of wealth, Yeongwoo, who had remained unfazed even against Mara's malevolent energy, found his knees buckling.

Thud!

At last, Yeongwoo knelt before the flag of the Shelbir Royal Family.

Then, raising his left arm, he declared with heartfelt fervor:

"Long live the Shelbir Royal Family...! Welcome to Earth, everyone!"

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 398: Gift Breakthrough (2)

Doatel.

A planet of the Virtuous Ones, also known as a cosmic relief sanctuary.

As such, the primary purpose of Doatel was to help the poor or aid those in distress who sought refuge there.

In other words—

‘Wait... aren’t they just a bunch of people giving away money? Then why does the royal family have so much wealth?’

Of course, it was also possible that they were able to engage in relief efforts precisely because they had so much money.

But even so, running planetary-scale relief operations must incur substantial costs... How on earth were they covering those expenses?

‘Where did all this money even come from? They couldn’t have been born into a pile of cash.’

As Yeongwoo stared at the endlessly stretching procession of palanquins carrying gifts, a massive shadow loomed over him.

—Yeongwoo-nim.

It was none other than Prince Aldo.

“Ah, Your Highness.”

As soon as Yeongwoo saw him, he gave a polite nod, to which Aldo responded with a similar bow.

—Thank you for the invitation. I’ve never traveled this far before.

"This far," he says...

If even Aldo, who had arrived on that massive spaceship, considered this distance significant, then just how far apart were Earth and Doatel?

“Is that ship yours, Your Highness?”

Yeongwoo asked, pointing at the colossal vessel that resembled a giant ceramic artifact. Aldo shook his hands in denial.

—Mine? No, all of this belongs to the Shelbir royal family and to Doatel. Our presence here is also in accordance with Doatel’s will.

“...Wait, you mean Doatel is aware that you’re bringing all this money here?”

—Of course. As soon as I returned to Doatel from the Promotion Hall, I made an official announcement, and I have fully informed them about you as well.

‘...Fully informed?’

Just what had he told them?

Yeongwoo doubted that someone like Aldo would go around speaking ill of him.

If anything, that made him even more uneasy.

“So, in short, this is a lawful visit? And the congratulatory gifts were obtained legally as well?”

—Naturally, Yeongwoo-nim.

“Hm.”

In that case, there was nothing more to worry about.

The financial power of the Shelbir royal family remained a mystery, but Yeongwoo had no reason to turn away incoming gifts.

‘And really, when else would I get to handle such righteous money?’

However, just because the gifts were legal didn’t mean all problems were solved.

After all, the competition over wedding gifts was a fierce battle involving the Chairman, Master Mara, and CEO Lemu.

Now, a massive new financial force had just entered the fray out of nowhere.

‘Shit, what’s going to happen now?’

Yeongwoo had no way of predicting how the existing financial titans would react to the sudden intrusion of Prince Aldo—no, the Shelbir royal family—into the game.

And before he could even sort out his thoughts, Aldo had already taken a step toward the lobby.

Yeongwoo hurriedly grabbed his arm.

“Your Highness!”

—Yes, Yeongwoo-nim?

“Have you ever met a villain before?”

As Yeongwoo asked, Aldo, who had been looking at the execution platform in the lobby, slowly turned his head.

—.....

Aldo had no visible eyes, nose, or mouth, so his expression and gaze were unreadable.

Yet, Yeongwoo was certain.

He was staring right at him.

“N-no, not someone like me—a villain wannabe. I mean a real villain! A much greater one!”

—Are you saying... there are villains greater than you, Yeongwoo-nim?

“...Ha.”

Yeongwoo felt a headache coming on.

This naive Virtuous One had clearly never encountered true evil from the other side of the universe.

“Right now, at that wedding venue, there’s a chairman of a weapons manufacturing company, the King of Ten Thousand Demons, and the Master of the Machine Tower. The other guests? Loan sharks and arms dealers selling equipment to backwater planets like this one.”

Yeongwoo openly disparaged his own wedding guests.

Yet Aldo didn’t seem to grasp the weight of it.

Instead, he placed a large hand on Yeongwoo’s shoulder and spoke.

—Yeongwoo-nim.

“Yes?”

—The universe is like a mirror that reflects oneself.

“...What?”

—You came before me as the self-proclaimed greatest villain of the Promotion Hall, yet in the end, you became my benefactor.

“.....”

He wasn't entirely wrong.

Though he had forced countless fellow participants to take on promissory notes, he hadn't actually taken their lives as originally planned.

Especially for Aldo and the 023 trillion-credit group, he had even granted them the privilege of additional promotions.

So, yes, in a way, he had been a benefactor.

“Well... I suppose that's true, but...”

—I've told you before. Good and evil are not absolute. Just as it was in the Promotion Hall, the karma of this place will also converge toward zero.

Swoosh!

Coincidentally, the very moment Aldo finished speaking, the executioner's blade fell upon the platform in the distance.

Yet Aldo paid no mind to it.

Instead, he spread his arms wide, as if embracing Earth's atmosphere.

Fwoosh!

—That, I believe, is why I was invited as your guest. You accumulated virtue in the Promotion Hall. I know this, and so I have come to return that virtue in kind.

In other words, if this planet had amassed immense evil, Aldo intended to counterbalance it with his own good deeds, thus restoring "harmony."

“...If you put it that way...”

Yeongwoo nodded.

But that was easier said than done.

The villains gathered here were on a completely different level from the amateur scoundrels at the Promotion Hall.

“For now... shall we make our offering?”

At last, Yeongwoo stepped toward the lobby, pointing at the gift table. Aldo nodded in response.

At his signal, Special Knight Domtao ordered the procession of palanquins carrying the wedding gifts to move forward once more.

Step! Step! Step!

The sound of their powerful footsteps echoed.

Hearing this, the wedding guests inside began to step out one by one to observe the spectacle.

Chairman Dogo, who had been loitering in the lobby, crossed his arms with an intrigued expression.

Lemu, too, observed the Shelbir royal family’s treasure-laden procession with a subtle smile.

And lastly—

「I smell fresh blood.」

The current top-ranked gift-giver, the King of Ten Thousand Demons, Mara, appeared at the main entrance, seated upon his Iron Throne.

Even he couldn’t ignore the presence of such an extraordinary new guest.

Clank! Clank!

Before long, the knights of the Shelbir royal family lined up in the middle of the lobby and simultaneously set down their large palanquins.

Boom!

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

The heavy crashing sound came not from anything ordinary—but from piles of money.

—...!

—W-What is this?

As expected, the guests in attendance flinched and stepped back.

Then, Aldo, flanked by Domtao for security, stepped in front of the ceremonial platform.

—Your Highness, it appears this is the ceremonial platform.

Domtao, glancing at the stack of signature boards behind the platform, spoke.

At that moment, Kobu, who had been standing in front, slowly stood up and fidgeted his fingers as he looked at the emblem of the Shelbir royal family.

It was clearly an insignia of a significant power, yet he had never seen this exact design before.

Then, from outside the ceremonial platform, an entirely unexpected statement came from none other than Chairman Dogo.

—Do you not know? It's the Shelbir royal family of Doatel.

—Huh.

—Ah!

"What?"

Not only the guests but even Yeongwoo was astonished.

'Seriously? Is there anything Chairman doesn't know?'

How could the chairman, who was practically the embodiment of evil, know the name of a royal family from Doatel—a planet known for reaching the pinnacle of virtue?

Then, Domtao leaned toward the ceremonial platform and spoke in a low voice.

—This is Prince Aldo.

At those words, Kobu immediately prostrated himself on the ground and shouted loudly.

—I humbly greet Prince Aldo of the Shelbir royal family...!

Then, as he carefully got up, he cast a quick glance at the high-ranking guests near the lobby.

—Um... Your Highness, here you can check the rankings and rules for the ceremonial donations... After that, you may set the donation amount you wish to offer and sign.

—Oh, so there's a ranking system for ceremonial donations?

Aldo's head twisted in a spiral motion.

Sliiide.

If he were human, it would have looked like a puzzled tilt of the head.

Then, placing his hand on the upper panel of the ceremonial platform, just as Kobu had indicated—

Tap.

The platform was instantly enveloped in an otherworldly light, projecting the ceremonial donation system before Aldo's eyes.

From the tiered seating system based on rankings to the privilege of expelling guests for the top-ranked donor, and even the significance of the third-tier seats—everything was laid out.

—Uh... This seems like a mistake.

Seeing the words "Guest Expulsion" on the display, Aldo turned around.

In response, Yeongwoo shrugged and explained.

"You read it correctly. The highest-ranked donor's ultimate privilege is the right to expel guests."

—Wait... But that doesn't make sense. Why would someone who values this ceremony enough to donate the most money want to expel another guest?

At that moment, a sharp voice shot toward Aldo.

「You fool. You're going to be expelled anyway, so just shut up and make your donation.」

—Pardon...?

Only then did Aldo notice the towering Iron Throne suspended high above and the figure seated upon it—Mara.

—Excuse me, but who might you be?

「Hah, you dare ask for my name?」

Mara, enraged, gripped the armrest of the throne.

From it, a surge of immense void energy burst forth, engulfing the entire lobby.

Fwoooosh!

“This is insane!”

Feeling the sudden plummet in stability, Yeongwoo urgently pointed toward the main building and shouted.

“Your Highness! That is none other than the number one-ranked donor, King of Ten Thousand Demons—Mara!”

—T-That person is ranked first?

Finally, Aldo followed Yeongwoo’s pointing finger and checked the ranking board on the main hall’s wall.

[Rank 1] Mara, Ominous Eye 「Private Amount」

[Rank 2] Dogo 「3 Billion」

[Rank 3] Lemu, Lightning Rod 「1.6 Billion」

[Rank 4] Hammer of Kwaya, Private Amount

[Rank 5] Cheok, 90 Million

—Ah.

Letting out a short exclamation, Aldo seemed to have realized something.

He turned back to Yeongwoo and declared.

—Now I finally understand why I’ve come here!

“...What?”

—The balance of this ceremony... is still not right!

Swoosh!

With an unprecedentedly determined motion, Aldo placed his hand firmly on the ceremonial platform.

—As someone who wholeheartedly celebrates this ceremony, I must restore balance!

In other words—he intended to become the top donor himself and expel the King of Ten Thousand Demons.

Swooooosh!

By now, the void energy that had engulfed the lobby had become a storm, constricting the guests.

More specifically, it was a tempest meant to tear apart Prince Aldo for daring to offend Mara.

“...Didn't you just say that someone who truly values the ceremony wouldn't expel another guest?”

Struggling against the raging void, Yeongwoo managed to voice his question.

Aldo, gripping the ceremonial platform, shook his head.

—This isn't expelling a guest, Yeongwoo!

“Th-Then what is it?”

—It's about removing evil karma!

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 399: Gift Breakthrough (3)

"Ah...!"

It's not about expelling the guests, but rather alleviating the negative karma...

'It makes sense!'

Upon hearing Aldo's words, Yeongwoo's eyes widened in realization.

If the balance of this planet is off, even with Aldo, the extreme righteous prince, personally making his appearance, the only option left would be to reduce the overflowing negative karma.

Moreover, it was clear who the source of that negative karma was.

—It seems that there is already enough negative karma in your guest list, Yeongwoo!

"Y-yes, I thought so?"

—Yes! So, I think it would be fine to alleviate some of it.

With this statement, Aldo's previously droopy head hardened.

Creak.

It became solid, almost like a rectangular shape, similar to the special knight, Domtao.

Whatever the reason, it was clear that Aldo had made up his mind.

'Aldo...!'

While Yeongwoo admired him in his heart, Aldo turned his head to look at the ranking of the gifts.

[1st Place] Mara, Ominous Eye 「private」

[2nd Place] Dogo, 「3 billion」

[3rd Place] Lemu, Lightning Rod 「1.6 billion」

[4th Place] Kwaya's Hammer, Private

[5th Place] Cheok, 90 million

He was probably estimating how much he needed to surpass Mara and take the first place in the ranking.

—2nd place has already reached 3 billion. Indeed...

"Your Highness, are you sure about this? I don't even know how much Mara's gift is!"

Yeongwoo asked, but secretly, he didn't mind if Aldo failed to overtake Mara for first place.

'After all, to challenge Mara, more than 3 billion is required. From my perspective, it's a win-win.'

Of course, if Aldo lost, he would no longer be able to maintain the balance of the universe, something he cherished.

Also, Mara's retaliatory expulsion was inevitable.

Therefore, while he hoped Aldo would win, in the end...

'This is a business of gifts. Just because someone is righteous doesn't mean they should win. The one who brings in the most money is the winner.'

His gaze then shifted toward the Shelbir royal family's money vessels.

How much money was in those vessels?

'There are piles of coins...'

Given Aldo's declaration of maintaining balance even after looking at the ranking, it was clear that more than 3 billion had been brought in.

After all, the second-place gift had already reached 3 billion.

But, this venue also had secondary gifts, didn't it?

Even if the ranking for first place was won here in the lobby, what could happen in the main ceremony hall was beyond Yeongwoo's knowledge.

—The gift ceremony will begin.

Finally, Aldo spoke in a solemn voice and clenched his fist, which made Kobu lift up the steel signature plate.

—Your Highness, will this signature plate be sufficient?

—Yes, that should be fine. But make sure you hold it tightly.

—Huh? Hold it tightly?

As Kobu nervously asked, Aldo stretched his right shoulder and fist back.

Thud.

—Huh? What, Your Highness?

Seeing Aldo's stance, Kobu was startled and shrank back, but Aldo's massive fist struck the air with a loud noise.

Baaam!

Aldo's method of signing was a punch.

"What?"

Contrary to expectations, Yeongwoo was shocked and left speechless.

In the meantime...

Thooooooooom!

The signature plate, receiving Aldo's punch, nearly folded in half.

—Ugh!

As Kobu, who was holding the signature plate, lost his balance and nearly fell backward, Aldo quickly grabbed his shoulder.

—A-are you alright?

Aldo's head returned to its usual soft form, and soon, an announcement came from the gift ceremony.

Pah!

< The second son of Shelbir, Aldo >

「Gift payment completed!」

"...Huh?"

Yeongwoo was once again surprised upon seeing the gift payment notification.

This notification only appeared when the gift giver's rank was below level 3 according to the Universal Law of Gifts.

In other words, it meant that Aldo, who had challenged Dogo and Mara, was a level 4 or lower existence.

'...Of course, he couldn't be level 3. After all, he went through the planetary upgrade assessment with me.'

Still, Yeongwoo had secretly hoped that Aldo's rank might be higher than he expected.

Otherwise, how could he stand so unfazed in front of the King of Destruction and the King of Demons?

But the actual rank of Aldo was... probably lower than Lemu or even Yeongwoo, who might be a level 7.

'So, what does this mean? Was he just brave because of ignorance?'

Or had his righteous nature clouded his judgment?

'Maybe being part of the royal family gives him some kind of power. Whatever it is, that guy is...'

A complete madman.

As Yeongwoo stared at Aldo, who had turned so righteous, the gift ceremony finally revealed the amount received from the Shelbir royal family.

Pah!

「Congratulations on the marriage of Strongest Sword Yeongwoo's parents, Kim Jeonggu/Song Jiseon, with a gift of 5 billion Karma, received!」

A lump sum of 5 billion in cash.

Everyone in the area gasped and started murmuring when they saw the message projected on the wall.

-Five billion...?

-Did he just gift 5 billion?

-That's probably what's in those vessels.

As the crowd whispered, something strange began to happen.

Shhyaaah!

From above, an ominous sound echoed, and the steel throne that had been supporting Mara vanished into thin air as if it had melted away.

—Huh?

—What!

—T-There!

Everyone's eyes widened in shock, focusing all their attention on Mara's reaction to suddenly losing his throne.

However.

「You...!」

This was Mara they were dealing with—the King of Ten Thousand Demons and the Master of the Void.

As soon as he lost his throne, he planted his feet firmly in midair and immediately extended his left arm, sending out a streak of pitch-black lightning.

Chaaaarrk!

'Huh? That bastard?'

Having had his throne taken from him, Mara had lost his composure and crossed the line.

—Your Highness...!

The first to realize this, aside from Yeongwoo, was none other than Domtao, a special knight of the Shelbir royal family.

Kwaaak!

He threw himself forward to block in front of the prince, while Yeongwoo swiftly drew his weapon, Bastard.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

'Yeah, damn it. If not now, when else will I get to cross blades with a Rank-3?'

He couldn't possibly fight Mara head-on, but he was at least determined to block that lightning strike.

After all, Bastard had been created for the purpose of overthrowing one's superior.

So, just as Yeongwoo and Domtao were about to move—

Whoosh!

A greatsword flew in from somewhere, slicing through Mara's lightning in midair.

—Huh?

—What!

Yeongwoo and Domtao both turned their heads in shock to see where the sword had come from, only to spot Chairman Dogo, his cloak billowing as he stood tall.

His gaze was not on the two insignificant beings but rather locked onto Mara, who, like him, was still suspended in midair.

—This is disgraceful. Your opponent is royalty. Do you really wish to make things more troublesome? And to think you would dare to insult the royal family in my presence.

At this, Mara curled his blackened left hand and spoke.

「Stay out of this, Dogo! You're the only witness here.」

'What?'

Yeongwoo picked up on at least two important insights from this.

First, no matter how powerful a Rank-3 being was, there seemed to be an unspoken cosmic law forbidding them from recklessly attacking royalty.

Second, the chairman clearly took that law very seriously.

'Is it because he's royalty himself?'

The exact reason was unclear.

Either way, it seemed that the chairman was willing to fight Mara if it meant upholding the dignity of the royal family.

He reached out and reclaimed his greatsword from where it had embedded itself in the ground, then pointed its tip directly at Mara.

—There is indeed a witness here. So, if you wish there were none, then deploy your domain and choose your battleground.

'B-Battleground? What does he mean by "deploy your domain"?'

Yeongwoo couldn't understand.

Mara, on the other hand, narrowed the crack running across his forehead the moment he heard Dogo's proposal.

「You've lost your mind. Are you really willing to gamble your life for a mere insect?」

Dogo adjusted his sword's angle even more threateningly.

—How dull-witted you are, Mara!

「What?」

—This is the Arena of the Ceremony. The victor has already been decided. Why do you insist on defiling a sacred duel?

This place was one where battles were fought with money, not power.

Dogo was essentially telling Mara to accept the results.

—You are a useless weakling, Mara...!

'T-That seems a little harsh, doesn't it?'

Cold sweat beaded on Yeongwoo's forehead.

As the host, he had nothing to gain from a battle between two Rank-3 beings erupting here.

If such powerful figures started fighting, the guests would be slaughtered, and the wedding venue would be utterly destroyed.

“Please, calm yourselves...!”

Yeongwoo finally resolved to step in and mediate.

Vrrrrrrr...

At that moment, the steel throne—now claimed by Aldo—glided through the air.

It passed right between Mara and Dogo.

「.....?」

—.....?

The two Rank-3 beings, who had been on the verge of clashing, fell silent in momentary confusion.

Meanwhile, Aldo steered the throne toward the main hall and slowly turned it around to face everyone in the lobby.

—E-Everyone, be silent.

“...What?”

Contrary to Aldo’s command, Yeongwoo’s mouth fell open in shock.

Then, from atop his throne, Aldo raised a finger and pointed at Mara.

—I believe... you, sir, are the biggest problem here.

「Oh?」

—Yes. So, please leave... I ask you as the top-ranked individual in the Ceremony!

At this, the crack running across Mara’s face quivered and twisted.

‘That bastard... he’s smiling.’

It was true.

Mara was laughing—his chest even trembled slightly with amusement.

Because Mara had already entered the main hall before, he knew what lay inside.

「Kid, I admit you’re an amusing one.」

Mara then wrapped himself in darkness and began approaching the throne.

Aldo, meanwhile, turned to Yeongwoo and Dogo in a panic.

—E-Expulsion! Expulsion...!

Then, he frantically asked Yeongwoo.

—Yeongwoo! What is happening? The expulsion authority isn’t working...!

Yeongwoo covered half of his face with his left hand.

He had to stifle his laughter.

“My apologies. I should have told you in advance...”

—T-Told me what?

“There’s a second round of the Ceremony duel waiting inside the main hall.”

—W-WHAT?! What did you just say?!

Realizing this, Aldo turned his throne toward the main hall and confirmed the presence of the second-round duelists.

And then, he let out something close to a shriek.

—Y-You damned villains!

At last, Aldo’s composure began to crack.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 400: Gift Breakthrough (4)

Regardless of Aldo’s declining homeostasis, Yeongwoo’s wedding hall was bustling with guests.

As the wedding ceremony drew near, ships continuously arrived through the passageway that the Shelbir royal family had opened in the void.

Thanks to this, the flow of congratulatory gifts remained uninterrupted.

Piing!

<Totum’s Blacksmith>

「Congratulatory gift submitted!」

Totum’s Blacksmith.

They were the ones who had once sold Yeongwoo a spine and artificial body parts.

「We have received 40 million Karma with congratulations on the wedding of the parents of the Strongest Sword, Jeong Yeongwoo—Kim Jeonggu and Song Jiseon.」

Their contribution amounted to 40 million Karma.

‘Ah, so even in space, sums exceeding 50 million aren’t too common. I guess 100 million Karma is still considered a significant fortune.’

After all, the equipment sold by wandering merchants across the universe generally ranged in price from a few million to, at most, several tens of millions.

So how much could their daily profit be?

It was clear that 40 million Karma was an amount far exceeding the daily wage of most lower-tier merchants.

‘If I want to make big money, I really need to step into a bigger playing field.’

Yeongwoo’s gaze shifted back to the ranking of wedding gifts.

[Rank 1] Aldo, 「5 billion」

[Rank 2] Mara, Ominous Eye, 「Private」

[Rank 3] Dogo, 「3 billion」

[Rank 4] Lemu, Lightning Rod, 「1.6 billion」

[Rank 5] Hammer of Kwaya, Private

Even after Aldo’s massive 5-billion-Karma gift, many guests had made contributions, but no one had surpassed the Hammer of Kwaya yet.

‘Didn’t the Hammer of Kwaya contribute 160 million Karma?’

And above them was Lemu, a Rank 4 entity.

The difference in donation amounts was striking depending on their ranking.

The universal laws dictated that from Rank 4 and above, things truly began to change.

‘And above that, the company heads start at 3 billion... It’s a whole different level.’

But the surprising winner of this first round was none other than Aldo, a being below Rank 4.

Strictly speaking, it was a victory for the Shelbir Royal Family.

This proved that the royal families of the universe had enough power to stand on par with Rank 3 and 4 entities.

‘What exactly is a royal family? How does one even establish a royal lineage?’

Yeongwoo pondered this question as he cautiously glanced at Chairman Dogo.

— ...

Dogo stood in the air, arms crossed, gazing at the descending procession of ships.

Then, without turning his head, he spoke.

— What is it? Speak.

He had already noticed Yeongwoo’s gaze.

Yeongwoo swallowed dryly before carefully asking,

"Are the royal families of the universe really that great? Why did you protect Prince Aldo?"

A slight misstep in wording could be seen as an insult to Dogo, who was himself from the Vesedel Royal Family.

So Yeongwoo was more cautious than ever.

Finally,

— I did not protect that prince.

Dogo turned his head and looked directly at Yeongwoo.

“Then... why?”

— I was simply showing respect to Shelbir’s progenitor. Do you know how a royal family is born in the universe?

“...I don’t.”

But Yeongwoo wanted to know.

Though it might be an excessive dream for a mere being like him, the idea was incredibly enticing.

The power and immense wealth that came with being a universal royal family...

Then, Dogo, uncharacteristically, spoke at length.

— Most royal families are created by a single individual. When someone writes their own myth, that myth becomes the foundation of their lineage.

“Huh... But isn't that also how Mythic Equipment is made?”

Yeongwoo looked down at Bastard, the weapon strapped to his waist, as he spoke.

Dogo nodded.

— A myth is the proof of the feats they have achieved. And a royal family is the authority of one who has become a myth.

“.....!”

In other words, one who writes their own myth can become the progenitor of a royal family.

So, someone must have accomplished mythic-level feats to establish Shelbir.

That explained why Dogo had spared Prince Aldo—out of respect for Shelbir's progenitor.

‘He wasn't even friends with Shelbir's progenitor... yet he risked his life to protect the descendant? That's an insane level of honor.’

It was a jaw-dropping level of respect.

‘Wait a minute. In that case...’

Yeongwoo's gaze shifted back to Bastard.

‘What about Bastard? It was called Vesedel's ultimate weapon. So... isn't Bastard actually the myth of the Vesedel progenitor?’

Even the colossal titan Gameta had said something similar at the Temple of Valor.

— Only those who write their own myth can leave behind a tangible legacy. Vesedel killed a transcendent and created Bastard.

By that logic, Bastard was indeed the weapon forged by Vesedel's progenitor.

'But the previous owner of Bastard was Dogo, and he was also a child of the Vesedel Royal Family... Is there a connection?'

As Yeongwoo's thoughts reached this point, the void in the sky began to turn red at its center.

"...Huh?"

Then, suddenly, a scarlet laser cannon pierced through the void and landed in the center of the open plaza.

Kwaaaaaang!

"What the hell... Who's this now?"

Yeongwoo blinked in surprise as Dogo spoke briefly.

— Toma.

Toma.

A universal-scale heavy weapon manufacturer.

Now, all of Yeongwoo's guests of significant stature had arrived.

Using the opening created by the laser cannon, an immense battleship forcefully shattered through the void matter and emerged.

Kwah-jajak!

The void matter crumbled like a fence struck by a tank.

'Toma... Isn't he a Rank 4?'

It seemed that, like Lemu, quite a few Rank 4s had no trouble holding their heads high in front of Rank 3s.

Then again, even Rank 4s were renowned across the universe.

Thud!

Toma's ship descended onto the ground, looking as if it had been crudely reinforced with layers of massive iron plates.

Clang!

The ship's front opened, and from within stepped out a massive figure, about seven meters tall.

'Is that... Toma?'

The being exiting Toma's battleship wore a chain mantle composed of square metal rings.

Its entire body was covered in bluish muscle, with limbs that resembled a human's, except the arms were noticeably longer, giving off a strange impression.

Upon closer inspection, its torso was also longer than a human's.

However, with its hunched posture and the chain mantle draped over its upper body, it simply appeared massive.

— ...

Then, Toma turned his head and spotted Dogo floating in the air.

He bowed even further.

Dogo, in response, nodded.

— Toma.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

When Dogo called his name, Toma finally left his ship and started walking toward the lobby.

Boom. Boom.

Like Dogo and Mara before him, Toma had arrived alone, without an escort.

'That guy is really Toma? He's nothing like I imagined.'

Yeongwoo had expected someone with the demeanor of a sharp-minded businessman, so he couldn't help but tilt his head in confusion.

Sensing this, Dogo added,

— Toma was also born on the battlefield. He is quite the remarkable warrior.

A remarkable warrior.

Coming from Dogo, that meant Toma was terrifyingly strong.

'Well, if he's running a weapons company in this brutal universe... he's no ordinary person.'

No matter how wealthy Prince Aldo was, could he really travel across the universe selling weapons?

Everyone had roles suited to their background and nature.

While Aldo, born with a royal spoon in his mouth, was engaged in intergalactic humanitarian efforts, someone born on the battlefield was selling planetary bombardment weapons on the other side.

Such was the universe.

Clank!

At that moment, Toma, the company president, strode across the open space and let his chain cloak fall onto the lobby floor.

Then—

—It is an honor to meet you so closely, Chairman.

He once again greeted Chairman Dogo.

As Dogo remained silent, floating in midair, Toma's gaze finally settled on Yeongwoo, the true host of the event.

—Jeong Yeongwoo 07. If not for you, I wouldn't have been able to stand before the chairman in one piece. I wish to express my gratitude.

Toma's blue lips moved.

Though he had human-like facial features—eyes, a nose, and a mouth—his face was excessively elongated vertically, and his eyes were just empty whites in long, slit sockets, making him quite eerie to look at.

'Ugh.'

Just seeing Toma's eyes sent chills down Yeongwoo's spine, but he managed to keep his expression composed and bowed slightly.

"It's an honor to meet you in person, sir."

Was 'sir' the right title to use?

Yeongwoo glanced at Toma to check his reaction, but his face was unreadable.

Then, Dogo spoke on Yeongwoo's behalf, cutting straight to the point.

—It is time. Offer your congratulations, Toma.

Swish.

He gestured with his sword toward the line of guests presenting congratulatory gifts.

—Oh, time has already flown by.

Current time: 3:17 PM.

Six minutes before the ceremony.

Following the chairman's orders without question, Toma strode toward the gift-giving area.

Just then, Yeongwoo sensed a very familiar presence behind him.

Swish.

Someone had just sliced through space and appeared.

"Huh?"

It was none other than his accountant, Kubu.

"Oh? Kubu?"

Yeongwoo greeted him with delight, but Kubu, ignoring him for the moment, first bowed to Chairman Dogo.

—It is an honor to meet the Master of the Hundred Thousand Sword Mountain, the King of Destruction, Chairman Dogo!

Dogo tilted his chin slightly and looked down at Kubu before giving a small nod.

—You are working hard.

—T-Thank you!

Receiving such words of encouragement from Chairman Dogo, Kubu blinked rapidly.

Then, at last, he turned to Yeongwoo.

—Congratulations on your wedding, Jeong Yeongwoo 07! A massive amount of congratulatory money is being reported!

Of all people, Kubu was the one who understood what was most important to Yeongwoo in this ceremony.

"Thanks. But I have to get through the Bridal Gift Breakthrough first before it actually becomes my money... I mean, before it's official."

Probably the greatest intergalactic business deal since Earth's birth.

Then, a thought struck Yeongwoo, and he asked,

"Oh, Kubu, you're attending the ceremony today, right? Did you bring your congratulatory gift?"

Kubu's eyes widened as if he hadn't expected the question.

—O-Of course! But before that...

"Before that?"

"There is an issue that requires your mayoral authority, which is why I sought you out first.

—My mayoral authority? What is it?"

Yeongwoo looked at Kubu expectantly, urging him to elaborate, but instead of meeting his gaze, Kubu rolled his eyes upward, staring at the sky.

".....?"

Naturally, Yeongwoo followed his gaze.

Then, Kubu's voice hit his temples like a hammer.

—Beyond there, criminals are waiting for entry approval.

"What?"

Yeongwoo was briefly shocked but quickly regained his composure.

If criminals were the issue, wasn't the entire lobby and wedding venue already packed with them?

"Criminals... You mean there are criminals among the guests? Uh... aren't there already a bunch of ex-convicts here?"

Since he couldn't directly point at the chairman, Yeongwoo merely rolled his eyes meaningfully.

Kubu, seemingly just as troubled, shifted his own eyes before continuing.

—That's... they're not just regular criminals.

"Then what? Are they high-level criminals?"

—They're escaped convicts.

"Excuse me?"

Now, this was something truly surprising.

Escaped convicts?

"What do you mean, escaped convicts? My guests are all..."

They're all ex-cons, not active criminals, he was about to say, but his words trailed off.

A crucial realization struck him.

It was—

「Rohm's Bottom」 - Legendary Swordsmanship

【Fights like a prisoner.】

The legendary martial art The Rohm's Bottom.

Wasn't it sold to him by the prisoners of Rohm?

'Wait a minute... were those guys... actual prisoners?'

As Yeongwoo stood there, mouth agape, Kubu continued.

—Escaped convicts are technically wanted criminals, so they're restricted from unauthorized entry into most Level 3 or higher zones.

"Wait, so you're telling me that before, our city was so lawless they just came and did business here?"

There was no need to ask further.

That was definitely the case.

"Those lunatics..."

But the wedding was about to begin.

If they were to be accepted as guests, a decision needed to be made quickly.

—Should we deny them entry?

Kubu, following common sense, made the suggestion first.

However, the idea of turning them away didn't sit well with Yeongwoo.

After all, he had solved many problems using their martial arts.

In a way, they were benefactors.

Rejecting those who had come all this way despite being fugitives wouldn't be honorable.

So, Yeongwoo made his decision.

"Go ask them first."

—...Excuse me?

"Ask if they're willing to help us with the Bridal Gift Breakthrough."

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

