

With The Gods 151

Chapter 151

Hargaan made an effort to not interfere between Hades and YuWon.

Hades's eyes suggested that he didn't see YuWon in a favorable light. He was definitely certain of YuWon's skills, but they weren't as impressive as he had expected.

Well, even if a clone of "The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal" had helped out, YuWon was still the only player to have survived Zeus's [Lighting Bolt.]

"Do you need to be with this guy?"

At Hades's question, Hargaan thought for a second.

He didn't need to be with YuWon. This was a job regarding Olympus. As an outsider, YuWon didn't need to be here with him at all. However...

"If he wants to be here, then I also want him to be here."

"So he's a trusted friend." Hades pondered for a minute and then turned to YuWon. "I know you are hiding something. Although I don't know why either."

What could he be talking about? In the fight against Cerberus just then, YuWon hadn't used many of his powers. He didn't use the lighting bolt, nor did he use demonic energy, [Sensory Field,] 「Kyneē,」 or 「Tríaina」 ...

But there was only one thing that YuWon actively wanted to hide.

'Hades may be looking for the Divine Dark Crystal, similar to Poseidon.'

In the previous future that hadn't been changed, he knew how Poseidon acquired the 「Divine Sea Crystal.」 Comparatively, as Hades didn't usually make moves outside of Hell, there was no way to know how he acquired the 「Divine Dark Crystal.」

Although he wouldn't randomly attack a player due to his nature, it wasn't a bad idea to be careful anyway.

"I don't trust people who have secrets against me. I cannot trust someone who doesn't reveal themselves willingly."

It was understandable.

YuWon thought for a second.

Take the risk of showing him the 「Divine Dark Crystal」 here and earn his trust?

No, even if he showed him, the problem would still remain.

'That wouldn't be the only secret he's talking about.'

Hades's eyes on him weren't just looking at his outer appearance. The 'secret' he was talking about was referring to YuWon's entire existence in itself.

‘What should I do...’

The cooperation of one of the “Big Three Gods,” Hades... It would be a great boon for YuWon. It would indicate the beginning of the internal split within Olympus, and it would be the fastest path to dragging Zeus down to the bottom. However...

“Even though your skills are like that, you have a good person backing you.”

“Person?”

“Hephaestus. I asked that guy about you.”

Hephaestus. Although his skills weren’t that impressive among rankers, his influence inside the Tower was definitely not weak.

The greatest blacksmith in the Tower. And he was also of Zeus’s bloodline.

“What did Ahjussi say?”

“He didn’t say much. Told me to trust you once and that I wouldn’t regret it.”

Hephaestus’s guarantee.

On top of that, Hades turned to Hargaan.

“This guy said the same thing as well.”

The two people that were fighting against Olympus had given their approval.

Hades stopped his pondering.

“Follow me.” Turning away, Hades’s body moved as if gliding. “I’ll tell you what you need to do.”

As he said that, Hades continued to go deeper into the cave.

Arriving at an unexpected situation, YuWon quietly watched Hades’s back.

‘Why did he test me if it was going to be like this anyway?’

It looked like YuWon was going to be asked to reveal more, but Hades had just changed his mind.

In the end, relationships and connections were king.

“Anyway, I guess this is the actual beginning,” Hargaan’s hands were sweating, and he spoke with a nervous tone, “of the Destruction of Olympus.”

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Knowing the future wasn’t simply the ability to know of the ‘incidents’ that would happen. It allowed one to make the decision to choose a ‘person’ based on each individual incident and the knowledge that everyone had.

Hades, who stood before YuWon, was such a person. He was the core individual in the ‘Destruction of Olympus’ incident this time.

“Apologies, but I haven’t much to greet you with due to the nature of this place.”

Inside the wide and dank cave, in this room that at least had a small table and a few chairs prepared, a gloomy-looking man that looked to be Hades's servant brought out some tea.

The opaque, black water looked like poison at first glance. YuWon smelled the tea a little and then looked at Hades.

"It's good for your body. It'll help with the circulation of mana and to calm your mind and body."

Hearing that, YuWon took a sip.

The flavor wasn't to his liking. It wasn't just simply bitter, it was also oddly sour.

But as Hades had said, its effect was true.

[You have taken 'Grass Grown in Hell.']

[Your mana regeneration increases for 1 hour.]

[Your mind clears.]

It wasn't common for such effects to come from a simple tea.

「Grass Grown in Hell.」 He had heard of it before.

'I was served some precious stuff.'

「Grass Grown in Hell」 could be exchanged for quite a considerable amount of points. The grass that grew in the barren environment of Hell was naturally very rare.

"I heard you're the vice-lord of the Heavenly Demonic Cult?" After taking a sip himself, Hades brought out the main topic. "Can you mobilize Cheon MuJin?"

Cheon MuJin. The high-ranker that could be said to be half the combat power of the Heavenly Demonic Cult.

From Hades's position, YuWon was also a key that could grant him access to Cheon MuJin's assistance. Although he was a considerably powerful player, YuWon was also someone who could mobilize the force of the Heavenly Demonic Cult.

"I am not certain."

"Not certain?"

"The powers I can bring forth are limited to that of the vice-lord in the end. But even that position can easily change with one word from the Heavenly Demon."

"I see. Then you're saying you can mobilize everyone other than Cheon MuJin?"

"It is possible."

"'Possible,' huh..." Hades's eyes narrowed as he looked at YuWon. "You sound like you have no intention of doing it."

"I'm saying that there is no need."

The Heavenly Demonic Cult wouldn't be intervening in this battle. There was only one reason.

"This fight will end if we get the king anyway."

YuWon had no intention of going to war. This battle needed to be a 'fight' rather than a 'war.'

Ragnarok, the Gigantomachy, and even the 'Destruction of Olympus' right now. All of them needed to have the least amount of casualties to get the best results for them to have any meaning.

If the Heavenly Demonic Cult were to join the battle, it would become a war. A war between the joint forces of Hades and the Heavenly Demonic Cult against Zeus's faction within Olympus.

"You are greedy."

"I will make it so."

"Do you have the power?"

YuWon shook his head at Hades's question.

Even if YuWon had gotten this strong at an incredible rate, his opponent was still Olympus and Zeus.

YuWon's abilities weren't at the level of Zeus yet. He needed much more time. However...

"I may not."

"What are you insinuating?"

"With the absence of one of the 'Big Three Gods,' I know that the balance of power has been broken."

Half a year ago, Zeus suppressed Poseidon and then directly took him to visit Asgard. Poseidon was imprisoned in Asgard's underground dungeon. After being dragged away by his own younger brother, he was sentenced to five thousand years of punishment.

Even after having thrown down his [Lighting Bolt,] Zeus, for some reason, didn't have any big altercations with Asgard. They probably came to an agreement after he blamed Poseidon as the main perpetrator and handed him over.

"Zeus, that guy. He already knew about it. That Poseidon and I had joined forces."

Although together under the banner of the 'Big Three Gods,' to put it bluntly, Zeus had much more overwhelming power compared to the other two. Zeus was the one who held the highest ranking among the three to begin with. But after Zeus had obtained the 「Divine Sky Crystal」 and gotten the [Lighting Bolt] made, his ranking had skyrocketed even higher.

There was no way of winning in a one-on-one. That was why Poseidon had reached out to Hades.

And in the end, with Poseidon being put in Asgard's prison, their plan ended in failure. However...

"The imbalance of power isn't just with Zeus, right?"

The one YuWon was talking about wasn't Poseidon or Hades.

"Hercules."

"...Yeah. That guy is a problem."

The hero of Olympus not even the "Big Three Gods" could mess with. A high-ranker that climbed with "The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal" and the one who cleaned up the Gigantomachy by himself. As the son of Zeus, the scales of balance wouldn't easily tip away from him.

"But why that guy?"

"What would happen if we could get Hercules on our side?"

"What?"

Hades immediately understood what YuWon was trying to say.

The battle would end after defeating the king.

However, YuWon didn't have the strength to do that yet. But the story would change if Hercules were involved.

"You, are you being serious right now?"

It wasn't just Hades who was surprised. Hargaan was also just as shocked.

YuWon nodded and answered, "Yes."

"What are the odds?"

"About 70%."

"...That high?"

Hargaan's eyes went wide.

The YuWon he knew was not someone reckless. He was the YuWon that moved with utmost certainty and planning even since the Tutorial.

So if YuWon was talking about a 70% chance, this meant that chances were quite high.

"I haven't heard your response." YuWon asked Hades who was in deep thought for a minute, "If we bring Hercules to our side, could we win?"

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Translator - Jreaming

Proofreader - BringTheRayn

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Night didn't exist in Hell.

There also wasn't a set time for meals either. Sleep when you were tired, eat when you were hungry. That was a day in Hell.

After finishing their talk, YuWon went to the lodgings that Hades had given him. The place he would be staying for a couple of days was a cave deep underground.

‘It’s supplied pretty well.’

A pretty large bed, a table with one candle on it, and a chair. Although that was everything in the cave, in Hell, this was practically a five-star hotel.

‘I’m not planning on staying long.’

After looking around his room, YuWon went outside.

A distant sky.

No, a ceiling.

Hell existed below the world. The ground was the sky, and the underground was the floor. The unseen world under the world—Hell.

‘Is it a coincidence that the name is the same?’

Yuwon looked at his hand that had 「Kyneē」 on it.

It had bothered him since the first time he had seen the skill’s name. A skill that had the same name as the world of the 42nd Floor.

‘Let’s...’

Bzzzt—

‘Test it out.’

The eye of 「Kyneē」 opened. The yellow eye looked out, and its black pupil saw the world.

At that...

[Summoning ‘Hell.’]

Kwaaaaaa—!

Yuwon was released from gravity as his body was lifted up. As 「Kyneē」 unleashed its power, Yuwon was dragged to an even deeper level underground below the underworld.

‘What is this...?!’

Yuwon hurriedly tried to reign in the power at the sudden event, but he was a beat too late.

Below the underworld. Deeper, even lower down he went, and soon YuWon fell into an ocean.

Bubble—

As he let out his breath, bubbles floated upwards.

Fortunately, he could still breathe.

YuWon opened his eyes and looked around.

It was a world where he couldn't differentiate between common trees and plants, nor could he discern the sky from the ground, nor up from down.

More than that, there was simply darkness. No...

'This is all...' YuWon felt the endless ocean that currently surrounded him. '...Mana?'

A large reservoir of mana that felt like an ocean.

[You have encountered 'Hell' for the first time.]

['King of the Dead' greets his own world.]

Here, YuWon...

[The dead worship you.]

...Saw death in its multitudes.

Chapter 152

Lick—

YuWon felt something warm on his cheek.

He opened his eyes at the feeling. At that moment, he felt the warm touch of a tongue on his face again.

Lick—

"...It's you."

YuWon pushed away Cerberus's face with his hand.

He frowned at the sticky, smelly saliva and then came back to his senses.

'What happened?'

It had been a while since he'd felt this dazed.

"Whine, hng—"

The three heads approached YuWon at once. Although it was bothersome, the dog didn't seem to hold any hostility.

Well, if it did, YuWon would've woken up to the feeling of his face being ripped off rather than being licked.

'Ocean.'

His fragmented memories quickly returned. He had experienced an unknown world after being sucked further under the underground.

The place in which nothing existed. A true darkness.

The message had indicated that place as 'Hell.'

‘Maybe I really went there and back.’

The place YuWon awoke was the same as before he was plunged into that place.

There were no traces that he had been sucked into that sub-underworld on the floor around him. It didn’t seem to be that of a physical displacement but maybe a hallucination or a projection of the conscience.

‘But why did I...?’

He felt suspicious of the sudden situation.

“Was it because of this?”

YuWon looked down at 「Kyneē」 equipped on his right hand.

He definitely remembered that he had activated it in the last moments. On top of that, ‘Hell’ was the name of a skill that 「Kyneē」 possessed.

The nearly endless dark-attribute mana that filled an ocean of darkness. That place had a similar quality to the power that 「Kyneē」 held.

‘The place that was the source of the Divine Dark Crystal’s power.’

He had thought about this multiple times before. Just where was the power that flowed out of 「Kyneē」 coming from?

There were no items that produced infinite power. The skills attached to an item usually used the player’s mana to activate.

But 「Kyneē」 was an anomaly. It emitted its own natural mana that it possessed. In this case, the item itself either had innate power or it was being supplied power from somewhere else.

‘If that is the case...’

YuWon thought back to the immense sea of darkness that was created from an incredible amount of mana.

“This is much more impressive than I thought.”

* * *

The next day, before YuWon had gone to the lower floor, in the place they had been talking before...

Hades was sitting across from Hargaan in the cave.

“I don’t know if I can really trust him.”

“But he didn’t say anything wrong, right?”

“That’s true.”

On the previous day, Hades had planned to only meet him for a short while, but he ended up having quite a long conversation with YuWon.

The Destruction of Olympus.

This was the plan that Poseidon and Hades had made together to drive out Zeus. Although the two had different purposes, they desired the same outcome.

“If everything that guy said is true, there is a possibility...”

Hades didn’t finish his sentence, and Hargaan let out a deep sigh and shook his head.

“As I thought, it’s absurd, right?”

Under the assumption that the information YuWon brought was true, it wouldn’t be impossible to bring Hercules over to their side. However, the task preceding that was the problem.

Although this was what YuWon had gone to do, it was hard to have any positive expectations for it.

“If that was the case, then he wouldn’t have gone in the first place,” Hades said.

“Pardon?”

“It won’t be impossible.”

“Could I ask what your reasoning for this is?”

“Who do you think put Olympus in its current situation?”

At Hades’s question, Hargaan was speechless.

There was no need to think too long about it. The answer came quickly.

Kim YuWon. Just because of his existence, a lot of things had changed in Olympus.

But still, even if he acknowledged that fact, it would have been hard for everyone to say that YuWon had completely flipped Olympus on its head. Because such a thing was impossible for a single player or even a single high-ranker to accomplish.

“He saved Hephaestus from the 1st Floor and fought against a test examiner and won. Him obtaining the Divine Sea Crystal forced Zeus to keep Poseidon in check, and Poseidon has started to stand against Zeus.”

It was difficult to harm Olympus even if you gnawed at it bit by bit. But as those incidents began to pile up, Olympus began to collapse from within.

And it had already been half a year since one of the pillars of the “Big Three Gods” collapsed.

“The plan to destroy Asgard has also become a failure due to his interference. Zeus cut off Poseidon, a big part of the guild, to stop an all-out war against Asgard, but the stability of his own position is also suffering.”

Zeus didn’t want a direct confrontation with Asgard. His original plan was to use the giants and demons to destroy them. But as long as that was impossible, Zeus could only keep an eye on Asgard for now and make small moves.

“A single random player cut off one of the ‘Big Three Gods’ and tied Zeus’s hands.”

“Hearing it like that... It's truly impressive.”

“That’s the reason I tested him. Rather than a test, I wanted to check with my own eyes. I wanted to know if he was able to accomplish all this because he actually had the skills to do so.”

Of course, the outcome was disappointing. There wasn’t much YuWon had shown as he suppressed the five Cerberus. The only thing he did show was the fact that he had indeed become proficient in [Gigantification.]

“Well, no matter the results, I still made the choice to invest in the history he’s making. Even if his skills are lacking, his results are definitely something.”

“Is that why you think this plan will also end with success?”

“Something like that.”

An uncertain but simple gut feeling.

Yuwon had shown enough proof up to now.

“Well, for now, let’s trust him and do our own parts. You go meet the Apollon siblings.”

“Then, Uncle, you will...”

“I...”

As if saying he could no longer stay here wasting time, Hades stood up from his seat.

“...Will go to Asgard.”

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Translator - Jreaming

Proofreader - BringTheRayn

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The 40th Floor.

Known as the world above the clouds, the complete opposite world to the 42nd Floor.

Step—

A white expanse of ground, no, sky.

Yuwon looked at the top of the white clouds that stretched far and wide and muttered, “It’s pretty.”

The buildings built on top of clouds and the faces of the people living in them were bright and busy. Unlike Hell, night didn’t exist, and it looked as if there were no such thing as suffering in this world.

An unrealistically beautiful world.

The 40th Floor was also the floor on which Olympus held the most influence.

“—What are you admiring so suddenly?”

YuWon turned to his side to look at his companion who had covered his body in a robe and covered his face.

It was Arthur.

“—Did you forget where we’re going right now?”

He had already set the tone and was readying his combat capabilities. It was a weird reaction, somewhere between excitement and nervousness at being able to fight after a long time.

“Have you been here before?”

“—After the founding of Britain, I had come here to meet with a ranker from Olympus.”

“Then you’ll know the path well.”

“—Who knows. It’s been a long time...”

So in the end, he wouldn’t be of much help.

There was no need to talk any more. Right now, all they could do was to find a path with the limited information they had and admire the beautiful scenery different from that of Hell.

And after YuWon walked like that with Arthur for a bit, he suddenly thought of something. “Where do the dead go?”

“—What?”

“Do you perhaps remember something?”

Although it was a question that could’ve been asked, he hadn’t until now.

The Arthur that YuWon knew was a specter and an Undead.

[The dead worship you.]

The message he heard when he was summoned to ‘Hell.’

There was no way to find the meaning to that message, but now that he thought about it, the Arthur in front of him was also one of the ‘dead.’ Maybe he knew something.

Maybe Arthur had been to that ocean as well.

But his expectation was shattered instantly.

“—I have no memory of it.”

“What do you mean?”

“—Right after I died, I was bound by Susanoo and stuck in the boundary between this world and the next. So not even I know what happens after one dies.”

“...Really?” YuWon let out a sigh and shook his head. “That doesn’t help.”

“—...My apologies.”

After hesitating for a second, Arthur spoke.

“—But I felt that I faintly saw an ocean of sorts for a moment.”

“An ocean?”

YuWon’s eyes sparkled.

Although it was only for a moment, since he had experienced it himself, it was probably true. On top of that, the image that Arthur spoke of was quite similar to what YuWon experienced.

“—Yes. But as it was truly for only a moment. I cannot confirm it.”

“No,” YuWon shook his head, “that’s enough.”

‘An ocean.’ That vague answer gave certainty to the vague speculation he had. And that was enough.

There was a big difference between a speculation and certainty even if they were of the same idea. As YuWon was entertaining this thought...

“—I can see over there.”

Atop a wide stretch of cloud, a single towering temple could be seen. No, rather than a temple, it was more like a huge wall-less castle.

Hundreds of steps. A low ceiling and wide base reminiscent of the Colosseum.

YuWon sped up his footsteps towards the place that had just come into view.

Step—

He came to the first steps of the staircase.

To the left and right of the stairs were many players standing in lines behind each other.

“There are too many people.”

“—It’s Olympus.”

The people lining up on the stairs looked oddly at YuWon.

No, to be precise, it was because of Arthur who was standing next to him.

“You do look suspicious.”

“—Are you talking about me?”

“You’re covering yourself from head to toe, so it’s understandable that you draw suspicion.”

As expected...

“Stop right there.”

A player that had been observing YuWon and Arthur for a while approached the two and blocked their way.

“You don’t look to be a believer here. What are you here for?”

YuWon looked at the players on top of the stairs that were looking down at them.

They wore priestly clothes that didn’t match the swords and spears they wielded.

The fact that at a temple, the symbol of Olympus, there were players who were armed, meant only one thing.

“We came to the right place.”

“What?”

“This is the temple of Ares, right?”

“What...”

“You dare say his name so carelessly!”

“An unforgivable sin!”

“Reveal your name and rank now! If not, you’ll have to pay the price for what you just did!”

Cling, clang—!

The players each drew their weapons.

This was why zealots were scary. They always had the same reactions.

YuWon let out a deep sigh and looked around the top of the temple.

A temple built like the Colosseum. It truly fit Ares.

“Olympus really has a lot of money. They made a building like this for a guy who only just became a high-ranker.”

It was understandable. Ares was the direct descendent of Zeus and Hera. Just looking at his parentage, he was in the highest ranking bloodline among Zeus’s children. It was obvious that he would receive a high position due to coming from two high-rankers with the highest influence in Olympus.

And he was also a skilled player who had become a ranker the fastest in Olympus before Hercules and Hargaan appeared.

In a sense, he had been born with a diamond spoon in his mouth.

“If you really hate your master being insulted, then go send a message to the top.”

The players under the command of Ares had something in common—they were all aggressive and prideful.

“That the Ruler of War and Combat...”

And...

“...Is being challenged by Kim YuWon.”

They never avoided any challenge of combat.

Chapter 153

A throne situated above a hundred steps.

A man was sitting on it, basking in the warm sunlight wearing armor adorned with gold.

“What’s this commotion?”

The man had a golden mane, clean-cut features, and smooth, bronze-colored skin.

The high-ranker who resided on the 40th Floor, the master of this temple, Ares opened his eyes, sensing the commotion coming from outside.

“Are you awake now?”

“Ah, yeah. What were we talking about?”

“About the welfare of the worshippers...”

“Right, something boring again.”

Ares, who had fallen asleep in the middle of the meeting because he was enjoying the warm sunlight, let out a big yawn and turned his head.

“I asked what the commotion is.”

“Eh? Commotion?”

“Can’t you hear them?”

Clang, ching—!

“The sound of clashing swords—”

Fwish—

“And of spilled blood.”

The sound grew closer.

The rankers who were leading the meeting and the players that were part of Ares’s temple turned their heads.

As the sounds got louder, they were able to hear it more clearly. Only then did the rankers realize there was a commotion happening outside and began to get nervous.

“Is it an invasion?”

“Wait, could it be Asgard?”

Everyone knew that the relationship between Olympus and Asgard hadn’t been that good recently. Because of this, one of the “Big Three Gods,” Poseidon, ended up being imprisoned in Asgard’s underground prison as well.

Fortunately, due to the fact that it was Zeus who had captured and handed Poseidon over, they could avoid war, but the situation seemed like an unstable bomb that could go off at any moment.

“No,” Ares continued to remain seated as he shook his head, “It’s only one person.”

Bang—!

The door didn’t open. It was broken in.

The broken door flew for a few meters and skidded on the floor. Then the corpses of the players guarding outside appeared, and the stench of blood filled the room.

Step—

Two people walked in through the broken entry. It was YuWon and Arthur.

“Two people...?”

As the two walked in, which was different from what Ares had said, the worshippers snuck glances at him. Ares had been wrong, and even they themselves could tell.

Something was wrong.

“Look carefully, you idiots.” Noticing their glances, Ares clicked his tongue in disappointment and looked around at the people there. “It’s one person and an Undead.”

“An Undead...”

“Ah!”

Arthur stood next to YuWon. From the ice-attribute mana continuously leaking from his body, the stench of an Undead could be felt.

Only then did they realize what Ares meant by ‘one person.’ Arthur was simply YuWon’s summon.

“But something’s weird.” Excitement returned to Ares’s eyes as he looked at YuWon. “I feel like I’ve seen that face before.”

“I asked to convey a message, but they just charged at me with their weapons.” YuWon flicked off the blood on his sword.

His eyes turned upwards, taking in the wide-open ceiling that was characteristic of Olympian temples.

And then his eyes met Ares’s, who was sitting in the highest seat.

“Who are you?”

“Kim YuWon.”

After revealing his name, YuWon pointed his sword at Ares.

“I came here to fight you.”

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Translator - Jreaming

Proofreader - BringTheRayn

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“What did you...?”

“Do you know who you are standing before!”

“If it’s Kim YuWon, isn’t he that fearless player who recently started picking fights with Olympus?”

“No matter how fearless...”

The rankers that were gathered there one by one began to draw out their mana, aiming hostility at YuWon. A few of them lashed out with their mana intentionally to attack YuWon too.

But...

“Then do you know who you are standing before?”

Crunch—!

Cr-Crack—!

Icy mana exploded out as Arthur took a step forward, freezing their strength. The hall instantly froze as if in the middle of a long winter, and silence took over the room.

“Ice-attribute mana...”

“That sword!”

“Is it... the ‘King of Knights’?”

Due to some rankers recognizing Arthur, the tension in the air grew thicker.

On top of that, unlike YuWon who was a newly rising player, Arthur was a high-ranking ranker who founded Britain. The fact that Arthur was wielding his sword against them was definitely threatening.

“I’ve only heard the stories. It’s my first time seeing it.”

It was a known fact that Arthur had reappeared in Britain. At that time, the number of knights in The Round Table was over a hundred, and it was impossible to stop all of them from talking about it.

Including Olympus, many of the major guilds with outstanding information networks knew that YuWon had Arthur under him.

“Then, can I see this as a challenge from The Round Table?”

“Since The Round Table is under Asgard, this may be...”

“No, we need to view Arthur as a separate entity as he has become an Undead. In the end, this is just that fearless kid acting independently.”

“Tch. Are you doing this because you have Arthur?”

“Don’t you know where this is...”

Although they were saying that, none of them moved rashly from their seats. They knew that YuWon was an enemy of Olympus, but as long as Arthur was standing in front of him, he wouldn’t be an easy opponent.

However...

“Are your eyes just for show?” Ares himself wasn’t looking at Arthur but at YuWon behind him. “That guy looks easy to deal with, right?”

He stood up from his seat.

Ares’s face was much brighter than during the meeting. He seemed to find excitement in this situation filled with the smell of blood as he looked at YuWon with a much livelier expression.

“What brings you here? You came to fight me?”

“It’s good that at least you understand my words.” YuWon nodded. “That’s right. I’m here to fight you. I heard that within Olympus, you never turn down an opportunity to fight or go to war.”

“Yeah, that’s right. Because I love fighting.”

“That’s a relief. Those guys over there tried to stop me from meeting you.”

“Those lowly ones did something unnecessary. I would’ve faced you if they had just guided you here. Haha!”

In any case, Ares seemed to welcome YuWon’s visit. Although hundreds of his subordinates had spilled their blood and died, that was just an afterthought to him. He just found this situation fun.

“But will you be alright? Unlike those guys outside, there are a lot of rankers here.”

There were more than ten rankers. Other than them, there were also about forty or so players who had been brought from outside. They did outnumber him by quite a bit, and their skills were nothing to scoff at either.

Yuwon looked around at them and then shrugged. “Let’s fight without the small fry.”

“What...?!”

“You really don’t know how high the heavens are, brat!”

“Sir Ares! There’s no need for you to fight yourself! We will...”

Bang—!

Rumble—

The heavy impact shook the temple. Ares’s subordinates were startled and lifted their heads.

“What do I hate the most in the world?”

The white of his eyes turned red. His eyes were filled with anger as he looked around the hall emitting waves of bloodlust.

“It’s interfering in my fight. Don’t you know?”

“W-We apologize.”

“Y-yeah. Let’s be careful.”

Step, step—

Ares walked down the stairs.

As he descended the one hundred steps one by one, the pressure in the room grew heavier and heavier. Due to the weight that was pushing down on their shoulders, some lowered their bodies and even had to kneel.

He had probably finished preparing to fight.

After coming down all the steps, Ares looked at YuWon at the entryway. Arthur stepped aside from in front of him, and their eyes met.

“You want to fight me?”

“Not just fight.”

“Then?”

“The winner will get everything the loser has.”

“Everything?” Ares looked uninterested. “I don’t have anything I want from you though?”

“Looks like you’re truly not that smart, just like the rumors say.”

“What?”

“There’s no way you don’t know what I have, right?”

“What you have...”

Ares’s eyes flashed open.

The eyes of all the rankers that were there widened as well.

Among the things that YuWon possessed, there was one that even high-rankers desired. The item that the God of the Sea Poseidon wanted, the item that was rumored to bestow the power of a god to the owner.

The 「Stone of the Sea,」 the 「Divine Sea Crystal.」

The fact that YuWon had that item was known to all rankers of Olympus.

“You’ll really put that on the line?”

“Yeah.”

“Looks like you’re confident in your victory. Well, since you came here risking your life, an item is nothing.”

There was greed in Ares’s eyes for the first time. He, who had been born to Zeus and Hera, had lived his entire life getting everything he wanted. However, not even he could simply obtain the 「Stone of the Sea」 just because he wanted to.

“Sure, alright.”

Naturally, he could only accept.

“It’s customary to take spoils of war. I’ll kill you and take the Stone of the Sea off your body as proof.”

Boom—

Ares stomped his foot.

“Everyone, stand back. I want to fight that guy alone.”

It was as YuWon had heard.

An aggressive and prideful personality. He enjoyed fighting and was stupidly courageous.

At Ares’s command, the few subordinates that were hesitating moved, and a big circle was formed in the middle of the temple.

“Alright. This should be enough.”

YuWon looked at Ares who seemed to be smiling with satisfaction. He held a sword and a short spear in his hands and was leisurely humming a tune.

Ares. The high-ranker of Olympus who symbolized war and combat.

Although he had enough influence to create a faction within Olympus, it hadn’t even been ten years since he had become a high-ranker. Of course, in regards to talent, he was within the top five rankers of Olympus, but his ranking wasn’t that much more impressive compared to rankers of other factions.

“Arthur.”

“Yes.”

“Swat away all the ones that try to interfere.”

“I heed your command.”

Arthur bowed at the waist and then kept the rankers nearby in check. Although there were more than ten of them, it wasn't so much that Arthur couldn't handle them. He had obtained Lancelot's body and had sworn complete loyalty with his soul on the line. At least until YuWon ran out of mana, Arthur would be able to fight at the full capacity of his prime.

“What, the ‘King of Knights’ isn't fighting with you?” Ares seemed a little disappointed.

His eyes turned to look at Arthur who was keeping vigilance against his subordinates.

The “King of Knights.” The historical ranker who had established The Round Table and founded Britain.

Ares wanted to clash swords with him once.

“It'll be a little disappointing facing just you.”

There was no need to even talk about YuWon's skills at this point.

The amount of damage he had done to Olympus was incomparable within the last few thousand years of its history. But compared to the damage, it was still unknown if YuWon had the level of skill similar to that of a high-ranker.

“Why don't you use your Undead? Aren't you a necromancer?”

Necromancy was a rare ability. There probably weren't even a dozen if you searched the entire Tower.

That was why, once YuWon's ability became known, Olympus could only predict YuWon's potential to be many times higher than average.

That was the reason Ares found YuWon interesting as well. However...

“No.”

YuWon didn't have any intention of calling upon the dead or using the abilities of “King of the Dead.”

“I would be cheating if I used that.”

There were two reasons. The first was that he was confident he could win even if he didn't use those abilities. And second...

“There's a pretty strong one.”

Just as he said, it really would be cheating. That one still needed to be hidden for now.

Chapter 154

"Trap..."

Ares' gaze drifted to Arthur and then back.

"So what you're saying is that you can beat me with yourself, is that what you're saying?"

"No, I'm not saying that, but it sounds like it, doesn't it?"

"Ha ha ha ha..."

A smirk tugged at the corner of his lips.

Rather, Ares' men were the ones who stirred at the provocative words, and wanted to charge at YuWon, weapons drawn, but Arthur planted himself before them, Mana throbbing in his empty eyes.

"Truly one has to live a long time for this sort of thing to happen in life."

His laughter ceased and the Sword of Ares twitched.

Scott-.

Thwack~

YuWon's back wall cracked.

Ares' Sword moved slightly, sending a sharp Energy Sword across the distance.

"I'll blow your head off right now."

"You talk a lot."

Hwareuk-.

YuWon's eyes turned red.

['Ash Eyes' read 'Sword Technique'.]

['Sensory Field' is activated]

Ash Eyes and Sensory Field.

When these two skills appeared, everything inside the temple was clearly visible, like the top of the palm.

"Wow, you're going to start with everything, I see."

"Oh, you knew that?"

Ares lifted the corner of his lips.

He didn't seem too surprised when he saw the Ash Eyes, given how much was known about YuWon.

"So..."

Skang!

The tip of a spear flew past.

The moment YuWon raised his sword and slashed it aside, Ares' body appeared from above.

"Block this one too!"

Clang-!

Woo~

Ares parried the blow, and the weight of it caused the divine ground YuWon was standing on to give way.

Ares retrieved the spear that he threw lightly and then plunged the spear straight into Yuwon.

Peek, peek, peek~

A quick stab.

YuWon dodged its trajectory with ease and asked.

"Are you okay?"

"What?"

At the moment Ares grimaced questioningly.

Pak-!

The fist that curled in the front stretched forward.

Thud-!

The floor of the temple was overturned, and lightning power was shot in all directions.

The body of Ares, who had been eagerly attacking YuWon, was knocked down. For the first time, he seemed to have a puzzled look on his face.

"Your house might collapse."

"You, this power..."

The power of Zeus Lightning, as well as the power of Hargaan.

It was a power that only appeared in direct descendants who had inherited Zeus' strong lineage. The power that even Ares could not inherit was used by Yu-Won here and now.

"It is the power you are jealous of..."

YuWon knew the ugly side of Ares.

"Of Hargaan."

Jealousy.

It was a word that would never be appropriate for Ares, who sat on the throne of war and fighting.

But that didn't mean Ares didn't feel jealousy.

He was jealous of only one person in his life.

Hargaan.

Throughout history, and as far into the future as he knew.

Of all the countless offspring of Zeus, he was the strongest in blood, and Ares was constantly jealous.

Snap~

"How dare you say that..."

When he touched her reverse scale, the reaction came immediately.

"How dare you mock me!"

Woo~

A completely different amount of mana was deposited into the sword than before.

If he had been cautious before because he was worried that the temple would collapse, now it seemed that he didn't care.

Ttak-!

The temple floor cracked, and fragments of the overturned floor flew out in hundreds or thousands of directions.

YuWon grinned as he slashed at the splinters that splattered towards him with his sword.

"Looks like I hit the nail on the head, huh?".

"Shut up!"

Flash-!

Golden mana exploded and Ares' sword was dyed the same color.

A sword more and sharper than anything else.

YuWon faced the sword without avoiding it.

[The strength of a Giant permeates your entire body.]

[The stat "Stamina" is temporarily replaced by "Muscles"].

Fire~

Along with Gigantification, Holy Flame entered the sword.

At the same time, the golden mana and YuWon's sword collided in the middle of the temple.

Twack-!

Twaaaaaack-!!!

"What kind of Mana...!"

"Everyone, behind us!"

The Rankers gathered in the arena/room were bewildered by the clash of the two mighty powers.

The aftermath of the sudden mana clash spread throughout the temple. Mana of different attributes coated the swords of the two men, scattering hundreds of strands of sword waves.

Two invisible waves of mana.

Boom, boom, boom!

Chanang-!

The sounds of swords and spears clashing could be heard non-stop.

The temple walls crack under the impact of the battle, and the ground began to crumble.

'Is it really Player Kim Yuwon who is fighting there?'

Yuwon was a player who had just passed Floor 40.

It was true that he had now left the lower floors and was now on a fairly high level, but he couldn't believe it.

It was as if he was fighting another High Rank.

It was an unbelievable situation.

Even when YuWon first invaded the temple, most thought that maybe he was crazy.

Of course, he was a Player who shook Olympus to an unprecedented level.

But all they thought was that he was just a Player.

And they were wrong.

For one thing, there was no way he could have gotten into a fight with no chance of winning.

There were enough chances....

No, maybe he had come in with complete certainty of winning.

"Your hands are quite spicy."

Tang~

An intense shock transmitted through the fallen sword.

The sword was durable, but the force with which he wielded it was considerable.

"Is it because of the Gigantization?"

Gigantization, YuWon's signature ability, was already well known in Olympus.

An ability that dramatically increased muscle strength, a symbol of Hercules.

Ares had also coveted it for a long time.

It was so hard to get that he had given up on having it, but....

'I'm greedy.'

Ares' eyes sparkled as he looked at YuWon.

Even at this moment, he was still astonished.

A Player who entered the tower at the same time as Hargaan.

He didn't understand how he had been able to grow so much in such a short time, even being comparable to a High Rank.

Eyes of Ash, Gigantification, Sea Stone.

And even the power of the Clown, which was the symbol of Zeus.

He was armed with all sorts of abilities and items that even the High Ranks of the Tower could only covet.

'If I can take him down, and get any of them...'

Ares' lips curved.

'Maybe someday I can surpass my Father.'

Grab-!

Ares' body leaned forward, accelerating in an instant.

YuWon distanced himself from Ares, who suddenly dug in further. Ares dug in further and further, brandishing his sword as if he would not let go.

At that moment...

"You should look up."

".....?"

Only then did he feel the Mana from above.

Ares raised his head and three dazzling lights entered his field of vision.

[Lightning]

Crackle-!

Three bolts of lightning struck Ares' head. Ares' body, clad in golden armor, turned yellow and YuWon's sword pierced him.

However...

Kak-!

".....!"

Ares' sword was charged with even greater power.

He was unaffected by the Lightning Bolt.

"That light is my father's power."

Ares approached Yuwon.

Close enough to see the reflection in his opponent's eyes.

Skak-.

Pik-.

"Do you really think I will fall under that power?"

Ares' sword slashed the ends of YuWon's hair.

It was the first time Ares' Sword touched Yuwon's body.

'It's creepy.'

Yuwon's eyes, which had been looking into Ares' eyes, narrowed slightly.

The sword became stronger and the golden aura flowing through Ares' body intensified.

As if this was only the beginning, his hands turned with the movement of the two spearheads.

Shuaak-.

Kak-!

The spearheads moved, forming a long line in the middle of the temple.

Then.

"Quaaaaaaaagh!"

"Ah, Lord Ares!"

"We're right behind you! Lord Ares... Aagh!"

Naturally, the temple was knocked down, so were those caught in the crossfire.

Blows that even a Ranker player would struggle to survive. Not to mention the players under their control.

All the blood was spilled by those under Ares.

At that moment...

Kiiiiiiing-.

Kak-!

Sword attacks flew from the aftermath of the fight with YuWon.

Arthur stood in front of one of the players.

-This is not a pretty sight.

Ares was so distracted by the fight that he began to rampage madly.

He seemed to have no regard for the safety of his subordinates.

He became the person Arthur despised the most, and he was fighting Yu-Won.

Kurrr-.

It was unknown what he was made of, but the temple did not collapse easily. Apparently, the points spent on it were worth it.

-What kind of war is this?

Ares.

A High Rank of Olympus who symbolized war and fighting.

-War, by its very nature, is not fought alone?

A sapphire glow flashed in his empty pupils.

Though he was not moving because he was at YuWon's command, Arthur wanted to pounce on Ares and slit his throat at any moment.

Kkagagagak-!

Shukaaak-!

YuWon concentrated on Ares' sword.

Striking the sword and pulling on it. He raised his holy flame to protect himself from the gushing mana.

The Eyes of Ash and Sensory Field, perhaps thanks to the two effects, avoiding his spear wasn't too difficult.

Then...

- How long do I plan to keep watching?

Arthur's voice flowed into her ears.

It was a voice that sounded very angry. Only then YuWon found Arthur standing there protecting the other Players and Rankers.

'Is he angry?'

He was.

Arthur had been known as the King of Knights in life.

Chivalry was what he stood for, his essence.

How repugnant Ares must seem in Arthur's eyes.

'I thought my senses would come back...'

"I don't think so."

"What?"

'Not going to happen.'

Ares looked puzzled, sword still swinging.

At that moment...

Ttak-.

The tip of the sword thrust into his throat.

Startled, Ares hastened to take a step back. But that was only for a moment, as Ares immediately swung his spear, cutting YuWon's body in half.

However...

Ttuk-.

Ares' body instantly stiffened.

Flames engulfed YuWon's body.

For a brief moment, he thought he saw the figure of Zeus.

'What the hell...'

"You said this was your father's power?"

Creackle-!

A blast of electricity burst from YuWon's left hand.

As if it was his from the beginning, YuWon felt that familiar mana.

As if he was in the dark sea without a single light.

He felt the same as when he had fallen into it.

Almost infinite mana.

He felt as if he was swimming in it.

Knowing and not knowing.

The difference was far greater than YuWon had first thought.

Kwajijijik-!

In the middle of the half collapsed temple.

The mana emitted by Kyneē drove away Ares' golden mana.

The dark energy emanating from Kyneē quickly enveloped the room and filled the temple.

'This is the difference between knowing the source of power and drawing upon it, rather than merely relying on the effects of an item...'

King of the Dead.

The power of that title was not just being able to command the Undead.

"What is this?"

Ares' eyes widened as he felt the power of the dark element pressing against his mana.

'This is bad.'

Normally there was only one reason for such a sudden increase in power.

When you've spent all your mana and you're looking for a quick victory.

Yes...

While it was certainly a remarkable feat, YuWon's skills were only a step behind him.

The fact that he hadn't been able to land a single effective blow so far was proof of that.

On the other hand, his own sword had managed to reach YuWon.

'He has realized that he would be at a disadvantage if he drags this out.'

There was no need to reply.

If he prolonged the fight, he would win nine times out of ten.

But his crumpled pride wouldn't let him.

Hwaaak-!

The mana emanating from Ares' body drove YuWon's body back.

The mana glowed as brightly as the sun.

Tak-.

Ares took a step towards YuWon.

"It's useless to resist."

Swish-.

The tip of his short spear aimed at YuWon's head pierced through the darkness.

At the same time, Ares' toes twitched.

Chak-.

The distance shrunk in an instant.

The darkness enveloping the temple parted, and Ares' two spearheads struck YuWon's head.

Tak-!

Woo-!

The two spears collided with YuWon's sword.

Ares immediately withdrew the clashing sword and tried to continue his attack.

But then...

".....?"

His body did not listen.

His arms didn't move.

His body felt strangely heavy and uncomfortable.

At that moment, Ares and YuWon's eyes met.

Tsut-.

Mana began to flow through his arm.

Ares suddenly faced the deep darkness around him.

Surely, the Mana he was emitting must have pierced YuWon's power?

"You are weak in close combat."

Clack-.

YuWon's hand grabbed Ares' wrist that held the spear.

"I can't believe how easily you went in."

"What the sh*t.....!"

Deuk-.

".....!"

Ares, startled, took a step back.

Tsut-.

As if going somewhere, Ares backed up a couple of steps and a wall of energy formed behind him.
Thud-.

A spear fell to the ground.

Wondering if he had dropped the weapon, Ares picked it up again, only to find himself empty-handed.

At that moment...

Ares found a familiar hand in YuWon's.

"That's mi.....?"

Ares' eyes widened.

He saw his wrist in front of him, and his own arm, which was empty.

The scream came too late.

"Aaaagh!"

More than the pain, it was the horror of the missing hand that filled his mind.

Paget-.

He staggered back in panic, but the walls were still as solid as ever.

It was the power emitted by Kyneē.

"Even if you had two hands, it would be hard, would you be okay with one?"

He was out of breath.

Ares grabbed the sword upside down and waved it against the mana blocking his back.

Passt, ssshhh!

An impenetrable force.

The bouncing darkness with a strong repulsive force enveloped Ares' body again.

Ares quickly raised his strength to shake off the darkness that clung to his body.

And a thought arose...

'Did he give me the way... on purpose?'

YuWon had opened a path for him that led deeper and deeper into him.

The thought crossed his mind, but nothing else came to mind.

Ares was not confident that he could penetrate the immense power that permeated the temple as easily as he had just done.

Ssshhhh-.

The energy emitted by Kyneē soared skyward.

The darkness spread out like clouds.

It blocked the sunlight falling on the temple, and in an instant turned the sky into night.

['Lightning Fragment' reacts with Kyneē]

Cleack, Cleack-!

Lightning flashed through the blackened clouds.

YuWon extended his hand towards him.

"Punch."

Flash-!

* * *

Aphesis, one of the Rankers under Ares, tensed at the scene unfolding before his eyes.

'What the hell just happened?'

Crackle, crackle-!

Dark mana filled the center of the temple.

From within this mass of mana, thunder could be heard again and again.

And Ares and YuWon were in it.

Perhaps this is the strength of Ares' opponent, YuWon.

Tak-.

Aphesis took a step towards him.

Then...

- Stop.

Skang-.

Arthur's sword, which guarded him with him, stopped him.

Aphesis raised his fighting spirit and looked at Arthur. Arthur turned his head and their eyes met.

"Step aside."

- Sorry, but that won't work.

Arturo recognized YuWon as his master.

And YuWon gave the order to stop those who interfered with the fight. Arthur had to follow that order now.

"I must protect my Master."

Aphesis felt the mana give her goosebumps.

This power, which made her body tingle just being near him, was dangerous, even for her Master, Ares.

- Me too.

"...Then I can't help it."

Chaeng, Chang-!

Starting at the signal, the Rankers and Players who saw the fight drew their weapons one by one.

Now they could no longer stand idly by.

-Good posture.

Arturo liked their attitude.

Those who would lay down their lives for their Masters.

It was the very spirit of British chivalry, to protect the weak and serve the Master.

-I too will respond in kind.....

Just as Arthur was about to increase his mana.

Woo-.

The huge mass of mana enveloping YuWon and Ares began to writhe.

Right after that...

Chak, Chak, Chak!

The mana that ran through the center of the temple swirled rapidly and was sucked into a single point.

The hitherto hidden interior was exposed.

The darkness cleared and the first thing to be seen was YuWon's face standing there.

"No way..."

Aphesis' eyes widened.

Ares, who was shrouded in darkness, was nowhere to be seen.

The darkness had not yet completely dissipated.

Ares had to be safe.

For he was a High Rank, the symbol of war and fighting in Olympus.

Aphesis believed that and waited for Ares to slowly appear.

Flash-.

A flash of golden light pierced the darkness.

Aphesis' expression brightened.

But only for a moment.

It was a matter of moments before that expression turned to despair.

"Ah, S-Lord Ares?"

The golden glow shining outward was not Ares' Mana.

It was an object he carried, a gift from Zeus.

It emanated from the mysterious golden armor he wore.

And Ares...

"Ares-nim!"

"No!"

His whole body had turned black and was no longer recognizable.

-It was over.

Arthur lowered his raised sword.

The duel had been won.

The remaining Rankers seemed to have lost the will to fight, or seemed choked with grief.

This fight was their victory.

Ssh-.

The darkness returned to Kyneē again.

Yu-Won looked at Kyneē for a moment.

Along with immense fatigue, he was also surprised.

He had expected it, but he couldn't believe that he could get so much power from a simple object.

It must have many uses.

What if he became more familiar with this power?

If it really supported his abilities, he might be able to make all that nearly infinite mana he had seen before his own.

A power that could reduce even High Rank Ares to ashes in an instant.

YuWon could once again check the power of this Kyneē.

Pak-.

After the fight, YuWon walked towards Ares' corpse.

Ares was lying on the ground, clad in golden armor.

His body was already blackened and corroded by lightning. He could barely be considered whole.

Yu-Won reached out his hand towards Ares' corpse.

All the equipment he used were expensive items.

But he wasn't very interested.

What was important now wasn't just the golden armor.

'There it is.'

Zalgraak-.

Yuyuan picked up the golden necklace Ares wore around his neck, the same color as the armor.

The necklace came off more easily than he expected.

It didn't look like a carefully worn necklace.

'Well, that's a good first step.'

With the necklace on his chest, YuWon looked at Ares' corpse for a moment.

'I've collected another one.'

In addition to the necklace, another additional achievement.

['The King of the Dead' calls out to the spirit of 'Ares.']

The soul being absorbed by Kyneē.

At the same time, the rest of Ares' body turned to dust.

Yuwon, who was trying to get his whole body, bit his lip in disappointment.

"Was that too hard?"

A combination of Lightning and Kyneē.

The corrosion was so severe that Ares' body was completely weakened and shattered to dust with only his Soul escaping.

It was a shame, but it had to be accepted.

There was no point in being too greedy.

Yuwon took Ares' armor, put it in his inventory and looked up.

'Also...'

It would be nice if they could move on without incident, but apparently that wasn't going to happen.

'Here they come.'

Woo-.

Over the open sky of the temple.

A new ceiling rose high like a pyramid.

'There's no way they don't know about this commotion.'

Perhaps when he first entered the Temple of Ares, someone had given them the news.

Not only did the two temples symbolize similar things, but they were on the same floor and not far apart.

Kee, kee!

Dagdak-.

The sound of horses' hooves in the sky.

If Asgard had the Valkyries, Olympus had the Chariot of the Sun.

Replicas of Apollo's Chariot of the Sun.

"The symbol of war and wisdom".

In the midst of the Chariot of the Sun that began to descend from the distant sky.

A woman with coppery skin and golden hair, like Apollo, descended in a blaze of light.

An existence symbolizing the true 'war' of Olympus.

Before Hercules appeared, the most important Warrior who fought in the Gigantomachy.

The closest brother of Ares.

"Athena."

She had come here.

Chapter 156

Athena.

She was a High Rank with a rank far superior to that of Ares.

Unlike Ares, who had just become a High Rank, she had been one for thousands of years.

Gigantomachy.

In that war, of which there is glorious record in Olympus, she killed countless Giants.

She may even have killed more Giants than Hercules.

"Dazzling."

Dagdak-.

Dozens of Chariots of the Sun.

The light they emitted was such that it was difficult for a normal person to even look at them.

-Won't it be dangerous?

At Arthur's question, YuWon nodded.

How many Rankers are on board?

Probably a lot more than Rankers under Ares here.

There were many Rankers in Olympus, and the Clan of Athena was one of the most prolific.

'Thirty? No, forty?'

It's probably more comfortable to think of it as a generous fifty.

Of course, more dangerous than all of them put together was the presence of Athena.

- 'What will you do now?'

Arthur was already burning out his fighting spirit.

A situation you can't escape from anyway.

All around him, Athena's Rankers were already encamped.

"Wait."

Amongst the ten Chariots of the Sun....

"Great allies will be coming soon."

Looking at them, YuWon raised his mana.

Because one never knew when this place would become a battlefield again.

Hwaaak-!

Intense sunlight flooded the temple.

The largest of the Sun Chariots descended nearby. At the head of the chariot was Athena, clad in golden armor like Ares and holding a shield.

"The Shield of Aegis."

Also known as the Gorgon/Medusa Shield, the most powerful armor on Olympus.

The moment you make eye contact with the Gorgon embedded in Aegis, you will be petrified and your entire body will turn to stone.

Ew-.

Athena's gaze swept the entire temple.

Yuwon and Arthur were standing in the middle of the temple.

So were the Rankers and Players at Ares' command, and the remnants of their mana.

And items like the shoes and gloves Ares had worn.

".....Really?"

He put on a sad expression at the marks that were revealed everywhere.

They hadn't always been close.

Though they had the same father, their personalities were completely different.

However, there was only one thing they both pursued equally.

To lead and fight for Olympus with their lives.

And in that spirit, the two lived back to back as close comrades before becoming brothers.

"Is Ares really dead?"

Woo~

The temple walls shook.

Thud, thud, thud~

The temple, which had been shaken by the fight between YuWon and Ares, trembled, and the fallen debris began to collapse.

Athena's question was answered by Aphasis, Ares' servant.

"Yes, my lady."

"...I see."

What if....

No.

It was a question best not to seek an answer to.

But it was true. Then, Athena's gaze strayed to YuWon and Arthur.

"Then you must be my brother's enemies."

Kakk-.

Through the Shield of Aegis, the cry of a slender serpent was heard.

[You are scanning the screams of the Gorgon.]

[Petrification' begins.]

['Sanctification' resists 'Petrification'].

['Eyes of Ash' resists 'Petrification'].

[Resistance was successful.]

I couldn't believe I was petrifying someone just by hearing them scream, let alone make eye contact.

'This is the first I've heard of it.'

Indeed, it was the original, not a replica.

Fortunately, there were skills to resist petrification, but he thought it would be dangerous to make eye contact.

'Athena and Ares were known as comrades in arms, not siblings.'

But a moment ago, Athena had said 'brother', clearly referring to Ares.

I could feel his emotions through the mana that filled the air.

Anger and resentment.

But unlike the others, her emotions were cold. She had a reputation for being cold, even cold-blooded.

This was what made her different from Ares.

She never got emotional.

"Are you Kim Yuwon?"

A heavy voice transmitted through the Mana.

Yuwon nodded and answered her question.

"Yes."

"I've heard the name a lot, but this is more than I've heard. I respect your strength."

Skak-.

Athena's sword was unsheathed.

A relatively short Sword that was used in conjunction with a shield.

Athena, unlike Ares, was known to fight both offensively and defensively.

Of course.

"And to respect that..."

That said, her sword was no blunter than Ares'.

"I'll do my best as well."

Shhhh-.

Thud-!

The temple floor split in half.

Yu-Won looked at the deep scars on his toes and then looked up again.

A single step.

Perhaps if he hadn't taken a step back in that brief instant, his body would have been sliced in half.

['Ash Eyes' read the path.]

[Sensory Field' is active]

Keep the effect of Ash Eyes and Sensory Field at maximum.

Athena's sword would be dangerous if it grazed him even once.

'It's vicious'.

He tried his best from the start.

After the slash, Athena held her shield forward and raised her sword.

"Everyone..."

At her gesture, the Rankers moved as one body.

Fifty Rankers.

Athena ordered them.

"Destroy the enemies of Olympus."

Ttak~

Chuck-.

Arthur stood in front of Yuwon.

- Run away.

Yuwon's gaze turned to Arthur's back.

Arthur was standing with his sword held high.

He was looking at Athena with the dozens of Rankers in front of him.

- I'm dead anyway. You don't have to worry about me, even if I die, I won't really die.

He was not wrong.

In fact, Arthur was a being that could resurrect at any time as long as Yuwon had enough Mana.

The Necromancers never considered the undead as companions, but considered them expendable if necessary.

But.

"I don't want to."

-Yes?

"I've had a similar experience before."

It wasn't a very good memory.

"If we fight here, we'll all die anyway."

Asura who lost two of his three heads.

He dodged the Outer's onslaught, knocking YuWon back.

It was probably the last time.

The last time he saw Asura's back.

"Then and now, the answer is the same."

From then on, YuWon decided to take the initiative, like Asura.

Together, fight and win.

Or, in the end, die all together.

"I do not accept."

-But...

"Arthur."

YuWon's voice was firm.

"I don't need a shield to protect me. You are my Sword, so focus on your role."

YuWon's eyes burned red as he looked at the Rankers.

"Besides, it's not our turn this time."

Chanang, Chang-!

The Rankers' weapons were drawn.

They were aimed at YuWon and Arthur at the same time.

Bows and spears.

The swords were enchanted and the sharp points of the weapons were about to pierce through their bodies.

Shuaaaaah-!

And then...

"Now it's your turn."

[The 'Eyes of Ash' resound]

['The Twelfth Eye of the Great Sage, Equal to Heaven' is looking at you].

Boom!

A long staff fell in front of YuWon, piercing through the curtain of mana covering the sky.

Tuhwaahak-!

"Kuak!"

"D-Do step back!"

From the center of the temple, an intense wind swept out in all directions. The Rankers who had lost their balance for a moment faltered, their movements halted by the suddenness of the situation.

"...What has fallen?"

"Does it look like a staff?"

"A staff?"

A long staff fell to the ground.

That caused a puff of smoke that enveloped the entire temple.

Vision was blurry.

Yuwon kept his eye on the smoke and looked at the stick that had fallen in front of him.

"Too late, as usual."

[The 'Ash Eyes' are trembling.]

Maybe it's because he used Kyneē too hard.

His body was overloaded, his concentration clouded and his vision shaky.

As he rubbed his blurry eyes with one hand, a voice spoke to him.

"Protagonists always appear at dramatic moments."

A mischievous voice.

She didn't have to wonder who it belonged to.

At this moment, he had already been watching this place for a long time.

Ssh-.

The smoke dissipated, revealing a long staff that had fallen in the center of the temple.

It was as thick as a thin forearm and about 4 meters long.

There was a man standing on the staff of unknown material, balanced on the tips of his toes.

White hair, fair skin, mischievous expression and glint in his eyes.

At the sight of him, the expressions of some of the Rankers quickly turned to contemplation.

"No way..."

"Why is he here?"

Eyes wide.

Athena, the boss, also looked surprised.

"Great Sage, Equal to Heaven..."

Known as a traitor of the Heavens, a High Rank member of the highest order.

An enemy that even his own father, Zeus, distrusted.

"Oh, hello?"

She waved and greeted him.

He had seen her face once before, long ago, even before he was a Ranker.

Athena.

She had been a test proctor on one level, long ago, as a member of Olympus.

"Long time no see, you know my main body? I don't think I remember you."

"Is that your... alter ego?"

Athena narrowed her eyes and looked at Son OhGong.

She remembered hearing it.

The Thunderbolt that fell on Camelot.

To stop it, the alter ego of the Great Sage, Equal to Heaven, was involved.

He had wondered why one of his alter egos was there, but apparently it was no coincidence.

"You're working with Kim Yuwon."

"That's what's up."

"Is he a colleague?"

Son OhGong scratched his head at Athena's question.

A moment of thought.

"Maybe?"

The answer was vague.

"To be called a partner, this guy has to be pretty crappy. Besides, he still pales in comparison to my main body."

After saying that, Son OhGong looked at Yu-won with pitiful eyes.

"Isn't it?"

Yu-won narrowed his eyes.

For a moment, he looked pathetic, the next mischievous.

YuWon realized he was teasing him.

"Not far."

"Not far."

Son OhGong looked at the Rankers around him.

"Take care of these guys, can you do it?"

"Yes."

"Good."

Bang-

Son OhGong slapped his palm with his fist.

Raising his fighting spirit, he looked at Athena and got off the Ru Yi Bang he was riding on.

So Ohgong grabbed his staff.

Athena glared at him and gripped Aegis tighter.

"Do you want to go to war with Olympus?"

"Let me answer you with this."

Son OhGong didn't like to talk too much in a fight.

Chuck-

The tip of the staff Ru Yi Bang pointed at Athena.

At that moment, Athena pushed Aegis forward.

Beyond the view blocked by the shield....

"Grow up."

Son OhGong's voice was heard.

"Ru Yi."

Boom!

Chapter 157

Kwaaaang-!

Over the temple sky.

Clouds flew in a circle in all directions, turning the sky into a big hole.

Jijin-.

Fortunately, Athena, who was pushed back by the impact, was not seriously damaged by the Ru Yi Bang's impact.

Shield of Aegis.

As one of the items symbolizing Olympus, it was an item reputed to be the strongest shield.

"Is it an item of Hephaestus?"

Son OhGong had a puzzled expression on his face.

He didn't know how much adamantium he had mixed in, but Aegis had an unbreakable defense, even for his Ru Yi Bang.

Of course, even more impressive was Athena, who held the shield and blocked the staff's power.

Gig, gig-.

Athena's hand trembled at the impact transmitted by the Aegis.

The Chariot of the Sun in which they were traveling was already shattered.

'The moment it passes through me, the whole line will break.'

Athena unleashed her power through her hand on the shield.

At that moment...

She was the center of the battlefield, and if she was pierced, the fight would be meaningless before it even began.

Gii-.

[Gorgon's shield is active].

[The blessing of war is upon your shield].

Aegis power.

As the effects of the item took effect, Ateanea raised her shield to block the staff.

Boom!

Ru Yi Bang's trajectory changed.

Skaaat-.

Athena, who unsheathed her sword, mounted the staff and quickly approached Son OhGong.

Shiiik-.

Shh-!

".....!"

A thin, long staff blocked the sword.

Athena's eyes widened.

"The staff?"

When had it shrunk so much?

Turning her gaze to the side, she could see the empty spot where Ru Yi Bang had disappeared.

Shiik, snap-!

Athena quickly swung her sword to block Son OhGong's staff with her shield.

As the distance shortened, Son OhGong shortened his staff and swung it like a sword.

Twack!

A heavyweight.

Not only was Son OhGong strong, but the weight of the weapon itself was considerable.

"It's not just about simply increasing and decreasing in size, it's also fast."

A staff that could extend and shorten at will.

Son OhGong's ability to wield it felt like a phantom.

He could increase in size at a moment's notice and strike his opponents from a distance, or adjust the length of the staff to the distance between them to keep the fight in his favor.

Although Athena had been through countless wars, it was the first time in her life that she had faced such weaponry.

It was then.

"Get bigger..."

The tip of the Ru Yi Bang was right in front of her.

'Ugh.'

Athena quickly lifted Aegis up.

"Kek."

Tooka-!

In an instant, Athena's body flew upwards with the staff soaring into the sky.

Ru Yi Bang soared high into the sky.

Son OhGong bit his lip in disappointment.

"Did you stop it?"

The decision to instantly raise the shield and protect the body was quite effective. It would be impossible even for Zeus to avoid Ru Yi Bang at this distance.

But despite the disappointment in his voice, the corners of Son OhGong's mouth turned up.

"It's fun, more than I thought."

Hwareuk-.

Son OhGong's Ash Golden Eyes blocked the petrifying effect of the Aegis and turned toward Athena, who floated upward.

She was indeed a High Ranker, the symbol of war on Olympus.

Unlike the first time, when he thought it would be easy, Son OhGong was beginning to enjoy this fight.

Swoosh-.

The clouds in the sky descended and gathered at Son OhGong's feet.

"The others can take care of themselves."

Swoop-.

Son OhGong's body floated upwards.

"Because I'm going to have to fight her some more."

Hua-ak-!

Son OhGong, riding his Flying Cloud, charged towards Athena.

Kwaang!

Ru Yi Bang and Aegis collided again, creating a wave of thick mana in the sky.

YuWon, who was watching the fight, shook his head.

Even though he was an alter ego, it seemed that his personality wasn't that different from his main body.

"At times like this, it would be much easier if it was the real thing."

YuWon looked at the fifty or so Rankers.

"The number of alter egos is proportional to the amount of hair on your head."

The Great Sage, Equal to Heaven had created hundreds and thousands of alter egos to fight.

Thinking about that, YuWon sighed heavily and shook his head.

After all, SonOhgong was stuck with Athena, so they were on their own.

Hwareuk-.

[The 'Ash Eyes' shake.]

['Sensory Field' is activated]

The Ash Eyes were unstable.

Fortunately, the Sensory Field activated without incident, but it didn't look like it had much longer to fight.

"Arthur."

-Yes.

"Getting out of here is more of a priority than killing the enemy."

In any case, they were Rankers.

Unless they have great loyalty, they will probably go to another guild when Olympus collapses.

There was no need to settle scores by killing them in cold blood.

Of course.

-You mean fight them without killing them?

"No."

That didn't mean they wouldn't fight.

"If necessary, we'll have to kill them."

It's about conserving energy by avoiding unnecessary fighting, not not not fighting at all.

"The war is about to begin."

* * *

Fifty Rankers.

No, it was over sixty if you counted the people already there.

Fortunately, his alter ego was able to save the day when the Great Sage, Equal to Heaven invaded.

'I can avenge Ares-nim.'

Aphesis looked at YuWon and took a step forward.

Even before he became a Player, he had longed for Olympus and had grown up in the service of Ares, the son of Zeus.

Ares was his Master and companion.

And now Ares was dead.

It was time for revenge.

At that moment...

Saaaah-.

An ice-attribute mana spread throughout the temple.

A shiver that penetrated deep into the bones caused Aphesis' body to instantly stiffen.

Immediately after.

Suk-.

Arthur's sword cut off Aphesis' head.

Pot-.

Turning backwards, Aphesis unsheathed her sword.

A sword imbued with Mana.

Kwagwagwagwagwat-!

At the same time she swung her sword wildly, and a dozen sword strikes shot out.

However...

Zzerzer~

Is he frozen?

The mana that gushed out with the sword attacks froze.

Frozen mana?

Even he, who had lived long before becoming a Ranker, had never seen or heard of such a thing.

"Look out!"

Boom, boom, boom!

An intruding colleague blocked Arthur's sword. The forcibly pushed back colleague flew backwards, grabbing Aphasis by the back of the neck at the same time and pulling him down.

Flick!

Aphasis, who had fallen to the ground from the blow, looked stunned.

'Is this an Undead?'

In his innermost self, he glared at Arthur.

Even if he was the King of Britain and the King of Knights, he would be weakened by becoming Undead.

If so, he had to be an ordinary Ranker or worse, or so he thought....

'It's no different from the rumors, is it?'

Rumors about the King of Knights have been around for a long time.

Due to the fame of the Round Table, his abilities were well known, and the ones Arthur displayed now didn't differ much from the rumors.

So he was not Undead?

Tsk, tsk, tsk.

Bang, cha-cha-cha-!

Arthur scattered icy mana in all directions as he fought against the Rankers.

At that moment, a Ranker froze and collapsed on the spot.

And then....

"There!"

Aphasis' head spun as she heard a Ranker's shout.

Shriek-.

YuWon, who had decapitated a Ranker, was heading towards the exit of the temple.

"Are you trying to leave?"

He didn't know why he had entered the temple and started a fight, but it seemed he had served his purpose by defeating Ares.

"I can't let you get away."

Snap-.

Aphesis gritted her teeth and stood up.

She couldn't stay like this. She had to avenge Ares.

[Lightning]

Tak-.

Aphesis, who had activated her ability, appeared behind YuWon.

Lightning was the highest ranked skill in Aphesis' arsenal, granting him several times his speed for a brief moment.

It was a skill mainly used by assassins, so it was rarely used because it was not in keeping with the spirit of the Ares Clan....

'If only I could avenge Ares-nim!'

Shuaak-.

A sword stabbing the heart from behind.

Apheses had no doubt that his sword would pierce Yuwon's body.

At that moment...

"I'm sorry, but I'm a bit tired right now."

As if time had stopped, YuWon's voice was heard completely before the sword touched his body.

No, it didn't.

'Did it stop, the sword?'

Without even touching the armor, his own sword stopped.

An incomprehensible situation.

It was definitely giving him strength, but the sword no longer entered as if something was blocking it.

[The 'Blessing of the Sea' dwells in your body.]

"I'll do my best to run away and rest for a bit.

Shriek-.

A warm sensation ran down her neck.

The world was spinning and time was slowing down. Aphasis hurried to grab her throat with both hands.

But her hands never reached her throat.

Twack!

Her neck went flying.

YuWon turned his head to look at the gushing fountain of blood.

"So I hope you stay out of the way....."

Thwack-.

Hwaahhh~

A single spear flew out and a chain of explosions engulfed it.

When the smoke from the explosion cleared, YuWon looked at the spear stuck in the ground and muttered.

"I can't even have a conversation."

Perhaps they realized YuWon's intentions, there were already more than ten Rankers standing in the direction of the exit.

Arthur was fighting hard on one side, and the fight between Ateanea and Son OhGong was in full swing in the other direction, upwards.

There was only one way out.

Then there was only one answer.

'I have no choice but to break through.'

Tsutsutsu-.

The color of the mana flowing from Yuwon's body changed.

A dull, dark red mana.

The expression of the Rankers who faced that color and the aura they felt changed.

"Demonic energy?"

"No, could it be?"

"But this..."

They had gone through countless trials to become Rankers, and had encountered Demons at least a few times in their lives.

The aura they perceived from YuWon was similar to the aura they perceived from them.

"Have you heard of the dual core?"

A power to replenish the mana spent from going overboard with Kyneē and ending the fight with Ares.

Fire~.

The dark red mana gushing from YuWon's body gave off fire.

The Demonic Energy was not mana, but a new fuel for fire.

[The 'Ash Eyes' rules over the 'Holy Fire']

The flames behind YuWon took shape.

A great purple flame leapt into the sky.

The flames spat scorching heat in all directions, carving unnecessary parts to form arms, legs and a head.

"Um, what kind of ability is that?"

"Is it a Giant?"

"Could that guy be a demon?"

The confused Rankers responded to YuWon's skill, and one by one, they used their own skills to increase their power.

Some of them cast another ability, as if to interfere with YuWon's, but it failed and dissipated.

Hwareuk-.

A long sword held in the hand of a Giant.

Swoosh-.

The Giant, in full Giant form, moved toward YuWon.

"If you don't want to die, get out of the way."

Kwak-.

Following YuWon's example of wielding the sword with both hands, the Giant adopted the stance of a double-edged sword.

[The 'Heavenly Demon Spirit' rules over the 'Sacred Fire'].

"Well, if you don't like it, don't do it."

Chapter 158

Rankers belonging to the tribes of Ares and Athena had something in common.

Not to fear death, and never to look back.

These were the beliefs one had to have when going to war. Fear, for them, was a mountain to overcome, never to possess, and if possessed, to conquer.

This was the way it had to be.

Hwareuk-!

A giant flame blazed in front of them.

The giant monster pounced.

"Look, what's that?"

To their eyes, the giant's form looked different.

A fire-sucking dragon.

A giant demon with two fiery horns and a frightening face.

Others were unrecognizable, imaginary creatures.

Huwaak-

A warrior must never feel fear.

Athena's instruction to stay away from fear.

She suffered more than anyone else, and taught it to her servants.

But those teachings were no longer useful.

With that thing in front of them, they could not help but feel fear.

Huwareuk-

He raised his flaming sword.

Bruuumgh-

Without realizing it, they took a step back.

"Get out of the way."

It was a friendly warning.

A warning before he swung his sword.

But no one in this room took it lightly.

A huge sword that was beginning to crumble.

Then, someone opened their mouth.

"Blood..."

The moment the sword came down.

"Watch out...!"

The shout was the catalyst.

The Rankers guarding the exit split into left and right and fled.

"Kaaaaaaaah-!"

"Uwaa-ah!"

Those who could not escape.

And those who overcame their fears, or were so frightened, that they froze in place.

They were consumed by the giant's fire.

"Have you ever been overcome by fear...?"

YuWon's eyes were riveted on the flames.

They are nothing but food for the flames.

A fire that feeds on the emotions of fear and dread.

His fear fanned the flames to burn even more intensely, and the Rankers, charred from head to toe, quickly collapsed to the ground, reduced to ashes.

"A scam is a scam."

He felt it again.

Holy Fire was an ability best used against a relatively weak majority.

The problem was Athena.

She had fought in countless wars, and was one of the highest ranking women in Olympus, so she shouldn't be too afraid of Holy Fire.

But as long as Son Ohgong was there to stop her, there was no stopping YuWon.

"Arthur."

"Yes!"

"Let's go."

Swish-

Yuwon walked towards the exit, surrounded by ashes.

Arthur followed behind him, watching his back. There were no more people following them toward the exit with the unquenchable flames

"It's a pity we didn't catch Athena here, but..."

Yuwon remembered the necklace in his inventory.

"At least I got something out of it."

Up until this moment, YuWon had been under constant attack from Olympus.

But at this moment, for the first time, YuWon raised his fist towards Olympus.

He did so by killing Ares, son of Zeus and Hera and a high-ranking member of Olympus.

At that moment, a flare was released to signal the beginning of the battle.

* * *

Swing-!

The impact of the staff against the Shield of Aegis thrust Athena.

With her shield in hand, Athena spun and raised her sword skyward.

Cha-cha-cha!

A thousand swords fell from the sky.

They swung to where Athena's sword was pointing.

- Ohhh -.

With a glint in his eye, Ohgong shortened his staff.

Immediately after, he examined the swords around him, using the Golden Eyes of Ash to examine them one by one.

Swish-!

The swords flew at the same time.

Huwish-

Bruuuuumgh-

Son Ohgong twirled the staff with one hand, and used it to knock down all the swords one by one.

Clang-clang...

Tuk tuk tuk tuk-

The swords fell to the ground, turning to dust and scattering. As they were made with the arcane power of Athena, they were destroyed when she stopped exercising her power.

The thousand swords disappeared.

Tuk-

With a twist of his hand, Ohgong retracted the staff and held it in his hand.

Just as he was about to wield it once more.

"Wait."

Athena lowered her shield.

Ohgong, who had been concentrating on the combat, made a puzzled face.

"...Maybe it's not necessary to keep fighting."

"Why?"

"Kim Yuwon has already retreated."

At Athena's words, Ohgong looked around and saw.

The temple in flames.

And the Rankers reeling.

As Ohgong gazed at the chaos on the battlefield, Athena realized that this situation had not been improvised.

"This was prearranged."

"He doesn't like to deviate from the plan."

"You mean Kim Yuwon?"

"Yes."

It was a short conversation, but Athena could glean a lot from it.

'Did you know he was coming?'

Ares and Athena's relationship was well known among the Rankers of Olympus.

Siblings with the same father.

And like-minded allies who went to war together.

YuWon already had Athena's support in mind when he attacked Ares' temple, and would use Son Ohgong to stop her.

'To what end?'

Athena glared at Ohgong, who had now put away his staff.

Part of her wanted to grab him and force him to tell her everything he knew.

But he was only a clone.

Even if he had a conscience, it was unlikely he would spit out information for fear of death.

Above all, it was his nature.

If it was the main body, it was such a lofty existence that it would even be difficult to look it in the eye.

Shhhh-

The cloud on which Ohgong rode gradually increased in size.

At that moment, Athena realized.

It would be impossible to capture Ohgong, let alone extract information from him.

"Well, it's been fun. See you soon."

Tohwaahhhh!

Ohgong disappeared into the sky leaving a white line.

Athena looked at his back and muttered.

"Soon...?"

* * *

After exiting the temple, Yuwon went straight down two floors.

Thirty-eighth floor.

A world where ninety percent of the land is covered with mountains and forests, and the other ten percent is desert.

It doesn't have much of a population due to the thousands of volcanoes ravaging around it.

Of course.

'How can you live in such a boring place like this?'

Chirp, chirp-

The echo of birdsong.

The sunlight sneaking through the leaves.

The pleasant, soothing smell of grass.

It was such a nice, peaceful place.

At least in appearance.

"Who knows. "

Yuwon kept walking, pushing aside the branches and bushes blocking his way with his knife.

It was a very vast forest.

There were very few towns and most areas were undeveloped, as if the players were just passing through.

This was one of those areas.

There was no point in finding one's way through such a place to begin with.

But....

"It's this way."

YuWon searched through his old memories and found the path.

All the forests looked alike.

But since the forest hadn't been touched by humans, it wasn't hard to find some trace of the person he was looking for.

Shhk-

YuWon crouched down and looked at the ground.

His eyes turned red.

Through them, he could see the faded marks on the ground.

'Found you.

Footprints.

YuWon followed the footprints.

How far had he walked?

As he walked, a large wasteland with sun shining revealed itself.

At that moment...

Tump-

The ground shook and the sound echoed through the trees.

Squish-!

In the distance, a tall, thick tree leaned sideways.

Trees several meters thick.

The ground rumbled once more as it fell.

Trump-!

YuWon walked in the direction of the sound.

The trees were falling regularly. As he got closer, he heard a man's voice above the noise of the trees.

"Are you lost?"

A deep, heavy voice.

It was the same voice he remembered, not one iota different.

Trump-!

Another tree fell.

The man's method of chopping was unusual.

He didn't take an axe and chop them down like a lumberjack, but rather he beat them with his fists, breaking them.

The fallen trees were piled to one side.

This was not just any lumberjack.

He must have at least outranked him to be able to break such a thick tree with his fist.

YuWon walked up to the man's back and asked.

"What are you doing here?"

The man's voice was unnatural, as if he had rehearsed it for a long time.

I see.

This kind of acting was uncomfortable.

"I'm not good at this."

At YuWon's question, the man turned around.

He was about two meters tall.

Muscles that seemed to come alive at any moment.

The man who was punching a tree, wearing shorts and a shirt, opened his mouth when he saw Yuwon.

"Chopping down trees.

"Are you a lumberjack by profession?"

"Something like that, for now."

"Then your home must be around here."

"Why?"

"It's just that I'm a bit tired and I was wondering if I could take a few days off and go away."

"..."

The man looked at YuWon.

"Ask you for a favor when we just met? What a ridiculous and unnecessary thing to do."

"If you're lost, I'll draw you a map. It's dangerous around here, and you'd better get out quickly."

"What could be dangerous in such a peaceful forest?"

"Not everything is what it seems."

"Really?"

The answer was predictable.

But YuWon felt relieved.

Unlike Son Ohgong, who had no idea where he was going, he had a straightforward character.

"Okay, but take me to your place. I'll pay for your accommodation."

"But..."

"I'm so tired. I feel like I'm going to faint."

YuWon exaggerated a bit, but he wasn't lying.

He fought against Ares, and then against the Rankers. YuWon's fatigue level had increased quite a bit from using Kynee and Holy Fire so much.

He was really exhausted.

The man looked at YuWon's face for a long while before replying.

"...Follow me."

The man walked towards a pile of wood to the side.

A pile that looked like dozens of trees.

He lifted the pile of wood, which must have weighed several tons, and walked briskly towards the others.

YuWon sighed as he watched the man's back.

'That stupid personality is still the same.'

All you had to do was insist, and he would help you.

Despite his outward appearance, that kind-hearted man never knew how to refuse a request.

'Probably, it's not that hard to get to me.' Hercules was about to tell the meeting how to approach him, but it was a topic that shouldn't even be discussed in the first place.

"You don't have to tell me that. I'm sure I'll do it anyway."

'...Oh. I see.'

Hercules.

A High Ranker capable of crushing Olympus.

He was killing time in this isolated forest, chopping firewood.

'I can't believe it...'

Shhh-

As he followed the woodcutter, YuWon thought of his other name.

'I wonder how a guy like that earned the title of Giant Hunter/Killer.'

Chapter 159

Thump, thump, thump-.

His footsteps sank and the ground rumbled with every step he took.

That was only natural.

The trees Hercules lifted must have weighed dozens of tons.

It was a wonder to see how he could lift so much wood with one hand.

"What's he going to use all this wood for, fire?"

Ranker Players, or at least those above a certain level, were rarely cold because of the weather.

They rarely burned wood to heat their rooms, only lighting fires to cook their meals, and even then, it was a rare practice in this era.

"Probably..."

"Probably?"

"You and I may not need it, but some people still need wood. The only ones who don't feel cold are the Players."

Ultimately, it meant he wouldn't use it himself.

'It looks like he's sending it somewhere.'

If so, it wasn't just a simple job, but some sort of service.

Chopping firewood and sending it to warm someone, that's what Hercules was doing, stuck on this mountain.

"Good job."

"Not really."

Embarrassed, Hercules walked away in silence for a while.

Behind him was a hut.

A rustic house, carved out of a tree.

But it looked big enough. It seemed too big for one person to live in, and it had few rooms.

'It's the same here.'

A cabin that had remained the same for quite some time.

It was refreshing to see it again.

'The door isn't locked, so come on in, I'll tidy up and get you something to eat.'

"That's it. I'll rent the house and I'll cook the meals."

"I thought you said you were tired."

"I'm just trying to make a living."

"...."

Hercules was speechless at the polite tone.

YuWon stoked the fire as if it were his own home, picked up a stack of bowls to the side and poured water into them.

As she watched him expertly prepare the meal, adding dried meat and vegetables, Hercules began chopping the wood he had brought with him.

Kak-!

Fuduk, fuduk, fuduk-.

He broke and chopped the wood with his hands.

The work went quickly. Hercules threw the cut wood aside.

Meanwhile, the sun was setting.

Tadak, takdak.

The lit bonfire roared in front of the hut.

Having finished his work, Hercules sat down in front of the fire. YuWon served the food in a bowl carved from wood.

"What is your name?"

"You're quick to ask."

YuWon took a spoonful of the soup, simmered with various ingredients, and answered.

"Kim Yuwon."

"Kim Yuwon... I've never heard of that name before, aren't you a Ranker?"

"I'm still a Player. However, I'm quite famous outside."

"It's been too long since I've been here alone."

Hercules didn't interact much with the Rankers outside.

He rarely wore his Player gear and had few close friends in Olympus, which meant that Hercules knew very little of what had happened in recent years.

"You should get out sometimes, though. It's not good to isolate yourself from the world."

"You don't seem to be very close to the world either."

"Do I look it?"

"You seem so."

"You're right."

After a brief exchange, the expressions of the two men returned to the same. Hercules, who hadn't smiled in a long time, felt a strange sensation.

"How strange."

"What?"

"I'm sure we met for the first time today, but this seems strangely familiar."

The conversation flowed like water.

It was like meeting an old friend for the first time in a long time.

"You don't seem like a very social person."

"You mean me?"

"That's right."

"I guess like-minded people get along well."

The meal went on for quite a while.

Meanwhile, YuWon and Hercules talked about each other.

"My name is Hercules."

"Ah, Hercules."

"Have you heard of me?"

"With a classification like that, it's impossible not to."

"...I'm not surprised."

"Wow."

Seeing YuWon pretending to be exaggeratedly surprised, Hercules laughed.

He wasn't overconfident, but he wasn't so stupid that he didn't know his place either.

Hercules.

High Rank on Olympus, second only to the three Gods in influence.

But in terms of Rank, he was second only to Zeus.

He alone could take down any medium sized Guild, or even a Guild on the threshold of a Great Guild.

But YuWon didn't seem to mind.

"But..."

Tadak-.

Hercules tossed a dry twig into the lit bonfire and stared at YuWon.

"It's only a matter of time, and someday you'll be up there."

Peculiar fellow, he thought.

From what he had just heard, he was not a Ranker Player, but a Player who had not yet reached the top.

However, there was an aura or subtle energy about him that a normal Player would not have.

He seemed to be facing a Player who had already reached the top.

It was the first time he felt this way.

"I enjoyed the conversation. I'm done with work today, so I'll go to sleep."

Putting away the bowl, Hercules stepped on the fire to put it out and entered the house.

YuWon, who entered after him, was led to a spare room.

A large wooden bed.

Lying there, in a hut in the silent forest, he felt relaxed.

At the same time...

Zalgraak-.

As he held the necklace from his inventory in his hand, a jumble of thoughts swirled in his mind.

'We've somehow found each other again.'

Hercules.

A High Ranker who had been considered as one of the candidates to return to the past along with the Great Sage, Equal to Heaven.

Also, the hero YuWon most admired.

He was here, alone, fighting a futile battle.

"...I'll think about it later."

YuWon put the necklace back into his inventory.

Then he closed his eyes.

It wasn't as big and solid as a castle, but it was the safest place than any other in this huge tower.

That day, YuWon slept comfortably for the first time in a long time.

* * *

Three days passed.

Meanwhile, YuWon had been following Hercules, felling trees and blowing them up.

"You're working hard."

"Yes, but these trees are heavier than I thought."

"Right. The wood of this world is harder and heavier than most iron, so it's a good material."

YuWon, who wove several trees together and hung them from his shoulder, felt a considerable weight.

He wondered how Hercules was able to move so much wood every day without using any tools.

'In terms of strength alone, you are the strongest in the Tower.'

Even now, Hercules did not even use Gigantification.

Moreover, his Gigantification had existed for a long time, unlike YuWon, so his skill level would be incomparable.

"Then why are you still here? You said you were going to take a break."

"I thought life wasn't so bad here."

"I see you have quite a bit of time before your Test..."

"Plenty."

The conversation went smoothly.

Over the past three days, YuWon had talked to Hercules quite a bit.

About his life, who he had met and what he had been through.

They had been close once, so it wasn't too hard to get back together.

However...

"Still, leave today."

Thud.

He hadn't said what he really had to say.

"Before nightfall."

Hercules dropped the pile of firewood he carried over his shoulder to the ground and turned to YuWon.

His kind eyes lifted and his pupils filled with strength.

At first glance, he looked like he was angry, but YuWon knew that expression.

'This is his face before the fight.'

This was the beginning.

He wondered how long he would have to keep felling, but it looked like he wouldn't have to wait much longer.

"Why today?"

"Because this place is about to get dangerous."

"I can take care of myself."

"Still, go."

Hercules made an anguished expression.

"...Please."

Even though this was the place where he lived, he even begged her to leave.

What a silly guy, he thought.

He asked YuWon to leave for two reasons.

The first was because he was really worried about YuWon's safety.

'I guess he doesn't want to show himself fighting.'

The image of Hercules fighting couldn't be that harsh.

She could still see the image of him grabbing his coat with his bare hands and slamming it to the ground.

However, from what she had heard, the Hercules in his days as a Giant Killer was a little different.

"Back then," he says, "when he fought, his eyes were turned upside down."

'Hercules with his eyes upside down...'

I couldn't imagine it.

Although he was sometimes afraid when he fought, but his eyes didn't seem to turn inside out.

Hercules had survived his fight with the Outers, and they had been in many fights together.

Thud.

Arriving at the hut, YuWon set the firewood he had carried down on the ground.

"You've done a good job. Now you can really go." Hercules said urgently, as he watched the sunset.

But YuWon, who had no intention of doing so, ignored him.

"Before that, let me ask you something."

"What?"

"Your character is very different from what I've heard."

Giant Killer/Giant Hunter.

The World called him the Hero of Olympus, but to the Giants, Hercules was nothing more than the demon who had killed most of his kind.

But Hercules did not fight for Olympus.

He went to war as the son of Zeus, but, well.

At least in the early period of the Gigantomachy, Hercules was against fighting the Giants.

However.

"Why do you hate the Giants so much?"

From one day to the next, Hercules' eyes would turn upside down when he saw giants and he would start killing them.

And it was the same even now.

"...Don't talk nonsense."

"Weren't you always on good terms with Surt and the Giants..."

"You..."

Hwaaak-!

Heavy mana fell over his entire body from top to bottom.

In an instant, he felt as if his body was about to explode. It was to the point where an ability of his activated on its own.

[The 'Blessing of the Sea' dwells in your body].

'I'd rather be struck by a sword.'

At this point, Hercules was half-fucked.

Fortunately, thanks to Triaina, he was able to escape the mana weighing on his body. However, it was only the power that Hercules unconsciously threw out.

"What do you think you know?"

"...I don't know."

YuWon let out a long sigh and opened his mouth again.

"That's why I'm asking. What happened."

He knew everything.

But he still wanted to hear it.

Hercules.

His idol, his friend, the story he had told, now, again.

But...

"Nothing happened."

There was no answer.

Perhaps it was to be expected.

Bonds and camaraderie were just feelings that YuWon was the only one who could feel.

To Hercules, YuWon was nothing more than a 'stranger' with whom he had had a brief conversation in the past few days.

'At least that's good.'

Pang~

The ground began to shake.

As Hercules warned, the sun was setting.

It was about time.

This was originally a world where Humans and Giants coexisted.

Although the Giants, who had separated from the Humans after the Gigantomachy, had disappeared from the earth, they still lived in this world.

The 38th Floor.

The land of Humans and Giants.

This was the world that served as the setting for the Gigantomachy.

Chapter 160

The period since the end of Gigantomachia.

In the midst of what was essentially a civil war, the giants and humans promised one thing.

'For half the month, the humans, and for the other half, the giants.'

'Not to invade each other's territory. We promise.'

King of the Giants.

Zeus, King of Olympus.

They both promised, and there was peace on the 38th floor.

Gigantomachy.

A thousand years after the greatest war in the history of the Tower.

Here, now, was a man who had not yet finished the war alone.

* * *

Thump- thump-

The ground was shaking, cracking and splitting.

Around the hut that housed Hercules, a lava-like heat boiled.

The world began to open up.

"Is it time already?"

Hercules, who had watched the phenomenon in disbelief, looked towards YuWon.

"You'll regret not coming back. This place is so different from any other place you know."

The thirty-eighth level world was known to be a place where humans spent half of the month and giants spent the other half.

It was a pact between the beings of this world.

And this forest was to the giants, what human 'cities' were to humans, a wheat-gathering area without bustle.

Yuwon nodded.

"Don't worry.

He looked up at the sky, which was blackening from the heat.

"I won't regret it.

It's an interesting phenomenon, but it's just another day in the life of the world changing hands.

'Compared to the Gigantomachy...'

A war many times bigger than the First Gigantomachy.

YuWon, who had just become a High Rank at that time, had participated in that war.

Compared to then, what was happening now was peaceful.

Of course, in Hercules' eyes, YuWon was just an ignoramus who was nothing more than a moth to the flame.

'...They say ignorance brings bliss'.

Pok-

Hercules approached the cracked ground.

The opening had begun, and was now nearing completion.

Lava boiled beneath the ground.

YuWon followed Hercules, feeling the heat.

"This heat and mana...?"

The energy flowing from the churned earth was different from ordinary mana.

It was familiar to him.

A confusing mixture of mana and demonic energy.

There were only a few people in this tower who possessed this kind of medium power.

It must be the territory of the demonic giants.

Boom.

He wondered if it was.

A hand came up from the bottom of the cliff, clinging to the cracked ground.

▶ [Day 16 begins.]

▶ [The 'promise of giants and humans' is fulfilled].

▶ [The masters of the world will be reversed].

► [Penalty for unspecified races in the area becomes stronger].

► [The masters of the world are the 'giants'].

No.

It wasn't one.

Clack, clack, clack-.

Kuong-.

One by one, the giants began to rise.

Each one of them had saccharine skin, flesh falling from their bodies, boiling lava in their veins instead of blood.

They were all different sizes.

Some were relatively small, like the brothers Bois and Noir, and there were also giants like small mountains.

'They're not from here.'

Just as there were different factions among the humans, there were also factions among the giants.

In this case, giants who had joined the demons, who had been transfused with their blood and had become demons themselves.

This was the land of the giants, but it was also the land of the demons.

"Stay where you are.

Suk-.

Hercules quickly picked up the felled tree he had set aside.

He wielded it lightly with one hand, as if it were a small wooden stick.

"...Unless you want to get caught in the crossfire."

Boo-boo-.

The wood swung slowly.

Shhhh-!

It hit something floating in the air.

At that moment...

Tsk, tsk, tsk-.

Tuhwaaaaak-!

The atmosphere cracked like glass, and the impact of the tree popped the giants' bodies like balloons.

Woooooong-.

The sky shook in one fell swoop. Clouds burst and shattered, changing the landscape of the world as far as the eye could see.

Hercules, holding an ordinary tree and wearing a lion skin over his head, was ready to attack.

It was the beginning of the Giant Slayer/Killer.

* * *

Joboook-!

Kwak, -!

The tree exploded against the giant's head.

Hercules swung the tree and his fists alternately as he smashed his way through the hundreds of giants.

Crunch, crunch, crunch-!

He punched the air with his fist and several giants went flying.

It wasn't a special ability, nor did he use a great deal of magic.

It was simply the power of his body, so to speak.

'It's terrifying.'

His eyes were hidden by the lion skin.

But YuWon sensed a madness in Hercules' way of fighting that he had never felt before.

On the surface, it looked the same.

But even if it was the same action, it started differently.

'Every blow from a weapon or fist must have a purpose.'

At least the Hercules before him was different from the one YuWon knew.

'For a fight without purpose is nothing more than murder.'

"Purpose..."

When it came to wielding power, this Hercules had no purpose.

No.

Maybe he did.

'Maybe killing your opponent is an end in itself.'

Killing, a fight that is an end in itself.

It was hard to believe that Hercules, not Susanoo, was doing such a thing.

Y...

The head of the last remaining giant was crushed.

Even though he must have known he was dead, Hercules did not stop wielding his weapon.

Gwang- gwang- gwang- gwang!

The giant's body was torn to pieces.

For a body as huge as a small mountain, it didn't take long for it to become mushy.

Minutes passed, and Hercules, his body burning, refused to let go of his weapon.

Pajik- pajik.

Meanwhile, Hercules' body had taken a considerable penalty.

It was enough to completely restrict even the strongest. That meant that among the giant opponents, there were many who had not yet reached Ranker level.

Furthermore, for the next 15 days, Hercules, who was not a giant, would be penalized even more.

'I have to admit that he is strong.

Great strength requires a strong body.

Hercules was now brandishing his weapon without caring about the penalty.

"Whoa."

Hercules let out a long sigh that he had been holding back.

It wasn't because he was tired or out of breath.

It was because of heightened emotions.

How much time had passed?

After only a few minutes of clearing the giants that had appeared around him, Hercules looked around YuWon.

"It should be safe around here by now."

His eyes were bloodshot.

"If you want to live, you can either go somewhere safe or stay here."

Jobok-

With that one piece of advice, Hercules was soon on his way.

Presumably, to slay another giant.

'He's out of his mind.'

A part of YuWon wanted to stop him.

But he didn't have the power to do so now. To stop Hercules, even the main body of the Great Sage, Equal to Heaven would have to come in person.

'Has he been like this since the Gigantomachy?'

The Giant Killer.

The title was not coined only during the Gigantomachy.

After the Gigantomachy, after the truce between Olympus and the Giants.

Hercules continued his war against the Giants here.

Even after the Second Great Gigantomachy, it continued.

Kuk-.

YuWon followed Hercules as he walked away.

Destroying Olympus was secondary.

YuWon could no longer stand by and watch Hercules being destroyed.

So the two of them rushed down the lava cliff.

* * *

Hwareuk-

Puff!

The lava flowing underground seemed nothing out of the ordinary.

Not only was it hot, but the heat was so intense that just standing still seemed to burn your whole body.

Pajiiiig-

Hercules went through it.

And behind him.

"Are you still following me?"

YuWon called after him.

"Yes.

"Why?"

"I have nowhere to go anyway. And I think I'll be safer by your side."

It would be safer to stay together.

Hercules agreed. Of course, that was when things weren't so different.

"...Do you even know where I'm going?"

"I don't know where you're going, but I know what you're going to do."

"Do you know?"

"What else could the Giant Killer be here for, but to kill giants?"

"It's good that you know."

Nodding, Hercules spoke menacingly.

"I'm going after Gigantes.

Gigäntes.

It was the name of the giant who represented the giants, as well as the three gods of Olympus.

Not only was he taking out his frustrations on them, he was looking up.

"Are you still going to keep me knowing that?"

By referring to Gigäntes, Hercules was saying that where he was going was a dangerous place.

That he wouldn't be able to protect him once the fight with Gigäntes began, and that it would be safer to fall from this point.

"I know where it is.

"You're stubborn... Wait what did you say?"

Hercules' eyes widened.

For a moment, he turned to YuWon and held out his hand.

Pak-.

He felt a great strength in the hand gripping his shoulder.

He felt that if he exerted any more force, his shoulder would be ripped off.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes.

"How?"

Gigäntes had been in hiding since the Gigantomachy. Hercules had searched for them everywhere, but never found him.

All he knew was that he was on the 38th floor.

And now, YuWon said he knew.

"Can you guide me?"

YuWon Looked at Hercules and touched the arm holding his shoulder.

"But first, let go of me, you're squeezing me."

"Ah... I'm sorry."

"Follow me if you want to know. Luckily, it's not too far."

Hercules looked behind his back for a moment at YuWon's confident gaze.

If what YuWon was saying was true, if this was how they were going to meet Gigäntes....

Perhaps he could not guarantee the safety of his group.

After a moment's thought...

"You said you knew the way, right?"

Hercules stretched out his hand towards YuWon.

Boom-.

YuWon felt his body defy gravity and float upwards.

Hercules hurriedly put his arm around YuWon's shoulders and asked.

"Which way is it?"

"Down."

At her answer, Hercules followed her gaze.

Boggle-.

Boiling, bubbling liquid.

"Into the lava? I've been there before."

He must be crazy, YuWon thought.

He really was crazy, he thought, searching every corner of the tower, even inside the lava.

"No".

But that wasn't enough.

The place where he was was even deeper.

"Lower than that".

