

With The Gods 41

Chapter 41

Even injured, a Ranker was still a Ranker. Just by standing near him, YuWon felt like his entire body was going to go numb.

“You won’t be able to laugh off the penalty.”

YuWon tried not to be hostile against Chryses. YuWon hoped that he wouldn’t join the fight until Hephaestus woke up.

The penalty of the Tower was much more powerful when a Ranker first laid hands on a player from the lower floor. It was different from Hephaestus, who had retaliated against players that attacked him first.

“I know.”

Fssh—

Chryses endured the pressure that the Tower exerted on him. While cauterizing his open wounds with fire, he created another spear.

“What’s your relation to Hephaestus?”

“I’m a customer.”

“A customer?”

He wondered what YuWon was talking about, giving him a baffled look. A customer? Chryses figured that YuWon must have commissioned Hephaestus for an item or a repair. But he couldn’t understand it... Why would someone butt into a battle of this scale over that kind of relation?

YuWon exhaled a deep breath. He was trying to create some distance so other players wouldn’t get caught up in Chryses’s attack.

‘The moment I let down my guard even a little bit, I’ll be burnt to ashes.’

His opponent was a Ranker and the right-hand man of Apollo, the Ruler of Fire, no less. At this point in time, Chryses was still a fledgling that had just become a Ranker, but he was still not one to be underestimated.

‘Let’s take advantage of the penalty.’

YuWon knew that as long as he climbed the Tower, he’d have to eventually fight against Olympus as well as Rankers. It just ended up happening much sooner than he had expected, but he knew not to panic.

‘If I take his injuries and penalties into account... it should be no more than five.’

If Chryses could use all of his powers, this would be an impossible fight. But considering the injuries he obtained during his fight against Hephaestus, coupled with the penalty a Ranker faced attacking a player of the bottom floor...

‘I can do this.’

Luckily, it wasn't a bad match up. With [Cinder Eyes] and the 「Pyromancy Robe,」 YuWon had a pretty high fire resistance. Plus, he had already experienced and survived Suruhtra's [Flames of Annihilation] during the Tutorial.

This was also the 1st Floor. Chryses might have been a Ranker, but the restrictions of the Tower meant that he was a lot weaker.

Crack, kk-crack—

YuWon's arm started to morph. Like a balloon being inflated, YuWon's right arm increased in size, enhanced by mana.

Witnessing his transformation, Chryses and Agamemnon's eyes widened.

[Gigantification]

It was the most powerful skill that YuWon possessed, and it was also one of the skills that was a symbol of Olympus.

“So he had quite the extraordinary skill.”

[Gigantification] was a skill that only Hercules possessed within Olympus. Countless Rankers had sought it out, but none of them were successful. That meant that [Gigantification] was an epic skill that even most Rankers didn't have.

“One...”

Fwoosh—

The flaming spear within Chryses's grasp radiated intense heat.

“No matter, he's still a new player that only just entered the Tower.”

Flash—!

A sun flew towards YuWon. Or at least that was what it appeared like.

YuWon swung his giant hand forward with all his strength.

Crash—!

[Gigantification combats against Sun Shard.]

[Cinder Eyes is resisting Sun Shard.]

[「Pyromancy Robe」 is resisting Sun Shard.]

Fwoosh, fwoosh—

[Gigantification] was a skill that had managed to break the armor and defenses of the Chimera Creator with ease. However, it wasn't enough to defend against a Ranker's attack with sheer physical strength.

[You have failed to resist Sun Shard.]

[Status effect : Burn inflicted.]

Sizzle—

YuWon's arm was cooked red. The pain from being burned was intense. He had somehow managed to block the attack, but he had failed to come out unscathed.

'Maybe I should have bought some Ice Crystals.'

YuWon wondered how things would have been had he consumed some 「Ice Crystals,」 like when he fought against Suruhtra. Though he might have become a bit slower in movement due to the icy aura, he would have at least had higher fire resistance.

Well, it was no use wondering about it now.

Fwoosh—

Chyses's next attack was already incoming, hurling towards YuWon.

Fwoosh—!

Shaaa—

The flames took the shape of a wave as it enclosed YuWon. It was actually closer to lava than fire, but it wasn't truly lava. It wasn't possible for Chyses to call forth lava while his powers were being restricted on the 1st Floor.

Though, it might have been a different story for a High Ranker like Apollo.

'I can't seem to catch a break.'

Whirr, whirrr—

YuWon created three [Mana Blasts] around him. The three Blasts took a ton of mana, and at YuWon's signal, they unleashed their power.

Boom—!

The [Mana Blasts] collided with the crashing fire wave, but all they did was decrease the intensity of the wave's force.

Whoosh—!

The flaming waves crashed directly into YuWon. He did his best to try and protect his body with his Gigantified arm and resisted the flames by strengthening [Cinder Eyes.]

[Cinder Eyes is resisting Sun Shard.]

[「Pyromancy Robe」 is resisting Sun Shard.]

[You have failed to resist Sun Shard.]

[Status effect : Burn increased to level 2.]

A string of messages popped up.

YuWon felt like he was being roasted alive. Hazy smoke came off his body, and he felt his legs weakening, making him wobble.

The edges of the 「Pyromancy Robe」 started burning off. Even though it was an item with excellent fire resistance, it was going against a Ranker's flame.

“That's... two...”

Spark, crackle—

Yellow electricity started flowing across Chryses's body. It was the second stage of the penalty.

YuWon wasn't the only one teetering from exhaustion. Chryses was also using all his strength to stay standing due to the injuries that were inflicted during his fight with Hephaestus.

‘If I can just last a little longer...’ YuWon thought.

He blinked once. It was just for a split second, and he thought he had plenty of distance between himself and Chryses. Yet...

Flick—

Chryses, who was wavering, disappeared into the fire, and...

Wham—!

“Kugh...!”

... In a flash, Chryses closed the gap between them and punched YuWon straight in the chest.

Crack—

YuWon heard his ribs breaking.

Unfortunately, that wasn't the end.

Ka-boom—!

An explosion occurred at the end of Chryses's fist, knocking YuWon up into the air.

Whoosh—

Crash—!

YuWon's body flew through the air, slamming into a wall.

The hard wall crumbled, and YuWon was buried underneath the rubble of the building.

Crumble—

Thud, thu-thunk—

“Cough!”

Pieces of the building trickled down and fell on top of YuWon's head.

He slowly tried to move and winced at the pain in his chest.

‘Maybe I underestimated him too much because we're on the 1st Floor.’

He might have just become a Ranker, but he was still a Ranker nonetheless. Even with the restrictions of the 1st Floor, the penalty, and his injuries, he wasn't an opponent YuWon could beat right now.

With [Cinder Eyes,] the 「Pyromancy Robe,」 and [Gigantification,] YuWon had thought that he would have been able to at least last until Hephaestus woke up.

‘But that makes it three.’

“Ugh...”

YuWon got back up while grunting in pain. His bones were broken, but he could still move.

It was thanks to the additional stats he had gained from the [Heaven-Slaying Star,] the Strength and Constitution he gained from consuming 「Giant's Heart,」 and protecting his body with his Gigantified arm.

‘Only about two more strikes left.’

YuWon pictured the rest of the fight in his head.

‘For me to endure that...’

In the end, YuWon knew he needed that.

Shine—

In the midst of the rubble of the collapsed building, a faint light entered his vision.

YuWon looked around at his surroundings. This was a familiar location.

“What do you know?”

There was still a Ranker and dozens of players outside.

“I sure am lucky.”

YuWon smiled as he stretched out his hand.

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Reaper Scans

Translator – NumbaWon

Proofreader – BringTheRayn

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Vzzzt—!

The penalty from the third attack had started. Chryses grit his teeth, trying to endure it. An intense pressure crushed his body while high voltage flowed through him.

When the penalty ended, Chryses's knees went weak, and he flopped onto the floor.

“Kegh!”

Chryses vomited blood.

“Cough, blegh—”

He couldn’t keep his mouth closed.

‘So... this is what the penalty is like...’

Having never looked down, only up, with the goal of becoming a Ranker, Chryses had never properly experienced the penalty. And when he did experience it, it wasn’t for something like coming down to the 1st Floor and using his powers, so he’d had no fear of the penalty.

“The penalty? You’ll know once you experience it first-hand.”

That was what the God Apollo had told him after he had received his mission and was about to go down to the 1st Floor.

“You’ll understand how great a power flows inside this Tower.”

At first, Chryses didn’t really understand what he had meant. What kind of a power could make even Apollo, one of the strongest people in Olympus, admit its greatness?

But now that he was experiencing it firsthand, he understood.

‘I could perish.’

The penalty was different from any skills Chryses knew. He tried putting it into words...

‘Will.’

From the sensation of his existence perishing, Chryses felt something massive intervening.

‘Is this the Tower’s will to prevent beings on the upper floors from intervening too much?’

He was surprised. Chryses had presumed that the Tower was just a massive world to live in, but for it to actually have its own will like it was alive? And that ‘will’ was trying to extinguish him for exerting too much power in order to protect the ecosystem of the lower floors.

“But with this, it’s now over.”

“Thank you for your hard work, sir.”

Agamemnon approached Chryses and bowed his head.

Without his help, this mission would have been impossible. It was Chryses who had captured Hephaestus with the replica 「Aegis,」 and he was also the one who had defeated the new player that suddenly interfered. This was accomplished entirely through Chryses’s help.

“Quickly transport the criminal! Check for fatalities and treat the wounded! Also...”

Agamemnon looked towards the collapsed building where YuWon was buried.

“Let’s just leave him be,” Chryses interrupted Agamemnon.

Shocked, Agamemnon looked back at him.

“Pardon me, sir. In the future, he’s sure to be...”

“The mission is now over. We’re the ones that broke the rule of the Tower by causing a ruckus. I’d like to avoid unnecessary murder.”

Agamemnon bit his tongue at the firm response. At the end of the day, it was Chryses who was the one leading this mission.

“I understand, sir. Then...”

Boom—!

From within the collapsed building, the rubble erupted, and a cloud of dust fanned out. And from within that mess, YuWon walked out, wielding a sword.

A fire lit in Agamemnon’s eyes once again.

“This almost dead shitling is...”

“Halt,” Chryses said.

Agamemnon shouted back at Chryses, who seemed like he was trying to dissuade him once again, “Are you saying we should still leave him be? He’s clearly trying to fight us again!”

“That’s not it.”

Chryses shook his head. He hadn’t stopped Agamemnon this time around because he wanted to avoid unnecessary killing.

Crackle—

Yuwon walked out from the cloud of dust.

“He’s...”

Vzzt—!

From within his hand, dark attribute mana, which was rare and uncommon, was endlessly overflowing.

“... Dangerous.”

[Pure Dark Divine Crystal]

Chapter 42

The workshop that Hephaestus had been using collapsed. Made by having done some adjustments to a small building in the slums, it was in a shabby state where it could have collapsed at any moment.

YuWon took a punch from Chryses, which sent him flying into the workshop. And from within the rubble, he found the 「Dark Divine Crystal,」 no, the now properly refined 「Pure Dark Divine Crystal」 and grasped it within his hand.

“What do you mean ‘dangerous,’ sir?” Agamemnon asked Chryses, confused by his words.

There was a hidden veil of annoyance on Agamemnon’s face as he looked at Chryses. He wanted to capture Hephaestus as soon as possible and finish his mission, but things continued to get delayed.

“He’s almost dead. There’s no reason to be afraid of him.”

“Dark attribute mana is a special case. And to consider him almost dead, though his mana is—”

“It’s fine.”

His patience finally hitting its limit, Agamemnon interrupted Chryses.

“No matter how talented he might be, he’s still a new player. You look very tired, sir. Please have some rest.”

Agamemnon set his sights back on YuWon.

“We’ll take care of him...”

It was the strangest thing. YuWon, who was standing in the pile of rubble just a moment ago, had disappeared.

‘Where did he go...?’

Boom—!

The sound of a loud explosion. It was from the direction where Hephaestus was laying on the ground.

Surprised, Agamemnon quickly turned his head.

“Kugh...!”

“Ahhhh!”

Wham, crash—

The subordinates that were sent to carry Hephaestus back were sent flying like bowling pins. It all happened in an instant, the battlefield erupting into absolute chaos once more.

YuWon was once again standing next to Hephaestus.

Agamemnon grit his teeth.

“What are you doing, you idiots?” Agamemnon shouted in fury. “Are you just going to watch him? Go kill him! I said I’ll give a management position to whoever kills him! Now jump him all at once!”

Hephaestus's petrified body continued to slowly twitch. The Petrification status effect only stopped one's movement. It didn't stop one's mind. That meant that even now, Hephaestus was struggling with everything he had to break out of the Petrification.

"L-Let's go all in together!"

"Ahhh!"

Though their individual skills weren't all that impressive, one couldn't ignore the strength in numbers.

YuWon tightly gripped his sword, watching the wave of people charge at him. With a sword in one hand and the 「Pure Dark Divine Crystal」 in the other, he unleashed his mana with all his strength.

Flash—!

An instantaneous mana ripple.

Shwoo, fwoosh—

Where the dark mana passed by, players' heads were cut off, and their arms and torsos withered away.

Their wailing cries could be heard from the horde of players.

YuWon continued to fight against the ones that rushed at him, bringing out the power of the 「Pure Dark Divine Crystal.」

Vzzt—!

Crash—!

With the fragment in YuWon's hand, his mana continuously changed attributes and was amplified.

The only ones to notice the item were Chryses and Agamemnon.

"He had an unbelievable item. Was that a reward from the Tutorial?" Chryses remarked in amazement, watching YuWon fighting against dozens of players from floors above him. He then looked over at Agamemnon whose face had turned white. "What did I tell you? Tsk, tsk."

Chryses's response ticked off Agamemnon. He grit his teeth. He didn't know what was going on. Until just a moment ago, he didn't seem like he had that kind of item at all.

"The Tower called forth a monster."

"This is no time to be impressed, sir!"

Agamemnon looked at Chryses with fire in his eyes, giving him a death glare.

"What's wrong? Didn't you say earlier that you guys could take care of him yourselves?"

“So are you saying you won’t do anything about this?”

“From the beginning, my role was to stop Hephaestus in his tracks. Against a new player, according to the rules of the Tower, you guys need to resolve this on your own.”

“Are you serious...?!”

Chryses smirked at Agamemnon’s reaction. It wasn’t that Chryses didn’t understand how he was feeling. After losing the Jackals, if he failed to capture Hephaestus, who was incredibly difficult to find, he’d completely lose ground in Olympus.

“Don’t worry,” Chryses said, standing up with a grunt. He clapped Agamemnon’s shoulder. “I intend on seeing things through.”

Drip—

A big drop of sweat fell down Chryses’s forehead as he continued to walk. He had already reached his limits from suffering the penalty. He looked like he might fall over at any moment from how poor condition he was in.

YuWon spotted the weakened Chryses. And at the same time, he flicked the finger of the hand that was holding the 「Pure Dark Divine Crystal」 and waved his hand in the air.

Crackle—!

Fwoosh—

The fire mixed with the dark mana, creating a black flame that enveloped YuWon.

Seeing this made the players that were charging in take a step back.

Step—

The only one who passed through the fire was Chryses. Seeming unphased by them, he reached out his hand and held some of YuWon’s flames in his palm.

“... Amazing.”

Fwoosh— Flicker—

Chryses remarked, while closely observing YuWon’s fire in his hand.

Fire and dark. It was already impressive that he was able to manipulate a single attribute, but YuWon was in fact able to control two attributes. Even most Rankers were incapable of this kind of mana control.

“Do you have any thoughts of joining Olympus? If equipment is what you’re after, I promise to give you something far better than what you commissioned Hephaestus.”

YuWon shook his head.

“There’s no way that’s my objective.”

“That’s true. You have a point.”

“And I’ve already given him my answer to that question before.”

YuWon referred to Agamemnon, who was standing and watching from the sidelines.

“And of course you said ‘no,’ right?”

“Of course.”

“What a shame.”

He knew that it was highly unlikely, but Chryses still asked for the slim chance of being able to recruit YuWon. Because YuWon was that desirable of a gem.

Chryses’s fire swallowed up YuWon’s fire, and the black flames near him changed to red.

The flames in the area were split in two—half YuWon’s dark flames and half Chryses’s red flames. The two fought each other, crashing head on.

While that was going on, Chryses body continued to be overloaded by the penalty.

“Are you sure you can keep fighting?”

Chryses responded with a baffled laughter, “I never thought I’d hear that from a new player.”

This was an embarrassing occasion he’d never be able to tell another soul. However, that was only because other people didn’t know about YuWon’s existence.

‘In about a hundred years, I might be able to share today’s events with pride,’
Chryses thought.

A scenario came to Chryses’s mind.

“You know, I’ve fought Kim YuWon before.

“No, really. ‘When?’ you say? Well, it was right when he had just arrived on the 1st Floor...”

Chryses smirked as he shook his head. He found it funny that he was already thinking about sharing this tale with his friends in the distant future.

Who could have ever imagined that a new player would be able to go toe-to-toe against a Ranker?

‘Of course...’

Fwoosh—

Chryses’s flames swallowed up YuWon’s flames.

‘That’s only possible if I manage to survive this first.’

Whoosh—!

All the nearby flames gathered around Chryses. The fire quickly swirled together until it formed the shape of a sun.

Watching this attack, YuWon mumbled to himself, "... So he's prepared to perish."

YuWon got a sense of how truly important this mission was to them. Of course, that was why they were able to send down a Ranker to the 1st Floor equipped with 「Aegis,」 even if it was a replica.

'If Ahjussi doesn't rejoin Olympus here...'

Fshhhhh—

YuWon started putting more power into the 「Pure Dark Divine Crystal」 in his grasp. Reacting to YuWon's mana, the Crystal wailed loudly. The resonating mana started to grow so much that YuWon's body couldn't handle it anymore.

'... The next Gigantomachy might not happen.'

To ensure that it didn't, YuWon had to protect Hephaestus right here, right now.

The second Gigantomachy, that tragedy, could not be allowed to happen.

Fwoosh—

Fshhh, shh—

The two massive energies were hostile to each other. The two different types of mana almost seemed like they were growling as they collided and created a windstorm.

Step—

YuWon and Chryses simultaneously walked towards each other.

The small sun that Chryses created started descending after he gave the signal with his hand.

Vzzzt, vzzt—

Not accepting Chryses's action, the Tower forced a powerful penalty onto him.

The small sun started to lose its form as it wobbled.

Grit—

Having clenched his jaw as hard as he could, chipped teeth and blood sloshed around Chryses's mouth. Still, he gathered the remaining focus he had and recollected his mana into one point.

Fwooo—

The flames came back together, and the small sun regained its shape.

With the last of his mental fortitude, Chryses managed to endure the penalty of the Tower.

And like that, two beings, one from the highest point in the Tower and the other from the lowest, collided.

"I knew it. You really are amazing."

In the midst of the giant collision of mana, Chryses was able to faintly hear YuWon's voice.

'He knew it...?' Chryses wondered.

Rumble—!

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Reaper Scans

Translator – NumbaWon

Proofreader – BringTheRayn

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A hot and violent windstorm brewed. Some of the nearby players even lost consciousness from the storm.

‘What kind of a ridiculous situation is this...?’ Agamemnon thought.

The entire world of the 1st Floor felt like it was howling due to the collision of mana against mana. And due to the aftershock of the penalty applied to Chryses, the surrounding area was already devastated.

The windstorm continued for a while.

Agamemnon’s nerves were on edge.

‘How did their battle go?’

Chryses could no longer fight. It’d be a miracle if he didn’t perish from this attack, let alone continue fighting. A Ranker exerting this much power on the 1st Floor was probably unprecedented in the Tower’s history. Even if he didn’t die, Chryses’s body was probably worn out to the point where he’d no longer be able to use any powers for some time.

Fshhh—

The area looked distorted due to the heat. The haze created by the collision of the two flames slowly started to fade away.

“Both of them... are alive.”

From within the haze, YuWon and Chryses could both be seen.

“Barely, but alive.”

It was as Agamemnon said. They were technically “alive.”

YuWon and Chryses were passed out on the ground. One could see that Chryses was alive from the subtle trembling of his body. Compared to Chryses, YuWon didn’t look as bad, but he was in a state where he could only slightly twitch his fingers.

Their battle was a draw.

Seeing the results, Agamemnon smiled.

“We won...”

Though it took a lot, YuWon had been taken down. Regardless of how strong he might have been, there was no way YuWon could do something while his body was completely torn up like this.

As Agamemnon was confirming his victory...

“You won?”

Klang—!

He heard an ominous sound.

Hoping it wasn't what he thought it was, he turned his head. And what he saw was...

“It's not over yet, kiddo.”

... A crippled man tightly gripping his hammer, his face contorted in fury.

Hephaestus had finally been released from his Petrification.

Chapter 43

Klang, boom—!

It was the sound of air being ripped apart.

Hephaestus swung his hammer with ridiculous force. Every time he exerted power, the penalty accumulated in his body, but Hephaestus continued to relentlessly swing his hammer.

It was a show of anger, and that anger wouldn't subside just from whacking the air a few times.

“U-Uhh...”

“H-He seems really mad.”

“My ears...”

The players that managed to survive the sonic boom of the hammer started retreating.

Hephaestus's hammer was scarier than Agamemnon's sword. The pressure could crush their bodies if they took even a step closer.

It was fear.

Hephaestus's body continued to turn redder and redder. His mana made it feel like he was a gigantic being. He was physically demonstrating that he planned on ignoring the penalty, daring anyone to challenge him.

The players knew that there was no way for Hephaestus, a Ranker, to directly attack them. If he indiscriminately murdered dozens of lower floor players, even he would be unable to take the penalty.

So one of two scenarios were bound to happen. Either he'd perish before he could kill all the players present, or an Administrator would show up. That meant that Hephaestus was currently just wasting his mana, swinging his hammer in the air.

‘I could use that to my advantage then...’ Agamemnon thought.

There was still a chance. Hephaestus wasn't at 100%, having just broken out of Petrification. So if he could just use the penalty...

That train of thought was interrupted by the sight of Hephaestus swinging the hammer in his direction.

Whoosh—

Ka-boom—!

The attack struck the air with Agamemnon in its trajectory.

“Kugh!”

The blast from the hammer directly struck Agamemnon's body.

Vzzt—!

A powerful electric shock flowed through Hephaestus's body from the penalty. Seeming unphased, Hephaestus stood calmly in his spot and swung his hammer onto his shoulder.

Unlike the other players, Agamemnon was a player from a relatively high floor. So despite being the first one to attack, the penalty placed on Hephaestus was significantly smaller.

“I don't care about the other guys, but I am definitely going to kill you.”

Tmp—

Fshhh—

“Cough, kugh...”

Agamemnon stood back up, using one hand to push himself off the ground while blood dripped out of his mouth. Mixed in with the blood that he vomited out were pieces of his internal organs.

Hephaestus walked closer to him, hot steam billowing off of his body.

Penalty? It seemed he no longer cared about something like that.

Hephaestus had completely lost his sense of reason. Either that or he knew that he wouldn't perish from just killing a single person like Agamemnon.

While ignoring attacks from the other players, Hephaestus continued to stare solely at Agamemnon.

Whoosh—

Hephaestus's hammer rose up into the sky.

Agamemnon couldn't move because of the overwhelming pressure and mana. He couldn't believe he had tried to catch a behemoth like him.

‘I-I'm going to die...’ he thought.

He knew these would be his final moments. Agamemnon shut his eyes tight as death approached him from head on.

Klang—!

The heavy ringing of the hammer spread, vibrating the atmosphere.

Agamemnon sensed his death... Or he thought he did.

The result ended up being different.

‘What just happened...?’

At the absence of an impact, Agamemnon carefully opened his eyes.

A large shadow covered his entire body.

Someone had stepped in between him and Hephaestus.

“▷You went too overboard.”

Agamemnon saw the side profile of an enormous man about three meters tall. With hands the size of a normal person’s head, he had stopped Hephaestus’s hammer.

Except for Giants, there weren’t many people who were that big and capable of stopping Hephaestus’s hammer with just one hand. And the only person who could have appeared with this timing would be...

“The Administrator...?”

Even before Agamemnon said it, Hephaestus had an inkling as to whom the gargantuan man that appeared in front of him might have been.

The Administrator of the 1st Floor.

It was honestly not strange for him to have appeared at this moment. In fact, his appearance seemed a bit late.

“Why did you have to appear now of all times?”

“▷ Did you think I’d just stand by and watch forever, leaving you be?”

Hearing Hephaestus’s complaint, the Administrator took his hammer and tossed it behind him. After leaving Hephaestus’s hand, the hammer fell with a loud thump, creating a deep crater in the ground.

“▷ If you want a proper fight, do it up there, not here. This is the 1st Floor.”

The Administrator almost never interfered outside of the test. They left most things to the players, Rankers, and guilds of the Tower. And usually when an Administrator interfered, it was because a problem occurred during a test.

The exceptions to this were in the bottom floors. Administrators took special care of the 10th Floor and below, especially the 1st Floor.

Still, normally guilds took charge and managed the floors, but right now a guild called ‘Olympus’ was causing problems. And since this was a problem that a guild couldn’t resolve, it was only natural that the Administrator came out personally.

“I had no intention of fighting.”

“▷ That’s good to hear.”

The Administrator turned his head. Agamemnon locked eyes with the Administrator, and he saw something like the great expanse of the universe within his eyes.

The Administrator. Just as the name implied, they were beings that ruled and managed the floors. They were beings that not only rivaled Ares, the person that Agamemnon served, but even Zeus, the King of Olympus.

“▷ Are you a bastard from Olympus?”

“Y-Yes? I mean, yes! That’s right, sir.”

Seeing Agamemnon stutter like an idiot, the Administrator thought how pathetic he was.

“▷ Pass this on to Zeus. If he does something like this again, I’ll come pull out his entire stupid beard again.”

“Y-Yes, sir...”

“▷ Don’t just say you will.”

The Administrator stretched out his hand.

Despite a giant hand coming towards him, Agamemnon couldn’t avoid it. He felt that if he tried to dodge it, the Administrator’s hand would immediately blow his head off.

“▷ You will have to, no matter what.”

Whirr—

A black mark was imprinted on his forehead.

Noticing the unique mark that resembled a tongue, Agamemnon rubbed his forehead.

Hephaestus, familiar with the mark, broke out in laughter.

“Kek, pfft...”

In the Tower, the orders of an Administrator were absolute. Still, the Administrator planted a mark on Agamemnon’s head to be sure. If Agamemnon were to ever meet Zeus, he would relay exactly what the Administrator said, including the bit about pulling out his beard.

Feeling helpless, Agamemnon looked back and forth between Hephaestus and the Administrator. What could he do between these two colossal beings?

It didn’t take much thinking. With the intervention of the Administrator, there was nothing they could do.

This fight... was Olympus’s loss.

* * *

Reaper Scans

Translator – NumbaWon

Proofreader – BringTheRayn

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* * *

YuWon felt like this entire body had been scorched on a grill.

It didn't take long for him to lose consciousness, though he did remember trying his best to not pass out.

He faintly remembered what happened afterwards.

[「?'s Egg」 bares its fangs.]

It was a ridiculous message. How could a creature that hasn't even hatched yet bare its fangs?

For a while, the egg trembled inside his inventory, as if it really was about to fight.

Gnaw—

The egg with a purple pattern. He thought he could see something like teeth. They weren't actually visible, but he was certain that they existed.

'This is dangerous,' YuWon thought. He felt goosebumps pop up, something he didn't feel even while directly facing a Ranker.

What was this egg?

YuWon got lost in fear and in thought.

'Was it trying to protect me?'

'What was the purpose of the fangs that it revealed from inside its hard shell?'

'Or was it trying to eat me while I was weakened?'

He didn't know the exact reason, but before he could find out, YuWon got another message.

[「?'s Egg」 returns to hibernation.]

The egg that had been baring its fangs for a while fell back into slumber.

This message wasn't something that had shown up while YuWon was passed out. It was a message that popped up just now.

YuWon suddenly realized that he had regained consciousness.

"I..."

He wondered when he had passed out, but YuWon wasn't able to finish his sentence.

"'I? 'I what?' a thick voice penetrated his eardrums.

YuWon opened his eyes. With his hazy vision, he turned towards the source of the voice, where he saw the blur of a large head.

"Ahjussi...?"

"Ahjussi? You really lack manners, don't you?"

The quality of Hephaestus's voice really knocked the sleep out of YuWon. His foggy vision soon returned to normal, and he got up and looked around his surroundings.

It was a small house in the slums. It seemed that Hephaestus decided to momentarily borrow the house of a slumdog that ran away because of the ruckus.

"When did you wake up?" YuWon asked.

"Now look here. I should be the one to ask you that."

Hephaestus couldn't believe it. The first thing the kid that was passed out asked him was when he had woken up.

Though that was unsurprising. When Hephaestus had woken, YuWon had already lost consciousness, so the two couldn't help but be worried about each other.

"How's your body?"

"I seem more or less okay."

YuWon didn't know how much time had passed, but most of the burns had healed up. He attributed his recovery to [Cinder Eyes] and his strong fire resistance.

"What about you, Ahjussi?"

"How long are you going to keep calling me that?"

"Well, I can't call you Ahjumma.*"

*TL/N: Female equivalent of ahjussi, used to refer to middle-aged women.

"You really know how to flap your mouth."

"But you survived thanks to me, so what does it matter what I call you?"

YuWon was being brazen, but Hephaestus didn't really have a good response. He scratched his head because it was true. YuWon was the reason why he hadn't been dragged back to Olympus.

Hephaestus was holding himself back, looking as if he badly wanted to say something.

YuWon looked closely at him, wondering what he wanted to say.

Soon, Hephaestus opened his mouth.

"Thanks."

"Excuse me?"

"I said 'Thanks.' How many times do you want me to say it before you get it?"

Despite having only said it twice, Hephaestus got up and started fake coughing. He was clearly embarrassed.

YuWon was actually impressed that he even said it twice.

'He tried pretty hard.'

The Hephaestus in YuWon's memory was someone that didn't use words to say thanks. He was more about actions than words because that was his life philosophy. Yet here was that Hephastus, saying 'thanks' and using his words.

It was because Hephaestus knew that he had to be sincere.

"My name's not actually Vulcaro," Hephaestus said with a serious look on his face.

"My real name is Hephaestus. I was a blacksmith for Olympus."

"Is that so?"

"You don't find that surprising?"

"I am plenty surprised."

"Are you unable to lie, or can you just not be bothered to lie?"

Hephaestus let out a baffled laugh after asking his question. He had already guessed that YuWon probably came searching for him knowing that he was Hephaestus. And because of the timing, he had even thought that YuWon might have been a member of Olympus.

"But I'm now certain."

It was a doubt that persisted in his thoughts for a while. Was YuWon a member of Olympus? If he wasn't, it'd be odd. How would he have known how to find him? But then, if he was from Olympus, that'd be equally as odd. Why didn't he try to capture him?

Hephaestus originally had no answers for either question, but thanks to this event, he became certain of one thing.

"You're not from Olympus. And you're definitely no ordinary player."

YuWon was certainly not your average player. Chryses was injured after a fight with him, and he had received a significant degree of penalty. But still, for a new player to beat a Ranker in a fight...

"Favors or misdeeds, I'm someone who always pays back tenfold."

YuWon already knew this very well.

"Since the Administrator intervened, Olympus won't be able to immediately come back to try and get me. That's why I rented out a big workshop in the city for a few days."

A new workshop. The man that had no choice but to reside in a tiny workshop to hide from Olympus got himself a proper workshop.

"Just wait a few days."

Though, that didn't affect the speed at which he could make something.

"I'll make you the greatest sword."

Chapter 44

The recovery went faster than expected. It was thanks to his high Constitution stat and the medicine Hephaestus left him.

After sleeping for a whole day, when he woke up, YuWon felt mostly recovered.

‘I think I can start moving around now.’

Crack, crack—

He couldn’t remember the last time he had laid down for so long. It had only been a day, but he already felt like his body had stiffened up.

‘I ended up facing a Ranker much sooner than I expected. I also thought I wouldn’t face Olympus until at least the 10th Floor, but things got ahead of schedule.’

Now fully lucid, YuWon sat up and started slowly stretching.

‘Still, despite my plans being thrown out the window, I gained something huge, so it’s fine.’

Hephaestus finally came out of hiding.

With the intervention of the Administrator, Olympus wouldn’t be able to plan another extreme intervention on the 1st Floor with a Ranker like this time. They’d need at least a few years for another attempt, and those few years would be plenty of time for YuWon to bring about change.

‘With Ahjussi’s help, I’ll be able to obtain items much easier. And I also managed to rebuild our relationship much faster than I expected...’

Ssk—

Yuwon put on the 「Pyromancy Robe」 that he had temporarily stored in his inventory.

‘And more than anything else, this is going to greatly affect the second Gigantomachy.’

Yuwon stared at the black gem in his hand.

‘It was an immense net positive.’

There was no need for him to properly calculate his gains and losses. On one hand, he had refined the black crystal, gained a huge supporter in Hephaestus, greatly influenced the Gigantomachy, and put Olympus under the close watch of the Administrator.

On the other hand, he’d made an enemy out of Olympus. But that was something that was bound to happen, so he hadn’t really lost much.

“So there’s only one day remaining.”

Hephaestus was one to never break his promises. A day ago, he’d promised that it would take him two days to make him the greatest sword using mythril.

YuWon had high hopes. Not only did he obtain the 「Pure Dark Divine Crystal,」 he was also going to be given an item of really high caliber very soon.

‘As soon as the sword is finished...’

YuWon’s eyes were filled with spirit as he walked out of the hospital room.

‘... I’ll start the raid.’

* * *

Vzzt—!

Fshhhh—

The mana from the 「Pure Dark Divine Crystal」 quickly disintegrated the monsters’ bodies. This was due to the special property of dark mana.

[Heaven-Slaying Star’s] completion rate went up by just a little bit.

While trudging through the corpses of the gorilla-like monsters around him, YuWon looked down at the crystal in his hand.

‘It’s surprisingly hard to handle.’

YuWon thought back to the power of the 「Helm of Invisibility」 used by Hades. If the 「Helm of Invisibility」 was the sun, the current 「Pure Dark Divine Crystal」 was no more than a firefly. It might not have been the completed Helm and just a refined crystal, but the difference in power was too great.

‘Which means that it’s the difference in users.’

YuWon might have scored a tie against a Ranker in his last fight, but that was only because it was on the 1st Floor. And there was also the fact that Chryses was heavily injured from the fight with Hephaestus, along with the penalty.

‘So I can’t control this properly quite yet.’

YuWon checked the status of the 「Dark Divine Crystal.」

[Pure Dark Divine Crystal]

▷ A fragment that holds the darkness of the genesis. It contains mana with an unending dark property.

▷ Classification : crafting material.

▷ Capable of Stealth.

▷ Can change mana to Dark attribute.

▷ Hell Summon (limited)

▷ 50% increase in dark-type mana resistance.

▷ 30% increase in Dark attribute mana amplification rate.

▷ 30% decrease in Dark attribute mana consumption rate.

There were three major changes:

The 'unrefined' status disappeared. The resistance, amplification rate, and consumption rate changed.

And 3. 'Hell summon.'

It was the effect that was the most noticeable.

'Hell' was a word that symbolized Hades, and it was also like the fountain of his power.

However, as the 'limited' mark said, YuWon couldn't use all the power of the 「Pure Dark Divine Crystal」 yet. Still, this gave a proper insight to its true power.

'The Crystal is less of an item that holds power, and it's more a medium that summons power.'

Hell. YuWon didn't know what kind of place it was. It could be literally the world after death, or it could be the name of another world outside of the Tower. But one thing was for sure. The 「Pure Dark Divine Crystal」 was an item that extracted power from that world.

'I am starting to somewhat get the hang of it, though.'

For a whole day, YuWon practiced using the Crystal.

Also, from the battle against Chryses, he was able to learn the limits of his own strength.

It took much longer for him to start the raid, but he gained enough things to compensate for it during that time.

And right on cue...

[**Hephaestus:** Come on over.]

... YuWon got a message from Hephaestus, who had changed his name on his player kit.

* * *

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* * *

On the outskirts of the city...

Fwoosh, woosh—

The workshop with a low ceiling and thin tunnels was filled with heat.

It was a pretty decent workshop.

‘It must have cost him a pretty penny.’

It seemed that Hephaestus had quite a lot of money saved up, but that wasn’t much of a surprise. Items that he made were worth at least tens of thousands of points, and he also got a cut of all equipment sold by Olympus. He was probably part of the top 1% of Rankers in terms of wealth.

“Today’s a quiet day.”

“You’re here?”

Hephaestus welcomed YuWon with his usual greeting. Impatient as ever, he immediately brought out the stuff.

“Here you go.”

Hephaestus handed him a small wooden box and a sword wrapped in black cloth.

YuWon took them in each hand, and then asked while shaking the wooden box, “I get the sword, but what’s this?”

“Open it.”

“...?”

YuWon put down the sword for a moment to open up the box, but there was nothing inside.

“Is it supposed to be a prank box?”

“You idiot. Take a closer look.”

“But there’s nothing inside...”

When he placed his hand inside the wooden box, he felt a smooth sensation at the tips of his fingers. YuWon’s eyes sparkled. Closely getting a feel of it, he could tell the form of the thing.

‘A glove.’

[Invisible Glove]

▷ A thin glove made from a special material. It has a great mana conductivity.

▷ It can be made invisible through the Settings.

The item name and description was simple and straightforward. It was made from a special material, and it had great mana conductivity.

From those two pieces of information, YuWon could tell what it was made from.

“Did you make this with mythril?”

“You’re quick to tell.”

Hephaestus let out a joyous laugh.

Mythril was a mineral whose strength was in its high mana conductivity. It was even said that when you imbued mana into a sword made solely out of mythril, it felt like an extension of your body.

YuWon put the 「Invisible Glove」 on his hand. Because it was literally invisible, the only way to put it on was by using his sense of touch.

After struggling to put on the glove...

‘I don’t feel anything.’

... YuWon couldn’t feel a thing. It was as if he wasn’t wearing anything.

He wondered why Hephaestus made him something like this. Not only would it have been a pain to make it invisible, it even used expensive mythril.

YuWon didn’t have to think for too long.

“There’s a groove.”

On the back of the glove, there was a small inset. YuWon placed the 「Pure Dark Divine Crystal」 into it.

Fshhh—

The 「Pure Dark Divine Crystal」 attached itself to the glove. And then the crystal that was emitting a black light soon disappeared with the glove.

The 「Invisible Glove」 wasn’t a special item. It was to make it more convenient for YuWon to carry the Crystal so he didn’t have to hold it in his hand anymore.

‘So this was the reason why he mixed in mythril.’

YuWon opened and closed his hand, gathering the Crystal’s mana in his palm.

Despite there being a layer between him and the Crystal, YuWon could control the dark mana without any oddities as he liked. This was thanks to mythril’s high mana conductivity.

“I’m glad I don’t have to explain how to use it. I didn’t have time or materials, so I just half-assed it, so use it however you like.”

“I’ll use it well.”

“Say that after you’ve checked your sword.”

YuWon nodded his head and unwrapped the black cloth.

A matte grey scabbard. The shape and length was exactly the same as the 「Well-Sharpener Sword」 that YuWon had requested.

‘It’s exactly the same.’

Just by unwrapping the cloth and touching it, YuWon could tell that this sword was truly epic.

Shing—

YuWon slowly pulled it out of the scabbard. The sharp blade emitted its own light.

Mythril was a faintly aqua-colored mineral, but the small quantity of the Dark Divine Crystal powder had completely tainted the sword black.

It was truly an awesome sword. Just by holding it in his hand, he could sense how sharp it was.

“You can name it.

[‘Blacksmith : Hephaestus requests a name for the sword.]

[Please choose a name.]

YuWon carefully inspected the sword.

He didn’t want to just name it after its appearance, instead wanting to decide after fully reading through the item description.

[? (undecided)]

▷ It’s a weapon crafted by the blacksmith Hephaestus. It’s been made using mythril and the remnants of a special crystal.

▷ It can accumulate dark mana.

▷ A maximum of 200% increase in stamina recovery rate in darkness.

▷ A maximum of 100% increase in mana amplification rate in darkness.

▷ A maximum of 100% increase in mana recovery rate in darkness.

After checking the effects of the sword, YuWon’s eyes widened.

‘What kind of recovery options are these...?’

It had a ‘maximum’ that only applied in a certain setting rather than a fixed rate, but the mana amplification rate and the stamina and mana recovery rates were already insane.

Taking the stamina and mana recovery into account, he might be able to sustain a fight in darkness almost infinitely.

‘A sword that increases my combat powers many-fold in darkness, as well as being capable of accumulating mana...’

This wasn’t simply a sharp and durable sword. It was a sword beyond all expectations.

Shing—

YuWon looked at his reflection off the smooth surface of the sword. He was smiling slightly.

Watching YuWon’s reaction, Hephaestus felt boastful.

“Have you decided on a name?”

YuWon nodded his head.

An onyx blade, specialized for night and darkness.

“I’ll name it ‘Edge of Nightfall.’”

[You have obtained 「Edge of Nightfall.」]

[By Hephaestus’s will, 「Edge of Nightfall」 becomes bound to you.]

A bound item. It seemed that Hephaestus didn’t want this sword falling into anyone else’s hands.

That didn’t matter to YuWon. Without some very special circumstances, there was no way he would sell a sword of this caliber for points.

“‘Edge of Nightfall’? You sure about that name?” Hephaestus asked.

YuWon answered while sheathing his sword, “Why not? It’s like a sharp sword of a deep, dark night.”

“What...?”

Hephaestus couldn’t believe it. For YuWon to be so edgy... He thought about scolding him, but decided to bite his tongue.

YuWon fastened the sword around his waist with a satisfactory smile on his face, unaware of what was wrong.

‘... He and the sword go well together,’ Hephaestus thought while shaking his head and letting out a deep sigh. There was nothing he could do. YuWon was clearly happy with it.

‘Too bad his naming sense sucks,’ Hephaestus disapproved. As someone that considered a piece of equipment to truly be complete once it was named, he was quite discontent.

Swallowing his grumbling, Hephaestus asked YuWon, “What do you plan on doing now?”

“I need to go up.”

There was zero hesitation in YuWon’s voice.

Hephaestus nodded his head, knowing that would be his response. “That’s what I thought.”

His face shifted from one that was ready to nag him to one filled with concern.

“What do you plan on doing about Olympus?” Hephaestus asked, averting his gaze.

He felt sorry. Because of him, YuWon got caught up with Olympus, and that was a wave too tall for YuWon, who had just started climbing the Tower. So of course he was filled with worry.

However...

“What do you mean, ‘what will I do?’”

... YuWon didn’t seem all that concerned. Was it because he didn’t know Olympus well enough? No, that wasn’t it. There was probably no one in the Tower that knew Olympus as well as him.

There was a response YuWon had long prepared for this question.

“I plan on taking them down...”

He pointed towards the roof of the workshop. No, he was actually pointing to the top of the enormous Tower.

“... From all the way up there down to here.”

Chapter 45

After exiting the workshop, YuWon turned around and looked back at the door.

There was no farewell. It was just the way Hephaestus did things. Before, YuWon thought he was just an unsentimental and cranky old man. However, he eventually found out that wasn't the case.

‘Then or now, he really is the same.’

Hephaestus was a friend he hadn't seen in a long time. And for YuWon, who had come to the past all alone, meeting a younger Hephaestus was a truly enjoyable time.

He was suddenly reminded of past encounters with Hephaestus.

“I lost my sword.”

“Really? Well I guess I have to make you a new one.”

When the fight with the Outer Gods was nearing its end, Hephaestus created a new weapon for YuWon when he had returned empty-handed.

Forget adamantium or myhril, the greatest metals, the world had become a place where even iron ore was hard to obtain. So YuWon wondered what weapon Hephaestus could possibly have made him.

But then...

“Ahjussi, this is...”

Hephaestus had made him a far better weapon than the one YuWon had previously owned.

He wondered where Hephaestus had gotten the materials from.

The sword Hephaestus handed him was made from adamantium, and from what YuWon knew, there was a very small, limited amount of adamantium left in the world nearing the Apocalypse. And this adamantium was...

“Did you melt your hammer?”

Hephaestus's hand had been wrapped with thick bandages.

YuWon could immediately tell how he got injured. After melting down his hammer for materials, he had used his fist as a hammer to forge YuWon a new sword.

YuWon asked why he did that, and his response was as typical of him as ever.

“Don't nag me and just take it already. I'm tired.”

It was a hammer he had spent his life with. After becoming a Ranker, he never put his hammer down, becoming a blacksmith recognized not just in Olympus, but in the whole Tower.

Hephaestus had melted down that hammer to make a new sword for YuWon.

That was how YuWon came to know Hephaestus's true personality.

Grip—

YuWon tightly grasped the handle of the sword at his waist.

Out of melancholy, he had a hard time leaving, but he quickly snapped out of it. YuWon bowed his head towards Hephaestus's workshop.

“Thank you for everything.”

* * *

There were many types of tests inside the Tower. From individual tests where you had to complete a specific mission, to group tests where you had to complete a specific mission with others, and scenario tests where you had to find the answer within a specific story created by the Tower.

The test on the 1st Floor was always identical.

“Name, Kim YuWon. A new player that entered the 1st Floor twelve days ago.”

A beautiful Elf lady with straight black hair that reached her hips checked YuWon's information on her player kit while biting a huge piece of chocolate.

“He set a historic new record in the Tutorial, and his potential is rated as S-rank...”

Snap—

Shuri was a Ranker that was currently ranked in the top 10,000.

She smiled while looking at YuWon's picture on her player kit.

“There's quite a few good newbies this time around.”

Not too long ago, she had managed to meet a player that was a feast for the eyes, which was something she hadn't experienced in a while.

It was a Pure-Blood from Olympus, a direct descendent of the Ruler of the Skies.

‘That Hargaan was only second place.’

Descendents of Olympus were the center of attention in every Tutorial. And the son of the Ruler of the Skies was rumored to be talented to the point that many Rankers had already set their eyes on him.

So Shuri couldn't help but become interested in YuWon after she had presumed that Hargaan was going to be first in the Tutorial.

In the 1st Floor testing center, YuWon was the only one standing in the middle of the massive Colosseum.

‘For him to participate in the test alone...’ Shuri thought.

Most players didn't participate in tests alone, but formed a 'team' with people of a similar skill level. The reason for this was simple. It came down to efficiency and the level of difficulty.

Ten players with a variety of skills had the power equivalent of twenty or even thirty people. So a team with a good composition would have a much easier time with the test than a player that was by themselves.

However...

'There's only one reason why he would participate alone,' Shuri thought while looking down at YuWon. She leaned on the arm of her chair, chin on her hand.

"So he thinks there's no one who can rival him on this floor."

It was a truly arrogant decision, but Shuri didn't think it was a foolish decision. In fact, she thought it was very wise.

* * *

Reaper Scans

Translator – NumbaWon

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* * *

The stage that represented the 1st Floor, the Colosseum, was the stage where the 1st Floor's test was held regularly. It was also famous for being unbreakable. The Colosseum's structure was so durable that sometimes Rankers would come all the way down to the 1st Floor to duel.

'I like that this test is pretty straightforward.'

Shing—

YuWon unsheathed his new sword, 「Edge of Nightfall.」

The purpose of the 1st Floor's test was to check if one had the power to take down chosen opponents.

For YuWon, it was already a certainty that he would pass this test.

So the crux was...

'Was the highest record Son OhGong's?'

[Ranking]

[1st : Son OhGong – Round 19]

[2nd : Hercules – Round 18]

[2nd : Odin – Round 18]

[4th : Asura – Round 17]

[4th : ...]

After checking the Colosseum rankings, YuWon shook his head, seeing Son OhGong's ranking. It was far above his original one.

'My previous record was round 12. I think it was a Dullahan that I faced?'

There was no end to the Colosseum test. Well, to be more accurate, no one had ever seen the end.

When you defeated an enemy, the next appeared, and when you defeated that one, a subsequent enemy appeared, and so on. It was an unending stream of enemies.

Luckily, you could give up in the middle, or you could move onto the next floor as long as you defeated the first enemy.

But since you could obtain a better reward the more opponents you defeated, players that aimed to become Rankers pushed themselves, rechallenging the Colosseum until they hit their limit.

[12th: Hargaan – Round 16]

Yuwon spotted a familiar name.

Hargaan probably sent his teammates up first while he continued to rechallenge the Colosseum.

'That's a pretty high record.'

Round 16 was a record that rivaled the top 100 rankers.

'Did he manage to get a higher ranking thanks to the King's Lightning Glove? He'll end up making his way up much faster than I anticipated.'

Yuwon already verified Hargaan's skill during the Tutorial and in the fight against the Jackals. He actually possessed the qualities necessary to one day stand at the top of the Tower and become the King of Olympus. And on top of that, thanks to his encounter with YuWon, he even ended up obtaining the 「King's Lightning Glove,」 an item worth tens of thousands of points.

It was like a tiger had been gifted wings. And this also applied to Hargaan's teammates as well.

'I guess I'll be hearing news of him soon enough.'

Hargaan started climbing the Tower before YuWon. YuWon was curious what floor he might be on by now.

'I'll see you soon enough.'

[THE TEST WILL NOW START.]

[PLEASE DEFEAT YOUR OPPONENT.]

Klunk—

With the message, a door on the opposite end of the Colosseum opened up.

“Kweeek, kwik—”

Clatter—

A tall Orc wearing heavy armor and wielding a glaive stepped out.

The first trial of the 1st Floor Colosseum was an Orc Warrior.

Over two meters tall, it was a beefy, shredded monster. It was completely different from ordinary Orcs that were mostly just fat. Not only was it much bigger in size, its body was like that of a well-trained soldier.

The 1st Floor Colosseum was a test designed to measure one's capabilities as a warrior with the Orc Warrior.

“Kweek—”

The Orc Warrior spotted YuWon.

YuWon was already approaching the Orc Warrior, wielding 「Edge of Nightfall,」 which he had already prepared earlier.

“Kkweeegh—!”

Seeing the sword in YuWon's hand, the Orc Warrior displayed its bloodthirst.

Whirr—

[Arcane Sword]

Around YuWon's sword, mana that emitted a black light started gathering.

And in a flash, YuWon's sword vertically passed through the Orc Warrior's body.

Shahh—

A gentle cutting sound.

Slash—!

The Orc Warrior's body was sliced in half, including its armor.

Thud, thud—

The Orc Warrior's corpse dropped to the ground, and the glaive that it tried to swing at YuWon ended up getting buried in the dust.

[Heaven-Slaying Star's completion rate increased by 0.008%.]

[You have passed the test of the 1st Floor.]

[Would you like to challenge the next trial?]

[Would you like to move onto the next floor?]

A message popped up for YuWon.

With that, the 1st Floor's test was over. For any player with the skills to defeat an Orc Warrior, the 1st Floor's test was merely a checkpoint that they had to go through. But the true value of the 1st Floor's test was elsewhere.

“Challenge.”

[You have chosen to challenge the next trial.]

[STARTING THE 2ND TRIAL.]

Fshh—

The Orc Warrior’s corpse turned into black dust and disappeared.

Soon after, the door that the Orc Warrior came out of opened again.

Thump, thump—

The sound of heavy footsteps.

“Kkweek, kkwi—!”

“Kkeeeek—!”

The second trial of the Colosseum consisted of two Warrior Orcs. The trial had become twice as hard.

However, YuWon was already at the door.

Phssh—

A black line was drawn across the Orc Warriors’ bodies.

Splash—!

The two Orcs’ heads were cut off, splattering blood everywhere.

[Heaven-Slaying Star’s completion rate increased by 0.016%.]

[You have passed the 2nd trial.]

[Would you like to challenge the next trial?]

[Would you like to move onto the next floor?]

Another message.

While looking at the entrance of the Colosseum, YuWon replied to the message, “Challenge.”

* * *

At a certain point, Shuri, who was spectating the test, couldn’t keep her mouth closed.

When she first saw YuWon cut down the Orc Warrior, she wasn’t all that impressed. When YuWon cut down two more Orc Warriors, she thought that was plenty doable, since that was something that even Hargaan had done easily.

However, as he passed the third and fourth trials... With every round that YuWon completed, Shuri finally realized what she was seeing.

“Isn’t this...”

Gulp—

Her eyes had widened, and without even realizing, she had gotten up from her seat.

“... A historic moment?”

Within the Tower’s seemingly infinite history, Shuri had been the test examiner at the Colosseum for thousands of years. And in her memories, there was a single person she remembered as the greatest participant.

‘He’s even faster than Son OhGong.’

It was the one who went by the title of “The Great Sage, Heaven’s Equal,” also known as the “Victorious Fighting Buddha,” the High Ranker Son OhGong.

He was the man who had set the highest record in the 1st Floor test. And right now, YuWon was clearing the trials of the Colosseum at a faster rate than the great Son OhGong.

Ka-thump—!

Yuwon crashed into the center of the Colosseum.

The ninth trial, a horde of armored Skeletons fell over like bowling pins. And just like that, another trial was easily cleared.

Yuwon had yet to even use a proper skill. Since he was fighting without rest, he was carefully managing his stamina and mana.

‘He’s not even cornered by the trial right in front of him.’

She was sure of it.

‘He’s looking much farther ahead.’

Yuwon was fighting against the great beings of the Tower. He was trying to surpass the records set by the High Rankers.

And so, Yuwon had reached the tenth trial.

Chapter 46

Fwoosh—!

Yuwon shot out vibrant red fire from his hands.

[Cinder Eyes controls Colossal Fire.]

[Colossal Fire — Colossal Sword]

A scorching mana. Wrapped in [Colossal Fire,] Yuwon’s sword grew multiple times in size.

The brilliant fire in the middle of the Colosseum flew quickly down towards the swordsman in front of Yuwon.

Klang—!

Two swords clashed against each other.

Yuwon’s eyes shined.

‘You actually blocked it?’

Kkk, kkkk—

The swordsman's blade was on the brink of shattering. To begin with, it wasn't a proper sword. It was nothing more than a completely dull, rusted hunk of metal.

YuWon wondered how the swordsman could swing such a large sword so easily.

The fight started dragging on.

'I don't need to drag it out too long.'

Once again, YuWon gathered up his mana.

Fwoosh—

The flames roared.

In response to YuWon's attack, from within the old helm, a blue light flashed from the swordsman's eyes.

Fwooo—

An unbelievable level of mana started radiating out of the swordsman.

Tmp—

Every time YuWon and the swordsman took a step, an imprint was left on the ground.

A collision between two manas, a fight between powerhouses started.

Kk-crack, crack—

Shwoo—

[Your arm has been imbued with the power of a Giant.]

[You have a low proficiency.]

[Your Constitution is too low.]

[Partial Gigantification will occur.]

The power of a Giant started buffing YuWon's arm.

Shatter—

The swordsman's weapon broke.

Slash—

YuWon sliced the swordsman's chest. He didn't manage to cut him in half like he intended, but it was still a deep slice. The tip of his sword likely cut into the swordsman's intestines.

"Kgh..."

Thud—

The swordsman fell to his knee. His helmet was sliced open, falling off his head.

Plop, roll, roll, roll—

The helmet rolled away, and the swordsman's face was revealed.

Almost brunette, dirty blonde hair. A face covered in wrinkles. A single eye.

Perhaps because YuWon's sword had reached his head, the swordsman had a bleeding scar on his face.

"If you had a better sword, this would have been much harder."

"... You know better than me that even if that was the case, you would have won in the end." The swordsman wore a bitter smile.

YuWon didn't deny it. It was definitely harder than a standard trial, but he still didn't find this all that difficult. He did use [Gigantification] since it was an enemy that was stronger than he had anticipated, but he still had a few aces up his sleeves.

It was a crushing defeat for the swordsman, but that actually made him feel better.

"And this makes it a second time."

From YuWon's memory, in the long history of the Tower, the swordsman had only ever faced defeat once. It was by the top Ranker that set the highest record in the 1st Floor Colosseum, "The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal," Son OhGong.

"He was also really strong. He was the first ever opponent that stood back up no matter how many times he was cut or stabbed. But with you, there's a very slight difference..."

While on his knees, the swordsman looked up at YuWon.

"You... are far stronger."

There was a hint of respect mixed into his words.

YuWon remembered hearing about the swordsman from OhGong to no end.

"That guy is incredibly strong. In terms of pure swordsmanship, he's probably better than most Rankers."

Son OhGong was the only player to ever defeat the swordsman and move onto the next round. Except for him, the other Rankers were unable to surpass him.

YuWon had wondered why. Now, after having personally gone up against him, he understood.

'The difficulty is way too intense for a trial on the 1st Floor.'

YuWon hadn't anticipated that he'd need to use Gigantification on the nineteenth trial. That was how much the swordsman's skill had broken YuWon's expectations. And this wasn't even the final trial.

'No wonder people can't get past this.'

YuWon didn't instantly finish off the swordsman. He tried to drag this out and buy as much time to recover the lost stamina and mana he had expended during the fight.

“So you plan on challenging the next trial.”

YuWon nodded in response to his question.

“Yes.”

“I knew it. I wish I could watch that myself,” the swordsman said, with a wistful face.

The light reflected off of him, creating a longing atmosphere. He was a man that looked like he truly belonged in the Colosseum.

“Thanks to you... I was able to... once again... fight with joy...”

The swordsman stopped talking. He died with his eyes open.

YuWon reached out his hand, and closed his eyes for him.

[You leveled up.]

[Heaven-Slaying Star’s completion rate increased by 4.78%.]

[Your Strength increased by 1.]

[Your Dexterity increased by 1.]

[Your Constitution...]

[You have passed the 19th trial.]

[Would you like to challenge the final trial?]

[Would you like to move onto the next floor?]

YuWon’s eyes widened.

‘Final.’

The unconquerable twentieth trial. The final trial.

‘Even OhGong wasn’t able to clear the next trial.’

The only person who knew that the twentieth trial was the final one was OhGong. This was because he was the only one to ever defeat the swordsman in the nineteenth trial.

However, even that guy, who was harder to kill than a cockroach, couldn’t pass the twentieth trial.

There were two reasons for that. The first was the injuries and depleted stamina from the fight against the swordsman. The second was...

[Would you like to challenge the final trial?]

[Would you like to move onto the next floor?]

The message popped up as soon as the swordsman died.

YuWon didn’t answer it.

Up until earlier, he had shouted “Challenge” right away, but this time he couldn’t. Not only did he use [Gigantification] in the fight against the nameless swordsman, he hadn’t managed to take a single break while rushing to the nineteenth trial.

YuWon needed at least a little bit of time to recover, as well as to make the necessary preparations.

‘With this, I’ve achieved the same record as OhGong.’

YuWon knew he would be able to clear the nineteenth trial.

‘The problem is the final trial.’

The reward for the 1st Floor’s test depended on how many trials one completed.

Currently, YuWon held the record for most trials completed, along with OhGong. Because of that, he had high expectations for the reward.

In addition, there was also the completion rate for the [Heaven-Slaying Star.]

‘4.78%... The completion rate went up quite a bit from that last trial.’

The completion rate went up in accordance to defeating beings of a higher caliber.

Though this did raise a question for YuWon—despite the nameless swordsman being stronger than the Chimera Creator, why did the completion rate increase by less?

‘Is it because it’s not set as a boss? Or maybe it took into account the Chimera Creator’s ability to make Chimeras...’

There wasn’t a way to know the metric behind how the completion rate increased. But one thing was for sure. It gave him a hell of a lot of stats.

[Heaven-Slaying Star]

Rank : A+

Completion rate : 42.11%

42%. And it was an A plus-rank skill to boot.

The completion rate indicated that it was still an incomplete skill.

‘I wonder how much it’ll increase when I take down the next guy.’

And YuWon wondered how this skill would change once it was completed.

While he was lost in thought without a care...

[If no response is given within 30 seconds, you will be automatically transported to the next floor.]

30 seconds.

This damn trial didn’t give anyone time to rest. Though, to be fair, if it gave people time to rest between stages, it would defeat the purpose of the Colosseum, where you were meant to fight consecutive opponents.

So YuWon wasn’t given a long time to rest.

YuWon replied right as the 30 seconds were almost up.

“Challenge.”

* * *

Reaper Scans

Translator – NumbaWon

Proofreader – BringTheRayn

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* * *

[You have chosen to challenge the final trial.]

[STARTING THE FINAL TRIAL.]

As soon as that message popped up...

Rumble—

The floor of the Colosseum shook.

The door opened wide, and from within, a faint cry could be heard.

“—Khyaaa—ah—”

Goosebumps appeared across YuWon’s body. It wasn’t just because the cry felt threatening. It was the killing intent and mana within the cry that YuWon instinctively felt.

“... It really is that bastard.”

Tense, YuWon went from wielding his sword with one hand to two hands.

[Your arm has been imbued with the power of a Giant.]

Crack, kk-crack—

Mana encircled the Gigantified right arm and his sword.

YuWon waited for it.

The noise got closer, and the shaking of the ground also grew louder with the noise.

And finally...

[THE BOSS OF THE FINAL TRIAL HAS APPEARED.]

“Kkiyaaaah—!”

The head that emerged from the door immediately started charging at YuWon.

He was surprised. It ran at him at such a high speed, it was hard to properly recognize its form.

Klaaang—!

The thing headbutted into YuWon’s sword.

Psk—

From that shock, its hard scales broke, and the hide underneath the scales was cut slightly.

However...

“Kugh...!”

YuWon was flung backwards from the high-speed impact. If he hadn't gripped his sword harder, it would have flown out of his hand.

'What kind of brute force...?'

Having been waiting with [Gigantification] active, YuWon thought he wouldn't lose against anyone in terms of strength.

The Giant Slayer, Hercules. [Gigantification] was his skill, and the man was greater than anyone in terms of pure strength, which was why YuWon displayed unparalleled strength on the 1st Floor.

But right now...

Drag—

Wham—!

YuWon, who was barely holding on with his feet digging into the ground, ended up getting flung away.

Thud, roll, roll.

His body rolled on the floor.

Sssshk—

YuWon quickly dug his hand into the ground to stop his roll.

Luckily, because he had already braced for impact, the shock wasn't too powerful.

YuWon quickly regained his form and stared back at the enemy that had entered the colosseum.

"Hissss—!"

It was a giant snake.

The thing slithered deeper into the colosseum and swung its long tail around.

Thump—!

A dust cloud erupted.

Something must have enraged it because the snake started rampaging around the Colosseum.

"I can't believe it..."

It was a much bigger fellow than YuWon had anticipated.

"Damn Administrator. They really are doing whatever they like."

The 1st Floor's test was designed and created by the Administrator. Seeing as how there was a Ranker as a test examiner, this wasn't likely a test that had materialized from the Tower's own will.

That was the case with all the trials after the tenth one because these trials were way too difficult for a player on the 1st Floor to be able to handle.

Rumble— Smack—!

Crash—!

The impact was sent all the way to the audience seats in the Colosseum. As an indestructible building, the Colosseum was fine, but the sound still rang in YuWon's ears.

Woom, woom—

From the center of the Colosseum, YuWon stared at the master of the final trial.

“Hisss—!”

The snake was long enough to encircle the colosseum once. Its body was meters thick, and its mouth was enormous. Its fangs alone were taller than YuWon.

This was the final boss of the Colosseum.

‘It only has a single head and tail...’

Fss, fssss—

An ominous mana and threatening killing intent exuded from the creature.

‘It's definitely that thing.’

It was far smaller, and comparatively its mana and killing intent was nothing, but YuWon was sure.

At first YuWon didn't believe it. He thought that OhGong saw it wrong and that it was just a similar creature. However, after seeing it with his own eyes, he had no choice but to believe it.

“Kkieeeegh—!”

A snake with eight heads large enough to cover eight mountains and fill eight ravines. A being that was closer to a mythical or demonic beast or even a dragon, rather than a monster. It was a creature that was engulfed in all the anger in the world from conception and eternally cried out its rage.

YuWon had heard that it was long ago sealed in Susanoo's sword, the 「Kusanagi no Tsurugi.*」

*TL/N: “Grass-Cutting Sword”

[PLEASE DEFEAT THE ‘7TH HEAD OF YAMATO NO OROCHI.’]

Chapter 47

《Yamata no Orochi.》

It was one of the most dangerous monsters in YuWon's memory. Among the monsters that existed in the Tower, it was a predator at the top of the food chain. It was also the thing that took Susanoo to the grave.

It was an ancient shard of an Outer God.

‘For this thing to actually be in the Colosseum.’

YuWon couldn't believe the difficulty. If the Administrator was here, YuWon would have cursed him out.

“Kkiyah, hiss—!”

The beast unleashed its fury with a cry. Bloodthirst, anger, torment, all sorts of emotions could be heard in that cry.

It only had one head, and it was significantly smaller than YuWon remembered, but it was still an extremely dangerous monster.

Crash, slam—!

Ssss—

No matter how much the serpent thrashed around, the Colosseum stayed sturdy.

At this point, it was simply a large animal. To put it in perspective, it was the equivalent of a newborn human baby. It was only loud.

Unable to break anything, Orochi started throwing a louder tantrum.

“Kkyaaah—!”

Its cry echoed and filled the colosseum.

YuWon started to find the beast loud and annoying.

“I’ll have to take it down quickly.”

Fwoosh—

A crimson light glimmered from YuWon’s eyes.

At the same time, the thrashing Orochi spotted YuWon.

“Sssss—”

It flickered its long tongue, closely watching YuWon.

The bloodthirst and mana that radiated from its eyes were quite ominous.

Without warning, Orochi started charging at YuWon.

Gnaaaw—

Crunch—

Orochi took a bite out of the ground.

YuWon jumped to the side, landing with one hand on the ground.

Orochi truly was a threat. Its bloodthirst was one thing, but there was also its size, which exerted a pressure. Being large in size was a powerful strength.

‘I guess the silver lining is that all it has going for it is its size right now.’

As YuWon tightly gripped his sword...

Slam—!

Orochi’s tail slammed down towards YuWon’s head.

Slam, slam, slam—!

Seething with anger, it continued to slam its tail down, even though YuWon's body would have been turned into mincemeat after the first strike.

After it had swung its tail countless times...

“The Orochi I knew wouldn't have acted like this.”

Vzzt—

Orochi sensed an ominous energy above his head.

Crash—!

It felt a blow on its head.

Vzzzzt—!

A rain of black light swallowed up the surrounding light as Orochi's head shook and fell.

“Kkkiyaaaaaaah—!”

Feeling excruciating pain, it let out a scream as it thrashed around. It shook its head, trying to get YuWon off of it, but he endured, swinging his sword.

[「Pure Dark Divine Crystal」]

The 「Pure Dark Divine Crystal」 concealed by the invisible glove let out a black light that started enveloping 「Edge of Nightfall」.

This was a completely different sensation to the one he felt while fighting Chryses.

‘This is much better.’

The energy of the Crystal wasn't something that could be controlled by a mere normal sword. This energy wore out one's body just by using it and made any normal weapon that took on its power disintegrate rapidly.

However, 「Edge of Nightfall」 was different. It was an item Hephaestus forged using the powder from the 「Dark Divine Crystal」. As it held the same property, it had no risk of disintegrating from the Crystal's power.

YuWon widely swung the sword filled with the energy from the 「Pure Dark Divine Crystal」.

Klang—!

Ting, ting—

The hard scales and tough leather impeded YuWon's attack. Even though the scales and skin were being cut apart, causing Orochi to bleed, the wounds were too shallow.

Whoosh—

Dash—

With Orochi's tail flying above his head, YuWon jumped down to the ground.

He wasn't satisfied by the cuts he had inflicted. All he managed to do was make the thing bleed a little.

However...

Fssh—

“Hissss—!”

Orochi trashed around in pain from the Crystal's mana, which had penetrated through the cuts on its skin.

YuWon stared at Orochi, writhing in pain, coiling up its body.

“It's way too fucking sturdy.”

Its scales and skin were far tougher than YuWon had anticipated.

Thanks to the Crystal's power, he managed to inflict some damage on it, but it was still nothing if you took its large size into account.

YuWon needed a plan B.

‘This might be the twentieth trial, but this is still the 1st Floor.’

YuWon's eyes darted around the Colosseum.

‘The difficulty shot up way too high, almost to an impossible level.’

“Kkkiyagh—!”

The wounded Orochi started swinging its tail around even more violently.

YuWon continued to avoid its tail, chipping away at its scales and leather.

Slash, slash—!

“Kkiyaagh—!”

The number of wounds on Orochi increased. But unlike previously, it stopped screaming and coiling up. Maybe it was overtaken by anger, but it continued to rampage after YuWon, fiercely whipping its tail around.

Slam—!

Dust was kicked up.

Every single attack was powerful enough to chill one's spine.

“Phew—”

With higher focus came a faster consumption of stamina.

After a certain point, YuWon stopped swinging his sword around.

Some time passed.

YuWon, who was busy avoiding Orochi, stopped in his tracks, and his crimson eyes looked to a specific spot.

“... Found it.”

Slam—!

Orochi’s tail fell on top of YuWon’s head.

* * *

Reaper Scans

Translator – NumbaWon

Proofreader – BringTheRayn

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* * *

‘So you showed yourself, 《Yamata no Orochi.》’

The text examiner for the 1st Floor, Shuri, got up after seeing the boss make its appearance inside the Colosseum.

Due to her contract with the Administrator as a test examiner, she wasn’t permitted to speak about the contents of the test with anyone. That’s why she couldn’t let anyone know about the existence of the creature in front of her, even though she was aware that the “Three Precious Children” were looking for 《Yamata no Orochi.》

This was the second time she was seeing that giant creature.

The first time she found out about Orochi’s existence, Shuri shouted in disbelief.

“How does this make any sense?!”

The twentieth trial was at a difficulty that no 1st Floor player could ever conquer.

The same could be said for the nineteenth trial, the nameless swordsman, but at least in the fight against him, one could win with a mix of skills and luck.

But in comparison to this monstrosity...

Its body was big enough to take up half the Colosseum, and its fangs were longer than a person’s height.

Though it didn’t have any special abilities because it only had one head, it was still 《Yamata no Orochi.》

“So the rising rookie’s challenge ends here.”

Shuri shook her head, watching YuWon get flung away after Orochi’s sudden appearance.

It was as she had expected.

‘You can’t beat something like that.’

《Yamata no Orochi》 wasn’t a being that a 1st Floor player could challenge.

The original Orochi was literally capable of insta-killing a player in the lower floors just by looking at them.

Even the great Son OhGong couldn't surpass this Orochi. OhGong had lost consciousness during the fight, and by fainting, the system failed him on the twentieth trial.

YuWon had unbelievable tenacity. Despite only being a 1st Floor player, he had survived a hit from Orochi's tail.

'Give up already. You've already set a historic record.'

A new player that cleared the nineteenth trial. Though Son OhGong had already set this record, the Tower would eternally remember YuWon's record as well. That should be enough, since, as a 1st Floor player, there was no way he would be able to even leave a scratch on Orochi...

Vzzt—!

Mana emitting black light flowed out from YuWon's hands.

Shuri's eyes widened, seeing the mana suck up the surrounding light as it swirled around YuWon's sword.

"Such recklessness...!"

And that's when it happened.

Pssk—

"Kkkyaaah—!"

Orocho screamed, its scales and skin cut apart.

The mana that snuck into the open wounds rotted away its flesh.

As if it was spooked, Orochi coiled up.

Shuri was left speechless. She couldn't believe Orochi was shying away.

But more importantly...

'He cut through Orochi's scales and skin.'

A 1st Floor player, a brand new player that had just finished the Tutorial no less, had managed to cut Orochi's skin.

She couldn't believe this.

Slam, slam—!

Thump—!

Orochi widely flung its tail around.

YuWon darted around, avoiding its tail while inflicting more wounds on Orochi with his sword.

Fsh, fsh—

The number of cuts on Orochi grew,

It no longer cared about being wounded. Instead, it swung its tail and bared its fangs with the sole purpose of killing its enemy.

YuWon kept cutting it so close that Shuri was scared for him.

That's when she realized something.

'Why...?'

Shuri noticed that YuWon had stopped using his sword a while back. This was odd, considering how YuWon's sword was capable of cutting through Orochi's scales and hide.

'So why is he...?'

As she pondered...

"... Found it," said YuWon, who had stopped in his tracks.

'What's he looking at?' Shuri wondered.

His eyes were a crimson color, and she could have sworn she'd seen eyes like his before.

'Could it be?'

She saw the face of a great being overlapping with YuWon's face.

Slam—!

Orochi's tail fell on top of YuWon's head, but Shuri didn't freak out.

This was no time for her to freak out.

As a Ranker, she could see it clearly.

"What is that?" she asked.

In a short span of time, YuWon had managed to twist his body to avoid Orochi's tail and get on top of him.

Tap, taka, taka, taka—

YuWon ran across Orochi's body by using the openings between the scales as a stepping stone.

Orochi wiggled around to try and shake YuWon off, but it was unsuccessful as YuWon continued to jump up its body.

This wasn't something that was possible with just pure stats alone.

'What in the world is he planning...?'

Once he was at the center of Orochi's body, YuWon changed the grip on his sword to a reverse grip.

Finally Shuri understood what YuWon was up to.

"Could that place be...?"

There was a small indent near Orochi's heart, the only part of his body not covered in scales. That was Orochi's reverse scale.

Suddenly an unchanging fact entered Shuri's head.

No matter how high the difficulty of the Colosseum increased, this was still a part of the 1st Floor's test. And the Tower and the Administrators did not give tests that could never be cleared.

Psshk—

YuWon's sword pierced Orochi's reverse scale.

Pshk—

Orochi did not scream. Instead of crying in pain, Orochi stopped letting out any sound.

“Kkhaa... Kkiyagh...”

The snake's sharp eyes started turning murky, and its body slowly stiffened up.

This was an old tale. A sinister snake that could cover eight mountains and ravines with its body, capable of using strange spells and enchantments.

The one who managed to bring down this enormous catastrophe that almost annihilated a floor was the High Ranker Susanoo.

Susanoo used an indestructible sword. There were special enchantments on it, and one of them was the power to seal a being that was pierced with this sword.

The name of the sword was 「Totsuka no Tsurugi.*」

*TL/N: “Sword of Ten Hand-Breadths”

With that sword, Susanoo was able to inflict a wound that could never be erased on Orochi's chest. That became the only reverse scale on Orochi, and it was the only way to clear the final trial of the Colosseum.

And now, in this place, a legend was reenacted.

—

Chapter 48

[You leveled up.]

[Heaven-Slaying Star's completion rate increased by 12.85%.]

[Your Strength increased by 1.]

[Your Dexterity increased by 2.]

[Your Constitution...]

[...]

[You have passed the final trial.]

[Your achievement is recorded in the Colosseum.]

Thud—

Following the message that YuWon passed the trial, Orochi's body fell in the center of the arena.

A deep rumbling was felt through the ground.

YuWon took a moment to catch his breath before checking his increased stats.

[Name : Kim YuWon]

[Level : 69]

[Strength : 78]

[Dexterity : 62]

[Constitution : 70]

[Perception : 60]

[Arcane Power : 72]

[Total Points...]

[...]

He leveled up again, even though he had just leveled up after defeating the swordsman in the nineteenth trial.

‘That’s stupendous.’

Logically, leveling became harder the more you leveled up. Starting around level 60, it became virtually impossible to level up through normal hunting.

That’s why most players preferred to obtain power through the floor clear rewards, rather than trying to level up by hunting and grinding. This was because all you got from leveling up was three stat points, but when you cleared a floor, the reward could potentially be even better than ten stat points.

However, one could never become a Ranker by setting levels aside.

‘Only 31 more to go till I reach Level 100.’

YuWon was leveling up much faster than he had anticipated.

Due to having lost his levels and stats from going back in time, his body felt as heavy as a pile of rocks, but that feeling had now mostly dissipated.

“Participant Kim YuWon.”

YuWon turned his head to the voice calling him.

An Elven woman wearing leather armor and holstering a total of six swords on her waist and back approached YuWon.

YuWon wondered where she appeared from.

Her movements were so quick and stealthy that YuWon had a hard time sensing her presence. In actuality, those graceful movements weren’t intentional, but just a force of habit.

A beautiful but intimidating face. Long straight hair. And a lover of chocolates.

‘Shuri.’

She was a pretty highly ranked Ranker. She was on another level of power compared to Chryses, who YuWon had faced off against recently.

She also happened to be the test examiner of the 1st Floor.

“Did you already know about 《Yamata no Orochi》 ?”

YuWon had wondered why the text examiner would approach a participant. Turned out she had some questions.

YuWon nodded his head at her question.

“Yes, I did.”

“Then that wound was...”

“It was a wound inflicted by the High Ranker Susanoo.”

That was enough of an explanation. With her doubts confirmed by YuWon, she finally got the answer to the mystery she’d been pondering. It was a wound caused by Susanoo, and YuWon was able to pass the final trial of the Colosseum by finding and piercing that wound.

“How did you figure it out?”

“Because the Tower never gives impossible tasks. Even if it was the twentieth trial, I thought that it was far too high a difficulty for the 1st Floor.”

YuWon pointed to his crimson eyes.

“So after looking carefully, I found the answer.”

Crimson eyes. After looking at them up close, she remembered seeing those exact same eyes in the past.

It was approximately 1,000 years ago. She was the test examiner on the 1st Floor back then as well when she was presented a great surprise by a player.

The skill that symbolized the High Ranker Son OhGong.

“... Are those the Golden Cinder Eyes?”

“They’re not golden quite yet.”

[Cinder Eyes] and [Gigantification.] A player capable of using the skills of two High Rankers from two of the biggest guilds. She was certain he must have some amazing backers. She was split between two possibilities, and with this, she was able to confirm her guess.

“So you’re from the Heavenly Realm.”

The Heavenly Realm. Similar to Olympus, it was one of the top guilds that ruled the Tower. And though it wasn’t any longer, at one point, it was the guild of Son OhGong.

“Or are you a successor of the Great Sage? Either way, that answers a few of my questions.”

Shuri was nodding her head.

YuWon decided to let her keep her misunderstanding as there was no reason to clear this up with a complicated explanation.

‘Besides, she won’t even be able to tell anyone what happened here.’

Confirming his thoughts, she said, “Don’t worry. Test examiners aren’t allowed to tell anyone the contents of a test or any information on the participating players. So there’s no way anyone will find out about you.”

“Ah, okay.”

“Also...”

Shuri unfastened one of the many swords on her and handed it to YuWon.

“This is a bonus reward from the Administrator for this test.”

A sword with a red handle and a silver scabbard.

It was a reward, so YuWon took it.

“You mean this sword is a reward?”

“It’s something that the Administrator handed me when I first became a test examiner. I was told to give it as a reward to any player that clears all the trials, but I honestly never thought the day would come.”

That was to be expected. Who in their right mind would think that a 1st Floor player could be capable of defeating one of Orochi’s heads?

But thanks to YuWon, Shuri was finally able to take one of the many swords off her person.

“Check it out. Even I don’t know what that thing actually is.”

YuWon unsheathed the sword to see it with his own eyes. As it was freed from its scabbard, it started to unleash a surprising mana. However...

“Huh?”

Weirdly enough, the sword was broken in half.

“Wait, is this thing defective?”

Even the test examiner was stumped by the sword.

YuWon looked at his reflection off the blade that was perfectly broken in half.

The blade of the sword had a gentle blue hue.

YuWon smiled faintly.

‘So this thing was here.’

* * *

Reaper Scans

Translator – NumbaWon

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* * *

[Totsuka no Tsurugi – Fragment]

▷ It is a fragment of the sword used by Susanoo long ago to seal 《Yamata no Orochi.》 There is a special power sealed inside it.

▷ It is currently in a broken state. You need to collect the remaining fragment to recover its original power.

The effect of the item was laughable. Broken in half, you couldn't even call it a real sword. A sword was a weapon meant for slashing and stabbing, but a broken sword could do neither very effectively due to its short length.

However, that didn't matter. YuWon had already procured a sword to use, and the fragment of 「Totsuka no Tsurugi」 wasn't meant to be an item for slashing and stabbing.

‘It is a key to obtain one of the Three Sacred Treasures, the Kusanagi no Tsurugi.’

The 「Totsuka no Tsurugi」 was originally an item that YuWon was supposed to obtain by fighting the “Three Precious Children.” So having obtained half of the item here meant that his plan just became easier.

“If you are unsatisfied with the reward, just tell me. Even if it takes some time, I'll put in a request with the Administrator...”

“It's okay.”

Click—

YuWon put the sword back in its scabbard and put it in his inventory. He wouldn't be needing that item for a while.

“This will be plenty.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.”

This was far better than a mediocre item that was only usable on the lower floors. And since he knew where to obtain the other fragment, it wasn't a difficult item to use.

Also, this was only the bonus prize for clearing all the trials of the Colosseum. The real prize still remained.

[You have cleared all the trials of the 1st Floor test.]

[You have obtained 20000 points.]

[All your stats increased by 2.]

[You have obtained 「Totsuka no Tsurugi – Fragment.」]

[You have obtained 「Orochi's 7th Heart.」]

[Would you like to move onto the next floor?]

Two points for every single stat. A total of ten stat points were given as a reward. For someone like YuWon who desired his stats to be well rounded, this was a reward as sweet as honey. With this, Strength, his highest stat, had reached 80.

Also, he was given 「Orochi's 7th heart.」

YuWon looked at the ruby-colored gem in his hand.

This was Orochi's heart. A miniscule heart compared to its giant size. That meant that 「Orochi's Heart」 was an item with that much condensed power.

[Orochi's 7th Heart]

▷ It is the 7th heart of Orochi, which was separated after being sealed by Susanoo.

▷ It possesses a powerful poison.

Unlike the 「Giant's Heart,」 「Orochi's Heart」 couldn't be consumed by any normal means. Orochi's blood carried poison, and the heart was condensed with the most lethal poison in its body.

It was an item that he couldn't use right now, but if he could somehow neutralize the poison, it would be one of the greatest elixirs ever.

“Orochi's Heart... I kind of half expected it, but it actually gave it to you as a reward.”

Shuri couldn't help but be a little envious. 「Orochi's Heart」 was an elixir that even High Rankers desired. It was so valuable that it was hard to put a price tag on the item.

“Congrats. Let me give you a piece of advice. Don't just consume it.”

It seemed that Shuri had felt bad about the reward she gave YuWon. Which wasn't all that surprising since, compared to 「Orochi's Heart,」 nothing should be known about the fragment of 「Totsuka no Tsurugi.」

“Thank you for the advice.”

After this, YuWon had intended to leave the 1st Floor since he had obtained his reward, so there was no more reason to remain here. Yet...

Vwoom, vwoom—

Vwoooooom—

[「?’s Egg」 is reacting.]

[「?’s Egg」 expresses hunger.]

Out of nowhere, the egg started letting out a cry.

‘So suddenly?’

Despite it crying out in hunger, there was nothing YuWon could do since he knew about the egg.

Normal eggs hatched simply by incubating them, but this egg didn’t do that.

An egg that expressed hunger... YuWon had never once heard of an egg like that.

[「?’s Egg」 shows its form.]

The egg was going to show its form?

YuWon checked his inventory, which showed no reaction. The egg was definitely still safely inside his inventory.

But then...

“W-What in the...?”

The first one to notice that something was off was Shuri. She readied her sword and activated her mana.

YuWon looked around to see what was up and felt a chill down his spine.

Gnaw—

Crunch, crunch—

The Colosseum was enveloped in darkness. And within the darkness appeared dozens of half-opened eyes and not fully grown teeth.

“Did a monster break into the Colosseum?” Shuri wondered.

She stayed on guard against the monster that had suddenly appeared in the testing arena.

She found this bizarre. This was the testing arena, a place protected by the power of the Tower. She had worked here as the test examiner of the 1st Floor for thousands of years, yet this was the first time a being from the outside had intruded into the testing arena.

Shuri decided to leave the thinking for later. For now, she had to prioritize bringing order to the testing arena as the test examiner.

Shing—

She tried to cut down the mysterious being by swinging her sword.

“Wait!”

Hearing YuWon’s voice, she stopped and turned her head.

“... Please give me a minute.”

YuWon stopped Shuri and looked at the strange thing that had appeared in the arena.

He was sure that these eyes and teeth didn't come from the outside. Instead, it was...

[「?'s Egg」 has started feasting on 'Orochi's 7th Head.]

... The 'Egg' that YuWon possessed.

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Crunch, munch—

The feast was quick.

The dozens of giant teeth easily pierced Orochi's skin and scales. As if it was made of tofu, the body dissolved as soon as it touched the teeth.

Shuri stopped staring at the thing and asked YuWon, “Is this... another one of your abilities?”

She didn't particularly feel any special mana or killing intent from the thing that was eating Orochi's corpse. She wouldn't have found it that much of a threat if not for the sight she was seeing. In fact, it made her even more on guard against the thing.

Shuri had become a Ranker through endless patience and hard work, eventually gaining the trust of the Administrator and becoming a test examiner. She was a being that had lived for almost ten thousand years now.

In contrast to her beautiful, youthful appearance, she was one of the older beings among the Rankers. And in that extremely long time, she had never seen a creature like this.

“It's something similar-like.”

“It either is or isn't. Or it's similar or not similar. What do you mean by 'similar-like'?”

“I'm honestly not sure.”

YuWon's answer made Shuri furrow her brows as she stared at the slowly disappearing Orochi carcass.

Anyway, now that YuWon had stopped her, she could no longer attack that thing. The one who defeated Orochi in the trial was YuWon, so the right for what to do with its corpse also laid with YuWon.

Nom, nom—

The meal was now over.

YuWon asked the eyes that had now grown ever so slightly larger, “Are you full now?”

[「?'s Egg」 nods its head.]

[「?'s Egg」 has started singing.]

Despite looking like a horrifying monstrosity, it replied like it was a child.

The message relayed the Egg's voice, which confirmed to Yuwon that this thing was indeed the very same Egg that he owned.

"... That's all fine then."

Fssss—

Ssk—

The darkness dissipated like a fading fog, and the eyes started disappearing. The final eyes to disappear had its eyes closed, as if it was content.

Yuwon checked the egg in his inventory. It was only by a little bit, but it had grown visibly larger.

[?'s Egg]

▷ It is ?'s egg. There is no way to know whose egg it is, what will come out of the egg, or how to make it hatch.

▷ Incubation rate : 13.58%

The frozen incubation rate had suddenly shot up.

Since he hadn't even known where to get started, YuWon had half-given up on it, but now he had obtained a clue.

"You have an idea as to what it is now?"

Now that the chaos was over, Shuri came closer and asked Yuwon.

Yuwon nodded his head and answered, "Yes, a little bit."

"A little bit, you say..."

He meant that he didn't know everything.

Shuri looked around the once again peaceful Colosseum. It was now quiet, but it felt as if a storm had swept through.

She, a Ranker who had lived for almost ten thousand years, couldn't comprehend a mere 1st Floor player.

Shuri's head was full of thoughts.

She looked back at YuWon.

"Honestly, I thought you were going to be the next Son OhGong."

It was an incredible compliment to be compared to the High Ranker Son OhGong. On top of that, she had thought YuWon was his successor. But she had more to say...

"But now... I'm honestly not sure."

The Heavenly Realm and "The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal."

The final ability that YuWon demonstrated made it hard for her to connect YuWon to the two. There was no way that the Heavenly Realm would be hiding such a sinister power.

“You seem to have a lot of secrets, so I promise not to share any of what went on here. Not that I have any intentions to do so, nor am I able to.”

“That’s good to hear.”

“I hope to hear news about you from a much higher place.”

Shuri reached out her hand to YuWon.

YuWon quietly looked at her hand.

‘She’s still the same as always.’

Shuri long had a habit of saying farewell to all participants that passed the test.

She was inflexible but just, as well as a beautiful and strong warrior.

YuWon was reminded of the sight of her losing her life in the final fight.

He took her hand and responded to her properly.

“It was nice meeting you.”

* * *

Among the first ten floors, the Colosseum’s test was famous for being an accurate measure of a new player’s abilities. Divided into twenty trials, every trial increased significantly in difficulty. And according to how many rounds you completed, you got a ranking.

Most average players that moved onto the 2nd Floor barely manage to clear the second trial. Players with some skill managed to clear up to around the fifth trial. And anyone who managed to clear beyond the tenth trial was considered to have the qualities fit for a Ranker.

And among this Colosseum’s rankings...

[1st : Son OhGong – Round 19]

Son OhGong’s record seemed unbreakable.

The greatest being when it came to ‘fighting.’ A Ranker known to rule the heavens, wielding an infinitely extending staff and manipulating thunder and clouds.

That Son OhGong’s record was finally broken after roughly a thousand years.

[1st : Kim YuWon – Round 20]

Kim YuWon. The new player that completely rewrote the Tutorial’s record. On top of having a flashy debut, he ended up inscribing another new record in the Tower.

There were some who were surprised, but there were also those who weren’t.

If one was capable of topping the records, of course they’d be capable of doing it again.

However, one thing was for sure now.

“An incredible guy entered the Tower.”

YuWon’s Tutorial record wasn’t a coincidence or some special luck.

“A new super rookie.”

“He might become a Ranker in only a few decades.”

“We got another monster like Son OhGong?”

“Is he a Pure-Blood? Where is he from?”

“Earth? Where’s that?”

“Is there anyone that knows?”

Various Rankers, players, and guilds that weren’t interested in him till now finally learned his name.

Kim YuWon. A star candidate to decorate the sky of the Tower had appeared.

* * *

Reaper Scans

Translator – NumbaWon

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A month had passed.

Hephaestus turned his head after noticing the presence that entered his workshop.

“So, you’re here.”

YuWon had come to pay a visit.

Nodding his head, YuWon spoke in a manner as if Hephaestus owed him money.

“I came to grab the thing I left with you.”

“Watch your tone. You’re not even paying me a single point. Wait right there. It’s almost finished.”

YuWon sat next to the hot furnace, waiting for Hephaestus to finish crafting. As usual, Hephaestus was repeating the process of hammering and quenching.

The workshop was hot. Like, really, really hot. So much so that normal players wouldn’t have been able to stand it. This place wasn’t the previous old, shabby workshop with a weak furnace.

Tshhh—

After hammering the armor that had been heated up, Hephaestus dipped it in cold water.

There were beads of sweat raining down his forehead from swinging his heavy hammer nonstop.

He turned around to look at YuWon.

‘Huh?’ wondered Hephaestus.

Something was off. YuWon wasn't sweating. He may not have been inside the workshop for long, but this was still highly unusual.

"What's up with you?"

"Excuse me?"

"Aren't you hot?"

YuWon shrugged his shoulders.

"I am hot."

Contrary to his reply, YuWon wasn't sweating at all.

There were some people who naturally didn't sweat regardless of the temperature, but with this much heat, he should at least have found it discomforting.

Hephaestus looked at YuWon with fascination. He wondered how high YuWon's fire resistance must have been.

After observing him for a bit, Hephaestus asked YuWon a question while wiping his sweat with a towel he had hanging by his side.

"So is the 10th Floor next?"

"Yes. I just came down after clearing the test."

"This one took you quite a bit of time. What was it, ten days?"

Ten days. It was time it took for YuWon to clear the 9th Floor's test.

In twenty days, YuWon had cleared all the way up to the 8th Floor's test, and he had finally reached the 9th Floor.

For how quickly he'd ascended, the 9th Floor's test had taken him a good amount of time.

"You know what the 9th Floor's test is like."

"It's been a while, so I'm a bit fuzzy on it, but I think it was finding your way through a labyrinth?"

The Labyrinth. That was the test given by the Tower on the 9th Floor. It was a test where you had to find your way through an endless maze with hundreds of paths, using a wide variety of methods.

"Still, isn't ten days too long?"

For most skilled players, making it through the Labyrinth usually only took four to five days max. So ten days was actually quite a bit of time. Any player other than YuWon would have been rated as unskilled if they had taken that long.

"Did something happen?"

YuWon rolled his eyes at Hephaestus's curiosity-filled question.

Seeing his reaction, Hephaestus smirked, having already known that something must have happened.

“Tell me already, if you want to receive the thing you commissioned.”

“Are you holding an item hostage?”

“Now.” Hephaestus egged him on.

Since he hadn't actually intended on keeping it a secret, YuWon opened up.

“I established a new path. It took me a bit of time to find them.”

A new path. Hearing that made Hephaestus narrow his eyes.

“... In the Labyrinth?”

“Yes.”

“It's not like it had a predetermined path. So what do you mean by 'a new path'?”

Hephaestus didn't understand what YuWon was going on about. The Labyrinth was called a labyrinth because there wasn't a set path. Not only was it extremely large, but some people ended up getting lost for a long time and even giving up on the test.

So to claim that he established a path in that Labyrinth...

Also...

“Did you just say 'them'?”

YuWon spoke as if the new path wasn't singular, but plural. This intensified Hephaestus's curiosity.

“There's no reason there had to only be a single exit. There could be one path, but there could also be a myriad.”

“Are you saying you created them?”

“Yes. They were just never actually treaded on. None of them were ever the wrong paths.”

“What kind of nonsense are you spouting here...?”

Hephaestus ended up speechless from how baffled he was. There was nothing he could learn by continuing to ask questions. He may not know how YuWon created the exits, but this was completely unrelated to him.

Hephaestus was a Ranker. He had long ago escaped the Labyrinth, cleared that test, and climbed the Tower already. Nothing good could come from intervening anymore with the matters of a lower floor.

“So you just made things easy for the following guys.”

He said it like that because he was bad at compliments, but Hephaestus knew what establishing a new path meant.

The Tower not only calculated the reward based on ‘first’ and ‘perfect,’ but a number of other factors as well were involved in the test. That meant that if you went through a predetermined path, you could easily clear the test, but it would net you a lesser reward.

On the other hand, YuWon had just cleared the test by establishing a never-before pioneered path. So naturally, his reward had to be better than a standard reward.

“I’m now dying to know how you’ll clear the other tests.”

“I’ll come back again and tell you.”

“So is this thing something you need for the next test?”

Hephaestus grabbed the sword he had hung up haphazardly on one side.

“I’ve made a lot of weapons, but I’ve never made anything like this before. A weapon that, instead of having excellent mana conductivity...”

Shing—

The sword was pulled out of its scabbard.

Hephaestus’s eyes sparkled while staring at the crappy weapon made from various impure materials.

“... Has the worst mana conductivity possible.”

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Yuwon took the sword from Hephaestus.

The sword had a hazy-colored blade. The weight was appropriate, and the shape and the balance of the sword was also good. The only shortcoming was, as Hephaestus said, its terrible mana conductivity.

[Nameless Sword]

▷ It’s a sword made from various materials. Its mana conductivity is terrible, but the blade is well-sharpened. It could be useful for butchering.

It was an object that was hard to even call an item.

Even when made of normal steel, an item was capable of accepting some amount of mana. And as long as Hephaestus put his effort into it, he could make a pretty excellent sword just out of plain steel.

However, the sword in YuWon’s hand was not like that.

“The materials in that are normally used to make armor, rather than weapons. Bad mana conductivity also means that it has strong resistance against mana.”

That meant that this was a weapon that was intentionally designed to have bad mana conductivity.

“If making a failed work is a success, then I can guarantee that I’ve succeeded pretty fantastically.”

It was the greatest failure. That's why Hephaestus was able to say he had succeeded.

To try it out, YuWon tried imbuing the sword with some mana.

[Activating Arcane Sword.]

[Failed to activate Arcane Sword.]

[An unknown power is blocking mana.]

Whirr—

The sword vibrated ever so slightly.

The mana that YuWon had imbued into the sword had become trapped, unable to get outside. And then the sword absorbed his mana like a sponge.

The skill had failed. YuWon was sure. This piece of work was a failure, the greatest failure at that.

“I like it.”

Shing—

YuWon put the sword back in its scabbard.

It was much better than he had expected. He had thought that at best the skill's effect would be drastically reduced, but for it to completely stop the skill...

If this was made into armor, it would have been pretty powerful armor with great mana resistance.

‘Fael, tar, obsidian, and onyx steel. He really only used minerals that are used to make armor.’

YuWon was not a blacksmith. However, after he had become a Ranker and started fighting the Outer Gods, he had touched and used countless different items. Thanks to that, he possessed some knowledge on what materials were combined to make certain items.

As for this item, it was less of a sword and more like armor in the shape of a sword.

“I got to have a fun challenge. It never even occurred to me to make something like this.”

That was a no-brainer as Hephaestus had only ever made perfect items.

Making a sword with the worst qualities using high quality materials was something he hadn't done even when he had first started wielding his hammer.

YuWon gave a total of 10,000 points in Asgardian bills to Hephaestus.

Setting aside its properties, the materials in this item had that much value, not to mention the fact that this was something crafted by Hephaestus.

Hephaestus tried to reject his payment, but YuWon insisted. He had let himself get used to free stuff.

‘That should do it for preparations.’

The 10th Floor.

It was the first wall that stopped players who decided to climb the Tower after finishing the Tutorial.

The Tower's tests became significantly more difficult every tenth floor. So players referred to parts like the 10th and 20th Floors as 'walls.'

Of course, this was completely unrelated to YuWon. YuWon was too far above the average player to feel like he had hit a wall from something like this.

YuWon found a portal near the workshop.

For 10p and having the qualifications of clearing the previous floor's test, one could teleport to another floor by using the portals.

[Please select your destination.]

"10th Floor."

It was the world that he had just obtained the qualifications to go up to.

"I'm headed to the Martial Realm."

[Qualification confirmed.]

[Teleporting to the 10th Floor.]

Flash—!

Before YuWon's eyes, the Martial Realm opened up.

* * *

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The Martial Realm was the name given to the world of the 10th Floor. And among the many floors in the Tower, it was one of YuWon's favorite worlds. It was a giant continent surrounded by the ocean.

In this place was a martial arts society created by the strong.

[WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF THE 10TH FLOOR.]

[THE TEST WILL NOW START.]

[Please select a martial arts school to join.]

[Please pass the test of the chosen martial arts school.]

Unlike other floors, the 10th Floor's test started as soon as you entered. The test was to pick among the thousands of martial schools, learn their martial arts, and pass that school's test.

In other words, this was a test of training.

On this floor, you couldn't pass the test by simply taking down an enemy or doing a special mission. The only choice you had was to learn the martial arts of the chosen school.

Of course...

'That's not the only way to pass the test.'

The area where YuWon arrived on the 10th Floor was crowded. There were countless people gathered around this empty field a hundred meters long.

"We're recruiting people to join the School of the Dragon Sword! Anyone is welcome to join as long as they have passion!"

"The House of the Gentleman's Sword is recruiting people. If you are a fellow that uses the sword, please come to the House of the Gentleman's Sword!"

"The School of Heavy Steel is a place to train your body as hard as steel! There is no better martial art than ours to learn to climb the Tower!"

It was like a market. There were players that were wandering around, unable to pick a school. A lot of mid-sized schools were shouting at the top of their lungs to attract those players.

The big fish, however, were either not present, or if they were, they didn't cause a scene because players with a good eye knew how to find and recognize the true masters.

That was when...

"Hello, young man."

... Someone came up to YuWon with a soft voice.

"Is this your first time in the martial realm?"

It was obvious what he was after.

YuWon looked at the sword on the man's back. He seemed to be a player that had decided to settle down in the martial realm.

Compared to other floors, quite a few players settled down in the martial realm. The reason was pretty simple: it was a nice place to live.

"That's right."

"Hmm. Judging by your outfit, you must be pretty skilled. Do you, by chance, use the sword?"

When YuWon nodded in response, the man started making a big deal out of it.

"What a coincidence... Or perhaps, is this fate? If you are a sword user, then you must join our School of the Sapphire Sword. Our school is..."

Rather than a martial artist, his manner of speech was closer to that of a salesman. Compared to the past, the martial realm had changed greatly due to the arrival of players from many different worlds.

YuWon just brushed off the man. The School of the Sapphire Sword? He had never heard of it before. Even for YuWon, who had a wide breadth of knowledge, it was impossible for him to know every single school in the martial realm when there were thousands of them.

‘Major schools are probably uninterested in places like this.’

And even if they were, they wouldn’t personally be seeking out people. A martial arts school with great martial arts and skills that had produced high-ranking Rankers would have people going in search of them. There was no need to act like a door-to-door salesman.

That’s why it was unlikely that one of the large martial schools would personally come for YuWon.

‘I see that there are a few noble clan-level martial arts schools.’

YuWon paid no heed to the School of the Sapphire Sword. He let him continue on while observing the few people from the major schools.

Wudang Sect, Azure Mountain Sect, Jaegal Clan. YuWon spotted some large martial schools that he remembered, but the one that he wanted wasn’t present.

“The founding of the School of the Sapphire Sword actually predates the Tower...” the man continued to blabber on.

YuWon frowned as he looked at him. First off, he had absolutely zero intention of joining the School of Sapphire-whatever. It was possible to change your school midway, but he had no time to waste on a school like that one.

‘Do they... not have any interest in places like this?’

Martial arts were the first real challenge faced by players who had been getting stronger from tests, rewards, and leveling up. This was a test where you had to become stronger by moving your body, hardening your body like steel, and practicing martial arts.

As it was a completely different type of test than the previous ones, there were quite a few players who stagnated on the 10th Floor, unable to ever clear the test.

“That’s why the School of the Sapphire Sword... Are you listening to me?”

The man who was excitedly explaining his school suddenly looked at YuWon with a frown. He realized that YuWon had stopped listening to him after a certain point.

“No. I wasn’t listening.”

The man’s face quickly hardened.

“It seems you’re bad at understanding.”

“I’m sorry, but I don’t have any intention of joining your school. Just go away.”

YuWon planned on walking away, but...

“Did you just look down on me? And my School of the Sapphire Sword?”

... The man had a volatile reaction.

YuWon scratched his head. He wondered why he was being so sensitive over something that wasn't that big of a deal.

"That wasn't my intention, but..."

After thinking for a second, YuWon shook his head in annoyance. He didn't really care to make excuses.

"You're not wrong."

"Grrr!"

As if his pride was hurt, the man stared at YuWon while gritting his teeth. His face was flushed red with anger. He pointed his finger at YuWon.

"You look like a scarecrow. Don't just say whatever you want when you clearly got here by luck."

YuWon couldn't believe he was just called a scarecrow.

The man had a pretty big frame. YuWon was on the tall side, but this man was about 10cm taller.

YuWon thought this guy should have known that fighting wasn't just about size if he had managed to reach at least the 10th Floor and mastered martial arts.

"Don't you know how great our School of the Sapphire Sword is?!"

The man walked towards YuWon while trying to create a dominating atmosphere.

It seemed as though he wasn't completely a small fry. The man released the power he was hiding, sending killing intent at YuWon.

He might not have been intending to kill YuWon, but he definitely wanted to scare him and pick a fight.

'There's no way he's actually this angry from that...'

This was a pretty old-fashioned tactic.

'Picking a fight and demonstrating your strength to a player that's new to the 10th Floor. It's not a bad way for a small school to show off their skills.'

It seemed as though YuWon had been highly underestimated. He felt like he got caught up in something annoying. He had to hurry since the school he wanted wasn't here, yet here was a school he had never heard of picking a fight with him.

"I don't know what floor you've been up to, but aren't you afraid of the penalty? Also, it won't be good for your school if this incident becomes well-known."

Among the many schools on the 10th Floor, there was an official rule: to not mess with players that had just reached the 10th Floor.

This was a long-held tradition after the Martial Realm was settled in the Tower. And any school that broke that rule was always punished.

The school was either directly punished by the Martial Artists' Alliance, or they became unable to recruit additional players from losing their reputation. Either way, it was taboo for a martial school to mess with a newly arrived player.

“Hmph! That is the case, but there are still rules in the martial realm. I can't let my school's name be tarnished. Now, it's too late for you to beg—”

“That's enough.”

Step—

The man stopped speaking mid-sentence as YuWon took a step towards him.

“If you don't want to settle this with words, I'm not interested.”

Once was enough for trying to talk it out.

The look in YuWon's eyes changed.

The man sensed a chilling feeling between the distance that was closing between them. After looking YuWon in the eyes, he took a step back without even realizing it.

‘How can his eyes...’

He thought that YuWon should have been a player that had just arrived on the 10th Floor, but his eyes were like that of a Ranker he once saw from a distance.

“What are you doing?” YuWon asked.

The man's nerves were on edge while he looked at YuWon.

YuWon whispered, “Come at me.”

Step—

YuWon took another step closer to the man.

The two now stood at less than a palm's length between them.

“Ngh—!”

Whoosh—!

Scared, the man from the School of the Sapphire Sword swung his hand at YuWon.

Wham—!