

With The Gods 451

Chapter 451

C451

Even when he reviewed it again, it was the same.

There were a total of 31 messages. However, there was no clue that could be relevant to the 'Celestial Floor' in any of them.

"This stupid and idiotic monkey..."

Yuwon wrote a text message, listing all the words that Son OhGong didn't like.

Frustration made him sigh.

[So, where is that place?]

He texted the Kit, and even after a few minutes, there was no response.

First of all, he wasn't the type to check the Kit much, and judging by the urgency of the content, it seems that the situation at that time was urgent.

Yuwon gave up on waiting for a response from Son OhGong and contacted someone else.

"...What should I tell him?"

The first thing he worried about was how to address that person. After thinking for a moment, YuWon decided that it was the right time to address various issues and sent a message to the Kit.

He stood up from his seat.

"There's no time to rest."

"Abba~"

Yuwon carried Danpung on his shoulder. Although not all doubts had been resolved, it seemed that he should move first.

"Let's talk about it later."

The situation was out of control in the Murim World.

Floor 10. A world consisting of the lowest floor of a Tower with a total of 100 floors.

Although it was a peaceful world with little strength, unusually, a giant had appeared.

Step by step...

Thump, thump, thump...

An imposing presence that made even the high Heavenly Mountain seem small.

Although he ventured into the Heavenly Mountain without permission, the Heavenly Demon Cult could do nothing about it.

This was partly due to the merger of the Heavenly Demon Cult and the Murim Alliance, which resulted in half of its power coming out of the Heavenly Demon Cult...

"A monster has arrived."

Kwon Cheonjoo and Pung Baeklim swallowed saliva as they watched the red-haired giant approach with firm steps.

As a Martial Artist of the Heavenly Demon Cult, Pung Baeklim thought it was natural to want to challenge a strong person when he saw one. In reality, he wished to fight the Heavenly Demon someday.

But the man in front of him did not inspire that kind of desire.

It was like standing before death.

Thump...

In the Heavenly Demon Cult...

Diablo appeared in front of Chun Mujin, the current Heavenly Demon.

"What is this commotion?"

Chun Mujin, who was lost in thought with his chin resting on his hand, slowly opened his eyes. Diablo's appearance was significant enough to make the normally quiet Heavenly Mountain noisy. Diablo.

He was at the top of the Demons and possessed enough power to fight against the entire Heavenly Demon Cult by himself.

Even Chun Mujin, considered the Sky of the Heavenly Demon Cult, could do nothing against him.

"I just came for a walk. What's the problem?"

"Your mere existence is the problem."

"Is my step that strong?"

"The children are trembling."

"So fearful. You, on the other hand..."

Diablo mockingly stuck out his tongue.

His red eyes quickly turned towards Chun Mujin.

"By any chance, are you afraid of me too?"

"I know you're not here as an enemy."

"You realize quickly."

Diablo showed no hostility.

As if he had important matters, his gaze was full of seriousness, but at least he didn't seem to come to fight.

Above all, there was no reason for Diablo to descend so low and kill humans at a time like this.

"I came to ask you a favor."

"What kind of favor?"

"I would like you to teach me your Martial Techniques."

"Martial Techniques?"

"I've heard that Asura was also a person from this world. Indra as well."

It wasn't difficult to understand. Diablo, who had been recognized by everyone in the Tower as strong, had suffered great damage to his personal pride due to the fight with Shub-Niggurath, and although he prepared for the next confrontation, in the end, he couldn't do anything.

That's why...

For the first time, he felt interest in 'Martial Techniques.'

The problem was that this place was the Heavenly Demon Cult, and the opponent was the Heavenly Demon, the Sky of the Heavenly Demon Cult.

"If so, why don't you go look for Asura?"

The Martial Techniques of the Heavenly Demon Cult were not taught to anyone. Just as YuWon obtained the Heavenly Demon Spirit through the Cult's trial, Martial Techniques could only be officially learned by passing the Heavenly Demon Cult's trial.

But Diablo was asking for Chun Mujin's Martial Techniques as if they were something that could simply be handed over.

"There's no guarantee that a strong person is a good teacher just because they're strong."

"Then, you don't seem like a good disciple either."

Their gazes clashed in the air. Realizing that Diablo was not welcome, he sat in his place, as if undecided.

"I don't know. If you don't accept me, I'll stay here to live."

"Aigoo~."

Chun Mujin sighed.

After thinking for a moment, he opened his mouth.

"How about we do it this way?"

Yuwon walked through the halls of Valhalla Castle when he stopped for a moment and looked out the window.

The sky, which had been darkened by Shub-Niggurath, had regained its blue color.

Closing his eyes for a moment and listening to the wind coming in through the window, he heard voices.

"Dad! Dad...!"

"You're in a good place, son..."

"Why does the world have to be punished like this? The world...!"

"Are you okay, friend?"

"My third son died. My third son..."

"Lucky."

"Lucky?"

"My wife, my daughter, and even my son have died."

Ten days had already passed since the fight had ended, but the world continued to mourn. Quickly checking the Kit, YuWon found out that 40% of the residents of Floor 65 had lost their lives.

Yuwon continued to listen to the heart-wrenching cries.

It was late, but he had to listen.

Going back to the past, remembering the sounds he had forgotten over time.

To prevent those sounds from coming back, he had to go all the way to the end.

"What are you doing here?"

The approaching voice blended with the wind as someone spoke to him.

Opening his eyes and looking around, Brunhilde was approaching YuWon.

"Odin is waiting for you."

"For me?"

"He heard that you woke up."

"Then tell Odin to come himself."

"While you were sleeping, he came to visit you several times. Only you didn't wake up."

Yuwon looked at Brunhilde and wondered about the meaning of Brunhilde's new way of speaking.

Had all that doubt been revealed in Yuwon's facial expression?

Brunhilde added words to address YuWon's doubts.

"It's a struggle that nearly destroyed not only Valhalla but all of Asgard. Thanks to the 'Benefactor,' we were able to stop at this level."

"So, are you calling me your Benefactor?"

"You were listening to the cries of the people, weren't you?"

YuWon was surprised by the sudden question.

He didn't expect to be found out. He hadn't used Arcane Power; he had just focused on his hearing to listen to the sounds.

"Don't think that the deaths are your fault. Instead of mourning the dead, look at those you have saved."

"Are you suggesting a change in perspective?"

"Sometimes, we can't do difficult things by trying to do difficult things. Change your perspective. It seems easy, but it's probably hard for you, our Benefactor."

Brunhilde's mouth curled up slightly as she said that.

Over her eyes that looked at YuWon, he remembered the young appearance of Odin in his youth.

"You can become a great king."

Such a respectful attitude was uncomfortable. It meant that YuWon's position in Asgard had increased.

Although it was an unexpected encounter, Brunhilde's advice was very helpful for YuWon.

"Let's go together. Besides, I was on my way to Odin."

Anyway, Brunhilde was kind to YuWon.

Very kind.

But...

Woong-.

Suddenly, Yuwon received a message from the Kit, preventing him from continuing the conversation with Brunhilde.

"Just in time."

"Yes?"

"I was going to contact that guy with the Kit later, but I guess I can talk to him in person."

"What are you saying...?"

"I'm leaving."

Please take care of the preparations.

YuWon's figure disappeared from Brunhilde's sight.

And his voice echoed in the place.

Brunhilde woke up abruptly. As if she had slept a moment standing and had woken up, Yuwon had disappeared from her view.

"...Preparations?"

A shadow crossed over the walls of the Valhalla Castle.

YuWon looked down at the bustling city below, stretching as far as the eye could see. After hearing Brunhilde's words, his heart seemed a little lighter than before.

'Thinking about the living instead of the dead...'

It was a strangely comforting feeling. Although he couldn't save everyone, the guilt for not being able to do so seemed to have diminished.

Originally, he would have bid farewell to Odin with a brief encounter. No, he would have spent more time in the castle, beyond simple farewells.

But in that short interval, the situation changed.

[Bull Demon King: Go up to the 99th floor for now.]

A message came not from Son OhGong, whom he had not been in contact with all the time, but from the Bull Demon King.

Instead of contacting Son OhGong, who had moved much earlier than YuWon to find Son OhGong, YuWon communicated with the Bull Demon King. After all, the Bull Demon King had moved much earlier than YuWon to find Son OhGong.

The Bull Demon King knew the location of the Celestial Floor.

Perhaps the Bull Demon King's help was what allowed Son OhGong to find the Celestial Floor.

'The arrival at the Celestial Floor was in the hands of the Bull Demon King at that time. Maybe it was a waste of effort at that time.'

Son OhGong's quest to find the Celestial Floor wasn't for one or two days. He wanted to reach the Celestial Floor to find the Buddhist Scriptures and undo the seal of the Golden Headband that restricted his strength.

But in the end, Son OhGong couldn't find the Buddhist Scriptures, and the war with the Outers started in such an incomplete state.

'Hercules gained the power of Lightning. Although it doesn't seem like he's using that power fully...'

Hercules using the lightning.

Remembering the figure of him wrapped in golden streams, YuWon suddenly wondered about his Ranking.

'If Zeus's words are true, that should be the real Hercules.'

He stopped his pace and searched for the Rankings through his Kit.

He didn't need to search anymore.

What YuWon wanted to know right now was Hercules's Ranking.

[1st place: Vishnu]

[2nd place: Odin]

[3rd place: Hercules]

As expected.

Hercules's Ranking had increased significantly.

'In the third place... that was Vishnu's original place.'

Had there ever been such a drastic increase in Ranking?

Not only had Hercules risen to a single digit, but he had even surpassed his father Zeus's Ranking.

Perhaps he himself didn't expect that result.

Of course...

Not only Hercules had experienced a significant change in his Ranking.

'What is this?'

[4th place: Zeus]

[5th place: Kim YuWon]

[6th place: Son OhGong]

Suddenly, his Ranking rose to a single digit, even reaching the fifth place.

He hadn't thought that the Ranking would increase so rapidly. First of all, YuWon's contributions were more in the actions he took from behind than the ones he took directly.

Still...

'Did the Ranking increase this way because of Danpung?'

He fought quite well, but it wasn't enough to rise so much in rank.

Hercules showed his power using Lightning, so that's fine, but the increase in his own Ranking was a difficult part to accept.

Still, seeing this Ranking, YuWon's first thought was...

'I'm one step ahead of that idiotic monkey.'

If he met Son OhGong again, he might mock him.

In the past life, he had never experienced YuWon's Ranking being higher than Son OhGong's, so if they met again, it would surely be surprising.

That's if the Ranking isn't wrong.

"The 99th floor..."

YuWon stopped in his tracks and looked around the castle.

From the 65th floor to the 99th floor, it was a considerable distance. He could climb using conventional methods, but he didn't know the situation, so he wanted to hurry as much as possible.

It wasn't necessary to use Golden Cinder Eyes.

If the person he was looking for was still here, it would definitely attract attention.

And as expected...

'He's still here.'

In the midst of the bustling City of Valhalla.

Thud, thud.

The brothers Apollo and Artemis strolled in a large, noisy chariot.

Chapter 452

C452

In the heart of Valhalla, chaos broke loose.

A handsome man with almost golden hair flowing in the wind, Apollo, was half-kneeling on the ground with a somber face.

"Ha, hahaha...."

Apollo let out a bitter laugh at what had just happened in an instant.

He couldn't help it.

At his side, ever-present, was his valuable "mode of transportation," which had now disappeared.

Or more precisely.

"I'll return it when I'm done using it. That's the rental fee."

He had to consider it as theft.

Apollo, with an expression of injustice, checked the rental fee YuWon had paid him.

[10,000,000p]

Ten million points.

Even if Sun Chariot was an impressive item, unless he sold it, paying that rental fee was more than enough.

In fact, with that amount, he could have lent it for over a year.

The problem was that Apollo had no other choice in the process.

"Cheer up."

Apollo sighed under the caress of his younger sister, Artemis.

Suddenly, he remembered when he first heard the name YuWon.

"Just a few years ago, this guy was almost killed by that Crices fellow."

Crices.

A subordinate of Apollo, a High-Ranker with a promising future who used fire attribute magic.

When YuWon set foot in the Tower for the first time.

When Olympus was preparing for the upcoming Gigantomachy and seeking Hephaestus, YuWon stood in Crices' way to protect Hephaestus from Olympus.

He was a newcomer on the first floor.

"Come to think of it, that was quite ridiculous."

Of course, if a High-Ranker attacked a lower-level Player, they faced penalties.

Unless the level difference was minimal, the gap between the first and the hundredth floor was enormous. However, everyone considered it impossible for a first-floor Player to fight against a High-Ranker.

But YuWon achieved it.

Even though he ultimately received help from Hephaestus...

"It was incredible growth from the beginning."

But still, he didn't expect him to grow so fast.

Apollo rode on Sun Chariot and looked in the direction YuWon disappeared.

Clearly, he was heading upwards. He didn't know where, but given the large number of points he paid and the rental of Sun Chariot, it seemed to be an urgent matter.

"Once again, the Tower will become noisy."

Thinking about it, the Tower hadn't become so noisy until a few years ago.

That short period of time felt longer than hundreds of years, and at the center of all events was YuWon.

After looking to where YuWon disappeared, Apollo spoke.

"Artemis."

"Yes?"

"Let's have something delicious."

Ten million points.

With the sudden influx of a large sum of money, Apollo spoke enthusiastically.

"Today, this big brother will spare no expense."

Firee, firee~

The flames on Sun Chariot burned more intensely as they consumed YuWon's energy.

Sun Chariot, known as one of the fastest means of transportation in the Tower, was one of Hephaestus's masterpieces. Not only did it have inherently high speed, but the speed increased the stronger the flame of the user driving it.

And the Sun Chariot absorbing YuWon's energy was running at a faster speed than ever.

[The Heart of Fire supplies fire to Sun Chariot.]

[The speed is increasing.]

[The speed is increasing...]

If Surt heard these messages, he might rise from his grave seeing how his Heart of Fire was being used as firewood for Sun Chariot.

Of course...

At this moment, in YuWon's mind, there was not a hint of thought about Surt.

'Maybe I was a bit harsh.'

It's not that he didn't care at all.

Even if he paid a large amount of Points, the fact that he brought Sun Chariot rather forcibly was a fact.

Thinking to apologize properly later, YuWon hurried his movement.

Hercules and Hargan sat across from each other.

Although the bar was crowded, it was surprisingly quiet, enough to hear even the breathing. Tranquility reigned thanks to Hercules and Hargan, who drank without saying a word.

Thud.

Hercules placed the liquor bottle on the table.

Although he put it down gently, the sound resonated clearly in the bottle. Worried that he had failed to control the force, Hercules lifted the empty bottle and shook it.

"Could you bring me another bottle?"

"Yes, of course! Right away!"

The liquor arrived quickly.

Knowing that Hercules, who drank quickly, would ask for another bottle, the waiter handed him a bottle prepared in advance.

It was just when Hercules, holding the bottle in his hand, was about to bring it to his mouth...

"Aren't you drinking too much?"

Hargan, sitting across from him, spoke.

Hercules's hand stopped.

"I have no forgiveness."

A brief silence.

"I'm sorry."

Hercules, who had spoken the same word twice in a different way, lowered his head.

He wasn't drunk. Hercules's alcohol resistance wasn't weak enough to get drunk with that amount of liquor. No, maybe he would never get drunk at all.

Despite that, Hercules was more affected by remorse than at any other time.

"I'm sorry."

"Why are you apologizing so much?"

"Because I took it from you."

"Originally, it was yours. It was planned from the beginning."

"Who decided that? Just because our father planned it that way doesn't mean we have to live according to that fate. Just because it was your choice to give me the Lightning Bolt, I accepted it; otherwise, I would never have accepted it."

"Thank you for thinking that way."

Hargan said this and smiled slightly. While Hercules drank alone, Hargan lifted his bottle and toasted with him.

Clink~

The clear sound echoed as the bottles collided. It was then that the heavy atmosphere in the bar eased.

The buzz returned to the bar.

Hargan smiled as he wiped his mouth stained with liquor with the back of his hand.

"I think everyone has been watching us."

"That's right."

"So take it easy."

"Understood."

"And contrary to what you think, I am satisfied."

Hercules, who was about to drink slowly according to Hargan's concerns, stopped.

Satisfied?

What could there be to be satisfied about after losing the power of the Lightning Bolt?

"First of all, haven't we become quite close? You're my idol."

"Don't be satisfied with that. We would have become close at any time, even without this method."

"Really?"

With an expression as carefree as ever, Hargan laughed foolishly.

In the face of Hargan's reaction, Hercules seemed perplexed.

Hargan aimed to become the King of Olympus. And, for him, the Lightning Bolt was an indispensable force towards that goal.

Having lost it, Hargan would probably feel disheartened. However, his current reaction was unexpected.

"Indeed, there is still much to do."

"What is left?"

"The Lightning Bolt, I mean."

Hercules's eyes widened.

To the implicit question in his eyes, Hargan responded casually.

Not everything was lost. But maybe because I had the Lightning Bolt for so long... or maybe because it left its roots inside me. It's still here."

Click.

The clenched fist rose on the table. It was an act emanating determination.

"So, I can become strong again."

"No..."

And towards that Hargan...

"You'll become stronger than before."

Hercules, who finished drinking the remaining liquor, said with determination.

"Because I will make you strong again."

The corners of Hargan's mouth lifted.

"I've been waiting for those words."

Firee, firee~

The Sun Chariot, running swiftly, stopped for a moment in the sky.

Due to the Sun Chariot appearing, spitting out blazing flames, the world that was darkening briefly lit up.

YuWon looked down from the 99th floor. The 99th floor had a more unique structure than any other world YuWon knew.

'Is this place developed, or is it lagging behind?'

The most developed world was the segment of the 60th floor, where Asgard was located. In this Tower, the formula was almost like an ancient law: the stronger the present Guild, the more development it would have.

Perhaps that's why the 99th floor had a peculiar structure.

It was a world intertwined with the interests of various giant guilds like the Celestial Realm, the Devas, and Heaven.

Perhaps for that reason.

The view from the 99th floor, seen from the sky, showed skyscrapers squeezed in the middle of a wasteland and an unexplored forest.

It was as if there were skyscrapers in the Murim World where science and magic had not developed.

YuWon arrived at that world and opened the Kit again to confirm the message.

[Bull Demon King: 99th Floor, head towards the end of that world. The direction is northwest.]

A message indicating the direction.

YuWon covered the Kit with that message and pulled the reins of the Sun Chariot.

'The end of the world on the 99th floor... no wonder that guy couldn't find it.'

No matter how fast Son OhGong is, exploring this vast Tower would be an impossible task.

Especially when it comes to the final corners of the worlds, there would be nothing beyond, so it wouldn't be strange not to explore further.

'But how does that guy know the location of the Celestial Floor?'

The question didn't last long.

With the Sun Chariot and a destination in mind, the time to get there wouldn't be so long.

YuWon pulled the reins of the Sun Chariot and headed straight to the place pointed out by the Bull Demon King.

There were no exact coordinates, but with a means of transportation like the Sun Chariot, the Bull Demon King would surely notice it and come by himself.

YuWon raised the flames as high as possible, releasing a thunderous energy as he began to move.

So, in about ten minutes.

While the Sun Chariot ran, a black wall began to appear in YuWon's view.

"Now, this is the end."

The flames of the Sun Chariot gradually weakened.

There was no way to break through that wall in any way. If it collided at this speed, the Sun Chariot would crumble to pieces.

But...

-Just keep running.

A voice echoed in YuWon's mind. YuWon, who was slowing down, looked around.

"Telepathy?"

No, this was a bit different from telepathy.

A voice transmission through magic. In a brief moment, the voice of the Bull Demon King made YuWon start to conflict with himself.

'If I destroy this, I'll only be able to look at Apollo with shame every time I see him.'

YuWon had many points, but destroying the Sun Chariot would be a burden even for him.

Even so, the thought didn't last long.

The Bull Demon King wouldn't say nonsense.

'It's just a small issue. I'll just ask Zeus to help me.'

Like your son is very angry, could you calm him down?

['Heart of Fire'] adds flames to ['Sun Chariot']

['Holy Fire'] adds flames to ['Sun Chariot']

With that thought, YuWon increased the speed of the Sun Chariot.

Thus, when the running Sun Chariot collided with the end of the world...

Aaah!

The world YuWon saw changed.

Chapter 453

C453

Who would have known?

That beyond the end of the world, there would be another world.

The wall didn't break. No, not even a scratch.

It was a boundary that would never break; it wasn't a material concept that could be broken from the start.

Literally, it was the end.

After that, there is nothing more, it can't be broken or crossed.

The entire world knew it.

Of course.

'The Outer exists.'

One day, someone defied all those expectations and knocked down the wall.

Foolish Chaos from the outside had already been stirring the Tower for a long time.

That's why, beyond the end of the world, it definitely existed.

But...

'It's not here.'

Even though he had never crossed it, he could be sure.

This was not the world beyond the Tower that he imagined. He could tell by looking at the blue sky and the sand-filled wasteland, and the tall hills.

It was just hidden here.

It was no different from the world he lived in.

-Here.

The voice of the Bull Demon King sounded again.

There was no indication of direction, but he could understand. He knew where the "here" that the Bull Demon King mentioned was.

Yuwon pulled the Sun Chariot beyond the hill in front of his eyes. The flame-wrapped Sun Chariot ran swiftly and crossed the hill.

And then...

Tuk!

Something jumped high in the sky and cast its shadow. In the next moment, it landed quickly on the moving Sun Chariot.

Bang!

In an instant, the Sun Chariot tilted to one side. YuWon hastily increased one of the flames to balance it and prevent the Sun Chariot from crashing.

"So, you decide to appear in such a noisy way; it seems there's something urgent."

Yuwon smiled slightly as he looked at the tall man who appeared in a hurry.

"Hyung-nim."

"I'm sorry. Come here."

Yuwon quickly examined the appearance of the Bull Demon King. His clothes were torn, and there were three long wound marks on his cheeks.

Now they were almost completely healed, but at first, they must have been quite serious wounds.

"It looks like you've had some trouble."

"I did."

"Where is Son Oh Gong?"

"That guy..."

Grrrrr...

There was a loud noise from the Bull Demon King's belly.

There was no way he made that noise after a day or two without eating. Though he doubted it, the Bull Demon King really seemed to be hungry.

"Haha..."

The Bull Demon King laughed awkwardly.

He pointed to the village that could be seen below the Sun Chariot beyond the hill.

"How about we eat first?"

Interestingly, there was also a village beyond the wall.

Although it didn't have tall buildings, culture, or civilization as developed as the 99th-floor world, it was still a quite diverse village.

Chiiik!

The Bull Demon King tore the meat.

That was it, he simply ate an entire pig without any seasoning, but the Bull Demon King enjoyed it a lot.

Gulp, gulp...

He drank the liquor in one go and cleared his throat. Although it was only a body the size of a pig, it was amazing how an entire pig could fit in his stomach.

How long has this guy been without tasting any food?

Thud...

Somehow, YuWon, who had been waiting for the Bull Demon King to finish his meal, finally opened his mouth.

"Are you still starving?"

"I didn't have time to eat."

"I see that the matter you were dealing with was serious."

"We kept fighting."

Fighting.

With whom?

YuWon's gaze turned to the marks on the Bull Demon King's face. Upon closer inspection, more than being cut with a sword, it looked more like a mark scratched with long, sharp nails.

"Is this the wound you received?"

"Yes, guess who I got it from."

"I don't know."

"From the same Son Oh Gong."

YuWon's hand, which was pouring water into a cup instead of alcohol, stopped. When the water overflowed from the cup, YuWon quickly tilted the hand to remove the bottle.

The words of the Bull Demon King were so surprising.

"What are you saying?"

"You seem very surprised."

"Of course."

"But I almost died even."

The Bull Demon King raised his hand and stroked his cheek.

A wound split into three.

Every time he touched the wound that didn't heal easily, the Bull Demon King recalled the fight.

"It wasn't with anyone, but with my only brother."

At the top of a high mountain.

There was an ancient, abandoned, and worn-out temple. Although it wouldn't be surprising for the temple to collapse at any moment, at present, barely anything remained of its original form.

The only thing left intact amidst the temple ruins was the worship hall housing the Buddha statue and the main gate of the temple.

Aaaaaah-!

A scream echoed from inside the worship hall. The scream was so loud that it shook the earth around the temple, cracking the ground.

In the center of the temple...

A repetitive moan, like a lament, echoed as Son Oh Gong, with both hands holding his head, sat. He repeatedly struck the ground with the force of his head, trying to free himself from the headache.

"Ah... Ugh..."

Crack.

He scratched the ground with his long nails. In the mind of Son Oh Gong, whose eyes glowed golden, recent experiences played out like images.

In the center of the worship hall, gripping the Buddhist Scriptures, the restraint of the Golden Headband suddenly came undone.

But at that very moment, Son OhGong lost his temper, turned his body, and attacked the Bull Demon King.

Swish!

Crunch!

Blood spurted from the face of the Bull Demon King. Startled, he quickly stepped back and looked at Son OhGong.

-... What's the matter?

Crunch.

Son OhGong bared his fangs.

He couldn't contain the boiling anger and the desire to see blood.

He had lost his sanity, and someone had robbed him of consciousness. His mind turned white.

Swoosh, Swoosh!

Son OhGong rushed forward with raised claws.

The Bull Demon King drew his sword while blocking Son OhGong's attacks.

The fight between the two continued for almost ten days. Son OhGong attempted to halt the attacks by regaining consciousness somehow, but it didn't go as he wanted.

Unconsciously, consciousness faded, and the world turned white.

This is how he regained some reason now.

Swoosh.

Son OhGong struck the ground with his head again, unable to bear the unbearable pain of the Golden Headband.

Aaaah!

The temple did not collapse. What shook was the mountain on which the temple stood.

Although everything in the temple was destroyed due to the fight between Son OhGong and the Bull Demon King, the only structure that remained standing was the main hall.

Squish~

To regain his reason, Son OhGong struck his head against the ground and bit his lips.

"Hyung... nim..."

No matter how much he tried to remember, OhGong could recall how the fight started, but not how it ended.

Why was he inside this temple again, and what happened to the Bull Demon King?

While rummaging through his forgotten memory...

Swoosh.

Once again, the Golden Headband encircling OhGong's head began to rumble and move frantically.

"Kugh...!"

Aaaaaaaah-!

""

After hearing the story, YuWon closed his eyes for a moment.

He had not considered this type of situation before. He thought that finding the Celestial Floor would solve all the problems.

"It was a two-against-one fight. OhGong and I fought against the Golden Headband."

"Golden Headband..."

Who put the Golden Headband on Son OhGong's head?

Son OhGong had no answers about it. Although he remembered the Golden Headband, he didn't know who put it on him.

"I've heard that Hyung-nim knows."

"The person who put the Golden Headband on that guy?"

"Yes."

"There was an older Ranker than me named Subhuti. Now he is a forgotten figure."

"Why did he put the Golden Headband on his head?"

"It was because of his growing power. OhGong was also a Yokai by birth. However, he was much stronger than me."

"Even stronger than Hyung-nim?"

"At that time, he was weaker than me, but I believe that if he had lived to be a hundred years old, he would have been stronger than me. His talent as a Yokai was so incredible."

Surpassing the Demon King at a hundred years old. It was a story hard to believe.

"But one day, Subhuti appeared and imposed the Golden Headband on Son OhGong. It was like putting a noose around his neck. The Yokai who could have become a great Yokai suddenly turned into a weak monkey."

'Should I believe this?'

It was a story that completely lacked realism.

Son OhGong, remembered by YuWon, was more talented than anyone. Before YuWon's arrival, he had passed each floor's tests with the best results and had left his name marked.

Even when he reached the 50th floor, he defeated the Chimera Creator overseeing the Trial at that time. But the Bull Demon King called him a "weak monkey."

"Why? Can't you believe it?"

"Yes. I suppose..."

"I understand. It's understandable, given what he has done."

YuWon nodded. Although he said it that way, he couldn't help but believe it. There was no reason for the Bull Demon King, who loved Son OhGong more than anyone, to lie to him about him.

"Anyway, it's a big problem. He may be enduring it somehow now, but who knows what will happen next."

"What does Hyung-nim plan to do?"

"What can I do? I can only take the Buddhist Scriptures from Son OhGong and strengthen the seal of the Golden Headband."

In short, it was going in circles.

The reason Son OhGong sought the Buddhist Scriptures was probably for this. Did Subhuti care for Son OhGong and impose the Golden Headband on him?

In response to the Bull Demon King's words, YuWon took out his Player Kit.

Son OhGong's text messages seemed somewhat urgent.

YuWon showed it to the Bull Demon King.

"Were you also there when this guy sent me this?"

"... No. This is the first time I've seen these messages."

"Really?"

Was this really the message right after the Golden Headband seal was broken?

Something didn't seem right. The desire to verify it arose.

"Allow me to withdraw for a moment."

"Withdraw?"

The Bull Demon King, thinking about what YuWon was about to do, looked at him with surprise and then, looking into his eyes, was astonished.

"Eyes of Foreknowledge?"

Golden pupils.

Through those eyes, YuWon began to see the future.

'... Is this the place?'

While isolated from the world, the back of the Bull Demon King appeared before YuWon's eyes.

He was ascending somewhere. It was a high and wide mountain where the summit was not visible.

Step by step.

As he climbed, the first thing he saw was a wide and tall gate on both sides.

'He is up there, where Son OhGong is.'

Yuwon followed the Bull Demon King towards where Son OhGong was.

He couldn't discern the overall situation.

But after seeing this scene, it was clear that they would go back to look for Son OhGong.

'At least that seems to be the case.'

He had used the Eyes of Foreknowledge to know what would happen in the future.

And also, in part, to see Son OhGong a little earlier.

In what state was he now?

And if he really was as strong as the Bull Demon King claimed.

There was a lot of information he needed to know beforehand.

But...

Blurry...

Suddenly, YuWon's vision became blurry, and everything in his field of view, including the Bull Demon King, began to shake.

"What is this?"

It wasn't because the Eyes of Foreknowledge were insufficient. He could judge that.

[An unknown force is intervening in the 'Eyes of Foreknowledge'.]

And then it happened.

Beyond the straight gate approaching his eyes.

-You...

The faint figure of a 'Buddha' with vague facial features, grayish skin, and dark blood appeared.

"How dare you think of crossing the gate?"

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There was no eye contact.

It was natural.

If they couldn't see each other, there was no possibility of visual encounter. More than anything, this was not the real reality but a future moment seen through the Eyes of Foreknowledge.

But then, why?

A chill ran down YuWon's spine.

-Don't cross this gate ever again.

A whisper.

The world seen through the Eyes of Foreknowledge distorted.

Something was interfering and diverting YuWon's vision through the Eyes of Foreknowledge.

"If you come back, I won't let you go so easily."

He cast YuWon away as if this was his space.

YuWon, who was contemplating resistance, soon stopped. Not being able to examine what was inside was regrettable, but that didn't mean he gained nothing.

On the contrary...

'Thank you.'

Because of you, I now know what's behind that guy.

Beyond the gate guarded by Buddha.

Aaaaah!

Suddenly, the faint cry of pain from Son OhGong was heard.

Aaaaah!

In an instant, the world changed.

The view through the eyes, the air current enveloping the body, the ambient temperature.

Everything changed.

The effect of Foreknowledge had disappeared.

"What did you see?"

It was the Bull Demon King's question, noticing that YuWon had used the Eyes of Foreknowledge.

YuWon, who had been sitting in confusion for a moment, stood up.

"I have to leave immediately."

"Where to?"

"To the mountain where that guy is."

Rumble, rumble~.

In the sky above the building where they were both dining, the Sun Chariot once again expelled flames and prepared for takeoff.

"... What?"

Although the Bull Demon King didn't understand what was happening, he boarded the Sun Chariot following YuWon.

The Sun Chariot, whose engine instantly ignited, began to move at breakneck speed. Although the Bull Demon King didn't fully understand the situation, he pointed in the direction with his finger.

"It's over there."

"I'll go right away, then. Be careful not to fall."

"Since you're concerned, speak now. Why are you moving so hastily all of a sudden?"

In response to the Bull Demon King's insistence, YuWon answered without turning off the Sun Chariot lights.

"It's not something like a Yokai."

"Isn't it?"

"There's something behind him. Someone with a bald head and tan skin."

"Did you see it with those eyes?"

"Yes."

And that 'someone' intervened to block YuWon's view of Son OhGong by interfering with the Eyes of Foreknowledge.

At this moment, the assumption was fragile and there was no solid evidence, but it was worth saying.

"He wants to take over Son OhGong's body."

"The body?"

"Yes."

Yuwon also didn't know who that person was. But he guessed that it probably could be an ancient High-Ranker who had long disappeared, now unranked.

The only reason he could guess that was because YuWon couldn't think of a High-Ranker who could make Son OhGong like this.

'If it's such an ancient High-Ranker and is now dead and missing.'

The only reason that thing might be targeting Son OhGong is one.

'Is it dreaming of resurrection?'

Yuwon looked down at the back of his hand.

A ring filled on his right hand. The moment he discovered it, an idea crossed YuWon's mind.

'...No harm in checking.'

Woo-.

Light sprouted from the ring on his right hand.

Golden, black, and blue lights enveloped YuWon. Along with the sensation that his body floated in the air for a moment, YuWon's mind was sucked into the Uranus Heart.

Clank-!

The sound of putting a teacup down was the first thing that greeted YuWon.

A man was sitting alone calmly in the center of a pure white.

It was Uranus, the owner of the ring that YuWon wore.

"It seems like you're quite bored."

"Well, what else can I do here? Apart from drinking tea I drank a long time ago while remembering its taste."

This was a space that did not exist physically. It was a virtual world artificially created by the soul of Uranus, who resided in the ring.

Of course, even the tea that Uranus was drinking wasn't real. Uranus had been passing time here in boredom for a long time.

Step~

YuWon walked toward Uranus and sat in front of him.

"Do you know why I came here, right?"

Uranus nodded.

In this boring place, Uranus's only entertainment was observing YuWon's life happening outside.

"Do you want to ask me about Gautama Buddha?"

"Is that guy called Gautama Buddha?"

"It's probably not his real name. He's just called that."

"How do you know him?"

"He was an active Ranker in my era."

Uranus's era.

He was a Ranker from the oldest generation that even surpassed the Bull Demon King or Odin, the ancient Rankers still alive. Naturally, for YuWon, who became a Ranker later than the current Rankers, Uranus was a truly ancient presence.

But it turns out that Gautama Buddha was a Ranker from the same era as Uranus.

"Then, how many years have passed?"

He thought that maybe it wasn't much different from Uranus being here.

Uranus.

He divided his own heart into three and left it in the world.

Gautama Buddha was not much different. He dreamed of resurrection through Son OhGong.

"Bull Demon King, it seems like that brat was completely deceived by Tathagata*. I remember Subhuti leaked the location of the Celestial Floor." (Note: One of Gautama Buddha's many names is Tathagata, and I'll call him that from now on)

Uranus smiled as if finding it amusing.

"What kind of person is Tathagata?"

"He's a fair guy."

"Fair?"

"Yes. He loves humans a lot and respects them. He doesn't easily kill creatures like ants or herbs unless it's necessary."

YuWon's eyebrows trembled at Uranus's explanation.

A moment ago, the description of Tathagata that YuWon saw through the Eyes of Foreknowledge was completely different. Moreover, he was planning to use the Golden Headband to take over Son OhGong's body.

The fact that Tathagata had such a compassionate disposition was surprising.

"Oh, and also."

But what a coincidence.

"That guy really hates Yokai. He tenses up just hearing them."

"Yokai?"

"It may not be the case now, but in my era, Yokai were beings that killed and devoured humans mercilessly. They were monstrous creatures. Those were the only creatures that Tathagata genuinely hated."

YuWon finally nodded understandingly at that explanation.

Given those reasons, it made sense that he would want to take over Son OhGong's body. After all, there would be no remorse for taking the lives of Yokai that would simply kill and devour humans.

"Is there anything I should keep in mind when fighting him?"

"Well, I'm not sure if my stories will be of any help to you. I don't know much about him, and anyway, he's already dead and now inside the body of the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal."

"Anything is fine. Tell me anything."

"Anything, huh?"

Urano, as if recalling something from a long time ago, silently touched the teacup.

So a few minutes passed.

Urano, who had been pondering Tathagata for a while, finally spoke.

"Do you know the Shaolin Temple in Murim?"

"The Shaolin Temple?"

There was no way he wouldn't know.

The Trial of the 10th Floor was to pass the tests of each Sect in Murim. Each Player tirelessly strived to learn martial arts that would be useful to them.

And the Shaolin Temple was one of the most prominent among the most well-known Sects in Murim, alongside the Namgung Family and others. Among the commonly known Sects as the Nine Great Sects, the Shaolin Temple was considered the best.

"The Martial Arts of the Shaolin Temple ultimately derived from Tathagata. Even the Martial Arts of the Shaolin Temple Leader are probably just child's play compared to Tathagata, but the basic structure should be similar."

"Shaolin Temple..."

The Martial Arts of the Shaolin Temple came to YuWon's mind.

They used fist and palm in combat, had the ability to suppress the enemy with the strength of a single punch.

In his heart, he wanted to go to the Shaolin Temple right now and study their Martial Arts to formulate a plan, but that was difficult.

Time was not on his side.

"Thank you."

"You're welcome."

Urano extended his hand as if to say "go," and suddenly held a teacup again, full and hot.

"I think I've gathered enough information," YuWon nodded and disappeared from his place.

A sip~

Urano's gaze, slowly savoring his tea, lifted.

"I'm intrigued."

Upward.

YuWon, regaining consciousness, headed towards the mountain where Tathagata was in the distance.

"The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal, using the Martial Arts of the Great Buddha."

Upon regaining consciousness, the Sun Chariot was nearing its destination.

The Bull Demon King stood at the front of the Sun Chariot. Despite the strong wind blowing, he didn't blink and stared at the mountains.

"Have you awakened?"

YuWon nodded at the Bull Demon King's question, who didn't turn his head.

The speed of the Sun Chariot gradually decreased. There was no need to hurry now that they were close to their destination.

YuWon looked at the mountains where Son OhGong was.

The first impression was quite impressive.

'It's enormous.'

The mountain was tall, taller than any mountain YuWon knew.

Boarding the Sun Chariot, flying higher than the clouds, the mountain was so large that he could look at it for a long time without lowering his gaze.

'I thought the Celestial Mountain was big.'

So far, the largest mountain YuWon had seen was the Celestial Mountain, which housed the Heavenly Demon Cult.

With over 5 kilometers above sea level and an east-west span of over 2,500 kilometers, the immense Celestial Mountain range was so large that it couldn't be encompassed in a single glance.

However, what could he say now about the mountain in front of him?

Even the Celestial Mountain seemed small compared to the size and intimidation of this mountain.

"Are you surprised?"

"A bit."

"I was surprised too. Although this Tower is huge, I never thought there would be a mountain as big as this..."

Jump~

The Bull Demon King's words couldn't continue.

It was because YuWon quickly jumped off the Sun Chariot to find the temple.

"You're in such a hurry, just like that guy OhGong."

Or maybe that meant it was so urgent.

The Bull Demon King followed YuWon and jumped. The Sun Chariot, without flames, remained floating in the sky, not moving any further, leaving only a slight amount of residual heat.

Thus, YuWon and the Bull Demon King jumped upward and arrived halfway up the mountain.

Thud!

Finally, YuWon and the Bull Demon King reached the mountain.

The one who knew the way was the Bull Demon King.

"Follow me."

With those words, the Bull Demon King moved forward. He seemed to be walking slowly, but his steps were as fast as taking ten or twenty steps at once.

As he followed the Bull Demon King, YuWon noticed a familiar scene.

'The path feels familiar.'

YuWon's steps following the Bull Demon King.

And at the end of that...

'...Did we arrive?'

Next to the plate with the name of the temple, the main entrance gate of the temple awaited.

And at that moment...

An imposing presence guarding the entrance to the temple.

A faceless Buddha appeared, protecting the main gate.

"You have finally come..."

At the same time.

Swing~

YuWon, who knew this would happen, unsheathed his sword without hesitation.

Slash-!

The form of the Buddha and the temple plate were cut. The main gate split with a loud sound, falling into hundreds of pieces.

Thud, clatter-.

Watching the main gate fall...

"Hurry out."

As if there was no time, YuWon pointed into the temple with the tip of his sword.

"Tathagata."

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OhGong stopped shouting.

The pain didn't disappear. It simply changed completely in nature from a headache to something entirely mental.

However...

-Get here quickly.

In Son OhGong's view, a familiar face finally appeared.

-Tathagata.

In the midst of the visual connection between Tathagata and Son OhGong, YuWon's face reflected in Son OhGong's golden eyes.

"Puhaha!"

Son OhGong burst into laughter.

Interestingly, he only smiled with half of his face. Even one eye was laughing, while the other remained completely serious.

'What did I say? Didn't I say he would come soon?'

Son OhGong murmured to himself, unable to express his thoughts in words.

He remembered the messages he sent to YuWon before his mind was absorbed by Tathagata.

He had asked for help, so YuWon would surely come. Son OhGong trusted in that.

But he omitted the explanation of where the Celestial Floor was.

'That bastard, it's already over.'

'It's a useless belief.'

'Stupid. Just because you don't know it well...'

'I know. Because I know you. I even know the name, Kim YuWon, which remains strongly in your memories.'

Son OhGong's mouth corner slowly dropped at Tathagata's words.

'That guy has defeated anyone who faced him, but he has never defeated you even once. I speak in terms of strength.'

"...And then?"

"Kim YuWon will face Son OhGong. So the result won't be different."

Son OhGong, who had obtained the Buddhist Scriptures and freed himself from the shackles of the Golden Headband.

And the will of Tathagata contained in that Golden Headband.

What YuWon faced now was both Tathagata and Son OhGong. And according to what Tathagata had seen in Son OhGong's memories, YuWon had never defeated OhGong before.

But...

'Well...'

Despite knowing that, Son OhGong's thoughts were different.

'Perhaps, that's because he doesn't intend to win.'

'Doesn't intend to win?'

'In our first meeting, he was considerably below me, but later... well...'

The doubts he had every time he fought YuWon.

'He is weaker than me, but much smarter.'

Did YuWon really fight himself without knowing he would lose?

Tathagata's words were not wrong either. But Son OhGong couldn't help but have expectations in this situation.

Did YuWon really come here with no confidence in winning?

Step, step-.

YuWon walked through the temple following the Bull Demon King.

Well, more precisely, it was the place that used to be a temple. The temple they walked through was completely in ruins, with collapsed buildings and disturbed ground, forming an unrecognizable shape of what it used to be.

If it weren't for the main gate, he wouldn't have even known it was a temple.

As they walked through the ruined temple...

'Is it a hall?'

A building that seemed to be in perfect condition caught YuWon's attention.

While everything around him was in ruins, this place in the center of the temple showed not a single imperfection.

This couldn't be a coincidence.

YuWon stopped for a moment and looked at the Hall.

"What happened here?"

"It's solid."

In other words, it meant that it wouldn't easily break even in a fight.

Seeing YuWon's perplexed expression, the Bull Demon King shrugged.

Who would ask something like that without knowing?

The Bull Demon King said his fight with Son OhGong had lasted almost ten days. During that time, everything around them collapsed, but the only place that didn't break was this hall.

It was a strange phenomenon.

YuWon stared at the Hall for a moment.

"What's wrong?"

"Hyung-nim."

"Yes."

"I have a request."

"A request?"

In such an urgent situation?

While looking at the Bull Demon King's perplexed face, YuWon explained what he had in mind. In response, the Bull Demon King thought for a moment and then nodded.

"Understood. If that's the case."

Although he replied that way, the Bull Demon King couldn't shake off the concern.

"Be careful."

"Don't worry. This time, I will win."

"Abba!"

Danpung hanging from his shoulder stood up and followed YuWon's words.

The Bull Demon King looked at Danpung's action with an expression suggesting he found it cute, then carefully stroked Danpung's head with a large hand.

"Yes, yes. Take care of the younger one."

"Abba."

YuWon held Danpung who had spoken to him and put him down by his side.

Normally, he wouldn't have had a problem fighting while holding Danpung. But at this moment, he couldn't fight while carrying Danpung.

With a familiar gesture, YuWon let Danpung slide down and placed him by his side.

Tap~

When YuWon opened the door of the Hall...

"Take care."

The Bull Demon King also turned his body in the opposite direction.

Clunk-.

The door of the Hall slammed shut.

It wasn't YuWon who closed it.

As soon as he entered, it closed automatically.

"And Danpung?"

YuWon, worried about Danpung following him a bit far, turned his head.

Considering Danpung's pace, it must have been difficult to enter before the door closed.

But strangely, Danpung was lifting his head from under YuWon's feet.

"Here."

YuWon showed a relieved expression at Danpung's energetic words.

Indeed...

No matter where or how he fell, Danpung returned as if nothing happened. Thinking about it, in part, it was thanks to Danpung's help that he could defeat Shub-Niggurath.

Although he looked small and weak at first glance, Danpung was someone he didn't have to worry about.

Swoosh-.

After a while, YuWon, who turned forward again, looked at Son OhGong sitting in front of the Buddha statue.

Son OhGong held his head as if it was about to break due to severe headache.

The inside of the Hall where he was sitting was as large as a training ground.

Swoosh-.

Before taking a step, YuWon glanced around the Hall.

Although it seemed to be in perfect condition from the outside, it wasn't on the inside. Scratch marks and dents everywhere were evidence of the battle between the Bull Demon King and Son OhGong.

Thump-.

YuWon approached Son OhGong while reaching for the hilt of his sword, ready to unsheath at any moment.

You never knew when or how the fight would start. YuWon looked at Son OhGong with fiery eyes.

No.

"I told you to get out soon..."

More precisely, he was looking towards Tathagata.

"What are you doing hiding here?"

Swoosh-.

['Golden Cinder Eyes' examines the 'Golden Headband' released]

[Tathagata's will has been discovered]

[The true nature of the 'Golden Headband' has been understood]

The true form of the Golden Headband surrounding Son OhGong's head was finally revealed. YuWon, confirming Tathagata's identity, which was linked to Son OhGong's body through the 'Golden Headband,' sighed at how obvious it was.

"The key is undoubtedly how to remove the 'Golden Headband.'"

Stripping that guy of the 'Golden Headband' wasn't an easy task. Son OhGong, too, had put constant effort into getting rid of the 'Golden Headband,' but in the end, he couldn't achieve it.

The last option was to search for the Buddhist Scriptures on the Celestial Floor, and now he was in this lamentable situation.

"What are you thinking?"

YuWon's gaze narrowed upon hearing Son OhGong's words.

An inappropriate tone of voice.

And a look.

He could sense it from the moment they first met.

That wasn't Son OhGong's presence but that of an entirely different entity.

"This body is truly amazing. Not to mention its nature as a Yokai, it has even devoured the Immortal Peaches."

Tathagata smiled satisfied as if he were pleased.

It was understandable that he felt that way.

From the moment the 'Golden Headband' was placed on Son OhGong's head, or even long before that, he had been preparing for this day.

"Was putting the 'Golden Headband' on him a preparation for today?"

"In normal circumstances, he would have led a life as a rampant Yokai. Instead of living that life, wouldn't it be better to hand him over to me instead?"

"That's..."

Recalling the words of the Bull Demon King, YuWon realized he wasn't entirely wrong.

Indeed, the Yokai power Son OhGong possessed was so overwhelming that not even the Bull Demon King could handle it. The 'Golden Headband' might have played the role of clearing his mind.

'When Son OhGong first received the Buddhist Scriptures, he turned into a monster and went insane. But now things are different than back then.'

What was in front of him now wasn't OhGong, who had turned into a monster and was going insane, but Tathagata, who had been sealed in the Golden Headband.

The situation was more troublesome than expected. It would have been much easier to deal with someone going insane.

"There's nothing good in talking too much."

Yuwon looked at Danpung, who was firmly attached to his feet.

"Step back a bit. Now it's my turn."

"Ah, Abba!"

"Don't be stubborn."

Convinced by YuWon's words, Danpung stepped back, puffing up his cheeks. His opponent was the ancient High-Ranker sealed, called Tathagata.

Danpung's role was more prominent when fighting against the Outers. At this moment, he didn't know what to expect.

"Don't worry. Unless you're a Yokai or a monster, I have no intentions of killing without reason. And that also applies to you, who has drawn your sword in front of me."

Son OhGong's thumb and index finger joined to form a circle. The energy moving explosively inside Son OhGong's body calmed completely.

As if revealing that he had no intentions of killing.

"You seem to be compassionate, as I heard."

YuWon tightened his grip on the sword and sighed internally.

'I should have hurried more.'

In an instant, regret overwhelmed him.

He regretted not choosing to fight alongside the Bull Demon King.

He felt no notable strength coming from the current Tathagata. Although he should have felt several times more power now that the 'Golden Headband' had been released, Tathagata was perfectly controlling that.

Certainly, he was not an easy opponent.

"It seems you're thinking too much."

Step~

Tathagata approached.

What does that circle really mean?

While YuWon focused on Tathagata's hand in that way...

Swoosh~

YuWon's pupils began to burn, and at the same time, his feet moved.

However...

Giiiiing-.

Unintentionally, the distance between YuWon and Tathagata narrowed one step inward.

Buwooong-.

Tathagata's right hand reached toward YuWon's chest. The circle formed by Tathagata's thumb and index finger touched YuWon's chest just above the heart.

Pwaack-!

"...!"

YuWon's eyes widened as if the impact pierced his heart.

YuWon's body was pushed backward and flew. Feeling the pain in his chest, he barely managed to hold himself up by striking the ground with the sword.

The distance opened up like that.

"The technique I just used is called Demon Killing Palm ()."

Surprisingly, Tathagata was already standing behind YuWon, making the distance seem insignificant.

A movement that not even the Eyes of Foreknowledge could easily track.

"This is called Dharma Crossing the River. In my old days, I crossed a river with this."

He talked a lot.

There was no reason to wait.

Shiiing-.

Kwaang-!

While Tathagata spoke those words, YuWon's sword flew towards the 'Golden Headband.'

It was a sword infused with the power of Lightning. Surely, it was a speed that not even elite High-Rankers could easily follow with their eyes.

However...

Click~

That sword stopped between Tathagata's fingers, as if it were unbelievable.

Incredibly hard to believe.

YuWon's pupils trembled.

"This is called Empty-Handed. In short, it's an initial technique involving grabbing a sharp weapon with bare hands."

Swoosh-.

The remaining hand...

"And this is-."

Thud-.

Tathagata's other hand, this time, touched YuWon's abdomen.

"It's the Martial Art called Hundred Steps Divine Fist. A move that covers a hundred steps."

Chapter 456

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Hundred Steps Divine Fist

This Martial Art from the Shaolin Temple was known throughout the Murim, and it had two meanings.

One was to strike the enemy no more than a hundred steps away with a single fist, and the other was to condense strength to walk firmly a hundred steps.

No one knew which of the two was correct, as until now, no Ranker had completely mastered the Hundred Steps Divine Fist.

But then, suddenly...

Wudeok...

The Hundred Steps Divine Fist unfolded with Son OhGong's fist.

Bang!

For YuWon, it seemed to barely extend a step's distance.

However, that force was more powerful than any fist YuWon had faced so far.

Crash!

YuWon was sent flying and crashed into the temple wall.

The solid wall collapsed, and debris fell to the ground.

YuWon writhed on the ground. Tathagata, who had unleashed such a move, clenched his fists several times and frowned.

"...This is strange."

He didn't feel the sensation he expected when hitting with his fist.

Clearly, something blocked the space between his fist and the body.

Indeed...

Swoosh...

YuWon, who had been thrown against the wall, slowly got up.

A blue glow emanated from YuWon's fingers as he touched the spot where he had been hit by the Hundred Steps Divine Fist.

["Blessing of the Sea" has been activated]

["Blessing of the Sea" has been broken]

Um, um, um...

The light emanating from the ring quickly disappeared. If he had taken the hit properly, his bones should have broken, and his organs should have torn apart, but YuWon stood up unscathed.

"Did you block it?"

Tathagata's gaze shifted to his palm.

The feeling of something blocking his fist.

Also...

"And... you cut me."

Red blood flowed from Tathagata's fingers.

He thought he had hit, but the punch didn't reach him, and he thought he had blocked, but YuWon's sword cut his hand.

The result was exactly the opposite of what he expected. Tathagata looked at YuWon with his golden eyes that hadn't changed from the beginning.

"I'm the one who got hurt, not you."

His golden eyes showed no change from the beginning. While looking at him, YuWon looked down at the part of his chest hit by the Hundred Steps Divine Fist.

"If it weren't for my eyes, I would have taken the hit."

He couldn't help it and had to block. Even that was difficult, so he had to resort to the Protection of the Sea, a one-time-use ability.

Tathagata turned out to be more complicated than expected.

"Son OhGong's physical strength, combined with Tathagata's Martial Arts..."

Although he thought he had blocked it, he felt a slight pain in his chest.

"No, has his physical strength also strengthened?"

The Protection of the Sea was a one-time-use ability. If used once, it would take at least half a day to use it again.

That was why the Protection of the Sea was not easy to break. However, he managed to break it with a single blow.

Tak~

Tathagata's fingers traced the circle again, just like at the beginning.

He called it Demon Killing Palm.

YuWon's two eyes examined Tathagata's fingers and feet.

"Look at the fingertips."

Of course, YuWon wouldn't stand still just because he focused on Tathagata's hands.

They say the best defense is a good offense.

YuWon wasn't happy to experience the same exchange of blows again.

"Although the mind and technique belong to Tathagata, his body is Son OhGong's."

Flames were not an option.

Even if the flames of the Heart of Fire and the Holy Fire were strong, Son OhGong had already endured the flames of the Eight Trigrams Cauldron.

Moreover, OhGong was now more physically complete than back then.

"So..."

Should he try following Hercules' path once?

Bang!

A Lightning Bolt shot out from YuWon's fingers with a thunderous roar. The body imbued with the property of Lightning became lighter, and on the other hand, it created the illusion that the world around him was slowing down.

Twap!

YuWon's figure disappeared from his position.

As Tathagata, who had lost sight of YuWon, turned his head in the opposite direction, something happened.

And right after...

[Demon Killing Palm ()]

Expanding the circle drawn on his hand, Tathagata unfolded the Demon Killing Palm once again.

Clang!

When YuWon's sword clashed against the Demon Killing Palm, sparks flew in all directions. Unlike YuWon, who moved quickly, Tathagata, who didn't have a stable center, staggered backward.

Kagagagak-!

Tathagata resisted by leaning on his heels.

In an instant, YuWon disappeared from his sight.

Schpat-!

Feeling a close presence, Tathagata extended his other hand.

Hwoong-! Tathagata's hand cut through the empty air. At the moment his pupils shook slightly, he felt a strange energy right above his head.

Kwarrung-!

A dazzling flash that made Tathagata's eyes momentarily avert.

It was as if a Lightning Bolt had struck directly on his head. YuWon, who had knocked down Tathagata's stance with the tip of his sword, appeared right above him, holding the Lightning Bolt in his hand.

How fast is this?

'Kekeke!'

It was at that moment...

In Tathagata's head, an unpleasant laughter was heard.

'Oh, you shouldn't do it like that.'

If I had been there, I would have used the "Golden Cinder Eyes" to not miss YuWon's movements.

That said, Son OhGong continued speaking loudly in his head.

"Are you tired? Would you like me to fight in your place? I think I'm better at fighting."

"Shut up!"

"Why? Does it bother you? I felt the same way when you talked to me in my head..."

Along with Son OhGong's mocking laughter, the Lightning Bolt that YuWon held in his hand fell onto Tathagata's head.

Kwaung-!

A thunderous roar accompanied the fall of the Lightning Bolt.

The size of the Lightning Bolt was large enough to fill the main hall of the temple. Probably, if it affected beyond the temple, it would have blown away several peaks of the mountains.

YuWon, moving swiftly, landed on the ground and stumbled several times.

When was the last time he moved so fast?

"I'm out of my..."

Deciding to release his Arcane Power, his body filled with power. Ten stat points made a significant difference.

If it weren't for YuWon coming from the future.

If he hadn't reached a similar mastery level before, it would have been difficult to properly contain his strength-intoxicated body.

But...

[Sensory Field is activated]

Fortunately, YuWon had several skills that allowed him to control his speed-enhanced body.

If the speed was too fast to control the body, he simply increased his perception with the Sensory Field.

Hercules used the power of the Lightning Bolt not to throw spears like Zeus but to increase his destructive power and speed.

Zeus and Hercules.

Yuwon properly combined the styles of both.

As he still couldn't match either of them in these styles, he thought he was doing quite well.

However...

Craack, crack-!

Due to the repercussion of the Lightning Bolt, the golden ripples gradually began to fade.

Chit, chit-!

Tathagata, standing with crossed arms, was shielding his head.

"I didn't expect it to end like this, but..."

Even though he thought so, there wasn't a single burn.

"It feels tingling."

What Tathagata showed at that moment didn't need to be explained by himself.

Although he wasn't as proficient in Martial Arts as the Rankers in the Murim World, YuWon knew enough about some famous stances.

And if his thoughts were correct.

[Indestructible Body ()]

A martial art stance from the Murim World that momentarily hardens the body like steel.

That was what unfolded in Tathagata's body.

Chit, chit-!

Amidst the golden waves of the discharge launched by YuWon...

Kkwang-!

At the moment YuWon naturally inhaled, he sensed a strange aroma at the tip of his nose.

And in the instant that aroma tickled his nose, the surrounding scenery changed.

"Lotos?"

Beautiful pink petals bloomed on the temple floor. They weren't lotus flowers in a pond but bloomed in the temple. They were more beautiful than any lotus YuWon had seen before.

But in YuWon's eyes, he saw hidden thorns in that beauty. After seeing the future through the Eyes of Foreknowledge, he kicked the ground.

Kwung-!

[Uranus Heart invokes 'Tartarus'.]

Total darkness enveloped YuWon's body.

And then, immediately, pink lotus petals bloomed in the main hall and flew towards YuWon.

Pik, pipipik-.

Ssshaeaak-!

Tens of millions, even billions of lotus petals rushed toward YuWon's body. The petals that touched the darkness emanating from Tartarus lost their power and withered, falling to the ground.

Tathagata, who deployed another Martial Art along with the Indestructible Body, looked at the darkness hidden among the millions of lotus petals and Tartarus and murmured.

"Is this the power of Uranus?"

The force that blocked the Divine Fist, and the lightning thrown by YuWon. Everything seemed somehow familiar.

But seeing that he also invoked the power of Tartarus, he was almost sure.

It was interesting.

Discovering the traces of a High-Ranker who had been active in his era in a place he had come to after jumping through an indefinite time.

"That's strange."

Tathagata frowned perplexed.

"It's much stronger than what is in this Yokai's memory. It hasn't even been a year."

Initially, Tathagata hadn't paid attention to YuWon's existence, thanks to Son OhGong's memory giving him an idea of his abilities.

Surely, he had potential and skills worth cultivating, but that was simply an expectation for someday in the future.

But this, what the hell?

Suddenly, he remembered the words left by Son OhGong.

-Probably because that guy doesn't intend to win.

He didn't intend to win, so he didn't win.

It was a hard story to understand. Above all, he couldn't accept how quickly he was becoming stronger.

Kugung, kugugu-.

It was then...

Within the Tartarus covered in lotuses.

A line of darkness even blacker than the Tartarus darkness glimpsed.

"It can't be."

Was he trying to counterattack from there?

With a more intense sense of crisis than before, Tathagata deployed the Indestructible Body once again.

[Nir.]

Nir, an item comparable to Gungnir, and YuWon was activating it hidden among the lotuses and Tartarus.

Thwack-!

The spear was aimed at Tathagata's head. More precisely, it was heading for the Golden Headband that encircled his head.

Despite deploying the Indestructible Body, it was quite an overwhelming strike to block.

There was no other option.

In Tathagata's hands, along with the Indestructible Body, the Empty-Handed was deployed once again.

If he couldn't block it with his body, he would catch the incoming spear with his hands.

But then...

Flash-!

At the moment he caught Nir with his hand, a black light burst in the hall.

Kwwoooong-!

In an instant, everything in the hall disappeared. In the world that turned black like space, not a single sound remained.

It was as if the world had stopped. But that kind of world didn't last forever.

Gradually, the darkness dissipated, and the scenery of the main hall reappeared.

Lotus flowers that died in black.

In the midst of them, Tathagata staggering.

Thud-.

YuWon approached Tathagata.

Looking down at Tathagata kneeling with one knee, YuWon disappointedly looked at the Golden Headband encircling his head.

"What is this?"

He sighed as he looked at Tathagata as if he were disappointed.

"You should have brought Son OhGong instead."

Chapter 457

C457

Tathagata's time came to a halt.

Within that moment, Tathagata had to hear the sound of mocking laughter.

"Did you hear it? Huh? Puff, haha, ha, ha!"

Son OhGong's grandiosity resonated in Tathagata's mind. With a piercing headache, Tathagata wished he could strike Son OhGong's head, hidden in the Golden Headband, with his hands right at that moment.

But that was only momentary.

'First, let's resolve this situation.'

Tathagata refocused on the situation before him.

Tathagata slowly rose, leaning on one knee.

While Tathagata was immersed in that, Son OhGong laughed again in his mind.

"Didn't you hear it before? He says I should have been the one to fight."

"You're noisy, Yokai."

"Anyway, do you think he did that just to provoke you? There's a reason for everything..."

The words that followed went unheard.

It's not that the sound was blocked. It was deliberately ignored to avoid being bothered by Son OhGong's words.

Thus, Tathagata's fingers once again aimed towards YuWon.

"It seems like you're disappointed in me."

"I'm not. I'm not a pervert who enjoys fighting strong guys like the one inside your head."

"Then what is it?"

"I was just a bit disappointed because the tension faded."

"I'm sorry. I couldn't live up to your expectations."

"No need to apologize. In fact, I'd prefer this to go unnoticed."

"Unnoticed? What does that mean?"

"I don't know."

Unnoticed...

What kind of comment is that?

Tathagata wasn't particularly concerned, but he suddenly felt that Son OhGong was holding back his words. It seemed like Son OhGong and YuWon were thinking the same thing.

"....You're hiding something."

"I'm not sure."

The corner of YuWon's mouth lifted slightly.

It was an unpleasant smile. Tathagata's eyebrows twitched slightly, and his hand moved.

"Don't get too arrogant just because one of your tactics worked."

Sssss-.

Sss-.

Arms extended one by one around Tathagata.

More arms than the Three-Headed, Six-Armed Asura. They extended one by one to form a total of one hundred and eight arms.

Hwaaa-.

At the same time, lotus flowers bloomed around him once again.

"You still don't understand."

Firee, firee~

YuWon's eyes burned. With Tathagata, who had many arms, and lotus flowers rising around him, YuWon instantly summoned lightning and darkness.

Psshh, pssh-.

A black discharge engulfed the hall.

Bang-!

YuWon jumped again among the lotus flowers.

Bang, bang-!

The fight between YuWon and Tathagata continued.

The arms that appeared around him were cut one by one by YuWon's sword. With more than half of the arms already cut, there were a little over fifty now.

'One by one, step by step.'

Bum-!

In an instant, the black lightning wrapped around the black sword cut another arm.

Relentlessly, YuWon swung the sword. Tathagata's arms closed sharply.

[Yongjogong (Dragon Claw Art)].

Claws resembling a dragon's claws simultaneously aimed at YuWon's heart, head, and five internal organs.

YuWon raised his sword and adopted a single-cut stance. A purple flame rose behind him and formed a gigantic figure.

[The 'Heavenly Demon Spirit' is imbued with the 'Holy Fire']

The gigantic figure followed the movement of YuWon's sword. The giant sword tip pierced through the hall and broke through the Dragon Claw Art.

Crack-!

Crack, crunch-.

The hall's wall gradually cracked.

Already armless, Tathagata staggered.

'Why...?'

Why was he falling so behind?

Tathagata with a puzzled expression. YuWon approached him and lifted his head towards the ceiling.

Tremble~

The hall slowly trembled.

When what he suspected turned out to be true, YuWon finally gained confidence in this fight.

"You don't have time to worry about what's happening outside, do you?"

Tremble!

The shaking on the hall's ceiling increased. The space, which had already weakened a bit due to the fight between YuWon and Tathagata, was now gradually distorting.

Like YuWon, Tathagata also looked towards that ceiling.

As if he already knew without seeing Tathagata's action, YuWon asked, "Why are you uneasy?"

"What...?"

"I'm afraid this temple will collapse. So I'm worried that everything underneath you might crumble."

Pointing at the ceiling with his fingertip, YuWon asked again, "So, here's the problem. Where do you think the Bull Demon King who came with me is right now?"

The pupils of Tathagata shook.

And right after...

Boom!

Crack!

The seemingly indestructible ceiling of the temple collapsed as the Bull Demon King wielded his weapon and entered the hall.

Thud!

The Bull Demon King's landing made the temple hall tremble. The hall, which already had a hole, opened up more, and the entire hall seemed filled with the sensation that it was breaking from the walls to the floor.

The presence of the solitary Bull Demon King filled the hall.

"Took its time."

Although it finally succeeded, it took longer than expected.

If Tathagata had been a bit more familiar with Son OhGong's body, the opponent would have had some trouble.

"It's more resilient than I thought. Though, anyway, didn't we succeed?"

"Thanks to what you did inside."

YuWon and the Bull Demon King looked at each other and smiled.

-Allow me to ask you a favor.

"A favor?"

"Don't come in. Stay out here."

"What are you saying?"

At first, the Bull Demon King was angered by YuWon's request.

They should enter together, defeat Tathagata, and save Son OhGong, but YuWon asked him to simply stay outside.

"I'm not saying you should do nothing. Please destroy the temple hall."

"The temple hall?"

"Isn't it strange? All other places are destroyed, but why is this place so unscathed?"

"That's..."

"And why is that guy still here?"

Bull Demon King's eyes blinked.

Only then did he realize what YuWon was thinking.

-If this hall is related to the Golden Headband...

-There's a good chance. Seeing that he's protecting this hall and can't leave it.

-But why you and not me?

-Your destructiveness is much better, right? Destroy the hall as much as you want. Wouldn't you hit with all your might?

The Bull Demon King's strength rivaled that of Hercules.

If he, determined, were to destroy it, there probably wouldn't be anything in the world he couldn't break.

-... I understand. If that's the case.

So, the Bull Demon King stayed outside and destroyed the temple hall.

Although it was tougher than he thought and took quite some time, the result was as expected.

Tink~

Tathagata grabbed his head.

It was a gesture similar to Son OhGong, who used to wrap his head to prevent Tathagata from taking over his body.

"From the beginning... Was the target the temple hall?"

It hurt as if his head was about to break. Son OhGong's voice grew louder, and YuWon walked towards him.

The sword's tip aimed at Tathagata's head, or more precisely, at Son OhGong's "Golden Headband" atop Tathagata's head.

"If you had already made Son OhGong's mind yours, you wouldn't have a reason to stay here. Nor would you have a reason to split your Arcane Power to protect the temple."

In a way, it was a simple prediction.

But simple often turns out to be effective.

"In these cases, in nine out of ten, or even ninety-nine out of a hundred, if you first destroy what you're protecting, things become easier. And now it's the same."

Yuwon's gaze, pointing the sword at the Golden Headband, scrutinized the fractured interior of the temple.

"It seems like you haven't completely sealed Son OhGong yet, right? That was why you had to stay in this place."

"They say you're a very intelligent guy... and it seems to be true."

Inappropriately for the situation, Tathagata smiled.

He thought he would have a strong will to live, but he was surprisingly calm.

"So, what? Did you think I would beg for my life in the end?"

"A bit."

"This was just an arrangement for my reincarnation. If I really feared death, I wouldn't have been able to reach Nirvana..."

Thump...

Tathagata's words couldn't continue.

The headache gradually intensified, and the suffering from the migraine began to spread throughout his body.

Kwaaaah...

And at the same time...

-Hey! What are you doing?! Hurry up and get rid of this guy, man!

Even the unexpected voice of Son OhGong, whom he hadn't been aware of, infiltrated his mind.

Tathagata's consciousness, lying dormant in the Golden Headband, took over Son OhGong's body, and Son OhGong's consciousness got trapped inside the Golden Headband.

If he had had a bit more time, he might have sealed Son OhGong's consciousness completely.

Now, he had to face not only YuWon and the Bull Demon King but also Son OhGong, who was beginning to run rampant in his head.

"Anyway-."

Shwack...

Was it Son OhGong's voice shouting from inside the Golden Headband that reached?

Crack...

YuWon's sword, pointing at the Golden Headband, accurately cut the Golden Headband covering Tathagata's head.

"...That was my intention."

Chirp, chirp...

The pleasant singing of birds tickled his ears. Opening his blurry eyes, the sunlight stung his eyes.

Son OhGong regained consciousness and stood up. In front of him were YuWon, and behind, the Bull Demon King.

As if they were protecting him.

Screech...

YuWon, standing with the unsheathed sword, sheathed it again.

Son OhGong looked at him with questioning eyes.

"I can see that your eyes are cloudy and stupid; it seems like you really came back."

"Do you want to fight?"

"Looking at the way you talk to the one who saved you, it seems more true."

Snap, a muscle tensed on Son OhGong's forehead. The corner of YuWon's mouth lifted slightly at Son OhGong's reaction.

Behind, the Bull Demon King, who was about to wield his weapon, sheathed it again and turned to Son OhGong.

"Are you okay?"

"It seems he's back fine, judging by how he was sleeping. It's safe to say he's okay."

The Bull Demon King's question was answered by YuWon.

Then, Son OhGong looked at YuWon with a questioning expression. It was the look of someone who had just woken up and didn't understand what was going on.

"I passed out."

"It looked like you were sleeping."

"I was unconscious."

"Even your nose was making noise."

"Do you really want to fight me?"

"In that case, I already won against you. Don't you know?"

"Aaaargh! How frustrating!"

It was impossible to win with words. Although he always won in fights, he never won in a verbal argument.

But this time, YuWon won, so he couldn't help but feel even more frustrated.

Moreover, thanks to YuWon, Son OhGong had regained his body.

"Still, fortunately, everything worked out fine."

Son OhGong looked at YuWon, who was watching as he writhed on the ground.

"Thanks for coming before that guy could completely control my body."

Gulp...

Why, even writhing on the ground, did the mere sight of that scene give him chills?

-At that moment, he might have been weaker than me, but if he had lived to be a hundred years old, he probably would have been stronger than me. As a Yokai, his talents were that impressive.

Now he was curious.

What is the extent of Son OhGong, released from the seal of the Golden Headband, who was suppressing the Yokai Power that the Bull Demon King saw?

'I'll have to find out in advance.'

He had to understand Son OhGong's full strength to plan for the future.

"Are you really upset?"

At YuWon's question, Son OhGong's writhing on the ground abruptly stopped.

As someone who had known him for a long time, he was already anticipating YuWon's next question.

"Then, shall we fight after such a long time?"

Chapter 458

C458

The time elapsed since the Golden Headband was broken and the seal was barely three hours.

And now...

YuWon and Son OhGong were once again fiercely fighting.

Bang!

Crunch, crunch, crunch...

In the midst of an untimely disturbance, the birds that were silently resting in the mountains soared into the sky.

Although the mountain beasts were disturbed by the noise, they dared not anger or show their fangs. Instead of resisting beings with incredible power beyond predators, they chose to abandon their home.

And right in a secluded corner of that fight...

The Bull Demon King, riding on Son OhGong's Flying Nimbus, clicked his tongue and looked down.

"How is it possible for these two brothers to be so alike...?"

He murmured as the Bull Demon King's hand was full of jerky obtained from YuWon.

Like preparing popcorn before watching a movie, entertaining excitement couldn't be complete without food.

Crunch...

Just as he was about to put some jerky strips into his mouth...

"What a shame."

Bang!

In the descending gaze, Son OhGong's fist was seen slamming into the ground.

YuWon's body, which barely avoided that punch, staggered. After losing balance once, it seemed challenging to even wield his sword.

"We can't keep watching this for much longer."

Contradicting what he had just said about the lack of value (maturity), the Bull Demon King expressed something opposite.

But the fight was so thrilling.

No, it was astonishing.

"...It has become more monstrous than I thought."

The fight between Son OhGong and YuWon.

It was becoming even more one-sided than he had imagined.

Boom!

One of the hills broke with Son OhGong's fist and fell down. Although the ground trembled when the hill fell, no one paid attention to it.

["Eyes of Foreknowledge" activated.]

The ability to see the future within a moment.

This was especially useful in a battle like the current one.

Wasn't it very helpful even in the fight against Tathagata?

But...

'Knowing doesn't mean being able to avoid it.'

YuWon knew.

A dense brown smoke cloud appeared. Using one hand to push it away, YuWon knew Son OhGong would appear.

But...

Swish!

Just as Son OhGong cleared the smoke, countless futures unfolded before YuWon's eyes.

"Which one is the right one?"

Fists extending in dozens of directions. The intertwined eyes of YuWon and Son OhGong met as the fists moved in a complicated manner.

Fire!

Not only did YuWon have special eyes.

Although he didn't have the Eyes of Foreknowledge, Son OhGong also possessed the Golden Cinder Eyes. Moreover, his mastery of the Golden Cinder Eyes was considerably greater than that of YuWon.

Was it because of that?

Bang!

Thud!

Avoiding Son OhGong's punch by a narrow margin was the only thing YuWon could do, and he didn't have the freedom to anticipate and counter-attack his attacks.

'...Damn.'

Even more in this situation, it was difficult to know the future a few moments later.

"Alright."

Gwaak!

Sometimes, all one could do was foreknow an unpleasant future that couldn't be changed.

Woong!

Son OhGong's fist headed towards YuWon's head.

YuWon didn't close his eyes. It was foolish to be scared and close his eyes to something like this, and above all, that fist wasn't terrifying enough to be scared.

Tak!

A light punch on the cheek.

"Did I win?"

Swoosh.

The force holding YuWon's neck loosened. YuWon, who was half-trapped in that hand, felt his breath clear as he replied.

"...Yes."

There was no room for further questions or refutation.

This time, the victory was overwhelming, so much so that there wasn't even a suggestion to try again.

A chill ran through his body, even after the fight had ended.

YuWon sighed, watching the lively figure of Son OhGong, who leaped high with enthusiasm.

'It's difficult to try something against him.'

Son OhGong's combat sense was truly outstanding. He handled the RuYi Bang, confused with his clones, and executed agile movements using the Flying Nimbus. He truly was an almost omnipotent being.

'Of course...'

YuWon's gaze followed Son OhGong.

Tathagata couldn't do the same.

The statement he made to Tathagata a few hours ago was sincere: that it was better to bring Son OhGong.

'Despite having few skills and techniques, no one else uses them as well as he does.'

With just the Golden Cinder Eyes, Son OhGong's skills were comprehensive. Moreover, his physical strength and Arcane Power had increased significantly overall.

Although in this fight, Son OhGong didn't use the RuYi Bang or the clone technique. He simply used his fist while using the Golden Cinder Eyes. That was it.

Even so, the result was astonishing.

'Might need to make adjustments.'

Son OhGong turned out to be a much stronger card than expected.

Both Son OhGong, who had released the seal of the Golden Headband, and Hercules, who had gained the power of Lightning Bolt, had advanced one step further than in the world where YuWon was.

'Now it's my turn.'

The fight with Shub-Niggurath had ended, and Son OhGong unleashed the seal of the Golden Headband on the Celestial Floor.

Now only he remained.

'It will be a difficult path.'

Just a few days ago, his ranking was higher than Son OhGong's.

Perhaps it would be better to set aside the idea of boasting for a while.

Now was the time to follow Son OhGong again.

Son OhGong woke up from a deep sleep.

The moon shone in the night, and the air was cool. It was a rather late dawn.

Son OhGong got up, rubbing his eyes. He first looked at the moon. Since he arrived at the Celestial Floor with the Bull Demon King, he realized that this place was really quiet at night.

"How long have I been sleeping?"

Son OhGong looked around for a moment.

There were quite a few people busy getting up early this morning.

How did this place form?

Crunch.

Son OhGong blended in with them, walking aimlessly. Without a particular purpose, he ended up watching the merchants who were busy selling goods early in the morning.

This place was no different from the Tower, at least in appearance.

Swoosh~

Son OhGong grabbed a candy from a stall and ate it. The way he grabbed it was not something ordinary merchants could see at a glance.

Crunch~

In that way, Son OhGong sneakily enjoyed the early morning theft, looking for YuWon and the Bull Demon King.

"By the way, where did the two of them go?"

Swish~

Son OhGong's eyes lit up. His field of vision widened, and he could see the broad back of the Bull Demon King in the distance.

Siiik.

"I found them!"

As if things were going well for a moment of boredom, Son OhGong smiled.

Swoosh~

A white cloud formed under Son OhGong's feet. The landscape around Son OhGong, traveling on the Flying Nimbus, shattered.

Thud!

It was a moment...

Son OhGong arrived where the Bull Demon King was.

It was faster than he thought. Son OhGong forcefully stopped his Flying Nimbus before it could collide with the Bull Demon King.

"That was close..."

"Are you awake already?"

The Bull Demon King, turning his head, looked towards something distant.

"You slept the whole day again."

It wasn't an illusion that the word "again" seemed to be particularly strong.

Son OhGong, scratching his head in an attempt to figure out how long he had slept, stood up and sat next to the Bull Demon King.

"What were you looking at?"

"You'll know when you see it."

"...?"

Curious, Son OhGong turned his head following the Bull Demon King's gaze.

Under the cliff where the Bull Demon King was...

Looking at the vast forest, Son OhGong's eyes widened in surprise.

"Eh?"

Perhaps because it was night.

Somehow, the forest/woods stretching before him seemed darker.

Step-.

YuWon walked through the woods.

The woods that had become dark was gloomier than the still unlit dawn sky.

'I didn't expect to see this again.'

YuWon stopped his steps and looked down for a moment, where Danpung was always attached to him as usual. Danpung, who would normally be running excitedly or sleeping on his shoulder, seemed strangely calm today.

"What do you see?"

YuWon spoke first to Danpung.

Danpung, who was staring at something, opened his mouth with a distant expression.

"Sheep-."

The mouth opened slowly.

"Shee..."

Although the pronunciation was a bit unclear, it was understood clearly.

A sheep.

And at that moment...

Baa-.

From the Black Woods, the familiar sound of bleating could be heard.

It was just what he expected.

Thump-.

Thump, thump-.

Through the dense woods, faint footsteps were heard.

It wasn't a single sound of footsteps. Moreover, the bleating became more frequent.

Baa-.

Baa-baa-.

Baa-baa-baa-.

It was an astonishing scene.

Just a while ago, even a month ago, he still had vivid memories of swinging his sword at them.

Thump-.

Sararak-.

Through the woods, purple-furred sheep appeared. They gathered around YuWon, and he looked into their eyes one by one to confirm that they posed no threat.

"Sheep-."

Danpung's relaxed steps.

Danpung approached the largest sheep among them. The size of the largest sheep was enough to surpass YuWon's head.

In this situation, it wouldn't be strange for them to devour him in one bite.

But YuWon simply couldn't imagine that situation.

On the contrary...

Baa-baa-.

With a pitiful bleat, the sheep lowered its head so that Danpung could climb more easily.

Just by seeing this, it was understood.

'The owner of the sheep has changed.'

As if it were a pleasant stroll, Danpung climbed onto the back of the sheep and laughed heartily.

"That's how it is."

Watching Danpung's figure, YuWon finally gradually understood what kind of power he possessed as an Outer.

"The power of names."

Baa-baa-.

A sheep approached YuWon.

It was the smallest of the flock. About the size of YuWon's knees, with sparse fur.

A shy sheep.

The sheep approached YuWon's legs and rested its head on them. It didn't seem threatening at all.

Did it want to be petted?

Swish-.

So, YuWon gently stroked the sheep's head.

At that moment...

[Danpung shares the name of 'Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young']

[The Black Woods Sheep recognize you as their owner]

With the resonating message, the woods sheep bowed in unison to YuWon.

Chapter 459

C459

Surrounded by sheep, YuWon felt a strange sensation enveloping him.

Who are these creatures?

In the future, they were the sons of Shub-Niggurath, who took the lives of countless comrades.

YuWon had been fighting against Shub-Niggurath for quite some time, so he knew well the power of each sheep.

Seeing Shub-Niggurath's offspring following him was surprising.

Although it was hard to believe, YuWon opened his mouth after a brief moment of reflection.

"Stand up."

Beeh-.

Beeh-.

Whether they understood the words or not, the sheep stood up in unison.

Danpung smiled at such a scene, and YuWon continued with what he had planned.

"Sit down."

Beeh-.

"Stand up."

Beeh-.

"Bang."

Beeh-.

The sheep sat, stood, and even simulated being shot.

It was fun, but he thought it was enough. The sheep's reaction to the "bang" was something that the inhabitants of this world wouldn't understand if they didn't know firearms.

Even so, the sheep could show this behavior for a reason.

'Did they connect to the System to understand what I want immediately?'

At this moment, that was the only possible hypothesis.

The Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young.

Although YuWon and Danpung didn't turn into sheep, it seemed they could control this forest/woods and the sheep.

'I obtained the Sheep of the Black Woods.'

An unintended harvest.

'What I can do with them...'

"Grow-."

It was at that moment...

Unusually, an eerie and unmatched sound was heard.

"Ruyi."

Baang-!

The sheep scattered like bowling pins before YuWon's eyes.

There was no need to ask why.

A giant club flew towards him.

And the sound of the item that activated a moment ago.

"Are you okay-?!"

As expected, Son OhGong rushed hurriedly towards YuWon.

Yuwon sighed.

It seemed like he had some idea of what he was thinking. The boy who had been sleeping all the time had discovered the Black Woods.

He probably thought that Shub-Niggurath had appeared in this world.

"It's okay, step back. Don't overreact."

Was it thanks to Shub-Niggurath? Son OhGong gripped Ru Yi Bang even tighter as he absorbed his Arcane Power and Yokai Power that he still wasn't accustomed to using while the woods trembled.

Thud, thud-.

"Overreact? Have you forgotten who she is? How many comrades died because of that bastard goat? Don't talk nonsense-."

"That woman is already dead."

"Huh?"

Son OhGong, surprised, turned his head towards YuWon.

In Son OhGong's view, looking at YuWon in disbelief, the figure of a small sheep slowly appeared, approaching YuWon.

"Hey, be careful-."

Swoosh-.

Yuwon stroked the sheep's head with his hand.

It was a sheep that, despite being hit by Ru Yi Bang, staggered towards him. If it were still in Shub-Niggurath's arms, there would be no problem, but now he had to take care of it.

Son OhGong's reaction, who was watching this situation for the first time, was:

"Wow."

With his mouth wide open, he asked with surprise.

"What is happening here?"

"We took away its name."

"The name?"

"Now that I think about it, it seems you haven't heard the news because you've been here all the time."

"Oh, right. Now that you mention it..."

Son OhGong, momentarily surprised by the situation that was hard to believe even seeing it with his own eyes, asked in amazement.

"Is it true? Did you kill Shub-Niggurath?"

"You can check by opening the Kit. We're half-ruined thanks to that."

"Really?"

There was no way YuWon could lie about something like this. The number of comrades who died at the hands of Shub-Niggurath was not something that could be used as a joke.

Above all, OhGong observed the scene unfolding before his eyes.

Instead of Shub-Niggurath, it's the sheep that bow their heads to YuWon.

This was proof enough that Shub-Niggurath had fallen.

"Oh, darn..."

"What's wrong?"

"No, it's nothing."

"It's not nothing that it's nothing."

"Oh, yeah. I'm hungry. Let's have breakfast."

"Seeing how you're avoiding the conversation, it's obvious..."

YuWon looked at Son OhGong with suspicious eyes. Avoiding YuWon's gaze, Son OhGong scratched his head.

Defeating Shub-Niggurath...

OhGong felt uncomfortable just thinking about it.

'I was glad in vain yesterday after winning. How annoying.'

While YuWon defeated Shub-Niggurath, he himself fell into Tathagata's trap.

Under Son OhGong's gaze, the Flying Nimbus appeared.

In an instant, while YuWon looked at the sheep below him...

Whoosh!

With a loud sound, Son OhGong rode the Flying Nimbus and soared above the Black Woods.

In the blink of an eye, he disappeared at a point while flying.

Almost YuWon burst out laughing at that moment.

'It seems like I have a pretty clear idea of what's going on.'

Son OhGong had been anticipating the fight with Shub-Niggurath. Naturally, because in the future, he had never defeated Shub-Niggurath.

However, it wasn't surprising that his face heated up when he thought that he had done nothing in the fight and had only caused trouble here.

'Maybe it's better this way. His biggest problem is his arrogance.'

If this incident managed to stimulate Son OhGong, it wouldn't be bad.

Son OhGong striving to become stronger.

Just with OhGong's presence, YuWon already felt secure thinking about how he could help in future fights.

YuWon's gaze turned to the Black Woods.

"Now it's the beginning."

Shub-Niggurath was dead.

Probably, this incident would be considered a significant problem even among the Outers.

At least, among the Outer Gods YuWon knew, Shub-Niggurath was ranked as a minimum second.

Perhaps...

Really perhaps, the fight would become more intense.

So...

'Maybe we should hurry from this side.'

Yuwon was getting better and faster results than he originally planned.

Since the past and the present had changed, the future would also change. Given that many plans had been ruined, Foolish Chaos wouldn't follow the future YuWon remembered.

'For a while...'

Unnoticed, one by one, the sheep that flew into the air under Son OhGong's club returned around YuWon.

And among those sheep...

'I'll have to learn more about this guy.'

Watching Danpung, who was laughing more brightly than usual, YuWon thought to himself.

The key to this fight, maybe it would be Danpung.

Outside the Tower.

Under the purple sky, sounds of melancholic lamentations resonated.

-Aaah!

-Aaah, aaah!

They were just sounds of sighs. Listening to them for a moment, Foolish Chaos murmured indifferently.

"It seems that goat's void is larger than I thought."

Foolish Chaos rolled a small pearl in his hand.

Thud, the sound of the pearl rolling. While caressing it for a while, he saw the purple sky swirling like mist.

Foolish Chaos raised his head.

Was it because of his mood? He felt as if the sky was reproaching him.

"It seems like you're angry."

As a response to that question, the sky shook again in a disorderly manner. Finally, Foolish Chaos realized he was being observed.

"After all, she was nothing more than a slut who surrendered to your words to gain a name. Calm your anger."

Crack!

It was at that moment...

Between the blurry purple sky...

The eyes, as thin as the crescent moon, opened a little and turned towards Foolish Chaos.

"Destruction-Bringing Star. Have you also gotten angry?"

Rumble!

The eyes slowly widened.

In the eyes that were once only white, the black sclera appeared, looking down at Foolish Chaos. He also opened the eyes that had been closed for a long time after Shub-Niggurath's death.

That wasn't all.

All beings in this world were screaming. Shub-Niggurath's death was a shocking event.

Even with Foolish Chaos at the center, it wasn't strange that they expressed their anger.

Swish!

A purple mist enveloped Foolish Chaos. In the face of the majestic appearances that appeared one after another, Foolish Chaos sighed softly.

"It seems that those who were silent are appearing in a group."

-You crossed the line a bit this time.

Unlike others, the mist approached Foolish Chaos directly and spoke to him.

There was no particular reason.

Unlike the eyes in the sky, the mist had a certain camaraderie with Foolish Chaos.

"For a while, I'll be a pariah."

-So it will be.

"Will you also?"

-...

Silence.

The mist disappeared silently.

There was no response, but the answer could be guessed.

"You're shy."

Thump!

Foolish Chaos rolled the pearl in his hands again.

Thus, Foolish Chaos's robe, holding "the eye" in his hand, fluttered in the wind.

"He came from the future, huh..."

Time passed.

It wasn't a very long time.

One year.

Only one year.

In the Tower, new Players entered, and more than ten Rankers were born.

In the past, this year would have been only a part of the time passing without anything happening in the Tower.

But for Odin, this year was longer than any other time.

Thud!

Late at night.

Someone stepped into the splendid palace of Asgard without permission.

Step, step. Without anyone's permission.

Odin, who was sitting on the throne, opened his eyes.

He wanted to see who dared to visit the palace at this hour without fear.

"They say you've been locked in here for three days. Aren't you bored?"

"...Are you Zeus?"

One year.

It wasn't a very long time. However, he had already seen Zeus, whom he hadn't seen several times in over a thousand years.

It wasn't a pleasant reunion.

So...

"How did you get here?"

"I just entered."

"Without permission?"

"I don't need anyone's permission. Just like you."

"You've become quite close, huh? Are we comrades now, the two of us?"

"If you think that way, I could stick a spear in your face right now."

"As for the spear, I'm confident too. It's probably very different from a year ago."

Trivial talk for a moment.

Soon, Odin, interested in Zeus's appearance, asked him about his motive.

"You didn't really come here to stick a spear in my face, did you?"

"I have something to tell you. It seems your information network is too slow."

"What do you mean?"

"That guy has moved."

"That guy...?"

In Odin's eyes, which were as gloomy as a corpse, light began to shine slowly.

Eyes full of hope.

After sitting on the throne like a corpse for three days, Odin leaned forward and asked.

"Where is he?"

Chapter 460

C460

The story unfolds in a small town on floor 99.

A girl, playing and jumping with candies in hand, suddenly stopped and looked up.

The girl's eyes blinked several times, and her pupils shone beautifully.

"Wow!"

In the girl's eyes, a clear sky was reflected. As the girl continued to gaze at the sky, her mother approached.

"Why are you like this?"

"Look at that!"

In response to the girl's excited exclamation, people around her looked to where she was pointing.

The sky didn't seem any different from usual. However, amidst that vast sky, some areas with different colors were visible.

"Eh?"

"What do you see?"

"There, look, there."

In the sky, a purple aurora appeared. The purple aurora against the clear blue sky looked beautiful.

"Wow!"

"Beautiful..."

It was at that moment...

Under the sky they were looking at, a dot appeared.

Boom!

"Eh?"

The man, blinking without understanding the situation, slowly lowered his head and looked at his chest.

Something pierced him. When he realized he had been pierced by a purple tentacle, he felt all his strength draining away, and pain engulfed him.

"Gluhk!"

"Aaaah!"

The tentacles pouring from the purple aurora pierced through people's bodies.

The village instantly turned into hell. The girl who had discovered the sky stood motionless.

"Let's go! Let's get out of here!"

"Mom..."

The girl reached out to her parents calling her, trembling from head to toe.

Naturally, instead of running with her shaky legs, the tentacles falling randomly were much faster.

Shi-eek-.

Boom!

The girl tightly closed her eyes. She thought she was going to be like the others who died in front of her.

But it was only for a moment.

Without feeling anything as she expected, the girl slowly opened her eyes bravely.

What entered her small eyes was the back of someone.

A man grabbing the tentacles approaching the girl's head with his hand. He raised his head to look into the purple aurora.

Kwang-clang-, kurrung-!

A Golden Lightning Bolt sprang from the man's hand.

"Are you okay?"

The man's eyes and the girl's met as he turned his head.

They were eyes and an expression so calm and reassuring that didn't fit the horrifying situation. Slowly, tears entered the eyes of the girl, who seemed like she would cry at any moment.

"Close your eyes again. There's nothing good to see."

Chik-.

The man who said that moved a foot, shielding the girl from what was about to happen.

Just after that...

Flash!

The spear in the man's hand flew into the sky.

Boom!

The tentacles falling down were consumed in black. The man who threw the spear observed the situation before stepping aside.

The revealed sight.

The girl's eyes, looking up, widened, and her black irises shone in gold.

"Wow!"

The beautiful golden waves devouring the purple and coloring the sky.

Thus ended the brief massacre on floor 99.

"We survived..."

"It's fortunate that there's a High-Ranker nearby."

"Indeed. In such a remote village."

Some Rankers who sensed the commotion and ran were already there, but the situation was already under control.

They fixed their gaze on the Golden Lightning Bolt that appeared in the sky.

"Is it a Ranker from Olympus?"

Rankers symbolizing Lightning are mainly from Olympus.

Zeus, who has the strongest Lightning.

Given that many Rankers handling Lightning magic aspire to enter Olympus, it's understandable that there are many of them.

However, thinking about it, aside from Zeus, it didn't seem like any other Olympus Rankers could unleash such a powerful Lightning Bolt.

"Who is it, exactly?"

"Maybe..."

"Maybe?"

"Kim Yu..."

"Ah, it can't be. He disappeared for over a year."

"Has it already been a year? Or not yet?"

"What does time matter? The important thing is that that guy isn't..."

Silence filled the air as YuWon turned to look at a group of Rankers whispering among themselves.

The Rankers avoided his gaze, closing their mouths and turning away. Though it was just caution, the idea of "What if...?" persisted in their minds.

From a considerable distance, YuWon heard their conversations with an ironic smile.

He didn't intend to eavesdrop, but with so many words, they simply reached his ears.

"It seems to be him, right?"

"Isn't it just a coincidence?"

"Having black hair automatically means it's Kim YuWon?"

"Someone should go and ask. At least verify his face properly."

"Are you crazy? What if it's real? What does it matter?"

Everyone avoided YuWon's gaze, but their mouths still didn't stop.

Listening to fragments of the conversation, it seemed like they viewed him as an evil spirit who killed people by just talking to them.

'Well, so what?'

YuWon diverted his attention from them and looked up.

The sky cleared once again.

Reclaiming that sky wasn't too difficult. The sky barely changed, just a little, and a single Lightning Bolt was enough to cleanse it.

But...

"Has it already begun?"

It had been a year.

Originally, it would have taken more time to move with more caution, but that was no longer possible.

The situation on the other side was advancing much faster than he had thought.

"I thought they would hurry, but still, it's too early."

The sky gleamed in YuWon's eyes.

The sky had turned partially purple. Just because it was a very small rift, it was not something to be ignored.

After a brief thought, YuWon nodded.

"No problem."

The faster they rushed, the lower their Points would inevitably be. Especially after the recent events, Foolish Chaos had consumed a considerable amount of Points.

The small rift in size proved it.

Kurur, kurung-

Kukung-!

The sky resonated loudly.

The few clouds turned into black storm clouds.

The appearance was quite thunderous as well.

"The Monkey that called me isn't coming."

Kwarung-!

A Lightning Bolt fell in front of YuWon's nose.

A column of golden light rising high. It must have been blinding, but YuWon stared at it directly.

"But two interesting guys have come."

Kurung, kururur-

The world momentarily turned golden.

Two people emerged from the golden column with lightning.

Step, step-

There were only two.

But in no way were they people who would appear somewhere in such a remote village.

A handsome man with golden hair and golden armor.

And a robust old man with silver hair and silver armor.

The Rankers murmuring when they saw YuWon were left speechless at the sight of these two.

"I-Is that Zeus, right?"

"And next to him..."

"Oh... Odin?"

"So, after all..."

Rankers who understood the situation began to retreat one by one.

It was because they feared being crushed like ants by the steps of those giants.

"Don't be afraid. We won't eat you."

Odin said this after noticing the Rankers' fear.

But just as the Rankers felt they could be relieved...

"Disappear."

Zeus's sharp voice cut through the crowd.

"Yes, understood!"

"We're very sorry!"

The Rankers hastily retreated with a word from Zeus.

Other residents also stepped back upon noticing the situation.

Watching them, Odin frowned and shook his head disdainfully.

"Why do they apologize so much...?"

"It seems the Rankers these days are quite cowardly."

Zeus and Odin, shaking their heads as if it were pathetic.

Approaching them, YuWon opened his mouth as if it were completely understandable.

"Appearing so suddenly and noisily, it's normal for them to be scared."

What was wrong with these guys? If normal Rankers weren't afraid of them, that would be stranger.

"Is that what matters now?"

Odin, meeting YuWon again, sighed deeply from the beginning.

"No contact, no news. What the hell were you doing?"

"Nothing happened."

"I suppose you kept using the Player Kit. If you could hear the news, then that means you heard it."

Odin spat out a resentful response to YuWon's reply.

In the past year, no one could find his whereabouts, to the point where there were rumors that "Kim YuWon was just a fictional person."

However, even amidst that disappearance, YuWon was aware of what was happening in the world through the Kit.

That meant he was also ignoring other contacts trying to find him.

"I've been busy. Quite, in fact."

"So, did you achieve something satisfactory?"

"...Maybe. More or less."

A vague answer.

Perhaps it was a bit uncomfortable to give details, YuWon changed the topic by throwing a question.

"What about you? Did you achieve something too?"

For a moment, YuWon and Odin's gazes met. Although the intention of the question was obvious, as if passing by again, Odin sighed softly and answered.

"Where else if not me? Since it was revealed that there is a floor above floor 100 that even the Rankers haven't reached, everything has turned into chaos."

"And you crossed it."

"If I can't, who else could?"

"Really? Well, you're right."

It was an accurate statement.

If Odin couldn't cross it, who else would have the qualification to obtain Divinity in this Tower?

At first, YuWon said that to change the subject, but now he was genuinely impressed.

'It seems he has become quite similar to how I knew him.'

Odin had already obtained Divinity when he first met YuWon. From start to finish, he was always a grandiose existence and never showed a weak appearance even once.

Even if it was Shub-Niggurath, it was the same.

Perhaps he couldn't defeat Shub-Niggurath, but he had the ability to give his companions time to escape.

A year later.

As the Tower changed rapidly, the companions inside were changing rapidly as well.

That was probably true.

"What about Hercules? Is he okay?"

Facing YuWon's question, Zeus lowered his head. It wasn't that he wasn't okay, but he didn't know.

"Try contacting him yourself. Anyway, it's not like you're really interested in how he's doing."

He felt exposed.

Indeed, Zeus had a resemblance to YuWon in more than one sense. He was aware that YuWon was interested in Hercules' growth, not his well-being.

"I will."

"Stop talking nonsense and come with me."

YuWon frowned at Odin's insistence.

It seemed he had a reason for urgently coming to see him.

"Where to?"

"There are things that can't be known through the Kit. You'll know if you follow me."

Odin didn't explain anything and simply dragged YuWon.

The Asgard ship floating in the sky.

"...Come to think of it, it's strange."

Zeus followed them on board.

Why? For a while now, YuWon felt like something was missing.

"Where is that kid you always had with you?"