

Great Mage 391

Season 2 Chapter 91

After a while, they received a call from Elijah, and Lukas and Joanna headed over to the Warp equipment with their gear.

Coincidentally, the Warp equipment was located in the mansion where Gullard had been staying in the past.

“Ugh...”

Joanna made a disgusted expression.

Gullard was no longer around, but the fact that this place had once been his lair made her very uncomfortable. It was almost like stepping into a haunted house.

But the moment she entered the mansion, her expression changed immediately.

“Archmage Joanna.”

“We owe you a lot this time.”

“Thank you so much.”

This was because she found the members of the Gray Sun bowing their heads towards her.

She could tell from their expressions that their words weren't just to be polite. Instead, their faces were covered by genuine expressions of gratitude and respect.

'Ah...'

It was different.

Joanna couldn't help but think about the praise she received daily back when she was in America.

The youngest Archmage.

The most brilliant female Wizard.

The young woman who would lead America to greater heights.

However, those words of praise were nothing but polite comments.

This didn't mean that the words were false. However... they didn't even come close to touching her heart the way these simple words of thanks had.

'...I was such a fool.'

How had she not realised?

Why had she been so pleased by those perfunctory remarks in the past?

Thinking back to herself at that time, Joanna felt ashamed.

"I... I just did what I had to."

Joanna avoided their emotional gazes as she muttered those words. She'd tried to answer calmly but failed spectacularly.

She didn't know why she felt so shy all of a sudden. She hadn't been this embarrassed even when participating in shows that had hundreds of thousands of viewers.

"Haha."

"She's completely different from what I'd thought at first."

"It's nice to see."

The members couldn't help but smile when they saw Joanna's human side.

Their attitude caused Joanna's face to flush red.

"Y-, you're looking down on me."

"They're not. They will never forget what you did for them."

Joanna's face went blank for a moment as she heard Lukas' words.

"...never... forget..."

Those words caused a strange feeling to fill her heart. It was different from any other emotion she'd ever felt in her life.

It was a warm and extremely overwhelming feeling that reminded her of the pride or feeling of accomplishment that she got whenever she progressed in magic or was commended by a superior.

"...it's the same in America as well."

"What do you mean?"

“People who leave for battlefields such as Europe, Africa, and Asia to carry out missions. People who risk their lives day and night to save others.”

“...”

“Of course, the America Association Branch didn’t like them very much. I also thought that they were stupid.”

Despite their strength, those people were always neglected.

In fact, their positions in the America Association Branch could only be described as poor.

And yet...

“...they always seemed devoted and proud.”

Lukas silently listened to Joanna’s voice.

After a short pause, she opened her mouth again.

“Now, I understand... how they felt.”

“That’s good.”

“Huh?”

“That smile that you just showed was very beautiful.”

Lukas spoke his honest opinion. After all, he felt truly happy at that moment.

Joanna had found the sense of satisfaction that only came with doing good deeds. Her outlook on the world would certainly be different from now on.

She would definitely shine brighter. So even Lukas couldn’t help but admire the beauty of this moment.

“...huh?”

But, unbeknownst to him, his statement had sent Joanna’s brain flying hundreds of millions of light years away.

Joanna stood there with an absent-minded stare on her face for a moment before instantly turning beet red.

“W-, w-. wh-, wha-, what did you just...-”

“Hey.”

A man appeared behind Joanna, whose lips were flapping up and down like a fish.

It was Kran. He was still dressed as sloppily as usual. With his ragged covering his lips, he spoke in his normal, blunt tone.

“I heard you’re going back to America.”

“Right. Will you come with me?”

“Ha. I already turned you down, didn’t I?”

“...”

Then why was he here? No matter how he looked at it, it seemed that Kran had been waiting for them for a while.

Kran frowned when he saw Lukas’ questioning gaze.

“I got a place I have to go for now. I need to fix my broken tools, replenish my equipment, and deal with the soul crystals.”

“Right.”

“...”

Kran crossed his arms and tapped his feet on the ground in a strange rhythm for a moment. Then, he spoke in a voice that felt like a mixture between nervousness and irritation.

“It’s called Argento Spell, right?”

“Right.”

“...I’ll remember that.”

After saying those words, Kran turned around and disappeared.

It was only then when Joanna came back to her senses and looked at Lukas with a confused expression.

“What did he stop us for?”

“For the day we meet again.”

“Huh?”

“That was the best he could do. We have to respect that.”

“...I see.”

Joanna said this, but her expression said otherwise.

She couldn't help but feel like Kran's interaction with Lukas was different from anyone else's. But she wasn't exactly sure where the difference was yet.

It wasn't long before they arrived at the Warp equipment.

There, they found Elijah waiting for them.

“Come quickly. All the preparations are complete.”

Joanna, who had been looking around for a while, finally tilted her head to the side.

“By the way, where did Mr. Lee go?”

Naturally, she was talking about Lee Jong-hak.

Elijah shrugged.

“He already went back to Asia. He seemed to have urgent business.”

“Ah.”

Well.

When one considered the position of the Human Dragon, Lee Jong-hak, it was understandable why he wouldn't be able to stay for a long time. His mission in Africa had already been completed, so it was natural that he'd head home immediately afterward.

However, Joanna couldn't help but feel a bit disappointed in the fact that he'd left without saying goodbye despite having fought for their lives together.

After doing one final check of the equipment, Elijah turned to them.

“You're heading to the North America Headquarters in Manhattan, New York, right?”

“Yeah.”

“Confirmed.”

Woowoong-

The Warp Portal let out a hum as it came into existence. Elijah gazed deeply at the portal before speaking in a solemn tone.

“...I will say it again. Thank you so much. Frey Blake, this is a favour that I will do my very best to repay. On my honour.”

His eyes then turned to Joanna.

“And you, Joanna Goldberg.”

“Ah... me?”

“Of course. You are also our benefactor.”

In fact, in the final battle against the Demons, the Gray Sun would have been annihilated if it hadn't been for Joanna. Elijah added with a serious expression.

“When I first heard the nonsense about you being chosen by the Great Mage, I honestly thought you'd hit your head...”

“Hey!”

No, how did this man know that?

After thinking that, Joanna realised that everything she'd said had been heard by the Gray Sun.

Crazy. That was crazy.

However, Elijah's next words caused her expression to change.

"...but now, I feel like it might be true."

"..."

For a moment, Joanna felt grateful. The events that had happened before then had allowed her to build up some resistance, so she was able to better hide her embarrassment.

Elijah looked at her and let out a soft chuckle before schooling his expression.

"Then, I wish you best of luck in America."

Paht-

A bright light enveloped them.

It was time to return to America.

* * *

“...”

The Warp Portal in Manhattan Square.

They were immediately greeted by bright flashes of light and loud noise.

“Ah...”

They were back.

Joanna felt her body relax when she saw the familiar scenery, smelled the familiar scents, and heard the familiar sounds. It hadn't been that long since she'd left, but she felt like a soldier returning home after a few years.

Lukas looked around before opening his mouth.

“There are fewer people than last time.”

“Oh, my God. What’s with the depressing comment? Can’t you see I’m trying to enjoy the feeling of returning home?”

“...”

Home.

Lukas’ expression softened slightly.

“It’s because today is a weekday. Besides, at that time, there were more people because of the press confere-...”

Joanna’s voice cut off before she finished her sentence.

This was because she remembered how rudely she’d treated Lukas when they first met.

It was a strange feeling. It hadn’t been that long ago, but she felt embarrassed like she was remembering the mistakes she made during childhood.

“...in any case, we should probably hurry over to the headquarters.”

After saying that, Joanna pulled out the smartphone that she’d kept deep in her bag. Of course, it was a communication device that could only be used in North America.

'There's a scratch on the screen.'

In the past, she would've immediately gotten a replacement, but now, she only wondered where the scratch had come from.

After fiddling with the smartphone for a moment, she called one of her contacts.

"It's me. Yeah. I'm back. Right, I'm in the square right now."

Then she hung up.

Soon after, a black limousine pulled into the square.

It was the man who had been stuck to Joanna's side the first time they met who opened the door and stepped out.

"You're back. I'm glad you're safe."

"Have you been well, Frank?"

"Yes."

His eyes then turned to Lukas, who was standing beside her. Irritation flashed in his eyes for a brief moment.

Lukas and Joanna. He'd been very upset when he learned that the two of them would be going on a mission alone. Of course, he knew that it wouldn't matter if Joanna's personal assistant or manager was to express dissatisfaction since the order came directly from the Association President.

Venting his anger, he spoke in a harsh tone.

"You didn't cause any trouble for Miss Joanna, did you?"

"Frank!"

The sudden shout surprised Frank.

It was none other than Joanna who'd shouted. She even looked at him with a reproachful glare.

"Be polite."

"B-, but..."

"Do I have to repeat myself?"

“N-, no, I’m sorry.”

“Am I the one you need to apologise to?”

“...ah... That...”

Frank bit his lip before bowing his head towards Lukas.

“...I’m sorry.”

“It’s fine. We should hurry up.”

Joanna nodded before stepping onto the car, followed by Lukas.

Frank looked at their backs with a complicated gaze.

“As expected, America is still the best. I can’t wait to go home and take a bath. With steaming hot water and rose petals. Huhu.”

“Is your house nearby?”

“I have a few, but the one here is the one I use most. Ah, it just so happens that I can see it from here. It’s that high-rise building over there. Although it’s a bit small, the night view is unbelievable, so it’s worth the inconvenience.”

“I see.”

“When it comes to the night view, the food at the Cruise Ship Restaurant is absolutely wonderful. I’ll invite you some time, so come with me.”

“...”

What was this atmosphere?

Frank couldn’t help but wonder inwardly as he drove.

He didn’t know what Joanna’s mission was, but now, he was curious.

What the hell happened to cause them to become so friendly in such a short time?

Frank knew just how noble Joanna was. His feelings towards her were closer to those of worship, and even though he was only in charge of chores, he took great pride in the fact that he could assist her in any way.

And as far as Frank knew, the only person that Joanna showed such a friendly attitude to was the Association President, Neil Prand.

No, it felt like her attitude now was even better than that.

Frank stopped thinking about it and slowly pulled over. This was because they'd arrived at the North America Headquarters.

"Wait here, Frank."

"...Yes."

They got out of the car and walked into Pilsky Tower.

Like last time, a man who looked like a security guard handed her an earpiece. Joanna took it and hesitated for a moment. Then, she opened her mouth.

"Thank you."

"...huh? Ah, no problem."

The security guard appeared bewildered for a moment before bowing and walking away.

"It's a security in-ear. It allows us to connect to the network inside the tower. You can change channels according to your clearance level... Wait a moment."

Joanna tapped the in-ear as she said that, and Lukas nodded.

Then, Joanna heard something from the in-ear and her expression changed slightly.

“They want us to go to the 58th floor.”

“Is something wrong?”

“Mm.”

Joanna spoke with a slightly cautious expression.

“...that’s the emergency room.”

It was the emergency room that only housed critically ill or fatally injured patients.

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The emergency room on the 58th floor was spacious and open. The ceiling wasn’t just higher than other floors; it was several times higher.

It was so large that it seemed to have been created from multiple floors. At least five floors had to be combined to create such a large space. This naturally meant that it looked incredibly spacious.

Nevertheless, there were so many people on this floor that the large space still didn't seem like enough. Doctors, nurses and those who appeared to be Priests ran around busily to the extent that one couldn't help but pity them.

Lukas' eyes turned to the far right side of the floor. There, a hazy light that didn't quite suit the modern atmosphere shined brightly.

This light was coming from what appeared to be small Warp Portals. There seemed to be a dozen of them lined up along the wall.

"This place has the most state-of-the-art facilities and equipment as well as the very best medical staff. Its services aren't just limited to North America. Depending on the circumstances, every Branch all across the world can send their critically ill patients here."

"I see."

Lukas nodded.

In other words, it meant that each of these portals was linked to a different Branch.

It was at that moment.

A portal hummed loudly before a large group of people stepped out of it. There were perhaps ten of them. They all wore distinctive costumes, which seemed to be a mix between robes and lab coats, and each of them had a staff in hand. The reverberation of mana could be felt from every part of their bodies.

Lukas immediately recognised them as Wizards.

And they were all quite talented.

Among them, it was the woman at the front of the group who truly caught his attention. She had dark hair with a slight hint of blue, and her eyes were deep and calm.

'This woman...'

Was a powerful Wizard.

At the very least, she was a Wizard who was much stronger than Joanna. This was quite surprising considering Joanna's improvement during their trip to Africa.

In short, this woman was the strongest Wizard Lukas had met since entering this world.

'She's approaching 9 stars.'

The woman then turned her head in their direction.

She hadn't felt Lukas' gaze. Instead, she was looking at Joanna. Then, the woman's lips slowly opened.

"Joanna."

"Vice President."

Joanna greeted her in a pleasant voice.

Vice President.

Lukas realised that this woman was the second-in-command of the <Wizard's Association>, an organisation comprised of only the most outstanding Wizards in North America.

It seemed Joanna knew her well.

"I heard that you were sent on a top secret mission, but it seems you've returned."

"Yes. Fortunately, we were able to complete the mission quickly."

"I see."

The Vice President's voice was clear and bright. Her voice alone was enough for one to get a hint of just how much she'd accomplished.

Soon, her clear gaze turned to Lukas, who was standing beside Joanna.

"...by the way, who is this beside you?"

"Ah. This person is..."

Joanna seemed to hesitate for some reason as she turned to look at Lukas.

Lukas stepped forward and opened his mouth.

"Nice to meet you. I'm Frey Blake, from the Europe Branch."

"...Frey Blake."

The woman narrowed her eyes for a moment as if trying to recall the name before she made an embarrassed expression.

"I'm sorry. It seems my knowledge is still limited as I haven't heard your name before."

"Don't worry about it. I'm not well known."

“...”

The woman's expression became a bit strange when she heard that.

Lukas realised that she had noticed his status to an extent, or at least she considered him a formidable opponent.

It was the same case as with Destin and Elijah in Africa.

Humans who had reached a certain level could not disregard Lukas as a nonentity, and instead, they felt that there was something about him that they 'couldn't ignore'. Kran was probably the same. That must have been why he'd attacked so fiercely the first time they met.

“Pardon my rudeness. My introduction is late. My name is Gloria Piniya. It's nothing special, but I am the Vice President of the Wizard's Association.” (TL: Should I change her last name to 'Pinilla'?)

“I've heard many things about you.”

Joanna watched the meeting between Gloria and Lukas with anticipation, but their conversation didn't go any further.

So she turned to Gloria with a brief look of disappointment.

“By the way, Vice President, what brings you to the headquarters?”

The Wizard’s Association’s headquarters was located in Texas, and it was extremely rare for one of the Wizards from the Association to leave the area. The Wizard’s Association was a very sequestered organisation. This was why Joanna had left in the past.

And yet, these reclusive people had come to the headquarters in a group. Including Vice President Gloria, all of the Wizards behind here were high-level executives in the Association.

It was not easy to see all of these Wizards in the same place like this.

Instead of answering, Gloria tilted her head to the side.

“Of course, it’s... No. Wait. Joanna, didn’t you hear what happened?”

“Huh?”

Just as Joanna blinked in confusion, another portal activated. This time, it was a group of men who appeared. The man standing at the front had a rock-like body and a fierce gaze that seemed to be filled with fighting intent.

‘Brazilian Fighter Squad...?’

More importantly, the man at the front of the was the legendary Fighter Squad leader, Anderson Hamus.

He took a crude but firm step forward and chuckled cynically when he saw Gloria.

“What a rare sight, I didn’t expect the dear Vice President to lift her heavy ass off her seat and come all the way here to the headquarters.”

“Anderson. It seems your childish provocations haven’t improved at all over the years.”

Gloria smiled similarly as she replied. Anderson let out a cheerful laugh.

“Haha. A fighter doesn’t need to provoke. But it is fun to play with you.”

“Hmph...”

“Well, take your time. I’ll be going ahead.”

After saying that, he walked past Gloria. Unlike the two leaders who seemed to be exchanging playful banter, the groups behind them exchanged fierce gazes as though they would jump on each other at any moment.

Joanna subconsciously swallowed a mouthful of saliva as the two groups passed each other.

‘From the Vice President to the Fighter Squad leader. What the hell happened?’

Joanna was shocked, but that seemed to just be the beginning.

As she stood there, the portals activated time and time again, with powerful individuals or groups appearing each time. From influential executives to famous hunters who represented each region to even a group of Catholic Cardinals.

She'd been active in the North America Headquarters for a long time, but this was the first time that she'd ever seen so many big names gathered together.

“What the hell happened?”

“That...”

“Master!”

Then, someone called out to Lukas.

When he turned, he saw Min Ha-rin and a man he'd never seen before.

“You're here too, Master!”

Min Ha-rin ran over to Lukas with a face that could not hide her joy. Lukas smiled faintly.

“It’s been a while.”

“Yes. I’m glad you returned safely.”

“Thanks.”

“...”

Min Ha-rin smiled brightly for a moment before she heard a soft cough from the man standing behind her.

“This is Vincent J. Heider. He is the one who taught me while you were away.”

“Vincent.”

As he said this, the man held out his hand to Lukas. Lukas took his hand and he responded.

“Frey Blake.”

“...I heard about your mission.”

Vincent's expression became a bit strange as he said this, not letting go of his hand.

"I'd like to formally commend you for your achievement."

"You're flattering me."

"No. Argento Spell... Soon, everyone in the world will have heard this name."

"...?"

Min Ha-rin tilted her head to the side, an expression that showed she hadn't heard the news yet.

Lukas wasn't too surprised, though. They'd probably heard about it from Elijah.

About him 'slaying one of the Five Dukes'.

It was an achievement that would surely shake the world, but Lukas didn't intend to talk much about it. It was so absurd that the more he talked about it, the more distrust and resistance he would get.

Instead, it was better to let it spread at its own pace. Of course, most of those who heard it would only dismiss it as a bluff or hearsay.

They would ignore it and carry on their duties.

This would continue until the thought 'maybe' appeared in the minds of the doubters.

This wasn't a difficult task.

In the past, when Lukas and his team first defeated a Demigod, the various tribes and kingdoms didn't believe it. Some even criticised Lukas, claiming that he'd shaken a beehive for no reason.

Back then, every day was hard, but he missed it.

A young man who was only able to survive because he had a like-minded group of friends.

'I was ignorant back then. I'm sure they knew that.'

Lukas suddenly remembered the voice of a man.

He'd spoken in an arrogant tone with his arms crossed.

'You just have to think hard. And show me the way to go. In exchange...'

The man, Kasajin, smiled so brightly that even a man might have fallen in love with him at that moment.

'I'll protect your back.'

"..."

Lukas awoke from his brief reminiscence. This wasn't the time to get sentimental.

Joanna turned to Vincent.

"Vincent, what the hell happened? Are they holding an emergency meeting because of what happened in Africa?"

"No, it's more serious than that... It'd probably be better if you saw for yourself. Follow me."

They followed Vincent without a word.

The place where they stopped was a special ward. But Joanna was surprised by the huge crowd standing outside of the room.

Vincent approached the doctor who was standing at the door.

"Anthony, how is he doing?"

"...not good. He's still on the fence."

The doctor replied with a heavy expression. Then, his eyes turned to Lukas, who was standing behind Vincent.

He spoke in a quiet tone.

“That’s them? Frey Blake and Joanna Goldberg?”

“Right.”

“I’ll allow you to enter. However, please do not stimulate the patient too much.”

Vincent nodded before slowly opening the door and entering the room. Joanna followed him, filled with confusion.

When she first heard that they should go to the emergency room, she thought that it was Leo Freeman who was in critical condition. After all, as far as she knew, there were only two people in North America who were related to Lukas, and one of them was Min Ha-rin, who was beside them.

But it wasn’t.

The large group outside consisted mostly of hunters from various regions, group leaders and high ranking officials.

There was no way these figures would gather just for Leo Freeman. Most of them probably didn't even know the boy existed.

More importantly, this room was a special hospital room. One that could only be used by senior officials and higher ups of the Association.

Dak.

The door opened and the inside of the room was revealed.

And Joanna finally received an answer to her questions.

"Ah..."

At first, she thought it was a corpse.

That was how miserable the man lying on the bed looked. Being moved to this place meant that he'd already received the very best treatment available. And yet, it didn't seem that way at all. To be precise, it felt like he hadn't received any treatment whatsoever.

Joanna couldn't help but call out with a stunned expression.

"A-, Association President...?"

Because lying on the bed in a state between life and death was none other than the President of the Hunter Association, Neil Prand.

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“He’s afflicted with <Rose Poison>.”

“Huh?”

Joanna’s eyes widened slightly when she heard Vincent’s words.

“It’s the poison that the Rose Duke uses. It’s so toxic and corrosive that even a Warrior with a well trained body would become a puddle of blood after a short while... If the President’s body hadn’t been so powerful, he would not have lasted this long.”

“Wh-, why did this happen?”

Vincent let out a bitter chuckle at Joanna’s question.

“There’s only one case that would cause the Association President to take such risks.”

He looked down at the bedridden Neil Prand before continuing.

“For America.”

“...”

Joanna remained silent, a complicated expression on her face. In fact, Vincent’s expression was the same. He looked down at his watch.

“He remains unconscious for most of the day, but there are times when he regains his consciousness. That time is approaching... Frey Blake, there is something he has to tell you.”

Lukas nodded at those words.

Vincent then turned towards the rest of the group and continued.

“The Association President would like to meet him in private. I’m sorry, but the rest of us will need to step outside.”

At those words, the rest of the group went outside, leaving Lukas alone in the room. Before she left, Joanna looked at Neil with an incomprehensible expression.

Lukas stopped Min Ha-rin as she was about to step through the door.

“Ha-rin.”

“Yeah?”

“Where is Leo now?”

“...in another room.”

Lukas fell silent at Min Ha-rin’s words.

So he wasn’t in Canada. Lukas had been told that Leo had been captured by the Rose Duke, who had occupied that region.

In other words, Leo had escaped that monster’s clutches some way or the other.

...If so...

“How is he?”

“He’s fine physically, but he’s not very stable mentally. It seems that he’s still in shock. Nevertheless, he’s much better than he was when he first got here. At least he can walk and talk to some extent now.”

After saying that, Min Ha-rin paused for a moment.

“...Leo...”

Then her eyes turned to Neil, who lay prone on the bed.

“The Association President rescued him.”

“...”

“He went to Canada on his own. No one knows what happened there. However, when he returned to the headquarters with Leo, the Association President was already on the brink of death.”

After saying that, Min Ha-rin nodded.

“That’s all I know, Master. I’ll be in Leo’s room.”

“I’ll be there soon.”

“Yes.”

Leo’s condition might improve if he met with their Master face to face. With that expectation, Min Ha-rin left the room.

“Huff, huff...”

Lukas looked down at Neil.

He was breathing heavily and slowly as though he would stop at any moment.

A white glow emanated from Lukas' eyes.

Clairvoyance.

This power wasn't limited only to clearly seeing distant objects. Depending on the usage, it was possible to analyse an opponent's weaknesses as well.

And being able to analyze weaknesses meant being able to tell their physical condition with a single glance.

The results didn't surprise him.

Neil was slowly dying.

His entire body was covered in white bandages, but the skin beneath the bandages was discolored, appearing to be the same shade of red as a rose.

More than 80% of his intestines had been corroded by the poison, for which the expression 'deadly poison' still wouldn't be enough. In fact, it was a miracle that he was still alive. Somehow, he was still managing to stay alive despite the fact that poison strong enough to melt steel was eroding his insides.

Taht.

Lukas put his hand on Neil's head.

The Demigod power which had previously belonged to Norn appeared.

Woowoong-

Urd.

It was that Demigod's ability to see the past.*

Originally, it would have been quite troublesome to view the past of someone with strong mental power like Neil. But at that moment, he was so weakened and fragile that it wouldn't be surprising if he suddenly died.

The strong barriers that once protected his mind were now nothing more than feeble, crumbling fence posts.

This allowed Lukas to enter his mental world without difficulty.

Fwoosh-

Then, he gradually assimilated with Neil's memories and his past.

* * *

Neil Prand slowly walked through the streets of a ruined city, his eyes slowly taking in everything around him.

Toronto.

He couldn't help but remember the splendour of the city that used to be the economic capital of Canada.

He remembered the people who lived here. People who had no sense of danger, who had now become corpses that filled the streets of this city.

The shattered peace weighed on Neil's heart.

"What are you doing here?"

Taht.

A figure fell from the sky.

It was a beautiful woman with a voluptuous body and blood red hair. A woman who seemed to be in a pleasant mood despite their gloomy surroundings.

Rose, the Rose Duke, tilted her head slightly.

“Why are you here? It doesn’t seem like you’ve brought that man with you either.”

“Rose Duke.”

Neil spoke in a calm voice.

“Why did you break the agreement?”

“What agreement?”

“Did you agree not to touch America?”

“Ahhh.”

Rose shrugged nonchalantly.

“But I didn’t touch it. Isn’t this Canada?”

“Quit your wordplay. Our non-aggression agreement applied to the entirety of North America and every territory under its jurisdiction. You couldn’t have forgotten that.”

“I did forget. Honestly. I’ll pay more attention next time.”

Rose said this with a smile, making Neil speechless for a moment.

‘...I see.’

She forgot because she never cared about it in the first place.

The deal, promise, and decision that he’d made after careful deliberation. That was how much it meant to this being.

“It wasn’t a bad deal.”

He meant it.

Neil didn't regret making the deal with Rose. Because of their agreement, he was able to save hundreds of thousands of lives. So even if he was given the chance to return to the past, he would make the same choice.

"What's with your tone? Do you intend to end our pact?"

"That's right."

"I'm not sure I understand."

"You don't understand?"

For the first time, anger mixed into Neil's voice.

"Look around. Look at what you've done. Rose Duke, do you know just how many people you killed here?"

"A few hundred. It wasn't that many. After all, this is only one out of hundreds of cities. I killed most of the humans in this city, but that shouldn't be that much of a deal breaker."

Rose looked at Neil with an incomprehensible expression.

"You're going to break ties with me because of a few hundred people? That doesn't seem like a logical decision at all."

She meant that he couldn't control his anger at the moment and was using his emotions to decide.

If they were to end their relationship now, America would no longer be a safe haven from the Demon's invasion. If that were to happen, an even larger number of people would end up dying.

Even Rose could not estimate just how high it would be. But one thing was certain. The bloodshed of the people in this city would be but a drop in the ocean by comparison.

Rose narrowed her eyes as she observed the human standing in front of her.

Neil Prand was a useful human with whom they could communicate. Because of her deal with him, many things had become many times more convenient.

Information on the locations of hunter hideouts, the distribution of human slaves, and even advanced warnings on planned attacks on Demon Nobles. All things that were difficult for the Demons to learn.

It was for this reason that she didn't want to break ties with him just yet. For the Demon King's sake, her relationship with this man had to continue.

After making her decision, Rose nodded her head.

"Fine. I'll admit it. It was my mistake."

She steeled her resolve and admitted to her mistake.

In retrospect, her attack on the Canada Branch was an impulsive decision that had been made in the heat of the moment.

“Think about it carefully, Neil Prand. I heard that the humans called America ‘The Utopia’. If you break ties with me, that would come to an end. You shouldn’t take such a risk because of one small mistake.”

“You don’t understand. The weight of that mistake.”

For her, it was just one mistake. But the cracks it had created could not be reversed. Even if they left them alone, the cracks would eventually become bigger.

It would be foolish to try to touch them. Just as it would be to continue this relationship.

Neil looked around.

Corpses of all genders, ages, and sizes littered the street.

Beings who thought they were absolutely safe.

Was it their fault that their city was in ruins? Was it their fault that they had become so intoxicated by peace that their complacency and inattentiveness had reached such a level?

No. Neil denied it.

They were innocent.

He was the one who was guilty. It was Neil who had given them an excessive sense of security.

Neil had wanted to protect the lives of everyone living in America. He'd wanted to recreate the peaceful nation from the 21st century where the public was never exposed to such dangers.

He'd wanted to make it so that everyone living on this land could take peace and security for granted. He'd hoped that they would be indifferent even when hearing about war in a distant country, watching the Demons and Demon Beasts causing havoc on the TV from the safety of their homes.

He'd wanted to protect their lives, their homes, and their jobs.

But above everything else, Neil had wanted to protect their smiles.

Now, that duty has been shattered.

By the being in front of him.

And it was all because Neil had foolishly believed her.

“You.”

A spark of emotion briefly flashed in his eyes.

“Insulted my duty.”

Then, a bloody battle ensued.

Neil’s fighting prowess was amazing. He showed combat power that did not shame his position as President of the Hunter Association. From the strength he displayed, it was clear that he hadn’t neglected his training for a single day. (TL: I thought Neil was a Wizard...)

His effort was proven by the fact that he was able to fight against one of the Five Dukes on his own.

The bitter struggle continued.

However, it was Neil who became more and more disadvantaged as time passed. They were ill matched.

Neil’s entire body was gradually stained red with poison. He felt terrible pain from every part of his body, and his vision was gradually becoming blurry. He knew that it wouldn’t be long before he fell unconscious.

On the other hand, Rose, who had only suffered a few minor injuries, appeared fine.

“Foolish.”

Just as Rose snorted and prepared to swing a vine forward.

Boom!

A bolt of lightning fell from the sky.

* * *

Lukas silently looked down at Neil for a while.

Only to protect America.

It was only then when he got a glimpse into why Neil received such support in North America.

‘I see.’

Lukas was able to realise something.

The reason why there was no sense of crisis in the faces of the people living in North America. The reason why they didn’t seem to have any awareness of the Demon threat.

It was all thanks to this man named Neil Prand. This man had managed to successfully create peace, at least in the limited area of North America.

'Humans are weak beings. You can't protect all of them.'

He heard Neil's voice from when he was just a boy.

'So I'll just protect what I can grasp. Master, I'll only protect America.'

In the end, he took responsibility for the choices he made.

Lukas still didn't think that it was the right thing to do. But now, he no longer felt ashamed of Neil.

"..."

Neil was looking up at Lukas with hazy eyes. With a shaky hand, he took off his oxygen mask.

Then, he opened his mouth.

"...Rose... is still alive."

He only said a few words, but he panted as though he would collapse at any moment.

However, his next words were clear.

“Don’t kill her.”

Neil’s hazy eyes focused as he grabbed Lukas’ wrist.

“It is a challenge that we must face.”

“Many people will die.”

“...it is a necessary wound. There will be more bloodshed in the future.”

It was then when Lukas realised that Neil had made some sort of decision.

His resolution hadn’t changed, and he would still put America first, but it seemed that he had finally realised it was impossible to coexist with the Demons.

The man with the greatest transformation power out of anyone Lukas had met in this world had finally recognised the Demons as enemies.

From now on, he would no longer take the safe road and would instead fight the Demons with his full power.

Of course, all of this was dependent on whether he could survive this ordeal or not.

“...”

Neil fell unconscious again.

Lukas looked down at him for a moment before placing the oxygen mask over his mouth once again.

Season 2 Chapter 94

A long, rectangular table filled a large room, at which a dozen or so people sat.

As she took her seat, Joanna looked around the room. Those who sat at this table were all great figures whom most hunters would know by name.

Just from looking at the faces of these people, she found it hard to breathe. Even though she was pretty well-known herself, she hadn't yet reached the stage where she would be known regardless of where she went.

‘...don't be intimidated.’

Joanna took a deep breath before straightening her shoulders.

Sitting at the head of this table was none other than Vincent. This fact caused a few of the people there to feel a bit strange. After all, while Vincent was a fairly well-known hunter, he still lagged behind quite a few of them when it came to skill or fame.

But it couldn't be helped.

Since he was attending the meeting as a proxy.

"First, I would like to express my gratitude to everyone for taking time from their busy schedules to come here today."

Aware of his position, Vincent's tone was very polite as he spoke.

"Although not much, I am Vincent J. Heider, and I will be the host for this meeting."

There was no applause. There were more than a dozen people gathered in the room, but no one could even hear the sound of breathing.

This was unspoken pressure for him to quickly get to the main point. Vincent tried to ignore the feeling that he was being crushed by the weight of the atmosphere.

Then, an old man spoke.

“Cardinal Thomas, I’d like to hear from you about the Association President’s condition.”

He was one of the board members. Although he lacked personal power, his influence could be ranked within the top five among the board members.

“It’s not good.”

Cardinal Thomas sighed as he answered.

“Have you heard of Rose Poison? It is very heinous. I managed to use my holy power to slow down its diffusion rate. But that is only a temporary measure instead of a true solution as I could only slow down and not stop the spread.”

“In that case, will the President die at this rate?”

Thomas hesitated for a moment at the board member’s blunt question before nodding.

“...that’s right.”

The atmosphere in the room became heavier as though a lump of lead had been placed on it. This was natural.

President of the Hunter Association, Neil Prand.

The symbolism, influence, and authority that he had were beyond compare. It would not be as simple as one person dying.

His death would impact the hunters in every Association Branch in North America and even humanity as a whole. They couldn't even begin to imagine how large the ripple effect would be.

"I don't understand. Where and what the hell were the Manhattan hunters doing?"

It was Anderson, Leader of the Fighter Squad, who opened his mouth with a harsh tone. His hostile gaze turned to Vincent.

"This is none other than the President of the Association. The leader of millions of hunters. A man like that goes to fight one of the Five Dukes on his own and no one stops him. Are all the hunters here stupid?"

"..."

Vincent just bowed his head. He couldn't refute Anderson's words. After all, he was right.

It was true that Neil had gone on his own to confront one of the Five Dukes, but the hunters in Manhattan were also at fault for not stopping him.

"It has already happened. Is this really the time to point fingers?"

It was the Wizard Association's Vice President who spoke with a cold voice. Anderson stared at her in displeasure for a moment before folding his arms and leaning back in his chair with a snort.

"What we need to do now is discuss a way to save Neil. The Association President cannot die."

When most of those sitting at the table nodded to show their agreement, her eyes turned to Vincent.

"Vincent, you called us here because you thought of a solution. Isn't that so?"

"..."

Vincent was silent.

Gloria was right. Regardless of if he was temporarily taking Neil's place or not, there was no way he could bring these people together without a clear solution.

Nevertheless, he couldn't open his mouth easily.

This was because he expected to receive a lot of resistance to the words he was preparing to say.

However, he couldn't stay silent forever. So, with reluctant determination, Vincent opened his mouth.

"We intend to ask the Saint of Salvation for help."

“...the Saint?”

“Mm...!”

The sounds of astonishment came from every part of the table. There were a few who immediately made unpleasant expressions. Most of them were the religious individuals.

This was natural.

The Saint of Salvation, one of the Top Three.

Despite his title as Saint, he had absolutely nothing to do with Christianity. So for them, a normal man calling himself Saint was sacrilege.

It was Cardinal Thomas who spoke on their behalf.

“...Vincent.”

Thomas was an extremely benevolent man who didn't get upset at most things, but now, he had a glimmer of displeasure on his face.

This couldn't be helped.

Thomas, who was a very famous religious figure with great faith in Catholicism, had been unable to drive the poison out of Neil's body with his holy power.

Under these circumstances, asking the Saint for help was no different from propagating the Catholic Church's incompetence.

And if the Saint managed to succeed in curing Neil of his ailment...

That would be a major blow to the faith of Christianity as a whole, not just Catholicism.

Vincent knew that as well. He knew just how rude his actions were at that moment. However, time was running out.

If it had been another Cardinal and not Thomas who was sitting at that table, then they might have burst out in anger or even left directly.

"Is that really the only way?"

"Yes."

Nevertheless, Vincent could only bite the bullet, not back down. He wanted to show his determination to everyone at the table.

Even if there would be strong backlash from the Catholic Church, saving Neil was the top priority.

Thomas sighed softly.

He could see the desperation of Vincent, no, of the entirety of America.

“Do you know where the Saint is right now?”

Vincent nodded and answered.

“It’s said that he’s currently in Korea.”

“Hmmm.”

“It’s said that he’s currently spreading his eternal life religion.”

“...”

Thomas bit his lip at those words.

“...he’s selling faith. It’s unacceptable.”

“From a business perspective, it’s a pretty good market. The religious business works well in Korea.”

It was Anderson who said these words with a chuckle.

“However, the fact that he’s in Asia... That will be a pain in the ass.”

Nodiesop.

The fact that an unidentified man had suddenly taken over the Asia Branch of the Hunter Association was something that was known to everyone capable of sitting at that table. It was highly likely that Korea was also not free of his influence. After all, the Korean Peninsula was not very far from the Asia Headquarters in Beijing.

“Have you come up with a solution to this, Vincent?”

“...”

Vincent was silent for a moment before he answered.

“...there is a Korean person with whom I recently became personally acquainted. I’m thinking of asking for her help.”

“Can you tell us who it is?”

“Min Ha-rin.”

‘Where have I heard that name...?’

“Are you talking about the White Flower?”

The hall became noisy for a moment.

Min Ha-rin was a well-known rookie from Asia. Her fame hadn’t yet crossed the ocean to North America, but there were a few people at the table who’d heard of her before.

“She certainly should have some independent line of communication to the Korean Branch.”

“Then let’s leave the case of the Association President there for now.”

In truth, nothing had been resolved yet.

There was no way to know if the Korea Branch would accept Min Ha-rin’s communication request or if they would help them find the Saint in Korea.

More importantly, it was possible that after they’d found the Saint after tremendous effort, he would refuse to assist.

Or even if he did agree to assist them, he might not be able to fix the problem.

...And above all else.

It was possible that Neil wouldn't survive until then.

“...”

There were a lot of things that they were unsure about, and anxieties were mounting.

But Vincent decided to stop thinking negatively. Worrying like this would only cause him to become sick.

Besides, there were still issues in North America that needed to be addressed.

After the attack by one of the Five Dukes, the civilians were filled with tension and fear at the thought that North America was no longer a safe zone.

They had to come up with solutions for all of these problems within the day.

This meeting, which would surely go on for a very long time, had only just begun.

Season 2 Chapter 95

“You’re really kind.”

Lukas turned around at the sudden voice.

Letip was standing there. He sat at a small table in the corner of the room, reading a book with his legs crossed as if he’d been there from the beginning. There was also a packet of sweets opened in front of him.

After looking at him for a moment before finally opening his mouth.

“Why did you save Neil?”

The lightning bolt at the end had seemingly appeared out of nowhere. It was easy to guess who had intervened.

At that moment, when Neil was on the verge of death, it was Letip who had interfered and saved him. And it was probably him who’d saved Leo as well.

Letip replied with a smirk.

“First of all, I was simply protecting a friend. I couldn’t just watch him die.”

It was only then when Lukas finally realised why Neil had gone to face a Duke on his own. He seemed to have been driven by emotion, but he still would have been able to make rational decisions.

It turned out that Letip was Neil's insurance. He had to have known that Letip would save him if worse came to worst.

"Then why didn't you kill Rose?"

"If I did that, I'd have to fight the Demon King."

"So you want to stay neutral?"

Tak.

Letip closed the book.

Then, he took a sip of cold water from a glass in front of him before getting up from his seat. Contrary to what he'd shown before, there was now a serious look in his eyes.

"Sedi is dead."

Lukas knew. Or to be precise, he'd gotten a vague feeling.

The influence, the death of an Absolute had on a universe, was by no means small. Especially for a small and fragile universe like this one.

And yet, the reason he hadn't been entirely sure was because of how sudden it was.

But now, Letip was telling him directly that Sedi was dead.

This meant that Sedi had truly died.

Perhaps within hours of their last meeting.

"She disregarded my advice, and now, she has disappeared from this [Weak World]. I'm sure I don't have to tell you who killed her."

"The Demon King."

He didn't say that it was Kasajin. Lukas wasn't sure if it was his own stubbornness or for some other reason.

"The Demon King, Nodiesop, and me as well. We don't care what happens to this universe. It doesn't matter to us if it collapses if we use power that exceeds its capacity. You felt it, didn't you? There are already a few cracks in the universe after the fight between Sedi and the Demon King."

"You're not usually this long-winded. What is it that you want to say?"

The corners of Letip's mouth rose once again.

“Ruler.”

“...?”

“Lord, Manager, Assistant.”

From top to bottom, Letip listed the different levels of Absolutes.

Lukas remained silent because he didn't know what he was trying to say.

“Only an Absolute who ‘rules’ more than one ‘concept’ deserves to be called a Lord. The same goes for you, Lukas Trowman.”

“...”

“In other words, among Lords, there are some who rule over more concepts than others. This is why there can be large power gaps between Lords despite them being on the same level.”

Lukas had a feeling that Letip was about to say something very important, and his hunch wasn't wrong.

“The Demon King, for example, is the Black Horned Demon God's right-hand man.”

“...right hand?”

The right hand of a Ruler.

This was Lukas’ first time hearing such a concept.

Whether he read Lukas’ expression or not, Letip continued to explain.

“It’s not surprising that you don’t know about it. Most don’t even know they exist. Personally, I call them Conquerors, but... Well, their title isn’t important. Just know that each of them is within the top five of all Lords.”

“...”

“The Demon King appeared like a gust of wind. One day, he suddenly appeared and killed the Absolute who used to serve as the Demon God’s right hand before taking his place. He’s an Absolute with mysterious origins, but his power is clear to all.”

This was the first time he’d heard any information about Kasajin since he disappeared.

With a strange feeling in his chest, Lukas continued listening to Letip.

“I am also a Conqueror.”

“...the Lightning God.”

“He’s my one and only Master.”

Letip nodded his head slowly.

“I received a call from God not too long ago. He probably wanted to give me a hint on how to deceive the laws of this universe. Do you know why I didn’t go?”

He answered his own question before Lukas could open his mouth.

“Because there’s no need to care about that at all. Lukas, stop paying attention to trivial things. The Demon King has begun to move.”

“You seem pretty wary. Are you afraid of him?”

Lukas asked, a hint of provocation in his voice.

However, Letip nodded with a scarily calm expression.

“Right. I’m afraid of him.”

“What?”

Then he said something that was even more shocking.

“Because at this moment, the Demon King is stronger than me.”

* * *

“Now, the Demon King has gone to Nodiesop. If my predictions are correct, then the two’s goals coincide and there is a high chance that they will work together. I don’t have to tell you whom they want to kill, do I?”

As if opposed to Letip’s assertion, Lukas refuted him.

“The Demon King might not be hostile towards me.”

“Why? Because you know him and the two of you came from the same world?”

“...”

Letip’s hoarse voice made Lukas’ head become cold.

Just a moment ago, he'd said that Kasajin's origins were mysterious. It couldn't be said that he lied... He said Kasajin's origins were mysterious, but he didn't say that he didn't know them.

Letip had once again twisted his words to suit himself.

"Hahaha..."

Letip let out a hollow laugh. Then, he furrowed his eyebrows.

"That little friendship game you played back when you were both humans. I don't know for sure, but I'm certain that it didn't last more than a century. Human lifespans are the same regardless of the universe... It has been a long time since he became an Absolute. Do you think the memories of when he was a human, a period of only a few decades, would still be important to him now?"

"Are you trying to say that you know more about Kasajin than I do?"

"I don't know anything about the human Kasajin. But I know the Absolute Kasajin better than you do. To become an Absolute is to say 'goodbye'. Goodbye to the world in which you were born and lived. Goodbye to your fate as a mortal. Goodbye to anything you might have created. In order to rise to new heights, it's necessary to empty your vessel."

"..."

“I’m sure you’ve seen it before. Absolutes who have become completely different from their mortal days. Memories of the past are nothing more than bits of data for Absolutes. They are driven only by their mission, their responsibility, and their sense of duty.”

Letip’s eyes grew cold.

“You are the only exception.”

He spoke with certainty.

“Don’t try to generalise your case. You are the only special one. There was never and will never be another Absolute like you who is bound to their past, origin, and race. Can’t you see why all Absolutes are so hostile towards you yet?”

Letip’s voice was like cold daggers.

There wasn’t a single wrong word. Even before Lukas began acting as he pleased, there hadn’t been any Absolutes friendly towards him.

Among the Absolutes, who were extraordinary beings from all over the multiverse, he was the only exception. The only one who was different.

“...you’re unusually talkative today, Letip. What exactly is it that you want?”

“Help me kill the Demon King...”

That was a ridiculous request at this point.

Letip nodded expectantly when Lukas remained silent.

“...even if I say all of that, you will continue to trust him unless you see it with your own eyes. That’s fine, too. Sooner or later, you’ll get to meet the Demon King. Then you’ll be able to see for yourself and make your own decision. About what kind of being Kasajin is now.”

Season 2 Chapter 96

Shaa-

An unusual downpour was raining down on Beijing, China.

The inside of the President’s office was completely dark without a single shred of light.

In this darkness, which had a strange, fear-inducing depth, Nodiesop sat comfortably in a large chair. He looked out the large glass wall which served as a window and into the distance with a seemingly lonely stare.

He found this universe to be extremely disgusting and annoying, but he quite liked views like this one. It felt like the heavy rain would wipe this world clean.

He closed his eyes gently.

He liked times like these. When he could listen to the sound of the rain against the window or even just watching it fall.

He couldn't believe that these large skyscrapers, the products of science, and the rain, a product of nature, could create such perfect harmony. This was probably one of those miracles called coincidences.

It was a time he wished he could enjoy forever, but today, he had an uninvited guest.

Flash!

A lightning bolt struck down, and before he knew it, a huge shadow was standing above the headquarters.

The owner of the shadow appeared to be a Demon. He had a body that was several times larger than a normal human. And within his large, destructively powerful body, an immense amount of demonic energy could be felt.

Nodiesop looked up at the shadow before muttering calmly.

“Have you chosen me next after Sedi, Demon King?”

Kasajin stood in the pouring rain with his back against the glass. The occasional bolt of lightning revealed his terrifying frightening visage.

Even the bravest of men would scream in fear the moment they saw those fearsome eyes in the darkness.

[And if I have?]

It was only a short phrase, but the pressure behind it was enough to distort the space in the room.

“It won’t be easy.”

[Don’t be so sure.]

After saying that, Kasajin turned to face Nodiesop. In an instant, he appeared in the office. It was fortunate that the President’s office was quite large; otherwise, it might not have been able to contain his large body.

He walked right up to Nodiesop, who remained seated in his chair, before looking down.

[I came here because there’s something I want to talk about.]

“Talk...”

It was something that he never would have expected.

From the moment he sensed Kasajin's presence, Nodiesop had prepared to use his external force at any time. This was because he thought he'd come here to fight him.

However, he couldn't see any signs of treachery from Kasajin. Was this a trick?

There was a chance that was the case, but he didn't think that this guy would go through all of the trouble of tricking him. After all, he was someone who stood at the pinnacle of Lords.

[You must have heard of the way to deceive the 'laws' from God. What hint did he give you?]

"I didn't expect you to be interested in it."

Nodiesop murmured in a blunt voice.

"Do you expect me to tell you that?"

[It doesn't matter if you want to tell me or not. After all, no one in this world understands him better than I do.]

It was a strange thought. Unable to contain his curiosity, Nodiesop asked.

"What do you mean?"

[Nodiesop, I'll teach you. God told me about the laws and deceiving the universe. I'll tell you the results of the various experiments I've done...]

Then, Kasajin began explaining in a low voice.

As a result, Nodiesop's expression gradually began to change. This change increased as Kasajin continued.

By the time Kasajin finished talking, Nodiesop's expression was a mixture of shock and disbelief.

He rose from his seat and walked towards the wall of glass that overlooked the city.

For a while, the only sound in the room was the sound of the rain pattering against the glass.

Then, Nodiesop sighed and opened his mouth.

"...why did you tell me all of that? Why didn't you kill me like Sedi?"

[Sedi joined hands with Lukas. Although, it was only temporary.]

"So you're saying that you're targeting Lukas?"

[Right.]

At that confirmation, Nodiesop burst into laughter. He turned around sharply. Brilliant gold eyes shined ominously in the dark. They were the eyes of a predator.

This was different from the pressure Kasajin was releasing.

Anyone who looked into his eyes at that moment would be frozen in fear.

“You made a foolish decision, Demon King. I wouldn’t have any problems killing him without your help. At best, he’s just a foolish kid who doesn’t know the true power of a Lord... He can’t begin to compare to the years of experience I, Nodiesop, have.”

[Did the eons wear away your judgment? Is the amount of time you lived the only thing you’re relying on? Do you think you can defeat Lukas Trowman with just that? He is very accustomed to fighting beings stronger than him... You, Nodiesop, who was promised the fate of an Absolute from birth, would never understand. What it means to constantly struggle just to survive.]

Rage flashed in Nodiesop’s eyes. His external force began to flow from his body.

Shaaa!

Suddenly, the rain began to fall even harder. It was so heavy that it felt like a hole had been ripped in the sky. It pounded against the window to the point where the wall began to creak ominously.

“What are you trying to say?”

[Risk your life. Try to have the idea that you will lose. Learn that fear. Otherwise...]

Kasajin closed his eyes for a moment, and he seemed to think about something, but he then let out a long sigh and said.

[You will be defeated by Lukas' tenacity.]

* * *

In an ominous forest.

The air felt sticky and clung to one's skin as though it was alive, and an unpleasant breeze tickled the ears.

With the faint stench and hazy fog that surrounded this forest, any normal person would never dare to think about entering this forest.

Nevertheless, Kran walked in this swamp like he was used to it. With every step he took, his feet sunk into the mud. The water that entered his shoes made him uncomfortable, but he ignored it. (TL: The author randomly transitioned from forest to swamp, so swamp it is...)

Eventually, he arrived at a cabin that was hidden deep in this swamp.

Creak-

Without hesitation, Kran opened the door and stepped inside. Inside, he saw a dusty room in which sat nothing but a small table and a crystal ball.

Kran put his hand on the ball, and a faint light began to leak out of it.

The light lit up the room for a moment before gradually taking the shape of a woman.

[Your call was pretty late this time, Kran.]

The hazy figure of the woman spoke softly.

“It was a tough hunt.”

“Hmm. Well, I suppose one of the Five Dukes would certainly be tough prey.”

“...where’d you hear that from? Ringo.”

[Huhu. Well...]

The woman, Ringo, chuckled softly at Kran.

Kran frowned at her for a moment before shaking his head.

“I met a guy called the Great Mage.”

“...”

Ringo’s image shook for a moment before finally stabilising. Because it was a figure made of light, no appearance or expression could be seen. Kran could only see the curves that were unique to women.

It was a bit depressing.

[I see, so you were able to defeat one of the Five Dukes with his help.]

Kran looked offended when he heard that, but he couldn’t deny it. After all, she wasn’t wrong.

He was strong, but the Five Dukes were monsters.

If it wasn’t for Lukas’ help, he probably would have died.

[More importantly, all the equipment I prepared for you has been ruined. It was really expensive, you know?]

“I’ll pay for it. I obtained a lot of soul crystals this time. Though, I missed the Duke’s.”

Chuk-

As he said this, Kran upturned his bag and dumped all of the soul crystals on the table.

Seeing this, Ringo grinned slightly.

[That’s unfortunate. Well, this should be enough to cover it. Take off your coat and turn your back to me, Kran. I’ll help you recover.]

She then whispered in a voice that could barely be heard.

[The Black Witch and the <Shroud of Night> will always give you our full support.]

* * *

Letip disappeared after saying what he had to, but Lukas couldn’t help but remain frozen in his spot.

...Kill Kasajin. With his own hands.

That was something that he never could have imagined.

'I should be happy instead.'

He should be happy that Kasajin was still alive, that he'd become an Absolute like him, and that he'd finally found someone he shared a past with.

It was lonely.

The Absolutes who wandered around the multiverse were essentially strangers wherever they went. This was why most of them chose to serve Rulers. Just by putting themselves in a large group, they were able to suppress the inherent loneliness that came with their task.

Lukas didn't do that. So his life as an Absolute was even more lonely than the others. He hadn't felt this lonely even during the 4,000 years he'd spent locked in the Abyss.

Then, he learned of Kasajin's existence.

One of his oldest friends was in this universe and shared the same goal as him.

A being who knew the Great Mage, Lukas Trowman, and not the Absolute, Lukas.

Suddenly, a laugh escaped his lips.

He could feel something creak. It wasn't just in his head.

Deep within, he felt something that helped form the foundation of his existence shake.

'Are you tired already, Lukas?'

It shouldn't be.

The path he was currently walking on did not allow him to stop or rest.

He'd decided that he wanted to become the God of Humanity.

Did he think it'd be easy? Had his resolution only amounted to this much?

...If he had to think of a problem, then it would just be one thing.

And that was that this path was much longer and harder than he'd initially expected.

He'd thought that he could endure it. But what if that wasn't true? What if he was just turning a blind eye to the fact that he'd already reached his limit...?

The Thunder God, a Ruler, had told him. Lukas was an Absolute with emotions and a very strong personality.

But Lukas couldn't help but doubt those words now.

Was he really different from the other Absolutes?

Wasn't he also only focused on his mission to save humanity?

...At this point, he knew that a clash with Kasajin was inevitable. As long as he called himself the Demon King and worked against humans.

There were also things that he could not tolerate. Things that Kasajin had done.

“...”

Lukas still didn't like Letip. Nevertheless, he had been helpful in the end.

Because he had allowed Lukas to prepare himself to kill Kasajin in the hospital room with only the electronic sound of the equipment to accompany him.

Season 2 Chapter 97

“Junior brother, do you feel better now?”

“Yeah. I’m fine.”

“...”

Leo smiled softly as he answered. But it was clear that it was a weak smile and that he was just doing it for her sake. This was natural, for he’d gone several days without having anything to eat.

Nevertheless, Min Ha-rin simply nodded her head without revealing any of her inner thoughts.

She couldn’t help but think about her two younger siblings in Korea. Although their personalities were different, they were very similar in stubbornly pretending to be strong even when they didn’t have to be.

In a situation like this one, arguing would just be counterproductive.

‘It’s understandable.’

He’d been held captive by one of the Five Dukes for several days.

He hadn’t even managed to fully overcome his trauma towards the Demons before he was forced to face a being who stood at their peak. His entire body must have frozen in front of her like a frog before a snake.

In addition, almost every hunter in the Canada Branch had died.

Leo was the only survivor.

For Leo, who had lost his entire family in a similar event, this was a disaster.

Min Ha-rin looked down at her one and only junior brother before saying bitterly.

“Make sure you eat properly. How will people look at us if we’re all skinny?”

“We?”

“Master is already very thin. Others might say that the skinny people are uniting.”

“Haha.”

Leo let out a light laugh.

“You’re right.”

The most important thing for a Warrior was the maintenance of their body. Although the significance of their mental state couldn’t be ignored, martial arts were originally meant to hone and polish the body.

Nevertheless, Leo was incredibly grateful for Min Ha-rin's consideration by giving joking advice instead of a harsh admonition. If he had an older sister, he felt she would be just like this.

"You saw Master, right?"

"Yeah."

"How is he? Did his mission go well?"

"I think so, but..."

When Min Ha-rin's voice faded at the end of her words, Leo turned to her with a serious expression.

"Did you notice something strange...?"

"..."

Min Ha-rin didn't answer immediately and was silent for a moment.

She was thinking about Joanna Goldberg, the woman who had been unforgettably disrespectful to them when they first met.

When she first heard that Lukas was going on a mission to Africa alone with that woman, Min Ha-rin was shocked.

Of course, she hadn't been worried about Lukas' safety. Min Ha-rin could not imagine her Master encountering any danger.

However, the thought that Joanna might be rude to him when she wasn't around made her shudder with displeasure.

But today, Min Ha-rin seemed to feel a different atmosphere from the two of them. She wasn't entirely sure what it was, but she was certain that the dynamic between them was very different from before they left as if they had some kind of connection.

...Of course, these were all just simple guesses without any confirmation.

In fact, it was possible that nothing had happened between the two of them and that Min Ha-rin's thoughts were only a misunderstanding. If that were the case, then Min Ha-rin's thoughts would have been nothing but a delusion.

Nevertheless, she wouldn't tell Leo this delusion.

"No. It's nothing."

Just as Min Ha-rin shook her head, they heard a knock on the door.

“Come in.”

Min Ha-rin and Leo thought that it was Lukas who'd arrived, and they turned with large smiles on their faces.

But it wasn't him who opened the door and revealed himself.

“...Mr. Vincent?”

“Do you have a second?”

When Vincent said this with a heavier expression than usual, Min Ha-rin nodded with little hesitation.

Vincent then turned to Leo who was sitting on the bed and said.

“You look much better now.”

“Yeah... But, didn't you have a meeting, Mr. Vincent? Is it over already?”

“No. The meeting is still underway. I simply excused myself for a moment.”

After saying that, Vincent didn't say anything more and remained silent for a while.

This was the attitude he was displaying despite coming here to them. Was it a topic that he couldn't broach easily?

With that thought, Min Ha-rin decided to open her mouth first.

"Um. How is President Neil doing?"

"To be honest, it's not looking very good at the moment. It wouldn't be strange if he died right now."

Leo's expression darkened at those words. This was because he knew it was Neil who'd saved him.

This fact caused Leo to feel a deep sense of gratitude and guilt.

Vincent's eyes turned to Min Ha-rin.

"...Min Ha-rin, I heard you were active in the Korea Branch for a while."

"Ah, yeah."

To be precise, she had been active in the entire Asian region, apart from Japan. Of course, she'd been more active in Korea. It was her greatest wish to achieve peace in her homeland more than anywhere else.

In truth, such patriotism was rare in this day and age. After all, it was hard to feel patriotic when the distinction between countries was not as clear as it had been in the past.

Now, the act of asking a hunter about their country was more to identify which branch they belonged to rather than where they were from.

"There is something urgent that needs to be done in Korea. Can you help us?"

"In Korea? Why there...?"

Vincent roughly explained the situation to an astonished Min Ha-rin. But as his explanation progressed, her expression became more and more serious.

After hearing everything he had to say, she muttered with a serious expression.

"Saint of Salvation..."

One of the Top Three.

She'd heard that he used holy power even more powerful than that of the Cardinals' and the Pope's of the Catholic church.

There were several reasons why he was famous, but one of his greatest achievements was his feat in Australia.

“There were rumours that he single-handedly killed five Marquises and raised the dead...” (TL: Marquis is between Duke and Count)

“I’d like to dismiss those as false rumors, but the testimonies of the eyewitnesses prevent that.”

In truth, the part that was the most shocking wasn’t the slaying of the Marquises but bringing the dead back to life.

Resurrection.

That was why he was called the Saint.

Of course, Min Ha-rin and Vincent were very skeptical about the rumors. It was different from other rumors.

For example, it sounded far less credible than Kran, another of the Top Three, slaying a Duke alone.

“...since you want to find him, does that mean that America knows the Saint’s true ability?”

“That’s not the case. Very little is known about the Top Three.”

Vincent muttered in a bitter tone. It was an honest statement.

Unlike Kran, who never hid himself, moved alone, and usually didn't care if people were monitoring him, the other paid close attention to remaining hidden.

The Black Witch who had never exposed her real appearance to the world or the Saint whose true appearance was still unknown because of the inconsistencies given by various eyewitnesses.

The two of them also had their own supporting forces.

The Black Witch's <Shroud of Night>.

The Saint's <Eternal Life Church>.

Both forces had fanatical loyalty to the two members of the Top Three, who were their founders and leaders.

“ ... ”

Min Ha-rin could feel the slight desperation and resignation in Vincent's voice.

It was only then when she realised. Just how desperate this man in front of her was. Glancing down at Leo who was lying on his bed, Min Ha-rin slowly opened her mouth.

“...I know the communication line that connects to Korea.”

“Really?”

Avoiding Vincent’s gaze, she continued in a heavy voice.

“Yeah. However... they wouldn’t let anyone other than me use the Warp Portal. Even if I talk to them and ask to bring companions, they wouldn’t let me bring more than two. No, three.”

“I see...”

Vincent, who’d appeared hopeful at first, deflated with a disappointed expression.

He remained silent for a moment with his head lowered before finally looking up at Min Ha-rin. The look in his eyes changed as though he’d finally made up his mind about something.

Then, without saying anything else, Vincent kneeled on the floor.

“M-, Mr. Vincent?”

“I know this is a very shameless act. But this is the only option left. Please. Please save the Association President.”

Thud.

Vincent's forehead hit the floor with a dull sound.

"Please. I beg you to help us."

Min Ha-rin looked down at Vincent, unable to say anything for a long time.

Season 2 Chapter 98

When Lukas finally arrived at Leo's hospital room, he immediately noticed the heavy atmosphere.

"Ah, Master."

"You're here."

Nevertheless, the expressions of the two in the room immediately changed when they saw him, and they greeted him with bright smiles.

Lukas nodded and turned to Leo.

"Leo, how are you feeling?"

“I’m a lot better now. Sorry for making you worry.”

Leo responded in a calm voice.

Lukas looked him in the eyes for a moment before speaking.

“Are you okay?”

“...yeah.”

“All right.”

Lukas didn’t ask him any more questions and instead turned to look at Min Ha-rin.

“Your mana flow seems much more stable than before. It was that guy I saw earlier, Vincent, who taught you, wasn’t it?”

“Ah, yeah. He’s a great teacher.”

As expected of her Master, he could tell that with a single glance.

Min Ha-rin couldn't help but smile as she had that thought, but her expression was a bit awkward.

"What's wrong?"

Min Ha-rin blinked in surprise at the unexpected question before smiling bitterly.

"...how did you know?"

"It's written all over your face."

When Min Ha-rin gently lifted a hand to her face, Lukas smiled softly.

"I'm joking."

"..."

It was a little strange for Lukas to say something like that. It was only then when Min Ha-rin noticed that there was something strange about Lukas' attitude.

'...did something happen to you, Master?'

This was a question that she wanted to ask, but Min Ha-rin couldn't open her mouth.

There were many reasons for this, but the most important reason was that she wasn't brave enough.

Lukas stood on a level way above her. So she could only imagine how great whatever was bothering her Master had to be. Because of this, a thought pervaded Min Ha-rin's mind.

What could she do even if she heard it?

"Tell me what happened."

This was said in a much softer tone than usual, discomfoting her even more.

Suppressing the strange feeling, Min Ha-rin slowly summarised everything she'd heard from Vincent.

"..."

After hearing what she had to say, Lukas remained silent for a while.

"So what did you say?"

"I told him that I needed time to think. I wanted to talk to Master first..."

“What do you want to do?”

“I want to help.”

After saying that, Min ha-rin turned to look at Leo.

“Because he saved Junior Brother... and because I have this feeling that it’s not the Association President’s time to die...”

That was an opinion Lukas could agree with.

It was not yet time for Neil to die. Of course, it could just be because of his biased views, but he felt that humanity still needed a being like Neil Prand.

“Then let’s do it. I happen to have business with the Saint, too.”

“Master too?”

“Right, I’m going to ask him to heal Nina.”

“Ah...”

Min Ha-rin felt a tiny shred of hope.

Nina Rednikova.

She'd been severely injured during the attack by the Asian hunters, especially her eyes, which had been cursed. The diagnosis determined that treatment would be impossible with the normal methods, but if the rumours of the Saint were true, then it might be possible.

"I can take up to four people to Korea with me! There's me and Master, and Mr. Vincent will probably want to go too. As for the last person..."

Min Ha-rin's eyes turned to Leo, and Lukas' followed.

Leo must have felt their gazes. Nevertheless, his expression didn't change. Instead, he slowly lowered his head.

"I'm sorry."

"Huh?"

"I..."

There was a deep sense of shame that squeezed out of Leo's calm face.

"...don't think I will go with you this time..."

* * *

Min Ha-rin headed over to meet Vincent after her short conversation with Lukas and Leo.

It seemed he'd returned to continue the meeting, but as soon as she alerted the guard waiting outside the room, he came out.

When he showed up, Vincent's face appeared to be much more haggard than when he'd left Leo's hospital room. It was as if the meeting was sapping all of his energy.

"You came."

There was a hint of tension that couldn't be hidden by his tired voice.

Seeing that Min Ha-rin had come to him, it meant that she had made a decision. However, her expression was so calm that he could not predict what choice she had made in the end.

Fortunately, Min Ha-rin didn't intend to procrastinate with this matter. She immediately got to the point.

"I'll accept Mr. Vincent's request. From now on, I will do my best to save the Association President."

"Re-, really?"

“Yes. In return, I have a few conditions. I hope Mr. Vincent can accept them.”

Vincent hurriedly schooled his expression.

“I’ll do whatever I can.”

Min Ha-rin nodded before mentioning the condition that she and Lukas had discussed.

“First of all, I’d like North America to officially acknowledge the establishment of Argento Spell.”

“...mm.”

Vincent couldn’t easily respond to this condition, and instead, he made a soft sound. There was a mixture of confusion and embarrassment on his face.

“Is it hard to agree to?”

“Personally, I would love to agree to it immediately. I would agree even if you mentioned a more difficult condition than that. However... this is not something that I’m able to decide on my own.”

“I see.”

Min Ha-rin nodded as though she'd expected it.

Authorising the establishment of an organisation was by no means simple. After all, it would mean that the North America Headquarters, which was the most powerful force in the world at the moment, recognised the establishment of Argento Spell. In short, they would be able to carry some of the prestige of North America.

This was a necessary process for Lukas to create a global organisation that went beyond the reach of each region and branch.

Of course, Min Ha-rin didn't understand the entire process and framework. After all, what she trusted wasn't the feasibility or validity of the plan but Lukas' existence. Even if he had decided upon a plan that seemed even less plausible, she would still give him her unconditional trust.

In any case, this was a matter of utmost importance. Vincent didn't have a low position in the North America headquarters, but he was not powerful enough to make such decisions on his own.

Vincent clenched and unclenched his fists nervously. He seemed concerned that Min Ha-rin would take back what she said if they couldn't agree.

"There are a few council members in the meeting hall right now, aren't there?"

"Right."

"Then wouldn't you be able to accept my offer if you persuaded them?"

“...that’s right.”

It was easy to say.

Vincent spoke with a heavy expression.

“It’s not that easy. Fortunately, most of the people in the meeting hall had a good relationship with the Association President. It might take some time, but I’m confident I could convince them to accept your conditions. However...”

Vincent’s voice faded at the end, but Min Ha-rin understood what he was trying to say.

“There are some people who are pleased with the fact that the Association President is injured.”

“Hoo.”

Vincent let out a heavy sigh.

Min Ha-rin couldn’t help but feel surprised. It seemed that even in North America, which she thought was perfectly united, some were antagonistic towards each other.

The reason was unexpected, but the outcome was something that Lukas had already anticipated.

“...of course, Argento Spell already has the extraordinary achievement of taking down one of the Five Dukes. It’s not widely known yet, but if they found out about this achievement, they would certainly not oppose you blindly. Even if they have high positions.”

“In other words, it will take time.”

“...I’m sorry.”

Min Ha-rin nodded at Vincent’s apology.

“That means my condition will be put on hold for now.”

“Is that alright with you?”

“Yeah.”

“Thank you for your consideration. Is there anything else you need?”

“Including myself, only four people will be able to go to Korea. So far, the list is myself, Mr. Vincent, and Master. As for the other person...”

Vincent shook his head before Min Ha-rin could finish talking.

“I’m sorry, but I won’t be able to go with you.”

“Huh?”

“I can’t leave the Association President’s side for now. He cannot be left alone. Someone has to watch over him.”

“...”

Vincent’s expression showed that he meant his words and that there would be no changing his mind.

Was he preparing for a possible assassination attempt?

This would make sense, especially if there were people who wanted Neil dead.

Min Ha-rin’s expression became a bit troubled.

“...then that means we’ll have to find two more... Mr. Vincent, would it be possible for you to gather some of the strongest and most reliable hunters in North America right now?”

Season 2 Chapter 99

Min Ha-rin's request was quickly accepted.

Vincent vowed to use all of the connections available to him to gather the very best hunters they had.

This was the selection of elite personnel who would be sent on a mission to save Neil. This matter was much more important for Vincent than it was for Min Ha-rin, so he would definitely find the most skilled and trustworthy hunters that he could.

They would most likely be hunters who weren't just renowned in North America but in the entire world.

'...I'll probably be the weakest...'

That thought made her feel depressed.

Min Ha-rin had managed to increase her combat power by a level through her fights with Vincent, but she knew that she was still lacking a lot.

She wanted to at least return to the level of the White Flower of the past, but for now, she was at best a 4-star Wizard.

'I have to reach 5 stars as soon as possible.'

Of course, she knew that reaching 5 stars wouldn't help her Master much.

Slaying one of the Five Dukes.

Her Master's achievement in Africa was amazing.

Of course, she'd personally seen him easily get rid of Duke Sandro with her own eyes, but she still found it hard to believe that he killed one of the Five Dukes.

'Why did Master take me as a disciple?'

All of sudden, this question appeared in her mind.

In her opinion, Lukas was close to perfect. Whether it was his skill, personality, or spirit, she could not find any flaws.

No matter how she looked at it, she could not find how she could be useful to such a master.

As she silently contemplated this question, the door to the meeting hall opened and a group of people came out. The meeting wasn't over, but it seemed they were taking a short break.

Min Ha-rin looked at their faces with a hint of admiration in their eyes.

'Powerful.'

She could tell from a glance. Each of these people had an aura that was as strong as if not stronger than Nina Rednikova's, the head of the Iron Blood Division, or Lee Jong-hak's.

These were some of the most powerful people in the entire world. Min Ha-rin couldn't help but feel even smaller.

It was then that she saw a familiar face among the group of unfamiliar faces.

She didn't have her usual arrogant expression, but she still appeared confident. Of course, she wasn't someone that Min Ha-rin was particularly close to or even fond of.

The woman also saw Min Ha-rin, which caused her expression to become a bit strange. Then, with a slight cough, she began walking towards her.

"Hello."

Min Ha-rin didn't expect her to greet her first.

She wanted to ignore her, but in order to not appear rude in front of the group of important individuals, she could only respond in a dull tone.

"...hello."

Joanna coughed again.

“What are you doing here?”

“I’m waiting for Mr. Vincent.”

“I see.”

“...”

Silence.

It was extremely awkward. Min Ha-rin felt frustrated because of the uncomfortable atmosphere that had descended around them. The fact that Joanna had come to talk to her meant that she wanted something, but from the look on her face, it seemed that she wouldn’t bring it up easily.

After being silent for a long time, Joanna finally opened her mouth.

“...how is that person?”

“That person?”

“Frey.”

Frey Blake.

That was the alias Lukas was currently using.

“He left a short while ago.”

“Where did he go?”

“I don’t know either... Is there something you need to say to Master?”

Subconsciously, her voice became sharp at the end.

Had she been offended by the fact that she called her Master’s name so recklessly?

Or was it because of the hint of familiarity in her voice when she mentioned Lukas?

“Are you Frey’s disciple?”

“...”

She answered a question with a question. Min Ha-rin decided to nod her head without mentioning it.

“Yeah.”

“Then you must also be a member of that group called ‘Argento Spell’.”

“That’s right.”

“ ... ”

Joanna’s expression became one of deep contemplation for a moment.

‘Joanna Goldberg.’

While staying in America, she’d learned a bit about her. She hadn’t even needed to go looking for information.

For example, it was easy to see broadcasts she’d appeared in while watching TV. And since Joanna was also a fashion model, she would see her image whenever she opened a magazine that she got from a store down the street.

She was the youngest Archmage as well as a celebrity.

She was a big star who received enthusiastic support from the American people to the extent that she even had her own fan club.

At the very least, it was safe to say that there was not a single young person living in America who didn't know who she was.

It was understandable.

After all, from an objective perspective, she could admit that Joanna was extremely beautiful, and she was also quite skilled at talking. In addition to that, she was also a talented hunter.

However, among all of her traits, the thing to which Min Ha-rin paid the most attention was her skill in magic.

'...there is not much of an age difference between us, but she's already an Archmage.'

Lukas had once told her the difference between a 6 star and a 7-star Wizard.

Simply put, the difference between them was like heaven and earth. It was a gap that could not be closed despite being only one level apart.

"On your mission in Africa."

"Huh? Oh, yeah."

Joanna, who seemed to have been lost in thought, regained her senses with a shake of her head.

“Did something happen between you and Master?”

“...something?”

“I feel like your attitude has changed a lot.”

Min Ha-rin spoke in a direct tone.

Joanna’s expression became a bit sullen. For her, her first meeting with Lukas had already become dark history.

“Now that I think of it, I never apologised for my attitude at that time. I’m sorry. I was immature.”

“It’s fine.”

“...I’ll be sure to apologise to Frey later.”

After saying that, Joanna pointed to the seat beside Min Ha-rin.

“Can I sit there?”

“Yeah.”

“Thank you.”

Even after she sat down, Joanna remained silent for a long time. Then, after their surroundings had become almost completely silent, she opened her mouth again.

“Do you know Frey’s true identity? Er, I’m not trying to pick a fight or anything. I’m just curious.”

Lukas’ identity...

In truth, Min Ha-rin didn’t know much about him. When she slowly shook her head, Joanna spoke in a cautious voice.

“...I might.”

“...?”

“I might know Frey’s true identity.”

Min Ha-rin couldn’t help but blink slowly at those words.

“...huh?”

* * *

Taht.

He arrived at his destination.

As he landed, Lukas looked around.

A city in Northern Ireland.

To be precise, it was the city that Sedi had once used as her hideout.

Currently, the city had taken the appearance one would expect to see from a city that wasn't protected by the association. In other words, it was in ruins.

Lukas slowly walked down the street where he could barely sense any human presence before stopping at a certain place.

“...”

Even in the ruined city, this place could only be called the scene of a disaster.

He could hardly imagine what had happened to give it such an appearance. Even if the greatest natural disaster imaginable to man had swept through this place, it wouldn't have been this devastating.

However, for the site of a battle between Absolutes, it was still lacking.

Lukas knelt down as he slowly inspected the deep hole that seemed to stretch to the very core of the world.

It was as though a giant worm had drilled its way into the ground.

'Warrior King Fist.'

Lukas could easily feel Kasajin's traces.

Suddenly, he felt a faint presence. Lukas' eyebrows furrowed slightly, and a hint of disbelief appeared in his eyes.

No. It wasn't possible.

Despite his denial, Lukas still spread his senses toward the presence. He got up from his seat and gradually began walking towards it. The closer he got, the clearer the presence became. At that point, it became difficult for him to deny it.

After a while, Lukas stopped in front of a collapsed building. As soon as he waved his hand, the rubble of the building split apart, and the limp figure of a little girl was revealed.

She wasn't dead. She was simply unconscious.

This was the first time Lukas was seeing this girl, but it wasn't the first time he'd met her. As strange as that sounded, it was true.

Lukas could easily tell the true identity of this being who had taken the form of a young girl.

"...Sedi."

The Absolute, Sedi.

She was still alive.

Only, she was different from before.

Season 2 Chapter 100

Kasajin was carving a statue.

He was holding a large piece of wood, but when it sat in Kasajin's huge hand, it looked like a wooden chopstick.

Shuk shuk-

He didn't use any special tools. The nail of his index finger was sharper than most famed swords, so they performed the task better than any carving knife.

Over time, the piece of wood held in the large hand gradually began to take shape, and before long, it turned into the figure of a man.

After he was done, Kasajin looked down at the finished sculpture.

Lukas Trowman.

[...]

He didn't feel emotional. In fact, he didn't feel anything.

What he sought now was practicality, efficiency, and balance.

"My King."

Then, Azazel's voice sounded. For a moment, his eyes locked onto the wooden statue Kasajin had sculpted.

There was a brief flash of emotion in Azazel's black eyes, but it disappeared as suddenly as it appeared.

He spoke politely.

"Duke Rose has once again gone against your will."

Deep anger was clear in Azazel's voice. After all, Rose had ignored his advice and instead continued doing as she pleased.

On the other hand, Kasajin's voice was as calm as ever.

[I see.]

"It is time for her to be punished for her insolence. You don't need to act personally, my King. Just give me the order. I will ensure to properly imprint the authority of the Demon King into her foolish brain."

[You don't need to do that.]

Kasajin shook his head.

[There is something more important I'd like you to do.]

“A task...”

[Summon Ugkas and Sipakna.]

Azazel’s eyes flashed with surprise.

He could understand why he might have wanted Ugkas, but Sipakna as well?

Did this mean that whatever he needed required the strength of two of the Five Dukes?

“What orders should I give them?”

Kasajin stopped fiddling with the statue and placed it down.

[Capture Kran of the Top Three.]

* * *

From the moment she was born, she felt like there was a large hole in her heart.

“...”

It just flowed.

All of the components that made up the concept of 'I' became thin liquids that blended and mixed before becoming part of a calm river. They began following a current that had a beginning but seemed to have no end.

In some cases, some parts became more prominent while others were lost entirely.

But Sedi Glaston's thoughts were the same from the start.

'I feel dirty.'

Her body had already disappeared, but she was still able to look around. Up until now, her body had been floating in the river like pieces of a broken star.

Each piece contained hundreds of years of memories. But most of them were just trivial things.

A cynical smile stretched across Sedi's lips.

'Is this what they meant by 'your life flashing before your eyes'?''

It was a funny thought.

Sedi never would have thought that she'd die like this.

Then, a broken star piece touched her.

Paht!

And Sedi saw her past unfold before her eyes.

* * *

Sedi found herself standing on a wasteland, where the sun blazed down on the barren, cracked ground with never-ending sandstorms.

Sedi realised that this was a memory from when she was a mortal.

She calmly looked around at this nostalgic scene as though she'd simply found an old diary.

It was a planet of fighters who never stopped fighting. In this world, where everything was fought for, Sedi was treated like a traitor. This was because of her unique appearance.

On this planet, where night didn't exist, no one else had pale skin and black hair like she did. This was probably the reason why the large hole had formed in her heart.

Sedi's parents had abandoned her at birth. Nevertheless, she was lucky enough to survive.

And when that luck ran out, that is, when she was able to stand on her own two feet, Sedi took her life into her own hands and worked to gain her own food and weapons.

Her story wasn't grand or extravagant. In fact, it was quite simple.

On the planet of fighters, Sedi fought more than anyone else and lost less than anyone else. And one day, the fighters began calling her 'the Reaper'.

'At that time, I felt the most alive.'

As she had this thought, the memory that Sedi was witnessing quickly progressed.

When she turned 30, she had the final battle with the Lord of the planet. He was a half step from becoming a transcendent, and Sedi had nearly died no fewer than five times in their fight. But in the end, she was the winner.

Sedi tore out his heart with her bare hands and ate it. The Lord had laughed loudly one last time as he accepted his defeat.

And with that, Sedi was able to step past the shell of mortality.

What came after was a tale that anyone who'd become an Absolute had experienced.

God came to her and offered her a chance to leave. And without even the slightest shred of hesitation, she took his hand.

She thought that there was nothing more for her in that universe and that by becoming an Absolute, she'd be able to fill the hole in her heart.

But the work of an Absolute was more tedious than she'd initially expected.

The pursuit of universal harmony. The words sounded grandiose, but in truth, she was little more than God's errand boy. In fact, she couldn't help but feel that it had been more rewarding to constantly risk her life back on the planet of fighters.

After carrying out the same task over and over again for a long time, her sense of self gradually began to fade.

Her individuality gradually disappeared and she became a rigid, inflexible existence just like the other Absolutes.

Then, she found the Ruler.

The Black Horned Demon God.

When she met him, for the first time in her life, Sedi gave up the thought of fighting.

She'd finally found someone whom she was afraid of. And, naturally, she submitted to him.

From that day forth, Sedi was bestowed the name 'Glaston' by the Demon God and was taken under his wing.

Sedi worshipped the Demon God with all her heart. She truly believed that despite being a Ruler, he was a being greater than God. She believed that if she served him, the hole in her heart would be filled.

In fact, whenever she followed his orders, she never had to think about the pain in her chest.

Feeling satisfied with that fact, she followed the Demon God unconditionally. Sedi thought that the Demon God would also care about her, in particular, to some extent.

After all, there were few Absolutes who carried out orders as faithfully as she did.

And yet...

'...it's the Demon King, not me.'

The Demon King.

Sedi had realised it the moment she met him. Whom, between her and the Demon King, the Demon God cared about more.

She couldn't understand it. And she fought desperately and resentfully. But she was defeated horribly.

A devastating defeat was worse than anything she'd experienced in her long life.

The Demon King took everything from Sedi.

Not just the external force that made her an Absolute but even the demonic energy that the Demon God had personally bestowed to her.

Sedi didn't have any complaints about it. Because the law of the jungle, in which the strong preyed upon the weak and the defeated lost everything, was already deeply entrenched in her mind.

Nevertheless, her misery didn't disappear.

'Did I live just for this moment?'

To give up everything she'd built to that Demon King?

As she had that thought, Sedi couldn't help but let out a self-deprecating laugh.

Why did she think that?

Was she trying to make her death seem more noble? Did she still think of herself as an Absolute?

No. That wasn't it.

Sedi was just upset that everything she'd achieved until now had been in vain.

Of course, she had made several achievements as an Absolute. After all, she'd saved at least a few hundred universes from destruction.

But she didn't feel any sense of accomplishment in that.

Sedi wasn't satisfied.

'I guess I'll disappear into the post extinction world now...'

The post extinction world.

It was the underworld to which Absolutes, whose bodies and souls had separated, were sent. It was a place no Absolute had ever returned from.

'...ha.'

It was only then when Sedi finally understood her true feelings.

-I don't want to die yet.

Suddenly.

“Ah...”

The calm flow of the river suddenly sped up as it began to be sucked in a specific direction. Sedi, who was blankly drifting along the river, was caught up in the flow and sucked in as well.

Then, a pure white light enveloped her body.

“...Ah.”

And a voice sounded.

Sensing the sudden change, Sedi opened her eyes. And after blinking a few times, her blurry vision cleared up.

‘This is...’

It was an abandoned building.

No. It was a half-destroyed building that could barely be called abandoned. She could see the night sky from the completely broken ceiling.

It was a familiar sight.

It took Sedi a few moments to realise that this was the half-destroyed house she'd been staying in since she arrived.

She sat up.

“Ugh...”

Then, she collapsed again as a throbbing pain wracked her entire body.

It was at that moment when she heard a voice.

“It would be best not to move.”

A familiar voice.

When Sedi turned her head, she saw Lukas leaning against a wall, looking at her.

“...you...”

“I’m amazed you’re still alive.”

“I’m... alive...? I.. Gurk!”

Sedi spat out a mouthful of blood.

Then she looked at the blood she’d just spat out with a startled expression.

This feeling.

A feeling that she hadn’t felt in a very long time.

That of a body of flesh and blood instead of the body of a transcendent.

She spoke up with a confused voice.

“M-, my... my body. What the hell happened to my body?”

“Do you really not know, Sedi Glaston? Or do you not want to know?”

Sedi looked at Lukas with a blank expression. The voice that she heard after carried a slight hint of bitterness.

“You have been demoted from your position as an Absolute.”

“Wh-, what are you talking about?”

“You are now...”

Lukas paused for a moment before finishing his statement.

“...mortal.”