

Great Mage 661

Book 2: Chapter 361

Hector scoffed.

“There’s no need for your empty words, what’s the situation?”

“...the outskirts of the city are basically destroyed at this point. I intend to send a rescue team, but I don’t have much hope that they will find any survivors. Fortunately, there haven’t been any reports of undead in the heart of the city, so I decided to have everyone evacuate to the city square first and then build a barricade.”

“A barricade? I think that would be useless.”

“Most of the undead that appeared are only low level. It should be enough to last about an hour.”

“...just low level undead? Diablo himself didn’t come?”

Hector’s question was valid.

He knew how terrible Diablo’s personal army of undead was. If even 10 percent of that force appeared in this city, then the barricades would amount to nothing.

But if all the undead that had appeared in the city were low level, then it was possible that Diablo himself might not have come personally.

“No. Diablo might still be here. He has already consumed most of his elite army. So it’s highly likely that the only undead he can currently mobilise are the low level ones currently in the city.”

When Peran said this in a confident tone, Hector tilted his head to the side.

“This is my first time hearing about this. Where did you hear that from?”

“That...”

If he were to tell the truth then he would inevitably have to mention Snow.

When Peran trailed off at the end of his word, Hector let out a soft chuckle.

“It’s fine if you can’t tell us the reason. We’ll believe your words for now.”

“Thank you.”

“...then back to what you were saying about building a barricade. As you said, it would only be able to buy us time. At most, it would only mean that they will die a few hours later.”

Asilla's eyebrows twitched slightly at the cynical remark.

"Then do you have a better plan?"

"I can't say that it's better, but I do have a plan."

"Let's hear it."

"You know that there is also a warp stone in this city as well, don't you?"

"...it's covered in dust. That piece of junk can't be used."

"If it's broken, I can fix it."

That wasn't a lie.

If it was Hector, he would probably be able to fix it in a matter of minutes. That was a fact that she admitted, albeit reluctantly.

"What would you do about the mana required to power it?"

"I have dozens of golem cores. There's a lot of ME sleeping inside them. We also have a Great Wizard here, don't we?"

Despite Hector's unstoppable words, Asilla's expression did not become better.

After all, the most important issue still existed.

"...there are 100,000 people in Yuterdam..."

Hector's expression shifted a bit when he heard that.

"Even if I take the damage we've already suffered and the future into account, the number of survivors wouldn't fall below 60,000 or 70,000. It would be impossible to move them all with the warp stone."

"Naturally, even if we use all of my cores and all of Peran's mana, we would only be able to operate the warp stone a dozen times or so at best. Even if we packed the warp stone every time we used it, we would probably only be able to move around 100 people."

"In other words, you're saying that we would only be able to save 10 percent of our population?" (PR: 10% of 60,000 is 6,000... 100 x 12 is 1200... Try 2%, math is hard lol)

Hector also frowned when he heard Asilla's sarcastic tone.

"What's with that look on your face? Do you really think I want to throw them away?"

"This... is my city."

“I know that.”

“The people you’re suggesting I leave behind are my people.”

“So?”

“...perhaps we can find another-”

“Asilla Goldiroth.”

For the first time since he entered the room, Hector spoke in a cold voice as he called her full name.

“It seems your old way of thinking hasn’t changed. Have you already forgotten why your people perished?”

“...”

“Cut what needs to be cut, and throw away what needs to be thrown away. That is one of the truths I learned over the past few thousand years.”

Crunch.

The sound of Asilla quietly gritting her teeth filled the room. The atmosphere in the room froze in an instant.

Despite Hector's rebuke, Asilla was still hesitating on making a decision.

It was at this moment that Peran, who had been silent the entire time, finally opened his mouth again.

"Why is Diablo aiming for Yuterdam?"

"That... probably because he wants the black box that I have."

"Do you mean the black box you showed us earlier?"

"Right."

"..."

If they gave Diablo that box, there was a chance he might retreat.

Well, no one actually believed that possibility. If Diablo had wanted to talk in the first place, he would not have summoned an undead army.

“...that box, where is it now?”

Nevertheless, the fact that the box was a key item that had great significance in the current situation couldn't be denied.

“I don't have it.”

There was a hint of a sigh in Asilla's voice.

“Because I already gave it to Iris.”

* * *

“Kuk...”

Blood gushed from his slit back.

It could be considered fortunate that the blade hadn't reached his spine, but that didn't mean that the wound wasn't fatal.

Iris hurriedly tried to stop the bleeding and close the wound using black magic, but the effect was insignificant.

“Why... I...”

She forcibly suppressed her rising doubts.

The reason this man used his body to protect her, Diablo’s goal... and even the appearance of an undead Lucid.

There were a lot of questions she wanted to know the answers for, but now wasn’t the time to think about that.

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“I can’t...”

The blood wouldn’t stop flowing.

She wasn’t using much black magic, but if she were to increase the output, it might cause the opposite effect from what she wanted. He might die immediately.

Then... What should she do?

At this rate, this man would die.

When she thought of that fact, for some reason, it made her feel strangely anxious. She could also taste blood on her lip where she bit it too hard.

She didn't understand. Why was she so upset?

Was it because this man had saved her? It was true that she never expected it and that she was grateful and sorry for him.

However, even so, it shouldn't affect her this much.

Even if Sheryl, her most loyal subordinate at this point, were in a similar state, she would not be more flustered than usual.

—You still dislike unexpected situations.

—But... I'm glad you didn't get hurt.

She still remembered the words Lukas left before he collapsed.

At that moment, it felt like something was stuck in her throat. She felt like if she opened her mouth now, she might cry.

This couldn't be happening. No way.

This wasn't like her.

Iris shook her head.

Woowoong-

Suddenly, she felt a vibration from her bag.

Opening it, Iris slowly pulled something out and held it in front of her.

"This..."

It was the black box she got from Asilla.

It was rattling and trembling as if it was alive.

Just as Iris tried to touch it with her finger.

Swoosh-

She felt a presence nearby.

Instantly going on alert, Iris quickly turned around.

But it wasn't Diablo or Lucid standing behind her.

"You..."

The person standing behind her was a woman, but her gaze was not on Iris.

Her eyes, which were shaking with agitation, were looking at something else.

To be precise, they were looking at Lukas, who was laying on the ground.

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Silence descended upon the hall.

Hector and Asilla glared at each other. The tension was thick, but it was Asilla who looked away first.

She herself admitted it to some extent. She knew how selfish and ridiculous she was being at that moment.

But even if she knew... Wasn't she supposed to be?

It was a realistic and feasible solution. Of course it was good. However, it was too cruel to treat and judge things so logically. Especially when there were so many lives at stake.

Wouldn't it be better to take the risk and try to save the lives of the majority even when the probability was low rather than certainly saving the lives of a few?

At the very least, for Asilla, even if she were to lose the gamble, she could die with a smile.

But Hector was different. That was why they could not understand each other.

Not once even in thousands of years.

"I don't think we'd be able to easily leave with the warp stone."

Peran's words brought her to her senses.

"The enemy is a 9 star Wizard. There is no way that he won't notice a large scale warp spell. He also has enough power to stop it."

"Well, I suppose."

...It was absurd.

Asilla had a blank expression for a moment, then she turned to glare at Hector.

“...you already knew that.”

“I didn’t know.”

“You knew that and you were just messing with me.”

From the start, mentioning the warp stone had been a trick. Hector pretended to look away, but Asilla was already bubbling with rage.

This was the point.

This was exactly why Asilla hated Hector.

“I don’t think Lady Iris was defeated so easily.”

Once again, it was Peran who roused her from her thoughts.

“And even if she was, it would have been impossible for Diablo to do it alone.”

“Hey, what are you trying to say?”

“Lady Asilla, can you observe Diablo’s current position?”

Most of the barriers had been broken, but the observation function should not have been damaged.

Peran had asked this with that expectation, and his prediction was not wrong.

“Although that’s possible... I don’t think seeing it would change anything.”

“It might change a lot of things.”

“...fine.”

As she said this, Asilla’s eyes widened.

Then blinked. For a moment, her eyes glowed amber.

Jing-

The light emanating from her eyes formed a shape.

Upon seeing this shape, Peran made an expression of surprise. This wasn't magic. Then was it a type of divination? It just felt different from that.

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It felt like a skill that was impossible for a normal person, it was something that could only be attached to a magical artificial lifeform.

"Lady Asilla, are you by chance..."

"Don't say more than that."

Asilla spoke with a wistful smile.

Peran did not speak any further and instead focused on the image that appeared in front of him.

The light had changed its shape and soon became a bird's eye view of a certain place.

A ruined city. Yuterdam.

Undead could be seen ravaging citizens who had no way to resist. It was a scene of horrendous slaughter. The citizens tried to beg for mercy from the egoless undead. But it was no different from trying to talk to a natural disaster.

“ ... ”

Peran bit his lip and revealed a pained expression as he witnessed the horrors, but he soon stopped.

Now wasn't the time to dwell on his anger.

He had to find it.

Peran's eyes moved busily.

'...Diablo alone isn't enough.'

Something that drove Snow to the brink of death, and even put Iris' life in danger.

Diablo alone was not enough. There was definitely 'something' more.

'Where is it?'

Where would he hide such a being, or a means?

...Diablo had lost most of his elite legion in his battle against Snow. The undead who were currently attacking were all low level undead who were no different from dead animals without an ego.

For him, Yuterdam was no different from an enemy stronghold. There was no way that he would advance to the city center while relying on nothing but low level undead.

No matter how confident he was in his ability to crush the city, he was Diablo.

As long as he had the thoroughness that everyone mentioned, then he would have at least two or three failsafes in place.

...A definite means of protecting himself.

Of course, there was no guarantee that the 'something' was what placed Snow in a near death state, but it might give him a hint.

After a while, Peran's eyes turned to a certain place.

Among the low level undead in that place was a single high level undead.

A knight in black armor, a Death Knight.

...And.

In its hand was a familiar sword.

The moment he saw that familiar sword, his body shook as if an electric current had run through his entire body.

“...Mr. Hector.”

“Did you notice some, Peran.”

“Perhaps. But before that, I’d like to ask you something.”

“Go ahead.”

“Among the Swordsmen of our era, is there anyone who could compete with Lady Snow?”

Although he seemed to have no connection to the world, an impression that most people believed, Peran knew the truth.

Hector’s information network stretched across the entire continent.

It wasn’t just his store that had branches in every country.

“...I don’t know. If it had been five years ago, I might have said that kid Jekid.”

The man in question had already lost to Snow in a fair duel. With quite a big gap as well.

The title 'Master of the Sword' had been Snow's since that day, and people respectfully referred to her as the 'White Supreme'.

"Other than him, I can't think of anyone."

"Then, how about in the past?"

"Huh?"

"Are there any great men or heroes recorded in history?"

"Peran, what the hell are you thinking?"

"Something crazy."

Peran gaze was still locked onto the Death King and on the sword he was holding.

"...please give me some time... 15 minutes, no, 10 minutes is enough."

“Do you have a plan?”

Peran nodded.



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“Sp-, spare me...”

A young woman begged with tears streaming down her face.

Her face was pale, and her entire body shook incessantly from fear.

[...]

Lucid’s movements stopped.

The tip of his sword, which was raised high in preparation to swing, quivered uncontrollably.

Perhaps this action gave the young woman hope, as her horrified expression gained a hint of expectation.

Bang!

Suddenly, a giant hand of bone appeared in the air before smashing the woman to bits.

Blood splattered everywhere.

Lucid wasn't spared from the impromptu shower. The drops of blood standing out starkly on his pitch black armor.

[...it's still not perfect.]

Diablo let out a long sigh.

He'd thought he'd been able to completely corrupt Lucid's heroic character, but he had been wrong. The command system had been established perfectly, but it seemed that he still needed to make some adjustments when it came to particular details.

He looked around.

Although his surroundings were a scene of misery and horror, Diablo's unmoving heart was not affected. Instead, he was just calculating how many undead he would be able to extract from this city.

Even though he had already received the cooperation of most Wizards, a trump card like Lucid, and killed Snow, it was still a bit reckless to openly take on the entire continent on his own.

‘The majority of people here are just civilians without any combat capabilities. Even if I revived all of them, they wouldn’t be very useful.’

It would be very difficult for him to obtain a useful army here.

Of course, if he were to slowly inject his death energy into them over time it would be possible for him to transform them into a useful force. But, unfortunately, Diablo didn’t have that much time.

Iris Phisfounder easily had the ability to call reinforcements. Of course, it wouldn’t be much of a threat unless she brought in a major player like Ivan, but Diablo was not in his prime state yet.

There was no need to bet on unclear odds.

Moreover, the goal of this attack wasn’t to kill someone.

[I didn’t think you would come personally.]

As he said that, Diablo turned to look behind him.

Asilla was standing there.

Srrng-

Lucid drew his sword and tried to step in front of him, but Diablo raised his bleached white hand.

[Asilla Goldiroth, the Demigod's plaything. How does it feel to live while trapped in that fragile body.]
(TL: So she *is* a Dragon.)

"..."

[I can't imagine that it would be pleasant.]

The flames in Diablo's eye sockets burned brightly.

Asilla met his gaze for a while before finally opening her mouth.

"Did you really need to do this?"

[Hmm.]

"If you had tried to negotiate, I would have agreed."

[I do not believe so.]

"Why?"

[Because if that truly were the case, you would not have called the Black Witch immediately after obtaining that item.]

Asilla's eyes went wide.

[There's no need to be so surprised. There wasn't a leak of information. It was purely a speculative conclusion. It hadn't been long since you obtained that item and Iris appeared in this city. That wouldn't have been possible without a quick and accurate response. In other words, you had no intention of giving that item to me from the beginning.]

"...do you even know what that thing is?"

[It seems you believe I am unreasonable enough to be greedy over something that I don't know the true value of.]

Crunch.

His skeletal fingers twitched ominously.

[I have a question for you.]

As expected, he also had a goal.

Perhaps that was the reason he was still allowing Asilla to live.

[Where did you obtain that box?]

“...shouldn't you know as well? I heard that you arrived just after I retrieved the box.”

[That's roughly true. But I would still like to be sure. Of course, it doesn't matter if you don't want to answer.]

'In that case I wouldn't have more business with you.'

Although he didn't say those last words, it was basically spelled out by the atmosphere.

Asilla hesitated.

In all honesty, it wasn't that difficult to answer his question.

However, what would happen next?... It had been less than a minute since she'd started this confrontation with Diablo. According to Peran, she needed to buy at least 9 more minutes.

She knew if they were to fight she wouldn't even last 10 seconds, let alone 9 minutes, so she had to find some way to drag on the conversation...

Should she try to trick him? Or say that she couldn't tell him so easily?

No, she couldn't. That wouldn't work.

Diablo had probably spoken his true feelings.

It wouldn't matter to him whether she told him or not, he was just trying to be sure.

This person would have no regrets even if he didn't get to hear a definite answer from Asilla.

In that case...

"The Amakan Desert."

First of all, confess the truth.

[...]

Diablo's eyes shimmered slightly.

Perhaps it was because he found Asilla's compliance surprising.

Or maybe the answer he received was different from what he was expecting.

The answer came a few moments later in the form of a murmur from Diablo.

[I see, as expected.]

As he said those words, the hand that had been restraining Lucid fell.

Then Diablo spoke in a brief tone.

[Now to end this.]

* * *

“...”

A familiar place.

This was the thought Lukas had as he opened his eyes.

Whether it was a dream or reality, his mind was a bit clouded. But that wasn't because there was a problem with his mind. Instead, it was as if this space forcibly blurred his consciousness.

“The name Great Mage must be crying.”

A voice drifted into his ears.

When he turned his head, he was met with the unfamiliar face of a familiar person.

...A man, the same Kasajin he'd met last time.

He was sitting on a boulder, swinging his skinny legs in a motion that didn't match his aura.

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His memories slowly came back to him. Lukas had been here before, and he'd also met Kasajin before.

It was strange.

Why had he forgotten this?

“I wasn't bored.”

“...what?”

“Watching you roll around like that, time passed really quickly. But what the hell? Roll, roll, roll... How the hell did the world’s Lukas Trowman become like that? No. That’s not it.”

Kasajin smiled cheekily.

“You’ve always been like that.”

“Like what?”

“You’ve always been more comfortable when you’re rolling around in dog shit than when you’re at ease... There’s a word for that. What was it again? I think they call it masochism?”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“Kekeke.”

Perhaps it was because of his joke, or Kasajin’s vulgar laughter.

But Lukas also burst into a ridiculous laugh before his expression changed.

“Kasajin.”

“What?”

“...are you the real Kasajin?”

It might just be his feeling, but when he said those words, Lukas felt like his surroundings became a bit clearer.

But he still couldn't tell where this place was.

Maybe he really was dreaming.

“I'm not sure if there is enough time.”

“What?”

“Follow me and see for yourself.”

As he said that, Kasajin got up from his seat.

“What kind of place this is.”

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Immediately after leaving the dark cave, they were met with a grey world.

The sky was clear as if there was no ocean to reflect colour from, and the ground was covered in something like dry sand.

The reason it was 'something like' was because while it had the appearance of sand, it clearly wasn't. It had a unique, near white colour that was similar to the sky above— the latter also seemed to be wriggling as if it were alive.

"Follow me."

Kasajin spoke up again in an indifferent tone.

He'd told him to see this place for himself. Even if Lukas asked him any questions, he probably wouldn't receive an answer.

So Lukas followed him in silence.

Stranger to him than the unfamiliar texture of the ground and the desert-like surroundings over which there wasn't a single hint of breeze, was Kasajin's very existence.

He wasn't used to it.

The rag-like garments he wore did not detract attention from his arms and legs which looked like the withered branches of an old tree. It felt like even if he dressed a scarecrow in the same way, it wouldn't be as thin as him.

This thought made him bitter. Was this man really Kasajin?

At that time, he could not feel any of the charisma of the Warrior King who had polished his body to the limit in the past.

...No. Now wasn't the time for him to worry about that.

Without a doubt, Kasajin probably had the same thought when he saw Lukas.

Coo... oo... oo...

Suddenly, a strange sound drifted over.

Taking his eyes off of Kasajin's back, Lukas turned to find the source of the sound. And immediately after almost leapt away.

A strange creature he'd never seen before in his life was slowly moving past.

"..."

What was that?

He couldn't think of anything to compare it to. He had never seen an animal or a monster that had a similar appearance.

It walked on six legs while a pair of degenerated wings hung uselessly on its back. There were no eyes or ears on what appeared to be its head, but two protruding noses moved around busily.

Sniff, sniff...

The busiest part of the creature's body were its noses. The huge pair of noses moved around like an insect's antennae, and its nostrils opened and closed constantly. It turned its head to them as if it sensed their presence.

Depending on the perspective, it looked quite creepy.

Of course, Lukas paid more attention to the sharp claws on each of its six feet than its noses.

"Leave it. Two noses is harmless."

"Two noses?"

"That's that guy's name."

“That’s a weird name.”

“That so?”

Despite his words, Kasajin continued walking with an even pace.

Lukas hesitated for only a moment before following behind him. And as Kasajin said, the creature didn’t seem to have any intention of attacking them.

When two noses had completely vanished from their sight, Kasajin finally spoke up again.

“Is it really weird?”

“...”

The name two noses.

You came up with it.

* * *

After that, strange creatures began appearing one after the other.

A bed with hands and feet.

A monster with a huge body that looked like a tongue and was covered in tentacles.

A giant whose face was in the middle of his chest.

All of them were monstrous creatures that even Lukas, who had visited countless universes, was seeing for the first time.

Whenever Kasajin saw them, he would tell him the name he had given them.

That was sleeper, that was bunch of tongues, that was face giant...

But unlike the countless monsters that appeared, the surrounding landscape changed very little.

They were still strolling across the pale grey desert with a similar coloured sky hanging above their heads.

How many monsters had they encountered so far?

How far had they walked?

Shortly after crossing over a sand dune that was more like a sand mountain, Kasajin spoke.

“We’re here. Do you see that castle?”

“...castle?”

Lukas looked where Kasajin was pointing, but there were no castles in his sight.

However... there was something there. Noise? No. It would probably be more accurate to call it a mirage. It was as if something was trying to hide itself away.

“I guess you can’t see it.”

Kasajin tilted his head to the side.

“It seems it still isn’t enough.”

“What’s not enough?”

“It shouldn’t be because of Diablo... Ah. That’s right. It’s probably her.”

Lukas' expression changed at his sudden words.

"...you know about Diablo?"

"I already told you. I've been watching everything from here. Anyway, I guess you're still lacking the qualifications."

"Qualifications?"

Once again, his question was left unanswered. Depending on who it was, when their questions were avoided so many times, it could bother them more than being lied to.

It was something that would've driven most to anger, but Lukas just let out a deep sigh instead.

"This isn't like you, Kasajin."

"Isn't like me?"

"You've been avoiding my question all this time. Of the questions that I've had since coming to this place, you haven't answered a single one."

Where was this place?

Why did you look like that?

Are you even real?

Regardless of how many times he asked, Kasajin always remained silent.

But this time, his expression was a bit different.

Lukas slowly opened his mouth.

“I saw you.”

And started talking.

About Kasajin, but not Kasajin.

About the Demon King, not the Magic Warrior King.

“In a different universe... You were the subordinate of the Black Horned Demon King, a Ruler, and you slaughtered countless humans.”

“ ... ”

"I would like you to answer this. Was that really you? The Demon King, was that really the Kasajin I knew?"

"No."

The answer came without hesitation.

It was the answer Lukas wanted, but the more he listened, the more confused he became.

"That wasn't me. However, that guy, the Demon King you knew, was Kasajin."

"Then you..."

"I'm just the dregs, Lukas, trash that doesn't even deserve to talk to you."

For the first time, Kasajin smiled bitterly.

"You said I was avoiding answering? That's not it. It's that I can't answer. Just like you could preach about the endless multiverse to the mortals in this world and no one would understand a word you say, similarly, you cannot understand my situation. That's the kind of place this is."

"...is it because I don't have the qualifications yet?"

“...”

Kasajin’s silence was as good an affirmation as any.

“...this is the second time you’ve come here. You even wandered around for a while before leaving. You don’t understand just how ridiculous that is.”

“...”

“However, I, we, saw a possibility. Lukas Trowman, even if I am dregs, I will help you walk that path again. Just like 4,000 years ago.”

For a moment, Lukas had a brief sense of nostalgia.

The last time he’d had this feeling was when Kasajin had reminded him of the existence of Frey Blake...

Lukas’ expression became urgent.

That was usually a sign that he was about to leave this world.

“Wait a minute. Kasajin, I still—”

Another question would remain unanswered. No. That wasn't all.

Lukas definitely had more to say to Kasajin.

"You will definitely do well, Lukas. The next clue is the box, and Diablo."

"What—"

With a bewildered expression, Lukas disappeared before he could even finish his sentence.

Kasajin stood alone on the dune and stared out across the landscape. Suddenly, he collapsed to the ground in an exhausted manner. He couldn't help but feel that it would have been nice if there was even a little wind.

Unfortunately for him, that was not the case.

* * *

Asilla didn't feel like Deukid was a sword. Instead, it was more like a large building, like a castle, was compressed into the shape of the sword and swung around.

Bang!

With every swing, the ground shook and there was the sound of an explosion.

Krrr...

The tall, splendid buildings that had surrounded them gradually crumbled like sand castles. And with each one that crumbled, it felt like a piece of her heart crumbled with it. She really was deeply attached to Yuterdam.

[...]

Lucid suddenly stopped moving. The head that was completely wrapped in black armour also seemed to be a bit tilted. It wasn't strange for him to be puzzled.

Asilla, the platinum blonde woman in front of him, had almost no fighting ability.

Diablo's words 'fragile body' hadn't just been a mockery, they were true. And yet, Lucid had failed to hit her three times in a row.

[I see.]

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Diablo, who was observing from the side, quickly understood the reason for this.

He could see Asilla's lips moving slightly just before each attack hit.

[So you can still use Dragontongue, Gold Dragon Asilla.]

“ ... ”

As expected of a Great Wizard.

It was impossible to fool the eyes of a being like Diablo more than three times.

[I'm amazed. Dragontongue is a power that's engraved onto the very souls of Dragons. Even if your body is changed, that power won't disappear, but... you shouldn't have the power to use it.]

Diablo calmly continued his speculation. There were absolutely no signs of tension.

Perhaps it was because of his blind faith in his own or Lucid's power. Or perhaps there was another reason.

In any case, it wasn't a bad thing for Asilla at that moment.

Because she needed to buy every second that she could. If Diablo had decided to intervene, she would not have been able to avoid Lucid's attack three times.

'How long has it been?'

She'd been so focused on holding on for one more second and avoiding for one more second that she wasn't conscious of the passage of time.

She hoped it had at least been five minutes... No. Wait a minute. If it was 5 minutes, it meant that she still needed to buy more time.

Are you crazy, Asilla? You, can you even do that?

'I can't.'

After answering her own questions, she slowly raised the corners of her lips. It was close to a smile of resignation.

Right. If she made any mistakes, she would die.

Bang!

With a splatter of mud, the fighting began once again.

Despite the chaotic mess, Diablo's eyes remained locked onto Asilla.

A curious mind.

That was the greatest strength and weakness of Wizards.

Currently, Diablo was focused on analysing Asilla. There wasn't any special reason for this. As mentioned before, he was just curious.

Dragon.

The Absolutes of the continent comparable to Demigods. However, after losing the Great War of Fate, they were deprived of their powerful bodies and their prides were castrated.

Diablo was naturally interested in Dragons. Beings who were blessed from birth with extraordinary sensitivity to mana and its manipulation. Any Wizard would be interested in them.

[Indeed.]

Clack.

White finger bones intertwined, creating an unpleasant sound.

[That body, is that of a golem.]

Like a mathematician who had finally found the answer to a particularly difficult problem that he'd been struggling on, there was a hint of satisfaction in Diablo's voice.

[It would be more accurate to call it a puppet. It wasn't inputted with memories and a personality, instead, it is a combination of artificial flesh and a soul... I know of only one being capable of such a feat.]

Without a doubt, it was Hector's work.

Diablo had a faint interest in the relationship between them, but it was very faint.

The question that had interested him the most had already been answered.

How a Dragon had managed to use Dragontongue without a Dragon Heart.

[That's it.]

Diablo gave his sentence.

[You can finish it now.]

Shuk-

With that one sentence, Lucid's momentum changed.

"...!"

Asilla didn't even have the chance to use Dragontongue.

Lucid, who appeared in front of her in the blink of an eye, swung his sword without hesitation.

Crack!

From her left thigh to her right shoulder.

Asilla's body split apart in an instant, but there was no scream. There wasn't even a splash of blood.

Instead, a liquid the same colour and consistency as molten iron, slowly dripped out.

[So the resemblance to a human ends at the appearance.]

He wasn't sure exactly how durable the body was. But even if the entire body was made of steel, it would have ended the same way before Lucid's swordsmanship.

“Kuh...”

Nevertheless, Asilla was still alive.

It seemed that as long as the head was still intact, there would still be a chance of survival. Or at least, there was a chance for a golem to survive.

But no such chance would be given.

Because Deukid gradually moved towards her head.

Just before the sword pierced Asilla’s head.

Lucid’s head snapped to the side.

Deukid, which was still in motion, was quickly pulled in front of his chest.

Bang!

A heavy sound came from Deukid. Lucid, who was unable to withstand the force of the blow, was sent flying. His body skipped across the ground a few times before crashing heavily into a three story building.

[...]

As if he couldn't believe the scene that had just unfolded before his eyes, Diablo remained frozen in place.

His gaze locked onto the young girl who had sent Lucid flying.

She had a small slender body. In addition, she was currently naked.

However, the pressure that was currently being exuded from her body made it difficult to pay attention to those factors.

"I didn't believe it when I heard it, but it's true."

The girl, Anastasia, glared at Diablo, her silver hair fluttering.

"You bastard... What the hell did you do to my friend?"

Needless to say.

Her turquoise eyes burned with rage.

Book 2: Chapter 365

“You got here pretty quick.”

Peran looked over his shoulder.

Standing there was Hector surrounded by a group of maids.

“I got lucky. She fully understood how serious the situation was. Thanks to that, our conversation was able to progress quickly.”

“You’re being too humble. It wouldn’t have been possible without your eloquence and ability to think on your feet. If I had gone instead, I wouldn’t have been able to convince her in such a short time.”

“ ... ”

Persuade.

A bitter smile spread across Peran’s lips.

He hadn’t done anything noble enough to be described as such.

As soon as he stepped out of the portal to the Ispania Mountains, he’d shouted at the top of his voice.

“Diablo brought Lucid back to life! We need your help! Please help us!”

He hadn't even been certain about the information.

Of course, he knew that the undead he'd seen had Deukid in its hands, and its skill with the sword should be comparable to or higher than Snow, but he wasn't sure if it was Lucid or not.

In other words, it was a gamble.

In all honesty, he didn't have any idea what Anastasia, who had appeared after a while, thought.

This was because her cold gaze and emotionless expression hadn't changed from the start.

It seemed that she believed Peran's words, but right before he used Warp again, she spoke.

'If you are lying, I will separate your flesh from your bones.'

“To be honest, the hardest part was getting out of the city without Diablo noticing. If he had noticed, he would have interfered with the spell.”

However, despite the tension, Peran was able to successfully leave Yuterdam without any hindrance. He'd thought he'd just been lucky, but that wasn't actually the case.

“From the start, Diablo was more focused on Lady Iris’ power than the movement of mana.”

“...indeed.”

Hector gave a slow nod.

His gaze turned from Anastasia, who was currently locked in combat with Lucid, to Asilla, who had rolled to the side like a piece of junk.

With a deep sigh, he said.

“My angels, may I ask you to retrieve her?”

“We will obey Master’s orders.”

The maids politely bowed their heads to Hector before going to collect Asilla, who had been disassembled in a miserable manner. Seeing this unbearable scene, Peran couldn’t help but say.

“...is she still alive?”

“Asilla’s core is in her brain. As long as her core is intact, her body parts can be replaced at any time... Well. In a way, this state is worse than dying for her. It’s fortunate that she’s still alive. Asilla did a great job.”

“...”

Hearing those words, Peran couldn't help but feel that the relationship between Asilla and Hector wasn't as simple as it seemed.

He was curious, but now was not the time for that.

Peran's gaze turned to the city.

* * *

Anastasia was not in this city. No. She wasn't even anywhere close to here. She was one of the few that Diablo kept a close eye on, so he was certain of that.

This meant that someone had brought her here.

[I made a mistake.]

Diablo murmured.

[I was too focused on Iris. Warp is a fairly high level spell, but I didn't notice it.]

A Wizard who had not joined him. At the same time, an Archmage capable of warping back and forth in a short enough span of time that he didn't notice.

At this point, there was only one such person that Diablo was aware of.

[Peran Jun.]

Things were definitely becoming annoying. Diablo admitted this fact without hesitation.

It was regrettable that he hadn't managed to kill Iris with his surprise attack. If he'd killed her, then he could have treated Anastasia, who had appeared here, as a bonus.

[Anastasia.]

Diablo slowly opened his mouth.

[I don't intend to fight you. What I want from them has nothing to do with you, and if you let me get it, I will leave without causing any more trouble.]

"You seem to be mistaken about something. From the moment you transformed Lucid into an undead, there was no longer any chance for a conversation between us."

A laugh involuntarily rolled out at those words.

When Anastasia glared at him, Diablo spoke again.

[Pardon me. I was just a bit confused by your words. Seeing someone express anger over me reviving someone from 4,000 years ago is quite humorous.]

The tone of Diablo, who laughed out loud for a while, suddenly changed.

[But what's even funnier is the fact that you called the Sword King your friend. Battle Golem Anastasia, have you still not understood your identity? You are not Schweiser.]

“Shut up.”

Diablo had touched Anastasia's reverse scale.

No, instead of touching it, it was more like he stabbed it with a knife.

Her turquoise eyes rippled with rage.

Her small fists clenched with a frightening sound and she began to stride towards Diablo as though she intended to smash his white bones.

But after she took a few steps, the sound of an explosion was heard from the rubble of a building in the distance. As the dust cleared, Lucid's armour was revealed once again.

There wasn't even a single scratch on the pitch black armour.

A wave of death energy rippled out from his body. Anastasia's expression hardened.

'He's coming.'

She was forced to turn her attention from Diablo to Lucid.

The black knight, who was more than a few metres away, narrowed the distance in an instant.

There was no sound, and even his presence became faint. So the only thing she could rely on was her eyes.

She could track his movements. So it was possible for her to respond.

Anastasia crossed her arms before covering them in a thick layer of mana. And in the same instant, Lucid struck with Deukid.

Clang!

There was a loud sound similar to colliding metal.

Anastasia sank. Neither her knees nor her back were bent. She was still standing straight.

However, Lucid's strength was so ridiculous that he forced her into the ground.

'What... this power...'

She did all she could to withstand it.

Anastasia's arms trembled as if they would collapse. She had to find some way to counterattack or get out of that position, but she didn't have the chance.

Lucid pressed his sword down with one hand.

'This isn't Lucid's fighting style.'

His style consisted of sword techniques and sword skills. This way of swinging his sword around like a club was something that a sane Lucid would never do.

...Her muscles were gradually approaching their limit.

If she continued to endure this, her entire body would be crushed like a tomato.

'...I, too, didn't spend the last 10 years in vain.'

Suddenly, Anastasia clenched her teeth. Two tentacles sprouted out of her back. In truth, they were more like metal tails than tentacles.

Clack!

The tentacles wrapped tightly around Deukid and began pushing it away with great force.

At last, Lucid's momentum was broken. Without any hesitation, he withdrew his sword and took a few steps.

During this time, Anastasia retrieved a blue gem from her bag, stuck it into her mouth, and clenched her teeth. (TL: Isn't she naked?)

Crunch.

This was a solid gem, but it was no match for the teeth of Anastasia, a golem. She chewed the gem like a piece of candy before swallowing it.

Slowly, an icy colour began swirling around her iris.

"Hup."

After taking a deep breath.

[Ahhh!]

She shot a storm of ice out of her mouth.

The powerful storm ripped through the surroundings as it rushed towards her opponent. She knew that his armour's defence was formidable, but she was certain that this would cause some damage.

That was the moment Anastasia was waiting for.

Lucid, who quietly watched as the ice storm approached him, suddenly stabbed Deukid into the ground.

Fwoosh!

At that same time, black fog began to seep out from the ground. It was like the fog was alive. The fog seemed to move on its own, gathering together and forming a semi-circle that enveloped Lucid.

Pak pak pak!

At last, the approaching ice storm slammed into the black fog. But like heavy rain hitting a rock, there was only a loud sound; it failed to break through.

'That was an ice storm created with the finest aquamarine.'

And yet, it was still not enough to break through Lucid's defen—

Anastasia cut her thought short as she threw herself back. This was because she caught sight of bone spears pouring down from the sky like arrows.

Puk puk puk!

The bone spears pierced the spot she'd just been standing in. Immediately after, the dirt began to take a purple hue before melting directly.

Those bone spears didn't just have simple physical power. With that kind of corrosive ability, her body would have melted like a candle if she hadn't noticed them in time.

Piht—

Another attack followed that one. A beam of dark red light.

The moment she saw this attack, her spine went cold.

This single dark red beam of light was far more dangerous than Lucid's hand to hand attacks and those bones spears combined.

Anastasia quickly turned her head to avoid it, but she was too slow, allowing the beam to brush past her cheek.

'My body...'

It couldn't move.

Her entire body creaked as if it was straining under great pressure.

Anastasia immediately understood the reason.

'Diablo... has he finally crossed over the threshold of true 9 stars?'

Absolute line.

Absolute, a power which was higher than mana, had struck Anastasia's body.

This caused the mana in her body, which was constantly circulating, to freeze.

It was like having the blood in your body stop moving. Of course, if such a thing happened to a human, they would die in seconds, but, fortunately, Anastasia was a golem.

'No. This isn't fortunate at all!'

In front of Lucid, not to mention tens of seconds, even a 1 second opening was lethal.

Boom!

She saw him charge toward her with explosive momentum. Every step he took shook the ground beneath them.

In the blink of an eye, Lucid appeared in front of her, Deukid outstretched. It was a simple stab, but the power behind it was unimaginable.

It was a stab that should be dodged at all costs, even if it was at the expense of her mana.

Just before the blade pierced her throat, Anastasia's vision went black.

Taht!

And when the darkness lifted, she was looking at an entirely different scene.

"Ah...?"

What just happened?

“You let your guard down, Anastasia.”

The moment she heard that voice, Anastasia understood the situation.

“...Iris.”

Without her realising, Iris had appeared behind her.

She'd teleported her with her power.

...To be rescued by this woman.

It didn't leave a pleasant aftertaste so it was not easy to thank her.

Anastasia opened and closed her mouth a few times before finally turning to look at Lucid.

“...do you know who that guy is?”

“The Sword King Lucid. The most noble and reliable shield that always protected us.”

“He has now become the sword that threatens our lives.”

Iris chuckled at those words.

“That’s a different feeling. It makes me a bit sad.”

She probably didn’t actually find it funny since her expression remained solemn, so she probably said that as a way to lighten the mood.

Anastasia also joined in.

“Who’s missing?”

“We don’t have anyone else to talk about old memories with, do we?”

“Hmph. I’m not sure. That beast might also be alive somewhere.”

At that moment, an unexpected voice interfered with their conversation.

[You’re wrong.]

It was the dry, cracked voice that literally belonged to a dead person.

But Iris and Anastasia could only make horrified expressions as they turned to look at him.

“Lucid?”

“You... were you conscious—”

[You are all wrong about one thing.]

Lucid interrupted them in a calm voice.

“...we were wrong about something?”

“What do you mean by that?”

[It's not just one person that should be here.]

“Isn't it only Kasajin?”

“What the hell are you talking about? No. More than that, are you still acting like a servant of that undead despite having an ego?”

[...]

Lucid raised his sword once again. It was as if to answer them with his attitude.

...As though he was saying that conversation was no longer necessary.

He had always been a guy like that.

A stubborn, noble man with strict convictions.

Iris and Anastasia bit their lips at the same time.

* * *

...Warmth.

That was the first sensation Lukas felt upon waking up.

His mind was a mess. Two things, the memories of Kasajin and his last memories, jumbled together in his head, giving him a headache.

Lukas slowly untangled the mess.

'...it's warm.'

Soft and warm. It was to the extent that he didn't want to move. He just wanted to stay like this.

But he couldn't. Knowing this, Lukas forcibly opened his eyes and woke up.

At that moment, he felt a familiar sensation, like a blanket wrapped around him.

But after moving slightly and blinking a few times, he realised what was wrapped around him.

It was not a blanket, but a giant Phoenix wrapped around his body.

"...Nix."

The Phoenix, Nix, lowered her head to look at Lukas.

...The flames of the Phoenix race were mysterious.

It was literally the greatest threat to those they were hostile towards, but for those they accepted, it was as warm as a hearth. In addition, it had the effect of regenerating and healing injuries.

Nix was probably the only reason he was still alive after taking that cut to the back.

“Thanks.”

Nix’s feathers ruffled slightly, but she avoided making eye contact.

But he now understood.

It wasn’t because she hated him.

Lukas got up from the bed of feathers.

“...”

And immediately felt vertigo.

Although his wound had healed, his blood hadn’t been replenished. So, in a way, he was still injured.

It didn’t feel like there had been many days recently when he hadn’t been injured.

“...don’t go.”

He looked back.

Nix, who had returned to her human form, was looking at him with a complicated expression.

“You are very hurt.”

“I know.”

“You won’t be much help if you go there.”

“That might be true.”

“It’s safer here.”

“You’re right.”

Lukas didn’t deny anything Nix said.

The more Nix spoke, the more confident she was that this man wouldn’t listen to her.

“...if you go this time, you might really die.”

After a while, Lukas looked away from Nix. Then he started walking.

“...”

Nix clenched her fists as she looked at his back.

“Huff. Huff...”

Before he could even go far, Lukas was already out of breath. He felt dizzy and nauseous, but he held it in because he felt like he would collapse if he allowed himself to vomit.

For a moment, he couldn't help but wonder.

Had he ever been so physically and mentally exhausted?

He felt like this was much harder than when he fought the Demigods in the past when he lived as 'Frey Blake', and when he was saving universes.

“Huhu.”

Somehow, a chuckle managed to escape his lips.

This was because Kasajin's words popped into his mind at that moment.

Right. He was right. Perhaps he really was a masochist.

Tuk.

After taking a few more steps, he tripped over a stone and fell onto his face.

He wasn't sure if he'd eaten any dirt or not, but there was a bad taste in his mouth.

For some reason, this reminded him of the night with heavy rain back at the Westroad Academy.

He'd fallen then too. And he'd wanted to just give up on everything,

'...it's much better now.'

As he had this thought, Lukas forced himself to his feet.

It was at this moment that something caught his eye.

It was black box. A smooth box made out of some kind of material that he couldn't identify. It hadn't been there before... but he thought that it might have fallen out of his pocket. Was it because he just fell?

But that thought still made him suspicious. Lukas didn't remember having a box like this.

Nevertheless, after a while, those thoughts faded.

“...”

Lukas' expression changed as he observed the box.

Book 2: Chapter 366

Reaching 8 stars was no easy task.

Peran pondered for a long time on what talent truly meant, and he looked back on his life from various angles to see where it had played a role.

He also endured great despair and suffering, and after persevering for a long time, he was finally able to reach 8 stars.

And then he realised something.

He had become incredibly strong.

This wasn't conceit or arrogance. Instead, it was a clear and objective thought that he had after thinking about it for a long time.

Peran, who had reached 8 stars, now had the power to wipe out an entire small or medium sized city in an instant.

But this brought a new kind of pressure onto his shoulders. Because he learned that with such great power came an equally great responsibility.

This made his self confidence skyrocket.

Again, it wasn't conceit, it was simply a firm belief in himself.

He knew that there were still beings stronger than him in the world, but at the very least, he didn't think that he would lose to them with no way to fight back even if he were to face them.

Not so long ago, this thought was cemented even further when he fought Cairo Wilsemann in the Jun Family Mansion.

After all, he'd even managed to face a 9-star Wizard to some extent.

And that was exactly why he was having so much trouble understanding.

The reality that he had no way to intervene in the battle currently unfolding before his eyes.

Crunch.

His clenched fists became even tighter, causing his nails to pierce his flesh.

His mana room was almost filled with mana. His mind was steady. And he wasn't injured in the slightest.

Except for the mana that had been used in the Warp, he was in perfect condition.

Nevertheless, he could not enter this fight. If he were to try to forcefully step in, he might end up getting in the way of Iris or Anastasia.

Because they were strong.

And he was only a bit strong. This was something he was finally made to understand.

If he stepped foot in this battle, he would only get in the way of his allies. So the only thing he could do was watch.

Peran's judgement was not wrong.

“ ... ”

But it was still an incredibly bitter pill to swallow.

* * *

In truth, the fight wasn't as equal as Peran thought.

And without a doubt, the one who was feeling this the most was Anastasia.

Clang!

The force of the clash sent her flying, her feet digging deep grooves into the ground.

"Kuk..."

One of Schweiser's bad habits was to quantify everything that he saw and heard. And that trait was passed on to her.

She couldn't help but compare the physical ability of the 'Sword King' from her past and the 'undead' in front of her right now, and soon, she reached a conclusion.

'His physical ability should be about double what it was in the past.'

At least.

Since the opponent was an undead, his explosive power was quite oppressive, so in order to obtain more accurate data, she would need to battle him longer.

So far, Anastasia could only be certain about one thing.

Lucid's physical abilities were far above hers.

Her body moved with a fearsome 1 million ME as fuel. Nevertheless, she hadn't managed to gain the upper hand a single time in dozens of skirmishes.

Lucid had become an undead, and he'd become much stronger. The limits of his human body had been lifted, which allowed his power output to more than double. In addition, Diablo must have used all of the dark magic in his arsenal to increase his attributes even more.

Paak!

A group of skeletal hands burst out of the ground, trying to grab her feet. Each white hand exuded a fearsome amount of death energy.

With her defences, the hands wouldn't be able to hurt her, but if her movements were restricted for even a moment, Lucid would be able to take advantage of it.

“Tch.”

Clicking her tongue, she dodged the attack.

This was a problem.

The connection between Diablo and Lucid was close to perfect. Whenever Anastasia tried to grab the initiative by using a magical tool or gem that was attached to her body, Diablo would cleverly dig into the momentary gap.

Because of this, she had never managed to step out of her defensive position since the fight started.

The division of roles between Lucid and Diablo was perfect. In the first place, Diablo was the Necromancer. Since he was the one who created the undead, he was also the one who had the best grasp on his abilities.

On their side, however, the situation was not good.

Papapat!

She hit the hands reaching towards her, turning them into bone powder that stuck to her fists. Anastasia didn't shake it off, instead, she took a few steps forward. In an instant, the distance between her and Lucid narrowed.

That black armour.

Its defence must be extraordinary, but she couldn't throw away the first opportunity she'd been given in a long time.

Just as Anastasia extended her fist to probe the extent of her opponent's defences.

In an instant, her view changed completely. And her outstretched fist futilely hit the air.

"Huh?"

Anastasia let out a soft sound with a bewildered expression.

"Ah."

Then she heard Iris' voice. It took a moment for Anastasia, who was standing there blankly, to understand the situation. Iris had teleported her away with space movement.

"You! What are you doing?!"

"A mistake. I didn't expect you to advance so suddenly there."

“You, really! It’s not that hard to think while fighting!”

“...”

Iris had a slightly sour expression but she didn’t say anything because it had been her mistake.

Nevertheless, Anastasia was able to close the distance to Lucid once again and punch him in the chest. Lucid’s body was sent flying backward instantly, so it seemed like the attack worked.

‘Hard.’

Anastasia looked down at her fist with a frown.

That punch had enough power in it to flatten steel armour, but it didn’t even scratch Lucid’s armour.

Boom!

Black lightning struck down from the sky.

The lightning landed right where Lucid had just been. From the charred ground around that location, it was clear that it was a fairly strong black spell.

“Why did you hit him away?”

Iris criticised in an irritable voice. As expected, she was the one that had just used the black magic.

Anastasia pouted slightly in response.

“...why didn't you say something before you used it.”

“If you could hear it then Lucid would be able to hear it too, wouldn't he? Or would you prefer I go to Diablo and tell him everything I plan?”

“Who said that? I'm just saying that there should be some kind of heads-!! Kuk!”

Anastasia leaped away without finishing her shout. Just as Lucid's sword swept through the air, cutting a few hairs.

They were horrifically out of tune.

However, this was natural.

Even 4,000 years ago, Iris and Schweiser had always been at each other's throats. Not only did they get along terribly, they never bothered to try to understand each other very well.

To make matters worse, the way the two fought now was quite different from the way they fought in the past.

Iris didn't focus on demon summoning or black magic like she had in the past. Instead, she focused more on Lord's legacy, the authority of space, and the way she fought changed to best utilise that power.

Anastasia, on the other hand, went without saying. Compared to before, her best weapon now was her body, not her knowledge. It was more efficient for her to swing her fists at the front as the combat golem Anastasia, rather than supporting from the rear like the Great Sage Schweiser.

They were unfamiliar with each other's changed ways of fighting, which, inevitably, caused a rift in their connection.

"Dammit! It would have been easier for me to fight alone!"

"Thanks for saying the words I was just about to say."

The way they looked at each other was not nice.

If it weren't for the desperate situation, the things they would have told each other probably wouldn't be so few.

'Why did I team up with a woman like this in the past?' (TL: EXACTLY!)

When she looked at this woman, on which she couldn't find a single pleasing feature, Anastasia couldn't help but wonder. But, of course, now wasn't the time to think about it too deeply.

As time passed, the banter between the two of them began to fade. This wasn't because they had finally started to properly work together by some miracle.

Instead, it was because their opponents' offence was becoming sharper.

In other words, even the time to speak was gradually disappearing.

And after 10 minutes,

For the first time since the fight began, the two of them shared the same thought.

'...This.'

'Is dangerous.'

They thought that they might die there.

* * *

‘An unexpected opportunity.’

Diablo calmly analysed the current situation and quickly reached a conclusion.

The Black Witch and the Wandering Golem.

Members of the ‘continental powerhouses’ that Diablo kept a close eye on.

Separately, they might not be able to pose as much of a threat as Snow, but they were still a part of the group that he specifically planned to deal with in the future.

Of course, he never expected any of the encounters to be easy. That’s why he only intended to meet them after planning thoroughly.

—When Anastasia appeared, soon followed by Iris.

Diablo immediately made plans to escape at any time. Regardless of if Lucid was there or not, he didn’t think it would be easy to deal with two of the great heroes from 4,000 years ago.

However, soon after the fight started, he lost that thought.

‘These two. Instead, they are reducing each other’s strength.’

It was a situation where they were interfering with each other's ability to fight at their full strength. This situation usually occurred between those who had a very weak understanding of each other, and whose personalities did not mesh.

It was not something he'd expected to see here. He hadn't expected the heroes from 4,000 years ago to be so pathetic. But for Diablo, it was a happy little accident. (TL:...I had to)

At first, he had been concerned about hiding his strength in preparation for future encounters.

But in this situation, it would be better to change that strategy.

Now, he planned to bury these two, who were major obstacles to his grand plan, in this place.

'One thing annoys me...'

There was no sign of the 'box' in this city.

But he didn't think too deeply about it.

Including Anastasia and Iris, who were here. There was no one who could understand the mystery of that box.

As far as Diablo knew, there was only one such being on the entire continent. And of course, 'she' was nowhere close to this city.

Shuk-

It was around this time that Lucid cut Anastasia's arm off.

"Kuk."

Anastasia's expression briefly flashed with dismay, but in all honesty, that was not a fatal injury for a golem like her. In fact, Anastasia herself had the regenerative ability to restore a severed limb. The problem was that she didn't have time to regenerate.

Lucid pressed her harder. Since she'd lost an arm, her defence naturally dropped by half. And before long, Anastasia's body was covered in countless cuts.

In this situation, Iris was almost useless.

Because of Diablo, her authority of space could not be used in depth. To prevent his interference, she would have to expend a great amount of power.

But she couldn't do that right now. Iris knew better than anyone just how dangerous the ability to manipulate space was.

If she were to recklessly increase the output or create something so complicated that Diablo couldn't interfere with it, it was possible for the power to go out of control and she would end up trapped in a dark space, a gap in the dimensions, forever.

'...just a bit, if I just had a bit of time.'

If she just had a bit of time to experiment, she could get a hint of how to utilise her power in a way that Diablo couldn't interfere with.

But there wasn't.

She didn't know what to do.

Should she take the risk, or should she leave this place first?

Just as Iris was struggling with her decision.

A beam of dark red light suddenly shot from Diablo's fingers.

"...!"

There was no sound, and even the traces were faint. Iris had not been able to feel any sign of the Absolute Line before it was fired.

'Fast.'

Iris knew that she would not be able to avoid it with her physical ability. She also couldn't use the authority of space either.

Left without a choice, she hurriedly created a summoning circle to summon a Demon.

[Kweeek...]

The Demon that came out of the purple summoning circle had the appearance of a giant meatball. It was a low level Demon that could only serve as a meat shield at best. In fact, it was such a low quality monster that it was almost shameful to call it a Demon.

The meatball Demon was somewhat resistant to physical and magical attacks, but it offered absolutely no resistance to the Absolute Line. The dark red beam pierced through the Demon without wasting a second.

In an instant, the red beam appeared in front of Iris' forehead.

Shuk!

But Iris' body disappeared.

[...]

Diablo was silent. That wasn't the authority of space.

That was a spell that moved her to a different place.

[Peran Jun.]

“ ... ”

Peran took a deep breath with a slightly tired expression on his face.

He had only used the Blink spell, but it felt like he had depleted most of his mental power. This was something that most Wizards would feel when trying to use spells close to Diablo.

'Absolute', the power that gave complete control within a certain portion of space.

He had used a spell while fighting against that power.

[That really surprised me. To believe you'd be able to defy Absolute and cast a spell.]

Diablo was genuinely amazed. For a moment, he completely forgot about Iris and Anastasia.

[What an awe inspiring talent. No. You seem to have more than just talent.]

“ ... ”

[...initially, I intended to erase this entire city after killing these two, but now I've changed my mind. Join me, Peran Jun.]

Peran took a deep breath as he looked at Diablo.

Reaching out a bony hand to him, Diablo continued.

[Let me help you. In 10 years, no, in 5 years, I will help you discover the clues to 9-stars. I will definitely do it.]

“I already turned down your offer once before. Didn't you hear?”

[I'm still going to make another offer. I'm doing it personally this time because I'm sure you are worth it.]

“ ... ”

There didn't seem to be any falsehoods in Diablo's words.

Perhaps this was his last chance, Diablo's last mercy.

If Peran accepted this offer, it was possible that he really would be able to reach 9-stars in 5 years.

"I refuse."

Nevertheless, there wasn't even a hint of hesitation in Peran's unshakeable voice.

[...I see.]

Diablo slowly lowered his hand with those words.

[Then die.]



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Diablo wasn't immediately able to carry out his sentence.

There were two reasons for this.

The first was Iris.

It seemed that she had managed to figure out how to bypass his 'Absolute interference'.

'Annoying.'

Diablo had no choice but to raise her threat level by two tiers.

If he failed to end Iris Phisfounder here, she would without a doubt go beyond the level of 'simply troublesome enemy'.

The interference wasn't something unique to Diablo. And in some cases, he might actually end up as the one being affected.

He didn't even have to think too deeply about it.

Lord, the leader of the Demigods, had conquered the continent in the past.

In front of that being, who was almost like a god, even 9-star Wizards were powerless.

Iris had inherited some of Lord's power. If she learned to freely use that power, she would, without a doubt, become a greater foe than Snow.

As for the second reason.

Fwoosh!

Flames erupted in front of Peran.

It was a simple 2-star spell, Fireball, which was no threat to Diablo. Even if he were to stay still and allow it to hit him, it wouldn't even be able to burn the black robes he was wearing.

But that wasn't the problem.

'How can he still use magic?'

Of course, Diablo hadn't fully released his Absolute Field.

If he were to extend his absolute space to cover the entire area, while it certainly would be advantageous in this situation, the burden on his mind would be too high.

In truth, he didn't feel that the situation was bad enough to force him to rely on his Absolute Field. For now, just using Absolute Line was enough.

Absolute power lingered wherever the Line passed, and that remaining force was enough to stop any Wizard from being able to use magic.

Depending on the level of the Wizard, it wouldn't be strange for the internal organs to shake and bleed the moment they tried to use their mana.

'It might be possible if he was squeezing out his mental power, but...'

That would have only worked a few times.

By now, Peran had already cast an unknown number of spells.

—It's weird.

At that moment, the words of Cairo Wilsemann, who had failed to capture Peran at the Jun Family Mansion, came to mind.

—The difference between Peran and I was clear. And yet, I couldn't easily subdue him. It was almost as if I couldn't interfere with him, do you know what I mean? As though I couldn't influence the mana room in his body.

When he'd first heard that, Diablo had just assumed that Cairo had been careless.

There was no other possibility he could think of apart from that.

The correlation among high level Wizards was absolute. It wasn't like Knights, Magic Warriors, or Mercenaries. Just the difference in their levels meant that they couldn't compete with each other.

For example, depending on the strategy, terrain, or condition, it was possible for a Second Class Warrior to defeat a First Class Warrior.

But Wizards were different.

In particular, the higher the level, the more those differences stood out. A 6-star Wizard could never beat a 7-star. Likewise, it was impossible to defeat an 8-star at 7-star or a 9-star at 8-star.

That's why, when he first heard the report, he doubted what he'd heard.

Cairo and Shepard, two high level Wizards, had let Peran escape.

...But now that he was in front of him, he could finally understand why.

'It's not talent.'

It was something else.

There was something unexplainable and alien about this man.

* * *

“Flame Ball.”

Throb-

As soon as the spell manifested, Peran felt a sharp pain as if his skull was being cracked open. He had to forcibly stop himself from screaming.

It was fine. He could still take it.

It was so painful that he felt like he would die, but not enough to actually kill him.

“I owe you one.”

It was at this moment that he heard Iris’ voice.

As he couldn’t afford the effort to open his mouth and respond, Peran simply gave her a small nod as he sent the Flame Ball forward.

Shuk-

Diablo’s black robe swallowed the Flame Ball. It disappeared as naturally as a drop of water in a waterfall.

“Paimon’s Curtain. Spells at or below 5-stars will not be able to break through that curtain.”

“Is it black magic?”

“Yes.”

Spells at or below 5-stars wouldn’t work.

In other words, it meant that he would need to at least use 6-star spells, a level higher than the spells he’d been using until now.

...He corrected his breathing. Just by drawing on his mana slightly, he could feel pressure as if his organs were being twisted. If he actually finished the spell, it wouldn’t just end there.

“Howling... Tempest.”

The 6-star spell manifested.

Gurgle.

And in the same instant, blood rushed up his throat. It was similar to the backlash one would experience if they failed to cast a high level spell. No, it was about five times worse than that, but that wasn’t the point.

'I'm starting to feel it.'

At first, he thought that he would die just from using a 1-star spell. The throbbing pain in his entire body that felt like he was being ripped apart and the intense backlash almost made him faint. And for the first time in his life, he became afraid to use magic.

But Peran did not give up, and instead tried to learn from that experience.

Paradoxically, when he used a 2-star spell, he was in a better condition.

This was because he learned how to move his mana to minimise the backlash.

All that was left now was whether he had the skill.

...To increase the level.

3-stars, 4-stars, 5-stars.

Gradually he learned how to cast spells naturally once again. The pain continued to grow, but thanks to his experience, he was able to prevent himself from fainting.

And now, he was able to use even 6-star spells.

Iris wasn't wrong. Howling Tempest truly did seem to have an effect. At the very least, the black robe covering Diablo, Paimon's Curtain, was somewhat shaken.

However, that was all.

He had managed to get past the black robe, but his opponent wasn't someone who would be affected by a 6-star spell.

Diablo raised his fingers to the sky. The ground around him rose up to take the ominous shape of a skull, becoming a barrier that protected him.

Howling Tempest could not pierce this earth barrier.

'The result would be the same even if I used a 7-star spell.'

It might have a slightly better effect, but it would only be a minor improvement at best.

What about 8-star spells?

Another Sun, Tornado, Ice Age.

Would such spells be able to bring down this monster?

...He would not be able to escape unscathed. There would definitely be some kind of damage.

However, he did not believe they would be able to kill him.

'It's not enough.'

He was too weak.

When this thought appeared in his mind once again, it caused anger to rise up within him.

...Why was he not a 9-star Wizard?

Crackle-

The space around him twisted and wobbled. He could feel the very space begin to creak.

Diablo and Iris' powers collided.

In the end, it was all thanks to her that Peran was still alive. If Diablo had only focused on Peran from the beginning, he would have died a long time ago.

That was the reality.

An 8-star Wizard. The Youngest Archmage. The Unparalleled Prodigy.

All he had were those fancy titles.

Although he was only one step away, Peran was no threat to Diablo.

[...]

Diablo had a similar thought, but it was also different.

Despite fighting with Iris, his attention never left Peran.

Of course, Peran wasn't wrong. On his own, he couldn't be considered a threat to him.

But the next moment might be different.

To put it bluntly, the Peran a few seconds later might be completely different from now.

This man appeared to be getting stronger with each passing second.

'He's using this battle as the greatest fuel to grow explosively.'

If he had skin, it might have already been covered in goosebumps. He could see the faint flicker of anger in Peran's eyes.

He knew that having the aptitude to feel anger instead of wallowing in despair when facing an enemy that was on a different level was one of the most important keys to reaching 9-stars.

Crackle-

The surrounding mana began to tremble as if it was resonating with Peran's emotions.

It was not a phenomenon that could be explained theoretically.

After all, Diablo was the person who should have had complete control of all the surrounding mana.

'...even if Iris is interfering.'

It should not have escaped his control.

Despite its instability, Diablo could not interact with the mana surrounding Peran at all. This was proof that Peran's influence exceeded his own.

'This is dangerous.'

As mentioned before, this was not just talent.

Peran's mystery. As a Wizard, this phenomenon should have filled him with curiosity first, but now, he was more wary and afraid than anything else.

At that moment, something suddenly occurred to him.

In addition to his potential, Peran might actually be the greatest threat to his cause...

And as soon as that thought became clear.

Diablo did not hesitate.

Paht!

"...!"

Iris couldn't help but tremble in surprise.

Because in an instant, it felt like the world had been flipped over and she could feel pressure in her lungs.

'He released his Absolute Field to the fullest.'

Peran, who also realised this, bit his lip. His entire body refused to move as if he'd been paralysed. It was impossible to even move a finger, almost like the air itself was restraining him.

[So this much output is enough to restrain your movements.]

Diablo muttered calmly.

Then he raised a bony finger and pointed at Peran's forehead.

'Ah.'

Peran's face paled.

It felt like flames, which had only been tickling his toes before, had suddenly reached his shoulders.

[I'm glad I was able to kill you here. Truly.]

Buzz-

Absolute Line.

Peran could feel his inevitable death slowly approaching.

'Is this how I die?'

His eyes widened.

That was all. Even if he could move, there was nothing that could block the beam of light.

He never would have thought that his end would be like this.

Then what? Did he expect to die a more meaningful death?

No. That wasn't it.

There was a real reason why Peran could not accept his death.

'I... not yet...'

It was because he had not achieved anything yet.

Genius.

That was what everyone said when they saw Peran, but his own feelings were different.

In his eyes, he had just walked a bit faster on the road of magicology which had already been paved and polished. He hadn't created the path himself.

He hadn't pioneered anything, hadn't truly challenged himself.

So he hadn't accomplished anything.

...!

'...can't die in a place like this!'

Boom!

It was at that moment that an explosion sounded. Peran blinked. Just now, the dark red beam, which had been heading towards him with unstoppable momentum, disappeared without a trace.

Peran turned to look at Diablo.

The white, fleshless fingers that had been stretched out were now a bit curled. The flames in his eye sockets were also flickering as if they were being hit by strong winds.

For a moment, Peran could not understand what happened.

‘Who is he looking at?’

It wasn’t Peran. It wasn’t Iris, or Anastasia, who was still fighting Lucid in the distance.

Instead, Diablo’s gaze was locked onto something behind Peran.

[Who are you?]

There was a deep sense of caution and unmistakable shock in his voice.

He’d never been more shocked than at that moment.

Even if an unexpected event occurred, he wouldn’t be more shocked than necessary. He would just feel that it was unfortunate that things didn’t go as calculated.

This was because he was confident that he could solve it one step later. He knew he had the ability to clean up a mess, regardless of what it was.

But it was different this time.

Absolute Line.

The power that tore space itself apart was impossible to defend, as Peran thought. If she had enough time, Iris, who had the power of space, could cut off its source, effectively stopping its progression. But that was a skill that only she had.

In general, there was only one way to truly stop an Absolute Line.

Cancelling it out.

And that was what happened.

Diablo's Absolute Line had been canceled out.

By another Absolute Line that had shot from the opposite direction.

[I asked you who you were.]

Diablo muttered again in a deadly tone.

His gaze was locked on an abandoned building behind Peran.

There wasn't a response.

Instead, a person appeared.

Tap.

It was a young man who appeared in the grass.

A face that was unfamiliar to everyone.

“...”

Except for one.

“You...”

Peran's voice trembled.

His expression continued to shift back and forth like a raging wave.

“Do you know that man?”

He couldn't answer Iris' question immediately.

But in his head, he was certain.

He knew. Of course, he knew. He couldn't not know.

This man,

This man with spiky gray hair and an almost emotionless expression,

He was the man he had been looking for for 10 years.

"...Frey... Blake."

Book 2: Chapter 368

As soon as he saw this grey haired young man, Diablo realised.

That his opponent was a 9-star Wizard.

'Who is he?'

There were no 9-star Wizards on the continent that Diablo wasn't aware of. He even knew most of the 7 and 8 star Wizards.

A young Great Wizard with such a unique appearance. Even if he were to hear about him in passing, he wouldn't have forgotten him. Of course, there was always the possibility that his appearance was fake.

However, Diablo's surprise wasn't because of his outward appearance.

'Those who reached the realm of 9-stars.'

Cairo Wilsemann, the de facto leader of Paragon, the 11th Tower Master, and until just recently, the Right Hand of the Circle Master, Ivan.

He was also 9-stars, but he couldn't be said to have completely conquered that realm.

The different levels were only ranked from 1 to 9 for the sake of convenience, but even if two individuals were at the same level, their level of skill might not be the same.

Cairo, who had only just entered 9-stars, and Diablo, who had been 9-stars since a long time ago.

It was only natural for there to be a gap between them.

Diablo was certain.

There was no Wizard currently on the continent that was a higher level than him. Not to mention a higher level, he couldn't even find someone on the same level.

Then what about this guy?

He had managed to perfectly cancel the Absolute Line he'd just shot out.

With the same technique.

'...there are still strong people on the continent that I don't know about.'

That was something he was already aware of.

But the time that this one appeared was very coincidental.

Iris, Anastasia, Peran Jun, Asilla, and Hector. He had just been on the verge of wiping out all of these people who were getting in his way.

This could only mean one thing. This man was most likely on the same side as them.

[It doesn't seem like you want to answer.]

He said this to the man who had been silent since his arrival.

And this time, he received the answer he didn't expect.

“Even if I tell you who I am, you wouldn't know.”

His tone was indifferent as if he didn't have emotions.

[Peran just called you Frey. Is that your name?]

“The answer to that question is not important in this situation.”

[...so you mean to say that further conversation is unnecessary. I understand.]

Since those were the other persons' intentions, Diablo didn't insist on further conversation.

He called upon his mana.

His opponent was a Wizard who was stronger than Cairo. There was even a high chance that he was close to his own level.

Nevertheless, the word 'defeat' was improbable.

Of course, he had been surprised to find a Wizard this strong, but that was it.

Diablo's confidence was not shaken in the slightest.

[I will tell you one thing. As long as you are a Wizard, it is impossible to defeat me.]

"The reason?"

[Because this isn't about the hierarchical relationship between Wizards... Peran Jun, even that man, who is praised as an unprecedented genius, is no different from a beggar in front of me. Of course, I know that you are a 9-star Wizard who surpassed Peran. That's why I'll show you clearly.]

Diablo's black robes wavered.

[The fact that there is still a difference in levels among 9-stars.]

Paimon's curtain. The true value of this black spell was not revealed in defence.

Crack!

The black cloth was torn into tens of thousands of pieces. The sound mixed with a cacophony of screams.

[Screech!]

[Kyaak!]

Hundreds of evil spirits appeared from the torn black robe. The evil spirits began to scream in every direction as though they'd just escaped from hell.

"Ku...k..."

Peran sank to the ground as a terrible headache shook his brain.

His head felt like it would split open. It was worse than when he tried to use spells while under Diablo's pressure.

'A mental attack.'

It was more powerful than any attack he'd encountered so far.

The higher the level of the Wizard, the more resistant they were to mental attacks. After all, the higher the level of the Wizard, the more inevitable it was that they'd spent a great amount of time training their mind. This training was fundamental for obtaining one of the most important skills for high level Wizards, Mind as Still as a Clear Lake.

That was why most mental attacks didn't work on Wizards.

However, the resentment contained in the evil spirits Diablo released was beyond imagination. They were not beings that could be classified as simple banshees.

Each of those evil spirits contained the resentment of thousands of people.

But that was just the beginning of Diablo's attack. As the evil spirits scattered in every direction, Diablo began to mutter.

[Hells...]

Bang!

However, before he could even finish the phrase, Diablo's body staggered.

Shock could be seen in the way the flames that burned in his dark eye sockets flickered.

'I was attacked?'

The mana that he'd just gathered to cast the spell scattered in vain.

The timing was perfect. If the attack had come any later, the spell would have already been released, and if it had come sooner, then even if the spell failed, his mana would not have been used up.

As a result, Diablo suffered a great loss.

He was forced to use up enough mana to cast an 8-star spell, but it had no effect.

'Was that a coincidence?'

He raised his head.

And that's when his gaze met Frey's which was still locked onto him.

...It wasn't a coincidence.

That thought lingered firmly in his mind.

He had no proof or basis, but he was certain.

That guy had intended for that to happen.

[Interesting...!]

There was a bit of heat mixed in with Diablo's voice.

[Are you trying to compete with me in magic? Fine. Let's do it.]

1,000 years.

He had devoted himself to magic for even longer than that.

Black mana began to swirl around Diablo.

[You will learn why all Wizards long for my teaching. And Why I am called the symbol of magicology.]
(TL: Arrogant Diablo huh.)

“ ... ”

Frey Blake's gaze deepened.

The full scale of a battle between 9-star Wizards.

Not everyone there knew what it would be.

“...”

Peran looked up at the sky with a shocked expression.

At some point, the surroundings had become as bright as day. Of course, this wasn't because the sun had risen.

Instead, it was because the hundreds or thousands of spells, which covered the sky, were illuminating the area.

Boom boom boom!

Loud explosions several times louder than thunder ripped the sky apart.

This was natural since hundreds of spells collided at the same time. However, the aftermath was horrifying.

Human corpses, undead corpses, small rocks, and even parts of buildings that were on the brink of collapse were swept away by the storm.

“...I didn't expect to see a fight like this in an era where both the Dragons and the Demigods had disappeared.”

It wasn't unreasonable for Hector to utter those words. After all, the battle occurring in the sky was something that mortals would believe was a battle between gods.

"Who is that man?"

"...I don't know."

Of course, he knew that this man was the 'Frey Blake' from his memories.

However... If that was the case then what about Lukas? In the first place, where even was he?

"Could you help that man fight Diablo?"

"..."

The answer to that question came almost reflexively.

"No. I would only get in the way."

"...even 8-stars like you are like that. Truly, it's suicide to step into such an equal fight."

"No. In my opinion..."

As he looked at the battle unfolding before him, Peran's expression became a bit strange. He paused for a moment before eventually deciding to close his mouth. After all, the words he'd been about to say were absurd.

Instead, he focused on the sky again.

...If his predictions were correct, this fight wouldn't last much longer.

* * *

Hundreds of engagements came and went in the blink of an eye.

It was a battle that left those on the ground in awe, but the two Wizards understood that it was only superficial.

Rather than a battle of attrition, it was more of a probe. Or a test.

Those names were more appropriate than calling it a battle.

It had never been a full force fight.

Hundreds of spells were unleashed each second, but there were no signs that either side was growing weary.

Ttuk.

Diablo halted the spell that he had just been about to cast. Then he looked at his opponent, who had also stopped gathering his mana.

...With that, he was certain.

[You, what are you doing?]

“Is there a problem?”

[Quit your cheap acting. Did you think I wouldn't notice?]

There was a hint of anger mixed in with Diablo's voice.

[Why are you only responding to my spells? Why aren't you casting any spells first? Do you think you can beat me with such a passive attitude?]

“It's not my fault?”

[What?]

“It’s you who can’t make me use my full power. If you were worth it, or if I couldn’t afford to be so relaxed, I wouldn’t just respond.”

[...kuku. How arrogant.]

“Well. I will...”

Suddenly.

Frey’s voice broke off. His gaze was directed to a few figures in the distance.

A girl and a Death Knight.

They were continuing their own fight while ignoring the commotion in the sky.

In fact, it was so one sided that it couldn’t even be called a fight in the first place. Unlike the Death Knight, who was still in perfect condition, the girl’s entire body was covered in blood.

Frey knew who the girl was... It was Anastasia. The battle golem created by Hector.

However, the one that caught his eye the most was actually the Death Knight who was wielding Deukid and using a familiar swordsmanship.

He was strong.

Even though Iris was assisting her from the shadows, Anastasia stood absolutely no chance.

Instead, she was being overwhelmed.

“Diablo.”

He mumbled softly.

After that, Frey lifted his head to look at Diablo again.

“You... Did you resurrect the Sword King Lucid as an undead?”

There was a slight waver in his voice.

Upon seeing this faint, but obvious agitation, Diablo regained his calm.

He even let out a quiet laugh.

That’s right.

Even this unknown Wizard had no choice but to feel a bit of panic when faced with Lucid who had become his subordinate.

[It wasn't easy. But it was possible for me.]

“...”

[You certainly are strong, Great Wizard. But you should know that magicology is not my only specialty. Necromancy is also one of my strengths. Let me ask you a question. If Lucid and I join forces, how long do you think you can la—]

Paak.

He couldn't finish his sentence. Diablo felt a sharp blow to the back of his head.

And as if he lost consciousness for a while, the flow of mana in his body was interrupted for a moment.

Unable to maintain his ability to fly, Diablo plummeted to the ground.

'I can't... right myself...'

It was an incomprehensible situation.

As an undead, pain didn't exist for him. It was understandable that he was surprised by the unexpected blow. But it shouldn't have caused any interference with his spells.

[Ku... uk...]

He forced his mind to concentrate, but in the end, the spell did not manifest.

Instead, Diablo crashed into the ground with a heavy sound.

As soon as he landed, he tried to get to his feet, but he failed to do that as well.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Second strike, third strike, fourth strike.

The heavy shock reverberated within his body.

He didn't feel pain in the conventional sense, but every time he was hit, his mana room shook violently and his concentration was interrupted.

'What kind of attack is this?'

It wasn't meant to inflict damage. If that was the case, then the strike would have already been aimed at his vital points.

It felt more like he was venting his anger on him instead.

"It should have been almost impossible to resurrect a man like Lucid as an undead."

A voice came from above him.

"Because he had a noble, faultless soul. His soul must have been brilliant, unsullied."

Frey paused for a moment.

"And you dirtied it."

[So what?]

"Shut up. I didn't give you permission to speak."

Boom!

His body shook once again. As he trembled, Diablo finally realised.

He knew. He knew what it was.

The thing that was hitting his body without him noticing.

This time, when he was hit, he realised that it wasn't magic at all.

It was Absolute.

[How...?]

He was using the power of Absolute like a club.

Such application.

Such skill.

“You were right before. Even among 9-star Wizards, there is a distinction in class.”

The voice was low.

“You will feel that deeply from now on.”

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Dreadment.

The sword technique created by Lucid. The sword technique that always protected them.

Reliable, reassuring. Capable of giving the confidence that Lucid would hold out, regardless of what enemy they were facing.

That’s why she’d never known.

Just how much pressure one felt when they were on the other side of that sword.

‘How should I say it?’

A rampart? An iron wall?

In any case, it felt like she was punching an incredibly hard surface to no avail. She didn’t even know if any of her attacks were working.

‘I’m not a combat specialist in the first place!’

It was only natural for Anastasia to scream inwardly.

Over the last 10 years, she'd made numerous modifications to her body. She attached magical tools and even added alchemy. In the first place, it was the most efficient way for golems to become stronger.

As a result, she was much stronger than she was 10 years ago.

Nevertheless, she was having a very hard time dealing with Lucid. Even though she was receiving the full support of Iris, nothing changed...

'Our cooperation is better than before, but...'

The situation wasn't showing any signs of improving.

No, that wasn't all.

Anastasia narrowed her eyes slightly.

'It feels like this guy is growing stronger the more we fight.'

Was he familiarising himself with his undead body?

That thought alone gave her goosebumps.

He was already frighteningly strong right now, but if he were to make that body completely his...

As she had that thought, her fists clenched subconsciously. The situation would only become worse as time dragged on.

Paak!

Anastasia's fist met Lucid's stomach.

It sunk in deeply.

The proof of this was the fact that his black armour, which hadn't suffered a single scratch until now, caved slightly.

It was her first effective blow since the battle had started.

Nevertheless, Anastasia, who had managed to attack successfully, had a stunned expression.

That attack hadn't been a trump card or anything. And the blow wasn't snuck in after exchanging a fierce set of blows.

It was the same attack as before, but for some reason, Lucid had allowed it to hit him.

Anastasia retreated quickly. Then she looked at Lucid with a wary gaze.

He was standing still as if he'd suddenly lost his mind. When she looked at him closely, she realised that he was actually looking somewhere else.

He wasn't looking at Anastasia right now. But it didn't seem like Iris was the one who captured his attention.

Lucid's gaze was aimed at the sky.

To be precise, it was trained on the two Wizards who were fighting in the sky.

Among them, it seemed that his gaze was fixed more on the man with grey hair.

* * *

When a battle between Wizards of the same level took place, there were important factors that usually determined the outcome.

In order to win such a fierce, equal battle, it was necessary to be able to read the opponent's intentions and be ready to quickly respond to them at any time. In other words, a broad mind was crucial.

Their field of view couldn't be too narrow. A Great Wizard was capable of casting more than a dozen spells at the same time. Front, back, left, right, above, beneath. It was even necessary to remember that it was possible to cast a spell directly in the body.

But the most important factor was calculative ability.

Spells that had already been cast couldn't be undone. Regardless of the size of the spell, the mana could not be recovered, and the time that was invested to cast it, whether long or short, could not be returned.

In other words, if one was to cast dozens of spells at the same time and send them all to their opponent without thinking about it, it was likely that they wouldn't be able to display even half of their maximum power.

Because even the spells that were cast by the same person could counteract each other.

Fire and water.

Air and earth.

Light and darkness.

Spells with conflicting attributes should never be sent out at the same time. A certain amount of distance needed to be between them for them to not affect each other. On the flip side, there were also

spells that synergised when they were combined. Those types of spells didn't necessarily need to be cast at the same time. But even if their departure time was different, they had to arrive at the same time.

That was not the only thing that one needed to think about.

There was something that was more important than the spells cast by an individual. These were the spells of their opponent.

In fact, it was much more important.

The dozens of spells that one sent out, and the dozens of spells sent out by their opponent.

When spells of the same level collided, the factor that decided the outcome was 'matchmaking'.

Therefore, it was necessary to constantly correct the course until the collision. In order to obtain and keep the advantageous position, it was imperative to not stop thinking and calculating even for a moment.

On top of that, it was necessary to remember to continuously cast new spells while the other collisions were still ongoing.

It was no different from a large-scale war. Even if one gained the slight advantage in the first round of clashes, without any reinforcements, that situation could be reversed at any time.

—Diablo and Frey.

The magical bombardment fired off by the two Great Wizards seemed like an endless war of attrition, but the reality was completely different.

They were constantly calculating to the point that smoke might start coming from their brains. Even if 10 7-star Wizards were to gather, they wouldn't be able to digest the number of spell formulas that were being squeezed out every second.

The fight had already turned into a brawl.

In this kind of chaotic fight, sometimes even 1-star spells were more effective than 6-star spells.

That's why one could never let their guard down.

"Impossible."

Right. He couldn't let his guard down.

Diablo had never thought that his calculative ability would be inferior to anyone.

And that was the truth that he was facing right now.

However, what was the war situation now?

Boom!

The aftermath of a spell collision happened right in front of him. If one were to compare the current situation to a real war, then the frontline had been pushed back all the way to the front of his base.

The opponent's mind was at least one level higher than his, his field of view was extraordinarily wide, and his calculative ability was incomparable.

Crash!

The first price of losing in the battle of attrition finally appeared.

Diablo's right arm shattered.

To be hit so hard, it had to at least have been the 6-star spell Hyperbolt.

'Paimon's Curtain has already dispersed.'

He didn't have the extra mental capacity to maintain the barrier.

There was a saying that offence was the best defence. That saying was perfect for Diablo at that moment. If he'd tried to defend at all, his entire body would have been shattered to pieces long before.

At that moment, he had no choice but to admit that this unknown Wizard bested him in every way.

That made his suspicions grow even more.

His opponent wasn't simply a genius.

It was true that one could be born with a high calculative ability.

However, in order to develop such a deep mind and battle awareness, one would need to accumulate experience for a very long time.

Diablo had lived for over 1,000 years.

A Wizard who was more experienced than him should not exist on the current continent.

Right, the current continent.

[...]

At that moment, Diablo felt a shock as though an electric current had passed through his body.

It was a certain type of pleasure that one felt when all of the pieces of a puzzle clicked into place.

[Kukuku... Kuhaha... Kuhahaha!]

Diablo's low laugh suddenly became a cackle.

The flames in his eyes burned brightly.

[I see. So it's you, Great Mage—!]

A voice filled with joy.

At that moment, Frey.

No, Lukas who currently had the 'appearance of Frey', paused.

[You have finally returned. To this world...]

"..."

[Kuhaha... I see. That appearance. It must be one of those 'forgotten appearances' that you had in the past. Right. I couldn't feel the presence of the box, but I hadn't thought that you'd already made contact with it.]

Diablo burst into laughter once more.

Lukas simply looked at him silently.

He was completely defenceless now. Should he just finish him off now?

'No.'

He couldn't.

Something had changed. Diablo was 'different' from before.

It wasn't his aura.

Instead, he simply felt that the current Diablo was dangerous. But that in itself was strange. The situation hadn't changed. The only thing that changed was that Diablo realised his identity.

'He realised that I am Lukas Trowman.'

Immediately after that, he regained his composure.

In other words, did that mean that he had means that could be used on 'Lukas Trowman'?

...Although there was no proof of this, Lukas trusted his intuition.

In the next instant, Diablo's mad laughter cut off.

[Come here, Lucid.]

Somehow, Lucid, who was still fighting Anastasia, managed to hear his low whisper and quickly appeared beside Diablo.

Lukas looked at him before opening his mouth heavily.

"...Lucid."

Kiki, kik.

As if broken, the Death Knight turned its head to him in a slow, choppy motion.

The moment their eyes met.

Lukas' eyes trembled slightly.

[Lu... Ka... S...]

A broken voice.

[Luka... Lukas... Lukas, Trowman.]

“...Lucid. You...”

[Ahhh. Uaah. Aaak. A-, ak!]

Lucid gripped his head and screamed.

Lukas' expression hardened. His very soul was being damaged.

[Let's stop here.]

Diablo spoke.

[I'll be leaving now. Because this isn't the place to fight you.]

“Bullshit.”

Boom!

Following the cold voice, an explosion caused stone to scatter in every direction.

It was Anastasia's landing. She'd crossed the distance of hundreds of metres in a single leap, so it was natural to damage the ground like that.

She glared at Diablo as the cloud of dust rose around her.

"Do you really think we'll let you go like that?"

Despite Anastasia's clear rage, Diablo still responded in a cheerful manner.

[I won't stop you from following me. But you should be prepared to risk your life when you come, Wandering Golem.]

"...you."

Diablo didn't listen to her response and instead snapped his fingers.

Then a pitch black tear in space rose up from the ground and swallowed him from the feet up.

Iris, who had just arrived, immediately recognised the true nature of the black magic.

‘Shadow Way.’

It was a high level spell with a long travel distance and fast activation speed.

In the blink of an eye, Diablo and Lucid disappeared. But Anastasia didn’t panic and instead turned to look at Iris.

“Can you track them?”

“...yes.”

While it was undeniable that Shadow Way was a high level black spell, it wasn’t impossible for Iris, who had the authority of space, to track it.

“Good. Start tracking them right away. Diablo should be on the ropes right now. This is our best chance to finish him off. We can’t miss it.”

“You cannot track them.”

A restrained voice.

Anastasia turned her head sharply.

Her fiery gaze met Lukas'.

"You..."

Anastasia paused for a moment before letting out a sigh.

"I'm thankful for your help, but please don't interfere more than this."

"Even though you don't know if you'll die if you chase them?"

It seemed that he was asking about their intentions, but his strange tone made Anastasia snap.

"Do you think I don't know that? But if we miss this opportunity today, it'll be even more dangerous the next time. So we have to try and end it now."

"There's a good chance that it's a trap."

"No. He can't afford that right now."

“Don’t make assumptions. Have you forgotten Diablo’s attitude as he left? He didn’t seem too worried that we’d follow him.”

“It’s possible that he was just bluffing.”

“...you should know how meticulous Diablo is. He is not the type of man to bet his safety on uncertain odds. Calm down a bit.”

Anastasia was silent.

Perhaps it was because she understood what Lukas was saying, or perhaps it was because she thought differently.

The reason was proven by her next words.

“...calm down?”

Anastasia spoke in a clear but emotional voice.

“How can I calm down? Did you know? That undead knight, the Death Knight that Diablo revived and controlled, is my friend.”

“...”

“This has nothing to do with you, which is why you can still be so calm. You can take a step back and analyse the situation carefully. I can’t.”

Anastasia’s voice was like a cold wind that penetrated his heart.

Subconsciously, his fists clenched.

...Those words... were hard to bear.

“That guy, Lucid, was a man who never spat on the street in his life. He was always clean and innocent. He was someone who would fuss more over his teammates’ scratches than his own broken arm...”

He knew. He knew it very well.

Nevertheless, Lukas, who could not admit that, stayed silent.

“...a guy like that... was made into an undead. He must still be in pain even now. I’m sure of it. He was cleaner than anyone else. If even a small portion of his sense of self remains, he will never accept the reality that he was made into an undead.”

“ ... ”

“So I have to break those chains and free Lucid as soon as possible.”

Anastasia looked at Lukas before sighing again.

“You don’t know. You can’t understand. But I can’t just sit back and watch my friend become an undead.”

...Since Anastasia.

No, since Schweiser was the one that said that.

Lukas couldn’t say anything. He felt like he couldn’t stop Anastasia now.

No.

Was that really the reason?

Was the reason he didn’t continue to dissuade Anastasia really because he had no way to stop her?

Lukas asked himself.

Or perhaps he was just afraid that her words would hurt him even more, which was why he backed down.

He didn’t know. But it didn’t matter. She wouldn’t understand.

Anastasia wouldn't know just how much her simple words had hurt him. They were daggers that pierced his heart.

It was much more painful than he expected.

Ignoring Lukas, who was standing there silently, Anastasia turned to talk to Iris. They were probably discussing how they would track down Diablo.

"...I."

Just as Iris turned to look at Lukas.

"Stop."

A loud shout was heard.

Someone was walking along the broken street.

"He is right. If you go after Diablo, you might not survive."

Everyone turned to look at the source of this voice.

It was a woman in a very unique style of dress.

But Lukas recognised her instantly.

God's representative.

A being he'd been determined to meet after returning to this world.

"...Great Medium."

The Great Medium of Hitume Ikar walked along, leaving soft footprints in her wake.

"I have a lot to tell you all. Especially."

The Great Medium stopped a short distance away and poked Lukas' chest with her finger.

"Lukas Trowman, especially you."

Book 2: Chapter 370

The box was neither large nor small. It was big enough to fit in the palm of his hand.

The texture of its surface was similar to that of jelly. It was cool and felt like it was sticking to the tips of his fingers.

Rather than a box that was storing something. It looked more like a 'material' that simply had the shape of a box.

Nevertheless, everyone called it a box. And the reason for that was quite simple.

It felt like there was something inside of it.

No.

It wasn't just a feeling.

There was definitely something inside of it. And it had been sealed in some way so that those who weren't qualified could never open it.

...It wasn't magicology.

But the vast majority of people who saw it would mistake it as such. Was this the intention of the person who made the box or put the seal on it?

That might be the case.

-...

External force.

That was the power surrounding the box.

At first, he thought it was an illusion, but it wasn't.

There was probably no one else in this universe apart from him who could see what this power truly was.

It was a power granted only to Absolutes who roamed between universes.

But that only made him even more suspicious.

After all, he was the only Absolute born from this univ-...

-...

No.

He wasn't.

Apart from him, there was one more.

Two images of the man appeared in his mind.

In one, he looked no different from a Demon, and in the other, he looked more thin and vulnerable than an old tree.

Although the two looked like completely different beings, they shared the same name.

Then what?

Did that mean they were the same?

—The next clue is the box and Diablo

A voice sounded in his head.

Was it advice? Or was it a trap?

What exactly was Kasajin thinking? He couldn't even guess what was running through his mind. It wasn't consistent. In the past, Kasajin was exactly the same both inside and out.

...The box.

His attention was drawn to it once again. Just as he touched it with his finger.

Click—

The box opened.

Ah. Subconsciously, he let out a soft cry of surprise.

As if it was resonating with him, black smoke rose up from the box. He shuddered, but it was already too late to dodge.

The black smoke engulfed his entire body. His vision went black.

He flinched, but there was no pain. The black smoke showed no signs of hurting him.

Instead... it felt warm. As if his entire body was submerged in warm water.

In the meantime, he could feel the smoke that was wrapped around his entire body entering his mouth, eyes, ears, and even his skin.

But there was no pain.

Instead, the smoke just continued to burrow deeper and deeper at a calm pace.

Deeper than his blood vessels, muscles, bones, and internal organs that were beneath his skin. Deeper than that.

Gurgle...

...Then there was change.

The elements that formed the very basis of his body began to change.

“Th... is.”

His own voice startled him.

It felt strange, but also carried the familiarity and nostalgia of a voice he knew.

It wasn't just his voice that changed.

He could feel it.

The fact that every cell which made up his appearance, physique, and bodily systems had changed.

To be precise, they had been overwritten.

“...”

The smoke disappeared.

He still didn't fully understand the situation.

However, he was certain that his physical condition, which could only be described as the worst before, had improved like an illusion.

...He could hear the sound of water nearby. So he decided to walk there.

And on the surface of a small lake in the middle of the forest, he looked at the reflection of his face.

'Frey Blake' looked back at him.

* * *

“...”

Lukas opened his eyes.

He couldn't help but feel like this kind of thing had been happening quite a lot recently. However, this time, he wasn't greeted by intense pain as soon as he came to his senses. In a way, it could be called a small point of comfort.

'...my memory.'

It was a bit hazy.

He remembered obtaining the box and becoming 'Frey Blake', but his memories after that felt like a dream.

He wasn't even sure if he remembered everything.

Perhaps only time would be able to answer that.

“Would you like some water?”

A loud voice came from beside him.

In a chair beside the bed, he saw a woman looking at him with an indifferent expression as she held her chin in her hand. Her hair was as dark as a starless night, and her eyes were as clear as a lake as she stared at Lukas.

The Great Medium.

As he looked at her, a faint memory surfaced in his mind.

She'd shown up shortly after he'd failed to deter Anastasia. And she'd said that she had something to say to him... and after that, he couldn't remember.

"...I fainted again."

He looked down at his hands as he said those words.

And just from that, he could tell. He was now Lukas Trowman, not Frey Blake. (TL: so he has a Blake State now?)

"How long?"

"About 6 hours."

Fortunately, it wasn't a worst case scenario where several days had passed.

Lukas looked around the room. Apart from himself and the Great Medium, he couldn't sense the presence of anyone else in the room.

"The others?"

"They left."

His heart grew heavy at the Great Medium's words.

"...did they decide to pursue Diablo in the end?"

"No. Not that."

The Great Medium shook her head as she continued.

"Peran persuaded them. He didn't manage to convince them completely, but he did manage to stop them from at least going after him right away."

"...Peran."

"He asked Anastasia and Iris to heal Snow."

“Ah.”

It seemed he had chosen to confide the Alliance’s situation to them. It was a timely decision.

Now that Anastasia and Iris had witnessed Diablo’s prowess for themselves, and seen Lucid with their own eyes, their sense of crisis should have been amplified to an unprecedented level.

Perhaps all the human powers would join forces and they would put aside the conflicts in Circle for now.

Even if things didn’t work out that well, he didn’t believe that they would refuse to treat Snow right now.

Lucid, the Undead Sword King, had become much stronger than he ever was. In the past, Lucid had been a brilliant hero even when he’d been more focused on defence than offence. If Kasajin’s role was to threaten the throats of the enemies by smashing from the front, then Lucid’s role was to create a strong defence line so that those in the rear could perform to their full ability.

But that wasn’t the case now.

The defence of Lucid, who had become a Death Knight, was stronger than ever, and his offensive power was now comparable to Warrior King Kasajin.

Even Anastasia, who had a ridiculous 1 million ME energy source couldn’t win in battle against Lucid. This was true even when she was receiving the full support of Iris from the rear.

Someone who could go head to head with Lucid without being pushed back.

Perhaps on the entire continent, only Snow de Predickwood could accomplish such a feat.

“So Peran isn’t here now.”

“Right. It’s just me and you. And Nix as well.”

“...when did they leave?”

“Just a while ago. Maybe 30 minutes or so?”

As he listened to her reply, Lukas got to his feet. Then, he took a sip of water from the bottle on the table to moisten his dry throat. The water was lukewarm, but it was enough to quench his thirst.

Even after he closed the bottle and placed it back on the table, the Great Medium did not say anything. It seemed that she was waiting for Lukas to speak first.

...The Great Medium remembered Lukas Trowman. She remembered him more clearly than anyone else he’d met.

Peran, who only knew Frey, was fundamentally different from Torkunta, whose very existence in itself was unstable.

“This universe forgot about Lukas Trowman.”

This was the first time he was able to mention this fact so calmly.

The Great Medium nodded.

“Do you know why?”

“Yes. I know.”

It was an answer that was filled with confidence.

At that moment, Lukas’ heartbeat increased a little bit.

Regardless of whether she knew that or not, the Great Medium continued in an indifferent voice.

“I can probably answer most of the questions you have now. But it might be a long conversation, so I’ll ask you in advance. Are you sure you wouldn’t like to get some more rest before we continue?”

“No. Let’s do it right now.”

He had a slight headache, but other than that, he was fine.

Lukas nodded to show his assent, and the Great Medium opened her mouth again.

“Everyone in this universe has forgotten you. And there is also no record of your existence.”

“No. Peran and Torkunta remember me.”

“Those are exceptions among exceptions. Torkunta in particular... is very lucky. But he may soon forget about you as well.”

“What do you mean?”

Lukas couldn't help but question the Great Medium's shocking remark. But she continued instead of answering his question.

“What do you think is the reason for this? I'm sure you've made your own guesses by now.”

“...I think God did something. But I can't guess why.”

“Well, you're not wrong. That's right. Your disappearance has something to do with his influence. But it was not done out of malice.”

“I see.”

There was only one being that an Absolute, no, a former Absolute like him knew who was capable of such an extraordinary act.

Whether large or small, God’s actions were always accompanied by events on the cosmic scale. That was something that Absolutes knew better than anyone else.

“It is a rule.”

“...rule?”

“This is a truth that I only learned recently. This is thanks to the weak security of the void records. Of course, that’s also why some beings other than me were able to interfere... But that’s not important right now, so let’s move on.”

Lukas looked at the Great Medium. She felt even more mysterious than she did before. For a moment, he couldn’t help but think about his disciple Arid, who had the power of Communication.

He couldn’t help but wonder if he had anything to do with the weak security of the ‘void records’ that she just mentioned.

“Lukas Trowman. You left this universe as an Absolute. How long have you been working as an Absolute.”

“I don’t remember, it’s been too long.”

“I see. Perhaps it was such a long time that mortals would not be able to perceive it.”

The Great Medium paused again and for a moment, their gazes crossed.

Lukas noticed hesitation in her eyes.

Why was she hesitating?

“...However, when you returned to this universe, only 10 years had passed. What do you think is the reason for this?”

“Because the flow of time is different in each universe.”

“That is not wrong, but it is different. The real reason is because that is what you wanted.”

“...what?”

It was hard for him to understand what she meant.

Of course, Lukas knew that the Great Medium was already doing her best to explain everything in an easy enough manner for him to understand.

But even her 'simple explanation' was hard for Lukas to understand.

"I didn't come to this universe with the power of an Absolute. It was with the help of someone else's power, not mine."

"Perhaps it was someone with a similar power to mine, but who was more powerful than me. No matter how powerful an Absolute is, they don't have the ability to freely travel to a particular universe."

...The Great Medium of the past hadn't known about Absolutes.

But now, she seemed to be perfectly aware of God, Absolutes, and the endless multiverse.

It was clear that in the decade that Lukas had been away, the Great Medium had also had her own experiences.

"But I was able to return to this time because I wanted to?"

"It must have been a subconscious desire. You probably wished that it would have been nice if only 5 or 10 years had passed, right?"

"..."

He couldn't deny it.

“There is one thing that is important here, Lukas Trowman. You are not the only one. It is possible for Absolutes other than you to step into this universe as long as the conditions are met. It might not be now, but it might be the past or the future. Do you understand what this fact means?”

“...do you mean a temporal conflict can occur?”

That was the only probability Lukas could think of.

For example, if he had returned to the battle 10 years earlier instead of now, he might have encountered ‘Lukas Trowman’ who was fighting Lord at that time.

“Absolutes are the only beings capable of transcending time and space. I’ll give you an example. Let’s say that an Absolute came to this universe 50 years ago. To get rid of Lord and the Demigods who broke the ‘balance’. After easily accomplishing their goal, they leave. What do you think would happen to you?”

Whether he could think of an answer or not, the Great Medium continued.

“You would not become an Absolute.”

“Ah.”

“The Absolute [Lukas Trowman] was born in the battle with the Demigods. So, in a universe without Lord or the Demigods, the universe would have been fine without your desperate struggle.”

“...so, my existence disappeared.”

“To be precise, you became independent. When beings become Absolutes, they inevitably fall away from their homeworld and become independent. That was the law that Dawns created to solve that paradox.” (TL: Dawns is what the Great Medium calls God.)

The Great Medium looked at Lukas’ face.

...The words she was about to say would surely hurt him. Not only that, they would bring him to the crossroads of choice once again.

Nevertheless, they needed to be said.

Perhaps that was the role that had been assigned to the Great Medium.

“...when you left this place, you must have left your home behind with dreams of returning.”

And even while facing the thorny road that he would walk as an Absolute in the future, he would not feel despair.

Because he had the hope of returning home.

Someday.

“However, the truth is that the moment you left, the place you wanted to return to was already gone.”

“ ... ”

It was easy to see what the Great Medium was actually trying to say.

She was saying.

That was the return that Lukas Trowman had been anxiously anticipating.

Was not possible from the beginning.