

Multiverse 261

Chapter 261: Not My Match

At the deepest part of the underground temple, there was an underground spring welling up from beneath the earth.

The stone passageway ended here, and the area around the underground spring was all dirt.

On the shore of the underground spring, there was also an altar by the water.

Atop the altar, that being appeared as if it were the most natural thing in the world, entering Erica's line of sight.

When that being entered her vision, Erica finally understood why Kaiser had looked at her with that kind of gaze and expression earlier, and why he had told her he hoped she could maintain her confidence.

Because only when that being appeared before her in a true sense did Erica come to understand what "god" meant.

"So you've found your way here after all, you detestable enemies."

It was a voice as if it came from deep within the earth.

The voice was extremely heavy, and also extremely powerful, extremely resonant, like thunder, deep and resounding.

The owner of the voice was a brawny giant in his prime.

He had a head of hair that looked like it had never been trimmed, and a beard that covered the entire lower half of his face. His height exceeded two meters, and his entire body was covered in solid muscles—just looking at him gave off an overwhelming sense of power.

His physique was exceedingly robust and powerful, giving a barbaric and mighty impression. He wore extremely rough clothing—filthy rags and a leather breastplate were strewn across his chest—and he was draped in a tattered cloak. His appearance, rather than being unkempt, could only be described as pitiful.

The owner of the voice seemed quite self-aware and spoke accordingly.

"If you had come a little later, you wouldn't have seen this unsightly body. Unfortunately, as you can see, I am currently injured, and can only temporarily hide the form I use for battle, appearing in this disgraceful state to reduce expenditure and hasten my recovery."

The giant spoke with a dignified tone, without a hint of frustration. He even bared his chest openly, letting others clearly see his condition.

Upon closer inspection, a Golden Sword was deeply embedded in the giant's broad chest.

The Golden Sword's blade had broken in the middle, so there was no hilt, only two-thirds of its original length remained. But it was unmistakably pierced into the giant's body, still radiating dazzling brilliance, suppressing the giant's power.

Understanding this, Erica's body began to tremble.

Simply because—even in a state where his power was being suppressed—she still felt fear from the giant.

Even though the other party hadn't used any Authority, hadn't exercised any power, just looking at him gave Erica the sense that she was gazing up at a higher-dimensional lifeform. She only felt overwhelmed, felt afraid.

An ancient Divinity manifested before her.

A true myth descended before her.

Even if the other party did nothing, tiny humans like ants could only tremble, could only fear.

If the person beside Erica were also an ordinary human, then regardless of whether they were a Great Knight of equal rank or a renowned Paladin in the human world, they would be just like Erica—trembling from an unknown fear.

Before a deity, so-called Paladins who could contend with Divine Beasts and demigods were but ants—no different from the average office worker walking down the street.

But, the one beside Erica was not an ordinary human, but an existence who had slain gods twice in this world.

"You're Melqart, right?"

Erica then heard Kaiser's voice, calm to the point of being indifferent, which startled her.

"Hahahahaha!"

The giant immediately burst into laughter, a bold and hearty laugh.

That laughter was like thunder from the heavens. The moment it sounded, it shook the air and the earth, causing the entire underground temple to tremble.

The spring continuously splashed with waves, and Erica felt as if she were caught in a storm, like a small boat tossed on the sea—helpless and powerless.

The giant unleashed his world-shaking laughter and loudly spoke.

"That's right! I am Melqart! The king of this island, this land, and these seas!"

Melqart—this was the one who once ruled over the divine realm of ancient Phoenicia.

His real name was Baal. In Christian culture, this name came to symbolize the Demon King of Gluttony, one of the Seven Deadly Sins. Milton's Paradise Lost depicted him as a Demon King who could rival God, a king of demons, so much so that he acquired the name "Beelzebub," making him the leader of the seventy-two demon gods, the dark great emperor.

His myth later spread to Greece and became the prototype of the hero Heracles. He was not only the king of the ancient gods, a great warrior, and the strongest dragon slayer, but the legend of Saint George was compiled based on his tale, so Saint George can also be considered one of his alternate names.

The Phoenicians, Canaanites, and Hebrews all worshipped him as Baal, with Melqart being revered as the chief deity and guardian god of Tyre.

In Phoenician belief, this god was born from the desert and wilderness, a storm god formed from the sun of blazing fire and rainfall. He was also the god of the sea, the sun, the god who governed both harvest and desolation, and the summoner of locusts that devoured all crops and laid waste to the land.

Melqart, the king god worshipped by Semitic peoples like the Canaanites and Phoenicians, held Authorities over storms, lightning, the sky, and more.

Erica finally understood why even a mighty god like Verethragna, the ever-victorious god of war, would have his divine body shattered and his incarnations scattered across Sardinia.

Because that god's opponent was not an ordinary deity, but a god-king class existence!

The Divinity of the god before her was of the same order as Odin or Zeus!

Even a so-called ever-victorious god of war, who ruled over victory, could not easily defeat a king among gods in myth!

No... I can't stay here any longer...

Erica could not suppress such a thought from arising.

No matter how confident or proud she was, at this moment, she could not help but obey the instincts of a human being—she wanted to bow, she wanted to run.

Until—

"I thought the first one to break in here and stand before me would be that arrogant and crazed god of war."

Melqart's eyes never once rested on Erica, treating her like a stone by the roadside, utterly ignoring her.

At this moment, the only one in this god-king's eyes was a single man.

The man standing beside Erica.

"I've heard of existences like yours," Melqart muttered as if speaking to himself. "The foolish goddess's creation... the child and illegitimate offspring of Epimetheus... the God-Slaying Beast, the King of the Earth..."

"The common enemy of all gods, the audacious one who slays gods."

"That would be you, right?"

Melqart's words made Erica momentarily dazed.

Then, as if she understood something, she suddenly looked up at Kaiser, her eyes filled with shock.

Kaiser, however, ignored Erica and replied to Melqart indifferently.

"I had thought your condition was much better than Verethragna's, but it seems you two are equally miserable."

Kaiser's gaze shifted to the Golden Sword embedded in Melqart's chest.

"This is a Golden Sword designed to sever Divinity, to cut off divine power, and to seal a god's Authorities."

Melqart had no intention of hiding his weakness and still maintained his bold and forthright demeanor.

"If one's opponent is a god, then this is the strongest sword. Even I, having been pierced by such a sword, can only hide in a place like this, doing everything I can to wear it down and extract it—otherwise, there's no way for these injuries to recover."

That was a weapon used specifically against gods. Being run through by such a thing wasn't something that could be brushed off as simply being "wounded."

In truth, the fact that Melqart could still maintain his physical form and not immediately collapse and return to myth was already an extraordinary feat.

If one were to truly compare the severity of injuries, Melqart's state was actually worse than Verethragna, whose divine body had been shattered.

"This is the weakest I've ever been. God-Slayer, if you want to kill me—the king of gods and the mightiest dragon slayer—now is your best chance."

Melqart provocatively declared to Kaiser without the slightest hint of fear.

"Though I had hoped to settle things with that arrogant god of war, since a God-Slayer stands before me, I might as well go all out in battle to display my majesty."

This was no bluff. It was Melqart's declaration.

Even while wounded, he would never fear battle.

Even if it meant burning out this body, he would, in his final battle, slay any fool who dared raise a sword against him.

Though a king, Melqart also possessed the nature of a warrior. Naturally, he wouldn't be like Odin or Poseidon, fleeing at the first sign of danger.

Of course, if retreating meant fighting better and going all out to win, Melqart wouldn't mind doing so either.

In any case, he would never show fear before a human.

"Come forth, my servants! Gather at my side! Prepare to devour the enemies who have come here!"

At Melqart's shout, the ground around him began to shift unnaturally.

Swarms of locusts had somehow appeared, covering the ground beneath him and the earth near the water's edge.

The number of locusts was vast—uncountably vast—densely packed and endless.

They made clicking sounds as they squirmed, crept toward Kaiser's direction, jumped, and even spread their wings to fly over.

The scene was enough to make one's scalp go numb.

At least, Erica felt that way now—unable to help but take a step back.

Only Kaiser remained still.

And then, he said something Erica had heard not long ago—something that now struck her as unbelievable.

"Forget it."

Kaiser calmly declared.

"In your current state, you're not my match."