

Multiverse 264

Chapter 264: Serving That King

Sardinia, Oristano Province.

In a luxurious hotel in Oristano Province, inside a room as grand as a presidential suite, Erica was on a call with someone.

"That's the situation, Uncle," Erica said quietly, holding the phone. "Sorry for disappointing you."

Erica's words were met with a heavy voice.

"No need to apologize, Erica."

The person Erica was speaking to was her only remaining family in this world, her uncle—Paolo Blandelli.

Hearing her uncle's familiar voice, Paolo's figure naturally surfaced in Erica's mind.

That was a man whose physique could be likened to that of a statue of David.

He was a man nearing forty, yet still exuded the vitality of youth. His sculpted and dignified face was filled with intellect and presence. Coupled with a perfectly trained, steel-like body, in every aspect he was a man deserving of the highest title of knight.

Strong and proud as she was, even toward Salvatore Doni, the nominal king of Italy, Erica only maintained superficial respect. In truth, she had never seen him as someone worthy of admiration—instead, she saw him as a monster, a barbarian, someone whose brain seemed chewed by a bear, wholly undeserving of reverence.

But toward Paolo, her uncle, Erica held heartfelt respect.

Because he had never disappointed her—whether as a knight, as family, or as the commander of the Copper Black Cross—this uncle of hers was perfect, impeccable, matching every image of perfection Erica held in her heart.

This wasn't an illusion. All of Italy could attest to it.

In terms of strength, he was a Paladin, standing at the peak of humanity, able to slay Divine Beasts and battle demigods alone. In terms of intellect, he had once, alongside the former chairman of the Witenagemot, set a trap to repel a Campione—a feat still fervently passed down to this day, making him the object of admiration for countless knights.

It could be said that Erica worked hard with Paolo as her goal. Her greatest ambition was to become someone like her uncle.

As for Campiones?

They were a group of arrogant, lawless Demon Lords—perhaps powerful, but not worthy of aspiration or admiration.

In Italy, there had long been a saying.

The people believed that the strongest knight in Italy was Salvatore Doni, but the highest-ranking knight was Paolo Blandelli.

Though Paolo himself humbly denied this, Salvatore Doni, the other party involved, had once smiled and acknowledged it, saying that as a knight, he was far inferior to Paolo.

That was Erica's uncle—the current commander of the Copper Black Cross.

At this moment, the man who stood at the pinnacle of Milan's magical world spoke gently to Erica.

"You are my most treasured pride, a genius child who will one day stand at the top of the organization. This is my personal hope, and a future I have always believed in."

"You will eventually surpass me, surpass all previous generations of the Blandelli family, and reach a level second only to our founder, who was a Campione."

"So there's no need to feel guilty about your performance. Child, you merely lack some experience in facing gods."

Her uncle's comforting words brought some relief to Erica's heart.

"But compared to gods and kings who have slain gods, I am still far too lacking."

Erica couldn't help but say this.

"You mustn't think like that, Erica," Paolo advised. "Comparing yourself to gods and god-slaying kings—there's no meaning in that."

"You are human. The ones you should be comparing yourself to must also be human."

"Gods and god-slaying kings—they are not human. They are existences beyond human understanding."

"As a knight, you can slay savage Magical Beasts and fierce Divine Beasts, but you should not think about slaying the earth or the sea, do you understand?"

Paolo's implication was clear: there was no need to regard gods and Campiones as people.

How could humans contend with natural disasters? How could humans be compared to nature itself?

And gods and Campiones were disasters—bugs born from nature.

There was no need to compare oneself to them.

"I understand, Uncle."

Erica accepted this reasoning.

If it had been before, she might have accepted it on the surface but not in her heart.

However, after facing a true god and witnessing the might of a Campione, she was no longer as prideful and self-satisfied as before.

Only by recognizing reality could she move forward.

Erica silently reminded herself of this, which Paolo, having sensed something, found very comforting.

"You've grown, my child."

In truth, at the start, Paolo had disagreed with Erica coming to Sardinia.

In his view, Erica still had much to learn and was too young. If she wanted to come into contact with gods, waiting a few more years wouldn't have been too late.

Unfortunately, Erica had insisted, and Paolo had no choice but to agree.

Now it seemed things were heading in a positive direction, and he could be somewhat reassured.

Even as he felt relief, Paolo gradually grew serious.

"According to your report, there are two gods manifesting in Sardinia. One is the God of Victory from ancient Persian mythology, and the other is the king of the ancient Phoenician pantheon."

"These two gods, due to a great battle, are now both injured. The former's divine body is shattered, and his incarnations have become multiple Divine Beasts. The latter was struck by the Golden Sword that severs Divinity and is still trying to wear down the wound."

"And that king who was born not long ago has also appeared on Sardinia..."

Paolo repeated the situation and calmly gave his conclusion.

"If that's the case, then the situation is not too bad."

At least, Melqart had no time to stir up trouble now, and Verethragna was still trying to retrieve his incarnations. Rampaging across Sardinia were only Divine Beasts, not the gods themselves. Plus, with a Campione already on site—someone who could contend with the two gods—the situation could definitely be considered favorable.

"But Uncle, the two gods are still alive. They could recover to full strength at any time," Erica said. "They already fought once. If they recover, they'll surely engage in another divine battle."

"At that time, Sardinia may not be as lucky as before and have both sides perish."

So long as it wasn't mutual destruction, the god who remained would likely stir up trouble in Sardinia.

A clash between gods could, if handled poorly, also engulf Sardinia and lead to its destruction.

The current situation might be stable, but the future was far from optimistic.

"Uncle, is there still no word from Lord Salvatore?"

Erica asked.

"Our lord is already en route to Sardinia," Paolo understood what Erica meant and shook his head. "But it will still take time for him to arrive—he very likely won't make it in time."

Not everyone could fly over like Kaiser.

Most Campiones still used human modes of transportation when traveling. Their Authorities didn't necessarily grant them speeds faster than planes, and even if they did, they couldn't use them nonstop to reach Sardinia without regard for consumption.

If Kaiser didn't have Divine Dividing, he'd probably also have had to obediently take a plane—otherwise, he'd have had to swim across the sea or exhaust himself using Shunpo or Sonído to travel.

Therefore, for Italy's king to reach Sardinia wouldn't be quick.

"What should we do then?"

Erica began to feel troubled.

"What did that king on your side say?" Paolo asked, a bit cautiously. "Is he willing to act?"

"It's not that he's unwilling," Erica said somewhat conflictedly. "It's just that he doesn't seem to want to take advantage of the gods' weakness. Instead, he plans to wait until both gods recover before taking them down in one fell swoop."

Paolo wasn't the least bit surprised by Erica's statement.

"Since he's a king who can slay gods, it's only natural that he wouldn't want to take advantage."

As a knight, Paolo could understand such an approach that respected both the enemy and oneself.

If it were him, he also wouldn't want to strike someone when they were down. He would wait until the other side recovered, then challenge them openly.

Erica was actually the same, so she wasn't displeased by Kaiser's actions.

But the opponents were gods—existences akin to natural disasters, not ordinary humans.

Letting such beings recover posed too great a threat to humanity.

"Uncle, should I go try persuading the king again?"

Erica sought Paolo's opinion.

"No, forget it," Paolo sighed and said, "The king is not someone we can sway. If persuasion fails and ends up angering him, that would be real trouble."

Don't forget—a Campione was also a Demon Lord, a walking humanoid catastrophe.

To anger one was no different than angering a god.

Humanity could not oppose gods, nor could they oppose Campiones.

Just as one must treat gods with extreme caution, so too must one be extremely careful with Campiones.

"Erica, for now, serve that king in the capacity of a retainer."

Paolo's understanding of Campiones far surpassed Erica's. He was also far clearer than the History Compilation Committee on how to deal with them.

Thus, he gave his instructions without hesitation.

"Don't attempt to do anything that might influence the king. Always remember, you are merely a subordinate to the king."

"As for the king's decisions and actions, accept them accordingly. Even if you have objections, do not resist directly."

"Use your wits skillfully, Erica. I believe someone as clever as you will accomplish this task."

Paolo gave Erica his utmost respect and trust.

"Yes, Uncle."

Erica took a deep breath and nodded heavily