

Multiverse 334

Chapter 334: That's Not It!

"You really did something big behind Ena's back, Your Majesty."

Inside the shrine office, in the living room, Seishuin Ena, who had already stood and bowed to Kaiser, unusually made a complaint.

"To think you went to subjugate the Monkey God while Ena was training in the mountains—this makes Ena feel like she's been derelict in her duty, Your Majesty."

Seishuin Ena's cheerful face was filled with resentment. It was clear what her mood had been like upon learning about this.

Her beloved King had gone off to slay a god without his loyal Hime-Miko. Didn't that make her seem useless?

Naturally, Seishuin Ena would feel aggrieved and dissatisfied.

"What?" Kaiser chuckled and said, "Don't tell me you wanted to fight a god yourself?"

"Ena isn't that arrogant, you know." Seishuin Ena shook her head and said, "If the opponent is a god, even with Ame no Murakumo no Tsurugi in hand, Ena wouldn't dare say she has a chance of victory, let alone when it's a divinity as powerful as the Great Sage Equal to Heaven."

If it were a relatively weak god, with the sword Ame no Murakumo no Tsurugi in hand, Seishuin Ena might have been able to put up some resistance, but the opponent was the Heretic God Sun Wukong, a powerful Steel Hero. Even with the sword, she definitely wouldn't be his match.

"But Ena still feels unwilling. Can you understand Ena's feelings, Your Majesty?"

Seishuin Ena's resentment seemed significant; she had started muttering endlessly.

"You're the one who went to the mountains to train. Who can you blame?" Kaiser shrugged. Seeing that Seishuin Ena still looked unable to let go, he finally said, "Alright, next time a god shows up, I'll definitely bring you along. Satisfied?"

Upon hearing this, Seishuin Ena smiled.

"Then it's a promise, Your Majesty!"

It seemed that was her true goal.

"Welcome back, Ena."

Mariya Yuri softly greeted Ena upon seeing this.

"Mm, I'm back, Yuri." Seishuin Ena first responded naturally, then turned to Erica and Liliana, saying, "It's been a while, Miss Liliana. And this is...?"

"Erica Blandelli." Erica, who had been observing Seishuin Ena, smiled as she met her gaze and said, "I'm the First Knight under His Majesty's banner."

As soon as those words were said, Seishuin Ena's gaze shifted subtly.

"I can't just pretend I didn't hear that, Erica." Liliana, who originally hadn't intended to speak, couldn't hold back now. "Even if you were indeed the first to pledge loyalty to His Majesty, being the first doesn't mean you can call yourself the First Knight."

Liliana clearly did not agree with this claim.

"But it's the truth, Liliana." Erica said unhurriedly, "Since I, Erica Blandelli, swore fealty to the King, I will be the First Knight no matter what. It truly isn't about order—but that doesn't change the end result."

"...You're still as confident as ever." Liliana narrowed her eyes and glared at Erica with a displeased expression. "If you dare make such bold claims, then you must have the guts to accept my challenge, right?"

As she spoke, Liliana seemed ready to draw Il Maestro.

In response, Erica merely looked at her with a mocking and slightly strange expression.

"You want to fight me for the title of First Knight, Liliana?" Erica said with a sweet smile. "I don't mind, since I'm not afraid of any challenge—but before that, shouldn't you be a knight first?"

"What do you mean by that?" Liliana furrowed her brows and glared at Erica. "Are you saying I'm not a knight? Are you insulting me?"

"You forgot, Liliana." Erica was unfazed by Liliana's glare and said casually, "Right now, you're not a knight under our King—you're a maid who was taken captive, remember?"

Liliana was instantly petrified.

"A mere maid has no right to vie for the title of First Knight, Liliana." Erica smiled with a look that could kill. "If you want to challenge me, you'll first need to persuade His Majesty to revoke your maid status and reinstate you as a knight."

Liliana opened her mouth, unable to say a word.

At that moment, Seishuin Ena spoke.

"To be able to render Miss Liliana speechless like that, it seems Miss Erica is quite formidable." Seishuin Ena, with her usual bright expression and tone, said to Erica, "Though I don't know when His Majesty accepted a European knight into his service, Ena doesn't dislike the idea of settling positions through strength."

"Even if Ena is not a knight but a concubine, Ena still wants to try challenging Miss Erica."

"Hey, do I have that chance?"

Seishuin Ena unexpectedly showed a competitive side.

It wasn't that Seishuin Ena couldn't stand Erica's confidence, nor that she felt threatened by Erica. Rather, it was the education she had received over many years—what one desires must be fought for.

When a contest appears, as the daughter of the Seishuin family, Seishuin Ena must never retreat.

The Italian beauty before her, claiming to be the King's First Knight, was clearly not someone to be taken lightly—perhaps even a favored concubine seeking to rise in position.

In that case, Seishuin Ena had to confront her.

First Knight?

More like trying to be the First Wife, right?

That won't do!

If it were Mariya Yuri, Seishuin Ena would have no objections. She knew Yuri well—she wasn't someone who fought for affection and her abilities were vital to the King. If the King said Yuri should be ahead of Ena, Ena would not object.

But... this Miss Erica was a different story.

Just one look and you could tell she was here to compete for affection, unwilling to be subordinate to anyone.

Whether as a knight or as a favored consort, she aimed to be number one. Seishuin Ena could sense that inclination in her.

So she couldn't ignore it!

"I already said, I fear no challenge." Erica accepted Seishuin Ena's fighting spirit with a smile. "Miss Ena, like Yuri, you're a Hime-Miko of this country, but unlike the gentle Yuri, you clearly look strong."

As she spoke, Erica glanced at the sword bag by Seishuin Ena's side.

From it, she sensed an extraordinary spiritual presence.

A Hime-Miko who would appear carrying such an object—Erica was not naïve enough to think she was a helpless girl.

Liliana's follow-up words confirmed this.

"Don't underestimate this girl, Erica." Liliana seemed to selectively forget what just happened and couldn't help but say as Erica and Seishuin Ena squared off: "She's a spirit medium who can borrow the power of gods. Even when I used Song of the Bow, I wasn't her match."

Upon hearing that, Erica raised her eyebrows.

"So, you've already lost to her, Liliana?"

Erica turned to Liliana.

"...Though it's frustrating, you're right. When His Majesty fought the Marquis, the one who stopped and defeated me was her."

Liliana seemed genuinely unwilling to accept it.

Among her peers, it was her first time losing so completely. It hit her hard.

She had always been called a genius, a prodigy. Until now, only Erica had been her equal. To be defeated in this remote corner of the Far East by an unknown Hime-Miko was naturally hard for her to accept.

But Erica, upon hearing her lifelong rival had been defeated, surprisingly accepted it quickly.

"A spirit medium—who would've thought such a legendary existence would appear in a small country like this..."

Erica looked deeply at Seishuin Ena and spoke.

"I originally thought that the disciple of the Luo Hao Cult Leader I met in Hong Kong—that young master of the Lu family—was, besides Liliana, one of the few talented individuals comparable to me. I didn't expect there would be a rare spirit medium hidden here."

Though she had only heard rumors, Erica knew well how powerful spirit mediums could be.

If nothing else, just the fact that they could borrow the power of gods was already an unparalleled advantage ordinary human warriors couldn't hope to match.

Even a tiny fragment of a god's power was enough to rival the strongest human fighters with ease.

This same-aged Hime-Miko before her might be, aside from gods and Divine Beasts, the strongest opponent she had encountered so far.

Being able to defeat Liliana while she used the Kotodama of David—that feat alone was proof enough.

Thinking of this, Erica not only didn't feel afraid, but her fighting spirit surged.

"To duel a priestess who serves the gods—it sounds like a very exciting experience."

Erica reached out her hand, and as her palm gripped the air, the Cuore di Leone appeared within her grasp.

"Grandfather may still be lending power to Ena, but right now Ena is not serving the gods—she serves the King."

Seishuin Ena stood up as well, picked up her sword bag, and smiled at Erica.

The tension between the two flared instantly. Their gazes met with such intensity it seemed sparks might fly.

"W-Wait!"

Mariya Yuri finally stood up, flustered as she tried to stop them.

"Miss Erica, and Ena, what are you doing? Why are you suddenly going to fight?"

She truly hadn't expected these two to jump straight to combat upon meeting.

"Don't stop me, Yuri." Erica didn't even glance at her, keeping her eyes on Seishuin Ena as she smiled. "This is a battle to decide who shall be the King's closest retainer. It concerns a knight's honor. Anyone who tries to stop us will be cursed by heaven."

"Don't worry, Yuri." Seishuin Ena did turn to Mariya Yuri and said considerately, "The number one position is definitely yours. Ena will defend it for you."

"Oh?" Only then did Erica look at Mariya Yuri, smiling faintly. "So Yuri also wants to vie for the top position?"

"This was always Yuri's position. It's Miss Erica who's trying to take it, you know?" Seishuin Ena spoke on her own before Mariya Yuri could respond. "His Majesty even said it himself—Yuri ranks above Ena. So Ena will definitely help Yuri secure the top consort spot. That way, Ena can be the second to marry in."

"I see." Erica nodded, then looked at Mariya Yuri with a half-smile. "I underestimated you, Yuri. So this is the kind of thinking you had when you came to His Majesty's side."

"T-That's not it at all!" Mariya Yuri hurriedly denied, blushing deeply. "I didn't want to become a consort! That's not why I pledged loyalty to His Majesty!"

At this point, Liliana spoke.

"Stop denying it, Mariya Yuri," she said. "His Majesty fought the Marquis for your sake. This has already spread across nations."

"Now, any well-informed magical society already knows that you, Mariya Yuri, are the woman beside the new King."

"Even your country's official organization... the History Compilation Committee, right? They've publicly acknowledged it, even pushing the Mariya family to the forefront."

"Surely your family is already calculating how much dowry to prepare for you."

Those words froze Mariya Yuri in place.

Only now did she recall that her parents had recently stopped asking whether she would come home at night.

In fact, when she did return home, they cautiously asked why she didn't stay over there instead.

"It's okay, Yuri. Dad and Mom are open-minded people. You're of age now. If you want to stay over there... go ahead."

"That's right, Yuri. We have no objections—just... please be safe, okay?"

Thinking back on the way her parents had said those things, full of hidden meaning, Mariya Yuri turned beet red.

She even remembered her younger sister had said something similar:

"Is big sis going to become an adult now?"

Recalling her sister's curious and surprised words, Mariya Yuri covered her face and crouched down.

"That's not it at all!"

The girl's tearful cry was no longer noticed by anyone.

"This place isn't suitable. Let's go outside."

"Ena doesn't mind. Then, Your Majesty, Ena will be back shortly."

Erica and Seishuin Ena left together and headed outside.

"I'll go watch."

Naturally, Liliana wouldn't miss this fight. After receiving Kaiser's approval, she immediately followed.

As for Kaiser, he had been observing the whole time, detached and unconcerned, as if it didn't matter whether Erica and Seishuin Ena fought.

"So full of energy."

Like watching two kids about to brawl, Kaiser leisurely sipped his tea, completely at ease.