

## With The Gods 161

Chapter 161

I knew where the Giant King was, but there was a problem.

It was the roaring lava.

How do you get into a sea of lava that's hard to get near?

'Hercules could get in without difficulty, but I...'

I wondered how long I could last in there.

It wasn't only YuWon who knew....

"Get out of the way."

Hercules headed toward the lava.

It was YuWon who had been fighting alongside him for quite some time.

Now, just by looking at him, he could see what he was about to do.

A fist glowed upward.

Boom, boom.

Hercules slammed his fist into the boiling lava.

And then.

POOF!

Lava erupted from his fist downward. The force transmitted to the depths caused the river of lava to split, revealing the submerged earth below.

Huduk, hududududududu-

Chaaaaaaaaaah-

The lava rose and fell again.

Swoosh-

Hercules placed the lion skin he was wearing on YuWon's head.

**[You receive the 'Lion King's Blessing'.]**

**[All elemental resistances increase]**

**[Absorbs a certain amount of damage]**

Chiik, Chiik-

The leather protected his body from the lava falling on his head.

It was a pretty good armor.

Not only did it have its own defenses, but it also possessed a special ability called "Lion King's Blessing".

Of course.

'Even without this, I could have protected myself with Triaina.'

Hercules, who had no way of knowing that fact, willingly gave up his lion skin to protect YuWon.

"Follow me. The way is clear."

"Ah...."

Kwagwagwagwagwagw-.

A hole opened up by a large impact.

He wondered if that could really be called a road.

"Yes. Road."

Anyway, to blow a hole in a sea of lava with a single blow.

Hercules, the Giant Slayer.

He alone possessed the power to destroy an entire floor.

"But didn't you say further down?"

"That's right."

"How far down?"

"The same as before."

YuWon pointed to the bottom, where the lava had disappeared.

"Just do it three more times."

"Okay."

Boom-.

Hercules brandished his fist as before.

"Though I feel cheated, for now..."

Kwaaang-!

The ground was dug deep.

"...I will trust you."

\* \* \*

BANG!

A deep hole was dug in the ground.

Underground everything was dark and deep....

Nothing existed down there.

"What is this place?"

Hercules looked up, incredulous.

Surely, he thought, if he broke through the ground and went down, he would find a damp, dark space below.

But no.

The place they descended to was too bright and familiar to be subway.

Hercules looked up and saw a bright blue ceiling.

Light shining down. A blue sky.

It looked like the sky.

"Are we really underground?"

Underground, several miles deep.

If it weren't for the craters he had made, he might have thought it was just like the normal world.

Tak-.

Arriving at his destination, YuWon began walking toward the high mountains in the distance.

He didn't look very surprised.

Hercules wanted to ask him, 'How do you know this place?'

But he didn't hold back, so he did.

"How do you know this place?"

"I have an informant."

"An informant?"

"Anyway, even if I told you, you wouldn't know him. Even if I wanted to take him to meet you, I couldn't either."

'Because you told me.'

He had heard directly from Hercules that there was such a place.

Of course, I couldn't tell him right now.

Even if I said it, he wouldn't believe it unless Hercules had an ability similar to Son OhGong's Golden Eyes of Ash.

He would think I was crazy.

"So stop arguing and follow me..."

Yuwon's expression and tone changed from the way he had been treating Hercules.

"If you want to know the truth."

Tak-.

Yuwon walked towards a high mountain.

Looking at YuWon from behind, Hercules muttered to himself.

"The truth...?"

What kind of truth was he talking about?

He wondered if he was being tricked.

His suspicions about YuWon deepened.

Hercules knew that he knew who he was all along, but he didn't care.

It had been a long time since he had seen someone kind and interesting.

He figured it wouldn't hurt to have a friend like that, whoever he was.

But now that he was here, he wondered if YuWon was a scion of the Giants.

And if that's the case...

Maybe it's a trap.

YuWon was no longer trying to hide anything.

Maybe, if he followed him, there would be something.

Whether it was a secret or a trap.

'If it's a trap.

Creack-.

Hercules clenched his fists and followed YuWon.

'I'll tear them all apart.

\* \* \*

YuWon headed towards a mountain.

A rather large mountain, perhaps several kilometers high.

However, YuWon didn't end up climbing that mountain.

"Why are you stopping?"

Hercules was no longer walking beside YuWon.

Looking at Hercules, who was still following him, YuWon asked.

"Why are you walking so far apart?"

"Because I'm suspicious."

"You don't know how to lie."

"What do you know about me that makes you say 'that'?"

"Well..."

That's why the one-way streets were that hard.

Actually, knowing only one side of the story was more uncomfortable than not knowing the other.

YuWon had felt it many times lately.

"Anyway, did you ask me why we stopped?"

YuWon pointed forward with his chin and said.

"If you stretch your fist there, you'll know."

"There...?"

There was nothing where YuWon was pointing.

Just a tall, forested mountain.

There were no roads or human traffic signs.

But he had to stretch his fist.

'I guess I'll just have to do as I'm told for now.'

At the moment Hercules was about to stretch his fist.

Woo-.

The earth and the mountains shook.

The earth shook and the mountains trembled.

"This vibration..."

Hercules' voice trembled.

"This energy."

His eyes were red and bloodshot, and the lid of his head opened, and the inside of his head turned white. (?)

Finally he found it

The Leader of the Giants.

The Leader of the Giants who had been at War with Olympus for a long time.

"Giant King!"

Thud, thud, thud-.

A flesh-colored figure emerged from the cracked ground.

He wondered how long he had been asleep.

The whole mountain, miles long, moved. YuWon looked at Hercules' face, which was going crazy, and asked.

"Is it that good?"

"....."

Hercules didn't answer.

It wasn't worth answering.

"Revenge, is that what you want?"

"...What?"

Swish~

It was the first time Hercules looked at YuWon with madness on his face.

Revenge.

YuWon seemed to know why he was killing Giants.

"Who are you?"

Hercules walked towards YuWon.

"Seriously, what do you think you're doing?"

"Don't get too excited."

YuWon looked at the slowly waking Giant King.

"I'm just trying to clear up a misunderstanding."

"Misunderstanding...?"

『**Who's talking....**』

A voice echoed in the air.

It was a simple voice, containing not a hint of mana, and yet it felt as if one's body would be crushed just by listening to it.

『**I see, the Giant Slayer has traveled here**』 .

The mountain stood up, stretched its limbs and lifted its head.

Long, thick legs.

They seemed to reach up to the sky, where the two men stood apart, and their great height exuded an unknown awesomeness.

『**Your name was Hercules.**』

Hercules rose to fame in the First Period of the Gigantomachy.

The High Rank who killed most of the Giants.

The Giant Slayer/Hunter.

It was impossible for Gigantes, the King of the Giants, not to know about him. (Note: This King of the Giants is literally called Gigantes, but so as not to confuse us, I'll call him Gigantes with dieresis).

"Yes, that's right, I'm Hercules."

Kwak-.

His curved fist clenched.

His life force resurfaced and, for the first time, mana began to flow from Hercules' body.

"Of course, I'm also the Giant Killer."

『**Then the job is quite obvious.**』

A long, long sleep.

Upon awakening, an old enemy of the Giants appeared before him.

No way would Gigantes allow this to happen.

Woo~

The mana that began to emanate from their bodies connected heaven and earth.

Just as they were about to collide.

Hwareuk-!

In the middle of the two, a huge flame erupted.

"Why are you stopping us?"

In the middle of them, YuWon was standing with his Holy Fire.

"What?"

『**Who is this person?**』

Gigantes looked puzzled at the unfamiliar face.

There was also a subtle hostility in that expression and voice.

He probably thought that YuWon, who was not a Giant, was on the same side as Hercules.

'If we fight here, the outcome is obvious.'

The three Giants were on equal footing with the three Gods of Olympus.

As such, they were proud of their prowess.

Except for the three Gods, no one could defeat them.

But the opponent was Hercules.

'I can't think it will be the same now as it was a thousand years ago.'

Originally, Gigantes would die here.

At the hands of Hercules, and in a very gruesome way.

He could not stand idly by.

If he did, there would be a second Gigantomachy, and the war would grow out of control.

As long as Hercules keeps looking for the Giants, it will happen.

Yuwon brought Hercules to this place to stop it.

"Relying on strength and fighting ignorantly is the same thing no matter what race you are."

"What?"

**『Are you saying that now because you can take responsibility? 』**

Hearing the two voices at the same time, YuWon wrinkled his brow and looked at Gigantes.

"Speak as quietly as possible. My ears hurt."

**『What a cheeky guy...』**

"Do you guys even know what you're fighting about?"

It was a fundamental question.

What were they fighting about?

It was Gigantes who answered first.

**『The perpetrator is the Giant Killer. He has killed, and will continue to kill, most of our kind.Do you need more reasons?』**

Gigantes had a clear reason. He had enough reasons to fight Hercules, who killed his own people and earned the title of Giant Killer.

But he probably doesn't know "why" Hercules hated the Giants.

"So Hercules..."

Yuwon's gaze turned to Hercules, who was standing in front of Giants.

"What you want is revenge for your mother who was killed by the Giants, right?"

Hercules' eyes flashed.

How many times had YuWon surprised him already?

"How did you..."

"Grab."

Flick-.

Zalgraak-.

".....?"

Hercules caught something YuWon had thrown at him with his big hand.

"Look what it is."

"What is this..."

An earthquake ran across Hercules' face as he examined the object in his hand.

A long, thin, red necklace.

It was something unforgettable.

"This..."

Woo~



Hercules' eyes rolled and the immense mana he had been hiding in his body began to shake the ground.

"Why do you have this?"

His anger shifted from Gigantes to YuWon.

Chapter 162

### **[Blood Drops Necklace]**

**\* \* \* A necklace made from a chain of blood drops. Contains someone's deepest desires.**

**# Protects the wearer's physical body.**

**# Can store three different abilities.**

There was no great description of the item.

But its effects were enough to make anyone want one.

An item that could store three abilities.

But to Hercules it was much more than just an item.

"Why, you...!"

Kurrrrrrrr-.

The ground cracked and an earthquake struck.

Seeing Hercules' anger, YuWon felt a shiver run down his spine for the first time in a long time.

He felt as if a fist was going to hit him at any moment.

'Scary.'

At least that anger wouldn't be directed at him now.

The necklace was in his hand, and he would be insanely curious as to why.

"I picked it up."

"You picked it up?"

Boom-.

His body was crushed downward.

It looked as if he'd sunk into the ground.

"Stolen, to be precise."

He hastened to explain.

"From whom?"

"Ares."

"Ares?"

"He had it.

The ruler of war and fighting.

Since they had the same father, he knew at least his name.

Of course, they had never met.

Ares hadn't done much in the Gigantomachy, and didn't have much of a public presence.

"Why would that guy..."

"I don't know why."

YuWon jerked his head toward the necklace.

"See for yourself."

"...."

Hercules looked at the necklace in his hand with an expressionless face.

Necklace of Blood Drops.

It was a beautiful necklace, despite its name, as the color was exactly the same as blood.

Hercules remembered exactly whose neck that necklace hung from.

**-My son.**

Takk-.

He couldn't squeeze any tighter because he feared it would break.

This was a souvenir, not just a necklace.

**-Everyone will try to use you.**

Hercules' mother.

Shortly after giving birth to Hercules, Alcmene looked at him and said.

**-I am sorry, son, for having given birth to you, for having brought you into a world of hardship.**

A son born of a wrong destiny.

Zeus took Alcmene in his arms and made her give birth to Hercules, and she hugged him tightly and wept.

Hercules.

A child who inherited the blood of Zeus and would become the strongest in the future.

And henceforth unhappy.

The world, and especially Olympus, would not leave him alone with such power.

**-Nevertheless, I beg you.**

Hercules remembered.

The sound of his mother's voice as she cried and hugged him to herself that was too big for a newborn baby.

And, strangely, his own infant self managed to understand every word.

**-Please be a good person, don't wield your power recklessly.**

Zalgrak-.

The necklace was worn by Alcmena at the time.

She treated this necklace as her own heart. As to who she got it from, she did not tell Hercules.

'Ares had it...'

Ares, a son of Zeus.

Why did he have this necklace?

Obviously it was a coveted item. It's not every day that you find an item capable of protecting your body and storing your abilities.

Also, it was a necklace that was easy to wear, so the High Ranks coveted it.

But none of that mattered.

The problem was 'why' the necklace of his mother, who died at the hands of the Giants, was in his hand.

An unanswered question.

'Maybe that guy is lying to me'.

And suspicion.

It was then that Hercules looked at YuWon.

"That necklace can store and use three abilities."

Gii-.

A red light began to emanate from the necklace.

Hercules' eyes twitched slightly.

A familiar Mana.

"But unfortunately, only the wearer who stores the ability can use it."

"No way... .."

**[User verification completed.]**

**[The user is 'Hercules', the son of 'Alcmene'.]"**

**[Beginning of 'Memories of the Necklace'.]**

Whoaaaah-!

An aura enveloped Hercules.

If he resisted, he could fight it.

But Hercules didn't.

"The necklace must have been set to automatically activate the skill when it was returned to its owner."

An ability that is activated the moment the necklace enters Hercules' hand.

It belonged to his mother, Alcmene.

A moment later.

The glowing red mana emanating from the necklace enveloped Hercules.

\* \* \*

Before him stood a small boy, large for his age, but small in front of him.

A small hand covered the back of his neck.

Hercules stared at his reflection, unable even to open his eyes.

'Is it me?'

It was unbelievable.

To see himself so small.

It was a strange feeling.

It was a strange feeling to see his mother smiling at him.

Alcmene was a beautiful red haired woman. She was both the leader of a Guild and a Ranker.

She gave birth to the son of Zeus, the King of Olympus.

It was an unwanted birth. But, in spite of everything, she loved Hercules.

**-Son. My son...**

Alcmene's feelings for holding Hercules in her arms were passed on intact.

The Memories of the Necklace

She had the ability to convey the emotions of Alcmene, who wore the necklace.

'Mother...'

The landscape changed.

Hercules had grown up in the blink of an eye.

As a child, he had survived a snake sent by Hera. Alcmene almost fainted as she watched Hercules crush the snake with one hand.

From an early age, Hercules grew up fighting someone.

Each time, Alcmene took a step forward and bowed her head.

Seeing that, Hercules thought that he should not use his fist recklessly.

How much time passed.

Hercules passed the tutorial and became a Player.

**-Mom, I passed the Test! I'm ranked higher than my father!**

Her son's first message after receiving his Player kit.

Seeing that, Alcmena smiled.

It was a bitter, sad laugh.

**- Great job! That's my boy.**

He remembered.

The message Alcmena had sent to his player kit.

At the time, he thought he was proud to have passed the test with flying colors.

That wasn't all.

"Why..."

The memory of the necklace reflected Alcmena's figure.

**-How was the test? Was it difficult?**

**-Yes? -Did you make any friends?**

**-That's good, but you should take it easy for a while. Don't go up too fast or you might fall.**

**- Do you? But...**

"Why is she crying?"

The text messages were casual.

He was shaking and crying and texting, seemingly indifferent.

He wished and wished and wished this moment would never come.

"Why..."

She must be proud, he thought.

He thought she would be glad that he had become a great qualifier, that he had honored Olympus, and that he had put his energy into the right things.

But she wasn't...

The necklace continued to illuminate those nostalgic times.

Having become a Ranker, he visited Alcmena. She greeted him as always, and then he met Zeus.

The great King of Olympus, with his golden hair hanging down.

**-Although Hercules has become a Ranker, he is still too young to go to war.**

As a low-level Ranker, she didn't even flinch in front of Zeus.

If he lifted a finger, she would die, but she held her head high.

Although she was Hercules' mother, she was now much weaker than her son.

**- There is still a long way to go before the war begins. He's a Ranker, you just have to level him up in that time. He'll be ready by then.**

**-Do you really intend to raise my son as a weapon of war?**

**-He's my son before he's yours.**

**-No.**

Facing the King of Olympus, he shook his head proudly.

**- As much as your blood flows, he is my son.**

**-Yes, he is.**

Zeus nodded his head more easily than he thought.

**-Anyway, it doesn't matter whose son he is.**

What was more important to Alcmene than anything else was what Zeus was going to eat today.

Whose son he was, it didn't really matter.

Zeus had many, many children, and it was common knowledge that he didn't love them all.

But...

A weapon of war?

It wasn't a conversation to pass up.

A weapon of war.

Something created, not a living person.

The war had been planned for a long time. Sending a child of one's own blood, like Athena, into battle was no big deal, at least to Zeus.

However, sending a son to the battlefield and giving birth to a son to be sent to the battlefield were completely different things.

**-You're crazy.**

Zeus, who had been contemplating the surface of the pool, turned his eyes to Alcmene, who had spoken fiercely.

**-Crazy?**

**-That's right. For you, the child is nothing more than a weapon: a spear, a sword, a bow?**

**-Something like that, of course, though it is a far superior weapon to those things.**

**- So you really are mad. How can you say that about your own son?**

**-Sons, daughters, whatever. There are many women who want to give birth to my children.**

**-You...!**

**-If only I could break the roof of this tower... -If only I could break the roof of this tower...**

The roof of the tower.

It was a story Hercules had grown up hearing.

In this tower, there is a roof that no one has reached yet.

**-I can make a second and a third Hercules.**

"Hehe..."

Hercules could do nothing but laugh.

To think that his life was planned by someone else.

A son for war. Alcmene knew, and had been urging Hercules for years.

Please don't wield your power recklessly.

Fortunately, Hercules was a rather obedient son.

That was all.

Why did his mother die?

Chuck, Chuck, Chuck.

Dozens of people besieged Alcmene.

Kak-.

Among them, someone walked forward.

A face she had never seen before.

But in the memory of the necklace, Alcmene knew him clearly.

**-Ares.**

The ruler of war and strife....

No, at the time he was a mere novice, who had not long ago been promoted to Ranker.

Of course, he was surrounded by other Rankers, many of whom were supported by Zeus.

**-Are you Alcmene?**

**-Yes.**

**-Then there is nothing more to say.**

Cha-ang, Chang.

The dozens of Rankers unsheathed their spears, swords and other weapons.

Alcmene's face was calm, as if she had sensed this moment long ago.

**-Is the war about to begin?**

**-Yes.**

**-I've thought of many cases, but this is definitely Zeus.**

**-Don't use that name carelessly.**

**-Now I'm going to die, I'll say whatever name I want.**

Alcmene chuckled to herself as she felt the wind blow through the forest.

Soon after, she looked at Ares, another son of Zeus.

**-What are you, the second or the third Hercules?**

-...

Ares did not answer.

He was well aware of his situation.

But he didn't care anyway.

The faithful sword of Zeus.

That's how Ares lived.

**- Silently give me your head.**

Ares' sword pointed at Alcmene.

Thud-.

Hercules' eyes were bloodshot and his teeth gnashed.

**-We will say that you died at the hands of the Giants.**

A weapon of war prepared for the Gigantomachy.

It was completed with the death of Alcmene, Hercules' mother.

Chapter 163

Pook, pook-.

He felt like he was going to go crazy.

Watching his mother die in front of him made him want to roll his eyes.

He was angry.

Even though he knew it wasn't real, he wanted to find Ares and tear him apart.

"Stop..."

His voice trembled.

Even though he was small, there was no way that voice could reach Ares or Alcmene in front of him.

Kwaaaang-!

"Stop!"

He stomped the ground to scatter mana around him, but the memory of the necklace didn't go away.

Huhhhh-!



A red stream of mana spread in all directions.

Alcmene's mana still lingered in Hercules' memory.

Yessss-.

The scattered mana came together again.

The image of Alcmena stabbed by the swords and spears no longer appeared.

In its place, another memory of Alcmena began.

**-I'm probably going to die.**

Two people sitting opposite each other.

Alcmene and her sister Alena.

**-Why I held my son in my arms to raise him as a weapon. I thought about it.**

**- What?**

**- When I die, how will Hercules react?**

At Alcmena's question, Alena's eyes widened like saucers.

With that question, she understood why Zeus had paired Hercules with Alcmena.

**-So that he could kill you and...?**

**-I can't think of anything else but that.**

**-You really believe that? -Don't you seem to be overthinking it?**

**-Sister...**

Alcmena shook her head resolutely.

**-You don't know Zeus. There's nothing "just" about him.**

**-How could it be...**

Wahh, wahh!

Screams were heard from the inner room.

It was the cry of poor Hercules, who had not yet been weaned.

Alena and Alcmena jumped to their feet, startled.

Alena ran to the door and stood in Alcmena's way.

**- You'd better stay away from Hercules, Alcmena.**

If in fact, that was Zeus' purpose.

The closer you get to Hercules, the closer you are to death.

**-Pretend you don't know. I'll find a nanny. Then you'll...**

**-I can't do that, sister.**

Alcmena looked over the door Alena was blocking.

A child's cry could still be heard.

Hercules was calling out to her.

**-Then you will die!**

**-Although it's very likely, I can't do it.**

**-Why?**

**- He is my son.**

**- Is it out of responsibility?**

**-No.**

**-So?**

**-It's only because I love my son very much.**

Momentarily speechless at that answer, Alena bit her lip hard.

A mother who loves her son.

No one in the world had the right to blame her. But now, as Alcmena's older sister, she had to protect Alcmena.

To do so, Alcmena must not be with Hercules.

**-He is just a weapon of war planned by Zeus.**

**- Do you think so too?**

Kwak-.

Alcmena's eyes looked at her sister, Alena, with force.

She reached out her hand towards the door Alena was blocking. Unlike Alcmena, a Ranker player, Alena, a player who had renounced the Tower, had no power against her.

**-Then he should be on her side even more. Even if everyone thinks of him that way, I won't.**

As long as Zeus made a decision, that child's fate would be sealed.

At all costs, he will take Hercules to war. Hercules will be a weapon of war, and he will kill many Giants, whether he wants to or not.

Kiiiiii-ii-ii-ii-.

Jeobuck, Jeobuck-.

Reluctantly, Alcmena opened the door and lifted Hercules, who was sobbing and crying.

"Mother..."

Looking at her, the grown man sank weakly into his seat.

**-Thank you, Hercules.**

The warmth in Alcmena's eyes as she gazed at her younger self was overwhelmingly nostalgic.

**-For being born as my son.**

\* \* \*

Whoa-.

The red mana surrounding Hercules changed with every moment.

Perhaps in her, Hercules is seeing the truth he never knew.

**『So there's a story like that 』**

Gigantes' voice echoed in his ears.

YuWon raised his head and looked at him.

A height high enough to make the back of his neck hurt.

He looked at Gigantes, who was so huge he could reach the sky, and felt his whole back stiffen.

'Is he able to see everything?'

Alcmena's skills were not that good.

An ability that was nothing more than a video, showing memories stored in a voice.

There was no way Gigantes, a Giant comparable to the Three Gods, would fail to comprehend such an ability.

"Thank you."

**『What do you mean,』**

"I was a little worried that you would take this opportunity to attack."

Hercules, the Giant Killer.

It was an opportunity, perhaps one of the few, to kill him.

If he had seized the opportunity and attacked Hercules, this is where the battle between Hercules and Gigantes could have taken place.

**『You risked your life to come here to resolve the misunderstanding between Hercules and us, the Giants, and I will not let your efforts go to waste』**

"Is that a thank you?"

**『That remains to be seen』**

That remains to be seen...

It meant that he would judge Hercules by his future reaction.

'He seems to be thinking a lot.'

YuWon was also looking at the necklace's memories.

He had heard the story and knew the outline, but seeing it with his own eyes was different.

'Gigāntes shuddered.'

There was a reason he had come and handed over the necklace that could have been given in advance.

Hercules had killed many Giants as the Giant Killer.

Even if he stopped killing Giants upon discovering the truth, it didn't change that he was an enemy of the Giants.

But what if it turned out that Hercules' enmity against the Giants was caused by Zeus?

What if Gigāntes, the leader of the Giants, sees it for himself?

'Please help me, Alcmene.'

On her, who died more than a thousand years ago, the lives of millions and millions of people depended.

To prevent a great war from occurring in the future, Alcmene's voice had no choice but to persuade Hercules and Gigāntes.

While YuWon watched over the direction of Hercules.

Swish~

The giant head of Gigāntes descended.

It descended from a height of hundreds of meters, and its pupils, the size of a house, were fixed on YuWon.

YuWon turned his head and looked at Gigāntes after a moment.

"Mm?"

**『Yes. I remember you. Urfa talked to me about you 』**

Urfa.

The High Ranking Elder of the Gigāntes Clan that he met on the 20th Floor who told him how to get the Sea Stone.

Apparently, Gigāntes had heard about YuWon from him.

"Weren't you sleeping?"

**『No, I don't usually sleep here all the time. I wake up from time to time to hear what's going on in the World』 .**

"Then why didn't you stop Hercules earlier?"

**『Because of this 』**

Gigāntes raised his arm, exposing his chest.

An ugly scar ran between his chest and armpit.

**『It was a wound inflicted by the Lightning of Zeus. A wound that takes a long time to heal. 』**

"Are you wounded, is that why you were hiding?"

**『I wasn't hiding 』**

Gigantes lowered his raised arm, hiding his wound again.

**『I was preparing for the next fight. 』**

The next fight.

The Second Gigantomachy.

Unlike the first one, which was not announced, the Second Gigantomachy led to a war many times bigger than the first one.

At first, it was asked why it happened.

We all began to think, but we couldn't think of anything other than Zeus behind the scenes.

But then it seemed to make sense.

'Wasn't Olympus the only one preparing for war?'

A hand claps when it meets another hand, and a war must have an opponent.

Olympus preparing for the Second Gigantomachy. As Gigantes, the Chief of the Giants, said, they also prepared for war.

'In the Second Gigantomachy, the Giants will be destroyed.'

The Giants were a race that occupied a fairly large part of the Tower's power.

Due to the Second Gigantomachy, such Giants were destroyed and several Giant Guilds, including Olympus, suffered irreparable scars.

An event that greatly reduced the power of the Tower.

'Winning a war against Olympus is suboptimal. The best we can hope for is no war at all.'

To this end, Gigantes' judgment was important.

The man in front of him was the one who held the key to war as Zeus of Olympus.

**『You must be an enemy of Olympus, judging by the way you stole from Poseidon. 』**

"That's right."

**『So you're on our side? 』**

"Not really."

**『Pfft. as I heard, you're a complete weirdo. 』**

Gigantes laughed strangely at YuWon.

The laughter was so loud that it sounded like a natural disaster to YuWon's ears. Gigantes looked at YuWon, who was covering his ears, with curious eyes.

**『To climb the Tower so fast, to steal Ares' items, to find this place that Olympus couldn't find. All of this is beyond common sense. And you defy all common sense, and now you stand between me and the Giant Killer 』** .

Even if you looked at each one separately, it was by no means unusual.

A skill that already surpassed most Rankers.

He had captured the Sea Stone sought by Poseidon and stolen an object from Ares.

And then revealed the truth to Hercules and Gigantes.

**『Just here and now you have made history. 』**

To make history

It was a grandiloquent statement, but YuWon didn't feel that way.

He really didn't.

To put it bluntly, it was wrong.

He wasn't making history, he was changing it.

"I'm kind of cool."

**『I see you know a lot of things, but you don't know how to be humble 』** .

Perhaps paying attention to YuWon's reaction, who was covering his ears at the loud voice, Gigantes smiled less than before.

**『 Anyway, you are an enemy of Olympus, but you are neither, which means you are neutral, which means you have no one to help you in times of danger. 』**

"Don't be so hard on me. I know what I'm doing."

**『Are you sure? 』**

"Yes."

Considering what he had to do in the future, this was just one more step towards his goal.

To YuWon, the power of an organization was like a poisoned chalice.

In the end, the power of a group would hold you back and, instead of giving you more power, it would take away your freedom.

Freedom.

It was YuWon's greatest strength, and no other guild had greater charm than that.

**『 If that's what you want, I can't help myself 』**

Fortunately, Gigantes didn't force a response.

Instead, he rolled his eyes and looked over to where Hercules was standing.

『**Now then...**』

Whoaaaaah-!

The red-colored mana was absorbed by the necklace.

『**It's your turn to choose.**』

The mana that had spread like mist dissipated and Hercules appeared with a dazed face.

Chapter 164

A blank face.

Contrary to expectations, there were no tears. Unable to feel reality, Hercules remained expressionless and raised his fist.

Kak-!

Hercules punched himself in the face with his fist.

With all the force he could muster, enough to turn the rocks to dust.

Thud!

He punched himself in the face, again and again.

No matter how strong his body was, there was no way he could be okay punching himself in the face with his bare hands.

His lips burst, his eyes bulged. It must have hurt, but Hercules didn't stop punching.

"That's enough."

A voice came from nearby.

YuWon stood in front of him. Hercules stopped punching and looked straight ahead for a moment, eyes focused.

"Answer me."

"What?"

"This, you said you took it from Ares?"

YuWon nodded and Hercules' eyes changed.

"Where is he now?"

He had been on the 38th floor for so long, fighting Giants, that he didn't know where Ares' temple was.

Looking into his eyes, glowing with life, she knew at once what he wanted.

"He's dead."

"Dead? Did you kill him?"

"Yes."

"Hah, I see I won't be able to get revenge on that guy anymore."

Hercules raised his head and looked at Gigantes.

"I'm sorry."

Swoosh-

Hercules fell to his knees.

Gigantes' eyes looked at Hercules.

"I'm so sorry I was alone in my delirium and killed your people..."

A misinformation that the Giants had killed Alcmene.

Hercules had fallen into the trap and had killed countless Giants throughout his life. It had earned him the title of Giant Killer, and he wore it as a badge of honor.

But now...

The title of 'Giant Killer' was indelible to him.

『**Are you serious**』 .

"If you ask for my life, I will give it to you."

There was the same madness in Hercules' eyes as the first time he saw Gigantes.

"But not now."

『**Are you going to look for Zeus?**』

"Yes."

The object of his revenge changed in Hercules' eyes.

It was no longer the Giants, but Zeus.

And by extension, Olympus.

'I'm at an advantage, for now.'

Hercules was Zeus' most powerful hand.

His immediate rank was higher than that of Poseidon and Hades, so there was no doubt of his ability.

Moreover, the Hercules that YuWon knew would later attain a higher rank than Zeus.

"I will kill my father, and come for punishment afterwards."

『**I see**』

Gigantes' eyes closed.

The mana that had surrounded him since he had confronted Hercules had suddenly diminished.

He no longer perceived Hercules as an enemy.



**『My words cannot forgive you. So much of my blood has died under your hands』**

"....."

**『But you and your mother are victims like us. 』**

Blood shed by Olympus and Zeus.

Among them were Hercules' mother, Alcmene, and Hercules, who had led an unwanted life as her son.

**『At least I won't be the one to punish you. But if you want to pay for what happened, be sure to do so. 』**

"Do it..."

**『Olympus.... 』**

Thud-

Turning around, Gigantes sat back down and returned to his mountain form.

**『Destroy it completely 』 .**

After speaking, Gigantes fell into a long sleep as if he had nothing more to say.

At those words, Hercules paused for a moment on his knees.

Crouching down again, Gigantes became like a tall mountain.

"..I understand."

With that, Hercules stood up.

Soon after, he put Alcmene's necklace around his neck.

Zalgak-

A red necklace around her neck.

Hercules looked up at YuWon.

"Thank you, I am in your debt."

A debt.

A debt to Hercules, one of the highest ranking men in the tower. His change of mind was a good thing for YuWon, and that change would serve him even better in the future.

"I'll be sure to repay this debt later. If it wasn't for you, I wouldn't have been able to stop myself."

The fight with Gigantes.

Hercules knew what the fight would lead to.

As one of the Three Gods of Olympus, the death of Gigantes would most likely lead to a Second Gigantomachy.

However, he had come to him to avenge Alcmene's death.

"If you feel like it, you can give me a hand later."

"Okay, thanks."

"Are you really going to fight Olympus?"

"I intend to."

A definite change of direction.

Fighting Olympus, his father, seems conflicted, but he was raised by Alcmene in the first place.

His bond with Zeus, his paternal love, had been emasculated by Zeus himself.

Zeus was trying to force Hercules' hand with Alcmene's death, and karma ended up turning against him....

"Then I'll give you a nice gift so you can cheer up."

"A gift...?"

"Here."

Hua-ak-.

Mana surged through YuWon's shadows.

The Mana enveloped everything around him.

Hercules frowned at that ominous Mana.

"What are you doing?"

"Try to stay still..."

Ssshhh-.

An aura appeared in front of Hercules' eyes.

"Because this is a gift."

"...?"

There was no such thing as too much caution.

After all, YuWon's skills couldn't hurt him at all.

Above all, he already recognized YuWon as an ally.

Pap, pap-.

The shadow began to squirm.

After a while, it took the form of a man.

"Who is it?"

A colorless body.

Dressed in black armor, eyes unfocused, the man looked vaguely familiar.

'He looks like my father.

Zeus.

The greatest being Hercules had ever known.

The black man who had appeared in front of him, the one YuWon had created, looked almost exactly like him.

"It's Ares."

"What?"

Hercules asked in amazement.

Ares.

With unfocused eyes, he didn't even properly contain a soul.

But his face, which resembled that of Zeus, certainly increased the conviction that it was Ares.

"You think you can't take revenge on the dead?"

"Is that possible?"

"It is possible."

Jjeouk-.

Kyneē's eyes widened.

"It is."

Eyes wide open.

Although he couldn't directly enter Hell like before, YuWon's title and Kyneē's power allowed him to summon a part of it.

**[The 'King of the Dead' confronts his World].**

**[Summoning 'Hell'].**

A huge sea where the dead exist.

A small part surrounded it. Just as Hercules was about to channel his Mana at the creepiness of it all, he noticed Ares' eyes come into focus.

Ares turned his head and found YuWon.

- You bastard...!

He found YuWon and immediately brought his hand to his waist.

The sword was not there.

Without panicking, Ares rushed at YuWon. With no sword, he planned to fight with his fists.

But...

**[The dead worship you]**

Shuffle-.

Ares fell to his knees without realizing it.

-.....?

Ares knelt down in front of YuWon.

Unlike Arthur, he was not submissive, but his soul had already become YuWon's.

Besides, the dead could not go against YuWon, who held the title of 'King of the Dead'.

"I am the one who decides..."

Skak-.

YuWon's sword was unsheathed.

"Who will feel pain."

Puuk-.

".....!"

Ares' eyes widened.

He didn't scream, thanks to the mental strength he had developed over the years, but his mouth tightened as he tried to hold back the screams.

Surely he had no body.

But the pain was not felt through the body in the first place.

"Weaker than the body is the soul. But depending on the person, the soul becomes stronger and tougher."

King of the Dead.

Earning that title, he learned about the dead, the living and the soul.

"Something like that, we usually call it 'Mental Force.'"

Mental Force (Note: Other names: Spirit or Will).

It was a measure of the hardness of the soul.

The spirit of an ordinary person would break quickly, but that of a High Rank person like Ares was a different story.

How much more pain would it take to break his spirit?

The soul was not easily broken.

And that was why YuWon could help Hercules get revenge.

"Beat him to death... again."

YuWon's words made Ares turn his head back.

Then, his eyes widened.

**-He... Hercules...**

Hercules.

She looked at him with terrified eyes.

Ares had avoided meeting Hercules until now, since it was he who had killed Hercules' mother, Alcmene, on Zeus' orders.

"Because it is possible here."

"Thank you."

Duduk-.

As if preparing his heart, Hercules loosened his grip.

And then...

**-W-Wait...**

Bang-!

BANG-!

A terrible scream rang out as Ares' body exploded.

"You're welcome."

\* \* \*

With a few blows, Ares' soul was crushed, only to be restored again by mental force.

It was repeated several times.

Hercules held his fist in front of Ares' eyes and said.

"Beg me what you have done wrong."

**-I refuse.**

It was an amazing display of mental strength.

Feeling the pain of being crushed and exploding over and over again and not apologizing.

Even YuWon, who was watching from the side, felt so disgusted that he wanted to vomit.

"Really?"

Boo-woo-.

Boom!

Ares' soul was crushed once again.

"That's good."

Apologizing wasn't going to stop him anyway.

But thanks to that, Hercules felt more at ease and was able to beat Ares to his heart's content.

How long had it been?

Twack!

Kwajik, frrrrrrrrrrrr!

**-Ugh, ugh...**

Ares, who gritted his teeth and held on, finally began to scream.

'Tenacious.'

Anyway, Ares had no place to escape.

As a dead man, he couldn't commit suicide, and he couldn't run away without YuWon's permission.

In the end, he had no choice but to succumb to his mental breakdown and die.

'A warrior who is not afraid of death.'

Jjaeuk-!

YuWon folded his arms and stared at the beating scene.

'Then what about annihilation....'

- S-Stop!

Ares' screams couldn't stop Hercules' fists.

Jjeouk-.

Pooh-!

Once again, his soul exploded. Unlike the first time, Ares' soul did not recover quickly, but slowly returned to its original form.

His whole body swayed like mud, and Ares hit his head against the ground.

**-I, I, I...**

The last remaining pride of the tenacious warrior....

**-I'm sorry...**

It broke right now.

**[You have subdued the 'Sovereign of War and Strife.']**

**[The Dominion of the 'King of the Dead' is increased.]**

A message similar to when Arthur's loyalty was won.

'That's not right.'

How can you induce obedience in such a simple way?

Beginning to soothe a friend's feelings had created a pleasant variable.

"I'm sorry?"

Hercules asked without lowering his fist.

Once was hard, twice was easy.

Ares nodded hastily.

**-Yes. I'm sorry. I was wrong.**

"Really? So..."

Hercules hesitated.

Relief briefly appeared in Ares' expression.

However...

Boom-.

Boom!

With a single blow, Ares' head flew off again.

"And now, just like that, you're going to get hit some more."

Chapter 165

Ares' Soul was not instantly extinguished once his mind was broken.

More importantly, the problem was how long YuWon could keep summoning Hell.

'This is the first time I've kept it up this long.'

Yuwon looked at Hercules, who was slamming his fist into Ares' still unregenerate soul.

He was shaking his fist almost madly.

It was natural.

Even if the root cause lay with Zeus, Hercules had seen the memory of the necklace moments before, when Ares' sword pierced Alcmene's body.

Having witnessed it with his own eyes, Hercules would not be satisfied with tearing Ares apart again and again.

'He will never be satisfied with this alone, but...'

Kwak-.

Hercules' fist clenched once more.

'I hope it feels a little lighter.'

Kwang!

Ares' body exploded once more.

His soul torn beyond recognition.

**[The soul of the 'God of War and Struggle' is weakened]**

**[He needs rest]**

**[Arcane Power is insufficient]**

Slowly, Ares' soul and YuWon's Mana reached their limits.

Hercules stood still and waited for Ares' soul to return to normal.

Then.

"Hercules."

YuWon approached Hercules, who was half dozing.

"Finish it now."

"Even a little more..."

"I'm already too tired."

Kak, kak-.

The summoned space shook unsteadily.

Finally, Hercules realized that YuWon had been using his abilities to maintain Ares' soul and allow him to remain in that state.

Besides, if YuWon were a necromancer, he would also need mana from him to restore the torn soul.

"You've been holding on too long."

"If you need it, say so later. I'll let you hit him again."

Ares, who was slowly being restored to his original form, shuddered.

But then Hercules shook his head.

"No, thank you. This is enough."

"Is it enough for you?"

"No. It's still not enough."

Hercules' eyes still glowed with fire.

He looked back at Ares, who was flinching, then spoke as he clenched his fists involuntarily

"But he's not the only one I'm going to hit."

"That's true..."

Ares had killed Alcmene himself, but that was only a small part of what had led to her death.

Many were involved in her death.

Ares, Zeus, Hera, and the rest of the ranks of Olympus, Zeus' people.

"I don't think I'll be free until I've crushed every one of their heads. I've done all I can with him."

"Do you want me to help you?"

"Forget it, what can you do with your skills?"

"I know a few things."

Hercules' eyes widened.



Apparently fighting wasn't the only way to help.

"What else do you know?"

"Who's fighting who."

Information even Hercules would find interesting.

"And who cooperated in Alcmene's murder."

All that information, of course, came from Hercules' own mouth.

"Whether or not you believe what you hear, that's your choice. But isn't it worth checking out?"

"...Let's see."

YuWon explained the enemies and allies to Hercules.

It would be unwise to allow a blinded Hercules to attack Olympus blindly. In fact, at the end of the Second Gigantomachy, Hercules had even attacked the ranks of Olympus after learning of Alcmene's death.

What Hercules needed now was to identify the real culprits.

"So, if you somehow have to fight Zeus, you won't do it alone. You still can't defeat him on your own."

Maybe in some time, but for now, Hercules was still not confident that he could defeat Zeus.

There was no way Hercules, who did not possess an immortal body like Son OhGong, would be dragged into such an uncertain fight.

"Crush Olympus..."

The plan centered on Hades.

By changing his mind to Hercules, that plan was already more than half completed. Although the plan lacked much substance, Hercules didn't think it was impossible after hearing YuWon's story.

However...

"I understand the plan, but you're not telling me to wait because of that, are you?"

"No."

YuWon shook his head.

He probably would have been the first to stop it if that was the case.

"Now go and destroy everything you wish. No restrictions, everything."

Smile~.

The corners of his lips twisted.

Turning around, Hercules looked back towards YuWon and asked.

"Do you think you can go up alone?"

"You go first."

"It's a good thing you're so fast."

Kwack-.

Hercules' legs tensed as he stood on the ground.

"Then I'll go first."

"Let's keep in contact."

Kwang-!

Hercules jumped with all the strength in his body and climbed up to the ceiling.

The floor collapsed and the earth shook like an earthquake.

After breaking through the Inferno that YuWon had summoned, Hercules climbed up to the ceiling he had broken through.

"Even when you move, you're still noisy."

Thud-.

Was it because of the impact he had just experienced?

Yuwon's mana around him trembled. With the summoned Inferno in play, Ares felt a sense of relief.

Then.

"We still have something to talk about, don't we?".

Pap-.

Yuwon leaned in, pinning his eyes on Ares.

Then, a terrifying gleam emanated from Ares' eyes.

**-I forgot you were a Necromancer.**

"Relax your eyes and speak respectfully."

**-How dare you....**

"Hey, Hercul..."

**-W-Wait!**

Ares cried out urgently, emotions surging through his soul.

The man who feared nothing, not even death, cowered in fear at that very moment.

It was not for nothing.

Only moments ago, he had felt his flesh torn and exploded by Hercules, and he could not die.

Although Hercules had already left after taking revenge on Ares, Hercules was ready to strike Ares at any moment if YuWon asked him to do so.

"Wait?"

YuWon looked at Ares as if the latter had something else to say.

The hesitation lasted only a moment.

-.....

"Fine."

The desired reaction came immediately.

Apparently, Hercules had bullied him too much.

After all, even if it wasn't just pain, facing Hercules with his eyes rolled back would be pretty scary.

"You know, I could use you as an undead with no will if I wanted to."

Ares lowered his head.

Necromancers, rare even in the Tower, had the ability to bind the souls of their opponents, turning them into mindless undead.

The same could be said of YuWon before him.

"Still, isn't it better to fight willingly than to fight unwillingly?"

**-Do you want me to swear an oath of loyalty?**

"Then at least you will be able to wield your sword of your own free will."

The souls of High Ranks were precious.

Especially a High Rank as talented as Ares.

YuWon wanted to turn him into an undead in his full state if possible.

**-I refuse.**

The answer was predictable.

**-You are an enemy of Olympus. As much as I fear Hercules, I cannot point a sword at my father and mother against my will.**

To Hercules, they were all worthy of death, but to Ares, Zeus and Hera were the parents who bore and raised him.

As much as Hercules feared them, it was hard to imagine a man of Ares' stature turning his sword against them.

It was only natural.

It was time to negotiate, not threaten and persuade.

"Then I guess we'll just have to use you in war."

Ares' eyes flickered.

He was probably thinking about his future.

He had already cracked the whip, now it was time for the carrot.

"But if you help me, I'll at least leave you out of the fight against Olympus."

**-Really?**

The question came a little late, but it came.

I had to catch him here.

"Let's get the system online and make a contract with me."

**[You have requested an oath contract]**

**[When the contract is concluded, the soul is 'completely' bound to the player].**

**[If the contract is not fulfilled, the soul becomes free].**

A contract between an Undead and a Necromancer.

A promise, bound to the system, more secure than anything else.

"Do you accept?"

\* \* \*

77th Floor.

The Temple of Hera, the first wife of Zeus and a High Rank.

It was known for housing the largest number of Rankers in all of Olympus. The Temple's luxury was the greatest among the factions of Olympus, and the wealth it had accumulated over the years knew no bounds.

Aside from the Three Gods, there was one being who wielded the greatest power and strength on Olympus.

She was Hera.

Gardens and gates as wide as a castle.

Strolling through them, the Rankers enjoyed the calm weather and peace.

"Lady Hera hasn't arrived yet?"

"No news of her."

"This outing seems to be going rather long."

"It's been a bit turbulent lately. Even if it's just a drizzle, it's still soaking the whole place."

The rumors about Kim YuWon were well known.

No one knew the full story, but enough Rankers knew that he had caused a rift between Zeus and Poseidon.

One of the pillars of the Three Gods collapsed.

Rankers who had followed Poseidon went into hiding or left the Guild, and there was a feeling of unease between the other two Gods, Hades and Zeus.

"I never thought the Three Gods would split up like this..."

"Who would have thought that the other one would also go out like this?"

"I heard that the other two held hands and lent each other a hand."

"Yeah, I heard that too."

Rumors abounded.

But even if the rumors were true, it didn't matter.

"Anyway, it's a fight whose outcome is obvious."

"Well. We have war heroes here too."

Zeus and Hercules.

Besides, Poseidon was also imprisoned in Asgard's prison.

Zeus' power was still strong and he was still practically Olympus himself.

"But if there's a fight, it's going to be a big one."

"That's right."

A Ranker looked up at the sky.

Clouds hovered serenely.

"It feels like the day before a storm."

And that was the starting signal.

CRASH...!

"What, what?"

"Is it an invasion?"

A section of the fence surrounding the temple collapsed, sending thick smoke upward.

On top of the collapsed fence.

The silhouette of a single, rather large man emerged.

"Is it just one?"

"Fear not, that guy who thinks he is...."

An exasperated Ranker stepped forward.

"Wait."

The older Ranker put a hand in front of him.

"That silhouette is...."

It was an unforgettable figure.

A hero wielding a mace and wearing a lion mask as he advanced across the battlefield.

Kwang!

He slammed his fist back into the temple fence, shattering it, and shouted.

"Where are you, Hera?"

Wooooooooo-.

A thunderous voice that rattled eardrums.

Manteus, a High Rank member of the Temple of Hera who knew him, muttered.

"H-Hercules?"

The Hero of the Gigantomachy burst into the Temple of Hera.

Chapter 166

Kwaaang-!

The temple walls were smashed.

Fences torn down.

Bodies on the ground and the ground upside down.

Hududududuk-.

Several Rankers gathered inside the precariously shaking temple.

In their midst, Manteus, a Ranker from the Temple of Hera, confronted Hercules.

"Why are you doing this, what's wrong?"

He looked on the verge of crying/shouting.

There were dozens of Rankers around him, but this was Hercules.

They were no match for him.

"Bring me Hera."

The answer was the same.

It was probably the third time he'd heard it.

Bring me Hera.

He could tell by the look in her eyes and the way she tore the temple to pieces that this wasn't just a greeting.

"She's not here."

"Really?"

Hercules thought a moment and then nodded.

"Then she'll come when the temple is destroyed."

Simple, straightforward answer.

Pak-.

Hercules took a step toward the assembled Rankers.

"Thirty-two. If that's all there are, you'd better gather more."

A shiver ran down Manteus' spine as they closed the distance.

"If there's around three hundred people, it might be worth it."

Three hundred.

That was the number he had mentioned with the Rankers in mind.

Some would say he was bluffing, but Manteus didn't see it as just bluffing.

No, it wasn't.

Rather, it was humility.

'After what he did in the Gigantomachy, the Rankers here can only be destroyed in the blink of an eye.'

But should he give up?

No. Even if he did, it would be a problem.

'What the hell happened to make him open his eyes like that?'

They were murderous eyes.

A look of unforgiveness.

The Hercules before him was the same one Manteus had seen in the Gigantomachy.

Kak-.

It was then that Manteus gave up the fight half-heartedly.

"War heroes are a thing of the past."

Pak-.

Hector, the High Rank newcomer to Olympus, stepped forward.

"Times have changed. You relics of the old world, dormant for a thousand years, you may retire to the back room."

Covering his head with a helmet and clad in silver armor, Hector approached Hercules.

He was clearly a man of High Rank.

Especially with thirty Rankers around him.

"Wait."

Manteus was quick to rebuke Hector.

"Right now we need to talk, not fight, and this is Hercules."

"Even if it is Hercules, this one has more than thirty Rankers."

Numbers.

How many people had died falling into that trap, but Hector didn't seem to have learned it.

"We've requested reinforcements from Olympus. Additional personnel will probably arrive shortly."

"That's good to hear."

Hercules folded his arms as he heard the whispers directed at Manteus.

As if to say: the more the merrier.

"...I'm sorry, but I can't take this disrespect anymore."

Hector approached Hercules with his sword and shield.

"Even if I die, I....."

Then...

Boom-.

At a good distance.

Hercules' fist stretched forward.

And at that moment...

Boom-!

The atmosphere crackled, and Hector's armor shattered.

Boom!

Hector flew skyward.

There was no time to say a last word or anything. The other Rankers gasped as they watched Hector fly like a shooting star.

"Uh, how far did he fly?"

"From a disparo....."

A Ranker who was the closest to a High Ranker.

Lately, Hector was a promise on Olympus. Even without a real bloodline, there was talk that if he did well enough, he might someday form a guild of his own.

But such a Hector was sent flying in one fell swoop.

Duduk-.

"Let's start now."

Kwaaang-!

Quad, quadd-.

As his foot hit the ground, the temple, already cracking, began to crumble.

"To destroy Olympus."

\* \* \*

**[The contract is complete].**



**[You have the allegiance of the 'Warrior of War and Struggle'].**

**[The power of the 'Warrior of War and Struggle' is restored].**

**[This soul cannot participate in a fight against an Olympus Player].**

Chuck-.

Finishing the contract, Ares knelt down towards YuWon.

The same as Arthur, a pledge of loyalty.

'To think that a day like this would come in my life... or death.'

Ares, who was reputed to be half-carvenic, was kneeling not to Zeus, but to YuWon.

Although he could not take part in the fight against Olympus, an intact Ares would be a great boost to YuWon at this time.

Yuwon took a short break to regain his Mana and climbed up to the roof.

It had been several days since he had returned from his business on the 38th floor.

Pak-.

In his inventory, his player kit vibrated.

**[Hargaan: Did you really make it?]**

Yuwon, who had just finished resting, sent a reply.

**[What's wrong?]**

**[Hargaan: Hera's temple was attacked by Hercules]**

**[I told him to strike there first. Now he's on our side].**

After replying, YuWon tried to put away his player kit again.

At that moment...

Tak-.

**[Hargaan: What? Really?]**

**[Hargaan : No, what have you done, you madman, Hercules, really?]**

**[Hargaan : I knew you were crazy, but what the hell have you done to convince Hercules?]**

The messages were ringing off the hook.

It was obvious that he was a bit surprised.

Yuwon thought about replying, but stopped himself.

It wasn't a very productive conversation. Since Hercules had attacked the Temple of Hera, it shouldn't be hard to figure out what was going on.

'It has begun.

The Temple of Hera was the first target thanks to the information YuWon gave him.

All the beings involved in Alcmene's death.

Of them, other than Zeus and Ares, Hera had the most to do with Alcmene's death.

'On Olympus, it's better to intercept them one by one than to kill them all at once. I've even sent their approximate locations in your player kit.'

The only Ranker who could stop Hercules on Olympus was Zeus. After all, there weren't many Rankers who could stop him, even if you searched the entire Tower.

'The destruction of Olympus has begun. There is only one thing left to do....'

Jiing-.

The vibration started again.

It must be the same vibration, but this time it felt different. YuWon took out his player kit and checked the message.

**[Hades: Preparations have been completed.]**

The message he had been waiting for.

After checking it, YuWon replied the messages from Hargaan that he had ignored earlier.

**[We will start now]**

Hargaan.

As the son of Zeus, he will be the player who would later lead the destruction of Olympus.

**[Hargan: Start? Hadn't we already started?]**

**[Not really...]**

The time has finally come for you to recoup your investment in Hargaan.

**[There is something you can do to help]**

\* \* \*

A dark and cloudy sky.

The sky, which has never been cloudy in a year, has turned unusually gray today.

Jeobuck, Jeobuck-.

The Throne of Heaven.

The temple of Zeus, King of Olympus.

It was there that Athena, Goddess of War and Wisdom, sought her father.

"We were waiting for her."

The Rankers guarding the temple stepped aside at Athena's arrival.

Even if it were Poseidon, one of the Three Olympians, they would not allow one-sided visits, but Ateanea's was for a reason.

'Maybe something was talked about beforehand.'

The situation seemed strange.

A sense of crisis I had never felt before.

Maybe, just maybe, the impregnable tower that was Olympus, built over millennia, might collapse.

'The sky is cloudy.'

Kurung, bang-!

Even the sky was thundering.

It was the first time Athena had seen such a sky in this world.

'You must be very angry.'

Gulp-.

Even though he was the father who gave birth to her, she was afraid of Zeus at this moment.

No, not just at this moment.

She had always been afraid.

Because Zeus was the strongest of all the Rankers she knew, the most bloodless and ruthless.

But it was an insignificant amount compared to now.

Athena walked down the corridor, reaching the center of the temple where Zeus resided.

Zeus had his back to her, facing the pool.

"You have come..."

The rise and fall of his voice was uncharacteristic.

But Athena could tell he was in a very bad mood.

More than his expression or his voice, the sky above the open roof gave it away.

"Ares is dead, isn't he?"

"...Yes."

"Hercules has been smashing temples?"

"...Yes."

"I see we're in trouble."

Naturally, Athena was surprised.

Trouble.

It was a word she had not used even when her relations with the Asgard had soured, when she had personally thrown Poseidon into her prison to avoid war.

No.

It was a word Athena had never uttered in all the history she could remember.

Zeus of all the gods was in trouble.

"I will call out the troops at once. Dionysus, Apollo and Hermes and send them to..."

"Apollo no."

He knew Apollo was in contact with Hargaan.

That was all.

But lately, since Hargaan's encounter with Hades, things had been different.

"You mean my uncle and his contact?"

"Yes."

"Is Hercules' return related to that?"

"I thought so at first."

Zeus' gaze turned sideways.

"But then I realized I didn't have to go that far."

"Yes?"

"Do you know who killed Ares?"

Everyone knew.

After hearing the news, he saw Ares' temple destroyed in person.

He couldn't imagine the shock he received....

A player who had just arrived on the 40th Floor.

He had heard the stories before, but he was already powerful enough to take on an entire Olympus Guild.

But...

"Is he related to the Great Sage, Equal to Heaven by any chance?"

So far, Athena had not rated YuWon that high.

Rather, she was worried about Son OhGong's alter ego by his side.

Although she already had the strength of a High Ranker, she was confident that she could take on YuWon at any time.

He wondered what it would look like in the eyes of Zeus.

And then.

"The Great Sage, Equal to Heaven, must be just like Hercules."

"What do you mean...."

"This is no coincidence.

Ares was dead, and Hercules had changed.

There was only a causal connection between the two men who had never met. On the way back, Zeus could see why Hercules had changed.

'It was a trap to get him back.'

He didn't know how he had found out about Alcmene, but he thought he had done a good job.

Olympus had already suffered an incurable wound.

He couldn't let this go on any longer.

"Athena."

A solemn call.

Pap-.

"Yes, my King."

Athena knelt before him like a loyal servant waiting for orders.

But Zeus was not looking at her.

All he was looking at was the surface of the well, which remained calm despite the wind.

"Strike the Heavenly Demon Cult."

Athena's eyes flickered.

Heavenly Demon Cult.

It was the only known guild in the outside world that had anything to do with YuWon.

"You mean..."

"Yes."

At this point, there was only one reason for Olympus to get involved with the Demon Cult.

"We will attract that Kim YuWon."

That was the moment he became Zeus' target.

Chapter 167

Athena was silent for a moment.

It was difficult to answer.

"The Heavenly Demon Cult has the Heavenly Demon."

This was clearly a High Rank that had been dormant for a long time.

However, he had been a High Ranker since long before the Gigantomachy.

"Furthermore, behind Kim YuWon is the alter ego of the Great Sage, Equal to Heaven."

The Heavenly Demon.

And the Great Sage, Equal to Heaven.

Besides, Kim YuWon alone is better than Ares.

In such a state, it was not a good idea to make the Heavenly Demon Cult an enemy, power-wise.

"This side also needs at least four High Rankers, including me."

"Take Hermes with you. I'll choose the other one tomorrow."

"If it's just one person..."

"It's time to let her out too."

Athena's eyes snapped open.

She could only think of one person's name for him to use the word "let her out."

"Really?"

"I'm sure she's waiting. She'll want to get on her feet and come out."

"She doesn't like the battlefield much."

"I know."

Zeus rose from the pond and stood up.

He looked away from the pond and spoke as he walked away.

"So you'll have to back off a bit when you fight next to her."

Athena turned her head and looked at the pond Zeus looked at.

A calm surface.

'What was he looking at?'

After becoming the King of Olympus....

Zeus, who had extremely limited outside activities, saw the world he wanted to see through this pond.

In times like these, when Olympus was shaken....

What did he see?

Now that Zeus is gone.

As if drawn to something, Athena saw her reflection in the pool.

\* \* \*

42nd floor, Hell.

In the deepest of all places, Hargaan found the person he had been waiting for.

"You call me to a place far enough away."

The deepest depths of Hell.

The place where all the most dangerous creatures in Hell, not to mention Cerberus, came from.

In a place where even Rankers were reluctant to enter, the two met.

"It's late."

Sitting leaning against a stone, YuWon looked at the time on his player kit.

"I've been running hard. The road up and down was a little jammed."

"Stuck? Like traffic?"

"Traffic? What's that?"

"I see."

YuWon shrugged and stood up.

Since it was one of the deeper places, everything was dark.

Looking around, where even the dimmest light was precious, Hargaan asked.

"But isn't it dangerous down here? It's too low..."

Paji Jiji-!

The bottom lit up.

A few bright spheres of lightning floated around YuWon.

At that moment...

"Eh.....?"

Hargaan spotted the corpses of the monsters he hadn't seen before, shrouded in darkness.

"How many are there?"

Hundreds.

No, maybe a thousand. Apparently they had gathered to eat YuWon, but failed.

In this desolate place, where not a blade of grass grew and there was nothing, YuWon cleared the monsters and waited for him.

"...I don't think you called me here for a chat."

At Hargaan's words, YuWon nodded.

"There's something I need you to help me with."

"What is it?"

"How many floors have you climbed already?"

"Now? Sixty-one floors."

"That's fast."

"Fast, yes. If I wasn't so busy these days, I'd probably go faster."

Unlike YuWon, Hargaan was focused on climbing the Tower as fast as possible. He could still climb the Tower as fast as YuWon, but in terms of speed, Hargaan was faster than YuWon.

"You have this too, don't you?"

Phazik-

A sphere of lightning erupted from the air.

YuWon pointed at the "Lightning Fragment" he had created.

"That's right."

Pajik-!

Yellow lightning began to flow through Hargaan's body.

Unlike what YuWon got as a reward for the test, it was an ability mixed into Hargaan's genes.

A more pure and complete ability.

In terms of pure quality and quantity of Mana, YuWon's power was stronger, but the maturity of his skill was incomparable.

"But why?"

"Are you ready to fight your father?"

Hargaan's eyes widened for a moment and then returned to normal.

YuWon referred to the fight against Zeus as a fight with her father.

He was asking her if she was willing to take a different path than her father.

"Why are you asking me that, as if I have any doubts?"

"I ask just in case."

"What isn't, isn't. That goes for any parent, and while I'm grateful for giving birth to me, it's my mother who raised me."

Hargaan, who gave an answer without hesitation, made a slightly bitter expression.

"Even more so, Hercules, if you look at that older brother..."

Hercules.

A weapon of war from Olympus, planned and created by Zeus.

After Hercules' change of heart, Hargaan asked YuWon about Hercules, and after hearing the answer, Hargaan was overwhelmed with mixed feelings.

He wondered if he might be like that too.

"The Olympus I have seen is a place where the end or the outcome is more important than the cause or justice. Whatever is done to get there is done without regard for the consequences."

"And you want to change that?"

"At least my mother taught me I should."

The corner of YuWon's mouth turned up.

It wasn't a very long conversation.



But at least this conversation was enough to convince him.

'He hasn't changed.'

He wondered what he would do if the Hargaan he knew in the future and the Hargaan he knew now were different because of his intervention.

But he hadn't changed.

No.

If anything, he had become more quickly the Hargaan he knew.

Now there was something else he was missing.

"There is something you can help me with."

"Me? What thing?"

"Your father. The fight against Zeus."

Hargaan's pupils instantly dilated.

"And you're in it."

"Are you mad?"

Hargaan's voice rose.

This wasn't about wasting his life or anything.

"Why would I want to be in there? You or me... No, not you. This is a mistake. Anyway, what do you think I can do to help by getting into that fight?"

Monster corpses lying around. And the victory in the fight against Ares.

Hargaan stuttered and changed his words as he quickly recalled those two things.

However, the conclusion was no different.

"Don't you have confidence?"

"...Should I have it? In the first place, who would dare to fight him?"

It was understandable, since this was not just any opponent.

Zeus.

King of Olympus, and a being in his own right.

In a fight against him, Hargaan would be no more than a tiny ant.

"Zeus. King of Olympus, Ruler of the Heavens, Lord of the Thunderbolts. Many names, but currently occupies ninth place."

YuWon recited the approximate information about Zeus.

Ranked 9th.

Of course, that was just for now.

'Later, he moved up to 5th place.'

A rare promotion for a High Ranked Player in the upper echelon.

It is said that while the power of Olympus has since diminished, the power of Zeus himself has actually grown stronger.

"I know. No, you don't seem to have realized how high rank nine is in this tower."

"I know that too."

I probably know better than anyone else.

Few people in this era have met as many High Ranked Players at the top as YuWon.

"So you're saying you can't fight him head to head because he's no match for you right now?".

"It's not that I can't, it's just that it's a meaningless fight..."

"Pointless."

Creackle-!

YuWon's Lightning surged and mixed with Hargaan's.

"It certainly seems that way."

"...I know you're not one to talk nonsense."

Hargaan let out a long sigh.

He knew it was nonsense.

However, YuWon in front of him always managed to do such nonsense.

Maybe...

Maybe, he thought, just maybe, this time it was true?

"What are you basing this on?"

"There are two, which one do you want to hear first?"

"Does the order matter?"

"It does matter. Because the first one leads to the second."

"Then you just have to say them in that order, right? Why do you have to ask?"

"Because you will be surprised. Prepare your heart and listen."

"Surprise me? Why?"

"Because you..."

YuWon chose Hargaan for one of two reasons.

"You are the only son Zeus truly loves."

For that reason alone, he held the key to Olympus' destiny.

\* \* \*

Those were cruel words.

Having to fight against the father who loved him.

YuWon's words shocked Hargaan more than ever....

But it didn't matter if he believed it or not.

Even if that were true, it was an immutable fact that Zeus was straying.

The only question was.

'It remains to be seen if he will make the same decision knowing this.'

Yuwon looked at Hargaan, who was sitting amidst the corpses of the monsters.

'Pajjik, Pajjik-!'

Lightning swayed unsteadily.

It was proof that Hargaan's emotions were out of control.

YuWon couldn't answer Hargaan's question of 'why'.

But it was definitely true.

Probably all sorts of things were going through his head right now, including the truth of what YuWon had said.

"I'm going crazy."

Hargaan scratched his head and opened his mouth for the first time in hours.

YuWon approached Hargaan again and asked.

"Are you organizing your thoughts?"

"There's nothing to organize. I don't even know if what you say is true or not."

"If you don't believe me, I have nothing more to say."

"No. I really believe you. Because what you said seems to be incredibly true."

"It usually is."

"Showing off. What are you, from the future?"

YuWon replied with a shrug. Mind you, inside he felt a little stabbed.

"Well, whatever, assuming you believe me."

"What difference does it make? All I have is my heart."

"So what's changed in that heart of yours?"

"I'm going to fight. That hasn't changed."

The result was the same.

"I can't say it won't hurt. Taking down a parent who loves you..."

Hargaan's tone was calmer than expected.

Perhaps he had ordered his thoughts, or perhaps he hadn't realized it yet.

In any case, his response remained the same.

"But there is no war. It's not right for hundreds or tens of millions of people to die in a senseless war."

"Glad to hear it, then."

"Then let's hear..."

The flow of conversation was interrupted for a moment.

"What's the second reason you need me?"

It was then that Hargaan forced the flow back together.

Ziying-.

The player kit buzzed in Hargaan's arms.

"Wait a second."

Hargaan hurried to check his player kit, as he had received many important calls lately.

As soon as he saw the message...

"This..."

Hargaan's expression hardened and he turned his player kit to show YuWon the screen.

"Look at this."

And on the screen...

**[Apollo: Our father has ordered to attack the Heavenly Demon Cult].**

**[Apollo: Your friend, doesn't he belong to that guild?]**

The message was more urgent for YuWon than for Hargaan.

Chapter 168

Mixed golden and red hair.

Light skin with sharp, glowing features.

Apollo, a man with a lyre in one hand, asked his sister Artemis.

"Is that guy all right?"

"Hargaan? Yes."

Black hair and dark eyes.

A beautiful woman with short hair and long, slender arms.

Artemis shook his head at Apollo's "yes."

"How can she be okay? In this situation..."

"He's made some friends in need, if anything."

"He already has a friend? That's a good thing."

"Yes. You're right about that."

Apollo smiled in satisfaction.

A friend.

It was a nice word. It was also something Hargaan hadn't had until now.

Despite referring to his teammates as "buddies", Hargaan had only ever called one person his "friend".

Smile~

"Are you laughing?"

Unlike Apollo, Artemis couldn't help but laugh.

It was because of that tall temple in front of them.

"Who are we going to see now?"

"Naturally..."

The Tower's largest shrine/temple.

The most opulent, the largest, made for a single dweller.

This place was not unlike the royal castle on Olympus.

For this temple belonged to his father, Zeus.

"To be called at this time..."

Remembering the text he sent to Hargaan, Apollo scratched his head.

"I guess this means I can't go help."

Zeus' calls were rare.

It was also a task of greater weight and importance than any directive that might fall on behalf of Olympus.

To ignore a call from Zeus was unthinkable.

"It's a coincidence, isn't it?"

"A coincidence, a great coincidence."

"What do you think?"

"I don't know; who are we to know what's in his big head?"

"Sure."

"Well, let's get going. We'll find out when we get there."

Apollo looked at the Rankers flanking the entrance to the temple.

"At this point, I wonder why you called us."

For now, Zeus would not lay hands on them.

Nothing was revealed about the apparent destruction of Olympus, except that Hercules was now against it.

Jeobuck, Jeobuck-.

Apollo and Artemis.

The two set foot in their temple to meet Zeus.

\* \* \*

It was a long walk from the 42nd floor to the 10th floor.

Hurrying down to the 41st floor, YuWon rented a Sun Chariot and traveled with Hargaan.

"They already have you as a target."

Muttering in a serious voice, Hargaan looked at YuWon.

The attack on the Heavenly Demon Cult.

They both knew it was a move with YuWon in mind.

"Don't worry. It's not like it doesn't happen from time to time anyway."

"Did you contact them?"

"I did. Be careful."

Contrary to expectations, YuWon's voice was quite calm.

Is he really not worried about this?

No, if that were the case, he wouldn't be in such a hurry.

"The Heavenly Demon Cult has High Rank Cheon Mujin, and there are several other High Ranks, so it should be fine."

Words of comfort.

But they were not just words of comfort. In reality, the Heavenly Demon Cult with Cheon Mujin was a force as strong as their long history.

They would not fall so easily.

"If it was just Athena, that would be the case."

He felt strangely anxious.

With Poseidon imprisoned and Hades turned against him, YuWon remembered what Zeus could do.

"Hermes, Dionysus? Apollo and his sister are united with Hades, and.... Ask another Guild for help? No, I don't think any Guild would intervene in Olympus at this time....".

After meditating for a while.

"...Pandora."

"What?"

"Pandora. She's been released."

A name flashed through his mind.

Of course, Hargaan didn't recognize it.

"Who is Pandora?"

A High Rank, sealed thousands of years ago.

Imprisoned on Olympus for her sins, she was released in the Second Gigantomachy, where she rose to prominence and reclaimed her rightful place.

She was a hidden card that Zeus had been saving for the Second Gigantomachy, so there was nothing strange about releasing her now.

"A rather old High Rank who was locked up in an Olympus prison. There are probably no more than 10 people on Olympus who know his name."

"How do you know such a person?"

"Let's just say I do."

"Well... it sounds like there's nothing you don't know."

Hargaan didn't say much, as if he was past the stage of doubting YuWon's information.

Now he just wondered what YuWon would do at this point.

"But a High Rank who has been sealed for so long, why do you think he was released now?"

"Because there's no reason to keep it anymore."

"Why?"

"Anyway, the next Gigantomachy has passed into oblivion. Even if it were possible, it would be delayed thousands of years."

The trio parted, and Hercules turned away.

Hephaestus could not be captured either, and the supply of weapons became impossible.

Even if the next Gigantomachy were to occur, Olympus would only lose.

"In such a situation, it is not surprising that Zeus chose Pandora. Even if it is a bit risky."

"Risky, for my father?"

A look of incomprehension.

It was a natural question.

Discussing the possible risks of Zeus, not anyone else.

YuWon didn't answer Hargaan's questions anymore.

In fact, YuWon didn't know much about Pandora either.

He had only heard vague accounts of what she had done.

'I hope I'm just making a mistake...'

Unless Zeus stepped forward directly, there was no enemy within Olympus that could pose much of a threat at this point.

But if it was Pandora, that was a different story.

"Faster."

YuWon tugged on the reins of the Sun Chariot.

Maybe they should pick up the pace.

\* \* \*

Chuck, Chuck-.

Tens of thousands of Cult members had gathered.

Each and every one of them had their weapons at the ready, lined up in rows and columns, ready for battle.

"Hail, hail, hail!"

Seated on the throne was the Heavenly Demon, Cheon Mujin.

Around him, the four Heavenly Lords stood and exchanged words.

"It's been a long time since we fought like this."

"Actually, isn't this the first time?"

"Yes. It's the war against Olympus..."

Their faces were filled with worry, anticipation and excitement.

Chang Cheonju\* (\*:Heavenly Lord of the Spear) and Kwon Cheonju\* (\*:Heavenly Lord of the Fist) shuddered in anticipation of an upcoming fight, while Do Cheonju\* (\*:Heavenly Lord of the Dao) and Geom Cheonju (\*:Heavenly Lord of the Sword) were ahead of their worries.

As much as they called themselves the Heavenly Demon Cult, their opponent was Olympus.

There was no guarantee that they would be able to survive a war against them.

"Is the information true?"

Pung Baekrim, the Heavenly Fist Lord, answered the question from Jang Chun-il, the Heavenly Dao Lord.

"It is a message from the Young Lord of the Cult. It's safe."

"I knew this would happen someday, but...."

Jang Chun-il muttered in a disgruntled voice.

At that, Pung Baekrim's face crumpled.



"Can we assume that you are expressing your dissatisfaction with the Young Cult Lord's actions?"

"I thought that someday I would endanger the Heavenly Demon Cult, and today may be that day."

Jang Chun-il did not deny Pung Baekrim's words.

He has always expressed his concern whenever news about YuWon spread.

The Young Cult Lord who became an enemy of Olympus.

He had always imagined this scenario in his mind: a war with Olympus could break the peace of the Heavenly Demon Cult.

"A man with no last name and no power in the Heavenly Mountains, yet he was able to take the seat of Vice Lord of the Cult simply because he was able to use the Holy Fire, and that was the beginning of this division."

"How dare you..."

"Enough, both of you."

Between the two of them, the Heavenly Sword Lord intervened.

The two men glared at each other, gathering momentum, and then looked back at the Heavenly Sword Lord.

Of the four Heavenly Lords, he was the most skilled.

Even in terms of ranking, he was already close to a High Rank, and was being discussed to be the next Warlord of the Murim Alliance.

All four Heavenly Lords are equal, but the Heavenly Lord of the Sword, Shin Mu-geuk, was an exception.

"Wrath is reserved for enemies, not allies. Recognize the current situation."

"But...!"

"To whom do you dare raise your voice?"

At Pung Baekrim's protest, Shin Mu-geuk silenced him with a single word.

Chen Mujin sat with an expressionless face as he looked at the assembled Heavenly Demon Cult members.

He slowly raised his head and muttered something.

"They've arrived."

The gazes of the four Heavenly Lords followed Cheon Mujin's gaze.

Goo-goo, goo-goo~.

Under the bright moonlight, the cloudy sky opened up and-.

Boom!

The guest they were waiting for arrived.

"Arriving so noisily."

Inappropriate for the situation, Cheon Mujin's voice was calm and relaxed.

In the open sky, a ship descended.

A ship that was miles long and flew in the sky.

It looked like a small island.

"Is it Odysseus?"

There could only be one Ranker of Olympus at the helm of a ship that size.

The Cult had long been confined to the Heavenly Mountains, but that didn't mean it was cut off from the outside world.

Odysseus, along with Athena and Ares, was one of Olympus' top warrior Rankers.

He had heard rumors of the ship he led.

Swish-.

Cheon Mujin rose from his seat.

Then, the four Heavenly Lords rushed over to him.

"Our Lord need not go first....."

"We will lead the way.

If the Heavenly Demon, the Head of the Heavenly Demon Cult and its spiritual leader, were to go first, the Cult's prestige would become meaningless.

The only time the Heavenly Demon can rise from his seat is when the Cult is in danger.

After more than a thousand years of public absence, he should not appear so soon.

But.

"Is this fight the time to argue about that?"

"...."

Faced with such an obvious statement, the four Heavenly Lords had no choice but to keep their mouths shut.

The opponent was Olympus.

An opponent against whom they could never let their guard down, or rather, an opponent against whom they had to give their best.

Creack-.

Towards that opponent, Cheon Mujin drew his Sword first.

"Then..."

Wooo-.

A reddish black mana emanated from Cheon Mujin's body.

"I guess I should welcome you guys for traveling all the way here."

### **[Heavenly Demon Spirit]**

A huge red giant appeared behind Cheon Mujin.

It followed Cheon Mujin, holding a sword, and stood next to him, as if it was a mountain.

### **[First Stage]**

Swoosh-.

Cheon Mujin's sword was unsheathed and pointed upwards from below.

With that move, Cheon Mujin's Heavenly Demon Spirit emitted a great momentum, and the tip of the sword accurately aimed at the Olympus ship that appeared in the sky.

### **[Basic Cut]**

Shhh-!

Shiiiiik-!

The Heavenly Demon Sword swung upwards.

Jjaeuk-!

The clouds parted at the same time.

The hazy moonlight that had been hidden spilled down to the ground. It looked as if the sky had been sliced with a single sword, splitting it into two sides.

And at the same time...

"Huh, huh?"

"The ship, the ship...!"

Gee-gee-gee-.

Zzzz-!

Olympus' ship, which was several kilometers long, broke in half.

"Yeah, that's enough-"

Chuckle-.

Cheon Mujin.

An ancient High Rank that has been dormant for thousands of years.

Also.

"I hope you don't mind my welcoming greeting."

It was the moment when the silence of the Heavenly Demon, who was said to have the power of half a Murim, was broken.

Chapter 169

Kung, kugugugugung-.

BANG-!

The ship lost control and crashed to the ground. The wreckage of the ship was covered with rainwater and the corpses of several players who had failed to escape.

"Wow, what a welcome."

The boy pressed his tattered hat against his head and stomped lightly in the air.

Hermes, the High Rank of Olympus, clicked his tongue as he looked at the wreckage of the crashed ship on the ground.

And next to Hermes...

"Why didn't you dodge?"

Athena narrowed her eyes and glared at him.

The Sovereign of Freedom and Thieves.

Hermes, he could have moved the whole ship to avoid the sword attack.

Of course.

"It's not that he didn't, it's that he couldn't, sister."

From Hermes' perspective, Athena's words were a bitter pill to swallow.

Pak-.

His gaze moved to the side of the Heavenly Mountain.

A huge giant with a single sword made of red mana.

"I've never seen anything like that, not even in the Gigantomachy."

A huge mana like a mountain.

The Heavenly Demon's Power was comparable to that of a Dragon, if only in quantity.

The 'Heavenly Demon' was more monstrous than anyone had thought.

"...We must prepare ourselves."

Athena also felt the giant's presence in front of her eyes.

"Because we will fight the Murim themselves."

"Anyway, this father of mine only calls me for troublesome things like this."

"I'll take care of the Heavenly Demon."

Athena lifted Aegis.

Hermes looked at Athena with narrowed eyes and put on a puzzled expression.

"Are you going to start with everything?"

"Since the fight has begun, it's only fair that we give our best."

"I know."

"Don't be heavy either. Fight like a man."

"Ugh-."

Hermes groaned, scratched his head in annoyance, and pressed his hat tighter against his face.

"I just hate fighting..."

jjalang-.

A staff appeared in Hermes' hand.

A staff with a snake's head, decorated with some beads.

Hermes twirled the staff and it floated in the air.

"So let's finish quickly and go back. The smell of blood should be as short as possible.

Geug, gugguk-.

The trees planted on Heavenly Mountain trembled, and were soon uprooted.

Pak, pak, pak~.

The trees split at the ends, turning into giant spears.

"H-Huh?"

"Oh, it's coming!"

The Cult Members gathered on the Heavenly Mountain screamed when they saw it.

Thousands of flying trees.

At the moment when all the Cult Members were attentive to it....

Pajijijijiji-.

Shukaak-.

The four Heavenly Lords jumped forward.

Tak, tak, tak-!

Toucheck-!

Thousands of trees burst into pieces, chopped into tens of thousands of splinters and falling helplessly downward.

Hermes asked as he looked at the four Rankers that seemed as small as dots in the distance.

"Is it them, the four Rankers of the Heavenly Demon Cult that they are most proud of?"

"They are the ones who bear the arrogant name of Heavenly Lord."

"It's an arrogant name for what they're capable of doing, but they're still pretty good."

The four Heavenly Lords blocked his attack, and he instantly recognized his opponents.

"I see I'll have to take care of those guys personally."

"And the rest?"

"You're on your own, sister."

Hermes, who had already made up his mind, began to walk alone toward the Heavenly Mountain.

Individual action was an absolute no-no in war, but this was an exception.

Hermes, the High Rank of Olympus who symbolized freedom.

He was the type of person who only excelled when given freedom.

"Selfish bastard....."

Of course, that didn't sit well with Athena.

"Everyone..."

Chuck-.

Athena lifted Aegis and let out a mana-laden voice.

"Prepare for battle."

"Prepare for battle!"

Chuck, Chuck-.

The Rankers and players on the Olympus side who had survived the clash rose up in arms.

Looking at them ready for battle, Athena gave an order.

"From now on, the annihilation of the Heavenly Demon Cult will begin."

"Here we go!"

Doo, doo, doo, doo, doo, doo~.

The army, numbering in the thousands, began to charge towards the Heavenly Demon Cult. For some reason, the Heavenly Demon Spirit that stood firm beside the Heavenly Mountain did not move.

'Looks like the other side is thinking the same thing.'

Cheon Mujin did not look at the others.

He instantly recognized the leader of this battlefield and identified Athena as his enemy.

**[You are Athena]**

It was Cheon Mujin's voice.

Athena felt as if he was right in front of her, even though he must have been on top of that high mountain.

She didn't need to cross swords to know that.

He is strong.

Maybe even stronger than her.

'You say it's because he's been dormant for so long that he's become wasted....'

As time passed, the rumors about the Heavenly Demon diminished, and Athena secretly hoped so too.

But no.

'On the contrary, it has become much stronger.'

During all that time, the Heavenly Demon had not simply been holed up in the mountains, growing old.

Quite the contrary.

Every day of his life had been spent on Heavenly Mountain, and he hadn't missed a single day of training during that time.

He was stronger than the rumors said.

Much stronger.

'Maybe today will be the day when the Heavenly Demon ranking will change...'

At the moment when Athena was about to approach the Heavenly Demon....

"Oi, what do I do?"

A frightening/ muffled voice was heard from the wreckage of the ship.

Two pupils hovered in the air like ghostly flames, staring at her with eerie eyes.

'Spooky eyes, as always.'

What is she thinking and what are her feelings?

It was a beautiful voice, surely flowing with jade beads, but all she could feel was a shiver.

Athena looked back at him and gave him a cold reply.

"For now stay there and don't move."

"Stay there? Why?"

"Because you're a mess and you shouldn't be here."

Pandora.

The first time he heard of her, it was from his older uncle, Poseidon.

"The strongest woman on Olympus? You're not there yet."

"Hera? No. She's scary too, but maybe in a hundred years you'll catch up with her. There is someone else who deserves the title of strongest woman."

Athena questioned Poseidon about her.

After repeated questions, Poseidon finally answered Athena's curiosity.

"Once upon a time, there was a Ranker named Pandora. She's long since forgotten, though."

"Pandora?"

"That's a name you've never heard before, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, you'd better never hear it again."

"Why, who is she?"

"Zeus is the only one who knows about her. She appeared out of nowhere one day and used terrifying power."

Olympus' strongest warrior.

Athena, who has lived her life with that goal in mind, has entered the prison to meet Pandora herself.

She did not know what she had done to deserve her imprisonment, nor what she was capable of.

Unaware of all that, Athena made her way to the prison.

And at the moment she met Pandora there....

Athena vowed never to open the prison doors again.

However...

'I never thought that my father himself would release him.'

In the end, disaster came out.

Zeus may have thought he could handle her, but it was too much for Athena.

Pandora.

The box hid a power that should never be opened.

"In other words, stay there until I give you instructions."

"...So, really, you're letting me out now, are you?"

"Yes."

Athena nodded weakly.

"After all, my father promised."

"Father...."

Pandora fell silent.

For a moment, Athena thought all the sounds of the world had disappeared.

"Zeus..."

The missing sound returned and Pandora's voice echoed in her ears.

"Zeus, Zeus, Zeus...!"

Rage at Zeus.

She screamed Zeus' name as if having a fit for a moment, and with that, an unearthly aura swirled around her and soared skyward.



Athena was quick to push Aegis forward.

Even being High Rank, her aura was a burden.

'Good thing we moved our allies earlier.'

Pandora was the reason they rushed before they could clear the ranks of their men who had fallen from the ship.

If Pandora attacked their allies first, it would be bad.

'An internal ally who cannot control his emotions is more dangerous than an enemy.'

Pandora's energy was blocked by Aegis' protection, but Athena stood there for a moment, unable to move.

At that moment...

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry..."

Like a manic depressive, Pandora lowered her head, hiding her eyes.

Pandora's voice came out as she delivered a series of apologies.

"I've done wrong, so please get me out of here. Please...."

"...Okay."

Biting her lip in exasperation, Athena looked at Pandora for a moment before turning away.

"Stay in there until I call you."

With a snap...

Athena finally made her way towards the Heavenly Mountain.

The enemy she had to face on this battlefield.

There was no way she was going to give such an opponent to Pandora.

She was the strongest opponent she had brought with her, but she was also the worst.

'I can't give in.

This war is yours.

It must be, and it must be written as such.

Skak-.

Sword and Shield.

Athena folded her arms and lunged at the Heavenly Demon Spirit.

\* \* \*

The Sun Chariot sped through several levels.

Taking the fastest route, the Sun Chariot arrived at the center of the Murim World.

It was Hefei where the Namgung Family lived.

"Ugh, I really can't stand these kinds of trips."

After spending the night in the rocking Sun Chariot, Hargaan grumbled.

It was more a play on words than genuine discomfort, a way to relax for the combat ahead.

"It won't be long now."

"Yeah, looks like it. Hey, that's Hefei, right?".

"This is my first fight with Olympus."

"Well, it was going to happen anyway, so let's do it in advance."

Fortunately, he didn't seem too nervous.

Inside the rattling carriage, Hargaan channeled his Mana and relaxed a bit.

He had nothing else with him but his fists and gauntlets. Now was the time to find the right tension and prepare for combat.

Seeing Hargaan's mouth close again after their brief exchange, YuWon turned his head to look outside the carriage.

The direction was Hefei Heavenly Mountain.

'It won't be long now.

Perhaps by now, Heavenly Mountain had become a battlefield.

Rankers from Olympus, led by Athena. Perhaps even this Pandora.

'I'm sure Cheon Mujin can take care of Athena. The problem is, if Pandora is there...'

There was nothing he could do now.

For now, he could only try to picture the situation on Heavenly Mountain in his mind.

It was when YuWon was looking in the direction of Heavenly Mountain through the window outside the carriage....

**[The '?' egg reveals its teeth.]**

**[The '?' egg swallows its saliva.]**

**[The '?' egg urges you to hurry up.]**

The unexpected message startled YuWon, who dropped the hand he was resting on the window frame.

"...Oh?"

Why is the Egg reacting here all of a sudden?

Judging by its insistence, the Egg seemed to know YuWon's fate.

'I've already obtained the Sacred Fire from the Heavenly Mountain. There's no way for me to react now...'

There was only one thing to say.

'Is it Pandora?'

Chapter 170

A Heavenly Mountain without the Sacred Fire.

The only thing that could be assumed to be there was Pandora.

How Pandora had disappeared, information about her was a blank sheet and nothing was known about the background of her birth.

'It's just a guess right now, but.....'

**[The '????' Egg urges you.]**

'It doesn't really matter.'

This message was more than a guess.

The fact that the Egg reacted meant that the tracks of an Outsider were going where it was headed.

It didn't matter if it was Pandora or someone else, as he had already received the message, he could only be more cautious.

'There's very little left now.'

He was certain of it.

Certainty that the egg would hatch, albeit a little sooner than he had expected.

Perhaps it would be the end or the beginning of a whole chapter of his life he had never known.

"Are you hungry?"

**[The '????' Egg nods.]**

"Yes, let's go."

YuWon smiled, the corners of his lips twitching upwards.

It's almost time.

"I'll fill you up in a bit.

Soon, he'll be able to meet the guy who was inside the egg.

With that thought, YuWon looked out the window of the Sun Chariot.

And then...

"Who are you talking to?"

"....."

Hargaan's voice pierced the back of YuWon's neck.

In his eyes, YuWon seemed to be talking to himself like a madman.

\* \* \*

Jii-ii-ing-.

Toucheck-!

One of the Heavenly Mountain's peaks was cut off by the impact of the Heavenly Demon Sword and the Aegis.

It wasn't even a sword strike, just a sword strike that bounced off a shield.

Chik-.

Athena flew to the ground, cushioning the impact with a hand on the ground.

When she looked up, she saw the Heavenly Demon Spirit's sword falling towards her.

Skak-.

Ssshhhhh!

The ground crunched under the sword.

Athena's sword distorted the trajectory of the sword wielded by the Heavenly Demon Spirit. Athena hurriedly stomped her foot to close the distance between her and the Heavenly Demon Spirit.

'Quickly.'

She expected it to be slow due to its size.

It was hard to imagine a creature that size unleashing an ability that fast.

But the Heavenly Demon Spirit was different.

"The form of a giant made of a mass of mana that follows the user's movements. Naturally, its speed doesn't differ from the Heavenly Demon's."

Cheon Mujin's eyes quickly followed Athena, and the Heavenly Demon Spirit's sword once again moved swiftly. Athena raised her Aegis to block it, swept it away, and closed the distance once more.

Close distance.

"You're not the only one who can atacaa."

Boom-.

Athena's Aegis stretched forward, striking the Heavenly Demon Spirit in the abdomen.

Boom!

Boom!

A shattering impact.

The Heavenly Demon Spirit's body shuddered, and at the same time, Cheon Mujin's mana, which was holding the Heavenly Demon Spirit, shuddered.

And without losing that small space, Athena threw the spear (?) she held in her other hand.

Twack!

The spear shot out towards Cheon Mujin.

It blew off one of the peaks of the Heavenly Mountain.

Unfortunately, Cheon Mujin had raised his sword just like Athena, deflecting the spear's trajectory.

"I see."

Pak-.

Thousands of spearheads appeared in the sky.

In the narrow distance...

For the first time since the fight had begun, Athena was on the offensive.

Kak-.

Puck, puff, puff, puff, puck-!

A hole began to appear in the great Heavenly Mountain.

Chen Mujin, who had been dodging the attacks with his footwork, took a look at his crumbling house and muttered.

"...Not a pretty sight."

A crumbling house.

Seeing it, Chen Mujin's Heavenly Demon Spirit rose up again.

Goo-goo-goo-goo-.

The Heavenly Demon Spirit's sword soared towards the sky.

Chak-!

The sword moved again, aiming at Athena.

Clang, clang-!

Gigigigeek, Paang-!

Spears and swords clashed, shattering into pieces.

Athena used her unbreakable Aegis to parry the Heavenly Demon Spirit's sword, and charged towards Cheon Mujin.

Meanwhile, Hermes and the Warriors of Olympus flew back and forth, fighting the Four Heavenly Lords.

Pandora sat motionless as Athena commanded, her eyes taking in the scene.

At that moment...

Shiiik-.

Thud, thud, thud.

Someone's corpse flew from afar.

The body, which looked like it belonged to an Olympus player, had not been dead for long.

That was the beginning.

Pandora's view of the battlefield had changed.

Aaaaaaa-!

Kak-!

It's this way! This way!

Wait, stop .....!

Puff, puff, puff-.

Puff, puff, puff, puff-!

The sounds of stabbing, slashing, burning, killing.

All kinds of emotions flashed like fireflies in Pandora's eyes: fear of death, murder and anger.

Swoosh-.

Pandora rose from her place.

Without realizing it, his body began to move on its own.

"Ah..."

She reached out to the fireflies scattered in front of her.

They were corpses, but to her eyes, it looked more beautiful than anything.

"Back then..."

A long time ago.

The image of a box, given to her by Zeus, flashed through her mind.

-This is my gift to you, Pandora.

-But you must not open this box. Never, no matter what.

He gave her a box as a gift and she must never open it.

At first she thought Zeus was making fun of her. But she accepted his gift and forgot about the box.

A long time passed.

She remembered the box when she needed it to survive a Ranker that had wiped out her entire family.

'At that...'

Finally, Pandora opened the box.

And then...

'They came out.'

She could see those bright lights.

Bam-.

Pandora walked onto the battlefield.

A single step on this vast battlefield.

However, there were three people who turned their heads with that one step.

"Pandora?"

"Oh, no...."

Athena and Hermes.

T-.

"...Who is she?"

Cheon MuJin.

In a single step, all three had noticed Pandora's presence.

The pause in the battle between Athena and Cheon Mujin gave the illusion of a pause, if only for a moment.

"What did you bring?"

After releasing the Heavenly Demon Spirit, Cheon Mujin looked at Athena floating in the sky.

In the distance, a presence could be felt beneath the Heavenly Mountains.

Cheon Mu-jin felt that this presence alone was more dangerous than anything else on this battlefield.

And then...

'Pandora has moved.

Swoosh-.

Athena watched Pandora across the inner surface of Aegis.

Pandora began to move slowly.

It wasn't very fast, but it didn't look like it would take her long to reach this battlefield.

On the other hand, somehow, her pace seemed to be picking up.

'Once she reaches the battlefield... the allies will be annihilated.'

Of course, the same would be true for the Heavenly Demon Cult.

The only ones left standing would be her, Hermes and Cheon Mujin.

And that would be neither a victory nor a defeat.

That was not the outcome Athena wanted.

'Now what do I do...'

And so, as Athena struggled with Pandora's existence.

Another familiar face reflected inside the Aegis.

"...You arrived."

\* \* \*

Pak-.

Pandora's pace became faster and faster.

Maneuvering from the half-destroyed ship, she reached the beginning of the battlefield.

Then several players saw her and approached her.

"Are you from Olympus?"

The Murim players and the Olympus players differed in their attire.

They assumed Pandora was from Olympus because of her attire and reprimanded her for arriving so late.

"You're not even fully armed yet."

"The punishment comes later. We're in battle now."

"Hey you! Hurry up and get your gear ready. Or are you, by any chance, a backup?"

"Either way....."

"Guys..."

Pandora's eyes scanned the players gathered around her.

"You guys scare the crap out of me."

Despite hearing the same words, the facial expressions of the five players were strangely different.

Some looked away as if stung, others blushed with anger.

Some even bowed their heads in embarrassment.

"Scared? What the sh\*t..."

Chilling.

A strange sensation ran down their spine.

Only then did the expressions of the five players become the same. Their faces turned blue, their eyes widened to tears, and their bodies began to tremble.

"Look at that."

Squawk-.

Someone started choking.

"They scare me."

"Kuck, kuck, kuck....."



The players were choking.

One of them stabbed himself in the heart with the knife in his hand. With a pop, the player fell to the ground, his heart pierced.

Five suicides in the blink of an eye.

Pandora looked at the scene and moved on.

No, she tried to move.

"How far are you going to go with that slow pace?"

A voice came from behind her.

Pandora's head turned. She could see two faces.

"Stay here. There's no fun in going there."

YuWon and Hargaan.

The two jumped out of the Sun Chariot, landing behind Pandora.

'It was real.'

YuWon looked at Pandora's face.

It was a beautiful face.

Pandora's features glowed in a way he would only see a few times in his life.

But it wasn't just that.

The moment he saw her, there was another reason why he was immediately and instantly convinced that it was Pandora.

'The ability to maximize all the negative emotions around her, just as he had heard.'

All these unpleasant feelings swirling in his chest.

Every unpleasant emotion she could think of, bubbling up as if they could explode at any moment.

It was like the Pandora she knew. She maximized all the negative emotions around her, centered on herself.

And it was nothing more than a skill Pandora exuded as naturally as breathing.

"This is so annoying, what is this woman doing?"

Hargaan was also suffering within the confines of her ability.

Fortunately, unlike the players who had just committed suicide, Hargaan did nothing to end her life immediately.

He was still not very high on the ladder, but he was as mentally strong as most Rankers.

Thus, Hargaan looked at Pandora with a sour look.

"Zeus....."

Pandora saw Hargaan at Yuwon's rear.

"Zeus?"

A face that looked more like Zeus than any other.

Upon discovering Hargaan, Pandora's body stiffened like a wooden stone.

Whether intentionally or not, Pandora's movements stopped. YuWon glared at Hargaan.

"Hargaan."

"Huh?"

"Go to the Heavenly Mountain and help Master. Don't stay here too close."

Normally, he would have insisted on fighting alongside him.

But this time, she couldn't.

"All right. I guess that's what I should do."

Hargaan's gaze drifted to the bodies of the players who had taken their own lives.

"I'm in danger too."

Pandora's influence was growing stronger even at this moment. It was safe to get away from her as soon as possible.

Staggering, Hargaan passed along the road around Pandora. Pandora's eyes followed him, but he soon turned his head to look at YuWon.

"At least you still have instincts."

Before he knew it, YuWon had unsheathed his sword.

Perhaps, just a moment ago, he would have tried to decapitate Pandora if she hadn't turned her head.

"More or less, the table is already set..."

At YuWon's feet.

Jjeouk-.

[The '????' Egg opens its mouth.]

The Egg, about to hatch, began to show its first teeth.

"It's time to eat."