

With The Gods 31

Chapter 31

After YuWon had left, Hargaan stood in place for a moment.

There were people waiting for him.

“So they’re here.”

A group made its way through the new players. A man wearing gold-plated armor and a helmet led a group of about ten or so players.

Hargaan had locked eyes with some of the group members earlier, so he had wondered if they would come greet him. Apparently he guessed right.

The group wore capes with an emblem of a large mountain, sword, and spear—the symbol of Olympus.

“I, Agamemnon of Olympus, give my greetings to the one of great lineage.”

“Agamemnon, you say? I think I’ve seen you before.”

“Thank you for remembering me.”

Agamemnon got on one knee while facing Hargaan. As a player who hadn’t become a Ranker yet, he had to show his respects according to Olympian lineage. But unlike his actions, Agamemnon looked at Hargaan with indifference.

“Is Ares well?”

“He’s the same as always.”

“I heard he became a High Ranker recently. Please pass along my congratulations.”

“Thank you.”

The war maniac of Olympus, Ares. He was the player that Agamemnon followed. But also...

“However... Lord Ares finds lineage more important than anything. He has ordered me to not pass along any of your messages until you find your birth mother.”

... Ares was renowned within Olympus for his bad personality.

“What did you say?”

“As you know, the Ruler of the Skies has little interest in children. And, sir, you do not know who your mother is...”

“You disrespectful—!”

Spark, crackle—

Rumble—

Electricity started flowing out of Hargaan's body. He tried to hold himself back, but his rage was already overflowing.

Yet, in the midst of Hargaan's anger, Agamemnon wore a stoic look, the look of someone who didn't know what they did wrong. In fact, it was possible that he was enjoying Hargaan's rage.

"Do not be like this, sir. I'm sure you're well aware of Lord Ares's personality. Lineage is something you create. I hope you'll have your own family one day."

"... Ugh."

Agamemnon put out the fire that he himself started.

Hargaan couldn't continue to show his anger after what Agamemnon said. It was true, the one that looked down on Hargaan was Ares, not him. Not to mention the fact that Agamemnon was one of Ares's men. If he accidentally went too far, it might end up souring his own relationship with Olympus.

"Alright. You guys may go."

"Yes, sir. Farewell." After bowing, Agamemnon suddenly remembered something and asked, "Who was that man earlier? Seeing as how he left by himself, he doesn't seem to be one of your teammates."

"That guy?"

Hargaan pressed his brow, recollecting YuWon, who had left first towards the city. He didn't quite know how to explain YuWon. Since he lost the bet and failed to recruit him into his team, he couldn't call him his companion. However, he couldn't say that it was just some guy he knew, since they still had unfinished business.

His relationship with YuWon... After thinking hard about it for a moment, Hargaan slowly spoke, "He is... a friend?"

Maybe it's because he had finally said it once, Hargaan was able to say it again with more confidence.

"Yeah, he's something like a friend."

"...?"

Hargaan's answer left Agamemnon in confusion.

"... Like a friend?"

* * *

Reaper Scans

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* * *

The Jackals called the period when the Tutorial ended the time of harvest.

They were a band that camped out on the 1st Floor whenever the Tutorial ended and went after new players.

Even though they might have earned the qualifications to be players, they were still greenhorn kids that had just completed the Tutorial.

The leader of the Jackals, Phatayo, was extra interested in this round's harvest.

"To be over already... They were much faster than expected."

It was only about ten days since the Tutorial started, and it was only a little over five days since the 5th Tutorial had started. Yet the new players had already arrived...

"That was historically fast."

"That would mean that quite a few of them will have good items."

"And because they took so little time, they should be that much weaker..."

This was great news for the Jackals. It meant that low-leveled new players with better items had entered the Tower.

"Let's quickly get into position and make sure to check that there are no guilds with them."

"Yes, sir."

"Aye, aye."

Including Phatayo, a total of 20 Jackals hid themselves on the pathway between the Meadow of Beginnings and the city. They were aiming for teams of new players with five or less people, but their first target was unexpectedly a single player.

"What? Only one guy?"

"Is he really alone?"

"This almost never happens..."

One of the Jackals asked Phatayo, "Boss. Could this potentially be a bait?"

Baiting was one of the ways the guilds on the 1st Floor used to lure out Jackals. They purposely sent out a small number of new players to bait out the Jackals, catching them once they revealed themselves.

However, Phatayo shook his head.

"No. He's the only one around."

Phatayo had a skill that let him see far into the distance. It even let him see through objects at close range. Thanks to that skill, he had been able to lead his gang of Jackals for a long time without getting caught.

“Really?”

Their boss’s words made the gang look closely at their prey. According to Phatayo, they had nothing to worry about.

“He’s actually alone?”

“It wasn’t a dud?”

“He doesn’t have any companions.”

“Something feels off. Should we just let him go?”

One of the Jackals got ticked off at his cowardly fellow Jackal. “Why should we let him go? We just need to quickly take care of him. Can’t you tell? That’s a Pyromancy Robe.”

“A Pyromancy Robe?”

“Wow. We hit the jackpot...”

The 「Pyromancy Robe」 was an item that cost a whopping 50,000 points in the Shop. It was an item worth potentially struggling against a single opponent.

“I take it that everyone’s in agreement...”

While looking at his companions in the tall grass, Phatayo’s face suddenly froze. His companions were confused why their boss froze up.

“What’s wrong?”

“Huh?”

“Where did he go?”

“He disappeared.”

The guy that was walking down the road just a second ago had now disappeared. It was like the act of a ghost. They were sure he was just there...

“Ahhhh!”

“W-What the—?!”

“Is it an enemy?”

Kling, klang—!

Slash—

The Jackals drew their weapons—swords, spears, and bows. And one of them must have specialized in skills over weaponry because he pulled out a staff. But their preparations were for naught.

Stab, pshk—

Spurt—!

“Ahhhh!”

“Who the fuck are you?!”

“Fucking come out!”

The Jackals fell into chaos. They couldn’t see their enemy.

“B-Boss...”

“I think...”

“This must have been a bait.”

The guy that was right before their eyes had disappeared. They couldn’t believe it.

‘There’s no way a new player that just got to the 1st Floor has a stealth skill.’

They thought that this was probably an illusion skill used by a different player to lure them out.

‘No wonder a new player was wearing a Pyromancy Robe. It was too good to be true.’

Grit—

Phatayo ground his teeth. He had already heard five screams, and he was in a situation where the enemy’s sword might pierce his neck at any moment.

“Everyone, retreat for—”

Slash—!

“R-Rikuey!”

“He’s here!”

“He disappeared again!”

“Ahhhh!”

In just a short moment, the people that were in the ambush apart from Phatayo dropped dead one after another. They weren’t far from him, so that meant that the enemy was already nearby.

Phatayo turned his head, and, though faint, he could see someone wearing a crimson robe.

‘Could it be?’

Phatayo concentrated mana in his eyes. The skill that got him to his current position, [Falcon’s Eye,] was activated.

Whirr—

His vision got brighter, and he was able to see something faint.

Slash—!

As the hazy figure swung his sword, Phatayo could see the crimson dragon robe and the enemy’s face.

The enemy disappeared right away. The only moment that he revealed himself was in the short instance when he swung his sword. However, to Phatayo's gang members who didn't have the [Falcon's Eye] skill, they probably saw nothing more than a quick flash.

'It's him.'

Phatayo's eyes widened.

The crimson dragon robe. The long sword. Though he couldn't see it clearly, Phatayo was sure that this red flash was the new player that they had planned to rob.

Thud—

Another Jackal lost their head, falling to the ground.

It was him again, a player wearing red clothes and wielding a long sword.

"U-Uh..."

Phatayo started stumbling back.

'He wasn't bait.'

The first new player to head towards the city from the Meadow of Beginnings. At first, Phatayo had just assumed he was a slightly skilled new player. Then he thought he had made a mistake and that he was a 'bait' prepared by a guild to lure them out.

Phatayo realized he was wrong twice. This guy wasn't something like bait. He was a 'sword' that was personally out to kill them.

'With this much skill, he must be a player from the upper floors. But why? A player from an upper floor would get penalized if they interfered with the 1st Floor.'

He was overwhelmed with confusion, but he decided to stop thinking, realizing that now wasn't the time to stand around and think.

"R-Run away—!" Phatayo shouted as he ran full force into the forest.

Well, he tried to run full force.

Slice—

"Don't be annoying and go too far."

A warm sensation enveloped his feet, as Phatayo's field of vision slowly tilted downwards.

"Ahhhhh!" Phatayo screamed in agony, his feet having been cut off.

Thud—

Having lost his feet to support him, he fell to the ground. Phatayo tried to crawl forward with his arms.

"Uh, ugh..."

Stab—

“Ahhhhhhh!”

A sword pierced his hand. He looked back to the shadow that covered him. The hazy figure started becoming clearer until YuWon, wearing the 「Pyromancy Robe,」 became fully visible.

“You were going to get caught immediately anyway.”

Stomp—

YuWon pressed down on Phatayo’s shoulder with his foot.

“Kugh... ugh...”

“I’m going to ask you something. If you answer it earnestly, I’ll at least send you off peacefully.”

“Kugh... K-Kill... t-this son of a bitch. Kill him...”

“Who are you talking to?”

After hearing YuWon’s words, Phatayo quickly glanced around him. Just earlier he had a team of almost twenty people around him. They were Jackals that had been hunting new players for over ten years, but now all that remained were headless corpses.

“I get what you want, but you should have reasonable expectations of corpses.”

“Uh... Ah...”

“If you’re going to keep acting like you’re mute...”

Press—

Crack—

“Ahhhhhhh!”

“I’ll just continue on with what I was doing.”

“I-I’ll talk! I’ll talk!”

Phatayo screamed from the agonizing pain of his shoulder getting crushed.

Then the force pressing down on his shoulder eased.

YuWon kept his foot on Phatayo as he proceeded to ask him questions.

“Do you know where the guy by the name of Mu WoonCheon is?”

Phatayo was shaken by YuWon’s question.

“H-How...?”

He couldn’t continue his sentence.

The sudden change in Phatayo’s expression made YuWon smirk.

“Wow.”

Press—

YuWon pressed down on Phatayo with more force.

“Jackpot on my first try.”

Chapter 32

YuWon was attacked by a few more Jackal gangs after that, but every single confrontation ended similarly.

There were some groups as small as 10 people and some as large as 30, but none of them managed to find YuWon while he used [Stealth.]

The most skilled Jackal ended up being Phatayo, among the first ones he had encountered. He was at least able to vaguely see through YuWon's [Stealth.]

Though none of this was really all that surprising. To begin with, it would be weird for a skilled player to be in a Jackal group. They might have the nickname of a ferocious beast, but that was only the case to new players who knew nothing about the Tower. At the end of the day, Jackals were just a band of dropouts that didn't believe they could climb the Tower.

After taking care of multiple Jackal groups, YuWon finally arrived in the city.

This was the central region inside the 1st Floor, and countless players lived here. Using points as currency, they had formed a society here.

And within the city...

“One order of Martial Realm meat stir-fry, and an aguardiente* please. Here's 5p.”

*TL/N: Terms for alcoholic beverages that contain 29%-60% ABV (Alcohol by Volume).

YuWon went to the restaurant called Tara.

He found food from the Martial Realm quite appetizing. Not only was it similar to food from his world, but YuWon had always liked Chinese food. When the apocalypse struck, he wasn't able to have any for decades, but here, he was able to have as much as he wanted by just paying a few points.

“Here's the stir-fry and aguardiente.”

The owner of the establishment brought him his food and the bottle of alcohol, which was the size of a child's palm.

While eating his food, YuWon looked out the window of the restaurant.

‘It's delicious.’

The food was as delicious as he had remembered.

Tara was a restaurant on the 1st Floor that YuWon used to frequent.

‘It went out of business about 20 years ago...’

Pour—

After having a sip of the aguardiente, he could feel the warm fuzziness of the alcohol spreading throughout his body.

This was also his first drink in a long time.

YuWon didn't enjoy being drunk, but he always welcomed a beverage to complement his meal.

"It was delicious. Have a great day."

Feeling good, YuWon gave the restaurant owner an additional 5p as a tip.

Having received a large tip, which wasn't very common, the restaurant owner smiled widely.

Next, YuWon went over to a cafe with a nice view.

"Please give me an order of any tea and fruit please."

The buzz from the alcohol wore off quickly. YuWon utilized the mana inside his body to scatter the drunk feeling from within.

At the terrace at the top of a building, Longjing* tea was served to him.

*TL/N: A type of green tea, also known as Dragon Well tea.

It wasn't a very expensive tea. You could find it in just about any cafe within the Tower.

Appreciating the fragrance, YuWon wore a smile of satisfaction. It had been a long time since he could enjoy such a leisurely time and view.

'This is something that's nice about having returned.'

After going all out, non-stop, he had slowly become fatigued.

YuWon looked at the view from the 5th Floor where the cafe was located.

The city in the central region of the 1st Floor was far bigger than Seoul. It had high-rise skyscrapers, restaurants that sold food from various worlds, cafes, pubs, and entertainment facilities. This world that operated with points as the currency looked quite peaceful and beautiful.

The thought came to him that it was the right call to return.

YuWon continued to drink his tea without thinking much more. And when he could see the bottom of his cup, he took out the fragment of the 「Helm of Invisibility」 from his pocket.

'Unlike the real 「Helm of Invisibility,」 it's not perfect at [Stealth.] I wonder if it's because it's still unrefined, and I'm not skilled enough.'

A fragment of the 「Helm of Invisibility.」 Its original name was the 「Dark Divine Crystal.」 It was a gem known to hold an infinite amount of power. The players from earth would even jokingly call it an 'Infinity Stone.' As such, it was an object that held tremendous amounts of mana. However, it was entirely up to the capability of the user to draw out and use that power.

‘I’m not sure about the limits of its power, but I’ll need to refine it first.’

The Ruler of the Underworld, Hades. The 「Helm of Invisibility」 was an item used by him, and it granted perfect [Stealth.]

YuWon guessed that the 「Helm of Invisibility」 was an item that maximized the power of the 「Dark Divine Crystal.」

‘[Stealth] isn’t the only problem.’

YuWon had previously seen Hades in battle wearing the 「Helm of Invisibility.」

‘The reason why Zeus was able to claim the position as the Ruler of the Skies and become the king of Olympus was because he had obtained the fragment of the Lightning Bolt first.’

It was an object that allowed the current Olympus and the Olympus of the distant future to exist.

‘Who could properly handle this...’

After finishing his tea, YuWon stood up. Break time was now over.

‘I’ll get to see Ahjussi again.’

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Reaper Scans

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After finishing taking a break, YuWon registered as a player at the Rankings Registration Office located at the center of the city.

Player registration was a process where new players were given a number, a ranking, and a ‘player kit.’

A player kit was a crystal that could be used by imbuing it with the user’s mana. Because a mana’s property was unique to each person like a fingerprint, once you registered your mana at the Rankings Registration Office, you could pull up a player’s number and information on the kit by using their mana.

In a way, a player kit was similar to a smartphone. You could look up various events and incidents around the Tower using the internet, and you could even communicate with someone on the same floor by using their registered number. A player kit was an essential item needed to live inside the Tower.

“Was it here?”

YuWon scratched his head while walking around according to his memories. He thought he kinda knew where it was, and it did turn out that he only kinda knew. It was actually incredibly difficult to find the location just by knowing the general direction it was in.

‘And I don’t really have anyone I can ask.’

In the end, he had to search for it by foot.

And so YuWon ended up in an alleyway in the outskirts of the city.

“J-Just a few points.”

“Please...”

“My child is starving. Mister, please...”

If the center of the city was the day, then this place was the night. There was a gathering of beggars, dropout players, and citizens that were born inside the Tower.

“Give me everything you—kugh!”

“Michael!”

“Damn it. You bastard! How dare you do this to our—agh!”

Naturally, most of them chose to steal rather than beg, robbing the occasional players that entered the alleyway.

There were four or five of them. And since they were guys that couldn’t move onto the next floor or even find a proper job here, they were obviously weak.

“If you really can’t stand living like this, then go up.”

Snap—

“Ahhhh!”

“And don’t even think about taking this out on someone else.”

YuWon went ahead and broke an arm and a leg from each player that attacked him. He had no intention of showing pity.

Most of the people that had decided to remain here were still experiencing the fear from the Tutorial, people who only managed to enter the Tower by surviving somehow. People who weren’t confident they could overcome the trials on their own, and instead resorted to taking others’ belongings.

Pity? There was no one around who was capable of showing something like that.

Klang, klang—!

A familiar sound.

It came from quite a ways away. YuWon let go of the arm of the player that had attacked him, so he could go find the source of this sound that he had been looking for.

Klang—!

The sound grew louder.

In the deepest depths of a back alleyway, there was a shabby smithy that radiated intense heat.

“So it was here.”

YuWon walked into the blacksmith’s workshop. When he parted the curtains that were in place of a door, he felt a rush of even more intense heat.

The entrance was only slightly hot, while the inside of the workshop was like being steamed alive.

Klang—!

The rhythmic beat of hammering steel.

But soon, a different sound emerged.

Fshhhh—

The sound of plunging hot steel into water.

From the room where the hammering was coming from, a voice came out.

“Didn’t you say you had to work in the morning?”

It was a thick, rough voice.

YuWon waited for the owner of the voice to walk out.

A moment later,

Creak—

From behind a firmly shut steel door, a blacksmith with a dark tan walked out.

Thump—

The man walked with a limp. Holding a heavy hammer, he looked at YuWon with curiosity.

“Huh? Who are you?”

After looking him up and down, the man was pleasantly surprised. YuWon looked entirely normal, unlike the thugs and beggars that roamed the alleys.

“Isn’t that the Pyromancy Robe? You don’t look like you’re from around these parts. Are you lost?”

The man instantly recognized and commented on the 「Pyromancy Robe.」 It wasn’t all that surprising. It was a fairly well-known item, and it cost way too much for a player on the 1st Floor to wear. It was something you’d normally never see in a slum like this.

“No, I’m in the right place.”

“Are you sure?”

“Is this not a blacksmith’s workshop?”

“What? You wanna buy some equipment?”

After listening to YuWon, the man picked his ear as if he had lost interest. He then pointed at a wall with some cheap equipment.

“If you’re fine with these, go ahead. Though I’m not sure if they’ll be any better than what you have already.”

After hearing the man speak, YuWon started appraising the items on the wall one by one.

YuWon’s brows furrowed.

[Shabby Sword]

▷ A sword so poorly made, the blade has no edge. It’s more of a blunt weapon than a sword.

The object was barely a sword, even having a pathetic description. A sword like this wouldn’t even be able to cut an apple without imbuing mana into it. The apple would get smashed instead of sliced.

“They’re all failures.”

The man frowned slightly at YuWon’s brutally honest criticism. It might have been true, but he was talking about something he personally made. Who would be happy to hear their creation called a failure right to their face?

“It seems you’re not that talented at breaking stuff.”

The blacksmith’s expression shifted. He looked confused by what YuWon had said.

YuWon looked away from the broken equipment and stared right at the man.

“Your name’s Vulcaro, right, Ahjussi?”

“Ahjussi?”

The man was surprised by YuWon calling him with familiarity. He knew his name. That meant that it was no coincidence that YuWon had entered his workshop, which was deep inside a hard-to-navigate slum.

“Who sent you here?”

Vulcaro tightened the grip on his hammer. A weak mana radiated around him.

YuWon quickly reached into his pocket and pulled out a player kit.

“You don’t have to be so wary. I’m a new player that just got to the 1st Floor.”

“A new player?”

Vulcaro looked at the player kit in YuWon’s hand.

On the marble-like player kit, the number one was engraved into it. It signified the highest floor the player had conquered.

The number one. It wouldn't make sense if a player that managed to earn a 「Pyromancy Robe」 in the Tutorial was unable to conquer the 2nd Floor. And in Vulcaro's eyes, YuWon didn't seem like a coward like the players in the slums that had given up, afraid of the Tower's trials.

This meant that he really was a new player that hadn't challenged the 2nd Floor yet.

“... So you're telling the truth.”

Vulcaro lowered his hammer back down.

Yuwon let out a sigh of relief. If their talk had gone sour and Vulcaro had swung his hammer, a catastrophe might have occurred.

‘Ahjussi is as quick-tempered as always.’

Yuwon was surprised that he'd raised his hammer after simply being called Vulcaro.

‘If I had called him by his real name, he might have actually thrown it at me.’

Yuwon decided he should pretend to be ignorant of the truth for a little while. But with this, he had managed to make him slightly lower his guard.

Vulcaro looked at YuWon with a gaze that was asking, ‘So what business do you have with me?’

In response, YuWon showed his hand.

“The reason why I came here wasn't to buy pre-made equipment, but...”

Flash—

In YuWon's palm...

“To commission you to make me an item.”

... Was a black crystal. The fragment of the 「Helm of Invisibility」 shone, letting out a black light.

Chapter 33

Vulcaro was a talented blacksmith. No, talented couldn't even begin to describe him because he was the best blacksmith that YuWon knew.

“That's...”

Vulcaro immediately recognized the crystal in YuWon's hand. Well, to be more precise, it wasn't that he recognized what the crystal was. Instead, he recognized its value.

“Could I... take a closer look?”

Yuwon nodded his head to Vulcaro's question.

There was no reason to say no. Even if he didn't want to, he'd have to give it to Vulcaro to hire him.

Vulcaro limped closer to YuWon. He looked at the fragment of the 「Helm of Invisibility」 up close, but since he had not been hired for a commission yet, he didn't reach for it. But it was more than enough for Vulcaro to understand the full value of the fragment.

“It's an unrefined crystal.”

It looked absolutely mesmerizing. Not only was the crystal radiating quite a bit of light, its energy also felt refined.

However, it only appeared that way to normal players and blacksmiths. Vulcaro was able to recognize that it was an unrefined crystal just by looking at it. That meant that...

“Are you able to refine it?”

... He knew how to refine it already.

“I certainly can, but...”

Vulcaro's voice trembled.

YuWon studied his facial expression and the look in his eyes. He was hesitating, and the reason for his hesitation was clear to YuWon. It was easy to see what the problem was by looking around at the trash items hanging in the workshop.

YuWon gave him time to think about it.

After a long moment, Vulcaro spoke, “... Where did you get this?”

He hadn't made his decision yet, but it was a positive response.

YuWon handed the fragment over to Vulcaro, and Vulcaro ended up receiving it before he could say anything.

“I got it as the Tutorial clear reward.”

“As the Tutorial clear reward? How did you receive something like this from...?”

Confused, Vulcaro pulled out his player kit and checked the date. It was the season for the Tutorial, but there should still have been quite a bit of time before it was over and new players started roaming the central region.

“How many days did it take?”

“About five days and two hours.”

“That's a new record.”

“Yeah, and I was ranked first.”

“You were?”

Vulcaro nodded after looking up and down YuWon's outfit.

The 「Pyromancy Robe」 was a pricey item that cost 50,000 points. It would be hard to find someone who had an item of this caliber, not just among the new players, but even among players on the 10th Floor.

Vulcaro knew that he wasn't just an ordinary guy, but for him to have placed first in the Tutorial while setting a historic record for the clear time...

"Surely with that kind of record..."

His doubts on where YuWon got the item disappeared, and his face showed clear resolve.

"The only thing I can do right now is refine it."

It was a yes.

Yuwon smiled wide. He didn't expect any more than that to begin with.

"Is it because you lack materials?"

"Using any old cheap material will just harm it. You need a material that can handle the power of the crystal."

"I see."

"Also..."

Vulcaro looked around his workshop. It was full of old, crappy equipment.

"Are you sure you want to leave this to me?"

"Yes, I do."

"You're a crazy son of a bitch," Vulcaro cackled. He firmly grasped the fragment of the 「Helm of Invisibility」 within his hand. "You don't think I'd run away with this thing?"

"Do you know what your eyes look like right now?"

"My eyes?"

"I'm not too bad at physiognomy.*"

*TL/N: Physiognomy is the practice of assessing a person's character or personality from their outer appearance, usually the face.

Yuwon took a close look at Vulcaro's eyes.

"If you wanted the crystal, I would see greed in your eyes, but instead, you look super excited."

Vulcaro turned his head in surprise. He saw the reflection of his face off a piece of armor hanging on the wall. Without realizing it, the corners of his lips had curled up, and his dead, muted eyes had recovered their shine.

"You trust me? Even though it's an important item?"

He said “important,” but that was an understatement of the fragment’s value.

Vulcaro’s gaze was aimed at the crappy items hanging on the wall. He was asking if YuWon trusted him despite him being the creator of these awful items.

Yuwon nodded his head without hesitation. It was Vulcaro. Not to mention, there was no one else he could trust with this except him.

“Of course I believe in you.”

“You sound like you know everything about me.”

“I’m a pretty good judge of character.”

A dull edge. A lackluster handle. Everyone would say that this sword was a failure. It was such a poor product, it felt like the metal used to create it had been wasted. It was to a degree that one would believe that a normal player, not a blacksmith, created it. But...

“You can crush the edges, and you can make a lame handle... but habits die hard.”

Whoosh—

Yuwon lightly swung the sword around. It moved in a gentle line, and YuWon smiled softly.

“It seems you forgot to ruin the balance of the sword while making it.”

Yuwon tested out a few more swords, spears, etc. This one, as well as that one. It was the same no matter how many weapons he handled. They all had a perfect weight distribution. Though they had a dull edge and shabby appearance, every single weapon was perfectly balanced.

This wasn’t something that could happen just by using good materials and taking the time to sharpen the blade. These were the products of a skilled and experienced blacksmith that lived by the hammer.

“Hahaha! You really are something.”

Seeing YuWon’s actions made Vulcaro put his hand to his forehead while letting out a baffled laugh. He couldn’t believe it.

They were pieces of equipment Vulcaro had hung up around the entrance to trick people. But instead of just ignoring them and passing by, YuWon had seen the true essence of the blacksmith that made them. And of all people, it was a new player that was passing through the slums.

“Who are you? You seem like a Pure-Blood. Who are you affiliated with?”

“I don’t have anything like that.”

“You don’t have an affiliation? But you are a Pure-Blood, right?”

“Something similar.”

“You’re either a Pure-Blood or not. What do you mean, ‘something similar’?”

Vulcaro looked down and let out a small laugh before looking back at YuWon.

“Fine. I’ll accept the job. Since you trust me, I’ll do the best refining there is.”

“Thank you.”

“But, I have a condition.”

Vulcaro zipped his lips.

“You need to keep where you got this refined, as well as the fact that this object has been refined, a secret. You can do that, right?”

He was doing everything he could to stay hidden.

It was truly a pity that a blacksmith of his caliber was rotting away in hiding. However, there was nothing YuWon could do about that right now.

“... Of course.”

The only thing he could do was keep his promise.

* * *

Reaper Scans

Translator – NumbaWon

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* * *

YuWon gave Vulcaro his number.

When you contact a number that's been registered into your player kit, as long as that player is on the same floor as you, you can communicate by talking with it like a cellphone.

Ten days. It was longer than he had expected, but it wasn't an unbearably long time to wait.

‘I had to remain on the 1st Floor for a while anyways.’

YuWon went and found an inn.

Because of the influx of new players, the hospitality industry was at near max capacity. Luckily, a decent inn had an empty room, so YuWon was able to find a place to rest quickly.

Set on clearing the Tutorial as fast as possible, he had been going at it full force without any proper rest or sleep.

YuWon slept for over half a day, until the sun rose.

“Breakfast for one. I'll take whatever, as long as it comes out quickly.”

After waking, YuWon went down to the restaurant on the 1st Floor. It was a fairly large place. And after paying three points, breakfast was served. It was a pretty good spread.

He had picked an inn at random, but it seemed that he had managed to find a pretty decent one.

‘Ten days is plenty of time.’

YuWon picked up a piece of bread.

‘The Jackals will get together four days after the Tutorial is over, so that’ll be in two days.’

This was intel he gathered by asking the Jackals he had captured. He had asked a few groups of Jackals, and all their responses were the same. The time and location matched across the board.

Now the real problem was the number of them.

‘It’d be more convenient if I could catch and kill them all alone...’

YuWon went over his plans while chewing on his bread.

‘But since I’m unable to do that currently...’

“So you were here.”

Drag—

YuWon looked at the man who sat down in the chair across from him. A man with wide shoulders and golden blonde hair who stuck out no matter the place. It was Hargaan.

“How did you find this place?”

Hargaan ordered his food and turned back to YuWon. It seemed he came without his companions.

“I searched all over for you. I asked around for the name of Kim YuWon, and this place came up.”

“That wouldn’t have been easy.”

“I got some connections. I ended up using some people.”

YuWon nodded his head in response to Hargaan’s answer. He should have guessed.

Floor One was where Olympus displayed the greatest amount of influence, and at the end of day, Hargaan was the son of Zeus, the Ruler of the Skies. Something like finding someone staying at an inn was probably a piece of cake.

“You got a player kit, right? Give me your number.”

“I never thought I’d end up getting hit on by a guy.”

“I didn’t know you had jokes. I thought you’d have a stale-ass personality.”

“I wouldn’t say I’m exactly fun either.”

YuWon gave his number to Hargaan. When they were done exchanging numbers, Hargaan’s food arrived.

YuWon asked while taking a bite of his soup, “When are you planning on climbing up the Tower?”

“In about five days.”

“And what are you doing till then?”

“I’m planning on leveling in the outer region. I also need to increase my team’s teamwork. I’ll need at least five days for that.”

“Really?”

A normal conversation.

Tak—

YuWon put down his spoon.

“If that’s the case, do a job with me.”

“A job?”

Hargaan was surprised by the unexpected proposal, mentioning a job out of nowhere.

This was the first time YuWon had suggested something to him first. He came unannounced to get his number, yet here was YuWon asking for something out of the blue.

“What kind of a job is it?”

“The Jackals.”

Hargaan’s ears perked at where the talk was going.

“I want to exterminate them.”

“You want to exterminate what?”

The Jackals. They were the scourge of the 1st Floor. It was unknown how many there were or if they were a structured organization. So exterminating them was considered impossible.

Yet here was YuWon suggesting exactly that.

“Just sorting them out would be a problem in itself, but I don’t think this is something that’s possible to do with just ten people.”

“Not ten. Just two—you and me.”

While wiping his lips with a napkin, YuWon watched Hargaan’s shaken expression.

“If you can’t, I can do it alone.”

“First, tell me more details.”

“It’s a bit too early right now. Come back here tomorrow night. I’ll tell you then.”

“Tomorrow night...”

Hargaan nodded his head. He didn’t finish his meal. There were far too many thoughts inside his head for him to continue shoving food in his mouth.

Drag—

Hargaan got up from the table first.

“Alright. I’ll see you then.”

“Going so soon?”

“I have a lot to take care of if I’m going to make time to meet you tomorrow night.”

Hargaan seemed to have taken quite a liking to the team he had formed during the Tutorial, trying to grow that team so they could climb the Tower together.

‘He’s really putting his heart into it.’

YuWon watched Hargaan leave the restaurant. And then...

“It seems like you’ve been waiting for a while.”

He looked back at the man sitting at the table behind him, who had been sitting with his back to YuWon.

“Now that that’s over, why don’t you tell me what business you have with me?”

“I was quite surprised because Sir Hargaan showed up out of nowhere.”

The man had been having a meal by himself and wore a hood.

“This is our first time meeting each other, right? Nice to meet you.”

YuWon locked eyes with Agamemnon, who stood up from his seat.

“I came from Olympus. Are you free for a quick talk?”

Chapter 34

Agamemnon sat down next to YuWon, smiling widely. It was kind of uncomfortable watching someone with a rough face like him forcefully smiling.

“Hargaan is kin to the Ruler of the Skies...”

YuWon stared at the coffee that Agamemnon ordered for him.

“Shouldn’t you have at least greeted him?”

Agamemnon shrugged in response, “I couldn’t due to my objective.”

“Your objective?”

“I came here to meet you.”

“You didn’t have to spell that part out for me. So tell me, what do you want?”

YuWon’s straightforward question made Agamemnon pause before answering.

“Kim YuWon. I heard that you ranked first in this Tutorial.”

Agamemnon’s words tipped YuWon off that he had looked into him.

Ranking first place inevitably attracted attention because players that rank the highest in the Tutorial were most likely to become Rankers. And this Tutorial was special among all the Tutorials because

it had completely overturned previous records. That's why there were so many guilds going after the pool of talented people from this Tutorial.

"Also... Sir Hargaan was only second place."

Zeus's direct kin, Hargaan, had participated in this Tutorial. He had the potential to not only become a Ranker, but a High Ranker. Yet, he failed to clear the Tutorial in first place, all thanks to YuWon.

"From what I heard, it seems that there was a dominating lead between first and second place. Everyone's saying right now that a monster entered the Tower."

"What an honest compliment. Thanks for the kind words."

"You're quite laid back."

Agamemnon took a sip of his coffee.

"Sir Hargaan mentioned how you two are like friends."

"Like friends?"

"Isn't that a strange thing to say?"

"A bit."

YuWon did find it odd. You were either friends or not friends.

'Like friends,' he says.'

It wasn't all that hard to figure out if you thought about it. YuWon and Hargaan weren't friends yet. But Hargaan said he and YuWon were 'like' friends. That meant only one thing.

'So he wants to be friends.'

YuWon didn't know if he should like it or not. He presumed that, at least at first, Hargaan only wanted him to join his team because of his skills, which was likely the right assumption. And Hargaan probably saw him more amicably over time thanks to their rivalry. Now Hargaan looked at YuWon favorably. This wasn't a bad thing for YuWon.

Agamemnon continued speaking, "And it seems that you haven't formed a team yet."

"I don't particularly like being associated anywhere."

"That was a smart call. Connections you form during the Tutorial don't last since most players don't become Rankers. In fact, over half the players don't even attempt to climb the Tower."

Agamemnon looked at YuWon with a soft smile.

"However, you're different. You have the potential to ascend beyond a Ranker and become a High Ranker. So, don't you think you should climb the Tower with people fit to accompany you?"

His voice was filled with pride.

YuWon got the gist of what he was saying. Actually, YuWon knew what business Agamemnon had with him the moment he showed up.

“Join Olympus. Come under the graces of Lord Ares. We can prepare anything you want.”

YuWon guessed right. Agamemnon’s goal was to recruit him into the guild.

Olympus was, among the large guilds, the one that put the most effort into recruiting new players.

YuWon smiled faintly. It was an interesting offer.

“Anything I want?”

“Yes. Lord Ares is different from a lowly being like Hargaan, who doesn’t even know his own mother. He is the son of Lady Hera and Lord Zeus, a great being that has already become a High Ranker.”

Agamemnon reached his hand out to YuWon.

“If you grab this hand, you will become one of Olympus and Lord Ares’s men. It will be far better than joining hands with a mutt like—”

“Stop.”

YuWon finally reached for his coffee.

Gulp, gulp—

He gulped the lukewarm coffee, chugging it in one go.

Clatter—

Drag—

“Thanks for the drink. I’ll be going then.”

“What?”

Agamemnon was shocked by what YuWon said as he got up from his chair.

“Are you refusing an offer from Olympus?”

“Yeah, that’s right.”

A snide smile and contempt filled Agamemnon’s face as he stared at YuWon.

“What? ‘Fit to accompany me’? ‘Doesn’t know his own mother’? ‘Lowly being’? And ‘mutt’?”

“Are you taking sides because he’s your friend? How could you refuse an offer from Olympus based on a flimsy relationship you formed during the Tutorial...”

“I even rejected the personal offer from Hargaan, Zeus’s son, because I don’t have any plans of being associated anywhere.”

YuWon asked Agamemon with a bit of a laugh, watching him stay in his seat, "What about you, though? Zeus and Hera are Ares's parents, not yours."

Agamemnon's face filled with rage, dripping with killing intent. If it weren't for the penalty of attacking a lower floor player, he might have already attacked YuWon.

But YuWon was completely unphased by Agamemnon's reaction.

"I only have one answer."

As if he was finished, YuWon started walking away.

"I can't be seen with deviant lowlives like you guys."

* * *

After YuWon had left, one by one, the customers left until the restaurant was silent. To be more precise, the customers had fled from the anger and killing intent exuding from Agamemnon.

At the center of the restaurant, he remained alone, stewing in his anger.

A moment later...

"Are you okay, sir?"

Agamemnon's subordinates came to the restaurant looking for him.

Agamemnon, who had been seated in place, trying to control his anger, slowly collected himself.

"... How many Jackals are we able to call on right now?"

"The Jackals, sir?"

"That's right. The Jackals."

"But they are..."

The subordinate shut up, unable to finish his sentence. It was because he noticed the look in Agamemon's eyes. He knew because he had been serving him for a long time. If he ended up saying the wrong thing here, it could be his head.

"We will need a few days."

"How many?"

"Currently, the Jackals are doing collections. They'll have to be finished with that before we're able to gather a significant number of them."

"Do we really need that much preparation in order to kill a single new player?"

"Please think rationally about this, sir. He's set a historic record for the Tutorial. Do you really think a moderate number of Jackals will do it?"

After hearing his subordinate's question, Agamemnon got lost in thought for a moment, nodding his head.

Not just new players, but most players in the early floors would have a hard time dealing with Hargaan. And YuWon was someone that had finished the Tutorial with a higher ranking, garnering the attention of many Rankers.

Agamemnon could understand his subordinate's hesitation. However...

"Then prepare about a hundred men."

His mind had been made up.

Grit—

Agamemnon ground his teeth, staring at the place YuWon had been sitting.

"When collections are over, kill Kim YuWon."

* * *

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* * *

"So how are you planning on exterminating the Jackals?"

Two days later, Hargaan met up with YuWon again at night. It wasn't difficult to meet now that they had exchanged their player numbers.

"There's a guy I have to meet."

"A guy you have to meet?"

"It took me a while to find where he lived."

Step, step—

YuWon walked down the dark streets of the city.

It was quiet. Everyone was either closing shop or had already gone home for the day.

"Why are we in the marketplace?"

"Just follow me."

YuWon's eyes darted around the place as he walked.

Hargaan, who was walking beside YuWon, saw his eyes, recognizing that they had changed.

'Those eyes again,' thought Hargaan.

They were crimson-colored, the same eyes YuWon had while fighting against Childe, the Chimera Creator.

"Scoundrel, are you a kin of that Monkey?"

That was Childe's reaction when he saw YuWon's eyes. Though he said 'Monkey' in a degrading manner, Hargaan immediately knew who that 'Monkey' was.

'Son OhGong, 'The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal,' ' thought Hargaan.

He was someone that had become a High Ranker after less than hundred years since starting his ascent of the Tower. He was famous among the players as the most talented fighter in the history of Rankers. Having raised his rankings on what seemed like a daily basis, he ultimately became part of the rulers of the Tower, one of the top High Rankers.

But also...

'Not only 'The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal,' but he also has the same skill as hyung-nim.'

Many questions arose in Hargaan's mind. What exactly was YuWon's ability? Who was he really? And was he associated somewhere?

'Is the reason why he won't join Olympus because...?'

Hargaan's steps came to a halt while watching YuWon walk ahead of him. He remembered one of the skills YuWon had used.

'Gigantification.'

It was a skill that blessed you with the power of the Giants. And it was a skill that only Hercules, the "Giant Slayer," held within Olympus. However, it was a skill that all the Giants possessed. If YuWon was a Giant... And if that was the reason why he wasn't joining Olympus...

As Hargaan's train of thought continued...

"Huh?"

YuWon suddenly stopped in front of a shop.

It was a general store that sold all sorts of goods.

"Make sure you respond properly."

"Respond?"

"We're going in."

Hargaan followed YuWon into the store that had most of its lights off, as if it was preparing to close for the day.

"Hey, owner."

Someone came outside from YuWon's call. It was a young man with a gentle face, wearing white clothes, his hair tied back.

"Oh, I'm sorry. We're closed for the day."

The baby-faced young man approached them with a warm response.

“But if there is something you’re looking for, please leave me your name and number, and I’ll contact you tomorrow.”

The young man pulled out a pen and notepad from his pocket.

The inside of the store was silent for a moment, before YuWon spoke.

“Mu WoonCheon,” YuWon said while narrowing his eyes. “I’m looking for a guy named Mu WoonCheon.”

The young man’s expression was shaken.

“... Fuck.”

Dash—

The young man turned around and quickly ran for the back door.

Fwoosh—

“Where do you think you’re going?”

YuWon grabbed the back of the young man’s, Mu WoonCheon’s, neck.

While getting pulled back, WoonCheon swung his hand.

The small knife that was in his hand grazed YuWon’s cheek.

Ssk—

Crash—

“Kugh!”

WoonCheon’s body was slammed into the floor, denting the ground and shaking the whole store.

“Damn—it...!”

WoonCheon wiggled around, trying to escape YuWon’s grasp. But the only thing he could do was struggle. There was no way to escape YuWon’s hold.

‘H-How is he so strong...?!’

He was being pushed down with excessive force. However, what terrified him the most was that if YuWon squeezed just a bit harder, his bones could be crushed.

This all happened in an instant.

Hargaan was confused about what was going on, so he asked YuWon, “What are you doing?”

“This is the guy.”

“What?”

“Alias Cheon NamWoon. His real name is Mu WoonCheon. He’s a player from the martial realm that gave up on climbing the Tower,” YuWon said while looking down at WoonCheon. “This guy’s the King of the Jackals.”

Chapter 35

YuWon restrained WoonCheon with a durable rope.

Though he might have been a 1st Floor player, he was still quite skilled. So YuWon had purchased a pretty durable rope from the Shop for this occasion.

“Ngh...”

WoonCheon lowered his head as he grunted. He guessed that it must have been a pretty expensive rope because no matter how much mana he used to power up, it did not give.

Watching WoonCheon, YuWon raised his hand.

Smack—!

“Ugh!”

“Don’t look away. I know exactly what you’re thinking.”

“W-Why are you doing this to me?”

“Because you’re Mu WoonCheon.”

“You got the wrong person. I s-swear.”

“Then why did you try to run earlier?”

“That’s because you had such a scary look in your eyes, I thought things might turn out like this...”

WoonCheon trailed off as he lowered his head. He had a pure, innocent face, and he looked as if he was about to cry from being falsely accused.

With a confused look on his face, Hargaan looked back and forth between the tied-up WoonCheon and YuWon.

“Hold up.”

Hargaan called YuWon to come to the back. Once YuWon had gotten close enough to him, he whispered a question.

“You sure this is the guy you were looking for?”

“I’m certain.”

“How can you be so sure? He really could have run because he was spooked.”

“Running away just because you heard a name? Doesn’t that seem odd to you?”

“But saying that he’s the King of the Jackals just from that is...”

“This.”

YuWon picked up and waved the small dagger that was sticking up from the floor. It was the weapon WoonCheon had thrown at YuWon.

“Does this look like a normal knife?”

“What is it then?”

“Look closely at the floor.”

“...?”

Hargaan checked the place the dagger had been. At first, he didn't think anything was odd, but upon closer inspection, he found something strange.

“It's melted...”

Hargaan originally thought that the knife had gotten impaled in the floor, but that was wrong. When the knife fell, it melted the marble until it looked like it had been impaled in it.

And now that he thought about it, unless it was some real master-grade sword, it'd be weird for a knife to be impaled in marble so deeply just by falling on it.

“This is a pretty potent poison. It's something that players on the upper floors would use, not a 1st Floor player.”

A lethal poison from the upper floors. It was a substance that was illegal to use on fellow players. Not only did it require permission from the bureau to possess, it was also incredibly hard to obtain it.

“Do you really think the owner of a general store would own something like this? Always hidden in his sleeves, no less?”

There were definitely a few oddities. That meant...

“Where did the information leak from?” a random voice said.

Actually, it was WoonCheon's voice, but his voice had become scratchier, and his manner of speech sounded much more foreign.

And it wasn't just his voice...

Kk-crack—

WoonCheon's face slowly started morphing. On the kind-looking young man's face, wrinkles started appearing, and his eyes started looking much hazier. It was as if he had suddenly aged.

“... So you were right.”

Hargaan now fully believed YuWon. This guy was Mu WoonCheon, the King of the Jackals.

“How did you discover my identity? And more importantly, how did you learn my name?”

“I wonder. How did I find out?”

Yuwon smiled back in response to WoonCheon's question, mockingly responding to his question with a question. This made WoonCheon grind his teeth and glare at YuWon.

“You apparently have no fear. Do you not know who’s backing me...?”

WoonCheon’s eyes turned to Hargaan, and he was shocked.

“That hair and eye color...”

Golden yellow hair and eyes. It was an uncommon appearance.

“Hargaan?”

He knew Hargaan’s name. It wasn’t all that strange that he knew. Hargaan was the son of Zeus, and he was a rookie that made quite a name for himself during this Tutorial. However, that wasn’t the only reason why he knew who Hargaan was...

Tap—

YuWon lightly hit Hargaan’s side from an angle that WoonCheon couldn’t see. Hargaan tried to gauge YuWon’s action, and then he remembered what he had told him before coming in here.

“Make sure you respond properly.”

‘Respond...’ Hargaan wondered, ‘Is this what YuWon meant?’

Hargaan raised his hand up high. And in a second, electricity started gathering in his hand.

Spark, vzzzzt—!

An electric attack, which radiated intense heat, formed in Hargaan’s hand.

After witnessing that, WoonCheon started mumbling, “... So it’s true.” There was rage in WoonCheon’s voice. “Did Olympus betray us?”

“What?” Hargaan was surprised by the unexpected question.

“Saying you were betrayed. That’s kind of harsh.” YuWon responded as if his feelings were actually hurt.

Hargaan turned his head and stared at YuWon. Meanwhile, YuWon walked towards WoonCheon in order to hide the look on Hargaan’s face.

“We simply have a favor we want to ask.”

“A favor?”

“You’re currently following Agamemnon’s orders, right?”

“That’s right. So?”

WoonCheon’s answer made Hargaan’s expression turn sour.

Agamemnon. Hargaan wondered why that bastard had a connection to Jackals.

The confusion was hard for Hargaan to shake off. But before he could snap out of it, YuWon continued on.

“For a little while now, the Ruler of the Skies seems to have an interest in the matters of the 1st Floor.”

“The Ruler of the Skies... does?”

“Yeah. And right on cue, his son has just finished the Tutorial.”

WoonCheon, who had a bitter face from thinking he was betrayed, now looked like he was filled with hope and expectations.

“How much longer do you plan on acting as Agamemnon’s dog here on the 1st Floor? He doesn’t even serve one of the ‘Big Three,’ but a greenhorn that just became a High Ranker.”

“W-Well, that’s...”

“If all this goes well, the Ruler of the Skies will start personally looking after you Jackals. And if you continue to do well, you guys might even obtain an important role in Olympus.”

“An important role...?”

WoonCheon looked sold. The Ruler of the Skies had taken an interest in him. It was a far bigger deal than receiving orders from just Agamenon, one of Ares’s lackeys.

The Ruler of the Skies. The King of Olympus. Zeus.

Being in his good graces would mean that he would have nothing to fear in this Tower. WoonCheon nodded his head, having forged his resolve.

“What... is the favor, sir?”

WoonCheon started speaking more humbly. It was as if he fully trusted YuWon’s words, which was inevitable. He’d been following Olympus’s orders up till now, and after seeing Hargaan’s electric attack, there was no way he wouldn’t believe YuWon.

“How many Jackals are there?”

“There’s about a thousand of them.”

“Gather them all by tomorrow night. Here’s the location.”

YuWon took out a folded piece of paper from his pocket and tossed it to him.

“Have them all there by midnight.”

“Midnight...”

“Don’t let Agamemnon or any of the guys on Ares’s side know. You can do that, right?”

WoonCheon nodded his head aggressively.

Tak—

YuWon tapped WoonCheon's shoulder before turning around.

Hargaan and YuWon promptly left the store together, and Hargaan started growling at YuWon, "You sure are good at name-dropping someone else's father."

He turned his head and saw that Hargaan was genuinely pissed. It was honestly a wonder how he managed to hold his anger back.

"Explain yourself, and don't leave a single detail out."

His voice sounded like a growling beast.

Spark, spark—

Because of how furious he was, a bit of electricity flowed out of Hargaan's body. If he actually exploded in anger, this whole area would probably be blown to smithereens.

YuWon fully turned around and looked Hargaan directly in the eyes. He could tell that Hargaan was angry, but he wasn't the target of his anger.

'He did a good job holding it back.'

YuWon knew that it was probably hard for him to hold back after Olympus was mentioned. He was a more patient guy than YuWon had first assumed.

"It's as you heard."

"You're telling me that Olympus is working together with the Jackals? You honestly expect me to believe that?"

"And what if you don't believe it?"

"There's no way. He must just be selling out Olympus's name. Olympus is—"

"Hargaan."

YuWon stopped Hargaan.

"I don't know what kind of place you think Olympus is, but you need to take off your rose-tinted glasses..."

Step—

YuWon turned around and started walking away.

"... And take a look at the true face of Olympus."

"..."

And like that, Hargaan was alone. He felt dazed.

"▷ Just thinking about how much more work I have now because of those bastards makes me want to go pull out Zeus's beard right now."

The relationship between Olympus and the Tutorial's Administrator had soured. He had asked YuWon, but he avoided giving him an answer.

“Did Olympus betray us?”

He remembered how the King of the Jackals mentioned Olympus’s betrayal. It was something he would never have said if they didn’t have some sort of connection to begin with.

Hargaan’s head ached, and he thought back to something YuWon had said.

“The Olympus you know is probably a place that’s righteous and uses its power to maintain order inside the Tower.”

That should be correct. Olympus was a guild that used its power to maintain order inside the Tower. He was taught that he should not stand by misdeeds and judge others that committed them.

Yet...

“If you want to know everyone’s true colors, you should slowly uncover it yourself. You wouldn’t believe me even if I told you.”

Everything that had happened so far and the stories he had heard about Olympus, they came together like puzzle pieces, forming a picture. And that picture was not the Olympus that Hargaan knew.

What that was...

“‘True colors,’ he said...”

... Just might be the true Olympus.

Hargaan stood in place for a long time, dazed. His faith had been shaken.

* * *

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Time passed, and two days later, as the light from the ceiling faded, night set in.

Hargaan came to the promised location, looking for YuWon. He hadn’t been able to reach him, so he was worried YuWon might not show up, but he was standing right at the outskirts of the central city, waiting for Hargaan.

“If you were any later, I was going to leave without you.”

Hargaan had arrived with one minute to spare before the set time. He had cut it a little short, but he did show up in the end.

“Have you finished thinking it through?”

“I was born and raised in Olympus.” Hargaan started going on a tangent. “Olympus was my home and family. And my father was my hero.”

Of course that’d be the case. Hargaan had spent his entire life growing up in Olympus, and it’d been less than a month since he was selected by the Tower to climb it.

“I don’t have a lot of memories with my mother. I actually can’t even really remember her face, but I remember her voice and something she told me.”

“And what’s that?”

““My son, don’t forget the pride of Olympus...””

Hargaan trailed off, but from what he said, YuWon could tell what Olympus meant to him.

To Hargaan, Olympus was more than just a guild. Olympus was pride in itself.

“I took my time thinking it through,” Hargaan said, closing his eyes. “If this was the right thing to do. Or if I’d be betraying Olympus.”

All the thoughts he’d had over the past day rushed through Hargaan’s mind. His own creed and Olympus battled on a balance, and in the end, the scale tipped towards one side.

“And your conclusion is?”

Hargaan reopened his eyes after hearing YuWon’s question.

“Whether you are right or wrong, the Jackals need to be exterminated since they are the parasites of the 1st Floor.”

Yuwon smiled faintly as Hargaan continued talking.

“And if that’s an embarrassing secret of Olympus...”

Hargaan’s eyes no longer looked shaken.

“I’ll cut them out with my own hands.”

Chapter 36

In a large cave...

“Wow. There was a place like this?”

“It is really big.”

“It’s damp and humid, and there’s a weird smell...”

“It was supposedly home of a Lizardmen tribe, though it’s been a while since it was cleared out.”

“Anyway, there sure are a lot of us.”

A bunch of people had gathered inside during the day. They were all players wearing white jackal masks, people who made a living by hunting 1st Floor players.

“There’s gotta be at least a thousand of us.”

“There were this many Jackals?”

“We’re so spread out, it can’t be helped that we weren’t aware.”

“Is this the first time all of us gathered together in one place?”

Jackals consisted of a network of small gangs, which meant that their presence was dispersed. Gathering together would defeat the purpose of their organizational structure, so it couldn’t be helped that this was the first time they had all come together.

“I heard that that team over there obtained Floch’s Viper.”

“Floch’s Viper? Doesn’t that go for about 10,000 points?”

“Damn. Our team got fucking nothing this time around...”

“Hey, at least you guys got a few nice looking gals. I’m sure they’d fetch a pretty penny on the black market.”

“Hehe. That’s true. If it weren’t for the captain...”

“Hey, shh.”

The Jackals’ chitchat suddenly died down. It was because of one Jackal that had just arrived at the cave.

Step—

“Are all of you here?”

It was a Jackal wearing a red mask, the King of the Jackals. Mu WoonCheon had appeared.

“Wow...”

“So he’s...”

“This is my first time seeing him in person.”

“Is that really the guy, captain?”

The Jackals who had never seen WoonCheon before asked each of their captains. The captains responded by simply nodding their heads.

When the Jackal captains got down on one knee and bowed their heads, the others followed suit. It was a sight to behold, a thousand Jackals bowing to one person.

WoonCheon smiled proudly behind his mask.

“Everyone, now rise.” Having enjoyed the greeting, WoonCheon signaled the Jackals to stand up with his hands.

And then the crowd started getting noisy.

“So it really is him...”

“He’s never shown himself before, so why now?”

“I heard he has a real bigshot backing him.”

“It’s not him that’s being backed, but us.”

“That’s how we were able to avoid the bureau till now...”

The cave had become noisy with chatter, and veins started bulging on WoonCheon’s forehead. He didn’t like this atmosphere.

“Whoever opens their mouth from this point...”

Shing—!

WoonCheon pulled out the sword that was hanging from his waist.

“I will cut off their head.”

Even inside the dimly lit cave, WoonCheon’s sword shone brightly.

The 「Moonlight Sword.」 It was an item far too pricey for any 1st Floor player to be wielding, but that weapon was in the hands of the King of Jackals right now.

The Jackals quieted down.

The captains also unsheathed their weapons and aimed them at the Jackals that were chattering, and the cave became dead silent in an instant.

WoonCheon lowered his sword before continuing.

“We have a mission to fulfill now.”

“A mission?”

“What mission...?”

The few that spoke out of reflex quickly covered their mouths because of the glares shot at them by the Jackal captains.

After the small commotion ended, WoonCheon continued speaking, “I don’t know what the mission is. It will be a difficult one since it requires all of us, but I can tell you one thing for sure...”

WoonCheon clenched both of his hands and raised them up above his head.

“After today, we Jackals will ascend to the sky.”

“Whoa...”

“Whoa, woووоо—!”

“Woohooo—!”

The Jackals cheered at the short speech. Some were just going along with the crowd, but WoonCheon still smiled proudly.

“I shall introduce them to you.”

WoonCheon pointed towards the entrance of the cave.

“Our backers.”

Tmp, tmp—

Two people entered the cave. They were both wearing the same red jackal mask as WoonCheon, which was the symbol of the King of the Jackals.

Blonde hair and black hair poked out from each mask. It was Hargaan and YuWon.

“Thank you for coming all the way here.”

WoonCheon bowed towards the two and then handed them a thick envelope.

“A small token for you...”

“What is it?”

YuWon reached out and took the envelope. Opening and inspecting the contents, he saw that there was a bundle of paper with ‘1,000’ written on them. They were papers that had a special pattern engraved on them with a skill.

“It’s Asgardian currency, sir. Each bill is worth 1,000 points, and it’s the result of the collections this time around.”

Asgard had created a unique currency of their own. They were purchasable with points and usable like real monetary bills. And since it was backed by Asgard, they were guaranteed their worth.

“And this is everything from the collections?”

“Yes, sir. That’s everything.”

Hargaan took a look inside the envelope after hearing WoonCheon’s explanation.

Each bill was worth 1,000 points, and the envelope was quite thick. It was at least a few hundred bills thick, meaning it was a total of hundreds of thousands of points. Even though Hargaan had grown up inside Olympus, he couldn’t help but be shocked by the amount.

‘So he’s decided to completely jump ship,’ YuWon thought.

Seeing the amount, YuWon was sure that it was almost, if not all, of the money that the Jackals had made this time around. He knew that Agamemnon must have been waiting desperately for this money, so handing it over to him meant that WoonCheon had resolved himself to fully join YuWon’s side.

“Thanks for the gift,” YuWon replied, as if it wasn’t a big deal, putting the envelope inside his inventory.

YuWon looked over the 1,000 Jackals that had gathered inside the cave. There was truly no other gang like them. They packed the cave full.

While looking at them, YuWon smiled underneath his mask.

“Well then...”

YuWon’s hand slowly came up, and hot mana gathered at the tip of YuWon’s fingers.

“It’s time to say goodbye.”

* * *

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Translator – NumbaWon

Proofreader – BringTheRayn

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* * *

Snap—!

YuWon lightly snapped his fingers.

[Colossal Fire]

Fshh—!

Fwoooooosh—!

Starting right in front of YuWon, a massive fire started spreading across the cave.

“F-Fire!”

“Ahhhh!”

“W-What is this?!”

“Is this—?!”

The fire spread instantly. Red flames filled the cave in just moments, and a sharp-smelling smoke arose.

Shocked, WoonCheon quickly put some distance between him and the duo.

The cave descended into chaos.

‘Could this be...?’

WoonCheon thought back to the water that was covering the floor of the cave. He had assumed that the cave was just damp, but that wasn’t the case. The water-like liquid on the ground was helping the fire spread even faster instead of putting it out. It wasn’t water, but oil.

‘But why didn’t it smell...?’ WoonCheon wondered. Oil had a distinct smell.

And then an item came to mind. ‘The Scentless Powder!’

WoonCheon realized it. That item was capable of hiding the scent of the oil inside this cave. And it being a cave, it wasn't out of place for the floor to be wet.

"M-Move!"

The nearby Jackals ran for the exit in an attempt to survive, but Hargaan's hands moved in reaction.

Crash—!

Vzzzzzt—!

"Ahhhhh!"

The Jackals that had tried to escape were knocked back. YuWon and Hargaan stood in front of the exit to stop them from getting out.

WoonCheon looked back and forth between the Jackals that were burning alive and the duo. Everything had happened so quickly, he couldn't process what was happening.

"W-What in the world is going on...?"

WoonCheon's eyes filled with rage.

"What do you think you're doing?"

"What do you mean, 'what we're doing'?"

YuWon took off his mask and tossed it aside.

"We're cleaning up."

Crush—

YuWon broke the mask with ease by stomping on it.

Following YuWon, Hargaan also took off and tossed aside the stuffy mask.

The two finally uncovered their faces, and WoonCheon finally understood that their goal wasn't to cooperate with them.

"You guys... You're not from Olympus."

"Wrong."

Smash—!

Hargaan responded after punching away another Jackal.

"I am from Olympus."

"Then why?!"

"Because you guys are an embarrassment to Olympus."

Hargaan firmly planted his feet at the entrance of the cave.

"And I'm going to cut you guys off with my very own hands."

Slice—

Slash—!

YuWon also cut down the Jackals that ran towards him without any hesitation. He had no intention of letting a single one of them leave there alive to begin with.

The entrance to the cave was the exit. There was no other escape route. That meant in order to escape from the fire, the Jackals had to get past Hargaan and YuWon to live.

“Damn it...!”

WoonCheon took out his player kit in a hurry. There was only a single person that came to mind right now.

Agamemnon.

However...

[Message could not be delivered.]

“Why?!” WoonCheon shouted while attempting to resend the message over and over again, asking for help, for Agamemnon to come to his location as fast as possible.

“Why isn’t it working?!”

“A player kit is an object that sends a message by using the mana stored inside it,” YuWon said, laughing at WoonCheon struggle so pathetically. “Did you really think the player kit would work properly in the midst of a shitshow like this?”

The player kit delivered messages by organizing mana into text. So the way to disable a player kit was quite simple. One just had to flood the surrounding area with mana, which was exactly what was happening. The fire skill created a wall of mana around the cave, so any mana message ended up disintegrating, unable to make it past the wall.

Fwoosh—

As time went on, the fire got hotter instead of dying down.

Over half the Jackals had already burned to death.

“W-What are you all doing?!” WoonCheon shouted, pointing at YuWon and Hargaan.

“Kill these bastards! Open a way already!” WoonCheon shouted at the top of his lungs.

It was a futile act. Even without him shouting as hard as he could, the Jackals were already running at the duo in order to live. And when they got close, they got their heads chopped off or were burnt to a crisp by an electric attack.

Fwoosh—

And before they realized it, the fire had gotten awfully close to WoonCheon.

“Uhh—!”

Being out of options, WoonCheon unsheathed his sword. In order to survive, he had to fight.

“Hi-yah!”

WoonCheon ran forward while concentrating mana around his feet. He aimed for YuWon’s side while he was distracted by taking down a Jackal.

Fssh—

YuWon turned his head and the two locked eyes. His eyes were crimson.

‘I-I can’t move...’

For a second, WoonCheon’s body was petrified, like he had turned to stone.

Slash—

Split—

Swinging his sword upward, YuWon sliced WoonCheon’s body in half in one go, cutting from his crotch to his head.

A red line appeared across WoonCheon’s body. His head rang, and he could no longer think. It was as if time froze. Everything felt slow. And before he lost consciousness, locking eyes with YuWon, he was able to hear the very last words of his life.

“I’ll put the money you gave me to good use.”

Chapter 37

Rumble—

Boom— Crash—!

The cave eventually collapsed from the fire.

YuWon and Hargaan, who had been protecting the exit, ran outside in a hurry, getting far away from the cave.

“Phew—”

Hargaan, who had been fighting with everything he had for hours, let out a deep breath before flopping down onto the ground.

Luckily, YuWon saw no injuries on Hargaan. Despite the long battle, it seemed like he had only run out of mana and wasn’t too worn out.

“Are you okay?”

“Do you think I would be?” Hargaan replied, looking up at YuWon.

Unlike him, YuWon didn’t look tired at all. He still looked fully geared to go. Hargaan noted how YuWon didn’t only have great skills, but also incredible stamina.

“Are you okay?”

“What do you mean?”

“We killed a thousand people.”

YuWon looked down at Hargaan, who was sitting on the ground. At first, YuWon thought that he had sat down because he was tired, but it turned out that it was from guilt.

‘This is probably the first time he’s killed this many people,’ thought YuWon.

Hargaan had never experienced war, so obviously he wasn’t used to killing people—even bastards who deserved to die, like the Jackals.

YuWon nodded his head to Hargaan’s question. “I’m okay.”

“How can you be so nonchalant?”

“Murder, kidnapping, robbery, slavery. Those were the primary ways the Jackals made money.”

Jackals were a troublesome matter for the 1st Floor. They hunted new players and other small groups of players, taking their items and robbing them of their lives. And male or female, any good-looking players were kidnapped and sold off to a slave merchant. The organization was a pestilence.

“I can save dozens, even hundreds, of people by killing one of them. Why should I hesitate in taking them down?”

“Still...”

“It might be more convenient for you if you wallow in half-baked guilt.”

Hargaan bit and closed his lips from YuWon’s words. He looked as if he was hit on the head.

After staying still, dazed, Hargaan shook his head and got up from his spot.

“I learned something from this event.”

“What would that be?”

“You have a sharper tongue than your looks suggest, and you’re pretty smart to boot.”

“Is that supposed to be a compliment?”

“Yeah, it is.”

YuWon looked at Hargaan, who was now smirking. YuWon had thought this before, but Hargaan had great mental fortitude. The guy was filled with guilt and regret until just a second ago, and now he was looking better after just a short exchange.

“You really are a just guy. Perfect for living an exhausting life.”

“Well you didn’t seem like a kind person, but turns out, you’re different from how you look.”

“What do you mean by ‘different’?”

“Even though you had nothing to gain, you went ahead and took care of the Jackals. That wasn’t an easy thing to do. It was the same during the Tutorial. You seem to always act with a much bigger picture in mind than me.”

The way Hargaan looked at YuWon had changed.

“From when I was young, I was told that that’s called a ‘great cause.’”

A ‘great cause.’ It was something quite embarrassing to hear.

After hearing that, YuWon burst out into laughter.

“You’re wrong about one thing.”

“What am I wrong about?”

“I don’t know what you meant by ‘there was nothing to gain.’”

Rustle—

YuWon shook a thick paper envelope in his hand.

“Just look at how much there was to gain.”

Hargaan’s eyes widened after seeing the envelope. He had completely forgotten about it. Inside the envelope were the points the Jackals had made from selling items stolen from the most recent Tutorial on the black market.

“That’s...”

“You wanna split it? You did help out.”

“Ngh...”

Hargaan lowered his head, grunting at the difficult decision. He then slowly looked up at the envelope in YuWon’s hand.

“... Give me some,” Hargaan mumbled quietly.

“That’s what I thought.”

After seeing YuWon’s smirk, Hargaan lowered his head even further.

The points that the Jackals had collected were gathered by killing and robbing new players. Though there were no owners to return the money to, Hargaan couldn’t take it with a clear conscience.

While opening the envelope to count the money, YuWon paused.

“Oh, I have something I want to ask you.”

“What is it?”

“You were second to me, right? In the Tutorial.”

“Yeah...”

Hargaan tilted his head, curious why YuWon was asking him this.

After a momentary pause, YuWon asked him, “What was the reward?”

* * *

“Whyyy?!”

Slam—!

The corner of the table broke off. All the food and drinks fell to the floor, and in an instant, the restaurant became dead silent.

After slamming his fist down because he couldn’t hold back his anger, Agamemnon lowered his voice before asking, “Why can’t I contact him?”

He was at a pub late at night, and what he was about to talk about was something that he couldn’t discuss while yelling at the top of his lungs in public.

“I-I’m not sure either. I definitely tried contacting them, but...”

“Did WoonCheon go crazy or something?”

“Since we sent him a message, I’m sure we’ll get a response soon, sir.”

“And what I want to know is...!” Agamemnon bit his lip while starting to raise his voice again. He somehow managed to reign his anger in before asking his subordinates with eyes full of fury, “... When exactly that is going to be.”

“I-I’m not sure about that, sir...”

“Unless he’s really gone off the deep end, there’s no way that bastard would have run off with our money...”

The money that the Jackals gave Olympus was a significant sum. It only ever happened once after every Tutorial, but they brought in anywhere from hundreds of thousands to sometimes millions of points.

That amount of points greatly affected the Ares faction’s financial power, and it was one of the major reasons why Agamemnon resided on the 1st Floor.

“Have you tried searching for any traces of him? Has he met anyone? Did he go anywhere?”

“We’re already searching for not just Mu WoonCheon, but any traces of Jackals using our network. I’m sure we can find him before the night is over, sir.”

“Find him no matter what. If we can’t, it’ll be the end for you, me, all of us.”

After growling, Agamemnon poured himself another drink.

He was capable of getting rid of the buzz with mana, but at the moment, he couldn’t hold back his anger without being drunk.

A few hours passed.

“S-Sir Agamemnon!”

One of Agamemnon’s men rushed inside the pub in a hurry.

From his subordinate’s reaction, Agamemnon’s face brightened. He thought that maybe they had managed to find WoonCheon.

“Did you find him?”

“W-We did, but...”

“But?”

The subordinate gave him a weird response.

Agamemnon quickly expelled the buzz by evoking his mana.

His subordinate tried to dodge his gaze as he pulled out his player kit. And on the player kit...

“What the...?”

It showed an image of a collapsed cave and a pile of burnt corpses.

“What is all this?”

“They’re... Jackals.”

“Jackals? All of them?”

It was a huge number. Agamemnon estimated close to a thousand of them. It matched Olympus’s estimate of their group size, which meant that almost all, if not all, of the Jackals had been gathered there.

“Th-Then WoonCheon as well...”

“He’s probably among them...”

Agamemnon’s switch was flipped. He had to gather all his will to hold back his anger.

“What about the collection money?”

“...”

His subordinate gave no response.

Finally...

“AHHHHHH—!”

Agamemnon let out a scream at the top of his lungs.

* * *

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Translator – NumbaWon

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* * *

After returning to the inn, YuWon opened the envelope and checked the collection money one more time.

[384000 points]

There were a whopping 384 bills, and this was after he had split half with Hargaan.

‘They did quite a number.’

380,000 points was an amount that only some Rankers ever got to see. If he used this money, he’d be able to buy a set of equipment on par with a Ranker.

“Well, I don’t have to worry about food or shelter anymore.”

YuWon put the envelope back in his inventory. He desperately wanted to run to the Asgardian Merchant’s Guild right away and exchange this to points. However, that ran the risk of Olympus learning that YuWon was the one who had exterminated the Jackals. And YuWon didn’t want to get caught up in something so complicated quite yet on the 1st Floor.

‘With this money, I’ll be able to buy the core materials needed to make the item that’ll hold the Dark Divine Crystal, but I still don’t have enough to buy the materials for the fine detailing...’

YuWon couldn’t hold back his smile at the mountain of points he had amassed.

‘Still, I might be able to finish the production of the item sooner than I expected.’

The 「Dark Divine Crystal」 was currently the highest-ranking item YuWon possessed. As an item that symbolized “the Big Three” gods of Olympus, it was one of the strongest items that YuWon knew to exist.

Though it was currently only capable of [Stealth] and changing the attribute of the mana...

‘The fragment of the Helm of Invisibility’s true power isn’t either of those.’

YuWon knew that the fragment was currently slowly taking shape to show its true worth under the greatest blacksmith within the Tower.

“The problem is...”

While laying down on the bed, YuWon put his hand inside his inventory and pulled out the egg the size of a fist. It was pure white with an irregular purple pattern.

[?’s Egg]

▷ It is ?’s egg. There is no way to know whose egg it is, what will come out of the egg, or how to make it hatch.

▷ Incubation rate : 0.00%

It was truly a puzzling item.

‘I can’t figure out what this item’s for.’

There were quite a few items with unclear descriptions. They were typically incomplete items, but that’s because they were only half-made.

Even YuWon, who had a myriad of different magical experiences within the Tower, had never seen an item in the form of an egg with this kind of description before.

‘This egg is a reward from the Tutorial, and it’s a reward for having achieved the highest record ever.’

YuWon rolled it in his hands while observing it.

‘Hargaan got the King’s Lightning Glove. It’s a pretty advanced item used by Rankers. Using that as a reference, this can’t be a normal item...’

It had to be an item that was comparable to the 「Dark Divine Crystal」. And considering that the 「Dark Divine Crystal」 was given for defeating the Chimera Creator, 「?’s Egg」 was likely to be an even better item since it was a reward for achieving over 670,000cp during the Tutorial.

“... But I just can’t figure it out.”

YuWon scratched his head in confusion.

It was only the size of a fist, and it was an egg of an unknown creature with an irregular purple pattern...

‘The pattern!’

YuWon jolted up from his bed. He felt a faint warmth from the egg, and now that he thought about it, this pattern wasn’t there when he had first checked the egg.

Wince—

His head ached. A nightmare-like memory, one he didn’t wish to remember, came to his mind. But now that he had remembered it, the memory sped through his thoughts like a high-resolution video.

It was an event from the not-so-long-ago past. But it was also an event potentially far in the future. That was when YuWon had seen an irregular pattern like this.

“An Outer God...”

When YuWon mumbled those words...

[「?’s Egg」 greets you.]

The egg spoke to him.

Fshh—

YuWon’s eyes morphed to a crimson color as he stared at the egg in the palm of his hand.

“You... What are you?”

Chapter 38

Why didn't he think of it sooner? Why didn't he notice it earlier?

For the next few days, the mysterious egg continued to occupy his thoughts.

'Is it really the symbol of an Outer God?'

YuWon couldn't sense anything. He started thinking maybe it was his imagination. For the Tutorial's reward to be related to the Outer Gods... Not once did he nor any of his comrades ever think of this possibility.

'There's no way to be certain yet.'

Tmp, tmp—

YuWon went outside for a walk.

'But if it's true...'

Would the thing that hatches from this egg be a valuable companion that helps YuWon...? Or would it bring destruction and ruin like the Outer Gods in his memories?

YuWon shook his head. He was thinking too much.

There was nothing he could do right now. He couldn't just throw away the egg, nor did he know how to hatch it at the moment either.

What he needed was time.

"What a stupid, ridiculous gamble."

YuWon let out a baffled laugh.

The egg of an Outer God?

Most creatures that hatched from eggs recognized the being that was with them the longest during incubation and the one they saw for the first time after they hatched as their mother. That's why some Rankers went through the trouble of obtaining eggs of mythical beasts to have them as companions. If they raised them right, a mythical beast could become a powerful ally.

'If I can properly hatch and raise this egg...'

YuWon stopped his train of thought, shaking his head.

'Let's stop dwelling on it.'

Overthinking things was a taboo. Right now, he had to focus on the object in front of him.

Tshhhhh—

YuWon entered Vulcaro's workshop.

"I'm here."

"Wait just a minute."

Fwoosh—

Vulcaro didn't even bother turning his head to see his guest. He put the crystal in fire and started refining it with a knife. The crystal slowly started changing shape after it was blasted with intense heat.

'It must be unbelievably hard.'

This was the first time YuWon was witnessing the refinement process for a fragment of "the Big Three."

Normal refinement of crystals was done by slowly chipping away at them with a knife, but the fragment of the 「Helm of Invisibility」 couldn't even be scratched without first being submerged in fire.

Vulcaro carried on with the refinement.

Some amount of time passed.

"Ngh."

Vulcaro stretched his back before submerging the fragment in water.

Tssssh—

The hot fragment instantly evaporated dozens of liters of water, filling the workshop with steam.

"So you're here."

Vulcaro wiped the beads of sweat on his forehead with a towel as he walked over to YuWon.

The two sat down on wooden chairs facing each other.

"Yes. You told me to come over."

"I have something to ask you."

"Something to ask?"

"What type of weapons and armor do you use? If you use a sword, what type of sword is it? Is it long and thick? What kind of armor do you prefer? How light or heavy...?"

"Why do you ask?"

"I ended up with by-products from the Crystal," Vulcaro answered as he pulled out a small bottle with black powder held inside. "I want to try making something with this."

Powder that came from refining the 「Dark Divine Crystal」. There wasn't a lot of it, but its value couldn't be underestimated. As the 「Dark Divine Crystal」 held such great powers, this powder was more valuable than most crystals.

Yuwon had no reason to refuse an item made from the Crystal's by-product.

‘Hades’s Scythe was made from the powder that came out while refining the fragment, but...’

“Don’t you need other materials?”

It wasn’t easy to obtain materials that could support the power of the 「Dark Divine Crystal.」 And knowing Vulcaro’s personality, he wouldn’t want to use this kind of material to make some half-assed item. However, YuWon didn’t possess any materials of that caliber yet.

“I don’t have any materials like adamantium, but I do have something similar. Since it’s not the refined Crystal, mythrill should be enough to handle the powder.”

“Mysrhril...?”

“I have some on hand.”

Thunk—

Vulcaro got up quickly from his chair, knocking it over. He then walked over and grabbed rebar off the wall. It should have been pretty hot from the heat inside the workshop, but Vulcaro held it unphased.

“It’s about 1.8kg.* It’s not that much, but it’s enough to make equipment by mixing it.”

*PR/N: 4lbs

Mysrhril wasn’t that hard of a material, but it was a rare mineral that possessed great mana conductivity, and depending on how it was crafted, it could even gain mana resistance.

Inside the Tower, mysrhril was considered a pretty rare mineral. With just about half a kilogram, you could mix it with metal to make a pretty decent item. Yet here was Vulcaro, casually owning 1.8 kilograms worth.

“1.8kg of mysrhril... That should fetch quite a price.”

YuWon currently had over 100,000 points, but that was nowhere near enough for 1.8kg. At the very least, he’d have to pay 300,000 points.

‘I could pay for it if I exchanged the Asgardian bills for points, but...’

Counting the points that YuWon took from the Jackals, he currently possessed a total of 500,000 points. However, there was no way for him to currently exchange that many Asgardian bills into points.

‘I guess I can only buy only a third of it.’

While YuWon was weighing his options...

“You can give me the money later. I’ll put it on your tab.”

“You’ll put it on my tab?”

It was a shocking offer. He was offering to put hundreds of thousands of points worth of mythril on a tab for a new player that had just arrived on the 1st Floor.

“And what if I end up running away without paying?”

“It’s my greed as a craftsman that makes me want to create a proper item with this. I’m offering this to you because I’m impatient. So if you end up taking the item and running away without paying, I won’t hold a grudge against you.”

“Still...”

“If you really wanna get technical about it, the item that you left me with is dozens of times more valuable than this mythril. Actually, you can’t even quantify the value of this item with points.”

Unsurprisingly, Vulcaro knew the true worth of the 「Dark Divine Crystal.」 And that’s also why he had decided to trust YuWon with his mythril.

“You trusted me for some reason, so it’s only fair I do the same.”

To put 300,000 points on a tab on a whim... YuWon had to hold back his grin. Vulcaro was still exactly as he remembered.

“Look over there and pick some equipment. If there’s something you like, I’ll start production based on it...”

“I need a sword.”

Shing—

Yuwon instantly pulled out a sword and handed it to Vulcaro with the handle facing towards the blacksmith.

“The weight doesn’t matter. As long as it’s not so heavy that I can’t wield it, I’ll get used to it quickly. As for the shape and length, this is an adequate size.”

“A sword you say...”

Vulcaro carefully inspected the sword YuWon handed him. It was the 「Well-Sharpener Sword」 YuWon had purchased in the Tutorial. It was a simple, no-frills sword that wasn’t very difficult to make.

Vulcaro smiled widely with a confident expression.

“That’s actually my speciality.”

It was the first time he had smiled after meeting YuWon.

* * *

Reaper Scans

Translator – NumbaWon

Proofreader – BringTheRayn

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* * *

A week later in the Olympus guild house located in the center of the city...

Clack—

In the large yard of the house, Agamemnon was putting on his heavy, silver-tinted armor. His subordinates helped secure it in place and brought him his sword.

“Is everyone here?”

“Yes, sir. We have gathered up all our players between the 1st and 10th Floors.”

“How many?”

“Around 200, sir.”

Agamemnon nodded his head to his subordinate’s reply.

200 players. That was a number equivalent to most mid-sized guilds. It had taken a few days to gather that many men.

“As long as we do this right, we should be able to get off the hook for failing to manage the Jackals properly,” Agamemnon said with a resolute face. He then shook his head. “No, maybe even better. The Ruler of the Skies might even take notice of us.”

The Ruler of the Skies. Hearing that name filled Agamemnon’s men with hope. Even though they knew how dangerous the mission they were about to set forth on was, they were able to cover up their fear with anticipation.

Agamemnon looked back at his men and smiled.

‘To think this kind of opportunity would come to me.’

A few days ago, he had been in despair, having learned that the Jackals had been completely exterminated. He was about to completely lose his position within Olympus and get demoted to being an ordinary player.

Thankfully, the will of the Tower hadn’t abandoned him. No, instead it had presented him with an opportunity, similar to how players who made it through difficult trials were given great powers.

“Where’s the location?”

“The location is...”

Agamemnon’s eyes widened at his subordinate’s answer. It was a completely unexpected location.

“No wonder he wasn’t found until now.”

His subordinate nodded his head at Agamemnon’s words.

In order to find ‘him,’ they searched every corner of the 1st Floor for a long time, but they had been unable to find even a trace. It was only now that they were able to locate him.

Agamemnon took his sword from his subordinate and fastened it to his waist.

“What about reinforcements?”

“Taking the Administrator’s intervention and the Tower’s restrictions into account, a suitable reinforcement has just arrived.”

“Good.”

Agamemnon mounted his horse and braced himself to set out.

“... Let’s go.”

Clop, clop—

Clop—

Olympus’s army of hundreds of players, including Agamemnon, set out for their mission.

* * *

Slash—!

Thud—

A five-meter-long giant snake fell to the ground. With its belly sliced open, it twitched around, bleeding, until it went limp, the life extinguished from its eyes.

[You gained EXP.]

[Heaven-Slaying Star’s completion rate increased by 0.006%.]

The completion rate slowly crawled up.

YuWon swung his sword to get the blood off of it.

On the ground, a relatively large, bloody mess of wolves and panthers laid dead. They were all prey that YuWon had hunted on the 1st Floor.

For the past ten days, YuWon had focused on hunting. It was partly because he didn’t want to just waste time while the refinement was being finished, and it was also to increase the [Heaven-Slaying Star’s] completion rate.

‘I guess I really can’t level up much on the 1st Floor.’

YuWon’s hunting speed was incredibly fast, but there was a limit to the amount of EXP he could rack up on the 1st Floor. After a whole ten days of hunting, he was only able to level up once. It was an extremely stunted pace, but he couldn’t get greedy and climb the Tower.

‘In order to achieve a higher record, I need the refined fragment.’

So the only thing he could do right now was wait while increasing the [Heaven-Slaying Star’s] completion rate.

As YuWon was about to continue hunting...

Ding—

... The player kit inside his pocket rang.

Currently, there were only two people who knew YuWon's player number—Hargaan and Vulcaro.

Yuwon sheathed his sword and checked his kit.

The message...

[**Vulcaro:** I finished the refinement. Come on over.]

... Was the news he had been waiting for.

Chapter 39

Fwoooooosh, fwoosh—

Before an intensely heated furnace...

Vulcaro stared at the finalized crystal, beads of sweat dripping down his forehead.

“... It's beautiful.”

He had crafted a lot of equipment and refined countless gems before, but he couldn't help but be impressed. He wondered if he had truly refined this crystal himself.

The onyx-colored crystal radiated a mystical, darkness-like light. And despite it only being the size of a fingernail after being refined, light shone through its thousands of facets.

Seeing that graceful light, Vulcaro couldn't help but put on a gentle smile. It truly was dazzling, so much so that one would never tire of looking at it.

Vulcaro remembered having seen an alluring light like this before.

‘I want to complete it.’

Vulcaro started to feel an overwhelming desire to create a fully finished product with this crystal. He wanted not just to refine it, but to create an item that could handle its full power. That was his greed as a blacksmith.

‘But...’

Vulcaro placed the crystal on a thick cloth, and wrapped it up.

“It's probably impossible.”

Shake, rattle—

Vulcaro raised his head. The equipment on the wall was vibrating ever so slightly.

Grip—

Vulcaro grabbed the hammer he had placed off to the side. He gripped it differently than when he was forging equipment.

He got up from his spot, limping as he walked outside.

“... It had to be today of all days.”

Vulcaro had known this would eventually come, but he walked on thinking how great it would have been if he had been able to have just one more day.

* * *

Clack—

Stomp— Stomp—

Hundreds of players marched in rhythm.

The slums were in chaos. People who made this place their home, unable to climb to the next floor, hid to protect themselves.

“What’s all this?”

“Did something happen around here?”

The oncoming players were armed with swords and spears. And all of their clothes were decorated with the symbol of Olympus, a tall mountain.

In front of this group, a player wrapped in red cloth walked alongside Agamemnon.

“To be in such a foul-smelling place...” Agamemnon frowned at the awful stench that filled the slums. “No wonder we couldn’t find him until now.”

Agamemnon stared at a building covered in tattered cloth. As he pointed his hand towards it, the hundreds of players behind him got into formation.

The players surrounded the building, preparing their weapons.

“And you’re certain this is the place?” Agamemnon asked his subordinate, his voice filled with skepticism.

The subordinate got close, nodding, his eyes having changed to a blue color. He answered, “I am certain, sir.”

“... Really?”

His eyes spelled his doubts.

Step-thump—

Hearing the sound of someone walking with a limp, Agamemnon smiled as he nodded.

“So we are in the right place.”

Thump—

A rough-looking, muscular man walked out of the cloth-covered entrance. Holding a hammer in one hand, the man wasn’t wearing any proper equipment. And the hammer in his hand looked like a standard blacksmith’s hammer.

“You’re causing a scene in the neighborhood. What brings you guys here?”

“Surely that’s a rhetorical question.”

Shing—

Agamemnon pointed the tip of his sword at Vulcaro's neck.

"Criminal Hephaestus."

After hearing Agamemnon, the players of Olympus that had surrounded the workshop started murmuring.

"Hephaestus?"

"The blacksmith of Olympus?"

"I heard he refused to make a weapon and ran off with the property of Olympus..."

There was a rumour going around that their mission was to capture Hephaestus alive. But once this was confirmed by Agamemnon, their faces changed in an instant.

"H-How are we supposed to capture a Ranker?"

"No matter how many people we have on our side..."

Hephaestus was the greatest blacksmith in Olympus—no, in the entire Tower. And he was a Ranker that had climbed to the top of the Tower.

Meanwhile, the people that Agamemnon had brought were players that hadn't even managed to clear the 10th Floor. Though they massively outnumbered him, there was a great difference in power.

"Fear not. A Ranker's power is severely restricted on the 1st Floor."

"What? I ran off with their property?"

Hephaestus let out a baffled laughter.

Whirr, whirrrr—

Vulcaro, or rather, Hephaestus slammed the air with his hammer. The hammer struck against the thin air and created a massive sound blast, shaking the eardrums of the nearby players.

It was a deafening boom. Hephaestus's powers made the entire place shake.

"Now stop making me laugh and come at me. I'll smash all of your heads."

His confidence made the surrounding players take a step back. They knew that if they were hit by that hammer, not just their heads, but their entire bodies would shatter.

Despite this, Agamemnon laughed at Hephaestus's actions.

"You're a Ranker that got crippled after being punished by the Ruler of the Skies. Can you really call yourself a Ranker while wearing almost nothing?"

Agamemnon's subordinate took a closer look at Hephaestus's leg. Agamemnon was right. Hephaestus was disabled. Even when he was walking out of the workshop, he looked like he might fall over at any moment.

“Besides...”

Flap—

Agamemnon gave a signal and the man wrapped in red came forward.

“We also have a Ranker on our side.”

The man had orange eyes, flaming red hair, and pure white skin. He was wrapped in a red cloth.

“... Chryses?”

Hephaestus’s eyes widened after recognizing the man.

Chryses. He was a player that had climbed the Tower while being sponsored by the High Ranker Apollo. He was a rookie that was fairly well known in Olympus. Hephaestus had also seen him a few times.

“So you’ve become a Ranker.”

“I didn’t think I’d end up fighting against you.”

Fwoosh—

Chryses stretched out his hand, forming a crimson spear.

Hephaestus muttered to himself. He didn’t expect that they would bring a Ranker from Olympus just to catch him.

“If you guys cause a scene here with a Ranker on the 1st Floor, the penalty will be nothing to scoff at.”

Players of the upper floors had their powers restricted on the lower floors. And if they used too much power, even if it was restricted, a ‘penalty’ was applied to them. Worst case scenario, an Administrator would show up to personally intervene in the situation.

“That doesn’t matter. I might be a Ranker, but you’re a Ranker as well.”

Hephaestus frowned at Chryses’s answer. Though he might be using his powers on the 1st Floor, it was directed at Hephaestus, another Ranker. So it was true that Chryses didn’t have to worry much about the penalty.

“You guys sure are good at coming up with sly tactics.”

Fshhh—

Hephaestus’s body started turning hot and red, and he started emitting a blue light from his eyes. His massive mana turned into heat, turning his vicinity into a sauna.

Gulp—

The tension was thick.

Fwoosh—

Hephaestus swung his hammer, finally speaking.

“... Come at me.”

* * *

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Boom, ka-boom—!

Fwoosh, boom—!

The hammer hit the air, and fire appeared all around Vulcaro.

Players started dropping dead. The fight between Chryses and Hephaestus descended the entire area into absolute chaos.

“I used to respect you.”

Klang—!

Chryses’s fiery hands grabbed Hephaestus’s hammer.

“You became a Ranker thousands of years ago, and instead of desiring more power, you followed your creed and wielded your hammer instead of a sword.”

“Is that the only reason why you respected me?”

Fshh—

The hammer heated up even more intensely. It was to the point that Chryses, who could manipulate fire, had to let go, unable to handle its sizzling heat.

Shwoo—

Ting—!

Arrows and spears rained down, and Hephaestus knocked them away by swinging his hammer.

Pshk, pshk, pshk—!

Chryses was impaled by the ricocheting arrows and spears.

“Kugh...”

Holding back his scream, Chryses slowly backed off.

Woosh—

Smash, kk-crack—!

Hephaestus swung his hammer down in the direction opposite of Chryses. The shockwave created from hitting the air blew players’ heads and crushed their bodies and armor.

“Kugh—”

“Ahhhh!”

Players screamed in agony.

Splatter—!

Blood started pouring from Hephaestus’s body. It was the Tower’s penalty.

Though he was attacked first, they were players of a floor much lower than Hephaestus. Regardless of the circumstances, Hephaestus couldn’t avoid the Tower’s penalty being applied to him for attacking them.

“Kgh...”

Hephaestus started wobbling. He already had a crippled leg, and now in addition to the penalty, he was having a hard time even standing.

Chryses pulled out the arrows and spears that had impaled him before approaching Hephaestus once again.

“I had respected the part of you that, despite being a Ranker, could drop everything and give up on power for your own creed.”

There was no aggression in his eyes, yet he once again wielded the flaming crimson spear in his hands.

“That’s why...”

“Cut the crap.”

Whirr, whirr—

Hephaestus’s hammer let out a cry. It was a vibration that shook the air.

Chryses could instinctively feel that this attack was going to be the climax of this fight.

“... I don’t want to fight against you.”

Fwoosh—

Chryses enveloped his body with fire. It was enough heat to melt the ground.

The entire area was filled with Chryses and Hephaestus’s mana.

The moment Hephaestus limped a single step toward Chryses...

Whoosh—

Chryses took the form of fire and charged at Hephaestus as if he was a chariot.

Whirrrrr—

Fwoooosh—!

It was a great collision of mana.

“G-Get away!”

“You’ll get caught up in it!”

Their collision burned all the nearby players into a crisp. Their fire attribute mana burnt the atmosphere into nothing.

Gulp—

Agamemnon swallowed his spit.

‘The result is...’

Fsssh—

The flames started receding. As the heat and smoke started dispersing, the aftermath of their collision was revealed.

Agamemnon smiled.

Crack, kk-crack—

Hephaestus’s arm was slowly turning gray, like stone.

“That... shield...”

“It’s something you made.”

Fssh—

The fire subsided, revealing Chryses holding a steel shield with the head of Medusa on it.

“It’s Aegis. It might only be a replica, but it’s enough to bind you.”

Crack, kk-crack—

Hephaestus’s entire body had turned gray.

「Aegis」 was Olympus’s greatest binding item. Not only was it the greatest shield, but it also held the power of the monster Medusa. That’s how the worn-out Hephaestus was able to be turned into stone.

Thud—

As soon as he fully turned to stone, Hephaestus fell over on his side due to his crippled leg.

Witnessing this sight, Agamemnon mumbled while trembling with joy, “It’s... finally over.”

There were over a hundred fatalities, and Chryses received fatal injuries, but he was still satisfied with the results. Because he had managed to capture Hephaestus, the criminal.

“Drag him away.”

Following his order, his subordinates that had shied away from the battle approached the petrified Hephaestus.

And that’s when a voice interrupted them.

“I can’t let you do that.”

Slash—

A player suddenly jumped in, and cut the feet off the subordinates that were approaching Hephaestus.

Splatter—!

“Ahhhhh!”

Their ankles were cleanly cut.

Agamemnon glared furiously as his subordinates cried in pain, rolling around on the ground.

“You bastard...”

The reckless guy that jumped in the midst of a battle between two Rankers and hundreds of players...

Fwoosh—

“What brings such wretched folks to an important place such as this?”

It was the new player Kim YuWon. He was now standing in front of them.

Chapter 40

It was when YuWon had just stepped foot into the slums.

He was on his way to the workshop after getting the message from Vulcaro when he felt an ominous flow of mana.

Boom—!

A sound could be heard in the distance—the sound of Vulcaro swinging his hammer.

‘What’s going on?’

For someone that was in hiding to suddenly use his powers... And then YuWon remembered.

‘Could it be...’

Vulcaro’s real name was Hephaestus. He was an older Ranker of Olympus, as well as a blacksmith. However, after going against the will of Olympus, Zeus made him a cripple, and he started living in hiding on the 1st Floor.

Yuwon remembered that there was one time where he was discovered by Olympus and dragged back.

“That happened to be today of all days?”

Feeling rushed, YuWon imbued mana into his feet. He didn’t have any speed enhancement skills, but he still ran at an impressive speed.

Whoosh—

He jumped onto the rooftops, and he beelined towards where he felt the mana was radiating from.

Ka-boom—!

Swoosh—

Hot air started blasting past him.

Two manas of the same attribute had collided.

YuWon stood in place, resisting the knockback of the blast from the collision.

‘Is there a fight between Rankers going on?’

Hephaestus was a Ranker from thousands of years ago. Though he might have focused on his work as a blacksmith after becoming a Ranker and despite him being crippled, normal players would never be able to catch him.

“I guess they’re not scared of the penalty.”

If this kind of fight went on any longer, the Administrator might intervene. If that were to happen, Olympus would lose a great amount of the influence they exercised on the 1st Floor.

So the fact that they took this risk meant that that was how much Olympus valued Hephaestus.

Fshhh—

After withstanding the heat blast, Yuwon continued on.

On top of a roof, Yuwon saw hundreds of players gathered around the entrance of the workshop, and in the midst of that crowd, he recognized two familiar faces.

One was Agamemnon, who was smiling as he watched the smoke fade away, and the other was...

‘Chryses.’

... Chryses, who was wielding a shield in one hand, his body in tatters after fighting Hephaestus.

‘That shield is...’

YuWon used [Cinder Eyes] to check the item that Chryses was holding.

A Medusa with her eyes closed. An item that could use Medusa’s powers once a day...

It was a replica of 「Aegis.」

“Then...”

YuWon’s face froze. As the heat and smoke dissipated, he spotted Hephaestus, who had become petrified.

* * *

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Agamemnon's face relaxed. He didn't care about his subordinates that had just gotten their feet cut off. Instead, his eyes were still focused on Hephaestus.

"Oh, so it was you."

Agamemnon's nonchalant response made one of his subordinates, who was still fully tense, ask, "Do you know him, sir?"

"Kim YuWon. He's a player that recently set a new record in the Tutorial," Agamemnon answered.

"A new record in the Tutorial..."

"Does that mean he's a new player?"

Agamemnon's answer made all the other players nearby also relax their guard.

"I was worried for a second."

"I thought another Ranker had dropped by."

"Hey, kid! Where do you think you're butting in?"

"Come back after you drink more milk from your mommy!"

"Hahahaha!"

In an instant, the tension shifted to mockery. Learning that the enemy that arrived at the scene was a new player and not a Ranker made the other players all laugh and jeer at him. That included Agamemnon as well.

'There's nothing that he can do by himself...'

No matter how great of a performance he had in the Tutorial, he was still just a new player that had recently completed the Tutorial. Because of that, Agamemnon wasn't even a bit scared of Yuwon.

However...

"... What do you think you're doing?" Agamemnon asked.

Despite their mockery, Yuwon appeared neither angry nor afraid. He was surrounded by almost a hundred players and a Ranker, albeit an injured one, yet Yuwon didn't budge at all while standing next to the petrified Hephaestus.

'This guy, could he be...?' Agamemnon thought.

"Are you planning on standing there and blocking our way until the petrification wears off?" he asked.

Yuwon didn't answer.

Agamemnon took that as a yes.

The other players, finally understanding the situation, stopped their laughter.

Petrification. That was the effect of the replica 「Aegis.」 However, because it wasn't the real deal, the effect of the petrification didn't last long, especially against an ancient Ranker like Hephaestus. Even if it was Chryses, a Ranker, that utilized the item, it was unknown how many more minutes the petrification would last.

Tik-tok—

Suddenly, Agamemnon could hear a ticking noise inside his head. Though it was entirely his imagination, it was true that time was not on their side.

If Hephaestus were to start moving again...

“What are you waiting for?” Agamemnon asked, raising his hand. “Kill him and bring Hephaestus here.”

“B-But, if he's a new player...”

“We'd also receive a penalty...”

His subordinates hesitated. In response, Agamemnon pulled out his sword.

Shing—

Slash—!

Agamemnon cut the head off the subordinate standing next to him. His head fell off, blood spraying everywhere. At the same time Agamemnon started bleeding from his arm.

It was the penalty from murdering a lower floor player.

“What was that about a penalty?”

Agamemnon made it clear that he was ready to cut down everyone who didn't follow his orders.

“Whoever can kill him and bring back the criminal, I will give them a management position here on the 1st Floor.”

“A management position...?”

“R-Really?”

“Just for killing a single new player?”

Their eyes filled with greed.

They knew that they'd receive a penalty for attacking a player from a floor lower than them, but Agamemnon's offer was too good to refuse.

The players started charging in.

“Ahhhhhhh—!”

“Die—!”

“I'm going to kill him!”

“No, I will!”

Even players of the 10th Floor joined in on the attack.

Agamemnon was sure that this would be resolved quickly. He thought that there was nothing a new player could do by himself in a battle like this.

However, he soon realized that he was mistaken.

Whirr, whirrr—

‘Arcane Sword?’ Agamemnon wondered.

It was a hot, flaming [Arcane Sword.]

YuWon cut down the players that charged at him with his sword imbued with fire attribute mana.

Fwoosh—!

Slash—!

“Ahhhh!”

“Don’t get caught in it!”

“Get back!”

With a single swing of his sword, he had shrouded himself and Hephaestus with fire attribute mana.

The players who weren’t able to evade it were burnt to cinders.

“Kugh... What kind of a skill is that...?”

“How is a new player already able to change the attribute of his mana...?”

Encasing a sword with fire mana wasn’t something that someone could do simply by possessing a fire attribute skill. To do that, one needed to first master a fire attribute skill, then have enough mana control to be able to change the mana’s essence to hold shape around the sword.

“So what?”

“He’s still just a new player...!”

“Ahhhh!”

Fwoosh—!

Shing— Pew—!

Countless swords, spears, and a myriad of skills descended on YuWon.

He endured it by swinging his sword and unleashing [Colossal Fire.]

[The power of Colossal Fire is added to Basic Arcane Sword.]

Shwoooo—

The attacks from nearly a hundred players was like a giant tsunami.

In order to evade the attack from all the surrounding players, YuWon had no choice but to use all of the powers of [Cinder Eyes.]

[Cinder Eyes tries to find a way.]

[Cinder Eyes is resisting fire attribute mana.]

The rare fire attacks were resisted by the power of [Cinder Eyes.] For YuWon who had previously endured Suruhtra's flames, a lower floor player's fire attribute attacks almost felt ticklish.

Whirr, whirrrr—

YuWon sensed a turbulent flow of mana from behind him.

‘Mana Blast,’ YuWon realized.

Swoosh—

YuWon quickly stretched out one hand in that direction.

Whirr—

[Gigantification x Mana Blast]

Fwoooosh—!

“Ahhhhh!”

YuWon's [Mana Blast] swallowed up the enemy's [Mana Blast.]

The three players caught up in YuWon's [Mana Blast] were cooked alive.

A short silence fell before the players went on an all-out attack against YuWon once again.

“Don't stop!”

“Keep him on the ropes!”

Klang—!

Fwoosh, boom—!

It was a messy battlefield.

Watching the scene unfold, Agamemnon's face froze. ‘What's going on?’ he thought.

Slash—!

Another Olympus player's head was cut off.

YuWon would not go down. Refusing to let them have Hephaestus, who was knocked over on the ground as a statue, he was a real persistent bastard.

‘You're telling me that he's truly a new player?’ Agamemnon wondered. He had heard that YuWon got first place in the Tutorial, surpassing Hargaan. He had also heard how he set a historic new record.

Agamemnon thought that perhaps a new player that could one day stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the great rulers of this Tower, the High Rankers, had appeared. That was why Agamemnon didn't

underestimate YuWon. Or at least, he thought that he hadn't underestimated him... The problem was that that still wasn't enough.

Twitch—

Agememnon noticed Hephaestus's petrified body move slightly. It was a tiny movement, but he was sure.

He couldn't drag this on any longer.

"You useless bastards..."

But as he was about to jump into battle...

"Wait."

... Someone stepped in front of Agamemnon.

"I'll take care of this."

* * *

Fsshh—

With his crimson vision, he was able to easily read the path of the sword being swung at him. YuWon was disappointed that this was what Olympus had to offer.

'So they don't know that numbers aren't everything.'

Wham—!

YuWon shifted his chest back, avoiding a sword swing before roundhouse kicking his opponent in the chest.

"Kugh!"

His opponent was knocked away. Players charged towards YuWon simultaneously from behind, left, and right.

"... Tch."

Feeling annoyed, YuWon punched the ground.

Then...

[Cinder Eyes takes control over Colossal Fire.]

[Colossal Fire – Fire Pillar]

Fwoosh—!

Ka-boom—!

"Ahhh!"

"Damn it....!"

A tall pillar of fire rose up around YuWon.

One of the players who reacted too late ended up getting caught in the flames and was knocked away, and the other two players gave up on attacking and took a step back.

YuWon maintained the fire pillar because buying time was enough for him.

YuWon glanced over at Hephaestus, who was still petrified on the floor.

“Hey, Ahjussi. How long are you planning on sleep—?”

Before he could finish his sentence, YuWon quickly turned his head, sensing an ominous flow of mana.

Whoosh—

A big flaming spear pierced through the fire pillar.

Ka-boom—!

[Cinder Eyes is resisting Sun Shard.]

[「Pyromancy Robe」 is resisting Sun Shard.]

YuWon, who had been standing in place, took a step back.

It was the first real fire he had experienced today.

Ssk—

YuWon wiped away the ash on his face with the back of his hand.

If it weren't for the fire resistance from [Cinder Eyes] and 「Pyromancy Robe,」 he would have just been incapacitated.

His burnt skin stung.

‘Sun Shard, huh....’

YuWon looked over at the person who had just thrown that attack at him.

‘So he finally decided to get off his ass.’

Orange eyes, red hair, and clothes tattered from the fight with Hephaestus.

The lion that was laying low from being wounded, the Ranker Chryses stood in front of YuWon.