

With The Gods 571

Chapter 571

Side Story 47

Crack!

The earth where Vritra's head had crashed cracked.

The Bull Demon King didn't stop just because he had subdued him once.

Boom!

Bang!

The iron club struck Vritra's head again and again.

The Bull Demon King seemed eager to crush Vritra's head immediately, swinging his club relentlessly.

Crack!

Bang!

Splash!

At that moment, Vritra opened his mouth wide and exhaled fire.

Fwooosh!

The scorching fire erupted from his mouth, melting the ground.

The Bull Demon King and Son OhGong leaped high into the air, and the Administrators also hurried to get out of the fire's reach.

Whoosh, whoosh!

The valley turned into a sea of flames in an instant.

The rocks and cliffs of the valley melted and turned into lava.

Vritra, who had exhaled fire, roared with his half-broken horns.

-Uuuuuuuuuuuah!

Kyaaaaaaaa!

Vritra's roar echoed in the valley.

The flames spouting from the ground swirled violently, and amid the deafening noise, Ananta still hadn't opened his eyes.

Son OhGong and the Bull Demon King, riding on the Flying Nimbus. The two, who had dodged the fire, descended and landed on the ground that had turned into lava.

"It's hot."

"Hyung-nim, are you hot? I'm fine."

"Are you bragging that you have Golden Cinder Eyes?"

The Bull Demon King clicked his tongue in annoyance and shook his head.

"Take care of that guy."

"Eh? But I want to fight against that Nantan or something."

"Stop talking in slang and grow up, kid."

"Hey!"

Son OhGong scratched his head in disgust. He had wanted to fight Ananta, but ended up fighting Vritra again, with whom he had already fought once.

However, he couldn't complain anymore.

His opponent was his Hyung-nim, the Bull Demon King, and his order was reasonable.

"No choice. I guess no one else but you can be that guy's nemesis."

The Bull Demon King patted Son OhGong on the shoulder to console him.

Despite his disgusted expression, Son OhGong didn't refute the Bull Demon King's words.

However, he was only concerned about one thing.

"How much has that guy's seal been undone?"

"I'm not sure. I haven't checked, so I don't know for sure."

"Be careful, Hyung-nim."

"Don't worry."

Clang!

The Bull Demon King slung the Mixed Iron Rod over his shoulder and looked at the two Administrators.

"Two, huh..."

His first battle against the Administrators. He had to hurry before Ananta's seal behind them broke.

"It doesn't seem like there's time for warm-up."

The Bull Demon King's eyes turned red.

It was time to become the King of Great Power for a while.

Boom!

The Mixed Iron Rod struck the thick stone wall in front of him.

Crash.

The solid stone wall shattered in an instant.

Immediately, the Bull Demon King's hand, which had lunged without hesitation, dug into the ground.

Crack!

Kyaaa!

An agonizing howl echoed from the underground.

-Shud Myuel!

The zombie-like giant-eyed Administrator, Ithaqua, shouted his companion's name as he ran towards him.

Crack.

The Bull Demon King raised his arm as he dug into the ground.

In his hand, he held a brown rock shaped like a long worm.

Boom!

Crack!

-...!

The rock-bodied Administrator, Shud Myuel, groaned in pain and crashed to the ground again after being hit by the Mixed Iron Rod.

The Bull Demon King wielded the Mixed Iron Rod mercilessly, as if he had lost his mind. The power that gave him the title of King of Great Power manifested instantly, shattering Shud Myuel's body.

Meanwhile, Ithaqua, who had come to his aid, lunged at the Bull Demon King with his long claws extended.

Sss!

Kyaaaa!

An attack as sharp as ten swords danced.

The Bull Demon King dodged Ithaqua's claws as he twisted, and a long wound appeared on his cheek.

And at that moment...

-You have fallen.

Sss.

The wound on the Bull Demon King's cheek turned purple. The Bull Demon King, who had been running like crazy, stopped moving.

Ithaqua's claws and the wound on the Bull Demon King's cheek were connected by a thin thread.

-No matter how small the wound is, anything touched by my power is included in my Curse domain.

Crack, crack.

A purple light emanated from everywhere Ithaqua's claws had touched so far.

The Bull Demon King knelt before the Curse activated through the small wound.

Tap, tap.

Ithaqua approached the Bull Demon King with slow steps.

"Although it took me a bit..."

He raised his hand, emitting the stench of a decaying body.

"Without you, The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal..."

Bam!

Ugh!

A hand covered Ithaqua's mouth.

The Bull Demon King, who had moved again, looked at him with red eyes and a gentle expression.

"Did you think a Curse would work against a Sorcerer?"

Grunting, growling~

"Keee..."

Ithaqua's face twisted by the force of the Bull Demon King's hand, and he quickly raised his arm.

At that moment, as he tried to injure the Bull Demon King again to curse him.

Boom!

The Bull Demon King's hand, which had lifted Ithaqua into the air with all his might, now held another item.

"Tear him apart!"

Kweeee~

A huge fan in the Bull Demon King's hand. The moment he swung it with all his might, a wind as strong as a condensed typhoon headed towards Ithaqua's body.

Kyaaa!

Sss!

Ithaqua's body split into dozens of pieces.

Even with his head divided into several parts, he muttered with clenched teeth like a zombie.

"It doesn't... make sense..."

Sizzle, sizzle.

With an unpleasant sound, Ithaqua's body slowly rejoined.

As all the features of the zombies originated from Ithaqua, he wasn't a being that could be killed so easily.

One thing...

'We need to reevaluate the ranking of the Bull Demon King.'

The Bull Demon King currently holds the eighth position in the ranking. His ranking had risen rapidly in the last decade thanks to his significant contributions in the fight against the Outers and acquiring a formidable ally like the Goblins.

However, that wasn't enough.

Unlike other Rankers, the Bull Demon King, who had stopped participating in public activities as if he had retired, was ranked below his true skill level.

'They should have judged him just below The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal, or even as his equal.'

Tap, tap.

Having shattered Shud Myuel's body and cut Ithaqua's, the Bull Demon King approached to cut the latter's throat.

His eyes glowed red, and his horns had multiplied several times.

Exhaling a steaming breath, the Bull Demon King raised the Mixed Iron Rod towards the Administrator.

And at that moment...

"It's amusing, Demon King."

The Bull Demon King's movement, attempting to swing the Mixed Iron Rod, halted.

Turning his head, he found thousands of eyes staring at him, and for a moment, his body wavered.

"What do you find amusing?"

Ananta, now with open eyes, looked at the Bull Demon King from his bind to the tree.

"Everything. Your courteous tone, your eyes that light up when you see blood. Have you stopped enjoying the taste of blood?"

"Are you mocking me?"

"Do you think I know nothing?"

Ananta's eyes widened.

"I've been awake for a long time. Since the Jade Emperor imprisoned you in the Celestial Realm."

"You don't seem to sleep much."

"When you sealed me, you weren't like this. You were much crueler and relentless back then."

The Bull Demon King's eyes stirred. An unpleasant sensation. As if thousands of snakes coiled around his body and thousands of mocking tongues touched his face.

"Do you want to forget it? That moment?"

"Shut up."

"I'm talking about the way you slaughtered millions of humans as a Yokai."

Pierce~!

A sharp pain shot through the Bull Demon King's head.

A memory he had been suppressing for a long time.

"I guess you can forget it if you live like this. If you live a good life, like a human, it's possible."

"Your venomous tongue remains the same."

Suppressing his anger, the Bull Demon King looked at Ananta with even fiercer eyes.

"It seems I'll have to kill you quickly."

"Do you know that?"

"I don't feel like listening to you anymore."

"Look carefully behind you."

"Behind?"

Was it a trick, or was it real?

That was his fleeting doubt. And in the moment that doubt lingered.

Brrrii~

The sound of music resonated from somewhere.

And a strange aroma reached his nostrils.

Dizziness.

The Bull Demon King's mind wavered at that precise moment.

Puff!

Smoke rose throughout the valley.

It didn't come from Vritra's flames.

That aroma and sound were not new to him.

"Gandharva... right?"

The Bull Demon King forcefully opened his eyes, enveloping his dizzy head. It seemed like he would lose his mind if he lost focus even a little.

Immediately, the Bull Demon King looked back, following Ananta's advice.

A man with gray hair that reached his legs limped closer with long, slender legs like those of a girl.

He approached the Bull Demon King while playing a flute with a pure, white face and greeted him.

"It's been a long time, Demon King."

"...Yes."

Gandharva.

The one handling the fragrance and sound was some kind of monster that wasn't an Administrator or a Player.

However, he had a human-like appearance. Except for the lack of focus in his eyes, he didn't look different from a young boy.

However, the Bull Demon King knew.

The horrible form that his true form had.

"Were you spying?"

He thought it was natural that he hadn't been involved in the fight for so long.

But his essence was mist.

In the first place, the monster named Gandharva could appear anywhere.

"I wasn't spying; I was waiting for the opportune moment."

"The opportune moment... you say?"

What moment was he referring to?

The Bull Demon King's eyes widened when he arrived at that thought.

'Won't it be?'

And then, he realized there were two more.

The Administrators who had moved to break Ananta's seal.

Cuckoo, cuckoo-cuckoo.

The trees that were pierced into Ananta's heart began to be uprooted.

The power of the spell weakened.

The spell the Bull Demon King had cast long ago had already been opened by the Administrators.

"...We arrived a little late."

Judging by the way his comrades were being pushed, it seemed they could have helped, but the other two administrators hadn't moved an inch from Ananta until now.

Their goal was only one.

The Monster King, sealed in the Vishnu Tree.

A being with a thousand Dragon heads, laughing at the world from the top of Dragons and Monsters.

Ananta.

Their sole objective was to release this being from its seal.

Kyaaaaah-!

A deafening roar and an oppression threatening to burst his heart.

And so, at the moment Ananta was freed from the seal, an identical message appeared for all Tower Players.

[The Monster King 'Ananta' has been released from the seal.]

[The statistics of all Tower Monsters will increase exponentially.]

[Ananta is currently in an unstable state.]

[Eliminate Ananta.]

Chapter 572

Side Story 48

In a hunting ground outside the city located on the 25th-floor world.

Pffft-.

"¡...!"

Kwak DuPal, a player who was obsessed with leveling up while preparing for the Trial of the next floor, staggered back in surprise.

"Hm, what's this?"

With a strange dialect that couldn't be identified, he looked at his notched greatsword.

A lizardman.

It was definitely the same type he always hunted.

Although the difficulty of the hunt had increased as he ascended the floors, he had never failed to cut down an enemy with his sword.

At least that's what Kwak DuPal, confident in his sword skills, believed.

'Was it a hallucination?'

Just as he was about to run towards the lizardman in front of him just in case.

[Monster King Ananta has been released from the seal]

[Statistics of all Monsters in the Tower increase exponentially.]

[Ananta is currently in an unstable state.]

[Eliminate Ananta.]

"What-."

Kwak DuPal let out a bewildered sound at the pop-up message.

The Monster King, the statistics of monsters increasing.

It was like a bolt from the blue.

Not only was Kwak DuPal confused, but the lizardman also tilted his head with a puzzled expression.

Gruk-?

The two stared at each other in confusion.

In the midst of the awkward confrontation, Kwak DuPal was the first to make a decision.

"Eek-aaah!"

Kwak Du-pal started running in the opposite direction.

The lizardman, who had been confused for a moment, suddenly got angry and began to chase Kwak DuPal.

Kiiiieek-!

And at that moment,

The same thing was happening everywhere in the Tower.

At the same time.

Namgung Hoon, who received the same message, was challenging the 82nd-floor Trial with his team.

"What, what are these things?"

"Team Leader! Did you get the message?"

"Ugh... these things suddenly got stronger..."

Pffft, pffft-!

Undead armed with swords and spears attacked Namgung Hoon's team members.

The defense of Namgung Hoon's group, entrusted with the mission to protect the tomb, began to gradually break.

It was then that a variable entered the increasingly dangerous battlefield.

The dark sky was covered with a blue aura, and great pressure was exerted on the ground.

The Arcane Power emanating from Namgung Hoon's body, who thrust the tip of his sword into the ground, crushed the undead.

"Emperor Sword Technique?"

Jegal Sehun, a member of Namgung Hoon's team, looked at him with surprised eyes.

Emperor Sword Technique (帝王劍形).

It was the supreme technique passed down only to the direct line of the Namgung Family, capable of mastering enemies without unsheathing the sword.

Even among the Namgung Family Rankers, only a few had mastered this technique, and yet, Namgung Hoon, who was not yet a Ranker, was using it.

'If it weren't for Hargan, this guy would have been the master of the next generation.'

Crack, crunch-.

Snap, crunch-.

The undead's bones broke, and their skin tore.

"Huu-."

Namgung Hoon, who had manifested the Emperor Sword Technique, took a deep breath and exhaled.

The crisis that had suddenly arisen had been overcome.

However, the problem was that he had used too much physical strength and Arcane Power to use the Emperor Sword Technique.

'The difficulty has increased.'

Namgung Hoon hadn't even thought that he would use the Emperor Sword Technique here for the first time.

Fortunately, he succeeded, but if he hadn't, they could have suffered a nearly fatal blow.

The message that suddenly appeared.

The Monster King's Seal has been released, exponentially increasing the power of Monsters throughout the Tower.

'Ananta. This is the first time I've heard that name...'

Namgung Hoon, a man from the Murim World, had never heard of Ananta.

However, one thing was certain.

'If we don't kill that Monster King, the Tower's ecosystem will collapse.'

Kyaaaaah!

Gu gu, guuuuhhh-.

Zheek, zhee-.

The ground shook, and the valley cliff collapsed.

A huge Dragon with golden scales covering its entire body.

Kung-.

The Monster King, Ananta, took its first step after being released from Vishnu's seal.

『This is what it feels like to walk.』

How long had it been since the last time it moved its body?

Ananta closed its eyes for a moment and immersed itself in the sensation.

Hundreds of billions of Tower monsters praised it.

Their voices resonated in Ananta's ears, drawing a smile on its face.

『It feels good to be alive.』

Ananta's resurrection.

It was a moment that even made the Bull Demon King, who was supposed to be immune to fear, tremble.

“Huuu-.”

The Bull Demon King, who had inhaled Gandharva's smoke, exhaled all the poison that had entered its body.

Fuuush-.

Gandharva disappeared along with the smoke.

Apparently, after temporarily immobilizing the Bull Demon King, the creature judged that its role was done.

Also...

“I guess this is it.”

“What are we going to do about The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal? He's not the type that can die.”

“First, we capture him. We'll think about what to do next. If necessary, we can seal him again.”

The two Administrators who had released Ananta's seal conversed with each other.

They began talking to Ananta's head, who started showing its teeth one by one.

"Can you do it, Anan-?"

Kwaak-.

At that instant, tentacles sprouted from the ground and wrapped around the Administrators.

“What are you doing?!”

『Of course, I'll take care of them. Both the Bull Demon King and the Monkey flying in the sky.』

Sssiii-.

Smiling with joy, Ananta brought the Administrators wrapped in tentacles to its mouth.

『But you see... I'm hungry. Administrators.』

“But we freed you from the seal-!”

Gulp-.

An Administrator slid down Ananta's throat.

Ananta was sure he had caught two, but the other had cut Ananta's tentacles and had disappeared somewhere.

『Well, there will be more opportunities to catch him in the future.』

Ananta clicked his tongue regretfully.

His thousand heads moved, and his eyes fixed on the Bull Demon King.

The Bull Demon King stared at him for a while. Then, with a gesture of annoyance, he stored the fan he had in his hand in his inventory and scratched his head.

"It seems like a hassle to seal that disgusting thing again."

Kwaaaak-.

Gripping the Mixed Iron Rod tightly, he looked at Ananta.

"No, maybe this time I should kill it?"

『Your mouth is still as sharp as ever, Demon King.』

"Both you and I are relics of a bygone era, but at least I'm relatively new. And..."

Gooooo-.

Arcane Power began emanating from the Bull Demon King's body.

And at that moment, a massive shadow loomed over the Bull Demon King's head.

Kuung!

Vritra fell to the ground. Its wings had round holes, and its body was twisted, unconscious.

"This one is the same."

"He's disgustingly persistent, for such an insignificant guy."

Son OhGong's golden eyes sparkled. He had also used Yokai Power to rush to fight Vritra.

"Is he finally released?"

"Yes, that's right."

"Good. It would have been a pity if he hadn't been released, eh."

For Son OhGong, who loves a good fight, there was no better situation than this.

His opponent is Ananta. Known as the Monster King, a being Son OhGong has wanted to fight for a long time.

Although they couldn't fight before due to circumstances, they now stand as enemies, face to face.

"Do you have anything to say?"

Son OhGong placed the Ru Yi Bang over his shoulder.

"Come on, Hyung-nim."

Shuaaaak-!

He dodged the dragon's head and flew into the sky.

Son OhGong moved quickly from side to side, wielding the Ru Yi Bang towards Ananta's head.

Kwagagagak-.

Ananta's teeth blocked the Ru Yi Bang.

Son OhGong, holding Ananta's head with trembling arms, lifted the other hand with all his strength.

"Huup-!"

Zheeng-!

Ananta's head shook, and it roared. But for that, Son OhGong had to use so much force that his arms almost fell off.

Only one of the thousand heads.

Son OhGong, who had blocked one, frowned and murmured.

"I don't have enough hands."

He needed clones.

And not just any clones, but clones with power superior to the normal.

"...Let's try it."

Although he had only thought of it a few days ago, when better than now to try it?

His doubt didn't last long.

Son OhGong plucked two hairs from his head.

"Huuh-."

The hairs dispersed in the air.

And next to them...

Bang, puff puff puff, bang-!

Smoke sprouted from Son OhGong's hairs, and dozens of Son OhGongs appeared from within him.

Siiik-.

The corners of Son OhGong's mouth lifted.

It was a success.

"It's a bit strange to share the fun, but..."

"Share?"

"Stop talking as if you were the original."

"Aren't we all 'us'?"

The clones refuted Son OhGong's words.

The noise of the clones chatting deafened him.

"This is a bit annoying."

Although they were smaller, as they were made using a part of his body as a medium, the performance of the clones was much better than before.

The only drawback is that the Ego of the Clones has become stronger.

Of course, that would be an advantage in battle.

"So, let's all go together..."

Cheek, cheekcheek-.

The Son OhGongs aimed their Ru Yi Bangs at Ananta in unison.

"Grow, Ruyi!"

Baaaang-!

Ananta's heads exploded from the Ru Yi Bangs of Son OhGong.

The clones then wielded their Ru Yi Bangs, used the Golden Cinder Eyes, and began attacking Ananta's body.

Leaving the rear to the clones, Son OhGong began running on Ananta's body.

Kyaaaaah-!

Another head lunged at Son OhGong.

Son OhGong, who had already shrunk the Ru Yi Bang again and held it in his hand, hit Ananta's head and unleashed the Golden Cinder Eyes.

Hwarur-.

Zheoeok-!

His eyes moved rapidly. Son OhGong struck the dragon's head flying towards him with clenched teeth and shouted:

"Don't play with me, Ananta!"

From the top of Ananta's head, Son OhGong spoke with a furious voice:

"Close combat is not your specialty! Isn't that right?"

His voice echoed.

At that precise moment, Ananta's movement stopped.

"Do you also know me?"

"Yes, I know you. I know you very well."

Son OhGong smiled, showing his teeth.

"So stop messing around and do it right. Otherwise, I won't have fun either."

Son OhGong had a bored tone.

Perhaps that wounded his pride?

"-Understood."

Tsusu-.

The head of Ananta that had exploded from the Ru Yi Bang regenerated.

However.

Tsusu, tsusutsu-!

Unlike before, the head was made of golden lightning.

"I was having fun for the first time in a long time, but you've ruined the fun for me."

That wasn't all.

Tsusutsu, tsus-.

Craaack, craack-le-!

A massive lightning enveloped Ananta's body. It soon transformed into a dragon of a thousand heads made entirely of lightning.

Zheok-.

Ananta's mouth opened wide.

Ananta's heads surrounded Son OhGong, who was standing on another head, and drooled.

"Therefore, I will chew you carefully and devour you."

Krrrurrr-.

A thousand heads that will never be cut or disappear.

The Dragon, growing larger and larger with lightning.

Ananta has revealed its true form.

So...

"Yes, yes. Now I really like it."

Kwaaak-.

Only then did Son OhGong smile, as if finding it amusing, and increased the strength in his hand holding the Ru Yi Bang.

"This is how it should be."

Chapter 573

Side Story 49

Long ago.

At the peak of the battle against the Outers, Vishnu and Asura, alongside their companions, found themselves in a desperate situation.

Anticipating a partial defeat, they had started debating who would be sent back in time using the Clock Movement.

It was then that a being appeared, acting as a variable for both Inner and Outers.

"Ananta?"

"That guy has resurrected?"

Ananta, resurging magnificently, burst onto the battlefield.

Devouring the Outers who had invaded the Tower, he satisfied his voracious hunger one by one.

Of course...

"Osiris was devoured by him."

"Heimdall too. That guy is devouring everything in sight."

The survivors who returned alive.

Vishnu, who had faced Ananta in the past, was filled with doubt, massaging his temples.

"Whether his resurrection will be an advantage or a disadvantage for us..."

However, initially, there was no need to worry.

There was nothing they could do, no matter how much they pondered the pros and cons.

Because Ananta, from the beginning, was not a being they could cooperate with.

Nevertheless, one thing was fortunate.

In the end, Ananta's existence turned out to be an "advantage" for them.

"Ananta stopped Shub-Niggurath."

While their companions, having discovered their base, fled, Ananta coincidentally encountered Shub-Niggurath.

And that day...

Though it was not his intention, Son OhGong and his companions were able to escape the sight of the Outers thanks to Ananta's help.

"To Shub-Niggurath?"

"What happened to that guy, Ananta? Did he eat it?"

"So? Is it dead? That huge goat?"

Faces filled with anticipation. If Shub-Niggurath had been eliminated by Ananta, the success rate, considered to be 0%, could increase by at least 1%.

In that case, there would be no need to gamble in an uncertain poker game with the Clock Movement.

However...

"Did you forget where we are?"

"Ah..."

At YuWon's words, who returned after observing the situation, his companions looked up at the sky.

A sky tinted in purple.

Under the Yog-Sothoth sky, eliminating Shub-Niggurath was a daunting task even for Ananta.

"Shub-Niggurath has joined Yog-Sothoth and Abhoth. Although I think Abhoth was devoured by Ananta on the way."

"And did he eliminate one of them in the process?"

"... They don't call him the Monster King for nothing."

Consuming everything that lives, and through that voracity, growing and strengthening, Ananta, the Dragon at the pinnacle of monsters.

Shub-Niggurath.

No, perhaps a being possessing even greater power.

That's why Son OhGong had always been curious since then.

What would it be like to fight against Ananta?, he wondered.

And now...

Kwa-rung, Kwa-uwung-!

Son OhGong was feeling that thrilling sensation he had been waiting for.

Craack-le-!

Son OhGong was enveloped in lightning. His flesh, as hard as steel, began to burn.

"Grrraaaaah-!"

Resisting the lightning, he concentrated his strength and roared.

Boooooom-.

Wielding the extended Ru Yi Bang, he aimed for Ananta's head.

Half of his clones had already been eliminated.

Craack-!

Son OhGong broke free from the lightning.

In an instant, a huge Dragon enveloped him.

Thuuuud-!

The pressure knocked him down.

And the lightning's force burned his body as if it were disintegrating.

And a lightning power that seemed to burn his entire body.

Paf!

Son OhGong ran towards Ananta, cutting through the waves of lightning.

Grabbing the Ru Yi Bang, he swung it with all his might, targeting the other heads.

Zas!

"...!"

The lightning-wrapped Dragon blocked Son OhGong's Ru Yi Bang with its teeth.

Holding the Ru Yi Bang with its teeth, the Ananta Dragon slammed OhGong to the ground.

Bum!

Craack, craaackl-e.

Electric current flowed through the ground.

Son OhGong, kneeling on the ground, grimaced in pain.

"Argh..."

His knees, as if electrified, wouldn't bend.

Bam!

With a roar, Son OhGong struck his knees with fists.

Bam, bam, bam!

After hitting his knees several times, his legs finally started moving.

His arms and legs trembled. Son OhGong stood up, leaning on the Ru Yi Bang like a staff, and raised his head.

Kyaaaah!

Craaack-le-.

The lightning-wrapped Dragons roared and looked at Son OhGong.

Although it's natural to enjoy the stronger the enemy, this was more than he expected.

"This is tough," Son OhGong muttered with a wry smile.

Every move was an effort.

For some reason, even reading his movements wasn't easy.

Ananta.

He was a more challenging opponent than he had thought.

Puf!

"Are you okay?"

The Bull Demon King landed unsteadily next to Son OhGong.

Son OhGong turned to him and asked:

"And you, Hyung-nim?"

"My body is more resistant than yours."

Being immortal didn't mean being invincible.

Son OhGong's immortality only meant he couldn't die, but the endurance and physical strength of his body had a clear limit.

The Bull Demon King still had some strength. Indeed, his body was more resistant.

"Don't you think I have more guts?"

"Guts... You say strangely intelligent things for you."

"Strangely?"

"It's a compliment."

"Doesn't seem like it."

"It does, and stop calling me 'you'."

Both of them smiled humorlessly. At this moment, neither of them was genuinely smiling.

"First, escape, Hyung-nim."

Son OhGong took a step forward.

"Anyway, I'm immortal, right? Don't worry about me and go first."

"Being immortal doesn't mean being completely invulnerable. You should know that better than me, who has lived with that body."

As expected, the Bull Demon King had no intention of retreating.

No matter how good his younger brother was, he had the pride of being the older brother (Hyung-nim).

His self-esteem was too high to allow himself to run away, leaving his younger brother behind.

Moreover...

"And I have to stop that guy here."

Ananta.

The Monster King who had been sealed long ago, or rather, the monster they had barely managed to seal.

Knowing what kind of being he was, the Bull Demon King couldn't just leave like that.

"If we leave here, that guy will devour everyone he finds outside. Since he's not a Player, there won't be any penalties."

The Monster King.

The world was very different before and after his appearance.

"Sorry, OhGong-ah. My legs won't move from here."

"Damn."

Son OhGong scratched his head in frustration. He liked to fight, but he didn't want the Bull Demon King to die here.

No matter how fun it was, he didn't want to lose his Hyung-nim again.

Paf!

The Bull Demon King moved even before the impulsive Son OhGong.

The reason was obvious.

Son OhGong was just acting before he could stop himself.

"Damn Hyung-nim. Always so stubborn."

There was nothing to be done. Son OhGong frowned and lowered his head.

Kuduk-.

His shoulders trembled as if convulsing. His muscles and body contorted, and Son OhGong raised his head with rolled-back eyes.

"This state... really annoys me."

Krur-.

An animalistic growl escaped his lips. By releasing almost all of his Yokai Power, his sanity was gradually fading away.

However, this was not the first time he found himself in this state.

"So..."

Kakak-.

He clenched his fists, making his nails creak.

Grrr-.

With an animalistic roar, Son OhGong kicked the ground.

Kwang-!

Son OhGong instantly reached the Bull Demon King. Together, they climbed onto Ananta's body and began attacking the Dragon heads covered in golden scales.

Kwrang, kurur-.

Craaack-le-!

Son OhGong's claws tore through the heads as he dodged the lightning bolts.

The Bull Demon King's Mixed Iron Rod crushed Ananta's heads one by one.

Son OhGong used the Ru Yi Bang to block another head that targeted him.

Fuuuwaaaak-!

The fan's wind resisted Ananta's lightning.

Arcane Power clashed as Son OhGong and the Bull Demon King fought against Ananta's heads.

『Excellent.』

And among them, one.

『The brotherly affection moves me to tears, Demon Toro.』

Ananta's head laughed at them.

And then...

Kyaaaa-!

Countless heads of Ananta lunged at Son OhGong, who wielded his claws and the Ru Yi Bang.

Craaack-!

“Kyaaaa-!”

Son OhGong screamed as he was enveloped by the dragons and struck by lightning.

The golden chains of lightning wrapped around his body.

Ananta, who had held Son OhGong, licked his lips.

『A Monkey with the property of immortality. It's tempting. Very tempting.』

"OhGong-ah-!"

The Bull Demon King shouted in surprise.

Ananta continuously injected lightning into Son OhGong's body, with gleaming eyes.

『Aren't you curious? Whether your immortal brother can survive being devoured by me.』

Immortality. An eternal and immortal being. Son OhGong, who possessed that legendary property even within the Tower, was an irresistible target for Ananta.

"Y-you- are-."

Craaaack-le-!

Son OhGong growled and writhed within the chains of lightning.

Ananta was quite impressed that Son OhGong didn't lose consciousness even with such an electric shock.

『Seems like it's not just the immortality』

Son OhGong's power kept growing. His Yokai Power increased with his almost infinite Arcane Power base, enhancing his physical abilities as well.

And to mock him, the chains of lightning tightened even more.

Meanwhile, the Bull Demon King sweated as he blocked Ananta's teeth with the Mixed Iron Rod.

'Ananta absorbs the power and properties of his devoured opponents. Although OhGong-ah has the property of immortality, if something goes wrong-.'

Papak-.

The Bull Demon King gritted his teeth.

'It's my fault. I should have prepared better.'

His original goal was to prevent Ananta's resurrection. However, that failed, and the situation turned into an inevitable battle against the beast.

He had to do something.

If Son OhGong died by any chance... and Ananta gained the property of immortality...

It could be the birth of a monster that even surpassed Shub-Niggurath and Yog-Sothoth.

'Even if I have to die...'

Chiik-.

The Bull Demon King began drawing on the ground with the tip of his toe.

The King of Great Power and Sorcerer.

There were many ways to obtain greater power in exchange for a great price.

And at the moment the Bull Demon King's spell was completed...

“Huup-!”

An object resembling a meteorite fell from the sky.

Kwaaaang-!

Kiee eeeek-!

Ananta, struck by the falling meteorite, sank into the ground. And at that moment, the hand of the fallen meteorite reached out to Son OhGong, who was tied by Ananta.

"You bastard-!"

Ananta's panicked shout.

Hercules, who had fallen from the sky like a meteorite, grabbed Son OhGong by the neck and lifted him.

"You should have been careful with your opponent while fighting."

"If we had gone all the way, I would have won."

"You say nice things even in that state."

Son OhGong smirked. Although he didn't like that they interrupted his fight, it was a fact that he had been in danger.

Moreover.

Craaack-.

There was no way Hercules had appeared here alone.

The dark clouds covering the sky.

Above them, a different Lightning Bolt than Ananta's, flowed with determination.

Flash!

First, a blinding blue light enveloped the dark clouds.

[Lightning Bolt]

Kwaauung-!

A blue Lightning Bolt descended upon Ananta's head.

Chapter 574

Side Story 50

Rankers.

Rankers are mighty entities that have conquered the Tower after overcoming 100 worlds and 100 Trials.

They are assigned a rank indicating their power and authority, as there is no higher place for them to ascend to.

However, all of this changed a decade ago.

"There is a ceiling over this world."

"A 101st floor?"

"That's what they say... but it's something different."

Floor 100.

The highest floor of the Tower, a symbol for Rankers.

Upon hearing that there was an even higher place, Rankers rushed to challenge it.

Of course, not everyone achieved the same result.

"The magnitude of Divinity varies."

"What is the criteria?"

"It seems like the ranking is changing."

Rankers who pierced through the ceiling and ascended to the sky gained Divinity.

However, the magnitude of their Divinity differed.

To be a God, one needs a Soul.

To be a Deity, one needs Dignity.

Only then is Divinity granted, the true qualification as a God.

And the condition to achieve all this is one:

Myth.

A God needs a story.

To build Divinity, a story worthy of it is required.

It's not that the story has to be special.

The events and outcomes one experiences while ascending and conquering the Tower.

The stories people pass on from mouth to mouth.

All those things were the story.

And the being with the most stories in this Tower is...

"If Odin were alive, it might be different..."

"No way. Even if Odin were alive, he wouldn't be a match for him."

"You're right, aren't you?"

Gigantomachy.

The King of Olympus.

Ruler of the Sky.

Father of the Gods...

A being who has created an countless number of stories.

"For now, Zeus is the best."

He had been pondering about the ceiling for a long time. And so, Zeus built Olympus, a grand temple as a monument to his name.

He fought and won the legendary Gigantomachy war, ensuring that his lineage played a crucial role in the battle.

The one who had crafted his Myth more meticulously than anyone else in this Tower.

Moreover...

[Dragon Slayer]

His Myth even encompassed the power of Indra.

Crack, crack-le-.

Remnants of the Blue Lightning Bolt flowed from Zeus's fingertips.

Zeus looked at the remnants of the Lightning Bolt he had unleashed and frowned disapprovingly.

"Not a very pleasant color."

The Blue Lightning Bolt.

An Arcane Power he knew how to handle but rarely used.

It was a power that Zeus had taken from Indra long ago, when he had lost his Lightning Bolt and sought to regain his strength.

The power once possessed by Indra.

A pure Lightning Bolt containing the power of countless Dragons and was the nemesis of Dragons.

The power of Blue Lightning Bolt was the bane of Dragons.

"I have no other choice now. I need it to slay that guy."

"I hope it ends today."

Zeus had been using the immense power he had taken from Indra as if it were his own Arcane Power.

There were two reasons for this.

First, Indra's power was too destructive and challenging to control. Second, he didn't like the color. Crack-le.

Once again, a Blue Lightning Bolt spear formed at the tip of Zeus's fingers.

Crack.

Krrr.

Unlike the Lightning Bolt Zeus normally wielded, this one was large and rough. If Zeus's normal Lightning Bolt was elegant, this one had an aura of violence.

Perhaps because of that...

Zeus once again expressed his dissatisfaction with the Lightning Bolt he had created.

"Not that great either."

Zeus's ability to control his Arcane Power was astonishing, even to YuWon.

The Lightning Bolt he created was a technique of a difficulty level incomparable to the Mana Orb.

Zeus was the creator of that technique and still several steps ahead of YuWon in handling Lightning Bolt. Hence, it was natural for Zeus to be unsatisfied with creating such a rough and large Lightning Bolt.

"Launch it."

"Don't order me."

Boom!

Despite his words, Zeus threw the spear with all his might.

Downward, beneath the clouds.

Toward Ananta's head.

Flash!

Boom!

A pillar of Blue Lightning Bolt rose above Ananta's head, making the world seem to freeze for a moment.

Kyaaaaah!

Ananta's heads screamed.

The Yellow Lightning Bolt flowing from his body clashed with the Blue Lightning Bolt.

In the midst of the struggle, a Lightning Bolt shot out from the mouth of one of the heads that raised its head.

Boom!

A hole opened in the cloud where YuWon and Zeus stood.

Both fell to the ground.

Ananta stared at them, his eyes gleaming.

"Is that the power you gained by killing our brothers?"

His reaction wasn't so much anger at being struck by the spear but rather surprise at discovering the true nature of Zeus's power.

"That's right."

"What, that reaction...?"

Ananta, who had been looking at Zeus, was surprised.

Golden Lightning Bolt occasionally mixed with the Blue Lightning Bolt.

Upon discovering it, Ananta realized why a Ranker of Zeus's caliber had such unstable control.

"It seems you took that from someone too."

Boom!

Bang!

Ananta's tail lunged toward Zeus's head. At the same time, another Blue Lightning Bolt spear formed in Zeus's hand as he jumped upward.

"But unlike other monsters, it seems your head is quite rotten."

"Those are arrogant words. Originally, intelligence was granted to us, the Dragons, before to you."

"That's an outdated way of thinking."

Boom!

Explosions of Lightning Bolt erupted between Ananta and Zeus. Zeus threw spears and stabbed Ananta's heads with them, while the thousand heads cornered Zeus.

While Zeus was engaged with Ananta, YuWon headed towards where Hercules had rescued Son OhGong.

"Are you okay?"

Son OhGong, crumpled like a dried squid after being electrocuted, looked up at YuWon from the ground.

"I could have escaped on my own."

"Then you would have become another monster's meal again."

Son OhGong's eyes flickered at YuWon's response.

"'Again,' you say?"

That word implied that YuWon knew something similar had happened before.

"Don't you remember? Don't you have ears?"

"Ugh..."

"Then why risk your life in a battle you can't win?"

"Running away would be even more pathetic."

"Being trapped on Flower and Fruit Mountain was embarrassing enough for you."

"Damn it! Why bring that up again?"

Son OhGong, trying to get up in one swift motion, frowned. Even with his resilient body, this time it seemed like it would take him some time to recover.

"Kugh... Instead, is it okay if we leave him with that guy?"

Hercules, YuWon, and even the Bull Demon King, who looked exhausted, gathered around Son OhGong.

Ananta was a monster. From Shub-Niggurath and Yog-Sothoth, it was the first time he felt such a overwhelming power difference while fighting something.

However...

"You see."

Kwa-rung!

Zeus pierced Ananta's head with the tip of his spear.

"Is he okay or not?"

"...Oh."

Son OhGong scratched his head awkwardly after confirming the battle between Zeus and Ananta.

"Have you forgotten what power that guy has?"

"Who?"

"...It seems like you really forgot. I'm talking about Indra."

"Ah, right."

Son OhGong nodded as if he finally remembered.

Indra.

The being who wrote the first Myth in this Tower, known as the Dragon Slayer.

His power was naturally the nemesis of Ananta, a member of the Dragon Race.

YuWon left Ananta in Zeus's hands for the moment. He trusted that Zeus, with the power that was the nemesis of the Dragon Race, could handle it properly.

"For now, let's focus on catching Ananta."

Zeus, with a long spear in hand, swung it towards Ananta's head.

Heads stabbed and pierced.

Zeus's and Ananta's heads collided several times in a row.

Bang, kwa-rung!

Crack, crack!

The Blue and Golden Lightnings Bolts clashed without merging.

Zeus's brows furrowed.

No matter how much he thought about it, he couldn't understand why he was here doing this.

'This really isn't my thing.'

His role was to be the leader.

Since long before the founding of Olympus, he had always been in command on the battlefield, finalizing battles from the rear.

So, why him...?

"Buy some time."

Pzzt.

Why was he following the orders of that guy?

Zeus didn't like this situation.

Of course, he knew the reason.

'Because that guy has information about Ananta.'

The more you know about the enemy, the easier the strategy.

That was an immutable truth for any opponent.

Of course, he wouldn't have believed it if it were someone else. But when it came to YuWon, things were different.

"I don't like it, I don't like it..."

Thuuud!

A Lightning Bolt burst in Zeus's hand.

At that moment...

"So, you're the King of Players."

Ananta, realizing Zeus's true identity, acknowledged the source of his power.

"Do you know me?"

Zeus didn't recognize Ananta. There were barely any records about him in Olympus, and Zeus wasn't so idle as to worry about a monster sealed long ago.

However, the opponent knows.

"Zeus. An arrogant one who calls himself God and Lord of the Sky."

From the moment he awakened his consciousness, Ananta had been observing the world with the eyes and ears of all monsters.

Also, the new Guilds born in the Tower.

The war against the Outers and the peace that followed.

That's why Ananta, although it was the first time he saw his face, could tell that the being in front of him was Zeus.

"The bloodline of Uranus. Yes. Now it makes sense. If you're his descendant, then..."

Uranus.

A being that existed in the same era as Ananta and possessed power similar to a monster.

If he was of his lineage, then Zeus's power made sense.

"You're wrong."

Craaack-le-!

Denying Ananta's words, Zeus raised the tip of his finger.

"I'm not anyone's bloodline. I'm not anyone's son, brother, or father."

Only he can define himself.

Crack, crack-.

Having said that, Zeus slowly approached Ananta.

"Don't dare to define me that way. Besides, I'm not the King of Players."

The dark clouds floating in the sky stirred.

Ananta's heads raised to look above the clouds.

Kurrur-.

An overwhelming Arcane Power that overwhelmed Ananta.

From Zeus's lips emanated confidence beyond arrogance.

"I am the King of the World."

Slowly, his hand descended.

And in that next moment...

Flash!

A huge Lightning Bolt, mixed with Blue and Golden Lightnings Bolts, fell upon Ananta.

[Divine Punishment]

BAAAAAANG!

Chapter 575

Side Story 51

A pillar of Blue and Yellow Lightning Bolts rose towards the sky.

The blackened rocks turned into dust and vanished, leaving a circular hole as if the clouds had been cleanly cut.

For a while, the sight and sound were devoured by the Lightning Bolt.

As the sound of the Lightning Bolt continued incessantly, Zeus stood at the center watching Ananta fall to the ground.

Craack-le~

The valley after the Divine Punishment was unrecognizable.

The surrounding topography had changed.

The massive crater was too deep to measure its depth, and its extent was large enough to erase several cities from the map.

The group, riding on Son OhGong's Flying Nimbus, hurriedly took refuge in the sky.

YuWon frowned as he looked at the hole below.

"It seems like he still doesn't think about the team."

That's why YuWon had put Zeus at the forefront instead of Hercules.

It was true that Indra's power was the nemesis of Ananta, but, in the first place, Zeus was not the type to fight as a team.

Lightning was the attribute type with the highest rank among many. And Zeus was the pinnacle of existence in that type of Lightning.

Maybe if his control had been perfect as always, but when using Indra's Arcane Power, it was impossible to control the range.

"...I've only heard about it, but it's the first time seeing it in person."

That was the Bull Demon King's comment as he observed the changed terrain from the Flying Nimbus.

"How many Myths has that guy written?"

The Myths created by Zeus were countless.

Rank 1.

That was the reason he was the greatest being in the Tower.

It was all thanks to the overwhelming power now manifesting before his eyes.

"There are probably countless ones. That guy has lived for that."

At YuWon's response, the Bull Demon King's gaze turned to him.

A vaguely familiar face.

"Do we know each other?"

"Let's say we do. In this situation."

"Right. I guess it's better if we move as a team."

He seemed to have a good relationship with Son OhGong. Moreover, YuWon had appeared here alongside Zeus and Hercules.

He couldn't have interfered in this game if he lacked the ability.

"Let's trust him."

While Zeus bought time, the Bull Demon King, who had already recovered considerably, stood up and stood on the Flying Nimbus.

Feeling strangely cheerful despite the situation.

"It's similar to when I met that guy, OhGong."

A guy he could trust and believe in.

Somehow, he even had the illusion that he would never lose.

"It could have ended already. After taking a direct hit from that."

That was Hercules' evaluation, who had witnessed Zeus's ability with his own eyes.

Divine Punishment.

Among the abilities Zeus could use, it was the most powerful technique.

Especially the Divine Punishment unfolding before his eyes was the most formidable Hercules had seen so far.

There was no way anyone could survive such a thing.

"It's not over."

"It's not over."

YuWon and the Bull Demon King responded at the same time.

In the face of Hercules' expression of doubt, Son OhGong laughed and added:

"If it ended with something like that, I wouldn't have gone through so much trouble."

Three people sure that it wasn't over.

And as expected...

Kyaaaaah!

Zzzt, zzzt.

Ananta's roar echoed from the bottom of the huge crater.

Pat-.

"It's starting to get interesting," YuWon muttered as he checked his Player Kit and jumped down from the Flying Nimbus.

"Also from here."

Craack-le~

Electricity ran through Zeus's body.

An uncontrollable manifestation of his last strength. Without a change of expression, a drop of sweat ran down Zeus's forehead and slid down his chin.

Flutter~

Ananta spread its wings and rose, revealing its form.

Uncommon gaps were seen between its thousands of heads.

Heads disintegrated by the Divine Punishment.

"Is your talent only brute resistance?"

"That can't be."

Roar~

Ananta folded its wings and lowered its body.

"Now I'll show you."

Ananta's golden pupils injected with blood.

Its lowered body quickly shrank, condensing the demonic energy that formed its massive being.

"Where to?"

Swoosh~

Not knowing its intentions, Zeus didn't let it be.

With no time to create a Lightning Bolt, he quickly launched a blue electric attack with two fingers towards Ananta.

Using every last drop of his remaining Arcane Power.

Rumble!

Thunder resonated on the ground as the Blue Lightning Bolt enveloped Ananta's body.

And then...

"You have an impatient personality, don't you?"

Thud, thud~

Unkempt yellow hair covering his eyes, bronze skin,

A tall man with a mischievous smile.

Zeus frowned at the man who appeared suddenly.

"Ananta?"

"Quick reflexes."

His smiling and carefree face contrasted with the monster he had fought before.

"Thanks to you, I lost some precious heads. I should at least thank you."

Zeus's Divine Punishment had taken more than a hundred of its heads.

Ananta's heads symbolized the magnitude of its power, so the loss was significant.

Of course, for Zeus, who had tried to finish him off with the previous attack, the result was not satisfactory.

"Is that your true form?"

"Who knows."

"...Doesn't matter."

Swoosh~

Zeus turned around.

Ananta looked in perplexity at the back Zeus presented to him.

"What...?"

Boom!

A swift fist hit him.

Bang!

Ananta's body staggered backward from the explosion of Lightning Bolt before its eyes.

Chrrr~

Ananta, who stopped firmly on the ground, looked at the man who had thrown the punch.

"Your body is small, but still heavy."

Hercules, with sore wrists from such a strong punch for a long time.

At that moment, Son OhGong and the Bull Demon King arrived on the Flying Nimbus from behind Ananta.

"I'm already recovered, idiot!"

Son OhGong, with a fierce look, rushed towards Ananta without hesitation, extending his Ru Yi Bang.

And in that instant...

"You could stay on the ground a bit longer."

Crunch~

Ananta grabbed Son OhGong by the head.

In the moment Son OhGong raised his head, surprised by a speed even the Golden Cinder Eyes couldn't follow, Ananta's palm covered his face.

Bang!

Ananta was sent flying at the same time.

The Bull Demon King's Mixed Iron Rod, who was next to Son OhGong, forcefully struck Ananta.

"Isn't this a familiar situation?"

The Bull Demon King, supporting the Mixed Iron Rod on his shoulder, looked at Ananta.

"This time, you'll be sealed again, Ananta."

"If you're going to seal me, you should have brought a million people like last time."

Ananta with a confident expression. Without hesitation, he ran towards Son OhGong and the Bull Demon King.

Kwaang, kwang-!

Every time Ananta's fist extended, thunder sounded.

Son OhGong and the Bull Demon King. And then Hercules joined them, cornering Ananta.

On top of that...

Baang-!

Along with the distant thunder, a Blue Lightning Bolt pierced through Ananta's shoulder.

"Not even ten are necessary."

Zeus.

He had returned to his position and was keeping his distance, acting as an archer. Although he couldn't launch as powerful a Lightning Bolt as before since he was fighting as a team.

Knowing Zeus's power, Ananta was forced to be cautious in his movements to avoid Zeus's spear.

"It doesn't matter."

Ananta ran towards Hercules, blocking him directly. Hercules clicked his tongue seeing Ananta running towards him, ignoring the spear stuck in his body.

"How foolish."

In close combat, no one could keep up with Hercules's pace.

[The Giant's strength resides in your entire body.]

[The power of 'Gigantomachy' resides in your body.]

The Arcane Power residing in Hercules's body. The power of Gigantomachy focused in his clenched fist and was launched towards Ananta.

Kwaang-!

Craack-!

"...!"

A Lightning Bolt exploded between Hercules and Ananta. Hercules looked wide-eyed at Ananta's fist that didn't retreat.

'This guy, his strength...'

A strength that even he couldn't reject head-on.

Hercules had been deceived by his external appearance and had forgotten for a moment.

His opponent was Ananta.

The fact that he was a giant monster with a thousand Dragon heads.

Jump-!

Ananta jumped high in the air the moment he clashed fists with Hercules.

Flutter~

Immediately, his wings spread on his back.

"What...?"

"Are you going to run away?"

It was impossible for Ananta to choose to flee instead of fighting.

Faced with the unexpected situation, Son OhGong and the Bull Demon King moved quickly.

They rushed to jump into the sky to chase Ananta, but...

Flutter-.

Wings blocked the path of Son OhGong and the Bull Demon King.

Vritra, who had been subdued by Son OhGong, had awakened and blocked their way.

-You cannot pass.

Grrrrrrr-.

Vritra gritted his teeth and exhaled fire, gathering his last strength.

Unable to pass over him just like that, the Bull Demon King looked at Son OhGong and reproached him.

"Hadn't you cut his throat?"

"I wasn't interested in a guy who couldn't fight..."

"It's my fault for entrusting it to you."

The Bull Demon King sighed deeply.

As much as they hurried to defeat Vritra, it was now difficult to pursue Ananta, who had decided to escape.

Just when Ananta was about to escape from the battlefield...

Shrak-!

Space tore in front of Ananta, revealing a black world.

"How annoying."

Ananta, who thought everything was over, frowned.

"...Was there one more?"

A man with black hair.

In YuWon's hand was gripped a young man with messy gray hair.

"Gandharva?"

A faithful follower of Ananta.

The mist, which no one had been able to catch, was now like a mirage in YuWon's hands.

"You can't pass."

A black glow emanated from the cold ring on his right hand, the "Uranus Heart."

"Neither you nor this guy."

Fwhaaaah-!

The space where YuWon was...

The Arcane Power emanating from Tartarus enveloped Ananta.

[Tartarus Prison is binding the target]

Ananta's eyes widened at the power emanating from YuWon.

For a brief moment, a long time ago.

The face of a great Ranker freely wielding the power of Tartarus and Lightning Bolt overlapped with his own.

"...Was it you? The one who created this board."

The true possessor of Uranus's power was before his eyes.

Zeus was only a torso.

The true head moving that torso was the black-haired man in front of him.

Craaaaaack-!

Ananta, with electricity running through his entire body, glowed with golden eyes.

Bang-!

Ananta jumped into Tartarus's prison. Thick darkness enveloped Ananta's body.

The glow of Lightning Bolt illuminated the darkness, and two attributes from different vertices collided.

Crack-!

Fwhaaaah-.

Failed to escape in one blow.

Behind him, Vritra's cry was heard.

The Rankers, including Son OhGong, would probably arrive soon.

"We can't afford a calm fight."

The time Vritra could gain was only one minute.

Ananta decided upon seeing YuWon unsheathe his sword.

'I'll deliver some heads.'

Chapter 576

Side Story 52

Hwaaaak-!

Ananta's hands reached forward, tearing through the darkness of Tartarus.

It was a sight that was hard to believe even for the eyes.

Darkness was an attribute with corrosive properties.

And among those attributes of darkness, Tartarus was undoubtedly at the top.

And now, this being was literally pushing Tartarus' darkness with brute force.

'He's not taking care of his body at all.'

Not even Hercules had fought in such a reckless manner.

Regardless of the urgency of the situation, this being was willing to risk his life to get closer to YuWon.

'Or maybe, he has another intention-.'

A fleeting thought.

YuWon swung his sword against Ananta, who had come within close range and was now aiming at his throat.

A clean cut.

His goal was to split his body in two with a single stroke.

However...

"What...?"

Ananta didn't dodge YuWon's sword.

That was strange.

He should have been cut in two.

[Golden Cinder Eyes is analyzing the target]

[Sensory Field is reading the target's movements]

[Eyes of Foreknowledge is activated]

He had been using these abilities to prepare for any unexpected variables.

And all those abilities were telling him the same thing.

In that brief moment, the tip of his sword, now wavering, would cleanly cut Ananta's body in two.

So, he shouldn't hesitate.

Indeed, the opponent might be playing with that hesitation.

At this moment, he had only one thing to do.

'Cut.'

Sssaaa-.

YuWon's sword, infused with the Arcane Power of Tartarus, cut through Ananta's body.

His body split cleanly in two.

Even YuWon himself, who had wielded the sword, was surprised by the outcome.

'What just happened-.'

Clearly, everything had happened just as predicted by Golden Cinder Eyes and Eyes of Foreknowledge.

However, now that he saw it with his own eyes, he couldn't help but feel a sense of bewilderment.

Only then did YuWon understand why Ananta had resorted to such a reckless tactic.

"...So that's it."

And in the next moment.

The right half of Ananta's cut body passed by YuWon like a beam of light.

"We will meet again. Without a doubt."

Flash-!

Ananta disappeared behind YuWon.

YuWon could only smirk ironically as he watched his escape.

He had decided to flee.

'Can this be considered smart?'

YuWon believed he had taken into account Ananta's abilities and strength.

He had even contemplated the possibility of Ananta seeking to escape if he found an opportunity.

However,

'I thought he would fight to the end from the beginning.'

Ananta had the ability to fight.

And most importantly, he didn't know YuWon.

At this moment, his name and identity had been erased.

Despite that...

'Maybe my mistake was trying to catch him too securely.'

Zeus, Hercules, Son OhGong.

The top three ranks of the Tower were gathered. And on top of that, the Bull Demon King.

It was a force too powerful to be gathered in one place.

At that moment, YuWon thought that if he joined them, they could easily subdue Ananta, who had just been released from the seal.

However, that had turned out to be a mistake.

A situation outside of his calculations.

Yuwon lowered his gaze to the sword he still held.

'This wasn't a cut; it was an abandonment.'

There was no sensation of a cut.

What he had seen with the Eyes of Foreknowledge was not a scene of him cutting Ananta, but a scene of Ananta detaching a part of himself.

'Even if that's the case...'

Gripping the sword tighter, YuWon muttered with a sarcastic voice.

"I have become careless."

He needed to reflect.

If this had been ten years ago, he was sure this situation wouldn't have happened.

First of all, he would have created a net to prevent Ananta from escaping, and he would have prepared more personnel to deploy a Celestial Net.

"Focus."

The only thing he had achieved in this time was one thing.

"Kim YuWon."

Click.

Self-reflection.

That was the only thing he had achieved.

Basement of a mansion located in the city center.

Sss-.

A bright light shone in the dimly lit underground storage.

Ananta appears.

Staggering for a moment to regain balance, he looked up at his arm.

"I've lost a lot."

An arm that had become murky.

Because he had lost half, even keeping his body upright wasn't easy.

Plop-.

Puff-.

Dust rose as he sat on the couch lying in the storage.

A storage without a hint of light.

Ananta, hidden there, muttered with an ironic smile.

"I'm finally free, but I'm in this state."

Not in his wildest dreams would he have imagined that the first thing he would do after breaking free from the seal would be to sit on a dusty couch.

"Vritra, Gandharva..."

Ananta frowned as he remembered the two who had moved to protect him.

"Those idiots."

His opponents were not easy. Zeus, who possessed the power of Indra, as well as Son OhGong, the Bull Demon King, and Hercules, were not simple opponents either.

And besides them, there was that strange guy whose name he didn't even know.

Fizz-.

Anger seized him.

It wasn't because of the death of Vritra and Gandharva, his two loyal subordinates.

"I've lost too many heads."

A thousand heads.

That was the number of power symbolized by Ananta.

However, Ananta had lost many heads in this battle.

And on top of that, he was weakened because he had just come out of the seal.

That's why losing more than half of his heads bothered him because it made him feel miserable.

Crunch-.

Whoosh-.

And at that moment, a man with a torch entered the basement.

Upon discovering Ananta, he jumped back in surprise.

"You, who are you?"

It was a middle-aged man with a belly, resembling a noble.

It was unclear what business he had in the warehouse, but his hurried steps urged the man to leave.

"You don't look appetizing, but oh well."

Crack-.

The arm that had transformed into a dragon's head opened its mouth toward the man.

"Now is not the time to be picky."

Bam-!

Blood splattered alongside the torch that fell to the ground.

After briefly satiating his hunger, Ananta reclined on the sofa and licked his lips.

Insatiable hunger.

To satisfy it, not even devouring thousands or tens of thousands of humans like the one he had just eaten would be enough.

"So, now, who should I hold responsible..."

The Olympus was the Guild that had influence throughout the Tower. Not only did the Olympus branches on each floor mobilize, but also Hermes' thieves.

"No special movements."

Zeus muttered disinterestedly.

Ananta didn't show himself easily. He had hidden so well that, no matter how much they searched, they hadn't received any news of him for several days. It was such a silent silence that one could even think he was dead.

However, one thing was certain: Ananta was not dead.

[Eradicate the Monster King Ananta.]

[Monster King Ananta is in a weakened state.]

[Monster statistics increase slightly.]

Ananta weakened. As he weakened, the statistics of the monsters existing in the Tower also weakened compared to before. Fortunately, thanks to that, the Tower's ecosystem didn't completely collapse.

No matter how much the statistics of the monsters increased, there were already many Rankers in the tower.

However...

"With time, that guy will grow bigger."

Ananta's ability was predation. He became stronger as he devoured something with power. No matter what it was. Players, monsters, if given time, Ananta would soon regain his original strength.

"What do you think?"

Zeus turned his head and asked YuWon. YuWon was the only person he could ask for an opinion. The world considered Zeus a despotic tyrant, but that was only because there was no one more competent than him.

Asking for an opinion. That meant Zeus recognized YuWon as a being existing in the same world as him.

"...It's my mistake."

Zeus frowned at YuWon's words. That response was not what he had asked.

"It's not about who's right or wrong. And if you think about it, everyone who was there is to blame."

YuWon nodded at Zeus's simple and straightforward answer.

The remorse that if he had been more prepared, the outcome would have been different.

The tension's absence that arose with the Outers' disappearance.

If self-reproach is prolonged, it turns into melancholy. During the last few days, YuWon had sharpened the knife of his heart, which was deeper than the sheath.

Back to square one.

"It's a bit strange."

"What do you mean?"

"It's too quiet."

"It's strange, even the Monkey who was there with you knows it. What do you mean?"

In the face of Zeus's insistence, YuWon spoke of his assumptions.

Zeus's eyebrows furrowed at the vague story.

"It's plausible, but..."

"For now, we should wish that guy moves like that."

"Are you saying we should pray?"

"For now."

At that moment, a purple-colored energy swirled in YuWon's pupils.

A gaze that gave a chilling sensation.

Although he said he would only observe, he wasn't prepared for that. Zeus realized that something had changed in YuWon as a result of this incident.

"Your eyes have returned."

"My eyes?"

"Maybe letting that guy escape was a gain. Thanks to that, your mind, which was clouding over with peace, has returned."

"I can't refute that."

YuWon nodded with an ironic smile. It was true.

Until recently, YuWon had been thinking that the main reason he let Ananta escape was himself.

However, he had finished reflecting.

"The time for reflection is over. Next time, I'll catch him for sure."

['The Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young' is looking for 'Ananta'].

['Goat 218' is looking for the target]

['Goat 102' is looking for the target]

['Goat 591' is sleepy]

['Goat 24'...]

The messages echoed in his ears.

The goats he had released to find Ananta had turned into thousands of eyes, transmitting information to YuWon.

The problem was the intelligence of the goats.

"How can they mistake a yellow lizard for a dragon?"

"That's not a dragon, it's a lizardman."

"That's just a rock."

"...If you're sleepy, go to sleep."

YuWon rubbed his temples in frustration and closed his eyes for a moment.

It seemed that finding Ananta with these foolish goats was going to be difficult.

In the end, it seemed that he would have to rely on Zeus and the rest of Olympus to find him.

"Anyway, keep looking for Ananta for now. Until we catch him, continue with what you were doing."

"Understood. But there's a guest waiting for you for quite some time."

"A guest for me?"

YuWon pointed to himself with his finger and asked.

It was strange.

Very few remembered him.

Apart from Zeus, who was in front of him, only Son OhGong, Hercules, and Pandora remembered him.

And now a guest?

"It's a Deva guy. He was looking for you eagerly."

"Which Deva-."

At that moment, a face appeared in his mind.

He had forgotten about him.

In addition to his former comrades, there was another person who remembered him.

"Hyung-nim!"

A handsome man limping towards YuWon, sobbing.

It was Varuna, running towards YuWon with all his might.

Chapter 577

Side Story 53

Varuna, in front of YuWon, sobbed for a while.

It wasn't a pleasant sight, with snot and all.

"Hey."

"I've been here...sniff... all this time... sniff-"

"Blow your nose. Depressing..."

Though YuWon felt like kicking him, he couldn't.

Even though Varuna was acting pathetic, kicking someone crying so sadly...

"...I'll give you a minute."

Yuwon would wait one more minute, and if he didn't calm down, he would send him back where he came from.

Counting 60 seconds in his mind, Varuna finally removed the hands clutching YuWon's legs and wiped his nose with the back of his hand.

Disgusting.

Varuna seemed to have finally calmed down and stopped sobbing.

"I missed you, Hyung-nim."

"Since when am I your Hyung-nim?"

"Isn't it since the moment I remembered you?"

"Ha."

Yuwon felt like they had a similar conversation before.

However, they were once comrades.

Although the power difference was significant, Varuna survived until the end in the battle against the Outers.

"Younger brother..."

Instead, he would prefer to call him a friend.

"Don't call me older brother (Hyung-nim)."

"But-"

"Treat me as a friend. It's much easier."

"Friend...?"

Eyes wide open. Tears welled up again in his bright eyes, and he knelt before YuWon.

"I'm touched by your kindness, Hyung-nim! But how can I dare? I am..."

Varuna couldn't finish his sentences. He seemed deeply moved by the suggestion of being treated as a friend.

"I'll serve you as Hyung-nim for the rest of my life!"

"You're driving me crazy."

There was no reasoning with him.

In the end, resigned, YuWon looked at Zeus.

"Why him?"

"I brought him here because he was desperately looking for you."

"Isn't that the only reason?"

Not many could set foot in this place.

Within Olympus, only Hades and Hercules could do so, and besides them, permission from Zeus was required.

There was no way Zeus would invite an external Ranker to the deepest part of the Celestial Palace just because he was looking for YuWon.

"He has a request."

"Request?"

Yuwon looked at Varuna.

Varuna, seeing their eyes meet again, hurriedly knelt.

"Please, save Deva."

It was the request YuWon was expecting.

Deva.

A Great Guild that had lost its center with Vishnu's death.

There was no need to investigate to know how the situation was there.

"I asked Athena to bring him here. Go in and check for yourself."

"No need to go out. It must be chaos."

Varuna's eyes stirred at YuWon's words.

Chaos.

It was a vulgar word, but there was no other that described Deva better at this moment.

"The absence of Vishnu. There is no easier place for Administrators to meddle than in a guild without a leader."

Vishnu was Deva's God.

The Myth of Vishnu was deeply rooted in Deva.

Vishnu, Shiva, Brahma.

Three absolute entities born from a single individual, Vishnu, had controlled Deva's Rankers with different personalities.

Overwhelming individual power that dominated a group.

This world was a place where that was possible.

And that also meant that Devas couldn't be controlled without Vishnu.

"Are you saying you were a target?"

"That's what it seems. And this time, it's been proven."

Varuna nodded at YuWon's words.

Thanks to Olympus' support, Varuna was here. Otherwise, he wouldn't have been able to make it.

Due to Vayu and Surya's betrayal, Varuna and Agni were in a critical situation.

"There must be more, probably."

Vayu and Surya had moved.

Only those two?

It was madness.

"...Yes, I think so too."

Varuna also had the same idea.

They wouldn't have acted so boldly only the two of them.

Someone else was involved.

Devas, as YuWon had said, were in a pitiful state.

"Did you get anything?"

"I captured Surya. Vayu escaped."

Zeus shrugged.

"That Surya didn't seem to know anything."

"Is the interrogation over?"

"I asked my brother. But the fact that she didn't talk must mean it's true."

Without Poseidon, Zeus only had one brother.

Hades.

The second in command of Olympus and the king who ruled the 42nd Floor world, Hell.

He was a being who, despite belonging to Olympus, followed a completely independent path.

The army of Hell belonged to Hades, and he had the ability to make the living experience death.

"Then it must be true."

"There's nothing more to get out of her."

The gaze turned to YuWon. It could be predicted what would come next. A premonition of a tedious task.

"You go."

As expected.

"You're asking me to do something annoying."

"Separate from Pandora for a while. She attracts too much attention."

Yuwon knew why this guy asked him to do this.

No one was more suitable for this task than him.

'No one will recognize me there, so it's natural.'

It was certain that the Devas were corrupted.

With Vishnu's death, they had become the prime target of the Administrators.

The problem was where the rot was. And how extensive it was.

'So he brought me here for this.'

There was no way Zeus brought YuWon here solely based on Varuna's request.

He brought him here because Varuna's request aligned with his own desires.

In other words, it was both Varuna's and Zeus's request.

Of course...

"You're not hesitating, are you? Anyway, if it weren't for Ananta, your next destination would have been that."

Zeus brought YuWon here because he knew YuWon's purpose.

YuWon let out a sigh.

It wasn't due to hard work or fatigue.

It was something he was going to do anyway.

The real issue was another.

"Pandora will make a fuss if she finds out..."

The shadow under the tree.

Yama, asleep inside it, had been silent for a long time, waiting for Varuna's contact.

Although upon learning of the betrayal of Surya and Vayu, he wanted to cut their throats immediately.

A message stopped him.

[Varuna: Wait a bit longer. I will go with you to find my Hyung-nim.]

Hyung-nim.

He didn't know when they became brothers, but he could roughly guess who the "Hyung-nim" Varuna was talking about was.

Kim YuWon.

It was hard to believe the truth Varuna told him about him.

The being who led the fight against the Outers and led Inner to victory.

However, the world had forgotten him.

It's hard to accept.

If Varuna had told him this suddenly one day, he would have treated him like a madman.

But...

'Even if Vishnu doesn't care...'

Tiriring-.

A message arrived from Varuna.

[Varuna: Do you believe me?]

A message like any other. Yama stared at the message on his Player Kit and forced a smile to hide his wrinkled expression.

Believe in you?

A womanizing and foolish guy.

In general, it was better to do the opposite of what this guy thought.

But this time was different.

I am believing in Vishnu and the guy Vishnu was looking for, Kim YuWon.

Currently, Kim YuWon is active under the name Kim YuHun.

Yama knew the rumors about his deeds in the Celestial Realm.

There are still many who doubt him.

Most say it's impossible for an unranked Player to defeat an Administrator, and it's just made-up rumors.

It's understandable.

After all, the name "Kim YuHun" is still not registered in the rankings.

However, that guy, Kim YuWon...

Swish-.

Varuna was approaching from afar to the meeting place. And behind him, as expected, was a black-haired man with an unfamiliar face.

'Is he really going to do this?'

He had been warned beforehand, but he still had his doubts.

Yama didn't know if it was possible or not.

'Can I really trust him?'

Swoosh-.

Yama emerged from the shadows.

Varuna, who hadn't noticed him, was surprised, but YuWon's gaze fixed on Yama from under the tree's shadow.

"He's called Yama."

"How should I introduce you? As Kim YuWon or Kim YuHun?"

"Whichever you prefer."

Yama shook the hand YuWon extended. He looked around in case there were other eyes.

"It seems you have a sharp eye."

"The gaze of the Administrators is everywhere. Considering that our enemies are them, there's nothing wrong with being cautious."

He wasn't wrong. The Administrators who control countless Envoys. Their eyes and ears, scattered throughout the Tower, were countless.

"I wish I could hide in the shadows with you..."

"Then it's done."

"...?"

What does he mean by "done"?

The appearance of a black light in YuWon's hand was just after the question arose in Yama's mind.

Fizz! Zzzzt!

Space opened.

A world of darkness where nothing is seen, but where countless things exist.

"Yes, follow me both of you."

"What...?"

Zzzzaaa!

That space absorbed Varuna and Yama.

[You are invited to "Tartarus"]

[You cannot refuse]

Everything was black around them.

However, it wasn't as if there was nothing.

'Dead? No, are they alive?'

Entities impossible to discern if they were alive or dead.

Their gazes watched them without exception.

None was particularly powerful, but their number was countless.

Did they ignore their gazes or know them?

"Does Hyung-nim also know how to do this? Not even an Administrator could find us here."

Varuna simply nodded, fascinated, as he looked around.

'Can't he see them? Can't he feel them?'

Unlike Varuna, who just trusted and followed YuWon without knowing anything.

This space had a different meaning for Yama.

'It's the first time I've felt such a profound Arcane Power.'

Yama, who mastered Dark Arcane Power, felt as if he were suffocating under the almost infinite Arcane Power emanating from this place.

And YuWon himself, who had led them to Tartarus...

"You're right. They won't be able to find us here."

He responded nonchalantly, nodding at Varuna's words.

"Neither the Envoys. Nor the Administrators."

YuWon's gaze turned to Yama as he uttered these words.

Yama's face turned pale.

Actually, there was no need to reach this point.

It wasn't necessary to go to Tartarus to avoid being detected by the Administrators, as Yama feared.

Even if their eyes were present throughout the Tower, couldn't they avoid the gazes of mere Envoys?

However, the reason YuWon had invited Yama to this place was one.

'He needed proof, right?'

It was because Yama had desired it.

-Uuuuhhh-.

-The living...

-Not allowed beings...

The infinite sinners of Tartarus swirled around Yama.

Yama went blank.

In no time, his eyes, corrupted by Tartarus, turned white.

"Eh? Yama? Hey! What's wrong with you?"

Varuna shook Yama urgently.

It would probably take him some time to wake up.

'I think I overdid it.'

Yuwon sighed, thinking that he had wasted time for nothing.

Chapter 578

Side Story 54

Consciousness rose from the dream.

"Ugh..."

Yama could finally breathe and opened his eyes.

At first, he saw nothing.

A dark sky and land.

Yama, hesitating, blinked several times.

Had he gone blind?

"You've awakened."

Yama felt relieved to see Varuna's face suddenly peering in.

"It's not the underworld, right?"

"Why the underworld all of a sudden?"

At Varuna's question, Yama turned his head to look for YuWon.

Seeing YuWon calmly reading a book, taken from his inventory, Yama shook his head.

"...I thought I was going to die."

If YuWon had wanted it, it would have been so.

Yama opened his eyes again and saw nothing around him.

Not the ghosts that filled this world until recently.

Not the sea of almost infinite Arcane Power.

He couldn't feel anything.

'They haven't disappeared.'

They were definitely here.

Simply, what they could see and feel depended on YuWon's will.

However, YuWon had deliberately shown Yama the reality of this place.

What was his intention?

Yama realized right away and approached YuWon.

"I apologize for doubting you."

YuWon looked away from the book he was reading and lifted his head at Yama's greeting with a bowed head.

Until recently, Yama doubted YuWon's existence.

It was natural, as Yama didn't remember YuWon.

But now, he could believe.

'Someone who wields such power...'

The one who controls the power of Tartarus.

Just for that, he was comparable to the highest-level High-Rankers.

YuWon nodded at Yama's greeting.

"It's not something you should apologize for."

"I feel better this way."

Varuna alternately looked at Yama and YuWon.

Not knowing what was going on, he blinked with a perplexed expression.

"What happened?"

"No. Nothing."

Yama tapped Varuna on the shoulder and shook his head. It was a hassle to explain, and there was no need to tell Varuna, who didn't doubt YuWon.

"How much time has passed?"

"About an hour."

"Fortunately, it didn't take that long."

Yama sighed in relief, worried that he might have caused some significant trouble.

One hour.

It wasn't much time. There was still enough time.

"Still, let's hurry. There are many places to contact."

"Hyung-nim, won't my sister (Pandora) scold you if you're late...?"

"Do you want to faint too?"

YuWon's eyes met Varuna's, and he closed his mouth.

Even if he wasn't very observant, he knew that YuWon was the reason why Yama suddenly fainted.

A place that has escaped the eyes of the Administrators.

Yama finally began to speak bluntly.

"There have been many eyes following me lately."

"Envoys?"

"Yes, that's also why I was being so careful."

Yama, who had been present at Vishnu's death.

He was the one with the highest loyalty to Vishnu than anyone.

In addition to Vishnu, he also had the highest rank among the Devas.

Of course, for the Administrators, that Yama guy could be nothing more than a thorn in the eye.

"Well then. We have two baits."

"Yes, that's right."

"Do you know all the contacts?"

"I know them, but..."

Yama looked at Varuna and continued:

"It's better if this guy does it. I've lived my whole life in Vishnu's shadow."

"Yes, that's true. No matter who contacts them."

"And if they're going to use me as bait..."

Yama, who had been pondering for a moment, nodded and continued:

"I'll roll up my sleeves and wield the scythe fervently."

Yama's eyes ignited with black fire. After Vishnu's death, he had become a warrior in his own right, not someone's shadow.

However...

"No need to exert yourself so much. What we need is not the scythe, but the name and the face."

"Eh?"

"I said bait, when did I say we would use him in combat?"

YuWon didn't have great feats in mind for Yama for now.

"First, we'll spread the bait."

Turning his gaze away from the puzzled Yama, YuWon gave instructions to Varuna:

"Say that Vishnu is alive."

A lie they couldn't avoid biting.

The name Vishnu, that was the bait.

A woman with pale skin and silky blue hair that reached her shoulders walked along the beach. She had come to listen to the sound of the waves breaking, but due to her disturbed mind, the sound merely passed through her ears.

"Vishnu-nim..."

She was looking at the message she had received from Varuna.

[Varuna: Vishnu-nim is alive.]

It was nonsensical.

Vishnu was dead.

Just by seeing that his name had disappeared from the Ranking, it was evident.

But, why all of a sudden?

[Varuna: Gather everyone at the indicated location in the message before noon ten days from now]

Even the time and place of the appointment were kindly indicated.

There was no response to the messages she sent asking what had happened.

"Is this guy crazy?"

Soma's expression wrinkled. She, one of the High-Rankers of Deva, was bewildered by Varuna's impulsive behavior.

Suddenly, he mentioned Vishnu's name and summoned the Deva Rankers. Although he was a High-Ranker who was among Deva's fingers, this was a bit over the top.

That means...

"Is it really true that Vishnu-nim is alive?"

If Varuna wasn't crazy, then this claim must be true.

While Soma was confused by the news of Vishnu's survival,

Splash~

Beneath the beach where Soma stood. The sand sank like an anthill, and an unexpected guest emerged from it.

"Have you heard the news, Soma?"

A man with brown hair and a body covered in fur.

With eyes like a beast and an appearance resembling a monkey, it was Hanuman, the Ranker mockingly known as The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal, on a budget.

"Yes, I've heard."

"Is this Varuna guy serious?"

"He's not answering my calls."

Soma's eyes, which had been fixed on Hanuman, narrowed.

"Something's going on."

"Is it really true? Vishnu-nim..."

Hanuman couldn't finish the sentence.

Soma observed Hanuman's reaction, and she shook her head.

"I don't know. Whether it's real or not."

"He had disappeared from the ranking, right?"

"You know we can't trust the Ranking now, right?"

"You're right... there might be another reason."

Upon hearing this, Soma pocketed the Player Kit again.

Soma: "For now, all we can do is gather. After all, this is a matter involving Vishnu-nim's name."

Vishnu.

Once again, she felt the weight that name carried in Deva.

Just with that name, the High-Rankers of Deva were uneasy.

They didn't know whether it was intentional or not, but as long as that name was in the message, they had no choice but to follow Varuna's words.

"Will Yama come?"

Hanuman asked cautiously.

At this, Soma's expression, which was looking out to sea, changed.

"That guy has been missing since Vishnu-nim's funeral."

Yama was Vishnu's shadow. Although he was the next in the Ranking after Vishnu, he didn't participate in Deva's management. Since Vishnu's funeral, he hadn't been seen.

Some Rankers who were friends with him searched for him, but they couldn't find any news.

"He'll come. Without a doubt."

Soma said with certainty.

No matter what others thought, Yama would definitely come. After all, he wouldn't hesitate to do anything for a matter related to Vishnu.

"...Really?"

Hanuman, who had been silent for a moment, looked out to sea just like Soma.

"It seems like we'll have to attend."

Probably, no Deva Ranker who received this message would stay still.

Of course, Varuna and Yama, but also Soma, Hanuman, Druva, Devavati, Gajendra...

It was certain that many named Deva Rankers would gather.

"Whether it's real or not."

And at that moment...

The numerous Rankers who received Varuna's message were having similar conversations, while harboring other thoughts inside.

The possibility of seeing Vishnu again.

Or maybe the opposite.

"If Vishnu is alive..."

71st Floor, Administrator's Office.

At the top of the colossal tower-like structure, the Administrator observed the events unfolding in Deva.

"Is it true?"

The Envoy standing in front of the Administrator, White Hand, shook his head.

"That's impossible, don't you think?"

"Yes, I suppose so. Some guys took care of that."

The Administrator, with a somber face, frowned in concern.

"But I can't help but worry."

The opponent was Vishnu. The strongest Ranker who had dominated the Tower for so many years. Although he had lost the first place to Zeus, he was a being who had enjoyed the pinnacle longer than anyone else.

"Do you think he's alive?"

"In case he is..."

It was inevitable to worry. In fact, he had tried to contact Varuna to verify the information, but for some reason, he couldn't.

Varuna had disappeared. Like Yama, he had managed to elude the Emisaries' surveillance.

'Is this Vishnu's doing?'

If that were the case, he had the capability to do so. Escaping the sight of the Envoys wouldn't be a difficult task for Vishnu.

"Even if it's just a possibility, if it's true..."

A cold light shone in the Administrator's eyes.

"This time, I have to cut his throat definitively."

The Administrator ordered White Hand to find Vishnu and Varuna at all costs. He also asked him to find out the relationship between Yama's disappearance and Vishnu.

Thus, while Vishnu's story was the main topic at the top of the Administrator's Office,

"He, hehe, he"

A cheerful and carefree murmur echoed, out of place in the Administrator's Office.

The Administrator, who was reclining in his chair, directed his gaze toward the source of the murmur.

Behind White Hand. A tan-skinned man was leaning against the wall, arms crossed, listening to the conversation.

"Who dares-?"

Fiit-.

The moment the messenger, White Hand, saw the man and was about to burst into anger.

Splash!

White Hand, with a red line on his neck, collapsed to the ground coughing blood.

White Hand.

He was the Chief Envoy of the 71st Floor. In other words, he was second in command to the Administrator on the 71st Floor.

And yet, his life had been extinguished in an instant.

Crunch~

The teeth devouring White Hand's corpse.

The Administrator recognized the man's identity by the Arcane Power emanating from him and his slitted pupils.

"Ananta...?"

Why did he appear here, who was said to have been freed from the seal and fled from The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal, and Zeus?

"What are you doing now? Isn't this different from what we agreed upon?"

"I've been thinking."

Crunch-.

Ananta approached the Administrator.

"I've come to the conclusion that there's no need for us to follow your orders."

The Administrators had released the seal on Ananta to confront the Rankers. They believed that with the power of the Monster King Ananta, even Olympus could be brought down.

However...

"Aren't you guys the more appetizing ones?"

Ananta's teeth, who had thought so, headed towards them.

Chapter 579

Side Story 55

Crunch, crunch-.

The teeth devoured the giant lying on the ground.

Ananta murmured, wiping blood from his mouth as the Administrator's gaze faded.

"Administrators have a bit strong taste, after all."

Craack, craack-le-.

The remnants of the electrical battle echoed throughout the office.

Tens of thousands of Envoys.

And the god who ruled them, the Administrator.

Ananta devoured both with an expression of ecstasy.

"This is how it should be."

He had finished savoring the administrator. He understood it right after awakening from the seal when he devoured him for the first time.

The power they possessed.

And beyond that, pure and unadulterated Arcane Power.

The ecstasy of tasting it was incomparable.

Kkeok-.

Soon, Ananta's head, which had devoured the administrator's body, was satiated.

"I'm done."

Chiji, chijiji-.

An uncontrolled lightning bolt erupted from Ananta's body as he stood up.

The feeling that his head, which had been annihilated, was filling up again.

He still had a long way to go to be complete, but if he continued devouring Administrators like this, he would surely recover his old heads, no, even more than that.

And when that time comes...

'I don't know his name, but I remember his face.'

Ananta remembered the black-haired man who had cut off hundreds of his heads at the last moment.

The man who used the power of Tartarus.

He exuded a dangerous aura.

"It's still not enough."

What he had seen at that moment was not all the power of Tartarus. He could feel that the man had an even greater power hidden. Otherwise, he wouldn't have desperately tried to escape, even sacrificing hundreds of heads.

"More, more. More than now."

Siiik-.

Lifting the corners of his blood-stained lips, Ananta walked through the hallway stained with the blood of the Envoys.

"I ate well, Administrator."

Floor 95.

A world devastated by Vishnu's death and the battle against the Administrator.

Now, in this world where Players no longer tread, new people began to appear, one by one.

"I didn't think I'd come back here."

This time, it was Soma who arrived. She frowned as she examined the map.

"Everything looks the same, where is it supposed to be?"

A forest full of trees. Even with a map, it didn't seem easy to find the way.

And while Soma looked at the map Varuna had given her...

"Are you lost?"

A man hung upside down from a tree like a bat.

"Druva?"

"It's been a long time, Soma."

Druva, one of Deva's High-Rankers, had also received Varuna's message and arrived at this place.

There was still quite some time left until the agreed-upon time.

However, Druva seemed to have arrived much earlier.

"You're quite absent-minded. How can't you find that?"

"What do you want me to do if all there is are trees?"

"Don't you see it?"

At Druva's words, Soma turned her head following his finger.

A tall-rising tree.

And on the thick trunk of that tree, it was written in large letters: "Here."

"What are the eyes for, then?"

"...Shut up."

Deva's Rankers, including Soma, gathered at the top of the tree.

A tree with many thick branches.

Soma looked at the tree breathlessly, reminding her of Yggdrasil, the World Tree.

"What's happening?"

"I should really call him Vishnu-nim..."

The tree rising through the clouds still brimmed with dense Arcane Power.

"I really don't know if he's still alive."

Although his name had disappeared from the Ranking, some in Deva still believed Vishnu was alive.

Soma was different.

She doubted. She didn't believe Vishnu could be alive.

She thought that even Vishnu wouldn't have escaped the eyes of the Administration Bureau.

However...

Sssh-

The air around Soma froze.

The air temperature changed according to the mood of a High-Ranker.

Druva, who was ahead, looked at Soma.

"Soma?"

Soma snapped out of it at his call.

"Ah, yes."

"Aren't you going...?"

"Let's go."

Soma, with an unchanged expression, as if nothing had happened.

"...We have to go."

She climbed the tree.

Thinking that maybe Vishnu would be waiting for them up there.

Tap, tap, tap.

Varuna shivered.

He could feel Soma's Arcane Power approaching from below.

Deva's Rankers were getting closer.

"Is it really okay to do this?"

"What do you want me to do about it?" Yama frowned at Varuna's frightened look, despite being the one who devised the plan.

It's true.

Even Yama himself couldn't be sure if this was right or not.

"Using Vishnu-nim's name as bait..."

His conscience bothered him as if a knife were being driven into his chest.

There was no other choice.

It was Vishnu, whom he had served and respected all his life. Yama and Varuna had lured Deva's Rankers to this place using Vishnu's name as bait.

"Where is my Hyung-nim?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know? He was supposed to come here!"

YuWon was the one who planned this.

Regardless of whether it was a good or bad idea, he gathered all the Rankers of Deva.

YuWon had used Vishnu's name as bait for them. But YuWon himself hasn't shown up at the meeting place.

"Are you going to keep depending on him?"

"No, it's not that..."

"Then snap out of it. If you don't, we'll be the ones losing."

"Ugh..."

Varuna groaned and lowered his head. Anyway, Yama closed his eyes and focused on the aura surrounding him.

"They're almost here."

The enormous tree created by Vishnu. Yama and Varuna stood, without even a chair, on top of this tree, closest to the sky.

And the first to arrive at that place was a woman with short white hair.

"It's been a long time, Devahuti."

"Yama-nim?"

Devahuti, a Deva Ranker who hadn't become High-Ranker but was close, opened her eyes in surprise to find Yama.

She knew Yama had disappeared, so she didn't expect to find him here, but she was surprised to see him.

"Is this your first time here, Yama-nim?"

"Yes."

"I knew you would come, but... so soon..."

Devahuti couldn't continue speaking.

'How much he must have missed Vishnu-nim...'

Devahuti's heart saddened.

Varuna and Yama didn't exchange a word.

Devahuti, observing both their behaviors, asked Varuna, who had sent the message:

"Isn't Vishnu-nim here?"

"Eh, eh?"

Varuna opened his eyes in surprise. Devahuti felt something strange in his bewildered expression.

"I'll tell you later."

"What do you mean by that?"

If Vishnu were really alive, he should appear immediately.

Varuna's response generated a different thought in Devahuti's mind.

'Maybe he plans to appear when everyone is gathered?'

A faint hope. Without a specific place to sit, Devahuti stood, observing the atmosphere.

Being a relatively low-ranking Ranker, she chose to remain silent.

However, the opposite happened.

"Hey, Varuna-!"

Smack!

As soon as he appeared, Hanuman reached out and grabbed Varuna by the neck without hiding his anger.

"What's going on? Is Vishnu-nim really alive?"

"H-Hanuman. Let go of me for a moment..."

"If you lied to me, I swear I'll with my own hands-!"

"Hanuman."

Sssaa-.

A shadow rose over Hanuman's body. With a chilling sensation in his throat, Hanuman stopped shaking Varuna by the neck and turned to Yama.

"Shut up and stay still there. Please."

"Y-Yama..."

The only person Hanuman, aside from Vishnu, feared was Yama.

The Shadow of Vishnu and the Deva known for being the most ruthless.

"If you're the one asking me..."

Yama was someone who could lose his mind and do anything when it came to Vishnu.

At this moment, the most important thing was to save his own skin.

"Phew-."

Varuna, finally released from Hanuman's grip, breathed a sigh of relief. If it hadn't been for Yama's intervention, this place would have been filled with people harassing him.

From that moment, Yama became Varuna's shield.

And so, the stage set by the two filled up.

Numerous Rankers inhabiting Deva gathered.

'All the big shots are here. Even Rankers from Medium Guilds with connections to Deva, all of them.'

The Rankers forming the core of the Guild. Their number seemed to easily surpass 200.

'It's really impressive when they gather like this.'

Devahuti felt again the true influence of Deva. Although Deva staggered due to Vishnu's recent death, Deva was Deva.

Along with Olympus and Asgard, it was one of the strongest Guilds dominating the Tower.

Varuna, under the growing attention, sweated cold without anyone noticing.

They all looked at him with curiosity for the news of Vishnu's survival.

'Varuna, you can do it. Make a face that seems as convincing as possible.'

As if he had a grave secret that he couldn't reveal. Keeping that expression was what Varuna had to do now.

However...

"What...? Eh?"

"Why is that guy here?"

Confused voices echoed.

Step by step, he approached.

An unexpected guest arrived at the place where Deva's Rankers were gathering.

"There are a lot of people gathered."

A man dressed in white greeted the Rankers of Deva gathered around him with a cheerful face. He shook his head from side to side and, finding Varuna and Yama, waved at them.

"Long time no see? Varuna. Yama."

Yama's hands trembled. He felt an overwhelming urge to run towards the man who was now in front of him and break his neck.

It couldn't be otherwise.

"...Vayu?"

He was responsible for attacking Deva along with Surya.

He was a traitor of Deva who had failed in his attempt to kill Varuna and had fled.

And at that moment...

Far from the tree, YuWon was watching the same face as Varuna.

The man dressed in white.

The moment he appeared in the place, the air around him changed.

'Is it Vayu?'

Yuwon had memorized the faces of the main Rankers of Deva.

Furthermore, he also knew from Varuna that he was a traitor to Deva.

'This becomes more interesting.'

Yuwon's eyes lit up.

['Golden Cinder Eyes' discern the truth from lies.]

Yuwon's view widened, and he could see at a glance the expressions of the Deva Rankers confused by Vayu's appearance.

Their expressions were much more varied than before. Various emotions like confusion, anger, and surprise could be seen.

'Rather, it's fortunate.'

Vayu.

The traitor of Deva who, until now, had been confirmed to be on the side of the Administrators.

'Thanks to him, it's easier to read the expressions.'

His appearance seemed to make things easier.

Chapter 580

Side Story 56

3000 years ago

Vayu, who had just become a Player, walked wounded and half-naked through the streets. There were always predators in the Tower lurking for new Players.

"Damn bastards..."

Thud~

Finally, Vayu collapsed. The wound on his abdomen was opening wider and wider. He needed to stop the bleeding, apply medicine, and treat the wound for a long time.

But...

"There he is!"

"He fled over there!"

"Don't let him escape!"

Veteran Players who had taken everything from Vayu were relentlessly chasing him, leaving him no chance.

"Curse, curse, curse!"

It was impossible to escape in this state. Using his mental strength to move his legs had only brought him this far.

It was unfair.

How had he survived?

How had he passed that infernal Tutorial?

'Why is the building... shaking...?'

His vision blurred. Focus faded from Vayu's eyes as he collapsed to the ground. The footsteps of his pursuers were getting closer.

There was no hope left.

And then...

"It's too early to give up."

Whoosh~

Someone appeared in his blurry vision. A warm sensation enveloped him as their hand touched him.

The man who appeared before Vayu was Vishnu. With a gentle smile, he covered Vayu's eyes.

"Sleep deeply, and everything will be better when you wake up."

That day...

Vayu was saved by Vishnu.

Whoosh~

A murderous aura filled the place. Countless eyes were fixed on Vayu. Although each of them was weaker than Vayu, their number was overwhelming.

"Calm down, everyone. Don't smother me."

"Vayu!"

"How dare you show your face here?!"

His fellow Rankers shouted. As if he had expected it, Vayu pulled a fan from his chest and waved it.

Whoosh!

A fierce wind blew. However, it carried no murderous aura and posed no threat to the present Rankers.

The meaning of the wind was clear. It was a signal for them to be quiet.

"Use your brains if you have them, idiots."

Vayu clicked his tongue. His words only served to fan the flames that were already subsiding.

"What...?"

"Idiots?"

"Are you done talking, Vayu?!"

Deva's Rankers were angry again. However, no one moved impulsively as before. They were all experienced Rankers. The fact that Vayu, the official representative of Deva, was here meant he had something to say.

"Yes, you are idiots."

Vayu spoke with conviction. At that moment, his gaze turned to Yama and Varuna.

"Think. What must you do to survive now?"

"Are you saying we should betray Deva and join the Administrators?"

Hanuman shouted angrily. He approached Vayu with long strides, causing the trees he stepped on to wither and twist, showing his fury. Vayu, anticipating this situation, remained calm.

"It's not a betrayal."

"What nonsense are you talking about?"

"Weren't we all united under Vishnu-nim? Now that Vishnu-nim is gone, what sense is there in us remaining united under the name of Deva?"

Hanuman, as if he couldn't hear more, shouted while waving his arms forcefully.

"That's treason, Vayu!"

Swoosh!

The sand sprouted from the twisted tree. A bunch of sand enveloped Vayu. Hanuman, with his elevated Arcane Power, had swollen neck veins.

"Vishnu-nim died at the hands of the Administrators! And how can you... join those Administrators...!"

At that moment...

Crack!

The sand falling on Vayu froze. Firmly compacted sand. And the familiar magic that opposed Hanuman.

"Quiet down a bit, Hanuman. Listen to what I have to say."

Hanuman looked at the woman stopping him.

"Soma...?"

"Vayu is speaking, right?"

She stood in front of Vayu.

And it wasn't just her.

Hesitant companions.

No, those he considered companions.

"Not only Vayu and Surya."

Crunch, crunch.

The trees swayed with Hanuman's anger. He was a High-Ranker of Deva. Although his rank was lower than Vayu's, he was a being with the power of dozens of ordinary Rankers.

However, he didn't move recklessly.

No, he couldn't. He couldn't judge lightly how rotten Deva was.

"Very well. I'll listen. Speak."

"Thank you, Hanuman."

He wanted to punch that sadly smiling face. But he couldn't. He knew it wasn't a situation he could handle alone.

The only person who could change this situation was one.

Sideways~

Hanuman's gaze turned to Yama, who watched the situation in silence.

'Why don't you move, Yama?'

Now that Vishnu was gone, he was undoubtedly the strongest among Deva's High-Rankers.

A two-digit High-Ranker. His power was such that he could face Vayu, Soma, and up to ten High-Rankers at the same time.

And most importantly, he was more devoted to Vishnu than anyone Hanuman knew.

Yama, who had lived his whole life in the shadow of Vishnu. He thought he would surely be furious at the appearance of Vayu.

'Are you, too, Yama?'

It was a terrifying thought, but he couldn't judge hastily. After all, who would have thought that Deva would come to this point?

His head throbbed.

Everyone he considered comrades could be enemies.

While Hanuman remained silent, Vayu continued speaking.

"Vishnu-nim won't come back. We have to choose. Live or die."

"Can't we fight the Administrators and win?"

"Do you think it's possible?"

Vayu scoffed at someone's question.

Maybe ten years ago. But King Odin is dead, Vishnu-nim is dead, and many other High-Rankers have lost their lives."

"Is there no hope?"

"That's right. And now more than ever. Because several High-Rankers, including myself, have joined the Administrators."

"You speak cowardly words so easily, Vayu."

At Hanuman's roar, Vayu turned towards him.

"There's no other way, Hanuman. I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I must keep living."

"How can you forget the grace Vishnu-nim granted you...?"

"Vishnu, Vishnu, Vishnu!"

Fwoosh!

At Vayu's cry, a fierce wind swirled around him.

A wind charged with Arcane Power.

With wide eyes, Vayu waved his arms and shouted:

"How long must I be bound by that? Does my life belong to Vishnu-nim just because he saved me a couple of times?"

Turning away from Hanuman, Vayu looked at Varuna. Varuna startled and took a step back at the murderous face that was completely different from the Vayu he had always known.

"Think about it."

Wooooosh!

And at that moment...

"Consider who is here now."

In the sky...

In the cloudless sky...

Caw, caw.

Caw, caw, caw.

From there came a familiar laughter.

Thousands of jesters.

"Envoys...?"

Floating in the sky, the Envoys observed Deva's Rankers.

How hadn't they noticed the presence of so many beings above their heads before?

'It can't be...'

"Do you want me to guess what you're thinking?"

At Hanuman's anxious expression, Vayu responded with a riddle-like tone.

"Have the Administrators come as well?"

Wooooosh!

In response to his words, pressure crushed Deva's Rankers.

"You got it, Hanuman."

It was a chilling sensation. No, it was more than that.

Terror and reverence imprinted on their instinct.

Hanuman broke into a cold sweat, struggling against the weak will that forced him to kneel.

'Is this...? An Administrator...?'

Hanuman, who had led the opposition to Vayu's words, felt his resolve shatter. Seeing the woman manifesting among the thousands of Envoys, Hanuman couldn't do anything.

To fight...

It was impossible to imagine fighting against such an opponent now before their eyes.

'Damn it.'

Smack!

Hanuman struck his trembling leg with his fist. The sharp pain returned him to sanity. Trembling in fear before Vishnu's enemy, even with the Administrator's presence, was unforgivable.

"Think it over, everyone."

The one who was now the voice of the Administrator, not Vayu of Deva, looked around.

"Decide whether you want to surrender your life to the already deceased Vishnu or if you want to live."

"..."

"..."

Silence fell upon the place.

Complex thoughts reflected on their faces.

They observed each other, seeking clues in the expressions of others.

Some, with determined faces, had already made a decision.

Hanuman, bewildered, looked around.

'What's happening to everyone?'

Even if it was coercion under the threat of death.

"You... are you really going to yield to that trash?"

It was strange. Even if they valued their lives, many were surrendering too easily. Deva's Rankers, who had overcome life or death trials to reach the top...

"Sorry, Hanuman."

Crunch.

At that moment, someone made the first decision.

Soma. She approached Vayu and made it clear which side she was on.

And that was the beginning.

Click, click, click.

Deva's Rankers gathered around Vayu one by one.

Seeing them move as if they had made a pact, Hanuman reflected on Soma's words.

""We'...?"

Before those words, which seemed to anticipate this situation, Hanuman realized the nature of the strange discomfort he had been feeling.

Growl~

"These bastards..."

Even before arriving here, some had already given up.

Deva was already rotten, and now it was rotting even more.

And not just them...

"We can't go on like this."

"With the Administrator involved..."

"Die or hold onto our beliefs. Those are our only choices."

It was time to make a decision.

Die or live.

"Yama! Say something!"

Hanuman looked at Yama. If anyone was more loyal to Vishnu than anyone, it was him.

He thought that at least he would be furious about this situation.

But...

"...Yama?"

Yama didn't respond.

With closed eyes and crossed arms, he remained silent.

Holding his breath, as if in deep reflection.

'Don't tell me you too, Yama?'

Now that he couldn't trust anyone he considered a comrade.

It wouldn't be strange if Yama also betrayed Deva.

Maybe even Varuna, who organized this meeting.

"Hoo-".

Yama raised his head.

Looking at the sky where the Envoys laughed and jeered, and at the Administrator watching them, Yama gritted his teeth.

And then...

Crunch.

Someone else began to move.

"...It was hard to bear."

Seeing him move, Yama finally lowered his arms and opened his eyes.

"Can I act now?"

"Yes."

Whoosh.

With red-glowing eyes, YuWon approached Vayu.

"You don't have to hold back anymore."