

With The Gods 61

Chapter 61

[Gigantification]

For this skill, YuWon had spent a portion of his precious time in the Tutorial. On top of that, he'd even fought Suruhtra while risking death.

The reason for this was quite simple. It was because [Gigantification] was that valuable of a skill. And among the effects of [Gigantification]...

[All the power of a Giant becomes concentrated in your right arm.]

[Your Strength stat is temporarily converted into Constitution.]

... This also existed.

Fwoosh—!

Yuwon extended his arm.

The Fist Lord's eyes widened while watching YuWon's hand come at him.

“What the—?!”

The force of the Fist Lord's fist got absorbed by YuWon's palm.

Boom—!

Crack, snap—

Planting both of his legs firmly into the ground, Yuwon managed to stop the Fist Lord's punch with his hand.

The Fist Lord heard YuWon's wrist snap, but that was all he managed to do to YuWon. For a second, his face turned white. For YuWon to actually stop him...

‘At this distance...?’ The Fist Lord thought.

With this unexpected situation, the Fist Lord's judgement slowed down.

Yuwon normally held his sword with his right hand, but now YuWon's right hand was holding the Fist Lord's fist. That meant YuWon's sword right now was...

Vzzt—

The energy of the 「Dark Divine Crystal」 went from his right hand, through his body, into his left hand.

On reflex, the Fist Lord followed the path of the energy with his eyes.

Slash—!

While holding on tightly to the Fist Lord's fist, YuWon slashed his chest.

Pshhk—

Blood spilled out from the cut. The wound wasn't that deep, but it was enough to drench the Fist Lord's hand when he touched the wound.

With no longer enough strength to hold onto the Fist Lord's hand, YuWon let go of him.

The Fist lord took a few steps back, looking at the blood on the palm of his hand.

For having been a direct cut, there wasn't that much blood. But the problem was that he had actually been inflicted with a wound.

The Fist Lord couldn't believe he let a 10th Floor player draw blood... 'No, maybe the problem was that I gave him an opening to attack my chest?'

This whole situation was baffling to him. If there had been more force behind YuWon's slash just now or if YuWon had had a bit more time to raise his levels and stats just a smidge more... If that were the case...

"Did I... lose?" the Fist Lord said. He was absolutely stumped, lowering both fists.

Yuwon's right arm, which had taken a direct blow from a punch he threw while accepting the penalty, was limp and broken.

It was obvious the Fist Lord would be the victor if they continued to fight like this. However...

"This seems to be my loss," the Fist Lord said.

The fact that he had even considered winning by continuing this fight was a problem. Because this fight should have never been a real fight.

Tak—

The Fist Lord put up both his hands to signify defeat before putting them down.

This meant that...

[The Fist Lord – Pung BaekLim signals his defeat.]

[You have 'perfectly' cleared the 2nd test of the Heavenly Demonic Cult.]

[You have obtained The Heavenly Demon's Spirit]

... A miracle had happened.

* * *

The second test of the Heavenly Demonic Cult ended.

Yuwon headed to the medical house for treatment while the martial artists that came to watch the test stayed in their spot for over half a day. They were so in shock, they couldn't leave.

"Is this for real? Did the Fist Lord actually lose?"

"He would have won if he saw it through to the end... but he himself declared defeat."

"Are we sure he didn't go easy on him?"

"The test wouldn't be that easygoing. If that was possible, it's weird that not a single person has managed to pass till now."

“Besides, didn’t you see him fight earlier? He was basically flying around.”

“He might already be on the level of a Ranker.”

“I heard something earlier about the Heavenly Demon’s Spirit...”

“Isn’t the Heavenly Demon’s Spirit...”

They went on and on about the fight between YuWon and the Fist Lord.

After hearing the news that YuWon had obtained the [Heavenly Demon’s Spirit,] a few of the lower-ranked martial artists headed to the martial arts library. However, none of them would likely obtain the [Heavenly Demon’s Spirit.]

“If it was that easy, it would have been found long ago,” the Sword Lord said while stroking his beard, watching the martial artists heading to the library.

The [Heavenly Demon’s Spirit] was the symbol of the High Ranker Cheon MuJin, A.K.A. the Heavenly Demon.

There was a reason why such a great technique was inside the low-rank martial arts portion of the library. The [Heavenly Demon’s Spirit] was actually not that different from your standard breathing and cultivation technique. It was nothing more than a breathing technique that allowed one to accept energy, and it was incredibly hard to discern that it was the [Heavenly Demon’s Spirit] just by reading it.

‘Not to mention, mastering it is a whole other story,’ the Sword Lord thought.

He wondered how many of these people running towards the library actually possessed the ‘eyes’ to discern it. And even if they did find it, how many of them would actually be capable of learning it? One? Perhaps two? It was also entirely possible that none of them could.

On top of that...

The Sword Lord thought, ‘From the perspective of the Cult, we can no longer just leave the Heavenly Demon’s Spirit there.’

Even if it was just a shell of the technique, the Heavenly Demon’s Spirit was still a symbol of the Heavenly Demon’s Cult. Now that people knew where it was, the Cult couldn’t just leave it there.

“So he was thinking about counter-attacking that entire time...” The Fist Lord mumbled while opening and closing his hands, recapping the fight in his mind.

The Sword Lord’s eyes darted over to the Fist Lord, who was mumbling while staring down at his palm.

“Fist Lord,” MuGuek said, walking over to BaekLim, who was still standing at the center of the training ground. “Don’t be too embarrassed about this. No one could have foreseen him having learned the Heavenly Demon’s Spirit.”

The Sword Lord said that to console him, but the Fist Lord had an unexpected reaction.

“Embarrassed?” the Fist Lord said with an oddly proud look on his face.

After seeing the Fist Lord's expression, the Sword Lord was reminded how much the Fist Lord enjoyed fighting, and he realized how much this fight might actually have been stimulating and enjoyable for him.

"He's going to become a High Ranker one day," the Fist Lord declared.

"Most likely."

"And he's probably going to surpass our leader."

After a moment of silence, the Sword Lord nodded his head. He couldn't deny it.

Even the Heavenly Demon, one of the High Rankers that ruled the Tower, probably couldn't have fought against a Ranker like this when he was at the 10th Floor.

"It's honestly an honor, having gotten to have such a fun fight against a guy like that."

Hearing the Fist Lord's response, the Sword Lord understood his feeling.

"I see."

Seeing how the Fist Lord wasn't feeling down at all, the Sword Lord decided to stop worrying. Right now what was important wasn't how the Fist Lord might have been feeling.

'Soon...' the Sword Lord thought while looking at the empty spot where the Heavenly Demon had stood. 'Soon the Lord will go find him.'

There was only a single test left, and that test was probably going to be conducted by the Heavenly Demon himself.

* * *

Reaper Scans

Translator – NumbaWon

Proofreader – BringTheRayn

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YuWon received treatment at the medical house. He only needed to receive treatment for his right arm. While blocking the Fist Lord's final punch, a few of the broken bones had pierced through the skin.

"All done."

Jin Il-Hwan, the chief doctor, finished treating YuWon's injury and rubbed the little medicinal herbs they had left on it.

This made YuWon realize how much of the medical ingredients he'd actually taken and gobbled up.

'For them to not even have a single potion...' he thought.

Health potions were such a common item, you could even buy them off of Lackeys, yet they didn't have even a single one because YuWon had depleted all of the Cult's supply to consume 「Orochi's Heart.」

‘I guess it can't be helped.’

On the 10th Floor, the Heavenly Demonic Cult was considered the boonies. Lackeys were merchants at heart, so they didn't operate in remote areas like this. In order to purchase medicine from a Lackey with potions, he'd have to walk pretty far.

“You shouldn't have trouble moving within a few days. Be careful until the bones heal back together, and regularly—”

“Thank you,” YuWon said, leaving before the boring explanation got too long.

Il-Hwan looked at YuWon for a second, figured he'd probably be okay, and waved goodbye.

YuWon knew that it would take about two days for his arm to heal without any proper medicine, like the doctor told him. But for broken bones and torn flesh, it would be a pretty fast recovery.

Holding his splint, YuWon returned back to his lodgings.

Waiting for the next test, he rested his head on his bed. While laying down, he recapped his fight against the Fist Lord.

‘It was shallow.’

The sensation of his left hand cutting into the Fist Lord's chest.

Though he was ambidextrous, YuWon predominantly used his right hand. Due to that, there would have been an inevitable difference in power. However, the reason the cut was shallow wasn't just due to the difference between his right and left hands.

In order to leave a dent on a Ranker's body, you needed something extra.

‘It really sucks not having hit triple digits with my Arcane Power.’

[Arcane Power : 98]

Just two. If he had only managed to raise this stat twice more, he would have hit triple digits.

Once you reached 100 with this stat, you were able to feel much more clearly the impact of each stat.

Had YuWon had 100 Arcane Power, he would have been able to leave a much deeper wound on the Fist Lord's chest.

‘The second test is over.’

It was a much longer test than expected.

YuWon checked his newly obtained skill, the [Heavenly Demon's Spirit.]

[Heavenly Demon's Spirit]

▷ Rank : A-

▷ Proficiency : 0.33%

▷ Created by the Lord of the Heavenly Demonic Cult, Cheon MuJin, it is an exclusive martial art of the school. It holds dominance over lower-ranked martial arts.

▷ By dividing your spirit, you are able to create a clone. The power of the Heavenly Demon's Spirit is dependent on how much mana you imbue into the clone.

A minus-rank. It was definitely a good skill. An A-rank was enough for most Rankers to desire it.

It was likely that the Heavenly Demon mastered this skill, reaching 100% proficiency with it.

‘So this is the skill I obtained at the midpoint.’

Thinking about the difficulty of the test, it was a lackluster reward, but YuWon didn't think of it like that.

The [Heavenly Demon's Spirit] was a skill YuWon had obtained by ‘perfectly’ passing the second test. It was a separate reward from the one he got by officially taking the test. On top of that, he wasn't fully done with the tests.

The [Heavenly Demon's Spirit] was definitely a great skill, but...

‘The test isn't over yet.’

And right on cue...

“Kim YuWon-nim.”

A female attendant came to YuWon, who was resting in his lodgings.

“The Heavenly Demon is calling for you.”

* * *

Guided by the attendant, YuWon was led to the deepest part of the Cult.

The Heavenly Demon YuWon remembered was someone that didn't care for formalities and disliked complicated things. Due to that, his residence looked no different than the other houses in the Cult.

The Lord's Manor of the Heavenly Demonic Cult.

Right at the entrance, the attendant took a step back.

“He has ordered that only a single person come in,” she said.

Of course, that ‘single person’ meant YuWon.

He left the attendant that stayed behind and stepped over the threshold.

Surprisingly, inside the manor, he couldn't sense anyone's presence. YuWon didn't think that the Heavenly Demon would leave the place after calling him here. There was only a single reason YuWon could think of as to why he couldn't sense his presence.

‘He's as sluggish as always.’

With YuWon's current skills, it was impossible for him to sense the presence of a High Ranker like the Heavenly Demon. That was inevitable since he was a monster that even the Four Lords combined couldn't beat.

YuWon walked slowly through the lord's manor, sightseeing.

Well, from the outside perspective, it might have looked like he was sightseeing.

[「?'s Egg」 bares its fangs.]

YuWon internally asked the egg, 'Is it here?'

The 'something' that he could sense since he entered Mt. Heaven. That 'something' was right here.

Chapter 62

The inside of the Lord's Manor wasn't that big, being only about 65 square meters.*

*PR/N: about 213 sq. ft.

What was waiting for YuWon there was the Heavenly Demon, who he had caught a quick glimpse of after he passed the first test.

"So you're here," the Heavenly Demon said while opening his eyes.

YuWon slightly bowed his head towards him.

Cheon MuJin, the Heavenly Demon. He was a living piece of history of the martial realm, as well as a High Ranker and the "sky" of the Heavenly Demonic Cult.

After attaining the position of a High Ranker through personal strength and the power of the Heavenly Demonic Cult, he had become a recluse in Mt. Heaven, stopping all external activities.

The only thing he did was oversee the tests, but as not a single person had passed the test, some even speculated that he might have died.

"I heard you called for me," YuWon said while looking straight at MuJin.

He was a tall figure, towering over 2 meters.* His shoulders were wide, and he was wearing a bright red dragon robe that covered his entire body. He had a short beard that covered his jawline all the way up to his hairline. And his eyes were sharp, as if they could cut.

*PR/N: 6'6.7"

Despite sitting down, his eyes were almost level with YuWon's, so YuWon waited for him to speak without sitting down.

"Is your arm okay?"

YuWon responded to MuJin's question while shaking his arm, "As you can see."

[Under the influence of night, your health regeneration speed increases.]

[Health Regeneration Speed : +102%]

YuWon's sword, 「Edge of Nightfall,」 was a sword that really shone in darkness. Its effect of accelerating health and mana recovery allowed YuWon to start healing quicker once it had become night.

“That’s a good sword. It makes me want it.”

“I’m sure it’s not as good as the sword you own, sir.”

“I’m quite greedy in that regard.”

Despite being unmaterialistic for the most part, MuJin was quite greedy when it came to swords. Due to that, for a while there was even a rumor that the Heavenly Demonic Cult’s vault actually stored many of the weapons that had disappeared from the Tower.

“Sorry, but this is off limits. There’s an ahjussi that’d chew me out for failing to maintain my own weapon.”

“Are you talking about Hephaestus? He certainly has the right to do that.”

“You know Ahjussi?”

“I don’t, but I have had the opportunity to wield a few swords that he’s made.”

MuJin’s greed for swords was greater than expected. Hephaestus’s swords were something that were hard to buy regardless of how many points you had. So to have wielded multiple of his swords before...

“So why did you call for me?”

“You’re quite impatient.”

“You know what they say, ‘time is money.’”

“That’s not a bad mindset,” MuJin said while getting up from his seat.

With his over 2-meter-tall stature, YuWon almost felt like he was face-to-face with a Giant.

“Let’s start the final test right away,” MuJin continued.

It was an unexpected response.

YuWon said while shaking his broken arm, “My arm’s still like this.”

“Didn’t you say you were okay?”

“I meant that it was okay for me to move. I’m still in no condition to fight,” YuWon rebutted. If possible, YuWon wanted to take the test while he was at his peak condition. That way he could attain the best possible result. Because of that, YuWon wanted to avoid taking the test right now if possible, but...

“It doesn’t matter,” MuJin said while quickly turning around and walking away. “You won’t have to use that arm anyway.”

Tmp, tmp—

MuJin headed over to an empty wall with nothing.

Confused by MuJin's claim that he wouldn't need his arm, YuWon wondered why MuJin had walked towards the wall.

That was when...

Vwoom—

With a small shimmer, MuJin disappeared.

'Is it a barrier?' YuWon wondered.

[Cinder Eyes]

Yuwon quickly used [Cinder Eyes] to investigate the spot where MuJin disappeared.

His hunch was right. Where MuJin had been, there was a small trace of a barrier.

'This is different from the one that's at the bottom of Mt. Heaven. It's much more precise and complicated...'

"What are you doing? Why aren't you entering?" It was MuJin's voice.

Pressed by the Heavenly Demon, YuWon carefully walked into the barrier. Fortunately, the first step wasn't hard to take, revealing a large open area where he'd thought a wall existed.

Riiiiing—

A noise rang inside his ears, and for a second his head became dizzy.

[Cinder Eyes tries to resist Requiem Barrier.]

[Cinder Eyes fails to resist Requiem Barrier.]

A barrier so powerful, [Cinder Eyes] couldn't resist it.

'I can't break through this.'

If he lost his focus for even a second, he'd fall prey to the illusion of the barrier.

That was when...

Grasp—

A big hand grabbed his shoulder and yanked him inside.

[You've entered the Heavenly Demonic Cave.]

[The final test of the Heavenly Demonic Cult will begin.]

His spinning vision returned back to normal. YuWon shook his head once and then looked around.

He could see MuJin standing close to him. His surroundings were a dark, damp tunnel. It was a cave.

MuJin started striding forward.

YuWon started a fire to light up the dark, humid cave, holding it above his hand like a torch.

His tensions were at an all-time high as he followed MuJin.

“Did you learn the Heavenly Demon’s Spirit?” MuJin asked.

YuWon responded, “Yes. It was turned into a skill,” while walking behind MuJin.

“Then it’ll probably be easier to handle now. The world’s become a much better place.”

He sounded like an old grandpa, but YuWon could understand where MuJin was coming from. MuJin was one of the oldest Rankers alive, an Ancient Ranker.

“You’re an excellent fighter,” MuJin threw out a sudden compliment. “Take good care of it.”

“Take care?” YuWon asked in confusion, but he didn’t get a response back.

YuWon didn’t understand what MuJin could have meant by ‘take care.’

Tmp, tmp—

Inside the quiet cave, the footsteps of the two echoed loudly.

Fwoosh—

The fire in YuWon’s hand flickered, even though there was no wind.

And that wasn’t the only thing.

[‘?’s Egg」 bares its fangs.]

[‘?’s Egg」 salivates.]

The Egg started having a reaction.

* * *

Reaper Scans

Translator – NumbaWon

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Towards the end of the Heavenly Demonic Cave, a light could be seen in the distance, a purple, flickering light.

It was a sensation that was similar yet different from mana.

‘There really was something here.’

It was so faint, he could only feel it now that he’d gotten this close to it, but Yuwon was sure that this was a power that came from outside the Tower.

The Egg on the other hand had detected it much earlier.

‘It’s acting like some kind of Dragon Ball™ radar.’

As he got closer to the fire, YuWon could see the identity of the light.

It was a ‘fire.’

[Colossal Fire is shaken by a mysterious power.]

A purple, shimmering fire.

The fire wasn’t that large. It was only the size of an adult male’s fist, and it floated up in the air like some sort of will o’ wisp.

He couldn’t feel any heat coming off of it, but YuWon felt an instinctive repulsion to the fire. It felt like just by getting close to it, his entire body would be burnt to cinders.

Yuwon only managed to shake off the tension in his chest by taking deep breaths.

MuJin spoke while staring at the fire, “This is the ‘Holy Fire.’”

“Holy Fire?”

“That’s what we call it.”

A holy fire. YuWon thought how simple of a name it was. And in his memory, there were quite a few skills with that name.

‘It doesn’t even feel like a holy power,’ YuWon thought.

He thought the name was flawed to begin with, but there was nothing he could do about it. A name wasn’t always decided by something’s true properties but rather just by how people had decided to call it.

If this thing was called ‘Holy Fire’ for a long time, then the system would have already recognized this power as Holy Fire.

“There’s an old prophecy that’s been passed down from long ago, since the Cult decided to settle down on Mt. Heaven and discovered this fire. The Cult exists to protect this fire and find its master,” MuJin spoke with a sorrowful smile. “The first Heavenly Demon of the cult, the second Heavenly Demon, and even my master, they all passed after living for this purpose. It is the same for me as well.”

“A prophecy... I’m having a hard time relating to it.”

“It’s a boring old tale that can’t keep up with the times. But believing and following such things is a common habit among geezers like me.”

“Do you truly believe in the prophecy?”

“The Heavenly Demonic Cult is a religion first and foremost before it is a martial school. And religion is something where the foundation will falter when faith wavers.”

MuJin's faith in the Cult did not waver an inch while answering YuWon's question. Despite having lived a much longer life than his predecessors, he still placed all his faith in the Cult.

"However, in this Tower, there are factions much larger than the Cult, and there are also people much stronger than me. That's why I had no choice but to use a trick to protect the Holy Fire from them."

"Is that why you created a test with the Holy Fire as a reward?"

"That's right. Thanks to that, the difficulty has become like this."

Asking a 10th Floor player to nullify an illusory barrier. Making them last through a fight against a Ranker. YuWon finally understood how this unbelievably difficult test came to be.

'By using the test as a guise, he could hide and protect the Holy Fire,' YuWon thought while staring at the flame floating mid-air.

"Has anyone ever managed to make it this far?"

"The Sword Lord. He's seen this before."

Purple light could be seen reflecting in MuJin's eyes as he stared at the Holy Fire.

"... But he didn't manage to beat it."

That was only natural. The power of an Outer God wasn't something that a player who had just climbed to the 10th Floor could win against. It was a fire that even a Ranker would have a hard time beating, so of course the Sword Lord couldn't do it as a normal player.

"However, this is most likely not an impossible test. If that was the case, the Administrator wouldn't have allowed this test to exist," MuJin said while looking at YuWon. "This is the final test."

Fwoosh—!

With those words, the Holy Fire that was only the size of a fist started to grow larger.

"Survive through this fire. Endure it..."

Fwoo, fwoosh—

The fire slowly grew larger and larger.

Yuwon still couldn't feel any actual heat, but it still felt like it might swallow and melt YuWon to the bones at any moment.

"... Until you are acknowledged by the Holy Fire."

[Endure the Holy Fire.]

[When you surrender, this test will end.]

Messages popped up with the announcement of what the test was.

Yuwon looked at the purple, shimmering fire.

The Holy Fire quickly grew in size, already reaching the roof of the cave. Without even needing to move, it felt like the fire would soon swallow him.

Fwoo, fwoosh—

The fire grew larger and larger.

MuJin stared at the purple sea of flames before looking over at YuWon.

‘So it’s hard even for him,’ MuJin thought.

Needing to walk into such a fire. It was honestly a ridiculous test.

There was a tale of the Great Sage Son OhGong enduring over 40 days inside an Eight Trigram Crucible. However, that was a test given to OhGong when he was nearing the top of the Tower.

‘It was the same way for Shin MuGuek.’

The Sword Lord Shin MuGuek managed to get directly in front of the Holy Fire. However, he was unable to actually challenge the test.

It was because of fear.

‘It might be better for him to give up. This is a fire that can even swallow a Ranker.’

MuJin knew very well that this was a difficult test. Even if YuWon had the skills to take on the Fist Lord’s punches, he was still just a normal human in front of this mysterious power.

‘Still, he managed to obtain the Heavenly Demon’s Spirit, so...’

In the midst of MuJin’s train of thought...

Tmp—

YuWon, who had only been silently staring at the Holy Fire, started to walk forward. And at the same time...

Gnaw—

... The Holy Fire opened its mouth as if inviting YuWon in.

—

Chapter 63

YuWon felt like a moth flying towards a flame as he stepped closer to the shimmering twilight fire.

After just a few steps, the Holy Fire suddenly engulfed YuWon.

Fwoosh—

The fire wasn’t hot. No, YuWon had to think that the fire wasn’t hot.

‘This fire grows by consuming fear.’

The Holy Fire wasn’t a fire that just burned hot. Taking on the form of ‘fire,’ it had the power to wear down those that feared it and burn them to cinders. That was the real reason why the Holy Fire was so dangerous.

‘I cannot be afraid of the fire.’

Fsss—

It was hot. As he walked deeper inside, the heat grew stronger and the flames became more intense.

It was something that people couldn’t help but naturally fear.

[Cinder Eyes resists the Holy Fire.]

[「Pyromancy Robe」 resists the Holy Fire.]

Fortunately, YuWon had quite a bit of flame resistance. On top of that, thanks to facing death multiple times while climbing the Tower, he didn’t really fear pain or death either. The problem wasn’t either of those...

Flicker—

The shimmering fire gathered together, forming images, changing constantly. It changed into hideous forms that couldn’t be described with words, messing with YuWon’s eyes.

[「?’s Egg」 opens its eyes.]

[「?’s Egg」 bares its fangs.]

Yuwon could feel the egg twitching. Holding a tight grip on the inventory on his waist, he warned the egg, “Stay still.”

It was fine that it ate Orochi’s corpse, but the Holy Fire was a different story.

This was a test that YuWon had to overcome, especially if this was related to a god from outside the tower.

Also...

“If you eat this, there won’t be anything left for me.”

The Egg ate the entirety of Orochi’s corpse. That meant that it had the power to physically affect the real world. And if it consumed the Holy Fire like it did with Orochi, YuWon would be in a bit of a bind.

If MuJin was right, this was the process to obtain the Holy Fire.

Yuwon didn’t believe in things like prophecies, but the system was trustworthy enough.

Ba-thump—

The Holy Fire continued to grow, and as he walked deeper into the fire of his own will, YuWon’s heart raced at a rapid pace. It was a sensation he hadn’t felt in a while.

“Outers” were beings that were beyond common sense and knowledge. Coming from a world outside the Tower, they could make you feel fear worse than death just by coming face-to-face with them.

That was exactly the situation YuWon was in right now.

The Holy Fire grew by consuming fear. It circled around YuWon's body, eating his fear, and growing into a monster.

"I don't know what you are."

YuWon stared into the eyes of the purple flame monster that wrapped around him.

"But I've seen enough 'Outers' to be sick of them."

He had already experienced more than enough psychological fear.

In order to fight against Outers, you needed a strong mental foundation, or you wouldn't even be able to stand in front of them, let alone fight them.

And YuWon was a survivor of a war against those very same Outers.

Tmp—

He walked forward, thinking back to the war against the Outers, the fight against those bastards, the crumbling world and the monsters that were swallowing it up.

"I'm not afraid of you."

He had become weaker from returning to the past, but YuWon's mind was no different than back then.

"I..."

In fact, it had become stronger.

"... Have returned to win against you guys."

* * *

Fwoosh—

Suddenly the raging fire calmed.

MuJin, who had been watching over the Holy Fire for ages, had never seen this happen before. But of course, that was inevitable since there was no one who had seriously attempted to obtain the Holy Fire before either.

'Did he give up?' MuJin thought.

The Holy Fire that had been growing as if it would fill the entirety of the Heavenly Demonic Cave slowly died down. And from a distance, within the fire, YuWon's shadow became visible.

"So he's still alive," MuJin remarked.

MuJin could only see YuWon's back, but he was standing up.

Expecting the massive Holy Fire to return back to its normal state, MuJin waited. However...

Fsss—

... The Holy Fire did not return back to normal.

Fwoosh—

A purple fire was wrapped around YuWon.

MuJin's eyes widened. "Could it be...?" he said in disbelief.

This was something he had wanted all along, but because things had stayed the way they were for so long, he questioned if the day would ever come.

MuJin looked at YuWon and the purple fire shimmering off his body. On top of that, the Holy Fire circled around YuWon like will o' wisps.

YuWon looked at the Holy Fire that split into three pieces.

Unable to believe what was happening, MuJin quickly went over to YuWon and asked, "What happened?" MuJin looked at YuWon's eyes.

YuWon didn't look back at MuJin. Staring at the Holy Fire, YuWon's eyes seemed hazy and out of focus.

And after a moment...

Ssk—

YuWon slowly collapsed forward.

* * *

Reaper Scans

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With his closed eyes, he couldn't see anything. But from within the darkness, YuWon felt like he was floating in zero gravity.

Fwoosh—

And in the darkness, a purple fire floated up. It was the Holy Fire.

The Holy Fire that floated around like a will o' wisp slowly drifted around his field of vision.

This was a very different response than earlier.

'So it doesn't intend on fighting me.'

The Holy Fire was now following him. The appearance of the vicious monster was a temporary form for the test.

'Being afraid of the thing in front of me would mean that I don't have the qualifications to wield it.'

That was why YuWon didn't fear the Holy Fire, and that was enough.

[You obtained 100,000 points.]

[Your Strength increased by 1.]

[Your Dexterity increased by 2.]

[Your Constitution increased by 1.]

[Your Perception increased by 1.]

[Your Arcane Power increased by 1.]

[.....]

[You passed the test of the Heavenly Demonic Cult.]

[You have obtained a skill of a higher tier than the Colossal Fire. The skill perishes.]

[You have obtained Holy Fire.]

[You have obtained title : Vice-Lord of the Heavenly Demonic Cult.]

[You have obtained the right to move on to the 11th Floor.]

[You are now able to teleport to the next floor.]

With the ringing message, YuWon was able to confirm that the test was over.

He had actually managed to obtain [Holy Fire.]

Ssk—

His heavy eyelids slowly opened, and he could see the ceiling. YuWon was sleeping with a blanket. And it seemed to have become day, as sunlight pierced through the crack in the door.

The first thing YuWon did was check the condition of his body.

‘Do I have any burns...?’

He patted himself down, but he felt no pain.

YuWon thought back to the Holy Fire, which felt like a dream, along with the message that said he had passed the test.

Next on the list was to check his newly obtained reward.

[Holy Fire]

▷ Rank : S+

▷ Proficiency : 0.00%

▷ A fire from [?]. Depending on the enemy’s emotions, it is able to exude greater power without any additional consumption of mana.

▷ It will not harm any targets you do not wish to hurt.

▷ Worsens wounds.

▷ Inextinguishable.

The description of the skill wasn’t far off from what he expected.

A fire that grows stronger by consuming emotions—it was a bit of an odd description at first glance. To begin with, there was almost no one that didn’t fear fire. Unless you were a High Ranker like

Apollo or Surya or a fire-controlling Giant like Surtr, fire was something that was natural to fear. And the Holy Fire was something that grew bigger by consuming fear. The skill's rank was enough to prove how powerful that was.

‘Being able to avoid harming allies is a big boon in large-scale fights. And being able to worsen wounds is also incredibly powerful.’

This was enough to put it among the top fire-type skills. On top of that...

‘This is even better than obtaining just any old skill.’

The fact that [Holy Fire] materialized into a skill had huge meaning for YuWon.

The Holy Fire was a power that came from outside the Tower, and from the long war, YuWon understood well the power that Outers had.

Their powers were infinite.

Because of that, there were many Rankers that sought out their powers, but none were successful. Yet here, out of all the unexpected places, YuWon had succeeded in doing that very thing.

‘This is so far beyond enough, it's overwhelming.’

It was a reward that YuWon was satisfied with and worth all the time he had spent on it.

But...

“‘The Vice-Lord of the Heavenly Demonic Cult?’” YuWon thought back to one of the messages.

To be the Vice-Lord of the Heavenly Demonic Cult...

A ‘title’ was a person's secondary name or position. Hercule's “Giant Slayer” and OhGong's “The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal” for example.

Normally, even Rankers struggled to obtain a single title, yet here YuWon had obtained one as a reward for the 10th Floor.

[Vice-Lord of the Heavenly Demonic Cult]

▷ Classification : Title

▷ Rank : B

▷ It possesses absolute dominance and command over cultists contracted to the Heavenly Demonic Cult.

▷ This title can be revoked by someone with the title of “Heavenly Demon.”

A B-rank title.

Titles were normally much harder to obtain than skills, so naturally, obtaining a high-rank title was as difficult as stealing a star from the night sky.

B-rank wasn't as powerful as some of the titles that YuWon knew about, but it was still a pretty high-ranking title.

Of course, the power of the title itself wasn't anything that impressive, but if you took the 'authority' into account, it became a different story.

'... The Heavenly Demonic Cult?'

The Cult was an organization that had long been facing off against the Martial Guild. Though they had become weaker from being cut off from the outside for a long time, their power was still nothing to scoff at.

So it was impossible to calculate the value of a title that was capable of commandeering such an organization.

YuWon got up from his spot and went outside.

The female attendant that was waiting for YuWon promptly led him to the Lord's Manor.

"So you're here."

Cheon MuJin was sitting at the same spot as yesterday in the same exact position.

YuWon was already mostly finished with packing.

"Is it still necessary for you to stay there? It's not like there's anything to guard anymore," YuWon said.

"Habits aren't so easy to fix. I tried going elsewhere, but I didn't quite feel comfortable."

The Holy Fire that MuJin had to protect was no longer there. It was now something for YuWon to carry.

"I obtained a title."

"You mean the title of Vice-Lord?"

"Yes."

"Keep it. You're plenty qualified, possessing both the Holy Fire and the Heavenly Demon's Spirit."

"Even if I become a Ranker, I won't be joining the Heavenly Demonic Cult."

"Do as you want. It's not something that's intended to tie you down anyway. It's a reward you obtained by passing the test fair and square, so you can reap the benefits as much as you want."

Despite it taking a lot of courage for YuWon to tell this to MuJin, his response was surprisingly indifferent. YuWon was worried that MuJin might pick him as the next Lord of the Cult, but it seemed that wasn't the case.

That was a good thing for YuWon. He didn't have any responsibilities but could still reap all the benefits, as MuJin said.

"Then I'll take it gratefully," YuWon said.

“Are you leaving right away?”

“I’ll stop by again when it’s time for the Grand Martial Arts Tournament.”

“Are you thinking of participating in the Grand Martial Arts Tournament?”

“I’m planning on it. That is, if I’m still below the 25th floor by then.”

The Grand Martial Arts Tournament was a tournament for players between the 10th and 25th Floors. Held three times a year, it was the most anticipated event in the lower floors.

“I see. So it’s almost time for the Grand Martial Arts Tournament...” MuJin mumbled as he nodded, recollecting an old memory. “I won’t see you out, since you don’t seem like the type that likes things like that.”

“You’re right on the bulls-eye.”

YuWon got up from his seat.

He had barely anything left to pack. Rations and other necessities were all already inside his inventory.

YuWon bowed his head to MuJin and left to climb up to the next floor.

“The Grand Martial Arts Tournament...” MuJin murmured to himself again.

With the Holy Fire finally finding its master, the hard shackles that had been holding him down for such a long time disappeared. MuJin, whose life mission had been protecting the Holy Fire, started wondering ‘What should I do?’ for the first time ever.

That’s when it came to him. The thing that the Heavenly Demonic Cult had wanted long before the Holy Fire appeared.

“I guess it’s time to return to the Martial Realm.”

Chapter 64

The test on the 11th Floor was a team battle.

Normally when you think of teams, you think five, maybe ten people on each side, but that wasn’t how the 11th Floor’s test was conducted.

It was a test where there could be as few as 100 to as many as 200 people on each team, with the teams randomly formed from a pool of test participants.

“Please this time...” the player Halimun mumbled while praying. He didn’t believe in God, but around his time, he would always magically end up being religious.

Currently, he was waiting for the test schedule.

Ding—

He heard the ring of the message, and soon after, a giant screen popped up in front of him.

The screen was dense with letters.

[208 : 208]

There were a total of 416 participants in this test. Since on average about 400 people participated, this was neither a large nor small number. This was actually better than having too few or too many participants and honestly not a bad number.

‘Please...’

However, that wasn’t the important part. The really important part was the ‘members’ that participated in the test.

‘I’m on Team A. Naturally, Lars and Melly are on the same team as me. As for the other guys...’

While looking around at the other names on screen, Halimun started to sweat.

“Who are all of these guys?”

After going through over a hundred names, he had only heard of a few of these guys, and all of them were pathetically unskilled.

There was even someone that was blacklisted from trolling in the last test, putting their own team in danger.

“Holy fuck...”

Halimun naturally ended up looking through the names on Team B.

The first name was already not looking good.

Lo’el. As a player with a rare healing-type skill, she was already quite famous on the lower floors. And since Lo’el was on the roster, that meant that her teammates should also be on Team B.

‘Of course those guys are with her.. Wait, what’s this? NamGung Hoon*?’

*TL/N: Hoon is his first name and NamGung is his last name.

This was also a terrifying name to see. Hoon was a direct Pure-Blood of the NamGung clan. It was said that there were few who were capable of rivaling him on the lower floors. That very man was a part of Team B.

He was a competitor easily capable of passing the 11th Floor test. As a Pure-Blood from the Martial Realm, born from the great NamGung Clan no less, he was fundamentally different from players that first stepped into the world of the Tower through the Tutorial.

“What the hell is up with this?”

It was impossible for him to not complain about this.

The 11th Floor test was what some referred to as a ‘game of RNG.*’

*TL/N: Random Number Generation – A process that produces numbers which are used to determine randomized elements in a game, such as team draw.

The test was ultimately decided by how many skilled players were randomly selected into your team.

Halimun had already failed the test three times. Not only did he lack skills, he also had shit luck when it came to his teams.

But...

‘This test is going to be the worst one yet.’

... None had been as bad a draw as this one.

Since this test was a team battle, he knew quite a few of the players’ names on the 11th Floor, but somehow all the somewhat well-known, skilled players had ended up on Team B.

On the other hand, it seemed that Team A was entirely comprised of useless players.

“What kind of deranged coincidence is this...?”

It honestly made him doubt if the teams were even really decided at random. Still not giving up yet, he continued to look through the team roster, eventually coming across a familiar name.

‘Huh?’

It was a name that he could never forget, having heard it so many times recently.

Halimun tilted his head, staring at the three-syllable name at the end of the Team A roster.

‘Kim YuWon?’

It had been quite a bit of time since YuWon first got to the 10th Floor. From what Halimun had heard, he was attempting the test of the Heavenly Demonic Cult, but as it was a test that no one had managed to pass yet, people thought he must have been struggling with it a lot.

‘Maybe it’s just someone with the same name?’

For YuWon alone to be on Team A while all the other skilled players were on Team B, it seemed quite unbalanced.

‘If it actually is him, he’s also pretty unlucky.’

It was certain that YuWon had great skills. Halimun had never seen them with his own eyes, but this was a guy that had broken record after record starting on the 1st Floor. And seeing as how he was now on the 11th Floor, he had probably also cleared the test of the Heavenly Demonic Cult.

But regardless of all that, this wasn’t an individual-based test. It was a team-based test with over 200 people on each team.

And Teams A and B had an unprecedentedly large gap in the quality of members.

‘Which is going to cause that many people to give up...’

This test was doomed. Halimun was certain that even YuWon wouldn’t be able to turn the tables by himself.

Having confirmed all the members, Halimun turned back with no energy left in his body.

The test was set to start in a week.

* * *

“That’s really childish,” YuWon said, sighing deeply after checking the members list.

There were quite a few familiar names on Team B. A few of them were even talented enough to become a Ranker in the far future.

On the other hand, Team A had no one he recognized.

It wasn’t hard to figure out why there was such a large difference between the two teams.

‘If I remember correctly, the 11th Floor belongs to Olympus.’

The 11th Floor was one of the floors that Olympus had the greatest amount of influence over, and there was no way that Olympus would look kindly on the culprit that stopped them from capturing Hephaestus.

‘The test examiner is Hypnos, one of Olympus’s Rankers.’

Though the teams were supposed to be sorted randomly, it wasn’t much of an obstacle for a skilled examiner to make some changes.

Of course, this was something that if caught by an Administrator would cause them to suffer severe consequences, so it was unlikely that they’d get caught by doing it once or twice. And even if an Administrator found it suspicious, they could claim that it was merely a coincidence.

‘Ro’el, NamGung Hoon, Salamov... Spyros? I think this guy is an Olympian Pure-Blood. There’s also a guy from Asgard as well.’

Their members were stacked. Even though there weren’t any High Pure-Bloods like Hargaan, there was a direct Pure-Blood of the NamGung clan, as well as countless formidable players.

A test with a roster of this caliber should even grab the attention of various guilds.

‘So they’re really going all out, huh.’

It was as plain as day to YuWon. They wanted YuWon to fail the test as payback. And as testing sites were extraterritorial zones* where murder was allowed, they might even have a more sinister plan laid out for YuWon.

*T/N: Extraterritorial zones are places such as embassies or military bases where the laws of the local region do not apply.

However...

‘Well, whatever.’

After checking the lists of team members, YuWon simply turned away.

‘If this is all there is...’

* * *

Reaper Scans

Translator – NumbaWon

Proofreader – BringTheRayn

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* * *

The 11th Floor was a world named Tahklan. With over 90% of the land being mountains or forests, it wasn't all that great of an environment for people to live in. Due to that, the majority of the residents of the 11th Floor were races of the forest like Elves or Dwarves.

"30 points? Why does the inn cost so much?"

"You seem to have just arrived, but that's how things are around here. The land is flat, close to the testing site, and has good infrastructure. Did you come here without doing any research?"

"Still...!"

"If you don't like it, you're welcome to go elsewhere. I highly doubt you'll find a place cheaper than here."

This was a typical conversation you could overhear at the inns in the village near the testing site. Between the players visiting to take the test and the players that hadn't managed to buy a house yet even after obtaining a residency permit, it inflated the price of the inn to be much higher than other places.

It was only natural as land that was good to live on was expensive, considering most of the land was forest or mountains.

"Next customer," said the inn owner Khalif, greeting the new customer with a hand on his chin.

It was a new face he hadn't seen around. From his experience, most players that had just arrived on the 11th Floor had a similar reaction to the previous guy. They complained about the expensive cost of food and lodging before having no choice but to accept the facts.

"Are there any rooms left?" the newbie asked.

"Of course we have rooms, but the bottom floor's full. So what do you want to do?"

Most of the rooms on the bottom floor were small and shabby but cost the least. In comparison, the rooms on the upper floors were larger and better maintained but were pretty pricey.

The guy from before was the one who took the last 30-point room.

"If that's the case, give me a room on your top floor."

"Top top?" Khalif responded while straightening his pose, taking his hand off his chin.

"A room on the top floor costs 100 points."

"It doesn't matter."

For someone to not care about a 100-point room... That was an amount that, unless you were a Pure-Blood from a top guild, you could never even dream of spending on just lodging. Khalif could smell the scent of money.

“By the way, this is the largest inn in this town, right?” the guy asked.

“Yes, that’s correct.”

“So you guys can do currency exchanges, right?”

Khalif’s eyes twinkled, quickly nodding his head in response, “Of course, sir. What bills are they?”

Not only did this customer want the most expensive room, but he also wanted to do a currency exchange. Realizing that this was a big-shot customer, Khalif’s attitude did a 180, bringing his hands together and showing respect to YuWon.

“Asgardian,” YuWon replied.

Asgardian bills were the most trusted and reliable currency. Because of that, it had a low exchange fee and was welcomed practically everywhere due to there being basically no risk.

“384 1,000-point bills. I’d like you to exchange all of it into points, minus the exchange fee of course,” YuWon said while handing the innkeeper a thick white envelope.

A whopping 384 Asgardian bills. Seeing them made Khalif’s eyes turn white from shock.

* * *

[You have obtained 376,320 points.]

Exchanging the bills netted YuWon a large sum, but even without this money, he was already rich because of the obscenely large amount of points he had obtained from each floor.

[Total Points: 931,420p]

930K points. It was an amount that even most Rankers couldn’t obtain.

YuWon was a bit disappointed he couldn’t hit one million points, but he still thought it was plenty.

“Hey, Lackey.”

[Would you like to call a Lackey?]

Speaking into the player kit, a message popped up.

YuWon responded to the player kit, “Yes.”

[Please wait a moment.]

The wait wasn’t long. Lackeys had an exceptional ability to sniff out money.

“> Heyo! What can I help you with?”

With a bright voice, what appeared was not a pierrot, but instead was a finger-sized fairy with wings.

YuWon thought the taste of the 11th Floor’s Administrator was better than that of the Tutorial’s Administrator. A fairy was much better to look at than a pierrot with a sickening, smiling face.

“Is the Shop usable right now?”

“> Of course. Please tell me what you want. We have everything there is, except for what we don’t.”

The fairy was overtly friendly. It was completely different in every way from the Lackeys of the Tutorial.

‘It’s probably due to the points I have,’ YuWon thought.

A Lackey’s main objective was ‘points.’ For providing various conveniences to a player, Lackeys took points as payment. What this meant was that as long as you had the points, you could make Lackeys do whatever you wanted.

“> So what do you need, sir?” the Lackey asked with a twinkle in its eyes.

YuWon already knew what he needed, but he pretended to think for a moment.

One of the ways to buy things cheap from a Lackey was to appear that you didn’t actually need the thing.

‘Or else they’ll jack up the prices,’ YuWon thought.

“First let me peruse a bit.”

“> Of course, sir.”

With a flick of the Lackey’s hand, a hazy screen popped up in front of YuWon listing thousands of varieties of items.

Looking around the screen nonchalantly, YuWon searched for a single item.

‘Adamantium.’

It was the only material that could complete the 「Dark Divine Crystal.」

‘I hope there’s some available for sale.’

Chapter 65

Lackeys possessed a near uncountable amount of items.

Some of them were even things that YuWon wished he could buy, making him wonder how a Lackey on the 11th Floor had possessed such a thing. However, YuWon wasn’t so foolish as to make an impulsive purchase.

As long as he could purchase some adamantium and receive Hephaestus’s help, he could obtain an item far greater than what was available here.

‘It’s here.’

YuWon’s eyes twinkled before he caught himself. His facial expression almost revealed his true feelings to the Lackey.

After finding the adamantium, YuWon still browsed over items, only coming back to it much later.

“How much is this?” he asked.

[Adamantium : 1.7kg]

The Lackey smiled after seeing what YuWon was pointing at.

“> Adamantium... Nice choice, but there are plenty of other good objects as well, so why that one?”

“Finished items are too expensive. I thought it'd be cheaper to purchase the raw materials and make something myself.”

“> That is normally true... however, it is a bit different for adamantium.”

The Lackey's eyes were smiling.

Yuwon could tell that something was wrong. The Lackey appeared as if it knew something.

“> This is an unbreakable material, and not only does it have great mana conductivity, it can even amplify mana. There's no other mineral like it in the world.”

The Lackey went on a spiel, but YuWon already knew how great of a mineral adamantium was.

‘Adamantium is the only material out there that can self-amplify mana. Taking its hardness and durability into account, it's honestly a cheat-like material,’ Yuwon thought to himself.

That was the reason why blacksmiths described adamantium as the material of dreams, but due to its incredible hardness and durability, there were less than ten blacksmiths in the entire Tower that were capable of handling this mineral.

“> As long as you can get your hands on it, you can definitely make an amazing item out of it. Of course, there aren't many blacksmiths who can handle it...”

And what would you know.

“> ... But you're acquainted with Hephaestus, aren't you?”

The Lackey knew about YuWon's relationship with Hephaestus.

Adamantium was undoubtedly a great mineral, but not only was there an extremely limited supply of it, with how few blacksmiths there were capable of refining it, there was also low demand for it.

Due to that, depending on whose hands it was in, its value fluctuated.

“So why does that matter?”

“> Well, since you're a player capable of getting it crafted into any item, wouldn't that naturally increase its value?”

The Lackey wasn't wrong. Any other player that came across adamantium would have to first face the hurdle of finding a blacksmith that could refine it. And even if they found someone capable, they'd need to pay an exorbitant crafting cost.

In that regard, YuWon was in an extremely advantageous position with Hephaestus being greatly indebted to him.

Yuwon had a slight snarl on his face. The conversation had gone on longer than he wanted in a direction he disliked.

"So, what's the price?"

"> Yes. It'll be 1.5 million points for 1.7kg of adamantium."

It was a ridiculous price. Even though it was adamantium, for less than 2kgs of it to cost 1.5 million points...

"I don't have that much money."

"> I am able to provide a loan with an interest of 11.5%. Actually, since you are a reputable player, I can even give you a loan at a 10% interest rate."

Lackeys were businessmen at heart.

Yuwon let out a deep sigh.

"A loan you say..."

The Lackey nodded its head.

"I guess it can't be helped."

"> Excellent choice! Then the 568,580 points you are short on will be borrowed through a loan at an interest rate of—"

"I'll just have to buy it elsewhere," YuWon said, closing the item shop window.

It all happened in an instant. The Lackey went into shock, but that didn't last long. It once again put on a nice smile.

"> Hehe. If that's the case, I could discount it a little bit. I'm not sure if you know, but this is a very rare item that can't be purchased elsewhere."

"Even without it, I'll have no difficulties climbing the Tower."

Yuwon's response put the Lackey into shock again for an entirely different reason.

Players naturally desired better items to climb the Tower, but that didn't apply to YuWon. Not only did he already have sufficient skills to climb the Tower, he had been breaking one record after another on every floor's test.

"I have plenty of time. There are Lackeys on other floors, not to mention there are also auction houses. And if it comes down to it, I could also just buy a different item."

In short, YuWon was telling the Lackey that if it was going to propose such a price, he had no intention of doing business with it.

“Let’s just end this here.”

“> Uh... Wait,” the lackey said in a panic.

YuWon was smiling on the inside. He was now in control of the flow of things.

“Nah.”

It was time to put the nails in the coffin.

“I’m not buying.”

* * *

“> Then 900K... no, I’ll sell it for 850K points.”

850,000 points. That was a fairly reasonable price, and it was the result of a long haggling session.

‘That might even be cheaper than market price,’ YuWon thought.

YuWon nodded his head, “If that’s the price...”

The Lackey who looked like it was on the brink of tears brightened up a little. But that was short lived. The Lackey carefully opened its mouth.

“> Um... Anyway, could you do... N-Nevermind. Let’s just do 850K.”

Due to the limited number of people capable of crafting, paired with the price, there were very few actual purchases and sales of adamantium. So even though it was valuable, for a Lackey, holding onto it did nothing for it.

In the end, 850K was still a lot of points, and it was unknown when another big baller like YuWon would come by. So it was essential for the Lackey to secure YuWon here.

[You have spent 850,000 points.]

[You obtained 1.7kg of adamantium.]

It was a pretty decent trade for YuWon.

Truthfully, the sooner he obtained adamantium, the better it was for him. In fact, the Lackey was right to suggest a loan to purchase it if necessary because what YuWon needed wasn’t just to climb the Tower without any troubles.

‘Now I need to get this to Ahjussi...’ YuWon thought while looking at the 「Pure Dark Divine Crystal」 on the back of his invisible glove. ‘However, I need this for the next test.’

The 11th Floor was Olympus’s domain. That meant that Olympus had many options to manipulate the test as well as to lay traps for him.

The 「Pure Dark Divine Crystal」 was YuWon's greatest weapon. Not only could it release its own mana, it could change the attribute of mana with little effort.

‘I'll have to go down as soon as I finish this test.’

Even for someone like Hephaestus, refining adamantium was no easy task, adding to the list of reasons why not too many people sought out this amazing mineral.

One month at the very least to even over three months. That's how long it would take to produce the item. So taking that into account, it wouldn't be a wise choice for YuWon to sideline the Crystal on this floor.

With a week left until the test, YuWon actually had a lot of time remaining.

“If that's the case...”

After taking a moment to think, YuWon checked his status window before getting up.

“Why don't I go on a walk?”

* * *

Reaper Scans

Translator – NumbaWon

Proofreader – BringTheRayn

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* * *

Hoon was one of the so-called geniuses. Not only was he a talented Pure-Blood player, being a direct descendent of the NamGung Clan, he had a background that supported his skills.

Since the Tutorial, he had passed various tests before his peers. Having come from one of the top martial clans in the Martial Realm, as well as having a father that was an executive at the mid-sized Martial Guild, he'd had no obstacles.

Talent and skills. Support of a large faction. Natural-born leadership. Hard-working. With all those qualities, Hoon was definitely qualified to be the leader of his group.

“This isn't as hard as I thought it'd be.”

“Yeah. I was expecting more since I heard it was the hardest dungeon on the 11th Floor.”

“If this is all there is to it, we can definitely see it through to the end.”

“Well, that's a given considering who we have.”

His teammates, whose morale was at an all-time high, all turned their gazes to Hoon, who was wiping his sword with a towel.

Hoon had long hair that was tied up in a traditional topknot. He was silently preparing to continue the raid of the dungeon, looking after a large sword that was the size of his own body.

Clatter—

Hoon got up from his seat. Having rested plenty, he picked one of the splitting paths, saying “How about this way?”

“If that’s the direction you want to go.”

“Things always go well for those who were meant to be something. If you want to go that way, I’m with you.”

“I agree as well.”

The ten teammates were in unanimous consent.

Being a maze-type dungeon, unless you had a high search-type skill, it was basically luck of the draw.

“Since we don’t have a lot of time, let’s hurry. We don’t have many days left if we want to finish the dungeon raid and get some rest before the test.”

“Understood.”

“The test, you say... Now that I think about it, it really is almost upon us.”

The 11th Floor’s test was the largest scale battle that players climbing the Tower would face, and tests that hundreds of players participated in together were also not very common.

“Is there any need to be so nervous? This test looks like it’ll be a complete cake walk.”

“Yeah. Team A is just full of scrubs.”

Despite the scale of the battle, the team composition was so far in their favor it was practically impossible to feel nervous.

The difference between the two teams was so large, some were even calling it the worst team draw in history.

“There was one person that was noteworthy though.”

“Kim YuWon?”

“He is kind of a hotshot.”

“True. He even passed the Heavenly Demonic Cult’s test.”

“He’s really fucking unlucky, ending up on that team.”

Rumor had already spread that the Kim YuWon was on Team A. People thought that this would end up being his first major setback after having smashed the records of every floor so far.

“Still, if he can even win this test, it’ll really prove that he’s great. In a way, it’d be another record.”

Because of that, people started to talk, speculating whether or not YuWon would simply give up this test.

“Stop chatting and stay on your guard. We don’t know when there might be an ambush,” Hoon said, taking the lead and scolding his teammates. “We’re going to give it our all in this test as well. That’s all there is to it.”

“Okay!”

“Alright, I got it.”

“I promise to keep that in mind, captain.”

Replying to Hoon, his teammates looked at how reliable their leader was.

Agrea’s Maze, said to be the hardest dungeon on the 11th Floor. Centered around Hoon, his team was raiding that very dungeon.

‘We all have to level up one or two levels. And actually defeating Agrea should help the finances of the team quite a bit,’ Hoon thought while tightly gripping his sword. ‘Kim YuWon, huh...’

Hoon had heard that name multiple times before. He was one of the players that were making names for themselves on the lower floors, just like him. In fact, it was well regarded that YuWon was far superior to him.

He didn’t know where YuWon was a Pure-Blood from, but he honestly wasn’t all that curious. What he really wanted to know was if his skills were as great as rumored.

‘I’d like to be able to face him at least once in this test.’

While he was lost in thought, they arrived at the next room.

Hoon prepared to use his skill, tensing up his legs. “Stop for a second,” he ordered his team while slowly stepping forward. “Everyone, prepare for combat...”

Despite being ready for a fight, Hoon suddenly stopped in his tracks.

His teammates that were following him asked in confusion, “What’s wrong?”

“Is something there...?”

“Huh?”

His teammates’ reactions were no different than his.

At the end of the tunnel, a large, circular room appeared. And inside that room, there was a purple blaze as well as dozens of spider monsters that were burnt to a crisp by the very same flames.

Chapter 66

“W-What the hell is all this?”

“Fire?”

“But it’s not that hot...”

“Were they all burnt to death?”

There were far more scorched spider monsters in this room than any of the previous rooms. Dozens, maybe even a hundred giant spiders even larger than the ones in the previous rooms lay dead.

And that wasn't all.

"Look over there!" one of the party members shouted, focusing the group's attention to where they were pointing.

Their finger pointed up at the ceiling.

Hoon's eyes widened after seeing what was up there.

"That's..."

"R-Really big..."

"That's actually a spider?"

A spider the size of a house with dozens of legs was dead on the ceiling. It wasn't entirely clear because it had been burnt black, but it appeared to have had hundreds of eyes on its back.

"Agrea..."

It was obvious to anyone who wasn't an idiot. It was the boss of this dungeon. Agrea, the queen of spiders who hadn't been defeated for years now.

"It died while stuck on the ceiling?"

"What happened...?"

Dash—

While his companions were lost in confusion, Hoon jumped up. Running across the wall, he reached the ceiling, kicking Agrea's corpse and dropping it to the floor.

Thud—

Because of how massive the corpse was, the chamber shook for a moment.

Hoon closely inspected Agrea's corpse as the purple flames started to extinguish themselves.

'It wasn't only burnt by fire,' he thought.

Inspecting the corpse would give him an approximate idea of the killer's skills. And coming from a martial clan specializing in the sword, Hoon was exceptional at reading traces of swordsmanship.

'These marks were definitely created by a sword. The sword's length is approximately 1.3 meters. They manage to slice through Agrea in a single swing after softening it with heat.'

Having checked the slash mark, Hoon was able to picture the fight in his head.

The monstrously-large Agrea. A player that can control purple fire. And the player's movement, slicing Agrea in a single strike while it screamed in agony from being burnt alive.

Shiver—

Hoon felt a chill up his spine. He wondered what might happen if he had to fight the player that did this.

Looking around at his surroundings, he realized that there weren't any burn marks on the chamber itself.

He had never heard of a skill that could do something like this.

"Was this maybe done by a Ranker?" he said, thinking out loud.

That was the only possible conclusion he could come to. The one who did this was simply too powerful for it to have been a player on just the 11th Floor.

But that still beckoned the question, 'Why would a Ranker come all the way down here?'

There was no reason for a Ranker to raid a dungeon on the lower floors. It'd be much better to raid the dungeons on the upper floors to level up. Not to mention a Ranker would get ridiculed by other Rankers if they were found to be raiding a dungeon on a lower floor.

"... We'll have to go back," Hoon said.

The boss room that was found sooner than expected had already been cleared by someone else who got there before them through a different route.

Hoon had no choice but to give up on this dungeon.

* * *

Reaper Scans

Translator – NumbaWon

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[Agrea's Thread]

▷ Classification : material

▷ A thread from the Spider Queen Agrea. It has a high mana conductivity, and it is super elastic. It is also harder than steel.

After checking what he reaped from the dungeon, YuWon put the lump of thread the size of his head into his inventory.

"I got lucky."

He ended up hitting an unexpected jackpot in the dungeon he entered on a whim to test out his skill.

'This much should fetch at least 1,000 points. Alternatively, I could also just keep it and use it later.'

He was already in a good mood when he stumbled upon this jackpot.

After exiting the dungeon, YuWon called forth mana to his hand.

Fwoosh—

A purple fire appeared above his palm.

He couldn't feel any heat because [Holy Fire] was a skill that only damaged targets that YuWon designated.

'It's even greater than I expected.'

There were things that simply couldn't be explained by the text in a skill window.

Having become a skill, the ability to wield the [Holy Fire] became engraved into his instincts. However, without actually using the skill, it was impossible to understand the full capabilities of how to use it.

That's why YuWon wanted to test it out before the test.

'For being an S plus-ranked skill, the firepower isn't that great, but that's inevitable with a low proficiency... But that's not what's important.'

[Holy Fire] was a fire that grew bigger by eating the opponent's emotions, which was one of the scariest abilities that Outers possessed.

Controlling one's emotions was difficult no matter how strong a mental fortitude one possessed. This applied to fear as well.

Spiders were naturally afraid of fire, so as soon as YuWon manifested the [Holy Fire,] it quickly grew by feeding on the spiders' emotions. In that situation, [Holy Fire] had a greater effect than any fire-type skills he knew.

'Once I have a higher Arcane Power stat as well as a higher proficiency, the effect should increase manyfold.'

He had obtained quite a lot in this hunt, including raising the completion rate of [Heaven-Slaying Star,] which had stagnated during his long stay on the 10th Floor.

[Completion rate: 91.67%]

Yuwon was now in the final stretch of completing [Heaven-Slaying Star.] It being an incomplete skill, YuWon was excited to see what kind of effect it would have once it was completed.

'This is going faster than I expected.'

His current growth speed was much faster than originally planned, but as the path ahead was thorny and treacherous, he couldn't be satisfied with his current progress.

"Huh?"

After returning to the inn, YuWon found a group of players gathered around, loitering in front of his room. They all had worried looks on their faces.

"What are you guys doing in front of someone else's room?" YuWon asked.

Step, step—

As he walked down the hallway, they focused their gazes on YuWon.

There were a total of eight players, none of which YuWon had met before.

“Are you... YuWon, by chance?” one of them asked.

As expected, their business was with YuWon.

The fact that YuWon had arrived on the 11th Floor and was going to participate in the test was already well known. That was unavoidable since the team list for the next test had already been publicly announced.

After taking a second to think on how he should respond, YuWon nodded his head. “So?” he said, thinking that it was pointless to lie.

“We are fellow members of Team A, like you. My name is Halimun.”

Yuwon nodded his head, signaling them to go on.

Halimun, glad to know that YuWon intended to hear them out, carried on. “As you know, the teams are highly disproportionate in this test. Team B has many well-known players, such as NamGung Hoon.”

Yuwon already knew all this, but he simply didn’t care. However, the same couldn’t be said of everyone other than YuWon.

“About half the players on Team A have already forfeited, but there are still half remaining,” Halimum said.

“And is that because of me?” YuWon asked.

Yuwon’s perceptiveness made Halimun nod his head in surprise.

“Yes. There are many skilled players on Team B, but I’m sure none of them are on your level. The remaining half believe that because you are on the team—”

“And that has nothing to do with the fact that you guys are out of points?” YuWon interrupted Halimun.

Maybe it was because YuWon hit the nail on the head, but Halimun and the others looked away.

On every floor, every time you took the test, players had to pay a test fee. The test fee was as low as 100 points and as high as 1,000 points. For YuWon this was chump change, but that wasn’t the case for your average lower-floor players.

On top of that, if you failed a test and wanted to try again, you had to pay the test fee again. This meant that quite a significant number of players gave up on climbing the Tower, being unable to pay the seemingly exorbitant test fees.

“Since it’d be a waste of points to just give up, you want to make an attempt by rallying around someone reliable. Is that it? YuWon asked.

“That’s a rude accusation...!”

“We just wanted to discuss how we could pass the test together...”

“I have something to say about that,” YuWon said while walking past the players to his room. “If you value your lives, just give up. There’s nothing that amazing up there that’s worth potentially dying a meaningless death.”

YuWon already knew well what lay at the top of the Tower, as well as the power that Rankers ended up attaining.

Most people that climbed the Tower revered the power of Rankers, wishing for a taste of that very same power and the influence that came with it.

‘It’s all meaningless,’ YuWon thought to himself.

9 out of 10, or more like 99 out of 100 people would lose their lives in the process.

And this test was even more dangerous than usual.

‘I should be the only one to enter this tiger’s den.’

This test was rigged, aimed at YuWon, and the other members of Team A were simply the sacrificial lambs.

Thinking that there was no need for them to be moths flying into the flames, he wished that they would give up on this test.

“Now if you have nothing else to say, go away. It’s not a pretty sight, being gathered around a stranger’s room,” YuWon said while opening his door. He had nothing more to say to them.

Halimun, who had been gritting his teeth from the humiliation, opened his mouth while trembling, “So you’re also just going to give up?”

Half the team had already forfeited the test. If YuWon also gave up, the remaining 1% chance would vanish.

“No,” Yuwon replied, contrary to Halimun’s expectations. “I’m going to challenge the test.”

“Huh? But you just told us to give up, and that...”

YuWon glanced back at Halimun and other players while closing the door, leaving them with a final line, “That only applies to you guys.”

Thunk—

The door closed.

They didn’t go away right away, so YuWon could hear whispering outside his door. If he tried hard, he would be able to make out what they were saying, but he didn’t bother.

‘I wonder how many of them will give up,’ he thought.

There weren't many that valued their life so little that they would be willing to challenge the test even while knowing Yuwon wasn't going to cooperate with them. So for anyone that remained, it meant that they were that desperate, and so they'd be at least somewhat useful.

'I'm colliding with them sooner than planned... but this is actually good.'

He couldn't avoid the challenge even while knowing it was a trap. Regardless of this test, Olympus was sure to continue coming after YuWon.

From the moment he got in the way of them capturing Hephaestus, they ended up in an irreparable relationship.

'The larger the trap, the more likely it is to get noticed by the Administrator. I know Olympus is going to try their hardest to eliminate me while I'm still on the lower floors.'

Having deeply interfered with the test, Olympus was now also exposed to danger. That was why YuWon decided to jump in headfirst even while knowing it was a trap.

"Bring it on, Olympus."

This wasn't just a test to move on to the next floor. It was why YuWon spent days honing his senses, which had become dull from returning to the past, to their maximum.

And thus, time flew, and the day of the test dawned.

Chapter 67

The day of the test dawned.

The location was the Dark Forest of Elilaum.

Hypnos, the test examiner, once again looked through the list of the participating players. First Team A then Team B.

Quite a few familiar names were visible.

"I'm going to be chewed out for a while."

There was too great of a difference in skills between the two teams.

Hoon alone was known as a super rookie capable of potentially becoming a High Ranker one day. The genius of the NamGung Clan. A player that NamGung JinWoon, a distinguished Ranker and the head of the NamGung clan, said will one day surpass him.

"But the cream of the crop is this guy."

There were a lot of people paying attention to this test. Part of that was because there were quite a few skilled players on Team B, but the main reason was due to a single player on Team A.

"Kim YuWon," Hypnos said to himself.

It was the only name that stood out on the Team A roster, almost creating an illusion where the letters of his name sparkled like gold.

It made the names of the players on Team B look pathetic in comparison. His name was famous, not only among the players of the lower floors, but even among Rankers.

“How did someone with such a bright future end up with a target on his back? Tsk, tsk.”

Hypnos pushed his hair back.

From the top of the Tower, there was one single order given out by the great Olympus.

Exterminate the player Kim YuWon.

Within the space of this test, it would become possible to try and do something to YuWon, and on the 11th Floor, where Hypnos was the test examiner, YuWon was basically in the palm of Olympus’s hand.

Hypnos was flying around on a white bull. Beneath him was a sea of dense forestry. It was Elilaum, the stage of this test.

“The preparations should almost be finished.”

Hypnos let out a long sigh, laying his head on the bull’s back.

If this test went well, not only would he be given a few days of vacation, he would also be rewarded well by Olympus. Just the thought of that was enough to make Hypnos smile.

That was when...

Ding!

Hypnos’s player kit rang.

It was a message.

“Who’s sending me a message right before the test...”

The annoyance from having his sweet daydream interrupted didn’t last long. After seeing who the message was from, he reflexibly sat up in a proper position.

[Hera]

One of the eight High Rankers that symbolized Olympus and the wife of Zeus, king of Olympus.

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Teams A and B had gathered.

There was a sharp contrast in the number of players the two teams had.

Hypnos counted all the players that had arrived on time. “Team A, 51 people. Team B, 200 people...”

One side had almost four times as many people as the other. On top of that, there was an even greater difference in the quality of the players.

“More players came than I expected,” Hypnos said, seeing all the players that came for Team A.

It wouldn’t have been odd if the entirety of Team A had forfeited, so 51 people was many times more people than what Hypnos had expected.

‘To think he’d actually participate...’ Hypnos thought while looking at the reason this many people even showed up. ‘Does he not know that this is a trap?’

Kim YuWon’s presence was what made this possible. The player that passed the Tutorial above Hargaan, an Olympian Pure-Blood. The player that set a new record on every floor, even passing the Heavenly Demoniac Cult’s test.

Despite all those achievements, Hypnos thought that he was too overconfident.

‘There’s no way he thinks he can overcome this much of a difference by himself...’

A single hand couldn’t beat ten hands. Well, that might have been the case in other worlds, but in the world of the Tower, that was false.

One hand could beat ten hands. Dominating, overwhelming power could beat the power of numbers. But that only applied to Rankers.

Currently, YuWon didn’t have to beat ten hands but hundreds. And a few of those hands were more powerful than the average hand.

‘Does he think he might be able to do something because this is a test?’

This fight was no simple fight. Because it was a test to discern if one had the qualifications to move on to the next floor, there were ‘rules’ to this test. It wasn’t some fight where just pure difference in power mattered.

There was a high, no, a 100% chance that the players of Team A were counting on the ‘rules.’

“Ahem,” Hypnos lightly coughed while observing the players. “Hello, everyone. My name is Hypnos. I’m the test examiner of the 11th Floor.”

Hypnos’s gaze went from YuWon to Hoon, Ro’el, Spyros, and others.

The various Rankers observing this test were either sponsors of these players or members of guilds that wanted to recruit them.

Hypnos was more tense than he had been for any other test he had been an examiner for.

“Team A looks short of a lot of people... But there will be no changes made, and we will go forward with these teams as is,” Hypnos announced.

The players on Team A who held but a sliver of hope all let out a sigh. If the teams were resorted, their chances could have gone up.

“I’ll get straight to the point by explaining the contents of the test and starting immediately. This will be your test,” Hypnos said, raising a red flag for everyone to see. “Capture the flag.”

When the test was revealed, everyone murmured.

Capture the Flag.

It was something entirely new to the people who were taking the large team test for the first time. But a few smart ones were able to discern what the test would be about from the name.

For YuWon, this was a familiar test.

‘This is going to be annoying.’

YuWon wondered why it had to be capture the flag. This was a test that he couldn’t solo.

Hypnos continued to explain, “The test is simple, but I should first explain that the flags have been crafted through technomancy and are capable of doing the following.”

Hypnos pulled out another flag and brought them together, which made one of them disappear into thin air, and on the remaining flag was now the number 2.

“This number represents the number of flags. I’m sure you won’t forget this unless you’re a complete imbecile. Now, the challenge is where the flags are,” Hypnos spoke while looking to the massive forest behind him. “The flags are laid out across the forest. In the middle of the road, at the bottom of a cliff, at the top of a tree, and even on the body of a monster. You have no idea how much of a struggle it was to set them up.”

Hypnos’s explanation made a few players chuckle. They could visualize how much hard work it must have been to lay out flags across such a big forest.

Hypnos continued, “You guys just have to collect the flags that are spread out throughout the forest. The team that collects the highest number of flags at the end wins. Simple, right?”

From the explanation, it really did seem simple. However, this wasn’t such an easy test.

“But this test is called ‘capture the flag’ not ‘collect the flag.’ This isn’t a children’s game like tag or something like that,” Hypnos said while smirking. “You will be able to take the flags that your opponents have collected. The method does not matter. You can steal, threaten, kill, or do whatever you like in order to take them.”

That was the true essence of the test. It didn’t matter if you couldn’t find a single flag. If you could take your opponent’s flags, you could win in the end.

“Finally, this test has ‘kings.’”

YuWon’s brows furrowed. This was the reason that this test would be complicated.

Hypnos reassured the players, “Don’t worry. It’s not like chess. You won’t fail just because your king dies. However, the role of the king is critical because any flags that the king holds is counted as double.”

The eyes of the players of Team A all lit up.

Double.

For a team with significantly less members, their only option was to utilize the ‘king’ to their full potential.

Naturally, all their gazes looked towards Yuwon. And YuWon understood immediately what their gazes meant.

‘I wish for that to be the case too,’ YuWon thought.

If YuWon could be the ‘king’ and he caught the enemy ‘king,’ it wasn’t impossible for them to win this test. However...

“The ‘king’ is decided randomly. You all know how it is. This is a shitty luck-based test.” Hypnos said while laughing.

Yuwon felt an urge to punch Hypnos in his smug face.

Random? Luck?

On paper, YuWon should have had a 1 in 51 chance of becoming the ‘king,’ but the actual probability was 0.

“Okay. Now then...”

Vwooom—

A blue magic array appeared underneath the two teams.

“The test will begin,” Hypnos announced.

Flash—!

* * *

Flash—!

The magic array lit up and the view changed.

Yuwon looked around at his surroundings, which was somewhere inside the forest.

‘So we’ve all been transported,’ YuWon thought to himself.

All the players of Team A were transported to the same location.

Somewhere in this forest were flags for them to search and find.

[The 11th Floor test will now begin.]

[Please find the flags spread out across the forest.]

[The team with more flags after 24 hours will win.]

[The flags can be stolen.]

[Your CP (Contribution Points) will be based on the number of flags you obtain.]

[If you deliver a flag to a 'king,' you will receive double the CP.]

[If the 'king' has his flags stolen, your CP will disappear.]

[Your reward will be based on your CP.]

[Team A: 0 flags]

[Team B: 0 flags]

Hypnos had just given a detailed explanation of the test, and this was a test that YuWon had already experienced before.

The victory in capture the flag was dictated by how you utilized your 'king' and whether or not you were able to get the other team's 'king.'

So priority one was figuring out who the 'king' was, which wasn't hard at all.

"Huh?

"What's up with you, man? What's going on with your body?"

YuWon looked over at the commotion.

There was a guy by himself shining in the shady forest.

It was Halimun.

"It says... I'm the 'king,'" Halimun said in a daze, not having expected himself to become the 'king.'

YuWon let out a deep sigh. That reaction alone was enough to disqualify him in YuWon's mind.

"What do I do?" Halimun asked.

They were already in a disadvantageous situation, and the 'king' that was supposed to be the crux of this test was in a state of total confusion.

'It honestly makes me wonder how he even got this far,' YuWon thought disapprovingly.

Step—

The first one to break away from the group was YuWon.

All the players on Team A had been closely watching YuWon and Halimun.

Seeing YuWon walk into the distance, Halimun asked, "Where are you going?"

"I'm going to go grab the flags, so don't go off and get killed somewhere and just stay here."

Halimun followed up YuWon's response with, "Y-You're not going to protect the 'king'?"

“That’s not how you’re supposed to beg for your life. Don’t worry. There won’t be any fighting right away,” YuWon replied.

After saying that to Halimun, who had fallen into the role of the ‘king,’ YuWon looked over at the other players, advising them, “Don’t just fool around. If you guys want to climb up, you need to obtain even the littlest bit of CP and secure a reward.”

The players on Team A nodded their heads at YuWon’s words.

He was right. Since they had just started, neither side had any flags yet. There wouldn’t be any clashes right away, meaning the priority was securing the flags that were spread across the forest.

‘At least it looks like they got the gist of it,’ YuWon thought.

Seeing the players move one by one, he himself started to get moving again.

Step, step—

The forest was quiet, but the 11th Floor’s forest was essentially a large dungeon with monsters creeping around every corner.

‘He said that there were flags on the road, at the top of trees, etc... but most are probably held by monsters.’

That was only natural for a test where you had to obtain flags.

‘Well then...’

YuWon’s eyes turned red, and immediately the claustrophobic forest felt like a wide-open plain to him. He could easily see a monster passing by far beyond the trees.

It was an ogre, also called the ‘king of the forest.’ And on his clothes hung a flag.

As expected, there was a higher chance that the stronger monsters would have flags on them.

‘I guess it’s time for me to start running.’

Chapter 68

“Well, this is going to be a complete walk in the park.”

Unlike Team A, there was not a shred of tension among team B.

They were just slightly amused by who the ‘king’ was. There was no talk on how to utilize the ‘king.’

“There’s just way too big a difference.”

“Have any of you guys heard of a guy named Vance on the other team? I took a test with him before, and, man, he’s a complete joke.”

“Why?”

“He doesn’t have many skills, and his level is low, too. But most importantly, he’s completely incompetent. It’s honestly a shock he even got this far.”

“Do you think that Team A is full of guys like that?”

“Probably.”

“Other than Kim YuWon, I haven’t heard of any of them. Besides, there’s such a massive gap in numbers.”

The mood was completely relaxed.

Hoon looked around at his companions who had come with him, observing the same thing.

“Being too nervous isn’t good,” a deep voice ripped throughout Team B, “but being too lax is even worse.”

Hoon’s words made his companions tense up a little.

It was something he had told them multiple times. Every test, Hoon insisted on a moderate level of tension.

The best condition was moderate tension. The second best was extreme tension. And the worst condition was carelessness. That was how Hoon was taught.

“That’s right.”

“This is a test...”

“And the enemy team does have YuWon.”

The only opponent they had to be cautious of in this test was YuWon. That meant the only variables for them were YuWon and the existence of the ‘king.’

“He’s right. Let’s be a little more alert. We can have fun after the test is over.”

“Yeah. We can go out together or something.”

“All of us?”

“Sounds good to me.”

“Then let’s hurry up.”

The players on Team B started skedaddling.

Hoon’s brows furrowed watching them. ‘They didn’t understand a word,’ he thought.

It was 51 versus 200. With such a dominant difference in numbers, it couldn’t be helped that they weren’t nervous. This applied to Hoon as well.

But this went beyond not being nervous. They were being outright careless, talking as if victory was guaranteed and thinking of the after party. It was like his words went in one ear and right out the other.

“Are you nervous?” said a voice from behind Hoon, making him turn his head.

It was a woman with stunning blonde hair that reached her waistline. Her radiant beauty paired with pure-white clothes was enough for her to grab everyone’s attention around her.

Hoon wasn’t all that interested in others, but he knew her name.

“Your name is Ro’el, right?”

“I’m honored that you know my name.”

She was called the Angel Ro’el. The nickname ‘Angel’ came from both her beauty and her ability.

A gentle breeze blew around her.

Hoon felt his body becoming lighter. He narrowed his eyes, realizing that it was the result of Ro’el’s ability.

‘Healing and buffing. They’re uncommon abilities,’ he thought.

There weren’t many support players. Not only was it hard for them to fight alone, but they were also the most susceptible to danger. Paired with the fact that it was hard to obtain buffing skills, it severely limited the number of support players.

Ro’el was a rising star among the few support players. Thanks to that, despite being only on the 11th Floor, she was as highly valued as players on the top floors.

“Don’t be too nervous. It’s an undeniable fact that there is a massive difference in power,” she told Hoon.

“That is an undeniable fact. Or that’s how it looks on the surface. ”

“What do you mean?” Ro’el asked.

Hoon replied while looking around at the players that were spreading out, “Don’t you think it’s odd? For being randomly placed, there’s too large a difference between the teams.”

“Is this not just a coincidence?”

“In the world I’m from, there is a saying. ‘There’s no such thing as coincidence in the world of the strong.’”

When something looked like a coincidence, there was likely a hidden reason for what was going on. Hoon felt that something was off with this test. And the same went for Ro’el.

She wasn’t an idiot. It was only natural to think that something was weird when such a large difference in teams happened, but that was the extent of her thoughts.

“But we’re still on Team B. Does the reason really matter?” she told Hoon.

“... I guess,” Hoon replied, but on his face was a look of doubt. Did the reason really not matter?

It might have been like Ro'el said, where the reason didn't matter as long as it benefited them, but the whole situation was still greatly off-putting for Hoon. It was an instinctive feeling, and rarely were his instincts wrong.

"By the way, who is our team's 'king'? Does anyone know?" Ro'el asked.

Hoon's companions shook their heads in response. The same went for Ro'el's companions. And there was no need to bother asking Hoon, who barely remembered Ro'el's name.

"It must be a not very well-known player, seeing as how no one knows," Ro'el spoke nonchalantly. She didn't really care who the 'king' was, and that was inevitable because even if something potentially happened to the 'king,' it seemed like an unloseable game for them.

Meanwhile, Team A was in a position where they had to protect the 'king.'

Hoon thought, 'I guess it's inevitable that she doesn't care.'

Their obvious dominance was likely the reason why no one paid interest to the 'king.'

'But...' Hoon wondered about the face of the 'king' that flashed gold in color. 'What did that guy look like?'

It was the strangest thing. Due to his great memory, since he was a kid, he never forgot something he saw once, yet he couldn't remember the face of the 'king' on his own team.

* * *

Reaper Scans

Translator – NumbaWon

Proofreader – BringTheRayn

* * *

Halimun didn't move around by himself. Rather, to be exact, he couldn't. He was accompanied by many people on top of his regular companions.

The reason was simple. It was the golden light that shone out from Halimun's body because he was Team A's 'king.'

"Found it!"

"Nice. So it was in a place like that."

"Isn't it in somewhat of a dangerous spot?"

"I'll go grab it."

At the bottom of a cliff, a red flag could be seen. It was the fourth flag they had found.

A member of Team A scaled down the cliff to fetch the flag.

“There are way too few flags spread out around the path. The other three flags were all held by monsters...”

“That’s probably where most of the flags are. If they were all in the middle of the road, this would just be a luck-based test.”

“True.”

“But we still got a good number.”

They were collecting the flags while escorting the ‘king.’ As important as protecting the ‘king’ was, if they couldn’t collect any flags, it would be entirely meaningless.

“And that’s now another flag for the ‘king’...”

Halimun took the flag from his teammate, and the number of his flag changed from 6 to 8.

“When you give the flag to the ‘king,’ you get an extra flag. Plus the ‘king’ and the person who grabbed the flag get additional CP. This is a sweet deal.”

“It’s a huge boost.”

“It really might be doable as long as we can get the enemy team’s ‘king.’”

They had gained a sliver of hope in a test that originally seemed doomed. It was thanks to the number of flags the two teams held.

[Team A: 59 flags]

[Team B: 110 flags]

The difference was almost double, but that didn’t necessarily mean despair.

‘We can overcome this difference if we can just get their ‘king,’ Halimun thought.

The difference was just slightly shy of double, and Team A had yet to gather all their flags to the king.

It was likely that Team B also didn’t give all their flags to their ‘king’ yet, but whether or not that was the case, it didn’t change the fact that they could still make up the difference by getting the enemy ‘king.’

‘And the only one who can do that...’ Halimun thought while tightening his grip on his flag, ‘is him.’

Kim YuWon. It was highly likely that a good number of the 59 flags were found by YuWon.

“But this place is really big. Navigating around is also no joke...”

“I wonder where Team B’s starting point is.”

“Since we agreed to meet up at midnight and pool our flags together, we should hurry up.”

“Since we’re a party of ten, we need to try harder.”

“We have to find at least ten...”

Snap—

It was the sound of a branch snapping, and it wasn’t caused by any of the party members present.

Halimun and the other players turned their heads towards the source of the sound.

“Who goes there?”

The area became silent, and no presence could be felt, but that didn’t last long.

Suddenly, the surrounding area grew noisier, and they could feel the presence of multiple people.

“Come on.”

“They found out.”

“Who was it that stepped on the branch?”

“I told you guys to watch your feet.”

Rustle, rustle—

A group of people walked out from the foliage.

And with that...

[Players from the enemy team have appeared.]

[Defend your flags.]

A message popped up for players of Team A.

They were players from Team B.

To each side, players of the opposing team had a faint red glow to them. This was likely a similar principle to how the ‘king’ shone gold.

“It’s just that I’m worried about YuWon on Team A.”

“Even YuWon won’t be able to do jack shit if he doesn’t have a ‘king.’”

“It’s like taking candy from a crying baby.”

“Not to mention the CP you can get from getting the enemy ‘king’...”

A few players on Team B did become more alert after hearing Hoon’s warning earlier. They were players that were intimidated by YuWon’s name. However, they also knew that there was no reason why they would have to directly face YuWon.

Their objective wasn’t YuWon, but the ‘king.’

Due to the rules of the test, as long as they got Team A’s ‘king,’ victory was as good as theirs, not to mention the flags and CP they’d gain from taking down the ‘king.’

“W-Why are there so many people here?”

“Twelve... No, thirteen?”

“No. There’s even more than that.”

“Damn it. Don’t be a wimp. We have ten people on our side!” someone from Team A shouted, but it was no use.

“Ten?” someone from Team B said, smirking. It was a player wearing a black mask, wielding a dagger. “I think you mean nine.”

“What... do you...” A faint red line appeared across the neck of the player that was trying to ask what he meant. Then soon after, his head fell to the ground.

It was an assassination.

“F-Fuck!”

“Atroc!”

“W-We give up!”

Unfortunately, you couldn’t give up in this test.

The players on Team A fell into a panic. They were aware that there was a difference in skills, but they didn’t know it would be this great.

“Run!”

“This way, Halimun!”

“I’ll stop them somehow...!”

Halimun’s teammates pulled him by his hand.

At first, Halimun’s head went blank, but he started moving at the thought that he had to survive no matter what.

“Save me!”

“Agh!”

“I-I surrender... Ahhhh!”

It was complete and utter chaos.

Halimun wasn’t that fast at running.

“Where do you think you’re going?!”

“The king’s head is mine!”

“No, it’s mine...!”

He was being chased by enemies from all sides, so Halimun had no choice but to draw his sword.

“S-Stop! Stop...!” Halimun shouted.

“What are you looking at?” a voice said from behind him, causing a shiver to run down Halimun’s spine.

Halimun’s eyes widened. It was the assassin that first killed his teammate.

He could feel the cold blade coming closer to his neck, so he closed his eyes, anticipating death.

‘This is it for me...’ Halimun thought.

“And with this, it’s our...” the assassin’s voice trailed off.

Halimun’s head remained in one piece.

Confused, he opened his eyes and heard a familiar voice.

“I told you to stay still.”

It was the voice he wanted to hear more than anything.

“Why do people never listen to me?”

Splatter—

Blood splashed on Halimun’s back.

YuWon had arrived.

Chapter 69

“Mr. YuWon!” Halimun shouted, relieved to see YuWon.

In his eyes, it looked as if YuWon had wings on his back.

The players of Team B all faltered, pausing their chase after Halimun, the ‘king’ that was glowing gold.

“YuWon?”

“The Kim YuWon?”

“Damn it. It’s the real deal.”

“Look over there.”

“Kayle died in a single strike.”

The player that went by the name of Kayle was pretty skilled within Team B. As a rare assassin, he was a player that fought by hiding his presence and utilizing his quick mobility.

“... Should we retreat?”

“But we outnumber him.”

“Isn’t this a chance for us?”

Team B was split in their opinions.

“Don’t be stupid. Did you forget who we’re up against?”

“A High Pure-Blood would already be hard for us to handle, and this guy is even more of a monster than them.”

“We should back off.”

YuWon’s appearance put a damper on the chaos.

Within the crowd of whispering players, Yuwon noticed a red flag.

“You guys can go, but leave that behind,” YuWon said, pointing at the flag with the tip of his sword. “Because you guys aren’t retreating, instead I’m letting you guys go.”

The dozen or so players on Team B all had sour looks on their faces.

YuWon wanted them to leave their flags behind. It had only been a few hours since the test started, but they had been running around hard to obtain these flags.

Also, their chance of losing would become higher if they handed over their flags because YuWon’s ‘king’ was present.

“Here,” one of Team B’s players said, pulling out a flag from his coat. The flag said 2. The player continued, “It’s only two, but that’s more than what most of these guys have. I’ll leave this behind, so let me go.”

YuWon nodded his head as he walked towards Team B.

The players split, creating a path for YuWon, and in an instant, he was now in the middle of over a dozen enemy players.

[You obtained 2 flags.]

[You obtained 20cp.]

A CP notification popped up with his procurement of the flag.

Two flags. It wasn’t a bad gain.

The player that had put his flag down started leaving, and YuWon let him go. He then looked at the other players, asking them, “Now what will you guys do?”

YuWon waited for their decision. There was no need to spill any unnecessary blood, especially when killing the enemy team awarded 0cp.

As long as they just peacefully handed over their flags, Yuwon was just going to let them go.

However...

“Are you fucking kidding me?!”

“We were just going to back off, but you had to provoke us.”

“Alright, let’s go at it...”

A player from Team B took a step towards YuWon, and...

Slash—

The sound of slicing through bone echoed through the forest.

Splatter—!

The player that had shown killing intent while walking towards YuWon ended up getting his body sliced in half.

None of the blood got on YuWon, however, as he repelled all the red drops aimed at him with his sword.

“That’s one down.”

Plop—

A flag fell to the ground.

YuWon picked up the flag.

The guys that seemed like they were about to explode suddenly fell silent.

The situation had changed.

“So, what will you guys do?” YuWon asked again.

“...”

“...”

The players of Team B tried to gauge the situation, trying to decide what to do.

If they gave up their flags, they’d be able to leave with their lives intact. On the other hand, if they fought, their lives couldn’t be guaranteed, but there was a chance they could defeat YuWon and Team A’s ‘king.’

They might even be able to gain the reputation of defeating YuWon.

‘If I could do that...’

‘I might be contacted by a major guild.’

These were the thoughts running through many of their heads. That they’d be able to join a major guild if they were victorious against Kim YuWon.

It was a well-known rumor that multiple major guilds were interested in YuWon, so it was natural that if they were able to take down YuWon, they would end up gaining the interest of the major guilds.

In the Tower, major guilds were basically kingdoms. And becoming members of said kingdoms could net them a significant amount of power. But...

“I-I’ll give up.”

“Me too...”

“S-Same. H-Here’s my flag!”

"I don't have any flags. Please believe me!"

... They still gave up on fighting.

It was only a natural decision. None of the players present valued their lives so little that they were willing to challenge him after YuWon had just displayed his skills.

This also meant that no one present was that skilled.

"Well then..." YuWon said, collecting the flags, "hand over everything you guys have."

* * *

Reaper Scans

Translator – NumbaWon

Proofreader – BringTheRayn

* * *

[You obtained a flag.]

[You obtained 10cp.]

[You obtained a flag.]

[You obtained...]

YuWon smiled wide. From a party of over a dozen players, he managed to take eight flags.

'They had quite a few on them,' YuWon thought.

Because it hadn't been that long since the test had begun, there were quite a few players who didn't have a flag yet. So it was a big haul that more than half the players present had a flag on them.

After obtaining the eight flags, YuWon decided he had to change gears.

"The first half of the game is over," YuWon said.

It had been about four hours since the test started. That was enough time for quite a few flags to have been found. From here on out, it was more efficient to hunt players on the enemy team rather than hunt monsters.

YuWon continued, "Team B's going to start coming after our flags. And like these guys, some of them are going to start aiming for the 'king.'"

"M-Me?" Halimun asked stutteringly. He still couldn't stop shaking from the fear.

"Is there another 'king' here?"

"Th-That's true, but..."

"So from here on out, do not be more than 20m away from me. Even I will have a hard time winning this test without the 'king.'"

To YuWon, Halimun was an annoyance but also necessary because he needed the 'king' to win.

Not only was his team outnumbered four to one, there were no reliable players on Team A. So the only way YuWon could carry this game was to maximize the usage of the 'king.'

'And I need the 'king' to get double the CP... So as annoying as it is, it's better if I keep this guy by my side.'

Yuwon thought it would be much easier if he could be the 'king,' but if that were the case, he wouldn't be able to obtain as much CP. It was a high-risk, high-reward situation.

In the end, this was a test YuWon had to hustle by himself.

"Where are the other teammates?"

"Everyone spread out. We decided that the best starting move was to gather as many flags as possible..."

"That was a smart decision," YuWon mumbled while looking at the number on his flag. "That is as long as you guys don't end up having it stolen."

Halimun's gaze turned to YuWon's flag. Upon checking the number of flags he had collected, Halimun's eyes widened.

'27 flags?!'

That was an unbelievable amount for someone to have collected alone.

He did just obtain eight, but that meant that even before they met up, he already had nineteen flags.

One flag was already difficult to obtain. Halimun wondered how it was possible for YuWon to obtain nineteen in such a short time.

Halimun checked his team's flags.

[Team A: 64 flags]

Among the 64 flags, 27 were in YuWon's possession. That was almost half, and with the skills he just exhibited, soon enough, he would have over half.

'Is he really planning on carrying this test by himself?' Halimun wondered.

From the beginning, YuWon wasn't treating this as a team-based test.

And for Team B, this was a test where 200 people had to cooperate to defeat the monster that was YuWon.

'But the number of flags doesn't add up...' Halimun was confused.

When he had checked earlier, the number of flags on Team A were 59. So with the eight flags YuWon just took, their total should have been 67.

[Team B: 105 flags]

Team B's total flags decreased, but it wasn't by eight.

This meant that...

"It's finally started," YuWon said after he, too, checked the number of flags. "The 'capture' portion of the test."

The ball finally started rolling in this game.

* * *

"... So you escaped after just leaving your flags behind?" Hoon asked.

His question made the rest of Team B look over at the players that ran away after losing their flags.

Their gazes were full of discontent, wondering why they didn't bother fighting when they outnumbered him.

"You guys didn't see his skills! Kayle and Max were taken down in a single strike!"

"You couldn't even see his sword because of how fast it was. It sent a shiver down my spine..."

"I could see it, but it was still really fast."

"You're bullshitting again. How did it move?"

"Huh? Well... It was like this, and..."

"Stop bullshitting."

Unembarrassed, they continued their explanation.

Hoon simply shook his head, disappointed in them.

These were pretty skilled players of the 11th Floor. Only a few of them were truly exceptional, but they were still all above average.

And the guy named Kayle was someone that even Hoon had heard of before.

'So Kim YuWon is that skilled,' Hoon thought to himself.

The players of Team B started looking serious.

A group of over ten players had lost to him. Only two players had died, but this wasn't a problem they could just ignore.

They had lost their flags, and in the end, this was a test to see which side could collect more flags.

"So even if we're all in groups of ten, he can take us down group by group," Hoon mumbled.

The players on Team B agreed with him. If YuWon took them down group by group and took their flags, in the end, they'd be at a disadvantage.

"Then what should we do?" someone asked.

This question put Hoon into deep thought. He originally anticipated this to be an easy game, but YuWon ended up being a bigger variable than expected.

“... Did you say that YuWon and the ‘king’ got together?” The first one to break the silence was Ro’el. She looked like she had just thought of something.

“Uh, yeah. I think he was on his way back from gathering flags.”

“That leaves us with only one option,” Ro’el decided. “Please contact Salamov, Kaichel, and any other skilled players on our team.”

“What?”

“A-Are you serious?”

Ro’el’s order shocked everyone because they knew what Ro’el meant.

She nodded her head and said, “There’s still a lot of time left. We can’t just keep running away.”

Her words made everyone murmur.

She was right. The first half of the test was now ending. They couldn’t win this test by just handing over their flags every time they encountered him.

“Yeah... You’re right.”

“That’s true.”

“He might be Kim YuWon, but he’s still only one guy...”

“And we have people like Hoon and Ro’el. Our team isn’t short of skilled players.”

Most people were agreeing with Ro’el.

Hoon kept his mouth shut and listened closely.

Finally...

“So that decides it right?”

... Team B had made a decision.

“Let’s get the ‘king’ and Kim YuWon.”

Chapter 70

It had been 12 hours since the start of the 11th Floor test, exactly the midpoint of the test.

During that time, YuWon went over the forest with a fine comb. Every few monsters, one of them would have a flag, and whenever he ran into players of Team B, he took their flags.

Yuwon was like an unstoppable tank. No matter how many people there were, they couldn’t stop him.

“I-I’ll hand mine over!”

“Me too! Here. I’ll leave it behind.”

“Please just spare me. Please...”

Players of Team B all got scared and handed over their flags when they met YuWon.

Since they were willingly handing over their flags, there was no reason for YuWon to fight them. So he just simply collected the flags they left behind.

[You obtained 2 flags.]

[You obtained 20cp.]

[You obtained a flag.]

[You obtained...]

YuWon obtained seven flags this time around.

‘That makes 100 flags.’

YuWon checked his CP, which was exactly 1,000 points.

‘And if I hand this over to the king, that’ll be another 1,000 points.’

YuWon didn’t trust Halimun yet. To him, Halimun was basically a deadweight. If by some accident he died or had his flag stolen by an enemy player, the results of the test would end up set in stone.

YuWon would hand over the flag at the last moment, right before the 24-hour mark would be over. That was what Yuwon was waiting for.

‘But this is strange,’ YuWon thought, thinking back to the players he had just met.

‘How do they know my face?’

His name was pretty well-known. Tests had public records, and having set new records, it was inevitable for his name to become well-known. But just because his name was well-known, didn’t mean his face should have been well-known, and yet the players earlier handed over their flags right away as if they knew YuWon.

That meant only one thing.

“They must have exchanged information,” YuWon said.

“Huh? Information?” Halimun asked.

“They probably told each other that I’m with the ‘king.’ As teammates, they should have exchanged their kit numbers.”

“So they know that you’re with me...”

“And so avoided me. Also...” YuWon trailed off.

Just now, no, since even earlier, the actions of the players on Team B were unified.

“They probably promised to run away if they encountered me.”

“By giving up their flags?”

“Yeah.”

“But how are they supposed to win the test then?”

No matter how large the difference in the power of the teams were, giving up their hard-earned flags at every corner couldn't possibly be a winning strategy.

On top of that, YuWon was moving at a pace that was so fast that Halimun could barely keep up with him.

‘There’s no way they don’t know that...’ Halimun wondered.

“It’s so they can secure certain victory...” YuWon said.

There were now 12 hours left in the test. With half of the test now over, the dynamics of the test was shaping up.

“... By getting you and me,” YuWon finished.

Halimun wanted to ask, “What do you mean by...” but he was interrupted by YuWon’s eyes turning red and his atmosphere changing.

“... They’re coming.”

Rustle—

Whoosh—!

YuWon grabbed an arrow flying towards them midair.

Snatch—!

“Agh!”

Flop—

Halimun fell backwards on his ass from how surprised he was.

The target of the arrow wasn’t YuWon but Halimun. Their goal was to eliminate the ‘king’ first.

Yuwon turned his head towards the source of the arrow.

Players of Team B whispered to each other.

“He blocked it.”

“Why would you aim for the ‘king’ first?”

“There’s no way something like this would have worked on YuWon.”

“The ‘king’ has to be present, so he’s at a disadvantage while fighting since he had to protect the ‘king.’”

“That’s what you think. As long as we can get the ‘king,’ why does it matter if YuWon is alive or not?”

“That’s true. Without a ‘king,’ even the great YuWon won’t be able to do a thing...”

A few players... No, it was more than just a few players.

YuWon looked around. Some were quite far away, but a large number of players were surrounding him.

‘It must be Heaven’s Net,’ YuWon thought.

Meaning a net woven with the skies, the Heaven’s Net was a technique long-used in the Martial Realm to surround someone.

Yuwon was surrounded by a large number of players from Team B. From a rough estimate, there were at least 50 players present, with none of them being easy pushovers.

Even the arrow that was aimed at Halimun just now was very fast and accurate.

A band of about 50 players. Among them were some players that YuWon had let go.

“I guess I should have just killed all of them,” YuWon said.

Halimun, eyes filled with fear, looked over at YuWon. To be able to say something so brazen so casually while in this situation. YuWon appeared both way too laid back and reliable at the same time.

Halimun gulped.

He asked Yuwon as calmly as he could, “What do we do now?”

“What do you think?”

Shing—

YuWon drew his sword and flicked it around. Within a single blink, a circle had been drawn around Halimun.

“Don’t leave this circle. The moment you leave, consider yourself dead,” YuWon warned Halimun.

“What? From here?” Halimun responded.

Halimun looked around his surroundings. They were inside a forest, but he was standing in a relatively open spot.

The reason why the archer from Team B aimed at him in this situation was likely due to the terrain advantage.

So Halimun couldn’t understand YuWon’s order to stand out in the open rather than hide deeper into the forest.

“A-Are you telling me to die right now?” he asked.

“Who told you to die? I’m just telling you to stand there and don’t leave.”

“But...!”

“I told you at the start as well. I told you not to die while wandering around, and you almost got yourself killed because you moved around.”

That comment from YuWon shut Halimun up.

YuWon was right. He had warned him to stay still at the starting point, yet, unable to properly understand YuWon's instructions, Halimun went off to search for flags with his companions.

And after almost dying, the one who saved him was YuWon.

"If you do that again, I can't help you this time," YuWon told him firmly.

"Ngh..." Halimun grunted while looking down at the floor.

It was a small circle, only about four meters in diameter. It was small enough to leave with just a few steps.

"S-So I just have to stay in this circle?" Halimun asked.

"Yep."

"And I'll be able to live?"

"Yep."

"You really, honestly promise to save me—"

"I said, 'yes,'" YuWon cut off Halimun, and he started to get a move on.

Halimun was shocked. Despite telling him to stay still, why was YuWon moving?

"Where are you going?!" Halimun shouted. He was so shocked, he almost chased after YuWon like a child that was being abandoned.

YuWon turned his head around and said, "Circle."

With that single word, Halimun stopped in his tracks. The line was right in front of his foot.

"Don't leave the circle," YuWon warned him.

Tmp, tmp—

Unable to do anything, Halimun just blanked out while standing. He felt as if he had been thrown in the middle of a den of beasts.

* * *

Reaper Scans

Translator – NumbaWon

Proofreader – BringTheRayn

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* * *

55 people. That was the number of players deployed to get YuWon and the 'king,' but they were all primarily here to defeat YuWon.

‘This is incredible,’ thought Varr. He was one of the players of Team B, and he was amazed by all the players that had come together for this task. ‘NamGung Hoon, Ro’el, Salamov, Spyros, Kaichel, Oroll...’

They were all players that he had only ever heard of. Especially Hoon and Ro’el. They were like stars to the players of the lower floors.

‘To be able to form a party with them...’ Varr thought. The fact that he was a part of this party boosted his confidence.

Varr was also somewhat known in the lower floors for his strength. With a bit of recognition himself, he was certainly qualified to be a part of the party.

‘The achievement of defeating YuWon is definitely going to help my career. If I can leverage that properly, I might even be able to attract the attention of bigger guilds.’

It was a fact that many guilds were observing this test. This was plainly obvious to any player that knew even a little bit about how things went in the Tower.

A fight between 55 players and Kim YuWon. This fight would dictate which players would gain the most attention on the lower floors.

“He’s moving,” said one of the players who was observing YuWon and the ‘king’ with his recon skills.

This woke Varr from his happy daydream, making him focus back on the situation at hand. It was his teammates’ responsibility to observe YuWon’s movements, but it was now also time for him to start moving with his teammates.

“Is he running away?”

“No. He’s coming deeper into the forest.”

“He’s walking into the forest?”

“I think he’s intending to fight, but...” the player observing YuWon trailed off, his eyes widening.

Annoyed, Varr pressed him, “But what?”

“He’s leaving the ‘king’ behind and moving alone.”

“He’s moving alone?”

They had heard that YuWon and the ‘king’ were moving together, which was true, so it confused Varr why he suddenly changed tactics now.

Varr quickly set that confusion aside, smirking.

“Move aside a sec,” Varr said, standing up from his spot and pushing two players aside.

Tmp, tmp—

Varr grabbed the spear he had set down on the ground.

The spear was over two meters long, thick, and made entirely of steel.

Varr held up his weapon and got into position to throw his spear.

“Arrows are weak,” Varr stated.

Clench—

His grip tightened, and his arm muscles bulged. As if he was becoming a giant bow being drawn, his back bent far backwards.

‘One... Two...’

“Three...!”

Boom—!

The spear shot out of Varr’s hand.

An excellent marksman can know if their shot will hit even before they fire their gun, and a spearman knows if their throw will hit the moment the spear leaves their hand. And in this moment, Varr was certain.

‘It’s going to hit!’

The spear that left his hand would perfectly penetrate Team A’s ‘king,’ and as expected, his spear flew in a perfect trajectory.

Varr smirked. He just became the one who led their team to victory. He had become the great spear thrower Varr...

“Huh?!” Varr exclaimed, while watching his accelerating spear.

The spear suddenly stopped, floating in mid air.

Varr said, “What the—?”

One of Varr’s teammates asked, “What’s going on...?”

Pshk—!

A chilling sound came from right beside Varr.

He looked over, and the teammate that was standing right beside him was now missing half his head.

‘This is...’ Varr inspected the wound. It was a wound inflicted from a piercing spear.
‘Could it be?’

Varr quickly turned his head, seeing that the spear that was in midair had disappeared.

Another teammate shouted, “Varr! Over here—kugh!” The teammate let out a choking sound.

Varr looked over, and he saw his teammate’s body floating in midair.

Anyone that wasn’t braindead could tell that something was there.

“Who are you?”

“So this side was a dud.”

Fsss—

From thin air, the form of a person appeared holding Varr’s teammate by the neck, inflicting pain.

Crunch—

Bones broke from the powerful grip.

The two teammates accompanying him were dead.

The one who crushed his teammate by the neck turned to Varr and slowly walked over.

Step, step—

“Now tell me,” YuWon asked, crimson eyes flashing, “where is NamGung Hoon?”