

# 심판의 1 군주

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DONG-A MODERN FANTASY

# **Sovereign of Judgment**

- 심판의 군주 -

- Episode 7 -  
**Tidal Wave of Monsters**

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오늘도요

[ **Myoniyoni Translations** ]

# CHAPTER 107

## NEW LAND, NEW ERA (1)

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There were no longer any objections.

Beginning with the collapse of the Sovereign of Dark Secrets Lao Ban, they had overcome the eyeless observers, completed the advancement evaluation, subjugated Cayenne Star, and had even experienced the Chu Youngjin incident. Everything was verified from the endless waves of fights and wars.

It was impossible to confront Choi Hyuk and the Berserkers. There wasn't a force on Earth that could take them on.

As expected, the world was changing as well. The world order reorganized itself under the 6 overseers and the 9 great sovereigns, who confined Overseer Nasir, as they possessed exclusive rights to trade with the alliance.

Those who had been reading the mood as they took a wait-and-see approach began to make their move.

"Let's go our separate ways."

President Shin Woojin became disheartened at Choi Hyuk's reply. He tried his best to persuade him.

"However, South Korea will perish then."

"Is that name so important? Then you continue its name."

Choi Hyuk's mind was resolute. Well, he was right. With the entire earth collapsing, the life or death of a 70-year-old nation on the Korean Peninsula could be considered a trivial problem.

"But..."

“No. My answer will not change. I don’t have any thoughts on accepting the president into the Berserkers, nor do I have any thoughts on an alliance or treaty of administrative duties. Even if you put down your authority as a great sovereign and wanted to join the Berserkers as my follower, I wouldn’t accept. The Berserkers are literally an organization of crazy warriors. And it needs to be. The president, as well as those following you, aren’t suited for it. You are people who have too much to become crazy warriors. Let’s go our separate ways. If you really don’t want to, then give up your privileges and live in my territory as a regular colonizer. That is all I can say.”

“...”

In the end, Shin Woojin had no choice but to give up.

To be honest, Shin Woojin’s position within the Korean Peninsula until now was ambiguous. He was the president. He used his own ability and didn’t lose his authority within the confusion. He won over a majority of the military, who had disappeared, and used civil service to maintain order in South Korea. He was truly the leader of South Korea. Choi Hyuk’s power was limited to the colonized lands in Dragonic. On Earth, within South Korea, the Berserkers were instead the minority.

However, this whole situation had instantly been flipped on its head since the advancement evaluation. During the advancement evaluation, the world’s population had been drastically reduced by a half. There was nowhere on Earth that could endure that kind of chaos. The anarchic situation continued. On the other hand, after actively participating in the advancement evaluation, Choi Hyuk’s influence had expanded on its own. Citizens of South Korea began to mentally depend on the Berserkers rather than the president. Many citizens moved to Choi Hyuk’s colonized land. Korean citizens who were under Choi Hyuk’s banner numbered more than half the population.

From then on, President Shin Woojin had to focus on his reign. It was distressful.

As Shin Woojin had joined and fought alongside the Anti-Berserker Alliance, he had been able to become one of the nine great sovereigns who shared Nasir’s rights. Normally, the 9 great sovereigns possessed the commanding authority over their respective countries. Yamato of Japan did and so did Zhang Ziyin of China. However, Shin Woojin couldn’t as South Korea had Choi Hyuk.

Because of this, he had simply watched. He had known that the clans under Choi Hyuk were dissatisfied with his forceful rule, and he even had hopes for their rise. Yet, everything became clear after the Chu Youngjin incident. No one could face the Berserkers.

In this situation, Shin Woojin had proposed an alliance with Choi Hyuk to maintain his authority. It was a proposal where policies such as public order and internal affairs within their colonized lands would be shared and combined. It was a type of federal government. As he was well aware that the Berserkers lacked administration and political abilities, he planned to use this federal government system to bring over his own authority over the South Korean citizens completely intact. Choi Hyuk would handle the war, and he would handle the mundane politics. That was his plan.

However, Choi Hyuk denied his proposal. He demanded a secession.

Shin Woojin had no choice but to abide.

“Overseer Choi Hyuk declares to secede from South Korea. Following Overseer Choi Hyuk and President Shin Woojin’s agreement, the citizens of South Korea are free to choose their affiliation.”

Although the world was in such a mess that the press and internet communications networks couldn’t function properly, the news of the secession quickly spread throughout Korea.

The time had come for them to choose sides. Those who had dipped their hands in both sides until now were busy thinking about what decision to make.

“I, Shin Woojin, will take responsibility and return you to your daily lives.”

President Shin Woojin asserted the legitimacy of South Korea. He stimulated the longing people had to return to their safe and familiar lifestyles in order to draw people in. To gather even one more person, he prepared all sorts of favors.

On the other hand, Choi Hyuk had an attitude of ‘come if you want’.

“I don’t care whether those who join me are old, young, male, female, handicapped, or not. You will fight without rest. And you will win.”

People couldn’t tell whether he wanted them to join or not by his pledge. However, the number of people whose hearts wavered at his pledge wasn’t small.

They were living in such times.



One of the problems which arose during the process of handling the doppelganger queen was the conflict between the Berserkers and the minor clans.

Choi Hyuk set an extreme measure regarding this problem. This was also the reason why he had no choice but to secede from South Korea.

Choi Hyuk planned on creating and controlling a 3<sup>rd</sup> troop comprised of all the colonizers within his scope of authority. With the authority of an overseer, which could establish strategies, he planned on dispatching them to the war against the monsters and then leaving Berserkers to control them. There would be a clear difference in rank between normal colonizers, minor clans, and Berserkers.

Also, there were no exceptions to this measure. Whether they were miners, farmers, or cooks, they would be drafted and then participate in the war.

“Will it be okay? If that’s the case, then our rate of production will drop.”

Artillery Captain Handke had a defensive attitude.

Choi Hyuk nodded.

“Earthlings’ production is like a speck of dust compared to the alliance’s. If the only thing we can sell is our strength, then we need to focus on it.”

His voice was resolute.

Yet, his followers still had many worries.

Guardian Bae Jinman said,

“There will be tremendous chaos. Although it could be said that they are somewhat tolerant after the large-scale expeditions during the advancement evaluation, either way, there are still a lot of people with occupations that aren’t combat-oriented. It’ll be difficult for those in the mining, farming, service, and manufacturing industries to adjust after being blindly sent to war.”

“That’s why we’ll establish a warrior school. It’ll be the greatest training school on Earth. If they still can’t adjust, then they can just follow Shin Woojin. Berserkers are our identity. Those who want to live in my colonized lands must participate in the war. I’m thinking about sending them once every week or two. Even if they can’t become formal Berserkers, they should at least be able to act as the second or third string or even trainees.”

Silently listening to Choi Hyuk’s explanations, Baek Seoin slowly raised his hand.

“But... To ultimately make humanity more powerful, I think that it might be necessary to strengthen humanity’s overall capability. Military power isn’t everything. Even at the Cayenne star, as we don’t have the skills to personally extract karma, we ended up handing it over to the alliance at a dirt cheap price. Even if it is possible for Naro to move between dimensions, its efficiency is still not great, and we are in a situation where we have no choice but to rely on the alliance’s military gate system to move large-scale armies. In the end, if we aren’t able to possess any of these key technologies, then we will never be able to move away from the alliance’s grasp.”

His words, which started cautiously, became filled with more certainty as he spoke. Yes. He made sense the more they thought about it. If they only focused on raising their military power without these technologies, they might end up only becoming a useful tool for the alliance. Choi Hyuk couldn’t help but fall into a state of deep thought at Baek Seoin’s points.

Then he shook his head.

“Baek hyung words are right as well. However, Earth’s technology is hundreds of thousands of years behind the alliance’s. Even if we have Naro, the situation doesn’t change. Even looking at the military gate system, Naro said that it had no idea how it worked. What I’m saying is that we don’t have the time to start researching these technologies right now. My thoughts are that, with military power as our footing, we increase our position within the alliance and use it to learn those technologies.”

“Hmm...”

Everyone was quiet. Choi Hyuk’s thoughts were extreme. However, it was difficult to say that his thoughts were wrong. At the same time, it was difficult to say he was right, but they could understand where he was coming from.

“Understood.”

With Ryu Hyunsung, who had been listening quietly, raising his hand as a start, the others followed, raising their right hands as well.

Even Baek Seoin, Handke, and Bae Jinman, who gave opposing views, raised their hands. They said, “Understood.”

It was a common sight in meetings comprised of the top ranks among the Berserkers.

As long as they had the most convention-defying person on Earth as their leader, no one thought that they could make him yield. If they held these thoughts, then they wouldn’t have stayed under Choi Hyuk’s command from the start.

Meetings were often times not a place to decide on something but rather a means to clearly understand Choi Hyuk’s motives. Only then could the executives do their work according to his motives. Well, if Choi Hyuk changed his mind in the process, then that was good as well.

So, even if they weren’t completely convinced, it was normal for them to move on with an “Understood” once they understood Choi Hyuk’s motives.

Just as the meeting was about to end like this, Lee Jinhee poked Ryu Hyunsung’s side. As she was trying to behave herself these days, she had simply attended the meetings and hadn’t opened her mouth once. However, it seemed that there was something she wanted to bring up.

Surprised by being poked by Lee Jinhee’s finger, Ryu Hyunsung stared at her before revealing an ‘Aha!’ expression. He cleared his throat and asked Choi Hyuk,

“Aren’t we going to secede? Have you thought of a country name?”

His question changed the mood.

Figuring out a name was a headache yet also an exciting process. The executives of the Berserkers looked at Choi Hyuk with expectant expressions.

Choi Hyuk received their gazes unenthusiastically as he replied,

“It’s fine. Tell them to call it whatever they want.”

That was how the ‘crazy law’ characterizing the ‘Berserkers’ land’ was decided. Everyone living in the Berserkers’ land had to partake in war missions once every two weeks. It was literally a crazy law. Someone said,

“Crazy... It’s not like Choi Hyuk is the only overseer in the world, who will go live in that crazy place?”

However, there were people who headed towards that place. There were many.

“Hyungnim<sup>{1}</sup>, do you remember hitting the jackpot in real estate when you listened to me before?”

“I do. That’s why I bought you beef. When others lost money that time, I earned a lot. I bought it since you kept rambling on about a rapid change or something... but you did well. When I think about it now... Well, it all went to ruin once the world became like this.”

“Hyungnim, there is currently a change even greater than that time. You must choose Choi Hyuk.”

“Choi Hyuk? I was going to choose Shin Woojin... They say that we need to go out to the battlefield once every 2 weeks if we choose Choi Hyuk. How can I do that? Although I’ve awakened, I’ve never even seen a monster yet.”

“Even if it’s difficult, you have to, hyungnim. There is no future staying on Earth or Dragonic. Look at Choi Hyuk. He’s insane, right? But what about it? He’s on a roll. Why is that? Isn’t it because he’s good at fighting?! Isn’t that why he’s acknowledged by the alliance and has become an overseer? It is now the era of space. Only those who can trade with the alliance can survive. But does Earth have the technology? Or the

resources? Currently, the only method for an earthling to advance in space is to fight. Although it's scary, you must. Just think of it as an initial investment. It is now an era where you need to know how to fight. Hyungnim, don't you trust me?"

"Hmm... Since you put it that way, your words do seem correct... But what if I die?"

"Ehh, why be frightened of that? Wasn't it the same in the past? Didn't people die when their investments failed? There's no need to be scared. Only, you need to prepare yourself. We are of a different class. We can't run around like rookies, can we?"

"Prepare?"

"Yes. You said your relative was a Berserker? I think I heard you say he was a Berserk Roach under Baek Seoin... Let's first contact him and ask for private lessons. Well... It'll be nice if we could ask him to help us during the mission, but let's not hope for that yet and rather learn skills that can ensure our survival. Hyungnim has to trust me. If we go to Shin Woojin for immediate comfort, we'll definitely die within 5 years. You saw it too. Non-awakenees turning to ash and dying. That's the kind of world we live in now. It's a world where you'll die if you're weak. There is no better investment than getting stronger."

"Okay, I got it. Yeah, I'll try calling him."

There were conversations like this everywhere.

A world you couldn't survive in unless you were strong.

Within this world, Choi Hyuk, who had no losses, might be the most suitable leader to follow.

People who decided to throw away their livelihood and start a new challenge were gathering under Choi Hyuk.

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{1} What a young man calls an older man. More respectful than 'hyung'.

# CHAPTER 108

## NEW LAND, NEW ERA (2)

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The population of Dragonic was increasing.

As Earth only had around 2 years left before collapse, each sovereign actively encouraged emigration to Dragonic.

The colonized lands, which were scattered like dots, were connecting together. As they had already explored the topography between the colonized lands during the great war between the 'Anti-Berserker Alliance' and the Berserkers, trade between the different colonized lands was progressing smoothly.

The 6 overseers (excluding Nasir as he has no authority), the 9 great sovereigns, who acted on Nasir's authority, as well as the 4 sovereigns who stayed neutral during the war. A total of 19 sovereigns recruited colonizers and allied with each other, growing their forces.

The majority of sovereigns drew colonizers in with promises of freedom and benefits. Freedom meant the freedom to choose how they made Mission Points, and benefits referred to tax benefits.

It had been a long time since major currencies on Earth had been replaced by Mission Points, which could buy supplies from the alliance. Methods to earn Mission Points included personally going out and completing alliance missions, providing goods to those who earned Mission Points through the first method, and selling Earth's goods to aliens in the lowest-ranked supply store for Mission Points. (No one would buy any Earth goods when brought to the low-ranked supply store used by low-ranked warriors.)

As many people completely avoided alliance missions, which risked their lives, most colonized lands were maintaining a 2:3 ratio of combat-oriented colonizers to non-combat-oriented colonizers. Combat-oriented colonizers made more income, but non-combat-oriented colonizers were comparatively safer. There were even some among the colonizers who went back and forth between combat missions and business activities, balancing risk and income.

Most colonized lands weren't simply a union of adventurers but were also comprised of inns, markets, woodworking shops, construction firms, restaurants, and red-light districts.

However, differences between the Berserkers' land and other normal colonized lands could be seen simply from the streets.

First, the buildings were sloppy. Unlike other colonized lands, which built large, refined buildings by using cutting edge technology, their buildings were small, simple and crude. The material used to build them was different as well. Unlike other colonized lands, which made steel, concrete and other materials from the processing of raw materials collected in Dragonic, the Berserkers used raw materials like wood and stone to build their buildings. Without the need for a separate process and technology, the colonizers could simply cut the materials with their swords.

The difference between the Berserkers' land and other colonized lands wasn't comparative to the difference between the countryside and a city, but rather the difference between the Middle Ages and present age.

The only decent buildings within the Berserkers' land were the ones built by the previous sovereigns before Choi Hyuk captured them.

The reason was simple.

There were no purely non-combat-oriented colonizers within the Berserkers' land. They were all required to join a combat mission once every two weeks. Although there were some who, after completing their duties, spent the remainder of their time running business activities. However, when compared to other colonized lands, these colonizers, who went back and forth between combat and non-combat, leaned heavily towards the combat side. They didn't have the various economies to support building decent buildings.

However, despite its crude appearance, the Berserkers' land always bustled with activity.

“Looking for a party for a mission exploring the northern regions of Dragonic!”

“Recruiting for a reconnaissance mission on the Lemir Star! Preferential treatment to long-distance attackers!”

“We’re going on a mission to the Cayenne Star, subjugating monster remnants and exploring ruins. Our party prioritizes safety over results. We are a heavily armed troop. A tanker with at least 2-star Endurance is welcome.”

People gathered in every square, looking for parties to go on missions with.

Also, every shabby bar and restaurant was packed with people, sharing their visions of the future.

“Wow... Did you see those guys from the Lee Jungmin Clan fight? They were flying all over the place. It looks like they value mobility. When they fought, grinding down their opponents with speed, even large monsters were easily handled. I thought that fighting was all about clashing head on, but it looks like you need to use your head a ton.”

“Right. I think your fighting style is important. Overwhelm them with speed, crush them with power, or beat them with techniques. You’re screwed if you increase your stats without any thought.”

“Not only personal style, but there has to be a concept to your party as well. You can’t join really important missions with parties simply gathered in squares, you know? Even if it’s difficult, I think it’s important to decide a concept before forming a crew.”

“Yeah, that Changsoo fellow only recruited long-range attackers for a reconnaissance mission this time. They say he hit the jackpot. Said he earned a ton of Mission Points.”

“As expected, is it currently the era of long-range attackers?”

“Well, to make money at our level, long-range attackers are the best. But to take down the really strong guys, you’ll have to use close quarters combat in the end. Look at the Berserkers. They have a small ratio of long-range attackers, but no one can face them.”

“Talking about the Berserkers, Gilsoo recently joined a capture mission overseen by Choi Hyuk personally. He boasted so much that the commander of his troop was Director Lee Jinhee.”

“Director Lee Jinhee? Her probation is over already? Ah, has it been that long already?”

“Yeah, rumors have spread that Overseer Choi Hyuk specifically took her on an especially tough mission for her return.”

“Haa... If Choi Hyuk says it’s tough, just how tough is it? Though, as long as they survive, their earnings will probably be on another level... If it were me, I wouldn’t have gone. Unless it’s Director Baek Seoin’s troop.”

“They won’t even consider someone like you.”

“What’d you say?”

Those who chose the Berserkers’ land usually possessed strong adventurous spirits. They talked endlessly with one another, learning the latest information, and using that information to carve and polish better survival methods for themselves.



{Kahur Kabkun<sup>[1]</sup> discovered. Estimated to be low-ranked. We will take action to destroy it before it grows any further.}

{Good, Warrior Leader Choi Hyuk. You’re on a good pace. Just keep going like this.}

He heard Commander Mack’s bright voice.

{Military gate system. Opening the detected Kahur Kabkun.}

Along with the system voice message, the Kahur Kabkun opened. Kahur Kabkuns were black wormholes, supply routes for the monsters. They were passageways that connected the universe the monsters lived in and the current universe karmalings lived in. As this one was a low-ranked passageway, it would be packed with 3-4-star monsters.

“Let’s go.”

Choi Hyuk rushed towards the opened gate. The Berserkers and the colonizers, who were assigned from the Berserkers’ land, followed behind him.

Following Choi Hyuk’s policy, even those who weren’t Berserkers were dispatched to missions of the highest difficulty. Those assigned to the Kahur Kabkun destroying mission this time were precisely that. Although they weren’t Berserkers, they were

acknowledged as fighting specialists.

They felt pride that they could fight alongside the Berserkers, who were known as the best. At the same time, they also had the aspiration to show the Berserkers up with their skills.

Yet, their pride and aspirations soon drooped like soggy sponges.

“Haaa! Haa!”

Not long after the battle began, many participating colonizers weren't breathing properly. They were completely out of breath. Yet, the battle continued without stopping.

A living hell.

An endless number of monsters swarmed towards them inside the Kahur Kabkun, and the Berserkers continued their relentless advance.

“Stick to the front, bastard!”

A Berserker in command of the regular colonizers shouted.

Kaaaang!!

While flinging away an enormous monster's front leg with his sword, he shouted,

“Stick to the front!!!”

It seemed it wasn't easy taking the monster's attack head on as his complexion wasn't good.

“Kuaack! Kuaah!”

At his angry urge, the normal colonizers stuck to the front, their voices indistinguishable between a scream and a shout. Hit by a monster's leg, a few of them were hurled far away. A gap opened up within the battle lines again. Then the Berserker in charge shouted again,

“Quickly stick together!!”

These regular colonizers were experiencing this kind of battle for the first time. It was a battle no different from a brawl. There was no point differentiating between the vanguard and the rear. The monsters, which were at the 3-4-star level on average, undoubtedly overwhelmed the 2-3-star colonizers. If those at the front became unable to fight, then those in the rear would take their places. If even they became unable to fight, then those who recovered from their wounds with potions and such would take over once again. This repetition of fighting and healing was like hell. A clearly unreasonable advance, yet this was precisely the Berserkers' fighting style.

The difference between the Berserkers and regular colonizers... they realized that this difference wasn't simply a gap in stats, but the difference in experience and expertise. The Berserkers, who were fighting as much as they were, didn't slow down. Even though they were sweating bullets and accumulating wounds, their eyes shined with resoluteness and killing intent.

"Kuhap! Kuhaaa!"

Looking at their appearances, the participating colonizers squeezed out every bit of strength they possessed. Although it was partially due to their pride... They didn't have a choice either. The moment they were separated from the group, they would die.

Then-

Flash!

They thought lightning had struck, but-

Blaze!

Flames surged like a forest fire.

The dark Kahur Kabkun brightened like dawn.

{Kiyaaaaah!}

The monsters screamed.

Due to the light, they could see monster cocoons packed on the outer walls of the

Kahur Kabkun. Those monsters squirmed, still growing even in this moment as the Kahur Kabkun increased their sizes.

“Burn all those insects!”

Choi Hyuk’s voice was interesting. Even though it didn’t seem like he was shouting, everyone could still clearly hear his voice.

“Burn them all!”

The Berserkers repeated Choi Hyuk’s words in the same manner they would shout, ‘Party time!’

“Hiyaaahaaa!!!”

The Berserkers dashed forward in high spirits. The cocoons were ripped apart. As the large blood vessels flowing along the outer walls were stabbed all over the place, black blood began to flow down. Soon after, Choi Hyuk’s flames adhered to it and, as if burning fuel, it engulfed the blood and the remains. A sea of flames gradually spread everywhere.

“Haa... Haa... Crazy bastards... Haa...”

The regular colonizers, who had become so exhausted they didn’t even have the strength to speak, became pale at the sight of the Berserkers, who seemed just as vigorous as they were at the start.

With bloodshot eyes, the Berserkers ripped everything apart and, depending on the situation, were ripped apart as well. However, they didn’t hesitate in the slightest.

Why wouldn’t this be difficult for the Berserkers? However, they were used to this as they always fought to their limits.

Kwaoooooh!

Enormous flames blew and a white flash shined in a straight line like lightning. Choi Hyuk’s Flaming Wing Dance and Instant Void Annihilation could clearly be seen from anywhere in the battle formation. The only reason why an army at the 2-3-star level

could capture a Kahur Kabkun frequented by 3-4-star monsters was because Choi Hyuk was at the very front, ripping the brunt of the enemy's attack to shreds.

"...Monster."

"No, no, a god. That's a fighting god."

That was how the reverence they had for Choi Hyuk became a level deeper.

Berserkers' fights ended as quickly as they were intense.

Choi Hyuk looked behind him. He saw regular colonizers, who were so exhausted they couldn't even keep their eyes open properly, and Berserkers, who were snickering despite having lost strength in their legs. He also saw monster and human corpses strewn behind them like a carpet.

Choi Hyuk currently stood in front of the Kahur Kabkun entrance. A black abyss-like space was spread in front of him.

An unpleasant karma flowed in from beyond it. It was definitely karma, yet it was different from the karma earthlings and aliens affiliated with the alliance possessed. Although Choi Hyuk could almost identically imitate the karma the Flame Wing Tribe used, he couldn't imitate this. This so-called 'monsters' karma, which was fundamentally different from karmalings', was unpleasant, sticky and ferocious.

Just beyond where he stood was a universe fundamentally different from the one earthlings inhabited. A universe in a completely different dimension. The homeland of the monsters. The world of death.

The black hole looked blood-red in Choi Hyuk's eyes. It possessed killing intent thicker than any human's he had seen yet. He could clearly see and feel its will of wanting to annihilate all karmalings. 'Something' from beyond was fuming. It was anxious to bore a wider Kahur Kabkun. As long as it could send a sufficient number of sufficiently powerful monsters, it would be able to instantly annihilate the karmalings of this weak universe... Its arrogant thoughts, irritated by the difficulty of crossing dimensions, crossed over in a telepathic form.

Choi Hyuk's heart was filled with something fierce. 'You're that strong?' was what he

thought. When he saw something strong, he wanted to break it. It could instantly annihilate us if a Kahur Kabkun was big enough...? Wasn't that being too arrogant?

However, Choi Hyuk suppressed his violent impulses. Now was not the time. He couldn't handle the monster beyond right now. Wasn't he so weak he couldn't even enact his own revenge? Those monsters in the world beyond, known as 'demises', were existences even Exalted Wings like Dark-Sound feared.

'But one day...'

Choi Hyuk suppressed his surging impulses as he threw a 'Kahur Kabkun Destroying Bomb' into the black hole and turned his back.

"We return."

He had to quickly return and quickly prepare for the next fight as an especially large number of Kahur Kabkuns were appearing in the Virgo Cluster, which was at the border. It was also an opportunity for him to grow stronger.

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[1] Kahur Kabkun, so this used to be called Kaluh Kabkun, but the author changed it.

# CHAPTER 109

## NEW LAND, NEW ERA (3)

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Chu Youngjin raised his head.

The entire sky was distorted. Like the gray static on TVs, black, white, and gray dots filled his vision as they flickered and squirmed.

His hair fluttered and his skin felt hot. The planet was extremely polluted, with karma shattering and smashing against each other.

This place stressed people out just by its existence. It was a war zone.

Aliens he had never seen or heard of before were fighting against monsters he had never seen or heard of before. To Chu Youngjin, both sides looked like monsters.

It felt unfamiliar.

Just before charging into battle, Chu Youngjin would unwittingly think of his extremely distant homeland.

“Are they doing well? Those two... Have they become my successors?”

However, his thoughts didn’t drag on for long.

{Newcomer! You XXX<sup>{1}</sup>! Pull yourself together!}

A senior officer of his troop swore buckets at Chu Youngjin, who had momentarily become sentimental. He was an insect-like alien with a mouth split into three parts and long antennae.

Chu Youngjin glanced at him and smiled.

“Don’t worry,”

With that short reply, Chu Youngjin’s eyes reddened.

Rumble!

At the same time as the rumble, Chu Youngjin penetrated into a crowd of maggot-like monsters. Black blood and the sickening flesh of monsters scattered into the air behind him.

This was a war zone where alliance members with no connections and karmalings who were deemed as Consumables were dispatched to. An alien troop that repeatedly fought in the most dangerous and dirtiest of fights.

Chu Youngjin liked this place.

He spent every day here, drunk on fighting. The more he fought, the blanker his mind became.

That was what he liked the most.



In the Barhaloleun Mountains, known as the Berserkers' homeland, a warrior school was erected a little distance away from the city. Ryu Hyunsung was training talented warriors there.

“Now, you see how Overseer Choi Hyuk blocked that attack? Why do you think he blocked it this time when he dodged it before?”

“Unlike before, his right foot was firmly on the ground. It seemed like he judged that he could take the attack with his strength.”

“A great answer. However, you're only half-correct. The reason is rhythm. There needs to be a rhythm when you use karma. Think about it. When comparing someone who fights with 10 Power to someone who alternates between 5 and 13 Power, who do you think is stronger? Of course, it's the one who alternates between 5 and 13 Power. When you don't need a lot of strength, use it lightly, but when you need to break your opponent, use it strongly. The secret to attacking effectively while still fighting for long periods of time is rhythm. To find a rhythm and timing that is optimized for you, you need to awaken all your senses.”

The students nodded seriously at Ryu Hyunsung's words. Although they were considered students, their ages ranged greatly, from those in their early teens to older people in their seventies. They had joined the advanced class as their fighting talents as regular colonizers, not Berserkers, had been acknowledged.

Ryu Hyunsung, who taught them, had a very bright and energetic expression.

“Now, if we were to proceed as normal, it would be time for actual fighting, but there is a special event today. I’m confident that there will be more to learn from it than from actual fighting. Although fighting is good, there are many cases where continuously fighting causes one to fall into a rut by repeatedly following a familiar pattern, and said pattern becoming a habitual routine. In times like these, it’s of great help to watch fights of those stronger than you and expand your realm of creativity. Now, follow me.”

The place Ryu Hyunsung led them to was a Berserkers’ training ground not far from the school. Berserkers had already gathered and were being noisy. There were so many Berserkers here that they couldn’t see what was going on beyond them.

Looking at the crowd of Berserkers, who were known to be brutal, the warrior school students were dispirited. However, their teacher, Ryu Hyunsung, didn’t hesitate as he pushed through the crowd.

“Move! Let the students watch!”

When Ryu Hyunsung shouted, the Berserkers turned around, seemingly in a bad mood. However, after confirming Ryu Hyunsung’s face, they moved aside without a word.

“Uh, director. Who are the chicks behind you?”

A few Berserkers showed interest.

“I told you they are students of the warrior school.”

Ryu Hyunsung replied lightly. Yet, his path to the front wasn’t entirely smooth.

There were Berserkers who didn’t move. They were indifferent when Ryu Hyunsung directly asked them to move.

“Why should I move? I barely managed to get this spot after coming here early in the morning. On top of that, isn’t this a matter regarding us, Chu Youngjin’s troop? Aren’t you, Director Ryu Hyunsung, a third-party here?”

Some refused in this way.

Then Ryu Hyunsung smiled brightly as he turned to look at his nervous students.

“The Berserkers are a bit like this. There are many who won’t listen to others no matter what. Since a lot of you want to become Berserkers, I’ll show you how to deal with them.”

Then he turned his head with a swish and stared at the Berserkers blocking his path. Tension hung in the air. The Berserkers blocking their path slowly got into combat positions.

“Director Ryu Hyunsung, it won’t be easy this time.”

“Won’t be easy, my ass.”

Punch!

Thud!

Bang!

Ryu Hyunsung had moved before he finished his words. The Berserkers blocking their path groaned as they slumped onto the ground. One was hit on the head, another stabbed in the neck, and the last had his chin kicked. They all became incapable of fighting. As he slowly walked passed them, Ryu Hyunsung explained,

“They are elites who have reached the peak of the 3-star level, but how were they beaten so easily? It’s precisely because of rhythm. I launched my first attack half a step earlier than they expected. I was half a step later with my second attack than what my target expected, and it was the same for my third and fourth attacks as well. What I mean by creating your own rhythm isn’t creating some standard rhythm. Figuring out your opponent’s rhythm quickly is the most important thing. That is why you have to awaken all your senses.”

Ryu Hyunsung continued to teach while pushing the Berserkers slumped on the ground away with his feet. It looked like being a teacher suited him well as he seemed to be enjoying it.

His students were carefully following behind him, tiptoeing in fear of stepping on a

collapsed Berserker.

Finally arriving at the very front, Ryu Hyunsung and his students saw an enormous open space surrounded by Berserkers, with twelve people standing in the middle.

The 12 consisted of the 10 team leaders under Chu Youngjin's troop and a pair of fraternal twins, Kim Honghyun and Kim Saehyun.

"What's the current situation?"

A female student, who looked around 17 years old, cautiously asked Ryu Hyunsung.

"Ah, it's a test to pick the next director of Chu Youngjin's troop."

"Next director?"

"Yes. You know that Director Chu Youngjin has been exiled, correct? There needs to be someone who will lead his troop in his stead. But Director Chu Youngjin recommended the next director before he was exiled. They are those two over there, Kim Honghyun and Kim Saehyun. The funny thing is they were the ones who had chased down Director Chu Youngjin during the doppelganger incident."

"Pardon? Then they didn't know each other before?"

"That's right. After fighting with them then, Director Chu Youngjin left after recommending those two, saying that they were better than the guys under him. I saw them too... And they are quite skilled. However, there was no way the lunatics of Chu Youngjin's troop would accept this. They insisted and decided amongst themselves that, whoever it may be, their director needed to be able to take down 5 team leaders by themselves. That's how this deciding match came about. The situation is, if Kim Honghyun and Kim Saehyun want to become joint directors, they need to take down 10 team leaders."

As expected, tension hung in the middle of the empty space.

While they were glaring at each other, Kim Honghyun stepped forward.

“Aren’t we going to fight? How long are we going to glare at each other?”

While talking craftily, he suddenly rushed into the group of team leaders.

Ruuuumble!

At the same time, rumbles resounded in the air. As they were the subordinates of Chu Youngjin, their usage of karma was similar to his, emitting thunderous roars. The experts of Chu Youngjin’s troop, who were known to possess the greatest destructive power in one-on-one situations among the Berserkers, struck out simultaneously. Their attacks had the intention to kill, not holding back at all.

Even as the air crackled around him, Kim Honghyun didn’t back down.

“Toughness, Fortitude!”

His innate skill and karma trait, both which greatly increased his Endurance, activated at the same time.

“And Reflex!”

Crash, bang!

Kim Honghyun blocked a portion of the downpour of attacks and received the rest with his body. With his monstrous Endurance and ability to avoid strikes to his vital points with his cat-like reflexes, Kim Honghyun stood firmly after receiving all ten people’s attacks.

Ryu Hyunsung admired,

“Wow, did you see that? He twisted his body the moment the team leaders became certain their attacks would hit. On top of that, it looks like his Endurance is unbelievable. That right there is rhythm. He completely took over their rhythm. The team leaders are probably taken aback now since things went differently from what they expected. A weakness.”

Ryu Hyunsung explained quickly.

As expected, Kim Honghyun smiled, revealing his teeth.

“That’s all?”

Swish.

With a swift sound of slicing air, Kim Saehyun, who had been standing behind him, attacked, targeting the team leaders’ weak points. Victory was already determined with his first move.

Kim Honghyun and Kim Saehyun were much stronger than expected. Since Chu Youngjin had run amok after beating them, they had initially thought they weren’t all that amazing, but they were wrong. After personally experiencing the combat-type innate skills they possessed, they realized they were on a frightening level.

The reason why they were beaten so badly by Chu Youngjin was because Chu Youngjin, at that time, was unbelievably strong. They weren’t a good match either. Chu Youngjin’s lethal one-hit attacks could pierce Kim Honghyun’s Endurance and Kim Saehyun’s sharp attacks couldn’t overcome Chu Youngjin’s monstrous Recovery.

“Uhh... If it’s those two, it might be tough for me too...? Chu Youngjin beat them with strength? And he was able to make a fuss afterwards?”

Nervous, Ryu Hyunsung suddenly muttered to himself, and his words spread through the mouths of the Berserkers. He was later frequently teased by Lee Jinhee for this. ‘Sniff, sniff? Do I smell the scent of a coward from somewhere?’

‘Damn... Let’s duel, Lee Jinhee.’

‘Heh? Why don’t you beat the Kim brothers first?’ Something along those lines.



At the same time, Choi Hyuk was in Naro’s spaceship.

If something was different from normal, it was the spaceship’s location. Naro’s spaceship, which had always floated above Seoul, was now floating over Dragonic.

It wasn’t through the use of the military gate system, but rather through the result of its own efforts and usage of the spaceship’s dimensional travel equipment.

Although it was subtle, Earth's horizons were expanding.

{Yes, yes, we are steadily progressing with the friendly sparring sessions as you ordered. We went to two places today. I beat the instructor of one but was beat by the one in the other. The spars between their trainees and our Berserkers were close. I think it was a good experience. I am organizing the list of my results.}

Lee Jinhee, who had been dispatched to Dark City of Laniakea, appeared on the screen. She was currently going around warrior training centers in Dark City with a portion of the Berserkers' elites for training.

"Good. But why do you look so glum?"

{It's because I'm embarrassed, why?! I already feel bad about losing, but I have to tell the instructors who beat me that my leader will challenge them later. This is like me calling my big brother for help.}

"Then become stronger than me."

{Damn it... I want to too. Ah, one more thing. When I asked around, it seemed that the rate of detecting Kahur Kabkuns in other clusters within the Laniakea Supercluster has gone up these days. It looks like Naro's prediction that it is a problem of the entire Laniakea Supercluster, and not simply the Virgo Cluster's, was right.}

"Really? Okay. If you hear any other rumors besides that, let me know through Naro."

{Yes, yes. I'll do as you order. Then I'm hanging up now. See you for the report tomorrow, leader.}

"Yeah, work hard."

After hanging up, Choi Hyuk was momentarily lost in thought. Her win rate was 40%. Considering that she was an earthling, who had only just debuted, it wasn't a bad result. However, when considering that Laniakea's Dark City was at the bottom, it was difficult to call it satisfactory as well. Since the ones who truly knew how to fight were probably out in the battlefields.

"We need to get stronger faster..."

Choi Hyuk was frustrated. The only ones who had reached the middle-ranked warrior

level amongst the earthlings were Choi Hyuk and Richard. This was severely lacking by Choi Hyuk's standards. Both earthlings and himself.

Of course, middle-ranked warriors could be classified as elites in the Laniakea Supercluster as, if they went down to the Virgo Cluster, which contained Earth, they could be warrior leaders. They couldn't be considered weak. 'Warriors' acknowledged by the alliance were worth something. It was similar to when Keushisuit bragged that he was a lowest-ranked warrior in the past. Unlike earthlings, who had no choice but to become warriors, of those who were alliance members from the start, a significant portion were non-combatants. There were a considerable amount of combatants whose skills didn't reach the level of being acknowledged as warriors. Even if they were lowest-ranked warriors, just the fact that they were acknowledged as 'warriors' by the alliance was worth bragging about in this backcountry.

However, was Choi Hyuk's goal directed at a backcountry like this?

Choi Hyuk, who hoped of advancing to the center, couldn't help but constantly feel lacking as 'middle-ranked warriors' were considered normal, ordinary warriors over there.

'Isn't this the same as a captain being able to strut around as a company commander on the field but being no different from enlistees at the headquarters? Something like that, I guess.'

It was like Baek Seoin's comparison. Choi Hyuk was unsatisfied with earthlings and his current status.

"Anyways, so there's an increase of Kahur Kabkuns in the entire Laniakea region..."

The majority of the missions he took on recently were destroying Kahur Kabkuns. There were just that many. From what Commander Mack said, there was a clear increase from before. Choi Hyuk was heavily gaining her favor these days as he had been constantly finding and destroying Kahur Kabkuns day after day.

Also, the fact that Kahur Kabkuns were becoming more abundant meant that monster attacks in those concerned regions were becoming more severe.

"An opportunity to make a contribution is coming."

Earth, as well as the Berserkers, had yet to adjust to this great change. However, Choi

Hyuk was still pleased by this change as new heroes would be born from the chaos.

Ring~

Behind Choi Hyuk, who was resolving himself once more, Naro played the guitar. Naro's eyes were gently closed, seemingly in thought, as it played its guitar in the background when it suddenly opened its eyes in surprise.

Ting!

The guitar strings snapped.

Naro quickly got up from its seat and spread its arms wide before shouting,

“Uh... Uhh. I finished scanning the entire Dragonic region just now. Besides the scan I did through the gates in the past, I really did scan the whole region, okay?”

Feeling something was odd, Choi Hyuk asked,

“But?”

“But I perceived Kahur Kabkuns on the opposite side of the planet. Although they look to be of a lower rank than middle-ranked Kahur Kabkuns... There are as many as 10... This... If we don't prepare properly, we might be swept away.”

“...”

Was it what Choi Hyuk hoped for? Chaos was indeed approaching.

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{1} Was XXX in the raws.

# CHAPTER 110

## PRE-EMPTIVE ATTACK (1)

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Zero asked,

“Should we kill him?”

Richard replied,

“Since he’s someone who frequents the red-light district... Handle it as though he got in a fight and died. As quickly as possible.”

‘As quickly as possible’, this meant to handle it within 3 days.

“Understood.”

Zero answered immediately and wrote, ‘Died in a fight, 2 Days,’ on the headshot on top of the table. Then he put the picture away in his pocket.

When his hand came out from his pocket, it was holding another headshot.

Richard momentarily became lost in thought as he looked at the new headshot on the table. The report he received from Zero beforehand crossed his mind.

Hans. He was a good man.

He was someone on the side of justice who couldn’t overlook injustice. There were many cases where the personalities of colonizers, who were experienced in fights, would severely crumble, but he wasn’t one of them. He organized a neighborhood-watch-like organization that surveilled and restrained colonizers who habitually assaulted and killed others.

Hans. He had a famous catchphrase in his territory.

“Screw off, bastards!”

When he shouted wholeheartedly and chased the colonizers causing a fuss by kicking them in the butt, the inexperienced or non-combat-oriented colonizers would friendlyly express their thanks with a “Boss Hans! Thanks for today as well!” after receiving his help. Richard looked favorably upon his actions and had met him in person a few times and helped him out.

He was a ‘person to keep alive’ then.

“But, it’s changed...”

Richard’s hand hurriedly tapped the table.

“Should we kill him?”

Zero asked once again when he saw Richard taking a while to think about it. It might look like he was urging Richard, but this sort of urging was also one of Zero’s duties.

‘There may be times when my heart grows soft and I might not be able to kill those who I need to, so urge me with the suggestion of killing them if you can.’

This was the order Richard gave him the first day he was appointed.

As he was someone who had resolved himself to this degree, he would reply soon once asked like this. Unaffected by emotion, he would coldly tell him to kill.

However, Richard’s thoughts this time dragged on.

“Take out all of today’s subjects.”

“Understood.”

Zero took headshots out from his pocket and spread them out. While examining each picture closely, Richard remained deep in thought.

“No matter how much I look at it, it’s a ridiculous list.”

Shaking his head, Richard ordered Zero once again,

“Take out all the remaining ones.”

“I’ll spread them here.”

Zero took out a bundle of pictures and spread them out on the table to the left of Richard. Looking at them, Richard pondered once again.

“This one is someone I need to keep alive, huh.”

Richard picked up a photo.

His name was Joseph.

He was currently walking around in the streets at night.

With a blank expression, as if he was someone with nowhere to go.

Then his gaze suddenly fixed on someone.

“Let’s have a drink!”

“I’m not in the mood.”

“Don’t be like that, let’s have one drink!”

As if he had just come back from a space mission, the youth, his entire body stained with blood and dust, pestered his colleague, who had the same appearance as him. Even though everyone else had faces of exhaustion and futility, the youth was especially bright. His smiling face gave off a friendly impression.

“You came back from that hell, but you don’t want to drink? Hey, hey, let’s have a drink. I’m telling you, even if it feels like hell right now, you’ll feel great if you sleep after having a drink.”

“You crazy... Why drink when you can’t get drunk due to karma? Unless you’re going to do drugs.”

“Ehh, you don’t drink to get drunk. You drink to act drunk.”

The other exhausted warriors simply grinned as they saw him smiling friendlily while

he made misleading statements.

“Let’s go, let’s go, yeah? We have to live so well that those guys come back from the dead due to envy!”

Although his extreme yet hopelessly optimistic character could make one feel uncomfortable, perhaps it was either because he had been like this for a while or because they knew his sincerity, but his colleagues, who had initially declined, gave in and followed him in the end. They all left with their arms around each other’s shoulders.

Looking at them, Joseph revealed a strange smile. His face distorted, becoming impossible to distinguish whether he was angry or happy. He slowly followed after the youth and his colleagues.

Richard held his forehead.

“Just what is about to happen for things to be like this?”

The reason why Joseph caught the attention of Richard’s intelligence organization, ‘Der Schatten<sup>{1}</sup>’, was because he was a serial killer who had murdered hundreds of people. He was a lunatic who didn’t care whether his victim was a beginner, moderately experienced, male, female, as he would sexually assault and torture them before killing them in a cruel manner. A criminal psychologist read emotions of ‘malice’, ‘rage’, and ‘superiority’ from the corpses of his victims.

His intelligence organization, ‘Der Schatten’, chased the clues and figured out he was the culprit behind the murders faster than anyone else. Then, like always, they would ask Richard for his verdict. The investigative agency had yet to identify the serial killer. ‘Der Schatten’ wasn’t an official organization that maintained public order but Richard’s secret organization. The fate of the real criminal no one knew entirely depended on Richard’s words.

Richard had seen him with his own eyes and had notified Zero. An additional investigation was conducted and it was now time to make a decision.

Richard tightly closed his eyes before saying,

“...Keep him alive.”

“Understood.”

Zero’s hand paused momentarily before replying calmly and drawing a blue circle around Joseph’s head as if nothing happened.

Richard quickly added,

“Take protective measures.”

“Understood. Subject number 11. Protective measures.”

As soon as Zero spoke into a tiny intercom installed on his clothes, he received a reply.

“Copy.”

From that moment, ‘Der Schatten’ would follow Joseph and guard him at all times. Just in case he, who killed people habitually, might suffer a counterattack and run into danger.

Keeping his eyes closed, Richard gestured to the faces on top of the table to his left and said,

“Keep all of them over there alive.”

“Understood.”

Zero put the photos spread out on the table into his pocket once again. They had one similarity. They were all as wicked as Joseph and were similarly adept at fighting.

Richard opened his eyes and looked at the photos on the table in front of him. They were people he needed to kill.

There were a few he had his eye on already among them. They were those who stabbed people’s backs using the ‘order’ Richard set up as their shield. They hid among those who stood for justice, hiding their weaknesses while posing as the victim as they profited. They were a shameless bunch who didn’t follow the rules as they showed no

mercy to their victims while they hoped to be protected themselves, insisting on rules and mercy when questioned.

He had pushed killing them back, waiting for the right opportunity and method.

However, they weren't everyone. Many photos of those whom he had secretly protected and looked favorably upon were in the lineup along with them. They were truly righteous, good people.

They were all people who were classified as 'people to keep alive'. However, they were now 'people to kill'.

"Why?"

Richard racked his brains.

The 'Eyes of the Judge' Richard possessed clearly distinguished between those who he should kill and those who he should keep alive to achieve the goal he set, 'the survival and prosperity of humanity'. Although it was restrictive, it was an amazing ability linked to foreseeing the future.

Yet, there was a limit to this ability. The Eyes of the Judge did not see one's past contributions or sins. It also didn't show one's merits and flaws. It simply determined whether someone was currently beneficial or not to 'the survival and prosperity of humanity' in a clear-cut manner. That was why Richard was always in thought. With the 'present' as its reference point, the Eyes of the Judge would always judge the 'entire future', therefore, saving someone might be a loss when thinking 50 years into the future, but they could be beneficial for the next 10 years. This was why Richard didn't only rely on his 'Eyes of the Judge' to determine whether someone should die or be kept alive. He would collect intelligence and make his own decision. There were even cases where he left those classified as 'someone to kill' alive. At what time and with what method would killing them be the most beneficial? He would also carefully consider whether this would result in a political liability for him.

Currently, those who had been considered 'people to keep alive' just a while ago were now 'people to kill'. The meaning behind this was clear. While keeping them alive had

been beneficial to humanity until now, from this moment on, there would be a bigger loss than benefit by keeping them alive.

“Just why?”

Why did it determine that these righteous, good people weren't helpful for humanity? Why was there such a sudden change? Why did it have to be them of all people when there were many righteous and good people besides them?

Deep in thought, Richard soon found a common trait among these people.

“...They are interested in the survival of beginner colonizers...”

They were heroes who wanted to protect the weak. They were existences who would protect the lives of the weak even if they themselves were to take a loss.

On the other hand, people who deserve death like Joseph were classified as ‘those to keep alive’. Their common trait was that, even if their personalities had broken down, their combat abilities shined.

In the end, Richard could only come to one conclusion.

“War.”

Muttering this, Richard suddenly raised his head.

“Zero. A war will break out soon. It might be a war involving not just us but humanity as a whole. It might have a similar impact as the advancement evaluation. Operate ‘Der Schatten’ at its maximum capacity. Try to make an excuse for the 7 overseers, 9 great sovereigns, and the 4 remaining sovereigns, as well as their key aides, to gather right now. It doesn't matter if I have to make a state visit or not. Just set up a meeting somehow.”

“Understood!”

Zero, who had always acted in a calm manner, replied in a nervous voice.

The meaning behind setting up a meeting was that Richard had to ‘personally see’

them. He was talking about the most influential leaders in the world as well as their aides. Who were 'people to kill' and 'people to keep alive' among them, and what information had changed in this time? This order showed Richard's will in wanting to be actively involved after judging that this information was the foundation of the fate humanity would face in the future.

There was no way he wouldn't be nervous.

Richard, who had at some point stood up, glanced down at the photos of 'those to kill' on the table in front of him and said,

"There is no other choice. Since there's no way we can tell how much time we have and what it will be... Deal with them all. Within a week."

Then, without looking, he split the photos into two sections. One side was a group Richard had planned on killing beforehand, while the other was a group comprised of people Richard valued.

"Organize a clash between the two forces."

"Understood."

Zero replied and began to move quickly.

Richard added,

"However, don't let the ones on this side die... If my prediction is right, then there's no need to kill them. Only, make them unable to take part in politics for around a month. Whether you wound them, make them busy by dealing a blow to their organization, or kidnap them."

"...Understood."

The group Richard said not to kill was the one that worried about the weak.

Done with his work, Richard planned on leaving the office and calling for Leah. However, an unfamiliar voice cut in.

“Amazing.”

Clang!

Zero unsheathed his sword. A man, whose presence was unknown until he spoke, stood against the wall.

Recognizing the man, Richard restrained Zero, who was prepared to attack.

“...Choi Hyuk?”

“Sorry I came by so suddenly. I came quietly to ask for advice, but I ended up becoming an eavesdropper.”

Richard shook his head at Choi Hyuk’s apology.

Richard had no way of knowing what methods Choi Hyuk used to infiltrate his office without a sound. However, he coolly accepted that he possessed the ability to do just that.

Above all, Richard wasn’t wary of Choi Hyuk. Instead, he believed that Choi Hyuk was the only sovereign he could show his true self to.

As they currently didn’t have time to waste, Richard cut to the chase and asked,

“Why are you here?”

Choi Hyuk simply replied,

“You’re right, there will be a war.”

Richard’s face stiffened.

Choi Hyuk requested Naro to display a holographic map of Dragonic. The hologram showed the area where all colonized lands earthlings inhabited were located and the Kahur Kabkuns on the other side.

“We discovered 10 Kahur Kabkuns. The monsters will enact a large-scale attack. As an

incredible number of monsters will pour in simultaneously... The Berserkers won't be able to cover for everyone no matter how hard they fight. Everyone will need to work together so I came to ask what we should do."

Choi Hyuk explained calmly.

Richard's mind raced.

The people to kill and the people to keep alive determined by his 'Eyes of the Judge', which was connected to the future, the prediction of the political landscape based on the intelligence 'Der Schatten' collected, as well as the news about the 10 Kahur Kabkuns. Once he put all this information together, he deduced the best strategy they should take currently.

Richard went straight to the point as he told him the strategy he had come up with.

"Pre-emptive attack. Rather than defending a strongpoint, we should first gather our elites and attack the Kahur Kabkuns."

An offensive strategy that disregarded losses. Choi Hyuk's lips curled slightly upwards.

"...You thought the same thing as me. But do you think it's possible? The Berserkers aside, I don't know if the other sovereigns and the smaller clans will accept it."

Richard gave a short reply to Choi Hyuk's question.

"Don't worry. I'll make it happen."

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{1} German for The Shadow

# CHAPTER 111

## PRE-EMPTIVE ATTACK (2)

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Choi Hyuk reported the data collected by Naro to the Virgo Cluster.

Not long after the Virgo Cluster investigated themselves did Commander Mack personally contact him. She bowed so deeply that her blue hair tumbled down. She was expressing that she was sorry in the manner people on Earth, specifically in Korea, would.

{I am ashamed. I am sorry I didn't notice this sooner. The result of the investigation was that 3 more Kahur Kabkuns were detected besides the 10 you found. As the Kahur Kabkuns were well-hidden, it would have been difficult for you to detect.}

"...There are a lot."

{There are. Their levels aren't low either. Although you have destroyed quite a few middle-ranked Kahur Kabkuns before, they were all mostly underdeveloped ones. The ones detected this time are sturdy, having been completed a long time ago. There will probably be monsters that even you will have trouble dealing with.}

"Finished a long time ago? They've been there for a long time? They aren't newly created?"

{Yes, they aren't newly created. They were simply dormant and are now being reactivated. Like you know, Dragonic was a planet that had been captured by the monsters a long time ago. Although it was assigned as the earthlings' colonized land, strictly speaking, that place is still within the monsters' territory. The Kahur Kabkuns used when the monsters attacked have still remained intact.}

"But, from Naro's analysis, rather than being neglected for a long time, they looked to be active."

{It seems like they recently started becoming active again. Haa... To be honest, Dragonic is located at the Virgo Cluster's frontier. The reason why it was allowed to be a colonized land for earthlings, who used to be deferred consumables, was because the higher-ups decided to expand the alliance's territory.}

According to Commander Mack, Dragonic was a planet whose location made it look like it had seemingly been stabbed into the monsters' territory. Earthlings, who used Dragonic as their colonized land, had unknowingly been treated as special 'airborne' troops as part of a 'landing operation'.

{Because it's so dangerous, we conducted a large-scale cleanup of the dimensional wasps' nests, which serve as information relay stations for the monsters, in the entire region. Also, we repeatedly launched waves of attacks in that region. It was an attempt to conceal the fact that earthlings had arrived on Dragonic... However, it seems that a flaw in our containment opened while we were dealing with the Kahur Kabkuns, that have been increasing drastically recently. The monsters found out that Dragonic contains the colonized lands of karmalings. As a result, earthlings have fallen into danger. I am sorry.}

Mack bowed her head deeply once more.

Yet, Choi Hyuk was calm. Although he had never thought that there would be 10 Kahur Kabkuns, he had already guessed that the reasoning behind the alliance assigning them Dragonic as their colonized land wasn't all good. Knowing that the monsters resided in a different dimension, it seemed that they thought they could secretly nibble away at the monsters' territory and regain Dragonic, but they already had an 'if it fails, it fails' attitude from the start. Since only earthlings, who were deferred consumables at the time, would suffer even if they failed, they didn't have a guilty conscience about failing. Among the facts learned by analyzing information about the alliance with Naro, there were a few bits of information that let him guess these circumstances. He wasn't surprised.

People without strength would suffer anyways. Because of this, receiving an apology wasn't what was important.

Choi Hyuk asked,

"Well, instead of an apology... Will you provide support?"

Mack's eyes looked up sharply. Her blue pupils didn't waver in the slightest.

{Of course, we will! Since the base of the earthlings, who are members of the alliance, has fallen into danger, of course, we will. Bilu<sup>{1}</sup> and Tangka. I'll send those two warrior leaders.}

Commander Mack's blue hair swayed as she assured,

{It'll be tough, but it's not to the point of despair. I'll make you win. Earthlings will become stronger through this fight.}

"What welcome words."

Choi Hyuk grinned like an upright warrior of the alliance.

Commander Mack acted quickly.

She sent an order to the 7 overseers...

{13 Kahur Kabkuns have been detected. From this point onwards, all earthlings' space missions will halt. You will quickly eliminate the enemies that have appeared in Dragonic first. Bilu and Tangka, warrior leaders of the Virgo Cluster, have been dispatched. Earth's overseers will be in command of the dispatched warrior leaders and have the authority to plan the strategy. You will decide on a commander-in-chief and notify the dispatched warrior leaders.}

The overseers, excluding Choi Hyuk and Richard, simply became disoriented at the sudden announcement.

'What? There are 13 Kahur Kabkuns?'

An emergency meeting was set up.



The day before the emergency meeting.

Richard, wearing his 'work clothes', observed the 'hunt'.

The hunting method was simple. The secretly deployed 'Der Schatten' gathered as many strong monsters as they could and passed them over to the 'prey'.

Once they were surrounded by monsters beyond their level, 9 out of 10 'prey' would die. It would be futile no matter how much they struggled.

Penelope's<sup>{2}</sup> troop, which was conducting a monster cleanup mission, didn't notice anything different at first. They had initially thought monsters, that were stronger than the ones usually seen here, had appeared, but at some point, they were completely surrounded. They not only lacked the numerical advantage but also faced difficulty in terms of individual capabilities as well. The newly appeared monsters possessed enormous heads that made up half their body. They swung their enormous heads with their thin, elastic bodies, similar to that of bamboo, to attack, and even if their attacks glanced off members of Penelope's troop, the attacks possessed such an incredible force that they made their ribs ache.

Kwaoo! Kwaoo!

Whenever the sounds of their heads smashing down resounded in the wind-

Break! Crack!

Terrifying sounds of bones breaking and denting could be heard everywhere. Human bodies became broken and smashed, leaving their remains littered on the ground like popped water balloons.

Penelope's troop quickly realized the situation they were in.

Above all, they became disheartened. 'Ahh, so this is where I die.'

They burned the last of their loyalty to save Penelope.

"Troop leader! You need to escape!"

However, Penelope pushed past her subordinates, who gathered to protect her, and came forward instead.

"No! Everyone can live. We can break through! Holy Light Scatter<sup>{3}</sup>!"

Possessing wavy hair and large eyes, Penelope showed no sign of being taken aback even though she was surrounded by strong monsters in an unexpected place.

When Penelope, Camilla's sworn sister, shouted while rushing forward, a bright light appeared around her. Bathed in this light, her subordinates' wounds slowly stanching, and their fear-stricken hearts calmly regained their cool.

Bang! Slice!

That wasn't all. Whenever she swung her sword, which was immersed in light, the monsters, that had overwhelmed the warriors with their powerful strength, were shattered and sliced. The monsters' incredibly solid-looking, enormous heads were split like watermelons.

Although she always looked gentle, she was incredibly resolute whenever she wielded her sword.

Penelope showed off her powerful strength while healing others. Following behind her, her troop members recovered their hope and courage.

"Wow! We can break through!"

However, there was someone else who had a headache because of this.

"They really are about to break through."

Richard, who ordered 'Der Schatten' to push Penelope into a corner, clicked his tongue.

"Well, I personally came here in case this happened."

It had been a long time since he had personally taken action on the field. He had come in case something happened as it was difficult to restrain a bigshot like Penelope with decent skill, and as expected, he personally had to act.

Whoosh!

Richard, who had been observing Penelope from afar, disappeared from his spot with a whoosh. Richard's Speed had already increased from when he had just reached the 5-star level, reaching 100 Speed at the 5-star level. If he was determined to act, there weren't many existences that could perceive his movements.

This was the same for monsters. He passed between monsters like the wind while he stealthily oscillated his karma.

‘Shockwave.’

Baaang!

His karma, which was oscillating so subtly it was difficult to notice, flew towards Penelope.

Just then, as if she felt something, Penelope narrowed her eyes as she glanced at the place Richard was a moment ago.

“Who is it?!”

Of course, this was after Richard had left that spot.

Penelope frowned.

“Who was it?”

If Richard had slipped up, he might have been caught by Penelope.

‘Huh... Did she sense something?’

Richard calmed his astonished heart. What he was most cautious of, even more than failing the mission, was getting caught.

Something had appeared and disappeared abruptly. Unable to confirm its identity, Penelope tilted her head.

“What was that just now?”

However, she couldn’t think about it for long.

This was because an enormous head attempted to headbutt her.

“Hmmp!”

Like she had until now, she wielded her sword to split its head. However, at that moment, something stealthily penetrated her defenses.

“...Kyak?!”

Boom!

That was the small pulse Richard shot. As soon as the pulse, that had been oscillating as subtly as the tremors of a flower, reach her shoulder, it suddenly burst, emitting a shockwave. The shockwave swept Penelope up as it exploded splendidly.

“Kuak...”

It was an unexpected attack. On top of that, it was an attack by Richard, who was one and a half levels stronger than Penelope. Penelope’s body faltered at the impact of the shockwave and momentarily fell into a state of exhaustion.

Using that opportunity, the monster’s enormous head smashed into Penelope. Since its timing was superb, to others, Richard’s sudden attack looked like the monster’s special skill.

Boom!

Penelope flew, smashing to the ground like a broken kite.

“Troop leader!”

Penelope’s subordinates hurriedly carried the fainted Penelope.

“We need to save the troop leader!”

Disregarding their lives, they rushed in like demons and ripped through the monsters’ encirclement. Fortunately, since Penelope had almost completely collapsed the encirclement, they could successfully escape with Penelope on their shoulders.

“It’s a success.”

Richard nodded as he saw the warriors fleeing as they carried the fainted Penelope.



The Ethiopian Sovereign Johan proposed,

“13 Kahur Kabkuns will be difficult to deal with. However, aren’t Bilu and Tangka on their way here, leading support troops from the Virgo Cluster? With them, I believe we have sufficient room for comfort. Let’s proceed with standard tactics. Let’s set up sturdy defenses and operate a detached force to take down the Kahur Kabkuns one at a time.”

The Queen of England Diana expressed her agreement.

“I agree.”

The 9 great sovereigns, who wielded Overseer Nasir’s authority, expressed their agreement as well.

“We agree.”

Sovereign Jessie actually went a step further and began to talk about what roles people would take.

“I think it’s best we pick two people as commanders. The defensive commander will be Overseer Camilla, and the commander of the detached force will be Overseer Choi Hyuk.”

It seemed he didn’t think anyone would object.

Well, this was his perspective. There weren’t simply a couple or a few Kahur Kabkuns but 13 of them. They didn’t have the firepower to take them all down at once. However, there was no way the other Kahur Kabkuns would stand by once they began to attack a couple of them. There was no doubt monsters would come pouring out once they attacked. That meant someone would have to defend against the outpour of monsters. They had to protect the countless number of non-combat-oriented colonizers and beginner colonizers as well as their assets, such as the buildings, in Dragonic.

That was why having a small elite troop destroy the Kahur Kabkuns while the rest firmly maintained their defense could be considered the best strategy.

However, just because it could be considered the best didn’t mean it didn’t have any

flaws.

“However, won’t that take too much time?”

Choi Hyuk immediately pointed out a flaw.

To destroy the Kahur Kabkuns one by one as the rest defended. Although it was a safe and sure-fire method, it was also the method that would take the longest time.

“Even if it looks slow right now, making sure each one is destroyed will be the quickest method in the end.”

The Queen of England Diana refuted. She raised her long lashes as she tried to get Richard’s attention. It was a signal asking him to stop the hot-blooded Choi Hyuk.

Unfortunately, he betrayed her expectations. He instead took Choi Hyuk’s side.

“A sure-fire way, huh?... That might be the case if we were the only ones in the war. However, this war is a massive war between the alliance and the monsters. We don’t know what will happen. While the warrior leaders, Tangka and Bilu, may fight along our side right now, during a war, we have no guarantee they will continue to do so. My thoughts are that it is best to destroy the Kahur Kabkuns as quickly as possible even if sacrifices are made.”

Breaking everyone’s expectations, Richard took Choi Hyuk’s side.

Richard resolutely thought,

‘No matter what sacrifices we make, it’s best to destroy the Kahur Kabkuns even a second faster. We need to disregard defending and attack. Defending won’t work. If a strategy centered on defense rather than attack was going to work, then there was no way those heroes who were considerate of the weak would have been classified as ‘people to kill’

Richard’s decisions always contained careful calculations like this. Although they couldn’t confirm the reasoning behind his decisions at the moment, once time passed, they would realize that his decisions were correct. That was why Richard’s words always carried weight.

‘Even if I consider Choi Hyuk is acting like that because he’s a battle lunatic... Richard

wants to go on the attack as well? If Richard thinks so, then there's definitely a reason behind it...'

Sovereign Jessie, who proposed a defensive strategy, and the 9 great sovereigns all took a step back as they thought over the situation once more.

'Richards wants to go on the attack? Euu... There's definitely a reason behind it if Richard says it. However, that still means a significant number of people defending will reduce. If we attacked two or three Kahur Kabkuns at a time, with what people will we defend against the outpour of monsters from the other 10 Kahur Kabkuns? Is he saying he doesn't care if the beginner colonizers live or die?... I have to stop this.'

Although the Queen of England Diana was influenced by Richard's words, she was still stubborn on her decision. She was well into the process of creating schools that specialized in systematically teaching colonizers in Dragonic. In her mind, those schools were the future of humanity. She couldn't let the future be destroyed.

She dragged Camilla into the conversation.

"To go more on the offense... There will be too many unnecessary sacrifices considering how uncertain its effects will be. Isn't that right, Ms. Camilla?"

As she called upon Camilla, Diana believed she would bring supporting arguments. However, for some reason, Camilla was silent.

"Ms. Camilla?"

Diana asked again.

Yet, Camilla was silent, still lost in thought. Instead, Richard injected,

"Ms. Camilla. You should know better than anyone else. The monsters' movements these days are unusual. Compared to when we first started colonizing, their numbers have multiplied and, above all, they are getting stronger. The more time we take, the stronger the monsters will get."

At Richard's words, Camilla tightly closed her eyes.

Normally, no matter how plausible Richard's words seemed, there was a likely chance she would support the defensive strategy in the end as Camilla was a person who

believed protecting the weak and the innocent was right. However, the circumstances had now changed. Penelope, who was like a sister to her, had fallen into a coma after suffering the monsters' surprise attack. The healers said that she would brush it off and get up soon, but the shock was still there. The sadness she felt because Penelope was injured as well as the surprise and bafflement that came from the fact Penelope, one of the top experts within the Camilla Clan, had fallen into a coma due to the monsters near her colonized land kept alternating within her mind.

'Something changed. It's dangerous. It's dangerous to leave the monsters alone.'

This realization crept into her heart by itself.

Because of it, Camilla had no choice but to nod, agreeing with Richard, in the end.

"I believe you have a point. The monsters' growth rate is certainly too dangerous to leave things as they are. I too believe that attacking rather than defending is the best method."

However, Camilla added a condition.

"Only, there will be a lot of people who will suffer losses with this decision. There needs to be a countermeasure set in place."

At her words, Sovereign Yohan, who had been watching the situation unfold, added,

"You're right. If we reduce the number of people defending and plan a large-scale attack, casualties are bound to increase and there will be many people dissatisfied with this. There will be people who possess forces or popularity that we can't simply ignore amongst them. If we do not placate them properly, our strength may wane due to internal conflicts."

Richard nodded heavily at their concerns as he said,

"Understood. I'll try to persuade them."

That was how the general direction was determined in the meeting that day. As they planned a strategy focused on attack, they would have to solidify a system of cooperation between the minor clans. Everyone thought this would be the most

difficult process. There was no doubt the beginner colonizers would oppose it, fearing for their lives, and the forces of justice that protected them would rush forward in a frenzy to defend them. Also, if they didn't placate those forces of justice well, they would have to owe them a favor, or else they, as well as those of good relations with them, would protest.

But what was this?

When it was actually brought up, there wasn't a big opposition. They thought this would be a sensitive issue, but people were strangely quiet after they announced it. The number of those unhappy about it wasn't small, but they couldn't form a united force and would sporadically express their dissatisfaction before dying down.

Within this indecisive, strange silence, the 'pre-emptive attack on the Kahur Kabkuns', focusing on offense rather than defense, was decided and announced.

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{1} Bilu, a 1023-quasarling, was one of the aliens who brawled with the overseers when they first arrived at Dark City.

{2} Penelope was the one Choi Hyuk met in the first advancement evaluation with the dimensional wasps.

{3} Tentative name. The author provided no Hanja (Chinese characters), making it difficult to figure out.

## CHAPTER 112

### PRE-EMPTIVE ATTACK (3)

---

When he opened the door, it was Flame-Rain. She looked tired. As soon as their eyes met, she suddenly entered the room and leaned her head against him. Her hair smelled like incense and campfire ash.

“It’s been a while.”

She said with her head against his chest.

Choi Hyuk motionlessly looked down at her. He hesitated before slowly placing his hand on her shoulder and patting her twice. Flame-Rain giggled as if she found this funny.

“Hiya. I feel a little better now. How have you been? I heard you went through a lot during this time. It looks like a broadcast of you might even air at the center.”

Flame-Rain took a step back and raised her head up.

Choi Hyuk carefully examined her face.

The ends of her red hair had turned white, and her lips seemed to have lost a bit of their luster. Her cheeks were smeared with black blood that she had failed to wipe off.

Choi Hyuk asked,

“Did you come here after fighting?”

“Yeah~ I came after I fought.”

She replied absentmindedly as she stretched her arms before flopping onto the sofa.

“I want a drink from Earth. Anything cold is fine.”

Even before she began talking, Choi Hyuk had already poured her a cup of soda. Then before she finished talking, he placed the cup in her hand. He was unexpectedly gentle.

“Oh? You provide good service.”

Her eyes widened. It seemed even Choi Hyuk was surprised as he blankly stared down at his hand.

He had missed this somehow.

He had always done this whenever he saw his mother come home from work exhausted. He had always poured her a cup of soda and placed it in her hand when she flopped down. Then his mother would place the cold cup of soda against her cheek before taking two sips. Finally, she would empty the cup and stand back up, livelier than before.

He missed this. He had completely forgotten it in his mind, but it seemed his body remembered.

‘But why did this habit show up for Flame-Rain?’

Choi Hyuk fruitlessly closed and opened his fist as he erased the awkwardness.

“Kiyah!”

Looking at him acting like that, Flame-Rain happily emptied the cup of soda as she shot back up while letting out a refreshing sound.

“This is good. It tastes better than what I drank on Earth last time.”

“That’s probably true.”

Although this was obvious, the famous soda brands of the past had long since disappeared. The soda Flame-Rain had just drunk was ‘Dragonic Cola’, a soda made by non-combat-oriented colonizers in Jessie’s colonized land using ingredients from Dragonic.

Its taste was amazing. If the sodas of the past were akin to a drizzle, then Dragonic Cola was similar to a squall raining down like a waterfall. It was a soda that invigorated colonizers whose nerves had worn out due to frequent battles. The carbonation produced by the special ingredients on Dragonic was so invigorating that not only did one feel it in their noses but also in their ears and throat. People who drank Dragonic Cola for the first time said it was like their whole body was drenched in rain. Some

even went further and said it felt like rain was falling inside their bodies as well.

Blaze, blaze.

It seemed she really had become a little invigorated as flames began to sprout from Flare-Rain's hair like normal. The white tips of her hair were covered by the flames and were no longer visible. Even the black blood smeared on her cheeks burnt up and disappeared.

"Thanks. Although it was short, it was nice meeting you. Let's see each other again. Safe and sound."

"Are you going to fight again?"

"Yeah. Although it's probably the same for you guys, the monsters started to suddenly launch an extensive attack recently, so the entire alliance is in a mess. There are a lot of losses too... Because of it, I have no time to rest... They say it was like this before 'demise'-ranked monsters crossed over, so everyone's nervous."

As she said this, Flame-Rain bit her lips. Then, as if nothing happened, she smiled cheerfully and said,

"Nuna made you a good sword so you can't go around getting bullied, okay? You have to do well."

"..."

Her attitude, which was similar to how someone would treat a kid, made Choi Hyuk show a dumbfounded expression, at a loss for words.

"Kekeuk."

While joyfully appreciating his expression, she jumped up, turning into flames and disappearing.

"..."

Choi Hyuk wordlessly stared at the air where she had disappeared. He had only realized today that even she could become exhausted. If Flame-Rain, whose power he couldn't even guess, was at the point where she couldn't hide her exhaustion... Just

how serious was the war?

Thump.

His heart thumped.

“The warriors and monsters there... Will I be able to beat them?”

He wanted to fight them as soon as possible. He wanted to get stronger.

Gulp. Gulp.

After emptying a bottle of Dragonic Cola, Choi Hyuk went outside.



The attack troops were split into three divisions.

Without using up all the troops, the highest number of Kahur Kabkuns they could take was three.

Bilu and Tangke, both experienced middle-ranked warriors, each led one, and Choi Hyuk led the third division. Richard stayed behind and acted as the guardian of those who remained.

“Euu... Even though Richard is staying behind, there are too many cities left without defenses. Two or three cities will probably turn to ash? Do we really have to do this?”

Although the Queen of England Diana was dissatisfied until the end, she didn't end her cooperation.

“Since we are able to take down the Kahur Kabkuns that much faster, if things go well, didn't they say that this method could instead reduce casualties?”

The Sovereign of Paradise Camilla mumbled as she comforted Diana, who had come out to the battlefield.

“You never know...”

Although she wasn't able to hide her unease in the end, she still showed her

determination.

It was a march to war so massive that it was unprecedented in humanity's history. It wasn't this big even when they faced the doppelgangers after the advancement evaluation. All colonizers who were decent enough fighters were assigned to the attack troops, and all colonizers besides them were appointed to the defensive troops. In reality, almost all earthlings were mobilized for this war.

Due to geographical conditions, they all couldn't gather in a single location, but they used the communication network to advance at the same time.

{We enter as soon as we teleport!}

As he possessed the most experience in dealing with Kahur Kabkuns, Tangka of the Armored Soul Tribe gave orders outlining what they would do.

{When we begin teleporting, the monsters around us will crowd towards us. However, refrain from fighting the best you can and prioritize on entering! Mark my words. The mission this time isn't annihilating monsters but destroying Kahur Kabkuns. Destroying them comes first. During this time, while our enemies have yet to fully prepare, we need to destroy as many Kahur Kabkuns as we can. Each division's aim is to destroy two Kahur Kabkuns by tomorrow. If we complete this initiative, then even if the monsters start pouring out, we will be able to take them down more easily!}

If each division were to destroy two Kahur Kabkuns by the next day, that meant a total of 6 Kahur Kabkuns would be destroyed. This could be considered their break-even point. If they were successful in this endeavor, they estimated that they would suffer fewer losses than if they were to have gone with a defensive tactic.

Because of this, Earth's full might was focused into these three divisions.

Although Bilu and Tangka had a lot of excellent warriors from the alliance in their divisions, as their numbers were insufficient, experts of each clan were assigned to fill the numbers, and the rest were all a part of the attack troops under Choi Hyuk's command. The remaining people were placed under Richard's command as basic defensive troops.

As each person gathered at their post, their bodies trembled nervously, waiting for

Tangka's declaration of war. What amazing fight would unfold?

{Then, off to war!}

Tangka declared. At the same time, the military gate system began to operate.

Whish!

The scene in front of them changed.

Wheeeee!

They heard the wind brush past their ears.

The Kahur Kabkun spread out below them was like an enormous lake. Black waves rippled on its surface. Flying monsters became surprised at the suddenly appearing humans, and shrieked.

Although there were monsters that ruffled their wings as they attacked the humans, the overwhelming majority of them turned into tatters and fell once faced with the humans' counterattack.

As he fell freely towards the Kahur Kabkun, which rippled like a black lake, Warrior Leader Tangka warned the executives of Earth who accompanied him once more,

"Stay alert. They are completed Kahur Kabkuns. They are incomparable in both quantity and quality to the Kahur Kabkuns earthlings have faced until now."

While thumping his metallic chest, Tangka openly stated the dangers of the Kahur Kabkuns.

"Understood."

Kim Honghyun, who was falling next to him, replied without a trace of tension. Then his twin brother, Kim Saehyun, poked his side and said in a serious manner in his place,

“We will keep that in mind.”

Clang! Clang!

After glancing at the two, Tangka didn't reply and smashed his fists together. As if that sound was a signal, the alien troops Tangka led unsheathed their weapons simultaneously. A taut tension hung in the air.

Chu Youngjin's troop, which Kim Honghyun and Kim Saehyun led, followed them and unsheathed their weapons as well. It was the same for the troops next to them, which were dispatched by other overseers. They were right in front of the rippling surface of the Kahur Kabkun.

“Sniper unit, prepare to fire!”

Snap!

Amongst the members of Tangka's free-falling division, there were also warriors of the El Tribe. They followed Great Warrior Lantz's order and charged their karma rifles. The karma rifles they were armed with were traditional weapons of the El Tribe. They were made with the inverted tree, yet they shined like metal.

As if they looked cool loading their rifles, the Berserkers, who were also armed with the El Tribe's weapons, took out and charged their rifles.

The people falling ahead of the others began to enter the Kahur Kabkun.

Great Warrior Lantz glared fiercely as he shouted,

“Let's go! The future of our race rests on your shoulders!”

“Woaaah!”

The spirits of the El Tribe's warriors surged. It was to the point where even the Berserkers were surprised by their vigor.

“Let’s clearly show those aliens just what sort of existences we are!”

“Waaaah!”

Accompanied by cheers, the El Tribe members were sucked into the Kahur Kabkun.

Rumble!

The Berserkers, who entered the Kahur Kabkun a step earlier than the El Tribe, slashed their swords down like lightning as soon as they entered. As expected of Chu Youngjin’s troop, thunderous rumbles boomed. This was the fighting method of Chu Youngjin’s troop, which possess definite power in return for quickly expending their stamina.

At the very front were Kim Honghyun and Kim Saehyun.

“Let’s go!”

The Kahur Kabkun itself was no different from an enormous monster. Hill-sized blood vessels pulsed on the ground, and when the vessels were cut, monsters poured out.

Bang, bang, bang!

As soon as the blood vessels burst along with their noisy entrance, monsters jumped out from them.

Kim Honghyun trusted his tough body and rushed into the crowd of monsters.

“Keuhaha! Is that all?”

Kim Honghyun trampled on the monsters. Kim Saehyun targeted monsters that showed openings due to his brother’s charge and killed them with a single strike. Chu Youngjin’s troop followed behind them and ripped the collapsed ranks of monsters apart with their powerful strength.

“Vice-directors, you’re quite good?”

Chu Youngjin’s troop members shouted cheekily at Kim Honghyun and Kim Saeyoung.

“Just don’t fall behind!”

Kim Honghyun replied with great force.

The battle that decided Chu Youngjin’s successor ended with Kim Honghyun and Kim Saehyun’s victory. However, as people said they couldn’t completely replace Chu Youngjin, Kim Honghyun and Kim Saehyun came up with the title ‘vice-director’ for themselves.

That was how Chu Youngjin’s troop was currently under the command of two vice-directors, Kim Honghyun and Kim Saehyun. To them, this war could be considered their debut, verifying their qualifications as top executives of the Berserkers.

“Wahaha! As expected of Chu Youngjin’s troop, you guys fight refreshingly!”

Bang!

Tangka seemed to in a good mood as he swung his metallic arm and turned the monster in front of him into meat paste with one strike. As expected of an alien possessing a large, powerful metallic body, he enjoyed heated battles.

Pssssht!

Steam rose from his body like a cloud.

Bang!

Every time steam rose from his body, Tangka progressed forward more quickly and smashed monsters to death. The more spirited he became, the more steam escaped his body.

The steam became thicker.

Pit, pit, pit!

A few bullets pierced through Tangka’s white steam as they shot through the air.

Slam!

The bullets were with such incredible force that, as the monsters collapsed onto the floor, the heads of the monsters they hit were crushed as though they were punched by a massive fist.

“Sniper unit, fire at will! Task unit, charge forward with me!”

The Great Warrior of the El Tribe Lantz took out his sword and rushed forward like the wind. The El Tribe warriors behind him gave a long whistle and followed behind him.

Tangka, who had been about to smash the monster in front of him to death, discovered the El Tribe sniper who had snatched his prey. Tangka smacked his chest once.

“Ohh... That guy’s pretty good.”

Warrior Leader Tangka liked the warlike El Tribe that possessed outstanding combat abilities. This was the moment the El Tribe, who had been living in isolation, debuted in front of the alliance members and aliens for the first time.

A large-scale war was a crisis but also an opportunity. Everyone had their own circumstances, but the warriors who were out fighting fought with all they had.

The beginning of the battle was progressing very smoothly.

# CHAPTER 113

## PRE-EMPTIVE ATTACK (4)

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Choi Hyuk sparred with Tangka the day before they went to war.

Bang!

Choi Hyuk's fist dented Tangka's metallic side.

Pushhhiii!

Steam escaped from Tangka's entire body as though he was angry. His battered side creaked as it returned to its normal state.

Whoosh!

In a flash, Tangka's fist touched Choi Hyuk's head, however, Choi Hyuk's waist swayed, dodging Tangka's fist like a ghost.

Woong, woong, woong!

Tangka's shoulder and Choi Hyuk's upper body were like hazes. They were moving so fast that their movements blurred. Tangka attacked and Choi Hyuk narrowly dodged. In the end, none of Tangka's attacks landed on Choi Hyuk.

Instead, it was Choi Hyuk who stepped forward, aiming for a moment's opportunity. He wrapped his hands around Tangka's left wrist, extending his arm, before pushing Tangka's elbow upwards with his shoulder.

Crunch!

"Grrk!"

Tangka's left arm bent backwards. Tangka let out a groan. However, his vigor didn't lessen in the slightest. Tangka's entire body rippled with a metallic karma light. Tangka's body rotated strangely as it approached Choi Hyuk like a magnet.

Baang!

“Keuk!”

A groan escaped from Choi Hyuk’s lips as he barely managed to raise his arms to block the blow. Tangka’s attack this time was one that pierced directly at Choi Hyuk’s weakness. It was an unexpected move that completely ignored the rhythm of the battle. It was a swift, unconditional assault, similar to how the north pole of a magnet would shoot towards the south pole of another. It possessed a persistence that felt as though you were caught in an invisible magnetic field as it would traverse the shortest distance towards you even if you attempted to dodge.

Rather than an attack, it was inhuman, like some sort of ‘phenomenon’, which was why Choi Hyuk couldn’t dodge it.

Although he had narrowly raised his arms to block the attack, his arms, which were reinforced with karma, had broken.

“Heh! I’ve finally caught you!”

Tangka’s vigor rose. Tangka possessed considerably superior stats compared to Choi Hyuk, yet he was the one who had been beaten up instead of Choi Hyuk. He had become annoyed by Choi Hyuk, who avoided his attacks like a slippery eel.

Tangka decided to end this properly as he had victory in his grasps.

“Now take this!”

He reached out and grabbed Choi Hyuk’s collar with both hands.

Although all the wounds Choi Hyuk had inflicted on him had already healed, Choi Hyuk’s arms were still broken. As his collar had been grabbed on top of that... It seemed like the spar would end with this.

Goong!

“...Huh?”

However, instead of his victory, Tangka saw a white light.

Choi Hyuk's right foot, reinforced with his blue karma, had shot up and driven itself into Tangka's lower jaw.

Thud!

Tangka powerlessly fell to his knees before slumping onto the ground.

"Hooooo..."

Stepping back on the ground, Choi Hyuk momentarily faltered. He had launched a front kick at the last moment by greatly exceeding his Stamina. He was obviously drained of karma, and his right foot had sustained heavy damages.

"Uhh... Damn it, what was that?"

Having fainted for a moment, Tangka flailed on the ground, attempting to get up from the ground. Choi Hyuk, who had been staggering, sat on the back of his head.

"What do you mean what? You lost."

"What? I lost?"

Tangka, who had been attempting to stand back up, flopped down after hearing those words. Even though Choi Hyuk was sitting on the back of his head, he didn't look like he cared.

"Impossible. For me to lose when you didn't even use your Weapon of Vow..."

Tangka looked dejected as though he had lost his nation.

"See. I told you that you would end up the same as me."

A black, transparent face and a body wrapped in a black fabric. Warrior Leader Bilu of the Dark Tribe<sup>{1}</sup> snickered, enjoying Tangka's current state. He had sparred with Choi Hyuk before and had lost. With an irked expression, he said to Choi Hyuk,

"You weren't even a match for us back during the welcoming party... You're getting stronger at a terrifying speed."

They both knew how strong Choi Hyuk was when armed with his Weapon of Vow.

However, they had lost when sparring with him in hand-to-hand combat without the use of weapons. This was ridiculous. Bilu and Tangka were already well into the late stages of the 5-star level, and Choi Hyuk was a warrior who had just reached the early stages of their level. The stat difference between them was enough that Tangka and Bilu could normally take on two or three warriors of Choi Hyuk's level.

However, since they had actually fainted in a one-on-one against Choi Hyuk, the shock they felt couldn't help but be huge.

Yet, Choi Hyuk didn't seem to be very satisfied.

"No. If this was a real fight where we actually risked our lives, I would have lost. Even though I can briefly knock you out, I don't have any techniques that can take you out in a single strike. On the other hand, each and every one of your attacks is dangerous to me."

But at Choi Hyuk's words, Tangka and Bilu looked like they had eaten a bug.

"What are you talking about? If we were fighting with our lives on the line, you would have unsheathed your Weapon of Vow."

"...Are you saying you would have fought against us barehanded even if we put our lives on the line? Ey, act in moderation..."

Choi Hyuk simply shrugged at their icy reactions as, no matter what they said, he personally felt he was very lacking. Only that was important.

As he grabbed Tangka's hand and pulled him up, Choi Hyuk asked,

"What do you have to do to become a high-ranked warrior? Do you know anything?"

"You're already aiming to be a high-ranked warrior?"

Bilu cut in with an irked expression. Choi Hyuk glanced at him while saying,

"I don't know... I heard that you can't become a high-ranked warrior simply by raising your stats. Isn't it good to prepare ahead?"

“That’s true...”

Bilu and Tangka exchanged glances. Then they clenched their teeth.

Bilu’s voice oozed with depression.

“We have no clue even after 50 years... If we knew how to become high-ranked warriors, do you think we would still be middle-ranked?”

“Ah... I guess that makes sense? After this war ends, I should ask Commander Mack for advice.”

Choi Hyuk quickly lost his excitement. His appearance scratched at Bilu and Tangka’s pride.

“Euack! Damn it! I will definitely become a high-ranked warrior before you!”

“Damn it...”

The alliance’s warrior training system could only support one until the 5-star level, becoming middle-ranked warriors.

The 6-star level. One could no longer receive assistance from the system to reach the 6-star stage, and one couldn’t make up the difference with stats. It was impossible for someone to distribute their free karma points to reach the 6-star level.

Only warriors who obtained a special enlightenment and developed their own personal karma (fate) could advance and become top-ranked warriors.

Because of this, there was a countless number of those like Bilu and Tangka, whose important stats had reached 599 (5★) and who ceaselessly aimed for and repeatedly attempted to become high-ranked warriors.

—————

<Choi Hyuk>

Power: 365 (+213) (4★) Speed: 371 (+201) (4★) Control: 317 (5★)

Endurance: 100 (3★) Stamina: 51 (4★) Recovery: 371 (3★)

Retribution: 251 (5★)

-----

Choi Hyuk's current distribution of stats wasn't well-balanced.

Considering his close-combat fighting style, his Endurance and Recovery were critically low. There were a lot of problems with his Stamina as well. One would think he was a ranged fighter when looking at his stats.

Even still, Choi Hyuk prioritized increasing his Control. When compared to the stats he possessed when he had fought against Richard back in Nasari, his Stamina had increased by 51 points, Retribution by 251, and finally, his Control by 309. His other stats were the same.

If you took into account the fact that his Retribution had increased by 200 points when he created his Weapon of Vow, he had, in fact, invested three-fourths of his points into his Control.

Although he was hanging on due to his outstanding Control stat and fighting senses, he couldn't continue to let his glass cannon body and low Stamina be detrimental factors.

Still, rather than balancing his stats, Choi Hyuk emphasized advancing to the 6-star level. He planned on increasing his Control and Retribution to 599 (5★) through this war and face the wall of the 6-star level.



Because Choi Hyuk had resolved himself like this, those assigned to Choi Hyuk's troops were experiencing a battle more difficult than ever.

"Wait! Wait! If we go at this speed, the rear lines won't be able to catch up! Overseer Choi Hyuk!!!"

The Queen of England Diana shouted. However, Choi Hyuk, who was pushing his way through, didn't slow down at all.

“Damn it... It’s no use. We have no choice but to match that guy’s pace!”

Sovereign Jessie clenched his teeth and shot forward. He dropkicked a jaksam that had been trying to force its way through.

“Kuaaah!”

The jaksam collapsed to the side with a scream. This was a monster among monsters, possessing such a strong vitality that it could even endure the attacks of a middle-ranked warrior as long as it didn’t exhaust its energy with three attacks. Because of this, Sovereign Jessie didn’t kill it and simply made it fall before passing by. He left it to those behind him.

“Exhaust it!”

By the time Sovereign Jessie shouted, Lee Jinhee was already rushing towards the collapsed jaksam. The jaksam, that had raised its knee and was about to get back up, launched an attack towards Lee Jinhee, who was running around in front of it like a fly. Its veranda-sized palm shined with light. She had no way to dodge it in mid-air where there was nowhere to step.

Tap.

However, Lee Jinhee stepped on the air and flipped her body, leisurely dodging its attack. After dodging one attack, she followed after Choi Hyuk who was way ahead of her. That was how the jaksam used up one of its attacks.

Its second attack was launched towards the Ethiopian Sovereign Yohan. He deflected the jaksam’s attack that was swinging down towards him with his enormous staff.

Baang!

The jaksam’s palm ineffectively thudded on the floor.

With this, the jaksam had used up a considerable amount of its power. Normally, they would have to endure three of its attacks to completely take down its defenses, but this was enough.

“Divine Punishment.”

Boooom!!

Camilla dropped from the sky like a meteor. Her iron mace split the jaksam's head. It took around 10 seconds since it appeared to kill the jaksam, which was a considerably powerful monster.

Those running alongside Choi Hyuk could be considered humanity's dream team.

Yet, they were desperate.

"We aren't even a quarter of the way there! Yet we have already met one of the strongest monsters we know?! Haha!"

Sovereign Jessie shouted, seemingly excited.

"We have no idea what lies in front of us! We must stick closely behind Overseer Choi Hyuk! Without him, there may be plenty of monsters we can't take on! Stick next to him so that he can regulate his stamina!"

The Sovereign of Paradise Camilla ordered urgently.

Even the Ethiopian Sovereign Yohan constantly encouraged the warriors lagging behind him.

"Damn it...! Hang in there! Or else you'll all die!"

Choi Hyuk's troops, which were only comprised of humans, ascended the long Kahur Kabkun and penetrated the monsters' ranks.

On the other hand, Bilu and Tangka were comparatively more relaxed.

While both Bilu and Tangka were similar in strength or slightly stronger than Choi Hyuk, the alliance troops they led possessed power that greatly exceeded what the average human possessed. To be Bilu or Tangka's adjutant, one would have to possess stats in the early stages of the 5-star level. Since their elites were on the same level as the Queen of England Diana, they could easily take care of the monsters. Also, they didn't lack numbers either due to the elites sent over from each overseer.

They were breaking through the Kahur Kabkun at a much quicker pace than Choi Hyuk's troops. The Kahur Kabkun entrance on the opposite side wasn't far away. Just as they were smoothly progressing along with their mission, a situation arose.

"Wha... What did you say?!"

Tangka couldn't contain his anger at the sudden order. He smashed his own metallic head with his fist as he raised his voice,

"You want us to retreat right here and now? Then what about the earthlings? If we don't destroy the target number of Kahur Kabkuns, it'll become difficult to handle the outpour of monsters!"

Tangka showed a fierce reaction. However, Commander Mack seemed as cold as ice. Lightning crackled around her golden horns. This showed she was extremely angry.

{... You can't refuse. You will go support Dark City immediately. That's an order.}

Only then did Tangka read her expression.

'Damn... It's an order from the higher-ups.'

This order wasn't made through Commander Mack's own judgment. It was an order from her superiors. That was why the person who was angrier and in more pain than anyone else at this moment might perhaps be her.

But what could they do? As long as they were soldiers, they couldn't disobey.

"Damn it!"

Bang!

After hitting his head once more, Tangka shouted as he activated the military gate system.

"There's an emergency situation! As of this time, all troops led by Tangka of the Virgo Cluster will teleport to Dark City! Earthling warriors, immediately contact each of your overseers and decide what to do!"

Flash!

Leaving those words, Tangka and his troops retreated.

Only the elites dispatched by each overseer remained in the Kahur Kabkun.

“...Wh... What?”

They had been on the brink of victory, yet everything suddenly changed.

Kuuuooooo!

The monsters that had been hopelessly pushed back reignited their spirits. Filling the empty space left behind when Tangka's troops disappeared, they pushed forward. Their positions had changed. The attackers had become the defenders and the defenders had become the attackers.

The heated excitement of the battle turned into fear and despair.

“...Brother. Quickly let the leader know and tell him to open the gate.”

Vice-director of Chu Youngjin's troop Kim Saehyun urged Kim Honghyun. Although it would be a headache in the future if they didn't destroy the Kahur Kabkuns now, if they wanted to save their lives first, they had to retreat.

Yet-

“Yeah, I reported it. I told him that we'd hold on for a while longer so to quickly come clean things up.”

Kim Honghyun actually unsheathed his sword and stepped forward.

“What? Are you crazy?! We aren't the only ones who will die! Everyone will!”

Kim Saehyun was surprised. However-

“Hihi. Of course, this is how you should act if you want to act as our leader.”

The Berserkers actually readily followed behind Kim Honghyun.

# CHAPTER 114

## PRE-EMPTIVE ATTACK (5)

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Choi Hyuk stopped, standing in the horde of monsters.

He had received a call from Commander Mack.

{Sorry. It's an evacuation order. I have no choice.}

Commander Mack had a grave expression.

"...Is this the same as the doppelganger incident?"

Even while he plucked the heads off the monsters rushing towards him, his expression remained calm. He nonchalantly asked whether this was a plot targeting earthlings set up by someone above.

Mack shook her head.

{No, it's not like that this time. Although it sounds silly if I put it this way... It's a justified order. Currently, the monsters are beginning to launch attacks throughout the universe. In fact, even the capital of the Laniakea Supercluster, Dark City, is under attack. Although I am sorry, regulation-wise, defending Dark City takes priority.}

Well, in the alliance's perspective, the value of Dark City was incomparable to Dragonic. To them, this was an obvious measure.

Unsheathing his sword and cutting down a line of monsters, Choi Hyuk candidly nodded his head.

He even nonchalantly asked,

"But commander, you look a bit angry?"

{... I'm sorry. While Dark City is an important base for the alliance... To you earthlings,

there currently isn't anything more precious than Dragonic right now. Although the alliance outwardly talks about the equality of its members, in moments like this... Damn it. I too... Haa. I'm sorry.}

Rather than Choi Hyuk, it was Commander Mack who had a more difficult time controlling her emotions. She tightly closed and then reopened her eyes.

{Either way, my duty is to protect Dark City. I am sorry we left so irresponsibly. I pray for your success in this war.}

The call ended.

Choi Hyuk still had a calm expression. His lips had curled up into a gentle smile.

He exhaled a short breath and shot forward, slashing a monster's face with his sword. A molar the size of a forearm broke and a fist-sized eyeball popped out.

As he looked at the scene-

Twitch.

His gentle smile convulsed. His calm eyes flared. The veins on his arms bulged.

"Those bastards..."

Choi Hyuk's feet moved while he broke out in swears. The calmness he disguised himself in until now split open, and indescribable emotions surged forward. Despair became rage, and rage became hatred...

"Flaming Wing Dance."

Wings of scarlet flames erupted from his back.

"Haha. Bastards."

Even these flames were the alliance's. The flames burned on his relentless hatred and fluttered like feathers.

"Kiiiiieee!!"

The monsters screamed as their bodies were burned by the flames and crumbled. A cruel smile hung on Choi Hyuk's lips. Joy sprouted from his hatred.

"Yeah. I'll kill you all!"

Kwaaaaaaah!

Choi Hyuk's flames began to devour the Kahur Kabkun.



"Bilu and Tangka's troops evacuated?"

The overseers who also figured out the situation fell into a state of chaos.

"Do you know how many troops were dispatched over there?! We have to order them to retreat before they all die!"

The Queen of England Diana was the first to bring up retreating.

"We can't!"

Just then, Baek Seoin, who had been close by, cut in.

"Berserkers have been dispatched there as well. Chu Youngjin's troop was sent to Tangka's troops, and Ryu Hyunsung, Handke, and Bae Jinman's troops were dispatched to Bilu's."

"So?"

"Berserkers don't retreat."

Baek Seoin banged his sword on his shield. As if threatening them, he said viciously,

"If you pull your troops out now, I will take it as leaving the Berserkers to die."

"You're crazy! Then you want them all to die together?"

"No. They'll die when they die, but they need to destroy the Kahur Kabkun before they do."

Unlike Diana, who looked as though she would burst with anger, Baek Seoin was cool-headed.

“Although our original goal was to destroy 6 Kahur Kabkuns, we need to at least destroy the three we are attacking now. If we don’t, we have no way to defend against the outpour of monsters. We won’t have Tangka or Bilu’s troops to assist us from now on. We need to, at the very least, take this opportunity to destroy the 3 Kahur Kabkuns, which were selected as the strongest. It’ll be harder next time.”

Baek Seoin’s attitude was unyielding, yet his words also contained reason.

To be honest, one would have to fight to know the outcome. They couldn’t be certain whether destroying the three Kahur Kabkuns or retreating and preserving their troops would be beneficial. Although a best action did exist, unless they had come from the future, they couldn’t say what the answer was with certainty.

However, Baek Seoin’s attitude was too resolute. Diana flinched and was pushed back by his spirit before making a desperate expression.

Looking at Diana’s expression, Baek Seoin added in a serious manner,

“My Intuition says so.”

The power of the innate skill ‘Intuition’, which Baek Seoin possessed, had already spread far and wide. When he even said that, she was hard-pressed for words.

As her attitude softened, she asked,

“...Really?”

“Yes. If we pull out all our troops, everyone will die.”

To be honest, Baek Seoin’s Intuition only noticed things that would affect his own safety. He didn’t know whether pulling all the troops out right now would put himself in danger or if they would really all die. However, Baek Seoin decided to simply put it this way. His empty bluff worked.

“I’m Overseer Diana. I’m sorry. I do not permit you to use the military gate system. We will go assist you once we have finished up here. Endure for a bit longer.”

“Yeah, it’s me. We’ll go there soon so endure for a bit longer.”

“This is an order. Even if you are on your own, destroy the Kahur Kabkun. If that’s too difficult, then defend your current position. We’ll be there soon.”

“Defend with your lives on the line!”

Following Diana, Jessie, Camilla, and Yohan all ordered their troops.

{Then... You have to come soon! The situation here isn’t good!}

Although there wasn’t anyone who disobeyed or became angry, there were some who ardently begged for help.

Blaze!

Looking at the scarlet flames that had surged just now, Sovereign Jessie replied,

“Don’t worry. I don’t think we will take long.”



“I thought the other guys would retreat, but they aren’t?”

After Warrior Leader Tangka left, Kim Honghyun, Kim Saehyun, and Chu Youngjin’s troop filled his void. Besides them, the other troops looked to have become chaotic at first, but it seemed they received orders from their respective overseers as they soon assembled behind Chu Youngjin’s troop. They could feel their desperation.

Because of this, the Berserkers had a reliable backup.

“Kahur Kabkun. If we don’t break it down, the monsters will continuously pour out. Let’s go smash it apart quickly!”

At Kim Honghyun’s shout, the Berserkers simultaneously took off.

{Keeluaaaaah!}

A changed dragon spewed its fatal breath from the air.

Flash!

On the surface, a jaksam, which had rushed in, breaking their ranks, was running amok.

Psssscht!

Shadow teeth stealthily approached the warriors while holding vassal starving ghosts and ambushed them.

Large numbers of monsters they had fought in the past made their appearances. Although they were all difficult to fight, they could still deal with them.

“Cleear!”

Kim Honghyun jumped high into the air using the Shoes of Hermes and swung his gigantic axe.

Crrraaassh!

Accompanied by an incredible sound, the destructive beam shot by the changed dragon hit his axe and curved.

Rumble!

The reflected destructive beam swept through the monsters instead of the humans.

{Kahllleuk!}

The changed dragon stretched its neck and roared in anger.

Slice.

Kim Saehyun sliced the changed dragon's head off. As expected of twins, the two new

vice-directors had great teamwork.

While Kim Honghyun gathered the monster's attention, Kim Saehyun used his innate skill {Sharpness} to deal a powerful strike and behead their enemy.

The changed dragon's head fell accompanied by the terrifying sound of flesh and bone being cut. Its black blood dripped to the ground.

The Berserkers fought as though they were possessed. They didn't care for ranged or close combat attacks and fought like slaughter machines.

Clank!

Whenever they saw a shadow teeth stealthily approaching, they didn't hesitate to raise their long rifles. They were karma guns made by combining both the El Tribe and Naro's technologies. They were quite decent weapons for the lowest-ranked warriors below the 3-star level.

Bang!

The moment the karma was charged, they shot their rifles. The shadow teeth's upper body shot backwards. As they could kill them without approaching them, they didn't have to move out of the way as much. As soon as someone shot their gun, a Berserker would unsheathe his sword and stab the head of the approaching monster. At the same time, the shooter would rotate his gun and shoot a monster approximately ten steps away from him before running the opposite direction.

They clearly held the momentum. However, there was a monster the Berserkers were seeing for the first time as well. At first glance, it looked human, yet its skin was patchy and as black as mud. Its arms were especially long, and its head was lowered, revealing dozens of eyes on the top of its head.

A Berserker who sighted this monster shouted arrogantly as he charged.

"Did you come out? Then go back in!"

Rumble!

The specialty of Chu Youngjin's troop, one hit one kill. His karma surged explosively, and using that strength, he struck out with power that exceeded his stats. He endured the pain that followed after with a shout and resoluteness.

Swish!

His strike shot out like lightning, yet his attack didn't touch the monster. The monster swung its arm, from which extended a long, sharp blade, at the Berserker. The charging Berserker was sliced by its blade and fell into two pieces.

Whhheeeze...

His sliced body powerlessly emitted the sound of wind escaping his lungs.

The monster emotionlessly stared down at the Berserker's corpse.

Slop.

It seemed like the monster's skin was viscous as it would make a slopping sound every time it took a step.

"...Wheek. Sho wheek..."

It said in an inarticulate voice. Although it sounded inarticulate, it was definitely speaking Korean.

As if reacting to its voice, new monsters appeared, ripping open the blood vessels of the Kahur Kabkun, and rushing at the humans.

"Keuk!"

"Gaack!"

They were all monsters they hadn't seen before. They all had their own unique appearances. It was difficult to call them one name like {jaksam} or {shadow teeth}.

They were also strong. The Berserkers, who had been progressing smoothly, were being slaughtered.

Originally, these would have been elite monsters Tangka's troops would deal with. Without a middle-ranked warrior, the Berserkers would have a difficult time facing these powerful monsters.

Unfortunately, as Tangka's troops were no longer around, the Berserkers had no choice but to face them.

The Berserkers began to be clearly pushed back. Their relentless advance had quickly reversed.

The El Tribe's Great Warrior Lantz tried his best to somehow change the tides.

"Kill them! Support the Berserkers! Show them the pride of the El Tribe!"

Following the Great Warrior Lantz's shout, the El Tribe charged towards the elite monsters as they shot at them. Their long rifles exploded karma endlessly. Pointed, condensed karma shot out.

Bang, bang, bang!

The karma bullets fired by the El Tribe marksmen always found their marks. An elite monster whose entire body was covered in a tough carapace was hit by dozens of bullets in an instant. Its carapace was shattered, and the black mucus inside gushed out.

"Push them back!"

Even Lantz unsheathed his sword and rushed forward. If the El Tribe marksmen wanted to safely shoot their firearms, someone had to stand in front and be their shield. That role fell to Lantz and his bodyguards.

"Hey! Mr. Great Warrior! Let's go hunt that guy over there!"

Kim Honghyun friendlily waved his hand at Lantz, who came out to the front. The monster he was pointing at was the disgusting monster with black skin and dozens of eyes on the top of its head. The monster that had spoken inarticulate Korean.

The eyes on the top of the monster's head rolled around leisurely as it observed its surroundings. Just by looking at its posture, Kim Honghyun was certain.

“That guy's the leader!”

Confident in his Endurance, Kim Honghyun charged towards it without hesitation.

That moment, the dozens of eyes on the top of the monster's head observed Kim Honghyun at the same time.

Slice!

When the monster swung its long arm, there was a flash. Blood gushed from Kim Honghyun's chest. Kim Honghyun's axe had been sliced in two and fell to the ground.

“Huh?”

He hadn't expected it to possess this much power. Kim Honghyun's Endurance had been powerlessly sliced through like his axe. Even though Chu Youngjin hadn't been able to slash him with one strike?

“Brother, dodge!”

Kim Saehyun shouted in surprise, and the Great Warrior Lantz rushed to save Kim Honghyun.

“Blessing of the inverted tree!”

Rumble!

Large tree branches extended from Lantz's necklace. The branches, which grew like a tidal wave, wrapped around Kim Honghyun and pulled him back.

The monster swung its sharp arms as it charged forward to prevent Kim Honghyun from escaping. Branches were cut as soon as they grew, but its attack narrowly missed Kim Honghyun.

“Wow... Damn, just what is that guy?”

“Sharpness!”

When he heard Kim Honghyun and had become relieved, Kim Saehyun, who arrived late, launched a sharp attack towards the monster that was slicing the branches apart. Although it was too late as an attempt to save Kim Honghyun, as a sudden attack, its timing was amazing.

However, the monster reacted to even this sudden attack.

Slice!

“Huh?”

Two arms simultaneously flew into the air. One was a monster arm, the other was Kim Saehyun’s.

The monster and Kim Saehyun’s eyes fixated on the two arms soaring in the air at the same time. There was a slight confusion, but the monster was the first to move.

Thud!

“Keeuk!”

The monster swung its remaining right arm and grabbed Kim Saehyun’s throat. Having lost both his sword and his right arm, Kim Saehyun couldn’t resist as he was grabbed by the monster’s hand, and his body dangled as it was raised up.

The dozens of eyes on the top of its head thoroughly examined Kim Saehyun’s body.

“Pretty shtrong?”

The monster said in inarticulate Korean. Kim Saehyun became surprised. He was so surprised that, despite his throat being strangled, he asked,

“Gack! You can talk?”

“Ki, ki.”

Yet the monster didn't reply as its lips spread wide into a smile. The monster slammed Kim Saehyun's face onto the ground.

Bang!

"Kuack!"

Bang! Bang!

Once, twice, every time it slammed his face on the ground, Kim Saehyun's nose was crushed and his teeth flew into the air.

Looking at this, Kim Honghyun became enraged.

"You bastard!"

He once again charged recklessly.

The monster glanced at Kim Honghyun before throwing Kim Saehyun, who had turned into a mess. Kim Honghyun hurriedly caught Kim Saehyun and-

Pssscht.

The monster's right arm pierced through Kim Saehyun's chest.

"Kehack!"

It was an attack that even pierced Kim Honghyun's chest as he held Kim Saehyun in his arms.

"Wheak?"

The monster tilted its head and grinned.

"Save the vice-directors!"

Rumble!

The team-leader-level Berserkers rushed forward. The monster didn't take them on and retreated to the back. It looked like it didn't want to take any chances. Considering how its left arm was cut off, compared to its overwhelming power, it seemed its defenses were quite weak.

The Berserkers looked after Kim Honghyun and Kim Saehyun while the Great Warrior Lantz stood at the very front, guarding against the monster.

“Their conditions?”

Lantz asked with his eyes fixed on the monster.

“Vice-Director Kim Honghyun will be able to recover soon!”

A Berserker replied.

“Saehyun!!!”

Followed by Kim Honghyun's screams.

# CHAPTER 115

## PRE-EMPTIVE ATTACK (6)

---

There was a gaping hole in Kim Saehyun's chest. His blood was gushing out, and unknown chunks were mixed in with his blood as they dripped to the ground.

While dying, Kim Saehyun worried about his twin brother, Kim Honghyun.

Like pouring water into a broken jug, every time his heart struggled, more blood would pour out. It was at this moment that Kim Saehyun instinctively knew what he had to do.

Although the karma within his body was dissipating, the karma that was embedded deep within his soul still remained strong. Kim Saehyun carefully took that karma out.

“Older brother<sup>{1}</sup>.”

Although Kim Saehyun called him ‘older brother’, due to the air escaping his lungs, what came out of his mouth was ‘older brosher’. He wheezed as air escaped his lungs.

Still, Kim Honghyun understood him. Even though he was only born a few minutes before him, Kim Saehyun always called him older brother.

“Yeah, buddy. Keep your head together. You’re okay, right?”

Kim Honghyun furrowed his eyes.

“Drink...”

With slurred speech, Kim Saehyun placed his powerlessly dangling arm on his chest and scrubbed the blood gushing from his chest with his palm.

“What?”

Kim Honghyun looked to be in shock. He didn't understand what Kim Saehyun was saying.

“Drink it...”

Kim Saehyun urged Kim Honghyun to drink his blood once more.

“What are you saying?”

Slap.

Kim Saehyun slapped the dazed Kim Honghyun’s cheek. Rather than saying he slapped him, it was more like he placed his hand on his cheek.

(Wheeze) (Wheeze)

“Drink...”

(Wheeze)

It seemed it was becoming hard for him to speak as the sounds of air escaping became more and more mixed in with his speech.

Their eyes met.

‘I’m sane so drink it. Shut up and drink it.’

Even while blood spilled from his mouth and while he couldn’t speak properly, Kim Saehyun’s gaze was clear. Kim Honghyun felt that he could read his thoughts through his gaze.

Although he couldn’t understand the reason, Kim Saehyun was serious.

“Haa... Haha...”

As he laughed with a stunned expression, Kim Honghyun’s two hands stuck to Kim Saehyun’s chest. Then he scooped some blood and drank it. The blood dripped and wet his lips, hands, and forearm. Once in contact with his skin, the slippery blood gradually became stickier.

“Are you happy? Are you?”

Although his tone was provocative, Kim Honghyun’s eyes were trembling slightly in

worry for Kim Saehyun. Kim Saehyun's hand rose up and ruffled Kim Honghyun's head.

"You did well... I definitely... (Wheeze) passed it over to you..."

Then his hand listlessly fell to the ground with a thud. His karma, which had still faintly been present just now, had scattered, disappearing for eternity.

"Saehyun! Saehyun!!"

Kim Honghyun shouted at the top of his lungs, but there was no way a person who had already died would come back.

"Shaehyuna! Ssaehyuna!"

A distressing voice imitated Kim Honghyun's wails. It had black, viscous skin that was hard and lumpy like mud, and numerous eyes on the top of its head.

It was the monster that had killed Kim Saehyun. It imitated Kim Honghyun's cries.

As if it had a tic, it did so repeatedly while tilting its head.

"Ssaehyunahh! Ssaehyunahkagak!"

Then it laughed. Kim Honghyun shot up.

"Endure it!"

The Great Warrior Lantz attempted to hold him back-

Whoosh!

But Kim Honghyun had already arrived in front of the monster.

Without holding the axe's handle, he swung the head of the ax in his hand at the monster's head. The monster twisted its body slightly and dodged his attack.

"Wheak?"

At the same time, it swung its right arm.

Psscht!

The monster's right arm pierced through Kim Honghyun's side and was about to slice Kim Honghyun in two.

"Haah."

Kim Honghyun took a deep breath. Even while receiving its attack, he didn't back down. Instead, he flexed his body.

The monster's arm pierced deep into Kim Honghyun's body, but it couldn't slice him in half. Kim Honghyun's muscles squirmed. His contracted muscles tightly clenched onto the monster's arm.

"Die, asshole."

Kim Honghyun pushed the blade of his axe into the monster's face.

"Kiyaaah!"

The monster screamed while looking at Kim Honghyun. It closed all the eyes on the top of its head at once and the monster's black forehead butted Kim Honghyun's nose.

Bang!

Kim Honghyun's body was pushed back a distance. He had a nosebleed. However, Kim Honghyun quickly regained his balance and wielded his axe.

"Eeck!"

But the monster's movements were much more refined than Kim Honghyun's. It dodged Kim Honghyun's attack and pulled out its arm that was embedded in his side.

Clang!

Kim Honghyun narrowly blocked its attack and rolled on the ground.

Kim Honghyun's Endurance couldn't completely block the monster's attack, and he

wasn't a match for the finesse of its attacks and techniques.

The Great Warrior Lantz attempted to help Kim Honghyun, who was in danger, but he couldn't as he had to deal with the other elite monsters that were rushing towards him at that moment.

Fortunately, the monster didn't kill Kim Honghyun right away. It brandished its right arm as it approached him leisurely. As strong as it was, its actions were also different from the other monsters'. Because of this, Kim Honghyun was able to slowly get back up.

A mess of blood and dirt, he stood up and spun the axe in his hand. His hand movements were somehow much lighter. The atmosphere seemed different somewhat.

Kim Honghyun wiped his lips with his hand. He felt Kim Saehyun's wet blood still on his lips.

Looking at his brother's blood, Kim Honghyun slightly trembled. He shuddered, filled with sadness.

"Son of a bitch... Is this why you did that?"

Kim Honghyun only now realized the unfamiliar power that had entered his body. As if he had opened his closed eyes, the world suddenly felt new.

"This... Is this the world you saw?"

Kim Honghyun mumbled to himself, and the monster watched him in interest.

Kim Honghyun adjusted his grip on the ax. Then he whispered quietly,

"Sharpness."

{Innate Skill Sharpness has been passed down to you.}

Sharpness. This was definitely Kim Saehyun's innate skill.

Kiing!

Kim Honghyun's previously sluggish axe accelerated. It shot towards the monster, drawing a line smoother than ever before. His movements had become more refined. Yet, the monster still reacted to his sudden movements. It attempted to dodge his attack as it took a step back. That moment, Kim Honghyun's axe became a level faster. His axe landed on it just before it could dodge.

Baam!

Black blood splattered.



They had destroyed Kahur Kabkuns 1, 2 and 3. Choi Hyuk fully demonstrated that he was humanity's greatest weapon this time as well.

Even in a situation where Bilu and Tangka had left, the reason why they could still destroy the three Kahur Kabkuns as planned was because of Choi Hyuk and the Berserkers. There was no one who suspected this fact.

Also, a new hero had appeared.

Kim Honghyun.

The first human to possess two innate skills.

Although he had received help from the Great Warrior Lantz and other troop members in the end, he accomplished the splendid achievement of killing a monster at the 5-star level. Excluding Choi Hyuk, it was a result accomplished by no one else.

With this, they had destroyed 3 out of the 13 Kahur Kabkuns.

Even though they had only accomplished half of their original goal of destroying 6 Kahur Kabkuns, the value of their accomplishment was by no means small. The Kahur Kabkuns they had destroyed this time had been estimated to be the trickiest to deal

with. The fact that they were able to destroy them before the monsters properly began to pour out was quite encouraging.

Although humanity couldn't stop the anger that arose due to the alliance's irresponsibility, they felt pride at the fact they had somehow been able to stitch up this disastrous situation.

The monsters' counterattack from the 10 remaining Kahur Kabkuns began.

While the warriors of the attack troops, who had become exhausted after destroying the 3 Kahur Kabkuns, rested, Richard led the defense troops to block the outpour of monsters.

To reduce damages to the cities and to gain a strategic position to target additional Kahur Kabkuns, Richard chose to launch an intercepting attack rather than to be besieged.

The fight between the defense troops and the monsters became a topic of conversation day after day. The video Naro filmed was widely spread, and there were so many monsters that it seemed like Dragonic itself had become a monster rushing towards them. Compared to the attack troops, there were more lower leveled warriors in the defense troops. That was why there were more casualties. Although there were many people going crazy, stricken with fear, Richard did whatever he could to unite them and send them to the battlefield.

Looking at them, the warriors of the attack troops reignited their fighting spirit. This was a fight that wouldn't end by defending. Someone would have to wade through that tidal wave of monsters and destroy the Kahur Kabkuns. Only then could humanity defend their new homeland, Dragonic. This mission, which was the most dangerous and honorable, lay in the attack troops' hands. The faster they destroyed them, the more people they could protect.

The warriors ended their short break and prepared for their second expedition. This time, their goal was to destroy three Kahur Kabkuns that were considered weak compared to other low-ranked ones. The leader of the defense troops, Richard, and the leader of the attack troops, Choi Hyuk, exchanged their thoughts and set their

schedule and route. Even though it was hard, everyone believed that, like the other crises they had experienced in the past, they would be able to quickly recover from this.

However, there was a variable that even Choi Hyuk and Richard didn't expect.

This variable was precisely the difference in perspective between the alliance and earthlings.

Humans thought something like this.

'What has the alliance done for us up until now? I mean, they suddenly appeared and made Rings of Rebirth and stuff, making people participate in a horrifying game and kill each other... Yeah, that's all fine. We became war machines like you wanted and survived. Then you talked about Consumables and stuff. You also used our homeland, Earth, as a resource and brought it to extinction... Okay, that's fine too. We still survived and took the advancement evaluation. We finally became alliance members that could be treated as people. But then you royally screwed us over with that doppelganger mission, didn't you? And now you suddenly made the support troops, who had come to help protect our second base, Dragonic, retreat? Just what have you done for us? You said, as alliance members, we were equals, yet all you do is use us and backstab us. But what? What do you want us to do now?! It's already hard enough protecting our base, yet you want us to send support troops to defend Dark City? Fuck, are we really alliance members? Aren't we vassals?'

That was right. Earthlings thought that they had been strongly backstabbed by the alliance. Yet the alliance didn't think that in the slightest. Instead, they told them to fulfill their duty as alliance members.

'The situation in Dark City is very bad. With Overseer Choi Hyuk or Richard as the leader, dispatch reinforcements of at least 5,000 low-ranked warriors and 100,000 lowest-ranked warriors within two days.'

They gave this absurd order.

Since Commander Mack resisted, saying that she couldn't give such an order, a bureaucrat of the Laniakea Supercluster personally gave the order.

It was an absurd order. Calling them 5,000 low-ranked warriors and 100,000 lowest-ranked warriors was putting it mildly. Low-ranked warriors were experts at the 4-star level, and lowest-ranked warriors were veteran warriors at the 3-star level. To be honest, it was the same as telling them to send all the elites on Earth.

Of course, there was an opposition.

"I mean, don't you know our situation? How are we to provide support when our base is about to be taken from us? No matter how important Dark City is to the alliance... We need to save ourselves first!"

Overseer Diana's face flushed with anger. Still, it seemed she tried her best to withhold her agitation and to not become hated by the bureaucrat from the supercluster.

However, the way the alliance bureaucrat saw things was very different from the earthlings.

{Although I understand the situation earthlings are dealing with, Dark City is registered as a vital strongpoint for the alliance. It has priority over Dragonic. Mark my words. If a species loses their base, they can find a new one, but if the alliance collapses, all karmalings will become extinct. In a critical situation like now, don't let your own species' selfishness take precedence.}

Earthlings suddenly became a selfish species that let their own selfishness take precedence.

Eventually, Diana burst in anger.

"Ha! That's funny. It just so happens that over 70% of the population in Dark City, a city registered as a vital strongpoint for the alliance, are Dark Tribe members, isn't it? They are a species strong enough to be considered in the top 4 of the alliance. What a funny coincidence. The city the Dark Tribe inhabits has been registered as a vital strongpoint and obviously needs to be protected with the united strength of the alliance, while the alliance doesn't care whether Dragonic, where we earthlings live in, falls into ruin or not?"

“Stop it...”

Overseer Yohan tried to hold the agitated Diana back. Diana flinched and looked like she regretted it, but she simply kept her mouth tightly shut with a venomous expression that indicated her anger hadn't been fully relieved.

The alliance bureaucrat replied with a stern expression.

{I understand you are angry. I also understand your hostility towards the so-called top 4 species. However, the alliance exists because of them, and you were able to receive benefits from this. Don't the earthlings owe the alliance a huge debt? Just think that it is now time you paid that debt.}

Yes. 'Debt'. That was the decisive point that divided their perspectives. While the earthlings inwardly asked, 'What debt?'... The perspective the bureaucrat from the alliance had was firm.

{If the alliance hadn't carried out the warrior training system and awakened earthlings' karma and made you into warriors... Earthlings would have already become extinct a long time ago due to the monsters. The alliance didn't simply give you the power to survive extinction, it also prepared you a base to continue to live on. As members of the alliance, it is now time for you to fulfill your duty.}

It was at this moment the overseers realized that their words would have no effect.

Strictly speaking, his words weren't wrong.

They had been able to awaken karma because of the alliance.

They had been able to survive until now as well as continue to survive and prepare plans to preserve humanity because of the alliance.

However... There was no one who wanted to say thank you.

That gap.

Their misery.

There was no way they could make them understand through words.

While a deathly silence hung in the air, Choi Hyuk took action.

“Understood. I will lead an army and provide support within two days. However, after we overcome this mess, I want to be promised support for Earth as well.”

{You will clearly be paid the price for your contributions and errors.}

“...Understood.”

{It's good that I can get through to you. Then, let's see each other next time.}

The call ended.

Choi Hyuk smiled faintly. In a light manner, he said to the overseers who had grave expressions,

“Why the sad looks? Is this our first time experiencing this?”

With the spirit he was going to war right away, Choi Hyuk unsheathed his sword and said,

“We don't have time. We need to destroy at least 4 Kahur Kabkuns within two days.”

Grit.

Choi Hyuk walked out without any lingering feelings. When he turned his back on them, they could hear him grind his teeth, which didn't suit his cheerful tone from moments ago.

However, when he turned his head around once more, he still had a cheerful expression. He even grinned as he said,

“We need to survive. Let's think about it after we survive.”

# CHAPTER 116

## ALIEN TROOPS FROM EARTH (1)

---

While looking at the tidal wave of monsters that covered Dragonic, Choi Hyuk recalled Kangdong District. It had disappeared now, but he still recalled the game 'Survive and Escape' which he encountered after leaving school.

Those days, where he went around with Baek Seoin to destroy portals in order to fight the monsters that poured in day after day, was similar to his current situation. If there was a difference, it would be that there was nowhere to escape to this time.

It was either destroy all the Kahur Kabkuns or the extinction of humanity.

Choi Hyuk did what he could. Like he promised, they destroyed 4 Kahur Kabkuns in 2 days. There were now 6 Kahur Kabkuns left. Judging by the number, there were less than half remaining... But the progress of battle was much more difficult. There were already too many monsters that had crossed over through the Kahur Kabkuns. Even if the earthlings fought with all they had, large losses were inevitable. Even if Choi Hyuk remained, it would have been the same.

Choi Hyuk had to put this situation behind him and leave Dragonic.

There was nothing more he could do. The best he could do was alleviate the situation in Dark City and return as quickly as possible.

Choi Hyuk and Richard exchanged glances.

"Richard, then."

Take care. He didn't need to say those words.

Richard absentmindedly nodded his head.

"Just come back soon."

In charge of defending Dragonic, he didn't take his eyes off the defensive lines that were engaged in intense battles.

As long as Choi Hyuk and the elites left, there was nothing they could do about their front lines being pushed back. He had to think of a way to retreat the front lines, as well as create new ones.

His mind was complicated. The best-case scenario was for Choi Hyuk and his expedition to return quickly. His first goal was to set the situation up so that they could launch an extensive counterattack when they returned. However, Richard also thought of the worst case. The situation where Choi Hyuk's expedition that took off to Dark City was annihilated and didn't return. Humanity had to survive even in that situation. He had to somehow make the front lines enter a stalemate, creating time for earthlings' potential to grow before driving out the monsters. If that was impossible... He had to consider migrating to another planet. It was something he couldn't aimlessly leave to the alliance. Richard was already thinking about that.

"Ah, you already told your friend Naro, right? That I might need its help in a pinch."

"Of course. I told it to follow your words as if they were mine."

{Yes. I can confirm it. I set my settings so that Overseer Richard will be my number 1 command authority until Overseer Choi Hyuk returns.}

Both Choi Hyuk and Naro confirmed it at the same time.

"Okay."

Richard nodded. He didn't even turn around and waved his hand.

"Have a safe journey, everyone."

Richard, Diana, Nasir, and Yohan remained on Dragonic.

Choi Hyuk, Camilla, and Jessie left for Dark City.

“Who knew things would come to this? We’re lucky that we destroyed a few Kahur Kabkuns with our pre-emptive attack. If we had prioritized defending, we really would be in big trouble right now...”

Diana, who had firmly pushed for a defensive tactic, mumbled with an exhausted voice. It was as she said. If they had stuck to a defensive tactic, then there might have been more than 10 Kahur Kabkuns still remaining. In that situation, if their elites had to leave like they were now, the progress of the war would have been truly grim. Humanity might not even be able to overcome this crisis.

Chills ran down her spine when she thought that.

‘As expected... Richard’s judgment is terrifyingly accurate. Just how is does he do it?’

Diana looked at Richard in a new light. His judgment would always be correct even when some unexpected change occurred as if he knew the future.

The other person who dumbfounded her was Choi Hyuk. It always looked like he was acting recklessly, but his judgments weren’t greatly wrong either. At least in fighting methods, it was clear he possessed an animalistic sixth sense.

Choi Hyuk was about to go off to battle.

“5 middle-ranked warriors, 5,000 low-ranked warriors, and 100,000 lowest-ranked warriors.”

He was calling the list of expeditionary members.

Within a year since the advancement evaluation, the military strength of earthlings had greatly increased. When he thought of the harsh wars they had experienced, such as the advancement evaluation and doppelganger incident, which then triggered the mission renaissance that followed, it was an obvious result.

The number of 3-star colonizers (lowest-ranked warriors), who could be considered as elites, had increased to 700,000 people, and the number of top elites, 4-star colonizers, had reached around 7,000 people. Of course, there were more people who had only just entered those levels than those considered proficient. For example, for a lowest-ranked warrior to advance to a low-ranked warrior, their important stats had

to reach 400 points, but there were many more 'entry-levels', who had less than 50 points, than those with more than 200 points, who were considered to be 'proficient'. Still, it was an amazing progress.

They also couldn't ignore the development of the top experts either.

Choi Hyuk, who had just become a middle-ranked warrior at the time, and Richard, who had taken half a step into the 5-star level, had already advanced to the point of being considered proficient (halfway), and those who had been at the edge of the 4-star level, Overseer Jessie, Camilla, Yohan, as well as Ryu Hyunsung, and Lee Jinhee, had become middle-ranked warriors during their attack on the Kahur Kabkuns this time. Considering that it became harder to increase their karma every level they went up, the achievements they made within this short period of time was amazing.

Yet, Choi Hyuk wanted more.

"Our goal isn't simply to survive and return."

With his back towards his troops, he observed the monsters pushing in from afar. However, to the troops, his voice was as clear as if he was speaking next to them.

"We will become stronger with this expedition. And then! When we return, only their screams will remain."

A small whisper, yet, his resolve was firmly embedded in it.

His anger and resolve moved the hearts of the warriors.

"Excluding me, there are 4 middle-ranked warriors, 5,000 low-ranked warriors, and 100,000 lowest-ranked warriors... Prepare for war!"

Along with Choi Hyuk's declaration, the military gate system activated.

The top experts of Earth went off to war. The 5,000 low-ranked warriors among them made up the earthlings' core military force. Because of this, Overseer Jessie and Camilla joined the expedition to protect and lead them. The 100,000 lowest-ranked warriors were the same, they were top experts. As they especially couldn't let the military force of 5,000 low-ranked warriors be used as sacrificial cards, additional

warriors, who were known to be one of Earth's strongest, joined in even though defending Dragonic was a pressing issue.

It was a gamble.

When thinking of priorities, it might have been better if they had just grit their teeth and washed their hands of this matter. It might have been better if they had simply met the requirements the alliance requested and have experts like Camilla, Jessie, Lee Jinhee, Ryu Hyunsung and the rest stay behind and defend. However, Richard believed in Choi Hyuk. Although he was also considering the worst-case scenario... He still trusted Choi Hyuk and gambled on their return. He included some of the strongest people in the expedition so that more people could return.

Whether this would be a brilliant move or suicidal would be determined later.

At the last moment, Richard turned around and looked at the expedition that was disappearing within the hazy gate. His eyes filled with complicated emotions.

“Alles Gute (The best of luck).”

Richard's gaze looked to the front again. His eyes were clear and unwavering.



Whoosh.

As soon as they crossed the gate and arrived in Dark City, the warriors were met with an intense heat wave. Traces of Dark City's dark, transparent appearance were nowhere to be found, and blue flames burned everywhere.

They saw a gigantic dog. Blue flames burned at the tips of its black fur. Its eyes and mouth billowed with blue flames. The mountain-sized dog was biting and devouring Dark City in the distance. Every time the dog ate a part of Dark City, the blue flames surged greatly.

“A hellhound...”

Choi Hyuk recalled the data he studied with Naro in the past. It was a monster that had never been seen in the Virgo Cluster. It was a high-ranked monster. Only those of at least the 6-star level could be its match.

Out of curiosity, he had carefully studied powerful monsters like it since he could encounter them in the future... But he never thought he'd see one here and now.

The monster Choi Hyuk remembered was a monster proficient in mass destruction. Well, the properties of fire were such. However, the flames it possessed were unmatched in its peculiarity.

“Euaaack!”

A blue flame floated around before catching on a warrior from Earth.

“Euaah!”

At first, the warrior writhed due to the heat, but soon, his hot burns began to feel cold like dry ice.

“Brrr.”

The warrior, who had writhed due to heat, now chattered his teeth as his body shivered.

“Hey, are you alright?”

A healer from the Camilla Clan hurriedly extinguished the fire and healed his burns, but the warrior still complained about the cold. His body began to shiver more intensely.

A cold flame.

“Cold... I'm cold!”

Their behavior was illogical. Those who were burned by the blue flames felt hot at first, but soon, their bodies shivered from the cold. Their strange figures made the warriors tense.

However, soon, something even more terrifying occurred.

“Ah... Warm.”

“Hey, are you crazy?! Euack! What are you doing!?”

With their bodies shivering, the people who had been inflicted with burns once again approached the blue flames to get rid of the cold. The blue flames wrapped their entire bodies, making them feel warm until they experienced a more intense chill.

“Cold... I’m cold!!”

Then they would look for more blue flames. They repeated their actions until they were turned into ashes. Every time the warriors gave their bodies to the blue flames, blue flames would spew out like dandelion seeds.

“Just what is this...?”

The hellhound was different from the monsters they had seen until now. The spirit surging from its body was enough to make them feel intimidated, and the blue flames spewing from its body were ominous and strange. Also, it made so many blue flames that the sky looked like it had a blue river flowing in it. Due to the warriors throwing their bodies into the flames, the already plentiful blue flames increased.

“Da-dangerous.”

The warriors stepped back. Their ranks became disordered. However, there was no place that was completely safe from the blue flames. Fear and chaos seeped into their hearts.

“Keep your heads straight! Don’t touch the blue flames if they approach, and push them back with your karma! Low-ranked warriors, push them back with your power, and lowest-ranked warriors, get into groups of 10 and push them back together. If you don’t push with enough power, they will burn through your karma and come closer, so follow my orders faithfully!”

The one who straightened out the situation was Baek Seoin.

Since any information Choi Hyuk thought was useful was forwarded to Baek Seoin through Naro, Baek Seoin also remembered the hellhound, in more detail than Choi Hyuk, and also knew how to handle it.

“Push! Push them back!”

Due to Baek Seoin's instructions, the expedition barely managed to regain their composure as they pushed the blue flames back.

Their actions left quite an impression on Dark City's 3<sup>rd</sup> District Garrison's Team 17 Leader, Lankin.

"What's this? I was worried since they sent newly-joined rookies, but they're better than I expected."

His body was painted red. Unlike Tangka, he was an agile robot. Lankin was of the Armored Soul Tribe. He was a middle-ranked warrior who had reached the peak of the 5-star level. He appeared while spinning his Gun of Sentiment 'Lankin's Thrill'.

The same time he appeared, a black flag fluttered above Choi Hyuk's head. Unrelated to Choi Hyuk's will, his sovereign symbol had been revealed. Lankin recognized the flag.

"So you're the leader, huh?"

With a joking voice, an announcement appeared.

{Effective immediately, Choi Hyuk, the leader of Earth's expedition, will be assigned to 3<sup>rd</sup> District Garrison's Team 17. You will follow the command of the team leader, Lankin.}

Thud!

Lankin jumped up really high into the air and dropped right in front of Choi Hyuk. The blue flames floating in the sky clashed with Lankin's red torso, but they simply bounced off powerlessly. Lankin, who was slightly taller than 2 meters, looked down at Choi Hyuk as he said,

"Although you might act like a leader in the countryside, this is Dark City. Stay alert and follow my orders. The situation is severe. You can do well, right?"

Pat, pat.

Lankin patted Choi Hyuk's shoulder as if he were a child.

Swish!

Choi Hyuk unsheathed his sword. His Sword of Vow 'Choi Hyuk's Imprint' almost brushed past Lankin's arm. Surprised by its startling chill, Lankin retreated his arm.

"Just what is the mea-"

He looked at Choi Hyuk with eyes mixed with anger and surprise.

However, Choi Hyuk had a carefree attitude as if all he did was simply unsheathe his sword. He nodded his head once as he asked,

"So, what's our target?"

# CHAPTER 117

## ALIEN TROOPS FROM EARTH (2)

---

Lankin glanced at Choi Hyuk's sword.

'What's that? It's not at the level of a Weapon of Calling. Is it a Weapon of Sentiment? But that's also... Don't tell me it's a Weapon of Vow?!'

Now that he thought about it, he recalled that a middle-ranked warrior from the countryside, who had only just joined the alliance, had created a Weapon of Vow. Weren't people talking about it for a while?

Diririring!

Faint lights flickered on Lankin's red torso as if they were putting on a performance. It was the way Lankin expressed joy.

"What the? Now that I look at you, you're a celebrity, aren't you? What was your name? Cho... Che... Uh..."

"Choi Hyuk."

"Oh, yeah. Choi Hyuk! Nice to meet you!"

Lankin placed his hand on Choi Hyuk's shoulder again. His friendly attitude took Choi Hyuk aback.

"A middle-ranked warrior who has a Weapon of Vow! I'm excited. Now, the guys we have to fight are over there."

Lankin turned Choi Hyuk's shoulders around, towards a certain direction. It was the opposite direction from the blue flames spewing hellhound. Lankin gestured towards the hellhound with his chin and said,

"Don't even look in that direction. They aren't guys we can take. The higher-ups of the special task force will take care of them. We only need to block that place. You see it, right?"

He saw it.

Although he couldn't see a single monster... He could clearly feel that it was unusual.

He hadn't seen it since he had been focused on the hellhound and its blue flames until now. Like a pathway, there was a rift in time and space in a specific direction. It wasn't simply time and space, but even karma was distorted like some jumbled jigsaw puzzle. The further away one looked from Choi Hyuk's position, the more pronounced the rift became. Dark City, which was dark and transparent, was influenced by this rift and was shining strangely. The blue flames flickered above it.

"...Was this not the consideration of the alliance?"

Tap, tap.

Choi Hyuk tapped the ground he was standing on.

The dark matter that made up Dark City didn't normally interact with normal matter. If it was like normal, those of lower levels wouldn't be able to stand on the ground. In the past, even Richard had been submerged up to his ankles and had flailed about. However, even the lowest-ranked warriors at the 3-star level could stand on the ground without any discomfort now. Choi Hyuk had thought the alliance had arranged this.

"Yeah. Normally, the alliance would have done it... But there is no need to this time. Since those monsters need a ground to stand on, though I don't know how they did it... They modified the dark matter. In this area, even if you're not of the Dark Tribe, you can stand on the ground with no problem."

Thud!

Lankin stomped on the ground. The playful attitude he had until now had turned serious. The bright red color of his torso had subsided into a cold, darker tone.

"It's not easy. These guys knew exactly what kind of place Dark City was when they came here. It's proof that, through the long war, they've accumulated information about our universe and the alliance. In this situation, they launched a large-scale attack... It's alarming, isn't it?"

Clank!

With a metallic sound, his Gun of Sentiment 'Lankin's Thrill' combined with his hand.

"Our mission is to destroy those pathways as fast as we can. Every time they appear, continuously. Whatever they are planning, you just need to make it so that they don't have time to play tricks. Then... Stay alert! It's about to start!"

Even though he looked like a good-for-nothing, it seemed he had constantly been observing the situation. At the same time as Lankin's warning, time, space, and karma re-assembled. It wasn't to their former state, but into something completely different.

At first, the pathway looked black like a turned-off monitor. However, upon closer examination, it was a mixture of incomprehensible colors. It was an ominous mixture entirely comprised of colors he was seeing for the first time. It was like a foreign language you could hear but not understand. It was a color that he could see but was difficult to perceive. At a glance, it looked black. The color was so unfamiliar that his brain couldn't process it. Perhaps, this was the color of death.

It became humid like an underground basement, and he could smell a disgusting stench of rotting corpses. Distorted karma crawled its way out of the pathway. Chills went down his spine because of how unfamiliar it was.

"It would be nice if we could destroy the pathway before it's complete, but our research staff has yet to fully analyze it... So we can only destroy it once it's complete. We can get 'poja' samples while we're at it though."

"Poja?"

"You'll know when you see it."

Lankin gestured in front of him when Choi Hyuk asked. In the pathway Lankin gestured to, a gray object crackled like electricity as it wriggled out. It was an object interconnected by what seemed to be thin spider webs. It was as sticky and fluid as honey, and it came out endlessly.

"That's poja. This is the first time it has ever appeared. It might be the best research object to figure out the creation process of monsters."

Lankin raised his gun.

“We’re going. There are other people who are good at collecting poja samples so you guys focus on destroying the pathways. The trick to destroying these pathways is the same as Kahur Kabkuns. Push until the very end of the pathway and throw a Kahur Kabkun destroying bomb. Then... Let’s go!”

Lankin and his troops prepared to charge.

However, just before they could, Choi Hyuk wielded his ‘Choi Hyuk’s Imprint’.

“Flaming Wing Dance, Instant Void Annihilation.”

The flames, which burned targets in the most painful of ways, and the slash, that could even cut time and space, combined. His Sword of Vow ‘Choi Hyuk’s Imprint’ added its deadly will onto his strike. Choi Hyuk’s concentration was at its peak. ‘Choi Hyuk’s Imprint’ added 600 points of karma to his strike.

Blaze!

Dark City, which had been lit by blue flames, now brightened with a scarlet hue. The poja, which continued to grow, was cut in half and instantly lit on fire. It shriveled like melting plastic.

“...Absurd!”

Lankin shuddered at his power. This wasn’t a power a middle-ranked warrior could create.

“I’m in a bit of a hurry.”

Leaving a flustered Lankin, who had forgotten about charging, behind, Choi Hyuk rushed in. The earthling expedition followed behind him.

Perhaps it was because of Choi Hyuk’s attack, but the poja, which overflowed from the pathway, began to show a violent reaction. The poja swelled up and whirled around into monster shapes.

{Kuaaah!}

They heard the roar of a changed dragon. The monster that had just been created by the poja spread its wings. There wasn't only a changed dragon. All sorts of monsters, from ones they had seen until now as well as ones they had never seen before, were created, wriggling in the poja.

“Ah... Disgusting.”

Alexei frowned. The hordes of monsters being created within the squirming poja in front of him truly made him feel disgusted. When the squelching sounds of the poja and cries of the monsters were added on top of that, it was a literal hell.

Even as he frowned, Alexei lightly made his way through the poja. Starting with the Ring of Rebirth when he was a second-year middle schooler, Alexei had experienced various wars against the monsters. He didn't spare his body.

It was disgusting? Then he would kill it because it was.

“Since you're disgusting... Die.”

As expected of someone who followed Lee Jinhee, Alexei wielded two short gladii. With quick movements, he stabbed the necks of newly born monsters and killed the monsters that were being created within the boiling poja by cutting them into pieces.

There was no need to talk about tactics and strategy. Everyone knew their own roles as fighting monsters had already become a part of their daily lives. Choi Hyuk was at the very front, and Lee Jinhee's troop was behind him. Ryu Hyunsung's troop, Chu Youngjin's troop led by Kim Honghyun, the Camilla Clan's top military troop, the Executioners, and the top elite troop of the Jessie Clan, the 'Extremers', followed behind.

The lead, which possessed a powerful destructive power, would mess up their enemies' ranks, and the rear would follow behind and completely restrain them. It was the tactic they used for Kahkur Kabkuns.

It was a tactic that made them penetrate through an unfamiliar, dark pathway into hordes of monsters. Although many humans had yet to experience this, the majority of the 5,000 low-ranked warriors and the 100,000 lowest-ranked warriors assigned to this expedition had experienced this multiple times.

That was why it was familiar, and that was also why they were sick and tired of it. They felt déjà vu when they fought against surges of monsters.

‘When did we start fighting?’ It even made them fall under the delusion that they had been on the battlefield since a year ago, no, 2 years ago, no, since they were born.

“Is there really an end to this war...”

Penelope from the Camilla Clan, who had recovered from her injury and returned to the battlefield, suddenly made a sad expression. She didn’t spare her body as she always fought for the happiness and survival of the people. She had constantly tried her best to get stronger so that she could defeat powerful enemies. However, the scale of the war stretched beyond her imagination. Weren’t they fighting a war on Dark City, a city 220 million light years away from Earth? When they had arrived, she thought to end this war quickly and save Dragonic... But after arriving here, she was overwhelmed by its scale.

‘Will humans die after fighting, scattered throughout this vast universe?’

A monster rushed forward. She blocked it and then killed it with a slash. However, when she killed it, another monster would charge at her. What if they cleared this place up? Even Dark City was considered a rural city in the entire scope of the alliance.

‘Where will we be called to next?’

There were as many monsters as there were stars in the sky... No, there were so many that they could cover the entire universe.

Reflected in her eyes-

Blaze

Was Choi Hyuk’s surging flames. Scarlet, ominous flames. However, in that moment, she, for some reason, felt that this ominousness was welcomed and even longed for it. This Dark City, which was filled with unfamiliar things, was dyed in the familiar light of Choi Hyuk’s flames.

Swish!

Ryu Hyunsung wielded his sword without rest. Befitting of a director who had become a middle-ranked warrior, every time he swung his sword, monsters would die by the handful. He even took care of the monsters the low-ranked warriors had difficulty dealing with. Especially the monsters that were reported previously, those were spotted occasionally. Although they generally possessed power similar to that of a middle-ranked warrior, their traits were different. There was one whose strength was strong, but its movements were slow or its endurance was weak, and it could be killed by low-ranked warriors, but that wasn't the case for all of them. The difference between those individual monsters was large. Even their appearances were different. What they all had in common, however, was that they looked strange, as if they had been kneaded into their shapes.

"They are rough around the edges as if they were created as tests."

However, there were some that were especially strong amongst them.

"Sho stoopudd. Keuhik!"

It mocked as it ripped apart a Berserker who had been charging at him fearlessly. Seeing as how it easily ripped apart a 4-star level low-ranked warrior, it seemed to be a legitimate middle-ranked monster. He had to wipe it out before the number of casualties grew.

Ryu Hyunsung's sword fell vertically, aiming at the monster's head.

"Keuhik!"

The monster easily avoided his attack and stretched its arm out. A strange power was consolidated in its hand.

"Hmmp! Too simple!"

However, Ryu Hyunsung retreated back slightly as he raised his lowered sword. He didn't approach close to attack. He lightly wielded his sword, aiming at the monster's wrist. The monster's wrist was sliced off. Even the power that had consolidated in its hand was cut and scattered. Among the talking monsters he had fought until now, it was the most balanced, but its attacks were simple like a child's. It was far from being a match for Ryu Hyunsung, who was renowned as being the best technician in the

Berserkers.

“Kak?”

It seemed it didn't see his sword swing up as the monster made a weird noise in surprise.

“Likke diss?”

Then, as if it understood, it nodded its head.

It began to swing its remaining left arm back and forth. Its movements were similar to Ryu Hyunsung's sword skills, his footwork unique to fencing and his quick slashes.

“...What did you...!?”

While Ryu Hyunsung was taken aback by the monster's unexpected actions, it stretched its hand once more.

Ryu Hyunsung reacted to it reflexively. He took a step back and targeted its wrist once again. However, the monster retracted its arm before he could. It had anticipated his move. The monster smiled.

“You bastard...!”

Ryu Hyunsung wielded his sword. However, the more they fought, the more refined the monster's movements became. It seemed like the monster was studying Ryu Hyunsung. It imitated his movements and even imitated his emotions.

It became harder to fight him.

“Keeuk!”

Ryu Hyunsung felt helpless. His confidence, which rose after becoming a middle-ranked warrior, wavered. Even though he possessed techniques more robust than anyone else, he lacked the decisive power that Choi Hyuk and Chu Youngjin possessed. This weakness was revealing itself right now. It was 'studying' Ryu Hyunsung. Ryu Hyunsung lacked the power to kill it with one strike.

His body felt heavier as if he had sunken into a swamp.

Kwing!

A bullet pierced the monster's temple like lightning.

Baaang!

The monster's head exploded like fireworks.

Wheee!

The bullet, which had pierced the monster's head, let out a whistle as it freely flew up and returned to its owner, Lankin. Various colored bullets were swirling around Lankin.

"Get a hold of yourself! Either kill it quickly or bounce. What are you doing, giving information to the monster while fighting it?"

Lankin, whose red torso was unusually bright, warned Ryu Hyunsung once more as he passed him.

"Stay alert. They are a new type of monster. They imitate us. They can even talk. Although it seems like the majority are strange at the moment... What do you think will happen once they finish imitating us? Don't give them too much information."

An odd nervousness and fear were mixed in Lankin's voice. Although he had exaggerated his happiness, he too was feeling fear from the fact that Dark City was being attacked as well as from the fact that a new type of pathway and monster, that they hadn't discovered until now, had appeared.

Even he, who was a warrior of the Armored Soul Tribe, which was one of the top 4 strongest tribes, wasn't optimistic of this war. When he became aware of this, Ryu Hyunsung felt gloomy for some reason. Even though he had thought he had become considerably stronger, there was no end in sight, like a nightmare he couldn't wake up from. Though he had gone beyond Kangdong District, Seoul, Earth, and even Dragonic, there was no end to the war and the situation was always bad.

'Is this a fight we can win? After repeatedly fighting like this, will I too die and disappear like my friends?'

Although he always acted otherwise, Ryu Hyunsung was weak-hearted and always

fought against these thoughts.

Also, from what he knew, there was only one method to beat his weakened heart. Ryu Hyunsung glanced at the red sky. Choi Hyuk's flames. When he saw them, his heart became calm for some reason.

He cleared his mind. He left his body to the fight. He didn't think of the future nor did he look back to the past. He simply lost himself in fighting. Then there wasn't an opportunity for his weak heart to burrow in, and it would disappear.

“..”

Lankin shrugged his shoulders as he saw Ryu Hyunsung charging forward without a reply, wielding his sword.

“...His fighting attitude is good.”

Then his gaze slid towards Choi Hyuk.

“I think I know who he learned it from.”

It wasn't only Lankin. Every human had looked at Choi Hyuk once. Alexei did, so did Camilla, even Ryu Hyunsung looked at him.

Choi Hyuk. He was indeed the incarnation of the karma fate 'Battle Addict'.

He fought without rest or hesitation.

His figure, which jumped into the middle of the poja, that fluctuated as if it were sky diving, and into the horde of monsters, was elegant.

Blaze!

The scarlet flames, which surged towards the sky, was like an orchestra. Choi Hyuk conducted his flames as he sliced newly born elite monsters in two. He didn't have the slightest bit of hesitation. The smile on his lips was like the enlightened Buddha's. He

accepted the fight with his entire body and was enjoying it.

All fear and dejection disappeared in front of him.

Like the disappearing fear and dejection, the monsters obstructing his path melted away.

“No matter how I look at it, he’s not at the level of a middle-ranked warrior... Whether it’s because that Weapon of Vow is a monster or he is. Maybe it’s both...”

Following behind him, Lankin felt devout for some reason.

# CHAPTER 118

## ALIEN TROOPS FROM EARTH (3)

---

To be honest, it wasn't as if Richard was confident.

No matter how bold he was, wasn't this a problem that would determine humanity's survival? No, when considering that humanity inherited Earth's karma, it might even be a battle that would determine the life or death of Earth's 5-billion-year history.

Of course, he felt pressured.

He felt it after coolly sending off Choi Hyuk's expedition.

Countless eyes were looking at Richard. Each bead of sweat on the back of his neck seemed like someone's chilling gaze. Everyone's fate rested on Richard, and everyone was watching Richard's every move. Their gazes weren't all amiable.

Although he already handled the lives of hundreds of millions of people as an overseer... The feeling he felt this time was completely different. This was war. On top of that, it wasn't a war fought with clan members who had declared loyalty to him, it was one that involved other clans and even non-combat-oriented colonizers who didn't belong to any clan. They were existences that could mock and ridicule every one of his decisions and proceed to hold grudges against him.

They had to win. If they didn't, then they would rip him apart.

However, their enemies were too strong for him to be confident of their victory. Even if they won, there was no doubt that the losses would be huge.

To be in charge of Dragonic's defenses meant that, no matter what he did, he would be subject to criticism and resentment.

Yet, Richard willingly accepted this heavy responsibility.

It was something someone would have to do, and there wasn't anyone who was

suitable besides him.

‘Am I really the best for the position? Won’t there be someone better than me?’ He didn’t even put those modest and timid thoughts in his eyes. Someone who could lead humanity better than himself? Since there were more than 2 billion humans, there was a chance that someone who possessed such talent existed among them. However, even if they found that person, there was no way that that person would have the same level of influence as Richard. Currently, the only one who could lead humanity at this time, and the only one who possessed not the talent but the right to do so, was himself. There was no other choice.

‘There is no one on Earth who can do this besides me.’

A heavy responsibility, but also pride.

When pressured by a responsibility beyond one’s abilities, some might be crushed by that responsibility, but others would exceed their limits.

Richard didn’t avoid this challenge. ‘Curse me all you want. Resent me all you want.’ If they needed a leader, then he readily planned on leading them. He would make decisions others would have difficulty making and take full responsibility for them.

Although he might only take losses... He would do it.

He was a king.

“Damn it, if I knew it would be like this, I would have gone on the expedition like Choi Hyuk... There are too many non-combat-oriented members.”

The problem that was currently giving Richard a headache was ‘military strength’.

They had given people the freedom to choose as a way to advance various technologies and increase their independence. As a result, non-combat-oriented colonizers, who didn’t fight for a living, made up 60% of the population. Even if they excluded those with combat experience, 50% of the total population were no-star colonizers, having not fought even once. It was because they couldn’t force them to participate in intense wars. As a result, they only had a bit more than 1 billion deployable soldiers. Although this might look like a lot at a glance, the endless number of monsters pouring out from

the Kahur Kabkuns already exceeded that number.

The bigger issue wasn't the quantity but the quality. Left to defend, there were 800 million colonizers at the 1-star level who could be considered as beginners, 200 million at the 2-star level, 600,000 at the 3-star level, and 1,000 colonizers at the 4-star level. There were also only 3 middle-ranked warriors at the 5-star level, Richard, Yohan, and Diana.

It was only after the advancement evaluation when people began to actively participate in the colonization. As it had only been a year since then, there was still an overwhelming number of beginners.

On the other hand, the monsters were mostly at the 2-3-star level. At least the number of monsters at the 4-star and 5-star levels were similar to humans... But they were pitifully lacking troops in the 2-3-star range.

Traditionally, numbers were the foundations of strategies. However, where could they increase their numbers when the entire human population was already mobilized for this war?

“Erdbeben-Blitzschlag (Lightning Quake)!”

Quiing!

Golden lightning, which contained Richard's irritation, split into hundreds. Like how Choi Hyuk's flames weren't simply flames, Richard's lightning wasn't simply lightning. It would penetrate and then exit out of each monster. All monsters caught by this light of death were pulverized and burst as if put in a blender.

“Damn... Is there no way?”

As they were in a situation where every warrior was precious, Richard had to think of a strategy while fighting. This was the same for the other overseers as well.

{The formation has been pushed back to the northern highlands. (Haa, haa) You're telling us to defend around the Barhaloleun Mountains from here on out? For how long?}

He received a message from Diana. It seemed she was in the middle of fighting as her breaths were uneven.

“Indefinitely. Endure for as long as you can. You need to endure it for at least a week. Only then will no troops be surrounded when you retreat further.”

{A week? Everyone’s exhausted from fighting. Please send support.}

“It’s the same everywhere.”

Just as he said this, Yohan transmitted a message.

{The situation at the Western front is very bad. The number of monsters suddenly increased. Please send support.}

“We don’t have any available troops...”

{Then the Western front can’t last!}

“...What are the levels of the new influx of monsters?”

{Fortunately, they are around the 1-star level. However, there are just too many of them.}

“Then, I will send the no-star colonizers in the rear.”

{Then the casualties will...!}

“Even if there are casualties, there is no other choice. Although I hope you save as many as possible... In a pinch, use the no-star colonizers as a shield and preserve your strength.”

At Richard’s cold-hearted words, Yohan replied heavily.

{Understood.}

After ending the communication, Richard let out a sigh.

“Haa... Damn it.”

Crackle!

Lightning shot out of the yellow jewel in his hand and grilled the monsters. Although

it wasn't as effective as Lightning Quake, it was sufficient in holding the monsters back. With Richard's intervention, the collapsing formation could momentarily maintain their composure.

They lacked troops everywhere.

"Huh?"

Just then, he suddenly recalled some information.

"Naro! Choi Hyuk made an alliance with the natives of Dragonic, right?"

{Yes, that is correct. He made an alliance with the native group within his territory, the El Tribe. Their current estimated population is 80,000. Usable soldiers are 40,000. They are 2-3-star level warriors.}

"What are they doing now?"

{When Tangka's troops withdrew, they suffered heavy losses and have confined themselves to their territory, the 'inverted tree'. Their leader, the Great Warrior Lantz, also suffered injuries and is known to be recuperating.}

To be honest, the ones who suffered the most losses when Tangka's troops withdrew was the El Tribe. They, who dispatched mostly long-range troops, had almost been annihilated when the situation turned into a brawl. Their aspiration of advancing into space had been astonishingly dashed, and they took a break when the Great Warrior Lantz, who pushed for the alliance with the Berserkers, was injured.

The elders, who were leading the El Tribe in Lantz's stead due to his injuries, didn't have a direct relationship with the Berserkers. On top of that, they had to calm internal strife aroused by the losses they suffered this time. Like this, the Berserkers and the El Tribe naturally grew more distant.

In this sort of situation, Choi Hyuk had to actively trade with them and maintain their relationship, but he lacked such senses. To make matters worse, when Choi Hyuk had to hastily go on an expedition to Dark City, the alliance between the two forces had fizzled out. Even the El Tribe members who resided in the Berserkers' territory returned to the inverted tree.

“40,000 usable soldiers... Is that all?”

Although his question was of false hope, Naro precisely knew what Richard was wondering about.

{No. They are only a tribe of the El race. I heard there are inverted trees throughout the Dragonic. Although I don't know the exact number, the population of the El race should be significant. Also, the majority of them are experienced warriors.}

“Is that so?”

A smile hung on Richard's lips.

A non-human force that he could have join the fight had appeared. On top of that, they were experienced warriors at the 2-3-star level. However, Naro made a pessimistic remark.

{However, they are a species that hid in the inverted trees when Dragonic collapsed in the past. They might be fine with surviving like that this time as well. Will they fight?}

“We'll have to see.”

Either way, there was now another possibility. Richard somehow felt excited.



{Second Garrison Team 1. We are going to destroy the 9th malformed Kahur Kabkun now.}

{First Garrison Team 27. A hellhound is approaching! Unable to retreat! Requesting support!}

Although there wasn't anyone who replied, this was a room to where all communications within Dark City was transmitted. Sitting here, one could understand the progress of the war throughout Dark City.

Here, Commander Mack stood at attention. Her always slightly floating feet were currently firmly planted on the ground. Her posture had no flaws. However, her lips were pursed in dissatisfaction.

“Do you even call for commanders now?”

In front of her was a warrior of the highest-rank whose name was famous as the owner of the Iron Mace of Vow, ‘Starlight-Flow’. ‘They’ were also the commander in charge of defending Laniakea’s Dark City. The Speckled Light Tribe members, which were the size of specks, would form a single group fate through their mind sharing ability. This formed fate community, a ‘team’ or ‘nation’, would be granted a single name. ‘Starlight-Flow’ was a name formed by a group of tens of thousands of outstanding Speckled Light Tribe members. Because of this, when referring to ‘them’, one didn’t use pronouns like ‘he’ or ‘she’.

{Don’t be like that. The situation is just that bad.}

The tiny speckled lights vibrated to create a voice. It was a clear ringing voice similar to that of a wind chime.

However, Mack’s voice was still blunt.

“However, what do we do about the Virgo Cluster?”

She said, seemingly upset. Yet, Starlight-Flow’s voice was still beautiful and calm.

{I know that you are very dissatisfied with the alliance.}

Even as ‘they’ provoked Mack’s anger, their voice was unconcerned. As the Speckled Light Tribe created a group mentality comprised of countless entities, their emotions weren’t easily agitated. Because of this, they could easily speak difficult words.

{You believe that the alliance holds responsibility for the decline of the Dragon race, right?}

“...”

Mack didn’t reply. Instead, her golden horns that hung behind her blue hair burned

with white flames. It didn't burn up, instead swaying like a symbol. It was the expression of her anger.

She was a descendant of the Dragon race, a force that was once as powerful as the top 4 of the alliance. However, the monsters' early attacks focused on the galaxy the Dragon race gathered and lived together in. The Dragon race, which had lost a lot of its power, kept suffering small losses due to the alliance's strategies. Just like the earthlings this time, they were sent all over the place, frequently unable to protect their own territory. They had lost their territory an innumerable amount of times, and a tribe would sometimes be massacred. Even still, the Dragon race couldn't choose to secede from the alliance. Secession meant the annihilation of their entire species.

Even as they saw Mack in anger, Starlight-Flow was calm.

{That's why I am the commander. So this is not an act of self-centeredness of a species. You know that our Speckled Light Tribe has no connections with Dark City.}

“...”

Starlight-Flow began to comfort Mack.

{Over a hundred hellhounds have appeared in Dark City already. That's not all. Three highest-ranked monsters have also been spotted. On the other hand, there are only two highest-ranked warriors on our side, including me. 3 vs. 2. We are missing one. We have no choice but to combine the strengths of high-ranked warriors to fend them off until support from the center arrives. Since the situation is like this, we called all the high-ranked warriors in the Laniakea Supercluster, yet we're still tight. Even if you are dissatisfied, help out. We can't call one and not another. All the high-ranked warriors called here this time are absolutely needed in their own galaxies. It's not just you. And you know that I carefully distinguish reward and punishment. I'll give you as much as the amount of effort you put in.}

This was true. Mack had, in the past, gained power through Starlight-Flow's accurate rewarding and grew rapidly. Because of it, she had been able to take a step back emotionally at Starlight-Flow's words back then. It was the same this time.

Commander Mack's expression relaxed slightly. It seemed a few members of the Speckled Light Tribe, which made up Starlight-Flow, flew up happily. However, as a

whole, Starlight-Flow's voice didn't change.

{It's the same for the earthlings you value. To be honest, you may ask how much help would they, whose strongest expert is only a middle-ranked warrior, be in this situation? But, if we start to overlook others based on their circumstances, there won't be any remaining troops to call. So don't antagonize us too much.}

At Starlight-Flow's words, Commander Mack's shoulders slightly dropped as she replied,

"Understood. I won't be dissatisfied anymore. However..."

She raised her head slightly and said in a voice mixed with playfulness,

"They will be of much more help than you think."

{Who? The earthlings?}

The moment Starlight-Flow asked, a field report regarding the earthlings was heard.

All communications were shared with Starlight-Flow, who was the commander.

{This is the Third Garrison Team 17 Leader Lankin. We have destroyed our second malformed Kahur Kabkun. We will start on our third.}

{What? Again? Already?}

{Overseer Choi Hyuk and his expedition that were dispatched as support are rendering brilliant achievements. Wow. Third garrison commander, these guys are no joke. Choi Hyuk, that guy is the owner of a Weapon of Vow. The famous one!}

The surprised voice of the third garrison commander and Lankin's excited voice mingled together.

A few specks of light flew upwards as if finding this was interesting.

{Ha?}

Commander Mack shrugged her shoulders toward Starlight-Flow.

“Right?”

# CHAPTER 119

## ALIEN TROOPS FROM EARTH (4)

---

Richard went to the residence of the El tribe, the 'inverted tree'. It was to ask that they participate in the war against the monsters.

Three elders met with Richard.

"Why have you come here? As we have already made an alliance with Overseer Choi Hyuk, we have no relations with you. Also, the Great Warrior of the First Branch, Lantz, who was assigned to interact with the humans, is currently on break."

The great elder, who was the oldest among the El Tribe at over 200 years old, drew a clear line between them on their first meeting.

His well-built figure, which was over 2 meters tall, possessed thick muscles, making the fact that he was the oldest meaningless.

This place was the heart of the El Tribe. Elders with imposing appearances stood at the front to meet with Richard, while other great warriors of the El Tribe watched from behind them. The elites of the El Tribe surrounded them.

The El Tribe didn't welcome them. In the midst of them stood Richard's aide, Leah, and himself. Although a situation like this would make most disheartened, Richard stood dignified. Even though he possessed the small figure of a human, he looked as big as anyone present.

"That's why we came here. How about we create a new alliance? This time with all earthlings."

Richard didn't talk in circles and went straight to the point. He already knew that the El Tribe was aggressive and forthright. From the Berserkers remaining on Dragonic, he had heard of the simple method Choi Hyuk had used to ally with the El Tribe.

As expected, this sort of speech was effective.

The great elder wasn't taken aback by the straightforward proposal as if he had

expected it. Only, his reply was negative.

“...Our tribe’s numbers aren’t as large as yours. An alliance with Overseer Choi Hyuk is enough. Though... we don’t know how things will turn out.”

“Aren’t as large... Are you referring to the El Tribe members here or the entirety of the El race?”

“The entirety of the El race? No, of course, I am talking about the El Tribe members living in this tree.”

“Then what is the total population of the El race?”

At Richard’s series of questions, the great elder frowned.

“Stop with the unrelated questions. Also, sorry but we have no thoughts on taking action in your fight against the monsters. It doesn’t look like the situation will reverse even if our tribe, whose numbers only reach tens of thousands, participates. To be honest... In this current situation without Overseer Choi Hyuk, we judge that there is no chance humanity will come out victorious. If you have no other business, come have a meal before you go back.”

At the great elder’s words, Richard laughed, not suiting the situation. After nonchalantly telling him that earthlings would fail and that they wouldn’t participate, he told him to ‘have a meal before he went back’. They were a cool-headed yet strangely warm-hearted species.

Richard did his best to swallow his laughter before saying,

“That’s why I am asking. It’s not an unrelated question.”

The checkered muscles covering the grand elder’s body squirmed as he looked blankly at Richard, seemingly wondering what he would say next.

Richard said,

“I, no, us earthlings want to make an alliance with the entire El race.”

“The entire El race?”

“Yes. Not only the El Tribe living in this tree but all the El Tribes living on Dragonic. We want to make an alliance with all the El Tribes.”

At first, the great elder didn't seem to understand Richard's words. However, after slowly realizing his meaning, he made a shocked expression.

Richard continued,

“It'll be difficult with just humans. However, if all the El Tribes join, we have a chance at victory. Let's combine our strength and chase out those monsters from Dragonic forever.”

Murmurs.

As soon as Richard said those words, the expressions of the other elders standing behind the great elder and the great warriors, who had been spectating, changed greatly. The surrounding El Tribe elites began to murmur to each other.

Even the great elder didn't continue to speak as he simply opened and closed his mouth a few times. Only after some time had passed did he speak,

“With... the other El Tribes?”

“Yes.”

Richard was inwardly taken aback by the unexpectedly intense reaction, but he replied calmly, not showing it on the outside.

‘What's this? Were my words so surprising?’

The question on Richard's mind was answered with the great elder's following words.

“We've never... never thought about that. Although we do communicate with each other through the inverted tree... We have never even met a tribe living in another tree. We never even thought it was possible. This... really is a difference in perspective!”

Dragonic was a planet that had collapsed long ago. The El Tribe, who had hid themselves in the inverted tree and avoided ruin, led monotonous lives. Even if they went out for necessary supplies and occasionally fought monsters, these actions would only take place near the tree. They had never met with other El Tribes living in trees far away from them.

Although they could communicate with one another through the tree, this sort of communication didn't allow them to meet in person. In reality, they had lived thinking of each other as imaginary existences.

Even the most elderly great elder, who was over 200 years old, had never met another tribe. This was the same for his mother's mother. The idea Richard, an earthling, had easily thought of was something beyond their realm of imagination.

"Meet other tribes?!"

Asking himself, the great elder's voice had a hint of unconcealable excitement.

Richard shrugged his shoulders and whispered to his aide Leah,

"See. If we just give it a shot, there are cases where the unexpected occurs."

Having shared the same pessimistic thoughts as Naro, Leah simply stuck her tongue out at Richard, who was putting on airs.



The expedition from Earth was becoming more and more renowned each day.

"Move aside! Move aside!"

When Chu Youngjin's troop, led by Kim Honghyun, charged forward, allied horned aliens, who had been fighting arduously, became surprised and scattered in different directions.

Rumble!

Only shredded monster corpses were left behind in the places Chu Youngjin's troop, who prided themselves on their strong power, passed by.

Looking at them, a strange feeling welled up in General Lee Kangjin.

“Haa... Astonishing. Was that bastard’s name Keushisuit?”

Back when Lee Kangjin was a captain, he had carried out a Consumables mission with Choi Hyuk. That time, Keushisuit, who had slaughtered Lee Kangjin’s troop members, was of the same species as the horned aliens who had scattered just now. Yet they were now overwhelmed by Chu Youngjin’s troop’s force and were busy moving out of the way. They were still catching their breaths with the short break Chu Youngjin’s troop had provided them. They could no longer look down on earthlings like they did in the past. Instead, there were more instances where they became timid in front of earthlings.

The earthlings, who had only been disregarded previously, were now pulling their weight.

“Yeah... I always fought with my life on the line for this.”

Lee Kangjin followed President Shin Woojin as a South Korean soldier. However, his heart greatly resembled that of a Berserker’. He had never forgotten how Choi Hyuk saved him back when he was dying in the hands of Keushisuit, not for even a moment.

“Yeah... This, this is the start!”

Biting down on his lip, he ripped apart the ‘poja’ that was creating monsters. Although its outer appearance looked like a rippling liquid, the poja possessed a hardness that was incomparable to diamonds. Yet it was ripped apart like tissues and melted under Lee Kangjin’s sword. Lee Kangjin had reached the 4-star level, a low-ranked warrior. He pushed himself even harder to become stronger.

How many species had crawled their way up from being judged as Consumables to proper alliance members? At least among the aliens gathered in this battlefield, there were none.

The dispatched expedition this time were the top elites of Earth. The majority of them had started in the Ring of Rebirth and were heroes who had faced death countless times and had survived. Their mindset towards fighting differed from others. Because of this, even if their stats were similar, the earthlings fought much more skillfully than

low and lowest-ranked alien warriors.

Choi Hyuk's flames burned endlessly at the front, and from behind him, earthlings charged forward like a blaze.

Every time they saw looks of admiration or timidity from other aliens, the earthlings felt great pride.

However, this pleasant feeling didn't last long.

Humanity was certainly no longer at the bottom. However, they were only now at the starting line. Humanity had to get much stronger.

Just as they destroyed another malformed Kahur Kabkun, an urgent order came down.

{3<sup>rd</sup> Garrison Team 17, immediately leave the battlefield! Immediately leave the battlefield! Two hellhounds and one highest-ranked monster are moving towards you! Immediately fan out and leave!}

As soon as they received the order, a roar, which seemed to not only almost burst their eardrums but also crush their bodies, erupted. Something so gigantic they couldn't see how large it was warped above the heads of Choi Hyuk's troops and Lankin's troops, which made up team 17.

"Kuak... What's that? What's just arrived?"

Lankin's face distorted. 'We only now heard the warning, yet it already arrived? That makes no sense!' He had an ominous premonition.

However, what had appeared was not an enemy but luckily an ally. A gigantic battleship that dyed the sky in a metallic light. Lankin shouted happily,

"Steel Battleship!"

Steel Battleship. Choi Hyuk turned his gaze when he heard his words. 'That's the Steel Battleship?' He had heard of it before. After killing the Wyvern of Destruction and awakening as a sovereign, Choi Hyuk had been called to the Steel Battleship. He had met the Giant Orc Karik there. He had first heard the words 'Exalted Wings' back then.

“Giant Orc Karik...”

When he said that name, Choi Hyuk’s voice boiled with expectations of battle. When he had first met Karik, all Choi Hyuk could do was not put down the sword he had raised. The spirit Karik exuded made all the sovereigns lower their gazes and lower their bodies. Back then, Choi Hyuk estimated that Karik was at the 5-star level.

If he really was at the 5-star level, then he was a middle-ranked warrior, meaning he was at the same level Choi Hyuk was at currently. Was he really?

Beside him, Lankin cut in,

“Huh? You know the Great Warrior of the Steel Battleship Karik?”

“Just... I saw his face once. Is he strong?”

Looking at Choi Hyuk who couldn’t conceal his fighting spirit, like a middle schooler asking if a guy was strong, Lankin laughed while rearranging his external armor, making clanking sounds.

“Not a chance. Karik is a high-ranked warrior. You know, right? How hard it is to go from the middle rank to the high rank? Even among those high-ranked warriors, he’s an elite who rides on the Steel Battleship.”

“Steel Battleship... Is that amazing?”

“Of course, it’s amazing. That troop is under the center’s command, not the Laniakea Supercluster’s. They receive direct orders from the Exalted Wings. They go around carrying out missions throughout the Laniakea Supercluster!”

Speaking like this, Lankin’s voice was filled with envy.

Paaaah!

A bright light burst out from the Steel Battleship. A mystical symbol filled the sky, which was lit with a metallic light.

Blaze!

When the blue flames of the hellhounds, which flowed like rivers, made contact with the symbol, they would fruitlessly die out.

Then a voice that made one's hair stand followed.

<<It doesn't look tasty. Lifeforms here carry around weird things.>>

It was a human-sized monster. It possessed a thick tail and horns that curved down to its waist.

When Lankin saw it, he let out a ring in alarm.

"Is that a highest-ranked monster? Looking at how it can talk, it might be a new type of monster? No, that's not it. Run!!!"

Lankin, who had been about to flee by jetting his karma, saw Choi Hyuk standing vacantly and halted his body, almost falling in the process. He hurriedly shouted.

"What are you doing? Run!"

"Over there... It's the commander. Karik's there too."

Over twenty warriors were flying to the place Choi Hyuk was pointing at. Among them, there was Commander Mack, whose Crystal of Sentiment 'Mack's Desire', which had previously been hidden in her hair, was floating next to her shoulder. There was also the Giant Orc Karik who held an enormous sword.

"Of course, they are! We are currently missing a highest-ranked warrior on our side! The high-ranked warriors are trying to hold that monster back using the power of the Steel Battleship! Hey! Aren't you going to run?!"

"Wait."

Choi Hyuk ignored Lankin, who was urging him. High-ranked warrior, high-ranked warrior. Although he had heard a lot about them, he had never seen their actual abilities. On top of that, wasn't the monster they were facing a highest-ranked one? He wanted to confirm their power with his own eyes. He couldn't miss this opportunity.

The clash between the monster and the high-ranked warriors only took a moment. When the Steel Battleship emitted a light that seemed to burn up, unknown symbols layered above the monster's body. It looked like it was a karma technique that limited the monster's actions, but the monster coolly said, <<What an amusing technique. I must examine it and take it,>> before rushing in. At the same time, the twenty high-ranked warriors simultaneously launched their counterattacks.

As soon as they clashed, with a whoosh, sounds were the first thing to disappear. Soon after, the sky was dyed in all sorts of colors. Then invisible, formless energy gushed out everywhere.

“Kaff.”

Choi Hyuk vomited blood.

The clash occurred in the sky a distance away and he had simply been looking up at it from the ground, yet he was beaten up by the after effects and vomited blood.

Crrreeeak!

Lankin's armor emitted a crushing sound under the pressure.

“Hey! Let's quickly run! Are you doing this in hopes that you'll grasp something? Give up! We won't be able to tell even if we see it! There's a difference of heaven and earth between them and us! Anyone below middle rank will die simply by being near the fight!”

Lankin prepared to flee by himself.

All of Dark City was trembling due to the collisions in the sky in the distance. Various lights erupted in a seizure, and shouting from the side, Lankin's voice gradually disappeared. Even though the ground and buildings were being destroyed, he couldn't hear anything. It felt like the world was being erased by their fight. Choi Hyuk kept vomiting blood.

It was like this. Humans had become much stronger. They could now face the Steel

Battleship and the Great Warrior Karik inside it, both of which they had considered to be similar to gods or natural disasters, with proper understanding and status.

Even still, the difference between them and humanity was like the difference between heaven and earth. They fought in the sky, while Choi Hyuk, who was regarded as the strongest human, was pressed against the ground like an insect.

Still, Choi Hyuk smiled.

He wiped his blood-soaked lips, tapped Lankin's shoulder and left the battlefield with him.

As they left and as he gazed at the mythical battle which dyed the sky in colors, he said in a pleasant mood,

“Still... Now that I see it, I can sort of understand a little.”

Even when Lankin looked at him, thinking, ‘What? This bluffing bastard,’ the smile on Choi Hyuk's lips didn't dwindle.

# CHAPTER 120

## ALIEN TROOPS FROM EARTH (5)

---

I was suffocating.

My insides were drying up, turning black. No matter how much I flailed, I couldn't breathe. When I was barely able to take another breath, it quickly dried up. Sweat soaked my entire body.

I couldn't die like this...

But death was extremely near.

"That's why you should have fled when I told you to. What the... Why are you so unsightly?"

Lankin asked.

Choi Hyuk and Lankin were able to escape from the aftereffects of the fight after fleeing for a long while. It was already a great pressure to run as they had started late, but in the end, the two were exhausted before they met up with other troops. Choi Hyuk's condition was especially bad. He was crawling on the ground, unable to get up.

"Anyways, for someone who has only now become proficient at the middle-ranked warrior level to try to see the fight..."

Lankin scolded Choi Hyuk. Although his voice sounded normal at a glance, he too wasn't in a good condition. His lustrous, smooth, red torso was now the color of ash, and the surface of his exterior armor had become rough. The creaking sounds of the gears and mechanical joints, as if in pain, didn't cease.

However, Choi Hyuk's pain was beyond that. Not only that, it had become more severe.

(G-gaah)

Choi Hyuk opened his mouth to breathe, however, there was no air. Like a fish out of water, Choi Hyuk kept opening and closing his mouth as his body writhed. A silent cry. No matter how much he squirmed, he couldn't breathe. Now that he thought about it, this place was Dark City. It was a city in outer space where oxygen was nonexistent. It was normal not to be able to breathe.

However, he had no troubles up until now.

'Why can't I breathe now?'

"...Why? (Gasp) Why can't I breathe? (G-gah)"

Choi Hyuk spat with difficulty. To be honest, this was also unbelievable, how could he talk when there was no atmosphere?

Lankin picked up Choi Hyuk, whose head was on the ground and was unable to stand up, and held him under his arm.

"You've been suppressed by karma. It had already been pressing down on you, but when you used all your strength to run, it pressed down even harder. It'll be strenuous enough to want to die."

Lankin ran with Choi Hyuk under his arm as he recalled that it had only been 3 years since the earthlings had awakened karma. It also had only been a bit over a year since they joined the alliance. He judged that it was obvious they were ignorant of matters related to karma. He explained in more detail,

"For both you and me, over 70% of the components that make up our bodies have been substituted by karma. We're in the process of removing the limitations of matter and are instead becoming the fate of the great universe itself. To us, karma is our flesh, food, and air, but because you were exposed to overly powerful karma just now, your own karma has been crushed. If I were to use the human body as an example... Your lungs have been crushed due to a powerful external pressure. The reason why you feel like you're 'suffocating' is because your body, which is experiencing this for the first time, has mistaken 'being suppressed by karma' for 'suffocation'. That's why, instead of gasping for air, try to control your karma. It'll be painful as hell until you get treated anyways."

'Ah... So I won't die?'

At the feeling of dying, Choi Hyuk had futilely tried his best to breathe. He became relieved when he heard Lankin's explanation. Although it felt so painful that he would die, he knew that he wouldn't die right away.

Slump.

His flailing arms and legs relaxed. Choi Hyuk's body fell limp under Lankin's arm.

"What the? Did you die?"

Lankin became surprised. However, he soon realized that Choi Hyuk had given up on trying to breathe and had instead started observing his internal karma.

"Huh... What a tough guy."

Lankin was dumbfounded. Although he had asked him to do it, he hadn't thought that Choi Hyuk would have become so calm so quickly.

Could a beginner swimmer immediately stop flailing as soon as they were told not to? What Choi Hyuk was doing was similar to that. He had calmly overcome the fear and nervousness that he might die any moment and was motionlessly observing his state as he waited for treatment.

Lankin had also experienced it in the past, but being suppressed by karma came with extreme pain and fear. Since he had calmly fended this off, Lankin couldn't help but be surprised.



'I'm suffocating.'

'Why did I think that I was suffocating of all things?'

Within this pain, Choi Hyuk observed his condition.

He was focusing on his senses. 'Why did my body mistakenly think that being suppressed by karma was suffocating? Just why?'

As soon as he overcame the fear and pain and started looking inside, he felt the karma that had substituted the cells in his body. This was the retribution Choi Hyuk had accumulated until now. At the same time, it wasn't all only Choi Hyuk. It was the retribution accumulated by the lifeforms of Earth as they evolved. Choi Hyuk had inherited this retribution. At the same time, a small amount of the fates of alien civilizations that had developed in the massive universe was also mixed in. He had also accumulated a different kind of retribution from punishing the monsters that were trying to destroy this tremendous history. Choi Hyuk could feel each and every one of them.

'He said I was suppressed by karma, right?'

However, Choi Hyuk couldn't feel anything odd.

'Just how and where is it being suppressed? How was it before it was suppressed?'

How did his current karma differ from normal? These thoughts came up one after another. Then he came across the most primitive question.

'What was karma?'

First, it wasn't matter since karma completely transcended the laws of physics.

Someone had said that karma was the energy made from the emotions of lifeforms.

But then there was a contradiction.

Weren't life forms beings of matter? How could energy created by matter transcend matter?

'Then, the universe wasn't composed of only matter from the start.'

In the end, the theory that life forms could create karma meant that an immaterial law existed in this universe since the beginning.

Also, Lankin had said that 'we were in the process of becoming the fate of the great

universe’.

‘Then, accepting karma into your body was accepting the fate of the universe into your body...’

So when new retribution (karma) was accumulated through one’s actions, it was also potentially determining the direction of the fate of the universe.

When he got this far, the conclusion became simple.

‘There’s no need to think about things so complicatedly. Karma is power in the end. Power that could sway the fate of the universe.’

Power. Everything was power.

At the same time, Choi Hyuk realized the reason why he felt the pain of suffocating.

‘In the end, even if karma is inside me, it is also connected to the universe. It is endlessly being influenced by the universe and is, in turn, influencing the universe. It has to be because fate is <bringing change to the universe>. However, because my karma has been suppressed by an enormous power, it is temporarily unable to connect to the universe. It’s similar to suffocating.’

Choi Hyuk realized that his karma currently couldn’t communicate with the universe. Normally, his karma would be connected to the great universe and be constantly communicating with it. Even though he had seen it before, he wasn’t aware of it.

However, he knew it now.

Choi Hyuk could also feel that Lankin, who was running with him under his arm, was spreading his own ‘color’ out into the universe, while also feeling his karma absorbing the endlessly streaming flow of fate from the universe. This was the ‘respiration’ of the great fate.

‘What the? He acted tough but his condition isn’t all that great either.’

At the same time, he could tell that Lankin’s ‘breathing’ wasn’t normal. Lankin’s ‘breaths’ were short and even stopped momentarily.

Choi Hyuk himself was pretty much not breathing at all.

‘Can I... reconnect it?... It doesn’t work.’

Although he understood the symptom, he couldn’t treat himself. Like being unable to move your foot when it had been cut from circulation for a long while, Choi Hyuk couldn’t make his karma breathe again through his own power.

However, he also knew the solution.

He was currently enduring a pain that felt as though he would die of suffocation at any moment.

However, within this pain, Choi Hyuk’s understanding became clearer.

‘What I saw before is the answer.’

The fight between the high-ranked warriors and the highest-ranked monster. The karma they emitted.

The karma was completely different from the karma Choi Hyuk had seen until now. Could he say that they each had their own symbol? It was similar to the difference between a plain piece of cloth and clothes made with the heart and soul of a top designer.

‘They created their own fate. A fate to put out in the universe. Their own karma. Although it’s weak, it’s a power that can make the universe conform to their will. I have to be at that level to move this suppressed karma.’

While his body was limp and swayed like a corpse, Chio Hyuk felt his own karma.

He felt it. It was a lousy piece of cloth.

‘Aah, so it’s like this.’

From the beginning, karma wasn’t something that could be differentiated as ‘Power, Speed, Endurance, Stamina, and Control’. It wasn’t some lousy tattered complication of energy. Mixing everything together and creating one’s own symbol was karma’s

true nature. This was most likely the standard they used to distinguish top ranks and those below.

‘That’s why they can’t express high-ranks with stats.’

Tap.

Choi Hyuk made a dot.

He made a dot in his rag-like karma for the first time.

He didn’t tailor it or dye it, all he did was put a dot and yet his entire body was soaked in sweat.



“What the? Why is he sweating so much?”

Lankin, who had sat Choi Hyuk in the healing spring water and sat next to him, became worried.

“Is he okay? He stopped responding when I called him since a while ago.”

{Yes, he’s fine. It seems he’s in deep meditation.}

‘Fragment Light’, a healer of the Speckled Light Tribe, spread out widely and flew dizzily around Choi Hyuk’s forehead before replying.

“Is that so... Either way, it seems we, team 17, will have to take time to recover for a while. I’m sorry for this when the situation at the front lines isn’t good.”

{No need to worry. We just need to share the situation at the frontlines in the meantime.}

“Is there something new?”

{Yes. There has been a huge discovery about the ecology of the monsters.}

“What is it?”

{Simply put, the existence of code name ‘Lilith’ has been discovered.}

“Lilith?”

{It’s what we hypothesized after researching the poja all this time... But this hypothesis is that all monsters are derived from a single ‘existence’. We decided to arbitrarily call this existence Lilith.}

“...? Then!”

{That’s right. We finally have a goal in this unforeseeable war.}

An unforeseeable war, it really was that. The war had been ongoing for an extremely long period of time, and no one knew when it would end. Sometimes, the alliance would push against the monsters, and there were even times when the number of Kahur Kabkuns would drop drastically. There was even a time when they had been happy, thinking that the war had ended. However, at some point, the Kahur Kabkuns would, once again, reappear, being created at a crazy rate, and the monsters would pour out endlessly. The front lines that had done their best to push forward retreated once more. This repeated again and again. The alliance gradually became tired of the war, but that didn’t mean they could stop it.

“Lilith! If we take down Lilith, the war will end!”

{That’s right. However, at the same time, there is some bad news.}

“What’s that?”

{The monsters are much stronger than we thought. It was a fact discovered recently, but it seems the monsters have already brought multiple dimensions of universes to extinction. It seems that the majority of monsters we fought were created while they were bringing other universes to extinction. However, monsters that spoke our language appeared recently.}

“...Then that means?”

{Yes, we see that as a sign... that they are seriously creating monsters specialized for our universe. Some predict that the large-scale attack this time might perhaps be to

exhaust the useless troops that had been sent to other universes while taking this opportunity to beta test new types of monsters. Perhaps, the monsters had been fighting wars against multiple universes up until now and they had only now found a reason to specialize monsters in ours. Either way, it means that they will become more serious in invading our universe.}

“Oh my god...”

Lankin’s torso made a ringing noise. ‘It’s already difficult, yet they weren’t even serious?’ He was fearful.

{Now, about our problem.}

Fragment Light gathered its members that had been spread like a haze. They gathered to create a single human figure. It had somewhat of a sad expression.

{It looks like the war in Dark City will go on for longer than we expected. The alliance is planning on sending reconnaissance troops to pierce the monsters’ headquarters. They believe that, since the monsters are invading at full force, their headquarters will instead be disordered.}

“Attack...”

It wasn’t like the alliance had never thought to attack the monsters’ headquarters all this time. However, the opinion that it was reckless to attack the monsters’ headquarters when they hadn’t chased all the monsters out from their universe was predominant.

However, the situation had changed now.

They now knew that they didn’t need to fight against the entirety of the monsters.

“Are you saying that they are going to dispatch a suicide squad and only take out the Lilith?”

{They will do the prerequisite for that, a reconnaissance.}

“...It’ll take longer for the support troops to arrive at Dark City.”

{Yes, since the elites of the alliance will be sent there.}

“Haa... No matter how strong the Steel Battleship is, it won't be able to restrain a highest-ranked monster forever...”

{Yes... It seems that the front lines might retreat even further.}

“...”

{... }

An awkward silence flowed between Lankin and Fragment Light. Although it was good news that the alliance had come up with a plan, because of this, those at the very front had to endure heavier losses.

Just then-

“Whooo.”

Choi Hyuk let out a breath. He suddenly opened his eyes and got up from his seat. The karma spring water, which had been healing him, emitted a rainbow of colors as it dripped down.

“Ah, now I can breathe a little. Anyways, it'll take longer? But that's troublesome.”

Choi Hyuk said abruptly as soon as he got up. His figure that was previously pale and had been sweating profusely was nowhere to be seen, and instead, he looked fine. Rather his face emitted a faint luster.

“Huh? You?”

Lankin opened his mouth in surprise.

{How did you already?}

Fragment Light was the same.

Lankin, who was less severely injured, had yet to recover completely, yet Choi Hyuk, who was more severely injured, stood up first. On top of that, he looked more lively than before he was injured.

“Tell me what you were saying just now in more detail. I pretty much started listening

at the end.”

However, with his feet still soaking in the spring water, Choi Hyuk sat down and asked as if nothing was wrong.

# CHAPTER 121

## ALIEN TROOPS FROM EARTH (6)

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The great elder of the El Tribe decided to ask the other El Tribes whether they would join the war or not. As they were short on time, he rigorously decided on a message to write on the communication 'leaf'.

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Earthlings hope to ally with all trees of the El race. They propose that we fight against the monsters together and make Dragonic a territory firmly and jointly ruled by both parties. As we, the Rikiniri Tree, the first senders of this message, share their opinion, we hope that you, our brothers and sisters, will answers the questions below.

Also, as we are sending as many leaves as we can, please write your answers below each other. Please help so that this matter and everyone's replies can be shared to all our brothers and sisters.

1. Please write your coordinates in Dragonic.

– The Rikiniri Tree is the fourth tree in the direction of the third branch of the sanctum.

–

–

2. Please write your estimates on the likelihood of victory if we were to ally with the earthlings.

– The Rikiniri Tree thinks that the likelihood would be that of one branch out of ten not blooming flowers.

–

–

3. If you believe that sufficient information regarding the likelihood of victory has

been gathered, please decide whether you will participate. For trees that are participating, please sign below.

– Rikiniri Tree.

–

–

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Enormous leaves were shaking beneath the ground. Although their outer appearances were clearly that of leaves, when touched, they were like soft metal. They could see underground caverns created by the shaking of the leaves. They could also clearly see ground water flowing and hitting against the leaves, splashing everywhere and creating waterfalls that disappeared into the ground.

It was the enormous underground world the inverted tree had created. As if alive, the branches occasionally writhed, emitting groaning sounds, and every time they did, their leaves would make a clinking noise. When looking at it for a long time, the leaves looked more like the scales of a gigantic living being.

Richard stood in the ‘nest’ of the inverted tree and saw the leaves scattering and flying to other regions. Each and every one of those leaves was a ‘letter’.

Tap, tap.

The leaves, which had been hanging abundantly from the branches, kept falling and fluttering down deep underground. Endlessly... A green stream lit the underground.

“The El Tribe’ magicians sent the leaves throughout the world. Since it’s our first time attempting such a large-scale communication... It’ll probably take a few days to receive replies.”

The great elder’s checkered muscles, a trait of the El Tribe, squirmed. As he himself wasn’t certain, he couldn’t give him an exact date.

“A few days...”

Richard nodded his head. Although he was inwardly a nervous wreck, there was nothing he could do.

“Then I’ll be on the battlefield. I’ll come back in a few days.”

“Do as you wish.”

One hour. This was how long he had been away from the battlefield to negotiate with the El Tribe. When considering the urgency of the battlefield, it was a long time. His karma, which had been exhausted due to the war, had recovered somewhat as well. It was fine if he recovered the rest on his way back. It was now time for him to return.

Just as he was about to turn around and leave, a leaf suddenly caught his attention.

It was an especially large leaf. A normal leaf was about the size of a townhouse, yet this particular leaf was the size of multiple soccer fields. A bunch of young El Tribe members were crowded on top of this leaf. They stood in a circle, and the mood, which was already beyond tense, started to feel more ferocious.

Richard forgot about returning and asked,

“What are they doing?”

Then the great elder replied with a bitter expression,

“It’s a harmony ritual.”

“A harmony ritual?”

Why was a harmony ritual so ferocious? Richard’s question was soon answered.

<Ooaaaahh!>

A loud roar rang throughout the whole tree. Then the young El Tribe members ran towards the center of the leaf. The circle they had been standing on shrunk as the distance between them shortened. Suddenly, they each took out their own weapons and wielded them at each other. Red, transparent blood gushed everywhere.

“Euaack!”

The first casualty appeared. “Keuk!” “Euack!” Then, like tomatoes being squashed in a mortar, casualties appeared everywhere. The green leaf was gradually dyed red. The leaf drank the El Tribe members’ blood and devoured their flesh.

This brutal scene wasn’t much different from the nightmarish experience of the first generation awakenees, ‘The Ring of Rebirth’.

“How is this...?”

Richard was at a loss for words. They weren’t fighting but killing each other?

“They will fight until there are ten remaining. This is our harmony ritual.”

The great elder was, on one hand, clearly bitter, but on the other hand, he was also indifferent. This was a ritual he had seen countless times.

Richard looked at the dying El Tribe members. They were young. If considered as humans, they were below their mid-thirties. Among them, there were even some that looked to be boys and girls.

“This is a harmony ritual?”

The divide between the name and what he was seeing in reality made him even more confused.

Soon, he saw a strange scene. A few El Tribe members either drank the blood of those they killed, or cut parts of their bodies, such as their arms, ears, or noses and combined them with their own. Although it sounded unbelievable, when two arms were stuck together, they would mix together like clay to form an arm of a slightly different color and shape. It was the same for ears and noses.

Richard thought,

‘Ah... Don’t tell me that’s harmony?’

The great elder said,

“We obtain two things from the harmony ritual. The first is strong, skilled warriors, and the second is the continued life of the inverted tree. Although it’s tragic, you do not need to be sad. Either way, we become stronger because of it.”

While observing the blood overflowing and dripping from the leaf, the great elder explained slowly,

“The inverted trees that protected the El race from extinction had appeared suddenly. At least from the information that was passed down, these trees did not exist previously.”

When he whirled his finger, a replica of Dragonic appeared in midair. It was a replica made purely of karma. It was a refined karma technique that humans had yet to obtain.

When looking at the replica, with the place they called ‘the sanctum’ as the center, the tree replicas were spread out as if following longitudinal lines.

“The trees you see here are the inverted trees that had appeared throughout this world... Although we don’t know when this map was sent... Either way, this is a map possessed by all El Tribes. Among these trees, it has been transmitted that a few of them have already collapsed and no longer exist. Although these trees, which had suddenly appeared, were strong enough to allow us to overcome extinction... They collapsed as they too needed a similar amount of devotion.”

“They need the sacrifice of the El Tribe.”

The great elder smiled at Richard’s words.

“We call this harmony.”

Richard looked back at the scene of slaughter. According to the great elder’s words, the majority of the karma of those who died was absorbed by the tree. Those who killed them only received a portion of their karma. However, they said that if they killed someone who possessed a special ability, which only a small minority of the El race possessed, they could also inherit their ability.

‘Was it an innate skill...? Well, Kim Honghyun said that he inherited Kim Saehyun’s innate skill by drinking his blood.’

So harmony had two meanings.

The dead El Tribe members and the tree would become one.

The dead El Tribe members' abilities would be passed down to other El Tribe members through a part of their body.

Richard looked at those countless deaths with bitter eyes.

The inverted tree was essential to survival on this planet occupied by the monsters. To maintain this tree, the El Tribe members had to kill each other periodically. A cold-hearted reasoning stating that, if they had to die anyways, the weak should die and the strong remain.

To survive in this cruel world, the El Tribe was, as expected, desperate.

Richard saw the El Tribe members desperately clamoring to be one of the living.

'Did I consider things too lightly...?'

He suddenly lost confidence.

The El Tribes also wanted to live. Just like how the earthlings did.

Since the El Tribe living in this tree had responded so well to his proposal, he had let his heart rest too early.

How would the El Tribes living in other trees react? They weren't very familiar with earthlings. There was no guarantee they would easily accept. Also, if it was a problem of preserving their tribes, it was obvious that hiding in their trees was better than going out to war.

'Nonetheless, there is nothing I can do.'

Although it felt like a boulder had been placed on his chest, there currently was no other way. He had no choice but to wait for the other El Tribes' responses. If he, an outsider, hastily acted, then it was clear he would only garner hostility.

"Is that so... I will now return to the battlefield. I hope for a good result."

As he left the inverted tree and teleported to the battlefield with Naro's help, Richard felt powerless. It was a feeling he hadn't felt for a long time.



"We can't drag this on for long."

Choi Hyuk said firmly.

He recalled Dragonic. The Dark City expedition was comprised of the earthling's key military force. The longer they were tied down in Dark City, the greater the pressure on those who remained on Dragonic.

"But we have no choice. In our formation, we only have two highest-ranked warriors. On the other hand, there are three highest-ranked monsters. We are missing one. We are only able to block them because we have the Steel Battleship and the high-ranked warriors dispatched from each region. If support is late... Then we have no choice but to wait until they arrive."

He seemed to be aware of the earthlings' situation as Lankin twirled his karma-gun and avoided his gaze when he said this.

The attitude he displayed was 'it hurts my heart, but we have no choice'.

Yet, Choi Hyuk didn't care.

"So, what you're saying is, we just need to get rid of that highest-ranked monster?"

"That's right. Since we have the Steel Battleship, we can overwhelm their forces below that level."

"Is that so..."

Choi Hyuk fiddled with his sword that hung at his waist. Looking at him, Lankin jumped in shock.

"Huh? You? You? You're not, right?"

A mere middle-ranked warrior thought of fighting against a highest-ranked monster? If it was the past, he wouldn't have even been worried. However, didn't he act

recklessly, saying how he wanted to have a feel of their power, just today? Lankin was worried about Choi Hyuk.

‘Crazy. Why is this talented guy so hasty? It’ll be such a waste if he was to die like this!’

To Lankin, a member of one of the top 4 tribes, the Armored Soul Tribe, Choi Hyuk was a warrior from the countryside whom he had never heard of before. However, after having a deep impression of the talent he possessed, he kept worrying about him as if he was a child near water. Lankin wanted to see Choi Hyuk fully realize his potential. He didn’t want to see him break like other warriors who died before they could.

Fragment Light scattered and flew around Choi Hyuk.

{I sense belligerence. Don’t tell me you’re planning on rushing towards a highest-ranked monster? Stop it. It’s not a matter of mutiny, you will die a dog’s death.}

Choi Hyuk hadn’t said anything, yet the two aliens were making a fuss.

Lankin calmly tried to soothe Choi Hyuk.

“Although I understand how you feel, stay calm. Even if Dragonic is captured, as long as your key military force is okay, you will be able to make a comeback. Instead, the worst situation for earthlings is you dying!”

Even when Lankin said this in such an earnest manner, Choi Hyuk just wordlessly fiddled with his sword. Frustrated, Lankin asked,

“You’re not going to do it, right? I’m just making a fuss, right?”

Looking at Lankin, who suddenly shoved his face towards him, Choi Hyuk replied with one word.

“What?”

He was uncommunicative. Like this, he passed the two of them and left.

From the beginning, he hadn’t listened to a word they had said. There was only one thought on his mind.

'I know the secret behind the power of high-ranked warriors. Since the Steel Battleship's power can restrain a highest-ranked monster, if I can use a skill at the level of a high-ranked warrior, then I can deal a blow to the monster. The key factor is the magnitude of my power. Even skilled high-ranked warriors couldn't deal a proper blow... I need a powerful strike that exceeds theirs.'

While walking out, Choi Hyuk tightly clutched his sword, which he had been fiddling with.

Clack.

As Choi Hyuk's Imprint was grasped, it made an interlocking sound.

'Also, it definitely said that the power of a Sword of Vow was... <Unlimited>, right?'

Although 'theoretically' was written in front of it, either way, a Sword of Vow's power was <Unlimited>. That was why Swords of Vow were so precious in this massive universe.

Choi Hyuk considered it objectively.

'Although I discovered the secret of high-ranked warriors, my power isn't beyond that of middle-ranked warriors. However, my opponent is a highest-ranked monster. Will I be able to wield a power that can overcome 2 levels with the Sword of Vow alone?'

Then he conducted a critical analysis.

'Before that, did I really discover the secret of high-ranked warriors in its entirety? Could this be just one of the multiple obstacles one must overcome to become a high-ranked warrior?'

He considered his judgment and doubts objectively in order to make a sensible decision... Choi Hyuk began to think furiously. Choi Hyuk did his best to worry.

'What do I do if I can't bring out sufficient power with the Sword of Vow?'

'What do I do if I didn't discover the secret to high-ranked warriors in its entirety?'

However, an answer came forth from deep within his heart.

‘No way.’

No matter how pessimistically he thought about it...

He didn’t think he couldn’t do it.



“The results are in.”

A few days later, after fighting against the monsters as much as he could, Richard, who was visiting the ‘nest’ while recovering his karma, heard the ‘El race’s decision’ from the great elder.

“After discussing with all the trees, if we become allies, the likelihood of victory is the leftmost branch not blooming flowers out of ten.”

Richard was slightly shocked at the passage.

“...What does that mean?”

“It means there is a high chance we’ll lose.”

Richard’s expression became dark.

Although he wasn’t completely sure, it seemed like it meant their chances of victory were less than 10%. No, considering that it wasn’t only one branch not blooming but the leftmost one, it might mean a 1% or even 0.1% chance of victory. The El Tribes were guessing that their chances of victory were extremely low.

‘As expected... Will they not participate in the war?’

However, Richard couldn’t give up now. The progression of the battle had become worse over the past few days. They absolutely needed the El Tribes’ help.

'I have to somehow persuade them... We don't have a lot of time...'

Richard quickly darted his eyes. Even in this moment, Richard's 'Eyes of the Judge' distinguished the executives of the El Tribe into two groups. Those to keep alive and those to kill. Under normal circumstances, he might have devised a scheme.

However, the problem was that he was an outsider in this current situation. He couldn't act rashly and didn't have enough time to set up a plot. On top of that, what could he do about the El Tribes who lived in other trees?

'I'm powerless...'

He felt a powerlessness that was multiple times of that which he felt a few days ago.

Richard desperately hid his look of despair and asked,

"So?"

Then the great elder declared with a very rigid face,

"The entire El race living in trees-"

His voice possessed an unmatched decisiveness.

"-decided to ally with the earthlings and go to war."

"As expected... However, could you think about it one more tim- Ah, wait a second? What did you say?"

Richard, who had tried to say whatever he could with an urgent heart, became lost for words.

The great elder smiled and stretched out his hand.

"There has never been a time in our history when we had even the slightest chance of victory in the war against monsters. However, isn't there a very small chance of victory now? If we don't choose to fight with what might be our last chance at victory, then we can't be called the El race. Please take care of us."

It looked like the great elder felt great happiness at the fact that all the El Tribes chose

to fight. He realized that these people of the same race, whom they had never met before, were similar to them, and he felt elated and thrilled about this.

Although the type of happiness he felt was different, Richard's happiness didn't lose out to him at all.

"Haha... Hahaha! Please take care of us!"

Richard held the great elder's hand.

The El race's courage and belligerence were much greater than Richard had expected.

Richard remembered this.

'The El Tribes are much more resolute than I expected.'

# CHAPTER 122

## ALIEN TROOPS FROM EARTH (7)

---

The smell of burnt corpses wafted in the air. When the blue flames blazed in the air by themselves, they emitted this disgusting stench.

Looking from the center of Dark City, there was a blue horizon. The hellhounds endlessly ate the city and spurted blue flames. Their front lines kept getting pushed back, and the city burned from its borders.

“Didn’t they say that the supercluster towards the middle has already pushed back the invasion? But why are the reinforcements coming?”

“I heard they were planning on a counterattack...”

“Those crazy! When everyone here is about to die?! Shouldn’t they think about counter attacks or whatever after they push them back?”

“If you say it like that, then what city isn’t being invaded? Stop complaining. You probably don’t know because you’re from Dark City, but this is happening in other places too! Don’t you even know how much preferential treatment Dark City has received until now?”

“What are you talking about? Why are you bringing this up now?”

“Hey. Hey, stop it. Don’t exhaust your energy and focus on recovering your karma.”

The region at the back was like a gigantic hospital. When walking down the streets, from heavily wounded people to those who had exhausted their karma, all sorts of people were taking a break and receiving treatment here. Perhaps it was because of the bad progression of the war, but the mood was disjointed and verbal disputes broke out here and there.

“They say the Steel Battleship took heavy losses this time.”

“So, a highest-ranked monster is still a highest-ranked monster even if it is restrained?”

“Looks like it. Because of it, the front lines retreated a ton again.”

“Apparently, the Great Warrior of the Steel Battleship Kanon died in battle this time.”

“Kanon did? Wasn’t he the pride of the Rondo planet? He became a great warrior of the Steel Battleship while being from a tribe on the outskirts...”

“That’s what I’m saying... Not only that, apparently, a lot were wounded as well.”

“The Steel Battleship... This... Will we lose?”

“Hey! Don’t say such ominous words!”

Choi Hyuk walked down the street by himself.

‘Steel Battleship... It’s been a long time.’

During this time, team 17 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> garrison had already gone on multiple missions. Although Choi Hyuk looked forward to a fight against a highest-ranked monster every time, perhaps it was due to the previous incident, but they were only sent to places far away from the highest-ranked monsters and he didn’t get the opportunity to.

Lankin looked at Choi Hyuk, who seemed somewhat impatient, and continuously warned him by saying, ‘Don’t think such useless thoughts. Enduring is winning. The position of earthlings is already low, but if you act out, people aren’t going to look favorably upon it.’

Of course, Choi Hyuk paid him no heed.

As soon as he entered the treatment center, he could feel a refreshing karma. The lobby was filled with warriors of the Steel Battleship, who were taking a break.

“A single defeat is only a single defeat! What’s our motto?!”

“The more we’re tempered, the stronger we get!”

“Fight! Fight! Kill! Kill! While you gradually increase in numbers, we’ll gradually become stronger! If you can’t kill us! We’ll kill you!”

“Fight! Fight! Ooohhh~ Battleship of steel!”

They even started energetically singing a military song. As elite fighters of the alliance, despite facing a loss, their fighting spirit was overflowing.

Someone among them stopped Choi Hyuk, who tried to go up to the upper floor.

“Hey, who are you? You can’t go there.”

It was an alien with enormous antlers. He was a member of a tribe known as the Large Horned Tribe. It was a tribe he had met a few times during missions. The one blocking Choi Hyuk’s path possessed deer antlers like those on Keushisuit but the antlers were much larger. Looking at how he seemed to be a middle-ranked warrior, it seemed he was a hero of the Large Horned Tribe.

Choi Hyuk blankly stared at him and said,

“Move. I came to visit someone.”

“Hey, this place has been assigned exclusively for the Steel Battleship. Isn’t it the basics to reveal your affiliation if you want to go in?”

“Choi Hyuk, overseer of Earth, affiliated with the Virgo Cluster.”

“Virgo Cluster? You’re from the same place as me? There’s a place called Earth there?”

Asked the alien, tilting his head.

“Hey, hey, don’t you know? The planet that newly joined the alliance this time! That’s Earth! That guy was on air and is famous.”

“Ah, really? Well, I didn’t know since I was busy with missions.”

He stared down at Choi Hyuk.

“Go up!”

After saying that, he returned to his group and began singing again.

Although he didn't know if they were like this because they were elites, their attitudes were always overbearing and provocative.

Choi Hyuk sighed and went up to the upper floor.

Commander Mack wasn't as injured as he expected.

"I'd be sorry if I was heavily injured when Warrior Leader Kanon put his life on the line and protected our retreat," she said as she swept her hair up. Although her voice sounded calm, a dangerous energy was emitted and swayed from her golden horns. It seemed she was extremely angry.

"Truly... This is what war is. You never know who will die. No matter how many times I experience this, I can't get used to it."

She shook her head.

"Don't die easily."

Thud. Her fist hit Choi Hyuk's chest.

"Understood. That's why could you dispatch me somewhere else?"

Mack, who had been emotional, burst into laughter when she heard Choi Hyuk's words.

"Puahaha! And here I thought this was a hospital visit! Of course, it wasn't, no way the heartless Overseer Choi Hyuk would do that. Puhah! But you came to the wrong house. I don't have any power. Just where do you want to go?"

"The Steel Battleship. I bet there are a lot of vacancies as well."

"...What are you saying? I just told you not to die easily, yet why do you want to come to the Steel Battleship? Are you crazy?"

Mack gave a hearty laugh. Then she said in a serious voice,

“Although it’s not like I don’t know that you like to fight, but don’t show your hot-bloodedness this time, and even if that monster comes near you, run immediately. You only have one life.”

Then, after staying silent for a moment, she covered her eyes with her palms and said,

“It has become stronger. Maybe it’s because it’s a new type, but it was a bit clumsy at first then it gradually became more skilled. As expected of a monster that was created with us as a reference. It adjusts and grows stronger. Because of that, an error appeared in our tactic... Kanon dying is really... Either way, be careful. Currently, it’s not a big exaggeration to say that the fate of the earthlings hangs on you. You have to live for the earthlings to grow stronger. And even increase your position within the alliance.”

“Commander.”

Choi Hyuk called Mack. Choi Hyuk unleashed his karma so that Mack could see every nook and cranny.

“I told you you can- Huh?”

Mack, who had been shaking her head, felt Choi Hyuk’s karma. Then she perceived the ‘change’ within it. A trace of karma that a middle-ranked warrior could never have. When using a drawing as an example, it was ‘incomplete’ with only a few lines drawn, but it was a karma that gave her a terrifying feeling with just that.

Choi Hyuk said,

“Commander, I’m not fighting to protect someone.”

Mack couldn’t reply. Only, she thought that even Choi Hyuk himself might be included in that ‘someone’.



Commander Mack reported Choi Hyuk’s request to her superior.

Not long after, Choi Hyuk separated from the expedition from Dragonic and was dispatched to the Steel Battleship. He was even sent under the premise of the successor of the Great Warrior Kanon.

Although he was still a middle-ranked warrior, he had realized the level of the high-rank warriors. Also, he possessed a universal treasure, a Sword of Vow. These two points were the secret to his lightning quick promotion.

Of course, this didn't mean Dark City placed high expectations on him either. He was only being used because he could be the slightest bit of help in the fight against the highest-ranked monsters.

"Middle-ranked warrior. Listen well. Your aim is to keep Narci in check. Don't do anything beyond your capabilities."

The name of the highest-ranked monster the Steel Battleship was facing was Narci. The one in charge of Choi Hyuk was the Great Warrior Karik of the Giant Orcs. He remembered Choi Hyuk.

"Normally, this isn't a fight that a middle-ranked warrior can join even if you've taken a glimpse of the next stage. Be careful on your own. Stay put until you receive orders. Okay? Don't die in vain after finally getting rid of your Consumables fate and reaching here."

While repeatedly telling him, Karik patted Choi Hyuk's shoulder.

"Understood."

Then Choi Hyuk didn't overexert himself and fought following orders. He would stay hiding in the back until he received orders, then he would slash from afar. Since they fought so carefully, it wasn't very dangerous, and there wasn't any way to contribute enough for it to become dangerous.

"Huh? Who's that?"

"Ah, you know. The middle-ranked warrior who made a Sword of Vow. He joined the fights in the past few days and helped us. You didn't know? He's sort of like Kanon's successor?"

"The hell, what Kanon's successor? I didn't even know he was here."

"That's because he's still a middle-ranked warrior. There's nothing that can be done. It's already amazing he's able to endure being so close to our fight and not being squashed by karma."

“Well, that’s that. We’re going to retreat for a while again, right?”

“Yeah. The Steel Battleship has accumulated damages, and we also exhausted our karma...”

The great warriors of the Steel Battleship didn’t pay much attention to Choi Hyuk either.

Then their fourth clash against the monster began.

This was the fourth battle since Choi Hyuk had joined the Steel Battleship.

This fight was different from previous fights right from the start.

Until now, they had retreated their front lines to drag out the fight so that they could preserve their power. However, this time, the highest-ranked monster Narci was the first to push its way through to a location they couldn’t back away from.

“Why? Just why? Why is it forcing its way towards here while receiving attacks?!”

The method of leading Narci to a specific direction had been simple up until now. In the direction it wasn’t supposed to go, they concentrated enough power to make it unable to bear the damages and threw tasty bait (someone’s sacrifice) in the direction it was allowed to go. Although they would definitely suffer losses, it was a tactic that allowed them to avoid decisive losses.

However, at this moment, it was receiving concentrated fire on its body, ignoring the easily destroyable targets in front of it, and making its way towards Dark City’s strategic point, ‘the Dark Ocean’. It was the very same location Choi Hyuk had created his Sword of Vow in the past.

Narci naively pushed its way through as it said.

<<Why aren’t you letting me go this way? Is there something over here?>>

As expected of a monster that was created in imitation of karmalings, it knew how to think and also possessed a sense of curiosity. Its movement patterns were completely different from previous monsters. It was much more difficult to control than previous

monsters.

The highest-ranked monster Narci possessed enormous freezing wings on its back. Due to its swaying blue wings, even the space around them froze and broke apart. Anything that touched these terrifying freezing wings would freeze, and it would spread everywhere. Warriors said that its wings were similar to the flame wings the Flame Wing Tribe would release during a fight. Only, their properties completely conflicted with each other. Its freezing wings were unbelievably compatible with the blue flames the hellhounds emitted.

Blaaaze!

A scarlet flame wing sprouted from the Giant Orc Karik's back. Expected of a giant orc serving the Flame Wing Tribe, he could use their flame wings. Though it wasn't a complete pair with only a lone wing on his left shoulder.

However, although it wasn't complete, it was a higher-level flame than the 'Flaming Wing Dance' Choi Hyuk used. The intense flames from Karik's flame wing and its feathers obstructed Narci's freezing wings. Even though it fluttered as though it would die out, Karik's flame somehow managed to block the freezing wing's advance. It didn't touch Choi Hyuk at least.

"Be careful. It's different from before. Don't take even a step over my flames."

The Giant Orc Karik warned Choi Hyuk.

{The monster is engaging in combat! We won't avoid! Our goal is to make it back down!  
We can't give it the Dark Ocean!}

The vice-captain of the Steel Battleship shouted resolutely. As the captain, who was the other highest-ranked warrior, was fighting another highest-ranked monster by himself elsewhere, the vice-captain was the one in command of the Steel Battleship.

The Dark Ocean could be said to be the entirety of Dark City's worth. The Steel Battleship decided to defend it.

The monster's freezing wings spread continuously. It froze space as well as the dark matter, which Dark City was composed of. Space and the parts of the city that had frozen at last shattered and fell, and these freezing shattered pieces froze even more of the city once they fell to the ground. Would it look like this if the sky collapsed? Would the world's extinction look like this? Those who lived near the Dark Ocean all screamed in confusion as they died. The highest-ranked monster Narci advanced, strolling with five hellhounds.

Kwooh!

The Steel Battleship emitted a noise as it blazed up. It covered Narci and the hellhounds with a strange symbol. It was a karma technique that restrained the highest-ranked monster's abilities.

Then the high-ranked warriors' simultaneous attacks began.

Whoosh!

Sound disappeared this time as well.

It was a clash between Narci and the Steel Battleship that had completely suppressed Choi Hyuk last time.

However, this time, Choi Hyuk wasn't suppressed. He observed their clash more clearly from a closer distance.

A world frozen white by Narci's freezing wings was nullified as it was ripped and torn apart by the high-ranked warriors' attacks.

{Push! Karik! We'll fire the Steel Battleship's main armament so smash its heart. Choi Hyuk, move behind the Steel Battleship!}

As soon as the vice-captain's orders were sent, Karik, who had been protecting Choi Hyuk, spread his wings and shot forward.

Kwooh!

At the same time, white flames poured out from the Steel Battleship, which had been blazing white. Its main armament was created after researching the powerful breaths of the ancient dragon race. Its flames remained in Karik's sword. As highest-ranked

monsters could just avoid the flames shot by the main armament, Karik, who was good at handling flames, directly contained the flames in his sword.

<<Keuaah!>>

Narci, that had continued to advance while overexerting itself, screamed as it was hit by Karik's lightning fast attack.

<<It hurts!>>

However, it soon swung at Karik as though the attack wasn't effective. Karik barely managed to avoid its attack, but his right shoulder was ripped off. Karik's body froze. His brightly shining scarlet flame wing coldly died out as well. Although he wouldn't die, a single attack gave him an injury that made him incapable of fighting.

However, battles were cold-hearted. The vice-captain wasn't perturbed as he called out a name.

{Next, Mack.}

Mack, a descendant of the Dragon race, stepped forward after Karik, who handled flames. Even though the main armament shot flames, it was still created by imitating the Dragon race's breaths so Mack could also handle it well.

Kiriring!

The Crystal of Sentiment 'Mack's Desires', containing the white flames, emitted a light next to her blue hair. Her horns, which stretch out behind her, were engulfed in flames brighter than ever.

"Keuaah!"

<<Kikiki! Again?>>

Mack charged forward resolutely, and Narci received her attack while finding it fun.

Chiiii!

Narci's freezing wings blocked Mack's flames. Although Narci wasn't able to shake Mack off, Mack too couldn't penetrate through Narci's wings. This deadlock was also an opportunity to attack.

{All attack!}

The great warriors' attack rained down.

<<Keuaah!>>

The monster Narci screamed as it was hit. However, it didn't take a single step backwards.

<<It hurts. But this time, it's you.>>

Brrdrrrdrk!

Mack attempted to break away from Narci, but her arm was grabbed. Just by being grabbed, her blue hair froze. Frost covered her crystal. The flames on her horns seemed like it would extinguish at any moment. Her situation was different from Karik's. The attack didn't glance off her, and instead, her arm was caught.

{Mack!!!}

The vice-captain shouted. However, there wasn't anyone who could land a proper strike on Narci at this time. Even their main armament, which they had fired twice consecutively, was reloading currently.

The one who acted in this moment was Choi Hyuk.

No, he had been secretly advancing ever since Mack started launching her attack.

Following a route he had thoroughly analyzed through the previous three fights, hiding in the shadows of the Steel Battleship's concentrated fire on Narci, he approached right in front of Narci without even his allies being aware of his actions.

From Narci or the other great warriors' perspectives, they hadn't been able to notice him as his aura was too weak compared to the auras unleashed from their clashes.

<<Huh?>>

{Choi Hyuk?! Hey, you crazy bastard!!}

Just as Narci and the vice-captain became aware of Choi Hyuk's existence-

“Hey.”

The Sword of Vow ‘Choi Hyuk’ Imprint’ had already been unsheathed. Then it drew a very smooth line.

<<Keuaaak!>>

Narci's scream followed after.

## CHAPTER 123

# ALIEN TROOPS FROM EARTH (8)

---

The monsters covered Dragonic. The sky swayed like stirred milk, and the ground trembled due to the onrushing monsters. The plants and animals that had endured Dragonic's previous extinction, became utterly extinct this time around. After every step the monsters took, the plants and animals would be shredded, mangled and infected, turning black. A rotten smell permeated everywhere.

Dragonic was being covered in death. However, there was a line which separated this death from the living. From afar, one could see that one-fourth of Dragonic was still green. That line was the line of defense, splattered with the red blood of humans and the black blood of monsters.

Just then, inverted trees rose up between the fields the monsters were charging through.

Rumble, crack!

Enormous roots erupted through the ground.

Like giant dragon tails, the roots swung around, mangling the monsters. The tree roots, which sprouted from the ground, held onto mountains and fields and eventually pulled out the inverted branches.

The trees rose from the ground.

The enormous leaves, which were seeing the sky for the first time in thousands of years, scattered. The leaves, which were similar to flexible metal when underground, became hard and sharp the moment they saw the sky.

Swoosh!

Slaaash!

The scattering leaves became enormous swords, chopping up the monsters in the sky and on the ground with swooshing sounds.

Bvrroooo!

The sounds of the El Tribes' horns rang, and the El Tribe warriors leaped out. The earthlings, who were maintaining their line of defense, matched their timing and charged forward as well. The monsters that were at the front were surrounded and killed mercilessly. This was the first time the earthlings were able to push their front lines forward since the war began.

“Maintain this spirit! We recover the El Tribes' sanctum!”

Richard took command. Although the El Tribes' trees rose up, this wasn't even one-third of the El Tribes' population. Only the trees that were within the human's defensive line or not too far away had risen. The El Tribes that were located in regions the monsters had a firm control over weren't able to rise yet.

For that, they needed the El Tribes' sanctum, which was located somewhere between the humans' territory and the monster portals.

‘There is an extremely strong power hibernating within our sanctum. It was passed down that it should be used to completely recover this land once the monsters left Dragonic... But since there won't be a next time, I guess it's okay to change the order of things.’

This was what the great elder had said. Even while he made an excuse, saying that he wasn't clear on what it was, since this information had been passed down a long time ago, he confidently said that as long as they could recover the sanctum, there would be a way to have the El Tribes, who were isolated amidst the monsters, participate in the war as well.

Although it was vague, Richard trusted him as, even after he said those words, his eyes showed the great elder as ‘someone to keep alive’.

If they wanted to recover the sanctum, they would have to push their front lines forward, even if it meant overexerting themselves.

It was a tactic that would inevitably result in enormous losses.

However, they didn't have anything to fear as the only thing the humans and the El Tribe members had left was resolve.



<<Keuaaak!>>

The pinky finger of the hand holding onto Mack was deeply sliced into. Even though Narci had been fine after receiving the Steel Battleship and the high-ranked warriors' attacks, it couldn't help but be injured when facing Choi Hyuk's attack, which focused on one of its weakest points. If he didn't have his Sword of Vow, even this would have been impossible.

Doong!

The moment Narci's grip loosened, 'Mack's Desire' blazed brilliantly. As if it was smashed by an enormous hammer, Narci's head swung to the side, and she shook off its grip.

"Thanks, Choi Hyuk."

Mack, who had regained her senses in an instant, expressed her thanks.

{Good! We'll provide cover so quickly return, Choi Hyuk!}

The vice-captain urgently shouted.

However, Choi Hyuk looked at Mack's frost-covered face and said,

"Commander. Just once. Save me just once."

He, instead, kicked the air and charged forward.

"Hey! You crazy!"

Mack stretched her hand out to stop Choi Hyuk, but he was a step quicker than her.

"Keuu..."

Hesitant, Mack glanced behind her and distanced herself a little from Narci. However, as if she was aware of Choi Hyuk's request, she didn't back away completely.

{Mack! At least you come back!}

Only the vice-captain's shout rang out, falling on deaf ears.

Choi Hyuk felt Narci's malice, which seemed to tighten around him, wanting to rip him apart.

Brrdddk!

Everything froze around him. His body froze. Even his thumping Karma Heart, which had been protecting him, slowed down.

It felt like even time was freezing.

Everything besides Choi Hyuk and Narci moved slowly, seeming paused. Finally, Mack, who was a slight distance away, began to gradually freeze as well, following suit to the slowing time. Besides them, everything was slow. The sounds heard from outside were wonky as if they were played from stretched audio tapes. They heard the vice-captain's shout, which had become low and impossible to make out, and they clearly and slowly watched as the warriors of the Steel Battleship readied their karma in desperation.

The only ones who could move properly within this slowed time were Choi Hyuk, Mack, and Narci. Ah, of course, Choi Hyuk and Mack's bodies were frozen so they couldn't move properly.

Clang!

Narci shattered the back of Choi Hyuk's right foot. Although he didn't know how it did it, when his frozen foot shattered, he felt a pain that seemed as though even his soul was being ripped apart.

<<... >>

Narci didn't say anything and was completely expressionless. Only, it glared at Choi Hyuk with its white eyes as it mechanically destroyed Choi Hyuk's body, torturing him. It didn't pay any heed to Mack, who was frozen only a slight distance away.

Clang! Clang! As if it wanted to utterly erase Choi Hyuk's existence, it meticulously shattered Choi Hyuk's body and turned him into dust.

Although a pain so intense that he could faint swept his entire body, Choi Hyuk didn't even blink. He looked at it until the end. Instead, Choi Hyuk was actually feeling joy in this moment.

'Good! It's not killing me right away. On top of that, it's even attacking my foot.'

This amount of pain wasn't much to him. The sweetness of victory would be more than enough to make up for all this pain and more.

Narci was expressionless, but Choi Hyuk could tell that it was completely enraged right now. A bright red light that seemed to want to blind him was emitted from its body. A simple, yet intense, killing intent dyed the horizon, an artificial sunset of Dark City.

Because Narci was so angry, it didn't kill Choi Hyuk right away. It wanted to kill him by thoroughly grinding up his body, starting from his feet. It even started with his feet and not his hands. Although he wasn't sure whether it wanted him to possess a sense of false hope by allowing him to keep a hold of his weapon, because of this, Choi Hyuk could overcome the part he was most worried about.

'If you take after us, then you must also take after our emotions.'

Due to its anger, Narci's judgment had narrowed. It only focused on grinding Choi Hyuk from his feet up.

Choi Hyuk was confident that Narci wouldn't kill him immediately, but he didn't know where it would destroy him first. Although he was prepared to fight him with his sword in his mouth if it destroyed his arms, for it to focus on his legs... There was no outcome better than this.

'Now I just need to overcome one last obstacle.'

Choi Hyuk waited. Within this slowed time, even a second seemed too long. Narci crushed Choi Hyuk, savoring it as though it was eating a snack. Still, before even 5 seconds had passed in normal time, Choi Hyuk's lower body had turned into powder.

During this time, Choi Hyuk's eyes didn't waver in the slightest. While unable to wriggle his fingers, his eyes still glared at Narci. Seeing this, Narci's face distorted.

Blaze!

Red light (killing intent) exploded.

Looking at this light, Choi Hyuk realized.

‘Now!’

He didn’t even take notice of Narci’s downpour of attacks on his body.

It looked like he was prepared to die.

This was Choi Hyuk’s resolve.

Normally, he wasn’t someone who should be allowed to die as it would be impossible to take revenge if he did.

Even if he had to pitifully crawl on the ground, he had to live.

But the world wasn’t so easy that it would give someone crawling on the ground a chance to take revenge. This sort of thought didn’t match Choi Hyuk’s personality either.

The universe was too large for a lowly earthling to imagine.

‘To try to preserve my life when dreaming of getting revenge against something like that?’

It was a foolish thought.

Choi Hyuk dreamt of the impossible. What he needed to accomplish the impossible wasn’t only ability.

Only after throwing his life away and still surviving multiple times could he place the impossible within his reach.

He didn’t only need ability, he needed luck as well.

No, he needed fate.

Bang!

Choi Hyuk's karma blazed. His weak and tattered karma became string-like and weaved together.

Fate, Choi Hyuk realized what it was.

He had artificially obtained the fate, {Battle Addict}, through the alliance, but it wasn't that. What was known as the {Battle Addict} might have been a tutorial meant to help others realize how to become high-ranked warriors more easily.

Currently, Choi Hyuk needed a real fate, something that exceeded those artificial fates by leaps and bounds.

A sword that wouldn't break under the pressing malice surrounding it. A terrifying blade that could slice apart anything in its path.

Never lose. Slash without fail.

Choi Hyuk made this his fate.

'I will even slice death.'

Choi Hyuk's karma had now, at the very least, perfectly matched the quality of high-ranked warriors'. As it straightened out, Choi Hyuk's karma added a new fate to the universe.

Due to the sudden burst of power, Choi Hyuk's frozen body returned to its normal state. Strength was firmly applied to his hand gripping his sword.

'He's still only a proficient middle-ranked warrior, but he's emitting the energy of a high-ranked warrior? I've never heard of this!'

Even as she saw this, Mack couldn't believe her eyes.

Choi Hyuk felt Narcis's oncoming power. Unlike his own karma, which had only just

awakened, its karma was already complete and more enormous than his. A 'death' that was more than enough to break his newly awakened 'never losing' fate rushed towards him like a tidal wave, attempting to swallow him up.

That moment, Mack fulfilled Choi Hyuk's request.

Thud!

Narci's attack faltered for a split second.

'Mack's Desire' went beyond just heating up. It was to the point that it emitted a white light and inflated in size so much that it looked like it would break. Commander Mack's yearning for her declining species' revival was directed at Choi Hyuk at this moment.

"You think you'll lose?! You son of a bitch!!!"

Crude swears erupted from her mouth as a formless power pushed forward like a landslide. Narci's hand, which was approaching Choi Hyuk, stopped as though it was grabbed by a giant.

However, it was only for a moment.

With an annoyed expression, Narci lightly brushed off Mack's power and, with an attitude of 'these pests are annoying me', swung its other hand.

However, that momentary opening was everything Choi Hyuk had hoped for.

The reason why he risked his life and tested his fate.

His Sword of Vow blazed. Bearing Choi Hyuk's will, which was directed towards never losing and slashing without fail, his Sword of Vow drew out its power endlessly. The potential of his Sword of Vow, which added at least 300 karma points to a slashing attack, fully bloomed at this moment. 1,000 points, 5,000 points... Led by the enormous karma it emitted, the fate of the universe swayed towards his sword.

Choi Hyuk's strike, containing a power that exceeded the high-ranked and reached the level of highest-ranked warriors, slashed Narci.

Slice.

Narci's left hand, which was stretching towards Choi Hyuk, was sliced off. It spun in the air.

<<Huh?>>

Confusion burst from Narci's mouth.

It reflexively raised its remaining right arm and covered its face.

Slice.

But it too was sliced off with no resistance.

Splaaash!

'Choi Hyuk's Imprint' pushed forward and chillingly swept across Narci's shoulder and stomach. Black blood gushed from Narci's body. Its sliced intestines were cast into the air and squirmed like worms.

<<Huh? Huh?>>

Narci tried to heal itself, but for some reason, it couldn't. Its power was suppressed by the karma contained in Choi Hyuk's Sword of Vow. If it wasn't under the Steel Battleship's debuff, it could have endured it somehow, but it couldn't right now.

Narci lost all the composure it had possessed until now.

'Since you take after us... You must also take after our arrogance.'

Choi Hyuk revealed a bloody smile.

"Also... You probably take after our fear as well, right?"

After he said those words, Choi Hyuk lost consciousness and fell to the ground.

<<Ahhh... Ahh... >>

However, Narci didn't have the energy to become enraged from being ridiculed by Choi Hyuk, who it had considered a bug. Its sliced body, sliced intestines, and its wounds which didn't heal. Looking up with its white eyes, Narci was engulfed in fear.

The vice-captain, who watched this vacantly, jolted to his senses and shouted.

{This is an opportunity! All attack!!}

The Steel Battleship and the high-ranked warriors began to launch their attacks simultaneously.

<<Hiiiik! Hiik!>>

Narci died, writhing under the barrage of attacks landing on its body.

The hellhounds that had followed it were completely slaughtered as well.

The progression of the war, in which they were constantly being pushed back, had instantly reversed.

# CHAPTER 124

## ALIEN TROOPS FROM EARTH (9)

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Through washing blood with blood, they recovered the El Tribes' sanctum.

However, every earthling who had arrived here had a dejected expression.

"What the hell... There's nothing here."

A black desert. The land had already died due to the monsters. This wasn't what they risked their lives for.

However, the attitude of the El Tribes was different from the earthlings.

"Ah..."

They all showed expressions of having just woken up when they stepped into the sanctum. As if they had realized something important but were still dreaming, they walked in a daze towards a certain location. The earthlings mistook their dazed, slow movements at first.

"As expected... Is this place a dud? Look at them, they've completely lost it."

Yet, the El Tribe members' walking pace became gradually faster. They were all walking towards the same location. What seemed like a small commotion at first became a single stream, and then soon, a tidal wave.

The El Tribe members no longer walked. They all ran. The earthlings were taken aback.

"What? What's happening?"

The El Tribe members gathered in a large, round circle at the location. To the earthlings, this place was a wilderness which looked no different from the other places, but the El Tribe members seemed to have felt something as they placed their lips on the ground and began to cry.

“...It seems we came to the right place.”

Diana said as she thoroughly wiped off the monster blood smeared on her sword.

“It seems so. What will they do now?”

Richard seemed slightly tense. He had recovered the sanctum after believing in the great elder’s ‘intuition’, however, it was still unclear just how this would help in the war. He crossed his arms as he looked at the great elders and great warriors from each tree discussing this.

Unable to hide their yearning and compassion, the great elders and great warriors were the first to arrive, but they were currently hesitant for some reason.

“...Wasn’t it set that we should only lift this restriction once we obtained Dragonic’s safety?”

“Great Elder of the Lassel Tree, didn’t we already discuss this?”

“But... Don’t you feel it too? This is an inheritance we cannot afford to lose.”

“I know. I’m scared and my heart is in pain, but we can’t forget that it was due to the earthlings that we were able to step forth into the sanctum.”

The most elderly great elders were more likely to be hesitant, while the younger great warriors urged for the fulfillment of their promise.

“We already rose up. There’s no place to retreat to anymore. This could be our first and last chance. We need to awaken the sanctum.”

“That’s...”

The El Tribe members instinctively hesitated but, in the end, accepted that this was the only way.

“Your words are right...”

The hesitant El Tribe members shut their eyes.

“We can’t fight if we are afraid of losing it.”

When they opened their eyes again, they looked more determined. They piled their hands together.

Someone began to sing a strange song.

“Don’t resent.”

Then all the other El Tribe members began to sing along as well.

“Even if you lose everything.”

“As it is the fate of those who live.”

“Don’t look back when you fight.”

“Since it will only result in, at best, you joining those who died first.”

“Or brightly opening the future, which was only but a string.”

“Don’t be afraid to lose everything.”

This song was originally sung to celebrate the El Tribes’ sacrificial rite, the harmony ritual. The ‘those who died first’ referred to the warriors who had died in the previous harmony rituals as well as those in the past who couldn’t enter the inverted trees during the extinction.

It was a very old song, but all the warriors of the El Tribes had killed their own in order to survive. They sympathized with the song more than anyone else.

They would fight when necessary. This was to respect those who died before them.

Piiing!

A bright light shone from their gathering of hands.

A change began to occur in the sanctum.

Rumble!

The ground shook as though there was an earthquake. Enormous trees rose from the ground, surrounding the earthlings and El Tribe members gathered there. They were the inverted trees of the El Tribes.

A tree with red leaves, a tree with green leaves, and all sorts of trees rose up from the ground. Among them, there were even a few the earthlings were familiar with.

“Huh? Isn’t that the tree that rose up near Overseer Camilla’s territory? Isn’t that the tree near Barhaloleun?”

Not only their branches and appearance, but even the shape and color of their leaves were distinct, making each tree identifiable.

“All the trees moved here! All the inverted trees in the world gathered in one place!”

A quick-witted person shouted in excitement.

It was as he said.

The ground shook crazily, and an endless number of trees rose up from afar, covering the horizon. As all the ‘inverted trees’ in the entire world gathered, the horizon was covered from all angles. The earthlings and El Tribe members were surrounded by an enormous fortress of trees.

Amongst the risen trees, the tribes, who had been unable to bring out their armies due to being located amidst the monsters, leaped out, their hearts being moved.

The El Tribes leaped out, and the trees rose up. Those that rose up spread their branches and roots further out. The trees tangled together and became one. More leaves grew out from each branch. The appearances of these inverted trees changed.

The earthlings fell into a trance at this great transformation.

“Those are... Dragons...”

Like the words someone had foolishly muttered, the curving branches and sprouting leaves looked like the appearance of a dragon from afar. The dragons tangled together and formed enormous trees, and these trees combined to form a gigantic fortress. The

leaves shined like dragon scales above the fortress.

“Oh my god...”

Richard had uncrossed his arms at some point. Looking left and right, his expression showed he couldn't believe his eyes.

“This is... a fortress blessed by nature.”

Filled with wonder, the Queen of England Diana didn't know what to do.

The fortress, created through the gathering of all the inverted trees in the world, encompassed enough land that tens of millions of people could enter within. A warrior from Seoul looked at the land and the surrounding trees and recalled Seoul, which was surrounded by mountains. This was much larger and grander than that.

Dddrr... Drk!

The continuous noise died down. However, the El Tribe members had yet to untangle their clasped hands.

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

A momentary silence.

Hrddrk!

Thin roots sprouted from the middle of the gathered El Tribe members, breaking the silence. The roots tangled together and created a large nest, and seven enormous eggs shot up from the nest.

“Eggs?”

Richard couldn't take his eyes off the eggs, which housed immense karma, for some reason.

Shake.

The eggs shook.

Shake, shake, crack!

Each of the shaking eggs began to crack.

{Kireureuk!}

A small baby dragon stretched its head out of the shell of a broken egg.

The El Tribe members bowed their heads in front of the dragon.

During this time, the tree roots continuously grew slowly to create large buildings and towers.

Karma, filled with delight and vitality, filled the fortress and spread out endlessly. This power, which was spreading like a wave, could probably be felt from the other side of Dragonic.

{Kireureureuk!}

{Kyah!}

The seven small newly born dragons cried excitedly.

The great elders from each tribe came out and carefully held the dragons, which were tilting their heads.

"Dragons... The pact we must uphold."

They alternated between being deeply moved and solemnity.

“Euheuheuk! Nice to meet you.”

“For this day to come... Heuheuheu...”

“Ah... Dragons. Yeah, I heard of them. Noble existences. Existences we need to protect...”

The El Tribe members, who had finally reunited after an extremely long time, hugged each other and cried. They worshiped the birth of the dragons together.

“Although I don’t know what’s what... I’m elated.”

Diana didn’t hide her smile.

“It definitely... seems like it went well.”

Richard smiled with a relieved expression.

The two smiled as they walked towards the baby dragons. However, before they could even take a few steps, they flinched in shock and stopped in their tracks.

Shaaaaaa...

Everyone shivered. There was an obvious foreboding.

A terrifying and heavy karma suddenly appeared, suppressing the karma of life that had just stretched out.

Its power pressed down on the fortress of trees as though it was saying ‘Who dares raise their head in my presence?’ A terrifying energy that no one had experienced before.

“A high-ranked monster...”

Someone mumbled, his jaw trembling.



“Although it had been lost, we recalled everything the moment we entered the sanctum.”

The El Tribes explained it like this.

Like how one could infer from the name Dragonic, dragons undoubtedly used to inhabit this planet. Also, the El Tribes were the friends as well as the followers of the dragons.

During the extinction, the monsters obstinately focused on the dragons, and the dragons, fearful that their generation would come to an end, sealed their eggs and hid them in a special location. That place was the sanctum. They had chosen the El Tribes to undo the seal of the sanctum and take care of the dragons which would be born from it.

As compensation, the dragons provided the El Tribes with safe havens. They created the ‘inverted trees’ with dragon corpses and with the sacrifices of living dragons. The dragons had hoped for a regeneration in the far future as they gave up their own lives with this place, the ‘Dragon Nest’, as their focus.

“Because of this, this place is filled with the inheritance of the dragons. Forgotten knowledge, forgotten technology... With this place, not only the El Tribes, but even the earthlings can change greatly.”

The great elders of the El Tribes said this unanimously.

However, Richard added with a solemn face,

“If we protect it... you mean.”

At his words, the El Tribe members slumped their heads.

The high-ranked monster was approaching the ‘Dragon Nest’.

It was time to make a decision. Would they defend the Dragon Nest or leave it behind?

“...To be honest, we would like to defend this place. However... we will follow the earthlings’ decision.”

While saying this, the El Tribe members tightly hugged the baby dragons. If they wanted to properly take care of and teach the baby dragons, they needed the sanctum, but the baby dragons’ lives came first. They weren’t in a situation where they could diverge from the earthlings’ plans.

“Though it’s regretful, we have to leave. We are outside our line of defense. If we slip up, we might be isolated here, unable to move. Even if we consider the fact that we have a fortress which contains traces of the dragons of the past’s power... We can’t block the high-ranked monster’s path with just our strength.”

Diana’s words were reasonable.

Richard was lost in thought. If he considered which was safer, it would be to retreat. They would be able to buy more time and preserve their key forces. Only, that method wouldn’t keep them safe until the very end. They wouldn’t be able to evade the high-ranked monster forever. The longer strong warriors like Richard and Diana avoided fighting it, the more warriors would be sacrificed and the front lines would be a mess. It would be like building a castle in the air.

Not only that, but Richard was concerned about the inheritance left behind by the dragons of the past. The basic knowledge and technology necessary for humanity’s prosperity could be found in the dragons’ inheritance. However, if he chose to fight the high-ranked monster, there was a chance that their key forces, which came to recover the sanctum, and all the El Tribes, as well as himself, would die.

They were both choices he didn’t want to make, but he had to.

Would he choose momentary safety or take a risk?

At the last moment, Richard called for Leah.

“Leah, give me a mirror.”

Everyone’s eyes widened at his unexpected request, but his aide, Leah, calmly took out a hand mirror. Richard motionless looked at his face reflected in the mirror. He closely

examined each detail, from his platinum hair to the wound given by Choi Hyuk.

Then he grinned.

He decided.

“We’ll defend.”

“Pardon?”

Diana showed a strong reaction.

“The authority to command currently lies with me, correct? Please follow me. In return, I will stand at the forefront.”

This was Richard’s decision.

# CHAPTER 125

## SOVEREIGN OF JUDGMENT

---

“Then, shall we write our wills?”

“Our wills?”

“Yeah. Let’s all write one. Like always, we don’t know when we’ll die.”

They never knew when they would die. Even still, Richard ordered people to write their wills. This was because he knew very well that the fight against the high-ranked monster would be unlike any fight they had experienced so far.



Choi Hyuk was lying in bed.

During this time, Choi Hyuk became the hero of Dark City.

“How did a middle-ranked warrior slash apart a highest-ranked monster?”

“He has a Sword of Vow... Also, he had the help of the Steel Battleship.”

“Even still, does it make any sense?”

“Why can’t it? All the elderly who possess a Sword of Vow right now had created legends back when they were young. There’s nothing more to say about those known as the Exalted Wings. Although I didn’t think I’d see it in my lifetime, there were definitely cases like this in the past.”

“You’re saying Overseer Choi Hyuk is at their level?”

“Then he isn’t?”

“...Wow...”

“What should I say? The fact that I saw this historic scene with my own eyes... I’m very proud of it.”

Choi Hyuk's heroic feat had become a legend.

The citizens of Dark City were proud that a legend like this had occurred in their own hometown.

{To be honest, it wasn't only Overseer Choi Hyuk. The troops from Earth fought better than we expected. We will now see a scene of the earthlings' fighting.}

Choi Hyuk wasn't the only one under the spotlight. Various broadcasting media platforms praised the earthlings' fighting techniques.

{Although the earthlings' fighting techniques are crude and simple, their utility is on the level of experts. Who would have thought that a species that hadn't even awoken karma until four years ago would fight this well? This is why some argue we need to research the earthlings' fighting techniques and their growth and add it to the alliance's manual.}

"That's right. The earthlings were fiendishly good at fighting. Those who possess innate skills are rare and their karma isn't special... yet they fight strangely well. When it looks like they might die, they survive and attack. I've never seen fighting techniques like theirs before."

From the aliens' perspective, the earthlings really possessed nothing special. Like how the Flame Wing Tribe was born with the ability to create flames, the majority of alien tribes possessed a distinct characteristic in how they used karma. However, the earthlings didn't have such a characteristic.

From the beginning, the process in which the earthlings began to control karma was different from other species. The earthlings were suddenly able to use karma once the alliance dismantled Earth and allowed them to artificially inherit it. It was like forcefully making a flower bloom before it was ready. Because of this, there was no way their karma would possess a distinct characteristic. If they were to look for a distinct characteristic, it would only be that it contained the perseverance of lifeforms that were created and had evolved throughout Earth's 5-billion-year history.

However, with just this, the earthlings were able to create a fighting technique that wasn't lacking when compared to the other species. In only four years.

"The earthlings are already reassuring, but they'll get stronger in the future. I look forward to it."

That was how Choi Hyuk and the earthlings became renowned in Dark City.

At first, when Choi Hyuk said he would attack the highest-ranked monster Narci, Lankin made a fuss, saying, 'The status of earthlings is currently low. If you act insubordinately, all the earthlings will be criticized!' but the result was different once things settled. Such things like 'my side' and 'your side' weren't decided from the beginning, it depended on one's actions. Even those who didn't even show an ounce of interest would, at times, gather to someone's side after an incident. What Choi Hyuk accomplished was exactly this.

The earthlings, who were an unspectacular species from the countryside, had, at the very least, become a species affiliated with the hero of Dark City.

Everyone had taken the earthlings' side.

Specifically speaking, what Choi Hyuk had done was insubordination, but there was no one who would dare say he needed to be punished.

As the war waged on and a new hero was born, the time outside passed by like a blur.

However, Choi Hyuk, who was lying down this whole time, didn't have the leisure to enjoy this mood.

{We can't heal the lower half of your body right now. It has been completely crushed by a highest-ranked monster's power. To recover, we need to wait for a healer from the center. Due to your contributions this time, the alliance will undoubtedly send a healer... But it will take time. Since we're in the middle of a war right now.}

Fragment Light said as it scattered like a fog and thoroughly looked after Choi Hyuk. The lower half of Choi Hyuk's body was still in a shattered state. Although he had regained consciousness in a day, all he could do was lie down.

If it wasn't for Fragment Light, who was healing Choi Hyuk around-the-clock, he would have already died. His condition was just that severe.

{On top of that... Since you used such an enormous power with the body of a middle-ranked warrior, the karma in your entire body has been torn up. Even if a healer arrived right now, you would still have had to recuperate for a month.}

This was what Choi Hyuk felt as well. The karma, which had filled his body like honey, was now like dried clay, broken and split. He couldn't expend any strength.

Even still, Choi Hyuk urged Fragment Light again today.

"Is there really no method? Aren't you aware of Dragonic's current situation?"

{Yes. I do. Isn't that why we sent Earth's expedition back to Dragonic even though the war in Dark City hasn't ended? However... There is no other way.}

"Really?"

Since the moment he had regained consciousness, Choi Hyuk restlessly troubled Fragment Light.

Faced against his perseverance, even the objective Fragment Light became fed up with it.

{Yeah, there is a way. A warrior at the same level or stronger than you just needs to cut their karma and body and pass them down to you. Rather than regenerating your destroyed body and karma, you are transplanting them. Although it is a dangerous method, if it works, you can move immediately and even become stronger. However, which warrior will transplant their perfectly fine body over to you? That is why I said there is no method.}

"..."

Choi Hyuk couldn't help but be silent.

Although it was cruel, time simply passed like this.

The third day.

Choi Hyuk was still lying down. It seemed they seized their chance to victory as the sky, which had flashed with lights until yesterday, was now dark and calm. It was dark and quiet. There were almost no lights, as one would expect from Dark City. There was nothing to do.

If it was like normal, he would be able to see and touch dark matter, but due to his torn-up karma, his senses were completely in the dark. Since he didn't have feet, he couldn't move, and he simply lied down in his designated spot as he blankly waited for time to pass.

His only enjoyment was watching Fragment Light fly around like fireflies.

'Ah...'

Choi Hyuk blinked.

Anger surged multiple times a day and made everything seem like a dream. He simply had to endure during this time. He was powerless as though he was already dead.

"It's peaceful... Damn it..."

Choi Hyuk found this period of time spine-chilling.

'Why am I so anxious?'

Perhaps it was because his body wasn't in its normal condition, but Choi Hyuk had been engulfed in an unknown anxiety multiple times now.

The lights from Fragment Light swayed around Choi Hyuk's face, and the shadows of Dark City cast over him.

Step.

Just then, someone entered the infirmary. Due to the busy war and the fact he needed complete rest, no one visited during this time.

"Who is it?"

"Hello."

The one in the shadows with her head lowered was Richard's aide, Leah. It seemed she had just come from the battlefield as her entire body was smeared in blood.

“Aide Leah? What about the war?”

“Yes. It’s me. I’m...”

Leah, who had raised her head in the darkness, lowered it again. Her shoulders trembled miserably.

“...This. If you read this, you’ll understand. Then, I’ll return to the battlefield now.”

What she had handed to him was Richard’s eye, which was as solid as a jewel, and his will.

Choi Hyuk accepted these items in a moment of bewilderment. The warm blood smeared on the eye and will wet Choi Hyuk’s hand.

—

Choi Hyuk.

I hope you will use my final gift well.

Remember.

You don’t need to kill even if it says you need to. You don’t need to keep them alive even if it says you need to.

A skill is a skill. Don’t trust it blindly.

I’m leaving it up to you.

—

As a will, its contents were exceedingly simple and lackluster.

“Leah. What is this?”

Choi Hyuk called out to Leah, who was about to leave. She, who had been walking uneasily, stood rigidly as if nailed in place. However, Leah couldn’t open her mouth easily.

“..”

Unable to endure it, Choi Hyuk urged her.

“Don’t drag it on and tell me quickly.”

Even though he couldn’t even stand up, his voice was frightening and as sharp as a blade.

“...A high-ranked monster appeared. Overseer Richard, Yohan, and Diana and the great warriors of the El Tribes fought it.”

“A high-ranked monster?”

Choi Hyuk felt his heart tighten. He knew precisely how powerful these ‘high-ranked’ individuals were. If a high-ranked monster appeared, there was no one on Dragonic who could face it. Only then did Choi Hyuk understand the sudden words that Richard had died. This wasn’t the only problem though.

‘If I don’t return, I can’t protect Dragonic.’

Middle-ranked warriors couldn’t understand the true power of high-ranked monsters as the difference in power wasn’t in ‘quantity’ but ‘quality’. Choi Hyuk’s heart became urgent.

“Fragment Light! Make a proposal to the higher ups! Isn’t Dark City stable now? We need support troops in Dragonic.”

But before Fragment Light could reply, Leah shook her head.

“There is no need for that. The high-ranked monster has been dealt with.”

Choi Hyuk was shocked at her words.

“How?”

“Overseer Richard... ended it.”

Choi Hyuk was at a loss for words.

A high-ranked monster wasn't an existence that could be killed just because a few middle-ranked warriors gathered to fight it. This was especially true for earthlings.

The only way a middle-ranked warrior could wield a power beyond their ability was with a karma-weapon. Something like the Sword of Vow or the Sword of Calling that Choi Hyuk and Chu Youngjin possessed. However, besides those two, no other earthling was in possession of a karma-weapon. As such, it was impossible for a middle-ranked warrior to deal an effective blow on a high-ranked monster. Even if they could somehow hold it back, it was impossible for them to kill it.

No, it might even be impossible for them to hold it back as they didn't possess a technique to suppress their enemy like the Steel Battleship.

"How?"

That was why Choi Hyuk asked again like a fool. Leah shook her head.

"...I don't know how. Either way, the high-ranked monster died in Overseer Richard's hands... Also, he passed away in its hands."

Tap. Tap.

Clear teardrops fell at her feet. Leah still couldn't raise her head.

"...I think Overseer Richard knew that he was going to die."

"..."

Choi Hyuk couldn't say anything.

Perhaps Richard had obtained enlightenment at the last moment, like how Choi Hyuk had when he fought the highest-ranked monster. Perhaps what determined their fates was the existence of a karma-weapon. Richard was a warrior much more talented than Choi Hyuk had thought.

Yet, he died.

Like how Leah had said, she didn't know how he died, but he had died in a place where no one recognized his talent.

“Why didn’t you run?”

“...Instead, we protected the inheritance of the dragons of the past.”

‘The inheritance of the dragons of the past...? Was that worth exchanging Richard’s life for?’

Choi Hyuk’s expression was cryptic.

{Ha... So that’s what happened.}

The one who joined in was Fragment Light.

{Dragonic used to be inhabited by dragons that were the closest to the original form. Many exalted dragons lived there. For example, the ancient dragon Barhaloleun was evaluated to be at the peak of the highest rank. The inheritance left behind by them will probably not be ordinary. Although we will only know the details after examining it, if they fought in the presence of that inheritance, I believe that the high-ranked monster’s strength might have been somewhat restrained.}

Fragment Light, who had been tilting its head at the news that a middle-ranked warrior had killed a high-ranked monster, revealed an understanding expression.

On the other hand, Leah’s expression became darker.

Twinge.

Choi Hyuk felt a pain in his chest.

This was a pain he was experiencing for the first time since he learned his mother had died.

In the distant Dark City, Choi Hyuk had lived, while in the distant Dragonic, Richard had died.

Choi Hyuk, who had promised to return quickly, couldn’t fulfill his promise. On the

other hand, Richard protected Dragonic as promised. Using his own life.

Choi Hyuk blankly looked at Richard's will and his blood-smeared eyeball.

"Then I'll take my leave..."

Leah said her farewell and returned to the battlefield, but Choi Hyuk was so lost in his own thoughts that he didn't return her farewell.

'I still have a long way to go.'

Cold water was poured on his heart, which had become slightly cocky due to the fact he had slashed a highest-ranked monster. Choi Hyuk trembled from his powerlessness. Dragonic was suffering under a tidal wave of monsters. Even Richard, who he trusted, died. However, Choi Hyuk was still lying in bed.

He felt a regret that exceeded feeling powerless.

"The end result is the same... Would it have been better if I had just kept my body in good condition while we waited for support?"

{No. It would have taken longer to wait for support troops than it would have taken for you to recover. You did the right thing.}

Like always, Fragment Light presented the cold, hard truth, but it didn't comfort him in the slightest.

Victory didn't come cleanly.

Like how he learned of his mother's death not long after beating the Wyvern of Destruction, Choi Hyuk's life was always in the middle of a war, where the greatest victory and the worst loss simultaneously intersected.

{But, that eye. It looks like it's a body part containing an innate skill. If you leave it outside for too long, the karma inside will scatter. It seems she came running as soon as he died... I'll preserve it for you.}

Fragment Light stayed objective even in situations like this.

This trait actually opened Choi Hyuk's eyes.

"It's fine."

Choi Hyuk raised his hand and overlapped Richard's eyeball with his own eye. Inside was the most fundamental karma Richard had possessed.

{Uh, it'll be difficult to inherit that right now.}

Fragment Light tried to stop him, but Choi Hyuk didn't listen.

Even though his eye hurt as though it was burning, this much pain was nothing.

Fragment Light calmly looked at Choi Hyuk and said with an awkward voice.

{You're doing well. Well, since only the essence is there, there isn't much in terms of quantity. But, you know, right? As its power is weak, it won't be able to recover your injuries. You will only inherit his innate skill.}

"I know."

Red blood flowed from Choi Hyuk's left eye which had fused with Richard's eye. Choi Hyuk blinked.

When the blood drained a little, his left eye, which emitted a dark blue light, was revealed.

Choi Hyuk looked at Fragment Light.

It emitted a white light (goodwill), and above its head was a blue shield symbol.

Fragment Light was 'someone to keep alive'.

Choi Hyuk closed his eyes.

He inherited Richard's innate skill.

It was truly a shabby inheritance ceremony. Veins bulged on top of Choi Hyuk's tightly clenched fists.



During this time, the expedition which returned to Dragonic underwent intense battles.

The blades of the expedition, which had returned from Dark City even stronger than before, ripped apart the invading monsters without mercy.

In the situation where both Choi Hyuk and Richard weren't present, the one standing at the very front was the Sovereign of Paradise Camilla.

"Penelope."

While letting her karma rest for a moment, Camilla called out to Penelope, who was standing by.

"What, unni?"

Like always, Penelope replied affectionately.

However, Camilla's expression was solemn.

"Like always, our clan will stand at the front."

"That's a given."

"...But observe the other warriors outside of battle well. Pass it on to everyone."

At Camilla's rigid attitude, Penelope instinctively became tense. Her round eyes, which had always been good-natured, contained a keenness to them.

"What should we consider when observing them?"

"Whether they have the qualifications to join our clan for one. Especially focus on Richard's clan members. Also, secondly... Those who might potentially become our enemy."

“...Enemy?”

“Yeah. Enemies. Tell them to be careful. Since Richard died... Although I don’t know how he did it, the peace until now was all due to him. But he died. The ones remaining are those wrapped in their own desires... People who feed off their own pride... Everything will change now.”

Camilla raised her sword, which had been resting to the side for a moment.

As she glared at the onrush of monsters, she said,

“In the end, the sword is what protects paradise.”

Rather than looking at the monsters, she looked beyond them as she fiercely wielded her sword.



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