

심판의 1 군주

오늘도요 현대 판타지 장편소설
DONG-A MODERN FANTASY

Sovereign of Judgment

- 심판의 군주 -

**- Volume 10 -
Calculations of Revenge**

**-Author-
TodayAgain**

[Myoniyoni Translations]

Chapter 157

Awl (1)

Flame-Rain stood in front of the thirteen towering stone plates. She did her best to not bend her back and tremble her legs and the tips of her eyes as she raised her head slightly.

Although she looked exhausted, she looked dignified like a queen.

{Did you find the location of the monsters' queen?}

“Although we found a few possible locations-“

{Did you find it?}

“We didn't find it.”

{So you failed your mission.}

Flame-Hell spoke coldly.

Only two out of the thirteen Exalted Wings commented, Flame-Hell and Flame-Thorn. The other stone plates remained silent as graves.

{While an incredible number of highest-ranked and high-ranked warriors died in battle... You failed your mission, you say...?}

Flame-Thorn's words followed a rhythm like a song, slowing and popping at certain words, as she criticized Flame-Rain.

Flame-Rain bit her lips.

“...I am strongly aware of this fact.”

‘Strongly aware.’ Flame-Rain was truly pained by it.

This reconnaissance mission was, in reality, a mission leading to death, yet those warriors followed her to that place while smiling. They always considered themselves as her subordinates.

After Flame-Sky died in battle, the Flame Wing Tribe abolished the monarchy.

Flame-Rain was no longer a princess, and following this, she wasn't able to have subordinates. Yet, there were still people who followed her. Flame-Rain had avoided them in case they would experience disadvantages because of her... Which was why she didn't even properly know their names and faces...

'Fools. Without receiving anything... You all went so far to protect this stupid woman...'

Flame-Rain mumbled inwardly.

The warriors had readily laid down their lives for her, yet only a hundred survived out of a thousand. That was all. The rest had died because she was weak.

She could make an excuse. 'From the start, the Exalted Wings gave me an impossible mission!' She could resent them. However, she didn't.

'Even if I did... It's my responsibility for acting within their expectations.'

Yes, it was her fault. However, if she lowered her head in front of them and submitted because of this, it was clear that this would be an even greater fault.

Flame-Rain clenched her fist tightly as she stiffly raised her head.

"But! I cannot accept your words that I failed my mission. During the expedition over a few months, we confirmed the total area of the monsters' universe, its topography, and three possible locations for the monsters' queen. Not only that, we confirmed that the monsters' forces are greater than we expected, including newly discovered ones. Of course, because of my incompetence, countless warriors... died in battle... However, we did not fail our mission. They did not die for a failed mission!"

Blaze. Blaaze!

Each and every time she opened her mouth to speak a word, her hair would blaze white.

Her flames, which usually gave off a bright yellow and orangish light, was gradually turning white. After her hair, her eyebrows, then her eyes, soon even her skin swayed with white flames; they rippled around her like wings.

Looking at her appearance, a stone plate, who had been maintaining his silence, replied.

{... Princess. Was there some progress?}

Before Flame-Rain could reply, Flame-Thorn shouted coldly.

{Exalted Wing Flame-Fog. Whether in the alliance or our tribe, there is no 'princess' position!}

{...}

In reality, everyone called Flame-Rain 'princess', even Flame-Thorn. However, no one could argue if the 'rules' were brought up. Flame-Fog quietly backed down and his stone plate became silent.

Then, another stone plate joined in.

{I too believe that the princess... No, Flame-Rain's mission wasn't a failure.}

{Exalted Wing Flame-Ember!}

Flame-Thorn raised her voice.

Unlike Flame-Fog, Flame-Ember didn't back down and shouted.

{...!}

{...?}

That moment, various indescribable thoughts raged between them. In a single second, vast amounts of information regarding the history of the alliance and the Flame Wing Tribe went back and forth between Flame-Fog and Flame-Thorn's stone plates. An extremely quick dispute created from their transcendent cognitive skills and the alliance's technology.

It was an intense argument.

In the end-

{Enough-!}

Whoosh!

Flame-Hell's stone plate rang loudly and shattered the frantic flood of thoughts. As the chairman of the Brain and the prime minister of the Flame Wing Tribe, when Flame-Hell acted, Flame-Thorn and Flame-Fog tightly shut their mouths.

Even during this commotion, Flame-Rain stood proudly, blazing with white flames.

Flame-Hell spoke.

{Flame-Rain.}

"Yes, Exalted Wing Flame-Hell."

{The mission was finding the precise location of the monsters' location, and you failed to do so. Then is the mission a failure or a success?}

Flame-Hell's voice was courteous yet cold.

"However, we found three possible locations."

When Flame-Rain argued, an enormous hologram appeared above her head. It was the map of the monsters' universe she had brought. There were three red dots on it. They were the possible candidates for the queen's location.

{I acknowledge that. So was it a success?}

"..."

Flame-Rain didn't say a word. She wasn't even taken aback. She simply proudly gazed at Flame-Hell's stone plate.

In the end, Flame-Hell gave up on waiting for her answer and said.

{You were only partly successful. Too many warriors died compared to the results you obtained.}

He was scolding her, pointing out that they died because of her. These words were clearly meant to strike her.

However, Flame-Rain didn't bite her lips. She simply blinked, blazing with white flames as if asking, 'So what is it that you want from me?'

Seeing her like this, Flame-Hell realized that there was no use provoking her anymore. She was tougher than before and more resolute than ever.

'She's definitely changed... I don't know if she's truly advanced further. However... It's too late.'

Yes, her growth had always been swift and surprising, but it was too late. Flame-Hell didn't feel any sense of danger from Flame-Rain. Instead, he pitied her. She had been the more precious girl in the great Flame Wing Tribe. Yet, her fate now rested in his hands. No matter how resolute she became now... It was too late. In fact, because she became so resolute, she might even despair even more from now on.

A long time had passed since Flame-Sky died in battle, and the moment the Flame Wing Tribe abolished the monarchy, the course of the game had already been decided.

Even Flame-Fog, who wanted to maintain his fidelity to Flame-Rain, couldn't do anything in front of him for a long time now. The only one who could protect her was herself. This was also her weakness.

It might have been more of a pain if she gave everything up and clung to him, but she always tried to protect herself with her own strength, making her easier to use.

Wasn't it the case this time? This princess volunteered to walk into hell, and she selected her troop according to the wishes of those who hoped to be her hands and feet. The more she tried to depend on herself, the more power she would lose.

Flame-Hell decided to make another announcement. While it didn't equate to certain death, he assigned her a mission where it was highly likely she would die. For she wouldn't be able to refuse this time as well.

{Then I will give you the opportunity to fulfill the other half.}

Following Flame-Hell's words, two of the red dots disappeared, leaving only one red dot remaining.

{According to High-ranked Warrior Choi Hyuk's information, a Kahur Kabkun creating a demise-ranked monster is near that red dot. Search the red dot region and destroy that unborn demise-ranked monster.}

Blaze!

The moment she heard the words 'demise-ranked monster', Flame-Rain's proudly blazing flames wavered. Seeing this, Flame-Hell said.

{Please avenge His Late Majesty Flame-Sky...}

Choi Hyuk had already wreaked havoc at that Kahur Kabkun. The monsters would obviously be prepared now. Him ordering her to enter that region and destroy the demise-ranked monster was the same as telling her to step on a visible landmine.

However, Flame-Rain didn't become gloomy from this thought. This wasn't the first time anyways.

Only, Flame-Rain vacantly gazed up towards the sky. She might have been thinking about her father. Her eyes soon returned to their unwavering state as she stared at Flame-Hell's stone plate.

She said,

"Please do this for certain. If I return victorious... Please arrange an event commemorating my triumphant return. Don't change your words after I finish doing everything you asked."

{Your declaration just now could be considered as an insult to the 'Brain'. Why not be careful of what you say?}

Dark-Sound cut in.

Flame-Rain sighed as she turned around.

“I, Flame-Rain, am the 28th ranked transcendent warrior in the alliance. I have only now returned from the war. Since it wasn’t a loss or a victory, I plan to redeem my insufficient results. As I will provide the alliance with certain victory this time, I expect a warm reception according to the alliance laws the day I return victorious. Then, due to being exhausted, I will go rest now.”

{...}

The Exalted Wings showed their agreement with their silence.

They had been able to push her because she had been cooperative all this time. As the 28th ranked warrior in the alliance, she undoubtedly had the authority to request a break after returning from war. This was especially true considering she would soon step out onto the perilous battlefield again.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

On her way back down the Road of Glory, Flame-Rain discovered the flower petals on the floor. When she spread her hands, the petals gathered on top of her palm. Flame-Rain put them away in her pocket and began walking again.

With slightly lighter steps and clearer eyes, she resolved,

“If I return alive this time....”



The colonization of the Laniakea and Shapley Superclusters was progressing smoothly. Since they had annihilated the Kahur Kabkuns of the Rotten Border and a large area, the monsters’ obstruction wasn’t fierce either.

Only, whenever they found traces of karmalings who had experienced a gruesome extinction, they were momentarily filled with mixed emotions as they thought, ‘They all died to be used as nutrition for the demise-ranked monster...’

It progressed smoothly with no hiccups. At this rate, it was only a matter of time before they finished the mission given by Dark-Sound and Choi Hyuk would receive his large reward.

However, Choi Hyuk didn't seem to be very motivated in colonizing. There were many instances when he stared blankly, lost in his thoughts.

"Leader, what are you thinking about?"

When Lee Jinhee asked,

"Huh? Uh... The demise-ranked monster."

Choi Hyuk would either reply like this or mumble to himself,

"...Isn't she going to contact me?"

Looking at him like this, the artillery captain Handke tilted his head, saying, "Hmmm.... If he wasn't the leader, then these definitely are the actions of a boy falling in love for the first time... This would be true if it wasn't the leader..."

Then a day came when Choi Hyuk, who acted like someone with a screw loose, regained his vigor.

It was the day Chu Youngjin contacted him again.

Choi Hyuk abruptly shouted,

"What? A subjugative expedition has already been formed? Without me? Then what about me?"

{Ah... Yes, they already left for battle.}

"Already?"

Facing Choi Hyuk's admonition, Chu Youngjin said as though there was nothing he could do about it.

{This was originally a secret. The troop that I'm a member of obtained this information because they are very informed for some reason... But I didn't hear about it right away since I'm a new recruit.}

“Ah... But I wanted to slice it...”

As if disheartened, Choi Hyuk stretched his legs and burrowed himself into the sofa. Seeing this, Handke mumbled, ‘He’s in love alright. In love with fighting.’ It seemed like Choi Hyuk couldn’t forget the thrilling sensation he felt when he faced the demise-ranked monster.

While Choi Hyuk was wallowing in his disappointment, Chu Youngjin, who had been paused for a moment, added some more information.

{Apparently, the princess is the leader of the subjugative expedition again.}

“...What?”

Choi Hyuk’s eyes shined viciously.

Chapter 158

Awl (2)

Flame-Rain didn't remember her father.

She had been too young when Flame-Sky died in battle.

What she remembered was the moment the universe united, using Flame-Sky's sacrifice as an opportunity, a few years later. She remembered how the Flame Wing Alliance had been established with cheers and how all intelligent lifeforms in the universe united under the identity 'karmalings' as they strode down the streets together. 'For life and freedom, love for all.' She spent her childhood wading amidst these heated cheers that swept the streets.

In other words, she was a part of the alliance generation.

While she was a symbol of monarchy and the very person who stimulated the nostalgia of those who grew up in the previous generation, the world she loved and the only one she knew was the alliance.

She grew up receiving the best education. As she was no longer a princess, she was no different from a lonely orphan. However, everyone in the Flame Wing Tribe treated her like their child, and back then, even Flame-Hell treated her well.

This was why she had no reason to wish for the restoration of the monarchy.

What she hoped for was to become an outstanding warrior who could contribute and return the alliance's favor.

So, in one word, she was happy.

'But... How did things become like this?'

Everything became a mess after she began completing missions as a warrior, having

gone through childhood and youth.

This was because the true appearance of the alliance and the war were very different from what she had thought.

The cheer 'Love for all' had completely disappeared at some point.

She would scoff whenever she heard the alliance's salute 'For life and freedom'.

The alliance's cause had changed from being victorious in the war against the monsters to safeguarding the key tribes.

If they could reduce the losses of the key tribes, then they could bear the extinction of species living on the outskirts. They even began slaughtering, calling it 'mining', and they justified this by saying they weren't going to give the monsters resources.

Flame-Rain couldn't adapt to this.

When she endured once, she would soon face more severe instances. She became more and more unhappy as time passed.

From then on, her crimes increased one by one.

Insubordination.

Mutiny.

Overstepping authority.

If it were others, they would have been executed multiple times for this. However, she was released after receiving punishments on the level of probation or serving in the common ranks every time. Only then did she realize the influence she possessed.

The Flame Wing Tribe members always loved her.

Although the number of people who didn't agree with her cause gradually grew, she was still loved.

‘Why does our princess worry about other species more than her own?’

‘I like the princess. However, I think it’s best to leave politics to Flame-Hell.’

‘My older brother died last time! Because the princess ignored the order to retreat...’

The younger the generation, the greater the number of people who were saddened by Flame-Rain, which in return, strengthened Flame-Hell’s position, but that was all.

The older generation showed their unwavering support for Flame-Rain.

‘Hey! No matter what, you cannot show dissatisfaction at the princess’s actions!’

‘Even if the royal family has disappeared, the uniqueness in her veins hasn’t disappeared. You will know soon enough.’

‘She’s the princess. We’re not at the level where we can judge her actions as right or wrong.’

They had agreed to the abolition of the monarchy only because they were swept up by the whirlpool-like situation after Flame-Sky’s death. If Flame-Rain became sufficiently strong and desired it, they were always willing to stand for the restoration of the monarchy. This fact was what Flame-Hell was most nervous about.

In fact, even Flame-Rain and Flame-Hell’s political aims were largely different.

‘The Flame Wing Tribe is the most exalted species in the entire universe! Why don’t you understand that the life of one of ours is more important than the entirety of another species? If everyone else survives but our tribe becomes extinct, then we have lost that war. But if everyone else dies and even one of our race survives, then that’s victory.’

Flame-Hell attempted to persuade Flame-Rain multiple times, but she didn’t budge. In the end, Flame-Hell resolved himself.

‘I won’t say any more.’

He believed that if Flame-Rain came to power, then their species would go extinct. He

couldn't back down.

Disciplinary actions and appeals continued, and the more he confirmed the influence Flame-Rain possessed and her true intentions, the frostier Flame-Hell's expression became – a dangerous omen.

As she knew this, Flame-Rain resolved herself to be alone.

The fact that there were many people who would die for her because she was Flame-Sky's daughter. The fact that she thought to oppose the alliance's policies. These could be the troublesome seeds that could incite a civil war within the alliance.

If a civil war did break out, Flame-Rain's side would lose. Since this would result in a huge loss in the alliance's forces, this wasn't good for both Flame-Rain herself and the alliance.

From then on, Flame-Rain didn't return to her homeland. She only traveled from one battlefield to another. She went to wars Consumables were participating in and became friends with lowest-ranked warriors. She also saved those who might have died in vain. That was how she minimized her influence within her tribe and followed her own beliefs.

Then Flame-Hell began suggesting her more and more difficult missions, using her warm-heartedness so that she couldn't refuse but also as if telling her to die there.

Flame-Rain endured everything. She believed that Flame-Hell would one day understand her sincerity. She grew stronger silently and persistently so that she could gain Flame-Hell's acknowledgment and become an Exalted Wing. So that she could change the alliance even a little. That was her dream.

'However, I won't live like this any longer.'

During the previous expedition, she realized that Flame-Hell wouldn't change.

Even if she tried to be by herself, she couldn't, and those who followed her kept dying. Her method had been wrong. If she wanted to prevent them from dying, she shouldn't lower her head to Flame-Hell, but instead, she needed to display enough strength to prevent him from using her as he wished.

'I need to burn everything blocking my path.'

Resolving herself to this, Flame-Rain's body trembled subtly.



The monsters' universe was filled with remains from ruined dimensions.

Like the universe karmalings inhabited, there were planets and stars. However, there could be a planet floating on an endless stream of water, perhaps a dead turtle below that water, or even a thin two-dimensional universe hanging over it like a rag. Ripped spaces and objects from various universes were mixed together creating a surreal image.

Flame-Rain collected her breath alone in this space.

Flame-Hell assigned her two missions: checking a possible location of the queen and destroying the unborn demise-ranked monster.

Between the two, she completed searching the queen's potential location first. There wasn't anything there. The enormous power she had felt previously had seemingly been washed away. Although it felt somewhat ominous, she had no choice but to move on.

In front of her was the Kahur Kabkun in which the demise-ranked monster was located. There were no subordinates who came with her. It was because she came alone to covertly search the queen's possible location.

Flame-Rain counted the time as it passed. It was almost time for her subordinates to

arrive. Her plan was to launch a surprise attack against the demise-ranked monster when her subordinates arrived and gathered the monsters' attention.

'I wonder how many gathered.'

As it came closer to the time of the operation, Flame-Rain's body constantly trembled due to nervousness.

'I'm past the proficiency stage of the transcendent level. I'm at the peak of the transcendent level. I won't lose out too much against the Exalted Wings.'

At the 'Brain' last time, her flames turned white and her power increased by another level. Still, she was scared.

Even though she resolved herself to no longer avoid things and to face everything with all her strength, she was scared that she would collapse here and that it would end in the deaths of all those who believed in her.

'I have to win no matter what.'

Flame-Rain got a grip on her trembling body. Then, a strand of excitement permeated her fear.

'I can win. If I win this time, then I can use this victory as a foothold to change everything.'

Flame-Rain took a deep breath. The light emitting from her body dispersed, leaving only heat behind. In this state, she infiltrated into the mouth of a gigantic, coiled snake that was floating amongst the remains of various universes. This place was the Kahur Kabkun where the demise-ranked monster was growing.



"Kuaaah!"

{Kiyeeeh-!}

It was utter chaos within the Kahur Kabkun. Warriors and monsters tangled amongst each other as they fought intensely.

Seeing this, Flame-Rain was surprised.

'Wow... There is a lot.'

The number of warriors gathered in the Kahur Kabkun greatly exceeded her expectations. They didn't lose out to the black swarm of monsters.

'So many...'

She felt moved and burdened at the same time.

This plan was different from before in many ways. She, who had always gone around on her own with a passive heart, personally requested for help this time. Flame-Hell? Political position? She decided to ignore them.

She had sent messages to the Flame Wing Tribe households who still followed her and to those whose thoughts aligned with her and whom she was close with, mainly from the top four tribes. She said,

'Help me. To end this tedious war, I will create a new force.'

And they replied.

With numbers larger than she expected.

The time she spent on her own at the lowest places doing the most dangerous missions wasn't for naught. She obtained friends. Those who saw her fight and those who received a favor, they all gathered here.

All Flame-Rain had to do now was win. A great victory where she could preserve her allies.

She saw a black hole in the distance and the large lumps of flesh next to it. In order to face the advancing warriors, the number of guards near them was low.

Blaze!

Still not emitting light, Flame-Rain was hiding in her heat-only state, but her temperature kept rising.

Drip.

Due to the extreme heat, the space around her melted like ice cream. She penetrated into the melting space.

When she reappeared, she was right in front of the lumps.

{Ahh?}

{Something approached.}

{Annihilate.}

While the number of monsters guarding the lumps was low, they were all elites. There were three highest-ranked monsters and numerous high-ranked ones.

However, Flame-Rain felt something was strange.

'Is this all?'

Flame-Rain revealed herself. In her hand was the Weapon of Conclusion 'Flame-Rain's Glory'. A Weapon of Conclusion was the symbol of warriors in the late stages of the transcendent level. It was a weapon that became a fate on its own. A supreme weapon, the most powerful amongst karma weapons.

Blaaaze!

She had only revealed the sword's appearance, yet white flames shot out everywhere like a sudden shower where one couldn't see in front of them.

{Kaaaack!}

A highest-ranked monster melted instantly and disappeared while the other two fled with half-burnt bodies. While their duty was to protect the lumps of flesh, they didn't dare approach the flames pouring out like a waterfall.

"Let's end this quickly and leave."

She took aim and swung 'Flame-Rain's Glory' at the lumps of flesh, making a great arc. The sliced area burned as white flames rushed out. The enormous lumps of flesh were

ripped apart by the flames and turned into ash.

Even the vicious vigor of the demise-ranked monster disappeared as if it was washed away.

'...Huh?'

But Flame-Rain felt something was odd.

'Is this really the end?'

Even though she had broken up the enemy forces with a feint operation, it was still too easy.

Just as she tilted her head-

Pshhh...

The white flames that covered her surroundings suddenly went out. A reddish-brown miasma rose out from the place the lumps of flesh had been and completely surrounded Flame-Rain.

She felt like she could faintly hear a voice.

{... Everything... Will... End... Even... Your fate of glory...}

Then the monster's vigor that had disappeared occupied her surroundings and tensed sharply.

Only then did Flame-Rain realize why the great power she had felt from the queen's potential location had disappeared.

"With that power, they forcefully completed the monster... It has already awakened."

All she saw was the reddish-brown miasma surrounding her. Flame-Rain couldn't measure her opponent.

The tips of her fingers trembled. She asked herself, 'Flame-Sky, who was known as the strongest warrior in history, died killing a demise-ranked monster. Can I handle a monster like that?'

There was only one answer.

'I have to. Believing in my fate.'

There wasn't anyone who could help her anyways. She bit her lips, and 'Flame-Rain's Glory' erupted in white flames once again.

Chapter 159

Awl (3)

She felt cold all of a sudden.

She couldn't feel her toes.

Blaze!

White flames erupted from her feet.

Pssh.

However, they weren't able to endure for long.

She felt ticklish all of a sudden.

Her back started feeling ticklish, then her palms as well. She wanted to rip her flesh out.

Still, Flame-Rain stood with her sword drawn, unmoving.

Blaze.

Instead, flames burned on her hands and down her back.

Pssh.

They soon went out as well.

Flame-Rain couldn't see anything. She only saw the reddish-brown miasma flowing around her. No, she thought she saw it, but when she looked again, it seemed like black

dark matter.

She lost her sense of time. She felt like she was only caught moments ago, but thinking about it again, she felt that she might have been here all her life.

She was dizzy.

However, the 'Flame-Rain's Glory' in her hand didn't waver in the slightest. The tip of her sword took aim in front of her, and her unblinking eyes looked forward.

'It's eating away at me.'

The monster was avoiding a direct battle with Flame-Rain and, instead, chose to slowly kill her. Covering her senses, it suffocated her like a snake constricting the neck of its prey. It was slowly exhausting her and gradually making her fall into despair.

'But its fangs are weak...'

This was how she figured out that it wasn't yet complete.

It was probably because they forcefully awakened an underdeveloped monster. At least for now, it was certain that it couldn't display its full power. If it possessed power befitting a 'demise-ranked monster', there was no reason for it to exhaust Flame-Rain to death like this.

Completely hiding its body, it faced Flame-Rain with the safest and most certain method.

'The problem is that, even knowing that the monster isn't complete... There's nothing I can do.'

She smiled bitterly. Suddenly, she couldn't breathe, as though she was choking. It was the monster's pressure.

Blaze!

"Haaa..."

Only after breathing in the flames blazing from 'Flame-Rain's Glory' could she breathe again.

She couldn't relax for an instant. All she could do was endure with all her strength. Without being able to counterattack, she was steadily becoming exhausted.

'If I could clear away this miasma for a moment... If I could figure out its location...!'

She thought about the conditions required to overcome this situation, but they were all impossible. Her current strength was insufficient, and her subordinates were being pushed back. This might very well be her last battle.

'No. No.'

Blaze!

Flame-Rain burned away the despair that had covertly entered her heart. Her eyes shined once again.

"I won't lose."

Her eyes blazed. Psssck. They blazed again as soon as they were put out.

She stared at the unwavering reddish-brown miasma with her blazing eyes.



Drip.

Flame-Rain jolted back to her senses when she felt a cold raindrop seep down her nape.

She suddenly heard the sounds of a rain shower.

'Wh-What?'

Splash. Splash.

Cold water submerged her feet. The pouring rain flowed down her body. She shivered.

'Rain? Why rain? ...Ah!'

Taken aback by this sudden situation, Flame-Rain jolted to her senses when she

attempted to wipe away the rain dripping down to her nose and mouth.

Blaze!

'Flame-Rain's Glory' spewed flames. Against the white flames, the pouring shower was swept away. She was still within the darkness, a world covered with reddish-brown miasma.

"Whew..."

She let out a sigh of a relief. If she had moved her sword for even an instant or if she had taken her hand off her sword to wipe the rain away, she might have received a fatal blow.

Just then, she heard a voice from somewhere.

{... It's useless... No need to feel... depressed...}

Frowning, Flame Rain was about to stare out into the darkness after coming to her senses when she suddenly let out a suppressed groan.

"Heuk...!"

She desperately hid her agitation as she tried her best to keep her sword in position.

She had noticed something when she was about to stare into the darkness. She couldn't see out of her left eye. The moment she had been dazed by the monster, it had devoured her eye.

Her throat was blocked by a sudden dread.

Blaze. Blaze.

'Flame-Rain's Glory' erupted into flames again, but the monster didn't stay put either.

Pssh. Pshhh.

The flames kept dying out like fire being lit on damp firewood. Only the acrid smoke filled her chest.

“Get it together. Get it together. It’s okay.”

She tried her best to deny it, but fear devoured her, gradually growing larger.

How much time had passed? Perhaps the warriors, who had rushed all the way here for her, had already been annihilated. Even if she beat this monster, was her fate to inevitably die?

“No. Get it together.”

She wanted to slap her cheeks if she could, but she couldn’t show even the slightest opening. Fear permeated her heart, making it heavier.

It was hard.

If this monster was as strong as the demise-ranked monster that had killed her father, then everything would have already ended without her having to suffer so much.

It might have been easier then...

This monster was slightly stronger than her, and because of this small difference, she couldn’t overturn her current disadvantageous situation. This made it even more agonizing.

“Ha!”

With a shout, ‘Flame-Rain’s Glory’ cut through the reddish-brown miasma.

Pwaaack!

The flames following her swing ferociously ripped and burned the space around it. However, even beyond it, she was still within the reddish-brown miasma.

While her flames were brilliant, she had taken another loss.

Tsss...

The tip of her left pinky turned into ash and scattered.

It had attacked again using the moment her heart wavered. She was lucky to have

noticed it when she did or she might have lost her hand instead of just her left pinky joint.

“Errk...”

Flame-Rain pondered while gritting her teeth. What would be better: calmly and tenaciously fighting like she had been until now or struggling without looking back?

Thinking logically, there was a better chance of winning if she endured persistently. Waiting for an opportunity, enduring until the monster slipped up.

However, what troubled her was that, if she did drag the fight on, the warriors who had come for her might be annihilated.

A long silence continued in the darkness. Like a revolving lantern, she recalled her past. Her childhood, youthhood, and even the time she was alone after becoming a warrior.

The rookie warrior she had discovered then.

At first, she was sorry for the things the alliance had done to his homeland, and later, his figure overcoming those perilous trials despite being so weak grabbed her attention. When he created a ‘Weapon of Vow’ despite being a middle-ranked warrior, she was unable to sleep. The fact that an outstanding warrior could be born from a weak species that the alliance had disregarded was proven by Choi Hyuk alone.

He had proven that the current alliance was wrong and walked a path to change the alliance. It felt like she had finally gotten a comrade to walk the path she had been walking alone until now.

How... wonderful that was.

When she thought of Choi Hyuk, her heart became stronger for some reason.

She recalled how he habitually fought reckless battles and won. While Choi Hyuk had a 'Weapon of Vow', she possessed a 'Weapon of Conclusion'. While he was talented, she was the daughter of the man known as the strongest warrior in history.

Looking back at her current disadvantageous situation, it was no different from the countless trials he and she had been through.

Blaze. Her flames erupted more violently.

"Haha."

As she came to a decision, her heart lightened.

"I was soft."

She had been riding on the tiger's back since the beginning.^{1} She had already cast the dice the moment she dragged other warriors into this. Although she was scared that they would die due to her failure, from the start, they had gathered here prepared to die. That was also why she had called for them.

To worry knowing this, how absurd.

Her real opponent wasn't this simple monster. It was the alliance, which itself was a monster that had become too bloated. Wasn't her ambition to face off against that?

To be scared in a place like this, it was undoubtedly absurd.

"Do whatever you want...! I'll burn it all."

Blaaze!

Ttss...!

White flames violently surged from her body. The reddish-brown miasma continuously put them out, but Flame-Rain didn't stop and continued to emit flames.

She changed her tactic. She would shave off its flesh even if it meant giving up her bones.

'Flame-Rain's Glory', which had only been keeping the darkness in check until now,

acted first.

Slowly at first, then becoming faster and faster, Flame-Rain danced.

Her sword sliced the world horizontally then again vertically.

“My fate is glory. However, my glory has yet to begin!”

Flame-Rain’s body blazed with flames.

That moment, as if it had been waiting for this, the monster began devouring her piece by piece.

First, her smooth calf, her round shoulder, soft cheek, then glossy hair. It ate them one after another.

Flame-Rain’s body kept disappearing. Her sword didn’t even touch the monster.

‘Just once...’

Flame-Rain gave up on thinking. She focused entirely on her sword. As she ripped apart the space around her, she hoped to find its trace!

However, even her hand had disappeared at some point.

The last thing Flame-Rain saw was the darkness.

Then she saw a single sword erasing this darkness.

The reddish-brown miasma, which she couldn’t burn no matter what she did, was erased horizontally as if rubbed by an eraser.

Through the erased miasma, the figures of Choi Hyuk and a monster, which looked like a thirteen-year-old boy, were revealed. The monster was glaring at the new

perpetrator, Choi Hyuk. However, Choi Hyuk wasn't very interested in it.

"Flame-Rain?"

He quickly examined the inside of the reddish-brown miasma, but he couldn't find Flame-Rain. Instead, he felt a murderous intent that made his heart tighten.

'... This is troublesome.'

The demise-ranked monster that looked like a boy was targeting Choi Hyuk.



"Dark-Sound had ordered the Berserkers to completely colonize the Shapley and Laniakea Superclusters. However, since the Berserkers are an independent troop, how we go about completing this mission is up to us, right? 'Knowing that a Kahur Kabkun housing a demise-ranked monster is near us is like an itch at the back of our heads. We can't proceed without subjugating it. So we determined that we can only complete Dark-Sound's mission perfectly after we deal with that demise-ranked monster first.' There you go. Good enough?"

"...Yes."

Choi Hyuk had made up this excuse since Baek Seoin told him he needed at least one to go off and help Flame-Rain before following after her.

The situation on the battlefield wasn't good by the time he arrived there.

The demise-ranked monster, which had yet to be born, had already awakened, and Flame-Rain was trapped in its reddish-brown miasma for two hours.

Due to the unexpected progress of the battle, the warriors who had gathered for Flame-Rain were agitated. Still, they couldn't retreat without knowing whether Flame-Rain was alive or not so they continued to fight nervously.

Choi Hyuk wanted to save Flame-Rain no matter what.

Thinking about how she was assigned to another dangerous mission after barely surviving her last and about how she might truly die this time, his body moved instinctively.

‘Again? Again? Will someone die regrettably again?’

Like Richard? Like Jung Minji? Although it wasn’t like he directly thought about them, the reason why his chest felt tight was probably because he had experienced their deaths.

Also, since it was Flame-Rain, he couldn’t just wait and see.

However, he couldn’t help but let out a sigh as soon as he looked around the reddish-brown miasma she was trapped in.

There was nothing he could do.

Even with the accumulation of experience from the previous fight and the wars he partook in afterwards, as a high-ranked warrior, there was nothing he could do. His body stiffened just from looking at it.

‘As expected... It’s strong.’

He knew that his fate ‘never losing and slashing without fail’ was only starting to be put to the test and was too weak to face the monster known as ‘collapse’.

He was well aware that, even if his nature was to enjoy fights, his outstanding talent allowed him to know the sheer difference between him and his enemy. What Choi Hyuk always possessed was ‘confidence’, not ‘arrogance’. Also, his opponent this time was one he wasn’t ‘confident’ in beating. Despite knowing this, Choi Hyuk still came here.

‘Flame-Rain... At least say something.’

But the reason why he came was because he believed in his sword skill called the ‘First Sword’. While Choi Hyuk didn’t possess the ability to create an opening on his own, if

Flame-Rain could create an opportunity, then he might be able to properly assist her.

‘An opportunity... Just a moment’s opportunity.’

From then on, Choi Hyuk didn’t blink.

Even though the Berserkers who had followed him here had joined the other troops and were fighting intensely, Choi Hyuk observed the distant reddish-brown miasma.

Holding ‘Choi Hyuk’s Imprint’, he gulped down the impatience and nervousness that arrived at his heart one by one.

That moment, Flame-Rain changed her mindset and began struggling with all her might, and the reddish-brown miasma, which appeared to be impregnable, began to ripple. Weak points began to appear.

‘Flame-Rain!’

Choi Hyuk, who had been standing still like a rock, waiting for an opening, realized that this was his opportunity.

The nervousness, restlessness, rage, and memories he had swallowed exploded at once. Like a universe being created after a big bang, it erased everything.

Choi Hyuk called this sword strike the ‘First Sword’.

Even sound disappeared with a deafening boom.

Tu-! ...!

Like its name implied, ‘First Sword’ erased everything.

The space between Choi Hyuk and the reddish-brown miasma in the distance as well as the reddish-brown miasma itself.

Following the swing of Choi Hyuk’s sword, history itself was erased and only the mark

of his sword was recorded as the first and last entry. His sword demolished everything in existence in order to become the first.

Since the space between Choi Hyuk and the miasma had been erased, Choi Hyuk was standing in the middle of the miasma, and because the miasma was erased in a horizontal line, he caught a glimpse of the demise-ranked monster that had been inside.

“Flame-Rain?”

However, he didn't see Flame-Rain.

Only the ill-tempered demise-ranked monster's murderous intent tightened powerfully around him.

Since he had put everything into his 'First Sword', he didn't have the strength to avoid its attack.

{... Foolish... Death...}

The monster, whose appearance was that of a thirteen-year-old boy, said unpleasantly as it slowly raised its hand at Choi Hyuk. Choi Hyuk squeezed all his remaining karma to try to avoid its attack somehow.

Slice.

That moment, something flashed past the monster's neck.

{... Huh...?}

Before the monster could say anything-

Blaaze!

White flames completely burned its sliced head and body.

The monster's small figure had been revealed due to Choi Hyuk's sword.

And, the moment the monster's attention was focused on Choi Hyuk, what cut its head off was 'Flame-Rain's Glory' which had been waiting for this opportunity.

"...Flame-Rain?"

At first, Choi Hyuk didn't see her. All he saw was a single sword.

However, soon, her tattered figure materialized starting from the sword handle.

Although she was missing an eye and her body was cut and ripped in various places, she was alive. She had only fainted.

Karma was shapeless.

Focusing all her concentration on her sword, she had assimilated with it. Then, like how the monster had hidden itself, she too hid her traces within her sword and, supported by Choi Hyuk's intrusion, launched a surprise attack on the monster.

That was how Flame-Rain and Choi Hyuk became 'demise-ranked monster killers'.

The meaning behind this great accomplishment was beyond their expectations.

While she might be known as an eccentric despite being the Flame Wing Tribe's princess, Flame-Rain, who was a transcendent warrior, hadn't been able to obtain military distinction.

While he was a genius who created a Weapon of Vow despite only being a middle-ranked warrior at the time, Choi Hyuk was undervalued as he was of a weak species

from a planet on the border.

In this moment, they had finally come out from the behind the curtains.

{1} Riding on the tiger's back – The moment you got off the tiger's back, it would eat you. Basically, there was no turning back.

Chapter 160

The Fourteenth

By the time Choi Hyuk saw Flame-Rain again in the Speckled-Light Tribe's infirmary, she was uninjured. From her eyes, which shined brighter than the stars, to her round shoulders, she had completely healed from the injuries she incurred when battling the monster.

She was sitting down comfortably and was looking up at the star-filled universe. When Choi Hyuk entered, she became surprised and stiffened blankly. Choi Hyuk saw her eyes tremble.

"You're fine? You were severely injured."

Choi Hyuk had been in a similar state as well back when he was injured by Narci, who had been much stronger than him. He was able to recover quickly because Commander Mack had given him one of her horns. If she hadn't, then it would have normally taken much longer. However, Flame-Rain had completely recovered in two days.

Choi Hyuk found it odd, but Flame-Rain didn't seem to be in the right state of mind to answer this question.

"That was... you?"

Still looking at him with confused eyes, she was barely able to speak those words.

Choi Hyuk firmly stared into her eyes.

"The one who rescued you? Yeah."

"How..."

"I slashed it because I could."

Flame-Rain's expression, which had stiffened at his simple answer, soon relaxed. Then

she frowned before shouting,

“Hey! Is that as easy as you say?! You said you’re only a high-ranked warrior!”

“Now I’m a highest-ranked warrior.”

He said in a manner as though he was saying his pimples cleared up after a night’s rest. However, it really was like that. It was different from when he needed a special enlightenment and Commander Mack’s assistance to advance into the high rank. After rescuing Flame-Rain and sleeping due to exhaustion, he woke up as a highest-ranked warrior.

It wasn’t all that surprising though. Choi Hyuk possessed a great understanding of his fate, enough that he could slash a highest-ranked monster with a single swing previously. What he lacked was retribution, but since he slashed a demise-ranked monster, though it was incomplete, it would be even weirder if he didn’t advance.

“Eiik...! Ha! Huhu...”

Seeing his attitude, Flame-Rain was at a loss for words before giving up and laughing absentmindedly. While she wanted to shout, ‘Even if you’re one, a highest-ranked warrior can’t slash that reddish-brown miasma!’, but she gave up on it. Since Choi Hyuk wasn’t the type to explain thoughtfully, Flame-Rain decided to explain what she had seen and felt.

“Did you know? Its reddish-brown miasma. Slashing through that was actually more difficult than slicing its actual body. Because it wasn’t fully grown, its own endurance was low. That was why it put all its strength into its reddish-brown miasma to avoid a direct confrontation. I wasn’t able to clear away the miasma and was losing... But your sword slashed through it. Even though my memories of that moment had completely disappeared, strangely, I can vividly remember the pitch-black sword that erased everything and pushed its way through. It was such a strong, fundamental power that it surprised me. But people say that it was your sword.”

Flame-Rain calmly met Choi Hyuk’s gaze. ‘Now you know why I was surprised, right?’ Choi Hyuk felt a bit embarrassed for some reason and scratched his nose once before unsheathing his sword.

Cling.

He stuck 'Choi Hyuk's Imprint' in front of her. Its pitch-black blade as well as Choi Hyuk's swaying black karma. Choi Hyuk attempted to explain.

"Is it that surprising? It's because you shook the monster up. If not, then I would have never been able to slash through the miasma."

While it was rare for Choi Hyuk to be bashful, Flame-Rain didn't notice as she was busy examining 'Choi Hyuk's Imprint' and Choi Hyuk's karma on it, seemingly entranced.

"Amazing... A fate no one in the alliance has ever created... Even though it's still weak, it possesses a sharpness that can cut the fate of 'collapse'. A power to deny all things established."

Tap. Tap.

The more she examined it, her hair began to stand on its end one after another. Pure white flames dimly blazed in her eyes like refined silver.

That moment, she looked at Choi Hyuk with a bright expression.

"If it's you... If it's you! You can end this war!"

"...!"

Not suiting the situation, her smile was so brilliant and her skin, on which her flames faintly blazed, was so lovely, that Choi Hyuk had to close his eyes and avoid looking at her.

A peaceful darkness welcomed them.



That day was also the day Flame-Rain's triumphant return ceremony was held. Because of the promise Flame-Rain had received beforehand and since the public's opinion couldn't be covered up because there were quite a few warriors from the top four tribes who participated in the expedition, their triumphant return ceremony was arranged without any problems.

Flame-Rain's subordinates planned a triumphant return march from the infirmary on the edge of Alliance City, cutting through the city and the Road of Glory, to the 'Brain'.

"Let's go. You're going on your triumphant return march."

"Triumphant return march? From where? Ah, will we go back out into space and act as though we've just returned? Eh, you're supposed to march as soon as you return victorious, but because I was injured like a fool..."

Flame-Rain mumbled as she followed behind Choi Hyuk before being surprised in front of the infirmary.

All the warriors who had fought with her had gathered, fully armed, on the not-so-large road. They were so well disciplined that she couldn't even hear a single breath from all of them.

However, when Flame-Rain stepped out, their gazes turned towards her simultaneously.

Thud, thud!

Flinch!

Flame-Rain was taken aback when the countless number of warriors with rigid expressions turned to look at her.

After seeing their expressions relax, she smiled awkwardly.

Gentle smiles were on the warriors' faces, then they opened their mouths wide and cheered.

"Wooaaah!"

Their cheer was loud enough of to shake Alliance City, the capital of the alliance.

Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump!

Completely contrary to their disciplined postures and unable to contain their emotion, the warriors stomped their feet and banged their weapons as they rushed to Flame-Rain and hoisted her up in the air.

“Woahh!”

She was thrown up in the air, accompanied by their cheers, and their raised arms received her again. Stepping on each other, some even taking to the air, they tangled together to create a tidal wave as tall as a building. At the top, Flame-Rain rode the tidal wave of warriors as she was propelled forward. Beside her was Choi Hyuk, who had been hoisted up alongside her without realizing it.

Choi Hyuk had a bitter expression.

Seeing him like this, Flame-Rain laughed.

The citizens of Alliance City cheered as well as they watched the enormous wave of warriors marching through the city.

-The warriors who defeated demise!

-The biggest military merit in the history of the alliance!

-We hit first and defeated demise!

Multiple cheers mixed together and echoed out. They had beaten a demise-ranked monster that could have brought despair to the alliance with their skill and without relying on a plan. That wasn't all. They beat the monster in the monsters' universe, in the middle of the enemy camp! The alliance, that had always defended and taken losses, was now starting its counterattack!

The excitement of the marching warriors and the observing Alliance City citizens was beyond their expectations. To be this happy because they won!

While being propelled forward, Choi Hyuk saw their faces.

Amidst the crowd that had gathered, he saw the commander-in-chief of the Shapley Supercluster, Armor-Phantom, Night Sovereign Ding, who caused a conflict on Dragonic, and even Hashishi and Manta, who he had clashed against during the recruit training of the Kundle Tribe. He looked down on all of them. He saw their bitter, downcast looks.

At first, Choi Hyuk was dazed but suddenly felt a sharp sword-like emotion jumbling in his stomach. It felt chillingly pleasant. It was now time to kill those who he needed to kill, and there was almost no one left who would block his path. With every step he took, their chains and shackles that sloppily wrapped around to restrain him fell off one after another.

Finally, his shackles, his enemies, were only the Exalted Wings.

His enemies that he didn't even know the faces of were close. If he stretched his hand out a little further... Not one would remain...

'There really isn't a lot left now.'

Swallowing the blades that wanted to slice his stomach open and rush out, Choi Hyuk was barely able to smile.



{We didn't know that the demise-ranked monster would be awake. To be able to defeat a monster like that... I express my respect for your military merit. Flame-Rain.}

No matter what he thought inwardly, Flame-Hell respectfully greeted Flame-Rain.

"I didn't accomplish it alone."

Greeting modestly, Flame-Rain shared her merit with Choi Hyuk. Choi Hyuk lowered his head slightly.

Seeing those two, Flame-Thorn spoke in an unpleasant voice.

{Please don't misunderstand me... But something is odd. It was a demise-ranked monster. A monster like that had awakened, yet is it possible for a warrior of the proficiency stage of the transcendent level to defeat it? On top of that, a warrior who had just become a highest-ranked warrior was able to provide assistance? If the monster was so weak, then I don't think there's a reason to call it a 'collapse'...}

Flame-Ember immediately cut in at Flame-Thorn's thorny words.

{Considering the testimonies and records, the demise-ranked monster that appeared this time wasn't complete. However, I heard that the nature of its power was

undoubtedly that of demise and that its strength wasn't below ours, it might even surpass it.}

{However, since the level of the warriors who participated in the expedition was low... Couldn't the reports have been exaggerated?}

{No, that why I'm saying!}

Flame-Ember and Flame-Thorn were about to argue once again, but Flame-Rain cut them off.

"I would like to request something."

Unlike before, her attitude exuded composure.

{...}

In this strange mood, the Exalted Wings waited for her request in silence.

"I request for a reordering of the alliance ranks."

Immediately after those words, Flame-Rain's skin blazed with chillingly white, transparent flames. It was different from her previous orange flames and even her white flames seen recently.

Her vigor surged out without holding anything back. She was clearly showing off her strength.

{Hmm...}

{Huu...}

There was no meaning in distinguishing who mumbled. Everyone mumbled before swallowing their silence. Flame-Rain had been at the proficiency stage of the transcendent level. She, who was the 28th warrior in the alliance ranks, had grown tremendously after overcoming this trial. Her flames, which displayed her full strength, proved everything.

She had passed the mid-stages and was completely in the late transcendent level. Her power was now comparable to Flame-Hell and Dark-Sound, who were the strongest of the Exalted Wings.

Even Choi Hyuk widened his eyes in shock.

‘I knew her wounds healed too quickly...’

She had obtained much more than she lost. While Choi Hyuk accumulated Retribution from facing the demise-ranked monster, Flame-Rain had accumulated the most. Choi Hyuk shook his head after seeing Flame-Rain, who had already been strong, become even more unbelievably strong. ‘So there was another monster here.’

{Ranks... Ranks... Will giving you the 14th rank be sufficient? As you know, it is the greatest rank for a warrior.}

Flame-Thorn’s attitude, which had been busy ridiculing Flame-Rain, changed. As long as her ability was confirmed, there was no use trying to lower her contribution.

However, Flame-Rain shook her head.

Rank 14. The reason why this was the greatest rank for a warrior was simple. There were 13 Exalted Wings who were tied for first.

Therefore, what she wanted was one thing.

“No, I want to be a member of the Exalted Wings.”

{...}

{... Then won’t there be five Exalted Wings from the Flame Wing Tribe?}

{... But she has the qualifications.}

{...}

Silence and murmurs immediately covered the Brain. It was a dilemma. The Exalted Wing couldn’t simply agree through silence nor could they clearly oppose it either.

{... I op-oppose.}

Flame-Thorn, who had fallen into a state of shock, jumped to oppose a few moments later.

Following this, Flame-Hell stated.

{Flame-Rain. While the Exalted Wings need to possess a power stronger than anyone, one cannot become an Exalted Wing with just that.}

Flame-Rain was still composed. Cheers chanting her name still rang in her ears. She was already the alliance's hero and was fully justified in her actions. On top of that, she had a measure in dealing with the other Exalted Wings' wariness. Even Flame-Hell would have no choice but to acknowledge her in the end.

"Yes, of course. Exalted Wings are those who lead the fate of the great universe. Each member has to propose a future their fate would reach... But I have already shown you this."

{... What is it?}

"The end of the war."

{...}

"Now is the time to recover what we have lost. I, as the 14th Exalted Wing, will be the commander-in-chief in attacking the monsters' universe."

{... That's dangerous.}

"Staying like this is more dangerous. Like how the monsters avoid getting noticed while capturing our planets and creating Kahur Kabkuns, I too will avoid their notice and establish our base and fortress. I will make preparations so that more warriors can take part in the attack more safely."

{...}

A heavy silence settled. A petite lady stood in front of 13 stone plates. The entire universe perked its ears at her words.

"We need to continuously mess up their plans. The more we do so, the tougher our defensive line will become. Didn't Highest-ranked Warrior Choi Hyuk completely

colonize two superclusters in the quickest time in the alliance's history because he swept through the demise-ranked monster's Kahur Kabkun and the many Kahur Kabkuns affiliated with it in a single action this time? Even though our defensive line expanded rapidly, isn't it easier to defend than before?"

{...}

The Exalted Wings' silence continued.

{Eu...!}

Only Flame-Thorn protested. However, sensing that the flow had already been overturned, Flame-Hell stopped her.

{Stop.}

Then, with the following silence, it was decided.

Baaang!

With a bang, the 'Brain' shook. The 13 stone plates that were spread an equal distance apart were slightly pushed away, and another stone plate arose from the space created. A white stone plate that reached the sky was engraved with a waterdrop flame symbolizing Flame-Rain.

{Congratulations, princess. When you blazed with flames... It felt like His Late Majesty had returned.}

Flame-Fog, who had always been silent, congratulated her with a trembling voice.

Hence, the 14th Exalted Wing was born.



"Wow..."

Choi Hyuk left the 'Brain' slightly dazed. Although Choi Hyuk also received some rewards, after seeing Flame-Rain become an Exalted Wing before him, he wasn't too

interested in what he had obtained.

‘An Exalted Wing... If you become an Exalted Wing, then you can probably see other Exalted Wings face-to-face, right? Then should I also aim for that?’

Choi Hyuk had decided that the Exalted Wings would be his final enemies, yet the only one he had seen in person for a moment until now was Dark-Sound. Besides that, he had met them indirectly at the ‘Brain’. If he wanted to get revenge, he had to at least be able to see them. He needed to get closer to their core.

“Flame-Rain is going to set up in the monsters’ universe...? Then do I have to go there too?”

Attacking instead of defending. It was a completely new opportunity. If he took advantage of that, then he would be able to make great contributions, and if he did that, then he could take a step closer to the Exalted Wings. Choi Hyuk was walking while thinking this when his expression suddenly stiffened as he stopped in place.

A shadowy darkness had suddenly enveloped him. He couldn’t see, hear or feel anything.

Choi Hyuk calmly turned his gaze.

“For life and freedom. What is it that you want from me, Exalted Wing Dark-Sound?”

A glint appeared on Dark-Sound’s eyes, who had his arms crossed. It was because he didn’t expect Choi Hyuk to find him so quickly. However, he didn’t show his surprise and said,

“Amazing, isn’t she? Flame-Rain... She acted well. To think that she would declare she would go to the monsters’ universe instead of staying in ours... With that one move, she silenced all the other Exalted Wings from other tribes who were scared of the increase in the Flame Wing Tribe’s influence. On top of that, her flames... charming, aren’t they? To the point Flame-Fog returned to her side... It seems that they are moved to tears when they see amazing flames.”

“ ... ”

Choi Hyuk didn't know how to reply so he remained silent.

Dark-Sound approached Choi Hyuk without making any sound and said,

“Flame-Rain. She's a good friend. However, don't become so close with her.”

“...”

Dark-Sound continued to speak weird things, but his next words were shocking.

“I know it all. You... hate the alliance so much that you want to erase it, right? That's why I'm saying this. Be careful. To your enemies, you can't let them know that you hate them. You need to make them misunderstand you. Only then can you snag an opportunity.”

While saying this, Dark-Sound's eyes boiled with hatred for the alliance.

“So don't be close with Flame-Rain. If possible, it's better if it seems like you are hostile towards her. Only then will they not be wary of you.”

Choi Hyuk saw a faint white light (goodwill) from Dark-Sound's cold eyes.

However, whether he was someone to kill or keep alive... As if his Eyes of the Judge were covered by something, he only saw a faint shadow. He couldn't distinguish what it was.

traitorAIZEN note: Volume 9 actually ends here. Next chapter is the real start of Volume 10.

Chapter 161

Gathering and Scattering (1)

To Choi Hyuk, the time spent with Flame-Rain was...

He would either have tea with her when she suddenly visited or they would talk for a while, and she would only visit for less than thirty minutes every few months, sometimes even only once a year. That was all, yet... it was weird.

It didn't feel awkward when he met her, and since it felt like they had conversed throughout this entire time, it instead felt like the blood and slaughter that were their daily lives was as faint as a dream.

Choi Hyuk opened his eyes at the 'Tower of Warriors'. The karma that had been sticking next to him dispersed like butterflies. While this place was called the 'Tower of Warriors', its true appearance was like that of an enormous whirlwind of karma. Within this place, where everything was floating as if there wasn't any gravity, Choi Hyuk raised his floating body. Specks of light chaotically flashed by his still fuzzy vision, and when the 'Light of Eternity' emitting from the center of Alliance City reflected on them, they would create all sorts of shadow-like symbols. Swords, shields, crystals... Weapons he could identify, and some he couldn't, flashed before disappearing.

The 'Tower of Warriors' was the tomb of karma weapons.

When warriors died, their karma weapons would slumber in this place. The unfulfilled callings, sentiments, vows, and conclusions of dead warriors gathered together to create a huge flow of fate, and the Exalted Wings used this power to handle the Net of Fate. It was the alliance's symbol along with the 'Brain'. The right to stay here wasn't given to anyone.

Choi Hyuk stretched his hand out to his waist and looked for 'Choi Hyuk's Imprint'.

When he placed his hand on its handle, only then did it feel complete. The refreshing sensation of morning overcame him.

When he slowly lowered his body to exit the tower, the silhouettes of the karma weapons that filled the tower would surround his body. When his body lowered to an appropriate level, like elevator doors opening, the silhouettes dispersed on their own.

As soon as he landed on the lowest part of the Tower of Warriors, he heard Lee Jinhee's chatting voice.

"Wow... Then Flame-Rain was on the battlefield in 2002? And that was before they started colonizing the Laniakea Supercluster?"

"Yeah. Since the frequency of discovery in the Laniakea Supercluster was so low, and when I arrived, monsters had already occupied various places... It was really intense that time. I almost died numerous times."

"Do even transcendent warriors get in danger?"

"Of course! Also, I was a highest-ranked warrior that time."

"Then you entered the transcendent level in only ten years?"

Hearing Lee Jinhee's shocked voice, Flame-Rain brushed her hair as she boasted,

"Everyone's surprised by my growth."

Lee Jinhee exaggeratingly lowered her head.

"Yes, yes, of course, Exalted Wing. Wow, anyways, hearing your story feel a bit surreal. In 2002, Earth didn't even have smartphones. I don't even remember that time well. Ah, can I call you unni^{1}?"

Flame-Rain smiled as she waved her hand while Baek Seoin mumbled in shock,

"In 2002, Korea was a pot of craziness because of the World Cup. So the alliance was in the middle of war back then too. Well, if we look at the number of years, then the alliance has probably been fighting since prehistoric times... The alliance wasn't made

for nothing I see.”

Flame-Rain looked up. Shadows of the karma weapons were cast above randomly. Countless warriors had died, and the Tower of Warriors, which grew larger every time they did, was already as wide as multiple stadiums and so tall that one couldn't see the top.

“Yeah... It wasn't easy. So the earlier and more key members have a stronger compensation mentality.”

Flame-Rain's voice lowered.

“2002... The world cup that opened in South Korea and Japan. I saw it too. I studied a lot about Earth. It was a beautiful planet. For Earth to become like that... I'm sorry.”

Baek Seoin and Lee Jinhee were taken aback by Flame-Rain's words.

“No! There's no need for you to be sorry.”

“Yeah. In fact, we're grateful to you, unni.”

Flame-Rain smiled weakly.

Dim flames blazed in her eyes. Her voice became even lower, and it rang even deeper.

“I... am going to change the alliance. Starting from the monsters' universe that I am assigned to, I will change the alliance into one that doesn't distinguish between the center and the borders, where all warriors are respected and fight indiscriminately and where no life will be treated as a Consumable! I will create an alliance that is truly for life and freedom. I will endure, no, become stronger in the monsters' universe and return. Starting the change from there, I will change even our universe.”

Seeing her tightly shut lips and faintly blazing eyes, Lee Jinhee's mouth became agape. Led by Flame-Rain's passion, she unknowing said,

“Me too. I want to see that world...”

“You will.”

Flame-Rain nodded firmly.

Choi Hyuk, who had been watching them from the back, joined in with a slightly confused voice,

“Just when did you all become so close?”

While they should have seen Flame-Rain with him when she visited, from his knowledge, Baek Seoin, Lee Jinhee, and the others hadn't talked with her before.

Lee Jinhee and Baek Seoin were startled by Choi Hyuk's sudden appearance and quickly greeted him. Flame-Rain replied leisurely as though she had already been aware that he was behind her,

“We became close while waiting for you to get up.”

“You were waiting for me?”

Flame-Rain went over and pulled Choi Hyuk's wrist.

“Let's go. I'll show you my homeland this time. While it's very different from Earth, it probably won't be bad.”

The cheers and jeers of the Berserkers' executives, who were out in the plaza, simultaneously rained down on them as Flame-Rain disappeared with Choi Hyuk.



Flame-Rain brought Choi Hyuk to the fountain of light, no, the lake of light in the center of Alliance City. This place, called the 'Light of Eternity', was like the sun as it shined a light on the entire city, which was as large as the moon.

She grabbed his wrist and pulled him step-by-step towards the Light of Eternity.

“If the Brain and the Tower of Warriors are the symbols of the alliance for all members... This place is the symbol of the Flame Wing Tribe, who possess absolute influence within the Flame Wing Alliance. It's a place of privileged access.”

She said in a slightly bitter tone as she submerged herself completely in the light.

While the 'Light of Eternity' was a device that provided energy to Alliance City, it was also a two-way gate that led to the Flame Wing Tribe's homeland. The moment Choi Hyuk was about to pass through the 'Light of Eternity' while being led by Flame-Rain, Choi Hyuk heard a cold message.

{Other species are prohibited from approaching.}

"He's my guest."

{Ah, pardon me! I welcome your return to our homeland, princess.}

As soon as Flame-Rain cut in, the voice that had been cold towards Choi Hyuk became like a warm breeze.

Immediately after, Choi Hyuk entered the Flame Wing Tribe's homeland, 'End of the Universe'.

At a glance, this place seemed to be within a painting by Van Gogh. Everything he saw was a flame. As though a great painter had paid great care to his every brushstroke to create harmony, all sorts of textures, shapes, and colors of flames meshed together, like Pointillism, to create an incredibly noble scene, from violent flames to smooth flames and from white flames to green, pink, and purple flames.

"...This place is?"

Choi Hyuk opened his mouth without realizing it, and Flame-Rain didn't reply as she took a deep breath.

The flames around her blazed as if blessing her. These flames, which were transparent and white like her own distinct flames, made it feel as though the entire universe was protecting her.

'Is this what they call a princess?'

Choi Hyuk admired unconsciously.

"It's a wonderful place, isn't it?"

Flame-Rain said only after taking deep breaths without a word for a while.

“End of the Universe. Since it hasn’t been long since the big bang when considering the passage of time relative to this place, the Flames of Beginning, which birthed the universe, still remain intact here. The Flame Wing Tribe are the descendants of the Flames of Beginning that conceived the universe. That’s why the diehard nationalist also call us the descendants of the Creator.”

She kept pulling Choi Hyuk’s wrist as she showed him various locations. She collected the most delicious flames and let Choi Hyuk taste them and even introduced him to the artistic flames kindled by the Flame Wing Tribe.

In this place, where everything was made up of flames, there was no need for a city, buildings, or even clothes.

However, each and every flame here had the touch of the Flame Wing Tribe. This was what the Flame Wing Tribe usually did. They consumed and created flames.

The Flame Wing Tribe’s emotions started and ended with flames. The desire they possessed from the beginning was to kindle a more beautiful or a more everlasting flame. There was nothing else besides that.

Visiting her homeland for the first time in a long while, Flame-Rain was sentimental the whole time.

“This place is not only my homeland but my mother as well. Not as in a figure of speech, but literally. Like earthlings, the Flame Wing Tribe members can give birth by mixing flames with each other... But in cases like my father, who possess overwhelmingly powerful flames, they can fuse their flames with this universe’s flames. Then... a child is born from those flames. That is why I don’t have a mother in Earth’s traditional sense. This world, these flames are my mother.”

Flame-Rain looked happy while saying this. According to her words, this was like returning to her mother after a long while. However, her expression soon darkened.

“That is why... my tribe members can’t give up on these flames.”

“Give up?”

“Yeah. All things born must die. Our universe isn’t an exception, and neither are the Flames of Beginning. After the big bang, the universe has been cooling, and the flames we enjoyed are gradually dying out. We couldn’t just watch that happen... Still, my father, Flame-Sky, accepted this change and was looking for a new way of life, but Flame-Hell, who came into power after my father passed away, isn’t like that. To maintain these flames for as long as possible, he decided to make the Flame Wing Tribe the greatest existence in the universe. This was why we were able to obtain the special fate as the ruling species of the universe, and using this fate and power, we can allocate the karma necessary to continue maintaining the Flames of Beginning.”

She stopped speaking for a moment before having a hard time opening her mouth again.

“While no one talks about it now, the Dark Tribe, Armored Soul Tribe, and Speckled Light Tribe, who are now known as members of the top four tribes, had all gone through what Earth had gone through in the beginning. This happened after my father had passed away. Flame-Hell said that these were inevitable trials and that it was the monsters’ doing, not ours, but in fact, these were all things we did to obtain a ruling position for the Flame Wing Tribe. I didn’t know this when I was young. Like a fool, I believed that the alliance was free and peaceful by only looking at its outer appearance.”

Hearing this, Choi Hyuk recalled the deep hatred Dark-Sound had revealed to him.

Flame-Rain stopped, as if she was fighting back her tears, before changing the mood and hitting Choi Hyuk’s shoulder.

“But I saw it. Another universe. I saw how beautiful the universe, which the Flame Wing Tribe members hate and call the ‘cold universe’, is. The cold air on Earth. The stars in the night sky. The hot coffee I drank while blowing on it. How wonderful all those things were. Wasn’t it? How was it? Growing up in a cold universe without knowing anything about the alliance and the war?”

Choi Hyuk’s expression momentarily became emotional after listening to her words. Soon, he shook his head and said,

“...It was simple. Without knowing anything about this enormous universe, we simply

lived by advancing our feeble science. Since we didn't know anything about karma, we were so weak that we lived solely by wielding the technology we had created. While in fear that the weapons, technology, and artificial intelligences we created could destroy us, we greedily warred against each other. Not everything was good. That was why, when we first saw the alliance, I think we thought that it was illustrious despite being scared and hating it. We thought those of the alliance were different from us since they could manipulate karma since birth. But... looking at it now, I don't think so."

Flame-Rain smiled as she agreed with him.

"Huu, yeah. In the end, we're all foolish. That's why we're all the same karmalings, right? There isn't a truly exalted species. So..."

She stared directly at Choi Hyuk as she continued,

"So I will make one. A new alliance. An alliance that is truly for the prosperity of all karmalings. To do that... I need your help."

She stretched her hand out.

"Let's work together. You will, won't you?"

When he saw her outstretched hand, Choi Hyuk felt a prickling sensation.

He recalled how Jung Minji had stretched out her hand, asking him to work together with her back when he was about to leave the high school after completing the Ring of Rebirth and the Throne Game. That time, Choi Hyuk refused. Then she died.

This situation felt similar.

Of course, a lot had changed since then as well.

While he himself had changed a lot, the biggest change was Flame-Rain. She was someone who warmed others' hearts by being next to them.

It was the same right now.

She stretched her hand out while saying that she would abandon this universe where various colored flames blazed around them like a great masterpiece. She was small yet stronger than him. Despite this, she was easily hurt. However, she had the qualifications of an empress as she could recover from it and establish her own vision.

She was frighteningly beautiful.

This was why Choi Hyuk couldn't smile or hold her hand and wish her the fortune of war.

Instead, he took a step back. He didn't avoid her gaze. Only, while hiding his emotions as best as he could, he shook his head.

"No, I won't."

He said in the end.

Then again.

Flame-Rain's hand, which she had stretched out like a flower with a fluttering heart, flinched as though it was met with a cold breeze.

{1} Unni – what a younger woman calls an older woman.

Chapter 162

Gathering and Scattering (2)

The Light of Eternity, which surged from the center of Alliance City, hit the various gravity fields and different atmospheres in the sky, scattering intricately. It looked like a patchwork stitched from various types of skies, such as a sunset, blue autumn sky, shining light, and darkness. No matter how long one looked at it, they wouldn't get tired of it.

"It's finally peaceful..."

In a place not far from the Tower of Warriors, Alexei stood leisurely as he drank a soda. The soda, which was called 'One Sky', was connected to Alliance City's sky and karma. No matter where or when you drank it, its rippling liquid reflected the various skies. When drunken, the sky-blue liquid would wet one's tongue and throat as it soaked into one's cells, and the faint scent of an autumn or spring breeze would linger in one's nose. It felt like one's mouth and stomach was being soaked by the sky.

Alexei let out a breath in satisfaction.

However, Lee Jinhee didn't seem to be in a good mood.

"Lyosha, what's peaceful? Can't you see everyone's busy wracking their brains?"

Without a doubt, the Alliance City citizens were huddling together and discussing something with serious faces. Alexei wasn't aware of this.

"It's because of the princess, right? Establishing a fortress in the monsters' universe or something... Well, I guess these announcements that always pop up are shocking in Alliance City?"

Alexei said as though it didn't concern him and smiled brightly at Lee Jinhee.

"But director, it's only shocking to those living here. To people like us from the borders, isn't this news welcoming? Dropping privileges and competing solely on skill... And there's no ridiculous treatment like making the less skilled Consumables. To be

honest, this is like a dream to us!”

Seeing Alexei’s somewhat excited expression, Lee Jinhee’s face became even darker. Lee Jinhee stared at the boy’s face, who always followed her like a puppy while saying that he liked her. He smiled timidly as if saying that he was happy just meeting her eyes.

While he had lost a bit of his baby fat and his face had become more mature, he was still young. Her heart ached a little more.

“Lyosha.”

“Yes! Director!”

“You entered the middle rank, right?”

“I entered it! I am ashamed for reaching it so late.”

While completing the mission this time, the majority of warriors at the team leader rank were able to step into the middle rank. Among them, Alexei, who was the top team leader in Lee Jinhee’s troop, had already passed the early stages and was heading for the proficiency stage. While he said he was ashamed for reaching it so late, his expression revealed an uncontrollable pride.

Lee Jinhee patted Alexei’s head as she said,

“Good job. You worked hard. However... We really were late. Both you and me.”

“Pardon?”

Alexei, who had been happy from hearing he did well and that he had worked hard, was surprised at Lee Jinhee’s self-deprecating words.

“We’re late. Too late. Didn’t you realize anything this time? The Berserkers couldn’t follow leader. We’re supposed to support him from behind when he pushes forward... But we couldn’t. The gap between leader and us is gradually increasing.”

She wrapped her hand around her forehead as she said,

“Leader won’t wait for us since he’s someone with clear goals. So us Berserkers need

to match his goals on our own. That's why he picked us. Yet, he reached the highest rank this time... While none of the directors directly below him have even become high-ranked warriors yet. Even the team leaders below the directors have only now reached the middle rank... Late. Too late. If we want to cover the leader, then, at the very least, the directors need to be high-ranked warriors and the team leaders need to have reached the proficiency or peak stage of the middle rank. But even I, a director, am still only a middle-ranked warrior."

"That's... because the higher rank you are, the more difficult it is to increase your rank. On top of that, I heard that, starting from the high rank, you need enlightenment regarding your fate, since you're transcending the system..."

"Yeah. But that's our problem... At least, during the next mission, we need to reach the high rank. Only then can we follow the leader, even if we're insufficient."

"Euu. It's already hard enough. I heard that once the base is created, it'll be safe for a while... Can't we work hard to find enlightenment then? While saying these words may be me overstepping my position... You can't be too hasty."

Alexei said everything he had to say even while reading Lee Jinhee's mood.

Lee Jinhee looked up at the complex sky filled with various colors.

"Yeah... But we probably won't go to Flame-Rain unni's base."

"Pardon? Isn't it obvious we'll be going there? She's close friends with our leader. Their goals are similar."

Lee Jinhee smiled bitterly.

"You still don't know the leader? No... He's not interested in improving the alliance."

Saying this, Lee Jinhee saw the Berserkers focused on training around the Tower of Warriors.

Sweating heavily, Ryu Hyunsung wielded his sword with his eyes closed. Baek Seoin, on the other hand, had set up automatic weapons around him and was, whilst standing in the middle of them, avoiding the barrage of swords and bullets. Kim Honghyun was sparring with Zero, and Leah was meditating on her own.

While the Berserkers always fought with their lives on the line, Choi Hyuk didn't promise them a glorious future. Choi Hyuk's path was simply more destruction and slaughter. He wasn't interested in a better future.

Then what were the Berserkers fighting for?

Revenge, agony towards the past, and ambition to be stronger than anyone else. While there were multiple reasons, all of them were related to one thing – the intense pleasure experienced from the fights led by Choi Hyuk and the sense of accomplishment gained from defeating a difficult opponent. No drug could provide them with that sharp, abundant sensation. Whether it was to forget their pain or for a better future, they couldn't help but be led by him.

However, there was a possibility that this case wouldn't last forever, especially for those warriors who strove for certain goals rather than indulging themselves in battles to forget their pain.

“Whaat? Then what kind of mission are we going on? How scary... Isn't it time for us to establish our foothold? And I am curious about the new base that's being established...”

Listening to Alexei's dispirited voice, Lee Jinhee shook her head.

“Yeah... I don't know how things will be in the future either. What kind of mission the leader will be assigned to is unknown...”



Choi Hyuk recalled his conversation with Dark-Sound.

“However... I want to quickly grow stronger. Is there another path besides standing next to Flame-Rain and invading the monsters' universe?”

“There is. She's going to cautiously begin her activities from the border, trying not to be noticed. However, the alliance needs a more aggressive plan than that.”

“What is it?”

“The whereabouts of the queen of monsters. There are now two possible locations remaining. We need to find out which of the two the queen is at and what the best

route to invade that place is. And if we attract the monsters' attention while doing this, it'll help hid Flame-Rain's stronghold, so it's not all bad. While there are those within the Exalted Wings who hate Flame-Rain, there isn't a single one who hopes that the stronghold, which we spent a large number of resources on, will collapse. Since everyone will be doomed if we mess up."

"So you're saying to invade the center. That's a dangerous mission."

It seemed he liked the sound of 'dangerous mission' as he rolled the word on his tongue once more while smiling. Dark-Sound nodded his head.

"Yeah. Flame-Hell and I will suggest you for the position so do your best. Also... I'll give you a present."

"I'll accept it gratefully."

Choi Hyuk didn't refuse any presents. Smiling faintly, Choi Hyuk bowed and Dark-Sound, seeing this, grinned.

Dark-Sound's pale lips spat a few words and Choi Hyuk's face became stiff.

"The ones in charge of Earth's recruit training."

"..."

Blaze.

A small black flame blazed. It even burned on the tips of Dark-Sound's fingers.

'Haa... As expected.'

Of course, he wasn't injured in the slightest, the fact that Choi Hyuk's flames could even burn the tips of his fingers was surprising on its own. This flame didn't use any skill, materializing purely from his burning rage. Choi Hyuk's eyes were blazing black as he looked at Dark-Sound without a reply.

That was why Choi Hyuk didn't care about his executives' reactions.

“Ah... Leader. Are we fighting again? We have a lot to do. We need to reorganize Dragonic and we have to research new technologies... No, no, fighting is good. However, what reason is there for not going to Exalted Wing Flame-Rain’s stronghold? We can fight as much as we want and reorganize there.”

The Artillery Captain Handke made a gloomy expression. Aide Leah continued after,

“There have been rumors that all the El Tribe members and earthlings on Dragonic will be transferred to that stronghold. That place is no different from a new colonized land. The ones who go first will obtain a bigger proportion. Aren’t we at the time where we need to make humanity stronger by going at a slower pace? We can obtain sufficient military merit there as well.”

These were the suggestion of the administrative and education representatives of the Berserkers. Guardian Bae Jinman didn’t say anything and kept his eyes closed.

Choi Hyuk shook his head.

Normally, he would go along with whatever his subordinates wanted, but not this time.

In this moment where he couldn’t back down and his leadership was tested, he settled the situation with a single sentence.

“I found out who were in charge of Earth’s recruit training.”

The ones in charge of Earth’s recruit training. At first, they all tilted their heads, uncertain of what he meant, but the moment they understood, shivers ran down their spines.

Choi Hyuk’s words stabbed at them like daggers.

“Let’s deal with them first.”

Within this chilling silence, someone opened his mouth.

“...Earth’s... Recruit training. You’re talking about the ones who created... The Ring of Rebirth and the Throne Game, right?”

It was Guardian Bae Jinman, who had his eyes closed until now. His eyes were bloodshot.



Flicht of the Speckled Light Tribe was a strategist who recently came to fame.

While he was from one of the top four tribes, as could be inferred by his name, he was of low birth within the Speckled Light Tribe. In his tribe, names like 'Fragment Light' and 'Fingernail Light' were common, and those who were respected had 'Light-' in front of their names. Yet, he didn't have 'Light' in his name.

In the Speckled Light Tribe, millet-sized lights gathered in a group to form a collective intelligence, which was then given a name, but, the lights that composed Flicht were all weak and indecisive losers.

However, Flicht didn't give up. Maybe it was because he was a gathering of the weak and cowardly, but he always worked harder than anyone else. Since he didn't hold any expectations for himself, he didn't become overconfident, and when people criticized him, he didn't lash out in anger but rather endured and made efforts to improve. After continuing like this, he had completed a few large missions, and using the 'hit' results from a recent mission as a basis, he was even able to advance into the alliance's capital, Alliance City.

He was a strategist active in Alliance City's tactic market. His story of making his own fortune through strictly his own efforts was quite famous, and many people respected and admired him.

Flicht was really happy about that.

Whenever he went to the tactic market early to examine the newly proposed tactics and discussed with other strategists about which ones had potential and which ones were trash, the thought 'I succeeded' always sunk into his mind.

It was the same today.

"Hey, Flicht! This is a new tactic, what do you think about it?"

"Management of reconnaissance troops to figure out the monster queen's exact location and invasion route... Are you interested in it? I'm not."

"Woah, woah, it's still quite a hot-button issue. And it's essential information in order to end this war."

“The war ending...? I don’t know, I can’t believe it. While Exalted Wing Flame-Rain may have had some fun with her victory, do you think we’ll be able to see the war end in her generation? In our generation, the best we can do is maintain the current situation. There’s a higher chance that the war will end with our loss. It’s all just hot air. It’s just a diversion to gain more power. All higher ups are like that.”

“So... The reconnaissance is like a show?”

“Yeah. Since Exalted Wing Flame-Rain is gaining popularity with tribes outside Alliance City with her determination to end the war, to combat this, the original Exalted Wings planned a ‘show’ tactic. However, real investments will be focused on Exalted Wing Flame-Rain’s stronghold construction. It’s better to get on that. When there’s such a great alternative, there’s no need to waste precious points on a show like that.”

“Flicht, I understand what you’re saying... But shouldn’t you of all people be interested in it? I hear the person in charge of this tactic is someone from ‘there’?”

They were both his colleagues and competitors, and facing their banter, Flicht expressionlessly turned his gaze towards the tactic information board.

‘Person in charge. The Leader of the Berserkers, a B rank independent troop, Choi Hyuk.’

Flicht smiled bitterly as he shook his head.

“Hey, take it easy.”

In principle, who was in charge of which tribe’s recruit training was a secret. However, when looking at the circumstances, guessing who did what mission was too easy. While everyone didn’t personally say it out loud, since they knew Flicht had made a great profit from leading Earth’s recruit training, they indirectly teased him.

Just as Flicht shook his head and was about to look for an investment-worthy tactic, someone tapped his shoulder. He also heard an energetic voice say, “Hello, Mr. Flicht. It is an honor to meet a strategist with such high prestige like you.”

When he turned around, a familiar earthling man was standing in front of him. While he was inwardly taken aback, he calmly asked,

“Who are you?”

The man lightly smiled as he gave a reply unrelated to his question.

“While it is sudden, the reconnaissance mission... will be a success. How about investing in it?”

He had a bright smile. Flicht avoided his gaze and said while walking elsewhere,

“Haha, I’ll think about it. I’m busy now so...”

Thud.

However, the earthling grabbed his shoulder.

“Ah, it doesn’t matter whether you invest or not, but you’ll still be participating. I came here to tell you this.”

The man’s constant disrespectful attitude made Flicht’s expression go stiff as he asked,

“...What are you saying?”

The man smiled brightly as he replied directly,

“The Leader of the Berserkers, Choi Hyuk, is dispatching the strategist, Flicht.”

The surrounding strategists were shocked at his reply as they retreated back. Now that they thought about it, the vigor released by the black sword at his waist wasn’t normal. They murmured, ‘Ah... That must be the famous Sword of Vow.’

“Dis... Dispatch?”

Choi Hyuk’s black eyes came in front of Flicht’s eyes, who still couldn’t believe the situation. He was still smiling brightly, but his eyes were cold as ice.

“You are being dispatched by an A+ rank resource transfer right. The meeting time is... Huh? It’s right now?”

“Rid-ridiculous!”

Flame-Rain received a S+ rank resource transfer right this time. As an A+ rank, it was no different from the highest rank. Before Fritch, who couldn't believe his situation, could even finish protesting, the space around him crumpled and swallowed him up.

Choi Hyuk motionlessly stared at the space Fritch had disappeared from. Then he smiled widely as he brushed his hands.

“It'll be thrilling, huh?”

He leisurely walked past the frozen strategists and left.

Chapter 163

Gathering and Scattering (3)

Chiii.

It was raining on the field, and a single flame was getting soaked. While steam rose up in the air, she looked up at the sky. Though the rain was falling constantly, the moon and stars shined as there were no clouds.

“As expected, this was where you were.”

The voice was as deep as a large brass instrument.

Flame-Rain, who had been crouched on the field, getting soaked, turned her head slightly, indicating she was aware of his presence. Then she absentmindedly looked back up at the sky.

He kept walking towards her while talking to her. On the surface of his body, metal moved delicately like a puma’s muscles, and he placed his long arms on the ground to assist his walking. His face resembled a Moai^{1}, he was Mechas of the Armored Soul Tribe^{2}.

“The environment setting... is Earth. As expected of a place where lifeforms depended heavily on the circulation of water... The environment is quite delicate. Weak, low energy level.”

When Mechas acted as though he knew, Flame-Rain, who had been sitting blankly, replied as though she appreciated that he knew.

“Right? It’s strange. The planet is as weak as a glass egg, and it’s too cold for the Flame Wing Tribe. However... I like this delicate coldness.”

Flame-Rain gently scooped up rainwater with her hands. Chii... Steam rose up. Flame-Rain’s eyes followed the rising steam in a trance.

“The reason why the Flame Wing Tribe is special is because they were born from and

grew up in the Flames of Beginning. They will get weaker if they get accustomed to places like this.”

Hearing Mechas’s whining voice, Flame-Rain’s blank eyes focused and she asked confidently,

“Will that really be the case?”

“...”

Mechas couldn’t reply for a while but acquiesced in an acknowledging tone in the end,

“Isn’t Choi Hyuk an exception...? Well, still, I’ll acknowledge it. The earthlings’ growth rate is surprising for now. While I don’t know when they’ll reach their limit, even their current potential is high enough to be considered elites.”

As if saying, ‘See?’ Flame-Rain turned her shoulders and said,

“If a fate ends, then you simply need to accept another fate. It’s not the environment that decides whether one becomes stronger or weaker, but one’s own actions.”

Mechas, who had been listening to Flame-Rain’s words while saying, “Yes, yes, princess,” abruptly shook his head as he said,

“In fact, I still can’t believe it. For Choi Hyuk to be a highest-ranked warrior already... It seems like it was only yesterday when he was just a snotty-nosed brat in the lowest-ranked supply store.”

Mechas recalled when he had guided Choi Hyuk and taught him how to use the lowest-ranked supply store.

“You’ve only met him once, yet you act like you brought him up?”

“It’s just a figure of speech. Wahaha.”

Mechas’s laughter rang out from his entire body. After seeing him laugh, Flame-Rain lowered her head. She swept her hand over the grass that grew on the field, black burnt marks trailing her hand.

Mechas’s voice became deeper and it rang out for even longer.

“Choi Hyuk... is apparently in charge of a reconnaissance mission. It was announced today.”

“...Really?”

Flame-Rain grabbed a handful of burnt grass and dirt before letting it wash off in the rain.

“What might be his reason?”

She mumbled to herself after a long silence. Since Mechas didn't really have anything to say, he simply stood there silently. Did she offend him? Was it burdensome? What was he planning on doing... Revenge? While swallowing these various thoughts flowing from her mind, Flame-Rain brushed herself off and stood up.

“...Nothing we can do.”

“Are you okay?”

Flame-Rain grinned at Mechas's question.

“I have to be. I am responsible for a ton of people!”

Then she added quietly,

“...Well, we don't know if he'll change his mind later.”

She energetically moved her arms around in a circle. Seeing her like this, Mechas's voice became gentle,

“I'll take the lead, princess.”

“Now really, how many times do I have to tell you? There isn't a position called 'princess'! Also, you're not from the Flame Wing Tribe anyways!”

“No, the tribe doesn't matter. I am calling you that because you are you. It's not because you are someone's daughter... Or, should I call you 'queen'?”

At Mechas's joking words, Flame-Rain showed an unpleasant expression.

“On Earth, there’s the expression ‘as bold as brass’. You have no shame... Don’t you cringe when saying stuff like that?”

“Well, as you can see, I really do have brass skin.”

Mechas gestured at his Moai-like face as he took the lead.



“What is this? Are you trying to get revenge?”

Flicht shouted as soon as he saw Choi Hyuk. Choi Hyuk didn’t reply and closely examined Flicht like a predator considering whether to eat or leave a small animal alone.

“While I don’t know what you’re thinking, you can’t get revenge for a mission that was conducted justly. It is a violation of alliance laws!”

However, Choi Hyuk still didn’t say anything. He simply slowly walked around Flicht and closely observed him. Flicht gradually became more nervous. The speckled lights that made up his body trembled in panic. Flicht’s mind became unruly, divided between speckled lights that were panicking and lights that tried to hold them back and regain order.

“Just what is it that you want? What do you hope to gain from doing this?”

Choi Hyuk still didn’t reply. Flicht did his best to persuade and unite the speckled lights that had fallen into a state of panic. ‘Everyone! Please calm down! We need to calmly grasp this situation! The more panicked we become, the more dangerous it becomes!’ It seemed that his persuasion worked, as the unruly speckled lights recovered their calm, and his chaotic thoughts were swept away.

“Haa... Just what are you playing at?”

As his mind cleared up a little, Flicht decided to behave more actively to release his anxiety and check Choi Hyuk’s reaction. He looked around the room and took out a drink ‘Glacier Tears’ from an absolute zero space.

“Since you aren’t talking after bringing in a guest... I’ll drink this first. I’m thirsty.”

Just as he was about to open the cap, Choi Hyuk snatched the bottle away. The speckled lights suddenly flew up, indicating Flitch's surprise. Choi Hyuk poured the Glacier Tears into a glass. It was a dense liquid that pooled together like liquid mercury.

In a calm manner, Choi Hyuk said with a smile,

"Didn't I tell you? You have been dispatched for a reconnaissance mission. Please help us."

Faced with his unexpected attitude, an intense discussion broke out between the speckled lights that made up Flitch.

'No! There's no way that's the reason! There's no doubt this has something to do with Earth's recruit training!'

'Why are you always so pessimistic? Just now, we only needed to stay calm, but instead topics of 'revenge' started popping up after you became uneasy. In fact, we might have made Choi Hyuk feel even more suspicious towards us!'

'That's right. Even if Choi Hyuk came to us after knowing everything, he might not have any harsh feelings towards us. Choi Hyuk has also been in charge of recruit training before. Was it the Kundle Tribe? I heard that he killed a number comparable to us. Since Choi Hyuk is experienced enough to know what kind of alliance this is, I'm sure he understands.'

'If it really is for revenge, then there isn't any reason to act like this, right?'

Discussions like this quickly broke out amongst the speckled lights before coming to an agreement and reforming as the group intelligence 'Flitch'. Flitch quickly regained his composure.

"I don't know why it has to be me. I'm a strategist. I no longer have any troops! My fighting strength isn't amazing either."

Shiver.

That moment, Choi Hyuk didn't reply, but Flitch felt a killing intent that sent chills down his spine. It was only for a moment.

'What was that? Did I sense wrong?'

'No, I felt it too.'

Each of the speckled lights quickly reported their state. There was a single conclusion.

'While it was short... A few felt it. It was killing intent. Choi Hyuk knows. Though we don't know what he's going to do....'

The speckled lights began to feel agitated, but Flitch tried to his best to look dignified as he drank Glacier Tears. Due to the drink, the unruly speckled lights froze all at once before defrosting, giving them a calming sensation.

Flitch talked slowly,

"While I don't know what you're thinking... This mission will fail... Don't tell me you're planning on starting a losing war because of a reason like that? While turning your back on your limitless potential?"

When Flitch said, 'because of a reason like that', he was referring to Earth's recruit training. Amongst the speckled lights, a suspicion had been proposed that Choi Hyuk was purposely dragging him into a losing war to get revenge on him.

However, unsure whether Choi Hyuk understood his meaning, Choi Hyuk, who had been staring at Flitch with clear eyes, suddenly asked,

"A losing war?"

"Of course."

"What's the reason?"

"...Are you asking because you really don't know?"

"Yes."

"...There is one reason. Because you aren't a transcendent warrior. Because you aren't, you can't meddle with the Net of Fate. You don't have a method of hiding yourself when the monsters notice your invasion and begin chasing you down. Also, think about it. You are supposed to find the queen's nest. Even if the monsters' universe's defenses are lax because they haven't been invaded before... There's no way that's the case for the queen's nest. There will definitely be monsters close to the demise rank near the

queen. Even if you want to get close, you undoubtedly need to be at the transcendent level. Also, you need powerful troops composed of highest and high-ranked warriors. Only then can you use them as bait and retreat if the monsters come at you from behind. It was the tactic used by Exalted Wing Flame-Rain during the previous reconnaissance mission. However, it is impossible for you. So this mission will have no choice but to fail.”

Choi Hyuk smiled brightly at Flicht,

Ptch.

Choi Hyuk’s hand quickly pierced through Flicht’s chest. The speckled lights which made up his chest burned and turned into ash.

“Euack!”

The speckled lights scattered like sand and fled before gathering on the other side of the room. The speckled lights were in a fuss. ‘Euack! That bastard killed my friend!’ ‘Calm down! If we fight him now, we’ll all die!’ A minority of the speckled lights struggled, unable to endure their rage and sorrow, while the rest tried to hold them back.

“Just what are you...”

Taken aback, Flicht asked while trembling.

Choi Hyuk revealed his white teeth as he said in an aggressive manner,

“Ha? What do you know? I’m too pissed off by how you act like a know-it-all, be it in the past or even now. But you, do you know what kind of ability I possess? Why do you think the Exalted Wings assigned me, who isn’t even a transcendent warrior, to this reconnaissance mission?”

“That is...”

Flicht couldn’t reply because he assumed that this mission was purely a political show. However, Choi Hyuk looked serious and angry.

Choi Hyuk came closer and said,

“Get a hold of yourself. There’s no place to escape to anyways. If you want to live, work harder for the success of the mission. You need to prove your usefulness, right? Or die on the frontlines as a meat shield. Why? It’s what you like, isn’t it? Kill. Only then can you kill. Right?”

The speckled lights that made up Fritch’s entire body began to tremble. While they wanted to scatter and flee right now, it was impossible as they were suppressed by Choi Hyuk’s spirit.

While comforting those that had fallen into a state of chaos, Fritch was barely able to speak.

“Th... en will you let me live?”

“Did I say that I was going to kill you?”

Seeing Choi Hyuk reply so naturally, Fritch nodded his head with difficulty.

The tips of Choi Hyuk’s lips curled up as he tapped Fritch’s shoulder and walked past him. He saw the clearly visible blue shield symbol above Fritch’s head.

‘He’s someone to keep alive? Does that mean he’ll be of use when I face the Exalted Wings later?’

Choi Hyuk grinned. The skill he had inherited from Richard had been quite useful until now...

‘This time, it’s truly trash.’

Choi Hyuk’s steps hurried. He wanted to go to the monsters’ universe quickly.

‘And there...’

Thump, thump. His heart thumped and his black karma became flames as they blazed in his eyes.

{1} The statues on Easter Island.

{2} Mechas was the Armored Soul Tribe member showed Choi Hyuk around the lowest-ranked supply store at Flame-Rain's request.

Chapter 164

Gathering and Scattering (4)

Fritch, who was putting on airs, brought a tool called the 'World of Nothingness.'

"You should know that, in order to develop this device quickly, I spent my entire wealth. While it could be the key to the success of this mission... Haa, I feel like swearing. To be honest, even though I invested everything into this mission, I still don't think it'll be possible. I've never made such a risky investment before... Either way, now that I've done everything I could, the rest is up to you."

While clearly showing a distressed appearance, Fritch handed a black, brick-shaped whetstone to Choi Hyuk.

Its appearance was ordinary, almost primitive, but the moment Choi Hyuk received it, he felt a powerful karma inside it.

Its vigor didn't lose out to Weapons of Sentiment, which highest-ranked warriors wielded.

Seeing Choi Hyuk's surprised face, Fritch smiled faintly as he explained,

"It is a tool named 'World of Nothingness'. By referencing to alliance reports, I created it with Leader Choi Hyuk's special skill, 'First Sword' in mind... Well, rather than explaining it to you, it'll probably be better if you try using it. Please grind your sword on the 'World of Nothingness'."

Choi Hyuk took out his sword and ground it on the whetstone-like 'World of Nothingness'.

Sereung, sereung.

The third time he ground it-

Ssereung!!

The sound became deeper and pulled the space around it. All matter stretched towards Choi Hyuk, looking ridiculous. When Choi Hyuk pushed his sword on the whetstone, matter was pulled towards him, and when he drew his sword back, it returned back to normal.

Unsure of whether he noticed it or not, Choi Hyuk kept grinding. Every time the space distorted, the surface of the whetstone would cover his sword, and every time it did, the whetstone would become slightly smaller.

“I think that’s enough since we’re only testing it.”

“Ah...”

When Flitch stopped him, Choi Hyuk, who had been grinding his sword as if in a trance, raised his head with slightly blank eyes.

“Even though it’s ridiculously expensive, it’s a consumable. You have to use it sparingly. Using this much is sufficient for testing purposes.”

Choi Hyuk nodded at Flitch’s reasoning.

“Now, the method of using it... You already know, right? Since we purposely came out to this remote location, try slashing once to your heart’s content.”

Flitch said while looking around at the desolate planet that no one lived on. Since there was no atmosphere, the sky was black. When looking around, there were only stones and sand. The only thing that caught their eye was the tall mountain range in the distance. A dim light shined from the peak of the tallest mountain.

Choi Hyuk aimed his sword towards that peak. The karma that was tightly wrapped around his sword cried out, pleading him to do something. There was no way he wouldn’t know how to use the ‘World of Nothingness’, even if he didn’t want to.

“First Sword.”

Ping-

Choi Hyuk’s sword made an arc, and following its path, everything was erased, even

time and space, as though they were never present. Due to the disappearance of space, the peak of the distant mountain came towards him.

Normally, this would be the end of the First Sword's effect. However, it was different this time. The 'World of Nothingness', which covered his sword, was released, vibrating as it filled the erased space-time.

Flitch, who was somewhat excited, said,

"I observed that the principle of your skill is similar to that of the big bang. The 'First Sword' has the power to create universes, and it uses this ability to push and erase the pre-existing universe. However, it ends there, without actually being able to create a universe. The 'World of Nothingness' was developed this time to assist the 'First Sword' in taking it a step further. It increases the possibility of creating a pseudo universe. Like this."

Flaash!

A brilliant light emitted from within the space-time, which had disappeared.

When they came to their senses, Choi Hyuk and Flitch were standing above a completely white hall.

"Huu..."

Flitch let out a sigh of relief. He looked around at his surroundings as he spread his arms.

"Welcome to the World of Nothingness. To be honest, because I was in a hurry to make this, I didn't have the time to test it, but it works better than I thought. How lucky!"

"...Definitely."

Choi Hyuk faintly exclaimed. All sides of the hall were smooth and white. It was a dimension created in this moment. Unlike a real universe, which could give birth to life, it was no different from a dead universe... But it was still a universe and Choi Hyuk was the creator of this world.

He was moved by an indescribable emotion.

Choi Hyuk walked to the end of the hall. When he reached the end, there was a large window instead of a wall. Beyond the window, he saw the dimly shining mountain peak.

“...Is it a hidden dimension?”

“Yes. While it’s a completely new dimension, it is simultaneously a place right next to the pre-existing dimension. While you can call it a hidden dimension... More intuitively, it’s an underground tunnel. It is the best way to explore without the monsters noticing. Though I can’t say we won’t be caught, the likelihood of getting caught is reduced drastically... Do you like it?”

Seeing Flicht cautiously read his mood, Choi Hyuk smiled slightly and replied,

“Very.”

“Whew... I feel like I’ve come back from death’s door. Then can I go now?”

Before he said that ‘he had done everything he could’, and now he asked if ‘he could go now’. Meaning, he didn’t want to involve himself in the mission any longer.

‘No way. There’s still a lot left.’

Choi Hyuk hid his feeling of contempt and placed his hand on Flicht’s shoulder.

“Yeah. You did well. Now let’s start the mission. Let’s work well together. We’ll probably survive if we do well.”

Flicht’s face distorted when he heard Choi Hyuk’s words, which gave him no room to leave.



‘No! No! We’re as good as dead the moment we enter the monsters’ universe!’

‘This is crazy! Do you know how many people Choi Hyuk dispatched for this mission? He didn’t dispatch any! Excluding the Berserkers, he only dispatched the three people who participated in Earth’s recruit training! Isn’t it obvious then? He’s just going to kill us!’

'So what are you going to do about it? Stop whining. It's checkmate!'

'Let's escape. Let's escape somehow and sue him in the alliance.'

'Sue...? Can't you tell from the fact Choi Hyuk figured out all three of our identities, instead of just one? Someone from the Exalted Wings sold us out! Though we won't be able to escape anyways. Haa... To think that he would wipe his mouth clean after receiving the 'World of Nothingness'...'

The speckled lights that made up Flitch were in a complete mess. Like congressmen in a fight, they were pushing and being pushed. However, there was only one conclusion – 'There's nothing that we can do.'

Flitch of the Speckled Light Tribe, Demaetsu of the Keunib species, and Sino of the Seo Tribe. These three, who were in charge of Earth's recruit training, felt like they were going to the slaughterhouse as they were pushed into the monsters' universe by Choi Hyuk.

As soon as they crossed over to the monsters' universe, Demaetsu of the Keunib species opened his mouth wide open, revealing his teeth, and said,

"This is good enough, right? Since we've crossed over to a completely different dimension, there won't be any evidence remaining. Since everyone's a Berserker, there won't be any witnesses either, right? If you're going to kill us, then kill us quick, you narrow-minded earthling."

Demaetsu gave Choi Hyuk a ridiculing look. On the other hand, Flitch and Sino couldn't hide their nervous expressions.

Choi Hyuk smirked at Demaetsu.

"Did I ever say anything?"

Demaetsu snorted.

"Are you trying to act otherwise now? You never planned on completing this mission from the start, right? If you wanted to complete it, then you wouldn't have only brought over the Berserkers, a C+ rank independent troop."

“A smaller group is better when hiding from the monsters. Also, the Berserkers work well with me and they are stronger than you think. They grow stronger quickly too.”

“Ha! Is that so? To hide from the monsters? You, a mere highest-ranked warrior? When you can’t even access the Net of Fate?”

The Net of Fate. It had the power to tune the entire universe. If Choi Hyuk didn’t access and wreak havoc on it, then his location would be fully revealed to the monsters. Because of this, no one believed in him.

{Kiiyyeek!}

{Kuoooh!}

To make matters worse, maybe it was because they had suffered on multiple occasions, but the monsters reacted quickly. Unlike before, when they were slow to notice their invasion and send support, this time, the monsters reacted almost as soon as they crossed over.

The monsters, who had been resting while devouring a planet they had plundered from another dimension, rushed out all at once. They even felt a spine-chilling killing intent coming from far off into the distance.

While he couldn’t be certain because they were so far away, Choi Hyuk thought that they might perhaps be transcendent monsters or even demise-ranked monsters rather than highest-ranked ones. Their vigor was simply that terrifying.

It seemed even Demaetsu, who had been aggressively talking back to Choi Hyuk, was shaking in fear as he retreated while drenched in cold sweat. With his lips trembling, he said,

“Do-don’t tell me you’re planning on leaving it to the monsters? If-if you are a warrior, no, if you are trying to get revenge, then you should do it with your own hands, right?”

It seemed that he never considered that Choi Hyuk could overcome this crisis.

However, there was a reason the Exalted Wings had assigned Choi Hyuk, who was only a highest-ranked warrior, to this mission. With his sword that could reset everything, they judged that he would be able to keep his location hidden from the monster universe’s Net of Fate. On top of that, he had received an unexpected present from

Flitch. Choi Hyuk believed that the mission was doable.

“How pathetic... Do you think you’ll be able to survive acting like that?”

While mocking Demaetsu, Choi Hyuk slowly unsheathed his sword. Demaetsu flinched backwards.

From what Dark-Sound had told him, it was this damn keunib who had selected the monsters and scattered them throughout Earth. The Shadow Teeth that Lee Jinhee had difficulty with, the Wyvern of Death that had killed Baek Seoin’s parents, and the Flaming Devil that had killed his mother were all personally selected by Demaetsu.

‘Demaetsu... Demaetsu... Huh.’

Even though he wanted to kill him right now, he did his best to ignore it and turned around.

Choi Hyuk ‘swallowed’ his rage.

Even his hatred for Flitch, who personally planned out the Ring of Rebirth and the Throne Game, among others, as well as his loathing for Sino, who created various supplies and provided them to the humans, encouraging them to struggle against each other... He swallowed and returned them all to his heart.

The ‘First Sword’ would activate the moment his emotions, which had been accumulated, exploded.

Choi Hyuk saw beyond the monsters gathering around him and towards the ‘mission region’ as he slashed out.

At the same time, the ‘World of Nothingness’ activated. It was a world created by grinding almost half the whetstone.

With the ‘First Sword’, the monsters that filled their vision disappeared. In fact, a corner of the monsters’ universe was being ripped up as it disappeared. A bright light poured down from above Demaetsu’s face, who had been looking at this scene while

lost in thought.

Then an enormous white hall appeared. The hall was so large one could call it a plaza. The pre-existing universe disappeared and a new one was made.

“Wow... What is this? Our leader is insane...”

Like how Lee Jinhee mumbled this, the Berserkers were shocked at this scene as well.

However, the ones who knew the details were even more shocked.

“This...! Crazy! A device that creates dimensions? But that hasn’t been developed yet! It was concluded that, because there was no way to obtain the power to create a universe, it was impossible for the time being... Ah! Though I did hear that Choi Hyuk’s new sword skill ‘First Sword’ did have that sort of power...”

Sino, whose tribe was well-known for their technology, was crazily mumbling to herself.

“...It was to this degree?”

When Demaetsu, whose tribe had the trait of being weak to the strong and strong to the weak, personally saw Choi Hyuk’s move, he felt himself becoming endless smaller compared to Choi Hyuk.

Finally, Flitch, whose body was trembling, possibly due to the speckled lights clamoring, was barely able to ask Choi Hyuk,

“U-umm, Leader Choi Hyuk? How far does this path go?”

“Huu... Huu... To the first location suspected to be the queen’s nest.”

Choi Hyuk seemed exhausted as he replied. When Flitch heard this, his body trembled as though it had been hit by lightning.

‘No way! The location suspected to be the queen’s nest? The distance is quite significant, yet he opened a path all the way there? A mere highest-ranked warrior can output this much power?’

‘As expected... He was always like this. Even from the recruit training, Choi Hyuk was

an exception to the norm.'

'There's a limit to being an exception. This is...'

'Yeah... This... He might really complete this mission perfectly. I thought it was impossible... I was thinking about what he could do by only bringing the Berserkers... But now that I see this, he probably won't even need the Berserkers. He's just that strong.'

That moment, Sino, Demaetsu, and Flicht cleanly forgot about the danger they were in. They were completely entranced by the feat displayed in front of them.

To be sublime...

Was making others forget about themselves. It made others realize how small they were in comparison and made them completely surrender.

The feat Choi Hyuk showed them was precisely this.

'This... is truly amazing.'

'Whether or not he's our enemy... Amazing. Beautiful...'

The number of speckled lights that possessed goodwill towards Choi Hyuk increased, irrelevant to the danger he brought. Sino and Demaetsu also couldn't help but sense their feelings change.

Their hearts began to submit to Choi Hyuk.

Just as Choi Hyuk wanted them to.

Chapter 165

Gathering and Scattering (5)

It was cold and there was no wind or scent. There was only a white tunnel that extended endlessly.

In fear that they could make the 'World of Nothingness' unstable, the Berserkers, over a few days, slowly passed through this long tunnel.

The white walls occasionally rippled and became transparent, reflecting the strange scenes of the universe the monsters lived in.

Initially, the monsters were bustling due to Choi Hyuk's attack, working in groups to search for the intruders. Finally, however, the commotion gradually died down after they couldn't find anything.

The Berserkers murmured,

"It'll be really thrilling this time."

Whenever monsters as large as spacecrafts brushed past the tunnel, the Berserkers would lower their voices.

"So we're searching these bastards' homeland..."

As earthlings, their animosity towards the monsters couldn't help but be greater than their hostility towards the alliance, since they were the ones that actually invaded their homeland and killed those precious to them. At times, these monsters felt like such uncontrollable calamities that they made them feel powerless. Thinking about how they were now invading the core of the monsters, naturally, their hearts raced and their minds were resolute.

"But who are those three? No troops were dispatched for this mission, only them."

"Maybe they are incredibly strong? Or those three are better than dispatching B rank troops?"

“They don’t look that strong...”

There were Berserkers who started talking to Flitch, Demaetsu, and Sino out of curiosity. The tension from the monsters that they occasionally saw outside the tunnel, the sense of mysteriousness from the white ‘World of Nothingness’, and the sense of solidarity from going to the core of the monsters with each other mixed together, making their hearts both silent and more open.

“What are your names?” quickly turned into, “If we survive, give us a tour of Alliance City.” Formal replies such as “I welcome getting closer to the Berserkers” soon became candid like “I’m a bit tense, do you have anything to eat? I was suddenly dispatched so...” Finally, they began giving detailed introductions to each other.

“Don’t you guys have families? The majority of us Berserkers don’t, but I don’t know about you who live in Alliance City.”

“I have a lot. Keunibs can have polyandrous or polygamous relationships as long as they have the ability. I’m considered quite capable, so... Hehe, I want to see my third wife.”

Demaetsu purposely made a wicked expression.

“I am going to get married to a man called Mino next month... I had a tough time in Alliance City, and I was comforted a lot by him.”

Sino, whose tribe was famous for only having one lover their entire life, had an affectionate look as she thought of her fiancé.

“The Speckled Light Tribe has no gender classification. Well, we do, but it’s only for individual members. The consciousness ‘Flitch’ is a group intelligence... If the population of speckled lights inside increases or if there is a growing conflict between members, then we separate, but I guess you can call it a type of reproduction.”

Flitch simply shrugged his shoulders.

“Then, excluding Flitch who doesn’t have a family, why did you guys, who have families, come to this dangerous place?”

When a Berserker asked, Demaetsu raged, shouting, “Do you think I wanted to come?!” and Sino made a bitter expression while she answered, “We were... dispatched. We

didn't have a choice." Flich protested, "Hey! Why are you excluding me?!" However, they soon glanced at Choi Hyuk and said,

"However... It might not be as bad as we thought..."

Unexpectedly, Choi Hyuk wasn't hostile towards them and they were impressed by his remarkable abilities. As long as they could return alive, this might be an amazing opportunity to gain great military merits. The expressions they looked at Choi Hyuk with contained goodwill and were full of expectations.

After spending a few days together within this tense yet friendly atmosphere, the outside scenes they occasionally saw changed. The grey viscous poja densely covered their surroundings like a fog, and the monsters inside it bubbled. Every time a bubble popped, it resounded like thunder and the bodies of the monsters inside would either get smaller, change color, or split apart.

"..."

They couldn't tell if various monsters were being born or remodeled. Disregarding everything else, the Berserkers were overwhelmed by the poja's scale, which was easily larger than a galaxy.

"...Is this really the queen's nest?"

The Aide Leah mumbled, but they couldn't be sure yet.

"Sino."

Choi Hyuk called Sino of the Seo Tribe. Sino quickly went in front of him.

"I ask for your analysis. What kind of place this is and is it the queen's nest we are looking for?"

Sino, the alliance's technician, looked around with an objective gaze before shaking her head.

"Sorry. There isn't enough information. I think we need to go a little deeper to know for sure."

A little deeper. The warriors felt somewhat uneasy as they heard her words.

It was completely different from before when they had lightly joked with each other as they traveled. While it was still the same white tunnel, each step they took was filled with extreme alertness.

“...Killing intent.”

Like Ryu Hyunsung mumbled, the monsters’ characteristic killing intent was invading the empty tunnel.

{Grr}

{Kireuk?}

{Huh? Something’s?}

The monsters around them, which could easily be discerned as being at the highest rank, seemed to have sensed something as they kept loitering around the tunnel. It was to the point that the Berserkers could even hear their growls and mumbles. The killing intent invading the tunnel gradually thickened, and as they traveled deeper, they were no longer within the ‘safe zone’ of the ‘World of Nothingness’.

“Sino, still not enough? Isn’t this the queen’s nest?”

Demaetsu, who was clearly nervous, kept urging Sino.

“Ah, jeez!”

Sino, who was concentrating the best she could, became irritated at Demaetsu, who kept bothering her. Then she glanced at Choi Hyuk as she said,

“I’m still not sure if this is just a key facility for the monsters or if it’s the queen’s nest. We need to go deeper if we want to know for sure.”

Formally, she was reporting to Choi Hyuk, but in reality, she was also trying to explain their situation to the nervous warriors.

Then Sino quickly added,

“However, if we go any further, we might be found out. How about we stop here for now and come back with reinforcements? The enemy forces are beyond our expectations.”

Listening to her words, which sought safety, Choi Hyuk calmly shook his head.

“No. We’ll go further. We can’t do this twice since the monsters possess learning capabilities. Also, we don’t know if we can get this far next time.”

Sino’s eyelashes trembled at Choi Hyuk’s reply, but she resigned herself to her fate and instead concentrated on analyzing as she stepped forward. With nervous looks, Fritch and Demaetsu stuck next to her.

“Let’s go.”

When they took a few more steps, the scene outside changed once more. The poja, which had covered their surroundings like a fog, faded away, and monsters the size of continents and planets were now floating around them, anchored to various locations. This sight, at a glance, was alarming.

With cold sweat on his face from the thickening killing intent, Demaetsu urged Sino once more.

“Sino, still no-“

Sino glared at Demaetsu without replying.

“Demaetsu, act moderately. Sino’s trying her best...”

Fed up with Demaetsu, Fritch said while taking Sino’s side, but-

Bang!

The sky collapsed.

No, the ceiling of the ‘World of Nothingness’ buckled.

“Haah!”

“What is that!?!?”

A monster had suddenly appeared and was stepping on the ceiling. It was similar to the Punisher that Choi Hyuk had captured previously. Its outer appearance was similar to a human's. It also possessed weapons and armor composed of a monster's body.

{...}

The monster didn't give them the chance to comprehend the situation. It silently narrowed its black eyes and swung a hammer, created from a monster's head, down at them.

Kwaaah! Kwaah!

Swaah!

Space rippled and they heard the sound of a tide going out. The white tunnel suddenly became dark like a basement with a blinking emergency light.

“A demi... Demise-ranked monster!!”

Sino screamed with a pale face.

Choi Hyuk replied,

“Strictly speaking, it's different. It doesn't have the fate of collapse... However, it's as strong as them.”

The monster felt different when compared to a monster created by suppressing the fate of a universe's collapse into it. Its original strength was probably similar to Flame-Rain before she became an Exalted Wing – the proficiency stage of the transcendental level. However, after wearing monster armor that was based on karma weapons, the monster's current strength seemed to exceed that of Exalted Wings'.

This monster noticed the 'World of Nothingness' and was attempting to break into it. Following it, the numerous high and highest-ranked monsters in the area began attacking the 'World of Nothingness'. The large tunnel became dented like an aluminum can and ripped in various places.

Swish.

Choi Hyuk unsheathed his sword and shouted,

“Sino, keep going! Check if this place is the queen’s nest!”

Faced with this dangerous situation, Choi Hyuk, who had talked to her politely until now, began ordering her informally.

“Demaetsu! Flicht! Escort Sino! The Berserkers will block the other monsters from breaking in! I’ll be the one to face that one!”

Choi Hyuk glared at the expressionless monster with black eyes. Unlike original demise-ranked monsters, which were powerful due to inheriting the fate of collapse but were difficult to control, this monster seemed like something the queen of monsters created on her own. It might even be the queen’s bodyguard.

“The World of Nothingness is undoubtedly a universe in another dimension! On top of that, it’s a universe I personally created! I can’t use my full strength until they completely break in! So push them back! Don’t let a single one in!”

Choi Hyuk’s order resounded like thunder.

Bang! Baang!

With that, the fight between the monsters, who were trying to rip the tunnel in various places and break in, and the Berserkers, who were trying to push them back, began.

“It’s a demise rank! A demise rank! We’re going to die! Run away!”

Demaetsu fell into a state of panic, unfitting of a high-ranked warrior. Flicht shook his body.

“If we flee, then we’ll really die! Snap out of it! Just believe in Choi Hyuk! We need to believe in him and do our job! Sino! You get a hold of yourself too!”

“Ye-yes!”

Darting down the tunnel, which seemed like it could collapse at any moment, Sino hurriedly analyzed with her trembling eyes.

'Mino... Mino...'

Inwardly, she kept calling her fiancé's name. If she didn't, she felt like her heart would burst from fear.

She didn't know how much time had passed. The tunnel was almost completely dark now.

Sino cried out,

"It is! It's here! This is the queen's nest!"

At the same time, a light flashed.

Sino lost her memory.



"Thi... This is?"

When she first opened her eyes, Sino couldn't remember where she was. As her strength hadn't completely recovered yet, she looked around with a cloudy vision, and only after blinking a few times did she realize where she was.

It was a place where objects from various other universes were piled on top of each other like a garbage dump. It was the monsters' universe. They were currently sitting on a branch of an enormous tree that was floating in the outer region of the universe.

Choi Hyuk was panting while sitting on a mushroom the size of a bed.

"We... survived? How?"

Fritch, who only now came to his senses like Sino, asked Choi Hyuk. Choi Hyuk friendlily replied while panting heavily.

"Huu... Hu... We endured as long as we could and retreated as soon as I heard Sino's report."

"Retreating... must not have been easy. On top of that, even us high-ranked warriors lost our memory. How..."

Flitch's questions continued. Choi Hyuk opened his mouth to explain, but it seemed it was difficult to explain as he frowned and tilted his head.

Sino, who absentmindedly stared at him, answered instead.

"You cut... time, right? Or should I say, you reset it?"

Choi Hyuk nodded his head, indicating she was right. However, Flitch's reaction was more intense.

"No way! Reset time? You reset the time of this vast universe? No one can do that!"

However, unlike Flitch, who was taken aback, Sino stared directly at Choi Hyuk and said,

"Of course, he didn't reset the time of this entire universe... He only reset the time of the small, dead universe, the 'World of Nothingness'. Isn't that right? So the tunnel disappeared immediately and we returned to the start of the tunnel. While the time in the monsters' universe flowed regularly!"

Satisfied by Sino's clever explanation, Choi Hyuk nodded his head.

That moment, Sino's eyes sparkled.

"Amazing!"

She staggered to a stand and jumped up and down.

"While it's possible in theory, for it to actually happen! Wow... If I tell Mino, he'll be completely surprised!"

Demaetsu, who seemed to have been awoken by her happy voice, gently got up and said,

"So loud... But you really are amazing! Leader Choi Hyuk, you are stronger than any other highest-ranked warrior I've ever seen."

With his mouth, which stretched along his jaw, open, Demaetsu staggered over to Choi Hyuk, got down on one knee and placed his hand out. Then in an embarrassed tone, he continued,

“I heard that... Earth had this sort of culture in the past, but I don’t know if I’m doing it right.”

He cleared his throat and, in a serious tone, said,

“Leader Choi Hyuk. I am in awe. I realized that the path you walk only contains victory and glory. While I do have my previous sins, if you forgive me and hold my hand, I will dedicate my life to you. As you know, our Keunib species is famous for being rude, but aren’t we also renown for our loyalty?”

Demaetsu’s attitude changed suddenly.

It was enough to be cringe-worthy, but Sino, who was deeply impressed by Choi Hyuk, jumped up and joined in.

“Huh? Then, me too! Me too!”

Not losing out, Flitch joined in as well.

“Ah... Really, so embarrassing... But! I also feel the same. I have always admired how you became stronger faster than anyone else. While it might have angered you, I have always done my best for your growth. Whether it was the King without Subjects, sovereign qualifications, or the Flame Wing Tribe’s Karma Heart Discipline... Everything passed through me. Also, I was the one who requested the alliance to grant you citizenship. While it might have been an unforgivable method... I did my best to make you stronger. Please give me another chance. I want to repent for my sins under your command.”

The three looked at Choi Hyuk in a serious manner.

Their misgivings towards Choi Hyuk had already mostly disappeared. They judged that he would have killed them already if he had truly wanted to. They thought that, since he dispatched them and they went on a mission together, he was thinking of the bigger picture rather than simple revenge. No, they hoped that this was the case as they already felt a deep sense of closeness with Choi Hyuk and the Berserkers after experiencing a mission of life or death together. Also, they were certain that they could advance even higher up in the alliance if they were with Choi Hyuk.

“What the heck? What’s going on?”

Only then did the Berserkers gather, mumbling about this unusual mood.

Choi Hyuk grinned and looked up at the tree branch that went so high up that he couldn't see the end.

They were successful in determining the monster queen's location in the monsters' universe.

This feat could be considered the greatest contribution since the start of the war. The moment he accomplished this, his enemies kneeled in front of him and promised him their loyalty.

He naturally began grinning.

He couldn't be any more satisfied.

With a joking expression, Choi Hyuk said,

"Darn... But I don't need all three of you? Maybe only one?"

"Pardon?"

Seeing their perplexed looks, Choi Hyuk kept smiling as he handed them each a drink.

"Don't be so awkward and first drink. You all worked hard."

Only then did they realize he was joking and they drank their drinks with a smile. The moment their throats were revealed-

Pit-

Choi Hyuk's sword instantly cut their throats.

"Keuh... Kuak..."

They were taken aback by the sudden attack, however, it wasn't fatal and they only felt

pain.

Staring down at them as they rolled on the ground while holding their throats, Choi Hyuk spoke. His speech had, at some point, become cold and impolite.

“In the past... My friend died like that. I heard her throat was stabbed by a trusted friend while she was drinking water.”

Swish.

His sword twirled in his hand. Choi Hyuk’s gaze was frighteningly cold.

“You three, who were in charge of Earth’s recruit training... I tried using you, but I don’t think you’ll be useful any longer. Three is too much, I’ll only let one of you live.”

As Choi Hyuk continued to speak, now understanding the situation, the Berserkers’ faces turned cold as ice. It didn’t matter if they had laughed and chatted with each other not long ago. Didn’t he say they were the very people in charge of Earth’s recruit training?

A chilling killing intent flooded out, and in the middle of it, Choi Hyuk, who possessed a malice thicker than anyone else, said,

“You know the method very well, right?”

As if singing, he said,

“Kill.”

Then all the Berserkers followed after him as though they were a choir.

“Kill.”

“Only then can you kill.”

Fritch, Demaetsu, and Sino’s complexions turned pale. Being suddenly faced with this situation when they had been relaxed drove them further into a state of panic.

While looking down at them, Choi Hyuk made a final declaration.

“It’s judgment day, bastards.”

Chapter 166

Gathering and Scattering (6)

Choi Hyuk was very satisfied as he looked at the scene in front of him. The white light (goodwill) emitted by Sino and Demaetsu, who had sworn loyalty to him, wavered as they turned dark. The rare yellow light (sacrificial will) wavered as the speckled lights that made up Flicht fell into a state of chaos.

Sino despaired,

“I can’t believe it!”

However, Choi Hyuk’s eyes were so dark they didn’t seem to reflect light.

“Believe what?”

Sino, who was at a loss for words, protested while prattling on randomly,

“That...! We are high-ranked warriors of the alliance! You can’t deal with us like this!”

“Didn’t you do it too? To us?”

“That...! That...! That was because earthlings were awfully weak...!!”

“You guys are awfully weak right now. In my eyes.”

“No! No! Do you think the alliance will allow this sort of crime?”

Events that took place in the monsters’ universe... While there might be suspicions, there wouldn’t be any evidence remaining. Although she knew this, like a child’s tantrum, Sino desperately made arguments that even she didn’t believe. Seeing her like this, Choi Hyuk felt that she wasn’t even worth sympathizing with. Instead, feeling a thick sense of boredom, he turned to Flicht and Demaetsu. While thinking, ‘Do you guys think so too? Then I guess I don’t have a choice,’ Choi Hyuk fiddled with his sword.

Demaetsu's expression changed.

"So! We are high-ranked warriors of the alliance- Kack!"

Sino had been repeating the same words when a thick, saw-edged sword sliced into the back of her neck. With a 'Rip!', it tore into her neck.

"Is this what you want?"

Demaetsu asked with a tense expression after slashing Sino's neck.

Bang!

Sino tried to push Demaetsu away with her karma, but it was too late. The fatal injury she received while her guard was down wasn't something she could recover from on her own. Her eyes trembled. She looked at Demaetsu and then at Choi Hyuk, and was on the verge of tears.

"Must... Must you do this...?"

Then Choi Hyuk smiled brightly, like a spectator who had finally seen the mind-blowing scene of a movie that had been teased for the past hour.

While smiling, he said with a slightly regretful face,

"Must I? I know, right? I'm sort of regretting it. Was his name... Mino? If I knew you had a fiancé, I would have brought him here and killed him in front of you. What a shame. But don't worry. You'll meet him soon enough."

"No... Please... Please..."

Her crying face-

Rip!

Rolled on the floor while spurting blood. Demaetsu shook his saw-edge sword once. Blood splattered, and with her head separated from her body, Sino's lips mouthed, 'Mino...' before becoming forever still.

"Ha... Ha... This is..."

With a dispirited expression, Flitch's gaze alternated between Choi Hyuk and Demaetsu. Choi Hyuk simply smiled and Demaetsu said, "Sorry, Flitch," as he raised his sword and took aim.

Kikikik.

Joyful chuckles erupted from the Berserkers surrounding them and rang out like echoes.

Just now, Flitch had been picturing a sweet future.

A completely new life. In the mission he underwent with Choi Hyuk, he found himself standing in awe at 'greatness' for the first time in his life.

In the beginning, he didn't want to be disregarded by others. Then, because he wanted to be envied by others and to satisfy his ego, he moved to Alliance City and chose the path of a strategist. However, since becoming a strategist, he hadn't ever felt such a thrilling sense of satisfaction as he had from his mission with Choi Hyuk.

What Flitch saw this time wasn't a normal life, such as being well-off and having a good death. In Choi Hyuk, he saw the making of a truly great achievement that would leave an everlasting mark on this vast universe. He also had a hunch that if he worked together with him, then he would be able to live his life while making and becoming a part of history – a completely different story when compared to his life until now. He had a feeling that he might be able to find something worth devoting his life to.

Even the speckled lights he was composed of, which worked together for survival and had a sense of superiority, seemed almost entranced as they resolved that they would submit to Choi Hyuk's greatness and devote their lives to him. 'No! Did you forget what that bastard did?!' The speckled lights who had lost their close friends from Choi Hyuk's attack, burned with hostility, but they were a minority. Many speckled lights were dyed with a golden light (sacrificial will).

That was why, when he swore loyalty to Choi Hyuk, which was before he had made a judgment in which he calculated the pros and cons, he was being 'sincere'. It might perhaps be the first time Flitch had shown his true self to someone.

However, his sincerity was ripped to shreds as soon as it was born.

Right now, Demaetsu, who was holding his sword smeared with Sino's blood, was standing in front of him.

"I'm sorry."

He swung his sword, but Flitch couldn't even move a finger.

As a coalition of speckled lights, Flitch was usually someone who would make decisions objectively, but, when the majority of the speckled lights that had supported Choi Hyuk fell into a state of panic, he fell into a greater state of confusion than other species.

Even now, inside Flitch, speckled lights that couldn't believe their current situation were despairing. In the end, the groups who revolted were those who were hostile towards Choi Hyuk. 'Damn it! I knew this would happen! Knock them down!' As if undergoing a coup d'état, they took charge of the body, and only then could they react to Demaetsu's attack.

While it was very late, it was enough.

Jjong!

"Keuk!"

Demaetsu screamed. Wedges made of light stabbed into his every joint. While faltering because he wasn't in his complete state, Flitch arrogantly said,

"Huu... Demaetsu. Did you think it would be easy because I was disturbed? Did you look down on me because the Speckled Light Tribe has the weakest fighting capabilities among the top four tribes? As an insignificant keunib... You dare bare your teeth at me?"

However, Demaetsu didn't give up easily.

Grit, grit.

Demaetsu ground his teeth as he broke and pulled out the wedges of light, which had stabbed into his body.

"You do look easy. I mean, would the geek of the Speckled Light Tribe have experienced

fights before?”

“Just die.”

As a minority of speckled lights had overturned the base system and became a dictatorship in this situation of emergency, it was as though Flitch’s personality had changed.

Demaetsu attacked violently and, despite faltering, Flitch displayed refined fighting techniques overflowing with killing intent. The fight went back and forth for a while, and Demaetsu, who had launched a ferocious attack on Flitch, trembled suddenly before falling down face-first. Lights bloomed from his body like flowers and hovered over Demaetsu’s corpse.

“...I, I am going to die like this...?”

The keunib, who prioritized surviving, squirmed miserably as he died.

A short period of silence passed.

“Whew... Whew....”

Flitch glared at Choi Hyuk while the speckled lights trembled.

“It’s done, right? It’s fine if you use me as a slave. Just let me live like you promised.”

Choi Hyuk looked at Flitch with an entertained expression.

Reflected by his Eyes of Distinction, the speckled lights emitted a spectrum of different colored lights. His head was red with killing intent, his chest area was a murky yellow color (sacrificial will), trembling with uneasiness, and the rest was a mix of black and white, making a dirty grey color. The ones who were currently in charge of Flitch were the minority emitting the red light. They were itching to kill Choi Hyuk. However, it seemed like they wanted to live as the tone in which they spoke to Choi Hyuk was respectful.

Choi Hyuk grinned.

“No, I clearly told you that there should only be one remaining.”

Flitch quickly looked back at Demaetsu and Sino when he heard Choi Hyuk’s words. However, they were undoubtedly dead. The black light (hostility) from Flitch’s body became thicker.

“...I am clearly the only one left. Please keep your promise.”

Yet, Choi Hyuk grinned as he shook his head and pointed at Flitch with his finger.

“No? There are still a ton left, right?”

Flitch, who didn’t understand what he was talking about initially, showed a dumbfounded expression before his body trembled as though it had been struck by lightning.

“You... You bastard, just what are you saying?”

Choi Hyuk didn’t hesitate at all as he declared,

“Decide, Flitch. No, you guys. Whether only one of you will survive or if all of you will die as Flitch.”

Choi Hyuk was talking to each of the speckled lights that made up Flitch.



“Crazy bastard!!”

Unable to bear it any longer, Flitch shouted. To tell the countless speckled lights that made up a single individual to struggle against each other... It was unimaginable. This had never happened before since the birth of the universe and the formulation of Speckled Light Tribe.

Flitch was overwhelmed by the rage from all the speckled lights. There was no longer a single white or yellow light coming from his body. Much to Choi Hyuk’s satisfaction, Flitch’s body was filled with deep red and black lights.

“Are you doing this because we were in charge of Earth’s recruit training? Aren’t you a psychotic bastard? No. Are we the only ones that did stuff like that? It’s pretty much

the alliance's handbook! At least you earthlings weren't mined! To be honest, do you think we couldn't have mined you if we wanted to? We're the ones who gave you opportunities! Now it's not enough to just get revenge, but you're telling us to fight with each other? Are you mad?!"

Having lost his reasoning, Flitch began swearing a ton.

{Bastard, you should be ripped apart by a monster's jaws.}

{A species perfect for mining.}

{Lowly bastards that began fighting with each other only after a little encouragement.}

{Should have crushed you all with your planet and shoved it up a monster's ass.}

It wasn't only Flitch, all the speckled lights that made up his body swore noisily. While their voices were too quiet to hear properly, a few of them were discernable.

Choi Hyuk nodded his head.

"Good. Keep talking."

Flitch became even more furious.

"You crazy bastard. Also, is it really our fault that you guys killed each other? Guardian Bae Jinman? Don't you remember how he awakened? We made escape routes like that for all of you. If you had stronger cooperative mindsets, then no one would have died during the Ring of Rebirth. What do you think would have happened if you had just joined hands? There are species that underwent the same training and survived with no one dying. Why are you blaming us when you guys were the ones that were so lowly that you killed each other?"

Choi Hyuk looked at Sino and Demaetsu's corpses.

"Hmm, I wonder. At least, you don't seem to be different from us."

"Euck!! That's! That's because! You!"

Flitch was so mad that he wasn't able to speak properly. In the end, the speckled lights exploded forward and shouted at the same time.

{How is that our fault?!}

{You ordered us!}

{Yeah, if you have a problem with that, then why don't you get rid of the entire alliance?!}

{Are we simply pushovers?! You split-personality bastard who's strong against the weak and weak against the strong!}

{Why? Scared of the alliance?}

{Yeah! Isn't everyone like that?! You also acted that way to the Kundle Tribe! Why don't you get rid of the alliance and commit suicide?!}

While hearing them swear simultaneously, Choi Hyuk's eyes curved into crescent moons. The Berserkers were surprised to see him like this. It was because they had never seen Choi Hyuk smile so brightly that his eyes curved into crescent moons.

Choi Hyuk joyfully said in a tone that seemed like he couldn't take it any longer,

"Yeah. That's exactly right. Heh. The alliance..."

Fritch, who had been running amok, stiffened like a rock after hearing Choi Hyuk's short but completely screwed-up laugh.

"You... Don't tell me you... You're crazy! Completely insane! Aaack! Aaahck!!!"

Fritch trembled from shock and fear. Still smiling with crescent-moon-shaped eyes, Choi Hyuk walked to him with surefooted steps and began stabbing his body repeatedly. "Now, only one, only one will remain. If you don't move fast, then you might be next."

Choi Hyuk began to grab and crush Fritch's body with his bare hands. Those who were unlucky turned to mush and dripped down.

"Euaaack!"

{Kyak! No! I want to live!}

{Run away!}

{Don't push me! Don't push me!}

The speckled lights scattered and ran away. However, as they were connected to each other by a powerful force, they couldn't go far and were killed while pulling and pushing each other.

Then-

{Ha... Ho-how could you...}

{I want to live! I want to live!}

In order to make room to run from Choi Hyuk's hands or perhaps to be the last one remaining, the struggle between the speckled lights began.

Perhaps the fight broke out more quickly because the speckled lights that made up Flicht were especially cowardly.

As soon as the fight began, everything afterwards proceeded naturally. The speckled lights that had lived their entire lives as the group intelligence known as 'Flicht' began distrusting and killing each other to survive.

Choi Hyuk didn't make any more moves. He simply observed the speckled lights kill each other.

With a smile, Choi Hyuk said,

"Yeah, that's exactly what you did to us."



{This is different from what you promised! It's different I tell you! Come back! Come baaack!}

A pale speckled light shouted after being abandoned in the monsters' universe. However, as he was so small and weak on his own, his voice couldn't be properly heard.

Like promised, leaving only one speckled light alive, the Berserkers left the monsters'

universe.

The shouting and despairing speckled light couldn't endure the extremely cold and foreign environment for long and soon turned into grey dust.

This was how the first revenge came to a close.

Chapter 167

Gathering and Scattering (7)

The brilliant smile on Choi Hyuk's face faded the moment he exited the monsters' universe after completing his revenge against Flicht, Demaetsu, and Sino. His lips were tightly shut, and his eyes were narrowed. While he didn't know whether his surging emotions were that of sorrow or futility, his expression seemed to be suppressed by something.

"I have a place I want to visit before we return."

Following Choi Hyuk's request, Naro's spaceship didn't move towards Alliance City, but rather towards a secluded stellar system within a remote galaxy. Within this stellar system was a solar system with a sun at its center. The planets Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn orbited around this sun. In the past, Earth had been situated between Venus and Mars. Currently, however, no traces of Earth remained.

The Berserkers each had different expressions. Some looked mournful, others happy, and a few had sad yet relieved expressions.

Whether they were recalling their pasts or the thrill of revenge, it looked like everyone was feeling something as they looked at the empty spot, but it was a little different for Choi Hyuk.

To Choi Hyuk, this place was cold and completely void of anything. There wasn't even a scrap of Earth remaining.

Thinking that he came here for no reason, Choi Hyuk regretted his decision.

'There already isn't anything left...'

Since everything precious to him had already disappeared and all that remained was revenge, he wondered what emotions he expected to feel by coming here. While the Berserkers felt various emotions, Choi Hyuk didn't feel anything as he gazed at the

place Earth used to be. It simply felt like a waste of time.

‘Let’s go back.’

While swallowing his saliva bitterly, Choi Hyuk was about to return when he felt a celestial body approaching from beyond the Sun. The celestial body possessed the faint karma of living beings.

“There was a celestial body with life besides Earth in this solar system?”

Naro seemed to have felt it a little later than Choi Hyuk as he said.

{Huh? I think I sense the karma of living beings?}

Choi Hyuk gave Naro a strange look.

‘... When did he?’

He inwardly even felt a little admiration towards him.

{Eheh, why are you looking at me like that?}

Naro felt uncomfortable when Choi Hyuk began staring at him for no reason. Choi Hyuk glossed over it with a grin and turned his gaze away.

Just then, the sensed celestial body started to appear from behind the Sun.

“Whoa!”

Shouts similar to a cheer erupted from the Berserkers.

“Earth?”

“Dumbass, how can that be?”

It was much smaller than Earth and it wasn’t blue either. However, there undoubtedly

was a blue area.

“What is that?”

While everyone was talking, Choi Hyuk flung his body towards that planet. Just as he was about to pass the planet, its gravity pulled him in.

Thud!

He stepped on the ground. He had pretty much free fallen from a high altitude. If there was something strange about the planet, it was that, while its force of gravity was overall weaker than Earth's, at least in the blue area, it possessed a force of gravity similar to that of Earth. Because of this, the moment Choi Hyuk landed on the ground, the sound of impact rang out quite loudly.

Thud! Thud!

Following him, the top executives of the Berserkers and Naro's hologram landed on the ground.

“This is...”

Kim Honghyun became at a loss for words as he looked around at the surroundings. This was the same for everyone.

In this place, they saw an enormous lake and green trees from Earth growing around this lake. Elephants and giraffes were eating the vegetation, and leopards were hunting rabbits and boars. Because an atmosphere like Earth's existed around the lake, they could breathe in the air that they had yearned for. When they looked up in the place, they could see a blue sky.

“...Paradise?”

Lee Jinhee absentmindedly said.

“An environment control system...”

Baek Seoin's voice trembled slightly. When his gaze landed on the island at the center of the lake, which was floating 5 meters in the air, and he read the words which were written like a memorial on the border of the island, Baek Seoin teared up.

“This place... is the moon. It's also a cemetery... The Sovereign of Paradise Camilla...”

These were the words written on the border of the floating island.

{X Month X Day. This is a tribute to our homeland, Earth, which is forever gone from this universe. We also hope that the various species that were regrettably faced with extinction on the day of the calamity find eternal rest here.

We recovered the moon, which had been flung into the distance after Earth's collapse, and placed it in Earth's previous spot. This is because this moon might perhaps be Earth's only legacy. Like this restored area, Earth was a place filled with blue skies, blue oceans, and green lifeforms.

We hope that those who are still living and those who have died can all be at peace in this paradise.

The Sovereign of Paradise, Overseer of Dragonic, Leader of the Valkyries, Camilla.}

On the floating island in the middle of the lake, stones engraved with the names of the dead were paved into a plaza. It seemed like they had created this after collecting as many names of the dead as they could. Amidst these stones, no, in a more special place on the middle of the floating island, Choi Hyuk discovered his mother's name 'Choi Miyeon' and silently stood in front of it for a long time.



After a solemn yet touching moment, the Berserkers, having relaxed a little, began chatting once again.

“Camilla, that lady, is quite good.”

“The timing was incredible... To see this after we had just returned from getting revenge really made me tear up.”

Since they could return and report immediately through the military gate system, they used this opportunity to enjoy some leisure time.

The top executives of the Berserkers gathered around Choi Hyuk, who had become somewhat more tranquil. They all couldn't hide the emotional turbulence they were experiencing.

Having used to be the leader of Richard's assassination organization, Zero's eyes were filled with excitement, and Aide Leah went beyond simply being excited as her eyes shined with ambition.

The Artillery Captain Handke seemed somewhat proud, and Kim Honghyun, who was Chu Youngjin's successor, stood arrogantly even though his eyes were red from crying.

It seemed that everyone was proud of the achievements they have accomplished as Berserkers.

However, the emotions of the top executives who had been with Choi Hyuk since the early days were a bit different.

Bae Jinman's closed eyes trembled nervously.

Ryu Hyunsung looked anxious and powerless like a lost child.

Lee Jinhee looked at Choi Hyuk with eyes containing slight expectation, and Baek Seoin stared at Choi Hyuk as though he was leaving it all up to him.

While an unknown tension hung in the air, Choi Hyuk nonchalantly said,

“Congrats on becoming high-ranked warriors.”

While fighting monsters that were a few ranks higher than themselves, the top executives had naturally become high-ranked warriors. Everyone was embarrassed by his compliment.

“Anyways... It’s good that we won’t be holding you back, leader!”

Kim Honghyun said as though he was relieved of a burden.

Aide Leah joined in,

“It’s not just as simple as becoming high-ranked warriors. While I don’t know why, when we finished getting revenge on Flicht, Sino, and Demaetsu, our karma increased greatly. Our current level is around the proficiency stage instead of the early stages of the high rank.”

Choi Hyuk slowly nodded.

“I too... became strong enough to be considered to be at the proficiency stage of the highest rank.”

Leah cautiously asked,

“As expected, it’s because we got revenge, right?”

Choi Hyuk nodded.

“It’s the same as having overcome an important inflection point of our fates.”

An important inflection point of their fates... Choi Hyuk rolled those words in his mouth. Rather than an inflection point, it might be more precise to call it a turning point.

Choi Hyuk suddenly raised his head and called out to Naro, who was sitting on a hill and humming to himself. The white hologram with a simple appearance cheerfully skipped towards them.

“Did you call me, leader?”

Choi Hyuk purposely said in a more cheerful tone,

“Yeah, congrats to you too.”

“Pardon?”

“You awakened, right? Just looking at you, you’re a high-ranked warrior... No, if you properly settle down, you might even be a highest-ranked warrior, right? Congrats! Then are you now an Armored Soul Tribe member?”

A few executives were shocked at Choi Hyuk’s words while others nodded their heads in realization.

On the other hand, Naro’s body stiffened from nervousness. Without bending his elbows, he waved his arms around and said,

“Ah, no. To say I’m an Armored Soul Tribe member so suddenly...”

Ryu Hyunsung, who seemed slightly uneasy, abruptly cut in,

“Definitely... When we were fighting the demise-ranked monster last time, Naro did save me. I wasn’t sure... But, as expected, was it truly Naro?”

Rather than being thankful, his voice sounded somewhat sad.

Naro became even more taken aback than before as he flailed around.

“No. While it is true that I can use karma now... To say that I’ve become a member of the Armored Soul Tribe...!”

“While born as artificial intelligences, they are existences that have become a part of the universe after awakening their own fates. Isn’t that the definition of the Armored Soul Tribe? I think Naro would know more...”

As Naro was speaking gibberish because he was so taken aback, Aide Leah joined in and settled the situation.

Naro lowered his marshmallow-like head.

In a faint voice, Naro was barely able to squeeze out,

“But... Leader hates the top four tribes. No... You all do. Also, when an artificial intelligence awakens as an Armored Soul Tribe member, they have to go to Machine City and undergo training... And that means we have to be apart during that time...”

“Eh? Leader Choi Hyuk hates the top four tribes? You’re saying that after seeing Flame-Rain unni?”

Lee Jinhee said in a mischievous voice. Naro’s bent shoulders relaxed slightly.

“Is that true?”

“Yeah. While there are plenty of jerks amongst the top four tribes, there are also a lot of people who work hard for a better universe, like Flame-Rain unni and her comrades...”

While she was talking to Naro, Lee Jinhee kept glancing at Choi Hyuk, reading his mood.

“Also, since we’ve completed our revenge now, won’t we work together with Flame-Rain unni? Now that we’re on a roll, it’s not like we’ll be disregarded by the top four tribes either... Also, we can always wait for you.”

She glanced at Choi Hyuk again. Choi Hyuk simply revealed a bitter smile.

‘Completed our revenge... you say.’

Positive responses erupted regarding Lee Jinhee’s words. They were all the top executives who had joined later.

“As expected, are we going to Exalted Wing Flame-Rain’s camp?”

“The revival of humanity! If Overseer Richard had seen this, he would have truly been happy...”

Handke brightened and Leah seemed moved.

Yes, this was normal.

Since the ones in charge of Earth's recruit training had died, it was normal to think they had completed their revenge. Since they had accomplished a satisfying revenge, they no longer wanted to ruin themselves with rage and now wanted to think about safety and the restoration of humanity.

While they knew Choi Hyuk's goal was revenge, they didn't know the scale or the destination. In case there were observing eyes, Choi Hyuk had never rashly brought up the topic of the Exalted Wings. The Berserkers believed that Choi Hyuk's targets of revenge were confined to the ones in charge of Earth's recruit training.

'However...'

Choi Hyuk was different. Since the moment he realized his mother had passed away, the hole in his heart had gradually become larger. Within it raged black flames, flames that wanted to devour the entire universe and even himself in the end.

Choi Hyuk couldn't stop.

Lee Jinhee probably examined Choi Hyuk's mood because she was somewhat aware of this.

So it was time to come clean.

Choi Hyuk raised his shoulders up high before dropping them as he said,

"No, we won't go to Flame-Rain. There is no such thing as safety for the Berserkers. I don't promise success, fame, or prosperity. I can only promise one thing. If you stay with me, you will be able to kill a lot more. Enough to forget everything."

"Ah..."

Lee Jinhee's eyes trembled.

“Pardon?”

Leah, Kim Honghyun, Handke, and others were taken aback.

“...”

Baek Seoin and Bae Jinman nodded their heads as though they already knew.

“Ah-“

Ryu Hyunsung, who seemed somewhat depressed, raised his head suddenly.

Choi Hyuk clearly told them,

“That’s why, if you are satisfied and no longer want to fight, leave the Berserkers.”

Whoosh.

Suddenly, a strangely heavy spring breeze blew past those who were suddenly at a loss for words.

Chapter 168

Each's Calculations (1)

The 'Dream of the Great Universe', located in Alliance City, the alliance's capital, was an enormous hall the size of a palace. All the alliance's most important events and gatherings were held here.

The inauguration and war ceremony for the fourteenth Exalted Wing, Flame-Rain, was held here not so long ago, and the Berserker's triumph party for discovering the monsters' queen's location was held here as well.

The atmosphere of the party was rowdy. Whether one was envious or jealous of the newly born hero, the mood couldn't help but be heated and there hadn't been a single boring moment since the start of the party. Whether one wanted to praise or mock them, no one could wait to talk to the Berserkers. At this moment, the most popular group in the entire universe was the Berserkers.

However, the Berserkers couldn't enjoy the party and were all making distracted expressions.

Lee Jinhee was sitting, blankly looking up at the ceiling. She didn't show any reaction when someone tried to talk to her. The ceiling she was staring at was created by stacking cubes of crafted silver metals covered in dark matter together. Because the dark matter, which made up the cubes' frames, was transparent, the silver metals seemed to be floating in the air.

The ceiling Lee Jinhee was staring at gradually curved into a wall before becoming the floor. Perhaps it was because of the gravitational force of dark matter, but the warriors enjoyed the party while walking on the ceiling, walls, and pillars. The special decorative flames of the Flame Wing Tribe spread out everywhere and bloomed like fireworks. A stream of light from the Speckled Light Tribe flowed in mid-air in the center of the hall and served food from all over the universe to the warriors.

As expected of a hall that represented the alliance, the 'Dream of the Great Universe' was built by integrating the unique architectural styles of the top four tribes. Even while she examined each corner of this beautiful place, Lee Jinhee's eyes didn't show any interest.

"Director Lee Jinhee."

The Artillery Captain Handke took out a nuclear bomb candy and a glass of 'Phoenix Blood' and handed them over to Lee Jinhee. However, Lee Jinhee simply raised her head with a blank expression, almost as if she didn't hear him. Handke called out to her again.

"Director Lee Jinhee, let's talk. I've decided to leave the Berserkers."

Only after hearing that Handke would 'leave' did Lee Jinhee's head move. Yet, her gaze still couldn't focus as she looked at Handke.

"Eat."

Lee Jinhee absentmindedly swallowed the candy Handke had handed her and was shocked by the extremely small-scale nuclear explosion that went off in her stomach with a bang.

"What... What is this?!"

"Puhaha! Thrilling, isn't it? That is the nuclear bomb candy that is banned for earthlings below the high rank to consume. Since our bodies aren't made up of flames or dark matter, even a middle-ranked warrior could take quite the blow from it. Now, drink this."

With a frown, Lee Jinhee instantly downed the glass of Phoenix Blood.

Blaze!

The moment the Phoenix Blood went down her throat, it turned into flames and was absorbed into her bloodstream, circulating once before exiting through her nose and hair.

"Hwaa..."

It seemed to be quite refreshing as Lee Jinhee's eyes began to shine like normal.

"Ah, thanks. Because of you, I'm finally coming back to my senses. But what did you say just now? You're leaving?"

When Lee Jinhee, who had now pulled herself together, asked, Handke intentionally nodded cheerfully.

"Right."

Hearing this, Lee Jinhee's expression turned serious. She carefully asked,

"...Can I ask why?"

"Well, there isn't some sort of grand reason... Just, I want to be happy now."

Handke's eyes dimmed slightly.

"At first, I was also a lunatic. At the sudden change, I lost my daughter and my wife... When I heard that this was all because we were weak, I was so angry that I felt like I would die. So I enjoyed going around with Leader Choi Hyuk. I could forget my pain and guilt while fighting a ton, but you know? Looking back, I felt like I was entranced by something. 'I need to kill more.' 'I need to get stronger.' I pushed myself even harder with those thoughts... But, after thinking about how we completed our revenge this time, I jolted to my senses. I felt like I had just awoken from a dream. Having suddenly thought about it... I felt like I could now live while enjoying myself. The position of earthlings is much better than before, and my own position accumulated from being a Berserker is especially great. As a high-ranked warrior, I can spend my time in the center of the alliance, Alliance City, while being respected as a decent warrior, right?"

Then he smiled.

"Ha, so I want to let go of my past and live in the present. I'm also tired of fighting every day. Now I want to meet a nice woman, have a beautiful child, and live nicely. While I'll have to continue to fight as a warrior... Raising a family becomes impossible if I stay with the leader. You also never know when you'll die, in fact, I actually thought I'd die this time."

Lee Jinhee slowly nodded her head.

Seeing Lee Jinhee like this, Handke asked in a polite voice,

“So, what does Director Lee Jinhee think? Are you planning on staying?”

Lee Jinhee’s shoulders flinched and trembled. Handke patted her shoulder.

“I’ve thought about this for a while. That if there was any person that didn’t fit the Berserkers, it was Director Lee Jinhee.”

Lee Jinhee’s head drooped.

She could hear the crackling of the decorative fireworks set up everywhere and the sounds of people’s conversations reverberating against the silver metal.

Within these sounds, she could even hear a warrior approaching Choi Hyuk while shouting, “Leader Choi Hyuk! Congratulations!” Lee Jinhee’s gaze turned towards that direction. She saw Commander Mack of the Virgo Cluster and other warriors of the Dragon race gathering around him and leading him elsewhere.

‘The warriors of the Dark Tribe led him somewhere before also...’

There was an unwritten rule that Exalted Wings normally didn’t attend these parties. She thought that each camp was trying to win Choi Hyuk over instead of them.

‘What is everyone trying to do? What will happen in the future? And the Exalted Wings? The alliance? The Berserkers? Earthlings? ...Me?’

The more she thought about it, the gloomier she became.

In a quiet voice, she asked Handke,

“Did you talk with the others?”

Handke scratched his head.

“I did. Leah and Kim Honghyun are leaving. From the beginning, Kim Honghyun was planning on using the Berserkers as a foothold for his success... Leah decided to interpret Richard’s will more broadly and is going to work towards the revival of the earthlings.”

Lee Jinhee asked with a slightly stifled tone,

“And what... about the others?”

“I don’t know... Unlike Leah, Zero said he’d follow Leader Choi Hyuk as written in Richard’s will... Baek Seoin was stern, saying that he owed Choi Hyuk a life debt. Bae Jinman, that man surprised me. He simply smiled and shook his head. Knowing him, I thought he would leave...”

“And Hyunsung oppa?”

When Lee Jinhee asked about Ryu Hyunsung, Handke frowned.

“Haa... That guy is too headstrong. He said he’ll remain and fight until he dies. He has no thoughts on making new relationships or on living a better life. So I asked him why he was acting this way. Considering how young he is and his seven years of loyalty, hasn’t he done enough? Shouldn’t he forget about those who he has lost and move on with his life? Then he answered, ‘No, I have no thoughts of forgetting them until I die. If I also forget my friends, then their deaths would really have been for nothing. I need to suffer; only then can their resentment remain without disappearing. I can’t forget them until I die. The world won’t continue to go around as though my friends’ deaths were nothing. At least, in front of my eyes, until I die.’ ...Really now. His friends definitely hope for that.”

Handke grumbled, but Lee Jinhee looked sad. She listlessly looked out into space and said,

“Is that so...? I... don’t know. Really.”



‘Event Horizon Troop’, also known as the Horizon Troop, was an independent troop where the problem children in Alliance City gathered. It was common for independent troops to be composed around a specific tribe, but this troop was diverse, composed of many of the tribes existing in the alliance. Unlike other troops that took safer actions as they grew stronger, this troop was famous for not refusing dangerous adventures. That didn’t mean they fought every day like the Berserkers. They became renown for taking on dangerous missions and then taking a long break, spending the Mission Points from the missions like water in Alliance City. Also, the troop ranks were decided

solely on skill so the arrogant young masters and ladies from the top four tribes had to obediently follow orders from the commanders from minor tribes. Because of this, there had been instances where naïve geeks from the top four tribes called Horizon Troop team leaders ‘bumpkins’ and were beaten half to death by their team members, who were also from the top four tribes.

This Horizon Troop was precisely the one Chu Youngjin settled in after leaving the Berserkers.

Always taking on dangerous missions, this time, the Horizon Troop was dispatched to the monsters’ universe as the first task force in support of Flame-Rain. Their mission was to help Flame-Rain build her fortress by invading the heart of the enemy camp and throwing them into confusion. They weren’t affiliated to Flame-Rain and were simply her temporary support in order to earn a big haul of Mission Points.

“Okay! Collection of the ancient dragon corpse is complete! Now we run until Exalted Wing Flame-Rain can hide us! Break through their encirclement!”

The leader of the first task force shouted.

At the same time, he saw glimpses of a mountainous dragon in a dense red and blue fog that surrounded as its bones melted and disappeared.

In a good mood, the leader of the first task force mumbled,

“We’re lucky, lucky. To think that the dwelling of an ancient dragon that devoured monsters in the past would be here.”

The monsters’ universe, which had already come to the end of its lifespan, changed its fate of collapse into monsters and sent them to other universes, and by absorbing and combining with the living fates of conquered universes, the monsters’ universe maintained its existence.

Fortunately, the first task force came across the dwelling of an ancient dragon that had been integrated into the monsters’ universe.

“The important aspect of fighting against monsters is maintaining a karma surplus. Since we recovered the karma of an ancient dragon that had been snatched away, we gained and they lost. The fruits of our labor this time is great. We just need to get out.”

The leader of the first task force was truly in a good mood. While he didn't say it, the fruits this time didn't simply end with the completion of a mission.

‘In the grand scheme of things, I heard that that person works hard to obtain dragon races... The corpse of an ancient dragon should be a great present.’

The leader of the first task force smiled. It felt like things were going well recently.

‘That guy's the same. The more I see him, the greater he is.’

His gaze was directed at the warrior who had joined recently. Unlike the Horizon Troop's model of fighting hard when fighting and playing hard when playing, he was a freak who kept switching between task forces and was constantly taking on dangerous missions. While he fought like he would die at any moment, his skills grew just as fast. He had been a middle-ranked warrior when he joined, but currently, he had grown strong enough to be at the peak of high-ranked warriors. When he saw him fight, he felt inexplicably different.

The leader revealed a satisfied smile.

‘Even when considering the fate he awakened when he became a high-ranked warrior, he'll truly be a useful military power later. Though I am worried he might die early from fighting with no regard... Since I placed ‘Puppet Shiro’ next to him, it won't be too dangerous.’

After thinking to that point, the leader turned his gaze towards a different direction. The monsters swarmed densely towards them. While they had obtained great results already, this only mattered if they actually came out of this alive. Until Flame-Rain moved the Net of Fate to conceal them, they had to break through the encirclement and run. It would be an intense fight.



Puppet Shiro was a battle doll created by a now extinct species. She possessed the standard appearance of a beautiful woman that resembled earthlings, Flame Wing

Tribe members, fairies, and others. However, her skin was created with a special metal that made it strong and cold.

The species that created her were incredible cowards. When they had to fight against the monsters, they would link their karma to battle dolls like her to fight instead of fighting personally. They did this despite the efficiency of karma not being that great.

She fought while receiving her masters' karma in her 'gear heart'. However, after losing a war, her masters were all killed. At the time of their demise, she accepted her masters' karma, which filled her gear heart, and their resentment towards the monsters had succeeded into a new fate. Now, after an immeasurable passage of time, she had become the battle doll 'Puppet Shiro', a highest-ranked warrior of the Armored Soul Tribe.

She blocked Chu Youngjin, who was rushing towards the heart of the enemy camp. With a chilling voice, she warned,

"Are you crazy? You're deep enough already. You'll die if you go in any further."

Chu Youngjin, the rookie warrior she was parenting, was an excessively rash person. Even now, he had gone out of the formation and was about to charge into the enemy camp alone. While this wasn't the first time he had done this, this time, even Shiro couldn't bear letting him go.

"There. Don't you see it? It's a highest-ranked monster. You won't last 10 seconds against it. Death."

Shiro calmly explained in order to save him, but Chu Youngjin's eyes simply filled with irritation and fatigue. As if explaining was a pain, he spat while unaware of what he was saying,

"I won't die."

"You will."

Chu Youngjin pushed her away and argued,

"Hey! I won't die! I already died! I won't die!"

"...? You're alive."

“I’m dead here! Here! Crazy! Move aside!”

Thumping his chest, Chu Youngjin’s eyes rolled like a crazy person’s. Rather than Shiro, who was trying to stop him, he cared more about the monsters behind her.

“I don’t understand.”

Shiro declared with her cold, pretty face.

Tick, tick, tick. She heard her gear heart churning regularly like a mechanical clock. Besides the feeling of danger she felt her life was at risk or satisfaction from killing monsters, born as a battle doll, she wasn’t really emotional about other things.

“Shiro, you’re really tiresome...”

Since Shiro continued to not let him go, Chu Youngjin eventually gave up going any further and began clearing the monsters near him. Rumble! Rumble! Every time his karma rang out explosively, monsters’ bodies exploded and the nearby monsters lost their strength.

Even though he had slaughtered a sufficient number of monsters, Chu Youngjin still felt unsatisfied.

‘More... More... I want to fight more intensely.’

Chu Youngjin had no regrets if he died right now since there was nothing he had to live for.

While he did think he had to help Choi Hyuk, this thought was no more than a habit.

Currently, there was nothing he wanted to do besides futility risking his life fighting and growing stronger to develop ‘Chu Youngjin’s Guardian’, which his lover Lee Hyejin had left behind. His life consisted of fighting like he would die and looking after Choi Hyuk whenever he came to his senses.

If life was a game, Chu Youngjin thought that the real game had ended and that he was simply playing a bonus game.

The Horizon Troop broke through the monsters' encirclement and advanced. Chu Youngjin stood at the very front. Becoming more agitated as he fought repeatedly, Chu Youngjin forgot Shiro's dissuasion and charged forward once again. Leaving the formation on his own, he became isolated in the midst of the monsters.

However, for some reason, Shiro didn't stop him this time.

'Reckless human. His big weakness is that he cannot calculate capability. If he dies here, that is it. Possible to consider him unnecessary in the grand scheme.'

Not only was she assigned to protect Chu Youngjin, she was also tasked to judge whether he was a suitable person to pull into their grand scheme. This time, Shiro decided to leave him alone. She also thought he would die soon.

Chu Youngjin, he was undoubtedly an amazing warrior.

The fate 'Futility' that he awakened when he became a high-ranked warrior even infected the karma of monsters, weakening them. Every time a rumble erupted out, the monsters within 500 meters of him would stagger as though their chests had been pierced by a stake. On the other hand, his sword strikes were destructive enough to exceed his current level. He could easily slaughter high-ranked monsters, which were of the same rank as him.

However, that was the limit of his strength. It was useless when facing a highest-ranked monster.

'Farewell.'

Seeing the highest-ranked monster, who she had been constantly observing, attack Chu Youngjin, Shiro inwardly sent him an emotionless farewell. As long as his fate of 'Futility' wasn't effective, Chu Youngjin would be ripped to shreds within ten seconds.

That was what would happen, yet...

Ruumble!

A thunderous rumble rang out, different from before. A light flashed, and this rumble shook the monsters' universe. All the monsters within sight faltered at the same time.

'...?'

Shiro couldn't comprehend the current situation. She saw the highest-ranked monster falter. It was clearly weakened by Chu Youngjin's 'Futility'. Then, with a flash, she witnessed Chu Youngjin's sword smash through the monster's body. The monster split in two, never to reattach again. This was something Shiro hadn't calculated. Faced with this utterly unexpected situation, Shiro's way of thinking had taken a shock.

Tick, tick, tick, TICK, TICK! TICK! TI-TI-TI-TI-TI!

Her gear heart, which had been operating normally, began to churn crazily.

As if entranced, she approached Chu Youngjin. She brought Chu Youngjin, who had completely passed out in front of the highest-ranked monster's corpse, into her embrace.

As though he was sleep-talking, Chu Youngjin said,

"See? I still didn't die... Fuck..."

Chu Youngjin frowned, seemingly distressed. Passed out, a single teardrop hung from the edge of his eye.

Shiro felt her always cold forehead become hot.

'?'

Noticing an abnormality within her body, Shiro quickly searched for the problem.

Kiiing!

Only then did she realize her gear heart had overheated and was spinning in place. She had never experienced this before.

"...Broken?"

While agitated and holding Chu Youngjin, Shiro frowned.

Chapter 169

Each's Calculations (2)

On the endlessly expanding blue sand desert of the Blue Ocean Planet, which was the homeland of the glass crabs, Choi Hyuk reunited with Chu Youngjin.

“Uhh, leader. I heard you’re doing well these days.”

Smiling blandly, Chu Youngjin raised his hand up.

Because he was happier to see him than he expected, Choi Hyuk felt a little embarrassed.

“Nice to see you, Chu hyung! But what’s this whole ‘leader’ thing...? You aren’t an official member of my troop anymore.”

“Really? Then I’ll talk casually. If we think about it, weren’t you my junior at school?”

Chu Youngjin spoke casually as though he had been waiting for those words. Choi Hyuk’s eyes widened before he laughed out loud. A peaceful smile hung on Chu Youngjin’s lips as well. As he also felt happier to see Choi Hyuk than he thought, his heart beat faster.

‘Is he the only person who remembers Lee Hyejin and was present at that moment...?’

While they didn’t know each other during school, still, Choi Hyuk was the only person who he shared memories of that time with.

The slaughter in high school. The students who survived that had scattered. At least, those Chu Youngjin was close with had all died the day Jung Minji had died, and there was no way to know how many besides them were still alive. Perhaps they had all been annihilated since the lives the earthlings lived since then weren’t easy.

Yeah. That was why Choi Hyuk was the only one. The only one who knew and witnessed her final moment. This was meaningful to him. Especially now, when he was living amongst aliens without any connections.

'Proof that there was such a time.'

Chu Youngjin stretched out his hand and firmly held Choi Hyuk's. Choi Hyuk also firmly held onto his.

"Congrats. You're already a highest-ranked warrior?"

Chu Youngjin smiled bitterly at Choi Hyuk's congratulations.

"It's funny hearing the word 'already' from you. The places you used to beat me still ache when it rains, bastard."

"If you don't like it, why don't you get stronger and hit me."

"You monstrous bastard."

They separated soon after chatting and laughing.

Choi Hyuk stared directly into Chu Youngjin's eyes and asked,

"How are things going? Have you successfully infiltrated the enemy camp?"

"It's shit... Still, because I became a highest-ranked warrior, I think I can now see the true nature of this troop. There is definitely something going on. Though we'll have to wait and see if it's an opportunity or not."

"Really? Since you can't see anything yet... Hmm, did you make any new friends?"

At Choi Hyuk's question, Chu Youngjin recalled Shiro, who he had gotten quite close to lately. She was a highest-ranked warrior of the Armored Soul Tribe. While she possessed a cold gear heart, she occasionally became flustered when dealing with him.

After thinking about her for a bit, Chu Youngjin smiled bitterly.

"Not a lot, just a few. Well... Will there be a time when those relationships are useful?"

"We have to do everything we can right now."

'Have to do everything we can.' These words contained Choi Hyuk's frustrations.

They were finally almost there. The true nature of the alliance, which had toyed with Earth, had come to light, and their targets for revenge were decided. Now, they might be able to successfully get their revenge if they took one more step. However, they didn't know where to take this one step.

“Do everything we can... Yeah, now that you've brought it up, let's be clear. I wanted to ask you before. What is your revenge and what is mine? To be honest, we've never discussed it in detail before. Since we don't know when we'll meet again, why don't you tell me today.”

Determined, Chu Youngjin asked with calm eyes.

Choi Hyuk looked around at his surroundings. Endlessly expanding blue sand. There was no one who could hear their conversation. On top of that, Choi Hyuk's strength, which had erased the monsters' universe's Net of Fate, could be used here as well. Even Exalted Wings shouldn't be able to know what they discussed here. He also met with Chu Youngjin here because he was confident in this.

Choi Hyuk stared directly at Chu Youngjin and replied in a snappy tone,

“All.”

“All? Does that mean all 13 Exalted Wings?”

“Yeah.”

“...The troop I'm in is famous for being hostile towards the Exalted Wings' policies, but there could be an Exalted Wing behind them. There should other people who can assist our cause besides them since we can't ignore the competitiveness between the Exalted Wings... Even still, all 13, you're not going to change your mind?”

Choi Hyuk didn't nod and firmly answered,

“Yeah. Will you join me?”

Why was it? That moment, even though it was only for a moment, Chu Youngjin thought of Shiro. However, that was it.

Chu Youngjin quickly forgot about her and nodded his head.

“I’ll join you since I don’t really have anything else to do.”

Chu Youngjin thought that Choi Hyuk’s plan wasn’t bad. His own world had collapsed with Lee Hyejin’s death... Yet the world still continued on as though nothing happened. Under the logic that those who survived needed to live...

So...

If all 13 Exalted Wings died and the alliance collapsed... Maybe then, people would realize how frightening their actions were. That it was something they shouldn’t have glossed over and forgotten... With regret. It wasn’t a bad thought.

Choi Hyuk didn’t go out of his way to thank Chu Youngjin. He simply patted his shoulder once and requested,

“Then... Work hard. I can’t think of a way to have them all gather in one place. There hasn’t been any recorded instance of them gathering in one place since the founding of the alliance. Since it’ll be too difficult to take them out one by one, we need to gather them in one place. We also need to become strong enough to kill them... I’ll work hard, so you as well.”

This was, in fact, the real reason why he called Chu Youngjin here. No matter how much he thought about it, he was stuck on this final step. Because he thought that they could come up with a method if they worked together, he took the risk to call him here.

Fortunately, Chu Youngjin nodded.

“If I learn something about my troop and gain some influence... I might be able to help you out with your plan.”

While it was only a supposition, right now, he earnestly held onto even this uncertain hope.

Choi Hyuk shook Chu Youngjin’s hand.

After their handshake, Choi Hyuk took a step back. While he was happy to see him and wanted to stay longer, their meetings were best kept short since Chu Youngjin could be Choi Hyuk’s hidden sword.

'It'll be best to refrain from contacting him.'

He was about to say goodbye when Chu Youngjin quickly asked him,

"What did the others say?"

Choi Hyuk momentarily flinched at those words before calmly turning around and saying,

"Leah, Handke, Kim Honghyun are leaving... Jinhee nuna is still thinking about it."

"Lee Jinhee... I hope she can be happy..."

"My thoughts are the same. Half my mind wishes she leaves the Berserkers and finds happiness..."

Choi Hyuk didn't mention the other half.

"Then let's meet next time when we're more certain of things. Also, let's not contact each other unless there is a drastic change."

Choi Hyuk left after waving his hand. Chu Youngjin raised his hand once as a send-off.

Then he later realized,

'Now that I think about it... There aren't 13 Exalted Wings anymore, but 14... What is he planning on doing about Flame-Rain?'

Chu Youngjin temporarily observed the place Choi Hyuk had left before shaking his head and returning to his troop.



"You grew stronger... Did you enjoy your revenge?"

Wherever he met Dark-Sound, he was always covered in a pitch-black darkness. His senses lost their sense of direction, and he felt like he was in a dream when he was in reality.

If he didn't want to lose himself in this darkness, he had no choice but to erect a sharp

sword in his heart.

Erecting a sword in his heart, Choi Hyuk gave a short bow.

“...Thanks to you.”

Dark-Sound asked while laughing,

“Of course, that isn’t all?”

Choi Hyuk silently looked at Dark-Sound.

‘Of course, that’s not all.’

While he didn’t know if Dark-Sound read something from his eyes, he seemed satisfied.

“You need to plot a bigger revenge scheme! For example... Flame-Hell! The main culprit who created the current unfair and cruel system! An elitist to his bones! I’ve flattered him for a long time which is why I can stand next to him. Now it’s your turn. It’ll be easier for you since I’ve made a path. However, you need proof. Proof that will make Flame-Hell trust you. If you do well... It won’t be long before you can take out the person who stands at the top of the alliance.”

Dark-Sound’s voice was excessively sweet as he knew very well what Choi Hyuk wanted.

Before, when Dark-Sound met Choi Hyuk for the first time, he could see that he had a grudge on some ‘ambiguous target’. While he possessed uncontrollable rage, at that time, Choi Hyuk didn’t know how and to whom he should vent his rage on. While he kept thinking about getting revenge, his target and plan were uncertain.

That was why Dark-Sound was confident that, if he provided this pitiful warrior with a certain target and plan, he would be able to control him.

What he had overlooked was simply the amount of rage Choi Hyuk possessed.

However, hiding the sword in his heart, Choi Hyuk asked in a clear manner,

“What is it that I need to do?”

“You need to give Flame-Hell what he wants. What he wants are the circumstances to spread his wings.”

Flame-Hell was suddenly in competition with Flame-Rain.

He wasn't pleased with Flame-Rain becoming the symbol of victory nor could he identify with how she indiscriminately appointed warriors.

While there wouldn't be any immediate clashes as Flame-Rain had gone to the monsters' universe, if she returned after a hundred or even a thousand years, he might have to hand his power over to her without a single fight.

Because of this, Flame-Hell also needed victory and a way to appeal to the youths. He needed a leader that could assemble young warriors around him.

“That's why I recommended you. The Kundle Tribe that you trained recently and the glass crabs you saved. That was decisive. They all follow you, right? That's something amazing. Warriors gather around you without reward, drunk on your victories... Of course, there are people who've left you recently, but seeing as there are still many left, you possess a certain charisma. Flame-Hell wants that. He hopes that you will go out to war with the young warriors of the top four tribes and the new generation of rookies. He wants you to make them stronger and entrance them to embed a strong image of Flame-Hell in their minds.”

Dark-Sound suddenly grabbed Choi Hyuk's two shoulders. His touch was so cold that it felt like his shoulders were freezing.

“Take this to heart. On the outside, you need to make it seem like all your victories and glory is because of Flame-Hell's decisions and wisdom. However... You understand, right? For the grand plan, it's not bad to keep a few on your side. You also need to quickly reach the transcendent stage.”

Dark-Sound smirked.

When Choi Hyuk came to his senses, Dark-Sound was nowhere in sight. The darkness that covered his surroundings was gone as well. He was at his residence in the Tower of Warriors, where illusions of karma weapons swayed.



Dark-Sound hummed after his conversation with Choi Hyuk.

Flame-Rain grabbed his shoulder.

Blaaze!

Chiiii!

The suddenly surging darkness and flames fought each other, creating a whirlwind, before dying down.

Dark-Sound didn't seem surprised as he craftily asked,

"Woah, woah, princess. Why are you so angry? What about the monsters' universe?"

"There's no problem if I leave for a bit... But... Are you really going to push Choi Hyuk into this?"

Unlike Flame-Rain's serious expression, Dark-Sound's expression was calm.

"What reason is there not to? You would have done the same if he joined you."

"Don't make me laugh. I'm different from you. While I'm cooperating with you right now, this doesn't mean I'm your comrade."

"Wow, how hurtful."

Dark-Sound dryly rubbed his chest.

Flame-Rain gritted her teeth and growled,

"Remember this. It'll be best if you don't think about using Choi Hyuk for a bit before throwing him away. This is a warning."

"Yes, yes, princess. I understand. Don't worry and go back to the monsters' universe. While it's okay for a bit... That 'bit' shouldn't be more than a minute."

Dark-Sound replied as he leisurely met her gaze. Even as her blazing eyes disappeared

while staring at him, she warned,

“Don’t misjudge my ability.”

“ .. ”

Flame-Rain disappeared, and Dark-Sound glanced at his shoulder. The place Flame-Rain grabbed had burnt up and become transparent.

Dark-Sound chuckled as he mumbled,

“What a charming princess. For a Flame Wing bitch, that is.”

Chapter 170

Each's Calculations (3)

“It is an honor to work with you again! And on a mission to punish the damn mutts of the universe-!”

A man with flames blazing in a whirlwind spoke, seemingly moved. He was Whirlwind Fire of the Flame Wing Tribe. He had, among others, participated in the mission colonizing the Shapley and Laniakea Superclusters. Beside him stood Black Snow, a high-ranked warrior of the Dark Tribe, who had pitch-black, transparent hair that floated in the air, greatly contrasting with her pale face. Seeing as how darkness sneakily covered her pale face, it seemed she was shy.

Warriors who were recommended by Flame-Hell had gathered in the square on the lowest level of the Tower of Warriors to greet Choi Hyuk. In other words, a formal meeting was held before the expedition. Whirlwind Fire and Black Snow were the two warriors who had arrived first. As soon as they met Choi Hyuk, they emitted a blinding white light, not hiding their goodwill.

However, a phrase caught Choi Hyuk's attention.

“The mutts... of the universe?”

Of course, the expression had been automatically translated by the Net of Fate, but Choi Hyuk became interested as the swear suited Korean sentiments very well.

“Isn't the 'Blue Mane Tribe' the name of the species we received the killing order for?”

Whirlwind Fire became more excited at his question that he said,

“Yes! So the mutts of the universe!”

Yet, as he didn't know the circumstances, Choi Hyuk gave a questioning look.

Finally realizing that Choi Hyuk didn't know much about the universe's history, Whirlwind Fire showed a flustered expression. As he wasn't sure of how to go about

it, Black Snow, who had been standing by docilely, acted.

Darkness softly flowed from her hair and created a dark space akin to the universe in front of Choi Hyuk. A few lights shined like stars inside it before creating a 3D shape like a hologram.

The shape formed by this mystical process was familiar to Choi Hyuk.

“...A dog?”

Like tribesmen, he had fancy ornaments hanging from his neck and head and his teeth and claws were dyed, but no matter how much he looked at him, the Blue Mane looked like a dog or a wolf.

Black Snow explained in a slightly excited voice,

“Yes! They are the ‘Blue Manes’. Now that I think about it, I heard that there were animals similar to them on Earth. It’s common in the universe. Species created resembling species that possess a great fate.”

Saying this, Black Snow’s gaze alternated between Whirlwind Fire and Choi Hyuk. This was a silent explanation of how the dogs and wolves on Earth resembled the ‘Blue Mane’ Tribe like how earthlings’ faces and bodies resembled the Flame Wing and Dark Tribes.

Choi Hyuk slowly nodded.

At a glance, the wolf-like ‘Blue Mane’ looked lofty and strong, enough to incite a vague sense of curiosity for him by looking at his appearance. Yet, the mission Choi Hyuk received was to ‘annihilate’ them.

‘Why?’

They were in the middle of a war against monsters, yet to annihilate a karma species? It was more dubious as he had suddenly received this mission without a word of explanation. But now, it seemed this species was infamous enough to be called the ‘mutts of the universe’.

Hearing her explanation, the reason why they were called ‘mutts’ and were excluded from the alliance went way back. Before the alliance was founded, contact between other species was rare and many weren’t aware of the existence of other species. This was before the concept of ‘karmalings’, grouping all species into one.

Back then, the ‘Blue Manes’ were as famous as the Flame Wing Tribe, which had awakened karma. If the Flame Wing Tribe was famous for their incredible military strength, the ‘Blue Manes’ were famous for their nomadic lifestyle, going around the universe, and their loyalty, paying back any goodwill they received. The Blue Manes were quite popular.

It was around this time when species from a different dimension invaded. Unlike the massive invasion of the monsters currently, their actions were similar to seeking refuge, but either way, this was the karmalings’ first encounter with species from another dimension.

They were powerful, possessed reason, and they had set up tactics in order to dominate this new universe. The ones who first submitted, wagged their tails at their technology, and swore allegiance were the ‘Blue Manes’.

The ‘Blue Manes’ provided them with the information they had obtained while traveling throughout the universe and used the trust they had accumulated to cause the collapse of other species.

Before the Flame Wing Tribe eventually annihilated those from the other dimension, numerous species suffered as their slaves.

Black Snow seemed angry, her body trembling, as she continued,

“But even after that, they were brazen-faced, not reflecting on their actions. When the monsters invaded, they rejected the alliance’s proposal to join them, forgiving their past actions, and hid even further. They hid beneath the alliance’s shadow and focused on their own safety. On top of that, there were rumors that they attempted to cooperate with the monsters. They can’t be forgiven.”

Choi Hyuk unconsciously mumbled,

“They are traitors like Ye Wanyong^{1}...”

“Ye Wanyong? I don’t know what that is... But they are mutts.”

Seeing Black Snow grinding her teeth and Whirlwind chiming in while nodding his head, he could tell that the hostility toward the Blue Mane Tribe was universally great.

A question arose from listening to them.

“Why hasn’t the alliance subjugated them yet?”

When Choi Hyuk asked, Black Snow and Whirlwind Fire looked at Choi Hyuk with eyes shining with respect.

Whirlwind Fire said,

“Before the foundation of the alliance, we didn’t dare to. While we did kill them whenever we saw them, because they were fundamentally nomads, they fled from planet to planet and from galaxy to galaxy. Only after founding the alliance did we truly have the capability to subjugate them... But we didn’t have the capacity to because of the war against the monsters. While the Blue Manes weren’t an incredibly powerful species, they couldn’t be ignored. To completely subjugate them would require a large army, but the alliance didn’t have the capacity. But the one who reversed this situation is you, leader!”

“...Me?”

“Yes, of course, after the massive invasion last time, the monsters’ activities reduced drastically, but it wasn’t like we had spare reserves since we had to recover lost territory and keep the monsters in check. However, didn’t you completely capture the Shapley and Laniakea Superclusters by crossing over to the monsters’ universe, taking out a demise-ranked monster and by destroying all the Kahur Kabkuns that were densely packed together? Thanks to that, the monsters’ strength in our universe has reduced significantly and the alliance has leftover defensive resources. Only now do we have the time and resources to subjugate the mutts of the universe!”

“...Is that so?”

While his evaluation had strangely mixed Choi Hyuk and Flame-Rain’s achievements, Choi Hyuk didn’t consider it a problem.

Rather, others mocked them. While they murmured to each other, he could hear them

all.

“Haa... Whirlwind Fire. You really got to acknowledge his ability to boast.”

Someone plainly remarked. When Choi Hyuk turned around, that person turned around towards them. There weren't just one or two. The warriors who had begun to fill the Tower of Warriors were looking at Choi Hyuk, Black Snow, and Whirlwind Fire.

A significant number of them were from the Flame Wing Tribe. The plaza surged with flames as though torches had been lit throughout.

They were the next generation elite warriors that Flame-Hell had selected. Flame-Hell wanted to develop them into a force that supported him. Since he included this many Flame Wing Tribe warriors when developing the next generation of alliance warriors, it clearly showed his intentions of wanting to keep the Flame Wing Tribe at the center of the alliance.

Either way, Choi Hyuk predicted that there wouldn't be any trivial clashes since Flame-Hell wanted his help by sending them, but there seemed to be a few warriors within the plaza who didn't look upon him favorably.

Their murmurs, which they didn't try to hide, were picked up by Choi Hyuk's ears.

“Highest-ranked Warrior Choi Hyuk... Of course, he's amazing, but isn't his ability too low to lead a troop like this?”

“My words exactly. They should have brought at least a transcendent warrior in the rankings.”

“Did you hear what they were saying before? He didn't even know who the mutts of the universe were. While I know he's talented and has contributed a lot... Will he be able to command properly like this?”

“There are rumors that the head of the Blue Mane Tribe is at the transcendent level...”

They were blunt.

During the first meeting with their troop leader, the man who would be commanding all of them, they slandered him without any hesitation with attitudes of ‘your capacity is only this much if you can’t even handle this,’ and looks of ‘what are you going to do about it?’

Choi Hyuk found this interesting rather than being taken aback.

‘The Flame Wing Tribe’s evaluation of me is stingier than I expected. Then... Does Flame-Hell trust my abilities so much that he risked opposition? Or is this also a test...?’

Revealing an amused expression, Choi Hyuk pointed to a warrior. He was the warrior who had mocked Whirlwind Fire.

“You.”

The warrior who mocked Whirlwind Fire came forward.

“Yes, I am a high-ranked warrior of the Flame Wing Tribe, Sand Fire.”

While his attitude was polite, he gave him a challenging look.

Choi Hyuk asked,

“It seems everyone is doubtful of this mission and my abilities, what about you?”

Then Sand Fire replied without a moment’s hesitation,

“I think... that we should just act like we are completing this mission before giving up.”

“Sand Fire!”

Whirlwind Fire shouted, seemingly unable to control his rage.

Yet, Choi Hyuk didn't pay him any mind and asked again, filled with curiosity,

"Why?"

Sand Fire stood confidently and replied freely,

"First, while the head of the Blue Manes is a coward, his ability to command is outstanding. Unlike what is known publicly, this isn't the first time we are attempting to subjugate the Blue Mane Tribe. Previously, they dragged the war on with their unique guerilla tactics, and in the end, the alliance, which prioritized the war against the monsters, had no choice but to retreat. I wonder if Leader Choi Hyuk will be any different. Second, it has been confirmed that the head of the Blue Mane Tribe is at the transcendent level. Compared to him, you are a highest-ranked warrior. I don't think any further explanation is necessary. Third, you can't obtain our loyalty. Look at your troops first. You only have eight high-ranked warriors... No, since three left recently, five. Only you and Naro of the Armored Soul Tribe, who can't even control his own strength yet, are highest-ranked warriors. Compare that to the hundreds of high-ranked warriors and seven highest-ranked warriors dispatched this time. This is a type of allied force so it isn't fair for Leader Choi Hyuk, whose force is the smallest, to be the commander-in-chief. There won't be anyone who truly follows you."

In the end, he was saying that he couldn't acknowledge him because his commanding ability was doubtful, he lacked military power, and he seemed to have been appointed by pulling strings.

Having witnessed Choi Hyuk kill a highest-ranked monster with a single slash when he was only a high-ranked warrior, Whirlwind Fire and Black Snow wanted to retort, but since Choi Hyuk's reaction was so calm, they didn't know what to do, only reading Choi Hyuk's mood.

After listening to Sand Fire talk in high spirits, Choi Hyuk nodded as though he understood.

Then he said,

"Okay, we go to battle tomorrow at this time. Gather here."

Sand Fire was the one who was taken aback.

“...Pardon?”

Yet Choi Hyuk didn't say it again.

He simply announced while turning around,

“You all know my face, right? It seems Exalted Wing Flame-Hell has prepared some refreshments, so eat and drink moderately and then gather here tomorrow.”

Choi Hyuk raised two fingers.

“Listening to you, it seems like the key point is to end the war before it drags on. Two months. I will end this war in two months so look forward to it when you arrive tomorrow.”

After saying this, Choi Hyuk smiled unsuitably before leaving with light steps.

“Ah! Leader!”

Black Snow and Whirlwind Fire followed after him as though they were his attendants.

“...”

A silence hung in the plaza where the rest of the warriors remained.

A portion of them, who came here ready for a fight, were taken aback by Choi Hyuk, who didn't play along, and the rest seemed to find this situation fresh as they began to enjoy it. Soon, someone erupted into laughter.

“Puahaha! He's quite intense!”

“Two months? Can he do it? If he does, he's a hero!”

“Kekeke, I bet he's bluffing.”

“Woah... Our leader is charismatic.”

Choi Hyuk was working hard to capture the hearts of these young warriors like Dark-Sound requested.

{1} Known as one of the 'Five Eulsa Traitors', who signed the Eulsa Treaty making Korea a protectorate of Japan in defiance of Korean Emperor Gojong.

Chapter 171

Each's Calculations (4)

There were two groups who flipped out when they heard that they would be marching off to war the next day.

The first group was comprised of the highest-ranked warriors participating in the subjugation. The seven highest-ranked warriors, who were rushing to meet Choi Hyuk, complained incessantly about the sudden schedule, demanding the specifics of his plan.

In response, Choi Hyuk used Flame-Hell's name.

'I understand you are uneasy. However, there is a reason why Exalted Wing Flame-Hell trusts me. You should trust me too. You will know tomorrow.'

He simply said what he wanted and dismissed them.

The one who came to see him next was a bit unexpected. He was Armor-Phantom, the commander-in-chief of the Shapley and Laniakea Superclusters. It was different from when he had arrived in his small, secondary body last time. Choi Hyuk was suppressed by the vigor of Armor-Phantom's real body. Metallic pieces fluttered like feathers as they reflected light to form Armor-Phantom's outline. Spreading wings made of metal and light, his splendor made him look like an angel judging the world. At a glance, he seemed to be at the early stages of the transcendent level, similar in strength to Flame-Rain before she grew stronger.

Now that their relationship had gone awry, he gave Choi Hyuk an indifferent look.

"While I don't really want to see your face... I came because the elders of my tribe sent me."

Hearing this, Choi Hyuk's expression couldn't help but stiffen. Only Exalted Wings were individuals that Armor-Phantom, who was a transcendent warrior and the

commander-in-chief of two superclusters, would refer to as 'elders'. This was the first point of contact he had with other Exalted Wings besides Flame-Hell and Dark-Sound.

Yet, he couldn't predict the reason for Armor-Phantom's visit.

"Why is that you are imprisoning a warrior who has awakened as an Armor Soul Tribe member?"

There was no doubt he was referring to Naro when he said 'a warrior who has awakened as an Armor Soul Tribe member', but to claim he was imprisoning him?

Choi Hyuk frowned.

"I have never imprisoned Naro."

"Then why isn't he answering to his tribe's calls?"

Releasing the aura of a transcendent warrior without restraint, Armor-Phantom pressured Choi Hyuk.

Choi Hyuk decided to call Naro over and ask him.

After arriving, Naro didn't know what to do when he saw Armor-Phantom. Seeing his reaction, it seemed Naro did receive a summons from the Armor Soul Tribe.

[No... That... I never thought you would come personally.]

To the flustered Naro, Armor-Phantom gently, yet firmly said in an attitude overflowing with affection for Naro,

"Naro, a highest-ranked warrior of the Armor Soul Tribe, it's great to see you. I came because I was worried. If you're in a situation against your will, just say it. There's no need to worry. There is no one who can imprison an Armor Soul Tribe member in this entire universe."

His voice was filled with pride for his tribe.

Naro flipped out.

[That's not it!]

“Then?”

[That's... I don't want to leave the Berserkers.]

Armor-Phantom seemed shocked as he was momentarily at a loss for words. He barely managed to speak again.

“Think about it again. It's not like you're leaving forever. Those who have awakened as members of the Armor Soul Tribe have to receive our education. Only then can you be a true member of the Armor Soul Tribe. You also have to recreate your body! How long are you going to dwell in that large, heavy spaceship? You can become much stronger than you are now!”

[...I like the spaceship.]

Naro avoided Armor-Phantom's gaze.

Choi Hyuk looked at Naro, and Naro also glanced at Choi Hyuk, telepathically sending the emotions he was feeling right now. Naro didn't use telepathy much since he learned to speak. However, like the first time they had met, Naro only used telepathy to communicate with him.

Choi Hyuk understood what emotions he was feeling right now.

'I don't... want to leave.'

If he helped Armor-Phantom persuade Naro right now, he could probably leave a good impression on the Armor Soul Tribe. He might even be able to get closer to other Exalted Wings faster.

Despite this, Choi Hyuk closed his eyes. He suddenly thought of the executives who had decided to leave, Handke, Leah, and Kim Honghyun, and especially Lee Jinhee, who was still undecided.

Speculation was simply speculation. He didn't know what path would be best, however, Choi Hyuk decided to walk the path his heart chose. He had already lying to himself enough.

Choi Hyuk used Flame-Hell's name once again.

"You don't have to worry about Naro's education. The expedition this time is being personally supervised by Exalted Wing Flame-Hell. I am certain it'll be better than any other experience in the world. I think it's best if you broadened your mind. Aren't we all members of the alliance either way? I don't think there's a need to be educated by one's own tribe. Like this, Naro will be able to become a great warrior of the 'alliance'. I will support Naro's decision."

Something he said seemed to have rubbed Armor-Phantom the wrong way as his metallic feathers simultaneously stood on end and emitted a "Ting!" sound. While he clearly looked angry, it didn't seem like he could act out since Flame-Hell was mentioned. He simply glared at Choi Hyuk before leaving.

[You don't even like the alliance much.]

Naro said in a playful voice. The warm feelings Naro felt were transmitted to Choi Hyuk's heart.



Choi Hyuk couldn't help but feel sorry for the Berserkers.

This was, in reality, someone else's war. A war started because Flame-Hell wanted to keep his other competitors in check and strengthen his authority.

While it was for his revenge, Choi Hyuk was pushed into this situation as a puppet, and the Berserkers would die for his ultimate enemy, Flame-Hell.

All this happened because he was powerless.

Choi Hyuk resolved himself.

'This is the last play.'

The next time... The next time he unsheathed his sword would be for his final revenge. Gritting his teeth, Choi Hyuk swallowed his surging sorrow and rage. These were the sufferings he had to endure and accumulate in order to open the way for a new universe.

Choi Hyuk gathered these sufferings and aimed them at the Blue Manes. His Karma Heart thumped. After he had dealt with those who were in charge of Earth's recruit training, his Karma Heart kept beating nonstop as though it was sick. It beat nonstop as it squeezed out all of Choi Hyuk's power and fate. Choi Hyuk already knew that the end was near and that he wouldn't lose to anything.

“Charge! We target the head of the Blue Manes in the shortest distance possible! We leave behind those who can't keep up!”

The warriors, who followed Choi Hyuk while wondering what his strategy was, were shocked at his declaration. To suddenly tell them to break through at a single point... this strategy should never be chosen against the Blue Manes, who possessed excellent maneuverability and specialized in guerilla tactics.

Yet, while they were shocked, Choi Hyuk and the Berserkers were rushing towards the Blue Mane Tribe's border army that had appeared in front of them.

Their charge, which wasn't even in proper formation, looked unsteady as though they would quickly be blocked by their enemies.

If the other warriors didn't follow behind them, then the Berserkers would suffer heavy losses. If things progressed like this, it was clear that those who didn't follow quickly would be reprimanded.

Even if they didn't follow his order of charging towards the head of the Blue Manes, they had to support his charge first.

“That crazy! Follow after them for now! Once we catch up, we drag that bastard back and retreat!”

The highest-ranked warriors swore at Choi Hyuk as they led their troops and followed after Choi Hyuk.

A war they had never experienced before began.

Bang! Bang!

Grrr!

[Filthy alliance scum!]

The Blue Manes barked, cursing them. Their claws swung out. A wolf at the front seemed to disappear, and when he reappeared, his jaws were already on a Berserker's neck.

However, the Berserkers were skilled as well.

Lee Jinhee grabbed a Blue Mane who was targeting the back of her neck, and keeping a firm grip on his neck, she dragged him along. Lee Jinhee stabbed the wolf's stomach and side before shoving his face into the jaws of another wolf.

Her subordinates followed her example and trampled on the onrushing wolves. Still, their charging speed didn't drop at all.

While the Blue Manes' outer appearances were that of wolves, their colorful dyes and tribal ornaments showed that they were somewhat civilized and possessed reason. Yet, the Berserkers killed them indiscriminately one after another as though they were killing beasts.

These scenes exceeded the predictions of the other warriors following after them.

'The Berserkers and the Blue Manes' levels aren't that different? Yet how is it so one-sided?'

Their first prediction of the clash, that it would be even or that the Berserkers would be pushed back, was wrong.

'Still, I bet it'll be difficult to break through since the Blue Manes' maneuverability is excellent. Huh?'

The prediction that the Berserkers would be held back by the Blue Manes and lose to their maneuverability was also proven wrong.

Instead, the ones who lost their maneuverability were the Blue Manes. They tried their best to slow the Berserkers down, but the more they tried, the more pitifully they were slaughtered and thrown back.

[Grrr!!]

Along with a fierce roar, a highest-ranked Blue Mane warrior ambushed Choi Hyuk, but by that time, Choi Hyuk's sword was already passing through the top of his head.

[Rrrr...]

While thinking that he was biting Choi Hyuk, the highest-ranked Blue Mane warrior became a corpse.

Shudder.

A crushing force.

Without the slightest delay, the Berserkers pushed through the Blue Mane border army. The other troops, who wanted to save the Berserkers and drag the recklessly charging Choi Hyuk away, simply followed behind them. They couldn't even catch up to the Berserkers.

"Unbelievable!"

Someone shouted, almost screaming. His voice sounded as though he had taken a heavy blow to his pride.



Like how Choi Hyuk's Karma Heart was beating furiously, the Berserkers' karma was boiling violently. As their karma, which had grown greatly since their first revenge, still didn't satiate the Berserkers, it boiled even more violently, swelling in size whenever the Berserkers felt unsatisfied. The Berserkers didn't suppress their surging karma and simply left their bodies to the flow.

At this moment, even Lee Jinhee, who was withholding her decision on whether or not to continue to follow Choi Hyuk, fought with cruelty and without hesitation, fitting the typical characteristics of a Berserker.

However, her actions couldn't compare to Ryu Hyunsung's.

If there was another warrior who shined on this battlefield other than Choi Hyuk, it would be Ryu Hyunsung. The seven highest-ranked warriors following from behind and even Naro, who was assisting the fight, couldn't match the powerful aura Ryu Hyunsung gave off.

'Haha! I can kill them! I can kill more!'

Ryu Hyunsung had already cleanly forgotten that the Blue Manes weren't monsters but a karma species that possessed reason.

His mind was filled with the thought that he could kill to his heart's content.

The day he awakened was an eternal nightmare imprinted on Ryu Hyunsung's mind. He felt like the misery he felt when all he could do was watch his friends die powerlessly that day was being erased every time he killed a wolf.

Ryu Hyunsung's body shivered in ecstasy.

He had always fought dreaming of a better future and, when he was tired of fighting, taught new Berserkers in preparation for the future. Yet, no matter how much he struggled, he would have nightmares at night, and the emptiness in his heart gradually grew. It was only then when he realized,

'Ah, I already died.'

Only then did Ryu Hyunsung understand Chu Youngjin's fighting style. The extreme combativeness of someone whose heart had already died. On the other hand, during the recruit training, he had refused to acknowledge that his heart had already died and stubbornly used the sword techniques he had mastered in the past.

Ryu Hyunsung decided to throw away this shell.

'I'll entrust the future... to others.'

Ryu Hyunsung thought of Handke, Leah, and Kim Honghyun, who had left the Berserkers. Yes, he just needed to leave the future to them. It was a problem for someone who was already dead to think about those things.

What he had to do now was-

'Kill and kill!'

Whether it was his enemies or himself.

He felt free.

Shouting, Ryu Hyunsung swung his sword, splitting a Blue Mane's head and then smashing his eyes with the handle.

"I'll die! When I die! Let's see how strong... Huh?!"

As though possessed, he shouted nonsense from his mouth.

His karma weirdly kept swelling, and he could easily kill Blue Mane warriors who were similar or stronger than him.

His heart shuddered.

Ryu Hyunsung was always considered to be half a step to a step lower than Chu Youngjin, but the vigor he was showing right now didn't lose out to the Chu Youngjin of the past.

Rather than a Berserker, he seemed like a demon.

"How could he fight like that?! ... Ah..."

The warriors who couldn't hide their shock at the Berserkers' splendor were at a loss for words when they saw Ryu Hyunsung.

He purposefully stretched his neck out to bait the wolves. Then he killed those who approached to chew his neck with a single stab.

He even fought whilst being surrounded by the wolves, inducing them to launch pincer attacks. However, whenever the wolves launched the pincer attacks, they would die in the blink of an eye.

It seemed like nothing could harm him.

Glossing over Choi Hyuk's contributions as he was rumored to be an exceptional highest-ranked warrior, they were especially shocked seeing Ryu Hyunsung, who they thought was at or below their level, show off his splendor.

The weight of the name 'Berserkers' clutched their hearts.

The punitive expedition, which broke through the border army in one go, quickly pushed forward toward the center of the Blue Manes' territory rather than taking action against the Blue Manes.

Even the troop leaders, who didn't agree with Choi Hyuk's strategy of killing the head of the Blue Manes in one go, were currently frantically following the Berserkers as though they were entranced by something.

At the same time, Handke, Leah, and Kim Honghyun, who had left the Berserkers, were meeting with the Sovereign of Paradise Camilla.

Camilla was worried about the Berserkers.

"Overseer Choi Hyuk... wasn't satisfied with the first revenge? Then where is his revenge directed? If the alliance falls into danger, then we cannot win in the war against the monsters. It's a problem even if Choi Hyuk fails. All earthlings might be branded as traitors."

Handke gently shook his head.

"That would only be the case if Leader Choi Hyuk ever lost. However, I can't imagine the leader losing. Whether it's against the alliance or the monsters. It's the same for the Berserkers who follow him. What moves them isn't logic or reasoning, but their wounded pride and collapsed happiness. The deeper their wounds, the more they

can't stop. Nor will they lose. Of course, those who only rage with revenge can't be our future. However, after they have flipped the world on its head... No one will be able to look down on earthlings. That is our future."

Handke grinned before adding,

"Well, to be honest, the reason doesn't matter. While I left the Berserkers, I have no thoughts on obstructing their path. I feel sorry for and really like them."

After saying this, Handke looked up at the milk-white skies of Dragonic. Looking for Choi Hyuk and the Berserkers who were fighting nonstop somewhere beyond it, he gave a short prayer for their fortune in battle.

Chapter 172

Each's Calculations (5)

After piercing through the Blue Manes' border defense, they were quickly advancing to the center of their territory when they heard something howl.

While they didn't know what it was, the fact that it was howling was certain. In response, the warriors' weapons vibrated like brass instruments, their hearts thumped like drums, and the planets rang out like bells. Even space itself shook like a reed.

'Ahwooooo!'

This sound wasn't heard by their ears. It was a resonance created by the vibration of everything, including the world around them.

The warriors, who advanced following Choi Hyuk and his Berserkers in a trance, stopped in place. Their ears perked up at the sound escaping from their hearts. It was a chilling sense of dread.

Countless stars appeared in the darkness of outer space.

Whether they were there since the beginning or had only now been born from the darkness, each pair of eyes shined brightly and dark shadows with fluttering lush manes made their appearance.

"Chasing Manes..."

One of the warriors following the Berserkers made a stifled cry.

The most elite troop of the Blue Manes. It was an attack troop personally led by their leader. Even while the Blue Manes were publicly suppressed, they had raised their name in infamy by ruining countless troops and species.

They could sufficiently guess that they were strong with the information they had gathered until now.

However, the punitive force assembled this time was composed of the top elites of the alliance. They didn't lose out to them at all.

Yet, for some reason, they felt a suffocating pressure.

"Look over there."

Someone mumbled.

The appearances of the wolves were slightly strange. Their front paws were larger and more ferocious looking, and there were small eyes stuck on their excessively long manes. Each wolf had an unknown skull of a beast on their heads.

No, they were monster skulls. The warriors unconsciously looked at Choi Hyuk.

The monsters' new weapon that warrior Choi Hyuk first reported to the alliance. A method where a monster could fuse with another by equipping itself with it. They were new weapons that had the possibility of even surpassing the alliance's karma weapons. The wolves had fused with living monsters and were using them as weapons and armor.

"Crazy... Does this mean they really came to an agreement with the monsters?"

"How? The monsters aren't existences that can be communicated with!"

Murmurs began to spread.

The wolves were watching them with overwhelming numbers and overwhelming vigor.

They were only confronting each other, yet the warriors were already becoming exhausted and restless. Wherever they looked, they saw strange wolves staring at them like statues. Like claustrophobia, emotions of fear and suffocation flared up in the warriors.

The mood seemed like they had lost before even fighting.

Choi Hyuk acted in order to cut this flow.

Kririring, kang!!

The moment 'Choi Hyuk's Imprint' rang out while twisting its body, Choi Hyuk was already in front of the 'Chasing Manes'. Just as they were about to exclaim, 'As expected of Choi Hyuk...!', Choi Hyuk shot backwards with a bang. Without being able to maintain a steady posture, he was pushed back.

A large shadow was cast in the place Choi Hyuk had attacked. While emitting a cold darkness that ached one's bones, the head wolf revealed his teeth.

"I can't believe it. Is this really all? Have only feathers gathered without a single wing?"

The moment the head wolf appeared, everyone held their breath. Their karma was suppressed. They couldn't move their bodies. It felt like the fates they had grasped since they had become high-ranked warriors were being shredded apart like tissues.

At this moment, even Lee Jinhee was stricken with fear.

She had grasped the fate 'Challenge' when she became a high-ranked warrior. However, the head wolf seemed like the peak of challenges. A limit she could never overcome. A despair that she could never challenge again. She couldn't even move a finger. Her karma, which proudly flowed through her body, stiffened and became as heavy as a rock.

Just then, she heard a rough pant next to her.

Grit. She heard someone grit their teeth.

When she looked around, it was Ryu Hyunsung. His eyes were so red that they seemed like they would cry tears of blood at any moment.

"Ry- Ryu hyung?"

Lee Jinhee became uneasy from the beast-like sounds Ryu Hyunsung was making.

“Ryu hyung! Don’t do it!”

Despite Lee Jinhee’s attempt at holding him back, blood dripped from Ryu Hyunsung’s eyes. It seemed he even bit his lips too hard as blood also flowed from his lips.

While everyone was being dominated by the head wolf’s vigor, Ryu Hyunsung’s body trembled before he shot forward with a bang.

“Hey! Ryu Hyunsung!!!”

Lee Jinhee screamed. The head wolf, who had instantly shot Choi Hyuk backwards, was still there, yet...

Without knowing, Lee Jinhee shot after Ryu Hyunsung.

At the same time,

“Get up!”

Bae Jinman’s shout shook the warriors. A golden brilliance spread out endlessly with Bae Jinman at its center. The golden brilliance reduced negative emotions and increased positive ones as it connected the warriors’ fighting spirit.

When numerous warriors’ hearts interconnected and they began to depend on each other, the fighting spirit they had lost slowly recovered.

“Damn it!”

Baek Seoin, who could only now move his body, swore as he saw Ryu Hyunsung and Lee Jinhee shoot forward. The worst-case scenario crossed his mind.

-!

Then sound disappeared. No, the howl that made their bodies and the planets tremble disappeared suddenly.

The head wolf, who had been looking at Ryu Hyunsung and Lee Jinhee as though they were laughable, turned his gaze.

His large paw clashed with 'Choi Hyuk's Imprint'.

Choi Hyuk, who had been flung away, had returned. While the 'First Sword' he used was calmly blocked by the head wolf, it brought the result of sweeping away the pressure the warriors were under.

The head wolf growled as he admired,

"You have a strange skill."

Choi Hyuk didn't reply. As if to engrave that he was his opponent, he shot forward and slashed again and again.

Every time Choi Hyuk and the head wolf clashed, dark, blazing flames clashed with a cold darkness and made waves. A wave of heat rushed over them, followed by a cold wave, and then another wave of heat.

These waves had the effect of waking the warriors, who had fallen into a trance. As they came to their senses, the warriors, who had been suppressed by the fear of death, indiscriminately reacted temperamentally.

"Damn it! Fight! Pierce through them!"

The warriors pushed forward. The wolves calmly moved their formation back before attacking the warriors, who had broken their formation while recklessly charging at them.

Dogfights broke out everywhere.



"Damn it... Berserkers! Move with your teams! Alexei! You go around and organize the Berserkers' formation!"

Baek Seoin shouted in a mad mood. However, Alexei, who heard the order, didn't even look at Baek Seoin.

“...Sorry. Everyone, follow me! Let’s go rescue the director!”

Alexei ignored Baek Seoin’s order and led his subordinates to Ryu Hyunsung and Lee Jinhee, who were isolated at the very front.

“Hey! Hey! You crazy...! Naro! We are going to cooperate with the highest-ranked warriors of the other troops! Ask them to help recover our formation! We’re going to be crushed at this rate!”

{Understood!}

Baek Seoin moved urgently. While they seemed to be dogfights, the wolves were actually pulling the punitive force members into their formation and dispersing and attacking them in groups of twos and threes. Clearly a disadvantageous fight for the punitive force.

Baek Seoin tried his best to recover from this situation, but his efforts were soon faced with another obstruction.

“Alliance scum. I was going to kill you soon anyways, yet you crawled here on your own.”

A highest-ranked wolf, along with other wolves who followed him, rushed towards Baek Seoin knowing he was the commander.

“I am Meteor-Chasing Mane. You won’t be able to grab my tail even in your dying moment.”

His silver fur that was hidden in the darkness revealed itself. It seemed ‘Meteor-Chasing Mane’ prided himself on the color of his fur as his ornaments, monster armor and claws were all silver as well.

Whoosh.

He disappeared after spouting self-indulging remarks.

Crassh!

Baek Seoin’s shield was torn away. Blood splattered.

There were similar scenes everywhere. It seemed they obtained information about the punitive force's advance by observing them as they precisely intercepted key warriors. The seven highest-ranked warriors were all held back by powerful wolves, and Naro and the top executives of the Berserkers had to face the wolves that came to fight them.

It seemed a few among them were given 'must kill' orders as they were faced with wolves beyond their level.

Like how a highest-ranked wolf approached Baek Seoin, another one faced off against Ryu Hyunsung.

"Hey! Ryu Hyunsung! Get back! Go back to the formation!"

Ryu Hyunsung ignored the shouting Lee Jinhee and pushed forward.

"Why are you like this?! Do you want to die?!"

As he brushed off Lee Jinhee's hand, which grabbed his shoulder, Ryu Hyunsung growled like a beast as he spoke nonsense.

"Again! Again! You want to lose?! Again?! You want me to stand still? You want me to see everyone die?!"

It seemed Ryu Hyunsung recalled the disaster that occurred when he awakened after experiencing the sense of despair the head wolf gave him.

Ryu Hyunsung's eyes were filled with killing intent as though Lee Jinhee had become a great enemy of life and death.

At that moment, two wolves charged at them.

Among them, the highest-ranked wolf targeted Ryu Hyunsung while the wolf at the peak of high rank targeted Lee Jinhee. Both were ferocious. Rather than ripping them apart while wielding their claws, they charged at them like rhinos. Still, their flesh ripped apart and blood splattered as though saws slashed past them.



The head wolf sneered in ridicule.

“While we hid our power during this time... I didn’t think that they would send a fellow that hasn’t even reached the transcendent level.”

Choi Hyuk attacked with gritted teeth, yet the head wolf was overflowing with composure.

“Well... You are strong considering you are a highest-ranked warrior, but...”

The distrustful head wolf leisurely faced Choi Hyuk as he once again looked around at his surroundings. Then he confirmed that this was all there was to the punitive force. There was no way there was a hidden trap set up by the alliance.

The large wolf laughed as his fur stood on their end.

“It truly is a wonderful appetizer.”

He would have the main dish when he advanced towards Alliance City with the monsters. He had a hunch that he would finally be able to repay the humiliation he had endured while hiding all this time.

‘Ahwwwoooo!!!’

The head wolf howled again, and this time, time stopped.

The countless eyes of the monster’s body that was equipped to the head wolf simultaneously opened and vibrated along with his howl.

All order collapsed. The swords of the warriors who aimed at the wolves’ bones and flesh, became soft as feathers, and the steps of a passing wolf became claws that slashed at the warriors’ hearts. Attacks that should have hit missed, and attacks that should have missed hit. It seemed that a portion of the universe’s fate had reversed.

The ones who first noticed this change were the Exalted Wings.

The stone plates, which were covered in darkness in the ‘Brain’ of Alliance City, all lit up at once.

{We have lost control over the Net of Fate at the Blue Manes' coordinates.}

{Did the head of the Blue Manes do this? His strength is close to ours?}

{We'll help so let's immediate recover our control!}

Controlling the Net of Fate was the most important tactic in the war. If the Net of Fate was taken by someone else, the order of the universe would become disadvantageous to them.

However, the Exalted Wings couldn't quickly regain control over the Net of Fate.

{No! You can't! Invasion! It's an invasion! An extensive one from the monsters! This... This is the largest scale ever. It's multiple times bigger than when Exalted Wing Flame-Sky died in battle!!}

An Exalted Wing of the Speckled Light Tribe screamed. Even without his scream, the Exalted Wings felt the power of the monsters that encroached on the Net of Fate, which they maintained, throughout the universe. If the situation was like this, then they didn't have the capacity to focus their strength on the wolves.

{Oh my god... The rookies of the alliance will all die! Flame-Hell!}

An Exalted Wing of the Armored Soul Tribe shouted roughly. The majority of the rookies that were participating in subjugating the Blue Manes were either Flame Wing Tribe members or those close to the Flame Wing Tribe. Those who disliked how Flame-Hell openly tried to increase the Flame Wing Tribe's power couldn't help but strongly express their discontent.

While those who would die were pro-Flame Wing Tribe, when an all-out war broke out against the monsters, each and every one of them were precious military resources. They couldn't contain their rage when thinking about how a disadvantageous war began because of Flame-Hell's greed.

{...}

Flame-Hell was silent. From the intelligence provided by the reconnaissance troops and Flame-Rain, who had left for the monsters' universe, he had judged that there would be more time before the monsters launched an extensive attack, yet this situation was as if he was hit on the back of the head.

A precipitous situation where he couldn't see ahead.

Just then, the Exalted Wing of the dragon race, Leviathan, made a doubtful report.

{Huh? The head wolf's command over the relevant area's Net of Fate... No! The Net of Fate itself has been destroyed...?}

{This is...?}

While everyone was shocked, Flame-Hell and Dark-Sound let out a sigh and managed to squeeze out a smile.



The moment the head wolf howled, Choi Hyuk felt a thrill surging from his heart.

The fully transcendent level vigor emitted by the wolf. The power to decide the fate of the universe. The fate the wolf created – ‘Second Coming’. The power he declared to return to the alliance that chased them out as terror.

Facing this overwhelming power, his karma, which seethed at the cusp of bursting and tickled at his heart, finally exploded.

The fate Choi Hyuk possessed, ‘Never losing’ and ‘Slash without fail’ grew explosively at a timing that seemed almost preplanned.

However, Choi Hyuk wasn't surprised. He already knew, though he couldn't explain it.

Even when he learned that the head wolf was assumed to have reached the transcendent level, he didn't tremble at all. He felt like he could win. It wasn't simply a prediction, he was confident.

Perhaps even Dark-Sound and Flame-Hell knew as well. The fact that, when he concluded his first revenge, he had already arrived at the proximity of the transcendent level. The fact that he could awaken if the right opportunity presented itself.

‘Choi Hyuk's Imprint’ transformed from a ‘Weapon of Vow’ to a ‘Weapon of Conclusion’.

Following this, its name also changed from 'Choi Hyuk's Imprint' to 'Choi Hyuk's Denial'. His vow to 'slash without fail' and to 'never lose' was finally complete and became a power that could deny all power.

He no longer had to gather his strength and swallow various emotions to use the 'First Sword'. As soon as he stretched out his sword, the existing powers were, as though natural, denied and obliterated into nothingness. Even the 'Second Coming' the head wolf declared and the Net of Fate which the alliance had lost control over were no exception.

While the head wolf was still stronger, it was a difference in nature. Choi Hyuk's unique karma, which could interfere with the Net of Fate when he was only a highest-ranked warrior, was enough to throw away the head wolf's dominating fate even though he had only just reached the transcendent level.

"You... What did you...?"

Frozen as if taken aback, the head wolf glared at Choi Hyuk.

Choi Hyuk mocked.

"Round two, doggy."

Chapter 173

Each's Calculations (6)

As the clash between Choi Hyuk and the head wolf became increasingly serious, the universe began to squirm. It was a fight between transcendent warriors that was rare even throughout the history of the universe.

To the point where powerful warriors even felt nauseous, space-time, as well as all order and laws, shook violently.

“Damn it! Gather! Maintain our formation!!”

{What? What are you saying?!}

Due to the completely erased Net of Fate, the species couldn't communicate with each other.

It was a pandemonium of pandemoniums.

Stars and planets that couldn't endure the constant clash of power and changes in laws exploded.

Boooom-!

An enormous explosion. Their surroundings vibrated, and a sun, which hadn't been there, appeared. Day suddenly arrived for this dark space, and all sorts of fragments and gas formed a tidal wave that swallowed the space whole.

Baaang!!

Like lightning, day and night switched, and the warriors cursed as they were hit by the broken fragments and died one after another.

Under the torrential rain of fragments, Baek Seoin felt an unease crawl down his spine.

“Hieh!”

With a strange shout, Baek Seoin flung his body away, and the silver ‘Meteor-Chasing Wolf’ dropped down on his previous spot.

{Grrrrr... How did you dodge?}

“What are you saying? All I hear is you barking.”

Baek Seoin grumbled while awakening his senses to their limits.

Vring! His Sword of Sentiment ‘Baek Seoin’s Premonition’ rang out as he held it up. When Premonition rang, the part of his body that his enemy would attack would ache.

This was the reason why Baek Seoin, who was only a high-ranked warrior, could endure against a highest-ranked wolf. With his innate skill ‘Intuition’ and his Sword of Sentiment ‘Baek Seoin’s Premonition’, he could narrowly avoid his enemy’s attacks due to the unease and pain he felt beforehand.

However, this also meant that all of Meteor-Chasing Wolf’s attacks were savage enough to put his life in danger. Baek Seoin could die at any moment because of a slight misjudgment.

The angle he held his sword, the distribution of karma in his body, his gaze... nothing was easy. Every trivial decision was followed by a life-threatening unease, and Baek Seoin had to analyze them all in detail before moving. He needed to find a place where he didn’t feel uneasy or ache.

{I can help you.}

Though Naro showed his intent in helping him, Baek Seoin refused.

“No, Naro. If you’re exposed now, your life might be in danger. Hold your breath until we at least set up a defensive line.”

While Naro had awakened as a highest-ranked warrior, his body was still that of the enormous spaceship. Because he would be at an absolute disadvantage in a close combat fight against the wolves that excelled in maneuverability, Baek Seoin decided

not to expose Naro at the risk of his own life.

{You'll die! It's not even certain if you'll be able to set up a defensive line or not!}

“If you act now, you'll die immediately! Hieh! I have to concentrate so don't talk to me! Look after Lee Jinhee and Ryu Hyunsung instead of me!”

The silver wolf followed after Baek Seoin like a meteor. Narrowly, as though he could die at any moment, Baek Seoin dodged his attacks and survived.

Everyone was in a similar situation. While they endured for now, they would soon collapse. The formation where they were scattered and killed off one by one changed again. The warriors were pushed into groups and crushed. Due to the lack of space, it was common for allies to be wounded by other allies. While they did their best to push their enemies back and regain some space, what returned was death. The corpses of warriors mixed together with the fragments of smashed stars and drifted away.

The fear of 'defeat' and 'death' permeated them.

Everyone was clearly fighting desperately.

Choi Hyuk, who had only been a highest-ranked warrior, fought evenly against the head wolf, and the seven highest-ranked warriors and five Berserker executives had yet to die whilst facing opponents stronger than them. However, they didn't have the strength to reverse the situation because the Blue Manes had become stronger than they had imagined after cooperating with the monsters. All Choi Hyuk could do was not be one-sidedly pushed back by the head wolf. The rest couldn't even do that.

“We were too rash...”

“What was I entranced by to come here...”

The young warriors of the top four tribes let out sighs. Flames dimmed dangerously, and metal creaked. Darkness paled, and the light became faint.

Ryu Hyunsung endured the planet wreckage that was powerlessly falling on him as he looked at the situation.

Lee Jinhee was wounded all over her body as she took on two high-ranked wolves, and Lee Jinhee's unit, which went to save her, was surrounded by other wolves and couldn't move. Ryu Hyunsung couldn't even see his own troop members.

As Ryu Hyunsung didn't have a special skill like Baek Seoin, he couldn't face off against the highest-ranked wolf, 'Crushing Mane', with his strangely increased ability. The wolf had turned Ryu Hyunsung's body into tatters in 20 passes.

The reason why Ryu Hyunsung was still alive was because the wolf considered him already dead and was slaughtering others around him.

Ryu Hyunsung's head, which had surged with rage and curses, finally cooled.

'I'm really going to die now.'

As he thought this, the madness that filled his mind disappeared, and like a kaleidoscope, his surroundings clearly entered his vision.

'So this was my final battle.'

As soon as he thought this, a lofty feeling and a wronged emotion surged within him.

Baang!

Somewhere, another planet exploded, and his vision brightened like it was daytime. As though he had suddenly awakened from his sleep, everything looked clear.

It was a strange feeling. His mind was cool, yet his heart was sharper than ever. Ryu Hyunsung clearly felt this situation.

An encircled situation.

The enemies blocked the front and they didn't have anywhere to retreat to.

The fear-stricken rookies of the alliance kept being pushed back when there was nowhere to retreat to.

Ryu Hyunsung ridiculed them.

If there was a path, it was in front of them. Even if it was as small as the eye of a needle, they had to find it. Without madness or fear, with all their concentration and strength, they had to defeat enemies stronger than them.

His reasoning and emotions became one as they proposed a path. To push past the enemies in front of them.

‘However... I can’t even move the tips of my fingers.’

Suddenly, he felt like he knew what to do and could succeed, yet he couldn’t even move his own fingers.

‘Is this really the end?’

While he had always inwardly hoped to die, he didn’t want this sort of death.

He didn’t hope for a death so vain and weak.

The moment he thought this-

“Director Ryu Hyunsung!! Run!!”

He heard Guardian Bae Jinman’s voice. He had approached under Zero’s covert escort and was squeezing his karma to heal Ryu Hyunsung.

When Bae Jinman’s golden karma permeated his body, his body, which had been ripped to shreds to the point of being unrecoverable, began to regenerate like a miracle. That moment, what Ryu Hyunsung felt wasn’t relief like ‘I’m alive...’

‘Ah, I can fight again.’

He held expectations that he could fight properly this time.

A mysterious phenomenon. Ryu Hyunsung's body didn't simply stop at being healed.

The karma that made up his body was redistributed and was being replaced with different properties.

His eyes shined blue.

A genius. While this word was most suitable for Choi Hyuk, Ryu Hyunsung had, in fact, grown up while hearing he was a genius.

A genius swordsman. Since he was young, he received attention as a rising sabre star of Korea and was selected as the youngest national representative ever. There were even big talks of him defeating the top-ranked swordsman in the world during his practice games. Yet, that was all. Ryu Hyunsung didn't win a single medal throughout his four years at Korea National Sport University. 'Training-purpose' was the label given to him. During friendly matches and practice, he was a genius swordsman stronger than anyone, yet he lost powerlessly in real matches.

The length of two finger joints. That distance was always the problem. He lacked the determination to pierce through his opponent's malice that wanted to kill him and stretch his sword out first.

He believed that he had overcome this weak point after the recruit training began and he joined the Berserkers, killing people and monsters.

'That wasn't it.'

Ryu Hyunsung finally realized that he was still running away. He was in an ambiguous state where it was too painful to live yet he couldn't die. Perhaps this was why he couldn't leave the Berserkers since, if he stayed with Choi Hyuk, they would always have a goal. Whether it was right or wrong, whether he liked it or not.

He had always been in this ambiguous state. It was no different from his past days as a 'training-purpose swordsman'.

‘Advance.’

Ryu Hyunsung finally realized the true meaning of the fate given to him when he became a high-ranked warrior.

At first, he was confused. ‘Advance’? To be honest, how he clung to his life while living and fighting was closer to ‘evasion’ than ‘advancing’. He constantly evaded to his past. He also evaded his past. He fought to forget about his memories and fought while thinking of his memories. To call that ‘advance’?

However, now that he thought about it, it was a desperate manifestation of his subconscious. A warning that he was fated to disappear if he didn’t ‘advance’.

Ryu Hyunsung finally realized this meaning and wholly accepted it.

My path is in front of me.

Now was the time to move forward.

If he didn’t, he would die. He didn’t have the energy to think about victory or defeat, only to find the path. It was time to open a path with his cold reasoning and wild nature.

At some point, his tattered body had completely recovered.

Ryu Hyunsung turned his back on Bae Jinman, who held his hand out towards him, and Zero and shouted towards all the fear-stricken warriors,

“Open your eyes properly, you dimwits! Break through them!”

Unlike his ragged beast-like voice before, his voice rang out clearly this time. His voice, containing his enlightenment, was clearly transmitted to the warriors who couldn’t understand Korean.

Everyone's gaze momentarily fell on Ryu Hyunsung.

Ryu Hyunsung stretched his leg out. He turned his waist like a top and flung his arm forward like a fishing pole. His karma, which explosively surged in his body, was pushed forward like a river without any hesitation. He passed through the length of the two finger joints that he had always lacked.

Crash!

Slash!

'Crushing Mane' charged at him like a cannonball as soon as he heard Ryu Hyunsung's voice. His body passed by Ryu Hyunsung's chest, and Ryu Hyunsung's sword slashed his mouth.

{Kyaah!}

The first attack Ryu Hyunsung landed on 'Crushing Mane' was a fatal blow. While three streams of blood flowed from Ryu Hyunsung's chest after the wolf passed by him, he didn't bat an eye.

He only saw a clear sword path to kill the unpleasant wolves. A thread-like path. Nonetheless, a clearly existing path.

A beautiful sword path was drawn with his hand.

Ryu Hyunsung easily caught up to the wolf that was shaking his head and retreating from him. He pushed his claws down and slashed his neck before the wolf could dodge it.

Slash-

The highest-ranked wolf, 'Crushing Wolf', couldn't even yip before his deeply slashed head was thrown into space.

Slash!

Ryu Hyunsung's sword slash left a trailing afterimage as it slashed through a corner of the battlefield. The wolves in its path were simultaneously split in two, and a canyon was drawn on a small natural satellite that was in its path.

His sword slash seemed like the work of a sword god.

"Ryu hyung? Wh- what is this?"

Despite being pushed towards the defensive, Lee Jinhee was at a loss for words. It was the same for the two wolves that had attacked her. While their mouths were agape, Ryu Hyunsung passed through the wolves and sliced the heads of the two wolves off their bodies.

"Did you reach the highest rank...?"

Lee Jinhee said blankly.

Yet, Ryu Hyunsung didn't reply, only shooting out after patting her head. This time, to help the seven highest-ranked warriors who were struggling.



Due to Ryu Hyunsung, the mood of the battlefield changed. With his help, the strongest warriors of the alliance could defeat the wolves that were holding them back, and the freed highest-ranked warriors went out to help others. It was now time for the deeply infiltrated wolves to be pushed back.

The front lines were formed, and their defensive line stabilized.

Seeing this, Baek Seoin shouted in an almost singing voice,

"Now's the time! Naro! Restrict them!"

{I've been waiting for this!}

The wave of karma that spread from Naro's spaceship snared the wolf that targeted Baek Seoin and the wolves that infiltrated around them. 'Meteor-Chasing Mane's highest-ranked karma was instantly degraded to that of a high-ranked warrior. The wolves that noticed this change targeted Naro, but the flow had already been reversed. A threefold defensive line had already been set up in front of Naro.

"That's it! It's working! We can fight!"

The fight between 'Meteor-Chasing Mane' and Baek Seoin, in which Baek Seoin was one-sidedly on the defensive, had turned into a close fight. Recovering his composure, Baek Seoin glanced in Choi Hyuk's direction.

"Now... If the leader wins...!"

While the situation had improved, that didn't mean they were winning. If Choi Hyuk quickly won, then, no matter how large the losses were, it would be the alliance's victory. However, if Choi Hyuk couldn't in time, then the inferior punitive force would face the chance of being annihilated.

For some reason, it currently seemed like Choi Hyuk was being pushed back.

Just then, Baek Seoin saw Ryu Hyunsung.

He, who had created balance in the battlefield, was charging towards Choi Hyuk and the head wolf, who were fighting over there.

"Hey! Ryu Hyunsung! Are you crazy?! Where do you think you're going?!"

Baek Seoin heard her scream.

Bang, bang, bang!

Another star exploded brilliantly. His surroundings brightened as though it was daytime.

Chapter 174

Each's Calculations (7)

In reality, the fight between Choi Hyuk and the head wolf was impossible to perceive. It was beyond just being too fast, it was literally on another level.

When spectating this fight, the head wolf's enormous paw would suddenly appear and rip their heads, and the moment their gaze met Choi Hyuk's black eyes, their hearts would be pierced. They were clearly dead, yet when they came to their senses, they were fine.

All that remained was a fear that made their bodies tremble from head to toe, a warning not to peep at the transcendent realm before them.

Warriors of higher levels could overcome this fear and observe the fight, but the fact that they still couldn't perceive anything was the same.

When looking at the fight, they might feel like they saw something, but the memories remaining in their minds were a mess. They simultaneously saw Choi Hyuk leap up and pierce the head wolf's head and the head wolf instantly breaking Choi Hyuk's neck. One time, the head wolf howled after killing Choi Hyuk. Another time, Choi Hyuk sat on the head wolf's head after killing him. At times, the two looked like triangles, straight lines, round spheres, and other shapes as they flew around and dizzily entangled together.

"A fight between transcendent warriors isn't a fight that properly follows laws, but a fight that creates their own laws and reality."

Someone explained, but they couldn't figure anything out in the end. All they knew was that they were fighting.

The place Choi Hyuk and the head wolf were fighting was somewhere completely different from here, in other words, a place blocked by the 'wall of laws'.

As these were the circumstances, even highest-ranked warriors didn't dare join the fight, let alone high-ranked ones.

Since Ryu Hyunsung, who just reached the highest rank, flew towards that fight, those around him couldn't help but cry out in astonishment.

“Euaack!”

Lee Jinhee tried to follow him, but Alexei stopped her.

“Director! You can't!”

“Let go!”

Lee Jinhee struggled, but she couldn't move forward when the other members of her troop also joined in to hold her back.

“Euaaaaah!”

Lee Jinhee screamed in despair.

Having bitten her lips to the point of bleeding, she seemed determined as she glared in Ryu Hyunsung's direction.

Lee Jinhee tightly gripped her Sword of Sentiment 'Lee Jinhee's Dream' and poured all her karma into it before throwing it.

'Protect Ryu Hyunsung.'

With this earnest wish.

Bang!

From the tips of her fingers, which had burst with blood due to being overloaded, 'Lee Jinhee's Dream' shot out with a bright silver trail.

Lee Jinhee shouted,

“Baek hyung, what are you doing?! Cover Ryu Hyunsung!”

At her shout, Baek Seoin, who had been vacantly staring at Ryu Hyunsung, jolted to his senses.

If there was no way to stop Ryu Hyunsung, then it would be better to find a way to support him.

“Guardian! Support Ryu Hyunsung with your karma! Naro! It’s fine if it’s only slightly, but reduce the aura of hostility! Zero, follow behind Ryu Hyunsung!”

While he personally couldn’t do anything, he found others who could help.

“Warriors at the highest rank! No, anyone! Support Ryu Hyunsung with your karma! Or at the sword Lee Jinhee threw!!”

It wasn’t easy. Ryu Hyunsung, who was now a highest-ranked warrior, was charging quickly, and ‘Lee Jinhee’s Dream’ was following behind him. Even if the warriors in the distance pooled their strength together, there was a concern their strengths would clash.

Baek Seoin shouted,

“It’s okay! Lee Jinhee’s Sword of Sentiment is special! Just send your support!”

{... Are you certain?}

“I don’t know. If we don’t send our support, then it’ll certainly fail.”

Baek Seoin brushed Naro’s question aside.

In the end, Baek Seoin was correct.

Boom!

Supported by other warriors’ strength, ‘Lee Jinhee’s Dream’ accelerated like lightning. As though it would cover the entire world, and while blazing a trail of silver light, it passed Ryu Hyunsung and opened a path for him.

Ryu Hyunsung’s body was also filled with karma sent by Bae Jinman and other

warriors. Those who could send their strength further sent it to Ryu Hyunsung while those who couldn't supported 'Lee Jinhee's Dream'.

Seeing 'Lee Jinhee's Dream' pass him, Ryu Hyunsung tightly gripped his sword.



A fight between transcendent warriors was fundamentally different from all the fights he had experienced until now.

Transcendent warriors were those who had completed and declared their fate to the universe.

Like how a flap of a butterfly's wings in Beijing could become a typhoon in New York, fate was created through the accumulation of very trivial actions.

Each fluttering strand of the head wolf's mane, each breath the wolf let out from his long mouth, and the karma that acted as his bones and heart steadily drove Choi Hyuk into a corner like on a chess board.

It wasn't a traditional fight where they simply aimed their sword or teeth at their opponent's neck. When the wolf moved his head, he crumbled or expanded the space Choi Hyuk was standing in. Each fluttering strand very slightly dispersed Choi Hyuk's surroundings. Even after it seemed like the head wolf had swung his paw, as though on repeat, his paw swung out yet again. Every time the wolf did so, Choi Hyuk's breathing would stagger. With these as his groundwork, the wolf would ensnare Choi Hyuk and tear his limbs off with his paws, making Choi Hyuk a sacrificial lamb in declaring the second coming of the 'Blue Manes'.

The head wolf leisurely and diligently pushed Choi Hyuk into a corner.

However, Choi Hyuk had a cheat-like trait.

"Whoo..."

After catching his breath...

Shik!

Accompanied by the sound of air escaping, when 'Choi Hyuk's Denial' cut through the air, it would cleanly erase all the groundwork the head wolf had laid down. The distorted space would return to normal and the wolf's tricks in dispersing Choi Hyuk's surroundings would immediately stop. Rather, it was the wolf who lost his breath.

The head wolf laid the groundwork to kill Choi Hyuk, and Choi Hyuk laid the groundwork to find and negate the wolf's groundwork. It looked like a dance as they approached while glaring at each other before separating, repeatedly laying down and erasing groundwork.

The head wolf was irritated by this situation.

If this was chess, this was the same as his opponent clearing the board whenever he gained an advantage. There was no way he wouldn't become annoyed.

Still, the head wolf barely managed to hide his irritation as he disguised his composure.

{How long are you going to do this? Until all your subordinates are dead?}

At the head wolf who was trying to provoke him, Choi Hyuk simply replied,

"Yeah, bark, bark."

He meant to cut the crap.

Because the Net of Fate had already disappeared, he really sounded like he was barking.

{Grrr...!}

On the other hand, the head wolf, who was more skilled at using his power than Choi Hyuk, could understand what Choi Hyuk was saying. He became provoked even though he was the one that attempted to provoke Choi Hyuk.

Like an unending fight, the two tangled and separated again. Even though Choi Hyuk was in a disadvantageous situation, he wasn't impatient, calmly nullifying the head wolf's attacks again and again.

While waiting for a new variable to appear,

While waiting to discover an opportunity to attack,

However, the variable that arrived was much different to what Choi Hyuk expected.

Choi Hyuk and the head wolf sensed that Ryu Hyunsung was approaching them at the same time.

Their judgments differed.

‘Hmm?’

The head wolf glanced at him before ignoring him. A mere highest-ranked warrior, there was a qualitative difference in strength between them. The head wolf was certain that Ryu Hyunsung wouldn't even be able to get close.

‘Ryu Hyunsung...’

On the other hand, Choi Hyuk's gaze deepened.

He saw Ryu Hyunsung's clear eyes. Determined to risk his life... No, rather, his eyes looked like they weren't determined to do anything. Rather than being determined, his eyes were filled with the tenacity and will to inflict even the slightest wound on the head wolf. As though his entire life was for this moment, a sword strike containing his own self.

Choi Hyuk was moved by those eyes.

‘Either way, it's difficult to reverse the situation like this.’

The head wolf, who had combined with a monster, was stronger than he imagined, and if things continued like this, the punitive force would be the one who would eventually face defeat.

Still, since there was no other way, he thought to find the wolf's weakness while enduring, but Ryu Hyunsung was a better alternative at this moment.

Choi Hyuk resolved himself to bet on Ryu Hyunsung.

The air changed.

{Grrr...}

The head wolf's howl rang out longer and spread wider than before.

{... Something's changed? Did you decide to halt your futile attempts in resetting the playing field?}

Up until now, Choi Hyuk had always been on the defensive. When the head wolf laid down the groundwork to end Choi Hyuk's life, Choi Hyuk focused all his power in breaking that groundwork. However, Choi Hyuk began to prepare for an attack.

Not acting to break the wolf's groundwork, he moved in order to slice the wolf's neck the moment he slipped up.

The start of the true fight.

Choi Hyuk no longer reset the playing field and began moving his pieces one after the other.

This was the moment the head wolf was eagerly waiting for.

He even became suspicious because things went so smoothly.

'Perhaps there's something special about the approaching warrior?'

However, there really wasn't anything special about him after a second glance. He was simply a reckless warrior. No matter how much he thought about it, the wolf believed that there was no chance that a weak highest-ranked warrior could approach and land an effective blow on him.

'How foolish. Does he even see me?'

While ridiculing Ryu Hyunsung, the head wolf's lips widened.

{Good thinking. It's a very foolish decision.}

Grrrr. An unpleasant laughter rang out.

Choi Hyuk reacted indifferently to the wolf's laugh.

"Yeah. Bark, bark."

However, unlike his confident attitude, Choi Hyuk's situation instantly became disadvantageous.

Since Choi Hyuk wasn't his opponent in terms of level or strength, Choi Hyuk wouldn't be able to last long in a head-on fight without his power to 'deny'.

It only took an instant.

A metallic scent wafted in the air, and the wolf's body looked like it split in two.

Thinking he could avoid it, Choi Hyuk dodged, but the wolf's enormous paw was swinging down at him. He had to move more in order to avoid the wolf's attack.

Everything became a mess. The wolf's breath which he thought he heard from his right was actually coming from his left. His foot tripped over empty space, and he faltered. He saw the wolf's fluttering mane yet he couldn't see the actual wolf. The wolf that had clearly moved in that direction was standing in place.

Space and time, order and law, all of these were moving in a direction advantageous for the head wolf. If he still didn't 'deny' soon, then Choi Hyuk really wouldn't last long.

"Huu."

Yet, Choi Hyuk took a deep breath.

He poured karma into his sword and waited for the right opportunity.

{Krrrauuuh!}

Chapter 175

An Impeded Sky

Woong-

At first, it was a low reverberation.

Naro's karma reached the 'wall of laws'.

While it was only slight, the wall vibrated, and a tiny crack appeared, enough for a needle to pass through.

Crash!

'Lee Jinhee's Dream' burrowed into this crack. Then, the brilliant silver trail, which followed behind it, permeated the crack.

Yet, it was fruitless.

While its vigor in trying to burrow through was intense, it burrowed in at the pace of a turtle.

{I unknowing sent my strength as well because Naro's telepathy was so desperate...
But I feel like it was a waste of strength.}

The warriors of the punitive force shook their heads as they saw 'Lee Jinhee's Dream' gradually slow down, unable to completely pierce through the wall of laws.

From the beginning, it was a logically impossible task.

Completely different laws applied in the space the transcendent warriors were fighting. No matter how much strength they gathered, it was no use if the laws changed.

'Lee Jinhee's Dream' looked like it had almost stopped.

Everyone thought,

'This is the end.'

However, this was the beginning.

Riip!

They heard the sound of something ripping.

The Weapon of Sentiment 'Lee Jinhee's Dream', which contained her earnest wish to protect Ryu Hyunsung, was born from Lee Jinhee's dream that hoped people would live smiling and cry seldom.

'Choi Hyuk's Imprint' could slash anything in accordance with Choi Hyuk's vow, and 'Baek Seoin's Premonition' could sense all danger in accordance with his intuition. 'Lee Jinhee's Dream' was a sword that was created to fulfil Lee Jinhee's wish.

Following her wish, 'Lee Jinhee's Dream' gathered the nearly overflowing power within it into a single point and exploded.

Crack, crack!

Web-like cracks spread from the sword.

Ting!

With the weakest piece of the blade flying off as the signal, 'Lee Jinhee's Dream' exploded brilliantly.

Whooong!

The wall of laws was gradually erased from the outside.

It was a phenomenon similar to Choi Hyuk's 'First Sword'.

As the condensed power exploded all at once, all the order and laws were erased. A new sky opened up.

This wasn't an explosion made of flames.

Earth's blue sky with cirrus clouds spread out from the smashed 'Lee Jinhee's Dream'. An autumn sky opened up in the dark, vast universe.

It was a sky Ryu Hyunsung could fly through. The figures of the head wolf and Choi Hyuk could be clearly seen in this sky.

{Grr...}

The head wolf growled, thinking this was unexpected. However, he still disregarded Ryu Hyunsung.

The wolf's decision was the same. While it was surprising that they had pierced through the wall of laws, the wolf still thought that Ryu Hyunsung couldn't inflict a wound on him. Being able to inflict a wound on him, the key individual of this fight, was a completely different matter from being able to overcome the wall of laws, which was a by-product of their fight.

The wolf simply focused on Choi Hyuk, the one who was incomparably more dangerous than that mayfly. The wolf opened his mouth with the intention of ending this fight. It was the first time his canines were exposed during the fight. The moment he opened his mouth, Choi Hyuk was already in it. The wolf's black throat rushed forward while devouring even space itself. Chilling canines.

"Good job."

Choi Hyuk smiled as he gazed at this despairing scene. The head wolf's maw shut on Choi Hyuk, devouring him headfirst.

Twing!

It was at this moment when the wolf felt a stinging sensation run down his spine. At

first, it only stung a little, almost like a mosquito bite, but soon, a cold blade ripped into his flesh.

'Advance'. Ryu Hyunsung's sword, which contained the fate 'Advance', pierced into the wolf's skin and embedded itself in his flesh.

An effective attack.

However, it wasn't fatal. It was to the point where the wolf could ignore it and finish crushing Choi Hyuk.

Rather than being in pain, the wolf was thoroughly shocked. The wolf had believed so strongly that it was impossible for Ryu Hyunsung to inflict an injury on him that he momentarily thought that a third-party, another transcendent warrior, had joined the fight.

Flinch.

The wolf was so shocked that his body trembled. The wolf unconsciously moved his karma and flung Ryu Hyunsung, who was clinging on his back, away.

This was the opportunity Choi Hyuk had been waiting for.

The karma gathered in the wolf's canines to chew Choi Hyuk had suddenly dispersed and the muscles in the wolf's jaw relaxed slightly.

Choi Hyuk swung 'Choi Hyuk's Denial', which had simply been in his hand, with a ripping sound.

Goong!

Just then, the warriors of the punitive force and the Blue Manes heard a skull-splitting sound. They were so surprised that they patted their heads. However, what was split was the head wolf's skull, not their own.

The wall of laws that obstructed their view of Choi Hyuk and the head wolf's battle

closed widthwise like a TV turning off.

The single horizontal line was Choi Hyuk's sword strike.

...

It was as dark as a powered-off TV. They couldn't see anything as though everything had disappeared.

Splash!

The head wolf's blood endlessly flowed from the gap in space. Like ink dropped in water, the wolf's blood spread out and created a nebula.

Defeating the wolf's fate known as the 'Second Coming of the Blue Manes', which he had declared to the universe, the nebula made of blood was the only trace that remained. It was the birth of a celestial body known as 'Wolf's Head'.

"Huu..."

Choi Hyuk, who appeared in space completely soaked in wolf's blood, let out a sigh. The dead wolf's karma and fate permeated into him. His fate known as 'Never losing, Slashing without Fail, and Denial' proved itself once more and became stronger.

{Grrr... Was I too conceited...?}

Even though the wolf had his skull split in two and blood endlessly flowed out from it, for some reason, he could still hear his voice. Perhaps the Net of Fate had been restored at some point, but he could understand his words without issue. Not only that, he also could also sense the wolf's memories and emotions that shined like a kaleidoscope.

In the beginning, when foreign existences invaded, the Blue Manes faced them. However, while the Blue Manes were fighting with their lives on the line, the other species ignored their pleas for help as though it wasn't their problem. In the end, faced with the risk of extinction, the previous head wolf chose to be taken to do forced labor

under the foreign existences. The previous head wolf took responsibility for his decision and committed suicide. After burying his death in his heart, the wolf became the new head. The other species, who had ignored their pleas for help, now fervently charged at them when they defected. Their previous days in which they had to do whatever they could to survive...

{How regretful... Yet, I lost. I was simply weak. So this is the end... Oh warrior, I have one request.}

As though he wasn't paying attention, Choi Hyuk showed no reaction to the head wolf's heartbroken will. Still, the wolf couldn't help but speak.

{It's fine if you only take one. It's fine if it's a newborn pup. It's fine if it grows up brainwashed by the alliance and lives for the alliance. It's fine if our species is disgraced for generations. Only... Only, please don't let my species die out... I request you, oh warrior.}

Choi Hyuk didn't speak for a moment.

Then, turning his back on the completely dead head wolf, he gave a short reply.

'Sorry, but if it's revenge, I'll do it for you.'

{Ah...}

The head wolf no longer had the strength to continue speaking. Leaving only a bitter sigh, the wolf disappeared forever.

Choi Hyuk raised his voice and ordered the punitive force,

"The Net of Fate has been restored! I will access the Net of Fate and make the laws in this place advantageous for us. Don't leave a single mutt and kill them all!"

"Woaaaah!!!"

It was a slaughter. It was a complete reversal from when the head wolf first appeared. The wolves' teeth didn't reach the punitive force no matter what they did, and the punitive force could wield their weapons however they wished and they would still

slash the wolves' flesh.

The young wolves that fled elsewhere lost their way and ended up facing the punitive force.

“Yelp!”

“Yip!”

“Grruah! You cursed bastards of the alliance!”

“Please! Please! Just this child! Euaaah! Grrrrk!!! Ahhh!!”

None of their curses, threats, or pleading worked.

That day, the Blue Manes faced extinction. The blood flowing from their bodies mixed with the head wolf's blood to create the enormous Wolf's Head nebula.



“Ryu hyung! Ryu hyung! Hey! Ryu Hyunsung! Come to your senses, huh?”

Zero, who followed after Ryu Hyunsung, was successful in recovering Ryu Hyunsung, who was flung far away after being hit by the head wolf. After avoiding Choi Hyuk's fierce attack that didn't care for Ryu Hyunsung's safety, he was barely able to drag him outside.

Lee Jinhee came rushing towards them as soon as they got out.

Her hands trembled, her shoulders shivered, and her eyes fluttered.

Like someone out of her mind, she grabbed Ryu Hyunsung and cried.

“Wake up!!!”

Held and shook by Lee Jinhee, Ryu Hyunsung opened his eyes.

However, his eyes weren't focused.

“Ah... Nice to see you...”

Whether he was seeing Lee Jinhee or something else, the tears that pooled his eyes dripped.

“When we see each other again, let’s spar and then go have some chicken skewers. Heu... You know that I like fast food.”

Ryu Hyunsung smiled while licking his lips. It seemed his eyes saw his past college friends who he had trained with.

“Guardian! Guardian! Quickly do something!”

Lee Jinhee’s face was soaked with tears.

Bae Jinman placed his hand on Ryu Hyunsung’s forehead before gravely shaking his head.

Even a healer of the Speckled Light Tribe in the punitive force, upon examining Ryu Hyunsung’s condition, dimmed sullenly.

{I don’t know how he did it, but... He used a power he shouldn’t have been able to... Already the karma in his body is dispersing like sand, and his fate has been wiped clean as though it has completed its duty.}

Hearing what the healer of the Speckled Light Tribe said, Lee Jinhee furiously shook her head.

“There’s no way. No! Ryu Hyunsung! Look at me! Do you see me?!”

Ryu Hyunsung’s eyes were still not in focus as he mumbled to his friends who had already died.

Sadly, the words he was saying in his comatose state weren’t of his dying wish. Instead, they were his determination to live on.

“I... will live diligently. Even if I look back, I’ll move forward. When we see each other again... Heu, I’ll probably be a bigsho...t.”

Ryu Hyunsung’s last words weren’t audible. Starting from the tips of his fingers, his body turned into ash as it collapsed and spread out into the universe.

“Ha... Ha! Ah...”

Almost convulsing, Lee Jinhee snorted in short bursts of deranged laughter before trembling and then fainting.

Bae Jinman quickly approached her. His face was serious.

Lee Jinhee’s karma weapon, which was no different from a companion to one’s soul, had shattered. Her body was a mess as well. It wouldn’t be odd if she died right now. The only reason why she was awake until now was purely because of her concern for Ryu Hyunsung.

“I will evacuate Director Lee Jinhee. Please settle the matters regarding Ryu Hyunsung.”

Bae Jinman lifted Lee Jinhee and left.

Yip, yip!

Yelp!

The universe was filled with sounds of wolves being slaughtered.

Bae Seoin blankly observed Ryu Hyunsung’s death and Lee Jinhee fainting.

With hollow eyes, he saw Ryu Hyunsung turn into specks and disappear.

‘Huu... Let’s first collect his body.’

Baek Seoin decided to gather the dispersing specks when Choi Hyuk leaned his forehead on his shoulder.

Choi Hyuk, who looked completely exhausted, didn’t even raise his head as he asked,

“...Did Ryu hyung die?”

“...Yes.”

Choi Hyuk wordlessly raised his head slightly before ordering,

“Leave... his already dispersed body... Let’s use this.”

Because collecting the body that had already dispersed as specks seemed like it was disturbing the deceased’s rest, Choi Hyuk proposed an alternative.

In the hand he stretched out were fragments of the Sword of Calling ‘Ryu Hyunsung’s Commemoration’.

“Let’s hold a funeral at the Tower of Warriors.”

After handing the sword fragments to Baek Seoin, Choi Hyuk turned his back.

Looking at his back, which seemed awfully small, Baek Seoin bit his lips. His eyes shined with resolve.

“Leader.”

A sharp voice. When Choi Hyuk turned around, Baek Seoin’s eyes were filled with extreme resentment as he said,

“I think I found a way.”

“...What?”

“A way to gather all the Exalted Wings in one place.”

Black flames ignited deep within Choi Hyuk’s bitter eyes.



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