

심판의 1 군주

오늘도요 현대 판타지 장편소설
DONG-A MODERN FANTASY

Sovereign of Judgment

- 심판의 군주 -

**- Volume 11 -
The Grand Scheme**

**-Author-
TodayAgain**

[Myoniyoni Translations]

Chapter 176

Lee Jinhee's Vow (1)

"How far are you going to go?"

"..."

"Including Flame-Rain unni, everyone besides earthlings?"

"No."

As he said this, Choi Hyuk gestured to his head.

Then, after thinking for a little, he said,

"Flame-Rain..."

Unable to speak anymore, as though hesitating, he slowly shook his head.

While he hadn't spoken in detail, Lee Jinhee could figure it out with that.

Gesturing to his head meant his target was limited to the Exalted Wings, and him shaking his head meant that he didn't want to kill Flame-Rain. She could also immediately tell that he was being cautious with his words in case someone was eavesdropping.

Lee Jinhee made no response as she turned her gaze towards the window.

The hospital room and the scene outside its window were reminiscent of a comfy family home in the Swiss Alps. This was done under the healer's recommendation, indicating that she needed complete rest.

Following her gaze and watching the herd of sheep grazing on the grass outside, Choi Hyuk took out a glass bottle from his inner pocket. The glass bottle sloshed with a

night sky as though it had been filled with the universe.

“It’s the dark ocean. Other rare resources are mixed in as well. You only have one chance. 20% chance of success. If you can’t restore your sword, then apparently, it’ll take an exorbitant period of time to recover your retribution, which has fallen to the level of a low-ranked warrior.”

Chio Hyuk’s gaze fell onto the fragments of ‘Lee Jinhee’s Dream’, which were placed next to Lee Jinhee’s bed.

Tap.

Even as he placed the glass bottle next the fragments, Lee Jinhee remained silent.

“I hope you can repair it. Also, if you can repair it... Don’t return to the Berserkers.”

At his words, Lee Jinhee shot her gaze towards Choi Hyuk. Her eyes widened and started to tremble. However, Choi Hyuk didn’t meet her gaze this time. His gaze turned towards the door he had entered through as he slowly turned his back.

He raised and waved his hand.

“Be happy, nuna.”



The punitive force Choi Hyuk returned with flipped the alliance on its head.

People went wild at the ‘Wolf’s Head Nebula’ that remained after the annihilation of the Blue Manes.

The alliance members, who grew up hearing about stories of the ‘mutts of the universe’ since they were young, couldn’t believe that those Blue Manes were now extinct, yet the ‘Wolf’s Head Nebula’, as evidence, swathed them with a thrilling sensation of realization.

The species they had only heard of in stories became extinct and had turned into a nebula... At this news, which was like a legend or a myth, the alliance warriors felt an

indescribable emotion.

And eventually, the topic would turn to Choi Hyuk.

“The mood of the alliance wasn’t good since the monsters launched a massive invasion... But isn’t it amazing? Because of Leader Choi Hyuk, a worry of ours has completely disappeared!”

“Leader Choi Hyuk is creating a completely new legend in the alliance! I heard he became a transcendent warrior this time? I also want to fight under his command!”

Riding on this mood, Flame-Hell’s support base expanded.

“If he was powerful from the beginning, then he wouldn’t have fought a direct battle against the Blue Manes. A warrior whose strength goes beyond his low rank. Exalted Wing Flame-Hell’s insight in sending Choi Hyuk is surprising.”

“Is that how it is?”

“Yeah. To be honest, it’s amazing. While everyone knows Choi Hyuk’s amazing, who would have thought that he could take down the head wolf?”

“Wow! Exalted Wing Flame-Hell is really amazing! Ah, did you know? It wasn’t just Choi Hyuk, everyone in the punitive force grew immensely stronger! There were only eight highest-ranked warriors besides Choi Hyuk when they left, but there were 17 of them when they returned!”

Those who were prompted by Flame-Hell beforehand moved all topics towards Flame-Hell.

“That’s also amazing. I heard that the top four tribes’ rookies only went to safe battlefields until now, yet Exalted Wing Flame-Hell sent them to a ferocious battlefield. Apparently, the opposition was intense in the beginning. But the result? As you can see, there was a huge improvement. Normally, you gain more Retribution if you win against opponents stronger than yourself.”

Even the fact that Flame-Hell selected members of the expedition around members of his own tribe because he wanted to increase his tribe’s influence was glamorized as ‘him having no choice but to push his own tribe members into a corner because the opposition of other tribes was too fierce’.

Flame-Hell's popularity surged, and on the other hand, the approval ratings for other Exalted Wings in opposition to Flame-Hell dropped.

"I heard Exalted Wing Armor-Desert severely criticized Exalted Wing Flame-Hell this time. How can he show his face now after that embarrassment? In the end, Exalted Wing Flame-Hell was right, and Exalted Wing Armor-Desert was wrong, right?"

"And what about Exalted Wing Light-Step?"

"Hey! Is that their fault? Who could have known that Leader Choi Hyuk would be so great? Only Choi Hyuk and Exalted Wing Flame-Hell could have known. Those two are amazing."

From the highest-ranked warrior to the lowest-ranked warrior, they all seemed to be uniting under Choi Hyuk and Flame-Hell.

Even the timing was perfect. The warriors, who needed a mental anchor when facing against the monsters' largest attack yet, consciously and unconsciously supported Choi Hyuk and Flame-Hell even more.

Because of this mood, Ryu Hyunsung's funeral, which the Berserkers wanted to handle quietly, became a great event.

Flame-Hell personally declared,

"It's the death of a great warrior. It is only right to send him off with the honor he deserves."

Then it was exposed that he would personally attend the funeral.

Choi Hyuk's position on this was 'I feel like vomiting'.

It meant that his enemy, Flame-Hell, would use Ryu Hyunsung's death as propaganda... There was no way his stomach wouldn't be upset.

However, Choi Hyuk endured it.

Since it wasn't time yet.

Yet this wasn't the only thing that irritated him.

“Send Naro.”

After returning from his expedition, Armor-Phantom came every day to negotiate sending Naro to the Armored Soul Tribe.

As if he didn't remember how he left in anger last time, he approached Choi Hyuk deceitfully and tried to persuade him, saying things like how Naro could become an outstanding warrior once he possessed a proper body rather than playing a supporting role in battle as a spaceship, how they would install a top-of-the-line A.I. in Naro's spaceship and even upgrade it, provide comforts to the Berserkers in various missions, give them Mission Points, or how there was nothing good about becoming enemies with the Armored Soul Tribe.

Since Armor-Phantom came across so polite, at first, Choi Hyuk asked Naro for his opinion again. However, Naro's position was always the same. He didn't want to leave the narolings' spaceship and the Berserkers.

So Choi Hyuk rejected Armor-Phantom's proposal as politely as possible.

However, today, he was surging with irritation.

It was the day of Ryu Hyunsung's funeral so he couldn't help but become irritated when Armor-Phantom brought up sending Naro to the Armored Soul Tribe again.

Choi Hyuk glared at Armor-Phantom.

But Armor-Phantom's mood was also different from usual.

Unlike how he had suddenly started acting politely and friendly during the past few days, today, Armor-Phantom was cold and high-handed like when their relationship twisted in the past. On top of that, it seemed he was angry for some reason as well.

Armor-Phantom flapped his large wings that were made up of metal and light as he stared at Choi Hyuk, fully releasing the vigor of a transcendent warrior.

Not long ago, Choi Hyuk had felt strained under his vigor, but Choi Hyuk no longer showed a trace of shyness.

Whether Armor-Phantom flapped his wings or emitted his vigor, Choi Hyuk didn't care in the slightest. Instead, he growled while taking a step towards Armor-Phantom.

"Armor-Phantom. I've told you multiple times. I respect Naro's decision. As his kin, you should also respect Naro's decision. I'm telling you once more, but what he learns while completing missions with me doesn't lose out to what he would learn from the Armored Soul Tribe. So, whether it's concern for him or meddling, stop it. Finally... If you don't have any intentions of cherishing Ryu Hyunsung, then leave."

It seemed he was displeased by Choi Hyuk's sudden impolite and provocative tone as Armor-Phantom flapped his wings.

However, that was all he could do. This was because Choi Hyuk was no longer below him in terms of strength or position.

'...He grew this much through one battle?'

While he knew that Choi Hyuk reached the transcendent level, he had only now entered it. Armor-Phantom believed that he would still be able to pressure him with his vigor. Unfortunately, he was wrong.

When he thought about this, he felt frustrated due to the blow to his pride, but there was nothing he could do right now. He became even more pissed as a result.

Shimmer.

After throwing off his frustration by crashing the metallic fragments that made up his body together once, Armor-Phantom took a step back and said, as if spitting,

"Yeah, this was the last. I won't come anymore."

He turned his back without hesitation and left the Square of Warriors.

Choi Hyuk, who suspected it but didn't think that he would really leave without

looking at the funeral, clicked his tongue in astonishment.

Baek Seoin, who had been watching from the side, said,

“You did it in the end.”

Choi Hyuk shook his head as though thinking about how it would be a pain and asked,

“Will it be a problem?”

“While we can't know for sure... It might be helpful in gaining more of Exalted Wing Flame-Hell's trust.”

“Then it's fine.”

If he obtained Flame-Hell's trust, then it wasn't a loss even if he was hated by the Armored Soul Tribe since his immediate goal was getting close to Flame-Hell.

Choi Hyuk brushed off these thoughts and looked up at the Tower of Warriors. A tower created by gathering the karma weapons of all the warriors who had passed. While looking at the karma weapons' swaying silhouettes, he suddenly asked,

“Soon... Ryu hyung's weapon will enter there.”

“Yes... Soon.”

Then Baek Seoin, who was silent for a moment, cautiously asked,

“Anyways, how is... Jinhee?”

“I told her what I wanted to do. But it seems... She still needs to recuperate.”

Choi Hyuk and Baek Seoin thought about Lee Jinhee, who had yet to arrive at the Square of Warriors.

‘She might not come.’

As soon as he thought this, Choi Hyuk unconsciously mumbled,

“It’s probably better if she didn’t...”

Yeah, not coming would be better.

Flame-Hell would appear soon and the ceremony would begin. Then by mourning Ryu Hyunsung’s death extravagantly, it would be used to raise Flame-Hell’s popularity. Choi Hyuk thought that it was better to not come, using having to recuperate as an excuse rather than to see that.

Beside him, Baek Seoin subtly nodded his head.

“...That’s right. It’s not like we won’t see her ever again.”



‘The calculations of revenge.’

Lee Jinhee mumbled.

Revenge was revenge, nothing more.

It wasn’t wishing for the repentance of one’s enemies or searching for one’s happiness.

It wasn’t a trial nor was it a realization of justice.

It was simply inflicting someone else with the same or more pain that one had received. In order to show them the depth of their pain.

That was all. It wasn’t for anything.

Since it was ruined.

All those crazy for revenge had left was the world that made them go crazy in the first place, there wasn’t a reason.

“That’s why it’s fruitless.”

Lee Jinhee repeated,

“Fruitless...”

Her gaze landed on the fragments of her shattered sword.

Her shattered dream.

Her dream, which was to fight so that they could live happily together, was currently in pieces.

Yet, she smiled. She brushed her fingertips against the shattered sword fragments.

Having fallen to the level of a low-ranked warrior after her karma sword, which was like a soul companion, shattered, her fingers couldn't bear the energy of the fragments of the Sword of Sentiment and were soon soaked in blood.

She received the dripping blood with her other hand. It was warm.

“Still, since I'm still alive, I can get revenge.”

A single teardrop fell from her smiling face.

After lowering her head for a while, she stood up with a resolved face, and then took her shattered sword and the glass bottle Choi Hyuk left behind and left.

Chapter 177

Lee Jinhee's Vow (2)

That day was the first time Choi Hyuk saw Flame-Hell's true figure.

While everyone was gathered for Ryu Hyunsung's funeral, night fell on Alliance City.

The Light of Eternity, which surged from the center of Alliance City 365 days a year, suddenly went out, and even Alliance City's unique sky, which was a gathering of skies from other species, was erased for a moment.

All that remained was the dark universe and the stars that slowly shined within it.

Just as the conversations between the warriors died down, a flame ignited with a blaze.

A flame the size of a candlelight ignited in front of each warrior gathered in the square.

"Today, we send off a great warrior."

They heard a voice.

At some point, Flame-Hell was floating in the middle of the Tower of Warriors. Though he looked old, in some ways, he simply looked like a handsome man with a few years of experience. His hair wasn't composed of flames. However, his exposed skin and eyes blazed with hazy flames.

"While he is gone, his will and fate will continue to remain here and lead the universe we live in. Leader Choi Hyuk, come forward."

He didn't introduce himself in detail or ramble on, but instead quickly began the ceremony.

Choi Hyuk stepped forward while holding the shattered Sword of Sentiment 'Ryu Hyunsung's Commemoration' with both hands.

Flame-Hell's gaze remained on Choi Hyuk.

"Leader Choi Hyuk. You worked hard."

Flame-Hell gave him some words of solace.

Flame-Hell maintained his modesty and was overflowing with self-restraint. He didn't impose himself in this ceremony.

Just the fact that he was personally supervising this funeral was enough for others to confirm his friendship with Choi Hyuk, and that the glory from Choi Hyuk's feat would ultimately return to him. More stories glamorizing him were spreading on their own, and there was no need for Flame-Hell to personally supplement them from here.

That was why he used this moment to move the warriors' hearts and strengthen their bonds.

Flame-Hell seriously led the funeral.

"Highest-ranked Warrior Ryu Hyunsung. He played a key role in obtaining victory in the battle against the Blue Manes. If not for him, there would be many warriors who wouldn't be able to attend his funeral today."

Flame-Hell looked around the Square of Warriors. Since a small flame was in front of everyone, it seemed like the sky and the ground were filled with stars.

"Highest-rank Warrior Ryu Hyunsung, with his sacrifice, we were able to become victorious in one war, but there still remains another. It is against the monsters, who are currently launching the largest-scale invasion ever seen."

Warriors nodded.

While examining their sympathy, Flame-Hell skillfully ended his commemorative speech.

"Like how he did his best to fulfill his duties as a warrior for us, it is now time for us to fulfill our duties as warriors for him. The flames in front of you right now were

flames I created by extracting a tiny amount of karma from you. By gathering these flames, we will restore the will and fate Highest-Ranked Warrior Ryu Hyunsung left behind and combine them into the Tower of Warriors. His will shall mix with our will and remain forever, and we will be victorious together in this war.”

When Flame-Hell ended his speech, the flames in front of everyone’s eyes shook. Then, as though they were floating on a river, one by one, they flowed into the fragments of ‘Ryu Hyunsung’s Commemoration’, which Choi Hyuk was holding.

The more the flames flowed into them, the more transparent and brighter the fragments became before floating up and permeating into the Tower of Warriors.

In its final moment of permeating the tower, the fragments formed an intact sword shadow before disappearing with a metallic ring.

Flame-Hell said,

“For life and freedom.”

Everyone else followed,

“For life and freedom!”

Their voice rang throughout Alliance City.

Like the break of day, the Light of Eternity slowly brightened, and the sky of various lights that had been erased slowly returned.

The dawn of Alliance City comforted the warriors’ souls. Having concluded the ceremony, Flame-Hell disappeared without a trace, and the warriors gathered in the square began conversing with each other with brighter voices than before.

Spending time together until the Light of Eternity brightened completely and the day arrived was Alliance City’s funeral custom.

“...It ended.”

Now that the ceremony ended, they had carried out all the big tasks. Having somewhat mixed feelings, Choi Hyuk placed his hands in his pockets and blankly looked up at the Tower of Warriors.

Even Baek Seoin beside him didn't speak.

Just then, a commotion broke out in the square.

"What the heck? A low-ranked warrior? Why is a low-ranked warrior in Alliance City?"

"Well... Maybe she's here under the probationary qualifications of a troop. But why is she here in the Square of Warriors? Since there is a whirlwind of karma here, it must have been difficult for a low-ranked warrior like her to enter."

"No, no. She's Director Lee Jinhee of the Berserkers."

"She's one of them? But why is her rank so low?"

"Apparently, her karma weapon was smashed this time."

"Oh my. It's admirable that she's still alive."

Choi Hyuk and Baek Seoin's gazes were fixated in the direction of the commotion. There, Lee Jinhee was strenuously taking steps forward. The Tower of Warriors was created by a whirlwind of karma. Of course, winds of karma always swept through the Square of Warriors, which was in its front yard. While there wasn't a significant effect on middle-ranked warriors and above, it seemed it was difficult for Lee Jinhee, who had just fallen to the level of a low-ranked warrior. Each step was difficult for her.

"Ah... I didn't think of this."

Baek Seoin blamed himself as he went to help Lee Jinhee.

However, Lee Jinhee stretched her hands out as she stopped him. She didn't receive help from anyone as she walked with her own strength and stood in front of the Tower of Warriors.

"Haa... How sad. For someone who was a high-ranked warrior not too long ago."

"Won't she recover?"

“Who knows...? The possibility of success is so low.”

The warriors murmured to each other as they looked at Lee Jinhee with sympathetic eyes.

Yet, Lee Jinhee paid them no mind. She simply lowered her head in silence in front of the tower.

Rather it was Baek Seoin and Choi Hyuk who flew into a rage, but they bit their lips and kept silent, thinking that taking action could deal a blow to Lee Jinhee’s pride.

After concluding her moment of silence, she arduously walked towards Choi Hyuk while dripping with cold sweat. Unable to do this or that, Choi Hyuk simply stared at Lee Jinhee. Seeing her right now, his emotions were in disarray.

While she had beads of sweat, her lips were slightly curved upwards, and above all, her eyes shined like stars.

‘What... does she want to say?’

Just then, Lee Jinhee arrived in front of Choi Hyuk.

She took out the shattered sword fragments and the glass bottle from her pocket.

Choi Hyuk, whose lips had been tightly shut, unconsciously opened his mouth.

“That’s-“

Lee Jinhee cut him off. She wiped the smile from her face and strengthened her gaze.

“I decidedly to cleanly give it up.”

While she didn’t say what she gave up, Choi Hyuk could tell for some reason.

Her dream. Living in happiness. It seemed that that was what she gave up...

“ ... ”

Choi Hyuk didn't know what to say.

No, how could a woman, who said she had given up on her dream, be so filled with willpower and overflowing with vigor?

"Instead, I can't see someone among us die again."

Then, before he could say anything, she uncorked the stopper and poured the liquid, which seemed like the dark night sky, onto the shattered sword fragments. Even though the glass bottle was only the size of one's palm, the black liquid poured out endlessly from it. Like water in zero gravity, it pooled together and grew larger without dropping to the ground. It covered all of the sword fragments, her hand, her forearm, and finally, her shoulder.

The warriors murmured to each other.

"Is that... the dark ocean?"

"Don't tell me she plans on repairing her shattered weapon here?"

Without knowing, Choi Hyuk raised his voice.

"What are you doing?! How could you open that here?!"

Even though the best materials were used, the success rate was already less than 20%. If she failed even once, she couldn't try it again. Then Lee Jinhee would remain as a low-ranked warrior. That was why it was proper to attempt repairing her weapon only after recovering to her best state and choosing the best place and weather for it. It wasn't something to do while sweating and in this noisy outside environment.

However, Lee Jinhee's eyes didn't waver in the slightest.

"Believe in me. Doing it here in front of you is for the best."

She stared into Choi Hyuk's eyes while she spat each word.

"Before I die, I will absolutely not see you die. Even if you die, I will die before you."

Then she ended her words with a sigh,

“I vow.”

Whoosh!

At the same time as she closed her eyes, the dark ocean, which had submerged up to her shoulder, expanded and swallowed her entire body.

Bang! Bang!

Sounds of thunder rumbled in the darkness.



‘Ah?’

Lee Jinhee opened her eyes.

Shwaaaah.

It was raining outside. The pungent scent of humid wooden floorboards permeated her nose.

This place was a classroom. A classroom that no one studied in anymore. Lively people sat on the desks and chairs. It hadn’t been long since she met them, and although they didn’t meet under great circumstances, they seemed to be good people. To be precise, they seemed to be people she felt she would like.

While the present was foggy and the future was gloomy, it had been a while since she had such a leisurely night. Lee Jinhee examined the people sitting in various positions here and there before saying,

“The mood is perfect! Let’s tell scary stories!”

At her words, Baek Seoin revealed an astonished expression.

“What scary story. The present is scarier.”

Lee Jinhee still wasn't discouraged.

"Why? Why?! No matter how scary the Wyvern of Destruction is, it can still be hit. What's actually scary are ghosts!"

"Haha!"

Baek Seoin burst into laughter. Beside him, Choi Hyuk, who sat on a desk with his hands in his pockets, simply watched the rain outside the window. It seemed he was worried about his mom again.

"I don't like ghost stories."

Ryu Hyunsung, who always acted like a model student yet had somewhat of a depressed expression, retreated backwards.

"I don't know. If it's a really scary story, tell it. Since there are so many scary things in reality right now, it might even be a change of pace?"

The always businesslike Crazy Knight King Jung Minji gave a subtle smile for some reason as she took Lee Jinhee's side.

Lee Jinhee became excited.

"Right? That's what I'm saying. Leader! Look over here!"

Choi Hyuk slowly turned his gaze as though it was troublesome.

Lee Jinhee revealed a satisfied smile before her expression became serious.

Lowering her voice, she began her story.

"So a person was driving on a dark mountain road with no streetlights at night..."

Just then, the world flashed before thunder rumbled.

Kaboom!

"Oh my god!"

Lee Jinhee stopped talking and jumped into the air in fright.

Bang!

Due to her enhanced physical abilities, she jumped to the ceiling and slammed her head into it. The cement-finished ceiling was smashed and fell while Lee Jinhee disgracefully flopped on the floor.

“Puahahaha!”

Baek Seoin roared with laughter at this sight.

Jung Minji grinned, and Chu Younjin’s lips, who stood expressionlessly behind her, wriggled. The laughter continued to spread, and soon, everyone in the classroom was laughing. Even Choi Hyuk smiled as he shook his head.

Even while she patted her head in embarrassment, Lee Jinhee seemed happy that they were laughing and followed suit.

Maybe it was because they laughed, but they talked more than usual that day.

Within this slight warmth, Lee Jinhee thought that it would be nice if they could gather around and laugh like this after their battles. While eating something good.

“Yeah, I thought that.”

Lee Jinhee’s face, which smiled like an idiot amongst them, gradually became bitter. When she raised her head again, like a scene in a picture, the world’s time stopped, and everyone paused while smiling and looking at each other.

Choi Hyuk, Baek Seoin, Ryu Hyunsung, Bae Jinman, and Jung Minji... They were people who could have lived a different future together. However, Lee Jinhee completely realized that she couldn’t dream this dream any longer and that she couldn’t stay in this memory any longer.

Lee Jinhee stood up.

She opened the window. She saw raindrops that stopped in mid-fall. She stopped in front of the windowsill.

“While it would have been nice if I could... I no longer have any lingering attachments. They are all dead or are probably going to die.”

Saying this lightly, she took deep breaths.

“I don’t want to be the only one to leave from this. Only... Only, I won’t see someone die before me. I’d rather die.”

She glanced behind her before throwing herself out the window.

“Especially Choi Hyuk, that bastard. That bastard who thinks he’s the only unhappy person in the world. I can’t watch that bastard die.”

Thud. Her falling body instantly impacted the ground. She opened her eyes.

The dark ocean, which she was submerged in, instantly hid its trace.

Her gaze met Choi Hyuk’s.

“...Right now...”

This was the first time she saw Choi Hyuk’s eyes tremble.

‘No? I think he was like this at his mother’s funeral.’

While smiling, Lee Jinhee said,

“This is my vow.”

Just then, the moment the dark ocean cleared, Choi Hyuk saw a brilliantly shining golden light emitting from Lee Jinhee. The color of ‘sacrificial will’, which he had

almost never seen since he obtained his Eyes of Distinction.

What she raised while saying, “This is my vow,” was a single short sword shining with white light.

The Sword of Vow ‘Lee Jinhee’s Vow’.

Alliance City’s dawn ended, and a glistening, brilliant world began to brighten once again.

Chapter 178

Frontlines (1)

An extensive construction began on Naro's spaceship. The construction was to help Naro, who had awakened as a highest-ranked warrior, use his abilities more effectively. Complying with Naro's will, they would maintain the basic frame the narolings had built and would only upgrade the outer armor and circuitry.

This was a very special case.

While it wasn't like there weren't any Armored Soul Tribe members in the shape of spaceships like the 'Steel Battleship', they were rare. As long as the total amount of karma a warrior could handle was limited, a smaller body would always be more economical and powerful than a larger body in battle. That was why the majority of battleship-type Armored Soul Tribe members were born through the alliance's request to the tribe for a special mission or to meet a quota.

Cases like Naro's, where one could maintain their spaceship body and even decide upon the remodeling process, were those of incredible privilege.

In the deepest core of Naro's spaceship, in the square where the narolings were buried, which Naro absolutely wouldn't let anyone lay a finger on despite the massive construction this time, Baek Seoin, Lee Jinhee, Naro, and Choi Hyuk held a meeting. After combining Naro and Choi Hyuk's power to prevent anyone from eavesdropping, they discussed their plans for the future.

Baek Seoin began the discussion with a light topic suggestion.

"Flame-Hell seems to have really liked leader's declaration."

It was as he said.

The costs of remodeling Naro's body were wholly paid for by the alliance. Despite the fact that the expenses would be astronomical considering the size of his body, they

provided only the very best resources, so much so that a rumor saying they had spent more than a hundred times that of what an average Armored Soul Tribe warrior would spend on creating their own bodies began to spread. This would have been impossible if it wasn't for Flame-Hell's wholehearted support.

Of course, the Berserkers were overflowing with reasons why Flame-Hell should give them preferential treatment.

Successfully subjugated the Blue Manes.

A well-conducted funeral.

Especially at the end of the funeral.

Where Lee Jinhee completed her Sword of Vow and went beyond just recovering her strength that had fallen to the low rank, stepping into the highest rank.

As according to Flame-Hell's plans, all of this gave hope to the alliance and made people consider Flame-Hell as the symbol of this hope.

However, there was another incident that made Flame-Hell determined to wholeheartedly invest in Naro.

The 'declaration' Baek Seoin mentioned was the declaration that popped up in Choi Hyuk and Armor-Phantom's conversation before the funeral.

'I'll telling you once more, but what he learns while completing missions with me doesn't lose out to what he would learn from the Armored Soul Tribe.'

It turned out that these words had scratched an itch for Flame-Hell.

He wanted to weaken the Armored Soul Tribe's unity and strengthen not only the alliance's influence but the influence of his own Flame Wing Tribe. To accomplish this, he wanted to transfer the Armored Soul Tribe's special member training to the alliance.

In this situation, Naro's refusal for training and Choi Hyuk's declaration were perfect opportunities for Flame-Hell.

This was the reason why Naro was given the best resources.

"On the other hand, we'll probably be hated by the Armored Soul Tribe."

Lee Jinhee said, wondering if it was okay, and Baek Seoin shrugged his shoulders.

"It's actually better this way since we need to earn Flame-Hell's trust."

Then he turned his gaze towards Choi Hyuk.

He swept away the slightly easygoing mood and fixed his gaze.

"As I said before, there are two tasks we must prioritize. First, obtaining Flame-Hell's complete trust. Therefore, garnering hate from the Armored Soul Tribe, who are Flame-Hell's competitors, is actually welcome. Second is for Chu Youngjin to figure out the mastermind behind the 'Event Horizon Troop' and to obtain the mastermind's wholehearted trust. To be honest, this part is... very uncertain. First, the mastermind needs to be an Exalted Wing, and above all, that person needs to be able to trust Chu Youngjin."

"Hmmm..."

Lee Jinhee groaned.

There was no one present that didn't like Chu Youngjin. However, liking someone and trusting someone were completely different matters. Chu Youngjin was an uncontrollable person. They had already confirmed this back during the doppelganger incident. It was also the reason why Lee Jinhee didn't say anything.

While there was probably no way he would purposely betray Choi Hyuk, they couldn't ignore the possibility that he wouldn't do the things he had to.

Still, Choi Hyuk resolutely shook his head.

"We don't have time to be concerned about that. We're absolutely weaker than them. If we start to doubt and prepare for various things, then it'll be too slow. We can't slash them with a slow sword. Let's just leave that part to Chu hyung."

“...Understood. Then if we assume that everything goes well, then like I said before, the Exalted Wings will gather in one place. There’s a likely chance that... Exalted Wing Flame-Rain won’t be able to attend. Then only one task remains. Finding a method to defeat the Exalted Wings, who have all gathered in one place... While I am researching all sorts of poisons and weapons, I don’t have anything yet.”

Choi Hyuk nodded.

“Yeah, then let’s focus on that.”



“Focus on Earth’s culture...”

Puppet Shiro was in the Shapley Supercluster’s archive. An immeasurable amount of data was being downloaded into her electronic brain.

Even as she was performing incredible calculations with her mind, Shiro mumbled to herself without realizing.

“The friendship of earthlings... Earthlings provide food or eat together to express friendship. Earthlings enjoy eating.”

With her arms crossed, Shiro’s fingers fidgeted.

“The taste of food is made up of a variety of elements. Textures of food can be smooth, chewy, crispy...”

Because she was looking through various data at once, her mumbling jumped from topic to topic.

“Among earthlings, those known as Koreans prefer a chewier texture compared to other cultures...”

“When eating, they don’t only pay attention to the taste of the food, but also the scent, temperature, comfort of their chair, the mood, and others...”

She suddenly stopped speaking.

Her hands tightly clenched her crossed arms. Kiing! Kiiing! The sound of her gear

heart turning rapidly broke the silence.

In a startled voice, she started saying,

“What am I doing...? I came to investigate the monsters that appeared around the Shapley Supercluster on my day off...”

She closed her eyes and did her best to calm her gear heart. Only after trying for a while did she finally succeed. Tik, tok, tik, tok. It returned to its normal sound.

Now that she had calmed down, she began avidly reading information regarding monsters like she had originally planned.

Not much time had passed before her ‘tik-toking’ gear heart began to churn without traction and she started mumbling again.

“When developing relationships, earthlings prefer smaller presents as opposed to bigger ones as they feel less burdened by them...”



The Event Horizon’s First Battle Unit Captain ordered Shiro,

“Shiro, carefully check if we can bring Chu Youngjin into our grand scheme. It’s become more sensitive now because the Berserkers confirmed their friendly relationship with Flame-Hell this time. While I know Chu Youngjin was exiled, he might still have a connection we’re not aware of. Gain Chu Youngjin’s trust. Also, figure out what Chu Youngjin thinks about the Berserkers.”

Shiro replied with her signature emotionless face,

“Understood.”

Therefore, her ‘only doing her mission’ was the excuse she gave herself. Though, she didn’t think about why she needed an excuse in the first place.

The 'Event Horizon Troop' fought hard to protect the Laniakea and Shapley Superclusters.

It hadn't been long since Choi Hyuk had completely erased the Kahur Kabkuns within these superclusters and fully colonized them. That was why the Shapley and Laniakea Superclusters were the only two outer superclusters that didn't suffer an internal invasion when the monsters launched their large-scale invasion, and because of this safety, they were set up as a stronghold and logistics base.

However, because their defensive line wasn't completely intact yet, it didn't take long for the superclusters to become the monsters' number one target. The border of the two superclusters became the most intense battlefield in this war.

Also, there were two heroes rising in prominence on these frontlines.

Puppet Shiro and Insane Sword Chu Youngjin.

Kiiing-!

The output of Shiro's gear heart became better recently. While its accuracy was lower than before, her karma increased and her instantaneous explosiveness became so powerful that people evaluated that her fighting strength had increased.

"Charge in, I'll cover your back."

Her tone was stiff as always, but the way she treated Chu Youngjin had changed drastically. It was different from when she used to constantly intervene whenever he tried to charge forward explosively to prevent him from dying and when she used to watch idly, unconcerned whether he died or not, if he didn't listen to her.

She actively took the lead and devoted herself so that Chu Youngjin could go berserk to his heart's content while still being safe.

It was the case right now. Chu Youngjin wanted to defeat a highest-ranked monster on the other side.

The highest-ranked monster, which looked like a self-propelled gun composed of lumps of flesh, fired ranged attacks at the Event Horizon Troop, causing significant

damage.

However, it wasn't easy intercepting the monster as it was surrounded by high-ranked monsters and above. Unless they advanced steadily, they would be killed after being isolated from the rest of the group even if they managed to kill the monster.

In a situation where even Chu Youngjin was hesitating, it was Shiro who urged him.

"You don't need to worry about your return route. Trust me."

Chu Youngjin smiled at her when she spoke in such a reliable manner. Then, without turning back, he rushed forward. It seemed he was squeezing out all his strength as monsters were scattered in a bloody mess accompanied by the sounds of thunder. In an instant, Chu Youngjin pierced his way, creating a long, narrow path, to the highest-ranked monster. Shiro followed closely behind him.

With his characteristic style of squeezing out all his power, he slashed through the monster. As if preplanned, he then immediately fell into a state of exhaustion. Chu Youngjin fell into a situation where he could be skewered by any monster's teeth or claws. The one who saved him was Shiro, who had followed closely behind him.

She took a deep breath and hugged Chu Youngjin.

Her vision was flooded with monsters, dripping fluids from their bodies.

'Can I do it?'

In the past, she wouldn't have even attempted it, but as she gazed at Chu Youngjin, who was in her arms,

Kiiing-!

When she saw his face, her gear heart would churn explosively. Her strength surged instantly. While incomprehensible, it was a fact. Shiro, who objectively calculated her own capacity, knew that, if she was with Chu Youngjin, they would be able to pull through any disadvantageous situation. That was why she could attempt a reckless technique that she wouldn't have attempted in the past without fear.

"Full-speed Escape."

Her two feet transformed into what looked to be large rocket boosters.

Hugging Chu Youngjin, Shiro's body became flat, starting from her head. As soon as her body flattened like a crushed can-

Booom-!

She disappeared from her spot while hugging Chu Youngjin. All the numerous monsters that obstructed their path were simultaneously turned into a bloody haze. Many monsters died powerlessly, unable to counterattack even once.

After returning to a safe location, Chu Youngjin sincerely admired,

"Wow... How did you do that?"

"It was a skill I learned from an elder when I first became an Armored Soul Tribe member..."

"Really? Amazing."

"Since there are many differences between Armored Soul Tribe members and other lifeforms... A few skills can achieve an effect greater than one's level by using remodeled bodies."

After saying this, Shiro glanced at Chu Youngjin. After cautiously examining his slightly flushed face, which seemed to indicate his sincere admiration, she turned her gaze and mumbled,

"In this respect, Naro, who recently became a highest-ranked warrior and yet refused to receive their education, is truly foolish. Same for Choi Hyuk, who encouraged him. Armored Soul Tribe members need to receive teachings from the elders of their tribe."

Shiro covertly tested Chu Youngjin's heart. Hearing her words, Chu Youngjin frowned.

"Choi Hyuk, that bastard..."

Then he shook his head as if he didn't care or perhaps he didn't even want to talk about it.

Shiro felt slightly relieved when she saw that he was hostile towards Choi Hyuk. When she turned around, while relieved, the battle seemed to be wrapping up. It was thanks to Shiro and Chu Youngjin flipping the situation around.

‘Is it ending soon? Then...’

After reading the mood, Shiro carefully took out two items she had stored at a cold temperature in her body and then handed one to Chu Youngjin. She raised hers.

“Good job.”

“...This is?”

Chu Youngjin was surprised at what Shiro took out. They were cans of beer from Earth.

“I heard earthlings like this. Since you did a good job in battle today, just think of it as a reward given by your superior.”

Shiro said coolly. Yet, her gear heart had been churning rapidly for a while now.

Chu Youngjin gave Shiro an odd look before grinning, cracking open the beer and gulping it down.

When he lowered his can, Shiro had her hand stretched out, handing him something.

It was a white, chewy cheese stick.

“I heard that you had to have something to eat while drinking where you lived. It’s not like I looked it up. My electronic brain contains all the knowledge in the world.”

After finished her excuse-explanation, Shiro handed him the cheese stick and proceeded to gulp down her own beer.

“Woah! Victory!”

The cheers of warriors erupted at that moment. Monster corpses floated in space, scattering and disappearing, and whenever they did, the starlight, which was covered by them, became more distinct.

‘The mood’s good too... ’

Shiro mumbled to herself without being aware of what she was saying.

Chapter 179

Frontlines (2)

‘My target is all 13 Exalted Wings.’

Chu Youngjin mulled over those words. This was what Choi Hyuk had said when they met on the Blue Ocean Planet, and Chu Youngjin had accepted his plans since he didn’t really have anything else to do and detested the world.

‘Event Horizon Troop. There must be at least one Wing behind them. That Wing... if it isn’ Flame-Rain, then they’ll end up as my enemy.’

The Event Horizon Troop was the troop Chu Youngjin was a member of, and it had made significant contributions to the defensive battle in the Shapley and Laniakea Superclusters. Chu Youngjin looked around at the warriors who were in formation, ready for another battle.

While he was used to it now, they were clearly different from other troops. This elite troop was indiscriminately made up of young masters and ladies from the top four tribes and people from the borders like Chu Youngjin. Be it from aliens with outer appearances similar to humans to furry ones that looked like beasts, or aliens that floated in space like a fish or a jellyfish to aliens that squirmed like snakes or worms and aliens that were composed of liquid or gas, these aliens, these warriors of the alliance, were so diverse in appearances that they were indistinguishable from monsters from a human’s perspective.

Chu Youngjin had become used to this strange sight. Now, when he looked around, he saw many familiar faces, many of whom he could put a name to. Even though he had only been here for a short period of time, they had already gone through a countless number of life-or-death situations together.

Filling his vision with their faces, Chu Youngjin calmly thought,

‘So I’ll betray them eventually.’

He was to figure out who was behind them, obtain and use their trust before killing

them all. That was Choi Hyuk's goal. As long as he planned on walking this path, Chu Youngjin couldn't avoid his inevitable betrayal.

"It's reasonable."

Shiro had, at some point, arrived. She stood next to Chu Youngjin and looked at their troop members while saying,

"While I don't know how much you knew before joining, but this place is different from the alliance. We don't discriminate warriors by where they came from. Since we only prioritize skill, we always achieve the greatest results."

For some reason, it seemed her expressionless face was shining with pride.

With his gaze still on the troop members, Chu Youngjin asked,

"Is it similar to Exalted Wing Flame-Rain's aim?"

He was answered with a sharp reply.

"No. Exalted Wing Flame-Rain is too much of an idealist. She wants harmony amongst species and gives opportunities to the weaker species. It's not effective."

'So Flame-Rain isn't behind them?'

While thinking this, Chu Youngjin mulled over Shiro's words.

"What I'm saying is, rather than vague concepts like harmony and risky investments, we prefer concrete battles and warriors who are useful right away."

Shiro nodded her head. A subtle, almost indiscernible smile spread on her lips.

Chu Youngjin met her gaze and asked,

"Is that the world you want?"

At his question, her cold, hard eyes melted like thin ice and wavered. She seemed to be reminiscing.

“No. What I want is simply war... I am the creation of a species that became extinct due to the monsters. I was a battle puppet that fought against monsters in my masters’ stead. However, I couldn’t complete my mission. My masters were all slaughtered by the monsters, and because of that, I was reborn by succeeding their fate. While my present self is a completely different existence from the past... Still, my heart is engraved with resentment towards the monsters. I... I don’t know what kind of world I want. Only, I know what kind of war I want very well.”

He looked into her eyes, which seemed to shimmer with light, looking almost tearful, before turning away and mumbling,

“...Sounds lonely.”

Shiro’s eyes rippled.

“What did you say?”

When she said that, Chu Youngjin met her gaze once more and simply said,

“I mean if that’s the kind of war you want, then that’s also the kind of war I want.”

“...”

Shiro’s frozen eyes shook. She turned her back towards him and said,

“Just what are you...? No, so that’s it. I’ll keep that in mind.”

While Shiro’s electronic brain was calculating at incredible speeds, all her thoughts ended up as errors and she couldn’t calculate anything.

‘What does he mean? Is he agreeing with me? If that’s the case, then won’t it be fine to bring him into our grand scheme? No, no. Then what did he mean by ‘sounds lonely’? And what about, ‘if that’s the kind of war you want’? Rather than agreeing with me about our cause, maybe he- No, what am I saying? Me? What does that mean? Anyways, why is my gear heart overheating? But did I just say that ‘I’ll keep that in mind’? What did I mean by ‘keep that in mind’? As expected, the great cause? No, Chu Youngjin’s... feelings. No, just what are his feelings?!’

When she tried to come to a rational conclusion, she didn’t like it for some reason, and when she tried to come to a conclusion emotionally, she couldn’t comprehend her

emotions.

Shiro disappeared after saying that 'she would keep that in mind' without another word.

Chu Youngjin watched her leave before smiling bitterly and mumbling,

"Those words came out easily."

Feeling awkward, he looked out at the troop members again as he recalled a word again.

'...Betrayal.'



War was glorious and full of hope.

While the frontlines receded and there were superclusters that were completely subjugated by the monsters due to their sudden invasion, there was still hope because of the actions of heroes in various places.

Transcendent warriors, who raised their names onto the alliance's ranking, quickly emerged, and the names of heroes who had won consecutive victories spread rapidly.

As the war waged longer, warriors, either knowingly or not, became nervous.

'No matter how much I think about it, I don't think the monsters are using their full strength. How will it look when the monsters invade us at full strength?'

When this discussion broke out, people concluded that 'they could take them on'.

While the monsters were strong, the warriors of the alliance didn't lose out to them. They achieved as many consecutive defeats as they did victories.

This gave hope to the warriors.

And the one who gave the biggest hope among them was Choi Hyuk and his 'Flame

Army’.

The Flame Army fought on the most intense battlefield, the Shapley and Laniakea Superclusters, and their performance made them quickly exceed the Event Horizon Troop, which Chu Youngjin was a member of, in fame.

The obvious name ‘Flame Army’ was of course assigned to them by Flame-Hell. He strengthened their military power with the Blue Manes punitive force as their core, and they became a leading troop in terms of power.

The ‘Flame Army’, which was filled with many promising rookies of the top four tribes, especially those of the Flame Wing Tribe who were the leading power in the alliance, gave a new hope to alliance members.

Of course, the war was cruel.

It was especially cruel to species that possessed the ‘Consumables’ fate.

However, to those who had already become alliance members, this didn’t concern them much.

“Ahhhck!!”

“Heuuuuk! I... I can’t die like this!”

Screams filled a distant area in the universe.

A wall made of blood and flesh to block the pouring monster army. The Consumables fulfilled their duty by being horribly crushed. These lives, who had endured the hardship of the alliance as Consumables and had, at times, betrayed their own family and friends to survive, were dying powerlessly.

Choi Hyuk and the Flame Army motionlessly watched the mass of deaths. During this time, an endless number of new Consumables poured out onto the monsters’ formation through the military gate system, and the monsters became drunk from the amount of karma and blood they had consumed.

“Now.”

Choi Hyuk, who had been coldly watching this scene, finally opened his mouth.

The technique, officially known as ‘monster armor’, where two monsters combined into one, with one of them becoming a weapon, was created in order to resist karma weapons and was very effective. Because of this technique, various galaxy clusters collapsed, and multiple galaxies were subjugated. However, it wasn’t like the alliance was standing still since Choi Hyuk first reported the existence of this ‘monster armor’.

The method the alliance found in nullifying ‘monster armor’ was throwing Consumables as bait. Since monster armor was made up of two different monsters fighting as one body, it became easier to face them once they broke their cooperation. As they continued to easily slaughter their prey, the monster that had transformed into the armor and weapons began to become immersed in the slaughter, tossing its command to cooperate to the side. Then the ‘monster armor’ effect of ‘ $1+1=2.5$ ’ became ‘ $1+1=1.7$ ’, making it worse than fighting separately.

So sacrificing Consumables was the simplest and most effective tactic in dealing with monster armors.

Of course, there were drawbacks.

Those with monster armors were normally elites, therefore, if they slipped up, the battle could end in their loss, rendering the consumption of Consumables useless. They couldn’t use this tactic if they weren’t certain of their victory. However, Choi Hyuk’s Flame Army always used this tactic to slaughter elite monster armies. It would be the same this time as well.

The moment Choi Hyuk said, ‘Now’, flames erupted to devour the universe. The Consumables, who were groaning as they were being ripped apart by the monsters, and the monsters, who were drunk on blood as they devoured the Consumables, were both erased by the flames.

The flames the countless Flame Wing Tribe warriors spewed made the battlefield feel like their homeland, which was now blazing with the Flames of Beginning, flames that

had never ceased to burn since the Big Bang.

The most eye-catching thing in those flames was Choi Hyuk's dangerously surging black flames.

The battle, which waged in the flames, ended in half a day and would be added as another victory for the alliance.

Even though they were exhausted from fighting, the warriors were happy at their consecutive victories.

“Wow... To be honest, while the other top four tribes are amazing, as expected, aren't the warriors from the Flame Wing Tribe the best?”

“Of course! They're fiery! While the Dark Tribe warriors, who are skilled in one-on-one fights, and the Armored Soul Tribe warriors, who lead the battle with their diverse set of skills, are amazing, it's so refreshing to see the Flame Wing Tribe warriors push forward with their strength!”

“Amongst them, Leader Choi Hyuk's black flames are... Wow, I'm at a loss for words. Whether they were highest-ranked monsters or whatever, they would all become ash in one second.”

“But Choi Hyuk isn't a member of the Flame Wing Tribe, right?”

“Hey, hey. While I can't say for much else, those flames are clearly more like the Flame Wing Tribe's than anyone else's.”

The Flame Army's fame became Choi Hyuk's fame, and Choi Hyuk's fame became the Flame Wing Tribe's fame.

Even the young Flame Wing Tribe warriors, who arrogantly said things like, ‘The best we can do is act like we're fighting before retreating,’ during the Blue Manes expedition, underwent a drastic change and now praised Choi Hyuk ahead of anyone else. It was to the point where there were even some who called him ‘Flame-Hyuk’.

While he could be considered as a sweet hope for some, to others, he was also a source of frustration.

“What? You want me to back off after providing you with Consumables again? Look here... I am the commander-in-chief of this place and the operational authority lies with me! Are you ignoring the chain of command?”

Armor-Phantom, who was the commander-in-chief of both the Shapley and Laniakea Superclusters as well as a transcendent warrior who ranked 71st in the alliance ranking, didn't hide his displeasure. Rather, he intentionally vented his anger.

Yet, Choi Hyuk didn't give him the opportunity to vent.

“Then what? Are you going to block the monsters with your newly recruited Armored Soul Tribe novices? Don't embarrass yourself and just send Consumables as you've been doing.”

After saying this without even the slightest change to his expression, Choi Hyuk left the meeting room. Yet, there was nothing Armor-Phantom could say since Choi Hyuk and his Flame Army were achieving consecutive victories that no one else could. If not for him, they couldn't hope for the safety of the Shapley and Laniakea Superclusters.

Creeeeak!

While emitting a piercing sound as the metallic pieces of his body rubbed against each other, Armor-Phantom could do nothing else but glare at Choi Hyuk's disappearing figure.



“It seems Choi Hyuk is doing well...”

Dark-Sound had a smile on his face as he gathered the reports brought up from various parts of the universe. As planned, Choi Hyuk obtained Flame-Hell's trust while accumulating the malice of the other top four tribes.

The sword known as Choi Hyuk was almost complete.

“It's really close now...”

He felt like he could finally see the fruits of the humiliation and shame he had endured while smiling all this time.

“We will complete the grand scheme before this war ends. To do that... I need another hero who can replace Choi Hyuk...”

Tapping his fingers, Dark-Sound became immersed in his thoughts. Quiet footsteps suddenly resounded in the dark, dreary space in which he was alone. The footsteps became quicker, and at some point, they were in front of him.

“Exalted Wing Dark-Sound.”

It was a voice without any big deviations in pitch. However, he could tell that she was very happy to see him by her slightly higher tone.

Dark-Sound friendlily greeted the woman, who was his trusted, reliable subordinate and was like his child as he had taken care of her since young.

“You’re here? I guess you’re doing your job well, Shiro?”

One of the rising heroes of the Event Horizon Troop, Shiro. Her eyebrows, which looked like they had been drawn on, slightly rose, indicating her delight.

Chapter 180

Frontlines (3)

Unlike normal, Dark-Sound was standing leisurely with a smile on his face.

“It’s almost time for our grand scheme.”

A dense happiness seeped from his voice. His happiness was fully transmitted to Shiro, who was standing in front of him.

“Finally.”

Shiro’s voice was quiet and monotonous, but happiness also subtly trembled in her voice.

As if planned, Dark-Sound said to Shiro,

“If our grand scheme succeeds, it’ll be chaotic for a while... But, in the end, the alliance will be stronger because of it. We will be able to slaughter the monsters. Then the heavy resentment in your heart might also become slightly lighter.”

At Dark-Sound’s kind words, Shiro slightly lowered her head and clearly replied,

“I hope for Exalted Wing Dark-Sound’s resentment to lighten a little as well. I still remember your expression when you rescued me that day. I was helplessly surrounded by monsters since the moment I was born and had learned of rage, sorrow, and resentment that remained in those who had lost their homeland. These emotions pained my heart, yet, for some reason, when I saw your expression, I remember becoming a bit calmer. I hope that your heart will also become peaceful after this battle.”

Shiro met his gaze with her cold, honest eyes.

Dark-Sound ruffled her hair with a smile.

For revenge, he had lived his entire life hiding his true feelings, which felt like he was

eating gall bladders and sleeping on prickly hay.

Having survived while trembling alone in the universe after every one of her people had died, Shiro was one of only few close to him. She was someone whom he could reveal his true feelings to, as she was someone who could sympathize with his feelings.

That was why Dark-Sound cautiously said,

“So... Shiro, I hear you are quite taken by Chu Youngjin these days?”

“...Pardon?”

Shiro replied calmly as though it was her first time hearing of this, but Dark-Sound could hear her gear heart churning rapidly.

With a bitter smile, Dark-Sound looked into Shiro’s eyes and seriously said,

“Shiro, I’ll be honest. Our grand scheme needs people like Chu Youngjin.”

“Yes, I agree.”

“But, you know, right? The moment we explain our grand scheme to Chu Youngjin, we can’t go back. At that time, he has two choices: To sincerely participate in our grand scheme or... to die.”

‘Or to die.’ When he said that, Dark-Sound’s voice became emotionless. The friendliness and ease he showed up until now had disappeared without a trace, and it seemed like the air around her had turned into knives that could pierce her skin at any moment. She felt dizzy and cold as though she was standing barefoot on ice.

While enduring the sensation of her throat choking up, Shiro barely managed to say,

“Yes, I know.”

However, Dark-Sound still didn’t smile. He rigidly said,

“That’s why you have to understand him properly. Whether he’s someone worth participating in our grand scheme or not, I will completely trust your judgment. Of

course, it would be better if he decides to work with us and though I personally think we need him... Still, if you think otherwise, I won't approach him since he has his worth as an outstanding warrior of the Event Horizon Troop."

The more he spoke, the more Dark-Sound's voice gradually returned to normal. By the time he stopped speaking, his voice had become kind and full of concern.

"I'm saying this because I don't want to kill someone you like by chance."

At his never-lacking consideration, Shiro lowered her head and said,

"Thank you."

However, the stuffy feeling in her chest didn't recede in the slightest.

Errors.

All her calculations ended in errors again. It felt like there wouldn't be any results even if she calculated hundreds of millions of times.

The grand scheme was something she had constantly dreamed of. It was a great cause she decided to dedicate her life to. Of course, she wanted to work on this with Chu Youngjin. Also, there was no doubt he would be useful in making the grand scheme a success.

However, currently, she wanted to distance Chu Youngjin from the grand scheme entirely. Dark-Sound's words stabbed at her heart like a dagger. '...Or to die.' That cold voice. If there was even a 0.1% possibility of that happening, Shiro didn't want to bring Chu Youngjin into the grand scheme.

'However, the grand scheme needs him? Still... But if you do, then won't you be able to be close with Chu Youngjin like now? Still... Can I...? What's that supposed to mean? What is Chu Youngjin to me?'

Shiro abhorred these errors and confusion.

However, this also precisely represented how much she liked him.

Her heart still unsettled, Shiro walked out after her consultation with Dark-Sound. She mumbled, unable to bear it any longer,

“Just what am I supposed to do...? You... monster... butthole!”

That was the first curse Shiro ever swore.

Monster butthole.



Thanks to the Event Horizon Troop and the Flame Army, the Shapley and Laniakea Superclusters' frontlines had come to a lull – a temporary peace. The monsters hadn't completely given up yet. There were reports that a shocking number of monsters were assembling along the frontlines as though they were gathering strength for a single strike.

It was literally the calm before the storm. During this time, the warriors got a precious break while also busily reinforcing and examining defense facilities in preparation for the monsters' more aggressive attack.

The Flame Army moved their post to a planet located near the center of the Laniakea Supercluster during this period, which made it easier to advance in different directions.

It was a place that had sufficient supplies and facilities for war and comfort as karmalings inhabited the planet.

At the same time, it was a foothold that needed a powerful army to protect its inhabiting species and ancient relics against the monsters' invasion.

This place was precisely Dragonic, the earthling's second homeland.

“Here is...?”

Choi Hyuk, who instantly arrived on Dragonic thanks to the military gate system,

looked around with round eyes.

It was simply too different.

In the middle of Dragonic's characteristically swirling milk-white sky was a round, blue sky that hadn't existed before. It looked like the blue pupil of a god looking down at the world.

However, looking at it again, it wasn't simply a sky. Blue water was filling the sky. Rippling blue water pooled in the middle of Dragonic's milk-white sky like an island to form a different sky.

Lights from outer space hit the blue, round sky and scattered in various colors of the rainbow. Everything on Dragonic shined like pebbles in rapids.

"Where is this place?"

Lee Jinhee said in disbelief.

It was fully understandable.

Dragonic's characteristically desolate landscape had long since disappeared. Even the red sandy Barhaloleun Hill was now covered with glistening green plants and moist moss.

The Dragonic the Berserkers remembered and the current Dragonic seemed to bear no similarities.

Kiruruk!

"Huh?!"

While everyone was mesmerized, they heard a loud roar.

A shadow covered Barhaloleun Hill. Something was quickly flying over it.

Splash!

The thing that surged up into the sky happily dived into the sky-water a few times before flying away. It seemed to consider the mystical water pooled in the sky as its personal swimming pool.

“It’s a real... dragon.”

Lee Jinhee blankly mumbled. It wasn’t a dragon that looked like Commander Mack, but a true dragon. It really was a dragon, like the ones from Western movies, with enormous wings and shining scales covering its entire body. Its wings and scales glistened radiantly in the water.

Kiiirururuk!

The dragon roared loudly.

Then it suddenly shot towards Choi Hyuk like an arrow.

“Huh?”

Surprised, Lee Jinhee unsheathed her sword and stood in front of Choi Hyuk.

However, Choi Hyuk pulled her shoulder back. Wrapping his left arm around her shoulder, Choi Hyuk stretched his right arm forward. He opened for an embrace and a boy, who looked to be around ten years old, hugged him. The charging dragon had transformed into a human boy.

The boy shouted in a happy voice,

“Hyuk hyung! You’re Hyuk hyung, right...?!”

Successfully receiving the charging boy while taking precaution so he wasn’t hurt, Choi Hyuk awkwardly looked down at the boy in his embrace.

While it was his first time seeing his face, he could tell who he was. The young dragon’s karma felt familiar. Choi Hyuk’s karma rippled. He clearly remembered him. He was one of the baby dragons that was born in the El Tribe’s sanctum back during the

monster tidal wave. It seemed that the dragon, which had wriggled like a puppy back then, could now transform into a human and even talk.

‘Didn’t dragons need a hundred years or two before growing?’

It seemed that wasn’t always the case.

Choi Hyuk looked around at the familiar yet unfamiliar Dragonic once again before mumbling,

“It seems like it really is Dragonic.”



The location assigned as their base was the Holy Land, the El Tribe’s sanctum. Holding the chatty young dragon’s hand as he headed for the sanctum, the sights he saw were so beyond his expectations that it felt like a fun dream rather than reality.

First of all, he barely saw any earthlings. Instead, the Kundle Tribe and glass crabs, who Choi Hyuk had brought around for a while, were peacefully walking around in the earthlings’ colonized cities, such as Barhaloleun, Zhiyu, New Washington, and others.

“This is all thanks to Exalted Wing Flame-Rain.”

According to Baek Seoin’s explanation, back when Flame-Rain was constructing a stronghold in the monsters’ universe, all the overseers and sovereigns of Earth left Dragonic on her request. On top of that, thanks to her actively promoting it, the remaining earthlings left Dragonic along with others. In the end, those that remained on Dragonic were the El Tribe who needed to protect their sanctum, the Kundle Tribe and glass crabs that migrated here following the Berserkers, and a small group of earthlings.

‘It feels weird.’

It didn’t seem like a lot of time had passed, but a lot had changed.

Now that he thought about it, every day was intense without rest. After colonizing the Shapley and Laniakea Superclusters and defeating the demise-ranked monster with Flame-Rain, he had swiftly taken revenge on the three people responsible for Earth's recruit training, and then investigated the monster queen's location.

In fact, he was currently in the middle of an intense war as well.

A large-scale invasion of monsters.

However, like a stream below a ridge that avoided the sudden shower, Dragonic was peaceful for a bit, and because of this peace, Choi Hyuk had the opportunity to look back for a moment.

The people around Choi Hyuk had changed a lot as well. Artillery Captain Handke, Kim Honghyun, and Aide Leah, who had been executives, had left with the Berserkers they led. When they left, Choi Hyuk told them to take the administrative organization under the Berserkers on Dragonic along with them.

In the end, all that remained were the 5,000 elites who gave up on everything and followed Choi Hyuk.

Nothing else remained for Choi Hyuk besides them. Even the vast colonized land the Berserkers had taken on Dragonic and his influence over earthlings, he had let them all go.

While it was partly because his battles weren't so trifling that they could be fought while dealing with each and every detail on Dragonic, it was also because Choi Hyuk's rate of advancement was so beyond the rest of the earthlings' that they were useless to be concerned about.

Choi Hyuk, who had walked steadfastly, followed by his 5,000 elites who would follow him until the end, gradually slowed down as the memories of Dragonic suddenly overwhelmed him.

It wasn't on purpose, but many thoughts crossed his mind during this short period of time.

Was there something he could have done better?

Was he doing things right?

Would he be able to get revenge like this?

Should he have taken things into deeper consideration? Should he have been harsher?

Choi Hyuk's mind became entangled in these thoughts that suddenly crossed his mind.

"...!"

"...!... Hyuk!"

Choi Hyuk, who had been walking absentmindedly, raised his head at the sudden loud voice.

He had arrived at the Holy Land at some point and was walking towards the El Tribe's sanctum.

Crowds of earthlings, El Tribe members, Kundle Tribe members, and glass crabs filled his vision.

"Waaah! Choi Hyuk! Congratulations on your return!"

"Whiiik! Whiiik!"

"Leader of the Flame Army, Choi Hyuk!!!"

"Hero of the alliance!"

"Savior of the glass crabs!"

"Liberator of the Kundle Tribe!"

"Guardian of the Holy Land!"

To be honest, the 'Guardian of the Holy Land' should have been for Richard, but people

called him that, perhaps because Choi Hyuk had succeeded his fate.

'But the Kundle Tribe members and the glass crabs shouldn't even know what happened then...'

He laughed when he saw the Kundle Tribe members and the glass crabs, who he didn't even know at that time, shouting, "Guardian of the Holy Land!"

Though he didn't know why, people were welcoming him.

Though he didn't know why, to them, it seemed he was a hero.

Cheers filled the air, and those carrying baskets of flowers appeared and scattered flower petals. The young dragon, who had been walking alongside him, seemed excited as he once again transformed into a dragon and flew up towards the sky. Kiruruk! He heard the dragon's roar from high up in the air when the dragon's flames dyed the sky like fireworks.

Cheers erupted again.

To be honest... It wasn't a bad feeling.

However... As expected, it was awkward.

Choi Hyuk didn't know where to look so he spread his hands open and looked down at them.

His hands were empty.

"What are you doing?"

Lee Jinhee gently grabbed his empty hand.

When he looked at her, she smiled before holding his hand tightly and raising it up into

the air.

Waaaah!!!

As though his raised hand was a signal, a cheer incomparably louder than the previous ones shook Dragonic.

Choi Hyuk wasn't aware of this, but he was no longer just a warrior. His existence had become a symbol, a moving force and he was the idol of others. Even though his fate was to reject and slash everything, the number of people who survived and continued to live thanks to his fate wasn't small.

The fate of the great universe was slowly, little by little, leaning in Choi Hyuk's direction.

Chapter 181

Frontlines (4)

The Flame Wing Tribe's recent rise to prominence became an opportunity for the neutral members of the Armored Soul, Speckled Light, and Dark Tribes to unite.

Their position was simple. Although they could acknowledge the Flame Wing Tribe's dominance, it was difficult for them to accept Flame-Hell's recent indiscrete expansion of power.

Even those who were originally close to the Flame Wing Tribe or maintained neutrality began to turn away.

Still, it wasn't enough. With no less than four members of the Exalted Wings from their tribe, the Flame Wing Tribe was creating a 'Pro-Flame Wing Faction' among all species. In fact, if they included Flame-Rain, a newly ascended Exalted Wing, they would have five Exalted Wings. More than half the alliance's forces were under the Flame Wing Tribe's authority. The 'Pro-Flame Wing Faction' was made up of 45% of the alliance, and if they included Flame-Rain, the enormous organization reached 60% of the alliance. On the other hand, the 'Anti-Flame Wing Faction', which expanded this time, barely managed to hold 25%. The remaining 15% were minor, neutral forces that didn't belong to either side. They didn't have a lot of power.

Even now, the Flame Wing Tribe's influence was gradually expanding thanks to Flame-Hell's ambitious actions. If things continued as is, there was no doubt that all the tribes would be under the Flame Wing Tribe's command in the end as a nice-sounding 'One Alliance'.

The ones who were most opposed to this were, as expected, the Armored Soul Tribe.

They reacted strongly to Naro's refusal to accept their education and Flame-Hell's 'One Alliance' chant, which had Choi Hyuk's cooperation.

{Flame-Hell is trying to erase our identity!}

{We can no longer sit watching idly. We need to stop him.}

There were two Exalted Wings of the Armored Soul Tribe. Between the two, Armor-Song was categorized as someone well disposed towards the Flame Wing Tribe and Armor-Desert was considered neutral. However, the two had become extremely opposed to them now.

{To do that... As expected, we need to stop Choi Hyuk.}

Light-Walk, who was also in the 'Anti-Flame Wing Faction' within the Speckled Light Tribe, responded.

However, Dark-Resentment, who had been silent, cautiously proposed an opposing opinion.

{I think... Dark-Sound has some sort of plan.}

Immediately, Armor-Desert opposed.

{Isn't Dark-Sound Flame-Hell's yes man?! Last time, you even stirred trouble by proposing inviting Dark-Sound into this meeting... Seriously, why are you like this? Dark-Sound's the one who fostered Choi Hyuk, and Choi Hyuk's currently Flame-Hell's most loyal informant. It's no different even if he has a plan. Though we don't know when his plan will bear fruit or whether he has one or not, it's already too late. We need to get rid of Choi Hyuk as quickly as we can. You should know what educating new tribe members means to our Armored Soul Tribe, correct? We call this education process 'Birth'!}

The Armored Soul Tribe's birth process was very unique. Intelligent lifeforms who had the opportunity to advance over long periods of time would eventually create robots and artificial intelligence, and an extreme minority would be granted a fate and awaken as an Armored Soul Tribe member. They weren't born possessing blood relations or an environmental affinity like the other tribes. Instead, they were an assembly of independently arising individuals. That was the Armored Soul Tribe.

That was why their education was important to them. They obtained bonds with each other through their special education system. That was why it was called 'birth'. Plainly speaking, those who didn't undergo their education, like Naro, couldn't identify as a member of the Armored Soul Tribe.

That was why the 'One Alliance' Flame-Hell was pushing through Choi Hyuk and Naro was, in fact, a policy eradicating the Armored Soul Tribe's identity. This was an urgent issue that couldn't be delayed for the Armored Soul Tribe.

Because he knew this, Dark-Resentment couldn't say anything opposed to it.

{However, Dark-Sound... Haaa, never mind.}

Dark-Resentment clearly knew how Dark-Sound grew up and how deeply he resented the Flame Wing Alliance, but it was difficult to prove this to others. While they were close when they were young, he hadn't had a private conversation with Dark-Sound since they became Exalted Wings.

In the end, Dark-Resentment gave up and asked.

{And your plan is?}

Only then did Armor-Desert calmly explain.

{If we want to take the flow from Flame-Hell... We also need to propose a solution to this endless war.}

Dark-Resentment's voice became serious.

{Have you had any results?}

Armor-Song replied.

{We have. Exchanging technology with the dragon race was of especially big help.}

{... And the achievement rate?}

{It's still far off. We haven't fully understood the monster queen's strength. We can only assume that it is stronger than a demise-ranked monster. Since it will probably be stronger than Flame-Sky, who was the strongest warriors in the history of the alliance, the question is still whether it'll work or not. Another problem is deploying the equipment to the monsters' universe. So... }

Armor-Song paused for a moment. His quiet and calm tone possessed an odd liveliness. As if singing, he said.

{Isn't that why we need to test it?}

This was the secret conversation held between Exalted Wings on a relay base located in the dark universe that was created by the Armored Soul Tribe.



“For life and freedom!”

Commander Mack of the Virgo Cluster and the Great Warrior Lantz saluted in booming voices in front of the El Tribe’s sanctum.

Soon, young dragons rushed out.

“It’s Hyuk oppa!”

“It’s Hyuk hyung!”

He hadn’t seen them often, yet the dragons excessively welcomed him. When Choi Hyuk looked awkward because of the dragons who were tugging at his pant legs, Commander Mack smiled calmly.

“It seems Overseer Richard’s aura is completely imprinted in the children’s minds. They recognized Army Leader Choi Hyuk at a glance. They were such a handful, wanting to see you...”

This time, Choi Hyuk, who didn’t know what to do because of the young dragons, calmly looked at Mack, who used polite, respectful speech naturally. She had recovered her level that had dropped after giving him her horn and had even improved as it seemed she was on the brink of reaching the highest rank.

Nonetheless, her polite speech still sounded awkward to him. Wasn’t she the first commander he served after joining the alliance?

As if she noticed Choi Hyuk’s thoughts, Mack smiled subtly as she said,

“Leader of the Flame Army, an S-rank division troop. Leader Choi Hyuk is my superior by a large margin.”

Choi Hyuk simply smiled once.

Smiling as well, Mack led Choi Hyuk and his group into the sanctum.

“Then I will guide you to the Flame Army’s headquarters.”



“Wow...”

“Huh...”

As soon as they entered the headquarters, Lee Jinhee and Baek Seoin exclaimed. Choi Hyuk wasn’t much different.

Rather than a room, this place was more like outer space.

Within an endless darkness, there were two branches of light made up of an endless number of shining galaxies, the Shapley and Laniakea Superclusters.

The headquarters was a place where they downscaled the nearby universe.

Blue and red dots were distributed throughout the vast space. Blue dots were allies, and red dots were enemies. When their gaze rested on one, detailed information regarding it would appear in their vision.

Mack boastfully explained,

“You can check the current war situation in real-time here. Not only that, but simply by looking at one and thinking about it, you can communicate with that commander on the battlefield.”

{Amazing! To downscale the entire supercluster region into this system... }

Naro, who followed behind them, couldn’t contain his amazement as he looked here and there.

Mack watched Naro while saying,

“That’s not all.”

Mach twirled her hand. Then the surrounding, shining galaxies disappeared to be replaced by thin lines that spread everywhere like a spider web. It was a net that shined in a white light with rotten, black light in some places.

Choi Hyuk gasped,

“This is... the Net of Fate.”

“Yes. This is the Net of Fate the Exalted Wings are managing. In this place, while limited, you are able to access the Net of Fate and increase its effects. As an army leader at the transcendent level, you should be able to grant your allies with fortune and your enemies with misfortune. If you stay here, you will feel like you’ve become a god.”

The one who reacted to her explanation filled with confidence was Naro, rather than Choi Hyuk.

{Amazing! I didn’t see this system in the alliance records thought?!}

As if she had been waiting for this, Mack boastfully answered,

“Of course. This is a system created using the dragon race’s own technology.”

{All of this?}

“Yes. To be honest, this is also one of the reasons why Dragonic was chosen as the Flame Army’s base. This is the holy land of cutting-edge dragon technology recently.”

Mack’s voice was filled with pride. Still, she glanced at Choi Hyuk.

“This is all because of you and Overseer Richard. We were able to protect the ancient dragons’ sanctum and obtain their knowledge thanks to you two. While the knowledge is old, it has been of great assistance in recovering real combat technologies. With this knowledge and technology traded with the Armored Soul Tribe, the dragon race was able to a major step forward.”

{Hee... }

Naro admired while twirling in place.

Mack's gaze was fixed on him before turning away. With a slightly cautious expression, she said to Choi Hyuk,

"And speaking of which, Army Leader Choi Hyuk, from what we learned while trading with them, the Armored Soul Tribe's mood seemed quite serious. I think it's best if you are careful. While I want to help you if possible, as the dragon race has decided to maintain its neutral stance, there's no way for me to help."

Mack's curved eyes were filled with concern.

Choi Hyuk simply smiled.

After the introduction of the headquarters, next was the welcome party.

"Wow! Our leader is 17th in the alliance ranking?"

"If we exclude the Exalted Wings, he's third on the warrior ranking. This much is obvious considering he's proved his skill by eradicating the Blue Manes and leading countless battles to victory."

Lee Jinhee and Mack hit it off.

"Third in reality... He's really high up there!"

"This much is nothing... There are rumors he's going to be the 15th Exalted Wing and even rumors that he's the warrior who will bring the 'Spring of the Universe'."

"The Spring of the Universe?"

"It's like a legend in the alliance. The first and last warrior who brought the 'Spring of the Universe' was King Flame-Sky. That he might bring the 'Spring of the Universe' means he might become the strongest warrior in the alliance."

"Could he really?"

"I don't know... It's about time for his growth to halt, but we don't know for sure."

The two chatted endlessly as they ate. The welcome party food was comprised of

dishes from Earth for the Berserkers.

Sausages were grilling on the table, and the cheesy scent of pizza in the stone oven spread as it cooked. A blue-skinned alien put amazingly fried chicken into a large vat filled with Korean-style sauce. Holding the vat with both hands, the alien mixed the chicken and sauce with a sifting action. Crispy chicken and spicy sauce were tossed in the air, spreading a spicy fragrance.

Craving beer while watching this, Lee Jinhee downed a beer. It was refreshing, yet slightly disappointing.

Mack quietly asked,

“You can’t get drunk, right?”

“Yes. Well, since awakening, the fun of drinking has disappeared.”

Smiling, Mack poured her a blue drink. It emitted a cold chill. Lee Jinhee chuckled when she saw it.

“Glacier Tears? Heh. I used to drink this instead of alcohol since it makes you feel drunk as your karma freezes. But since I’m at the highest rank, it doesn’t work anymore.”

With a strange smile on her face, Mack pushed the wine glass with Glacier Tears towards Lee Jinhee.

“Try it.”

Lee Jinhee downed the glass in one go.

“Huh...?”

She staggered before widening her eyes.

“It’s effective? Even though it was only for a moment, my karma froze!”

The triumphant smile Mack had on the entire day returned.

“This is also a drink improved by the dragon race’s new technology. To be honest, we

developed it to use as a poison, but that turned out to be too difficult.”

“Yes. If I come to my senses and resist it, I can resist its effect at any time.”

Mack shrugged.

“That’s what I mean.”

Choi Hyuk drank a glass of Glacier Tears while listening to their conversation.

When he released as much resistance as he could and calmed his karma before drinking, the cold drink that poured down his throat permeated every corner of his body.

While it was subtle, he felt an intoxicating sensation.

It felt good.

That was how their leisurely and enjoyable day, which they hadn’t had in a while, came to an end.

The next morning, the Laniakea and Shapley Superclusters that materialized in the headquarters was densely surrounded by red dots.

Chapter 182

Fate (1)

Spring of the Great Universe.

The day Flame-Sky passed away after killing the demise-ranked monster, white and red flames dyed the dark universe like fluttering cherry blossoms. The desolate universe, which had cooled to the point of almost reaching absolute zero, was filled with warmth like in the distant past.

The Spring of the Universe arrived for everyone indiscriminately. Even the earthlings had seen how the sky had been dyed with light that day, though there weren't any records of it as characters hadn't been invented yet. The light touched their souls. Even birds and frogs that hadn't cried a tear in their entire lives wailed under this light.

It only lasted an hour.

It was magical.

Planets, stars, nebulas, galaxies, dark matter, and Flames of the Beginning. Each and every karma species was as unique as the vastness that separated their homelands. Even though they treated each other with indifference or hostility, they experienced a sense of kinship for the first time that day. In fact, they instinctively realized that they were a part of a single fate, and their hearts broadened.

Because there was spring, the alliance was founded.

Some said that spring had come because they had defeated the fate of demise from a different dimension.

Which was why they inferred that, if another great warrior overcame demise, the universe would experience another spring.

Others said that, since the Spring of the Universe was the symbol of a new fate and

unity, those that watched the spring together would be tied by a deep bond.

They said that those who held hands or met gazes when the dark universe turned transparent, where red and white flames fluttered like feathers, would experience love or friendship stronger than ever.



“Euaack! Hah! Hah!”

The day started with Baek Seoin’s scream.

Soaked in cold sweat, Baek Seoin came looking for Choi Hyuk.

“Something, something is wrong. Heu...”

Baek Seoin’s body trembled as he spoke. His Intuition was warning him that a threat to his life was approaching.

Immediately, Choi Hyuk and Baek Seoin rushed to the headquarters. The headquarters itself was a map of the battlefield. Nearby galaxies were shrunk and displayed in this dark space.

The Laniakea and Shapley Superclusters shined and so did the red dots surrounding them.

“It’s not different from yesterday?”

Choi Hyuk tilted his head.

Unlike Baek Seoin’s reaction, there was no change to the frontlines.

“No, there’s definitely something wrong.”

Baek Seoin quickly shook his head. His body trembled like someone suffering from a severe cold.

It seemed serious. There was no doubt that Baek Seoin’s Intuition activated. However, there didn’t seem to be any problem in the Shapley and Laniakea Superclusters.

Then the problem might lie beyond them.

“Naro, contact Alliance City.”

Naro’s hologram appeared in the headquarters the instant Choi Hyuk commanded. He shook his head.

“Huh...? I can’t get in contact with them.”

At this ominous premonition, Choi Hyuk furrowed his brows.

“Military gate system! We leave for Alliance City right now!”

[...]

However, there was no response from the military gate system as well.

The alliance’s system only went down when the monsters launched large-scale invasions.

They currently weren’t in the middle of fighting, yet the system was down?

“This...?”

Choi Hyuk’s expression became grave.

“What’s going on?”

Even Mack, who was called urgently, was agitated. For all their connections to Alliance City to be cut? She acted quickly to figure out what was going on.

“I will try to contact Armor-Phantom!”

Fortunately, there were no problems with the internal communication network within the superclusters.

However, Commander-in-chief Armor-Phantom was of no help.

[What are you saying?]

He too didn't know what was going on.

His face became stiff once he attempted to contact other superclusters after listening to Mack's explanation.

[...Immediately contact all troops in the Laniakea and Shapley Superclusters and tell them to be on emergency stand-by!]

Emergency standby... While it was a standard command, it was also a frustrating one.

Choi Hyuk, who had been observing the situation, shook his head.

"I will personally patrol the area. Assemble the Flame Army."

Just as Choi Hyuk turned around to leave, a static sound shook the headquarters.

"Huh?"

"Ah...!"

Choi Hyuk and Mack exclaimed simultaneously.

It was a message from the alliance sent to all troop leaders!

It wasn't in the form of a communication but was reminiscent of the previous game system – a message floating in front of their eyes.

[Preserve your military strength as much as possible and retreat!]

Connect with other troops and preserve the alliance's military power.

Currently, the Hercules, Coma, and Perseus-Pisces Superclusters have all been annihilated!

Laniakea... %\$%&%\$ surrounde-... #\$\$%#%#\$\$\$^&&\$#...

They couldn't read anything besides the first two lines because of the interference.

"This is..."

The moment Choi Hyuk frowned and raised his head, the battlefield map of the Laniakea and Shapley Superclusters changed.

The red dots, signifying the monsters' forces, were already densely clustered around the frontlines. The lights were so overwhelming that the headquarters became dyed in a red light.

"Just what is this all of a sudden? While we were resting so well... I thought we'd still have a few more days..."

Lee Jinhee said dispiritedly after having been woken up. It seemed she was so taken aback that she couldn't believe the current situation.

On the other hand, Baek Seoin, who knew and understood the current situation better than anyone else thanks to his Intuition, barely managed to squeeze a few words out.

"The Hercules, Coma, and Perseus-Pisces Superclusters... Those are all superclusters near the Laniakea and Shapley Superclusters."

The fact that three superclusters nearby were annihilated meant that they were isolated. This might have been the reason why they couldn't contact anyone.

The headquarters quickly became chaotic.

Everything was uncertain.

It would still be a problem if they tried to retreat as ordered. They couldn't move recklessly when they didn't know the exact military strength of their enemies, an advantageous retreat route, or the support of allies.

First, they needed more information.

While he would prefer not to, Choi Hyuk decided to personally talk with Armor-Phantom.

“Connect me with Armor-Phantom. We need to share info- No, wait!”

Choi Hyuk hastily stopped talking.

He received another message.

In front of him was a separate message given by Flame-Hell.

[Prioritize preserving the Flame Army's troops!]

This order is the highest prior-%\$###!

##^\$...

The interference this time seemed worse than before. Still, he understood the gist of it. Flame-Hell wanted to preserve the military strength of the Flame Army over the alliance's military strength in general.

Just as he frowned, he heard Mack's voice peak.

“Exalted Wing Leviathan?!”

It seemed Mack had also received a separate order from Leviathan, who was an Exalted Wing of the dragon race. It seemed the message wasn't fully intact as she looked around, pitifully calling out his name until she eventually sighed and faltered. Her face was as white as a sheet.

It was a mess.

While he didn't know how they did it, the Shapley and Laniakea Superclusters were surrounded in a single day. Even communications were severed as a precaution. It was to the point that the messages, which barely arrived, seemed like miracles.

However, these messages were a problem on their own.

The orders conflicted.

The alliance hoped for the preservation of the alliance's military strength as a whole by cooperating systematically, while Flame-Hell prioritized the Flame Army's survival.

The bigger problem was that that might not be all.

Mack most likely also received a separate order from Leviathan, and Armor-Phantom might have received one from the Armored Soul Tribe as well.

'How irritating...'

They stressed cooperation to the earthlings, yet Choi Hyuk felt disgusted by their true faces, which became clearer the more he saw them.

"...Leader Choi Hyuk."

Just then, Mack talked to Choi Hyuk. His gaze met hers.

She had almost been in a panic moments ago, yet she strangely seemed to have calmed down. No, it seemed she had resolved herself.

"I beg you."

Her spirit enwrapped the headquarters. Though she was only at the early stages of the highest rank, for some reason, her spirit was powerful enough to burrow into Choi Hyuk, who was approaching the peak of the transcendent level.

‘Prepared to die...’

Choi Hyuk could sense her desperate will.

Slowly bowing her head, she said,

“Please protect Dragonic.”

‘...!’

This was completely unexpected.

He had thought that Leviathan’s command would be something like ‘preserve the military strength of the dragon race’ like Flame-Hell’s, but her request was completely different.

“Is there a reason?”

When he asked, Mack raised her lowered head. He saw her tightly clenched lips.

“Knowledge of the ancient dragon race that has yet to be fully deciphered lies in this planet. However, the real issue is the young dragons. The reason why they could be born after such a long time since their extinction was purely because of the El Tribe’s sanctum. You most likely saw the sky made of water on your way here. The sanctum changed Dragonic’s environment like this so that the young dragons could survive. Even if we somehow succeeded in retreating after losing Dragonic, the children would gradually become weaker. They would eventually die soon...”

She seemed quite agitated as her golden horns, which followed behind her blue hair, trembled subtly.

However, Baek Seoin, who was soaked in cold sweat, could only perceive her words as joint suicide.

“What nonsense...! We’ll die!”

Mack calmly and firmly stared at Baek Seoin.

“If I could protect the children through my death, I would readily die multiple times.”

Her blue hair fluttered to reveal glimpses of her Crystal of Sentiment ‘Mack’s Desire’, which contained white lighting.

‘Ahh, so that’s it...’

Seeing her like this, Choi Hyuk felt like he could suddenly understand the division in the alliance.

In the end, the alliance couldn’t unite as a single entity.

While it would be nice if they could fight as effectively as possible against their common foe, the monsters, this was impossible.

In the end, they each prioritized their own species, and they each had something they had to protect.

The great cause known as the ‘victory of karmalings’? That was good, but what good was it if you and your species had all died?

While there would be species that risked their lives for the great cause, if that was true, they would probably already be extinct. Those that survived in the end were those who could weigh profit and losses.

It was this sort of fight, this sort of world.

It was a world where, within this long, tiresome war, those who were fated to die would die and only those who had a reason to live survived.

‘In the end, the reason why they emphasized cooperation and unity during the earthlings’ recruit training... was because they couldn’t.’

Someone had to act for the great cause. Someone had to follow the alliance’s orders

while giving up what was more important than their lives.

That was why the recruit training was so brutal.

Choi Hyuk laughed.

What Mack was trying to protect was worth more than her life. Choi Hyuk knew this feeling very well. He was trying to enact revenge on the alliance because he had lost it.

If some other person in the alliance had said this, then he might have ridiculed them to his heart's content.

However, it was Mack. Even now, the horn Mack had cut was somewhere in his body.

Yet, behind Mack was his enemy, Leviathan. There was no way his current emotions wouldn't be complicated.

Entangled in his evaluation, Choi Hyuk said in a cynical voice,

“And if we all die? What if we all die a dog's death trying to protect Dragonic?”

To be honest, this was highly likely since the most outstanding existences in the alliance were confident in their loss and ordered them to retreat.

Nonetheless, Mack affirmed,

“No, support will come. Exalted Wing Leviathan promised this. Support will definitely arrive. Please help us. Then the dragon race will never forget this favor.”

“That damn Leviathan.”

Whenever he heard his name, Choi Hyuk's evaluation became more twisted. At the same time, there were faces he recalled.

‘Hyung!’

‘Oppa!’

The young dragons who clung to him.

'How troublesome.'

Choi Hyuk swallowed his groan.

Maybe it was because he believed he owed Mack a debt, because he unknowing came to like the young dragons, or because of Mack's promise that the dragon race would never forget this favor, while he didn't know the exact reason, it weighed on his mind.

The problem was the fact that it weighed on his mind since Choi Hyuk's fate started with 'never losing'.

If he backed out like this, it would be a loss. There wouldn't be a problem if this didn't weigh on his mind...

Fate wasn't decided but was rather carried out. After having never comprised, Choi Hyuk's fate might stop here today.

'If that happens, my growth might halt as well.'

It wasn't that Dragonic weighed on his mind. Even though he would lose Flame-Hell's trust that he had arduously accumulated if he messed up, even though he could die, unable to fulfill his revenge, and even though he felt vexed thinking about Leviathan, this still weighed on his mind. Also, Choi Hyuk couldn't choose to lose.

Seeing Choi Hyuk, who was deep in thought, Mack stressed once more,

"Support will arrive. We will win."

She said, 'We will win,' rather than 'We can win.'

These words moved Choi Hyuk.

Chapter 183

Fate (2)

'Victory.'

For some reason, this word nailed into his heart.

Choi Hyuk's mother, Choi Miyeon, had taught him.

'Just get hit.'

Lose. That was winning.

However, his inborn talent whispered,

'You can win. They are nothing.'

It was the truth.

Choi Hyuk had always won in fights against many people who were physically superior to him at once.

Only, as he was physically inferior, his fights always ended with extreme results and he had even killed someone during a fight before.

'See? You won. Why are they picking a fight?'

What halted young Choi Hyuk's immature thoughts was his mother's sobs.

Choi Hyuk wasn't a psychopath who lost his sense of sympathy, but was simply a genius whose skill was higher than his already sky-high pride. He felt bored with the weak and was interested in defeating those who looked like they were proud of their

strength.

The reason why someone like him decided to live his entire life while losing was because of his mother's desperate plea.

Though bullying irritated him, it was fine because it didn't hurt much when they hit him. He would graduate from school eventually.

This was also part of Choi Hyuk's pride. Since he promised his mother he wouldn't fight, he didn't. This was his pride.

However, when the moment of awakening arrived, his mother died, and nothing remained to bind him. What gripped Choi Hyuk wasn't simply his endless thirst for revenge and rage but also his true nature, which burned for victory and to prove himself.

"Victory..."

Choi Hyuk mulled over this word. The more he did, the more the word filled his mind.

Why was it that Choi Hyuk decided to kill all 13 of the Exalted Wings without distinguishing between friend or foe?

Of course, this was how he calculated his revenge since revenge wasn't a one-to-one trade.

However, what Choi Hyuk wasn't aware of was the competitive spirit budding from his heart. The Exalted Wings prided themselves as the strongest in the universe. To them, who believed that they could use the fates of other species however they liked because they were strong, he wanted to ask, 'Are you really that strong?' His competitive spirit budded beneath his thirst for revenge.

That was why his fate wasn't simply 'revenge' or 'destruction' but 'never losing' and 'denial'.

At this moment, Choi Hyuk felt his competitive spirit rising as he could participate in a fight that everyone predicted would end in defeat and one where they had ordered them to retreat. This was his fate. He liked Dragonic, and this made him want to test if they really had to hand over Dragonic to the monsters.

Perhaps his reasoning that he didn't want his fate to weaken was simply a justification his mind had come up with.

Even though this wasn't the time to offend Flame-Hell, what if he did?

Since earthlings were sacrificed because 'there was nothing they could do', he planned on smashing everything because 'there was nothing they could do' as well. This was the case now and also applied to the alliance's order which orbited around the 13 Exalted Wings.

The word 'victory' had now engulfed his body. They had to retreat?

He rejected this.

"Baek hyung, I'm sorry. Plan out a strategy. We will protect Dragonic."

"Eehhh?!"

Baek Seoin's eyes, which looked into Choi Hyuk's unwavering ones, trembled greatly.

In his heart, Baek Seoin had vowed that he would devote his remaining life to Choi Hyuk, to become Choi Hyuk's hands and feet, after he had rescued him and killed the Wyvern of Destruction that had killed his parents.

If Choi Hyuk came to a decision, that was it. Baek Seoin gulped.

"Ah, understood."

Fighting with his instincts which told him to flee, he began thinking about how they should fight.

“First... Please check the Net of Fate.”

At Baek Seoin’s request, Choi Hyuk waved his hand and changed the battlefield map in the headquarters.

The surrounding red dots disappeared and were replaced with thin lines covering the universe.

“Erm...”

Everyone groaned.

The Net of Fate had turned black. It looked like over 80% was occupied by the monsters.

Seeing this and looking like he was about to cry, Baek Seoin told Choi Hyuk,

“Err... Do we really have to fight?”



{Just what are you doing right now?! We should be gathering our strength to break through the encirclement! Are you saying that you’re going to survive by yourself?! Did Flame-Hell order this?!}

Armor-Phantom shouted.

After overcoming his shock, he summoned everyone within the galaxy and was preparing to retreat. Choi Hyuk defied his order, and Armor-Phantom believed that the Flame Army was acting in order to survive by themselves.

{Do you not know how severe the current situation is? It’s so bad it won’t be enough even if we gather everyone. Even if you prioritize the Flame Army’s safety, we still should gather first! If not-!}

Armor-Phantom was shouting and coaxing Choi Hyuk simultaneously.

“Naro. End the communication.”

Choi Hyuk ended the call and stood up. 'Choi Hyuk's Denial', which hung at his waist, rang out.

"Baek hyung, do what you're doing. I'll go greet them."

Baek Seoin, who was constantly contacting people, still didn't seem to have calmed down. Soaked in cold sweat after fighting his instincts to flee, Baek Seoin told him,

"You need to fight well. Only then will warriors gather."

Choi Hyuk shrugged and left. Beside him were Lee Jinhee and Mack.

Baek Seoin called out to Choi Hyuk once more.

"Leader!"

When Choi Hyuk turned around, Baek Seoin winced one of his eyes as he grumbled,

"If we survive... Let's start our plan quickly."

They still weren't fully prepared. While he was confident in a one-on-one fight against an Exalted Wing, he didn't have the strength to defeat all 13 at once.

However, Choi Hyuk grinned as he understood what Baek Seoin meant.

With a tone that sounded like 'I'm aging quickly because of you', Baek Seoin added,

"If we survive this, the 13 Exalted Wings won't be a big deal. Ah, if things go as planned, then it'll be 12 instead of 13 since Chu Youngjin has to deal with one... This is, of course, if both of you survive."

Baek Seoin said, exhausted. Choi Hyuk laughed as he replied,

"Yeah, I'll return after a good job."

Choi Hyuk walked out to greet the pouring monsters that seemingly covered the entire universe.



The frontlines were chaotic.

At the suddenly rushing monster army, the countless troops that stood on the frontlines retreated.

Then they received the order to retreat.

This was the start of a retreat, no, an escape, regardless of whether one was on the frontlines or at the back.

The blue dots on the battlefield map were retreating like a receding tide. The warriors soared past Dragonic like a meteor shower. The universe gradually became empty, and the monsters took their place.

Only a few blue dots were standing by in isolation, and those at the very front were already held down by the monsters and they were being smashed apart before they could even flee.

At this time, a blue dot that left Dragonic was shooting towards the frontlines.

“Huh... The monsters?”

Choi Hyuk exclaimed when he saw the monster army.

Rather than a ‘monster army’, this huge mass looked more like a ‘destroying machine’.

The monsters were connected with each other.

With metallic skin that looked cold and hard, limbs as sharp as blades, and distorted eyes as bright as neon signs, they formed a long, thin, dark, pointy battle line like the one that appeared in the old Japanese animation with Sadola carrying living weapons on its back.^{1}

While their exteriors looked similar, they varied in size, from ones that looked like

they could eat spaceships to ones that were the size of fillet knives.

They were connected to each other through threads that came out from their backs.

No, they were like tactile tentacles. When one monster died, the tentacle would wriggle and connect with other nearby monsters. From a thick one of a large monster to a thin one, from a vicious one that looked like a hacksaw to a thinner one, they were densely connected to each other. Their charging appearance looked like an enormous net.

The net of monsters scattered the alliance warriors as they killed each one without fail.

“Euaaah!”

Even warriors who looked to be at the highest level were powerless.

Whether they launched a powerful attack, exploded, or used fire or ice, the connected monsters either absorbed the damage by uniting their strength or avoided the attack and continued to rush forward. Still, there were monsters that died, but facing the net of monsters that only rippled momentarily, all their struggles seemed meaningless.

The large, powerful monsters rushed first to hold the overall shape of the net, and the large and small monsters rushed after them in order. They killed warriors that were easy to kill, or they otherwise simply skipped them. Nonetheless, it was still a massacre. The spaceships that were destroyed by their thick, pointy tentacles broke apart into smaller fragments before disappearing. A warrior was mashed into paste while flailing in their net without being able to swing his sword even once. No matter how many tentacles they severed, there would always be another. No matter how powerful the attacks they launched, they were constantly nullified by the thick, tough tentacles at the back. The monsters acting as the net’s spindles were resilient and sharp.

The warriors’ fighting spirits were cut like straws.

Crush! Smash!

“No... No... I didn’t come all this way to...”

Those who were born as members of the alliance and devoted their entire lives to it were powerlessly met with their end.

This scene left a strong impression on Choi Hyuk. The monsters were clearly evolving.

Last time, they imitated karma weapons, and now they took it another step further and made an army into a slaughtering machine. Surely they weren’t the same monsters that barely began to use tactics to try to ‘cooperate’ with the Blue Manes, right?

“Leader, doesn’t that look like it?”

Lee Jinhee mumbled next to him. It seemed she was trying hard to calm down.

“What?”

“That. The chain-link strategy used by Cao Cao.”^{2}

It appeared in the Battle of the Red Cliffs in Romance of the Three Kingdoms. It was a stratagem where they connected their battleships with iron chains to reduce the chances of seasickness.

While the difference between that and the current situation, where the linked chains themselves were powerful weapons, was large, they did look similar.

Choi Hyuk flatly said,

“Then will this also be similar?”

Blaaze.

Black flames sprouted from his back. They weren’t wings like the Flame Wing Tribe members’, but rather, the flames distorted on their own. Against the bright flames ignited by the Flame Army behind him, Choi Hyuk’s flames were like shadows.

“That the answer to the chain-link strategy is flames.”

As soon as he said this, Choi Hyuk disappeared.

Kwaoooooh!!

A section of the monsters’ net exploded and collapsed.

Chapter 184

Fate (3)

{Ahh, there's no need to be nervous. I'm also on your side. I wanted to bring Flame-Hell to ruin long before you did. That is why... I'm thinking about conducting our grand scheme before this war ends.}

Dark-Sound's voice was exaggerated like a musical actor's. He seemed excited.

On the other hand, the others were silent. This wasn't a silence of agreement. The Exalted Wings, who possessed the most outstanding minds in the universe, were momentarily at a loss for words.

After a long silence, Armor-Desert spat with a suppressed voice.

{Exalted Wing Dark-Resentment, what is the meaning of this?}

Armor-Desert believed that Dark-Resentment ignored their worry in the end and invited Dark-Sound.

Dark-Resentment firmly denied it with a low voice.

{It wasn't me-}

Dark-Sound cut in.

{Haha, there's no need to find fault with the wrong people. I was simply much more competent than you thought.}

Was Dark-Sound's personality always like this? He was different from before when he had a quiet, cold appearance. While they didn't know why he was so excited, as people who gathered as members of the 'Anti-Flame Wing Faction', they couldn't help but feel uneasy.

As if he read their thoughts, Dark-Sound said.

{Ah... It seems I was too excited. However, please understand. I have lived my entire life to say these words. So please listen carefully. Now, before this war ends, we will execute the grand scheme. I'll say it once more. Execute! The grand scheme!}

It seemed he couldn't contain his excitement.

{... While I don't know what this grand scheme is, I still don't know why you, Dark-Sound, are here. Isn't accessing a private communication without an invite not simply rude but criminal?}

Nervousness was clearly present in Armor-Desert's voice. Since Dark-Sound, Flame-Hell's second in command, joined this gathering, whose goal was to topple Flame-Hell, without permission, it was true that, no matter what he said, it would be difficult to take his words at face value.

On top of that, how did he access this communication device that was created with the Armor Soul Tribe's innate skill? There might even be an informant in the tribe. If he knew this much, then he...

'Did Flame-Hell know as well?'

Armor-Desert's blood ran cold. However, if he noticed, then he noticed, why did he appear now? To warn them? No way.

Though everyone had fallen into a state of confusion, only Dark-Sound sounded completely calm.

{Well, I understand that you can't trust me. However, a guest who can vouch for me will soon arrive.}

As soon as he said this, a new voice joined their discussion.

{... I am Flame-Rain, the Fourteenth Exalted Wing. Thank you for inviting me. Also... I can vouch for Exalted Wing Dark-Sound.}

{Flame-Rain... It was you?}

Light-Step said in exasperation.

To be honest, the goal of this meeting was to bring Flame-Rain over to the 'Anti-Flame Wing Faction'. When they were wondering where the information leaked, to think it was Flame-Rain.

The truth was different. Dark-Sound already knew before Flame-Rain vouched for him. However, Flame-Rain didn't correct this fact.

{What's important is that I have long since discussed with Dark-Sound about means to drive Flame-Hell out and the order of things after. Meaning, his goal is similar to yours. Also... You probably understand from my words, but you don't need to persuade me. I am already on your side. I believe that we need to stop Flame-Hell and do not think that the Flame Wing Tribe should hold a special position in this universe.}

She went straight to the point as though she didn't find this gathering very comfortable.

When Flame-Rain said this, it was difficult for the others to be suspicious of Dark-Sound.

While one couldn't trust a person's heart, there were also things they had no choice but to believe. Among those was that Flame-Rain was hostile towards Flame-Hell. The two couldn't coexist.

A short silence hung in the air. This silence indicated agreement.

Armor-Desert stopped feigning ignorance and bluntly asked.

{So Exalted Wing Dark-Sound, what exactly is this grand scheme you mentioned?}

{First, I'll personally take action soon.}

{Take action?}

{Yes. Since the monsters' force is too strong, it's better for Exalted Wings to participate than simply holding onto the Net of Fate. We will be victorious once we personally raise our weapons and fight. At that point! Please set the mood. So that Flame-Hell, who's practically the alliance's chairperson, can participate too. It doesn't matter if you give him a hard time or praise me and make him jealous. Anyways, we'll send him

to the battlefield. However, since he's someone who is very concerned with his safety, he'll probably bring along his trustworthy guards... Then, when he's exhausted from the intense battle, his trusty guard will stab him. While Exalted Wing Flame-Rain nobly said to drive him out... I want him dead.}

There was even madness present in his voice.

{... }

The other Exalted Wings showed their agreement with a short silence. If they could kill Flame-Hell with the method he mentioned, then it would be easy to cover it up him dying in battle instead of being assassinated. There was no need to worry about political backlash either.

At the end of their short silence, Armor-Desert indirectly asked.

{... It'll be best if we killed him like that. However, is that guard Choi Hyuk?}

{That's right. However, since I've already prepared a plan B and C, you don't need to worry about the plan not being executed. You just need to set the mood.}

{... Understood.}

Though Armor-Desert had already plotted to assassinate Choi Hyuk, he didn't bring it up here. There wouldn't be a problem since Dark-Sound had already prepared a plan B and C.

{Then do we only need to set the mood?}

When Light-Step asked, checking if this really was all they had to do, Dark-Sound cheerfully replied.

{There's no way that's it. The grand scheme doesn't simply end with Flame-Hell's death. If killing him was our goal, then there would be no need to use cumbersome schemes or wait until now. What's really important is how we are going to structure the alliance's new order after Flame-Hell's death. The reason why I had endured this long was because of this, and this is precisely why I have come to you all today.}

This was the start of the real meeting.

How were they going to reorganize the alliance's order after they purged it of Flame-Hell? If there were others to purge, who were they? How would they block the monsters' attack during this confusion?

No one believed that everyone would keep the promises made here. Nonetheless, this was an opportunity to set up safety measures so that the plan wouldn't fail and to judge each other's capabilities before this drastic change.

That was how they prepared for the future.



Blaaze!

Black flames spread at a dangerous rate. They ran along the tentacles that connected the monsters together to spread even further. The tentacles, which were their weapons, had now become shackles that snared them together.

As the dark universe blended with the black flames, it was difficult to tell where the flames ended and the universe began. It seemed like the entire universe was on fire.

{Kiiyyeeeh!}

The monsters' screams as they burned together shook the space enough that the insides of low leveled warriors were a mess from just hearing them.

'A living hell.'

Even Lee Jinhee, who brought up the Battle of the Red Cliffs, felt her blood run cold.

Even though there were warriors from the Flame Wing Tribe amongst the struggling warriors, the monsters' net, which endured their flames well, was currently being

burnt into ashes.

There was no need for the Flame Army to act.

“I-I’m alive.”

The warriors, who barely managed to escape the monsters’ chase, joined the Flame Army. Choi Hyuk’s flames only burnt the monsters and didn’t hurt the alliance’s warriors in any way.

Seeing this, Lee Jinhee sighed.

‘Can I protect him like this?’

Looking at the situation, it seemed like she didn’t need to act.

‘I need to always stay alert.’

She exerted strength into her ankles. Space folded at the end of her feet.

Whoosh!

She stepped forward. She jumped over the folded space as she rushed forward.

Srring.

She unsheathed and raised ‘Lee Jinhee’s Vow’.

Her vow was to not let Choi Hyuk die before her. Whether she was of help or not, the place she had to be was in front of Choi Hyuk or at least beside him.

However, when Lee Jinhee arrived at the location where she guessed Choi Hyuk was, she felt that something wasn’t right.



It introduced itself as ‘Kwe’^{1}.

Though the monster looked like a human, it was a midget the size of a forearm. Yet, the vigor the monster emitted was at least on the level of Exalted Wings.

Indeed, it was probably because of a monster like it was running amok that 3 superclusters were instantly annihilated and the Laniakea and Shapley superclusters were driven into a corner.

It was different from any monster Choi Hyuk had encountered until now. Unlike other monsters that, while possessing reasoning, couldn't hide their instinctive killing intent, the monster didn't show any such intent.

The monster was happy.

“Black flames... There's no doubt. Nice to meet you! To think that I'd encounter you, my luck is really good.”

The monster even talked a lot.

“Did you know? You're really famous among us. You played a significant part in monsters like me being born.”

Of course, Choi Hyuk didn't listen idly. Mouth shut, he advanced in order to slash the monster.

However, other weird things obstructed his path.

Grrrng.

When he heard this low wailing sound, monsters that looked like boxes made of dark metal appeared. Like bricks, they stacked themselves in front of 'Kwe' and blocked Choi Hyuk's path. While they looked easy to deal with, from the aura they released, they seemed to be monsters at the high or highest-rank. It looked like they had no offensive strength and maximized their defenses as flame or slashes were very effective. Of course, he could steadily kill them. However, because another one flew out from somewhere as soon as one died, it was difficult to advance.

Crush! Smash!

Choi Hyuk, who had swept his surroundings with his flames and attacks, advanced slowly, killing them one by one, as though he was making his way through a dense jungle.

'Kwe' didn't care whether its subordinates died or not as it continued to speak what was on its mind.

"Apparently, a case like your universe is a first. While it's the universe that is the most persistent on resisting... The queen seems to be very shocked that you invaded us. We've only invaded and have never been invaded before."

The monster seemed to be talking about when Choi Hyuk crossed over to the monsters' universe, wiped out an area densely packed with Kahur Kabkuns, and killed a demise-ranked monster.

"You even made a fortress on top of that... The queen's temper isn't good. That's why... We decided to properly study you. That was how someone like me was born. A woman that spewed transparent flames and a man that spewed black ones! So I heard about you since the day I was born. It's really nice to meet you. Ah, right. I heard that you were the one who killed all those wolves as well? Wow... I'm the one who negotiated with them. So you ruined our first negotiations like that, eh? Haha, how amusing."

Clang! Crush!

Blaaze!

Even while the monster talked, Choi Hyuk steadily advanced forward as he ripped and burned the square monsters in his path.

'So noisy.'

This was to clash swords with the monster.

Yet, when he came close enough to touch the monster, it giggled.

"Anyways, it was impressive. Even though I made them quite resistant to flames, you slaughtered those kids with your flames. On top of that, your slashes are fearsome. Good. I get it now. Then how about this tactic?"

Red light slowly seeped out from the monster's body, which at shown no light previously. It no longer hid its killing intent.

A thin tentacle came out of Kwe's body and attached itself to a monster that was being burnt into ash. Then, as if the tentacles transmitted something, with this monster as the start, all the monsters' bodies began to change. Their metallic skin that was burning from the flames became runny and created bubbles as it boiled from the flames.

Tsss.

Smoke began to rise.

Before, Choi Hyuk's flames had cleanly burnt its target without leaving a whiff of smoke, yet the monsters now created a thick, heavy smoke as they boiled and melted.

Choi Hyuk was instantly surrounded by this smoke.

Before the smoke could completely cover Choi Hyuk's sight, he saw Kwe's body also undergo a change. The monster became more slender, sharper, and darker.

Seeing this, Choi Hyuk unconsciously thought of the word 'executioner'.

Soon, the smoke completely covered Choi Hyuk's eyes.

'...I can't feel anything?'

His five senses were completely sealed. Even Dark-Sound's darkness wasn't this thick.

"You can't see anything, right? Aren't you curious how this is happening?"

'Where is it?'

While he heard the monster's voice, he couldn't figure out where it came from.

"Do you know how many kids were sacrificed to defeat you? You just need to think that my kids' resentment runs this deep."

This meant that the monster manipulated the dying monsters to obscure Choi Hyuk's

senses. This was actually an amazing feat.

However, this wasn't what annoyed Choi Hyuk.

Grit.

He ground his teeth.

He couldn't tell where the voice had been coming from, yet he could clearly tell where it came from now.

As if taunting him, the voice was whispering straight into his left ear.

Chapter 185

Fate (4)

Choi Hyuk didn't slash his sword. Instead, he raised the senses in his body.

Though his eyes and ears were covered by this thick smoke, he could clearly sense his internals and blazing karma.

Choi Hyuk focused on his body rather than the external stimulation.

“You're calmer than I thought?”

This time, Kwe taunted him by whispering in his right ear. Choi Hyuk didn't move as he stood with his sword raised.

“Then how about this?”

Shiver.

A chilling blade touched Choi Hyuk's neck. The sharply surging karma tried to slice his neck. There were no preliminary signs, yet he could sense the moment the blade landed on his neck. The instant he felt his hair being cut, Choi Hyuk made his move.

Pih!

Blood spurted from Choi Hyuk's neck.

Crush!

At the same time, a blue blade was crushed by his left hand.

Jjoong!

'Choi Hyuk's Denial' sliced through the air. The thick smoke rippled as it was sliced through.

However, before the figure behind the smoke could be revealed, more smoke filled this opening.

‘...So it’s like this?’

Having allowed the monster to attack first, Choi Hyuk nodded inwardly. The moment he grabbed the blade, he clashed his karma against Kwe’s aura. It was weaker than he expected. While the power Kwe possessed wasn’t small, it didn’t seem like the monster specialized in close combat.

“Wow... How shocking.”

Kwe made a fuss.

“If you’re going to be so scary, I guess I’ll have to wait until you exhaust more of your strength?”

Its voice was smeared with laughter.

“But I don’t know if you know? The moment I discovered you, I already sent the news to my brothers. It’s disadvantageous for you if you drag this on.”

It was a lie. How could the monster have shared such a delicious prey?

But Kwe was confident that Choi Hyuk wouldn’t take its words as an empty bluff.

“Huh? I’m right next to you. It’s true. I’m really right beside you. Wouldn’t it be easier for you to face my brothers if you take one down?”

This was because Kwe had realized that Choi Hyuk could be dangerous even within this thick smoke if he solely focused on counterattacking. Kwe hoped Choi Hyuk would attack first. This was a trick to make Choi Hyuk show an opening.

It was this moment when Choi Hyuk thought,

‘Do you think you’ll be able to win if I attack first?’

A bloody smile hung on his lips.

“Try it.”

Pscht!

‘Choi Hyuk’s Denial’ swung without warning.

The smoke, which densely enshrouds his surroundings, was sucked into his sword’s path.

Swaaaaah!

‘Choi Hyuk’s Denial’ sliced through the smoke again. This time, a portion of the smoke melted with a boom.

Wherever Choi Hyuk swung his sword, the dense smoke would swirl, explode, and melt. It seemed like the smoke would clear up at any moment. Yet, the smoke always filled the area again by a hair’s breadth.

Pih!

“Waha! That’s it!”

Pscht!

“Aha! That was close!”

In a fervor, Kwe stabbed Choi Hyuk.

It could deal a critical wound. When Kwe tried to slice Choi Hyuk’s neck, he would avoid it as it sliced into his skin. When it tried to stab his thigh, the blue blade would be grabbed by Choi Hyuk when it went halfway in.

Even while Choi Hyuk was swinging his sword without rest, he diligently avoided any critical injuries.

‘Terrifying bastard.’

While Kwe was stabbing and teasing Choi Hyuk, inwardly, it was shocked by Choi Hyuk’s might.

Even though he was enshrouded in smoke created by sacrificing tens of thousands of sturdy monsters, Choi Hyuk could still threaten Kwe.

“Yeah! Yeah! Dance more!”

Kwe teased Choi Hyuk even more in order to hide its turmoil.

The monster sent more power to the bodies of monsters it was connected to. The monsters, connected by tentacles, boiled up as they spewed foul smoke.

The rate at which Choi Hyuk cleared the smoke and the rate at which the smoke was being created reached an equilibrium. However, Choi Hyuk was the one one-sidedly being wounded.

Choi Hyuk didn't care about this one bit.

‘Just once.’

Pih!

His wrist was slashed this time. His recovery rate was gradually slowing down. The dense smoke burrowed into his wounds, infecting his body.

‘Show even your shadow.’

He didn't bat an eye. Still swinging his sword, he cleared away the smoke that now even felt heavy.

Though he was one-sidedly being injured, he didn't think he was at a disadvantage at all.

“You're dead the moment I see you.”

Facing the glaringly dangerous individual that didn't become even the slightest dispirited after being one-sidedly wounded, it was Kwe who felt anxious.

It taunted him to hide its anxious state.

“You will never be able to see me.”

Pscht!

This time, Kwe left a decently deep wound on Choi Hyuk’s chest.

“To die while locked up in the smoke your flames created. Isn’t it romantic?”

Saying this, Kwe trembled.

‘Thrilling!’

It hadn’t been long since Kwe was born.

The warriors it had fought until now were boring. This was its first time facing an opponent like Choi Hyuk. While Kwe was so scared that his body shivered, being able to fight someone like him without being pushed back, no, to even be able to push him into a corner, it believed itself to be even more amazing. At the same time, the sense of danger, where it felt like Kwe could die if it lost its concentration for even a moment, felt thrilling.

Kwe became intoxicated in the fight.

Whoosh!

“...Huh?”

There was a sudden change.

Because something from outside invaded the smoke, the smoke was slashed through in a thin line, revealing a slight opening. The problem was that whatever invaded the smoke was rushed straight towards Kwe.

Clang!

It wasn’t a dangerous attack, but there was no way to block it.

Blood spurted out. It wasn't Kwe's, but the warrior who had rushed in. She had short, black hair and a slightly tanned face. The warrior, who was wielding a white short sword, spurted blood, seemingly having suffered an internal shock.

Her blood splattered on Kwe's cheek.

'Ah... Ah!'

Kwe made a commotion in surprise. Until now, the battle between Choi Hyuk and Kwe was close like walking on a tightrope. Choi Hyuk was trying to clear the smoke, while Kwe was trying to maintain it. Kwe wanted to deal a fatal wound, and Choi Hyuk wanted to avoid and counterattack. This equilibrium was shattered by the attack just now.

"I see you."

Kwe heard Choi Hyuk's voice right beside it.

There clearly should have been some distance between them, yet Choi Hyuk was right in front of it. Choi Hyuk hadn't moved. Rather, his black sword had erased the distance between them. Because the space between them had shrunk like a deflating balloon, they were right next to each other. Kwe couldn't avoid Choi Hyuk's sword.

Kwe screamed,

"Damn it! This is dirty!"

Choi Hyuk replied,

"What's this corpse saying?"



Light-Maze, who was the commander-in-chief of the Event Horizon Troop, gritted his teeth as he blocked the monster's attack.

"Defensive formation! Number 0!"

When he shouted, the tiny speckled lights, which formed his body, made a commotion.

‘Hey! Quickly supply smelting furnace #7 with karma!’

‘What are you doing? Team 3! Quickly make an 11-dimension reality distortion field!’

‘Ninth combat unit! Brace for impact!’

The karma weapons of Speckled Light Tribe members, who possessed group intelligence, were very different from other species. Rather than a weapon that was visible to the eye, the countless nano-sized facilities and equipment were their weapons. Countless speckled lights worked together to make miracles.

Voong!

Karma surged like a swarm of bees. Light-Maze’s dimension was distorted by dozens of layers. To the monsters, Light-Maze’s appearance distorted like an abstract painting.

Bang!

A long-haired boy’s fist smashed into it from above.

‘Gwaack!’

Even though they dispersed the impact through various dimensions, the remaining shock left a few speckled lights injured or dead.

‘Damn it! Damn it!’

Light-Maze swore. Compared to other species that recovered their injuries, Speckled Light Tribe members ‘healed’ by increasing in number after speckled lights died. Of course, this meant their recovery rate was slow and, even if they recovered completely, they couldn’t erase the sorrow felt from the deaths of their members.

This was also a reason why Speckled Light Tribe members usually took supporting roles, like healing or providing buffs, rather than fighting.

However, they didn’t have any other choice.

They didn't have the time to mourn their deaths.

All because of that small monster that called itself 'Myeol'^{1}.

"Wow! You blocked it again?"

No matter how one looked at it, it looked like an earthling. The monster's hair, which ran down its back, fluttered like a splendid mane, and its face made it look like a youth.

"Wow... This is fun. Fighting is so fun!"

It seemed like the monster, who had recently been born, was learning the pleasures of fighting while facing the Event Horizon Troop.

On the other hand, Light-Maze was suffering gravely.

"Keuh... Sorry."

The vice-commander-in-chief, whose injuries were so severe that he couldn't use more than 60% of his power, apologized.

Being ranked 117th in the alliance rankings, this wasn't something he should be apologizing for.

"No, we were just unlucky..."

The problem was that the monster holding the Event Horizon down was too powerful.

Even though the 24th ranked Light-Maze, 10th if excluding the Exalted Wings, and the 117th ranked vice-commander-in-chief fought together, all they could do was endure.

"To face that monster, the Exalted Wings will have to personally take action... Or, two in the top 10 of the warrior ranking..."

None of these were currently applicable to this situation.

Light-Maze's face darkened.

They could endure for now. However, they would die in the end. Both him and the Event Horizon Troop that was fighting intensely after being encircled by monsters.

'Annihilation...'

Thinking about the grand scheme, Light-Maze swallowed his rage. He didn't work under Dark-Sound to prepare for the grand scheme for such a long time only to die here like this.

How did things come to this...? They had encountered this monster while protecting the border at the very front as usual. Though they received the message to retreat from the alliance and Dark-Sound, they were too late as they were already caught by then. Currently, even if they somehow ran away from the monster, retreating was clearly impossible.

"...I'll kill that monster even if I die."

Seeing Light-Maze say this with such determination, Vice-Commander-in-Chief Kalon nodded. Kalon was born as a descendant of a now extinct species and had reached the transcendent level. He couldn't accept his last moments being powerless, unable to kill the enemy in front of him.

'Childish monster... I'll show you the experiences of a warrior.'

Grinding their teeth, the two decided to give the young monster hell.

However, Myeol's face suddenly distorted. The monster quickly turned around and shouted,

"What? Black Flames appeared there? Wait. Wait! It's really the Black Flames? Ah, hold him back for a bit! I'll go after finishing things up here! What? Elder brother is injured? Really?! Black Flames is that strong?"

Myeol, who was talking to itself, turned towards a tense Light-Maze and Kalon with eyes shining with excitement. Then, while giggling, it said,

“Sorry! Something urgent came up so I’ll be going now! Let’s see each other next time, kay?”

Whoosh!

Then the monster pierced through space and disappeared.

“...What the hell?”

Beep!

{Ah, I’m here to report.}

A hologram suddenly appeared in front of the taken aback Light-Maze.

It was the face of Choi Hyuk’s right-hand man, Baek Seoin.

{Reporting to all warriors in the Shapley and Laniakea Superclusters. The Flame Army, Virgo Cluster Regional Troops, and all the dragon races within the superclusters have decided to fight back with Dragonic at the core. Troops that fell behind and failed to retreat and warriors who want to protect their homeland until the end, we hope that you will gather in Dragonic. If necessary, we will dispatch rescue troops. While the current situation is very disadvantageous, Exalted Wing Leviathan has promised to send support. It’ll be our victory if we endure until support arrives. Once again, troops who failed to retreat and warriors who want to protect their homeland, we hope that you can gather in Dragonic.}

Then the screen changed.

{Kiyeeeh!}

Monsters that didn’t know pain were screaming as they burned. The entire universe seemed to be blazing because the flames were black. Tens of millions of monsters were burning in flames and were being crushed by the Flame Army’s advance.

The scene of Choi Hyuk inflicting a critical wound on a monster that looked to be as strong as Myeol was replayed as well.

Baek Seoin's voice resounded.

{This is the beacon of victory we are sending.}

Chapter 186

Dark Clouds (1)

A black smile hung on Dark-Sound's white face.

It was because of a message secretly sent by God Dragon Leviathan.

{Please dispatch support troops to defend Dragonic. I will not forget this favor.}

“Leviathan, you certainly love your race to a terrible degree. It seems your body has worn down, huh?”

To send support troops to a place they had already strategically given up. How absurd. Nonetheless, this could be an opportunity to gain the support of the dragon race, which strictly maintained a neutral stance. While happily pondering about how to use this opportunity, Dark-Sound sent a message.

{Do you have any additional information regarding the area? I think it'll be best to know what the current situation is like there... }

Leviathan probably didn't have any additional information, and if he did, it would probably be devastating. If Dark-Sound opposed it as soon as he heard his reply and dragged things on, then Leviathan would bring up various conditions himself.

‘Then, while listening to him, if there's a condition I like... Well, I could try sending support troops. Though I don't know whether we'll be able to rescue Dragonic fully intact.’

After reading the next message with a dark smile on his white face, Dark-Sound froze.

The first to disappear was his dark smile.

Whoosh!

Instead, a thick darkness fell in his office. This darkness wasn't normal, it was filled with an ominousness akin to a beast lurking in its cave or a ghost behind a door.

{We received a miraculous message thanks to the ancient dragon race's technology on Dragonic. The Event Horizon Troops, which had failed to retreat, and the Flame Army, which had promised to protect Dragonic, are taking part in the battle. Aside from them, other troops and warriors are also rapidly assembling there... Will you be okay with that?}

The darkness in his office darkened. After staying silent for a long while, Dark-Sound was barely able to mutter a name.

"...Shiro."

Even in this darkness, a shadow was cast on Dark-Sound's pale face, making it difficult to make out. Dark-Sound made a pained moan.

While he understood the situation was urgent, he didn't think that the Event Horizon Troop would fail to retreat.

"And Choi Hyuk and Light-Maze..."

He recalled other names later.

"The risk is too high to lose both of them."

The two were important pieces to the grand scheme.

It wasn't like there wasn't anyone to replace them if something happened but...

“Shiro...”

Dark-Sound mumbled once more.

Grit!

All that was heard was the sound of grinding teeth within this absolute darkness, where nothing could be seen.

Dark-Sound sent Leviathan a message. He even forgot about adding any conditions.

{I'll cooperate.}

Then he recalled the only individual who could send proper support troops in a situation like this.



{Jinhee! Quickly grab the leader and get out! The monsters are approaching!}

{Got it.}

Lee Jinhee sent Baek Seoin, who was at the headquarters, a simple reply before looking at the thick smoke in front of her.

No, could she even call it that?

It was so dense and heavy that it rippled and moved that it looked like a sea of molten metal.

She had been standing here blankly for a while now. However, it was now time to move, whether it was assisting Choi Hyuk, who was fighting in there, or dragging him out and retreating.

Lee Jinhee took deep breaths.

While she answered easily with a 'Got it', there was no way it would be easy. This was a phenomenon created by a monster that was as strong as an Exalted Wing. Even Choi Hyuk lost his senses in this smoke.

"But I can do it."

Lee Jinhee gripped her short sword 'Lee Jinhee's Vow'.

Her heart turned into karma covered her sword. 'Lee Jinhee's Vow' gradually shined brighter.

'Lee Jinhee's Vow', which was created by her vow to protect her friends and Choi Hyuk, possessed a special ability. Wherever Choi Hyuk was, it could find him. Even in this pitch-black smoke, she would be naturally put on a path leading towards him. It didn't matter if she couldn't see or sense anything. Her sword would be able to find the path on its own.

Also, as long as her heart, which vowed to protect him, was sufficient enough, her sword would be able to pierce through this phenomenon created by someone equal to an Exalted Wing as, theoretically, the power Swords of Vow possessed was limitless.

There was one more thing she believed in.

"Choi Hyuk is also trying his best in there."

He was probably already in a scuffle with this smoke. She believed that, if this was true, there would be an opening to enter this terrifying smoke.

"The recording... is going smoothly."

Thinking about how Baek Seoin asked her to record this as promotional material, Lee Jinhee grinned. That was how she shook off the last of her nerves.

"Hu."

Letting out a short breath, she shot forward.

She swung her sword.

Jjong! Riip!

The moment the blade contacted the smoke, it felt like it had hit a boulder. The smoke stuck on the blade like a sticky rice cake.

However, she clearly cut through it. She opened up a narrow, faint path.

The fate she was building towards was 'Freedom'.

Cutting through the heavy smoke that crumbled as soon as it made contact and lightly running in the threadlike opening, she pushed on with her sword.

Without a doubt, her sword was moving towards protecting Choi Hyuk.

Kaang!

As expected, she reached him.

With a faint smile, Lee Jinhee vomited blood and fainted.



"...So reckless."

After staring at Lee Jinhee, who was lying in her hospital bed, Choi Hyuk shook his head.

While he firmly believed he would have won without her, it was still a fact that he was able to win more quickly and easily thanks to her.

She had already undergone all her treatment procedures. Her hospital room was set up like the ones on Earth so that she would be at peace when she woke up.

Choi Hyuk tucked her snugly under her blanket before leaving.

The El Tribe's sanctum was crowded with warriors. Choi Hyuk, who was walking through a pathway created by tangled roots, fixed his gaze on a familiar face.

Their eyes met.

The man's eyes trembled as he saw Choi Hyuk. Instantly, he tried to avoid him by turning around and going in another pathway. If he did, Choi Hyuk would have ignored him and walked past him.

However, he turned his half-turned back around to its original state and looked at Choi Hyuk. He had brown skin, wasn't very tall, and possessed an innocent appearance, but deep within his eyes hid a sharp gleam.

"It's been a long time, Overseer Choi Hyuk."

He was Night Sovereign Ding, who had attempted to use and tame Choi Hyuk in the past. Thanks to this, Dragonic experienced a purge started by Choi Hyuk. A cruel purge where he used his Resource Transfer Right to send warriors on impossible missions.

However, Ding hid under Armor-Phantom's shadow and avoided the purge. Choi Hyuk now met him here.

Since he acted familiar, so did Choi Hyuk.

"You're bloody?"

"Ah... My subordinates who went on a mission outside were wounded. It seems like I was stained when I went to save them. We failed... to retreat."

Ding said as he slightly held up his bloody shirt.

As if uninterested, Choi Hyuk asked,

"You were on Dragonic?"

"Yes... Since everyone was leaving Dragonic, I was leading those who remained."

In the past, Ding made a naïve smile. He held wicked motives behind his naïve smile. However, it was different now. Rather than his naïve smile, he seemed nervous. With a face that seemed like he had come to a resolute decision, he looked at Choi Hyuk.

“Why?”

“I am a coward who hates dangerous things.”

The majority of earthlings migrated to the newly created fortress in the monsters’ universe. Though it was safer than expected, it was still at the very front lines.

Ding said that he remained on Dragonic because he was a coward without the slightest trace of shame.

‘Yeah, he was this kind of person.’

Choi Hyuk scoffed in his mind.

“Okay. But you know, right? That as long as you’re under my command, you’ll have to fight with your life on the line.”

This was something Choi Hyuk pretty much forced on the earthlings, sometimes at the cost of countless lives.

Night Sovereign Ding smiled bitterly.

“I know. And I will. Only then will I be able to save even one of my people.”

‘Was he always like this?’

Hearing Ding’s belief-filled voice, Choi Hyuk saw his bloody shirt in a new light.

Ding stared directly at Choi Hyuk and said,

“To be honest, I don’t like you. No, I hate you. However... In this current situation, I think it’s a relief that we have someone like you... Since our chances of survival might rise even slightly.”

After saying this, Ding looked at Choi Hyuk for a moment before silently lowering his head.

“Then I’ll take my leave.”

Ding walked past him.

Choi Hyuk grinned before continuing to walk towards the headquarters.



The defensive line was created by selecting 13 of the stars closest to Dragonic.

The key point of this defensive battle was safely protecting Dragonic.

Since it was common for nearby stars to split apart when warriors with extraordinary strength clashed, they needed a defensive line that was sufficiently distant from Dragonic.

However, as the alliance's forces were utterly inferior in this situation, they couldn't set up a defensive line too far away either. There were 13 stars nearby that could ensure Dragonic's safety and prevent their forces from being too dispersed.

The ancient dragon race's knowledge, the alliance's technology, and the glass crabs were sent to establish the defensive line.

Whiiiek!

Whiiiiik!

Outer space was filled with the glass crabs' whistling.

The glass crabs, which had been Consumables but then grew to become members of the alliance with the Berserkers' help, showed surprising results.

While their technology might seem worthless when compared to the technologies and methods that existed in the alliance until now, when their technology was combined with the alliance's, it resulted in a great synergistic effect.

Previously, the glass crabs had used the glass sand that covered the Blue Ocean planet to create various karma structures. Then they used the interaction of these structures to suppress their opponents' karma while raising the karma of their allies. These crabs, which were broken up into countless tribes, gathered to increase their overall

intelligence.

Currently, countless structures that were inspired by the glass crabs' structures were littered between and on these 13 stars, making them look like characters.

“What a sight!”

These were the first words spoken by Lee Jinhee, who regained consciousness and flew off Dragonic after receiving treatment.

The universe was shining with a pale milk-white light. Light emitting robots filled the area to create countless characters and constellations. Satellites endlessly flew between them while emitting a strange karma. The 13 stars, which were the key points in the defensive line, shined brightly as they connected all spaceships and satellites together like a spider web.

“The glass crabs' technology was this amazing? On the Blue Ocean planet, they looked like pretty sculptures and buildings.”

Naro was the one who replied.

{Strictly speaking, the key technologies used here are the ancient dragon race's karma technique known as 'magic' and the colony system that make up Speckled Light Tribe members. The glass crabs' technology was used to fuse these two different techniques.}

Kwaohh!

A satellite brushed past Lee Jinhee. Even though there seemed to be nothing in satellite's trajectory, mysterious characters flashed momentarily before disappearing.

Whiiiek!

Whiiiiii!

The glass crabs' unique whistling sounds echoed throughout this area like a whale call.

As if he was crawling into this scene, Naro stretched his head out and immersed

himself in this scene before continuing.

{If we can survive this, the alliance's technology will advance greatly as well. I learned a lot this time as well. A defensive line created by using the dragon race's magic as the microstructure, the glass crabs' technology as the structure, and the Speckled Light Tribe's colony system as the macrostructure... Dragonic's current defensive line itself is an enormous lifeform. It would be alright to call it an artificial Speckled Light Tribe warrior.}

The one who heartlessly cut Naro's words which were filled with emotion was Choi Hyuk, who had been standing nearby.

"And its function is?"

Naro glanced at Choi Hyuk before shaking his head and explaining.

{The inside of the defensive line is now no different from the headquarters. You can see the situation of the war when and wherever and can access the Net of Fate to increase its influence. Then, even if three enemies at the same level of Kwe, which you fought, come at the same time... If we limit it to within the defensive line, we can obtain up to 70% of the Net of Fate. We'll be able to fight much more advantageously. Also, a fixed amount of impact from enemy attacks on our allies will automatically be absorbed by the defensive line. Also, even if Dragonic faces a sudden attack, using the connected dimension system, we can disperse the impact between the 13 stars. Arithmetically, we can face off against an army ten times the size of ours. The problem is... our enemies will number over a hundred times ours.}

The effectiveness was great despite how hurried they were. Nodding, Choi Hyuk asked again,

"And its weakness?"

{Each time one of the 13 stars that make up the key points in the defensive line is destroyed, the effectiveness drops drastically. Also, once the defensive line collapses, it is impossible to restore. We used all the resources and treasures that could be brought over from throughout the superclusters into making this defensive line. If three stars are destroyed, then the control of the Net of Fate will drop to 50-50... We believe that if all the stars are destroyed then it could drop to 80-20. Of course, the stars will be able to absorb a significant amount of impact because they have each

been equipped with powerful dimensional distortion fields... If Kwe, who you faced before, or Myeol, who the Event Horizon Troop encountered, personally make a move, they could be quickly destroyed.}

“As expected, I should have killed that monster then...”

He had successfully landed a strike thanks to Lee Jinhee, however, though Kwe received a critical injury, it survived and escaped.

{Also, it seems... the enemy will gather around our defensive line in a day.}

In the dark universe, morning seemed to have only arrived here as the area within the defensive line shone with a milk-white light.

Monsters that desired the deaths of all karmalings quickly gathered beyond it.

Chapter 187

Dark Clouds (2)

The warriors didn't sleep. They gathered around the defensive line created by connecting 13 stars as they observed the monsters' movements.

The monsters didn't sleep either. As though they had been turned into hideous stuffed creatures, they didn't move as their black eyes glared at the alliance warriors and the defensive line.

There were common sightings of monsters with long octopus legs and a wide mouth with saw-like teeth on the top of their heads. Earthlings called them 'Teeth Krakens'.

It was a tense standoff.

However, the warriors were belligerent even as they faced off against the enormous, threatening monster army.

'Come at us if you dare.'

They had already resolved to risk their lives the moment they gathered on Dragonic for the final resistance.

The glass crabs' whistling resounded lengthily like whale calls, and the universe within the 13 stars was shining brightly with a milk-white light like a sunrise. There were mysteriously appearing characters. Opinions that dying in such a beautiful place wasn't bad were spreading.

However, the basics of fighting were dampening your opponents' spirits, doing the unexpected, and smashing your opponents' calculations into pieces.

War started in a state no one expected.

"Huh? Huh? That's?"

The monsters, which didn't move as though they were stuffed, suddenly moved aside, opening holes in between them like sponges.

Meteors shot through those holes at incredible speeds.

Bang! Baang!

Brightly shining characters appeared on the defensive line. The shooting meteors scattered into tiny fragments when they contacted these lights. However, the defensive line and the characters making up the defensive line shook.

Kreeeeuudk!

The participating earthlings felt that their vocabulary was lacking at times like this. Should they describe the sound of countless meteors crashing into the defensive line as a downpour? Simply a downpour?

This might be how it sounded on Dragonic, which was the furthest from the defensive line.

The sound echoed out by riding on the karma that filled the milk-white defensive line. Since their bodies were shaking, the sounds were not coming from outside but from within. Endlessly, it sounded like their flesh was ripping into a thousand pieces and their bones were shattering into thousands of pieces by just the impact.

This was the drumbeat that declared the start of the war.

The monsters charged after the meteor shower.

“Euah... Euaaah!”

The warriors tried everything to block them, but their bodies didn't move as they wanted. While they had a lot of experience, this was their first time fighting a battle like this. A battle with superclusters' life or death on the line? A meteor shower that

fell like raindrops? Each meteor seemed to possess the power to bring all life on a planet to extinction. Each one was a calamity, yet they belted the defensive line like a machine gun. This wasn't a legendary battle, rather, it seemed like they were literally flung into a myth like Ragnarok that would result in the deaths of gods. In other words, the warriors were scared.

“Get a hold of yourselves!”

The ones who didn't lose their fighting spirit in a situation like this were those from the so-called noble tribes like the Flame Wing Tribe, which was born from the flames of the Big Bang, the Dark Tribe, which was born from dark matter, and the Armored Soul Tribe, which was born from warring civilizations in the universe and had witnessed the collapse of such civilizations. Those whose birth backgrounds were spectacular didn't lose their focus when faced with such a terrifying sight as though they were proving why they were called 'nobles'.

“They are just physical attacks! You are warriors who wield karma!”

Even if they were physical attacks, it was a different matter if these physical attacks could destroy planets. Still, their thunderous shouts weren't completely wrong. Since the defensive line was holding up magnificently, the majority of the meteor shower's impact was absorbed. The damage the meteor shower left was more mental than physical.

Perhaps they felt something from the outstanding warriors' encouragement, but one by one, the warriors overcame their fear and focused on fighting. However, the monsters didn't wait for the warriors to recover their senses.

“Keuak!”

“Grak!”

Grit.

Teeth krakens grabbed warriors with their long legs and shoved them in their mouths, crunching down on them, as they swiftly swam through space.

An all-out war broke out without delay.



“...They are collapsing faster than I thought.”

Lee Jinhee mumbled.

The most elite warriors partaking in the Dragonic defensive battle were gathered at the back.

There were four transcendent warriors.

They were Choi Hyuk, Commander-in-Chief of the Event Horizon Troop Light-Maze, Vice-commander Kalon, and the alliance ranked 49 Dark-Feet, who had been dispatched to the Perseus-Pisces Supercluster but couldn't retreat and had been chased here.

They didn't go out to the frontlines and instead observed the war situation.

This was the advice of various ranking advisors under Baek Seoin.

“You still have to endure. Until now, we have confirmed three monsters at the level of Exalted Wings. We have no idea how many transcendent monsters there are besides them. They too aren't showing themselves. If you show yourselves first, there's a chance you'll be targeted.”

The strongest spears of both the alliance and the monsters were still hidden in a fog. These spears would show their greatest strength when they pierced through the fog and launched a surprise attack.

Exposing themselves first was more dangerous.

“Hmmm...”

Choi Hyuk's expression didn't seem like he quite agreed.

Baek Seoin attempted to calm Choi Hyuk.

“Endure it for a bit and use your strength to maintain the Net of Fate. It is especially important to quickly maintain the time scale.”

The 'Net of Fate' was the most powerful strategic asset the alliance possessed. Its function didn't simply end with suppressing monsters' strength and reinforcing allies.

The universe was a complicated place. Like in a movie that came out a long time ago, depending on the speed and gravity of a celestial body, an hour in one place could be a year in another. The miraculous feat of tying all these different time zones on a single time scale and allowing countless tribes to communicate with one another was only possible through the Net of Fate.

Currently, the four transcendent warriors were meddling with the Net of Fate to make time flow slower in the Laniakea and Shapley Superclusters. A day here was four days outside. This was possible because they were in control of over 70% of the Net of Fate.

Because of this, the support troops would arrive faster than expected. This was why it could be better for the four to maintain the Net of Fate rather than partaking in the battle.

"That's why I'm worried."

Yet, Choi Hyuk didn't seem to fully agree with Baek Seoin. While he doing what he was told right now, a dangerous feeling swelled as he observed the constantly updating war situation.

Whiiiek!

Whiiiiii!

The glass crabs' whistling hadn't stopped even now, but a more ominous shriek covered their whistling sound.

Kyaaaaaah!!

A shriek that seemed to come from hell ripped the world around them.

The teeth krakens forced their way through after the meteor shower. While the warriors endured the best they could, the frontlines kept receding, and one of the key points of the defensive line, a star at the very front, happened to enter the monsters' range.

The shriek erupted at that moment.

“What... What is that?”

It was an enormous stake that looked like it could cover a continent. It looked like a cross. A gigantic dragon was nailed to it as it bled, its body trembling as it shrieked.

Kyahhh!

Its shriek sounded like it was announcing the end of the world.

Kiiing!

Whooong!

Whenever the dragon shrieked or squirmed its large body, the pointy tip of the cross emitted a strange resonance, releasing a destructive power.

“Just... What...”

There weren't just one or two.

Ten stakes were held up towards the star. They were so fast most warriors didn't even see an afterimage.

Kwwaaaoh!

Something seemed to fly by when bang exploded a moment later.

Whiiek! Whiiek!

The whistling sounds of glass crabs stopped, and instead, an incredibly loud scream erupted.

Kwaaaaah!!!

This was the scream of the defensive line that surrounded the 13 stars and Dragonic. Having utilized the Speckled Light Tribe's colony system, the defensive line itself was no different from a similar lifeform, and this defensive line squirmed in pain. The milk-white space flickered as though there was an earthquake and the characters that appeared mysteriously trembled. The artificial satellites and robots blew up in a chain explosion.

Kwaaaaah!!!

The scream had yet to end.

A stake that stabbed into the star's dimensional distortion field twisted its body as it slowly penetrated the distortion field and pushed its way towards the star. "Kiyyyaaaak!" The dragon nailed on the stake trembled as it roared.

It felt like the entire universe was screaming. The warriors fell into a state of panic just from the screams.

"Crazy..."

Baek Seoin swore.

Then, at some point, a stake fully penetrated a star's distortion field and stabbed into the star. Unconcerned with the star's surging flames, the gigantic dragon nailed on the stake was injected into the star like a syringe.

Not long after, the star exploded with a bang. Numerous warriors were swept up in this explosion and oxidized into ash. The only ones that remained were warriors of the Flame Wing Tribe.

[...Our control of the Net of Fate dropped to 65%. The time scale has been reset to 2.5 days from 4.]

Naro's stiff, tense voice sounded out.

Clang.

Choi Hyuk stood up. 'Choi Hyuk's Denial', which hung on his waist, shook with a sound.

"As expected, we can't keep going like this. We can't have one of our 13 stars collapse already."

"However, if they launch a counterattack...!"

Baek Seoin tried to stop him, but Choi Hyuk wouldn't listen to him.

"Let them launch a counterattack. We'll win anyways if we endure until support arrives, right? Even if they don't, we win if we kill all the monsters at the transcendent level. If we keep waiting, we'll just die sitting as they break down our defensive line one star at a time. It hasn't been that long since this war started, yet we already lost a star."

The light from the explosion had yet to reach them, who were standing near Dragonic. The reason why they could see the situation in real-time was because of the Net of Fate, which transcended space and time.

Nevertheless, Choi Hyuk looked in the direction the star exploded in.

A strange feeling covered his body.

While he didn't learn it, he instinctively knew what he could 'deny'.

Simultaneity.

Einstein's train.

According to Einstein, two objects moving at different speeds perceived the 'simultaneous events' at different times.

Someone inside a train traveling close to the speed of light would perceive lightning striking the front of the train and then the back whereas someone outside might perceive lightning striking the front and back of the train simultaneously. Simultaneous events to someone was not the case for someone else.

Existences each lived on different space-time axes. To aliens currently standing a million light years away, the 'present' might be 200 years in the past or future, at least until Exalted Wings used the Net of Fate to fix the time scale between karmalings.

However, at this moment, Dragonic's defensive line was already misaligned with the alliance's normal time scale. Also, due to the pressure of the monsters, there was a subtle difference in time scale between Dragonic and the outer most defensive line.

If space-time was bread, its current state wasn't a properly cut cross-section but cut diagonally so that it stuck out at the front.

Choi Hyuk found what he had to do inside this.

He decided to cut the part of the bread that was sticking out, the twisted space-time.

Sling.

'Choi Hyuk's Denial' was pulled out from its sheath.

Whoosh!

He struck out the moment he unsheathed his sword, and it stirred up dense dark matter from Dragonic to the location of the shattered star. The space-time of the star shattering was completely cut off.

Events that could occur and events that already occurred, he 'denied' them all.

Step.

When Choi Hyuk took a step, the world surrounding him shed its skin. The fragments of the shattered star and the bright light emitted when the star exploded slipped back

and disappeared like plastic wrap. Then the world changed.

Choi Hyuk looked around at his surroundings. He was standing where the star had been destroyed just now. However, the star was still burning brightly here.

“What... the hell? I just die- Kack!!!”

The defensive line was completely restored. Even the dead warriors looked fine.

However, not everything was the same.

“Wh-what’s happening...?”

“Haaaaah!”

The revived warriors trembled as they died again. Fate and karma transcended space-time. While space-time was denied, the already dissipated fates and karma of the dead warriors didn’t return and the warriors who revived again had no choice but to die again.

Only, because the defensive line, which was like a lifeform, hadn’t died or was entirely a lifeform, it could recover its functions once space-time was denied.

For Choi Hyuk, this was enough.

Kiyaaaaah!!

The stakes charged towards the star while shrieking like before. One of the stakes had been injected into the star and exploded along with it so the dragon on it vomited blood as it died like the other warriors. There were still nine unscathed stakes remaining.

Choi Hyuk gripped his sword handle and smiled.

“I’m here. Try crossing over.”

Bababang!

The nine stakes shattered at the same time and opened the curtains for the real defensive battle.

“Crazy bastard... It was possible to slash through those with a sword?”

At the back, Light-Maze felt an unknown sense of inferiority and defeat after watching Choi Hyuk’s splendid declaration of war and swore.

Chapter 188

Dark Clouds (3)

Grit.

She ground her teeth so hard it seemed she would bite her tongue. Blood ran between Mack's lips. Surging lightning crackled as it evaporated the blood flowing from her mouth.

Vice-Commander-in-Chief of the Event Horizon Troop, Kalon, glanced at Mack as he mumbled,

"The monsters... Are still using dragons as weapons...?"

"Yes, they degraded and made us into living bombs."

Mack said, her voice was laced with uncontrollable rage.

A large part of the dragon race's ruin was due to other tribes' disinterest, but the monsters played a large part as well. They tenaciously targeted the dragons. Not created by flames, machinery, dark matter, or a group intelligence, the dragon race were the most powerful lifeforms of blood and flesh. The monsters used dragon bodies as materials to create various weapons like the Planet Destroying Stake used just now.

As he could sympathize with her fierce spirit since he too was the descendant of an extinct species, Kalon didn't say anything and excused himself.

'This isn't something that can be comforted with words.'

Though he understood her feelings, he was an outsider in the end. Kalon didn't look at Mack any longer, fixing his gaze on the monsters, because he knew this better than anyone else.

Mack felt sorry because she felt like she vented to the wrong person, but it was only for a moment as her vision was now filled with monsters that would be killed soon

enough.

Yet, the situation was good.

“Haaa... They appeared as expected.”

Baek Seoin, who had been silently looking at the frontlines, held his head.

At some point, Choi Hyuk’s appearance, which had clearly been running amok at the front, split into fragments and couldn’t be seen clearly. Instead, various indiscernible images of round and square objects filled his mind, making him confused.

He was referring to one thing.

“Transcendent monsters have appeared.”

When Baek Seoin turned around after saying this, there were no longer any transcendent warriors standing behind him.

They had already disappeared in order to deal a severe blow to the newly appeared transcendent monsters.

“Haa... We’re screwed.”

Baek Seoin held his head again. Their judgment wasn’t wrong considering Choi Hyuk had already been exposed, but this progression of events was the worst since there was no doubt the other side would have more transcendents than them.

“Now... We can only rely on our individual capabilities.”

Baek Seoin mumbled as if resigning himself to this situation. He bit his lips as he unsheathed his sword. The longsword, ‘Baek Seoin’s Premonition’, revealed its mirror-like blade that reflected the universe. A chill shined in Baek Seoin’s eyes.

Baang!

It was as he expected.

The three who were rushing towards Choi Hyuk were ambushed before they could reach him. The monsters clearly had the advantage.

Three Exalted-Wing-level monsters ambushed Choi Hyuk, and seven transcendent-level monsters, who were similar in power to the top 100 of the alliance ranking, attacked the three transcendent warriors who were rushing to save Choi Hyuk.

The unfavourable battle began at a disadvantage.



“Nice to meet you. You can call me Jae^{1}.”

It was a casual voice that accompanied a casual ambush.

Jae looked like an eight-year-old boy and wielded a pointy broadsword that looked rusted. It had suddenly appeared behind Choi Hyuk and swung its sword.

When Choi Hyuk dodged its attack by a hair’s breadth, it smiled as it blew on him. Brown smoke blew and permeated Choi Hyuk’s body.

‘Huh?’

Though it was unbelievable, Choi Hyuk felt dizzy.

However, Jae didn’t give him a chance to examine his body.

Kwe stood at the back due to its injuries from last time as it changed the course of the nearby monsters.

The monsters were more closely connected than the previous time when they had used the chain-link strategy.

The monsters attacked Choi Hyuk as an enormous wave.

A sea of tens of thousands of eyes filled with killing intent and teeth and claws that

could rip one to shreds swarmed towards him. There seemed to be no point in differentiating whether a monster was of the high or highest-rank. It was simply a cosmic disaster.

Roar!

Monsters within this wave were crushed by other monsters as it continued to advance faster and faster.

Choi Hyuk endured this spell of dizziness as he pushed his sword into this disaster.

With smooth movements as if churning cream, 'Choi Hyuk's Denial' passed through the monsters' bones, flesh, and teeth. He broke the wave of monsters up as though he was slaughtering animals.

Puahaha!

Hudrdrdrk!

Though the monsters pushed forward like a landslide, the moment they arrived in front of Choi Hyuk, the wave was ripped to shreds and scattered like a drizzle.

Choi Hyuk calmly wielded his sword while feeling dizzy. His eyes suddenly widened.

"Keuk!"

Baang!

A heavy strike had been hidden behind the wave.

Choi Hyuk barely managed to block it with the side of his sword. Though he blocked it, the side of his sword was pushed back against his stomach. His body bent like a twig against the impact to his abdomen.

“Wow! You weren’t pierced through? It was really powerful this time. Anyways! I’m Myeol!”

It was at this moment Choi Hyuk realized that Jae’s attacks and Kwe’s attacks from behind were all in preparation for Myeol’s attack.

It had used the fact that Choi Hyuk’s focus had become hazy from Jae’s attack to hide and ride in the wave of monster to increase its momentum and punch Choi Hyuk’s abdomen.

Kiririiiiik!

‘Choi Hyuk’s Denial’, which couldn’t break, buckled under the impact as it groaned.

“Kaff!”

Blood gushed from Choi Hyuk’s mouth. However, even in this situation, Choi Hyuk didn’t bat an eye as he stared directly at Myeol, who had punched him.

“Wow... Thrilling eyes!”

Flash!

For 0.0001 seconds, no, in an instant even shorter than that, Choi Hyuk lost consciousness.

‘Did it... punch my chin?’

His head turned back. The right side of his chin throbbed as though it was shattered. His body was flung back, unable to withstand the impact. Only after understanding this did Choi Hyuk realize that he had been hit. While it was for an extremely short instant, Choi Hyuk had lost consciousness. His physical body from when he was human was simply a shell now. His body now moved using karma, yet he fainted? Whether this made sense or not, Choi Hyuk sighed in sincere admiration.

‘Ha...’

It was the first time he had experienced this. To think that he would lose consciousness after taking a blow from his opponent during a fight? This didn't happen even when he faced Narci, a highest-ranked monster, when he was a high-ranked warrior.

The monster known as Myeol was of similar strength to Choi Hyuk. Even if he considered that it had Kwe and Jae's assistance, its punch just now contained unbelievable talent.

"Haa... You blocked that too?"

However, it wasn't only Choi Hyuk who sighed in admiration. Forgetting to attack Choi Hyuk again, Myeol alternated its gaze between its fist and Choi Hyuk as it sighed in admiration. Even in its perspective, its punch just now was perfect. Its punch just now was the most covert, most destructive, and most timely punch it had thrown since birth. Yet, Choi Hyuk blocked this with the side of his sword. Of course, he didn't completely withstand the impact and fainted momentarily due to the blow to his chin.

'I blocked it?'

Though Choi Hyuk was dazed by Myeol's mumbling, it was true. If he hadn't blocked it, that would have been the deciding blow.

Still, Choi Hyuk didn't remember blocking it. It was either he blocked it unconsciously or he forgot after blocking it.

Whatever the case, it left a huge blow to his pride.

"Haaa..."

Choi Hyuk's gaze became cold. A smile hung crookedly on his lips.

It felt like all the hairs on his body were raised and each cell had eyes. A powerful awakening controlled him. The pure, savage emotions Choi Hyuk had always suppressed were released without any restriction as they ran amok.

He wasn't the type to talk a lot during a fight, but without being aware of it, his mouth spoke with a pretentious air,

“It hurts?”

Choi Hyuk didn't know what he was saying after experiencing this feeling for the first time during a fight.

Myeol was the first rival he had met in his life.



Blaaze!

A white light shined from Lee Jinhee's raised sword, illuminating its surroundings. 'Lee Jinhee's Vow' was notifying her that Choi Hyuk needed her help.

'I need to protect him!... But how?'

The situation was different from before. 'Lee Jinhee's Vow' only shined, it was unable to show her a path. Lee Jinhee thought she knew the reason. While she wasn't certain, there was no doubt there were at least two Exalted-Wing-level monsters attacking Choi Hyuk. There was also no doubt that she would die a dog's death if she rushed in to help Choi Hyuk.

“Then what about the other transcendent warriors?”

Helping them was also impossible. The most rational scenario was where they quickly defeated their enemies and went to help Choi Hyuk, but joining a fight between three transcendent warriors and seven transcendent monsters would be a one-way ticket to dying a dog's death.

'Lee Jinhee's Vow' didn't know what to do as it simply shined brightly.

Baek Seoin shouted at Lee Jinhee, who didn't know what to do,

“There's no other way now! We need to protect the 13 stars no matter what! If our defensive line remains intact, the transcendent monsters will weaken to a degree! Our duty is to protect the 13 stars so none of them are destroyed!”

Blaaze!

The light shining from 'Lee Jinhee's Vow' surged as if saying he was right. Lee Jinhee bit her lips.

'What vow...'

She was quite proud when she had helped him in his fight against Kwe last time, but this was the worst. Who was protecting who when she couldn't even get near the fight between transcendents. Rather than being of direct assistance, she could only use the most roundabout method of all the roundabout methods to help Choi Hyuk.

Though she ridiculed herself, she ground her teeth.

Even if she was upset, she had to endure it. Now was the time to fight with all her strength.

Baek Seoin rushed towards the front and Lee Jinhee followed behind him. Mack was already way out in front of them. There was no point in differentiating the front and rear lines.



In the all-out war where there was no distinction between the front and rear lines, Shiro desperately tried to stop Chu Youngjin.

"It's not logical!"

Her usual stiff voice was nowhere to be heard. She screamed like a child.

"We can only protect the defensive line! That's the best we can do! You'll die a dog's death if you go there! As we are now, we can't even perceive a battle between transcendents!!"

Chu Youngjin and Shiro naturally followed along when the Event Horizon Troop joined Dragonic. Chu Youngjin didn't even glance towards Choi Hyuk's fight so that his relationship with him wouldn't be exposed.

However, what caught his attention was a different problem on the battlefield. He couldn't take his eyes off the hellish fight happening between the three transcendent warriors and the seven transcendent monsters.

He was completely entranced by it, like a moth rushing towards a flame despite knowing it would burn to death.

He was fascinated by the overwhelming violence that seemed like it could rip him to shreds just by looking at it.

This was a type of mental illness.

He had been traumatized when he powerlessly watched his girlfriend, the dearest person in his life, being brutally murdered. After that day, Chu Youngjin hated violence more than anyone, but he was also engrossed by it. Those without hope were bound to resemble what they hate.

Also, the fight between transcendents was the most perfect violence in the world.

“No! You can’t!”

Shiro blocked Chu Youngjin’s path with her body. Him acting recklessly wasn’t uncommon so Shiro had even begun matching his rhythm and fighting alongside him. This time, she couldn’t. She couldn’t lose him like this.

Shiro held him back with the resolve to beat him down if she had to.

“Where are you trying to go?! When you can’t even see them!”

Shiro screamed deafeningly.

However, the next moment, she lost her hold on him.

“Huh?”

She couldn’t ‘perceive’ how Chu Youngjin escaped her grasp.

“I see it. No... I think I see it.”

What resounded in her ears was Chu Youngjin's voice, who seemed to be dreaming.

"No... Just what are you saying!"

Whoosh!

"Huh?"

Shiro was about to refute his words, but she lost sight of him again.

No matter where she looked, she couldn't see him.

Her gaze instinctively turned towards the fight between the three transcendent warriors and the seven transcendent monsters.

"You... Crazy bastard!!"

Her cold, stiff face crumbled, almost about to cry.

{1} Jae – Disaster/Calamity

Chapter 189

Dark Clouds (4)

'Crazy bastard.'

Night Sovereign Ding coincidentally saw Chu Youngjin.

Because he would only end up becoming mesmerized by the fight between transcendents, he was trying his best not to look at the fight and eventually forgot about it while fighting the monsters. That was why he unexpectedly discovered Chu Youngjin. Their gazes had coincidentally met when Ding was looking around to check on his subordinates.

Chu Youngjin was going crazy trying to overcome the 'wall of laws'.

'Tsk, tsk. Though they say there's no one in their right mind amongst the Berserkers, he's a highest-ranked lunatic. His lunacy must have been bad to be chased out of the Berserkers... but he's still like that?'

The incident where Chu Youngjin was exiled from Dragonic was famous. An extremely bloody wind blew that time. There was a reason why the talented amongst earthlings, Ding included, attempted to tame or keep the Berserkers in check. Because they were scared. If it was insane, humans were even scared of a crazy dog the size of their forearm, yet they were like crazy tigers.

'If he's going to die, he should die while being beneficial for others. He's also acting recklessly like that.'

Last time, he was beaten to a pulp by Choi Hyuk after coming at him. This time, he was struggling to join a fight between transcendents as a highest-ranked warrior.

He looked utterly shabby compared to his grand reputation.

The battlefield of the transcendents.

Chu Youngjin arrogantly jumped into the space that was blocked by the ‘wall of laws’, which prevented even highest-ranked warriors from perceiving it. However, he ended up nailed to the middle of the wall. He couldn’t go forward or retreat backwards like a butterfly on a pin. His body shook like a bug zapped by an electric fly swatter.

‘Haa, that must hurt.’

He felt like he could hear the crackling sounds all the way over here. His body was bent at an impossible angle, and it looked like his left arm was rolling up, piercing through his mouth and then out again. His body was flipped inside out, and his leg grew impossibly long as it coiled like a snake.

Seeing a body that should be dead squirming was very grotesque. The object, which was almost too pitiful to call Chu Youngjin now, squirmed as it continued to burrow its way through the wall of laws.

“Chu Youngjiiin!!!”

A pretty face, but seeing her frighteningly armed state, she was undoubtedly a warrior of the Armored Soul Tribe. She stood next to him, uncertain of what to do, as she wailed. But this didn’t concern Ding. Ding turned his head back.

“Not one of you die! You hear me? Dying here is a dog’s death! You must survive and push towards our target spot!”

Ding shook and slapped his dazed subordinates, grabbing them by their collars, as he instilled them with fighting spirit.

“Let’s live high and big!”

Seeing his subordinates get in formation, Ding nodded.

Before he focused on fighting again, Ding glanced at Chu Youngjin, who continued to advance while enduring the pain. A firm resolve shined in his eyes as he looked at Chu Youngjin with pity.

‘Idiotic bastard. I would never degenerate like him.’



The three monster brothers, Kwe, Jae, and Myeol, were the perfect party.

Kwe used the overflowing number of monsters to control the battlefield. The wave of monsters it caused obstructed Choi Hyuk's view or restricted his movements and, alternatively, assisted Jae and Myeol's movements.

Jae moved quickly as it nibbled away at Choi Hyuk's strength. A dreadful curse was present in its brown breath and its saw-like blade, which was carefully and secretly scratching Choi Hyuk. Whenever the curse invaded Choi Hyuk's karma, Choi Hyuk felt his arms and legs tremble and he felt like vomiting.

Yet, Myeol was the highlight of the group. With its overwhelming power, it clashed with Choi Hyuk head-on.

'I think I can understand the feelings of a monster in an RPG game...'

Choi Hyuk smiled bitterly.

To a monster facing a party of adventurers, it was advantageous if it took out their healer, magician, or even their archer first.

Yet monsters would foolishly attack the close-ranged warrior in front and die in vain. Choi Hyuk had thought this was due to the limit in artificial intelligence.

But his thoughts had changed now.

Riiiiip!

"Keuk!"

He unconsciously groaned.

"You can't lose focus. I'm Myeol! Mother said I was the most special amongst us five brothers!"

The monster boasted like a child. However, its uncultivated fists were endlessly sharp and heavy. If Choi Hyuk even momentarily tried to keep Kwe or Jae in check, Myeol would notice and approach to launch a fist at him.

“Do you really have to boast what the queen told you to your enemy? Huh, youngest?”

Jae grumbled as it swung its sword at Choi Hyuk, who became rigid after blocking Myeol’s heavy fist.

Seeing how one called her mother and another called her queen, he could clearly tell who was more special.

Myeol was strong enough to justify it. He couldn’t get rid of it at all.

‘Yeah. It’s not that the monsters aren’t able to ignore close-ranged warriors because they’re dumb. It’s because they can’t.’

The wound Jae inflicted on him throbbed. Heat blasted from his nostrils and his mind became dizzy as though he had a fever.

Even at a time like this, a small fist surged towards his chin yet again.

Baaang!

Choi Hyuk barely managed to deflect Myeol’s punch with the side of his sword. Even though he deflected it, his body shook as though it was hit by a cannonball. His hand, which was holding his sword, burned like it was on fire and his head felt faint. Would Earth split apart if it was hit by its fist?

However, Choi Hyuk smiled.

While he wasn’t some pervert, it felt like his head was becoming clearer and clearer the more he got hit.

Shhhaak!

A black blade covertly aimed at Myeol’s throat. While it looked like he unconsciously launched an attack the moment Myeol hit him, that wasn’t true.

It was a sword strike to determine the victor that was fully infused with Choi Hyuk’s

talent. Like how hot steam suddenly escaped from a pressure cooker when opened, this was Choi Hyuk's best counterattack, one where he had been waiting to be hit by Myeol while he kept Kwe and Jae at bay. His karma could 'deny' anything. This strike would disintegrate highest-ranked warriors just brushing past them.

Piik.

Yet, Myeol avoided his perfect counterattack. While his sword brushed past its forehead, its eyes were calm. He couldn't 'deny' Myeol with this sort of injury.

What was worse was that it countered right away. Choi Hyuk felt shivers as he saw its fist nail into him.

Jjoong!

'Ah...'

He almost lost consciousness again. It was like this when he was hit in the chin, but it was his side this time. A pain that felt like his flesh was being ripped apart followed after.

A shout now erupted from deep in his heart.

'So you can be this strong at this rank.'

Choi Hyuk had always faced opponents that were of a higher rank than him.

If the fight was difficult, it was because their rank was higher than his.

However, currently, Myeol was of the same rank as him. Yet, this fight was more dangerous than fighting higher ranked monsters before. Even though Kwe and Jae were supporting Myeol, he thought it would be an equal match if they fought one-on-one. That was why, while Kwe and Jae were assisting it, he was being beaten one-sidedly.

"Kaaff!"

He was hit by the wave of monsters while he attempted to keep Myeol at bay. When he barely managed to push his way out of the attack that felt like his entire body was being fed into a shredder, Jae hacked at his shoulder with its cursed blade. By the time he barely managed to squeeze out his recovery ability against the dizziness that almost made him flop down, Myeol's fist smashed into his gut.

This was the first critical blow he had taken.

His strength slipped from his body. It felt like his karma, which was embedded in his body instead of muscles, was being torn into pieces. Drool flowed from his mouth, and a cold sweat ran down his back.

The fact that a warrior made of karma was drooling and sweating meant that his karma was currently in the process of collapsing. This was a very bad condition.

Yet, Choi Hyuk didn't lose consciousness.

A single thought filled his mind.

'So you can be this strong!'

What he grasped in his fight against Myeol was a possibility. A possibility that surpassed simply increasing in rank and allowed one to reach the highest peak of their current rank.

Choi Hyuk was currently seeing and being hit by this possibility, which he had simply vaguely assumed previously.

At the same time, he realized how strong he currently was and how much stronger he could get.

Jjong!

Even though he was dealt a big blow by Myeol just now, Jae's terrifying sword swung at him without rest. Blocking its attack with his sword while his mind was befuddled, Choi Hyuk smiled again.

After getting hit, it became bearable, and after blocking their attacks, it became

possible to block them.

He blocked them without thinking about blocking them, and he had a premonition he blocked them before he actually did. He didn't know, yet he did. Choi Hyuk's subconscious rose up and became one with his conscious.

A bead of sweat followed Choi Hyuk's hair and then dripped down.

Choi Hyuk bared his teeth as he clashed with the monsters.

'Th-that monster-like bastard.'

Even though Kwe was a monster, that was the only way it could describe him. They were three out of the five brothers that the queen used her heart and soul in creating. While the queen made them after Choi Hyuk and Flame-Rain left an impression on her, the reason why they were dispatched wasn't to face Choi Hyuk, a single transcendent warrior. They were the monsters among monsters that were sent to end the Exalted Wings.

Yet, three out of five of them were busy fighting Choi Hyuk.

Though Choi Hyuk was the one being constantly hit, and the fight with him always seemed to be on the cusp of ending, it didn't. Kwe cheered when Myeol's fist landed on his gut. Kwe thought that this fight would finally end. Yet, after that, the bastard was now unbelievably dodging their attacks. No, it felt like he was getting better at avoiding and enduring as time passed even though Kwe wasn't sure if that made any sense.

Kwe felt an unknown sense of fright.

"Just die!!!"

With his shout, monsters swarmed towards him. Like hardcore fans in a frenzy in an enormous concert hall, the monsters shoved and stepped on each other as they rushed towards Choi Hyuk with an explosive vigor as though a blocked floodgate had opened.

With Kwe's ability, the densely packed monsters overcame their limits as they attacked Choi Hyuk with fervor. Exhausted, Choi Hyuk would have no choice but to

pushed back by their might.

Swiiish!

When Choi Hyuk pushed his sword out, the tidal wave of monsters instantly crumbled into pieces. Black blood fluttered like cherry blossoms, and their thinly minced pieces of flesh were burnt by black flames. It was such an extreme change that one might mistake it for a spring breeze of flower petals rather than a tidal wave of monsters.

“Huh?”

A bit later, Kwe let out a dull sound. The figures of Jae and Myeol, who were running around while hiding behind the tidal wave, were exposed within the slowly fluttering pieces of monster flesh.

Then Kwe saw it.

Choi Hyuk’s gaze was locking onto Myeol.

“Ah, Noo!!”

Kwe instinctively shouted.

Just then, Choi Hyuk ridiculed the charging Myeol.

“You did well, but why haven’t you advanced?”

There was no doubt that he couldn’t even see its fist in the beginning, yet he could now clearly read its path.

It was clearly a blow that could instantly knock him unconscious in the beginning, yet he could now sufficiently disperse its impact.

What was more...

“Let’s end it now.”

He could now land the counterattack that was unsuccessful previously as though it

was nothing.

This was the moment he had been waiting for.

Slice!

'Choi Hyuk's Denial' cleanly sliced through its neck.

"Huh? Huh?"

It made a dazed sound as though it couldn't believe its neck was cut.

Though it looked like a young boy, it was a monster.

Sticky, black blood shot out like tentacles and attempted to stick its head back on.

However, since his sword, which was filled with the power of denial, precisely sliced through its neck, the monster didn't have the opportunity to activate its regenerative ability. Its surging blood caught on fire and evaporated before it could touch Myeol's neck. Like flames on an oilfield, blood endlessly surged out and disappeared after being burnt up by the flames.

Aware of its own death, Myeol mumbled as only its head remained.

"This isn't... possible. Mother said I was special... There's... There's no way..."

"There is."

Choi Hyuk mocked as he turned his gaze away.

He aimed his shining black sword at Jae and Kwe. Jae, who had been rushing at him along with Myeol, had at some point retreated and was now standing next to Kwe. He could see the confusion and nervousness in its eyes.

It wasn't a bad feeling.

“H-how? It’s not like your rank increased?”

Kwe asked in confusion.

Wiping away the sweat from his forehead, Choi Hyuk said with a refreshed expression,

“Yeah. I didn’t increase in rank. I became able to properly manipulate my rank.”

‘Should I thank them?’ While he was happily thinking about this, he suddenly felt a powerful karma and turned around.

A powerful karma swept through the area where the three transcendent warriors and the seven transcendent monsters were fighting. A fourth transcendent warrior, who had suddenly appeared, reversed the disadvantageous situation as he trespassed onto the battlefield.

Choi Hyuk’s smile thickened when he felt the familiar karma.

“Just what was that just now?!”

Choi Hyuk looked at Kwe, who was almost foaming at its mouth, as he happily said,

“What do you mean what? It means you’re all dead.”

Chapter 190

Dark Clouds (5)

It was a very long fight.

When they thought that one thing was over, another thing would swoop in, and when they thought that they overcame that, another would pop out.

That day was no different from deciding the fate of the universe.



Myeol's decapitated corpse didn't disappear easily. The retribution it had accumulated in this unfamiliar universe flowed out to form an ocean. The rate at which its retribution flowed out exceeded the rate it dissipated.

A nebula would probably form in this region. First, using the retribution it had accumulated, then later, the great universe would dismantle its retribution and absorb it to create a new fate. A new star would form and then a new karma species would be born.

Choi Hyuk felt a change in himself from the new retribution he had accumulated by slashing through a fate that had crossed over from another universe.

Choi Hyuk felt his karma change. There wasn't an immediate effect since his body was exhausted to the point of drooping. However, he knew that everything would change once he had some sleep. Then, although he wouldn't be able to match Flame-Hell or Dark-Sound, who were considered the strongest amongst the Exalted Wings, his power would only be slightly lower than theirs.

"Hooo..."

Pulling himself together, Choi Hyuk stared at the enemies in front of him. While it would be difficult, he wanted to deal with Kwe and Jae.

However, they were crafty.

“Damn it! Damn it all! But... But you will all die here!”

“How surprising. But it’s too late. This is as far as you’ll go... Though it is a bit of a waste.”

Once Myeol died, Kwe and Jae spoke stale words that only a villain might say before fleeing.

Choi Hyuk attempted to catch them, but he failed. It was difficult to chase transcendent monsters that focused on escaping, and on top of that, he was very exhausted.

In the end, he shook his head and looked at the situation of the war.

It was tragic.

There were no alliance warriors where Choi Hyuk stood, only pieces of monster corpses.

Two stars that were a part of their defensive line were completely destroyed, and the area was filled with bits and pieces of monster and warrior corpses.

Kuaaack! Kuaack!

While the leaders of the monsters, Kwe and Jae, fled, the war hadn’t ended. All around him was an intense battlefield.

Only the area around Choi Hyuk was quiet because no one dared to approach. Choi Hyuk sighed as he stood amongst the remains of the monsters Kwe had controlled and Myeol’s thick retribution, which floated in space like a liquid.

“...I’m thirsty.”

How long had it been since he felt this?

He wasn’t just thirsty, he felt hot and drowsy. This was the effect of his body becoming imbalanced.

“Should I rest for a bit...? I wish there was a cool drink.”

When Choi Hyuk said these weak words, someone arrived next to him and handed him a cup filled with refreshing liquid.

“You worked hard.”

Unknown when he arrived, Night Sovereign Ding was standing with a sincere face while holding a cup.

Choi Hyuk’s gaze alternated between the cup and Ding.

“...What are you doing?”

Though he hadn’t received it yet, he felt the chill emanating from the cup on his lips and cheeks. Just from this, he felt like he was freezing.

Choi Hyuk knew what the drink was – ‘Glacier Tears’. It was the drink Mack let him taste while bragging about the dragon race’s technology. The drink had a strong effect on karma, so much so that it even gave Choi Hyuk, a mid-level transcendent warrior, a buzz. If he drank this in his currently extremely exhausted state, he could forget everything and fall asleep as if it was strong alcohol.

In some ways, this was ideal. A refreshing drink after a battle. It was good.

However, the problem was the fact that the battle hadn’t ended yet. Though the scales of victory leaned on their side with Chu Youngjin’s awakening, the battle between the transcendent warriors and monsters had yet to conclude. Drinking this wasn’t advisable in a situation like this.

Choi Hyuk looked around at his surroundings.

The area was empty like a demilitarized zone. He and Ding stood at the center while around a hundred or so earthling warriors surrounded them. They looked to be Ding’s direct subordinates. Unfamiliar machines the size of one-room apartment units were set up around, above, and below Ding and him.

Choi Hyuk truly found it odd.

“Don’t tell me... You’re going to come at me?”

The situation seemed like it.

Others weren’t paying attention here because they were focused on fighting. On top of that, because of the intense power emitting from Myeol’s corpse, they couldn’t peer through it even if they wanted to unless they personally came over here. Choi Hyuk was exhausted after his intense battle. A hundred or so warriors and unfamiliar devices surrounded him.

He couldn’t believe it.

But, if that wasn’t the case, then why would they play a trick like this in the middle of a fight?

Ding smiled as he saw Choi Hyuk was taken aback. It wasn’t a naïve smile that hid his inner thoughts nor a nervous smile. It was, without a doubt, one of ridicule.

“Why? Didn’t you say that you were thirsty?”

As if his voice was a cue, he felt something explode with a pop.

A chill permeated around him like when one opened a freezer on a hot day. The space around him felt dense like ice cream, and his head ached as though he ate a pile of ice.

It suddenly became difficult to breathe and move.

Even when he tried to move his karma, his karma didn’t move as though it was frozen.

Even Myeol’s dead retribution, which flowed continuously, halted as if time had stopped.

“Is this perhaps...”

When Choi Hyuk mumbled absent-mindedly, Ding smiled brightly. It was a cruel smile.

“If would have been better if you drank this as well, but it doesn’t matter. How is it? It’s a technology we’re developing to take down the queen of monsters.”

He threw away the cup in his hand. The cup flew slowly. The liquid inside splashed out of the cup in a clump. Ding’s movements seemed somewhat restrained.

“...Your rank has fallen too? Early middle rank... No, peak low rank?”

“Yeah, just like you.”

While he didn’t know how they did it, his, Ding’s, and the hundred-odd warriors’ ranks had standardized at the peak low rank.

All karma beyond a certain limit was frozen, unable to be used.

Choi Hyuk grumbled,

“If you had something as good as this, you should have used it on the monsters.”

“We’re still developing it. We need to use it when fighting the queen so it would be troublesome if they figured it out and took precautions against it after us having used it beforehand, wouldn’t it?”

Ding explained quite friendlyly, seemingly thinking he had won.

“Armored Soul Tribe?”

When Choi Hyuk took this chance to ask in more detail, he slyly shrugged his shoulders.

It wasn’t a question that really needed an answer as it was obvious either way.

“That’s not what’s important right now, commander. The main point is you’re currently surrounded by a hundred warriors equal to you, isn’t it? Up till now, it felt like the whole world was yours, didn’t it? I’m jealous. However, even still, you shouldn’t have offended me.”

As though he had been waiting for this moment, Ding couldn't endure his happiness and waved the weapon in his hand.

"It's stifling to move in space because my rank dropped. Let's end this quickly, commander."

He aimed his sword at Choi Hyuk with cold-blooded eyes.

Tang!

His sword was flung from his hand. Ding didn't know what happened.

"...Huh?"

His face became flustered.

"I think you're mistaken about something..."

Choi Hyuk revealed a bloody smile.

"Did you think you'd win if our ranks were the same?"

The 'Game of Thrones' crossed his mind. The incident where the students and teachers had gathered in the gymnasium to kill each other. That time, everyone was of the same level. And Choi Hyuk came out victorious amongst them.

Also, the difference between Choi Hyuk's fighting senses then and his current senses now was as vast as the difference between the Laniakea Supercluster and Earth.

Pstch!

"Kah! Grrr..."

Ding, who was taken aback and attempted to flee, was unable to dodge and collapsed with blood foaming from his mouth after his throat was pierced.

Myeol's head was still cut off, Lee Jinhee and Baek Seoin were too busy with their own fights to pay attention to the situation here, and Chu Youngjin was about to awaken as a transcendent warrior.



There were two memories Chu Youngjin couldn't erase from his mind.

How Lee Hyejin's shoulders trembled in his embrace.

And the final smile of the doppelganger queen, who had looked identical to her.

Though he acknowledged that the doppelganger played him for a fool, it was still a memory of despair.

Memories where he failed to protect her when he said he would.

Her existence which he had lost once in his embrace and again behind his back.

That was why there was a lingering reluctance he couldn't give up even though he fought to die.

'I want to get stronger.'

He didn't hope for much. He hoped to possess enough strength to protect the person in his arms, the person whom he could hold onto if he just stretched his hand out.

No matter who that was, even if that person was Choi Hyuk.

Even if he lost everything, he hoped for the strength to save the person in his hand.

What should he say if he met Lee Hyejin once he died?

'Sorry. No matter what I tried, I couldn't do it.'

Chu Youngjin couldn't say such words. Rather, he wanted to get on his knees and apologize.

'If I tried a bit more, if I became stronger a bit faster...'

He believed he should suffer like this.

Lee Hyejin died because he didn't try. Twice. He had to think this and feel guilty. Only then would he never forget her.

Chu Youngjin needed to get stronger.

"Grraaaaah!!"

He repeatedly thought this while stuck like a fly against the 'wall of laws'. Even though it was so painful it felt like someone had rubbed salt on his wounds after tearing his body to shreds, he continued to advance forward. Because he lacked the effort. Because he had to prove that he lacked the effort to protect even one person.

At some point, 'Chu Youngjin's Protection' began to shine brightly.

'What protection. I couldn't protect anything...'

The sword that was created through Lee Hyejin's death. While shining, the sword, which made him sad, lonely, and sorry, transformed. It obtained a new fate fueled by Chu Youngjin's transformation.

His body, which couldn't overcome the 'wall of laws' as though it was stuck to it with glue, suddenly became lighter.

His twisted body returned to normal without a trace.

‘This... is the world Choi Hyuk sees...’

Chu Youngjin instinctively realized that he had entered the transcendent level.

He could clearly see inside the ‘wall of laws’.

Light-Maze, ranked 24th in this alliance, was taking on three monsters, while Dark-Feet, ranked 49th, was fighting two, and Kalon, ranked 119th, was fighting one. This meant that, naturally, one monster remained. The warriors were losing out by a difference of exactly one monster.

Chu Youngjin knew what he had to do.

He instantly chased down the monster that was causing a ruckus as it went between the three warriors without anyone keeping it in check.

“Ah, no!!”

Kalon shouted when he saw Chu Youngjin’s actions.

“Kehih!!”

The monster that was targeted by Chu Youngjin didn’t show any traces of being flustered as it created an explosion, seemingly having waited for this opportunity. The explosion was strong enough to annihilate nearby enemies, even if they were at the transcendent level.

The warriors who suffered heavily for not knowing this at first frantically kept a distance from it throughout their battle.

Blaaze!

However, Chu Youngjin, instead, rushed towards the explosion. He didn’t even bat an eye.

The red sword in his hand emitted a light. The light shined in a very small radius. A short distance that Chu Youngjin could reach it if he stretched his hand out. However, everything within this radius disappeared.

‘Chu Youngjin’s Absolute’.

Chu Youngjin’s sword, which was reborn as a Weapon of Conclusion, possessed an absolute influence within any area his hands could reach.

As long it was within this radius, Chu Youngjin was confident he could kill a transcendent-level monster in a single exchange as this was the fate he hoped for. The power to eliminate anything that was a threat to the person within his arms or next to him with absolute certainty.

Ptsch!

“Keuk?!”

The monster’s expression revealed its disbelief.

Though Chu Youngjin, having become a transcendent warrior, wasn’t as versatile as others and didn’t have any special characteristics like Choi Hyuk, he obtained one thing – an outstanding close combat prowess that could kill anything within a certain distance.

The transcendent-level monster’s body was ripped into tatters at his continuous sword strikes.

With this, it was over.



“Huh... Amazing.”

Light-Maze gave Chu Youngjin a blank look. While it was only within a close range, he was shocked by the divine power Chu Youngjin revealed.

It was enough to make him, who was ranked 24th in the alliance, discouraged.

Chu Youngjin had an irregular power. While it was impossible to control in fine detail,

as long as the conditions were met, he was a weapon that could wield absolute power. In the perspective of his opponent, the best they could do was predict it in advance. If it activated, his attack would leave them with heavy losses.

His first display was quite impressive. The six monsters that were fighting the warriors were inevitably killed when Chu Youngjin approached. If Chu Youngjin was a normal transcendent warrior, it would have been impossible for him to cause such an extreme reversal.

“Are all earthlings monsters...?”

First, Choi Hyuk, and now Chu Youngjin, they were two weapons that could be used in any situation, despite facing potentially difficult opponents.

Light-Maze shook his head as he heard a screaming voice.

“Chu Youngjin! Chu Youngjin! You crazy bastard!!!”

Shiro screamed as she approached once the ‘wall of laws’ dispersed after the fight.

Chu Youngjin saw her, who always looked cold-headed, in a new light.

Without realizing, he stretched his hand out towards her as she cried, saying how she thought he would die.

“Hey!!”

Before the tips of his fingers could touch her hair, Choi Hyuk called out to him. No, he wasn’t particularly calling out to him as he called out to all the transcendent warriors there.

“If you’re done, come here!”

Earthling corpses were scattered around Choi Hyuk. Around a hundred of them.

“What is this?”

“Foolish yet thankful guys.”

Choi Hyuk gathered the machines floating amidst the corpses and told Baek Seoin, who hastily arrived, to store them.

“But...”

After gathering all the machines, Choi Hyuk lowered his voice. His gaze was on Myeol’s decapitated head.

“But I don’t think this is the end.”

He sounded fed up. However, his voice also contained some nervousness.

“That’s...”

Chu Youngjin followed Choi Hyuk’s gaze and saw it. After being decapitated, Myeol’s body kept spewing a ferocious power. Yet, that wasn’t important. Something more ferocious than this ferocious power was squirming, awakening, within it.

“Don’t tell me...”

“No way!”

“What... are we supposed...?”

Light-Maze, Dark-Feet, and Kalon, who had fought with their lives on the line just now, showed extreme reactions.

They looked like they were resenting without a target to resent, asking how this could be, before becoming uneasy.

Choi Hyuk revealed a bitter smile.

“I only noticed now after all this time because these guys had played a trick on me.”

Only after killing Night Sovereign Ding and his 100 subordinates and disarming the machines did his karma return to its normal state. It was at that moment when he sensed this ferocious power.

Choi Hyuk ground his teeth as though he was fed up with it as well as he asked,

“It said its name was Myeol... It’s probably the character Myeol for ‘demise’, right?”

If it was demise, then something came to mind. A force that overwhelmed even Exalted Wings. Not an incomplete one he had faced with Flame-Rain before, but a complete one.

The words Myeol said flashed through his mind.

‘Mother said I was the most special!’

He also recalled the last words Kwe and Jae had said.

‘Damn it! Damn it all! But... But you will all die here!’

‘How surprising. But it’s too late. This is as far as you’ll go... Though it is a bit of a waste.’

Choi Hyuk felt like he finally understood why it was special and why it was a waste.

Myeol’s stomach ripped open, and an enormous hand, which one wouldn’t imagine could come out from there, abruptly appeared.

Chapter 191

Denial and Glory (1)

The five brothers the monster queen created were, in fact, 'bait' to destroy the Exalted Wings.

The five brothers had already destroyed the Heracles, Coma, and Perseus-Pisces Superclusters and were pushing the Shapley and Laniakea Superclusters to the brink of ruin.

If they crushed Choi Hyuk's resistance and slaughtered all the soldiers attempting to flee, the queen calculated that the Exalted Wings would have no choice but to act.

The monsters' forces were simply too powerful. With the five brothers that were comparable in strength with Exalted Wings and 13 early transcendent-level monsters, their forces equaled almost a third of the alliance's total strength.

A third, this was the ratio the queen had painstakingly decided on. A force powerful enough that many of the Exalted Wings would have to personally partake in the battle to stop them. A force just powerful enough that they would be able to stop them if they overexerted themselves a little.

There was no doubt that the alliance would drag the five brothers deep into their formation to reduce losses, focus their forces, and prevent any of the Exalted Wings from dying in battle.

This was what the queen had predicted.

She predicted that at least eight Exalted Wings and many high-ranking warriors would participate in the battle since that would be the only way to stop the five brothers without taking any large losses.

The moment the battle began, the queen's trap was complete.

The special youngest brother, Myeol. It was a booby trap.

The moment Myeol died, a demise-ranked monster would be born in the middle of the alliance. It was expected that the monster that could collapse an entire universe on its own would slaughter all the Exalted Wings gathered there and break all the systems in the alliance. Even if they were Exalted Wings, they wouldn't be able to confront a demise-ranked monster without any prior preparation and in an exhausted state after fighting the five brothers.

However, this plan was ruined thanks to Choi Hyuk.

The five brothers, who had promised to meet once they annihilated the Shapley and Laniakea Superclusters, had lost Myeol before they could even gather.

Thanks to this, the booby trap that the queen had prepared had activated, not in the middle of the alliance, but in the Laniakea Supercluster, which could be considered to be at the border of the alliance.

This was great news for the alliance.

To the warriors participating in Dragonic's defense, however, this was a nightmarish situation.



Even Choi Hyuk, who loved fighting, was somber regarding this situation.

Only its arm had come out, yet it felt like the entire universe was screaming.

This wasn't the underdeveloped demise-ranked monster he had killed with Flame-Rain in the past. This was a fully matured demise-ranked monster.

In this current situation, where Flame-Sky, the alliance's strongest warrior in history, was no longer alive, it was the only existence to have overcome the limits of the transcendent level.

Kuaaaah`!!!

The demise-ranked monster's roar burst through Myeol's ripped belly.

That moment, Choi Hyuk grabbed Baek Seoin and retreated. That wasn't all. The other transcendent warriors hastily flew back as well. Chu Youngjin held Shiro as he ran back.

"Kueh... Ak..."

Yet, Baek Seoin and Shiro, who were both highest-ranked warriors, couldn't endure the impact and trembled. Blood burst from Baek Seoin's eyes and ears, and sparks flew from Shiro's body accompanied by the sound of creaky, rusted gears.

It was the same for Choi Hyuk. Instantly, the senses in his entire body seemed stunned.

When he blankly turned around, he saw warriors breaking ranks and retreating like a receding tide. The ones who fled were lucky. Even though the monster had only roared, he saw quite a few whose chest had exploded from the vibrations.

The ringing of its roar vibrated and burst the warriors' veins. A bloody taste lingered in his mouth as though he had eaten steel.

'This is unbelievable...'

He saw a fear-stricken Kalon. It seemed Chu Youngjin's legs had frozen up as he was punching his thighs. Light-Maze and Dark-Foot looked fine, but their bodies were trembling subtly.

Choi Hyuk had no choice but to admit that his thoughts were completely wrong.

'There is a huge gap between reaching the limit of the transcendent level and my current level.'

Encountering a true demise-ranked monster felt like a shock, similar to when he saw the monster Narci back when he was a middle-ranked warrior.

No, it exceeded that because the demise-ranked monster made him feel that they couldn't win. This was the first time he felt this way since meeting Dark-Sound for the first time when he joined the alliance.

Baek Seoin trembled in his arms as he barely managed to say,

“Le... Leader. Those... machines. Those machines... Reactivate them...”

It seemed he was trying to tell him to reactivate the devices that suppressed his karma before. Choi Hyuk smiled bitterly as he shook his head. It didn't seem possible to stop this demise that had already started to move with the machines. Also, there was a bigger problem.

“Sorry, I didn't know how to turn them off so I cut everything that looked to be a power source.”

Baek Seoin's eyes were filled with disappointment.

“God... Damn it... This is why you have no friends...”

Baek Seoin had always been respectfully, but it looked like he bore quite a grudge. Currently in a state where his rationality was paralyzed by the fear of this demise, his inner thoughts made their way out his mouth.

It felt like he was seeing an acquaintance talking nonsense under an anesthetic.

Choi Hyuk ended up chuckling when he saw Baek Seoin grumbling nonsense while wasting away.

Thanks to that, his stiff body relaxed.

He left Baek Seoin, who had almost fainted, with the other Berserkers and examined the situation once more.

“We need to disperse in different directions!!”

Dark-Feet, who had been relatively calm, shouted.

“Do you think we can escape the demise like that?”

Light-Maze ridiculed while trembling.

Even the transcendent warriors were stricken with fear.

‘Still, this is a bit much...’

No matter how amazing a demise-ranked monster was, these reactions were too severe for experienced transcendent warriors.

A bigger problem was that Choi Hyuk himself wasn’t much different either. This was true now even though he had regained his cool. Something like a scream rampaged inside him and rocked his karma. It felt like his body wasn’t his own as though he was possessed by a ghost.

‘Ah...’

Thinking about this, Choi Hyuk found the answer.

What was scared wasn’t him.

It was the universe.

The universe itself was seized with fear at the appearance of demise. Choi Hyuk’s karma was of the universe in the end. It rolled and shook along with the scared universe.

Choi Hyuk couldn’t do anything about this universal phenomenon.

‘Flame-Rain’s father slew a monster like this on his own?’

He smiled bitterly as he mumbled,

“Just when are the support troops arriving?”



Around the same time.

Lights went on simultaneously at the 'Brain', which was located in Alliance City.

The screams of Exalted Wings filled the 'Brain'.

{A demise! A demise-ranked monster has appeared!}

{There was no hint of it until now!!}

{That's not the problem! It has appeared in the Laniakea Supercluster, where Army Leader Choi Hyuk and the others are isolated in!}

{If it's that place... Isn't that where Exalted Wings Dark-Sound and Leviathan requested support troops?}

{We need to let them know of this situation and cancel support!}

{... }

In the midst of their buzzing voices, it was Dark-Sound who was quiet. He felt like his heart was being sliced into thin pieces.

'Shiro... So I lose you in the end as well.'

He had believed that he could give up many things for that child, yet... for a demise-ranked monster to appear. That was his limit. If he didn't cancel sending the support troops, then even they would be annihilated, and if that happened, his grand scheme would be off the table as well. He had longed for this grand scheme his entire life – for revenge. Even if it was Shiro, he couldn't protect her whilst giving up on his grand scheme.

'A cruel world until the end... '

While uncertain to whom he should resent, Dark-Sound broke his silence and contacted his support troops.

{A demise-ranked monster has appeared in the Laniakea Supercluster. The 13 Exalted Wings demand the support troops to retreat.}

{Hmm... }

Leviathan groan in grief when he heard Dark-Sound's message.

The other 11 Exalted Wings waited quietly. Soon, a reply came from the middle of the Brain.

{Is that so?}

{... }

Then there were no more words. To say, 'Is that so?' instead of 'Understood'?

{We demand you retreat! Did you hear us?!}

Flame-Fog shouted in an irritated voice, unable to contain his patience.

Yet, there was no reply.



Just then, the demise-ranked monster was about to show its face. Its two shoulders and arms had already come out and were grabbing the universe. The distant stars looked stretched thin like a meteor shower due to how the universe was bending.

Those who wanted to flee had already fled.

Even the monsters fled. They were unconcerned about formations as all things that lived with a fate couldn't help but run when faced with 'demise'.

The only ones who remained were the transcendent warriors. They knew better than anyone else that running was useless. They were the only force that could resist it.

"Our goal... is to inflict even a wound the size of a fingernail. We need to make it constantly use up its strength... so that the warriors who come after us will be able to

fight it a bit more easily. Leaving even the smallest wound on its body will be evidence that we lived as warriors of the alliance.”

Light-Maze resolved himself, having already given up on his life.

While Choi Hyuk was very displeased with how he assumed they would face defeat, he couldn't correct him.

Even his fighting senses that had reached their peak after fighting Myeol was of no use. When looking at the demise-ranked monster, all he saw was demise. There was a fundamental difference between them. He couldn't even guess its weak points, let alone find them.

Kuoaaaaah!!!

The monster's second roar rang out. It rang more loudly this time as its entire head was extended out from Myeol. The demise-ranked monster didn't have eyes, ears, or a nose. All he saw were its widely-opened mouth filled with teeth.

“Keuk!”

Kalon, who was the weakest among them, lowered his head. His flowing nosebleed drenched his front.

“Keuuuh!!”

With his nose bleeding as well, Chu Youngjin bitterly endured it. His eyes were so bloodshot that blood dripped from them.

With just its roar, it was able to damage warriors who had reached the transcendent level.

Seeing them like that, Choi Hyuk silently stepped forward.

His sheath, which he threw, spun as it flew towards the other side of the universe.

“I still have to try.”

Choi Hyuk tightly gripped his sword handle.

He acknowledged that the monster was stronger than him.

He acknowledged that he couldn't see any openings.

He acknowledged that he could die.

Acknowledging all this, Choi Hyuk stepped forward. The moment he aimed his sword at the now fully extended head, he once again denied everything.

He would break its strength, create an opening, and reject death.

Choi Hyuk's sword shot towards the demise-ranked monster.

A completely reckless strike.

Yet, a miracle opened up behind his sword.

Kwaooh!!!

Choi Hyuk's sword extended towards the monster's head while erasing space. A gate that looked like it could swallow an entire planet opened up just above it.

It looked like a prosperous sky was opening up behind Choi Hyuk's back.

The boom that exploded from the gate erased the lingering effects of the monster's roar.

It was a stronghold enshrouded in delicate flames. The stronghold, which could be

called a planet, fell directly towards the monster's head.

Everything changed at that moment.

Everyone felt it. The fates that had left this great universe had returned on a large-scale. This new inflow of fates awakened the universe.

A fiery shout resounded throughout the universe.

“Look at you all!! Pull yourselves together! Everyone attack!”

It was Flame-Rain's voice.

The support troops Leviathan had promised Choi Hyuk before the situation changed had arrived.

Chapter 192

Denial and Glory (2)

Flame-Rain had left the monsters' universe. As difficult as her mission was, she led a force that made up 15% of the alliance's strength. In it were five warriors that ranked in the top ten excluding the Exalted Wings, eight in the top 50, and ten warriors at the transcendent level outside of that. Her force consisted of the most elite warriors as she was the only Exalted Wing leading it.

That wasn't all. Each of the three dimensional strongholds mobilized to colonize the monsters' universe was comparable to the size of Earth.

The largest and sturdiest among them, 'Deus', had crossed over with Flame-Rain and was charging at the demise-ranked monster. Having already exceeded its max speed, 'Deus' didn't slow down as it fell directly onto the monster's head.

Though the gate opened a bit behind Choi Hyuk, it instantly passed him and crashed into the monster's head.

Booooooom!

The sound wasn't as loud as expected.

The moment the gigantic stronghold impacted the demise-ranked monster's head, it crumbled, reducing in size.

The enormous object that was larger than a planet crumbled to reveal its core.

Deus's colossal mass compressed into the size of three watermelons as it pierced into the monster's head.

"Kuah?!"

The monster opened its mouth wide under the impact.

However, the true impact had only begun.

It could be considered that Deus's core largely consisted of three power sources, but in reality, there was only one.

Karma weapons of fallen warriors taken from the Tower of Warriors;

The Flames of Beginning that remained from the Big Bang; and

A black hole also known as the hole of the universe.

There was only one in the end, however, as the black hole devoured the karma weapons and Flames of Beginning.

The black hole born from this exhibited such a powerful force that it could be considered a world inside the world.

The black hole was, by nature, an isolated world. There were even scientists from Earth who guessed that the universe we live in was also inside an enormous black hole.

The black hole used as Deus's power source was a black hole, which was a small universe, granted with the essence of karma.

The black hole grew by devouring karma weapons and the Flames of Beginning, and it freely manipulated space-time to create a 'complete world' which even Exalted Wings couldn't easily approach.

A world crashed into a demise.

“Kuaaahhh-!”

The monster’s scream erupted after a delay, but there was a pitiful note to it.

‘We’ll win!’

The warriors drew hope from the monster’s scream.

Flame-Rain didn’t miss this opportunity.

With herself at the lead, the 23 transcendent warriors charged forward with their lives on the line.

Light-Maze, Dark-Feet, and Chu Youngjin, who were watching blankly, regained their senses and also charged towards the demise-ranked monster.

“We end it in a single clash!!”

Flame-Rain’s voice ignited the warriors’ fighting spirits.

The demise-ranked monster didn’t have eyes, ears, or a nose. It only had an enormous mouth.

Its teeth had even densely filled the ceiling of its mouth, and each one exceeded the power of the transcendent warriors’ karma weapons. Like karma weapons, fate was indwelled in each of its teeth. ‘Demise through disease’, ‘Demise through war’, ‘Demise through time’...In the end, they were all demise.

Every time it roared, its densely packed teeth resonated to release the power of demise without restraint.

“Someone shut its mouth!”

“Yes!”

Flame-Rain’s right-hand man, Light-Blue, who was ranked 20th, replied cheerfully.

The speckled lights which made up her body created a long needle and thread from the production factory inside. Like a skilled physician, Light-Blue sewed the monster’s mouth in an instant.

Keu-!!!

Its mouth shut, the demise-ranked monster could no longer shout as it struggled. The warriors’ attacks shot down from above.

Their attacks could slice through continents, pierce through skies, and freeze and burn as though they were creating hell. The monster helplessly endured their attacks as it hadn’t regained its senses after being hit by Deus and having its mouth sewn.

Brrrrrk!

Until its teeth popped out above its sewn mouth.

It was a strange sight. The teeth inside its mouth came out one after another and ripped its lips. The lips Light-Blue had robustly sewn together were powerlessly ripped apart.

It opened its mouth once more.

Crunch!

It bit down on the world.

It was similar to Choi Hyuk's 'denial'. No matter how far apart they were, the distance between them was devoured and disappeared. When they came to their senses, they were already inside the monster's mouth. Six transcendent warriors were swallowed.

Drip.

Each drop of blood stickily flowing from its mouth and shined like warning lights. Light-Blue, who had sewn its mouth, and Kalon, who had participated in the defensive battle for Dragonic, instantly lost their lives.

Without even the time to register the shock from this unreal scene, the monster roared again.

"Kuaaahhh-!"

"Kuah! Block it! Block it!"

It felt like flames were blazing – flames known as fear. In an instant, their once optimistic mentality evaporated and their bodies trembled. The warriors attacked violently out of desperation to flee from the monster's nightmarish teeth.

Their attacks naturally avoided its teeth, concentrating on the back of its head or its shoulders.

Choi Hyuk, who had been diligently wielding 'Choi Hyuk's Denial' while mixed in with Flame-Rain's support troops, retreated at some point.

His eyes narrowed.

The demise-ranked monster received a huge shock from Deus's self-destruction attack and had yet to recover. However, it was quickly regaining its strength. While, at a glance, the warriors' desperate attacks seemed to overwhelm the monster, in reality, they weren't able to deal the decisive blow.

'Its head and shoulders aren't its vital points.'

Choi Hyuk concentrated. Its weak points, which he couldn't see previously, slowly became visible.

His fighting senses which reached their extreme peak in his fight against Myeol finally shined. Like how he could later see Myeol's fist, which he could barely see at first, in detail, he currently saw the demise-ranked monster.

Choi Hyuk's eyes shined with a black light.

"It's the teeth!"

Choi Hyuk shouted.

Light-Maze, Dark-Feet, and Chu Youngjin, who were fighting nearby, reacted to his voice.

'...Its teeth?'

Its teeth had instantly slaughtered six transcendent warriors. Its teeth had powerful enough energy to make their bodies freeze just by looking at them. Yet, for them to be its weak point, it was hard to believe.

However, the one who said this was Choi Hyuk. They couldn't simply ignore it.

During this time, Choi Hyuk's sword went through space and clashed against the monster's tooth.

Jjoong!

“Keuu...”

Choi Hyuk let out a groan.

‘Denial... didn’t work on it?’

At first, Choi Hyuk’s karma smoothly burrowed into its tooth, yet the moment it was about to cover the tooth, it was bounced away more quickly and smashed into his chest.

It felt like smashing his hand into a metal plate. The palm of his hand hurt, and a ringing resounded throughout his body.

However, Choi Hyuk slashed out with ‘denial’ once more. Though it was bounced away, his karma did burrow into its tooth.

‘Let’s see how long you can last.’

Jjong-!

“Keuk!!”

The demise-ranked monster, which seemed fine no matter how much they attacked its head and shoulders, finally showed a reaction. Even though his hand panged with pain as though it was being torn apart, Choi Hyuk became certain. In some ways, it was similar to when he was facing Myeol, Kwe, and Jae. Monsters were different from humans. Their weakest points weren’t their weakness, rather, their strongest points were their weakness. There was no other way to kill the demise-ranked monster besides breaking its teeth.

It was the most dangerous method, yet the only method.

The monster opened its mouth wide. He saw its densely packed teeth. Would there be any effect from breaking one? Hundreds of teeth which exceeded Choi Hyuk's strength attempted to swallow him like they did the six warriors before.

“Block it!”

Light-Maze's voice rang out.

Baang!

Chu Youngjin's sword stabbed into its cheek and exploded. While the monster flinched momentarily, its blank face scowled scarily as it bit towards Choi Hyuk.

Blaaze!

However, its teeth didn't reach Choi Hyuk. Dark-Feet stood in front of Choi Hyuk as he glared at the monster.

“No one can touch my body without my approval.”

Dark matter, which couldn't be seen or touched, filled the universe. While it filled the universe, dark energy couldn't be seen or touched.

While their names were similar, one possessed gravitational force while the other possessed a repulsive force that pushed stars away. The common notion among earthlings was that these two things were different. However, the great warriors of the Dark Tribe could manipulate both of them. They could consume their bodies to create dark energy. The dark energy inside the monster's mouth expanded explosively. Like stars growing apart at a speed faster than the speed of light, the monster's lower and upper jaw were swiftly pushed apart. Roaring, the monster's face scowled more severely.

“Kuaaah!”

Just then, Light-Maze pushed its cheek. He was attempting to make it turn its head to devour a different area. The speckled lights in his body created a propellant like rocket

fuel. Light-Maze's brilliantly shining body looked like a comet. The monster's head gradually turned, but it was slightly too late.

The demise-ranked monster suppressed the dark energy, which had expanded by squeezing Dark-Feet's life, and devoured a part of the universe again.

Crunch-!

The demise-ranked monster's teeth missed Choi Hyuk thanks to Light-Maze frantically turning the monster's head. However, Dark-Feet, who was in front of him, couldn't avoid them and was sucked into its mouth. As a member of the Dark Tribe, he didn't bleed a single drop of blood. A clump of invisible energy simply slapped Choi Hyuk's cheek.

All this happened in a moment.

Choi Hyuk was powerless.

Grrt!

He gritted his teeth. He wasn't taken aback or scared, nor did he blame himself. He simply raged. 'Choi Hyuk's Denial' smashed against the monster's teeth.

Jjong!

Due to swinging his sword at an extreme speed, there was only one impact though he

swung three times.

Vomiting blood, Choi Hyuk was ricocheted away.

“Kuaaah-!”

The demise-ranked monster’s scream was the news he had been eagerly waiting for, and its broken tooth was his spoil.

It was the first effective strike since the stronghold ‘Deus’ smashed into its head. The warriors’ gazes fixated on Choi Hyuk and the monster’s broken tooth.

Choi Hyuk didn’t cheer since he only successfully broken a single tooth out of hundreds.

Choi Hyuk got into position once more and swung his sword. As always, the distance between the monster and him was instantly ‘denied’. Choi Hyuk stood in front of the monster and attacked its tooth.

Jjong!!!

‘More! More!’

Choi Hyuk was impatient. Though he was already overexerting himself and heat boiled from his body, it still wasn’t enough.

‘Denial’ was undoubtedly effective. However, the instant the fate of demise inside the tooth was denied, it was filled up again like a spring. He had no choice but to instantly swing with an overwhelming strength like before to cut that flow off.

A battle of attrition.

In addition, time wasn't on Choi Hyuk's side.

'Before it recovers from the impact!'

Even now, the monster had only partly recovered from the impact from Deus. Yet, it was already this difficult.

'More!!!'

Choi Hyuk swung in desperation.

Jjong!

The monster's tooth emitted a loud sound as it shook, but it wasn't enough. He couldn't continuously wield the same strength as before.

Cough!!

His internal injuries became more severe from the recoil of not being able to break its tooth. He drew bloody saliva. It was difficult to breathe as if he was biting down on a blood-soaked rag.

The problem was their incompatibility.

'Denial' was the power to erase everything and return it to nothingness, but 'nothingness' and 'demise' weren't greatly different concepts.

Choi Hyuk's Denial denied even demise, but the space where everything was turned into nothingness became the home for demise again. The two powers endlessly snatched each other's space. Choi Hyuk had exhausted too much of his strength from fighting consecutive battles to cut this cycle instantly.

Thud.

Someone supported Choi Hyuk's back, who was pushed away from the recoil.

“I’m here.”

Her voice sounded like she had been on a walk.

A sword shrouded in transparent flames passed above Choi Hyuk’s exhausted shoulder and hit the tooth he had swung at just now.

It was the Weapon of Conclusion Flame-Rain possessed, ‘Flame-Rain’s Glory’.

Her flames burrowed into the monster’s tooth, which was filled with nothingness through Choi Hyuk’s Denial.

Glory bloomed in a place with nothing.

The moment her karma and Choi Hyuk’s karma lingering in its tooth met, a powerful explosion erupted as though oxygen was fed to a flame.

Baaaang!!

It was much more impressive than when Choi Hyuk forcefully broke a tooth earlier. The monster’s tooth exploded as even its roots were pulled out. It was easy and snappy, like making popcorn. Everyone’s gazes were stolen by this scene, even the demise-ranked monster’s.

“Huh...?”

Choi Hyuk blankly stared at Flame-Rain.

“...Ah?”

Flame-Rain also foolishly looked at Choi Hyuk.

The two of them shuddered at the chemical reaction of their karmas.

In a dazed voice, Flame-Rain said,

“Uh... I think we’re quite compatible?”

The problem of incompatibility.

If there was a glory that surpassed all glory, it would be the creation or resurrection of a world.

‘There is light.’

In the world of nothingness created by Choi Hyuk’s Denial, Flame-Rain’s Glory became the light announcing a new beginning.

Kuaaah-!

The monster’s belated scream didn’t register in Choi Hyuk and Flame-Rain’s ears as they looked at each other.

Chapter 193

Spring of the Great Universe

Later on, Flame-Rain would recall this fight and say, 'It was a thrilling romantic comedy!' She would then proceed to boast about how well-informed she was of Earth, making comments such as, 'How about it? Don't I sound exactly like an earthling now?'

Choi Hyuk, on the other hand, who didn't enjoy watching movies and dramas, didn't have much feeling towards the words 'thrilling' and 'romantic', but whenever he recalled the strange fight that day, he too unknowingly ended up shaking his head.



"Should we do it again?"

She laughed like a child with the screaming demise-ranked monster in the background.

When she tapped Choi Hyuk's shoulder, without realizing it, he immediately swung his sword at the tooth next to it.

Jjong!

Flame-Rain's sword followed right after it.

Glory filled the vacuum created by denial.

Baang!

It was the same this time as well. The demise-ranked monster's tooth popped out like a piece of popcorn, accompanying the explosion caused by denial and glory.

Her villainous grin widened.

"All troops!! Cover us!!"

Her order heated the warriors' bodies as though they had taken a shot of strong vodka.

Speckled lights gradually shone brighter and members of the Flame Wing Tribe members interspersed the universe with flames. Darkness spread by the Dark Tribe members cast shadows and the Armored Soul Tribe members made metallic sounds that were like guns being loaded.

An orchestra in space.

The demise-ranked monster that tried to capture Choi Hyuk and Flame-Rain was the conductor, the transcendent warriors that slashed, smashed, and pushed to obstruct it were the musicians, and Choi Hyuk and Flame-Rain were the dancers in the center.

Bang!

A tooth popped out.

Bang, bang!

Two teeth popped out.

Even as she narrowly dodged the monster's attacks with the help of the other warriors, Flame-Rain's face gradually blossomed into a bigger smile.

If Choi Hyuk decided on a target, Flame-Rain would follow his lead, and when Flame-Rain popped a tooth out, Choi Hyuk would look back at her and deliberate their next target. Since she kept laughing, Choi Hyuk laughed as well as though he was infected.

"I think we're crazy."

Flame-Rain said.

"I've never gone crazy like this..."

Choi Hyuk replied.

To think they would laugh like this while fighting a demise-ranked monster, which made the entire universe tremble in fear. They weren't scoffing or laughing manically, rather they naturally began roaring with laughter. The moment they thought, 'I never imagined such a funny fight...' they would smirk and laugh.

Of course, it didn't only make them laugh. It was thrilling as well.

Even the monster's smallest movements distorted space and made stars look like streaks, and its hard claws and teeth, which were hard to discern, poured down on them like a waterfall or subway. Even though its attacks didn't land, they had to protect their bodies with karma to survive and their cheeks and chests tingled as though they had been slapped. Cold sweat ran down their backs every time they narrowly avoided the monster's attacks.

However, after perspiring cold sweat, they giggled due to the thrilling chill.

"Blow it away!"

"Push!"

"I'm on my way there!"

The warriors suppressed the demise-ranked monster with all their strength, and Choi Hyuk and Flame-Rain danced. They laughed as they danced a dance that would lead to their gruesome deaths with a single misstep.

Every time the monster's claws swept the universe and its teeth devoured space, Choi Hyuk and Flame-Rain, like falcons, would target its teeth with their blades, popping out one after the other like fireworks brightening the universe.

Then, at some point...

{Kuaaah! Feel the demise!!}

Enraged to no end, the monster sent out a comprehensible telepathic message as it raised its upper body like a snake and took a big bite of the world.

Cruuuuunch!!

“...Huh?”

The heatedly fighting warriors suddenly froze.

No one could react to the monster’s sudden action. Choi Hyuk and Flame-Rain were no longer in sight.

Its mouth was firmly shut.

“Don’t tell me...”

The warriors became pale.

The demise-ranked monster’s mouth curved upwards.

Just like that, its mouth tilted back and exploded.

Baaaaang!

The monster’s dented head exploded.

Whoosh!

Hundreds of teeth shot up into the air.

Stepping on the monster's slumped torso, Flame-Fain held an exhausted Choi Hyuk up as she stood in place.

The 'Spring of the Great Universe' had begun.



Killing a demise-ranked monster was completely different from killing any other monster.

The death of a demise-ranked monster, whose existence approached the bounds of a law of the universe, created a phenomenon that was called 'the Spring of the Great Universe' throughout the universe.

The universe, which had been trembling at the sight of demise, cheered at this unexpected victory.

Having overcome demise, new possibilities opened up for the universe. Warriors would get stronger, karmalings would prosper, and new species would be born.

Standing in front of the demise-ranked monster's remains as it melted from the light of the universe and dispersed, the warriors could confirm this as fact.

Like a sunrise, the universe became transparent starting from its edges. From this transparent beyond, a warm, red light rose like the sun. A horizon was created in the universe that had been dark in every direction. As if the sky was opening, the light in the horizon slowly pushed on and covered the entire universe. White and red light fluttered like feathers.

"Wow... Look at this."

Flame-Rain propped Choi Hyuk on top of the crumbling demise-ranked monster's

body and jumped around. Since she was jumping around on top of a corpse, it should have looked strange, yet contrarily, it was a beautiful sight. The demise-ranked monster melted into the universe as its corpse dispersed into specks of light, and Flame-Rain jumped around like she was running through a shimmering field of spring flowers. She chased after the fluttering red and white lights. She tried eating them, sticking them to her hair, and twirling around.

Her cheeks glowed, and transparent flames blazed on her hair.

Choi Hyuk thought she was dazzling.

He suddenly realized that he no longer saw the symbols and lights shown by his Eyes of Distinction and Eyes of the Judge, which had helped alleviate concerns from his actions. They had changed so naturally that he didn't realize it.

Choi Hyuk now simply read a portion of people's will and fate.

His 'Eyes of Distinction' allowed him to sense the other's will towards him, and 'Eyes of the Judge' allowed him to read the relationship between one's fate and his.

Her will was still firmly directed at him, and her warm fate was embracing his cold-hearted one.

While this information wasn't as intuitive or simple as seeing a white light or a blue shield symbol, perhaps she was more dazzling because it was so.

While what kind of goodwill she possessed towards him and how her own fate embraced his own wasn't as simple to read as before, because he knew them more clearly, she was dazzling.

Acting exhausted, he closed his eyes and mumbled,

"Thanks."

"Huh? What did you say? This nunim^{1} who was cold-heartedly rejected yet magically appeared to save your life couldn't hear you properly. Say it again."

Choi Hyuk shook his head when she smiled and acted innocent even though she had heard him clearly.

He had refused her proposal of going to the monsters' universe together with her and had fought as a loyal subordinate of her mortal foe, Flame-Hell. Yet she was still like this.

'What's making her so happy for her to laugh like that?'

Seeing how he didn't speak and simply shook his head, Flame-Rain laughed. Then she looked up at the universe, which was now clearly dyed like spring flowers, and said,

"It's spring."

In this spring which had clearly arrived, warriors who had scattered to run from the demise-ranked monster were now looking for each other as they gathered.

Chu Youngjin was the same. He traversed through the gently glittering universe to find one person.

Even though he suffered a moderately severe injury and was completely worn out, he felt like he had to find that person.

It was a highest-ranked warrior who had been unable to bear the monster's roar and had retreated. Since he didn't know where she went or if she was alive, it was a suffocating search.

'Not here, not there.'

Though he needed rest and get treatment, perhaps it was due to his exhaustion, but he couldn't think at all. He searched for her thoughtlessly like a machine with a predetermined command.

Just as his vision became blurry and his strength left his arms and legs, he finally discovered a familiar silhouette. She too discovered him.

“Chu Youngjin!!”

Even hearing it again, she sounded awkward because her voice was overfilled with emotion. Still, it wasn't bad.

“Ha... I found you.”

As soon as he said this, all his tension relaxed. Chu Youngjin lost consciousness. It was fine since she was alive. For some reason, a smile hung on his lips.

Shiro embraced Chu Youngjin.

She covered her smooth, hard skin with warm, gentle karma.

She recalled the fight against the transcendent-level monsters, which she couldn't perceive let alone join in, and the fight against the demise-ranked monster that followed soon after. Then she gazed down at Chu Youngjin, who had come looking for her after all the fighting had ended.

While it was impulsive, she made a decision.

She whispered quietly,

“When you wake up... I'll tell you about the grand scheme. Let's fight together, and bask in the glory together. From now on.”

To Shiro, them partaking in the grand scheme together meant that they would be fighting together in the most important battle in this war, which could be considered her life. It meant spending their lives together.

She couldn't imagine this great warrior, who had come looking for her, rejecting their grand scheme.

No, it was her selfishness. She no longer thought she would fight apart from him.

Her unease disappeared, and certainty and expectations filled that space.

This was the first Spring of the Great Universe since Flame-Sky died slaying a demise-ranked monster.

Some said that those who watched this spring together would be tied by fate and that if they held hands or gazed in each other's eyes when the dark universe turned transparent and white and red lights fluttered like feathers, they would become once-in-a-lifetime lovers or friends...



As the Spring of the Great Universe occurred at the same time throughout the universe, the Exalted Wings soon learned that the demise-ranked monster had died.

“Haa... Was this a blessing in disguise?”

Dark-Sound's eyes shined.

Shiro was alive. Just this fact filled his heart with emotion.

Yet, that wasn't all. The entire situation was the best.

While the demise-ranked monster was killed, a significant number of remnants remained. Dark-Sound now had the justification to personally mop them up.

Flame-Hell would have no choice but to personally act following Dark-Sound's suggestion in order to keep Flame-Rain, whose name spread once again as a hero of the alliance, in check.

That wasn't all. He was able to confirm that Light-Maze and Choi Hyuk were both alive through the restored communication network.

There couldn't be a better opportunity than this.

“Carry out the grand scheme.”

Finally...

Finally, this day had arrived.

Dark-Sound revealed a huge grin.



“Apparently, Youngjin obtained Dark-Sound’s trust.”

“Then tell him to kill Dark-Sound during this expedition. The method will be... the same method he requested me to use.”



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