THE BOOK EATING MAGICIAN

BOOK 04

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The Book Eating Magician

(책 먹는 마법사)

by

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Synopsis

['Lightning Magic Primer' has been consumed. Your understanding is very high.]

[The 2nd Circle magic 'Lightning Bolt' has been acquired.]

The unprecedented magician who will eat all the magic books of the world has appeared

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Chapter 301 – Hall of Fame (1)

Flash!

Theodore appeared with a flash of light. As soon as he escaped from the teleport blockade, he moved from the halls of the palace to his private room.

He didn't want to walk around, but neither did he feel so tired that he wanted to lie down in bed right away. If it was as Kurt explained, no one would know that Theodore had already woken up. In that case, there was no need for him to cause a disturbance.

'I am worried about Sylvia and Master, but... His Majesty would've told me if something has happened to them.'

In Meltor, information could no longer be hidden or limited restricted to Theodore. Kurt knew this, so wasn't it impossible for him to hide news about Theo's people? It was right to think that nothing had happened in the meantime.

"Gluttony."

-I'm listening.

Theodore sat in his chair and requested, "Explain the feature called the Hall of Fame."

He had read the message a few times, but all it said was 'learn the accumulated knowledge of magicians using achievement points.' How could he learn it and what was included? He was forced to ask Gluttony directly.

-Okay. Unsurprisingly, Gluttony replied like it had been waiting. -As implied by the name, the Hall of Fame is a special function that exists to preserve the souls of memorable or worthy magicians. This feature applies to writers of books eaten by all users, from the Age of Mythology to present day. Only the most brilliant and outstanding ones are eligible for this function.

“…Since the Age of Mythology?”

-That’s right. There is a magician who pulled an asteroid from outer space, and there’s also a magician who made an underwater city at the bottom of the sea. Every single one of them has made a mark in the history of magic.

Meteor fall was a catastrophe which had been unintentionally caused by a great magician whilst exploring the sea of stars. The legendary underwater city known as Atlantis… Records said it was an island which had been sunk by the hands of Atlas during the Age of Mythology.

Some of the magicians were wicked, and others were good. However, their alignment didn’t matter. Gluttony only cared about the magic. Thus, he collected the souls of over 100 great magicians. Sometimes, they were the enemies of his user. There were other times when they were disciples or heroes who fought on the battlefield together.

The Hall of Fame was like Gluttony’s history built over thousands of years, maybe longer.

Theodore asked without hiding his surprise, “I can learn from them directly?”

-If you want. It is also possible to receive their assistance if you have enough achievement points.

“Assistance? Is it similar to the one question one answer function?”

-The question and answer is the most basic assistance, Gluttony gave a vague answer. Then it made a direct suggestion, -It is quicker to experience it once. How about it?

“Now?”

-Yes. You don’t seem to have anything to do. If I am mistaken, I will apologize.

Theodore was a little worried, but his hesitation was brief. This was something he had to experience once, and it was hard for him to leave the room right now. He got up from the chair and moved to the bed before giving an answer. After all, be it Synchro or the Library, he had lost consciousness every time he used Gluttony's functions.

"Okay, I will try it once."

-A wise decision.

Gluttony moved at Theodore's consent.

[At User's request, the Hall of Fame has opened.]

[User currently has 157,329 achievement points.]

[Reconstructing the list of the Hall of Fame... Complete. The structure has been fixed in the form of a 'gallery', according to the user's recognition structure. There are three frames registered by User.]

[Connecting to the Hall of Fame.]

Theodore felt his consciousness being sucked away as always. Behind his eyelids, his spirit was being drawn into the hole on his left palm. The connection with his five senses faded, and the distinction between reality and his consciousness blurred. He was sucked into the vortex of irresistible attraction—

...Or he should have been.

'Uh, aren't I enduring well?'

Unlike before, Theodore remained conscious.

'Is it because I reached the 8th circle? If I go this way, I can enter Gluttony...'

Not long after that, Theodore clenched his teeth and prepared for the dizziness. Then his consciousness was sucked into Gluttony's vortex.

Kiiiing-! There was a sharp noise ringing in the mental world, where there was no concept of sound. Simultaneously, a wave of dizziness came over him. Theodore was stunned, dizzy, and then nauseous. Even so, he patiently endured it for a few minutes. Finally, the dizziness stopped. Theodore opened his tightly closed eyes and looked around.

[Ah...!]

Then he became thrilled.

[Is this the universe inside of Gluttony?]

There was a sea of endless darkness filled with shiny beads of light like the stars in the night sky. It was a huge and desolate universe. These were the words of old scholars: The sky, the earth, and the universe were wide and rough. If the study of magic touched the world, then the universe was waiting at the final destination.

Theodore refuse to imagine the end of the world that was infinitely expanding even now. It was a spectacular universe inside the grimoire, Gluttony of the Seven Sins.

-Hoh, you didn't lose consciousness. Gluttony recognized him. -If you look at it every day, you'll get no inspiration. But the first impression is the same for any user. Civilization as well. Once you observe it, you have no choice but to pursue it. Regardless of whether it is magic or science, there is nothing in history that hasn't challenged the universe. User, Theodore Miller, are you the same as the prophets?

[...I am a bit ashamed, but I can't deny it.]

Theodore's heart was beating rapidly. He'd thought that pursuing a dream was purely a privilege of childhood, but now a new fire was burning in Theodore's heart. A magician with eight circles could destroy a kingdom. However, even they weren't qualified to leave this earth and challenge the universe. Only a

person who had become a true transcendent by completing nine circles, the circles beyond the frame of life, could qualify.

‘Per ardua ad astra (Through adversity to the stars),’ Theodore recalled an old saying he’d heard somewhere and clenched his fists.

-Here we are.

At that moment, gravity returned to Theodore’s body.

“Wah!” Theodore stumbled a few steps due to the sudden change and opened his eyes after barely regaining his balance. “…This place.”

In a simple word, it was a corridor. A gentle light shone from the lamps on the wall, and the passage was a straight path. There was a red carpet at his feet as he took careful steps. It was a landscape that could be present in a royal palace, but Theodore found a strange point.

Countless portraits hung along the corridor at regular intervals.

“Simon Magus… Georg Faust… Aleister Crowley…?”

There were nameplates at the bottom of the portraits lined up on the left and right. Even if he knew the history of the Age of Mythology, the great people who played active roles in that era were unknown. Theodore only knew about Surtr, the owner of Laevateinn and Paracelsus.

-You can touch it if you want.

Theodore reached out a finger according to Gluttony’s words.

[Would you like to open Aleister Crowley? 48,316 points will be consumed to awaken this soul.]

“4-48,000?” Theodore panicked at the absurd number and let go, causing the message to disappear without a trace. If he thought about a grimoire that was worth 70,000 points, this was a truly ridiculous cost.

Then Gluttony chuckled and said, -I'm sorry, but this is just at an ordinary level, User. Simon Magus next to him requires 150,000 points to wake up.

"What? What type of magician is he?"

-He was the peak of gnosticism. He died in the challenge of the 10th circle, but his capabilities are considered within the top three inside this Hall of Fame.

Theodore gulped involuntarily. He didn't know who Simon Magus was, but Gluttony placed him within the top three despite having collected magicians for thousands of years? A monster that had reached the peak even during the Age of Mythology, where there were 100 grandmasters... He wasn't something that could be easily awakened with achievement points.

"Eh?" At that moment, there were some portraits that caught Theodore's eyes. "...Why are these portraits shining?"

The portrait before him wasn't reflecting the light. Rather, the frame itself was actually emitting light. Moreover, it wasn't just one. Theodore looked carefully at the contents of the portraits and staggered back. It wasn't because he discovered an unfamiliar face. On the contrary, it was because familiar faces welcomed him.

Gluttony confirmed Theodore's thoughts, -It is as you are thinking. These portraits are the souls personally collected by User.

From left to right, they were Heathcliff, Abe no Seimei, and Paracelsus. They were magicians worthy of being in the Hall of Fame.

"The authors of the books I ate are here..." Theodore looked at the three portraits with a strange sentiment.

Meanwhile, Gluttony continued, -They don't need to be opened up separately, and it doesn't cost a big price to talk to them. It is also possible to get their help easier than other souls if you use

achievement points.

“Their help… For example?”

-The lingering attachments left by great magicians like them are usually hard to solve. Furthermore, in the case of a unique ability, it is often impossible to learn even after completing Transmission. It is like Paracelsus’ Discerning Eye, that is innate to him, or Heathcliff’s Prophecy.

Theodore nodded. Their unique abilities were extraordinary and powerful. If he could borrow these abilities at will, it would be worth spending the achievement points.

‘Ah, that reminds me.’ Theodore looked at the portraits and remembered the past. ‘When you have reached the boundary of a mortal, go once again to the world tree… Should I ask Paracelsus about that?’

Having gone from the 7th circle to the 8th circle, there was only one wall left to transcend. So, Theodore probably met the criteria now. He looked at Paracelsus’ portrait. Paracelsus was a dignified and elegant magician with a white beard. However, there was an unquenchable curiosity and playfulness in his eyes.

‘…No, it would be hard to hear a proper answer.’ Theodore’s intuition spoke to him. The hint that the old man gave Theodore previously was the only thing he would hear, so it wasn’t worth wasting achievement points. Thus, Theodore stood in front of a different portrait and reached out a hand.

-User, will you receive his help?

“Yes, please.”

-…I don’t understand your intentions, but okay. I will approve the request and call the soul.

At the same time, several notification messages popped up.

[Heathcliff’s soul has been called.]

[It is a soul directly collected by the user. A conversation with the soul won't consume any achievement points.]

The left hanging portrait shone, and the shadow of a man walked out. He was a middle-aged bearded man in white robes. It was the former master of the white tower and writer of the Book of Clouds, Heathcliff.

"Ah, you called me." He saw Theodore in front of him and his eyes widened. "...What? You've already reached the 8th circle? It isn't uncommon to be surpassed by juniors, but I never had that experience. I didn't know I would fall behind first."

"I-I'm sorry?"

"Don't worry. My stomach is just slightly sick," Heathcliff started the conversation with a silly joke before nodding calmly. "So? Why have you called me, Junior? You hardly need my help now with your skills."

"If only that was the case." Theodore had a purpose for calling Heathcliff. "I would like to request for Senior's specialty."

"Hrmm, my specialty?"

"Yes." Theodore took a deep breath and confronted Heathcliff's hazy eyes. "Please read the mysteries known only to heaven for me."

Chapter 302 - Hall of Fame (2)

Heathcliff's eyes narrowed at the cryptic words. "...Read the mysteries of the heavens?"

"Yes."

It might sound strange, but the two people knew what it meant in this situation.

In the Eastern language, the phrase 'reading the mysteries of the heavens,' meant literally reading heavenly secrets. It was a phrase that metaphorically pointed to 'future work', an area that those with predictive abilities knew about but didn't want to commit to.

According to the long memories of Abe no Seimei, one of the greatest shamans in the east, reading the mysteries of the heavens was a taboo that shouldn't be violated.

"Sigh, you have penetrated the essence of my magic." However, Heathcliff didn't respond to the request directly. He gave a long sigh and scratched his head several times.

Theodore nodded without saying anything.

The White Tower Master Heathcliff's unique power wasn't to control terrible storms, neither was it magic like Supercell. Instead, it was actually the ability to read the mysteries of the heavens! It was different from short-term predictions, including Alfred's super sensitivity. The ever-changing future was fluid and was an area where mortals couldn't intervene. Heathcliff made predictions by observing the curves.

Theodore had inferred Heathcliff's essence by looking back at his old memories after reaching the 8th circle.

-Well, I ended up dying in the middle of nowhere.

-Don't tell me...! Didn't you see into the future?

-Maybe, maybe not. I don't know what happened after I died.

Now, it is your turn.

Even though seeing the future was rare, it didn't mean that death could be avoided just by seeing the future. If there was a prognosis that called for death, it was a foreknowledge that a mortal body couldn't bear. Heathcliff's foresight wasn't something that could be acquired, even if Transmission was finished. The power to read the mysteries of the heavens was Heathcliff's only Sorcery, a unique magic that had barely completed during his lifetime.

"Well, okay," Heathcliff accepted Theodore's demands. Then he advised, "I want to tell you one thing before that. Reading the 'heavens' reduces the life of a mortal. But I'm dead. Do you understand what that means?"

"...I have to pay for the reading."

"Correct. I don't know how much, but a huge amount of your achievement points will be consumed. If you don't mind that, I will take a look."

The heavens was an area that wasn't accessible to mortals. It contained confidential information that could only be found by transcendents of this material world and couldn't be used without a penalty.

"Yes, it doesn't matter." Yet Theodore accepted it without hesitation.

'Surely it won't cost 100,000 points?'

Theodore now had points to spare after stealing from Jerem's Tartarus. Then a notification window appeared before him.

[You have chosen to use target name Heathcliff's Reading the Mysteries of Heaven. That rating is B+. Depending on how far and how closely you look, the consumption of achievement points will vary greatly.]

[The minimum range for Reading the Mysteries of Heaven is one month, and the achievement points consumed is 3,000 points.]

[It is set according to the user's discretion.]

'3,000 points.'

It wasn't bad. This was a bigger expenditure than he'd expected, but it was at a level that he could afford easily with 150,000 points. However, he thought a month was too short. How much achievement points would be consumed if it was at least three months?

The notification window appeared again, as if to answer the question.

[The duration is 3 months, the accuracy is high, and 48,000 points will be consumed. The capacity will increase as the time zone expands, so the consumption of achievement points will increase.]

[Error! You can't set the accuracy as 'high.' By adjusting the accuracy to the 'normal' level, 24,000 points will be consumed.]

Theodore took a deep breath and swallowed hard. 48,000 points... and now 24,000 points for ordinary accuracy! Reading the heavens cost the same amount of achievement points as opening the soul of a great magician. Theodore felt conflicted for a brief moment.

He was worried about Jerem's presence, but did he need to spend 24,000 points for an inaccurate prophecy?

'No, it is worth it if there is danger in the future.'

Furthermore, even though Heathcliff couldn't read the future accurately... If Theodore wasn't careful about threats, he might suffer more damage than when Invidia attacked. In the end, Theodore decided on the painful expense. "Then please do so, Senior."

Heathcliff closed his eyes. "...Okay, let's take a long look."

It was called looking at the future, but one's eyes were useless

when it came to predictions. No, they were more of a hindrance. This was why the ancient prophets sometimes dug out their eyes. Heathcliff soon opened his eyes.

“Ah.” Theodore covered his mouth from the shock. It was natural that he do so, since Heathcliff’s eyes had turned completely blue and were swirling like a wave.

“…Ohh… Oh…ohhh…” He groaned like an ill or dying person. “…Seen…”

Reading the Mysteries of Heaven was used.

「The worshipper of death hides.」

「The shadow of the false god is lifted.」

「 The person who devoured the remains of the light and was exiled will return.」

「Big birds and snakes are surrounding a tree.」

「The squirrels will help you to repay the favor.」

It was exactly five sentences. After that, Heathcliff’s murmuring stopped, and his blue eyes returned to their original state. A magician who understood the true meaning of those eyes didn’t exist in this era.

Theodore summarized it simply, “It is vague.”

They might be key clues, but it was impossible to understand before the situations occurred. The worshipper of death was certainly Jerem, but there were doubts about the false god, the remains of light, the big birds and snakes. The same was true for the squirrels who would repay his grace.

“Prophecies are originally like this. There are no prophets in the myths or legends who explain clearly.”

“Is that so?”

“That’s right.” Heathcliff shrugged and stepped back. “Well,

then my role ends here?”

Was he returning to his portrait? As his form became increasingly blurred, Theodore threw out a forgotten question, “Ah, Senior! Is there a lingering regret that Senior left behind?”

“Huh? A lingering regret… Let’s see?” Heathcliff made a noncommittal reply while returning to his portrait. “I’ll tell you when I think about it!”

Then he was gone. The frowning Theodore was left behind, and the Hall of Fame sank into silence. Even though he was dead, Heathcliff’s free-spirited personality hadn’t changed much. Theodore regained his composure and looked at the other two portraits.

‘There are many things I want to discuss with both of them, but… right now, it is better to focus on the prophecy. I will call Seimei after I became a transcendent.’

Theodore spoke into the empty space, “Gluttony, I will leave now.”

The notification messages were Gluttony’s reply.

[At User’s request, the Hall of Fame has closed.]

[User currently has 133,329 achievement points.]

[Closing the Hall of Fame.]

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The next day, Theodore was analyzing Heathcliff’s prophecy when he made a surprised expression. “His Majesty called me?”

“Yes, Captain Theodore.” The servant bowed politely as he delivered Kurt’s message. “It isn’t just you. The White Tower Master and all of the people who participated in the last battle have been called.”

“What is the reason?”

“Well, it is…”

The servant’s words were unsure, so Theodore felt like he had to listen to Kurt speak personally. Kurt had concealed the fact that Theodore had awakened from people. The fact that he was calling Theodore, the White Tower Master, and other people meant it was something big.

“Let’s go.” Theodore put on a red robe and left his room.

“Follow me please.” The servant took three steps in front of Theodore and led the way. This was to avoid the attention of others. Thanks to the servant, Theodore could reach the royal palace without any disturbances and entered the room where Kurt was waiting.

Then several voices rang out as Theodore entered.

“Theo!”

“…You’ve woken up. I am glad to see that you are well.”

“Not even giving me a hint, isn’t that too much?”

Sylvia, Orta, and Randolph greeted him in turn, while more and more people were attracted by the fuss. Surprisingly, there was no reaction from Veronica. However, when Theodore looked at her, she blew him a kiss. In some ways, it was the behavior of a victor.

After a few minutes of turmoil, Kurt entered and settled on the throne, causing the room to calm down. “I’m sorry about the sudden call. However, this issue isn’t something to be treated lightly, so I gathered all the parties involved.”

There was one thing that everyone present had in common. They had been mobilized against Andras and involved in the battle against Invidia. Aside from the two guardians of Elvenheim, the seriously wounded, and the dead, everyone else was gathered here.

“Last night, an envoy arrived from the Andras Empire.” However, Kurt wouldn’t have called them here if it was just that.

“I received a letter with the official stamp of the emperor of Andras.”

This caused a great stir. It was natural as the emperor of Andras, the monster called Invidia, had vanished without a trace in the Nadun Mountains. Now, a self-proclaimed emperor had appeared in Andras. Hadn’t Invidia died? Or had the fight for the throne ended in just a few days, with the crowning of a new emperor?

“The name of that emperor was also written in the letter,” Kurt continued.

Then in front of all the people with questions, he read out the words at the bottom of the stamped letter, “Andras’ 19th emperor, Crowd von Andras.”

Chapter 303 - End of War Agreement (1)

Crowd—there was no one who didn't know that name. Amazement and doubts filled their faces. The surname was slightly different, but his identity was obvious.

He was the empire's 1st Sword, Andras' strongest swordsman. They didn't know how it happened, but Crowd von Russel had become Andras' 19th emperor.

"…I don't remember seeing his body in the Nadun Mountains."

"Yes, but being coronated in a few days…?"

"It is a ridiculous replacement."

Among the buzz of the people's chatter, the white-masked Orta muttered in a quiet voice, "It isn't impossible if he used force. Now that almost all of the Seven Swords are dead, there is no power in Andras that can stop him."

It was as Orta said. The swordsman Crowd was the best swordsman of this age, so he could take over the throne with force. He wouldn't raise an eyebrow even if all of Belfort's army went against him. Crowd was literally the strongest person in Andras. In a nation which had been founded upon the idea that a strong man stood on top, it was highly probable that Crowd had become emperor of Andras with his own power.

"I also agree with White Tower Master's words," the king sitting on the throne, Kurt III, agreed with Orta's opinion. "Until now, the monster called Invidia had worn the emperor's mask, so he didn't dare try. It was how the imperial bloodline was maintained in a single family up until now. But after Invidia died in the last battle, there is no obstacle in the way of Crowd's rule."

"Additionally, the national ideal of the Andras Empire is to follow the strong, so there wouldn't be an uprising."

"That's right. From this point on, we must recognize him as the

emperor of Andras and evaluate his letter based on the appropriate standards.”

The 1st Sword of the Seven Swords was a great position, but it was incomparable to the emperor’s authority. The value of this letter was the same. The letter written by Crowd von Russel and Crowd von Andras was like the difference between heaven and earth.

Kurt looked at the letter in his hand and continued speaking, “Crowd, the emperor of Andras, has asked for a ceasefire in order to negotiate terms.”

“Ceasefire… to end the war?”

A ceasefire and ending the war… The meaning was similar, yet significantly different.

Kurt nodded at Orta’s words and read the letter again to deduce the author’s intent. “Perhaps it is a preliminary negotiation. If we don’t agree, he knows they have no chance of winning if we keep fighting.”

The empire had already been defeated—Kurt firmly asserted this. “Crowd might’ve survived, but there is no way that Andras can win when the empire’s Seven Swords are almost collapsed. By ascending the throne, the queen chess piece has become the king. He is in a position where he can’t freely move. He has lost his ability to act as a trump card and doesn’t have the power to reverse the situation anymore.”

“They are fair words.”

The emperor was the strongest sword master, but an emperor had two important roles.

It might be possible if half of the empire’s Seven Swords were alive to support him. However, without a rook, bishop, or knight, the movements of a king were severely limited. Moreover, unlike a queen, Crowd already knew that the Andras Empire was

completely defeated.

Thus, he had asked for a momentary ceasefire in order to present some conditions.

“From here on, I'll read out the contents.” This was the main point. Kurt held the letter and started reading it. “I hope that Andras and Meltor will move their armies away from the forefront and discuss the end of the war in the northern part of the Sipoto Plains, which is the midpoint between the two places. I, Crowd, will come directly as the representative of Andras. I will acknowledge our defeat in this war and make a few promises first.”

Kurt raised an eyebrow at the next words but continued reading the letter.

- - - -

One. The Andras Empire promises to give up the name of the empire. I will build an autonomous nation where people of ethnic minorities, who want freedom, can live.

Two. The Andras Empire will hand over 30% of the territory close to the border of the Meltor Kingdom and permanently give up the right to occupy them. The choice of territory is entirely up to Meltor.

Three. I will establish a semi-permanent non-aggression treaty between Andras and Meltor, as well as designate a safe zone where we can trade regularly. I hope to promote a friendship between the two nations. All tariffs incurred in the trade zone for the next 10 years will be borne by Andras.

- - - -

“...Now, anyone here can negotiate these terms.”

After Kurt was done, the expressions of the people present changed.

As if to represent them, Orta opened his mouth, “The conditions

are bad. No, it is hard to negotiate any further. Andras was able to dominate the Northern Continent because of their territory and population. Now they are giving up both things. They do actually mean to end the conflict in the Northern Continent."

There were those who would want to keep fighting, but the people gathered here weren't stupid. Even if they continued the war to subjugate Andras, it was impossible to tightly control the vast land. It was a different story if they could take over 30% with peaceful bargaining. That would be enough to make up for the power Meltor had lost in the war.

Andras would become an autonomous state and trade zone...?

That was nothing more than a roundabout declaration of surrender, cutting off their hands and feet. Andras might survive the end of this war, but they would never beat Meltor again. That's why the facial expressions of those present were strange.

"By the way, there is one unrelated condition," Kurt spoke again and turned to Theodore. "Emperor Crowd has demanded that Theodore take part in the negotiation. He has a story to share with you, regardless of whether you are the leader or just part of the group. Perhaps it is something related to the former emperor, Invidia. What do you want to do?"

"I..." Theodore was troubled for a moment.

It was true that he was curious about the information Crowd had. The information was obviously closely related to Invidia. If Invidia had truly wanted to kill him, even Crowd would've died in the Nadun Mountains. It now seemed necessary to grasp why Crowd had become the emperor.

"I will accompany the group."

"Your Majesty, I will follow. Won't it make things more certain?" Veronica raised a hand after Theodore's reply.

It made sense. Crowd might've become the emperor, but there

was the possibility that he was seeking Theodore's neck. However, he wouldn't be able to do anything against two 8th circle magicians moving together.

"Please do so," Kurt agreed with her and nodded. "The date for the signing of the new agreement is in a fortnight. You all can relax, while Theodore and Veronica will prepare as the heads of the group. White Tower Master, please assist them if they require it."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"I hope that this agreement will bring peace to the Northern Continent. I am ashamed to rely on you again when you aren't in perfect condition. After this situation is over, I will provide proper compensation."

The meeting abruptly ended.

*

A fortnight... It was both a long and short period of time, but every moment was valuable to Theodore. He escaped from the palace grounds and moved to an area near the capital. It was the new Miller estate that he planned to visit. The guards were surprised by the unexpected teleportation, but their eyes widened after seeing his robe.

"No, who are you? Heok, that robe...?"

"A-Are you perhaps Prime Theodore—no, Marquis Miller?"

There was no need to respond with words. Theodore nodded, and they instantly saluted. It was a normal reaction. As Meltor's hero, Theodore was a person whose name was heard at any busy area in this kingdom. He didn't know it, but his popularity had long overtaken the king's.

"Oh, my. Who is this?" A woman embraced him as soon as he entered the drawing room. The warm and familiar smell disarmed all of Theodore's alertness. She could use perfume and cosmetics

now that she was a senior noble, but his mother was still the same. Holding Theodore firmly in her arms, she then looked back.

“Honey! Leo! Theo has returned!”

“What?! Who came?”

“Brother! It really is Brother!”

His father had thinning hair, and his brother, Leonardo, was much bigger than before. His family gathered in an instant around Theodore. He was awkward after not seeing them for a long time, but his parents and brother talked without noticing.

There were stories about Theodore’s achievements or earls he didn’t know. Theodore made a surprised expression when he heard that Leonardo was better at the sword than at magic.

“Really?”

“Indeed. It is so cute how he plays with a wooden sword all day. What did the knight who taught him say? He said he wanted Leo to be his disciple.”

“Wow, Leo. Don’t you have amazing skills?” Theodore patted Leo’s head, causing him to giggle.

Was it because he wasn’t accustomed to being praised by his brother? Theodore watched him approvingly before secretly asking his parents for the authenticity of the story. If it was true that his brother had talent, then Theodore would recommend a proper teacher for him.

“Is there someone that you have in mind?”

“There are two possible people.”

They were Randolph and Rebecca. One was a sword master, and the other was facing the wall to becoming a master. Both of them would be suitable to be Leonardo’s teacher. However, Randolph had shown his skills in the war, so he was likely to become a high-ranking noble. Such a person couldn’t become a tutor.

‘I will ask Rebecca later.’

It might be different if she went up the master ranks like Randolph, but she couldn’t stay beside Theodore with her current abilities. As such, it was more efficient to make her Leonardo’s teacher and entrust her with protecting his family. Finally, Theodore stopped worrying. He wanted to enjoy this time with his family.

Then came the very next day. After breakfast with his family, Theodore returned to Mana-vil Capital. He walked around the infirmary looking for a certain name. Although he could ask the receptionist, Theodore didn’t want to attract unnecessary attention.

[Vince Haidel]

Soon after, Theodore found what he was looking for.

“…I’m coming in.” He entered without waiting for a reply.

His teacher, whom he hadn’t seen in a few months, was lying on the bed. Vince Haidel, the war mage in red robes, looked haggard, but he welcomed Theodore with a large smile. “Ah, I was wondering who would be so impolite. I’ve heard all about your activities. You did really well.”

“Master.”

“You don’t have to feel sorry for me. I fought my best on the battlefield and got this result. Rather, I am proud that I survived the western front.”

His words weren't wrong. It was a miracle that he had survived the onslaught of Invidia and the surviving Seven Swords.

Vince pointed to the empty left leg socket and said with a refreshed expression, “It is done. Vince Haidel will now live as a magician, not a war mage. I might be suited for it, but I didn’t really like fighting. A small library room with a pen and parchment is good enough for me. The things you tell me are

sufficient to last the rest of my life.”

Thinking of the analysis of ancient languages to the reinterpretation of ancient civilizations, Vince laughed like he was really happy. His face sincerely showed that he didn’t care about a lost leg. In the end, Theodore couldn’t help laughing as well. The weight of the elixir in his pocket was unbearable. If he handed the elixir over now, Vince would wave his hand and tell him to use it for more important situations. Theodore Miller knew from a very long time ago that he was such a person.

‘I don’t know who was worried about whom.’

Theodore took off his robe and sat in the chair next to the bed. He forgot all the complicated stories and chatted with his teacher. This chat started at noon and continued until the sun went down.

“Why do you keep moving around?”

Until the day of the promised meeting, Theodore met and talked with people.

He went to see the injured elves, and he comforted Sylvia, who was saddened by her grandfather’s death. Theodore also shared a cup with those who celebrated his victory and spoke with elders of the Magic Society.

Time passed by, and the promised day arrived.

Chapter 304 - End of War Agreement (2)

The Sipoto Plains...

It was a boundary dividing the northern and central parts of the continent, a neutral zone that didn't belong to any powers. Dry winds blew throughout the year, with clouds and raindrops hardly ever present. It was a desolate wasteland. This wasn't a suitable environment for nomadic people to live in, so they wandered around the continent instead.

Hwioooooong...! The wind blew.

It had become moist since a while ago. This westerly wind, which had a bit of moisture, had started to blow after the sand dragon, Desertio, died.

Some knew the story, but most people didn't.

Nature had realized before anyone else. This was no longer a wilderness where only weeds could grow. The seeds of eaten fruit dropped onto the clothing of travelers, rolled off their carriages, and into the ground, where they started sprouting buds. The change couldn't be felt in a few years, but after a hundred years, nobody would be able to call this place a wilderness anymore.

However, visitors arrived before a hundred years had passed.

Flash! There was a bright flash of light, and a majestic magic circle appeared on the ground that previously contained nothing. Unlike the disposable magic circles that disappeared after arriving, this one was built for round trip purposes. The white tower had invented it many years ago.

The people who appeared on it looked at the dust clouds.

"Cough, it looks like we need to do something about the dust clouds." The young man wearing a red robe waved his hand, lifting the dust cloud and revealing the scenery.

There was a beauty, also wearing a red robe.

Then there was a man with two swords hanging at his waist.

Finally, there was a magician in a white mask and white robe.

This was the moment when Theodore Miller, leading the main powers of the Meltor Kingdom, took his first step onto the Sipoto Plains.

"...Amazing," Orta spoke while walking behind Theodore. "Creating a magic circle from Mana-vil to Sipoto by yourself. Even the Red Tower Master and Blue Tower Master couldn't do this... Your Sorcery is more special than I imagined."

That's right. The person who invoked the long-distance teleport set up in Meltor palace's garden hadn't been White Tower Master Orta but Theodore.

"Well, I don't fully know yet." Theodore looked down at his hands with a subtle expression. He didn't think it was much to be excited about, but it was different if both Veronica and Blundell had failed to do this. The reason for it was possibly his Forced Harmonization, just like Orta said.

'I feel like I have taken a step further.'

He couldn't help looking at his right arm. The Umbra imprint, the tattoo that had given him its power, had disappeared. Of course, it didn't mean he had lost the ability. After he reached the 8th circle and healed Veronica's soul, the mark no longer appeared on his skin. It was perfectly within Theodore's body and naturally lent its power. Umbra was also a multidimensional power, so there was no reason for him to be lacking when it came to comprehending space magic.

"Theo became better than you in a day or two? How refreshing," Veronica muttered from next to him

Randolph nodded. "I'm not trying to ignore you, but isn't it too late to be surprised now?"

“…Indeed.”

Theodore had called a dragon, a god from an old era, and an ancient warlock… Just as Randolph said, it was too late to be surprised simply because of space magic.

“It seems like Andras has arrived first.” Theodore used flying magic to look around and soon found the Andras flag.

There was a splendid building that had just been erected. The empire’s distinctive architectural form appeared on the wasteland. The tower rose into the sky, and a familiar presence was felt.

Crown von Andras—Andras’ strongest sword master and its emperor—was waiting for them.

“Ah, we’ve been noticed.”

Just as Veronica said, Crowd had noticed their arrival one beat later, and his presence became greatly exaggerated. Should they fly over? A magician who could use flying magic didn’t have to walk up stairs. Randolph was one person, so it was possible to carry him.

The shadow of four people appeared in the sky and then landed on the ground.

Tak.

At this moment, Theodore and three other people landed on the tower that contained Crowd. It was in a few blinks of an eye. Crowd didn’t show any surprise by their sudden appearance and greeted them slowly, “You came, dear enemies.”

He had black hair and turquoise eyes that weren’t shaken, despite the power he was facing. The 19th emperor of Andras stood in front of them without a sword.

“You have no fear… What if we try to kill you?” Veronica couldn’t help asking.

“It is a fight I can’t win. It is better to come with bare hands,

since you would be alert if I was armed," Crowd answered openly.

Theodore felt a strange trust in the Crowd who didn't hide his intentions and intervened in the conversation between the two. "Do you really intend to end this northern war?"

"I think that it can't be helped. If we keep fighting, the defeat of the empire is definite. Maybe we can strike you until the end, but what is the value of the blood that will be shed?"

"...You are serious." After obtaining another divinity, Theodore could see the truth contained in another person's words. Knowing that Crowd was talking from his heart, Theodore fell silent for a moment.

Unless Crowd was trying to make a move, this agreement would be a huge benefit for not just Andras, but Meltor as well. Even if victory was confirmed, a war would still cause blood to flow and national power to be consumed. There was a possibility that the benefits gained from achieving victory would be low by the time Andras was completely destroyed.

This was an opportunity to completely cut off the chain of hatred that had been inherited for hundreds of years due to Invidia.

"But there is an answer that I must hear before that," Theodore spoke in a cold voice as he cut to the chase. "You, what is your identity?"

Crowd had survived at the hands of Invidia who could wipe out Theodore's group of four without hesitation, a monster that had even repelled the incomplete god-king, Nuada. There was a sword master that wasn't killed despite mountains being crushed by the aftermath of the attack? The only way Crowd could have survived was because Invidia had spared him.

Thus, Theodore had to find out why. It was enough to have one monster who concealed his identity as a neighbor.

"Sigh, coming all the way here only to hide it would be funny."

For the first time, Crowd showed some emotion. This was clearly an expression of self-mockery. “I am a waste.”

“What?” The four people were surprised by his words.

“A chunk of waste that Invidia, the ‘envy’ of the Seven Sins, couldn’t consume. An excrement of unnecessary ego, strength, and memories. To put it more plainly, I am food waste.”

“…”

“500 years—no, counting from the beginning of the founding period, it has been nearly 700 years. The number of sword masters eaten by him was in the hundreds, and the accumulated egos and remnants of memories reached saturation. So, he made me. He wanted to isolate any unnecessary human debris outside his body.”

It was terrible. The four people were like statues as Crowd’s words continued. Even Veronica, who had grown up in a bad home environment, paled. Crowd wasn’t a human. He had been made by necessity and sometimes used depending on the purpose. Simply put, he was a ‘tool,’ something that shouldn’t have awakened an ego and formed emotions.

“…Crowd von Andras,” Theodore pushed down the feeling of nausea and spoke while staring into the Crowd’s eyes, “If this is true, why are you the emperor?”

Invidia had referred to the North as a ‘breeding ground,’ a breeding ground where Andras and Meltor fought each other in order to nurture suitable sword masters.

It was a place where loyalty and patriotism weren’t rewarded.

The wreckage filled Crowd’s body was a residue of this. He couldn’t avoid feeling hatred, and he couldn’t avoid blaming someone. Crowd was eligible to hate Andras more than anyone else. Rather than defending the empire, it wasn’t strange if he tried to destroy it.

“I also thought so at first. If the day comes when my sword

regains freedom, I will destroy it personally."

A question of 'Why didn't you?' was present in Theodore's eyes.

"200 years," Crowd spoke in a voice that sounded old. "After 200 years, the anger boiling inside me cooled down and the hatred lost its sharpness. I watched humans who knew nothing, raised disciples who knew nothing, and fought against enemies who knew nothing."

"So?"

"I realized that my hatred was aimed in the wrong direction."

Their deaths might've been tragic, but the knights inside Crowd had devoted themselves to the nation. Since childhood, they had lived lives of loyalty, honing their sword skills and gaining honor. Crowd didn't know what Meltor was like, but these people loved Andras in their own way and were faithful to it.

Once his anger and hatred scattered, Crowd barely became aware of his own wish.

"Roy hoped that no one else in his hometown would die of hunger. Dixen prayed for a country where children could laugh. Carlos wanted the great empire to last forever. I received this life from them. So, it wouldn't be strange for me to want to preserve Andras." Crowd finished his story that was both long and short, and no one could open their mouths. Maybe it was because he had been born a non-human that he wanted to live like a human more than anyone else.

The hostility of the four people disappeared. Monsters couldn't be understood, but Crowd's heart was understood by all of the four people present. Crowd might have been born of a monster, but he was all too human.

"...A non-human has become a human."

"I think it is quite funny."

Theodore couldn't help laughing, and Crowd smiled as well. The rest of the people were the same. A light breeze filled the tower as a decision was made.

Then Theodore took one step forward and said to Crowd, "Your Majesty." Unlike before, Theodore was now polite and courteous. "Meltor acknowledges your appointment as emperor of Andras and promises to participate in this meeting for an agreement to end the war."

"Heh. Thank you, Sir Theodore."

It was the greeting of a formal envoy. As Theodore remained on one knee, he spoke of his anxiety before starting the full-fledged talks. "By the way, what did you want to talk to me about? Surely it isn't about the terms of the agreement."

"Ah, I called you because you are involved."

"What does that mean?" Theodore made a bewildered expression.

This caused Crowd to answer with a strange smile, "The warlock who you released into the world, Jerem, approached me."

"What?!"

The four people stiffened at the startling words.

Chapter 305 - End of War Agreement (3)

It was a surprising story. The 9th circle warlock—that had been released from the grimoire, Death's Worship—had tried to contact the emperor of Andras?

Maybe Jerem was aiming to fill the vacancy left by the former emperor, Invidia. Most of the Seven Swords had been lost, but the power of Andras was still strong. They had wide lands and a vast population, which was something that would be hard for a warlock to ignore.

Andras had humans to supply as offerings.

They occupied close to 60% of the Northern Continent. Sacrificing just 1% or 2% of the population would be enough to gain a tremendous power. If Jerem obtained the throne of Andras, Meltor would have to devastate Belfort with their full power right now.

With a cold light in his eyes, Crowd started to talk about the warlock, "Somehow, he knew my identity and looked for me. He thought I was a power-blinded traitor and said that we could control this Northern Continent if we joined hands."

"Hah, it isn't out of the question."

"If I were interested in necrophilia, I would've thought about it for five minutes."

Theodore laughed at Crowd's words. It was true, despite being a joke. If Crowd had concealed this fact and colluded with Jerem, most of Andras' population would be used as sacrifices for black magic. The Northern Continent would've turned to hell in one month, rather than the three months that Heathcliff had seen.

"But I didn't want to rule over rotten corpses, so I refused."

"Did he step back?"

“No way. He revealed his true colors on the spot. Vampires, banshees, and other things appeared behind him.” Crowd stroked his empty sheath and his eyes deepened as he looked back at the memories of that time.

After all, Jerem was a legend who had reached the status of the 9th circle. So, it was a terrible experience even for Crowd, who could be called the strongest swordsman of this era.

Crowd continued speaking in a much heavier tone, "Honestly, it was pretty dangerous. This is despite the fact that he was in a terrible state and I was in perfect condition. If my helper hadn’t arrived at that moment, it is likely that this meeting would’ve been canceled.”

“Helper?”

“Haven’t you seen him once? The bow master who possesses the ability of foresight, he helped me.

“Ah.” Theodore was convinced.

He had been wondering why the bow master hadn’t shown up with Invidia. If that person was Crowd’s helper, then it was natural that he wouldn’t join in on the wild suicide mission. For a mercenary, this was merely a contractual relationship. It was rare for mercenaries to accept a mission where they would die, even if they were paid for it.

As one knot unraveled in his head, Theodore asked another question, “So? Did you kill Jerem?”

“No, he ran away. Somehow, he couldn’t show off his full ability. It was clear that the longer the fight went on, more energy was being consumed. He held on for an hour before giving up.”

Theodore nodded. As Gluttony said, Jerem had suffered a deadly blow. Despite his opponent being inferior to him, Jerem had retreated because he couldn’t continue fighting. This meant Theodore could defeat Jerem now. Theodore had to quickly search

for Jerem while he wasn't in a perfect state.

"From now on, it is the main point." At this time, Crowd spoke with a serious expression. "In the process of trying to sway me, I was able to find out the warlock's intentions. I know what he is trying to do and where his next destination is."

"...Where?"

Theodore couldn't help reacting by leaning his upper body forward, which caused Crowd to smile.

"Heh. I can't tell you everything."

"What?"

"Now, let's start the agreement to end the war. I wonder what concessions I can get with this information."

Theodore lost his composure and raised his voice, "You are using information about Jerem to negotiate? Don't you know that neglecting him will cause a disaster for the entire continent?"

"I'm sorry, but we are also on the brink."

"Kuk...!"

It seemed that Crowd was already taking action as an emperor, regardless of how long it had been since he was crowned. The frustrated Theodore was forced to take a step back. Clearly, it was impossible to persuade the ruler of Andras, who sat on the throne of responsibility. Moreover, it wasn't Theodore or Veronica who was in charge of the negotiations but Orta.

"...Sigh. Then please do so, White Tower Master."

Orta nodded and replied, "Don't worry. Not everything will be decided with this agreement. Just think of it as the basis of diplomacy."

"Thank you."

"Still, it will take a few hours. I will try to conclude it as quickly

as possible." Orta sat facing Crowd on behalf of Theodore and pulled out the stack of documents he had prepared in advance.

From here on out, these would be the real negotiations.

How far would they go and what would they get? This was a battle that went beyond the military forces. Veronica hated the sight of documents, Randolph only knew the sword, and Theodore only had knowledge from the library, so it wasn't a struggle they could involve themselves in.

Three hours later…

"…This seems to be the primary agreement."

"I agree. I'm a little tired."

The two people—Crowd and White Tower Master Orta—talked in the same language, but the matters were so complicated that it was difficult to understand what they were saying.

The brief summary was as followed:

The designation and development of the trade zones, excluding some of the mines in Meltor's 30% territory that they obtained, would be divided into 5:5. Unlike the conditions in the first letter which were one-sidedly disadvantageous, Andras could get reasonable benefits.

"Okay, I will keep my promise." Crowd had a tired but satisfied face as he turned to Theodore. The half-dozing Veronica and Randolph woke up, and the story began again in earnest.

"He said he was heading to Lairon."

"Lairon, what purpose would a warlock have there?"

"I didn't hear that much. I just know it has something to do with the royal family. It sounds like Jerem is looking for something left from the old days."

"A warlock and a religious kingdom…"

It was incomprehensible, but Theodore was satisfied with the clue to Jerem's location. Theodore organized the information in his head and spoke to Crowd, who was still looking through the documents, "I have to ask. Will you help us capture him?"

"No," Crowd replied decisively. "I'm sorry, but I can't afford to act independently, regardless of my will. Don't you know that all of the empire's Seven Swords are dead except for me? I can't give up the role of the king to become support."

It was an answer that Theodore had expected.

"Then how about the bow master? If he is a mercenary, I will willing to pay appropriate compensation."

"That... He can't. I can't tell you everything, but he can't do it right now."

"Later is good. When he is free, tell me."

"...I will do so."

Thus, the conversation with Crowd was over. Turning his back to Crowd, Theodore faced the three people who were waiting for him. Orta asked Theodore a question first, "Now that the negotiations are over, what are you going to do?"

"Let's see... The negotiations went well, but it would be nice for me to stop by Lairon."

"Then what about Red Tower Master and Sir Clovis?"

Veronica and Randolph answered instantly.

"I will move with Theo."

"I don't want to go back without doing anything."

It was as expected. Orta sighed lightly and nodded to Theodore. As the negotiator of the contract, Orta was obliged to report to Kurt. Before flying away from the tower, Theodore briefly looked at Crowd.

A human born from a monster, who had become a king of humans...

“Crowd.”

Crowd faced Theodore without asking why.

“I feel like I won’t fight you again.”

“...Hut, what are you saying?”

An unknown consensus was formed between the two men involved in the Seven Sins.

Why...?

Somehow, Theodore could sense it. For the rest of his life, he would never fight this man. Theodore flew away from the tower convinced about this despite there being no basis for it.

That was the day when the unique empire of the West Continent disappeared.

*

Flash!

This time, light swirled in the sky. It was the principle when moving to a place where the coordinates weren’t clear or unknown.

Teleport to at least 100 meters up in the sky—this was the first advice that a magician learning space magic was taught, since it wouldn’t threaten the life of someone unlucky. Theodore had also learned the warning, so he set the farthest point in the sky as his arrival point, even if it was a place without humans.

“I don't know where this is. Theo, where is this place?” Veronica asked while floating in the air with magic.

It was unfamiliar terrain.

“It is the northwest part of the Soldun Kingdom. I’ve been here before in the past, so I remember the space coordinates.”

“Ah, you thought up to here? There are many places in Lairon where teleporting doesn’t work.”

“That’s right. They are wary and appearing suddenly can be considered a hostile act by the Meltor Kingdom.”

Theodore maintained the flying magic on Randolph while speaking. It was well known that the religious kingdom of Lairon hated magicians and magic. However, many people didn’t know that the temples scattered through the kingdom obstructed magic itself.

This was the power of a divine power barrier on a national scale.

Lairon didn’t have any physical defenses, but it was excellent for detecting elaborate teleportation or the activation of large spells. It was nothing they couldn’t break through with force, but it was better to avoid attracting attention until they knew where Jerem was.

‘I can’t let him run away.’

It had been a few centuries ago when warlocks were declared a public enemy of the continent, but they had still survived. This was because it was impossible to find a warlock when they were determined to hide. A 9th circle warlock could definitely conceal himself from the pursuit of Theodore, an 8th circle magician.

“Now, we should go north. In my memories, there should be a city…”

Then at that moment…

“Theo.”

“Hmm?”

“The north is that direction, right?” Randolph’s voice was low and heavy, causing Theodore to turn his eyes in that direction.

Then Theodore’s expression hardened. “…Smoke?”

The sky was turning black. It was evening, when the sun sank

toward the west and the moon rose. He thought the red light was from the sunset, but the dark light on the horizon wasn't from sunlight scattering. It was the color of a large amount of flames burning and gaining momentum.

'No, let's concentrate.' Theodore focused his five senses, and heard screams and the sounds of clashing metal.

It was clearly the noise of battle. Seeing his signal, the other two people prepared themselves for battle as they waited for Theodore to talk. Should they rush over and check it? He was too nervous about the disruption taking place in Lairon to leave it alone.

"Let's go."

Using flying magic, the three people quickly shot toward the west.

Chapter 306 - Lairon, the Last Day (1)

The speed of a sword master might be faster in comparison, but the effect of the terrain meant flying magic was more efficient when it came to traveling long distances. A wide line of sight was also something they naturally obtained at high altitudes.

The three people flew like arrows and could soon see the city in the distance.

It was the northwest frontier city in the Soldun Kingdom which was ruled by Earl Albert. In the last civil war, he had been someone on Elsid's side and Theodore had met him once. The shadows of the three people moved above the Albert estate before Theodore remembered his face. The Albert estate was precisely in the middle of the city, so they could look over the entire territory.

Theodore took a quick look through Albert City.

"It is a mess."

There were flames, smoke, and people running away in every direction.

"The direction of the attack is from the north. The situation is too strange for it to be Lairon invading. The walls haven't collapsed yet, so why are there disturbances inside the city-"

"...Theo," Veronica spoke in a growl-like voice, "Move your gaze higher and look again. It seems like we've stepped on the tail of that bastard."

"What?" Theodore followed Veronica's advice. He triggered Hawkeye, and the shapes of those who seemed smaller than ants were immediately clear.

On the street stained with blood, a man was chasing after someone and roughly biting him in the neck. The person had his artery torn, and he fell to the ground, taking his last breath. It was a disastrous death, but that wasn't the end. As blood poured from

the torn neck, the victim became the offender. He had become a zombie, the most common and terrible representation of the undead.

“Undead! Are they the infectious type?” Theodore’s eyes widened as he saw the situation.

The familiars of the warlocks, the undead could be divided into two major types—manufactured and infectious.

The manufactured type of undead were made directly by the warlock’s magic power, while the undead made indirectly were classified as infectious type. They were killed by other undead or under the influence of special black infectious magic.

‘Of course, the manufactured type are dominant. However, the danger of the infectious type isn’t in the strength of an individual.’

One zombie would kill one citizen. Then two zombies would kill two citizens. The four zombies would then attack four citizens… In less than half a day, more than a thousand undead would turn this territory into a cemetery. This was the terrible part of the infectious undead and what caused a necromancer to be called the worst warlock.

However, Theodore remained calm as he looked at the ground. The infection was obviously a threat, but each individual undead wasn’t strong. It was possible for an army with a proper defensive line to take care of them. In fact, the soldiers of Albert City were blocking the undead from outside the walls.

The damage inside the city wasn’t small, but there was a defensive line, as well as guards leading out the survivors. It might be impossible to win, but they could hold on for a few hours.

‘…Nevertheless, this situation is weird.’ Theodore felt a sense of discomfort again. ‘There are a few high-level undead that appear to be giving commands, but it isn’t very organized. No matter how hurt he is, a 9th circle warlock wouldn’t be so disorderly.’

Was this a pandemic to increase his power? No, if he wanted that, Jerem would've moved faster and more secretly. It was a mistake to draw attention with the low-level undead and attract variables such as Theodore. Did he want to tie up Theodore?

"Theo, what do you want to do?"

They couldn't just continue watching from above. Theodore was troubled for a moment, but there was no choice. If he passed by Albert City, they wouldn't see tomorrow's sun. Theodore couldn't sacrifice those lives for his own convenience. If Theodore were such a person, god-king Nuada wouldn't have responded to his summoning in the first place.

"Randolph, go to the eastern section of the city and help the guards evacuate the survivors."

"I understand. What about you?"

Theodore smiled at the question and looked playfully at Veronica. "What is the red tower's 8th commandment?"

"Huh? A good warlock is a dead warlock?"

"Then the 10th one?"

"Aha, whether it is one hundred or one thousand people, wipe them all out!"

It was a reckless strategy, but it was different when it involved two 8th circle magicians. Each of them was a one-man army. For the strong who suppressed the battlefield, a group of undead was just like scarecrows to them.

"I understand. Please don't get carried away," Randolph said half-heartedly and fell to the ground without hesitation. Blindly fired magic was, after all, more terrifying than thousands of undead.

The height of the fall was quite high, but a sword master didn't have to worry. Randolph stably landed on a building, while the

two magicians split their roles.

“Veronica, I will take care of the city.”

“Okay, then I’m outside? I was a bit worried, but now I can let it all out!”

It was as she said. Veronica’s magic, which specialized in large-scale destruction, was difficult to demonstrate inside a city. If the attack magic hit the wrong place once, a disaster worse than zombies would occur. Even magicians who reached the 8th circle had some parts they were inexperienced with.

“Theo! Let’s bet on who will finish first!” Veronica created flaming wings behind her and headed towards her destination.

She exceeded the speed of sound. There was a sonic boom, and a few clouds were torn apart. Veronica was always like a storm. Theodore gazed at Veronica’s back before looking down. ‘…The west part of the city is already doomed. The center and south parts still have many survivors. I will focus on them.’

The survivors who were being surrounded by the undead took precedence. The eight circles inside Theodore’s body started rotating.

Huuuuuuong! His circles roared.

In retrospect, this was the first time he had used all eight circles. Theodore had a lot more magic power reserves than any other magician. As his circles increased in capacity, Theodore’s magic power became strong enough to be compared to when Veronica awakened her dragon heart. Then what magic was he going to use with this magic power?

“Lucete!” Theodore cried out with a loud voice.

Memorize.

All Slots Open.

Octuple Casting.

He had never tried this before! An enormous power soared, and the space around Theodore was greatly distorted. From that distortion, a light was born.

‘Success!’

Based on the name, they were concentrated arrows of light! These were from the debris of divinity that Nuada left behind back when he was summoned not long ago. A simple flame couldn’t completely stop the undead’s regenerative abilities. It needed the power of a god, who was the enemy of all undead and black magic.

Wuuong-Wuuong- Wuuong-Wuuong—

Every time the golden arrows appeared, darkness retreated from the night sky. Just like the sun rising again, this light spread all over the sky.

10, 20, 100, 200…

At first, Theodore intended to shoot moderately. However, he was soon forced to change his mind. He had made close to 1,000 arrows, but he still had room for more.

“Won’t I clean all of this up at once?” With bemused eyes, Theodore watched the resplendent scene he had created.

Kieeeek? Kieeek?

Kieeeeeeek!

Grrrrr…! Grr…kuk…

Every time the divine light swept through, the undead melted like candles. The zombies couldn’t endure it for even a moment and were burned. There weren’t many senior undead, but they also stopped moving, unable to ignore the effects of the light.

Theodore didn’t know that this magic, which mimicked Nuada’s true light wave, would exert this much power.

‘It might be the aftermath of Mitra turning into a goddess for a moment. Won’t this be enough to be effective against Jerem…?’

Theodore pondered it while Albert city was filled with silence. Standing in the middle of the golden sky, Theodore's figure looked holy. Some people fell to their knees, while others stared blankly at the sky. Theodore slowly raised his left hand and cried out, "Go."

There was a shower of golden arrows toward the city. It was divine punishment. Later, people would recall the scene. Someone had appeared in the sky surrounded by holy light, and they had poured out a brilliant shower of light to destroy the blasphemous existences.

More than 1,000 arrows pierced the undead. This was sufficient. It might be different for a death knight or lich, but these undead couldn't resist the brilliant light. They were like ice melting in the scorching summer sun. Only the undead were annihilated, with no harm being done to the living.

After the golden shower, there wasn't one undead left inside Albert city.

"...It looks like I won the bet." Theodore shrugged as he thought about how he'd made Randolph run around for nothing.

Theodore had reached the 8th circle through many twists and turns. He had only just progressed, but he realized that his magic had become several times more powerful. 'Theodore Miller' was the name of a great magician who could now be counted in the top three of the entire continent.

"Hmm?" At that moment, one undead caught his attention.

Chapter 307 - Lairon, the Last Day (2)

“Priest clothing?” Theodore thought he was mistaken at first.

He rubbed his eyes and looked again, but there was no difference. The white robe with the golden trim was definitely the clothing worn by priests of Lairon. Moreover, the undead wasn’t a zombie or a ghoul. It was a lich, something that was only possible when a magician with considerable abilities was turned into an undead. Therefore, the lich wasn’t completed burned away when struck by Theodore’s magic. It still had half its body left.

‘No matter how I think about it, something is strange.’ Theodore shook his head while sensing a strange incongruity. ‘An undead can’t disguise as a priest. Additionally, shouldn’t it have burned immediately when touched by divine power? If so, perhaps a priest was turned into a lich…’

It still didn’t make sense. The knowledge remaining in his head from Jerem stated that it was impossible. The gods, the guardians of the physical world, were the natural enemy of all warlocks. Just like how it had been when Jerem faced the lower god Mitra, the presence of any being under the influence of a god couldn’t be turned into an undead. Lairon might be a fake god, but his followers had real divine power.

Furthermore, it was a priest, not a magician, who had been turned into a lich…? The possibility of the Jerem succeeding in this difficult task was close to zero, let alone infection type undead.

“I have to go and check it.”

In any case, all the undead inside the city were now destroyed. The lich was barely breathing, and Theodore had nothing left to do. So, he quickly descended to the ground. As several buildings caught on fire, the magician in red robes stood on the bloodstained ground.

Tak.

The lich was collapsed like a rag at his feet. It really was a priest's clothing. The luxurious cloth and gold decorations were the result of extracting the blood and sweat of the people. Disgust boiled up inside Theodore as he walked over.

"Hey, can you hear what I am saying?" As he took exactly three steps forward, Theodore spoke to the lich.

The lich was an undead human type and still had intelligence. If the consciousness still remained in the body, it would be able to talk for a moment before its destruction. Where did it come from? Who caused this? Theodore didn't have any big expectations. However, if he could resolve one question, it might become the clue to this mysterious situation.

"...K...u...ah...." The lich couldn't even make a sound.

Theodore sighed and stretched out his right hand, sending a small stream of magic power into the lich. It wasn't enough to restore the body, but it should be able to speak.

"Answer me. What is your name?"

The lich's jawbones opened, and it replied, "...Great, Lairon... 2nd grade priest... Verm-ud..."

"Vermud," Theodore repeated. He realized the authenticity of the words and quickly asked, "Vermud. Are you a priest? Or a magician?"

"...I... am! Insult, me...! Lairon, ser...vant, for life..."

"Damn! It isn't a lie."

Theodore got the answer he wanted, but he couldn't help cursing. He had hoped that the original body was someone who had stolen the clothing, but his expectations weren't rewarded. Instead, a senior priest of Lairon had been turned into an undead.

It was hard to understand, but his brain had come up with the

worst causal relationship. ‘Dammit, maybe Lairon is already…’

While Theodore was busy worrying, the lich ran out of magic power and started to shake.

“Kuock! Ku…oh, ohhhh! Kuwoooook…!”

The body, that didn’t have any flesh left, popped up. The priest’s clothing was torn in the struggle, and an eerie sound was made. Then it happened when Theodore was about to end the situation quickly.

“…Great, Lai… Lairon…!” The undead priest, Vermud started to scream. “Why…? Your servant, casting me into the darkness… Have you forsaken meeeee?!”

With that last scream, he finally died. The ashes that piled up inside the clothing were the last traces left of Vermud in this material world. It was impossible for him to even be buried. However, it wasn’t Vermud’s death that caused a chill to go down Theodore’s spine.

“Lairon, forsaken…?”

Vermud’s last cry stimulated Theodore’s super sensitivity. He didn’t know why, but it was like a hammer had hit the back of his head. Theodore stood amongst the flames and saw signs of the undead that were wiped out with his arrows. Farmer’s clothing, soldier’s clothing, blacksmith’s clothing…

The type of jobs could be distinguished, but they all seemed to be clothing from Lairon.

Chill.

Maybe the worst case scenario that he had imagined—

“Theo! All the ones outside the city were cleaned up!” At that time, Veronica’s voice rang out from the distant sky.

“That was fast. There were at least 2,000–3,000 of them,” Theodore muttered with a wry smile.

Of course, Veronica would've found it easier than fighting in the streets. He watched Veronica in the sky and soon heard the cheers of a crowd. Perhaps the guards that Randolph had joined would recognize the situation.

'Well, I guess I need to talk to Earl Albert.'

Regardless of whether he was right or wrong, the impact of this situation wouldn't end with one kingdom. It was a disaster that could spread to more than half of the Central Continent. If the initial response was incorrect, tens of thousands of lives could be lost.

In order to properly communicate the seriousness, it needed the guarantee of someone with credibility... like a great magician whose reputation was known through the continent and who had a friendship with the royal family.

"...Let's go." Theodore left the remains of Lich Vermud, who had once been a priest, and flew off.

*

"I sincerely thank you for your help, Sir Theodore! I can never repay this grace!" Earl Albert cried out tearfully as he held both of Theodore's hands.

As a lord of a border area, his great physique and refined power showed he was a well-trained aura user. It wasn't enough to reach the level of a master, but he was still an expert. Most of the wreckage around here was the result of his cooperation with Randolph.

"It is nothing, Earl Albert. I happened upon this disaster by chance and did what any ally would do."

"Ohh, so modest at such a young age! I have seen the true colors of the hero whom I've only heard about in rumors."

Theodore barely managed to calm down the tearful Earl Albert and asked him a few questions.

“The raid of the undead definitely started last night,” Earl Albert clenched his fists and lowered his voice the moment he was asked when the attack had begun.

He was filled with a murderous intent to break the bones of the absent warlock.

The noble of the Soldun Kingdom spread cold energy all over the place as he told the story. “At first, I wasn’t afraid. However, they kept coming every minute. After killing one hundred, one thousand more arrived. After the one thousand, there were more… My soldiers aren’t weak, but in that situation, they could not breathe even for a moment. Some undead managed to cross the walls.”

“Then we arrived.”

“Yes! That is what happened. I sent a messenger shortly after sunrise, but it will take at least two more days for a reply to come. If you hadn’t helped, this territory…!”

Theodore appeased the frenzied Earl Albert again and asked for a place to talk with his two companions. The next task was done swiftly. Earl Albert’s soldiers quickly set up a barrack for the three people to stay in. In retrospect, it wasn't unusual. They had appeared from the sky, saving the soldiers from tens of thousands of undead. So, this reaction wasn’t unusual.

In the comfortably furnished barrack, the three people sat around a round table and started a serious meeting. Of course, the leader was Theodore, and he immediately pulled out a piece of parchment.

“Randolph.”

“Hmm?”

The pen moved quickly in Theodore’s hand, and he soon finished writing a letter.

“Remain in the Soldun Kingdom and send this letter to King

Elsid. Randolph is known to Marquis Piris—no, Duke Piris and the king, so they will listen to you."

"Then what about Lairon? Will you go with Veronica?"

"Yes."

He felt sorry for Randolph, but the speed at which senior magicians could move was beyond imagination. No matter how fast a sword master was, his aura was finite. It would be too late if he flew with both of them. It was better to leave Randolph in the Soldun Kingdom to prepare the defenses.

"Additionally, it is highly likely that we can't pass through Lairon by land. I need to get to the capital of Lairon quickly."

"Huh? How come?"

This time, both Veronica and Randolph were confused. The defenses of Lairon were strict, but they weren't able to stop a sword master. Even if he needed to hurry, why not use the land route instead of taking the risk of leaving a master behind? Theodore looked at them and opened his mouth once he confirmed there was no one around. "Sigh, it is likely that Lairon has been destroyed already. Any cities that are still intact will probably be covered with millions of undead."

"...What?"

"Among the undead that attacked the Albert territory, there was one wearing priest's clothing. It was a lich, not a zombie or a ghoul."

"What?! This is nonsense!" Randolph had no knowledge of magic and was confused.

However, Veronica was well aware of the meaning and felt astounded. To think that the worshipper of a god, who couldn't become an undead, had actually become a senior undead? Moreover, there had been the scream that Lairon had forsaken them. Additionally, although he hadn't told anyone yet, Theodore

had some other clues about this situation.

「The worshipper of death hides.」

「The shadow of the false god is lifted.」

What would remain if the shadow was lifted? Light? No. There was nothing left once the shadow was gone. If the god of the Lairon church had 'disappeared', it wouldn't be impossible for priests to become undead.

'No, it would be fortunate if Lairon just disappeared.'

In the worst case situation that Theodore couldn't speak of aloud, it was possible that a demon was buried behind the mask of the false god. If a god had turned into a demon, then a priest would become a warlock. The servants of a god would turn into the servants of a demon.

[Lairon] was a name that unified the kingdom, and if this unity were used...

Over 10 million undead and a kingdom of death could be born in one morning.

Chapter 308 - Lairon, the Last Day (3)

Kwarururung! A thunderous rumble rang out in the middle of the city.

The bell tower was hit by blue lightning and collapsed. There was also a statue made by many sculptors, as well as a hall where people sat and listened to the word of God. Debris scattered every time the lightning struck. In order to resist this ruthless destruction, a power equivalent to it was needed.

However, the city didn't have the strength to resist the invaders. The invaders appeared in the sky without any warning, and poured fire and lightning from it, burying the inhabitants under the ruins of the buildings. This power which treated humans as ants contained explosive power comparable to that of natural disasters.

Nevertheless, there were no casualties caused by this disaster. He couldn't describe people who had already died a while ago as being killed once again.

'Damn. Even if that is the case, it doesn't feel good.'

From amidst the clouds in the sky, Theodore looked down at the ground with bitter eyes. The zombies and ghouls had been humans not long ago. Theodore buried them under the dirt and destroyed the ground where they had lived. In his mind, he knew that this was something necessary, but he couldn't stop the negative emotions rising inside him.

Kwaaaaang!

There was a similar explosion in the distance. Buildings collapsed, and flames rose into the clouds. The person who caused this heat quickly flew in Theodore's direction. With red robe and red hair, the magician—Veronica—stopped near Theodore. "Phew, is this the 13th one? Are you almost done?"

"...I cut all the big branches. The undead won't spread any more and clearing the rest will be left to the others," Theodore spoke in a dry voice. "The great magic circle that covers all of Lairon... Based on the churches in each estate, the consciousness of the living dead spreads like a spider web. Certainly, the idea and structure of it is genius. However, it is hard to defend if it is too big."

It had been four days since Theodore and Veronica entered Lairon after leaving the Albert territory. If they had been flying in a straight line, it would've taken less than a day. However, they had chosen to go around to some territories instead of going straight to the divine king's palace.

That was due to the large amount of magic power consumed by flying at high speed, as well as something they realized while crossing the kingdom. It was the ritual magic, Pluto's Palace. This magic existed in the knowledge that Jerem left behind in Theodore. A necromancer had set a range for the spell, and all creatures inside it couldn't resist the magic, turning into undead. According to records, it was a massive black magic spell that ranged from an area of tens of square meters to hundreds of square kilometers depending on the caster's abilities.

'I've somewhat grasped it now. The false god, Lairon's identity... Additionally, the magic circle of living dead that reversed their faith.'

Theodore still couldn't be certain, but he considered his speculation as fact.

After all, he was the magician who knew more about the Age of Mythology than anyone else currently alive and who also had a contract with an ancient elemental. In the process, Theodore had trained his intuitive powers, including his super sensitivity.

'The remains of the light are probably a god that has died, an expression signifying a divinity that has lost its master.'

A divinity without a master was innocuous by itself, but it changed when it became the possession of another being. Using an analogy, the churches in each Lairon estate were wells, and the divinity was the source of water flowing into the wells. If Jerem became the master of that divinity, Lairon would become a demon and the water would be poisoned. Those who wanted their god's blessing would fall prey to the black magic at once.

Then Veronica spoke to the worried Theodore, "Well, isn't that why we went after the weaknesses? Even if we can't pull out the roots, we can hit the branches. By destroying all the points of the magic circle that are nodes, the situation won't worsen."

"But it isn't a solution. We need to go to the divine king's palace in order to resolve this completely."

Cutting off the thick branches could prevent the growth of twigs, but if the roots remained, the branches would just grow again. In the end, they needed to destroy the magic circle that was maintaining the roots—Pluto's Palace. It was obvious that the magic circle was probably at the center of the kingdom, the divine king's palace that was the symbol of the church.

The place where the 'remains of the light' that Heathcliff had predicted was also likely to be at the divine king's palace.

"...Veronica, what is the condition of your body?"

"Yes?" Veronica cocked her head at the abrupt question of concern.

"From now on, I'm going to increase the speed. If possible, I would like to arrive at the divine king's castle by sunset today. Is that okay?"

Theodore didn't need to hurry so much, but there was a small possibility that the great magic circle would go out of control. No, it was highly possible if Jerem had predicted this situation.

"Ha! Do you know who you are asking?" Veronica's robe moved

in the wind as she puffed up his chest.

The sunlight behind her illuminated the shade of her robe, making the curves of her sensual body more defined. It was unknown if Veronica saw Theodore's red face or not as she smiled confidently.

"I'm Veronica. It was when I was younger, but I am the magician who crossed the continent using flying magic. The distance to the divine king's castle is 200 kilometers? I can arrive there in an hour and still have enough magic power to fight."

"T-That is reassuring." Theodore's eyes were drawn elsewhere before he nodded and turned around.

He was a magician of the 8th circle, making it possible for him to fly as fast as Veronica. So, he didn't need to fly in her arms like he used to. However, Theodore was soon grabbed by a pair of arms. "Veronica...?"

Veronica deliberately pressed herself against his back and whispered in his ear, "By the way, Theo, do you want me to teach you one thing?"

"What?"

"Women are very sensitive to the eyes of men. Just before, it was like my skin was being licked... If you look at someone like that, most reactions are divided into two types."

If they didn't like the person, it would be severe discomfort. Or—

"—Are you trying to test my patience?"

The atmosphere would heat up if they liked the person. Veronica's golden eyes were like molten iron. Having a red dragon's blood meant she was easily swept up by emotions, and passion boiled in her body.

"I will accept it anytime if you ask me. But Theo isn't ready yet. So, you should be careful, yes?"

“…I understand.”

“This is the punishment.”

Immediately after that, flaming wings appeared behind Veronica.

“Be in this state until we reach the divine king’s palace, okay?”

Theodore had no choice but to nod. His answer wouldn’t make a difference.

*

It took exactly one hour for them to reach the divine king’s palace. Even a well-trained horseman would take four hours to travel 200 kilometers, and a hippogriff, famous for its speed, would take two hours. With Veronica’s magic, Blaze Wing, they traveled at a speed that was made possible by releasing the innate natural power of fire to obtain a tremendous momentum.

“Ah, we’ve arrived.” Veronica slowed down and looked at the grounds of the divine king’s palace.

Theodore was then released from her arms. He looked around him with a bit of regret.

‘This is the capital of Lairon, the divine king’s palace?’

It was the first time he had seen it. In the books, it had been described as a city made of pure white marble that shone with a divine golden light. There were many people who didn’t like the Lairon Church and the kingdom, but there was no one who didn’t admire it.

“In my eyes, it looks like the palace from a storybook.”

Theodore was half joking and half serious. His spiritual vision saw a mysterious energy rising from the palace into the sky. The smooth white walls and shining gates were intact, but the ones guarding them were undead. There was a red light that shone wickedly in the dark fog, making it a land of death.

It was a castle of the dead that denied access to the living. The

concentration of black magic here was incomparable to how it had been in all the other territories Theodore and Veronica traveled to previously. The vegetation that stretched out for several kilometers around the castle was dry and dead, while uninjured beasts were rotting.

"Theo, how many enemies do you detect?"

"...I don't see any signs of Jerem or the four horsemen. There are at least 100,000 undead. There are at least 1,000 intermediate undead. This scale is equivalent to 100 units."

Theodore used Mitra and Hugin to accurately determine how many undead were in the castle. What about at the center of the magic circle? There were 13 senior undead and 1,000 intermediate undead that could function as command objects. The number of undead gathered here would be enough to wipe out one or two small countries.

"What should we do?"

"Um." Theodore was troubled for a moment. "Well, it shouldn't be a problem."

"Right?"

They were unexplained words. The two magicians exchanged words and stepped forward carelessly. It was a cool stride as they stood shoulder to shoulder. They were master class magicians that dominated the mana around them. Once the two 8th circle magicians approached, the black magic was pushed back like a wave.

Huuuuuuong!

That change immediately attracted the attention of the undead occupying the castle. The skeleton archers on the walls loaded their poison arrows, while the lich created dozens of fireballs. They intended to launch the attacks as soon as the enemies came into range.

Then the two magicians stopped walking.

“Me first? Or you?”

“At the same time. The walls look quite thick.”

“But I think it is overkill. Well, okay.”

Theodore looked in the same direction and started rotating his eight circles. In any case, there were no survivors inside. Furthermore, there was no way for the Lairon Kingdom to revive now that it had been completely destroyed. He should destroy the enemies as efficiently as possible.

Memorize.

Three Slots Open.

That was enough. Theodore calculated the walls of the divine king’s palace and the destructive power needed. Veronica also called upon her own unique magic, the Explosion Sword.

“Lightning Spear Keraunos.”

Theodore cried out.

The 7th circle lightning magic, named after the weapon of the ancient god, appeared next to Theodore.

Paijijik! Pajik! Pajijijik!.

One spear had dozens of lightning bolts compressed in it.

Due to the nature of lightning, the range was somewhat lacking compared to Veronica’s Explosion Sword. However, the intensity of the power concentrated on one point was more overwhelming than Explosion Sword. Even if it was blocked by a titanium shield, the spear would still penetrate the shield.

It was attack magic which walls that lacked divine power wouldn’t be able to withstand.

“This is why I said it was overkill,” Veronica grumbled while lining up three swords near Theodore.

There was a total of six weapons. The swords made of fire and the lightning aimed at the castle. In the aftermath, the ground melted and the atmosphere became heated, creating a haze around the two magicians. They breathed out and cried almost simultaneously.

“Go!”“Fire!”

At the same time, the six spells shot forward.

Kuooooh!

The lightning turned into a ray of light and traveled over the ground, creating a strong wind. It burned those it passed by, while the wind swirled like a storm, causing a lot of dust to rise. This terrible phenomenon was trivial compared to the real attack.

Six strands of light flashed in succession! This was the only precursor to the swords and lightning striking the divine king’s castle. Then they landed.

————————————————————!!!

There was a loud roar, and the walls guarding the heart of the kingdom were shattered horribly. The broken stone fragments evaporated on the spot, and the undead courageously blocking the two magicians crumbled. It was a blow that signaled the end of the Lairon Kingdom, of those who borrowed the god’s power without knowing the true story.

Chapter 309 - Lairon, the Last Day (4)

Kwaaaang!

The two magicians appeared in the wreckage. They weren't affected by the enormous heat and pressure, or the air-deprived environment.

Magic power barrier—it was one of the basics for magicians who circulated magic power within their body. The magic power repeatedly circulated in the owner's body, with the centrifugal force creating an invisible protective film on the skin.

Of course, the basic defense wasn't great, and it would be difficult to block a few arrows with the barrier of a 4th circle magician. It meant it wasn't a technique that could be used in practice. However, that common sense was turned upside down at the 8th circle.

'Indeed, Veronica's phenomenal durability is the result of applying the low magic power barrier.' Theodore admired it as he watched Veronica's back.

He studied the application of the magic power barrier. The magic power circulation in Veronica's body was accelerated several times, amplifying the magnitude of the centrifugal force that formed the magic power barrier. The innate blood of a dragon, combined with high magic power concentration, would've increased the intensity even further.

In fact, Veronica occasionally had a red haze around her body. It was because her magic power was so concentrated that the magic barrier could be seen.

"How is it? Isn't it fairly good?" Veronica taught Theodore how to do it and looked around at the city in front of them.

Over the wall that had been destroyed by magic, the view of the divine king's palace was revealed. The city was filled with dried

blood, stinking pus, and traces of undead.

“Look here… Hah, is there a need to look so closely? That big building is the church of the divine king’s palace. A place where people who want to live a pure life enjoy the doctrines.”

“Certainly. It is tall enough to be seen from the outside… There would be no building taller than the church. To put it bluntly, it is like their god is looking down on them.”

It was a common guide everywhere. The people shouldn’t have a building larger than the royal family, and a person who wasn’t a lord shouldn’t have private property larger than a barrack. The authority of Lairon was absolute, so it wasn’t possible to have a building that was taller and larger than the church.

‘Well, it isn’t possible to mistake it.’ Theodore stared coldly at the headquarters of the divine king’s palace that rose in the distance. Other people might not know it, but his eyes couldn’t be fooled. Black magic power was swirling in the city, and the source of the evil power was that building. It was like an open door to an abyss where evil spilled out. The chill it produced was frightening, and Theodore’s hair became damp with sweat.

It was fortunate that he noticed the crisis, but his instincts as a living creature refused to approach.

“…Veronica!” Nevertheless, Theodore shook off the instincts and cried out. “Don’t mind the small fries! Give priority to the destruction of the great magic circle and head straight to the main building!”

“Ahahaha! That is my Theodore!” Veronica responded in a joyful voice and started to take in a deep breath.

A gust of wind was sucked into her mouth. Theodore knew what this deep breath meant and quickly created an ice barrier. It had far greater power than the magic that drove the stage 4 Pride away. This was Dragon Breath.

————————————————!!!

There were burning sounds as flames emerged from Veronica's lips and shot forward without interruption. The power of a protective water cover was meaningless! All the buildings and undead in its path were swallowed up as the flames rushed toward the headquarters. Soon, the building, which had a long history in Lairon, would turn to ash. It was at this moment that…

"This…!" Theodore shouted without hiding his dismay.

The moment that Veronica's breath hit the main building, a swirl of black magic power spread out against the heat. It was a storm of black magic power that was comparable—no, even stronger than the breath! Did it know that the Dragon Breath would occur?

No, it was because Lairon couldn't ignore the possibility of an outside attack. There was always a chance that great magic would be used against the kingdom of Lairon. Once the flames went out, the main building of the divine king's palace stayed standing without a single sign of damage. This was a defense that could block even the powerful breath of an 8th circle magician…

'At least the road to the main building is open. If we can't break it from a distance, we will go inside and break it.'

It was as Theodore thought. The trail of the Dragon Breath had created a shortcut to the main building. There wasn't a single bone fragment left in the path that the fire had passed through.

Papat!

The two magicians flew through the flames without needing to share their opinions. One was a quarter red dragon and the other was a magician who had the power of Laevateinn. They weren't the type of people who could be hurt by the fire. However, it wasn't just the flames that interfered with the two people.

[…Grr, grrr…r…Lai…ronnnn!]

"Living… the dead, I will, lead…."

“Repent, unbelievers trapped in a poor life!”

The skeleton type senior undead, bone warlords… The evil spirits that hadn’t been able to become death knights, the doom knights… The elder lich that Theodore had met once a long time ago… These high-level undead that could withstand the aftermath of Dragon Breath were flocked here in the double digits. They were designated as level 3 risks by the Magic Society.

It was a terrifying scene of fear.

“…Eh?” Theodore realized that he didn’t feel any tension at all.

The bone warlords, doom knights, and elder lich… All the undead were at danger level 3, but Theodore’s super sensitivity was as calm as a lake on a clear day. He had no worries at all. His concentration of the moment drew up into a new ground.

‘Forced Harmonization.’

As a doom knight’s blade headed toward him…

Integrated Dual Attributes.

Lightning and Wind.

Lightning Vortex.

Theodore blended the wind and lightning attributes in his body. He hadn’t tried it before, but he felt confident that he could do it. It might’ve failed if it was fire and water. However, it wasn’t difficult for Theodore to mix lightning and wind.

Shaaack! The doom knight’s sharp scimitar cut at Theodore’s torso. From the left clavicle to the right rib, it was a diagonal slash that would cause a serious injury. For some reason, the sensation against its hand was faint, but the doom knight shivered from the pleasure of killing the living. It was only a short time before Theodore’s fist, which had turned into a lightning storm, flew forward.

Kwarururung! There was a thunderous explosion.

Theodore's fist shattered the doom knight, and the debris of its armor struck the bone warlord behind it. Then blue lightning rushed forward and swallowed several undead. It was literally a storm lightning fist! Theodore was like both a gust of wind and a lightning storm as he moved. In addition to his high destructive power, his attack speed was too fast. Master level aura users couldn't respond to it, let alone the doom knights. This was the strength of the integrated attributes.

'I alone am enough!'

Theodore was confident in his own strength and shouted, "Veronica, this time I will lead!"

"Okay, show me how cool you are!"

By the moment she replied, Theodore was already a few hundred meters away. This speed didn't just apply to his body.

'The whole world seems to stop…'

It felt like a normal one second had been increased to one minute. There was even the illusion that his frontal lobe was spinning and his head became hot. Theodore's thoughts were quick due to the acceleration. The result of adding acceleration to his already genius brain was truly frightening.

'Decuple Casting.'

10 magic circles simultaneously appeared around Theodore's body. The ten circles faced every direction and shone with a golden light. This was a magic circle that imitated the divine power of Nuada Airgetlám, a power that was deadly to all undead.

Hwaaack!

A loud explosion wasn't necessary. Rather, a genuine light beam emerged. The skull of the bone warlord, which was comparable to adamantium, was crushed by the light. The undead didn't have vocal organs, so they couldn't even scream loudly at their ends.

“Kyaaaack!”

“I…trans-cend…death…!”

The banshees screamed as they were burned, and even the immortal elder lich couldn’t bear the divine brilliance. By complementing the scarce divine power with his magic power, Theodore’s pure light wave swept through the crowd of senior undead. He looked like one of the mighty warriors from the fairy tales, a hero who wielded light itself.

“—Wow, cool.” Veronica looked at Theodore’s back with glazed eyes and licked her lips.

The blood of an arrogant red dragon didn’t allow her to pay attention to the weak. Only the strongest who could threaten her life were qualified to be an adversary or a friend. The same was true for a companion, which could be considered an equal relationship.

‘Huhu, this is the second time now.’

They moved through the land filled with undead and soon arrived at the main building. However, the two people stopped walking at almost the same time. Anyone would worry when facing an unforeseen crossroad. It might be different for a common crossroads, but they had to decide if they should go up or down.

Theodore looked at the choices carefully.

‘This is a problem.’

The luxurious church in the capital was 40 floors high, and it also had a deep basement. This meant it had a total of 60 floors. It would likely take a long amount of time to cover these, especially when taking Jerem’s unknown plan into consideration.

Should they go up or down? The place where the core of the magic circle was contained was either the top floor or the bottom most floor. A warlock would usually think about the basement, but Theodore couldn’t base a decision on a stereotype.

Either way, it was necessary to investigate both. In this case, the two people had to separate.

“I’ll go to the top. Personally, the basement is a little stuffy for me,” Veronica chose her direction first.

So, Theodore naturally went down to the basement. He decided it without any clues. The two magicians discussed the signals they would send to each other if it was necessary, then they separated. One climbed the staircase to the top, while the other headed to the basement lit with torches.

*

“...Strange,” Theodore muttered as he was three floors away from the very bottom of the church.

He stopped for a moment and placed a hand on the wall. The air was too mild to contain the core of the black magic circle, Pluto’s Palace, that had already destroyed the kingdom. There were hardly any remnants of black magic on the walls, and there were no undead blocking him.

The basement of this building felt like a different place. The mana in the basement was calm, so he couldn’t feel anything with his super sensitivity.

Theodore started moving again and descended two more floors. Finally, he reached the deepest part of the building. In the end, Theodore didn’t encounter any undead, and the door on the bottom floor was unlocked. It was an ordinary sliding door that could be opened with a push.

‘There might be a trap... My senses are still quiet. Let’s get some help from this guy.’

Theodore summoned a knight from his inventory. It was the sword master automaton, Gladio. It was still damaged from the previous battle, but Gladio was capable of taking the lead.

“Open the door.”

Gladio pushed hard at the door.

Rattle. Then the door opened.

Theodore was filled with tension, but there was no danger in the room revealed. He sighed lightly and recalled Gladio back to the inventory. His tension disappeared and curiosity filled the gap.

‘There is no black magic, traps, or locks. I don’t know what this place is used for.’

This was the main church of the divine king’s palace, so it shouldn’t be a useless place, even if it was 20 floors underground. Theodore took a step forward.

“Hmm?”

There were no lighting devices in the room. This was a room that didn’t have torches or magic balls… so why was Theodore able to see clearly inside it? The reason for that was at the center of the room. Theodore’s eyes widened as he saw it, and he muttered in a cold voice, “…Coffin?”

The answer was the huge coffin filling the room. It glowed with a golden divine light which served as the lighting.

‘The remains of light,’ a phrase from the prophecy came to Theodore’s mind.

Chapter 310 - Lairon, the Last Day (5)

‘Don’t tell me…’

Were the remains of the divinity, the cornerstone of the Lairon Church, sleeping in the golden coffin? Theodore kept moving while feeling dubious. The closer he got, the more the light pulled down at his boundaries. This divine light that warmed the living didn’t seem like Jerem’s trap.

Once he got within a short distance of the golden coffin, Theodore was able to see an unexpected sight.

“Well, there is no reason to leave the contents.”

The inside of the golden coffin was empty. The lid was already open, and there was a shape engraved inside as proof that something had been there. Based on the marks, the owner of this golden coffin would’ve been a man with a height of two meters who had thin limbs.

Since a typical god clan was larger than an ordinary human, this golden coffin was likely a divine relic that housed the ‘remains of the light.’ The coffin might contain some clues. Theodore carefully looked around the golden coffin and found the blurred outline of letters on the inside.

The production date of this relic was at least 3,000 years old. The carved letters were worn out, but the traces attracted Theodore’s eyes. They weren’t ordinary letters. There was a sense of incongruity when he followed it with his fingers. His head tilted as he faced the unknown phrase.

‘What? I can’t physically recognize the characters?’

His optic nerve didn’t respond. As soon as he cut off the magic power flowing to his eyes, the blurred letters disappeared without a trace. It meant they were letters that couldn’t be seen with ordinary people's eyes.

“Gluttony.”

-Umm.

If there was something they didn’t know, don’t hesitate to ask. This was the philosophy of all magicians. Theodore woke up Gluttony. Unsurprisingly, Gluttony replied readily, -Hoh, it has been a while since I’ve seen divine letters.

“Divine letters? Are they letters of the god clan?”

-That’s right. It is a system that deviates from the concept of ‘writing’ the way it is defined by other species, but it is still the same as ‘writing and reading.’ It isn’t visible to the eyes of mortals or those without divinity.

“…I see. It is thoroughly meant for the god clan.” Theodore was convinced and nodded.

Meanwhile, Gluttony continued explaining, -They’re called divine letters, but strictly speaking, they aren’t letters. They form a sign that is inscribed using the will contained in the soul and are called divine letters.

“Then is it impossible to trace the source?”

-Usually, but it is possible for me. Each pattern has their own characteristics. It isn’t hard for me to distinguish between the letters of each god.

Regardless of what was considered impossible, Gluttony quickly decoded the divine letters on the golden coffin.

It was the moment when the secret of the Age of Mythology was revealed in Lairon. This was the true reality of Lairon, who had been used as a source of false faith for humans. The truth resonated in Theodore’s mind.

-Here lies Baldur, god of light, born as the second son of King Odin and loved by all. The orator who represents the world’s goodness, a brilliance that doesn’t tolerate sin. Whoever damages

these remains won't be able to find rest in the swamp of death.

The son of King Odin of the Aesir god clan, Baldur—this was the identity of the god called Lairon! Baldur was the god of light, so the expression 'the remains of light' was fitting. It was the source of the divine power that had sustained Lairon for hundreds of years, a sacrifice that would be more precious than a dragon heart for a warlock.

This was the reason why Jerem had come to the divine king's palace.

"Shit, it is already too late!"

The blank coffin proved that Jerem had achieved his purpose, causing Theodore to feel a sense of crisis. Baldur's body was in the hands of a 9th circle magician. The scale of the disaster that this would cause couldn't be fathomed. The ultimate magic circle left in this kingdom was only a gimmick, and the two magicians had arrived too late.

This was a fatal blow that couldn't be overlooked.

-No, Baldur seems to have set up his own trick, Gluttony stopped Theodore's self-blame.

Simultaneously, the golden coffin started to emit an even brighter light. It was the final radiance before death. Just like a candle about to be blown out, the remaining divine power in the golden coffin carried out its final arrangement.

Huuuuuuong!

The spectacular wave of light emitted from inside the coffin soon turned into a single image. It was a slender and long branch.

"What is this branch?"

Unlike its appearance, a pure divine power could be felt from it. Theodore looked at the shimmering branch with a puzzled expression. He didn't know what this branch had to do with

Baldur's 'trick.' However, Gluttony's reaction was dramatic in many ways.

-Mistilteinn! The branch of the mistletoe tree that killed Baldur, the god loved by all.

Theodore was astonished by the words and looked at Mistilteinn, while Gluttony grasped the full story.

-It seems like Baldur's soul isn't inside his body. Instead, he fled to the branch that killed him. He was awakened by User's divinity in order to convey his last wish. User, you will know his wish if you touch Mistilteinn.

"...Okay." Theodore carefully approached Mistilteinn.

It was a branch that emitted a warm light. The branch looked like it could be found anywhere, yet it was actually a relic of a legend that had killed Baldur. Theodore's fingers stretched out slowly and eventually touched the surface of the branch.

Pahat! An unknown memory emerged from Mistilteinn.

[... The calculations are out of order. Despite millions of lives being sacrificed, it isn't enough to devour Baldur's body. It seems like these lowlives aren't worth anything.] It was a cold and eerie voice, the voice of the incarnation of disaster itself which didn't contain anything but evil.

The voice of Jerem, the warlock who threatened the world and wiped out the people of Lairon, whispered in Theodore's ears, [More of Baldur's divinity has been consumed than expected. I overlooked the fountain of human greed... It is also because my resurrection was too delayed. I need a new offering to fill this gap.]

The root cause was Baldur's soul escaping into Mistilteinn, but Jerem didn't seem to know this.

He was silent for a while before coming up with a wicked idea. [That reminds me, there is a young world tree in the northern part of the continent. Furthermore, if I offer the souls of the elves... it

should be enough. It is fairly easy to calculate the power that will be consumed in the process.]

Elvenheim's world tree...!

Maybe it was because Jerem had occupied Theodore's body for a while, so he remembered some suitable offerings using those memories. The world tree was a symbol of endless vitality, a sacrifice suitable for Baldur's body. The beings of darkness yearned for a life and light that they couldn't produce, so the value of the world tree was incalculable.

[Kuhuhu, I can play with the elves after a long time.] Finally, the monologue trailed off, and the voice could no longer be heard from Mistilteinn.

This was the only thing that Baldur's soul could do with the weak power it had remaining. As Mistilteinn faded away in his hand, Theodore nodded like he was responding to Baldur's will.

"I understand your will, Baldur."

Baldur was a soul who cared for this world even though he was dead.

"I will surely stop him."

Mistilteinn shone once again, as if Theodore's voice had been heard.

Flash!

The tree branch crumbled like it was burnt, and the light penetrated Theodore's body. It was a blessing from Baldur.

'This...!' Theodore was shocked the moment he realized what blessing he had received. It was Baldur's blessing from the old myths, where nothing could harm him but a branch of mistletoe. This was an invincible blessing! The top blessing, which could negate the power of a god just once, was nestled inside Theodore's body.

It was Baldur's farewell gift as he left without any resentment.

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"Veronica... Not yet."

Theodore climbed back up to the first floor and looked around the empty auditorium. He couldn't find any more clues apart from Mistilteinn. The great magic circle, the original target of the two people, must be on the top floor with Veronica. The undead hadn't been able to come underground because of the divinity, so there must be a lot of security around the magic circle. It wasn't a bad idea to join her.

"—Um?"

It was at this moment that...

Kwaaaang!

Suddenly, the ceiling collapsed, and a pile of rubble fell down. Of course, it wasn't enough to injure Theodore. However, he couldn't help feeling confused. It was because Veronica could be seen from the ceiling. The red tower master didn't destroy things for no reason. She couldn't destroy the door of Meltor's royal palace, but she could ruin this building because the kingdom was already dead.

"...Veronica, what is that in your right hand?"

She was holding something like rags in her hand.

"Oh, this? It is the former pope."

Veronica shook off the smashed skull and threw the lich in the luxurious outfit onto the ground. There wasn't any part of its body that hadn't been smashed, and a strong magic power was leaking from it. The elder lich was a senior undead, but it was placed into a critical state by Veronica who didn't have any divinity.

"The pope?" Theodore's eyes shook at the words.

Veronica shook both hands and grumbled, "Yes, he said he was

an agent of Lairon. I was nervous because he was an arch lich, but it seemed he didn't know how to use the power."

"Well, he wasn't a magician, so it can't be helped."

It would be hard for the two magicians to know if they would win or lose against an arch lich at its peak. After all, it was difficult to destroy these monsters without divinity, and they were monsters that cast a shadow on the material world. However, an arch lich that didn't know how to use its power was just a skeleton. Veronica proved this by smashing it in a few minutes.

"Did you interrogate him?"

"Of course. I burned him a few times, but he doesn't know anything. He didn't even see the warlock's face."

"There is no point leaving him here. Finish it."

Veronica's fire neatly incinerated the arch lich, the former pope. It was a lich who hadn't been made through the right process, so there was no way for it to survive once the body had completely disappeared. In case of another situation, Theodore used the light wave to make sure the lich was gone.

"What about the magic circle? It looks like it hasn't been destroyed yet."

Magic power was still overflowing in the city, proving that Pluto's Palace was alive and supplying strength and immortality to all bodies in its sphere of influence. Perhaps the magic circle wasn't on the top floor? Theodore was feeling confused when Veronica rummaged through her pocket with a grim expression.

"I found it. The problem is that I couldn't destroy it."

She held a strange purple crystal in her hands.

"This amethyst..."

"It was the core of the great magic circle. No, this amethyst is probably the magic circle itself."

“The magic isn’t canceled despite it being separated from the magic circle. Once the crystal is activated, it only exists as the source of power.”

As a magician, they immediately understood the cryptic explanation, and the two people looked grimly at the amethyst. It was a small gem on the surface, but the inherent power and ominous feeling it gave off made it incomparable to the senior undead. Handling it carelessly could cause a catastrophe beyond the current one.

This was why Veronica said that it couldn’t be destroyed. However, it would reveal the evil intentions of the creator when the magic circle reached its maximum, so it couldn’t be ignored.

“Gluttony.” However, a third choice existed for Theodore. “This thing, can you digest it?”

-..... Silence was the response to Theodore’s question. -I am not weak, User!

Before Theodore could say anything else, the tongue swiftly stretched out and swallowed the amethyst.

[‘Nídhöggur’s Bloodstone’ has been consumed. It is difficult to measure the amount of magic power that is contained.]

[The ritual magic Pluto’s Palace has been destroyed.]

[It will take seven days to completely digest.]

[Nídhöggur has noticed User’s presence. It has threatened you for going against its contractor.]

Chapter 311 - Nastronds Demon King (1)

Theodore's expression stiffened before he could feel any pleasure at Pluto's Palace being destroyed.

It was because he heard a word that shouldn't be said. The evil dragon, Nídhöggur...!

The name of the amethyst that Gluttony swallowed was Nídhöggur's Bloodstone, and the message that said the evil dragon was aware of Theodore's presence was eerie. Above all, Nídhöggur was the demon king of Nastrond, an external dimension adjacent to this material world.

A long time ago, Theodore read a prophecy related to him in a book in the library.

Remote from the sun,

On the shore of corpses,

Venom drops through holes in the roof.

The backbone of the snake is woven into the frame.

The deceitful, murderers, and adulterers are gathered.

Nídhöggur devours their bodies.

Wolves tear at the wreckage.

Do you still seek to know?

They were horrifying sentences. The essence of it was a hell that didn't permit the entrance of the living and killed the sinners. However, Hell was mellow compared to Nastrond. Hell was a Buddhist place where, after the punishment, the sinners would receive enlightenment and be reincarnated. It might be painful, but it was a place to rehabilitate sinners and wasn't meaningless.

'But the sinners who fall into Nastrond are said to have their souls captured in the abyss and that they would suffer for a long

time.’

Theodore couldn’t argue about the dualism of good and evil with an infinite dimensional world, but he could say one thing. Nastrond was a dimension based on evil, and Nídhöggur was the demon king on top of such malevolence. Theodore couldn’t even imagine that this demon king and Jerem were in a contractual relationship.

-All the lacking puzzle pieces have been collected. In contrast to Theodore, Gluttony’s pleasure seemed to have risen. -The capacity of the warlock, Jerem, was high, but it wasn’t at the level to write a grimoire and restore his soul. It is appropriate to think that someone supported him.

“That supporter was Nídhöggur?”

-It is more like a patron than a supporter. In general, a transcendent like Nídhöggur rarely cares about mortals in other dimensions, but he likes eating people.

‘Eating people?’ Theodore made a strange expression.

This caused Gluttony to answer him in a nuanced voice, -Nídhöggur’s true nature is about necrophilia.

“…What?!” Theodore let out a horrified exclamation.

Gluttony added in a seemingly mocking tone, -Of course, that desire is limited by his appetite, but he enjoys collecting and eating dead bodies. That is why, since time immemorial, he frequently has associations with cruel tyrants, slavers, and necromancers.

A demon that transcended life… Among the transcendents, Nídhöggur was at the peak and had no need to eat or breed. Yet the demon still ate something. It was purely out of a desire to eat. He wanted to do it. Nídhöggur liked corpses because they were his favorite food. He chewed on the worthless bodies of humans, who had enjoyed harmful alcohol and cigarettes, and he enjoyed the taste.

“If he helped Jerem write Death’s Worship, is it a plan to obtain bodies to eat?”

-Well, I guess so. For him, the struggles in this world are just a cooking process. He chose a warlock who can fill his table in a larger and more luxurious manner.

“…A genocide for gourmet purposes. I feel sick.”

The horror faded away, and rage filled the empty spaces. Theodore had seen a lot of ugliness in his life so far. Robbing for the sake of gaining money, men of power being swayed by lust… Humanity’s history of war and struggles had always been because of greedy hearts. Theodore didn’t deny it. Humans were born with desire, and it was their choice and responsibility to restrain or wield it.

‘But I can’t accept this.’

It wasn’t enough that people were killed overnight without knowing why, but after death, they had to suffer forever in a world worse than hell. This was what being eaten by Nídhöggur meant. Nídhöggur was an unforgivable evil that pushed life to the edges of the cliff. If he descended, many lives in the material world would fall down to hell.

“I have to go to Elvenheim.”

It was too late to chase after Jerem. Theodore’s movements were too inefficient compared to someone who had been planning this for a long time. He would rather arrive at the destination and defend the world tree. It wasn’t the best choice, but it was second best. Theodore made a decision after listening to the advice of several great men.

“I understand the current situation. Theo?”

“Huh?”

At that moment, Veronica who had been watching two paintings with interest said, “I think it will be difficult to stay here any

longer.”

Theodore looked in the direction she was indicating and gave a long sigh. Undead were flooding in like a swarm of ants. Was it because the core of Pluto’s Palace had disappeared? Initially, the low-level undead hadn’t been able to get near the magic circle. This changed after Gluttony ate the core.

The two magicians looked at each other and rose through the ceiling.

Kwaaaang!

Theodore and Veronica plowed through several layers of marble and quickly left the building. The magic circle was gone, so the building could no longer be an obstacle. Theodore looked at the bodies on the ground and realized one difference from earlier.

‘…They are getting weaker. It isn’t enough to disappear in a day or two, but they might self-destruct within a month.’

The magic circle disappearing was to blame for that. An infection type undead couldn’t recharge its body unless it received power from outside.

It had to eat other living creatures or get a supply of magic power from somewhere.

Most of the undead in Lairon were of the latter case. They were now losing power because their power source had suddenly disappeared. Most of the senior undead had been killed by the two magicians, and the lower undead would collapse before crossing the border.

“Let’s go to Soldun.” Theodore shook off his thoughts and moved.

The two magicians in red robes shot through the sky above the divine king’s palace. The ruined city and church of Lairon was below them. It was the last of the Lairon Kingdom.

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The capital of the Soldun Kingdom, Arundel.

It had been a year or so since the Elsid Civil War, but the vigor in the inner city was uncommon. This demonstrated that the kingdom was operating well enough to handle the damage from that time. People laughed as they talked, while the merchants were busy raising their voices to solicit customers.

Arundel enjoyed a boom after a long time as they received honored guests.

“It has been a while, Sir Theodore.” Elsid had the face of a king as he spoke first. He didn’t know how to act in front of a main contributor in the civil war, who was an important character in the alliance and one of the leading magicians on this continent.

“You have reached a higher level since the last time I saw you. It is a joyous thing. I’m sorry for my carelessness in not congratulating you earlier.”

"It isn’t a problem, Your Majesty. Your words are enough,” Theodore accepted the praise and looked around at the nobles in the room.

This was an expression that said he didn’t want to talk in front of them. It wasn’t difficult for Elsid to notice, which then made him wave his hand. He knew that if Theodore tried to kill him, there was no way to stop it.

“Everybody leave. I will talk with Sir Theodore.”

“B-But Your Majes…”

“I won’t tolerate any objections. Or will you be responsible for the consequences? You can stay here if you say you are willing.”

Once the word ‘responsibility’ was mentioned, none of the nobles wanted to stay. Veronica hadn’t accompanied him to the throne room, so only Theodore and Elsid remained in the room once the

nobles were gone. Elsid looked around the room and laughed. The nobles had looked like rabbits as they fled.

“I don’t know if they are quick-witted or have no guts.”

“Isn’t it both?”

“Hahahaha! Sir Theodore’s words are correct.”

However, this didn’t mean that Soldun’s domestic affairs were a mess. The trustworthy nobles were heavily active outside the capital, while Elsid guarded the ones he couldn’t believe in. Unlike the kings of other kingdoms, Soldun’s king was in a completely superior position. After the collapse of Duke Cornwall and his cronies, the nobles were almost destroyed. The ones who remained were those loyal to the royal family, like Marquis Piris. The situation had completely reversed.

Elsid laughed for a while before asking why Theodore had come to the palace. “As I recall, you aren’t someone who likes empty courtesies. I will cut to the chase. What is going on?”

“It is a long story, but I will try to cut it down as much as possible.”

From then on, Elsid didn’t speak while Theodore gave a long explanation. He talked about the destruction of the Lairon Kingdom and the presumed cause. The story lasted for over two hours. However, Elsid’s concentration wasn’t disturbed at all as he listened to Theodore’s words.

“…Hmm.” Elsid gave a heavy groan and leaned back on his throne. His heart was heavy from hearing the news. “I didn’t know that such a big thing was happening. For the moment, I will follow your advice and move troops to the western and northern borders. Do you think it will be appropriate to station them for one month?”

“Let’s do two months just in case. My calculations might not be correct.”

If he couldn't believe the counsel of a great magician, who could he believe? So, Elsid nodded in agreement without hesitation. He would reorganize the position of the troops so that they could move at any time to the northwest where Lairon was located. Elsid could hide the real purpose and simply move the troops under the pretense of training.

After Elsid came to this decision, Theodore left the room. The situation wasn't leisurely enough for him to enjoy a dinner.

"Theo." Veronica was waiting outside the palace and hooked her arm in his. "Why didn't you talk about Nídhöggur?"

It was a considerable distance, but Veronica's ears had heard the conversation between Theodore and Elsid. Theodore replied calmly, "It is hard to obtain cooperation, and it probably won't be much use anyway."

"Oh, Theo is cold."

"I'm not trying to ignore Soldun. The opponent is so strong that it would be useless drawing in Austen, Kargas, or even the entire central part of the continent."

It was cold but true. Austen's sword master, Mujak, wasn't a match for one of the four horsemen. The same was true for Marquis Fergana of Soldun. If the number of troops increased, they would each just be one more body to become part of the enemy's puppets.

When dealing with necromancers, they shouldn't take an excessive number of people.

'An elementalist who can support from a distance without becoming a corpse will be less burdensome. Are the elves the 'squirrels that repay the favor' from the prophecy?'

Theodore moved toward where Randolph was waiting. Once they met up, the group would return to Meltor. Then he would lead the elves and recruit people to participate in the defense of Elvenheim.

The tasks were piling up, and the situation of the enemy was unclear.

“Okay, let’s try it,” Theodore said, forming tight fists. Then he declared, “If that damn dragon sees us as food, I will treat him to the worst meal ever!”

Theodore declared war against the evil dragon—Nastrond’s demon king, Nídhöggur—that even the transcendents from the Age of Mythology feared.

Chapter 312 - Nastronds Demon King (2)

Anyway, the decision to face Jerem was unavoidable. A warlock didn't forget grudges, and Jerem was still upset at losing Theodore's body. Even if he didn't have any relationship with Theodore, he would've tried to steal Theodore's body.

Theodore came to a quick conclusion. Fearing the hostility from Nídhöggur, Theodore quickly returned to Mana-vil.

"So far, this is the whole story of my investigation." Theodore faced Kurt III and confessed everything he had learned in Lairon. This was a different environment from the third-party Soldun. Meltor was the great power in the north, and it would be the greatest victim if Jerem's purpose in Elvenheim was achieved. There was a need to know in detail about the power of the opponent and their intentions.

"—Hah."

However, it couldn't be helped in this situation.

"We've been puppets of a grimoire for 500 years, and now it is the evil dragon Nídhöggur? He has been mentioned once or twice in the ancient records..." Kurt unconsciously held the back of his neck and leaned on the throne. The famous and wise king had a terrible expression on his face.

However, there was no one for Kurt to rebuke.

A dragon was making its mark in this era. The names of the gods were faded, and grand masters were only mentioned in popular novels. In the era of mortals that didn't believe in the Age of Mythology, Nídhöggur was a disaster. Niflheim's abyss, the demon king of Nastrond!

Nídhöggur's power over that dimension was equivalent to a god's. Of course, in order to exert his power in other dimensions, a corresponding price was needed, and Jerem planned to offer the

world tree and Baldur's body as sacrifices. If he succeeded, he would be able to dominate this material world.

"We have to stop it."

"Yes, that's right."

The minds and gazes of the two people, Kurt III and Theodore, connected. They couldn't choose the option of standing by idly. The people of Meltor knew better than anyone else about a warlock's viciousness. Warlocks thought that human life was worthless. They despised the human race and worshipped death. If the top warlock, Jerem, obtained this world, then all living creatures would fall to hell.

Kurt gave a long sigh and asked Theodore a question, "…Then what are you thinking?"

"I will do anything I can, but honestly, I can't guarantee that Meltor will be of great help. Nídhöggur is something that humans of this age can't resist."

"They are fair words. Thus, we have to end it before Nídhöggur completely descends."

"In the end, it is the defense of the world tree. It is standing firm in this position."

Kurt grasped the situation and laughed. It was a complete defeat the moment Nídhöggur descended. Gluttony said it might be possible if ten grandmasters were gathered…? As Theodore had seen in the fight against Invidia, they couldn't win against one grandmaster even if they collected all the masters on the continent.

It was an impossible prerequisite. Thus, Theodore didn't even think about fighting with Nídhöggur. They would lose the moment they fought. If they couldn't fight against Nídhöggur, then they needed to defeat Jerem who was planning the resurrection.

'The opponent is Jerem, who has the power of the four horsemen

and an army of senior undead. Other than that, I'm not sure.'

The odds weren't high in an all-out fight. It would be impossible if Jerem was in a perfect state, but after being damaged by Mitra, he was now only a little stronger than Theodore. Furthermore, if the pale rider was gone, then Veronica could deal with them with one or two masters. Considering the guardians of the world tree and the elemental rulers that the high elves could summon, there was no shortage of masters.

The problem was Jerem's hidden cards that Theodore couldn't know about. Jerem was at a level in which Theodore couldn't guess what he was thinking. So, Theodore needed to increase the odds in an all-out war.

The summoning of a senior demon? The undead stored outside Tartarus? He couldn't come up with measures for vague speculations. Theodore struggled for a while before coming up with an answer.

"Your Majesty, I want to ask you for something."

If the other party had unknown hidden cards, couldn't he counter it with the same tactics? Kurt III nodded, and Theodore requested something that hadn't been allowed since the founding of the Meltor Kingdom.

"Please give me full authority over the Zero Library in order to deal with this!"

Kurt's eyes widened at the unprecedented petition.

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-It is a very desirable request, User!

"Shut up."

Gluttony buzzed with excitement at the thought of eating a lot, and Theodore bluntly cut him off.

Needless to say, this request was accepted.

Full power in the Zero Library. It was the first time this authority had been granted in the Meltor Kingdom. Even the previous tower masters hadn't been granted this privilege. It was possible for Theodore to read any books in the Zero Library, as well as withdraw them.

This was to find a means to confront Jerem, but it was a big responsibility.

'If I fail after all this, I would want to commit suicide…'

Of course, it was more likely that he would be killed by Jerem or have his body stolen. Theodore didn't have anything to say and kept walking.

-Um?

However, his feet weren't heading toward the Zero Library.

-User, this isn't the direction of the Zero Library.

"I know. I need to head somewhere else prior to that."

-What is more important than magic to a magician? If the material world is to fall tomorrow, you should read one more book.

"Don't talk about the world being destroyed to someone who lives here," Theodore said. Then after hearing Gluttony's increasingly human-like words, Theodore spoke of his destination, "I'm going to meet the guardians. They are people who have to return to Elvenheim, and I have something to ask them about Heathcliff's prophecy."

-It is reasonable. But don't fuss over them too much, User.

"Just wait quietly for a few hours."

Theodore ignored Gluttony's urging and arrived at the room where the two elf guardians were staying. He didn't hesitate and placed a hand on the doorknob.

Click.

Clean air leaked out as soon as the door was opened. Was it the influence of both guardians? A wind normally found deep in forests greeted him. Simultaneously, both guardians saw Theodore.

“Benefactor! You are safe!”

“I’m really glad that you aren’t injured.”

Theodore was at a loss for words when he saw them.

“…I’m sorry for not coming sooner.”

Edwin’s left sleeve was empty, while Ellaim’s voice was soft as if the wound on his neck hadn’t healed yet. Despite suffering serious injuries, the two elves were genuinely pleased that Theodore was safe. Theodore’ conscience was stabbed by this innocent response. Ellaim refused his apology, “It is nothing Benefactor. Didn’t something big happen as soon as you got out of bed? Rather, this visit is sooner than I expected.”

“Sir Edwin…”

For an archer, the loss of one arm was devastating. Unlike a swordsman that could hold the sword with the other arm, an archer had to use both arms. Yet there was no gloominess on Edwin’s face. Theodore put a hand in his pocket. The elixir was meant for someone to use. Half a bottle could restore one arm and a cut neck. What were a few drops of elixir compared to those who risked their lives to delay Invidia?

“Ah, you don’t have to worry about that.”

However, Theodore’s determination was blocked by an unexpected opposition.

“…Do I have to force-feed this to you to make you drink it?”

The two guardians were different from Vince, as they were Elvenheim’s protectors. It would be shameful to turn a country’s masters into useless existences, let alone the elves who had crossed

the Red Plateau and come to Meltor because of Theodore.

While Theodore was struggling over the idea of force-feeding them when Ellaim explained, “Hahaha! That isn’t it, Benefactor. I have pride in the life I have built as a guardian and would take that remedy if I had a body that couldn’t shoot a bow again.”

“Then why?”

“It is simple. We can receive the grace of the parent tree and restore our lost body parts.”

Theodore’s eyes widened. “You can even recover lost limbs?”

“Yes. It consumes a lot of innate vitality, so an elf can only use it three or four times in their lives.

“Ah… Then it is impossible for humans.”

There was a big difference between the elves who could live for thousands of year and humans who could barely live to 100 years. He had wondered if he could fix Vince’s body this way, but the two guardians didn’t refute Theodore’s words. This method was only available to the elves who had a long lifespan and could afford to lose some of it.

‘No, now isn’t the time to be obsessed with this.’ Theodore quickly pushed this matter to the side and cut to the chase.

First, he explained the prophecy he had heard from Heathcliff, “…The prophecy has now reached the third verse, and there are two remaining. ‘Big birds and snakes are surrounding a tree’ and ‘the squirrels will help you to repay the favor.’ Can you think of anything?”

It could be good or bad. Theodore felt like the elves held the key. The memories of elves were long, and they had much fewer generations, so the guardians might know something about this prophecy.

…And his guess was right.

“I have.” It was Ellaim.

Edwin and Theodore turned their eyes toward him. This caused Ellaim to open his mouth with an awkward expression, “It is a story I heard from a female elementalist. In the old days, it was said that a god and demon surrounded the world tree and fought. One was in the image of a dragon, while the other was a giant bird.”

‘This!’ Theodore sensed something and asked hastily, “Is the name of the dragon ‘Nídhöggur’?”

“Níðhöggr… Yes. The pronunciation is a bit different, but it should be referring to the same being. A sneering butcher and dragon who swallows the dead. Additionally, the huge bird is called ‘Hraesvelgr’, and it was a sacred creature trying to protect the world tree.”

“Nídhöggura and Hraesvelgr… big snake and big bird…”

Just like thread moving through a hole in the beads, the clues started to join together. He could be sure after one more clue was added. Theodore’s mind started to move at full speed. Meanwhile, Edwin added, “That reminds me, Ratatoskr is the name of the squirrel that appears in the old myths. Is the squirrel in the prophecy perhaps Ratatoskr?”

“Ah!” A lightning bolt flashed through Theodore’s mind.

At this moment, all of the verses of the prophecy linked up perfectly. Theodore grabbed the hands of the two elves without being able to hide his excitement. “I have to go to Elvenheim with you.”

All that remained were the final preparations.

Chapter 313 - Nastronds Demon King (3)

The Zero Library was a place that collected the highest risk, as well as the highest valued books.

It couldn't be entered if permission from the royal palace wasn't given. In fact, it was impossible for a Superior-grade magician to even apply to access it. In order to enter the Zero Library, it was necessary to have at least the Prime rank. However, Prime magicians couldn't afford to take out a book from the Zero Library, let alone own it privately.

The four magicians standing at the top of the magic towers couldn't even abuse it. It was like that from the past to the present, until today.

"Is this the first time since I've taken out Hellfire?"

Theodore visited the Zero Library after such a long time and looked at the books kept in glass boxes. To a magician, it was a nicer landscape than a mountain of gold. There were books which contained ancient magics and a theorem on primordial magic that didn't exist. Then there was also a book where the language system couldn't be unraveled. A book was like the remains of wisdom.

-In my opinion, it is like a buffet. Isolate valuable knowledge from a person's hand and grant it to those who are qualified. Books exist for a purpose that is indeed rational.

"This is a little unexpected. For the overall development of magic, isn't it more advantageous for knowledge to be universal?"

Gluttony's voice was more upbeat than usual, and Theodore questioned it. It was as he said. In terms of the evolution of general learning, the number of scholars and intellectuals couldn't be bad. Grimoires were the same. The magic of the Age of Mythology was so wonderful because most of the inhabitants had innate talent as magicians.

However, Gluttony didn’t explain it further.

-I will describe it in my detail later. Right now, User has too much to do.

“…Okay, don’t forget about it later on.” Theodore thought it was a pity, but he didn’t have time.

He put aside Gluttony’s remarks and walked through the library.

‘Should I look at the books I appraised the last time?’

Academic theories were interesting, but he wasn’t going into a laboratory right now. He was going into combat and had to choose magic that could be used against warlocks and the undead. Theodore passed through a few familiar covers and piled up books on a table.

There was the shadow magic, Reverse Shadow, and the ultimate ice magic which created a cryogenic space, Ultima. Then there was also the earth magic that contaminated matter at high speed, Rotting Hands, and the astral magic which interfered with the soul, Soul Calibre.

There were a few more interesting books, but these four were the best when taking into consideration the time it would take to raise his understanding of them. Besides, he didn’t intend to finish eating at these four books. Theodore put two books to the side and appraised the remaining two, “Appraisal.”

Simultaneously, information about the two magic books appeared.

[Rotting Hands]

[This book explains the magic that quickly decomposes the target by accelerating the natural phenomenon of the material world. Decomposition is caused by a variety of factors, including air, light, heat, and bacteria. Depending on the material, the time the magic will take will change. The power of the magic changes according to the earth affinity of the caster.

* This magic book is rated ‘Precious.’

* Acquisition Conditions: 7 circles, affinity for earth magic (high).

* When consumed, ‘Rotting Hands’ will be learned.

* When consumed, your ability in earth magic will increase slightly.

* It is an original book written by the author, but the soul has become weathered after many years. It can’t be a target of Overwrite, and the fragment of the soul can be absorbed without ‘Transmission.’]

[Soul Calibre]

[This book describes the magic that interferes with the astral system of the material world and destroys it. The power of Soul Calibre, the sword of the soul, can cut through the immortality of senior undead. This magic can’t be learned without great inspiration. It may cause interaction with User’s power, Umbra.

* This magic book is rated ‘Treasure.’

* Acquisition Conditions: 8 circles, soul sensitivity (medium).

* When consumed, ‘Soul Calibre’ will be learned.

* When consumed, your ability in astral magic will increase greatly.

* This is the original that was directly written by the author. When consumed, some of the author’s abilities will be handed down according to your fitness level.]

Both spells were useful. The undead might not be alive, but their shells were made of muscles and bones. They couldn’t exert their power once they were rotted. It was useless against those like the banshees. That was why he learned Soul Calibre as well. There was no need to explain the practicality of Soul Calibre, which destroyed the immortality of senior undead.

“Gluttony, please keep them in the inventory.”

-I understand.

The tongue emerged from his left hand and swallowed up all four magic books. He wanted to sit down and read them, but Theodore still had something to do. No, his real reason for visiting the Zero Library was just beginning.

"...Now it is time to unseal the room of prohibited books."

Prohibited books—this was the reason why Theodore needed full power in the Zero Library. They weren't grimoires; prohibited books were a mixture of magic, not paper and letters. It wasn't possible to reach the level of a real grimoire, but it could suppress the souls of humans.

This was why the Magic Society placed prohibited books in a sealed room—to block the spread of damage. It was the heard of that, in the magic kingdom, only the king and chairman of the Magic Society could enter.

'It isn't possible to unlock this without a key.'

Theodore stood in front of the sealed room and admired the tight security. He wondered how many cracks would form if he hit it with Keraunos, the magic he had invented. Then Theodore pulled out the key Kurt had given him.

Clink. He inserted the key into the lock without hesitation and turned it clockwise.

The wards surrounding the sealed room in several layers were released, while dozens of mechanical devices activated with an unpleasant noise. It was like something was scraping at his ears. However, Theodore didn't give up and twisted the key till the end.

Kukukukung...!

The door opened.

"Ah."

At that moment, intense magic power burst out from inside the

sealed room. It was enough pressure to throw a person backward! This was the result of collecting dozens of prohibited books and sealing them in one place. The magic power contained in the room came pouring out. Theodore's legs stiffened, and he raised his vigilance as he withstood the pressure.

'This pressure is just a gimmick... The real thing will be from now on!'

They weren't at the level of grimoires, but the prohibited books in this sealed room were beyond common sense. The books could exercise their abilities without owners, or they could freely manipulate a human. It was common for them to tempt those who came within their sphere of influence. Unsurprisingly, unfamiliar voices began to whisper, flowing from the darkness of the sealed room into Theodore's mind.

[Desire this body. Enjoy all the richness of the world,] a majestic voice whispered, trying to inspire his ambitions.

[Take me. You can hold any woman you want in your arms,] a bewitching whisper tried to stimulate his sexuality.

[I will give you endless power, an infinite life,] an arrogant whisper attempted to seduce Theodore without any distinction in the direction.

There were many different types of voices. From that of a young child to an old man, from perfectly spoken words to hard to understand pronunciation... Theodore knew better than anyone else that something irrevocable would appear if he answered any of these temptations.

'Well, this deception doesn't mean anything to me.'

He wasn't affected. In order to control Theodore, who was an 8th circle magician and master of Gluttony, strength on the level of a demon or god was required. That wasn't possible for prohibited books, which were less than grimoires, to have. The prohibited

books didn’t stop whispering, even if they knew the truth. After all, it was the only way they could find freedom. The problem was that a terrible existence was attached to Theodore.

-Foolish existences trying to tempt my user! Gluttony, one of the notorious Seven Sins grimoires, raised its voice.

It sent out a mental wave that affected all the whispers at once.

[Kuaaaaack!]

[Kyaaaack?!]

[Kueeeeeoh!]

In a realm unknown to human senses, dozens of prohibited books were plunged into terrible pain. They had intended to touch Theodore’s spirit and were in direct contact with Gluttony’s mental wave, leaving them almost defenseless to it. The prohibited books had never been attacked this way before. Furthermore, the attacker was a grimoire that was above them. The prohibited books shook from the shock.

-Not knowing their place and not maintaining a single mental barrier! They don’t deserve to hold knowledge! I will put every one of them in my stomach…

“Ah, that isn’t possible,” Theodore interrupted Gluttony’s angry words. “You were the one who said the capacity would go over with more than two books. I can’t afford to have you sleep for three months when it is unsure if the function can even be used.”

-But—

“Please bear with it this time. Take out only one or two prohibited books.”

-…It can’t be helped. I will respect User’s judgment.

The meaning of the ‘capacity going over’ was simple. In the meantime, Theodore had fed Gluttony many books and artifacts. Gluttony’s seal was ready for the next phase, with only a few books

left until the sixth seal was lifted. However, it wasn't easy to accept the release of the seal. In order to release the sixth seal, Gluttony needed to sleep for nearly three months.

'I might've tried it if it was one month or two months… but three months isn't possible. The battle will end before the seal is released.'

Honestly, he felt regretful. Every function unlocked by Gluttony's seal was powerful and assisted Theodore greatly. There were functions that could be used directly, such as Memorize and Another. How much more powerful was the function of stage 6?

"Sigh, it is hard to miss the opportunity," Theodore said regretfully as he looked around at the prohibited books that had become gentle thanks to Gluttony. They were covered in gold, made out of cowhide, or even wrapped in chains. There wasn't a single book that looked ordinary.

Among them, one book caught Theodore's eyes.

"Ru…by?"

There was a book the size of a little boy's head with a red gem in the middle of the cover. It was covered in a suspicious haze of magic power, but Theodore couldn't feel any evil from it. He took a few steps closer and reached out a hand toward the prohibited book. No, the moment he stretched out his left hand…

[Kyaaaaak! Don't do it! Please don't eat me! I can't serve anyone other than my master, but I don't want to be destroyed!]

Theodore frowned at the scream inside his head. The aggrieved high-pitched tone caused Theodore to shake his head with a big frown. He didn't hear it with his ears, but his ears hurt. Theodore suppressed his irritation and examined the words of the prohibited book with astonishment.

"…Don't eat? Do you know Gluttony?"

The source of the scream was naturally the gold-encrusted book

with the jewel in the center that he had tried to grab. If the book were a human, it would look very agitated.

[W-W-What are you talking about?]

“Then shall I eat?”

Gluttony’s tongue poked out.

[I’m sorry, I was wrong! My creator knew about you, so a record remained in my memories!]

“Who is your creator?”

[T-That…]

As the book hesitated again, Gluttony quickly stretched out its tongue.

[Kiyaaaaak! S-Solomon! It is Solomon!]

--The king of wisdom? Stop talking nonsense! Why would he make a prohibited book when he can write a grimoire? Gluttony shouted before Theodore could respond.

It was an emotional reaction, with slight anger mixed in. This was evidence that Gluttony was truly outraged by the prohibited book. However, that anger vanished in an instant. Gluttony seemed to read something from the contact as it spoke in a cold voice, -…I see. You… You are a broken fragment of ‘Lemegeton’? (TL: Also known as the lesser key of Solomon).

[Hiik! H-How?!]

-There is no grimoire that can hide before me. This is the power of ‘Gluttony’ that I possess. You are just a fragment of Lemegeton. I don’t know how many pages you have, but it probably isn’t even 5% of its original performance. Isn’t that why you are on the level of a prohibited book?

This was a conversation that couldn’t be understood, so Theodore just watched the two of them. It was clear that this prohibited book had come from a grimoire called Lemegeton and

that this made Gluttony feel quite uncomfortable. The silent Gluttony opened its mouth again and suggested eating. -There is no value pursuing it any longer. User, can I get rid of this lesser thing?

[S-Spare me! It will be useless eating a defective product like me. B-Besides, I can function as a sub-ego, making it possible for secondary functions!]

Theodore felt like he was watching a catfight as he came to a decision. He laid his hand on the prohibited book and declared, “Appraisal.” It was time to look at the fragment of the Lemegeton grimoire.

Chapter 314 - Towards the World Tree (1)

[Lemegeton (Severely Damaged)]

[This is a grimoire that contains the power of King Solomon from the Age of Mythology. King Solomon used his wisdom and magic to rule over 72 great demons, wielding the power of the great demons with ten rings. Additionally, Solomon prepared a seal and key in case of his death.

* This grimoire can't function normally.

* Please note! This grimoire is over 90% damaged. The powers can't be fully absorbed even with predation.

* When ingested, the imprints of the senior great demons 'Nebiros', 'Foras', and 'Flauros' will be acquired. User can borrow their powers from these imprints or demonstrate special powers.

* When consumed, a very large amount of magic power will be absorbed.]

'It is definitely not in a good state.'

More than 90% damaged...? As a book, it was like having all the pages torn out except for one. Even if it was a grimoire, most of its power had already been lost. It was astonishing that so much had been lost. According to Gluttony, it wasn't even performing at 5%, yet it still contained the power of three senior great demons. In a perfect state, Lemegeton must have a myth rating.

-Yes, it is as User guessed, Gluttony confirmed it like it had heard Theodore's thoughts.

"It really has a myth rating?"

-That's right. Some of the great demons who contracted with Solomon had high rank and power.

"Demon king... like Fulito?"

-If I had to compare Fulito with one of the 72 great demons, he is

similar to the 7th one, Amon.

“7th?” Theodore's face stiffened.

Fulito was only 7th! If that was true, then Lemegeton had at least seven great demons with more power than a demon king, a transcendent who reigned as the master of one dimension and wielded that world according to his will. It was no wonder that Gluttony reacted to Solomon’s name. He was incomparable to Theodore, who had summoned Magnus in the past. What type of existence was Solomon, who had dozens of high-ranking great demons contracted to him?

It seemed like he was beyond the level of a transcendent. No one would argue if Solomon were called the god of magic. However, Gluttony had a different opinion of Solomon.

-No, he was just smart. He became aware of the endless desires of demons and fooled them with a clever contract. There were some demons who were deceived by some tricks, but others knew about it and passed by. Solomon was the summoner who called them. The material world of the Age of Mythology was what attracted their attention.

“They came like a sightseeing group?”

-Your words aren’t entirely wrong. For great demons, another dimension is just a place to ‘play.’

Pleasure is an inescapable desire for demons who have eternal life. In that sense, Solomon was a spokesman for those desires and the guide of many demons into this material world.

It was the result of talent and timing creating the situation.

[Ahem!] At that moment, the prohibited book didn’t grasp the atmosphere and interrupted Gluttony. [My creator, Solomon, is a great man! Many powerhouses in the Age of Mythology fell before him!]

-Shut up, used thing.

[Hiik.]

The prohibited book shut its mouth, and Gluttony began to speak again.

-I wasn't expecting a Baal or Agares class, but this is really terrible. The 24th 'Marquis', the 31st 'Hell Knight', and the 64th 'Great Duke'—they are worthless when it comes to battle strength. That drunkard, Saleos, still remains.

Theodore asked for an explanation, and Gluttony taught him in a disgruntled voice about Solomon's 72 great demons and the power of these three great demons.

Number 24, Marquis Nebiros, was a necromancer and controlled the power of 'Pain.'

Unlike the demon's nickname of 'Knight', Number 31—Hell Knight Foras—was the owner of a vast wisdom and gave the summoning the power of 'transparency.'

Number 64, Great Duke Flauros, possessed the power of 'Burning Eyes', which allowed the owner to shake off the temptations of other demons.

Theodore listened to the explanation in detail and said, "In the middle..."

It wasn't enough to call them bad, but the demons didn't have the ability to help him directly. The teachings of necromancy were of no use to Theodore who wasn't a warlock. Additionally, Gluttony's protections meant that the added bonuses were meaningless as Theodore already had strong mental defenses. The practical powers of 'Transparency', 'Burning Eyes', and 'Pain' were so vague that he didn't know their purpose.

'Well, a powerful demon wouldn't acknowledge me as qualified. Is it okay to compromise to this extent?'

However, Theodore looked at the prohibited book thoughtfully. Looking around at the other shelves, the majority of those present

gave off an evil feeling just from the cover. Collecting the fragments of a myth rated grimoire was more appealing, even if it was damaged. More than anything else, he liked that it could exert the functions without predation.

“Hey, prohibited book.”

[…Yes?] The Lemegeton fragment responded to Theodore’s call.

“Accept me as a temporary contractor. Do you want to be stuck in this sealed room forever?”

[That… Why temporary?]

“I possess so many divinities. How can I make a perfect contract with a demonic grimoire? Besides, if I make a double contract with you, I think there will always be conflict with Gluttony.”

The Lemegeton fragment contemplated the words for a while before accepting the suggestion, [Okay, I will accept a contract with you.]

“A wise choice.”

The moment that the mutual agreement was decided, a thick strand of magic power formed between Theodore and the prohibited book. It was the magical contract line to symbolize the conclusion of contract magic. The red gem of the Lemegeton fragment and Theodore’s right hand were intertwined with a string, then the last process of the contract occurred. It was the disclosure of the grimoire’s identity, its true name.

[I was called ‘Lemegeton’ a long time ago, but I was deprived of its light and crashed to the ground. The first of five locks, the prohibited book whose head is Lemegeton… Until the day that I am perfect again, call me ‘Ars Goetia’!]

“Ars Goetia.”

[Yes, Master. You can just call me ‘Goetia’.]

Theodore picked up Goetia, and the red jewel changed its shape.

The thick book transformed into a small silver ring that wrapped around a finger on Theodore's right hand. It was reluctant to be on Theodore's left hand where Gluttony resided.

'Oh, isn't this a convenient feature? The 10 rings that Solomon wore were probably a variant of Lemegeton.'

That wasn't all. Once Goetia turned into a ring, Theodore realized that his casting speed and amount of magic power had risen sharply. The functions of 'sub-ego' and 'secondary operations' that Goetia had mentioned started to show their power. The features were simple, but the level of the secondary operations was excellent.

Of course, Gluttony was still uncomfortable about the contract.

-Hah! Ars Goetia? Is it the name of the first chapter of Lemegeton? You picked it well for being so tattered.

[Hiiik!]

Despite having the same contractor, it was unknown if Gluttony's one-sided abuse of the prohibited book would stop. In the end, Theodore had to intervene. "Gluttony, don't scare it too much. It is too inferior to you."

-Hrmm, I understand.

Theodore walked out of the sealed room while Gluttony suppressed its hostility. Then Theodore closed the door of the room and reset the lock.

Ching! Snap.

The several layers of magic circles overlapped to form a magic spell, and the key in the keyhole faded away. The key to the sealed room was only for one use. Once it was used, it couldn't be used again. Every time the seal was released, the key would change. This tight security was truly the backbone of the kingdom.

'Now, this part is finished. Should I go back?'

With four magic books and one prohibited book, Theodore invoked Teleport. No shadows remained in the Zero Library.

*

“—Ah.”

“You took a long time.”

Theodore discovered an unexpected person when he left the Zero Library. It was a blonde girl with brown skin, Paragranum. Unlike her appearance, she was actually the head of the yellow tower and a grimoire. She had performed numerous studies in the magic kingdom and might’ve conspired with Invidia.

“Hasn’t it been a long time, Captain? I didn’t know you would return after facing Envy. I need to increase my evaluation.”

Paragranum smiled and placed the fox, that was in her arms, on the ground. The fox had three tails; it was Tres. He was frightened after being caught by Paragranum and rushed toward Theodore the moment he was set free. The warm and fluffy texture entered Theodore’s red robe.

Then the fox cried out with relief. Yip, yiip. Even though Tres was young, the intelligence of his spirit was high. He remembered that Paragranum had wanted to dissect him last time.

Theodore stared at Paragranum. “You…”

“Aren’t you leaving your pet alone too much? It would’ve died if it belonged to another magician. If you hadn’t come back, this would’ve become my first spirit specimen.”

“What do you want?” Theodore ignored Paragranum’s joke that wasn’t a joke and stared into her eyes.

Paragranum’s eyes held no emotions at all. It was like they were glass beads. He realized it when he saw these eyes. This being was a monster, not a human. She could do anything as long as it achieved her purpose of existence. Theodore was convinced that

she had joined hands with Invidia to cause the long war in the north.

“Oh, my. Don’t be too wary. You know ‘our’ ecology. Right now, is there any reason for me to be hostile to Meltor? What benefits can you gain from removing me?”

“No. I have no reason to listen to your words,” Theodore replied coldly and took a step back.

Grimoires had no human emotions, as they were things that would interfere with their principles of action. Encountering something like this was like yelling at a wall. If he accused Paragranum of working with Invidia, she would nod without any qualms.

Maybe that was why he decided not to ask. She wasn’t an opponent who should be rewarded with his emotions. Theodore cooled his head and stared at the being that, along with Invidia, was the wicked culprit of the slaughter in the north. One side had fostered sword masters and fed on them. The other side acted in order to make her research proceed faster. Grimoires wouldn’t hesitate to do any sins if it meant accomplishing their purpose of existence.

“Well, don’t be so hasty.” Paragranum didn’t shrink back at all as she faced the angry Theodore.

Instead, she pulled something out. It was from a shabby looking dimensional pocket.

“That!”

“Isn’t it too impressive to forget?”

The item was an emerald jewel in the shape of a cube. It had a perfect balance as light reflected off it. At Paragranum’s request, Theodore had recovered it from the ruin in the Meuse Desert. The Emerald Tablet—a treasure that all alchemists praised as the ‘Door of Truth’—recorded the truths of the universe. Gluttony had

drooled over it, so there was no need to explain its value.

“Now, don’t drop it.” However, Paragranum threw it casually!

“What are you doing?” Theodore cried out roughly as he grabbed the space pocket and the Emerald Tablet.

Then Paragranum opened her mouth, “Can’t I do something kind for others? I’ve handed over handmade potions, catalysts, and the Emerald Tablet.”

“That’s why I am asking. What are your intentions?”

“Don’t you need to go fight the necromancer that is contracted to Nídhöggur?” Paragranum shrugged as it spoke in a playful voice. “Nídhöggur, the lizard that rots all matter, is the enemy of alchemy. I can’t coexist with a warlock who contracts to such a being. Thus, I will lend a hand so that you can get rid of him.”

“But didn’t you say you would only give the Emerald Tablet after you achieved your purpose?”

“Unlike Gluttony, I am not obsessed with the original.” Paragranum muttered ‘copy’ in a small voice before continuing. “It is up to here. This time, I will place a bet on your victory and wait.”

“…What side was it last time?”

Paragranum stopped for a moment as she was walking away. She didn’t look back as she gave her answer, “It doesn’t matter either way.”

Chapter 315 - Towards the World Tree (2)

A few days after that:

Theodore's preparations had ended with the removal of a few books from the Zero Library. However, the two guardians lying in bed needed a little more time to finish their preparations. No, two days was too short. How could someone without an arm or whose neck was wounded cross the Red Plateau, which was famous for its harshness? The journey wasn't easy even for those with no injuries.

However, Theodore envisioned a better journey.

"Theo, is it really okay?" Veronica was worried that he might be being too hasty. Both of them were ready to leave, but it had been only three days since returning from the Lairon Kingdom. She was well aware of the possibility that this might be too soon, as she had been born as a quarter dragon.

Throughout her life, Veronica had constantly realized the difference between herself and others. With a frail body, unstable magic power, and stamina that only lasted a few days, even a magician who crossed the wall of a master was fragile compared to dragons.

"It is fine. I'm well aware of my limitations." Nevertheless, Theodore didn't show any signs of weakness as he checked the magic circle he had drawn last night.

Like the last time, the scale of this magic circle drawn in the palace's backyard was enormous. It was the result of adding a few functions and assuming there would be a longer distance to travel over than when they went to Sipoto Plains. This was a magic circle to transport them to the northernmost part of the Northern Continent, the large forest containing Elvenheim.

'Okay, there are no problems.'

A normal teleport couldn't enter the Great Forest because mana evaporated in the Red Plateau. It was possible to manipulate space like Orta, but the mana of Teleport would be cut off along the way. Thus, Theodore had to change the underlying idea.

'If the flow is interrupted, don't ride it. Jump instead.'

They would move from point to point, not along a line. The coordinates of the vacant space were exchanged with the coordinates of the Great Forest. This was close to impossible. However, Theodore had a means to make the impossible possible.

[Hoit, hoi, ho...? Hooing?] The girl who emerged from the earth, Mitra, was the main character. Mitra had the seed of the world tree in her body and was the master key itself. The system of Ratatoskr that protected Elvenheim and the world tree would play a supporting role rather than interfere with Mitra.

If Theodore had any regrets in this situation, it was one thing.

"Tch, that blue worm isn't coming?" Veronica leaned against a nearby wall and brought up the topic he had been thinking about.

Sea Dragon Aquilo—she was a member of the strongest species in the material world and connected to Theodore through the blood imprint. In some ways, she was a perfect fit for this battle. However, Aquilo remained silent to this call. This silence was different from 'rejection.'

"...I've called several times, but there isn't an answer. She isn't the type of person who would just ignore someone, is she?"

"That is true. Did something happen?"

"I don't know. She might just be in a distant place. For now, we have to take it as she won't help."

Veronica pouted and grumbled, "I didn't want to use dog poop in medicine, so this is better."

It was natural when facing each other, but Veronica seemed

uncomfortable right now for some reason. Was it because there weren't many people equal to her? Aquilo's strength and personality made her a visible presence to Veronica. She didn't refuse it when asked about having Aquilo present, but it wasn't a relationship where they could be friends. Anyway, Aquilo's help wasn't going to come.

After a while, the two elves arrived in the backyard of the palace.

"Benefactor! You are already here."

"...What is this magic circle?"

Edwin's movements seemed a bit unstable because of his empty left arm socket, but there seemed to be no major problems. It was the same for Ellaim. He had no problems with breathing despite there still being a bandage around his neck. They suffered serious injuries, but the masters weren't fragile enough to be harmed by the recoil of Teleport.

Theodore greeted the two elves and stood in the magic circle. "Sir Edwin, please stand inside the ellipse drawn on the left. Sir Ellaim, please stand on the other side."

"I understand."

"Veronica..."

"You don't need to say it. This spot?"

An 8th circle magician wasn't something that could be reached with magic power and talent alone. He didn't need to explain the magic circle to Veronica as she stood where she was supposed to. Theodore saved a bit of time with that and immediately poured magic power into Teleport. The light of the magic circle grew stronger, and the backyard was covered with an intense magic light.

Huuuuuuong!

Unlike the last time, there was no farewell. The matter of

Nídhöggur and the revival of a 9th circle warlock was still being kept confidential, with only the king and tower masters knowing. It was better to hide it completely than to cause chaos, especially when the Magic Society would be of no help.

It was the same reason why they were concealing the trip to Elvenheim.

'From now on, I can't expect any more reinforcements.'

Theodore pushed aside the post-war complications and opened his mouth, "Now, I will get started. Mitra."

[Hoing! I'll try hard!]

In order for this space movement to work, Mitra's role was the most important. Mitra sat on Theodore's head and opened her arms wide, the sprout on her head spinning like a pinwheel.

Moving from point to point was several times slower than moving along a line. Considering the obstacles of the Red Plateau and the barriers around the Great Forest, the success rate was close to zero. It was a difficult task that even Orta could only try after reaching the 8th circle.

However, Theodore had a helper. It was the neural network called Ratatoskr that was widely spread through the Great Forest. Once the magic circle reached its limit, Theodore didn't miss the moment and used Dragon Words.

"「 лес, отвечать (Forest, reply)! 」" Theodore's voice reached the northern Great Forest, which was hundreds of kilometers away.

It might've ended here if it was a normal voice. Nature wasn't something that humans could command. However, Theodore's command was made with Dragon Words, and the consciousness of the world tree, that was not yet mature, responded to it. The huge mana of the Great Forest stirred, and a few roots stretched out to the magic circle far away.

Kiiiing-!

It connected, while a sharp voice stabbed at Theodore's mind.

-Who are you? How dare you intrude unauthorized into this neural network!

-If you don't identify yourself, you will be blocked immediately.

-...Noisy...

Theodore smiled despite the noise causing a headache. The voices were familiar. In order, they were Alucard, Lumia, and Naia. Ellenoa and Alisa couldn't be heard, but they weren't always connected to the neural network. They were either sleeping or doing other work.

'It has been a long time everyone,' he spoke lightly.

-This voice is...! T-Theodore?

-Oh, my. Theodore? You came back quickly.

-...He... not... intruder... sleep, again...

The reactions were unique. Theodore waited for the excitement of the elves to settle and then spoke, 'I'm not there yet, Lumia.'

-Huh? What does that...

'I established this connection in order to arrive.'

Theodore explained why he had connected this magic circle with Ratatoskr. It wasn't difficult to take the initiative with Dragon Words, but there was no reason to. They owed him for the last battle. Indeed, the high elves easily accepted his request.

-Hrmm, it is fine if it is you.

-I'll allow it if you come to see me.

-...A...gree...

There were no worries that Theodore might hold malicious intentions. Simultaneously, the paused connection with Ratatoskr resumed, and the entire magic circle was surrounded by a strong light. The two space coordinates were established, and the flash of

light was so bright that their eyes couldn’t see.

Flash!

After the light disappeared, no one remained in the palace’s backyard. There were only the traces of the magic circle, the burnt marks of strange shapes.

*

There was a light that seemed to blind eyes. Theodore shed a few tears as he looked around with still blurry eyes. Fortunately, his vision soon recovered. The objects before him became clear, and the tingling of his eyes soon disappeared. Was it the effect of using an excessive amount of magic power in a short period of time? Next time, he would need to make a few more adjustments.

‘...Well, it seems like we have properly arrived at our destination.’

He could figure it out even though his surroundings were just blurry shapes. Trees of this height couldn’t be found anywhere other than in the Great Forest, and the shadow of the world tree was rising above the clouds on the horizon. What about everyone else?

Theodore turned his head and saw Veronica and the two elves rubbing their eyes.

“It looks good. Let’s take a break here and start when we are in good shape.”

“...”

“...”

“...”

"...Excuse me, everyone?”

There were no replies. Veronica, Edwin, and Ellaim were staring in Theodore’s direction with blank expressions. To be precise, they were staring at Theodore’s head. He wondered what they were

looking at when he felt a startling sense of weight on his neck.

“Eh?”

It was like the weight of a child! Theodore turned his head in confusion and saw a pair of eyes gazing at him. He saw smooth earthy skin and brown eyes. She had a childlike face but still several years more mature than what he recalled. Was she around 10 years old or so? Her small legs hung naturally over his neck toward his chest as she sat on his shoulders.

Theodore called out her name with disbelief, “…Mitra?”

The girl smiled widely and replied with pronunciation that was much better than it had been just a while ago, [Yes! Mitra!]

“Hah.”

‘Who am I? Where am I?’

Mitra jumped down from the neck of the confused Theodore. Her height was still below one meter despite growing. The girl of the earth wore a blue-grey dress and danced around. Her strength also felt quite powerful. It felt equivalent to that of the upper elementals Edwin summoned.

‘Her strength has more than doubled? Why all of a sudden…?’

An ancient elemental might be beyond common sense. However, this growth was strange. Was it due to connecting to Ratatoskr for a while? Theodore was feeling troubled by the growth when Mitra cried out.

[Open, hooing!] Mitra pointed to the forest and gave it a command. Then the bushes and tree roots moved like the Great Forest was opening its mouth. It was a feat that Ellenoa had shown when Theodore visited Elvenheim in the past.

“…”

“…”

“…”

“…”

This time, all four people were speechless as they gazed at the triumphant Mitra. They didn’t know why, but Mitra seemed to have equal or more power than the high elves in the Great Forest.

Chapter 316 - Towards the World Tree (3)

‘Ah, that’s it. The seed of the world tree,’ Theodore remembered this fact belatedly.

It had been several years already. Edwin had come to him after saving Ellenoa and given him a gift from Elvenheim. That was the seed of the world tree which Mitra had eaten. Theodore’s gaze naturally shifted to the top of Mitra’s head. The sprout of the world tree, the source of all life in the Great Forest, was growing from her small head. If that bud was recognized as the world tree, then it was no wonder that Mitra had power in the Great Forest.

The world tree, Yggdrasil—in the Age of Mythology, it connected three dimensions and had influence in nine dimensions. Compared to its prime, this forest was nothing more than a bunch of weeds. Even if it was just a sprout, there was nothing in the forest that could rebel against Mitra, who borrowed Yggdrasil’s name.

[Theo, did I do well?] Mitra returned to Theodore’s side after opening the path. Her eyes were shining like lanterns as she expected praise. Her innocent face was the same as always. Theodore couldn’t help laughing as he stroked her wheat-colored hair several times. “Yes, well done.”

[Hihihi!] Mitra laughed like she was ticklish and started to dance. Someone who didn’t know her would’ve thought that she was a child out for a picnic.

[Catch me~!] Mitra called out playfully as she plunged down the forest path. Did she want to play tag? Theodore followed her with a gentle smile, while the remaining three people followed with bemused expressions.

The four people headed through the forest like that. The ankle-height roots of the trees bent, while the branches which could tear at one’s skin moved out of the way. Theodore had experienced it once, but it was still amazing. This time, the one exercising the

power was Mitra. The vegetation stirred with every step she took, and when she hummed, the wind responded like it was a well-made string instrument.

'No, it isn't just that. This...!'

Theodore enhanced his eyesight. Elementals without contractors were given forms, and they danced and sang around Mitra's body. This was an unrealistic scene where the natural world responded to Mitra's will. It might be a trigger to regain believers. The power that overflowed in the Great Forest and the elves that worshipped Yggdrasil might restore some of Mitra's divinity.

At that moment, Edwin asked from behind Theodore, "...Benefactor, is that an ancient elemental?"

Theodore read the mixed emotions in Edwin's voice and looked back. There was reverence in Edwin's eyes. It was just like how the knights of Andras felt toward the emperor or how Lairon's followers worshipped him. Emotions thickened the elf's voice.

"Yes, that's right," Theodore confirmed it.

"But this feeling... It isn't possible. How?"

"What do you mean?"

However, Theodore didn't hear an answer from Edwin.

It was Ellaim who replied instead. "We can currently feel the power of the parent tree from her. The size of the power is under the top elementals, but the purity is more profound. I would like to bow down in front of her and give words of thanks."

"...That much?"

The two guardians nodded, and Theodore finally realized the gravity of the situation.

The guardians of the elves couldn't hide their reverence and wanted to drop to the ground. They could barely endure it with the mentality of the master level. In that case, it wouldn't be

surprising if other elves immediately bowed down and prayed the moment they saw Mitra.

‘Should I think about putting up some measures?’

Mitra regaining her divinity wasn’t a problem. It was the environment that was a problem. The foundation of her power was based on the world tree, so the elves’ limited faith was more likely to bind her to Elvenheim. If so, Mitra’s contractor wouldn’t be able to escape this land either. There was a lot of work to be done to avoid this.

Theodore was worrying about it when the uncomfortable Veronica caught his eye. “Veronica.”

“Huh?” Veronica sensed his question and looked down at her left wrist. She was wearing a bracelet with strange characters carved on it. Surely she wasn’t feeling uncomfortable because of the accessory? However, that idea quickly vanished from Theodore’s mind. It was because his eyes grasped the function of the bracelet in a matter of seconds.

“Magic power sealing?”

Veronica nodded and explained, “It suppresses the magic power that leaks out of my body. I’m not in a good mood because I’m wearing this. Sorry to bother you.”

“Why are you wearing this artifact?”

A magician needed to be able to resonate the mana outside the body and the circles inside the body to exert power. By wearing the bracelet, it was like Veronica had her limbs tied up. Of course, she wasn’t defenseless because she had her innate physical abilities and the draconic mode, but she was much weaker than usual. There was no reason for her to wear the artifact.

“Without this, my magic power will burn the forest.”

However, Theodore was convinced by the explanation. It reminded him of what Edwin said when he visited as the envoy

previously. Edwin had said that the world tree had burned because of her.

“Perhaps it is a problem of my lineage. I heard that red dragons live mainly in volcanic areas and have a great influence over the natural world.”

“Then staying in the Great Forest…”

“Well, I should wear it until the battle begins. How can I come into someone’s house and become an arsonist? It will be okay once a ward is placed.”

Veronica spoke casually. However, Theodore was a magician like her and knew how frustrating it would be to be restrained like that. She was disconnected from her magic power, and it would feel like her hands and feet were suddenly broken. Even if she only spent an hour or two in this state, her limbs would feel cramped. Theodore admired her and couldn’t help muttering a few words—words which were spoken with no intentions behind them.

“I hope we get there as soon as possible. As soon as we arrive, I will set up a circle around you…”

[Yes?] Mitra, who was walking a few steps ahead, heard Theodore’s words and returned to his side. [Theo wants to arrive faster?]

“Huh? Ah. Well, the quicker the better?”

[Understood! Theo, believe in Mitra!]

“Y-Yes.”

Mitra smiled brightly like sunshine and raised her voice. Her tone was light, like a bead rolling around on a tray.

[Shorten, hoing!]

*

One hour.

“…”

“…”

“…”

“…”

During their last visit, this journey had taken half a day thanks to Ellenoa’s assistance and Orta’s magic. It would take three days when walking normally and one day when flying over the trees. Yet Mitra had shortened it to just one hour. Theodore’s group was moved to the center of Elvenheim in a manner that the two 8th circle magicians couldn’t understand.

“Y-You got here quickly. Theodore?” Lumia came to meet them and couldn’t hide her dumbfounded face. Her surprise was greater because she had continuously grasped the position of the four people using Ratatoskr. They had moved a few kilometers per minute, sometimes jumping from one point to another. Unlike Orta’s space movement, this method involved the direct manipulation of space.

‘Space movement—no, space distortion…? I thought there was no one who could handle the space around the world tree…’

Mitra, the cause of this, had already been recalled. It was an action to avoid having elves fall in front of her. However, this result left Lumia feeling confused. The wards of the world tree were enormous. It was a transcendent existence, but in the end, the world tree was just a lifeform. The immunity inside its body was just like that of any other life form.

So, it wasn’t strange that it had moved according to Mitra’s will, since Mitra was recognized as part of its body. Lumia didn’t know about Mitra’s existence and was confused, but she soon opened her mouth and said, “…Please follow me. It isn’t quite ready yet, but I have prepared a room for Theodore and your companion to stay.”

“Ah, thank you.”

“Additionally, Guardian Edwin and Guardian Ellaim, both of you worked really hard. As soon as the Ceremony of Evergreens is finished, we will start the healing process for both of you.”

“Parent’s grace, the will of the dancers thanks you.”

The two guardians accompanied Theodore and Veronica up to here. Theodore conveyed his heartfelt thanks to these two people, “Both of you can visit at any time. Meltor and I, Theodore, will never forget your commitment.”

“It was an honor to join you on the meaningful journey.”

“I will see you again tomorrow, Benefactor!”

The two guardians, Edwin and Ellaim, moved boldly without caring about the aftermath of their injuries. Would they be all better the next time he saw them? Theodore looked forward to the reunion as he followed after Lumia with Veronica. Lumia’s walk was rather slow, perhaps in consideration for those who were unfamiliar with this forest.

Then Theodore suddenly had a question. “Lumia.”

“Yes?”

“What is the Ceremony of Evergreens? If it is a secret, you don’t have to teach me.”

Lumia shook her head with a gentle smile. “No. It isn’t anything big. The world tree sometimes drops leaves that have reached the end of their lifespan. These are collected and recycled as fertilizer for the forest. However, the scale is so large that two people must go out.”

“Two high elves… Ah, perhaps?”

“Yes, it is as you thought.”

Ellenoa and Alisa had been absent when he connected to Ratatoskr not long ago. There was one high elf Theodore hadn’t met yet, but there was no way he could think of someone he didn’t

know. They chatted for a while before Lumia brought up the topic first.

“Theodore, can I ask why you came here like this?” She squinted at Veronica and lowered her tone by an octave. “It must be an important issue if you came with her.”

“…Sigh, it is as you said.”

The existence of Veronica was, after all, a threat to the world tree. Theodore wouldn’t have her accompany him if her power wasn’t needed. Theodore confirmed Lumia’s words and carefully selected his words.

Where should he start explaining? The fact that the evil dragon Nídhöggur was aiming for this land? Or that a 9th circle warlock had resurrected and was aiming to sacrifice the world tree? It was a heavy story, so he didn’t think he should say it while they were walking.

Then at that moment…

“—Hello.” Someone suddenly appeared in front of Lumia, Theodore, and Veronica. The two magicians reflexively stepped back, and Veronica stared toward the front with her finger on her bracelet.

“…Elf?”

The person who appeared had black hair, golden eyes, and white fur clothing. The beauty, who was different from the earthly beauty of elves, gazed at Theodore. She was around 160 centimeters tall, and her weight was unknown. The distribution of her center of gravity and her standing posture demonstrated that she was trained in fighting. Theodore evaluated the other person to be at least on the level of Edwin and Ellaim, so he couldn’t help feeling alert.

“Ah, wait a minute!” Lumia interrupted their confrontation. “Ah, Theodore! Is this the first time you’ve met her? She is the

third dancer, the shaman of the Dry Pine Tribe—”

“Titania,” Titania said her name in a dry voice and stood in front of Theodore without hesitation. “You are the contractor of the ancient elemental?”

“That’s right.” Theodore’s eyebrows frowned slightly at the high elf’s unfriendly attitude. Veronica was also unhappy, judging by the rise in temperature. At this rate, a fight would break out before they could talk. Titania ignored the harsh tension and looked at Theodore with strange eyes. “I see. If so, you are the one my master has chosen.”

“…Master?”

Titania nodded to his reflexively question with an emotionless face. “I will introduce myself again. I am the disciple of Sage Myrdal Herseim, the successor of the ancient elemental Geros.”

She concluded her shocking self-introduction, “I, Titania Herseim, have been waiting for you.”

Chapter 317 - Towards the World Tree (4)

Theodore asked with a puzzled expression, “You are Myrdal’s disciple?”

He had no idea he would hear that name here. A sage surrounded by many secrets… Myrdal was also a magician and elementalist. He was a mysterious person. His achievements were recorded in the magic towers, but there was nothing related to his personal relationships. It was questionable as to how Myrdal even knew Gluttony, and now he had a high elf as a disciple. Furthermore, he had left behind another ancient elemental?

‘If it is called Geros, then it is definitely Zephyrus… Ellenoa once showed me an illusion.’

Zephyrus, god of the west wind, was a god who took four laps of the material world in a day and caused storms just by sighing. Even if the power of that time couldn’t be reproduced, the tales about Myrdal were comparable to those about Zephyrus. Theodore recalled the welcoming image of Geros that Ellenoa had shown him. Geros had a crown of horns and a body surrounded by armor. Its form reminded him of a giant from the Age of Mythology.

“I heard that elves can’t be magicians. Are high elves different?”

“No way,” Titania replied with an emotionless face. “We can’t artificially interfere with the flow of nature. We are a species that can’t learn magic. The only thing I learned from him was the wisdom of nature, the reality of elementals.”

“A human teaching high elves about elementals…?”

“Haven’t you guessed it after meeting Master? He is known as a human, but he is something not human.”

Theodore fell silent. Making a guess about something was different from hearing it directly from a high elf. Sage Myrdal Herseim was something not human! It wasn’t an exaggeration to

say that not only had he mastered all of humanity's magic, he had also established a new system of elementalists.

'What is he? He made the contract between me and Mitra, and now I find out that he has also given a high elf an ancient elemental…' Theodore thought back to when he met Myrdal at the Fountain of Wisdom on top of the world tree.

He remembered every single world Myrdal had said.

[A fragment of memory calling out to me, how pretentious.]

[Huhu, please forgive me. I foresaw your visit, but I'm unable to move at this time. As such, I am forced to greet you and your contractor in this way.]

[Giving excuses…]

Despite being centuries old and a living transcendent, he had referred to it 'at this time.' It meant he had been aware of the situation. It was foresight. Myrdal's capacity for it far exceeded that of the white tower master, Heathcliff. So, it wasn't impossible for Myrdal to observe the future beyond the wall of centuries.

"So?"

There were too few clues. All Theodore could guess was that Myrdal had left some arrangements for an unknown intention. In order to know more about this, it was necessary to listen to the words of Titania, the high elf who claimed to be Myrdal's disciple.

"You said you were waiting for me?" Theodore asked.

However, this caused Titania to shake her head. "I have something to say and wanted you to follow me… but your task is more urgent. Is the story associated with the energy of death coming from the southwest?"

"How did you…?"

"I don't know how to see like Master, but it isn't hard to read the darkness."

Titania was an unknown presence like her master, Myrdal. Lumia twitched at the words she couldn't understand.

"Hey." At that moment, Veronica couldn't help stepping forward. "Why are you coming out of nowhere and speaking in informal language? Is it fun pretending to know everything? Do you think it is okay to treat Theo like this?"

"Hrmm?"

The bracelet around Veronica's left hand shook. Veronica's magic power wasn't so weak that it could be bound by a single artifact. The bracelet's durability rapidly fell once she allowed herself to get agitated. Titania saw it, and her eyes lit up. "Aha, the dragon lady who once burned the area during a confrontation in the past. Shouldn't you be more polite when visiting this time?"

"What? Should I say it directly? Cowardly high elf."

"…What?" Titania reacted sharply to the word 'cowardly.'

"Aren't you the high elf who hid during the incident last time? It must be easy when you can see the future. You can run away because you know someone else will resolve it!"

"You—!"

The sound of teeth grinding together could be heard from Titania's mouth. It was evidence that Veronica's words had scratched Titania's nerves about failing to participate in the fight against Laevateinn. Titania clenched her teeth and was about to reply.

"Hey, everyone! Let's go inside and talk. Yes?" It was easy to tell that the atmosphere was rapidly becoming bad, so Lumia intervened between the two and tried to calm things down. If Veronica's magic power were freed, it would severely damage the area around her. As such, Veronica and Titania couldn't refuse this mediation.

"Bah."

“Tch.”

Surrounded by a tight tension, the two high elves and two magicians walked faster.

*

Fortunately, a second argument didn’t occur. Titania stopped talking about Myrdal and remained silent as they headed to the cottage that Theodore had visited several times in the past. After greeting the four high elves, the two magicians went straight to the point. Like Lumia, the four high elves were aware that Theodore had come for a serious purpose due to Veronica’s presence.

It was a long story. Theodore talked about the war in the Northern Continent, the revival of the 9th circle warlock Jerem, the current destroyed state of Lairon, and the advent of Nídhöggur being the final purpose.

Three hours flew by quickly.

“...A warlock is aiming for the world tree. It sounds like something from a children’s fairytale book, but I don’t want to experience it directly,” the dark elf Alucard opened his distinctive purple lips and spoke with displeasure.

He didn’t show any doubts about the information Theodore had brought. After all, Theodore had known about the existence of Laevateinn before anyone else, so the high elves didn’t doubt him. Theodore was a clear-eyed person who had been invited to use Ratatoskr.

“Knowing about the existence and power of Elvenheim and still wanting to invade...”

“It means that he can win.”

“We must prepare well.”

“I didn’t think I would hear Nídhöggur’s name in this age.”

Titania didn’t say anything, but the other three quickly discussed

measures. They spoke without hesitation about Elvenheim's current power and the state of their defenses.

Theodore couldn't help wondering. "…Why?"

"Huh? What is it?" Alucard asked, and the four high elves looked at Theodore.

"Why aren't you scolding me? In the end, I am the one who resurrected Jerem. If it wasn't for me, the world tree wouldn't be in danger."

"Why?"

The four high elves looked at each other and laughed.

"How boring. That's what you were thinking about, Theodore?"

"What?"

"Don't forget that you plunged into the flames for us. Elves don't forget the debts they owe. And friendship isn't a relationship where debts should be dwelled on or exchanged," Lumia spoke clearly. "Let's get through this adversity again, Theodore."

"…Yes." Theodore nodded with a pained heart, and the story started flowing faster.

It was due to Naia. The usual sleepiness of the beautiful female elf was gone. Naia, the head of the clan known for their wisdom in Elvenheim, asked Theodore for one thing, "The prophecy that you heard, tell me."

"Ah, the prophecy…"

There was nothing to hide.

Naia listened to the five verses Heathcliff had spoken, then she carefully opened her mouth. "I think the big bird is Hraesvelgr. The one whose life principle is to go against the evil dragon, it is the bird that brings typhoons. Our tribe's records show that the two are always at each other's throats."

“Divine creature, Hraesvelgr… the old stories are continuing today.”

“If it has been prophesied, shall we call this divine creature?”

Theodore’s eyes widened at Alucard’s words and asked, “Is it possible?”

“It is possible.” Unlike the positive answer, the elf’s complexion wasn’t bright. Then Alucard immediately revealed the reason why. “The biggest problem is that the ritual will take at least a month. Additionally, it needs four high elves, which hinders our actions. Ellenoa and Titania are still immature as high elves, making it difficult to build a defense around them.”

“I can do it.”

“I’m not saying you can’t, Titania. You have to spend more time in the Great Forest. Hunting and war are different. We need someone with experience in leading…”

Titania’s eyes narrowed as she interrupted Alucard and declared in a strong tone, “I swear in the name of the root. Leave it to me.”

For elves, the roots were their home and clan. Swearing an oath on them was heavier than swearing on their own lives. Additionally, Titania was a high elf, so her root was the world tree Yggdrasil. The parent tree didn’t deny Titania’s pledge, and her commitment couldn’t be argued against.

Alucard had to raise both hands and concede, “…I understand. I will leave it to you. I will pass it on to the two people who aren’t here. Don’t forget to listen to Ellenoa and the other guardians.”

“Of course.” After achieving what she wanted, Titania immediately looked at Theodore and Veronica. Then she pointed to one person and said, “There is something you need to resolve first.”

“Huh?” Veronica was stunned by the finger that suddenly pointed at her.

Chapter 318 - The One who Inherits, the One who Maneuvers Behind the Scenes (1)

The underground, a subterranean world that caused instinctive fear among living creatures on the earth…

It didn’t allow for a single strand of light. This was a space that was cut off from the blue sky and the grace of the sun. If the place beyond the sky was revered as a sacred and beautiful place, then the area under the earth was considered as a place of death and flames.

Most cultures buried a person when they died, making the underground known as the world of the dead. There was a reason for this stereotype. There was no need to go back to the Age of Mythology. In this era, there were many forces that made the underground their home.

The underground auction house in the Kargas Kingdom was part of it.

At any time and from anywhere, those hiding in the underground were always afraid of the sun, and they held secrets that couldn’t be revealed to others. Those with wicked eyes crawled into the darkness beneath the earth to be able to display their wicked desires openly.

After staying in the abyss for a long time, the rats were finally eaten by the abyss.

“…Hrmmm.”

Bodies, bodies, and bodies… A man opened his mouth on top of a hill of hundreds, maybe thousands, of bodies. He let out a viciously distorted voice that caused the listener to feel fear.

The man was wrapped in a black robe, and as he crushed one of the skulls rolling near his feet, he muttered, “Kuhuhu, I would suppose this situation is called ‘boil the hound once it has caught

the rabbit'? It is my favorite expression." (TL: Getting rid of something once it has served its purpose)

It was as he said. All those who worked as his puppets were part of the mountain of the dead. The head of the Orcus Company, Isaac, had died in a gruesome puddle of blood. With Jerem's resurrection, the Four Horsemen turned the organization, which they had created, into a meal for Jerem, just like putting a hound that had lost its value into a boiling pot.

"Their deaths will help the king. Isn't this a rewarding experience for such trash?" Red Knight Elohim chuckled as he looked down at the mummified bodies. It wasn't just the vitality of the bodies that was drained. Their souls, the backbone of their life, had also been absorbed. Those who died here would have no room for salvation. They would constantly suffer pain serving under Jerem.

"Well, this will keep me alive for another month or two." Jerem nodded at Elohim and pulled out his hand that had been hidden in his robes.

Rotting skin, like that of a leprosy patient, was revealed.

The body of the Pale Rider couldn't stop the collapse of his soul. It was due to the lack of a suitable vessel for Jerem's soul, as well as the fatal wound Mitra had dealt him. Right now, absorbing the vitality and souls of the living was just a desperate measure, not a fundamental solution.

In order to fix this wound, he had to pay an equivalent price to a great being, Nídhöggur.

"If possible, I wanted to be better prepared, but... I guess it can't be helped. There isn't a lot of time remaining in this flesh." Words with an unknown meaning behind them flowed from Jerem's mouth. Just what the hell was he starting?

Building a mountain of bodies and a river of blood... Among

them was an excellent magician. There was also a swordsman who made a name for himself. One man had slaughtered all the famous people in the organization like they were chickens and completed a single magic circle.

“I don’t need to call a complete form from the beginning. It is enough to finish it after the calling. It isn’t difficult to call an avatar if I use the souls gathered from Lairon and the body of Baldur.”

The altar of sacrifices was surrounded by a magic circle of an ominous color. On the left was a soul gem. It was a crystal ball made from the 10 million souls that had been stolen by the great magic circle in Lairon. Judging by its value, the volume would remain even if he called several high-ranking demons.

However, there was an even more valuable offering on the right. It was Baldur’s body. Surrounded by a brilliant light, his remains didn’t allow the human eye to look at it. Jerem could only confirm the outline, and the Four Horsemen didn’t even dare face it. Baldur was a god who represented light, the antithesis of warlocks.

Therefore, the presence of darkness couldn’t help being attracted to this prey.

“「 Eater of the world tree, king of Nastrond. 」”

The magic circle, which had been drawn with the blood of thousands, flashed red. As soon as the chanting began, the darkness in the underground area started to wriggle as if it had gained life. It was proof that the wall separating the material world and Nastrond was collapsing.

“「 You are the one who scoffs at all deaths, who sits down on the field of those killed at the end of the world. 」”

The taboo history from the end of the Age of Mythology flowed out, and the magic circle emitted red light like it was responding. It was the eye of Nídhöggur, Nastrond’s king. The gaze penetrated

through the wall of the dimension and reached Jerem.

-Did you call this body, Follower?

Terror flooded in. As soon as he received that gaze, Jerem forgot his position as a transcendent and became terrified. Nídhöggur was a king of monsters who could kill him with one finger… Jerem had contracted with Nídhöggur to obtain the mighty power. However, it was inevitable for him to feel fear due to the difference between them. Jerem barely controlled the shaking of his voice and opened his mouth, “Your strength is required. Receive the offering I brought, and let me borrow your power.”

-Hoh? Nídhöggur first looked at the soul gem with disinterested eyes, but he then looked at Baldur’s body with intrigue. It was the body of a god from the Age of Mythology. He might already be dead, but Baldur’s fame had spread throughout the world.

Needless to say, Nídhöggur accepted it. -Okay, tell me your desire. In the name of this Nídhöggur, I will grant you strength corresponding to the sacrifices offered.

Simultaneously, the two sacrifices on the altar were sucked into the dark abyss. It meant they had become the possessions of Nídhöggur, the ruler of Nastrond. Subsequently, Jerem’s desire was conveyed to Nídhöggur.

-Yggdrasil, how interesting. In the Age of Mythology, many wanted to take it. But in the end, it was burned without entering anyone’s hands. Desire filled the eyes of the wicked dragon. -Indeed, this is entertainment after a long time. Follower, I’ll match your trick. This time, I will take that seedling.

“Thank you, great dragon.”

-On the day that this body swallows Yggdrasil, I will give you a piece of Niflheim’s territory.

Jerem grinned, and Nídhöggur opened his mouth. Magic couldn’t surpass the walls of the dimension. Jerem thought this at

first. Crossing the walls of the dimension wasn't a feat allowed to a 9th circle warlock, even when his body was complete.

However, this was just a mere nuisance to Nídhöggur.

————————————————————!!!

An odor of death spread out, and the dragon roared.

*

Simultaneously, Theodore's group finished their first task after the conversation in the cabin. It was to settle Veronica's matter that Titania had pointed out. The ward was completed faster than expected, and Veronica's mana calmed down.

"…Tch." Still, Veronica's complaints couldn't be stopped.

"Well done. There is no magic power coming from her." Titania nodded as she looked at the ward Theodore had made.

There was no problem if it couldn't be felt with the senses of a high elf. No fires made it through the ward. However, Veronica was unhappy about the situation and muttered to Titania, "You don't have to act so arrogantly with Theo!"

"…?" Titania didn't understand the meaning of the words and turned away with no response. Of course, her indifferent attitude made Veronica even more infuriated.

"I'll be right back. Please wait, even if it is boring." Theodore tried to calm Veronica, then he followed after Titania. He had visited Elvenheim once before, but most places were still unfamiliar to him. Titania, who was walking ahead, looked back at her and said, "Let's go higher. It is more efficient to explain each zone from a high altitude."

"I will."

The two people exchanged words and flew into the air. Theodore used flying magic, while Titania relied on the ancient elemental, Geros. As Theodore rose slowly in the air, he listened to the voice

coming from above him. Titania's voice was mixed with the wind as she said, "I want to ask you something."

She hesitated for a moment before asking softly, "Is my tone that arrogant?"

"...Huh?"

"I didn't speak with honorifics the first time we met. I don't have any bad feelings towards you and don't want to make you uncomfortable. If you have any complaints, tell me without worrying."

Theodore looked up at her with a subtle expression, then he realized that Titania was wearing a skirt and looked away. This was the disadvantage of flying magic. However, Titania seemed to think his silence was an answer and sighed. She spoke in a tone that was still stiff but carried some of her own troubles. "I respect you even if I don't use honorifics. You are the benefactor of Elvenheim. I'm not haughty or stupid enough to not admit them. If there is a problem... Yes, think of it as me lacking social interaction."

"Okay, I understand your point." He accepted her words but pointed out one thing. "Then you should fix something first."

"What is it?"

"My name isn't 'you'."

Titania looked down at him with surprise and smiled bitterly. It was only a slight smile, but it was the first time Theodore had seen it.

"...Indeed. Theodore, should I call you this?"

"Yes, I will also call you Titania."

"This is a monumental day. Aside from the high elves and Master, you are the first one to call my name."

The atmosphere improved as both of them continued to fly in the

sky.

After a few kilometers, Titania and Theodore crossed the clouds and landed on one of the branches of the world tree. They flew for a few minutes and couldn't even fly halfway up the world tree. Of course, they could go further up, but it would be counterproductive to their goal of understanding the different areas in the Great Forest.

'The scenery is spectacular. If this was opened as a tourist destination, many people would pay gold to see it.'

However, it was unlikely that would ever happen. Theodore was smiling when Titania called out to him.

"Theodore."

"Ah, did you want to explain something?"

"No, I remembered that I have to give you something."

"Huh?"

The wind was strong. Against the backdrop of the huge tree, the wind blew Titania's hair and white fur clothing. Then she pulled out a book from inside her clothing. Theodore's eyes shook as he saw the book's cover.

"Master asked me to give this to Theodore."

"Hah..." Theodore laughed involuntarily and received the book from Titania. The book's cover was so worn down that it was impossible to know when it was written.

'It makes me realize that he truly isn't human.'

Theodore's trembling fingers touched the characters on the title, [Deeper Theories about Elementals].

The Introduction to Elemental Magic II that Theodore bought a few years ago at the auction house had raised his understanding of magic and elementals, but he hadn't gotten a chance to talk to Myrdal again. It was the original copy of the book Myrdal had

written, but a fragment of his soul hadn't remained in it.

However, what about this book that had been written before Theodore was born?

"…Sigh." Theodore took a deep breath to calm his agitation and a place a hand on the sage's book.

'Appraisal.'

Chapter 319 - The One who Inherits, the One who Maneuvers Behind the Scenes (2)

As always, the same information window appeared in Theodore's mind.

[Deeper Theories about Elementals]

[This book goes beyond the theory of the four elementals, giving an outline of the royal elementals and the ancient elementals. It explains the difference between a god and an elemental, as well as the changes that occur to an elemental with a divinity. The author, Myrdal, wrote this solely for one reader. You are the only one who can access this data.

* This magic book is rated 'Unique.'

* Acquisition Conditions: A contractor of an ancient elemental.

* When consumed, elemental magic (Genuine) will be learned.

* When consumed, your understanding of elementals will increase to the maximum.

* This is the original copy that was directly written by the author. When consumed, you can read the message left behind by the author.]

Theodore's eyebrows raised when he saw the last sentence. This was a book that had been written solely for the sake of one reader...

Additionally, it bluntly stated that the condition of acquisition was that one had to be 'a contractor of an ancient elemental.' In the past, Sage Myrdal had truly foretold of Theodore's existence. It was hundreds of years ago, maybe even more. The fact that Theodore hadn't met Titania previously might also be due to Myrdal's arrangement.

'I was never harmed. But... can I trust Mrydal Herseim, who is an

unidentified existence?'

A great magician of a previous century and better known as the summoner of a king elemental... 'Myrdal Herseim' was a name that Theodore had only discovered in a textbook 10 years ago. Theodore had thought it was just a coincidence when he found the original book after meeting Gluttony at Bergen Academy and that he had simply been fortunate enough to sign a contract with an ancient elemental.

However, what if that luck was someone else's intentions? Despite the results benefiting Theodore, he couldn't help feeling upset that his choices and efforts seemed to be a puppet game. Feeling the need to talk to Myrdal again, Theodore opened the book. Then he frowned in less than 10 seconds.

"...What... This book?"

It was written in the official language of the continent. The summary of the paragraphs was excellent, and the explanation of the contents concise. This showed that the author's knowledge was excellent. The issue was that the contents had an absurd degree of difficulty.

'Damn, it will take longer than a day or two. It is at a level of theory that I will have to study for months or even years before being able to consume it.'

Looking at the Magic Society as a whole, it was rare to find a magician who knew more than Theodore about elementals. Yet he couldn't remember anything after reading it once. It was a good thing there was some overlap with the Fairy's Book. Otherwise, he wouldn't even be able to get past a few pages.

However, when Theodore thought about it, he realized it was natural. After all, the ancient elements were fragments of gods. This meant that a magician with eight circles was still lacking to fully handle that power.

‘Transcendent.’

An aura user must become a grand master or a magician must have nine circles before they could reach the realm of the gods. Theodore might possess several divinities and the experience of Mitra becoming a god again for a short period of time, but it was still far from understanding the nature of the power. This was what it meant to challenge understanding Deeper Theories about Elementals.

“Yes, I will accept it.”

Anyway, Titania had done nothing wrong when delivering the book. Theodore placed the old book in his inventory and decided to focus on the main priority. The book Myrdal left behind was an unexpected variable. The first thing Theodore needed to do was defend the world tree and stop Jerem’s desires.

“Then I will start off with a description of the areas.” The high elf looked down at the large forest stretched out below them and pointed a finger. “The south will be the forefront. The area next to the Red Plateau is empty. However, the ents and dryads coexist deeper inside. The strength of the two species are great when coexisting and large monsters won’t enter that area.”

“The ents and dryads… They are the species that receive the most from the world tree. They will certainly be a great help.”

“That’s right. Their cooperation is indispensable when building the defense lines.”

The ents and dryads hadn’t been able to play a big role against Laevateinn because of the fire. However, they grew up in the Great Forest and were two or three times stronger than other species in the area. The ent’s bark was hard to scratch even with steel axes, while the dryads exerted strength over the elementals in their area. Additionally, hundreds of ents could reverse the environmental conditions of the battlefield.

“Next is the west. You have also met them before. It is the area under the control of the beast clan. Frankly, it is difficult to expect much help from them.”

“I thought that as well…” Theodore smiled wryly at Titania’s words. He had defeated the chief of one clan with a punch, so there was no need to think the others would be stronger. There was a possibility of having power in numbers, but this wasn’t an advantage against a necromancer. Rather, it would be right to evacuate them to the rear to prevent them from becoming the enemy’s minions.

“Apart from the north, which is permanently frozen, the last area left is the east. The inhabitants of that area are wildlife and creatures. Their scale and power aren’t great, but we can’t rule out the possibility of them falling into enemy hands.”

“The undead, no taming… We can’t afford to have the creatures join them. It is best to have the beast clan organize the eastern forest.”

The beast clan wouldn’t be much help after the full-scale war began, but that didn’t mean they were useless. It would be meaningful if they helped reduce the trouble in the east. There was a need to discuss more detailed strategies. However, Theodore thought of the primary measures and opened his mouth, “Titania, where is it better to start?”

“The south.”

He wanted to ask her opinion, but Theodore was surprised that the answer was firmer than expected. “Why?”

“It is because the Ceremony of Evergreens is just ending. The ceremony takes place with the cooperation of the ents and dryads,” Titania explained the reason without hesitation. “I don’t know about the dryads, but the hierarchy of the ents is vague. There is no head, and they often don’t follow commands. It is best to tell the story when so many of them are gathered in one place.”

“Okay, let’s go to the south.”

“A quick decision is good.”

At almost the same time, both of them jumped down from the world tree. The white fur clothing and red robe fluttered like flags as they flew over kilometers. The two people sped quickly to the south forest, and below them was the spectacular sight of a sea of trees.

‘Eh?’ At that moment, Theodore recalled something. ‘The place where the Ceremony of Evergreens is taking place. This means that Ellenoa…’

Seeing Titania descend to the ground, Theodore reflexively lowered his body. Two colored flags could be seen through the dense trees, and they landed in an open space. Then he came face to face with the person he had thought about just seconds ago.

“…Theodore?” Ellenoa’s eyes widened as she cried out in surprise. What did she guess? Her face turned red after she saw Theodore. If Alisa hadn’t intervened, the two of them might’ve stared into each other’s eyes for a long time.

“Eh, you finally decided to take our cutie?” With a big laugh, a high elf who didn’t reach Theodore’s chest approached.

Alisa and Ellenoa were the high elves who had just finished the Ceremony of Evergreens.

*

“Ahahaha! So, you are traveling together?” High Elf Alisa listened to the situation and laughed as usual. Unlike her childish appearance, she was the second oldest in Elvenheim. Alisa had been living a long time since before Ellenoa was born a few decades ago, so she had more experience.

Alisa looked at the two people with playful eyes before asking Titania, “Titania, can you do it?”

“…Believe in me.”

“Yes, if you say so. Well, it will be fine with that good-looking man. It would be perfect if it turned into a love affair!”

“A-Alisa!” Ellenoa became flustered, and Alisa just giggled.

Then she pointed behind her as she asked Theodore, “By the way, have you thought of a way to persuade them? The ents don’t take our orders. It is over if the ents don’t move, even if we persuade the dryads. Don’t you know that?”

“Yes, I’m aware.”

The dryads were fairies who dwelled in trees. Even if they wanted to follow commands, the dryads couldn’t be separated from their tree and couldn’t move if the ents didn’t. The ents were a species that didn’t follow the orders of the high elves and whose hierarchy was unclear. Titania also wondered how they would get the ents’ cooperation.

“Everyone, don’t be too surprised,” Theodore spoke a few words of caution and activated his magic power.

Maybe it due to their proximity to the world tree, but Mitra immediately responded to Theodore’s call, absorbing all the mana in the ground and creating a body. Her hair was braided back, and the flower bud on her head was shining impressively.

[Hoing! Mitra!]

She was a child of 10 years, but the three high elves stiffened as they saw the essence of the child—the world tree, Yggdrasil. They felt the power of the giant tree that sustained all life in the Great Forest, the tree which the elves called the parent tree. Before any of them could open their mouths, something happened.

[Ohh…oh…ohhhh….!]

[…King…! Welcome…king…!]

[Bow…! Bow…knee!]

Kung kung. There was the magnificent sound of footsteps approaching. The ents reacted the moment Mitra appeared. The reaction was more than expected, perhaps because she had grown from last time. They fell to their knees and didn't raise their heads. Their branches broke, but the ents didn't care. The ruler of all vegetation, the embodiment of the world tree Yggdrasil, was a living god to the ents.

"…"

"…"

"…"

The noble and beautiful high elves were overwhelmed.

[H-Hoing? Theo? I… What do I say?] Mitra was confused.

Theodore thought for a moment before giving her an answer—all communications began with greetings. Mitra danced before placing both hands on her waist and shouting, [Nice to meet you—!]

Why…? This encounter would be a cornerstone in the great battle for the future of the material world. However, Theodore couldn't help seeing it as a play for an elementary academy. He laughed and stroked Mitra's head. This ridiculous spectacle was the beginning of the defense of the world tree.

Chapter 320 - The One who Inherits, the One who Maneuvers Behind the Scenes (3)

One month after Theodore's party arrived in Elvenheim, the 1,000 elf warriors deployed to Meltor returned.

Meanwhile, many changes had been made in Elvenheim, and the progress was continuing. Since Mitra's spectacular entrance before the ents, the forces that made up the Great Forest had started to move actively according to their roles.

As mentioned earlier, the four high elves, apart from Ellenoa and Titania, were doing the summoning ceremony for the divine creature. Theodore collaborated with the other two high elves to set up the defenses in the southern part of the forest.

The number one contributor to this task had been decided from the beginning. As always, the small girl with the blossom on her head was the main character. The ents ignored the high elves but followed every one of Mitra's commands. The dryads promised to cooperate like the ents, and the two species made their defenses according to Mitra's words.

[Woong... You! Go there and sit down, you! Go three more steps and lay down! No, to the left!]

Mitra looked several times at the topographic map that Theodore had drawn. She determined the shape and pointed back and forth. They were clunky instructions, but her orders were delivered through thoughts, not words. She might have seemed like a 10-year-old, but Mitra was the fragment of a deity who had power over vegetation.

The ents were a plant species, and there was no better species to accommodate her wishes.

Kuuong...kung....kuong...

Rumbling sounds rang out in the peaceful forest. The ground was

overturned every time the ents stepped, and puffs of dust rose up. Every tree moved was over 10 meters tall.

The sight of hundreds or thousands of these ents moving wouldn't be common in any era. The forest's appearance was changing. As the height of the ground was raised, the wild beasts were surprised by the sudden environmental changes and rushed out in all directions.

There was a hill that hadn't existed yesterday, and a vacant area had turned into a sheer cliff. The topography itself was being used to prevent the invasion of eternal enemies.

'Hrmm, it seems to be turning out better than I expected?' Theodore watched the progress from the sky and nodded with satisfaction. He had been anxious about leaving everything to Mitra, but she had grown into a little girl who possessed outstanding intellect.

Mitra understood Theodore's topographical map and positioned the ents as intended. If things continued like this, everything would be finished in a fortnight. He examined the southern area before turning his eyes away. This time, it was the habitat of the creatures in the east.

"Well, there is nothing that will be an obstacle for Veronica."

Veronica would be fine even if she was left alone for a week. The ward on her would last for two weeks. She had become impatient and asked Theodore for something to do. After a long moment of thinking, he had asked her to subjugate the eastern forest. It was a forest, but it wasn't a big problem if she stayed on the outskirts. The beast clan acknowledged Veronica's power and followed her commands.

'I don't need to worry much about the west and north areas... Things have been going smoothly so far.'

It might not be the best, but things were being handled well.

Apart from cleaning up the east and building the defenses in the south, Theodore had left the rest of the preparations to Elvenheim. The elves who had lived here for centuries were going to experience a great invasion!

A warlock that had contracted with an evil dragon would be at the forefront, while an undead legion would push forward. Theodore's tension increased as the days passed, and he prepared for the invasion in his own way. There was a heavy noise as he pulled out Soul Calibre.

"...I have read all four books."

It was a signal that he had read all the books he had taken out from the Zero Library.

Sigh. However, Theodore's complexion wasn't bright. It was because of the predation. He picked up the four books in turn, looking at their covers with troubled eyes. Then he looked at the information windows by placing his left hand on them.

[Ultima]

[This book describes cryogenic magic that can stop all the phenomena of the physical world. It is no coincidence that Ultima, from the ancient world 'Ultimate', has become the name of this magic. In the past, it was said that a magician had used Ultima to freeze a dragon, only to cause himself to die. In order to use this perfectly, the 8th Circle is needed.

* Your understanding is mediocre (65.4%)]

His understanding didn't become higher, even though he had read the book a few times. Given that the lower the level of understanding, the lower the effect of predation would be, it was likely there would be no benefits in this current state. Theodore looked at the information window again, and the last sentence stabbed at him like thorns.

'Eight circles or more... The magic Blundell used seemed to have

something to do with Ultima, so it is a pity.'

The Time Stop magic that had even stopped Invidia for a moment...! If Theodore could acquire that magic, it would be worth spending a lot of achievement points. Techniques that dealt with time, the ultimate magic, was a domain for the peak of the 9th circle, which was why Blundell's life had been consumed.

However, Theodore didn't want to talk about this now. He descended gently toward the ground and sat on a moderately high branch, looking at the remaining three books.

"It can't be helped. I should do the rest quickly."

Then the mouth on his left hand opened and prompted him, -Go ahead, User! My stomach is hungry!

"Your appetite seems to have become stronger. Can ordinary books fill you up? Come, eat."

Gulp!

The magic book was sucked into his left hand.

['Rotting Hands' has been consumed. Your understanding is very high.]

[7th Circle magic 'Rotting Hands' has been acquired.]

[Your earth magic ability has increased slightly.]

[An original copy has been consumed. Due to the many years, the author's soul has become weathered. There is only a fragment of the soul remaining.]

The wisdom of the 7th circle magic, Rotting Hands, entered Theodore's mind. It was corruption magic that no substance of the material world could afford to be affected by. Rotting Hands had a disadvantage of being dependent on the user's earth affinity, but that wasn't a great disadvantage for Theodore. He was someone with the power of Mother Earth, an affinity that reached the limits of a mortal.

‘Okay, this is a pass.’

The burden on his mind was small. After Rotting Hands, Theodore picked up another book. Then Gluttony’s tongue emerged.

[‘Reverse Shadow’ has been consumed. Your understanding is very high.]

[Your proficiency with permanence magic has increased.]

[The Umbra Imprint has reacted loudly. Your sense of dimensions and spiritual dominance will increase greatly.]

[An original copy has been consumed. The synchro rate with object name ‘Lenix Agarta’ is being checked… Blocked. Lenix Agarta has refused to sync with the user. You can try to force a sync using the permissions of a user, but it is not recommended.]

Theodore frowned when he saw the last message. “Rejected? The sync was rejected?”

-It seems that the author doesn’t want to talk. There are no emotions left. What do you want to do?

“…It’s okay. Talking to someone who doesn’t want it won’t get me any good results.”

There was one more remaining. Theodore picked up the last book, Soul Calibre, and cautiously placed his left hand on it. If the author of this book also refused to talk, he would have to force one of them. The last book entered Gluttony’s mouth.

[‘Soul Calibre’ has been consumed. Your understanding is very high.]

[The 8th circle special magic ‘Soul Calibre’ has been acquired.]

[The astral attribute affinity has reached its limit. In compensation, the level of skill proficiency will rise even further.]

[An original copy has been consumed. The synchro rate with Reynolds Spencer is being checked… You are at an appropriate

level. You can absorb some of Reynold's experience. The duration of the episode is 38 minutes and 17 seconds.]

[Synchro is starting.]

Theodore was relieved by the message, and his consciousness was drawn into the unknown space.

'Reynolds Spencer….' As Theodore's consciousness faded, he was troubled by the name of the author of Soul Calibre.

He seemed to have heard the name somewhere a long time ago.

*

Kuweeeeeoh! There was a roar that seemed to burst his eardrums. Theodore's consciousness woke up to a great shock. His blood boiled like a molten furnace, and his brain was filled with excitement and tension. It was a familiar feeling. Faced with a hideous monster, his feet started to move. Theodore remembered that this was synchro, so he stepped back and watched the situation.

'This is Reynolds Spencer's memory?'

The scene continued. He didn't know who the owner of this body was, but the battle style he was using was clearly a very technical type. His feet moved 360 degrees, and he accelerated forward. Was it more appropriate to call it acrobatics than a technical battle style?

The three-headed demon was confused by the acrobatic movements. The fight was fleeting. The demon had three heads and twelve eyes. Yet the moment its eyes looked around, the master of this body had already disappeared. It was an assault beyond the speed of sound, combined with six secondary magics!

As the owner of the body admired the magic, a dazzling sword emerged from his right arm.

Kiiiing-!

Asurahi’s Resounding Sword—perhaps it was the perfect sword on which to use Soul Calibre. Otherwise, it would be impossible to cut the body of a demon that was outside the laws of physics.

Simultaneously, three heads rolled to the floor, and the demon’s headless body turned into dust. In the end, the demon, that was a foreigner, was sent back to its dimension. The astral attack had dealt a heavy blow, but it was lacking to destroy the demon. Destroying a body that was beyond this dimension needed the power of a god.

Either way, the owner of this body won. It was a fact that didn’t change.

“Ha!” As he erased the sword that protruded from his right arm, the person presumed to be Reynolds shouted in a big voice, “Asura's soldiers—they aren’t a big deal! They are nothing in front of Reynolds! Spencer’s descendant won’t stop until you are all dead!”

The warlocks in the distance were surprised by his voice. The magnitude of the force they felt couldn’t be classified. At this moment, Theodore remembered where he had heard the name ‘Reynolds Spencer’.

‘Oh, my god.’

Reynolds spoke like he heard Theodore’s thoughts, “What is it? Person from the future.”

‘I-I’m sorry. Can I ask you one thing first?’

“Okay.”

Theodore gained the consent of the other person and took a deep breath before opening his mouth. If his memories were true, then the person he had synced with was…

“Defeater of the sand dragon, Azi Dahaka, as well as demon slayer and magic swordsman… Are you the great hero, Reynolds Spencer?’

Theodore knew it was a stupid question, but he couldn't hold it in any longer.

Magic Swordsman Reynolds Spencer was a great hero who had existed a thousand years ago, a legend who had killed a sand dragon that had swallowed up three kingdoms. He was a magician of the 9th circle and also a grand-class sword master. Numerous writers had written stories about him, and there were more than 10 epic poems based on Reynolds Spencer.

To think that Reynolds Spencer had actually written an original book and Theodore was now in his body…?

"That's right!" Reynolds shouted in a dignified manner. "This body is Reynolds Spencer! The last descendant of Spencer who destroyed the sand dragon, Azi Dahaka!"

Chapter 321 - The One who Inherits, the One who Maneuvers Behind the Scenes (4)

He stepped on the bodies of the demons at his feet and stood at the top. This was a man truly worthy of being called a hero.

Theodore realized the name was correct and became thrilled again. This was a war hero from the history books, a person from before the era of the magic towers. It was an era that had occurred thousands of years ago, at the end of the Dark Ages where darkness survived and evil swung its power.

The sand dragon, Azi Dahaka, was the crystal of destruction that the evil of Dark Ages had created. It was a monster that could spray all types of breaths with its three heads, as well as use the ultimate magic. Azi Dahaka had burned half of the continent in a week until a great hero stood before him.

'Oh, my god. You really are Reynolds Spencer...?'

This wasn't an exaggeration. Reynolds was a hero who had once saved the material world! Theodore had met several great men thus far, but he couldn't help feeling in awe of Reynolds. This impression was conveyed, and Reynolds couldn't help chuckling. "Hahahaha! Indeed, this is amazing. The world still remembering me after a thousand years, there is no greater honey for a hero!"

'...Honestly, I thought your story was fiction.'

It was unclear if Reynolds was a warrior or a magician, and his achievements had spread throughout the continent. Anyone who knew history would come to the same conclusion as Theodore. Demons didn't leave a corpse behind. Therefore, oral stories were the only records that could be used as evidence. Azi Dahaka was a monster, and it had collapsed because of this person. The grounds for Reynold Spencer's story couldn't be found anywhere.

"Well, it is probably a good thing," Reynolds removed

Theodore's doubts with a few words. "A hero's role is to shine a light on darkness and give hope to those who are in despair! It is fine if I have fulfilled that role."

In a sense, it was a contradiction. He was so pleased that his story had been passed on after thousands of years that the authenticity didn't matter…? Somebody might be suspicious of his personality.

However, because they shared a body, Theodore could tell that Reynolds' mindset was different from that of others. He didn't care about personal honor. All he desired was for justice to be alive on earth, giving power to those who were facing adversity.

This was the real role of a hero that Reynolds had carried out all his life.

"In the end, the world doesn't turn away from righteousness. Your life is someone else's strength. So, don't lower yourself before me, hero from the future."

'…Yes. Thank you, Sir Spencer.'

"The introductions are up to here. Shall we cut to the chase?" Reynolds spoke like he knew everything. "You want to learn Soul Calibre?"

'Yes.'

"The theory is simple. Magic power is refined and discharged out of the body. The magic power takes the form of a blade that interferes with the astral system, but it doesn't manifest like the theory. Isn't that right?"

Theodore answered in a puzzled tone, 'Huh? I succeeded until the formation of the blade but…'

"I thought so… What? You succeeded?" Reynolds' eyes widened. This person who wasn't even shaken by a high-ranking demon was greatly shocked by this.

Was Theodore that remarkable?

Reynolds read Theodore's thoughts and explained, "Soul Calibre is a type of special magic that has nothing to do with the abilities of a magician. The sword can only be manifested when the soul is used as a core. It is easy for the Spencer family to use because we have trained in it since childhood, but I have never seen someone outside the family use it…"

After muttering a monologue Theodore did not know the meaning of, Reynolds raised his right arm and pointed to the sky. Then a shining sword appeared in his hand. It was the fully manifested Soul Calibre.

"Haap!"

Reynolds cut through the sky with the sword.

Kiiiing-!

It made a terrible noise. Theodore blocked his ears unconsciously and realized that he had escaped from Reynolds' body. He didn't know how, but Reynolds had separated Theodore from his body. The noise from before was probably this forceful separation. Real hearing did not mean much in the mental world.

Theodore asked Reynolds with a confused expression, "Why did you suddenly do this, Sir Spencer?"

"I want to check something. Use Soul Calibre."

A great hero wouldn't speak nonsense. Theodore wasn't sure about the reason, but he complied with Reynolds' demand.

'Soul Calibre.'

It might be different for other magicians, but astral magic wasn't an unfamiliar concept for Theodore. The Umbra imprint glowed, and a soft green sword rose from his right hand. Of course, the strength and radiance were lacking compared to Reynolds' version. However, the shape of the blade could be seen clearly.

"Hoh…!" Reynolds said admiringly, "You can certainly form it.

Moreover, the green light symbolizes life and hope. I haven't seen such a beautiful light in a long time."

"Ah, thank you."

"But it is as I expected. Look closely."

Reynolds took the white light sword in his hand and used it to touch Theodore's green light sword. The moment that the two lights touched...

Kakang! Theodore's Soul Calibre broke with a cheerful sound.

"Ah?"

It broke like a cracker. The blade, which was made of a considerable amount of magic power, had broken easily. Theodore looked at Reynolds for an explanation. Reynolds showed his Soul Calibre and opened his mouth, "You can manifest Soul Calibre, but you can't reproduce the power. I'm not trying to dismiss your magic. It was like this from the start."

"Like this from the start?"

"Soul Calibre is literally a sword of the soul. Its strength is determined by the power of the soul that forms the blade. Magic power can make it take the shape of a sword, but it doesn't compensate for the underlying strength."

It was like a pavilion formed out of granules of sand. The smallest repulsive force would break it. That was why Theodore's Soul Calibre was broken. Theodore had been inspired by Umbra and managed to succeed in creating Soul Calibre with his eight circles. However, unlike Reynolds, Theodore wouldn't be able to cut a high-ranking demon with it.

"This is why my family, the Spencer clan, quench their souls for several generations before handing it over to future generations. I am the final result." Compared to Reynolds' calm voice, the contents of what he said were fearsome.

A soul being made into a sword, and a clan that handed it down for generations, repeating this process over and over... It was a history that couldn't be revealed to outsiders. Reynolds was Spencer's descendant. Theodore soon realized why Reynolds had asserted this. After all, Reynolds shouldered the responsibility of his ancestors who had given up their souls.

When the weight of the responsibility dawned upon Theodore, his face paled. Meanwhile, Reynolds just laughed and shrugged. "Don't worry about my past. Shouldn't you be paying attention to how to complete your imperfect Soul Calibre?"

"...Is there a method to do so?" Theodore asked in a quiet voice.

"I don't know," Reynolds responded instantly, without any hesitation. "If there were such a method, my family wouldn't have needed to inherit Soul Calibre from previous generations. The special magic, Soul Calibre, exerts its power when it is built up through time. There is no way to master it other than to train it thoroughly. At least, I don't know of one."

"But there is no time."

The fundamental structure of Soul Calibre needed a few generations to build up like the Spencer family. Jerem's invasion was a month away, and Theodore had too much to do to only focus on Soul Calibre. Reynolds, who received Theodore's memories through Synchro, couldn't help complaining, "I'm sorry that I can't be helpful. If possible, I would like to lend a hand directly..."

A warlock who had contracted with Nídhöggur, a villain trying to swallow up the world tree... There was no better enemy for a hero to punish. If Reynolds were still alive, he would've run to Elvenheim instantly. However, Reynolds Spencer died a long time ago. This was just a fragment of his soul.

Theodore was feeling frustrated when he suddenly had a thought.

The dead, a fragment of the soul…

Soul Calibre was a sword of the soul.

It was a technique inherited from generation to generation.

Reynolds Spencer…

Several puzzle pieces hovered in Theodore's mind and settled together in a suitable shape. It was an idea that was worthy of applause if another magician saw it. Theodore didn't hesitate to speak his idea. Shortly after that…

"…Are you a genius?" Reynolds was amazed.

*

Less than half an hour later, Theodore woke up from his synchro with Reynolds.

Paak!

He jumped up like he didn't want to waste a minute, moving to an empty spot without any ents or dryads. Theodore was worried that someone might up caught up in the aftermath of his magic. Theoretically, there weren't any errors. However, a magician should always be cautious when practicing.

"Huoong…" He took a few deep breaths and relaxed his body. His blood circulated in his muscles, and shortly after that, his stiff muscles stretched and his joints became flexible. Theodore finished his brief preparatory exercises and closed his eyes. For a magician, vision wasn't a problem. However, embedded habits were surprisingly helpful for concentration.

'Umbra,' he summoned the imprint on his right arm. There was a glowing light, and Theodore's spiritual senses reached another realm. Simultaneously, a sword rose from his right hand.

"Okay, there is no problem so far."

Soul Calibre, an astral magic that interfered with the soul, was a magic that Reynolds had evaluated as a power that couldn't be

used in practice. However, this time, there were some differences from the sword Theodore had made in the mental world. This sword shone brilliantly, and Theodore's right hand cut at the empty space before him. Just like Reynolds had shown him, it was like a lightning strike across the sky.

Kiiiing-! The space was separated.

For a moment, the special space used in the techniques of the 2nd Sword, Zest Speitem, was revealed. There was a wall of darkness that no physical force could pass, a joint that connected space. Theodore's Soul Calibre cut that joint. It was an eerie and destructive power.

Theodore erased the white sword and grinned. 'I can't exactly call it my Soul Calibre.'

Theodore muttered strange words as he looked down at his right arm. No, he was just talking to someone who couldn't be seen. "How about it, Sir Spencer?"

Reynolds' voice was conveyed from Theodore's right arm. To be precise, it was the engraving on his arm.

[Good! It is a bit lacking compared to my prime, but the undead won't be able to go against it.]

"It is really great."

That's right. Rather than forming Soul Calibre with his own soul, Theodore shifted Reynold's soul to Umbra and had him manifest Soul Calibre.

It was only a fragment of the soul and couldn't be compared to when he was alive. However, Reynold's Soul Calibre had been tempered over several generations and was much stronger than Theodore's. It was sufficient to play a role in the fight against Jerem.

Theodore had used a shortcut of intervening with the soul using Umbra's power.

‘One means of attack has been determined. Sir Spencer’s Soul Calibre can kill Jerem.’

Among the warlocks who were outside of the framework of ordinary life, the necromancers had especially strong vitality. Despite being injured by Mitra’s power previously, ordinary attacks wouldn’t hurt Jerem even if he were hit by several Infernos. Thus, Theodore needed to acquire an attack that would work against Jerem.

“Please take care of me, Sir Spencer.”

[Yes! Will you inherit the name of my family? This is guaranteed by Reynolds Spencer!]

It was a bonus that Theodore added one more talkative person to his household.

Chapter 322 - Eve of the Storm (1)

After finishing the Synchro with Reynolds Spencer, Theodore was continuously busy. He conducted the migration of the ents with Mitra and taught some human military strategies to the elves. However, the hardest task was probably making artifacts against the undead.

The elementals, that used purely the power of nature, were natural enemies for the undead, but it was too inefficient to solely rely on that. There was no limit to the stamina of the undead. A more efficient means was needed to combat the undead legions that didn't care about injuries.

...And Theodore found the answer to that in an unexpected field.

"Om." His fingers twisted in a strange form as he sang a strange chant.

Simultaneously, a brilliant gleam of light struck the pile of arrows in front of Theodore. It was the most famous shaman system in the East Continent, the esoteric Buddhist mantra. As a more powerful type of shamanism than exorcism, the esoteric Buddhist mantra annihilated all evil and blocked the source.

It didn't have enough power, but it was like gunpowder when used against undead of the lower levels.

'This isn't enough. Damn, the idea is good, but I can't make enough alone. It would be lucky if I could make half of the 300,000 I originally planned for.'

Theodore sighed as he looked at the completed arrows. Of course, it wasn't a good idea to give up on the rest of his tasks to concentrate only on making the arrows. He wiped the sweat off his forehead and looked at the stacked up arrows. It was nice to find something that was more efficient than elementals, but it wasn't an amount that he could do alone.

However, the problem was that this method involved a magic of an unfamiliar system, and the consumption of magic power was faster than normal. Arrows that destroyed evil, talismans that blocked the undead, and wards that weakened poison and curses needed to be made.

This meant Theodore had a mountain of work to do. So, it was inevitable that his physical and mental state would reach their limits.

'...Well, that's it for today.'

It was good to be prepared for the battle, but it wasn't meaningful if he was exhausted in the fight against Jerem. Theodore took care of a few more tasks before leaving the warehouse. The chill air of the deep forest cooled Theodore's sweat and entered his lungs.

This was a very brief respite that couldn't even be called a break.

"Ah! Theodore, I was looking for you."

Theodore had only taken a few deep breaths when an elf approached him. She was an elf with rare black hair and dressed in white bear fur clothing. It was the high elf, Titania. As always, she had a large bow at her waist as she spoke without hesitation, "This is the placement of the archers that you taught me last time... I think this configuration is more efficient."

"Show me..."

Titania drew a map on the ground. The workmanship was poor, but it was a strategy chart that anyone with some skill could recognize. Theodore had only taught her for a few days, but it was evident that she had understood Theodore's instructions and improved them.

She had lived as a hunter for many years, which meant she was more qualified than anyone else to develop strategies regarding this forest. Titania was slightly inferior to Alfred, but she was

definitely a genius.

‘Indeed, this is very good.’

Theodore couldn’t find anything to point out and told her, “Um, isn’t this very good? Did you put your hands and feet together?” (TL: Working together)

“I told them your opinions. It isn’t that difficult to cooperate with the other tribes who train together.”

“Okay, let's do that. If you see any improvement in the future, please tell me. I don’t know about the strengths or weaknesses of the different tribes, so I will only believe in Titania.”

“What? O-Only believe in me…”

Was it a burden? Theodore was confused by Titania’s attitude and soon realized the reason. It might seem like he was dumping responsibilities on her. Titania might be a genius, but she was a beginner who didn’t have previous experience in commanding. He blamed himself for being irresponsible and opened his mouth to encourage her, “If you are burdened…”

“No, no! Believe in me!”

“Eh?”

Theodore was stunned by her unexpected reaction, and Titania slightly turned red.

“E-Ellenoa is waiting for you. The rocks and trees have been moved according to your instructions, and the training of the elementalists has finished.”

“Oh, isn’t it faster than I thought?”

“Then I will go. I’ll see you later.”

Theodore didn’t have a chance to reply as Titania disappeared into the trees. Perhaps she was going to do some training. At first, he felt a little uneasy because of her stiff attitude. However, after a while, he realized that she was very sincere. Her stiff expression

and voice became softer, and the discomfort from their first meeting was no longer present.

[Oh, my. Oh, my. Oh, my!]

As Theodore took a few steps, a light and voice came from the silver ring on his right hand. It was the fragment of Lemegeton, the prohibited book—Goetia.

[You really are the master of this Geotia, sinful man!]

“What?”

[Making an elusive high elf blush. I feel like I am seeing my creator again!]

“You are the one thinking that on your own.” Theodore looked down at the ring with a slightly flushed expression.

He didn’t know how to feel about being compared to King Solomon when it came to women, not magic abilities. However, Goetia didn’t care about Theodore’s feelings.

[Hey, is this Ellenoa a high elf?]

“Ugh.” Theodore reflexively stopped moving. He had forgotten about the situation due to the crisis of the world tree. However, Goetia’s words revived old memories. The words of confession that he had previously received in Mana-vil… As a matter of fact, he had been prepared to give her an answer, but the warlock who couldn’t read the mood messed up the schedule.

Knock, knock. Theodore knocked at a familiar door and spoke in a soft voice, “Ellenoa, it is Theodore.”

“Ah, come in.”

At the reply, Theodore turned the doorknob and saw something white. It was the familiar he had brought to this place.

Yiiip? The three-tailed fox made a pleased sound from Ellenoa’s arms. It was Tres, the three-tailed fox that Theodore had brought back from the East Continent.

“Tres?”

Yip!

Until now, the fox hadn’t given his heart to anyone, making it strange to see Tres in Ellenoa’s arms. Was it because the high elves were the closest to the origin of nature and were unique among the elves? Noticing the relationship between Theodore and Tres, Ellenoa spoke with a surprised expression, “Theodore, did you bring this child? It is the first time I’ve seen a three-tailed fox.”

“I accidentally found him in the East Continent. I brought him because he doesn’t have a mother to take care of him. He seems to like the forest and Ellenoa though.”

“Ah… I see. Poor little thing.” Ellenoa’s eyes shone with compassion as she stroked Tres’ belly, causing him to cry out with pleasure.

Maybe it would be better to leave Tres in Elvenheim after this fight was over. The spirits in the East Continent also wanted an environment where they could live away from humans. It wasn’t a problem to worry about now. However, Theodore engraved it deeply in his mind so that he wouldn’t forget.

“Theodore, your hand.”

“Ah, yes.”

Ellenoa grabbed both of Theodore’s hands with a warm smile. The high elves had the ability to soothe tired minds and bodies. It wasn’t just treatment of wounds, as the consumption of mental power could be restored to some extent as well. Surrounded by a green light, they stood in silence.

‘Indeed, I feel comfortable with Ellenoa…’

It wasn’t a matter of stamina or magic power. This sense of relief melted the boundaries of the body and the mind. Then at that moment…

Kiiing! A sharp headache pierced him like an arrow. The light that tied Theodore and Ellenoa together was broken, and Theodore stared out of the cabin with a grim expression. He gained an ominous feeling that was on a different level from before! This was like looking up at the night sky without any starlight or staring into a pit where no sound was returned.

“It is close. I can detect it…!”

Theodore struggled with the hostile voice that he heard as he looked toward the south of Elvenheim. A tremendous number of deaths were approaching.

*

The Red Plateau was a landscape full of red sands where weeds didn’t grow. The water channels had dried up a long time ago. It was a land of death where rain clouds hadn’t appeared for years. There was no concept of people living in this barren land where life couldn’t survive.

…At least, until today. As the water had dried up a long time ago, there was no flora or fauna to be used as food. The cloudless sky meant only intense sunlight burned down. If there weren’t any living creatures here, who were the residents of this dead land?

Krruk…kuruuk…kuruk…

Ka…haaa…ku…kuheok…

Woo…oo…uhhhh….

Death moved forward. Those with rotting flesh or just bones were the undead, an army of dead people who hadn’t been able to find rest after death. Today, the name of this land wasn’t the Red Plateau. The procession of the dead meant this neglected land was filled with the stench of dead bodies.

There was a terrible number of at least 100,000. It was impossible to count them even if they were measured in units of thousands. The undead crossing the Red Plateau was a major threat to the

entire continent. The intense sunlight, lack of water, and non-existence wildlife couldn't even grab the ankles of the undead to hold them back. They moved closer to the world tree without taking a break.

'Damn, he did it properly.'

In the sky, a crow was watching the undead with sharp eyes. It was Hugin, a pet Theodore had inherited from Satomer. Theodore's development meant his range was now at over 100 kilometers. He used this method to spy on Jerem and the Four Horsemen without them noticing.

As he looked at the undead army with Hugin's eyes, some questions came into Theodore's mind.

'There are a lot of them, and the quality is also considerable. How on earth did he make so many undead?'

It was strange. The entire Lairon Kingdom might've been turned into undead, but they hadn't been created in the proper way and were relatively inferior in quality. The same was true for the quantity. A hand plow made of good steel was still a hand plow, a sword was still a sword. However, the power of the undead was limited if the correct production method wasn't used.

Yet, what about this huge army of undead? Low-level undead like zombies and ghouls were almost invisible. The army mostly consisted of intermediate-level undead. Lich, doom knights, and senior undead could also be seen. It was a number that would've required the killing of everyone in the Central Continent, not just the Lairon Church. He felt a sense of incongruity. The swords and armor the undead were holding...

Then at that moment...

-A rat-like person is spying.

From the far rear end of the undead legion beyond the horizon, an unexplored shape soared high in the sky. No, it wasn't

something that could be recognized from Hugin's perspective. The gap between Hugin and the opponent was so large that Theodore couldn't see it. However, he didn't need to see the shape to realize the identity. He would be a fool if he didn't know.

It was Nastrond's demon king, Nídhöggur. Within a vortex of darkness, he called out to Theodore in a voice that seemed to tear the sky and earth apart.

-Hoh, it is you. The thief who devoured the soul that belonged to me, not knowing who you are going against...

Theodore couldn't say anything. Fear froze his spine, and he had a hunch that speaking would give Nídhöggur a pretext to do something. On the other hand, Nídhöggur didn't restrain himself from talking as a red light gleamed in the darkness.

-Don't beg for your life. I will surely kill you. Don't beg for mercy. I will chew on your body and soul for hundreds of years. Your future has been decided at this moment.

Nídhöggur sentenced Theodore to death, and two beams of light shot out from the demon king. The beams of light aimed for Hugin.

-Get lost.

Shortly after that, Theodore's conscious was bounced out of Hugin's body.

"Uwaaah!"

"Theodore!"

Blood filled Theodore's throat, pouring out as he fell and barely grabbed the table. It was the price he paid for facing the monster called Nídhöggur through Hugin's eyes. Disregarding Theodore's blood-stained clothing, Ellenoa hugged him and used her healing power. Not long afterward, the blood stopped pouring out, and Theodore barely managed to open his mouth to speak. "...I took one blow. That damn lizard."

This was like a greeting for Nídhöggur. The telepathic attack didn't contain any will to kill. Being able to damage an 8th circle magician with just that... this opponent was a monster that a mortal couldn't go against. However, Theodore and the others had their own means.

"Ellenoa, how long until the summoning of the divine creature?"

"Yesterday, I heard that it would take four days."

"So, it will be in three days. Based on the enemy's marching speed, they will arrive in two days. We have to hold on with our own strengths for one day."

The normal undead would be greatly weakened in the daytime. However, these undead were probably beyond common sense. It meant the battle needed to be maintained for at least 24 hours. They had to fight the undead, who didn't know fatigue and craved the blood of the living. It was a great battle that anyone would feel afraid of.

Theodore rose from his spot.

'He will chew on me?'

Haha. He laughed wildly at Nídhöggur's declaration.

'You are the dumb one who doesn't know who you are going against. I will teach you properly.'

Theodore didn't shrink back from Nídhöggur's declaration of war.

Chapter 323 - Eve of the Storm (2)

Two days passed by after that. It was a long and short amount of time. After detecting the approach of the undead army, Theodore and the complete power of Elvenheim were busy preparing for the unprecedented battle. Although it wasn't perfect, they did their best.

The brilliant amulets hanging around the elves' necks, the arrows in their quivers, and the wide ward surrounding the south were all Theodore's work. It was the result of using his magic power to the limit that could be recovered, without wasting even one hour.

'This is all I can do.'

On the front line at the outskirts of the southern forest, Theodore blinked slowly. Since when had his vision already surpassed his physical limits...?

From beyond the horizon that even the elves couldn't see, the movements of the countless undead were reflected in Theodore's retinas. These were monsters that didn't need to breathe... The barren Red Plateau couldn't stop the corpses from marching.

The ugly wave was overflowing from the horizon.

"...Ahh, the parent tree."

"Our ancestors, please protect us...!"

The elves who saw it first started praying. This was because rotten flesh, blood flowing with maggots, and abominable things now filled the horizon. It was fortunate that the Red Plateau was windless. How awful would the stench be from more than 100,000 undead? It would enter their noses and might even lead to poisoning.

As the undead neared, the twilight illuminated their naked bodies.

The skeleton knights were moving with a red light among them.

An undead with a body that was larger than an ogre's roared.

The translucent bodies sang of a terrible future.

There was even a bone wyvern flapping its wings in the air.

'How terrible.' Theodore felt nauseous as he looked at the waves of nightmare-like corpses. He also noted the presences of the doom knights, banshees, and lich, as well as the evil dragon behind them that was the true enemy. Meanwhile, the army of death continued to move forward.

Kung! Kung! Kung! Kung! Loud noises rang out as the army marched onward, narrowing the distance to their destination. There was no need for trumpets or horns. The undead were just puppets controlled by one necromancer. They followed the commands of the conductor wielding his baton.

If he asked them to move forward, they wouldn't stop until their bodies were broken. If he said stop, they wouldn't move even if a natural disaster occurred.

Kung!

...Like right now.

"...S-Stopped?" Someone stuttered out loud.

Theodore moved forward. The enemies were still a few kilometers from the forest entrance. Nevertheless, they had stopped for a reason.

"Jerem, is it you?" Theodore's voice spread out and crossed several kilometers.

[Finally, I will show mercy to you,] the great warlock of death who controlled the bodies answered. [If you offer your body to me now, I will spare your kingdom and its people. As long as the great Nídhöggur descends upon this material world, there is no possibility that you will win.]

“Hah, do you think I would just agree?” Theodore wasn’t pushed back by the voice that pressured his mind. “This situation wasn’t unexpected. Did you die from greed or old age? Do you think that you are a real king because you gathered your subordinates and played a role? Hey, antiquated warlock. Wouldn’t it be better to go back to your grave before you become uglier?”

Upon hearing Theodore’s words, Jerem briefly fell silent. Maybe he was so angry that he couldn’t speak. After all, this was the soul fragment of a 9th circle great magician whose pride of reaching the highest peak of humanity was so high that its end couldn’t be seen.

If Jerem were still alive, he would’ve killed Theodore before more than a few cheeky words could be spat out. However, a few seconds later, his cold voice spoke up, [...Fool, you don’t know that victory or defeat has already been decided.]

Chill. At that moment, Theodore felt a chill and stepped back. Meanwhile, Jerem released the reins of the undead that he had stopped. [I will let you die as you wish!]

Simultaneously, the undead started to run wildly.

————————————————!!!

They let out a roar that was difficult to describe in words. Something wailed, something else made a strange sound, and something else screamed. In a dictionary, the word ‘undead’ meant ‘one who didn’t die.’ However, the magicians added another line —‘death was taken away.’

The undead were deprived of their last resting place at the end of their journey and surely hated the living.

“Come onnnn!”

The death coming from the horizon flowed quickly. They were low-grade undead, but their bodies were bathed in black magic and were more powerful than they had been while alive. A distance of 3 kilometers was crossed in just five minutes, and this speed was

maintained permanently.

The elves fought the reflex to pull back their bowstrings as they watched the undead approach at a fearsome pace. Prepared to shoot at any time, their archers' swollen arm muscles strained from pointing at the enemies' heads. However, the archers still had a long time to wait before they could act.

'Titania, get started!'

-Understood.

Theodore conveyed instructions through Ratatoskr. No flags or messengers were needed. As long as they were in the forest, Theodore could communicate with the high elves at any time. Titania nodded and moved. "Elementals! Summon your wind elementals!"

The elves responded quickly because they had been trained previously. More than 100 hundred elves who could summon intermediate wind elementals exerted their strength simultaneously. Shuriel was the lieutenant of the wind elementals. The eagle-shaped wind elemental, that was around 10 times larger than an eagle, fluttered its wings.

Kuuoooh—!

It started as a small vortex. Dust rose on the Red Plateau where the undead were moving, and it soon became a vortex that was more than 100 meters high. Then it became a tornado.

Originally, this wasn't a phenomenon that would appear in the wilderness without any clouds, but it wasn't surprising when so many wind elementals joined together. Additionally, it wasn't just one or two; at least eight tornadoes faced the undead army.

However, the elves who summoned the tornadoes turned to Theodore with uneasy eyes. The power of the tornadoes wasn't very high. Even if the intermediate-level undead were blown away by the tornadoes, they could still survive.

‘I was expecting this much!’ Theodore detected the approach of the undead and pulled out the Azoth Sword from his pocket.

The shining jewel in the sword was the Philosopher's Stone. This was the sword he received from Paragranum in the past. The stone was a legendary artifact that could change the form of a substance. Of course, there was a limit. However, Theodore was going to use all of its power today, even if it meant destroying the Philosopher's Stone.

“Ars Magna!”

The Azoth Sword glowed intensively as it was aimed at the tornadoes in the wilderness. All of the sand swirling in the tornadoes was discovered by the alchemy magic.

“Turn into white phosphorus!”

It was burdensome to convert an enormous amount at once, which caused the Philosopher's Stone to creak. Nonetheless, Theodore didn’t stop using his magic power. He needed to succeed at least once. If the eight sandstorms turned into a white phosphorus storm, then he could destroy tens of thousands of undead. After a few seconds that seemed like an eternity, the sandstorm was covered with a white light.

‘Success!’

Theodore didn’t enjoy this moment as he shouted, “Veronica, now!”

“Suuuuop…” Was it because of their soul-connected relationship? Veronica winked and took action the moment Theodore yelled.

Kuaaaaaaah-! She fired a dragon breath toward the white vortex!

The flames which could melt metal poured toward the ignitable material. The tornadoes started burning even before the breath reached them, turning into a pillar of fire that connected the sky and earth. It happened just five seconds after the sandstorm

turned white.

A super hell was unfolded. The undead were caught by the tornadoes, and their skin and bones became good fuel for the flames. Suddenly, all sides were filled with burning undead.

It was an unquenchable fire that would continue burning even if water were poured on it. The undead in the white storm were turned to ash. Aside from the ghost type undead that weren't affected by physical force and the senior undead that were protected by black magic, all the other undead were set alight as soon as they entered the range of the flames.

Theodore was briefly captivated by the firepower of the plan that he had envisioned.

'...It is a technique that shouldn't be used against a living person.'

It was awful. If the target of the attack were human, Theodore would've been filled with guilt. The attacking undead were filled with regret! Nevertheless, the undead didn't stop as they tried to push through the white storm.

Kieeeeeeek-!

One of the four horsemen, White Knight Hipatia, screamed and put out the white flames around her. It was like a foul, as she twisted fate by interfering with the physical laws. Furthermore, apart from Hipatia, there were many senior undead.

They were confused by the white storm, but the inflamed air could not do any damage to the senior undead. As the magic of the lich cut off the oxygen and a cold chill spread, the burning of the white phosphorus ceased and the force of the fire was reduced.

Kulkul...kul...kululul... The undead regained their composure and laughed. They didn't care about the trivial undead being burned. A different means was needed to deal with the senior undead. For example, a sword master's Aura Ability or a 7th circle

attack magic.

So, Theodore decided to give it to them.

‘Memorize.

‘Four Slots Open.’

His eight circles opened, and he poured magic power into his right hand.

“Goetia, assist.”

[Yes, my master!]

Four magic spells were activated simultaneously. However, the number of spells wasn’t important. If Theodore’s attempt was successful, it would even surpass 8th circle magic. The great magic, Abraxas—its destructive power was enormous, but it was limited by the number of times it could be used and its long preparation time.

‘It is possible now.’

Theodore added to the stability with the power and control of his eight circles while calculating the different elements. A golden halo rose and wrapped around his body. The magic power was so powerful that the flowing mana itself formed a protective film.

Great magic Abraxas (ΑΒΡΑΣΑΞ)…

Theodore had previously obtained a clue in his fight with Pan Helliones. Why did he need to divide Abraxas into chapter 1 and chapter 2? It was because he had the bias that only two antithesis elements could be used together. However, he would now use all four major elements for the complete form of Abraxas.

‘Final Chapter.’

Four spells came to Theodore’s mind. They were magic that could kill 1,000 soldiers and tear up the earth.

The red bead that symbolized fire.

The blue bead that symbolized water.

The yellow bead that symbolized earth.

The white bead that symbolized wind.

The four magic beads, which had the same colors as the magic towers of Meltor, were united in Theodore's hands. They swirled in a manner that was hard to control, and he barely managed to aim them.

'Think of this as my greeting, rotten lizard!'

Then he unleashed the power toward the center of the undead legion.

Chapter 324 - Eve of the Storm (3)

Kuaaaaaaah-!

Someone who saw the scene recalled it later.

…There was just light.

The Lairon Church borrowed this when they talked about the creation of the world, but this case was a little different. It was a heavy rain of light pouring down.

The light that was born from the process of collapsing the four elements simultaneously ignored the boundary between matter and non-matter, destroying everything. It was a huge physical blow to the undead. The doom knights' bodies shattered, and the transparent bodies of the banshees exploded like jellyfish.

This was the great magic, Abraxas! Theodore had envisioned this spell after reaching the 7th circle, but he needed eight circles to fully reproduce the power. The opposing elements collided with each other, and the repulsive force was immediately maximized. It was a physically and magically impossible phenomena, but Theodore's Sorcery made it enter the realm of the 'possible.'

"Go!"

The light wave broke the corpses mercilessly. It was a pure destructive power that even the caster couldn't control after it was launched. Besides, the terrible destructive ray wasn't the only fearsome thing. This was an attack magic that was virtually nonexistent in this world.

It was rare for there to be any magic with 'no attributes.' No attribute could interfere with it, and it didn't respond when pressed with pure force. Dealing destruction that deviated beyond the physical properties—this was the true power of Abraxas.

If black magic formed the rules of another world, then this would be a foul there. The undead were disintegrated by the terrible

light. The necromancers couldn't sustain the black magic, that was the foundation of their existence, against the power of Abraxas. It was the same for the senior undead. Under the light of Abraxas which destroyed even a lich that had a life vessel, one corner of the undead army collapsed at once. 30% of their total power was lost.

[It is up to here.] At that moment, a dark and eerie voice spoke out. Then darkness blocked the ray of light sweeping through the undead. Jerem couldn't let any more troops be lost and finally revealed himself.

Kukukukung!

Light and darkness collided. The shockwave that occurred as a result destroyed thousands of undead in the area, but it was a drop in a bucket compared to Abraxas' actual destructive power. Jerem used black magic of the 9th circle, creating a wall of imaginary space that absorbed the power from Abraxas. Theodore's Sorcery might not be standardized, but it couldn't overcome the fundamental differences between magic ranks.

[...You shouldn't miss it.] However, Jerem groaned after stopping the attack as he realized that half his wall was destroyed.

Even if Jerem's condition was incomplete, breaking the 9th circle magic till halfway? For Jerem, who had known Theodore a few months ago, this situation was completely unexpected. Jerem's red eyes glared at Theodore. On the other hand, there was a faint smile on Theodore's face.

————————————Kwaaaaang!

Shortly after that, a supersonic storm pierced through the cracked void and aimed at Jerem's body. It might not be as good as Abraxas, but it was a striking blow!

[Kuaaaaack!] Jerem's robes were shredded, and he was thrown into the distance. Most of Abraxas' power had been lost by destroying the imaginary space, but then a storm arrow tore at

Jerem's body. However, the shooter wasn't Theodore.

'Okay. You did it properly, Titania!'

-Of course.

As she spoke in a decisive voice, Theodore looked back at Titania's position in the distance. Then he could see it. Theodore had not actually been talking about Titania but about something that was a few kilometers, maybe 10 kilometers, away. At a distance where he would seem like a single ant, Theodore looked up at the sky.

There was a giant. It had horns in the shape of a crown and a naked body, completely without clothes, that was as rugged as armor. Like the titans that appeared in ancient myths, the ancient elemental—Geros—looked down at the battlefield while holding a greatbow that matched his physique. The fragment of Zephyrus that had once been contracted to Myrdal Herseim. Unlike Mitra who hadn't grown yet, Geros' state was already close to perfect. Titania had been learning to use this form since Myrdal handed over the contract to her.

'The disadvantage is that a lot of strength is consumed.'

Compared to Myrdal, Titania's power was lacking. There was a limited number of times that Geros could fire his arrows. The reason was obvious. Even if Theodore had weakened the wall first, Geros' attack was one which had broken the defenses of the 9th circle magic and damaged Jerem. If Geros could shoot those arrows endlessly, Elvenheim would win in half a day.

The 'Hurricane Bow' could only be fired three more times in the future. Theodore kept the number of times in his head as he directed the Elvenheim archers to fire. The undead formations had fallen apart, and their advance was stopped, so this was a chance.

"Shoot! Don't leave behind any of these ugly things!"

"Aim for the head! Even if the undead are a by-product of magic,

they can’t regenerate if the nucleus is destroyed!”

“Use normal arrows for the low-grade undead!”

The elven archers, on the ground and above in the branches, pulled back their bowstrings. Their vision was excellent, and they had delicate hands. The undead that didn’t even retreat were worse than training targets.

Pipipipiping! There was the sharp sound of arrows being fired. Arrows covered the night sky and struck the skulls of the undead. Of course, there were many undead that didn’t collapse from one blow. The dullahans survived using shields, the lich used defensive magic, and the senior undead survived with their own abilities. Then as one dullahan proudly advanced to the elves…

Pipipipit!

The baptism of golden arrows quickly turned the dullahan into a beehive.

‘The arrows of destruction look good.’

The nature of the matter wasn’t different, be it in the East or West Continent. Still, Theodore sighed with relief.

He didn’t know how frustrated he would be if the things he had spent weeks making became useless. He had made around 100,000 arrows containing the strength of the mantra. It wasn’t enough to remove all the undead, but it was effective when targeting only senior undead.

The undead started to feel the danger. The senior undead didn’t die in one blow, but there was a limit if they were facing 10 or 20 blows. They couldn’t stay fine.

“It has been good so far, but… is it a little lacking?” Theodore looked around the battlefield while floating in the sky.

The number of undead was still huge despite having been hit by Abraxas. There might be more undead being created somewhere. If

this became a war of attrition, Elvenheim would have the disadvantage.

“Veronica!”

“Huh?”

“I am going to use more great magic. Do you have enough magic power?”

“I only fired one breath, so I’m fine. Theodore, will you be okay? That previous magic consumed an absurd amount of power…”

Veronica’s words were right. One drawback to Abraxas was that it was a huge burden.

Despite having twice the magic power of a magician of the same circle, Theodore was breathing harshly after using it. If he used it three times in a day, his circles would be overloaded. Using it continuously would cause him to self-destruct before beating the enemies.

However, Theodore’s complexion was the same as before. “It is okay. I’ve thought of a shortcut.”

‘Shortcut?’ Veronica made a questioning sound, but she knew there was no time to explain. So, she just raised her magic power and shared it. Simultaneously, Theodore activated his circles, and 16 circles revolved, causing the mana in the area to vibrate.

Kukukukukung!

The undead were astonished by the thunderous sound coming from the sky. In particular, the intelligent lich and other senior undead knew the consequences of this sound. It was the sound of at least five 7th circle spells being used. This was unbelievable. It couldn’t be avoided. Since defense and evasion were impossible, the undead chose to intercept it. If they could stop the magic spells in time, the situation could be resolved somehow.

“This is rotten.” As Theodore continued preparing the magic

bombardment in the sky, he sensed the flow of power on the ground. It was the precursor to attack magic to stop him and Veronica. Of course, it wasn't at a level that could injure the two people. However, their purpose was to stop the magical bombardment. It would be enough to open a gap.

"Do you think I will let you act freely?"

However, Theodore had no intention of allowing it.

'Ellenoa, now.'

-Yes, I understand! Ellenoa's strong reply was transmitted through Ratatoskr's neural network.

What was it now? The answer came flying from the rear of the Elvenheim front lines. Something flew up in a smooth arc and dropped down.

[Mist of death... Bite the flesh... um?] The lich was concentrating on chanting a spell when it noticed a shadow, and its body was crushed by a huge rock.

Kwaang! Kuwang! Kwang! Kukwakwakwang!

It wasn't just one. Hundreds of rocks fell like a rock shower, crushing the undead. Of course, that power wasn't enough to destroy the senior undead. However, it was sufficient to stop the formation that was preparing the interception magic.

[Ruler... command...! Throw... hard as... possible!]

[Rock... heavy! One more...!]

A little way from the forefront, the ents were throwing the rocks with their hands.

The large objects that were over 10 meters big weren't comparable to those thrown by catapults. These flew as fast as arrows and fell like bombs. The low-grade undead were crushed, while the senior undead couldn't ignore the attack, forcing them to go on the defensive.

The elves used the earth elementals to make the rocks for throwing, then the ents threw them regardless of how many of their branches were broken. Meanwhile, Theodore and Veronica completed their spell.

Kururung! Kurung!

The materialized magic power was red and evaporated the nearby air. This was the two great magcians' magic bombardment that was designed only for destruction! The lich's jaws snapped shut as they intuitively sensed destruction, while the doom knights and undead forgot to defend. What was the point of struggling when they would just die anyway? Then at that moment...

[Boring,] a voice rang out from the border of the Red Plateau and the Great Forest. Just like the roar of a lion or a tiger, it caused everyone to shiver. It had a big impact. Theodore and Veronica stiffened just as they were about to fire their spells. Their perfectly configured magic formulas were scattered.

"Kuok...!"

"N-Nídhöggur? In this phase?"

The power that he could exert in this material world was limited, but Nastrond's king was still equivalent to a god. Theodore didn't know about the tribute Jerem had prepared, but it he knew it wasn't that big. Otherwise, they would have already been killed without being able to resist.

While Theodore was busy thinking about this, Nídhöggur declared, [Don't disappoint me, Follower.]

At that moment, something eerie rose up. It was a power that rose from an unknown abyss, a strength that Theodore's eyes couldn't see. Nastrond, the dimension ruled by Nídhöggur—its power of darkness and death flowed into this material world.

"I will follow your will, great evil dragon."

Four shadows floated a few hundred meters in front of Theodore.

They were Jerem and the four horsemen. Jerem had recovered from the damage caused by Hurricane Bow, and his torn body now looked exactly as it had before.

“Hrmm, do they want to try a tag match?”

“…Probably.”

Theodore faced the enemies with Veronica. From now on, it wasn’t a fight between armies but a fight between leaders. It was the battle between the strongest powerhouses of each army. As they listened to Titania’s words flowing through Ratatoskr, the two magicians’ red robes flapped aggressively.

As the Red Tower’s 8th commandment stated, a good warlock was a dead warlock.

Chapter 325 - The Night that Swallowed the Sun (1)

As the leaders of both sides confronted each other, a terrible phenomenon was occurring on the border.

A fraction of Nídhöggur's power was rising up!

The power coming from the land of the dead wasn't enough to strengthen Jerem and the Four Horsemen, but it was sucked into the bodies of the undead army. It was poisonous mana to normal life, but there was no better energy for the undead.

Animate Dead, the basic and ultimate spell for necromancers, was cast with the power of a dragon's breath.

Kuoooooh!

The shattered armor reformed, and the restored doom knights roared. The holes which the arrows had made in the bodies of the undead were filled up, and the lich that had turned to ashes were returned to their prime. Close to half of the undead that had been wiped out in the preemptive attack were resurrected, making it literally a nightmare.

Dominance in the battle increasingly tilted to one side. The rocks thrown by the ents and the arrows from the archers lost their strength against the undead army.

'I never imagined this. How should I respond?'

A few kilometers behind the front lines, Titania observed the ghastly phenomenon through Geros' eyes. Should she use the Hurricane Bow to cut off that flow? No, it was pointless. There were only three uses remaining. It was impractical to waste it on ordinary undead.

Titania calmed her confused mind as she looked at Theodore's back.

“…Teacher.”

She didn’t know why, but she couldn’t help mumbling that as she recalled faded memories.

Myrdal Herseim, a person in human form who wasn’t a human—he was the sage who had rescued Titania during her childhood and given her unfathomable teachings before disappearing. The only thing of resemblance was the blue eyes, but Theodore reminded her of Myrdal. Titania felt a vague sense of trust in Theodore.

At that moment, a thunderous voice rang out from the sky, [Don’t be afraid!]

Theodore was using magic to make his voice ring out through the battlefield.

Realizing the effect Nídhöggur’s presence was having in the battle, Theodore encouraged Elvenheim, [This evil dragon is an uninvited guest to this material world! He can only stay for a short time if he uses his power like this! Our resistance right now isn’t futile!]

Theodore had experienced war several times and knew, that putting aside the undead, fear alone could break down the power of an army. If their attacks didn’t work and the enemy didn’t fall, the lowered morale could become toxic. However, Theodore intervened in a timely fashion. The revival of the undead made the elves step back, but they were no longer afraid.

“Pull your bowstrings! If it doesn’t work with one arrow, fire ten arrows!”

“Our benefactor is watching! Don’t show an ugly side!”

“Don’t back down from the rotten bodies! We are the descendants of the Arv!”

Silver arrows poured down, and the momentum of the rock showers crushed the undead after several attempts. The arrows Edwin fired and the spears Ellaim threw stopped the wave of dead

bodies for a while. In addition to them, two other guardians made an effort to chop up the undead like fallen leaves.

Lastly, Elvenheim had one more trump card.

Kukukukukung…

The earth rose. No, an enormous amount of earth moved, giving that impression. Hands? Feet? The earth built itself into a mass weapon that was several hundred tons. The earth shook as the mountain of dirt fell on top of the undead. Unlike the usual shocks, it was a blow that shattered their immortality!

This was the earth elemental ruler, Nohengrin. Using the greatest power that the high elves could exert in the Great Forest, an elemental ruler was summoned. Titania was handling Geros, while four high elves were finishing the summoning of Hraesvelgr.

There was only one high elf who could call Nohengrin.

-Ellenoa, you…?

-I was only recently successful, Titania, Ellenoa said embarrassedly after summoning the elemental ruler.

It was with the aid of Ratatoskr and the world tree, but the result was still amazing. Summoning an elemental ruler after only being in Elvenheim for 10 years…? According to Titania's memories, none of the high elves had become accustomed to the world tree's power so fast.

'Maybe the power of love really exists.'

Titania laughed at the thought.

"…It is time to start."

As the two sides struggled on the ground, the atmosphere in the sky was changing. Red robes and black robes…

Titania looked at the six shadows and gripped her bow more strongly. The wind moved around her tense body as she prepared to fire at any time.

*

“A last-ditch effort,” Jerem dismissed his actions after the battlefield was re-energized by Theodore’s cry.

However, the discomfort on Jerem’s face proved that Theodore’s words weren’t wrong. Nídhöggur’s summoning was incomplete until the world tree was consumed. Therefore, his power shouldn’t have been used in this way. Jerem needed to overcome this battlefield as soon as possible.

“A last-ditch effort, doesn’t that apply to you?” Theodore said with a cold laugh.

“Cheeky fellow, feeling confident just because of one blow.”

“That isn’t the case. Last I checked, isn’t it two blows? Well, you probably don’t have any brain cells left after dying.”

“…You.” Darkness moved around Jerem’s body. It was evident that Theodore’s taunts were working properly.

The Four Horsemen read their master’s mood and came forward, while Veronica sent out an intense heat as she prepared for battle. It was an atmosphere where a fight could start at any time. There was nothing more suitable than the term ‘flashpoint.’

The two magicians talked through their contract.

‘I will play with Jerem.’

‘The other three are mine?’

‘Don’t be careless. They aren’t easy.’

‘I know that much.’

At that moment…

“Four Horsemen,” Jerem gave a command in a furious voice, “Deal with that young man. Don’t kill him. Bring his flesh before me.”

“As Your Majesty wills.”

Unlike Theodore, Jerem planned to use his subordinates to deal with Theodore. He didn't doubt that the two magicians would intervene in the decision, so Jerem stretched out both hands. It was clearly to cast a spell. As the two magicians reflexively responded, waves of darkness surged from all over the place.

'This...?' Theodore's five senses disappeared. No, it was the distinctive dizziness of space magic.

Theodore's eyes widened. 'Space disassembly!'

It was different from space movement which moved to a desired location or spatial distortion that interfered with the existing space. This was a special magic which scattered the targets with no specific coordinates. A magician with great ability could interfere with it. However, it was a trick that Theodore hadn't thought about, and as such, he responded too late.

As soon as the darkness was lifted, Theodore asked through Ratatoskr, 'Titania, can you still see me and Veronica?'

-...Veronica and Leader are still in the same place. The other three moved with you. Titania was cold like a hunter.

However, thanks to Titania's reply, Theodore could sort out the situation quickly and said, "Your master used you to grab my ankles."

White Knight Hipatia, Red Knight Elohim and Black Knight Delos—three of the Four Horsemen faced Theodore. Theodore watched the three knights in front of him and grasped his position. He was 13 kilometers away from the battlefield.

'I can use the lightning magic to rejoin them, but...'

It would just return to the original situation. If the difference between enemies wasn't large, he couldn't win by pursuing safety. He had to know the enemy's intentions and use power to beat the trick. Thus, Theodore didn't run away and laughed instead. Each of the Four Horsemen was a top-grade undead, and only top-level

masters were capable of going against them.

“You and your master are too slow to grasp the situation.”

“What?” The three people surrounding him were convinced of their superiority, so they made ridiculing expressions.

Nevertheless, the mocking on Theodore’s face was still intact. “Don’t you understand? The three of you can’t block me.”

He took a step towards the undead. “I will go back after cleaning up all of you. I believe in Veronica’s strength, but it is too much on her own.”

“…Speaking nonsense, human!” Finally, the red knight lost patience and aimed sharp claws at Theodore.

The claws of a vampire could split apart even mithril.

A vampire became stronger the more blood and magic power were consumed. After gaining power from the war in the north, the red knight had become several times more powerful than before. Following the fight with Invidia, he was now the most powerful among the Four Horsemen.

Elder vampire—in some legends, it was the highest ranking undead that flew through the wall of sound.

Peeeeeong!

The red knight reached Theodore in just three steps, but Theodore wasn’t too late to react to that amazing speed.

Forward Facing Array—the perfectly restored version exerted its power after centuries. Based on the grimoire, ‘Baopuzi,’ the technique that drove out evil was unfolded in the hands of a master.

“Keok?” The elder vampire came to an abrupt stop.

Blood suddenly poured from Red Knight Elohim’s mouth as he paused in midair. It was ridiculously powerful binding magic. His speed slowed down to 0, and the binding magic didn’t allow his

body to struggle at all. Theodore didn't miss this moment in which the red knight was wide open.

Memorize.

Three Slots Open.

Trident of Keraunos.

Three lightning spears were combined into one, forming a trident. The 7th circle magic that was compressed into one place evaporated the air around it. The brow, the neck, and the heart—the 150-foot-long thunder trident aimed for three of the weakest points on the red knight's body.

Kwarururung!

Magicians might not show any interest, but in the East Continent, it was long believed that lightning was God's judgment and had the power to destroy wickedness. Fighting for what was right against evil—it was the foundation of a few shamans, and that strength now lay in Theodore's thunder trident.

"————?! ——!!? ————!?!" The red knight couldn't even scream. Elohim's vocal cords had already been burned away as he started to boil up, turning into a puddle of pure blood. If this continued, it would be the destruction of the highest ranking undead!

Kieeeeeeek-! At this moment, White Knight Hipatia let out a scream that attacked Theodore's spirit. Of course, it didn't last long. However, this interference was enough for the red knight to escape from the thunder.

During this half a second gap, dozens of black magic power strands emerged from the black knight's staff. It wasn't complete like Jerem, but this was the 8th circle dark lich, an incarnation of evil that could kill a thousand people with a single word.

In an instant, eight curses bound Theodore—decay, erosion, poison, confusion, silence, darkness, binding, and pain. It was better to commit suicide than be cursed like this, but Theodore's

cast magic power and strength from his left hand fought against it.

Even so, a few seconds of paralysis was inevitable. Theodore's movements stopped for a moment, and Hipatia quickly moved in front of him.

[I will help you become comfortable. You are the king.] It was a soft and kind voice, but Theodore wasn't deceived.

Hipatia was the highest ranking ghost type, a terror wight that could destroy an estate with one scream. Furthermore, the scariest thing about undead ghost types was that they could directly interfere or injure the soul. Even if Theodore's magic power increased several times, he didn't have the ability to fight against it.

"S-orry... but," Theodore barely managed to move his lips, "No, thanks."

[Huh?] As Hipatia made a bemused expression, an eerie noise was heard.

Puk!

There was the smell of blood.

[...E-h?] Hipatia's face distorted with pain.

The man in Theodore's right hand wasn't affected by the black knight's curses, and Soul Calibre rose from Theodore's right hand, piercing Hipatia's heart. The great hero contained in Umbra, Reynolds Spencer, pitied the slender woman as he stabbed her and murmured in a profound voice, [Sleep well and atone, nameless lady.]

Simultaneously, White Knight Hipatia shattered like glass.

Chapter 326 - The Night that Swallowed the Sun (2)

Pakang! There was a sharp noise as Soul Calibre, the soul sword, extinguished Hipatia with a single strike.

If it were another one of the Four Horsemen, Theodore wouldn't have been able to defeat it all at once. A vampire's body wasn't particularly important to them, and the arch lich often stored their life vessel in another place. As such, it wasn't easy to destroy their immortality in one blow.

However, Hipatia was an undead that wasn't based on the flesh. Therefore, Soul Calibre's direct hit was indeed fatal.

'I caught one. There are two left.'

After a few beats, the curses were removed, and magic power once against circulated through his right hand. Reynolds clicked his tongue that he didn't even have, [Tsk, tsk. You are a very cruel young man.]

'I can't spare her just because her appearance is beautiful.'

[It can't be helped. She could've been rehabilitated if she were alive, but that lady is dead.]

As Theodore and Reynolds talked, Elohim's eyes became furious as he understood the situation. He might not have the trivial thoughts of a human, but who wouldn't be angry at losing a colleague they had spent hundreds of years with? This had happened because of his neglect, so the red knight's eyes turned red.

The mad vampire unfolded a pair of blood wings. "Kyaaaak!"

Red Knight Elohim placed his limbs on the ground like he was a beast. His human appearance was just a shell; his essence was a lump of blood. It was an irregular form that could transform into

anything he wanted.

“Don’t be too hasty, Red Knight!”

Elohim changed his body faster than the black knight could give a warning, and the red knight shot off at a terrifying speed. It was much faster than the speed of sound.

Even a sword master with lightning fast reflexes would find it hard to react. His claws were like a beast’s, and his teeth were as sharp as a shark’s teeth. He forgot about the order not to kill Theodore as he attempted to overwhelm Theodore with his primitive flesh.

“Kuruk?” In the high-speed world where even the falling leaves were stopped, he heard it.

-Fool, a creepy voice emerged, causing the red knight to stop. Then he saw a dagger pointed at his body.

“Ha! You are the fool, human!” Elohim, however, ignored this resistance.

Strong artifacts couldn’t kill an elder vampire. He might take quite a bit of damage, but it was something he could endure. In fact, he could survive even if he lost the majority of accumulated blood. However, his opponent was human. The human was destined to have his head torn off.

-Ars Magna.

A distance of 10 meters—Elohim crossed that in an instant. Just before Elohim’s claws tore at his enemy, Theodore raised a sword that was shining with a blue light. This was the last sight of the elder vampire, the red knight.

“Turn into water!” Theodore commanded.

Simultaneously, the Philosopher's Stone attached to the Azoth Sword broke. Following the white phosphorus storm, the price of intervening with the body of an elder vampire caused it to reach its

limit. Nevertheless, the strength of the Azoth Sword was certain. The moment that the blade shone, the body of the vampire turned to pure water!

Chwaack!

It was a shortcut that couldn't be used for normal creatures, but the elder vampire had a body that was completely made up of blood. Elohim's source of power, the blood, was lost all at once. The elder vampire had become a slime.

'Even so, I must not let my guard down.'

Looking down at the vampire that had lost its shape and become a puddle of water, Theodore cast a spell. It was to completely destroy Elohim.

Pajijijik!

The lightning spear hit the water, and the drops of water struggled as if they were alive. Electricity was more effective against water than fire. By the time the black knight stepped forward, the water on the ground had already dried up. It was the end of a vampire that could destroy an estate.

"Didn't I tell you? The three of you aren't a match for me," Theodore declared as he stepped on the charred ground.

"...You... What did you do?" The black knight was confused by the incomprehensible reality. They were the highest ranking undead, but there was only one of them left. It might be convincing if Theodore were a transcendent, but he was still at the 8th circle.

"Even if you used an artifact, the amount of magic power that you have is strange. You might've reached the 8th circle, but you used great magic continuously and even overwhelmed us...!"

"Is that all you want to say?" Theodore had Soul Calibre in his right hand and a thunder spear in his left hand, facing Black Knight Delos without any hesitation. After losing his colleagues,

the black knight wasn't a threat to Theodore.

"Then it is time to leave, ghost of an old era."

The battle that started didn't last long.

*

Peeeong!

Veronica's body zigzagged through the clouds and avoided the attacks of the enemy. Black lightning chased her and struck empty clouds, ripping them apart and burning the air in the area. This was a level of lightning that deviated from the natural laws of the material world. It had a fast attack speed and a destructive power similar to that of Hellfire, which meant that Veronica didn't dare confront the damage.

'Tch, using magic that I haven't heard of!'

That was the enemy she was fighting against. Meltor's magic might've developed over the centuries, but it wasn't a level that could go against magic from the Age of Mythology. Jerem could freely use that magic, so he was powerful even if he hadn't regained his nine circles.

Beyond the clouds, Jerem's black robe flapped like a grim reaper, and he started launching magic at Veronica, who flashed brightly like a comet.

"Water of Cocytus, kill my enemy."

There was no big difference in the attack power of the water attribute magic. Hundreds of water arrows floated in midair, and Jerem aimed them at his constantly flying target with a relaxed face.

Cocytus—it was a large river from another dimension that froze any object it touched with a single drop of its water. It didn't physically freeze the target. Rather, it stopped the target's mind and body. It was a black magic that resulted in the target's defeat

the moment the target tried to defend.

Pipipipiping! The water arrows poured down. It was a barrage that couldn't be avoided, so Veronica immediately turned to counterattack.

Her magic power boiled intensely, and fire arrows popped up to intercept the water arrows. This was impossible to do without elaborate magic power control and abundant practical experience. As the two spells canceled each other, a huge gust of wind came from behind Jerem. "...Annoying."

The wind had more power than a 6th circle attack magic. It was due to an insight that knew when to break the flow of battle. Jerem growled wildly and stared at the shooter that was somewhere in the Great Forest. The storm had the power to destroy his body. He could ignore a few mediocre arrows, but this storm was an exception. Without the help of Nídhöggur, he would have collapsed from the power that was equivalent to the eight circles.

At one glance, the combination of the two people, Veronica and Titania, seemed more powerful than expected.

Veronica looked around at the battlefield calmly. The difference in capabilities was clear. If it was a one-on-one, she would've died or be placed in a dilemma in her draconic state.

'No, it is limiting even with Titania.'

Unlike their opponent who had a bottomless number of means, the two of them had exhausted all means except their trump card. If Titania used her Hurricane Bow well, they could last another 10 minutes. However, if something went wrong, they would both die. This was a situation where she had to take a gamble.

Veronica struggled for a while before making a decision. "Haaap!"

Horns appeared, and scales grew. The temperature of the blood

flowing in her body rose dozens of degrees, and her red hair flickered like it was burning. This was her time-limited combat state, the draconic form. Her magic power was boosted several times, and the atmosphere shook. Jerem sensed the force from a distance and became alert. He knew that his opponent's momentary output had reached a level that could threaten him.

"This declining era is really full of annoying people," Jerem growled in an annoyed voice.

At this moment...

Wuuong!

A white light appeared from somewhere and was sucked into Jerem's body. It was a piece of the power he had given to each of the Four Horsemen when he made them a long time ago. The piece from White Knight Hipatia had returned to him.

"...Hipatia was destroyed?" The confused Jerem had barely cleared his throat when another piece of light was sucked into him. This time, it was the piece from Red Knight Elohim. Jerem suddenly stopped, but Veronica just watched without taking action.

'He is full of loopholes. Nevertheless...!'

She would die if she moved forward. Veronica knew because she had gained more power after entering the draconic state. The moment he accepted the two pieces of light, Jerem became another being. He was now a monster comparable to the 9th circle.

"Ah." However, unlike Veronica who saw it directly from the front, Titania who was on the ground moved. She saw that her opponent showed loopholes, and her hunter's instincts prevailed. Hurricane Bow. There was a giant gust of wind as the huge bow fired, and a storm appeared.

Kuoooooh!

The storm ripped through the clouds and swallowed up Jerem's

body.

“Yes, they lost to that little bastard.”

A black-robed hand stretched out from the storm. It was a skinny hand, but the darkness spreading from the palm was an imaginary space that blocked all physical forces. His eyes shone red, and Jerem aimed at Veronica with his right hand. “Grim Reaper, move your scythe.”

Veronica felt cold despite her boiling blood. Chill. Her nerves accelerated to the extreme as something appeared in the air and raised a scythe. Dark robe, white bones, and giant scythe—it was the spitting image of a grim reaper with a scythe described in books. This was a blow that cut between the boundary of matter and non-matter, breaking Veronica’s body and cutting the soul.

It was too late to avoid it. There was no way to block it. Veronica formed a fist as she sensed it. She aimed her fist at the falling scythe that tore apart space.

————————————————!

There was no sound. A shockwave appeared in the air. The reaper’s scythe and Veronica’s punch… Was it the spell or the blow that contained all her power? The reaper swung its scythe once before melting away. This was the legend that had once cut a demon’s neck.

“Haack! Hak! Huaaa…!”

It was a failure. Veronica was delighted at the fact that she was alive, despite the blood running down her half-cut off right arm. She would’ve been cut in half if she wasn’t in her draconic form. It was because she had used pure strength and speed against the reaper’s scythe. Jerem was surprised and asked in a low voice, “You survived. But what can you do with that body?”

The storm blocked by his left hand had already disappeared. He had blocked Titania’s blow easily. Veronica realized that the

strategy they had used so far wouldn't work anymore. Now, it was a game of pure power. The odds were slim, and her cut right arm hadn't recovered yet. However, her fighting spirit burned brightly. Then at that moment...

"...You fell as well, Delos?" A black light was sucked into Jerem's body, and his presence swelled even more.

It was at the level of facing a dragon. At this point, the odds of the Veronica and Titania winning fell to zero. However, when Veronica sensed this, she laughed. The expression on her face wasn't one of having given up or being prepared to die. Since when had a familiar back appeared...?

"All your subordinates have fallen, Jerem!" Theodore had turned his body into lightning to return. His red robes flapped as he declared war on the worst warlock in this material world. "You can't hide behind your subordinates now. Bring it on!"

"Ha, I'm hiding?"

A killing intent strong enough to stop the wind rose up! A fog of death and darkness emerged to cover the area.

Kururung...! Kurung! Kururung!

After absorbing the power of the Four Horsemen, Jerem's black magic power couldn't be compared to before. He might not have recovered the form of nine circles, but the amount and casting speed were comparable to that. An adult dragon would pale before it as the magician of death drew out his strength.

"I'll let you know your place, natives of this world!"

Chapter 327 - The Night that Swallowed the Sun (3)

Compared to Jerem's small and weak body floating in the sky, the black magic emanating from him was like a tidal wave.

Red lights shone out a few times from the center of that darkness, which was emitting the waves. The magicians who communicated with mana of the material world had a higher influence on the surrounding environment as their level increased, but warlocks were an exception in a bad way.

It was like dropping poison into a clear pond.

This magic power, which drew from two dimensions, contaminated this world's mana and hindered the flow of normal magic power. Life forms would lose their shape after continuous exposure to this black magic, and the ecosystem would collapse after a short period of time.

Considering the power of the world tree, it wasn't a big problem for the moment. However, with the amount of magic power Jerem had, it was just a matter of time. Theodore raised both of his eyebrows and spread his palms open before him. "Hap!"

His magic power emerged like a storm.

Kurururung.

The black magic power was suddenly pushed back, and the fog of darkness shot up instead of falling to the ground. It was proof that for a very short period of time, Theodore's magic power had exceeded the enemy's.

The dark red light around Jerem became thicker as he saw it. Theodore had defeated Jerem's subordinates in a short amount of time and operated a magic power that went beyond the 8th circle. Theodore was also a magician with a grimoire as his base, so Jerem had to be careful.

‘What? He feels much stronger than before?’ Theodore had time to talk to his advisers, thanks to Jerem’s caution. Theodore had only spent a short amount of time dealing with the Four Horsemen. However, in the time he had been gone, Jerem had become more powerful in a manner that Theodore couldn’t understand.

Nonetheless, it wasn’t a problem for Gluttony.

-That is Soul Partition! Did he recover the pieces that he planted in the Four Horsemen? The pressure must be quite serious in his injured state, but he must be confident about ending this quickly.

Theodore couldn’t understand all of what Gluttony said, but the reason behind Jerem’s increase in strength was clear.

‘Is it because I knocked out the Four Horsemen? But the connection between the necromancer and undead is a one-way path… Isn’t it theoretically impossible to reclaim the magic power that he gave to the undead?’

-That’s right. The magic power can’t be taken back.

However, the thing that Jerem recovered wasn’t his magic power.

-The cost of maintaining the highest level undead is high. In order for them to have been active for thousands of years after their master died, magic power the level of a dragon heart would have been needed. Jerem probably broke off parts of his soul and planted them in the Four Horsemen.

‘…Indeed, he was a transcendent in that age.’

The current Jerem was sealed in a grimoire. He was weathered by the thousands of years, as well as injured by Mitra. As such, his power was limited compared to what he had in the past. Despite Jerem being in a very weak state, it was understandable that his level had jumped so much after regaining some of his past power.

Theodore grew cautious as he realized the sudden change in

circumstances. Meanwhile, Gluttony spoke in the same tone as normal, -But he isn't able to utilize all his abilities. He can't resurrect the Four Horsemen, and the range of spells has only increased somewhat.

'In other words, he hasn't reached the 9th circle?'

-That's right. The wound that your kid dealt to his soul isn't easy to recover from. If that was possible, Jerem would've torn out the souls in the Four Horsemen sooner in order to recover.

Theodore laughed at the words and agreed, "I got it."

He faced the red light of Jerem in the distant sky and became conscious of the foreign object in his hand. It was a foul that Theodore decided to use in this fight. The item's size had been reduced to make it easy to carry, and it could be used as a portable magic power stone. This was a treasure he had gotten by finding Paracelsus' laboratory in the past and unraveling an unexpected connection.

It was the heart that the sand dragon, Desertio, left behind! The item which contained the magic power of nine circles was inside Theodore's robe.

Of course, it was impossible for Theodore to do anything with it other than use it as a supply of magic power. Resistance would occur if another species consumed it without refining it first, and the power of the dragon heart would destroy the person's body.

Only Theodore, who had the absurd 'Forced Harmonization', was able to utilize the ridiculous magic power.

"Veronica, how long can you keep that state?"

"30 minutes on the premise that I'm not injured. But if we keep fighting, it will be limited to 15 minutes."

"15 minutes... It is a bit close."

Theodore conveyed instructions to Veronica and Titania.

Veronica was in a dragon state, while Titania had two more shots left. If Titania, Veronica, and Theodore were unable to stop Jerem even with the dragon heart, then it would be impossible.

“Okay, I’m beginning.” Theodore moved with a sense of responsibility that had become heavier.

Memorize.

All Slots Open.

Octuple.

The efficiency of his magic power consumption was good. The moment Theodore held the dragon heart in his hand, his magic power became close to limitless. There was a limit to the amount that could be drawn out at one time. However, once he poured out all his magic power, it would return to being full in an instant.

The magic power around Theodore’s body took the form of blue lightning and turned into the shape of a giant spear. It was literally a divine lightning spear. The spear had a full length of 20 meters, and thunder echoed around it, attracting attention. Before Jerem could respond—

「Убирайся-к-чёрту (Go aw-ay)!」 The sound of a human voice beyond the limit exploded outward.

“…What?”

The fog cleared. It was due to the Dragon Words, one of the strongest powers in this material world. The fog of black magic covering the sky was lifted with the strong but simple words. Simultaneously, the huge lightning spear thrust forward.

Kwarururung!

However, it didn’t reach its destination. A wall of darkness had appeared and blocked the lightning spear. It was a black magic spell that rendered the power of all physical attacks to zero. However, it was difficult for Jerem to cope with the power of

Theodore's attacks, and a small crack appeared in the wall. Before the gap could be filled up, another storm struck.

Theodore's tactic of penetrating the damaged defenses and hitting Jerem was repeated in a second attack!

"—Hah, not even funny." Jerem's eyes glared angrily as he faced the series of attacks.

Peng!

Jerem broke the arrow from Hurricane Bow like he had been waiting for it. After all, he had a lot of defenses, not just the wall of darkness. Then the wind scattered, sucked away like it was in a vacuum.

Magicians were readers. They were the type of people who read the opponent, and their plan and weakness, then they would pierce through the gap to win. Yet a magician was reusing the same tactic as if they were unaware of this fact...? That wasn't possible unless they were making fun of Jerem. Therefore, Jerem's response was one beat late.

Peeeeeong!

Veronica's fist stopped in front of Jerem. In her draconic form, her strength was a few times stronger than normal, but it still couldn't break through the magic power barrier.

"...Hiding behind the storm and unleashing a series of attacks," Jerem commented.

Nevertheless, a shock was delivered. It was enough to damage Jerem's robe through the magic barrier that was almost at the level of the 9th circle. His robe fell down, revealing an undead wrapped in a dull darkness. It was the undead body of the Pale Rider which had been created by collecting the power of death. Jerem's anger could be seen clearly as even his bones were shaking.

"How interesting. But you haven't reached this body?" Jerem

spoke in a dry voice.

A lump of rage and dark energy headed toward Theodore's party with an enormous amount of power. It wasn't a spell, just pure magic power.

"I will make you know your place!"

An image of the reaper came to mind. There were also unknown existences hidden in the darkness. The summoning of a grim reaper and opening a lower dimension... They were spells from an ancient era, and in these times, it was doubted they had ever even existed.

Reality and nightmares started to cross in the sky above Elvenheim.

*

The darkness swirled vigorously, and flames poured out without rest. Lightning struck brightly, and gusts of winds blew. The fight which had started in earnest was now much fiercer than before. It was a battlefield without a single moment of rest, where one mistake would mean death.

Veronica was like a raptor wandering in this vortex.

"Shit!"

90 degrees left, 30 degrees right. She avoided the dark spear and creatures hidden in the darkness with her flame wings. The creatures that got caught in the flames burned and fell down to the ground, but there were no gaps. As soon as she tried to take a break, the fog that stopped all life came at her.

When she saw the wave of black magic power, Veronica screamed, "Inferno!"

A spell cast with one word destroyed the fog. She smiled wryly at the sight of this battlefield where spells, which determined victory or defeat, were being used instead of shields. Veronica looked at

the lightning rushing above her.

‘I am proud to have a lover like that.’

At first, the fight centered around Veronica’s draconic form. The 7th circle magic, the durable body, and the strength she placed in just a single fist wasn’t something that even Jerem could ignore. The problem was that the transformation had already ended after 15 minutes passed.

Pipipipiping!

Hundreds of arrows flew toward the ground, while Veronica burned a few ghoul wyverns around her. Titania’s use of the Hurricane Bow was no different from Veronica’s state. As it was a battle of two beings near transcendence, Titania and Veronica didn’t dare interfere with Theodore’s and Jerem’s strength. Currently, Veronica and Titania were at their limits just by attracting attention.

“…Win, my Theodore.” Veronica looked up at the darkness and lightning swirling in the far sky.

She never thought that she would be lacking power after reaching the 8th circle, but the world was full of strange things. Veronica formed a fist one more time as she recalled her beloved’s face.

Kkieeeek!

“Shut up! I can’t concentrate!”

She was going to beat up all these small fries.

*

‘They seem to be holding up well down there.’

In the slowed down world of lightning, Theodore was able to see flickering flames. It was Veronica’s breath.

The soul connected to his through the eternal contract was still calm, and her magic power was fairly intact. If it continued like

this, they would be able to endure for another hour. Theodore judged the situation calmly and moved as the death knight's sword aimed at him.

Fairy Dance's Direct Transmission.

Hand Counterattack Technique.

Both Hands Wind and Moon.

Lightning and the fairy dance at the same time...! It had been impossible in the past, but Theodore deepened his understanding after reaching the 8th circle. Now, he could combine the two different fields without difficulty. He used one hand to block the blade and the other to attack.

Kwarurung!

As the palm containing lightning slammed into the death knight's body, the death knight's black armor broke down, and the large body was thrown back. It might be different for a normal sword master, but the body of a crusader picked up from Lairon was unable to bear the fusion ability.

The death knight crashed into the ground from the blow. Theodore left the death knight for Veronica to finish off, while he stared at Jerem. Then Jerem spoke from where he was floating in the air, "How annoying. Do you want to do a war of attrition?"

"There is nothing else I can do."

Unlike his casual way of speaking, the emotions in Jerem's gaze were unclear. Despite having a contract with Nídhöggur, Jerem was being pushed by Theodore, who was a mortal. Additionally, he was consuming power to maintain the summoning of Nídhöggur, so Jerem didn't welcome a war of attrition.

'...I don't have much time left either.' Theodore ignored the throbbing pain in his heart and looked at the sky in the east with a more relaxed expression.

The presence of the dragon heart didn't mean that his available magic power was infinite. Theodore's physical body was taking a lot of abuse from the process of accepting and discharging the enormous power in his body. If he compared it to a rubber band, it was the repetitive act of pulling and releasing hard.

'I have to take his life in the next two attacks.'

Theodore accurately diagnosed his limitations and examined the tactics he had available. In the meantime, Jerem's minor summons were still interfering with Theodore.

Kiiing—

An evil spirit, made from 7th circle curse magic, was broken into pieces by the sword in Theodore's right arm. The Soul Calibre directed by Reynolds was more effective than he had expected. Reynolds allowed Theodore to kill enemies that were resistant to magic power. Without Reynolds, this fight would've been much more difficult.

"Tsk, you learned a strange magic from somewhere." Jerem clicked his tongue at this scene.

It was a magic that Theodore hadn't known a few months ago. Looking at it, the power was absurd. How could he have learned a magic like that in a short period of time and become so skillful in it? It wasn't a standard ability of the seven sins grimoire.

However, it was fair to say that Jerem would've have been capable of it if the grimoire had chosen him as its master.

"Ah."

At that moment...

"It is over," Theodore muttered words that Jerem didn't understand.

"What is over?"

"Look at the horizon to the east."

“What?” Jerem looked in the direction mentioned and his expression stiffened. A certain phenomenon was getting closer.

“Daybreak.”

The sun was the enemy of all undead, but its influence varied greatly with time and location. For example, the undead wouldn’t be affected at twilight when the sun was starting to fall below the western horizon. Then when did it have the most deadly effect on the undead? People often said noon, but magicians knew better.

The moment when the sun rose in the east at dawn had the biggest impact on the undead.

“…Were you planning for this from the beginning?”

“Half. If possible, I wanted to win with my own strength. However, it is difficult to endure.”

“You rat bastard…!” Jerem was angry, but there was nothing a mortal could do about the rising and setting of the sun.

No matter how much magic power Jerem had, he couldn’t cover the whole sky and block out the darkness. That was also impossible for Theodore. Based on the rules of the material world, Theodore judged it as his victory. For these rules to be overturned, a presence from outside these rules had to intervene.

-Pathetic, Follower. The being that was physically outside the world looked down at his follower and scoffed. He gave off a crushing presence with just a few words! Theodore closed his mouth while Nídhöggur looked at the eastern sky. The sky was golden, with dawn coming like a wave.

-This is truly an unpleasant light, he spoke unpleasantly and then yawned widely.

-From now on, I prohibit sunrise, Nídhöggur said absurd words.

Huk.

This was the end. With just a few words, Nídhöggur’s command

pressed down on the material world. Despite the sun that was peeping out from the east... Theodore didn't know how it was possible, but the sky that was about to brighten turned dark again.

Death and darkness, the power of the dragon who ruled over Nastrond! This was a transcendent's power.

"...Damn," Theodore cursed.

Meanwhile, the two camps of light and darkness felt sorrow and joy respectively.

Flash!

Behind Theodore's back, a bright light suddenly rose from the center of Elvenheim. It pushed away the darkness filling the sky, spreading out like the sun. No, it was different from sunlight. The moment the light touched his skin, Theodore could see the absurd source of this light. It was a power that was one step closer to the gods than humanity, a feeling that came before the five senses.

"Perhaps..."

As if to confirm his intuition, he heard voices, that had been silent for weeks, cheer.

-It has finally succeeded! Theodore, look!

-It isn't too late? Please tell me it is alright!

-Stop beating around the bush! We can't see it from here!

--...I... see...

They were the four high elves. These were the voices of those doing the summoning circle. If so, then there was only one possible source of this light.

Kiaaaaaaack!

It was of a ridiculous size. Two huge wings spread out over the horizon, and a beak moved through the clouds. The being called the legendary giant bird of the east... anyone who saw it would

think it was Hraesvelgr. A single flap of his wings could cause a hurricane, and he had fought with an evil dragon over the world tree.

Hraesvelgr had been summoned to greet his mortal enemy.

Chapter 328 - The Night that Swallowed the Sun (4)

“Hraesvelgr!” Theodore shouted after discovering the identity of the giant bird.

‘I heard he was a big sacred creature, but… isn’t this too big?’

Hraesvelgr was huge enough to cover dozens of kilometers and allow everybody on the battlefield to see him.

One of his feathers could cover four or five people, and there was the illusion of the whole world turning white every time he flapped his wings. His eyes couldn’t even be measured. Was it due to the large size that Theodore’s perspective was strange? Hraesvelgr himself was a transcendent body with such enormous power.

[Hrmm.] Shortly after that, Hraesvelgr, who was white from his head to his tail feathers, slowly raised his eyelids. Having been summoned in front of the world tree, Hraesvelgr looked around the battlefield without saying anything until turning to the part of the sky where Theodore and Jerem were standing. There were signs of an enemy that could never be forgotten.

[Arrogant and greedy lizard, you still desire the world tree?] Hraesvelgr’s voice admonished in a dry tone, spreading to all corners of this battlefield.

Someone said this in the past, ‘Sound was vibration.’

Hraesvelgr’s voice didn’t stray from this concept. The vibrations from the giant creature flowed through the sky and ground without losing a single bit of power. Everyone heard his voice, regardless of the boundaries between the living and the dead.

When Jerem heard Hraesvelgr’s voice, he unconsciously predicted the worst development. The demon king of Nastrond, the arrogant dragon, couldn’t let this provocation pass.

[—Hraesvelgr, it is you!] Unsurprisingly, Nídhöggur roared and revealed his body. So far, he had stayed in the position of a bystander to preserve his power. However, Nídhöggur faced Hraesvelgr now. [You are blocking me again! You haven't learned anything from the Age of Mythology! We have the same origins and will gain nothing from going against each other!]

[That's why you don't understand, demon king of Nastrond.]

Since time immemorial, good and evil had faced each other. Hraesvelgr was a sacred creature on the side of good, while Nídhöggur a dragon on the side of evil.

The battle over the world tree during the Age of Mythology had been an extension of that long struggle. As it happens, the two beings had the same habit of swallowing dead bodies. However, unlike Nídhöggur who enjoyed the act of torture, Hraesvelgr aimed to enrich the soil.

Hraesvelgr looked at the ground and unfolded his wings with a heavy sigh. [Today, I might end up overeating.]

Nídhöggur bared his ugly teeth. [Good. I won't pass up this chance if you are coming out!]

These were existences from the Age of Mythology! As the white eagle and black dragon scattered their presence, those sandwiched in between were forced to feel pressure. Those who didn't have properly trained minds and bodies fainted, while the undead that couldn't protect themselves were destroyed.

It was a presence that was hard to bear, even when they were just looking at each other.

[...I need to change places,] Hraesvelgr spoke while flapping his two wings.

Kuoooooh!

He was so big that the clouds were torn apart with just a light motion, while the atmospheric flow twisted into a vortex. As it was

recorded in the legends, it wasn't impossible for Hraesvelgr to cause a hurricane with a single flap of his wings. Hraesvelgr soared as the mortals looked up at him in awe.

Then he looked down at the ground and asked, [Are your wings just ornaments, Nídhöggur?]

[Hah, provoking me.] Nídhöggur knew his opponent's intentions.

Nídhöggur might treat mortals like worms, but Hraesvelgr respected life. This area would be turned to ruins if it was caught up in the fight between two transcendents, so Hraesvelgr flew into the distant sky to avoid this.

However, Nídhöggur just laughed wildly and spread his wings. [A king doesn't refuse challenges. I will accept this provocation!]

Simultaneously, the enormous bodies of the two transcendents ignored the laws of physics and flew into the sky. Their bodies were real yet unreal. The two monsters that couldn't be understood by mortals of this material world instantly exceeded the speed of sound by dozens of times.

It was a super fast speed that wasn't affected by resistance and gravity! They flashed past the atmosphere and the stratosphere before stopping.

[Hrmm, this place will be fine,] Hraesvelgr remarked. It couldn't be helped if those below were still affected by the battle this far up. Then he gazed at the enemy before him and said, [Let's start.]

[Is this place really okay, Hraesvelgr?]

[Huh?]

Hraesvelgr tilted his head, and Nídhöggur moved his venomous tongue. One bite from Nídhöggur and even a sacred creature would die.

[Then die!]

On the outskirts of the stars, the two transcendents started their

fight.

*

————————————————————!

It was a ridiculous sight. Theodore sweated anxiously as he gazed at the distant sky. This was a sight similar to the aurora that could be seen in the snowy northern country. However, in Theodore's eyes, this was more frightening than hell.

'T-The sky is being torn apart. These are Nídhöggur's and Hraesvelgr's incomplete powers?'

The fight wasn't at a distance where it could be seen with one's eyes, but a magician could deduce the epicenter of the mana wavelength.

According to Theodore's calculations, the two transcendents were around 1,000 kilometers away. The power could pass through a few cities, maybe a few kingdoms. Heat, wind, and pressure... The forces that came from the fight between Nídhöggur and Hraesvelgr exceeded the range of 1,000 kilometers!

If Hraesvelgr hadn't moved, Elvenheim would've been destroyed by the fight between the two.

"...I have to worry about my side."

Now wasn't the time to be thinking about the struggle between transcendents. Theodore looked in front of him, where Jerem seemed a bit different from before.

'Hmm?' There was something strange. Theodore felt a subtle discomfort and opened his spirit eyes. Then Theodore could see the reason for his discomfort.

'Jerem's power has decreased? Why?'

The amount of mana and presence coming from Jerem had decreased considerably. If Theodore had been at his limits during the fight earlier, then it was worth fighting now. However,

Theodore didn't act recklessly and spent a moment speculating about the reason. There was a chance that this weakening could be a trap.

-It is because of Nídhöggur, the silent Gluttony said suddenly.

'Is that so?'

-Yes. Unlike Hraesvelgr who is sustained by the Great Forest, the world tree, and the four high elves, Jerem is supporting Nídhöggur alone. The burden won't be light, even if he offered valuable sacrifices.

Theodore accepted the explanation. If Nídhöggur could move freely, then there would be no reason for Jerem to drag on this boring battle. It was a big burden on Jerem, so he wouldn't do anything to speed up the power consumption.

In that case, this situation was a big chance for Theodore. "...I shall try it once."

Jerem belatedly noticed the change, but there was no one in this era who could beat Theodore when it came to speed. The lightning shot out before Jerem could even cast a spell.

Pajijik.

There were multiple spears in the lightning state. Double, triple, quadruple... It was unbelievable that a single magician could cast the enormous number of attack magic filling the air.

Lightning Vortex, Inferno, Rotting Hands, and Shadow Spike...

Adding on the newly learned magic, eight attacks were completed in a matter of seconds and aimed toward Jerem.

Kwarururung!

Jerem's body flew toward the ground. He reduced the impact with defense magic, but the defense magic was blown away. Theodore wasn't one to miss this defenseless gap. "Gluttony, open the Hall of Fame!"

-Choose the soul you want to call.

“Heathcliff!” Theodore quickly summoned a soul and exercised his rights.

[Heathcliff’s soul has been called.]

[You have chosen to use target name Heathcliff’s Supercell. The rating is C++. Adjusted to the maximum power. 3,000 achievement points will be consumed.]

[Set the target point.]

It was the magic that made White Tower Mastery Heathcliff famous. Theodore might not be able to use it himself, but he could borrow its strength using the Hall of Fame. He set the target point for the falling Jerem, and power rose from the mouth in Theodore’s left hand. It was the magic borrowed from the Hall of Fame—Supercell!

Lightning clouds suddenly swept over the land. The place where Jerem fell to was in the middle of the undead army, so there was no chance of Theodore’s allies being caught in the aftermath. It was an artificially created thunderstorm. In a few seconds, thunder stronger than 6th circle magic emerged from the clouds. The water droplets falling from them caused the thunder to have a more efficient destruction. A storm of thunder struck in all directions. It was the moment when a spell that could deal with tens of thousands of troops was triggered to defeat only one necromancer.

“…Don’t, climb——!”

Even so, the opponent was Jerem. He might not be able to exert the power of the 9th circle, but Jerem quickly found a gap in the clouds and broke apart the thunderstorm with darkness. It was proof that his understanding of magic was ridiculously high. If Jerem wasn’t a warlock and the enemy, Theodore would’ve felt in awe of him.

‘But…’ Theodore grinned when he saw the ragged Jerem and the blackened bones.

Jerem had certainly weakened as a surprise attack had managed to damage him. Nídhöggur was busy with Hraesvelgr and could no longer protect him. Meanwhile, Theodore still had strength and means to fight.

“Gluttony.”

-Yes.

“Call Abe no Seimei. Use Curse Protection and Protection against the Fallen.”

-I understand.

[Abe no Seimei’s soul has been called.]

[Object name Abe no Seimei’s ‘Curse Protection’ has been selected. The rating is B. Theodore Miller has been chosen to be protected. Any curse magic at or below the 8th circle will be completely blocked. The duration is 10 minutes, and 6,000 achievement points have been consumed.]

[Object name Abe no Seimei’s ‘Protection from the Fallen’ has been selected. The rating is C+. Theodore Miller has been chosen as the target. The target is given the power to deal further damage to all evil. The duration is 10 minutes and 4,500 achievement points have been consumed.]

Abe no Seimei was one of the greatest shamans, as well as an iron wall against evil spirits. It might be different if Jerem were in a perfect state, but right now, he couldn’t use any curse magic of the 9th circle. Additionally, there was the Protection against the Fallen. Jerem would die if Theodore used Soul Calibre against him in this state.

‘It is a little bit disappointing, but it isn’t worth saving the points.’

If Theodore added the 13,500 points consumed by Reading the Mysteries of Heaven, then he had spent 37,500 points on Jerem. He wouldn't have had so many points if Gluttony hadn't swallowed the undead inside Jerem's Tartarus. In that case, Theodore wouldn't have been able to fight Jerem.

In a sense, this could be called a situation caused by causality.

"You still have tricks..." Jerem felt the power coming from Theodore's body and looked at him with a miserable expression. Theodore did not give any explanation or reason. He simply stepped forward while holding Soul Calibre in his right hand and a lightning spear in his left hand.

It was time to put an end to this pointless fight.

Chapter 329 - The Night that Swallowed the Sun (5)

The first attack was from Theodore. The lightning in his hand collided with Jerem's shield.

Kwarurung!

The lightning spear was pushed down and exploded the ground around it. If this were a desert, then the phenomenon, 'glassing', would occur. Dust clouds rose from the explosion and covered the whole area. Nonetheless, Theodore did not hesitate to advance. His eyes weren't covered by the dust, and he felt like this was the last chance. Super sensitivity—it was the intuition that appeared again after being silent in Nídhöggur's presence.

'Jerem's magic power isn't infinite. The level of the undead has fallen, and my side has a chance to win.'

The burden on Jerem couldn't be compared to before after Nídhöggur started moving in earnest. Moreover, Jerem's power had declined, while Theodore was still hiding a few trump cards. For example, what about the magic scrolls he had gotten a while ago?

"Gluttony, release number 112 to 119 from the inventory!"

-Understood.

At Theodore's words, eight magic scrolls popped out from his left hand. It was part of the rewards he got from Paragranum after going to Paracelsus' laboratory a while ago. There were 12 scrolls of 7th circle magic, and he chose eight that were useful for combat. He invoked all of them without any errors.

Wuoooooong!

Overwhelming magic power shone from the scrolls.

'Someone else might think this is a waste of money!'

The 7th circle scrolls could buy a small territory, and now eight of them were being used at once. The scrolls floated in midair and fired the 7th circle magic.

A heavy storm emerged from a scroll.

Tongues of fire emerged from another scroll.

There was a scroll that shot out lightning bolts.

There was also a scroll that froze a certain amount of space.

Additionally, there were several other attack spells that hit Jerem.

There was a loud explosion, and the earth shook.

If used properly, this was a chain of attack power that could kill a sword master in one go. However, Theodore plunged into the storm he created without much expectation. It was powerful but not enough to destroy the wall of darkness or Jerem's immortality.

'It is enough to stop him for a moment.'

Unsurprisingly, a being stood in front of Theodore after he entered the storm. The eyes of the death knight, an undead strong enough to survive the 7th circle attack magic, glowed brightly. However, its body wasn't in a perfect state. Theodore blocked the sword aiming at his throat and stabbed the death knight with Soul Calibre a few times. The death knight's immortality was completely destroyed, and it crumbled. The death knight hadn't been at a level to completely endure the power of the 7th circle magic scrolls, but it couldn't avoid the spells due to the presence of its master behind it.

"…Being used as a shield? It was a vain end."

However, Jerem's thoughts were a little different. Beyond the dust, his white jawbones moved as he spoke, "A servant should be satisfied about protecting its master. Everybody has a place and role. Its role was to sacrifice itself for me."

“Ha, is that so?” Theodore laughed without questioning it. “Then isn’t the role of the evil warlock to fall before me?”

“Let’s see?” A red light flashed in Jerem’s eye sockets, and he raised thin finger bones. Then he pointed to Theodore and declared in a loud voice, “True evil doesn’t disappear.”

With those words, the conversation ended. There was nothing more to be said. Jerem chanted a short spell before Theodore could act. Then translucent evil spirits rose from the ground, grabbing at Theodore’s ankles and body. He was caught in their terrible grip, and his vitality sucked out.

This was Drain Specter, which took away the vitality of a living being through contact.

[Huhu, how ridiculous!]

This was insignificant to the old heroes.

Kiiing—

Soul Calibre flashed a few times, cutting the necks of the evil spirits that tried to approach Theodore. Even the spirits under the ground were destroyed.

“Indeed, that sword is a special magic that kills the soul. I now understand why the Four Horsemen couldn’t go against you.” Jerem black magic moved in an ominous manner as he talked. “It isn’t effective against physical defenses and can’t be used if you aren’t close. It is impossible to use unless it is by a variant like you.”

“What, variant?”

“A magician who is able to use a hodgepodge of things. No, isn’t it because of Gluttony? Hahaha, you are really lucky to eat everything…” Jerem spoke with a blank expression and raised his finger, setting up a barrier of bones around him. He looked similar to the reaper beckoning from across the river of death. “Come, my last adversary.”

Simultaneously, Theodore's body became a flash of blue.

Kwarurung!

He rushed lightly with his lightning body. The distance between them was 30 meters. Before Theodore arrived, Jerem used four black magic spells in the blink of an eye.

Call of the Living Dead.

The undead appeared without any precursors and blocked Theodore's way, while three curses tangled around their bodies. They were curses for the living but powerful blessings for the undead. The undead reached master level in a few minutes and roared loudly, Kuooooooooh!

'Tch, annoying.' Theodore stopped and stared at them. 'These undead have excellent physical abilities and are hard to defeat with Soul Calibre. I will take a few minutes penetrating through them in an ordinary way.'

However, Theodore had Gluttony. He had no problem communicating with Gluttony in this accelerated state. The speed of his consciousness was faster than lightning.

'Gluttony. Number 238!'

-You are going big.

A scroll popped out from his left hand, and he threw it forward. There were five magic scrolls with 8th circle magic. The scrolls that hadn't been able to be used so far due to lacking power now saw the light.

"Open, Basilisk's Eye!"

The special 8th circle magic shot out petrification rays and hit the lumbering bodies of the undead. The muscles, skin, and bones of the undead were just good prey for the petrification rays. The undead physically strengthened by Jerem couldn't resist! They were relatively resistant to magic, but the undead couldn't hold on

for long and soon turned into stone.

Theodore ran past the stone bodies. It might seem good, but the basilisk's petrification caused by the scroll wouldn't last longer than five minutes. This meant it would be a mess if he didn't finish the fight in that time. It had to be a short and decisive battle.

Lightning shot out from Theodore's left hand and struck the defensive wall made of several layers of bone. The air froze. Then the power of the two strong men collided, and silence fell as the space was torn apart by the power. Theodore extracted a tremendous amount of magic power from the dragon heart and increased the size of Soul Calibre to nearly 3 meters. He was prepared to cut Jerem's body at any time.

"Jereeeeem!"

"Theodoreeeee!"

The heavy silence was broken, and strong magic that no one else in this age could reproduce sprang from the hands of both of them.

Fire, lightning, storm, darkness, light, and space…

The attack magic tore the air apart, and the heat fell to the ground, changing wet soil to lava. Two minutes hadn't even passed, but the fight was several times more violent than what had come before it.

Theodore's Soul Calibre cut off Jerem's left arm. Jerem's Arrow of Corruption struck Theodore's stomach. A shadow blade emerged from the ground and shattered Jerem's feet. Ancient magic interfered with the blood flow in Theodore's arteries.

These attacks kept continuing and repeating. Theodore's living body became a mess, while Jerem's immortal body received several penalties from the continuous magic. The durability of the undead was their strongest power in combat. It was clear that Theodore wouldn't be able to finish this in five minutes.

…That was only if Jerem hadn't made a mistake.

“Grudge of the Afterlife, curse him!” Jerem had Theodore’s memories and knew most of Gluttony’s functions, but he didn’t know about what had happened after he’d acquired them.

Hall of Fame was a special ability that allowed the user to borrow the power of registered magicians and receive their teachings. A few minutes ago, Theodore asked for help from a great man. It was Abe no Seimei’s Curse Protection, a fraudulent help that blocked all curses at the 8th circle and below.

‘Now!’ Theodore’s body moved the moment the curse was used. He accepted the curse without trying to avoid or block it and plunged toward Jerem’s body without hesitation.

It was checkmate through a foul!

“—What?!”

As Theodore raised his right arm, the shocked Jerem canceled the spell he was casting and his jawbones moved. It wasn’t too late to use an Order. Although it might not have as much power as before, it would be sufficient to stop Theodore for a moment.

「Закройте (Shut up)! 」Theodore’s Dragon Words were spoken first, and Jerem’s jawbones snapped shut. Theodore put to good use the moment Jerem tried to use an Order. A magician who couldn’t cast lost half his power. Then the sword of the soul fell like a guillotine toward Jerem’s head.

Kiiiiing!

Vertical and horizontal—the sword sliced at Jerem’s body from all directions.

“Urgent Order!”

The spell Theodore learned from Seimei completely suppressed all the pieces of Jerem’s body. If he missed one piece, Jerem might be able to resurrect since the power of a god was needed to completely destroy a monster like Jerem. Just like with Mitra, only the power of a perfect god could destroy the immortality that

came from another dimension.

In any case, it was only a matter of time now. This battle was already decided.

“...Ku, huhu...kuhuhu...hu...” Caught in the air, Jerem’s fragmented jaw moved. Theodore frowned despite being certain of Jerem’s defeat. His super sensitivity didn’t perceive any threat.

“What, are you going to complain?”

“Huhuhu... This great... body... frustrated by an enemy like you... Isn’t it... funny...?” Jerem’s words weren’t entirely wrong.

Jerem was a warlock who had reached the 9th circle and contracted with an evil dragon from another dimension. Even if he was weakened, he was still superior compared to Theodore. Yet he had lost, and Theodore had won. That fact didn’t change, no matter what Jerem claimed.

Jerem started to cry out in a desperate voice as fearsome screams emerged, “Nastrond’s demon king! The snake that kills the world tree! Take this body and make it your food! I offer you this body!”

Theodore didn’t have a chance to do anything as purple magic power wrapped around Jerem’s crumbling body.

“To those who block me, I place an eternal curse on this world—!” Jerem’s skull completely collapsed after this threat.

Only a pile of ashes showed that the warlock, Jerem, had been here. It was a chilling cry, but Theodore didn’t sense anything different. He stared at the pile of ashes at his feet with a bewildered expression. “What the hell...?”

At that moment...

-Theodore! Are you listening? Alucard’s voice was passed through Ratatoskr. Alucard’s urgent tone made Theodore realize there was an emergency.

Theodore quickly replied through the neural network, ‘What is

it? What's going on?'

-Look up at the sky!

'The sky?'

Theodore's eyes widened at the words and raised his head. After Hraesvelgr and Nídhöggur soared into the sky, he had been concentrating on his fight with Jerem without thinking about them. That had been because he realized that a mortal couldn't intervene in the struggle between transcendents. Therefore, he was shocked when he looked up.

"...What is it this time?"

The sky was tearing apart.

Chapter 330 - Dmitra (1)

The original concept of the sky was that it wasn't something that could be torn apart. How could the atmosphere thousands of kilometers above the ocean and clouds be torn? Large-scale weather phenomena were trivial compared to the real extent of the sky. The days of fearing that lightning known as the wrath of God had already passed.

"Crazy!"

No, it was just an illusion. Theodore looked up at the distant sky and couldn't help cursing. As a magician who explored the laws of the physical world, he couldn't believe the sight he was seeing. Who was it that contacted him in an urgent tone? Alucard?

The knee-jerk reaction was indeed accurate. The sky was torn.

It was almost 9 in the morning, but the sky where Nídhöggur stopped the sunrise was still dark. Unlike the moonlit sky filled with stars, this was a darkness that didn't allow any light to be seen. Unfortunately, Nídhöggur was the one who made this darkness, and Hraesvelgr was going against it.

————————————————!!

At this moment, lightning struck, and the world turned white.

"Urgh, again!"

The ground and the sky shook. Despite knowing it was an illusion, Theodore couldn't help reacting to it. It was a feeling caused by the oscillating of the dimensional system, which was due to the two transcendents. The aftermath of the fight traveled at least a few hundred kilometers. If the elves shared Theodore's senses, they might have fainted.

He kept this in mind and arrived at the place he had been told to go to through Ratatoskr.

“You came? I heard you were dealing with the enemy leader alone and was worried.” Alucard, who had sent Theodore the signal, welcomed him with a serious expression.

“Fortunately, there are no big injuries. My magic power is overloaded, but if I am careful, I can fight more…”

The dragon heart belonged to a dragon who had lived for 10,000 years, and it was literally a treasure with infinite magic power. Theodore was utilizing its power and would only be able to fight for half a day with it. Nevertheless, the battle against Jerem had been dicey.

Jerem’s casting speed, magic combination, and magic control made him more of a great magician than a monster. Theodore had barely won with the fouls of Soul Calibre, the Hall of Fame, and the dragon heart.

‘Well, there was also the patron called Nídhöggur.’

The emergence of the variable called Hraesvelgr tilted things to their side. Additionally, Theodore hadn’t had a method to finish Jerem off fully. Instead, he had collapsed on his own. Since early on, warlocks had never accepted death. So, Jerem must have had ulterior motives.

“Do you know what the situation is? The sky is torn despite the atmosphere not seeming to have a single scratch.”

“I’ll tell you everything when the others get here. Repeating the same words several times is just a waste of effort. Those in the south are already approaching.”

“The south?”

Before Theodore could say anything more, Veronica fell from the sky and clung to his neck. It was a high-speed fall that quickly switched to a slow speed, like a fishing fisherman.

“Theo, we won as well! You knocked down that monster alone while I was gone!”

“V-Veronica? Wait a minute…”

“What’s wrong? I’m just giving you a reward because you worked hard,” Veronica spoke while placing her cheek against Theodore’s.

Meanwhile, Titania just shrugged. She had the sense not to get involved. Soon afterward, Ellenoa and the leaders in charge of each defense area gathered. Apart from Alucard, the other three high elves were busy maintaining Hraesvelgr’s summoning.

“I will explain after the situation is organized,” Alucard said. Then he clapped a few times before saying, “Defenders responsible for each other, report.”

“The eastern front, Guardian Ellaim will report,” Ellaim said politely as he stepped forward. “On the eastern front, all the undead died a few minutes before you summoned me. There isn’t a single undead moving on the eastern front.”

“It is the same in the west.”

“The southern front has also been verified. Combat has entered in all areas, the land has been cleansed, and we are in the post-processing stage.”

“Umm.” Alucard’s expression stiffened after hearing that all the dangerous undead had disappeared.

Anyone who felt excited by this situation would have stones for brains. It wasn’t hundreds or thousands but hundreds of thousands of undead. Theodore might’ve killed the caster, but the undead wouldn’t be so easily destroyed. It was impossible for all of them to be gone.

“…It can’t be.” Theodore reached the truth before anyone else. “Don’t tell me that all the undead were sacrificed to Nídhöggur?”

“What?” Alucard was surprised by Theodore’s words and immediately asked Theodore, “Theodore. I’m not a magician, but is the power of the sacrifices enough to affect the two beings?”

“It should be fine…”

At that moment, Gluttony woke up and interrupted, -You are half right, half wrong. How can the soul of an imperfect warlock interfere in the confrontation between transcendents? The balance of power will just be temporarily collapsed.

“The balance between Hraesvelgr and Nídhöggur will collapse?”

-That’s right. Hraesvelgr is stable because of the legitimate ritual that doesn’t need a big sacrifice like Nídhöggur’s did. However, Hraesvelgr’s force is small. In the opposite direction, Nídhöggur took a shortcut by swallowing Baldur’s body. Nídhöggur can momentarily exert a stronger power.

Nídhöggur had devoured Baldur, while Hraesvelgr was reliant on the four high elves, the Great Forest, and the world tree. Hraesvelgr was stable and could be summoned for a long time, while a short battle was more beneficial for Nídhöggur. Therefore, Nídhöggur aimed to finish it straight away, but Hraesvelgr wanted a drawn-out battle.

However, this fight was turned upside down by a variable—the sudden disappearance of Jerem who had summoned Nídhöggur to this material world.

-The most important thing for summoning magic is the link. If it is lost, you can’t stay in this world for a long time, no matter how strong you are. This isn’t the time to relax. Nídhöggur’s power is threatening.

“So, is it a toss of the dice over who will win?”

-Hrrmm, I don’t know, Gluttony spoke in a voice that contained hidden significance. -Based on my memories, Nídhöggur is someone who will use everything he has.

Theodore’s super sensitivity gave him an intense warning, making him feel dizzy. This was a headache that caused his eyes to blur! It was at a level which told him death was inevitable. The

direction of the danger came from the sky where the monsters were tangled together.

“…Eh?”

The sky was bright. This pure white sky didn’t look normal. Unlike the darkness of Nídhöggur, divinity could be felt from the white light. It was the strength of Hraesvelgr. Theodore had no idea of the circumstances when Alucard suddenly paled and opened his mouth.

“Theodore.”

“Huh?”

“Hraesvelgr has sent a message.”

Theodore's face stiffened at the unexpected name.

“Eventually, Nídhöggur will shoot a death breath. Hraesvelgr will use all his strength to prevent it, but we should prepare for the blow.”

“…Ha, a blow. The words aren’t easy.” Theodore sighed as he realized what the warning meant.

It was only one blow, but it was much more powerful than Theodore could handle. A grand master’s killing technique…

The 9th circle magician’s ultimate magic. It was a blow that would inevitably cause death for any opponent. Nídhöggur’s breath would be able to destroy all creatures in this forest and Elvenheim.

‘…I don’t want to think about it.’

Theodore shook off the terrible scene that he imagined and asked a question, “What is the time limit?”

“The next two hours. There is a little bit less time now.”

“Two hours… We can barely get out of the Great Forest.”

Additionally, it was difficult to abandon the world tree and

Elvenheim. This was the elves' paradise beyond the Red Plateau and beyond the reach of greedy humans. Although Alucard didn't refute Theodore's words, the bitter expression in his eyes was clear to Theodore. Alucard was determined to throw away the world tree.

'Damn, it is hard with just two hours. If the right answer is to evacuate, then we have to move right now...!' Theodore desperately tried to think of measures, but the scale was too big.

The 5th stage Superbia and 6th stage Invidia were no match for this. It was a one-sided fight. In this case, it was closer to a natural disaster than combat. Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, and so on... A mortal couldn't do anything against an uninvited guest from another dimension.

Theodore moved his lethargic brain and continued to think of possible measures. 'First, I can briefly summon Fafnir to counter it.'

If Nídhöggur consumed a lot of power fighting Hraesvelgr, Theodore might be able to intercept it with Fafnir. The destructive power of the 'laser' was superior to any breath, so it could stop the breath of death.

'...Dismissed. Nídhöggur will shoot the breath at the world tree, and if I call Fafnir near there, Elvenheim might be burned with my own power.'

The world tree was so sensitive to fire magic that it burned with just Veronica approaching. It would surely be a catastrophe if two dragons fought against each other in the vicinity of the immature world tree. There was no time to intercept it from a distance, and he didn't have the exact timing either. Thanks to Gluttony's advice, he knew the speed and destructive power of the death breath. However, he had no control over Fafnir.

So, Theodore gave up on his first method.

‘Second, I can use all my achievement points to borrow the power of those in the Hall of Fame.’

Thanks to Jerem, he still had over 100,000 achievement points. It was possible to borrow powerful magic by calling the name of a great magician. However, this was frustrated by Gluttony’s advice.

-Meteor Fall or Grand Cross both have enough power to counter it, but they can’t be used with 100,000 points. You don’t have enough points to call their souls.

‘Ugh, then the third—’

It was amazing that there were spells which could counter the death breath. However, what good were the spells if they couldn’t be used when he needed them? Theodore was about to think about a third plan when Ellenoa raised a hand.

“Ellenoa? What’s going on?”

“Ah, nothing. Just…” Ellenoa was a little hesitant and took a few deep breaths before speaking. “I can still summon Nohengrin. Please tell me anytime if you need my strength.”

“Ah, thank you.”

“It isn’t a situation where you should thank me.”

The two of them smiled brightly as they faced each other. The heavy atmosphere became a bit lighter. Theodore heard Ellenoa’s words and thought about using the power of the elemental ruler. However, he dismissed it. Even if the elemental ruler did their best, it would be difficult to block Nídhöggur’s breath with their power.

Gluttony predicted that it would have the power of a lower or intermediate-level god.

‘Why is this lizard so anxious to eat plants? Reptiles should eat worms instead of going to another world.’

Theodore looked around. The location of their meeting was quite

high up, and he could see the elves being busy at the bottom. There were some he knew, and others he didn't know. They were anxious at the fact that the monster from the Age of Mythology, Nídhöggur, would blow a breath over their heads.

"...Ahh, the parent tree. Please protect us."

An elf rushed toward the world tree with a small swaddling cloth in his arms, a child that was born recently. Theodore had thought that the act of praying was for the religions of the human race, but the act of gathering both hands together and praying could be found in any culture. The elves really prayed for a god to help them. They hoped for their sincerity to touch the sky, and for a righteous deity to draw a sword and defeat the dragon.

'Hmm?' At that moment, Theodore sensed he was missing something and his eyes narrowed.

[Hoing!] Mitra, the brown-skinned girl, popped out of the ground with a bud on her head and somersaulted. It was a feat that could be seen in a circus. Theodore praised her skill before having a thought. This was the age where the gods had disappeared and magic had declined. If they couldn't hope for a god's help, why not ask for the help of a god here?

"Mitra."

[Yes? What?]

Theodore stroked Mitra's wheat colored hair and asked with a heavy expression, "Will you become the god of this forest?"

Chapter 331 - Dmitra (2)

There was less than an hour left before Nídhöggur's attack that Hraesvelgr warned about. Theodore and three high elves were preparing for a clean operation. It was a plan to borrow the power of a god to go against Nídhöggur. From the point of view of the material world, Nídhöggur was an uninvited person. The gods were a part of the material world and a guardian.

The problem was that there was no god to ask for help.

"...I-Is this really okay?" Ellenoa made an embarrassed expression while wearing thin cloth, a dress for ceremonial occasions or special rituals.

Theodore briefly went blank when he saw her. There were laurel leaves in her hair, and the fabric, which had been made with the elven weaving technique, wrapped smoothly around Ellenoa's slim body. Setting aside sexual attraction, it was a beauty that made everyone feel admiration.

"Beautiful."

Ellenoa was surprised by Theodore's words. "Huh...? T-Thank you."

"Ah! N-No, it looks good. Cough."

She had already heard everything. Both of them were aware of the serious situation and avoided each other's eyes for a moment. Then Ellenoa cautiously opened her mouth first. She had heard a few words on the way here, but she couldn't help doubting Theodore's plan. "Theodore, is this really possible? I didn't think that Mitra could return to being a god again."

"Haha, my explanation was a little bit brief," Theodore acknowledged it with a bitter smile.

If Ellenoa was asking this, then the other high elves were likely to be confused about whether this was a good idea.

‘Honestly, I also think it is a bit absurd. I didn’t have time to explain and skipped many things.’

It was a plan to return Mitra’s divinity and prevent Nídhöggur’s attack. Regarding the theories of elementals, the elves’ ideas were more established than those of magicians. If it hadn’t been for Theodore’s accomplishments in the past, they would’ve dismissed his plan as nonsense on the spot.

However, Theodore was confident in his own way.

He had once succeeded it inside his own body and now had a deeper understanding of the concept of gods. It would be possible if he used all the resources of Elvenheim.

“Making gods from zero is impossible even for transcendents. However, filling in incomplete pieces isn’t that difficult. I can just barely try it with my capabilities, but it will be possible with your help.”

There were three elements that established the existence of a god: the trinity of prestige; power; and authority. Those with all three were recognized as a definite god.

Prestige was the symbol of a god, the presence of divinity. Power was the proof of a god, i.e. if people had faith in the god. Authority meant the presence of worship.

In the ancient days, a god was born when the name of an existence became known and worshipped. They sought to love and take care of mortals, filling in the parts that were missing.

‘It isn’t easy when I think about it.’

In an age when all gods had disappeared, where could divinity be obtained? What types of means could be used to collect believers in a world that was not religious, apart from the Lairon church?

In that sense, Theodore was fortunate. The ancient elementals themselves were fragments of the gods and had divinity from the start. Theodore established the temple of four elements in his

body, and for a short time, he brought back Mitra's divinity.

However, the third piece wasn't as easy to fill. They needed followers who truly believed in the god. It used to be that hundreds of humans were sufficient, but not now. Now, at least tens of thousands of believers were needed. Furthermore, Theodore was a magician, not a priest. He might deify Mitra, but it wasn't enough to make her a god. He had forgotten about it until he encountered this situation.

Ellenoa understood what he said and nodded. "Aha, then we are in charge of Mitra's 'authority.' The mother of a great land. We will pray for Dmitra, who is related to the parent tree."

"Ah, but she can't become Mother Earth. The three divinities of the sky, sea, and earth... This isn't an exact calculation, but it would require 'authority' 30 times the size of Elvenheim."

"3-30 times...! It is great, Mitra."

[Hoi?] Mitra made a confused sound as she heard her name. Then she laughed and clung to the wall. Despite her mystical powers, she was just like a mountain girl.

[Yes, Mitra is amazing! Always like this!]

"Yes, now it is time to become more amazing."

[Hoing!]

Theodore opened his arms, and Mitra rushed into them. She was like a cicada clinging to a tree. As he carried Mitra on his back, Theodore and Ellenoa walked side by side. Every time they took a step, the light got closer. This was a spot on the branch of the world tree where the tribes gathered when there were important matters.

Step.

There were three steps left when Ellenoa's pace slowed. She hadn't even been in this forest for 10 years. Theodore wondered if

this was too much of a heavy burden, but Ellenoa was a high elf with a good nobility. Additionally, the power of the elemental rulers was essential to Theodore's plan.

Ellenoa seemed embarrassed about her delay in walking. "Ah…"

Her palm wasn't firm like that of a magician. She placed her hand on top of Theodore's rough palm.

Why…? The trembling of her body suddenly stopped.

"Let's go, Ellenoa," his steady voice calmed her.

"Yes, Theodore."

The two people walked into the blinding white light together.

*

There was a forest. It was easy to mistake it for Elvenheim, but there were a few other species besides the elves. There were the ents that integrated with the forest and protected the ecosystem, as well as the dryads. Additionally, there were the lizardmen from the swamps and the beast clan.

"Everyone, thank you for gathering," Ellenoa's voice didn't tremble at all despite there being thousands of people before her. Her clear voice calmed down the area, and everyone, regardless of species, concentrated on her words. The high elves, dressed in the ceremonial clothing and boasting a mystical atmosphere, were the pride of the forest.

"I think that everyone knows the threat that we and this forest face. The evil dragon from the myths, he looks down from the sky and wants to burn our world tree."

Ellenoa was calm despite her angry words. However, her calm created a bigger ripple. The people listening silently were overwhelmed with enough anger to forget their fear. It was proof they were assimilating Ellenoa's feelings.

"We have tried to guard this forest, but we are helpless."

Before the evil dragon that possessed transcendent power, the only thing the inhabitants of the forest could do was either run, die, or pray. Filled with powerlessness and remorse, Ellenoa continued saying, “We thought we anticipated the future, but we were ignorant.”

The high elves, who could summon the elemental rulers, were arrogant and thought they could defend the forest with their own strength. In the past, they had thought they could defeat all disasters and misfortunes. It was a stupid wisdom. That’s right.

She mourned in front of everyone, “Therefore, I prayed to the parent tree.”

From here on out, it was the pre-written script.

“I didn’t know where to go and how to overcome this difficulty, causing me to pray to the parent tree.” As Ellenoa continued in a sad voice, she called Nohengrin under the ground. She reduced the power and presence of the summoning as much as possible so the others wouldn’t notice.

Once she told him the purpose of this summoning, Nohengrin responded in a pleasant voice, “Then I received the answer!”

It was true that they had gotten permission from the world tree. However, the consciousness of the world tree hadn’t grown yet, so it couldn’t use that power freely. Fortunately, the world tree responded positively to Mitra’s mana, so Theodore’s plan would work.

As those present started to respond to Ellenoa’s speech, Ellenoa and Theodore thought almost simultaneously, ‘Now!’

At the same time, a large stone pillar appeared in the middle of the empty space before Ellenoa.

Kukukukukung…

No, it was an egg, rather than a stone pillar. The pillar in front of Ellenoa had an oval shape. It seemed like it had soared up at her

call. Ellenoa stroked the surface of the smooth stone egg and finished the play.

“The parent tree called a god.”

The crowd stirred at the word ‘god’, while Ellenoa continued to the end without losing her flow.

“After the Age of Mythology, few deities remained in this world. Mother Earth, the beginning of the world tree Yggdrasil and the name of the great goddess!”

The rock egg was split in half.

“Dmitra!” Ellenoa raised her voice as much as possible. Unfortunately for her, the effort had little meaning. She didn’t need to do anything more because the crowd in front of the world tree was already captivated by the girl who emerged from the rock egg.

She had wheat-colored hair that went down to her waist, two eyes that shone with a mysterious light, and ocher skin. Butterflies danced in the air around her, while the gnomes, famous for their invisible appearance, showed up. Just after that, the smiling girl held out her hands to the ground, and branches started to sprout from the world tree.

The dry skin peeled off, and green buds grew. They bloomed all at the same time. It was a spectacular sight that could be called ‘A Hundred Flowers.’ The inhabitants of the forest saw the flowers blooming under their feet and realized this wasn’t a mere gimmick.

“I-It is a real god…!”

Theodore’s partnership with the world tree was only brief, but there was no need to worry anymore. The reaction of people who saw miracles was the same in every age. They would feel honored, fearful, and either reject or challenge it. The inhabitants of the forest worshipped the world tree, so there was only one choice.

“D-Dmitra! The earth goddess!”

“Please save us, Dmitra!”

“We believe in you!”

They kneeled down and lowered their heads. No one forced them to do so, but the beast clan laid down their pride and bowed before the great being. It went without saying for the ents and dryads. They followed Mitra’s orders before she even revealed her identity, and now they were completely submissive.

[Hoong?]

Then something strange happened. Mitra, who was in her early teens, started to grow further. Her slender limbs elongated, and her flat body started to develop curves. Mitra’s innocent eyes filled with mischief, while her wheat-colored hair grew longer.

[Hihihi! A lot bigger?]

Based on the way humans aged, Mitra now seemed to be somewhere between 16 and 18 years old. Having turned bigger in an instant, she laughed while touching her arms.

‘…No, it isn’t just her body. Her divinity also grew,’ Theodore admired inwardly as he watched Mitra.

It was as he said. Her constantly rising power purified the odors and poisons of the undead from the bloody battle a while ago, causing the flowers and grass to raise their heads despite Nídhöggur’s dark sky. This was the power of Dmitra, the goddess of plants.

[Theo!]

Theodore was surprised by the sudden call and answered stupidly, “Y-Yes?”

Mitra giggled and said playfully, [Thanks for raising me!]

“…Are you a cat or a dog?”

[Hihihi! Then can I call you ‘Father’?]

“Eek.”

Theodore paled at the thought of being called ‘Father’ when he wasn’t even married. Meanwhile, Mitra turned her head. [Hung! Theo is a father to Mitra!]

Then she turned toward the surprised Ellenoa. [Theo is Father, then Ellenoa is Mother! How about it?]

“Huh?!”

“What?”

The Theodore and Ellenoa were shocked by Mitra’s words and avoided each other’s eyes. Mitra shook her head with a chuckle at the sight. Her playfulness had increased, and she had the ability to catch them off guard. She looked between Theodore and Ellenoa before clapping. [Ah, both of you are too shy. I need to use a lot of effort to make it progress quickly.]

Then she pointed to the sky with her finger and shouted in the exact direction of Nídhöggur, [So, you! That black thing over there! Get lost!]

A sullen voice was heard from the sky in response, -Cheeky little girl.

There was a white light. Then the ward, that Hraesvelgr had made, cracked repeatedly and soon disappeared without a trace. The shape of a dragon with huge horns protruded from the crack in the blackened sky. It was a transcendent that was the embodiment of fear.

This was the encounter between the evil dragon, Nídhöggu, and Earth Goddess, Dmitra.

Chapter 332 - Dmitra (3)

Theodore's body stiffened as he saw the sky. The presence of the terrifying creature, Nídhöggur, surrounded Theodore on all sides. He was able to protect his body, but the rest of the mortals fell to the ground without daring to look up at the sky.

Nídhöggur was a being they couldn't even face! No, it was good that it was this way. Theodore took short breaths.

'...We would be dead without Mitra.'

This wasn't a joke. As he stared at Mitra, he could see that the power stretching out from her was offsetting the power pressing down from that black sky. It was like a fly falling after being hit by a sudden clap. Just like how people didn't hesitate to trample on ants, Nídhöggur had no need to think about slaughtering mortals.

The malevolence of the 'Sneering Butcher', Nídhöggur, was worse than they had imagined.

-Kuhuhu, you say that you are going to deal with this body? Nídhöggur silenced Elvenheim from the distant sky.

Compared to the dragon that blocked the sun with one command and ripped the sky apart, the girl with the wheat-colored hair looked so small. For a moment, Dmitra, the ancient elemental who had become the incarnation of the world tree, looked like a victim before the evil dragon, rather than a goddess.

However, she was far more prominent than anyone else in this room.

[Yes, you stupid person!] Mitra puffed up her chest and placed her hands on her waist. She countered the evil dragon without taking a step back. [The sky is dark because of you! Too disruptive! Can't you read the mood? You, no friends!]

-What nonsense are you saying?

[If you have one, call them. A person who can't read the atmosphere won't have any friends!]

-This girl! Nídhöggur's raised his voice at the slander. -For a great demon king, other existences are either slaves or enemies to be killed. Therefore, I have no need for friends!

[Yes, yes. I heard your excuse. My score is 0 points!]

-W-What is wrong with you?

While the transcendents who had challenged the realm of the gods were in the double digits, how many of them had dared to mock Nídhöggur from the Age of Mythology? Countering wisdom with humor, he couldn't argue with a childish girl like her.

However, Dmitra didn't stop after raising Nídhöggur's blood pressure.

[People who don't have friends talk like this. You tell me that you don't need friends. Then why did you come to another person's house and cause a disturbance? In fact, you were lonely because you have no friends to play with!]

-……

[Don't you think you are lonely? Do you want to be Mitra's friend? How about it?]

Finally, Nídhöggur had no more patience.

-…It is now.

[Yes?]

-This damn world, I will blow it away with my breath. I will make sure it doesn't come back again!

Subsequently, Nídhöggur opened his mouth, and poison emerged from it. He aimed the poison at Mitra. It was a level of poison where even a god wouldn't be safe. Dmitra bit her lips and gathered her strength to prepare for the incoming wave.

‘It’s coming.’ Theodore, who had been paralyzed by Nídhöggur, sensed something.

This poison was just a prelude to the breath. The real attack would come pouring out next. The breath filled up with Nastrond’s death energy. It was a rotten breath that didn’t distinguish between the body or the soul.

Then just after that…

Kuooooooh!

From the heavily ripped crack in the sky, Nídhöggur’s breath blew forth like a fog over the ground. It didn’t seem to have much destructive power, and its speed wasn’t fast. However, the air became heavier as the energy slowly descended to the ground.

The masters who recognized it were fearful and took action first. The moment the fog covered the forest, everything in Elvenheim would die.

“Damn!”

Flames once again emerged from the transformed Veronica’s mouth, and the guardians unleashed all their strength at once. The storm arrows, thunderstorms, and other chain attacks launched at the fog of death. Did it work…? No, the destructive power of the fog was too high.

“…Dammit, it didn’t work at all!” Veronica paled unconsciously.

Her breath that was comparable to a pureblood red dragon only destroyed a little bit of the poison, while the attacks of the guardians only made it a few meters into the fog. Nídhöggur’s breath was still descending to the surface of the earth without a bit of hesitation.

[Don’t be afraid!] Mitra extended her palms without any fear. [I will stop that stupid dragon’s bad breath!]

The present Dmitra wasn’t like the old Mother Earth. The faith

of Elvenheim was lacking to regain her mighty divinity, so Theodore used the second best thing—the world tree, Yggdrasil. The sacred tree found in the myths was a symbol of the origin of life and wasn't lacking divinity at all.

'In addition to that, I cooperated with Nohengrin…!'

As such, it was possible to control this Great Forest.

While Theodore was thinking this, Dmitra finally moved. She was now the incarnation of the world tree and a goddess of this forest. As Dmitra moved her hands, the earth shook, and something rose from the ground.

Kukukukukung!

Tree roots, rocks, and dirt… The deeply buried roots of the world tree had the length and thickness of large walls, and they rose up like a kraken's legs. In response to Dmitra's call, the tree roots and dirt tangled together to make a pair of huge hands. The old saying about how the sky couldn't be covered with two palms seemed to be a lie.

[Eeit!] Dmitra moved the hands and joined them together as if to seal the hole in the sky.

The story about the giant (Atlas) who held up the sky in the past came to mind. The fog of death was pushed back into the crack by the pressure, and Nídhöggur's presence was blocked, temporarily returning the freedom of the Elvenheim residents. They looked up at the sky supported by two palms. Some sighed with relief while others cheered.

"Ohh…! The evil dragon's appearance is gone!"

"M-My body can move! I'm alive!"

"Hooray, Dmitra! Goddess of the forest!"

"The world tree is looking after us!"

However, it was still too early to cheer. Theodore, Veronica, and

the high elves were watching the sky, and their faces weren't bright. The cheering eventually stopped. If the evil dragon had really disappeared, the sky wouldn't still be black. He might be hidden by the hands, but it was proof that he was still present beyond the sky.

"Mitra, are you okay?" Theodore was behind her and could discover it immediately.

Mitra's neck was soaked with sweat despite having become a god. To think that A spiritual body that didn't have any physiological functions was sweating...? There could only be one reason for it.

[T-Theo...] Dmitra's face was pale. [Ohh, he is getting angry. It is hard.]

"Then why did you make fun of him? How is the situation?"

[I can still hold on. But the condition of the tree is getting worse...]

"Tree? Ah." Theodore realized who she was referring to and looked at the palms holding up the sky. The origin of these palms was the roots of Yggdrasil. It was impossible for the tree to not be affected after directly blocking Nídhöggur's breath.

"This..." Theodore found some signs and sighed. It was because the edges of the palms had become black and rotten.

However, it wasn't just that. It was slow, but both palms were gradually becoming black. Mitra's power was still holding it up. However, if this continued, both palms would collapse, and the breath would fall down again. Theodore prepared his heart and pulled out the dragon heart. "Mitra, draw on my strength."

[B-But...]

"If you are suppressed, then I will die anyway. Didn't you say it is hard?"

[...Theo is a liar!]

“Haha, maybe.” Theodore smiled bitterly as he faced the tears in Dmitra’s eyes. He wasn’t in a position to complain. Theodore Miller would sacrifice his life if they could overcome this crisis. Mitra had been with him for several years and knew it well. She didn’t try to say anything to convince him.

[I will win.] She faced Nídhöggur with a more serious expression. [If I win, Theo will be okay!]

Then the magic power in Theodore’s body started to be sucked out. To be precise, the magic power of the dragon heart flowed into Theodore’s body and then into Dmitra. Thanks to that, his actual magic power consumption wasn’t large. The problem was that Theodore felt burdened from the process of passing an absurd amount of magic power through his body. He was in pain, feeling like a few of his blood vessels were bursting.

‘I can’t stop. I will die if I am weak!’

Fortunately, the effect was immediately apparent. The blackened palms regained their color, and flowers and grass grew from the roots, purifying the poison. This was a phenomenon that was impossible without the power of a true divinity. If this was the case, then Nídhöggur had no way of returning to this world.

Theodore was briefly relieved thinking about the optimistic future when a voice rang out.

-You. You will never live.

Theodore froze at Nídhöggur’s words.

Jjejejeok!

The spread out breath became more concentrated, gathering at one point in order to kill Theodore. Theodore hadn’t expected such an attack. Nídhöggur wanted to kill Theodore and return, rather than destroy the forest or the world tree? In retrospect, that wasn’t weird since all the obstructions had started from Theodore.

-Die.

It was a death sentence.

Kiiiing.

Beyond the sky and the limits of the palm, a purple light fell toward Theodore. He knew the result of the death glare. His body would be shattered by the light, and it would dig all the way into the mantle. This flash of light was ultimate magic that couldn't be defeated. Nídhöggur launched an all-out attack, regardless of the damage to himself. No matter what, the young Theodore Miller couldn't escape the fate of death.

However...

"This is a handshake. Dumb little lizard." Theodore laughed.

Flash!

Simultaneously, a golden light enveloped Theodore's body. It was divine power! The power of a mighty god from the Age of Mythology devoured the ray trying to kill Theodore. It was a force comparable to that of Nídhöggur's breath. This was a god's immortality that couldn't be penetrated.

'Thank you, Balor! I'll keep my promise with you!'

The eternal protection that symbolized the sun god, Balor. It was the best defense from the Age of Mythology that invalidated any attack except from mistletoe! Theodore didn't pay any attention to the scattering of Nídhöggur's breath as he flew off the ground.

In the crack that started to disappear, he could see Nídhöggur's confused face!

"Get lost from this world!" Theodore became temporarily invincible and held the dragon heart in his hand, undaunted by Nídhöggur's murky poison. Theodore drew out mana at such a rapid rate that it felt like he was going to explode. Like setting fire to oil, he used the strongest magic he had available.

Great magic Abraxas (ΑΒΡΑΞΑΣ).

Final Chapter.

Four beads combined to create a sphere containing tremendous power. If the explosive power of the dragon heart was added to it, then he would have the strength to smash the nose of that arrogant lizard! Nídhöggur's face stiffened just before Theodore dealt the stunning blow.

-W-Wait a minute...!

"Elemental Buster!"

The light from Abraxas appeared as the dragon heart cracked.

————————————————————————!

There was a big explosion that shook the boundaries of this dimension.

Chapter 333 - Dmitra (4)

-Kuaaack! Nídhöggur's scream rang out through the sky and the ground. It was difficult for a body with a time limit to cope with the shock of the big explosion.

This was the result of Abraxas being used with magic of the 8th circle and the dragon heart. The explosion, which burst from the repulsion of two forces, caused the dimension to shake. Once the light from the big explosion subsided...

"...Pfft!" Theodore laughed reflexively.

It was because of Nídhöggur's face that was revealed through the rapidly shrinking crack. Due to the powerful shockwave, Nídhöggur's head was bloody. His scales which couldn't be damaged by aura blades were now shattered like glass, and one of his eyes was pushed into its socket. It was like a super huge battle hammer had slammed onto the top of his head.

-Y-You...! Mortal man from this lesser world!

The dragon from the myth was covered with blood. He struggled with the pain and poured out anger toward the one who harmed his body. Although only one of Nídhöggur's red eyes could be seen, Theodore felt the space around him freeze. However, Theodore realized that the pressure was much weaker than earlier, and he nodded casually. "Don't growl in my face. Your pride won't be regained through these actions."

-What nonsense are you saying?

"Think about it. It might be okay if you lost to Hraesvelgr. But being hit by a mortal... Oh, right. I had forgotten," Theodore muttered in a voice loud enough to be heard by Nídhöggur. His mouth formed a sneer like he was mocking Nídhöggur. "You have no friends? This is a good thing."

In the end, the last of Nídhöggur's patience was broken. -

Kuaaaaaah!

Before the fearsome roar, Theodore covered his ears but didn't back away. He didn't look scared or intimidated. It was because the crack in the dimensional world was almost closed. No matter how powerful Nídhöggur was, he was in another dimension and couldn't do anything unless someone summoned him again.

Nídhöggur's eyes were filled with anger, madness, and hate as he stared at Theodore.

-Taunting this body! Someday I will catch you and chew on yo —...!

At this moment, the dimensional crack closed, and Nídhöggur's words were cut off. The evil dragon was sent off in a disgraced manner. However, Theodore kept looking up at the sky.

"Ah...!"

Then he could see it. The darkness covering the sky slowly got a center of light. The sky was blue, and the warm sunlight flooded their eyes like it had been there from the beginning. The elves and members of other species felt strange chills as they looked up at the sky. The darkness that had been covering the sky disappeared, and everything was as it should be.

"O...Over? Can we relax?"

"Alive... We're alive!"

"Ohh, incarnation of the world tree!"

Joy and disbelief mixed together as the crowd became increasingly disorderly. The confusion needed to be calmed down. Theodore delivered instructions to the one whom he thought was the most suitable—the chief contributor to this incident.

[H-Hoing? Me?] Dmitra made a sound, and the people stopped talking and paid attention to her.

She was the incarnation of the world tree who had faced the evil

dragon and protected the forest! Naturally, awe filled the eyes of the people. There were even those who didn't dare look at her and had their eyes lowered to the ground. The area became silent in a flash.

[...Ha, hahaha...] Dmitra seemed embarrassed by their attitudes. She scratched the back of her head before raising her right fist up into the air.

It was difficult for her to speak, but she spoke concisely, [Nídhöggur is gone!]

As soon as she pointed to the sky with her fist, the people raised their fists with her.

[We won for everyone who lives in this forest!]

The large crowd cheered. Waaaaaaaah!

The various species were overflowing with joy. The furry bears carrying dryads on their shoulders swayed, while the rabbits riding on ents were dancing. The elves sighed with relief and relaxed, and the rest of the crowd followed. They had struggled against the undead for a long time, and there had been the advent of the evil dragon, Nídhöggur. This was a memory they would never forget.

'Sigh, it is over.'

This time, it was a really big incident. Theodore stood behind Dmitra and locked eyes with Ellenoa, who was waiting for him with a gentle expression. Then he saw tears fall from her eyes.

"E-Ellenoa?"

"...We did it," Ellenoa spoke in a small voice before taking a few steps and hugging Theodore.

Was it due to the difference in physique between the two people? It was clearly Ellenoa who was hugging him. Ellenoa spoke to the embarrassed Theodore in her arms, "I was worried."

"I-I'm sorry."

“Do you really know? I was worried a lot.”

Theodore smiled wryly as his fists pounded weakly on his chest. “…Yes.”

Finally, more tears fell down her cheek, and Theodore couldn’t help touching them. It was a warm and wet feeling. Theodore wiped away Ellenoa’s tears with his index finger, while her green eyes looked up at him like she was drunk.

“Ah…” He wasn’t dumb and knew the meaning of those eyes. Her face tilted and got closer. However, the moment the eyes of Ellenoa and Theodore got closer…

“Hmm?”

“Ah.”

Both of them felt a blatant gaze and looked in that direction. Simultaneously, Theodore and Ellenoa stiffened.

[Why did you stop? I don’t mind.] Dmitra finished her short words and chuckled, resting her chin on her hands as she gazed at the two people.

She smiled mischievously. The innocent Ellenoa’s intentions were exposed, and she fled with a red face. “P-Please don’t look!”

“Ellenoa!”

Dmitra laughed at the sight. [Hihihi! Indeed, Mother Ellenoa is naive.]

“Mitra, you are a troublemaker…” Theodore stopped speaking when he felt a sense of incongruity. Then he looked Dmitra up and down, and immediately realized why he sensed something was off.

“Mitra, why is your body smaller?”

That’s right. It was because Dmitra’s size had shrunk. Dmitra was surprised when Theodore pointed it out, and her eyes widened. [Hoing! Theo is right. At the most, I am 10 centimeters shorter.]

“Isn’t a decrease of 10 centimeters a big change? Don’t talk about that. Tell me why you are smaller.”

[Understood. Mitra is a good daughter, hihihi.] Dmitra made a small joke before touching a tree trunk that was slightly darkened. [The tree is becoming weaker.]

“What?”

[It used a lot of power to make me into this state and sucked up a lot of poison. It didn’t reach the roots, but a considerable amount of health was consumed.]

As Dmitra touched the world tree with sad eyes, Theodore hastened to make a diagnosis. Despite not being a god, he was connected to Dmitra’s senses and had overflowing knowledge as a magician. Theodore quickly realized the state of the world tree. “Shit, this isn’t good.”

It was a situation he hadn’t expected, but he quickly realized the cause of it. This wouldn’t have happened if the world tree was a fully grown world tree. The problem was that Elvenheim’s world tree was immature, and there was no new Arv to help its growth. In such an environment, there was the summoning of Hraesvelgr, turning Mitra into a god, and blocking Nídhöggur’s attack... It would be strange if there were no problems.

“Your power has already returned to the world tree?”

[Yes.]

“But it is still in this state...”

Dmitra, who had become Mitra again, nodded with a gloomy expression. The fact that there was no difference meant that the world tree had consumed a large amount of power. Theodore’s face stiffened as he saw the leaves of the world tree. The leaves, which had always been green, was now slightly yellow, and the branches, which should be as hard as steel, were now easily broken.

“…It looks like there is one more thing to solve.”

The worst was over. The presence of the world tree was as large as life for the inhabitants of this forest, but this was a minor challenge compared to Nídhöggur. A world tree that had yet to grow up needed to stockpile vitality for its growth. If it failed to compensate for this, it would die in some years, maybe decades. From this point on, it was a matter that needed to be discussed with the real top leaders of the great forest, the high elves.

“Well, it should be okay for a few days.”

Fortunately, this problem wasn’t something that needed to be solved in a day or two. Unlike the evil dragon, Nídhöggur, there were several solutions for this. So, there was no need to pour cold water on those who were tired from the hard fight. Theodore looked up at the clear blue sky. It was a sight that everyone in the forest could see.

“The clear and blue sky is the best.”

Theodore had seen the scenery of Nastrond behind Nídhöggur through the gap in the dimension. When the sky and earth were swallowed up by darkness earlier, the screams of those who suffered forever had seemed to tear at his eardrums. If the evil dragon, Nídhöggur, had swallowed up the world tree, this material world would’ve turned into the same hell as Nastrond.

‘That can’t happen.’

In the childhood he couldn’t remember well, Theodore had dreamt of being a magician who fought against an evil dragon. He had never thought that dream would become a reality.

“Kuk,” Theodore giggled in a somewhat pleasant mood as he stared at the distant sky above the trees.

Chapter 334 - Promised Night (1)

Jerem might've used magic as a last resort, but it ended up being good for the Great Forest.

What would've happened if the 200,000 undead army had survived? What if the leader was lost and the undead ran out of control through the forest?

Putting aside the defeat of Jerem and Nídhöggur, it would make cleaning things up more difficult. This was because the rotten bodies of the undead contained a deadly poison. There was also tainted mana in their blood. This mana contained the power to deny life and would cause damage if it overflowed everywhere.

However, Jerem had destroyed the undead. It had been a decision he made in order for Nídhöggur to last even one minute longer. As it happened, this misjudgment had saved Elvenheim and the Great Forest.

The undead had lost all the mana and poison, and became great fertilizer for the forest. There was no need for an unnecessary struggle, and the residents of the Great Forest could disperse throughout the devastated forest. The southern part of the battlefield was damaged, but the east and west areas received relatively little damage and regained their original appearance.

'It will take more time to be completely restored, but... well, it isn't considered a long time for the elves.'

There was a big difference between the concept of time for humans and elves. Unlike humans who became impatient if they were one day late, the elves could wait weeks for tea leaves. Theodore sighed with relief as he looked around the forest. "I'm glad there isn't any damage that can't be recovered."

Essentially, this situation had been caused by Theodore. During the fight against Invidia, he hadn't thought about the future and

released Jerem. This had developed into a catastrophic threat to the entire forest. Jerem was somehow defeated and the forest was defended, but over 1,000 elves lost their lives in combat. The high elves comforted him, but he couldn't ignore the responsibility.

The restoration of the world tree was the best thing that Theodore could do for this forest.

Step, step.

At that moment, a number of elves entered Theodore's room. No, this sentence was a little bit strange. They were the true keepers of the world tree, those who inherited the Arv's lineage. These were the leaders who represented Elvenheim. Among the high elves, Alucard with the impressive dark skin asked, "Theodore, what is going on?"

It seemed he was worried about why Theodore gathered them in this place when they were busy for a few days. Theodore looked around silently before tapping the table, as if telling them to sit down.

Then he began his story, "First of all, thank you for answering my call. I wanted to talk to you after your work was done, but there is something you have to be prepared for."

The expressions of the high elves changed at his words. Naia still looked sleepy, but her ears flinched, showing she was affected. There was something regarding the Great Forest or Elvenheim which the high elves needed to know...? They couldn't help wondering about it.

As the story flowed from Theodore's mouth, astonishment filled the eyes of the high elves.

"What?" Alisa confirmed the words she just heard in a voice that was a few octaves higher. "The power of the world tree has really weakened?"

"Yes, it is true."

“T-The time remaining? You didn’t tell us as soon as you discovered it. Does this mean the situation isn’t urgent?”

Theodore nodded in response to Alisa’s question. “My calculations is 50 years at the earliest and 70 years at the latest.”

“This is an emergency!”

It was unexpected. Unlike the relaxed Theodore, the high elves were turned upside down. Alisa screamed, and Alucard tightened his grip on the wood. Meanwhile, Lumia covered her mouth with a grim expression, and Ellenoa was similar to her. Titania had no expression, and Theodore couldn’t read Naia’s expression.

Theodore belatedly realized the reason why and sighed. ‘Damn, humans have a different concept of time.’

Human life was really short compared to the high elves who lived for a thousand years. The elves found it difficult to understand the urgency of the human race, but this perception was reversed when it came to decades. 10 years was a long time for humans, but for an elf, it was equivalent to one human year. It wasn’t a long time for them. Therefore, a period of 50–70 years was equivalent to 5–7 years. It was no wonder why they felt the issue was urgent.

“…Are there any measures to be taken?” Naia asked Theodore before anyone else. “You wouldn’t call us if you didn’t have any measures.”

“There are three things.”

“Tell us.”

The two people started the conversation in earnest, while the rest closed their mouth and focused on the conversation. Normally, she would be sleeping, but Naia was famous for her wisdom. In some ways, she was the best candidate to handle this situation. Theodore nodded and opened his mouth, “The first thing is to restore the destroyed forest beyond its original state as soon as possible.”

“Beyond the original state?”

“Yes.”

Naia nodded to show she understood the meaning. “You want to reverse the link of mutual growth. The forest can help the world tree grow.”

“That’s right.”

“But the strength of the forest alone isn’t enough. The second method?”

The conversation between Theodore and Naia continued before the other elves could understand.

“That’s right. Before the undead attack, the vitality of this forest was less than the world tree. If so, it will be lacking even if we raise the vitality.”

“It is impossible with the native life. Are you going to bring an outside source?”

“Yes, look at this.”

Theodore pulled out a fox from inside his robe. It was a sleeping three-tailed fox, Tres.

Yiippp…? The three-tailed fox woke up and buried his head into Theodore when he saw the six high elves looking at him.

“This fox?” Naia asked with a strange expression.

Theodore laughed and revealed Tres’ identity, “It is a spirit.”

“Spi…rit?”

“They existed on the West Continent in ancient times, but now they are only found in the East Continent across the sea. They affect the growth rate of animals and plants, and the world tree is included in that category.”

Of course, the world tree’s power was too great to compare to spirits, and the world tree itself was comparable to a mighty

divinity. The high elves looked convinced while Theodore stroked Tres' tail.

"If you accept this young spirit in the forest, you can circulate a much greater vitality than the old forest."

"Umm... I'm convinced. Then where will we get so many spirits? Ah, don't tell me."

"Yes, I will bring them from the East. As well as..."

Before Naia could speak, Theodore pulled out a pouch. The high elves smelled the fragrance flowing from the pouch and couldn't help groaning. The elves' senses were more sensitive than those of humans, and the mana purity coming from the pouch was strong enough to affect the high elves. It was coming from the seeds and seedlings remaining of the gift that the spirits of the Baekun Mountains had given Theodore.

"It will help if you plant these seeds. Isn't that right, Naia?"

"...It means it will also help you."

"Yes, please don't think of this as owing me."

"You are different from most humans. You should be a bit more greedy."

Theodore shrugged at Naia's compliment that wasn't a compliment while she smiled. However, Naia still hadn't heard the third method. "The last one?"

"The most important role... Ellenoa?"

"Ah, yes?" Ellenoa was surprised by the sudden call.

Then Theodore spoke with a smile, "The power of the world tree was consumed not only because it blocked Nídhöggur's breath but from helping Mitra become a god. We need a mediator to obtain the 'faith' and the strength that was passed onto Dmitra, and give it back to Yggdrasil."

"Mediator?"

“The expression is a little bad. Just as high elves are called the ‘dancers’ of the world tree, the gods have a corresponding role.”

Gods had existed since ancient times and had followers to spread the religion. The name of this special role was similar—Saintess, a link between gods and mortals.

“I think that Ellenoa is best suited for the role of Mitra’s Saintess.”

“That… Why?”

“Ellenoa has contracted with the earth elemental ruler, and Mitra also wants you. The final reason isn’t significant.” Theodore smiled as he walked in front of Ellenoa. “I think the same as Mitra.”

“…”

“If the burden is too much—”

“N-No!” Ellenoa quickly shook her head. “I will do it.”

“But…”

“If Theodore thinks I am the right person then I will do it.”

“Ellenoa…”

Alisa couldn’t tolerate the subtle atmosphere between the two people and interrupted, “Well, isn’t this good? I’ll leave it up to you. I’m already tired from all my other roles."

“I think so as well. The others?”

After Alisa and Lumia’s words, Alucard and the rest of the high elves nodded. The conclusion was decided so quickly that it was embarrassing, but there were no objections. Theodore read the atmosphere and called Mitra.

[Hoing! The great Mitra has appeared!] Mitra sprang up from the ground with a wild tumble.

The high elves couldn’t read Mitra because she had become the

incarnation of the world tree and assimilated with it. She could appear anywhere in the Great Forest that the world tree's roots reached.

[Mother Ellenoa! You are going to be my Saintess? Really? Really?]

"Really. B-But the word 'mother'..." Ellenoa's face turned red and she couldn't finish her words.

Mitra asked her, [Huhihi, it is for a future joy? Well, okay. I will call you my Saintess if you prefer...]

The girl with the wheat-colored hair appeared serious for a moment before she laughed, looking between Theodore and Ellenoa. A wicked expression was on her face. Before Theodore could stop her, Mitra used her power.

"Uh!"

There was a sense of pressure that didn't contain any animosity. Theodore's body tensed, and he couldn't keep his eyes away from the scene before him. Mitra gathered the now limited power of Dmitra in her palm. Pink, blue, red, and orange... The gathered flowers of different colors turned into the shape of a ring. Apart from the divine power coming from it, this was an accessory that looked no different from a well-made floral ring.

[Now!] Then Mitra handed the ring to Theodore.

"Why did you hand me this?"

[Hihihi, Theodore should put it on instead of me.]

"What?!"

[Then this Mitra is leaving!] Mitra sunk into the ground again and didn't respond to Theodore's call. No, in this case, she deliberately didn't respond. So, he couldn't forcibly bring her back.

"Sigh, I guess it can't be helped. Mitra is too playful..."

Ellenoa's face was pink as she held her fingers forward. It was her left hand. Theodore didn't know if Ellenoa knew the customs of humans or not, but the situation ended up like this.

"…Thank you, Ellenoa."

In the end, Theodore placed the flower ring on Ellenoa's finger. Simultaneously, another direction opened in the connection between Theodore and Mitra. Due to the contractual relationship, he could feel Ellenoa's presence in the role of a 'Saintess.' Ellenoa looked down at the ring on her finger with a bemused expression.

Clap, clap, clap! At that moment, Alucard cleaned up the situation by clapping. "I don't understand everything yet, but this seems to be settled. Theodore, is it okay to keep the rest of the story for after tonight?"

"Is something happening tonight?"

"A festival."

Theodore's eyes widened, and Alucard smiled bitterly.

"Even if we won, many colleagues were lost. Tonight's festival is a chance to comfort the souls of the dead and to encourage the living. As our savior and friend, we hope you will also participate."

"…Okay, I will do so."

"Thank you. The others will be delighted."

Perhaps this festival would be Theodore's farewell ceremony. Thus, he nodded readily, and Alucard left the room with a happy expression. Meanwhile, Lumia and Alisa enjoyed the long-awaited break, Titania was bored and looked for something to do, and Naia placed her face against the table and slept.

Ellenoa was still looking at her finger.

"…Tonight."

She touched the flower ring and seemed to be smelling it. Ellenoa gained strength from the ring on her left hand.

“Tonight,” she murmured in an unusually determined voice.

Chapter 335 - Promised Night (2)

The sun set as always. However, the forest was more turbulent than usual.

It was because the news of the ‘festival’ had spread throughout the forest as Elvenheim invited each species. Although it might seem strange to hold a festival a few days after a big battle, that was only from the viewpoint of a human. The residents of the Great Forest were accustomed to the food chain and accepted the invitation with pleasure.

The ents moved in a rare manner, while the dryads sang happily. Joyful songs, musical instruments, and cheerful voices rang out through the forest.

In particular, the square of the world tree, where the main guests were gathered, was very lively.

“Now! Let’s have a toast for our friend, Theodore Miller, who has come from a faraway place!” Alucard raised a wooden cup and shouted in a loud voice. “Cheers!”

Theodore smiled as he raised his cup in accordance with everyone else. In fact, the act of toasting wasn’t part of the elves’ customs. However, they followed along after seeing him and Veronica bump cups a few times. That’s why the people sitting here were becoming drunk much faster than usual. It was natural that they would lose their pace when drinking alcohol according to the pace of others.

The sudden development of bad habits caused Theodore to feel awkward.

“Hiccup.”

The worst victim was sitting on his left.

“Ellenoa, aren’t you drinking too much?”

“Ah… Not yet, still okay. Hiccup.”

“You don’t look okay…”

Her skin was red, and her tongue was twisted. However, she looked at Theodore with a clear focus. He didn’t know if she was completely drunk, but it should be fine if she said so. Additionally, his drinking partner wasn’t just Ellenoa.

“Hey, there are still more bottles, gorgeous young man!”

“Alisa, why are you calling me that? You look much younger than me.”

High elf Alisa looked like a human in her late teens, and she chuckled at the words. Every woman, no matter the species, liked being told they looked young. However, high elves lived for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years. Alisa held a bottle to her lips and said, “What? Are you not accepting my cup?”

“No.” Theodore lost his escape route and drank another cup of alcohol.

Then Lumia appeared next to him with another bottle. This was called facing a mountain after another mountain. Theodore had initially thought Lumia had a mature and reliable style, so he couldn’t help feeling betrayed.

Lumia looked a little apologetic but still offered him the bottle sweetly. “Please share a cup with me for your troubles.”

“…I understand.” Theodore drank more than the average person at this party and felt his face burn up. It was because the alcohol from the elves was much stronger than he had thought. By now, he had already drunk a few bottles worth of alcohol. He tried to refuse, but six individuals kept trying to share a cup with him. Of course, the effect of the drinks quickly faded. However, Veronica was a little different.

“Come on, look inside.” She sat on Theodore’s right and lifted the bottle with a frown after discovering that inside was empty.

Fortunately, she didn't seem to be angry.

"This one still has a bit left."

"Ah, thank you."

High elf Titania sat next to Veronica and filled up the cup in front of her. Despite having met for the first time a short while ago, they liked each other after trusting each other with their backs during the fight. The two women drank in a relaxed atmosphere.

The sound of singing and musical instruments stimulated their ears, and the atmosphere was good. A few hours flowed by.

"Ah." Ellenoa's cup fell over. It was proof that her vision was blurry.

Theodore realized it was time to stop her and opened his mouth, "You have drunk enough. Stop now."

Ellenoa looked up at him with a funny expression and asked with an excited voice, "Are you worried?"

Theodore nodded, ignoring his pounding heart. "Yes, I am worried."

"Then do you want to get some fresh air? Just like last time."

"That..." Theodore hesitated after being invited by Ellenoa.

Veronica laughed, pushing at his shoulder. She made a knowing smile, causing Ellenoa to blush.

"Go. It isn't too late in the night," Veronica told them.

"...Sigh, then let's go."

"Ah, yes."

Theodore held out his hand to Ellenoa, who rose from her seat and left the area with him. The high elves were either too drunk to know they had gone or left them alone. Veronica hummed as she looked at their backs before picking up a fruit. "Bah."

Only Titania was sober enough to read the mood and asked

Veronica a question without hesitation, “Veronica.”

“Huh?”

“I don't know much about the relationship between men and women, but… are you really okay with not following them?”

“Ah, really! You should pretend not to know!” Veronica suddenly yelled, causing the other high elves to look at her with surprise.

Veronica coughed a few times before closing her eyes for a moment. She seemed to be suppressing the feelings that were caused by Titania’s words. Titania waited with an expressionless face. Then Veronica opened her eyes. “Well, didn’t she seriously like the kid first?”

“Hrmm.”

“She can only stay with Theodore for a night, while I will be with him for the rest of my life.”

Veronica placed the fruit in her mouth. Then she chewed on it before spitting it out.

Spit! “What is this charcoal-like taste?”

The fruit that she had placed in her mouth tasted like fish that had been grilled over a campfire. Titania, who had been watching the entire process, tilted her body and filled Veronica’s empty glass.

“Humans should know that we elves hate liars.”

“Huh? Then?”

“Your lie just now… Yes, it is cute.”

“W-What are you saying?!”

Titania giggled at Veronica’s confused reaction and raised her cup.

The joyous night of celebration passed by.

*

On the other hand, Theodore walked behind Ellenoa. He got to know Elvenheim's geography while preparing for this battle, but he had no knowledge of where the high elves were staying. Therefore, Ellenoa led the way, and he had to follow. However, Theodore soon had to grab onto Ellenoa.

"Ah."

"Ellenoa!"

Her body had stumbled over stones. Fortunately, his hands were faster. Ellenoa's hot body temperature and smell were conveyed to Theodore as he held her. Ellenoa leaned on Theodore and whispered into his ears, "I can't walk anymore... Theodore, I'm sorry, but can you please take me to my room?"

It was a lethal temptation, whether she intended it or not.

"Of course."

"Huhu, please." Her smile was seductive despite her drunkenness.

Theodore shook off his thoughts and started moving. He was nervous about Ellenoa's breathing on his back and her skin sticking to his, but he somehow endured it. Theodore walked for a few more minutes in the direction she pointed and saw a wooden knot covered with an illusion.

'Is this really Ellenoa's bedroom?' Theodore stopped at the sudden thought.

Then Ellenoa whispered to him, "What's wrong?"

"Oh, nothing."

As he stepped into it, the bleak knot changed to another space. Theodore had experienced a tree knot used as a space door several times. It was something that even White Tower Master Orta had failed to reproduce.

"Is this Ellenoa's bedroom?"

“Today…”

“Huh?”

Ellenoa fell to the ground without responding to Theodore’s question. Theodore turned to her and froze like a stone statue. His reaction was natural.

“Theodore.” She gazed at Theodore with clear eyes, with no signs of drunkenness at all. “Do you remember the promise that night?”

She didn’t need to explain what was promised.

“Yes.”

“Then can I think of this ring as the answer?”

Ellenoa held up the finger with the flower ring. Unlike the elves who were born in the Great Forest and never left, she had once lived among in the human world. She had pored over the books about civilizations that humans had written, so it wouldn’t be strange if she remembered some customs. A ring on the left hand was a symbol of marriage.

“…Ellenoa.”

This couldn’t be avoided anymore. He shouldn’t avoid it. Turning his back on her courage and determination would be the worst betrayal. Theodore calmed his heart and spoke the words he hadn’t been able to say previously.

“I like you.” He wouldn’t hesitate if that was all. “However, I don’t think I am suitable to be your mate.”

He couldn’t make a high elf, who lived for thousands of years, happy. The present Theodore was too lacking. No, it wasn’t merely a matter of time. For Theodore who always experienced all types of situations, being involved with humans or elves was a bad choice. He couldn’t come up with an answer despite many years of suffering. Theodore scolded himself for being indecisive and making her wait.

“Me too.” However, her voice was filled with warmth as she held his hands. “I am the same, Theodore.”

Ellenoa opened her eyes, revealing the slight glittering of tears.

She grabbed Theodore’s hands and confessed her feelings in an affectionate voice, “It might be because I am Mitra’s Saintess or maybe it’s because of the power of a high elf, but I can see it. Theodore is going to do great things in the future. I can’t hold onto you greedily.”

“Ellenoa…”

“I know that, but we have this place. Do you know? This alcohol is unusually strong. I’ve never once drunk it. I showed weakness in order to take advantage of your kindness and have tonight.”

Did she seem ugly? Theodore shook his head. No, ‘ugly’ would be applied to people who betrayed their friends for riches or power. A pretty girl using cute tricks to gain someone’s affection wasn’t ugly. Ellenoa laughed despite shedding tears.

“Theodore, if so…” Her slender fingers moved to the edge of the veil on her shoulders as she spoke in a voice that made him melt. “Let me have tonight.”

Her clothing fell to the ground. Then Theodore couldn’t think anymore. No, he didn’t want to think. From here on out, his brilliant mind wasn’t a problem.

Theodore stepped forward and touched Ellenoa’s shoulder. The cold breeze touched her skin along with his warm touch. The shadows of the two people overlapped on the bed as the long night began.

It was the end of the festival.

Chapter 336 - Five Years Later (1)

"...Umm." A man opened his eyes in an antique bed.

This man, who had black hair and blue eyes, slowly raised his impressive body and laughed when he didn't see anyone beside him. Had it already been a few years since that dream occurred? It was a memory he didn't want to forget even after a hundred years, but he felt ashamed when thinking of the dream.

"I'm not a teenager still going through puberty."

Theodore arranged the messy and crumpled bed sheet, and then unlocked the window.

Kkiiik. A blinding light filled the dark room without any delay.

The only device that used magic in his bedroom was the shade to block out light. As the sun rose halfway on the eastern horizon, the outline of Mana-vil filled Theodore's view.

The buildings were much taller than they had been a few years ago, and the magic lights that had yet to be turned off lingered on the streets. The red magic lamp which reported emergencies in Meltor was turned off today, and the day started as always.

'I will be able to have a peaceful day today.'

After the great battle at Elvenheim, the struggles centering on Theodore subsided for a while.

The civil uprising in Andras and the chaos in the central part of the continent after Lairon disappeared had bothered him for a while, but it wasn't a big deal. In comparison to the 9th circle warlock who had tried to put the world tree in Nídhöggur's hands, the disputes between nations seemed cute.

Theodore thought about the past for a while before turning around. "Goetia."

[Yes, Master,] the ring on his right hand, Ars Goetia, responded

to the call in a gentle voice.

“Can you tell me the schedule for today?”

[At 8 a.m., there is a meeting in the main conference room of the royal palace. Robert Alpenheimer will visit the military academy for the purpose of establishing a strategy class at 2 p.m., and at 7 p.m. you have a dinner booked with Veronica.]

“I didn’t think the meeting was so soon. I have to hurry.”

After listening to Goetia who acted as his assistant, Theodore looked at the clock on the wall and started moving.

This was the time when the sun started to rise, but a magician couldn’t waste even one minute. It was quite common for a person with this sort of schedule to become a night owl. However, a person with physical strength like Theodore would have their drowsiness flee with the dawn.

He opened the closest that was several times larger than before. It contained different clothing depending on the purpose. There were a range of clothes for a national meeting, a public ceremony, and a conquest.

‘…They wouldn’t say much even if I dressed as I pleased.’

That’s what Blundell had said. There was no one who could stop or control the actions of an 8th circle magician. Just look at Veronica, rules were clearly unnecessary for her. She used to wear party dresses for meetings in the royal palace. However, Theodore was worried about the blood pressure of those present and pulled out the appropriate clothing. The clothing might not be made by a magician, but the fit was better than he thought.

‘Veronica doesn’t like wearing it, but I think the design is okay.’

It was black fabric with gold decorations, making it obvious to anyone that he was a person with a high status. Theodore groomed the rumpled robe with magic and greeted someone out of habit, “Sir Spencer, are you there?” There was silence for a few seconds

before an answer came from his right arm, [...I'm not gone yet. This old man is lasting longer than I thought.]

"Haha, please don't think like that. You have great strength."

[Eh, this old man is useless now.]

Theodore grinned at the grumbles of the legendary hero, Reynolds Spencer. After eating Soul Calibre, the hero's soul had stayed in Theodore's right arm and given away all his strength over five years. As such, Theodore confirmed his presence every morning because Spencer could disappear tomorrow or in a few months.

Reynolds said this wasn't necessary.

[I have no regrets because I have found a reliable successor. Don't grieve or mourn for me. There is no need to say goodbye to a soul who died a long time ago.]

"Then is it okay to say thank you?"

[Hmm, you are also very stubborn.]

He could tell that Reynolds was smiling wryly. Theodore smiled and released the security magic. The security magic had no meaning for him since he woke up whenever anything approached, but it was a formal security device that he turned on habitually. Then his senses caught a servant outside the door who politely bowed to him and greeted, "I beg your pardon, Chief Tower Master."

Theodore nodded at the title that he still wasn't accustomed to.

Meanwhile, the servant spoke cautiously, "His Majesty has invited Chief Tower Master to have breakfast with him. If you want, I will guide you to the dining room."

"Please do so."

"Yes! Thank you very much."

The servant turned with stiff motions, and Theodore followed

with a bitter smile. When Theodore was a child, he had wanted wealth and honor. Now all of that seemed in vain. He had magic that could break down mountains and change the climate. Why should he cling to money and status?

Theodore Miller, the peak of the tower masters, moved with troubles that no one could understand.

*

The Chief Tower Master was the peak of all the magic towers. It was the first time in Meltor's history that the title was used, and Theodore only took the role relatively recently.

Two years ago, the position of head of the central tower became unclear when Benedict retired after the war with Andras. He was an outsider, a free magician who didn't belong to any of the other magic towers. Thanks to this, Benedict had been able to coordinate the balance between towers from an objective standpoint and assume the role of chairman of the Magic Society.

The problem was that after he retired, there was no one left to fill the vacancy. The elder magicians who had participated in past wars were developing their own magic research and experienced intense fatigue. Nobody wanted to bother them. Above all, the qualification to become a tower master was that they had to be a magician of the 7th circle or higher. With the death of Blue Tower Master Blundell, there was only one person who could become master of the central tower.

'It is me.' Theodore sighed as he thought back on the situation. 'Hah, Benedict would've worried a bit more about retiring if I wasn't here.'

Theodore Miller, the youngest magician to reach the 8th circle, was a heroic person who didn't lack any requirements to be the master of a magic tower. Additionally, Red Tower Master Veronica was still alive. So, there was no fear that the red tower would collapse if Theodore was absent. Only a few people knew it, but

Veronica was in a subordinate position to him.

From the beginning to the end, it was a position for Theodore.

In any case, the process of his appointment was quick. Veronica naturally agreed and didn't hesitate to vote for him along with the white tower master and yellow tower master. The blue tower master seat was absent and the vote was treated as an abstention, but the majority was still established.

This was the first appearance of the Chief Tower Master position. It was proof that Theodore was the greatest magician of this time. However, his workload had increased. He looked down at the raucous meeting hall and sighed.

"So! We need to do an armed protest in Austen! They don't remember the grace we gave them and are trying to double the price of special products!"

Despite being five years older now, Roberts was still fired up as he criticized Austen's policy.

After the drought that had been caused by Desertio disappeared, the small desert kingdom gradually began to develop. It was due to Theodore's previous favor, but the momentum of a country where religion and power were united was surprising.

Now that they were no longer beggars, they acted in a shameless manner.

"No, an armed protest is too much! Won't it feel like we are taking on the brutal policies of the empire? No matter how shameless Austen is acting, it isn't right to pull out our weapons!"

They yelled at each other in every meeting. Today was no different as Robert's eyes widened with Jerome's words.

"Then what? If you say to soothe them gently again, I will snap!"

"Uhuh! The point of this meeting is to find a way!"

Both of them made sense. Meltor had won the war in the north

and acquired many territories and a lot of resources. As such, they had now developed far beyond what they had been five years ago. However, resources hadn't been all they lost in the war. Meltor's population and troops were currently spread out all over the expanded kingdom for relief work, and the atmosphere of the kingdom had barely stabilized. Going to war or an armed protest could disturb it.

At that moment, a magician in a blue robe raised their hand. "I will speak."

"Umm."

"Hrmm."

Simultaneously, both Jerome and Robert stopped speaking. It was because the status of the blue-robed magician was much higher than theirs. King Kurt's gaze shifted. The host of the meeting, Kurt III, opened his mouth and said, "Speak, Blue Tower Master."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

That's right. The woman had changed greatly over the past five years and was now recognized as a tower master. Her silver hair was like overflowing moonlight, and she had blue eyes which were like a calm lake. A beautiful woman with wisdom and strength rose from her seat, holding the staff that represented the previous tower master.

"…Sylvia."

It was her, Sylvia Adruncus. After Blundell's death, she had devoted herself to magic for three years without taking care of her body.

Theodore had visited her many times, but all he had been able to do was serve tea. Her eyes had been too intense for him to persuade her otherwise. Veronica said they could talk once Sylvia reached her limit.

However, Sylvia was a genius among geniuses. A few years of training passed, and she reached her limit. Then she broke through the wall with her talent and effort. No one could dismiss Sylvia, who reached the 7th circle at a similar age to Theodore and who held the staff that was the remnant of Blundell Adruncus.

Some saw this as a sign of Meltor's unending glory, while others were captivated by her beauty.

'A new... era.'

The vacancies of those who left were filled, and the wheels of history turned. Theodore's gaze deepened for a moment before returning to its original state.

Sylvia wasn't the only one who faced a wall. A tall wall, the 9th circle, blocked Theodore.

Chapter 337 - Five Years Later (2)

A few months ago, Theodore realized that he had learned all sorts of magic from the Hall of Fame and the Zero Library, like Abe no Seimei's Art of Onmyōdō and Aleister Crowley's Kabbalah.

Additionally, many great men taught him according to the achievement points spent, and Theodore was able to accept the overwhelming knowledge. The achievement points Theodore gained thanks to Jerem and his own learning ability showed great synergy.

'I didn't expect to reach saturation in five years.'

The five years had passed like flowing water, and Theodore realized he had reached the limits of a mortal.

The amount of magic that could be used at one time and the magic power flowing in his body was different from what they had been in the past. Soul Calibre was now perfect without the help of Sir Spencer. Theodore was a strong magician who wasn't lacking compared to the other tower masters. He had perfectly acquired elemental magic, as well as some special magic.

Now, Theodore could defeat the incomplete Jerem. He had stepped outside the boundaries of the 8th circle and was half a step to the 9th circle. This was Theodore's current status that was diagnosed by Gluttony.

He might take a few steps and become a transcendent, or he might miss the opportunity and fall back down to a mortal. It was unknown territory even for a grimoire that had lived for thousands of years. The wall that existed between circles was defined as the limits of a person. It wasn't something that could be done with outside help.

Gluttony, one of the Seven Sins grimoire, gave him this advice, - You can jump this stage with a little enlightenment in one night,

or you might not be able to escape it for 10,000 years. A gateway with the correct answer doesn't exist.

Would he have his heart destroyed or live for hundreds of years? It didn't matter either way. Some put down all their possessions and overcame them, while others went beyond everything. Theodore would find his own answer. If there were 10,000 magicians, then there would be a million ways to achieve it. In some ways, it was like Sorcery.

Even if they trained in the same environment, all humans were different. It was impossible for Gluttony to calculate his natural abilities, talents, personality, and all other elements.

"...It makes sense, but after thinking about it again, it just means that Gluttony doesn't know either," Theodore complained quietly and watched the meeting.

The disputes between the two factions subsided with Sylvia's compromise. Ultimately, it was decided to reduce the number of artifact exports to the Austen Kingdom and pressure them using the surrounding kingdoms. It was a decent solution. Theodore nodded silently.

The reason he didn't say anything was because his status was too high. Theodore's voice was so strong that everyone would try to follow his opinion. The nobles jockeying for power were also annoying. He sighed every time they came forward.

'I know they are trying to attract me to fight against the king... But do they really think I am crazy enough to side with them?'

The king wasn't corrupt, and there was no reason to stir mischief in a kingdom that was running well. Theodore quietly favored the solution to the issue they were discussing, and the meeting naturally ended in the direction Sylvia wanted.

Kurt III announced the closing of the meeting, "Then I will finish today's meeting here. Go back to your respective departments with

this conclusion and make sure that the actions against Austen are carried out carefully and urgently. Understood?”

“Yes, Your Majesty!”

“Chief Tower Master, please give me a minute. I have something to say to you. But if you have urgent business…”

Fortunately, the magic lights to announce an emergency were still off. Theodore accepted the invitation of the king, “It is okay. I will follow the will of Your Majesty.”

Finally, the people gathered in the meeting hall started to leave one by one. It was a habit for the officials on the outside to open the door, while those sitting closest to Kurt III were the last to leave. Of course, the representative of the blue tower, Blue Tower Master Sylvia, was at the very end.

“Sylvia.”

Sylvia had just risen from her seat when her name was called. With calm eyes, she turned to Theodore who then asked, “Are you doing well?”

“What?”

It was a dumb question. Although it was useless to say anything at this point, he couldn’t help being concerned about Sylvia after she reached the 7th circle. Theodore was the only person she called a friend, and Blundell had sacrificed himself for Theodore. However, Sylvia just smiled at him.

“Yes, I’m a little busy, but I’m fine. I heard you are getting along well with Veronica these days? Congratulations.”

“Ah, thank you.”

“His Majesty is waiting for you, so let’s talk later. Is that okay?”

“…Yes.”

Sylvia was now more talented than she used to be, but her attitude had become more standoffish. If the previous situation

had broken Sylvia's bond with him, then it couldn't be helped. Theodore watched Sylvia's retreating figure and walked over to Kurt, who was still sitting at the table.

Wanting to know why he was called, Theodore asked, "Did you call, Your Majesty?"

"Yes, Chief Tower Master. I borrowed your time rather than discussing in a place where all of them would argue. I'm sorry."

"No. Please don't hesitate to speak."

Then Kurt III opened his mouth with a gentle expression, "It is about the 'Southern Exploration' that you planned and talked to me about a week ago."

The southern part of the continent was a land of infamous swamps, as well as an area that civilized society hadn't stepped into. The loose boundaries of this physical world were scattered everywhere. It was a fairly common story for a half-hearted adventurer to walk through the southern part of the continent and disappear along the way.

However, Theodore planned for an exploration of the Southern Continent. It would make a loud noise if he went alone.

"I am aware that Chief Tower Master's abilities have improved a great deal. The majority of changes that have occurred in Meltor over the years have been due to your skills," Kurt praised Theodore's achievements before getting to the point. "However, the dangers of the Southern Continent are greater than them. The resources in the southern swamps are valuable, but there isn't a proper country in the Southern Continent. The Southern Continent has swallowed up dozens of expeditions over the years."

"I also know that, Your Majesty."

"I can't give permission for you to leave alone. If you really want to leave, I can't stop you. But know that I am firmly against it."

Until now, the relationship between the royal family and the

magic towers had always been good because they didn't interfere with each other's identity. The magic towers didn't intervene deeply with the kingdom, while the kingdom didn't interfere with the magic towers' research. It was strictly taboo to interfere with a magician's quest. This was how the magic kingdom had lasted up to this day.

So, in a sense, Kurt III was committing a taboo.

'Hut.' Theodore laughed.

If Kurt III had blocked him for a political reason, one of Meltor's pillars might've disappeared as Theodore turned away. However, the emotion in Kurt's eyes was only pure concern.

"Of course, Your Majesty. I also don't intend to go alone."

"Hrmm? The plan…"

"I'm not taking someone from the magic tower. The blue tower master, the red tower master, and the white tower master all have things to do. I can't borrow their hands for a personal exploration."

Therefore, he picked someone from outside the magic tower.

"The swamp is still part of nature, and there is one person who has no work to do."

"Don't tell me, it's them…"

"Yes, Your Majesty has guessed correctly."

After the war was over, the sword master, Randolph, became a noble of this kingdom and could only help nurture aura users. The mercenaries under his command also converted to knights and lived good lives. Between them, the bandits and criminals in the kingdom had dried up.

As soon as Theodore's suggestion was made, Randolph had accepted it. [Go! Go! When do I need to be ready? Now is fine!]

The face of a hungry predator was still unforgettable. Randolph

was easier to recruit than Theodore had thought he would be.

Additionally, the high elf, who was contracted with an ancient elemental and had a magician for a teacher, was committed to the exploration of the southern continent. She would be the main character of this exploration because she was carrying out Myrdal's words to 'put the south's distress to rest.'

Titania was his second companion to the southern continent.

*

"Hrmm, is that so?" Veronica cut the steak on the plate into two pieces and made an ambiguous expression. It wasn't hard for Theodore to guess the reason for that. Clearly, it was an unspoken protest about why he had to go to the Southern Continent. Veronica's eyes were cute, but she was someone with the nickname of destruction.

Theodore stretched out his hand and grabbed Veronica's hand softly. "Becky, I believe in your skills. I don't want to take you to the dirty marsh."

"Titania and Randolph are going with you?"

"Titania has a job to do, and Randolph is a mercenary who has always been on the battlefield."

Veronica pouted. She had been on battlefields, so there was no need to separate her from the swamps. "Do you think I am the lady of a prestigious family? I'm not a princess who has to be protected."

"But you are more to me than that."

"Eh..." Had a man ever treated her like this? She would've been angry if it was anyone other than Theodore. Now, Veronica's face couldn't help turning red. She shyly held his hand and whispered, "I will wait for you."

Veronica needed to stay in Meltor to handle matters there. Her

fire could also be bad with all the poisonous gas in the swamps. However, it was more effective to appeal to her emotional side. Moreover, he also meant it in his own way. Fighting with someone he wanted to protect was a great strength, as well as a terrible thing.

He still remembered his panic back when Veronica's heart stopped. Her eyes, which were always filled with power and passion, had dimmed, and her voice had faded. It had been a nightmare. So, Theodore's heart felt a desire to keep her away from danger.

Thinking of this, Theodore inadvertently put strength into his hands. Veronica responded with a sigh. "...Hah, I understand. I will remain in Meltor."

"Becky."

"It is your decision, and there will be a good reason for it. When are you leaving? And what is the date of return?"

"It will take a fortnight to finish the preparations. The deadline... Well, it won't take more than a month?"

"Hrm." Veronica made the strange expression again. She didn't like being separated from Theodore for a month, so she couldn't help feeling bitter.

However, unlike her thoughts, Veronica suggested a deal. "Theo, are you doing anything after dinner?"

"Huh? No, today's schedule is finished."

At that moment, Theodore felt his hand being stroked. White slender fingers were rubbing circles on his skin. He looked at Veronica, who didn't hide her intentions at all. Her red hair blended with the gentle lights, and her golden eyes filled with an obvious desire. A chill ran down Theodore's spine in a way that was different from fear.

"A fortnight and one month..." Veronica's lips curved, and her

eyes were captivating. Her tongue moved over her red and beautiful lips.

Theodore gulped like he was thirsty, and Veronica smiled at the reaction.

“Will you give me enough so that I don’t become lonely?” She said, getting up from her seat and hugging him. Then she whispered in Theodore’s ears, “Huhu, shall we go to your room? Or do you want to come to my room?”

Veronica’s hot body filled his arms as Theodore realized that Gluttony’s advice was right. The questions of the world had many answers.

Chapter 338 - Five Years Later (3)

It was a long and hot night. Veronica had been born with a strong body and a lust to match the red dragons. Shortly after returning from Elvenheim a few years ago, the two people got together actively. Perhaps it was due to the emergence of a rival called Ellenoa.

“Ah, umm, haaaah…”

Was Veronica afraid of Theodore being stolen if she acted late?

In the past, it had only occurred in his mental world. The emotions of the man and woman easily resonated due to their souls’ connection. Theodore always had Veronica in his mind, and they soon crossed the line. Theodore was a young man in his 20s, and he accepted Veronica’s passionate touch.

The first attempt was a little difficult, but the second was easy. The third was even easier. The relationship between the two magicians was known throughout the magic towers and soon spread throughout Meltor. The only two 8th circle magicians on the entire continent were together! The nobles who had prepared their relatives to seduce Theodore were forced to stop.

“T-Theo, uh, Theoo…” It was a thin voice that didn’t sound like Veronica.

The bed was magically enhanced and didn’t even creak despite the heavy movements of the two people. The red hair above Theodore’s body danced like a wave, and the waves that swung several times with an unknown rhythm came to an end with Veronica’s jerk of delight.

“-Hahhhh!” For a moment, her golden eyes lost focus as her body sank forward.

Veronica buried her face in the pillow and hugged Theodore. The heat had yet to scatter, and it circulated in the room. Their rough

breathing quickly subsided. However, the two people didn't move as they stared into each other's eyes. They were sticky with sweat and body fluids, but the two of them kissed without caring.

"So good. I really can't live without Theo," Veronica whispered sweetly against his lips while Theodore stroked her messy hair.

"Is this enough to make my Becky satisfied for a month?"

"Let's see?" Veronica's bewitching expression stirred him up again.

Theodore had been with her since the early evening, and the sun was now rising. Yet Veronica still didn't feel tired. If Theodore didn't have a well-trained body, he would've collapsed earlier. Although Theodore wanted to respond to her temptation, he just smiled and kissed Veronica's fair forehead. It was an expression of affection between the two as well as a mild refusal.

"I'm sorry."

"Tch, I thought so. Chief Tower Master's work is more important than me?"

"Becky..."

"Ahaha, it was a joke. Go safely." Veronica kissed him lightly and lay down.

Their time together was over.

"I'm going, Becky." Theodore washed his body with a simple spell and put on his scattered clothes. In the meantime, Veronica's breaths became smaller, and she was asleep by the time he finished dressing. He covered Veronica with a blanket and left with a smile.

Step, step. Theodore could use space movement, but after a night with her, he felt like walking. He descended a few floors from the top floor, and the noise gradually increased. In general, the higher the rank, the higher the floor. There was little sign of life until the fifth floor where the elders stayed.

It wasn’t until he descended several floors lower that somebody recognized him. “C-Chief Tower Master!”

Although the call wasn’t that loud, the entire floor became quiet.

‘Tsk, it is rare for me to come down this time.’

Theodore was late today. He normally got up when the sun rose, but it was now 9 a.m. However, Theodore didn’t need to explain why. The bewildered magicians all bowed and greeted the Chief Tower Master.

“There is a lot of work in the morning. Please take care,” Theodore responded.

“Huh? Ah, yes! Thank you, Chief Tower Master!”

“There is no need to thank me.”

As soon as he moved, the magicians split into two directions like the tide. Treated with respect and awe, Theodore wasn’t exaggerating when he said that he was the greatest magician of the magic tower and the world at the moment. The magicians couldn’t help shaking as they faced this living legend.

‘…Well, there will be people who will notice soon.’

Why had he come down from the red tower in the morning? As long as the relationship between him and Veronica was clear, it wasn’t difficult to guess the reason behind Theodore’s actions. However, no one said it because they were embarrassed.

As soon as Theodore left the red tower, a magician blocked his way.

“Chief Tower Master.”

With gold hair flowing over her glossy brown skin, she was a beauty who could melt the hearts of men. However, Theodore wasn’t affected by that as he asked her, “What's going on, Para?”

“There are a few things I have to report.” It was the avatar of Paragranum, who was both the Yellow Tower master and a

grimoire. Her glassy eyes without any emotions were proof of her inhumanness. She wouldn't come to see him for trivial matters.

"Let's move the location," Theodore said.

Paragranum nodded and followed Theodore to his lab in the central tower. It felt like the wind was blowing again.

*

The central tower was the center of the magic towers and the headquarters of all magicians in the magic kingdom. This was where they registered their statuses and exchanged research results. Unlike the other magic towers, there were no independent units to take action. It was where national events such as the magic contest and large-scale plans were organized.

This hadn't changed despite the owner of the central tower changing. There was only one difference from the days of the former chairman, Benedict.

The top floor of the central tower had undergone major renovations.

"Goetia, open the door of the laboratory."

[Yes, Master.]

The ring on Theodore's right hand shone and released the security magic on the door.

It might seem like an easy task, but in order to break through the door with Goetia, they needed the strength of Veronica in her draconic form. Other methods were to completely analyze the magic formula that Theodore had created or to take possession of Ars Goetia.

'It isn't impossible for a transcendent, but I can't assume that transcendents will be my enemies.'

Overestimating himself was something to be avoided, but he also couldn't overestimate the enemies. The boundary between a

prudent person and a coward wasn't that clear. The timing of when to take a step forward and when to pause was what separated the two. He should be cautious but not a coward. Thus, Theodore maintained the security of the laboratory at this level.

Ching! Ching! The adamantium and mithril locks were released, and the noise was heard for three minutes before stopping.

Soon, the inside of the research laboratory was exposed to Paragranum and Theodore. This was the research center of the Chief Tower Master of Meltor.

"...It looks different to what I saw a few months ago. Isn't there a lack of free space? Or did you construct a new facility?" Paragranum asked when she saw the difference.

However, Theodore just shrugged. "It is similar. There is a limit to the space expansion."

In fact, it wasn't an exaggeration to say that half of the research laboratory had been thanks to her. Paragranum was a grimoire created by the best alchemist in the Age of Mythology, Paracelsus. She adhered to the principle of equivalent exchange and had built this workshop in return for several conditions.

It was the birth of a research center that transcended the standards of this time. There was a teleport gate that could immediately move to Elvenheim, the Baekun Mountains, and Paracelsus' Laboratory. There was a mirror connected to communication facilities throughout Meltor, as well as a magic scroll press and potion distillation facilities for mass production. The bronze statues placed against the walls of the research center were golems capable of 5th circle magic.

Lastly, there was one final guardian of the research center.

[Welcome, Master.] Unlike the past, the automaton wore body armor and bowed down politely.

The automaton had Sword Master Lloyd's Aura Ability. After

having several modifications, it had now become a monster within the reach of the master level. It had a mighty combat power and absolute loyalty, making it the right guard for this research center.

“Gladio, are there any reports of grade 3 importance or higher?”

[No.]

“Grade 4?”

[There is one from the red tower, three from the blue tower, and two from the white tower. They are requests to handle monsters appearing in various places, the restoration of a pier broken by landslides, and the expansion of information sources in the central part of the continent.]

“Approve all of them. Tell the white tower to post a report as soon as they finish the selection,” Theodore passed on the instructions. Then he sat down at a table with Paragranum and started talking, “Why did you come see me this morning?”

“It is about the Southern Continent.”

“The south? This must be a big deal.” Theodore’s eyes widened at the unexpected words.

The grimoire, Paragranum, only cared about the purpose of its existence, not the chaotic Southern Continent. Many of the rare animals and plants that could be used for alchemy were available in the central and northern regions. So, he didn’t think there was any reason for her to be interested in the swamp. Then why did the words ‘the Southern Continent’ emerge from Paragranum’s mouth? It wasn’t long before he found out the reason.

“The dragons are moving.”

Dragons were the most powerful species in the material world. There was no way for Theodore’s expression to remain calm, but he tried to control his expression. Meanwhile, Paragranum spoke as if she had been waiting for his reaction, “The red clan’s Brasmati, the green clan’s Erucus, and two more. I don’t know

why, but four dragons have gathered on the Southern Continent. Do you have any guesses?”

“No, I have no idea.”

Dragons were beings that didn’t accompany their parents after becoming adults. There had never been a collective action like this in the history of the continent. It might be different in the Age of Mythology, but this was a disaster in current times.

At this time, Theodore asked a question, “Is Aquilo included in that group?”

“…The sea isn’t within my area of detection. But it is possible. If the sea dragon interferes, there would be a total of five. Maybe all the dragons are gathering in one place.”

“It is a meeting of dragons…” Theodore added one more thing to his list of tasks to do in the south with a grim expression. He needed to investigate why the dragons were gathering in the Southern Continent. It was hard to overcome the power of a dragon, but he had the confidence to pull himself out if he had to fight. Theodore was a few steps before the realm of transcendence and several times stronger than he had been in the past.

‘I wish Aquilo would answer… There is still no communication from her. Did something happen?’

It had been five years since he lost contact with Aquilo. That had been before the battle of the world tree, so he hadn’t been able to go after her. Theodore was briefly troubled by this. Meanwhile, Paragranum rose from her spot. “Then it is up to here for me. I don’t want you to miss the expedition, so be careful.”

“Yes, thank you for informing me.”

Once Paragranum left, Theodore kept thinking for a while. Why were the dragons showing interest in the Southern Continent? Was there a threat to the material world? If so, should he be alert to threats?

‘Tsk, I don’t know.’ Theodore let out a long sigh and suppressed his thoughts about the dragons.

He sat down in front of the mirror of communication and organized the reports from each tower.

‘It is time to replace Master’s prosthesis. Balance the bonded neurons… Okay, that is enough. I can tell him separately. It has been three days since Baek Dongil returned from Bergen? The hobgoblins won’t interrupt the schedule, so I will give him a vacation and send him to my hometown.’

A period of five years wasn’t short. Since having come to Meltor, Baek Dongil had now reached the 4th circle. He was constantly tapping at the wall to the next level. His heart, which had gotten hurt by how he had been treated in the East Continent, was now healed.

Vince, Theodore’s teacher, had also changed. It could be because he had lost one leg and devoted himself to research. His atmosphere grew softer, and the number of magicians who acted as his assistants increased.

“Well, it is good.”

This was a peaceful age. Theodore’s teacher could devote himself to the research he wanted to do but hadn’t been able to due to being on the battlefield. Of course, Vince didn’t always like everything. At that moment…

[Master, I’ve received a request.]

As he heard Gladio’s loud voice, Theodore turned. “Is it an interview? I didn’t make a promise…”

[It is a messenger from the Soldun Kingdom. After a meeting with the king in the morning, he came to see Master.]

“The Soldun Kingdom? What is the name of the messenger?” He asked to be certain. Theodore thought it was Baek Jongmyung who came to see Baek Dongil.

However, his expectations were betrayed in a different manner.

[The name is Marquis Fergana.]

“…Why him?”

He was the 7th circle magician who had been defeated by Theodore in Soldun’s civil war and eventually became a royal hound. Theodore made a strange expression and got up. “I have to meet him.”

Chapter 339 - Five Years Later (4)

Marquis Fergana was one of the 7th circle magicians in the continent and one of the three masters in the Soldun Kingdom. He was also the master of a prestigious family and a person who possessed 30% of the kingdom.

That's right. This was until he was defeated in the Elsid Civil War that occurred several years ago and was arrested. Originally, it was a crime that would cause him to be executed. However, the royal family was in a weak state after the civil war, so they used a special punishment to prevent the damage which would be caused by Marquis Fergana's vacancy.

It was the Oath of Obedience. At the time, Theodore had been dispatched with the allied forces, and his power had been borrowed to carve the oath onto the marquis' heart. There was no way for the marquis to get rid of the brand on his heart. So, from that day onward, Fergana became a slave to King Elsid and the royal family.

His days of exploring magic were long gone. First of all, he was a royal hound who followed the royal family's will and acted for national events, rather than family affairs. It was too big a cost due to his family.

'...It was my own mistake for falling for Cornwall's words and not being able to refuse my daughter. I know in my mind that I shouldn't blame anyone else.' Marquis Fergana was lost in thought as he sat at an old-fashioned table in a reception room.

He could feel it without any effort—the shackle carved onto his heart that even his seven circles couldn't resist. Was it called the Oath of Obedience? It was a very terrible name. He reconfirmed the enchantment on his heart and smiled bitterly. After being defeated by a young man not even 30 years of age, Fergana now had no freedom. He felt more disappointment, rather than

resentment, for the loss.

“Now, that young man is the greatest magician on the entire continent… I wonder if I was fortunate that I encountered him before that.”

Either way, Fergana’s defeat wouldn’t be changed. He drank the bitter tea as his heart filled with messy feelings he couldn’t determine. There were feelings of a magician’s jealousy and the inferiority complex of the underdog, as well as a mixture of vengefulness, awe, and admiration.

Marquis Fergana let out a long breath.

Kkiiik.

The door of the reception room opened, and Theodore walked in. “It has been a while, Marquis Fergana. I heard you were looking for me.”

It was different from the past. Theodore was wearing a black robe instead of a red one, and his eyes had added depth as he looked at Marquis Fergana.

Theodore Miller, the chief tower master, was the youngest magician in the continent to reach the 8th circle. Their eyes met, and they each had different reactions.

‘—Heoook!’ Marquis Fergana’s eyes filled with astonishment. ‘D-Deep. So deep that I can’t see the bottom. It is like looking into another dimension…!’

They were different types of magicians. It was like the difference between a person standing on a mountain peak and a person on the middle of the mountain. The gap between the two magicians could be seen from their eyes as pressure pushed down at Marquis Fergana.

The 7th circle and the 8th circle…

The 8th circles which could be seen in Theodore’s eyes were

difficult to face. Therefore, Marquis Fergana couldn't say a word.

"Ah, I'm sorry." Theodore belatedly noticed the reason and reduced the amount of power in his eyes.

It wasn't necessary to say that Marquis Fergan's fear increased. "I-It has been a long time, Chief Tower Master Theodore."

"Yes. Is this the first time since the civil war?"

"Yes, it is as you said." The pride that Marquis Fergana had built over decades vanished like a mirage, and he gathered his hands together politely.

As a magician of the 7th circle, Marquis Fergana could tell that Theodore Miller was already in a realm beyond his imagination. It would be too much if the marquis tried to curry favor with Theodore. The bad feelings related to the incident of the past faded and only awe remained.

After exchanging greetings and drinking a cup of tea, the conversation between the two people truly began.

"His Majesty asked me to consult with you about this issue."

Theodore made a strange expression as King Elsid of Soldun was mentioned. There were no signs of taking out a letter, so the marquis was going to say it directly. It meant this was a problem that couldn't be conveyed through letters and was important enough for a master to come in person. Theodore's eyebrows raised in interest.

Meanwhile, Marquis Fergana started talking, "It happened three months ago. Monsters kept attacking the kingdoms in the south-west."

This wasn't uncommon. The Southern Continent, filled with infamous swamps, was located a few kilometers south of the Soldun Kingdom, and it wasn't unusual for monsters from the swamp to leave the area. There were many beasts who tried to avoid the human species. However, the number and strength of

those who wandered away from their habitat weren't great, and they were easily blocked by the standing army at the border areas.

The royal family had thought the same thing three months ago.

"But after a month or two, the number of creatures attacking the border didn't diminish. No, it was estimated that they increased."

"It is an abnormal situation."

"Yes, I saw that this situation was a monster wave."

'Monster wave' was a term that referred to a phenomenon where at least 1,000 monsters moved in a single direction, regardless of species or ecology. It was a phenomenon that could be found in encyclopedias. The number of monster waves had greatly reduced over the centuries. However, there must be a reason for Marquis Fergana's certainty.

"I don't know. The swamp monsters are adapted to their environment, and it is difficult for them to survive in other areas. The swamps in the south are filled with poison, and the vegetation is drenched with this evil energy, mutating the monsters."

"Did you try exploring inside?"

Marquis Fergana nodded firmly at Theodore's question and answered, "It was just the edges, but yes."

"You couldn't find the cause?"

"Unfortunately, I didn't see anything. Ah! There was something unusual."

"What is it?"

Marquis Fergana made a fearful expression as he recalled what he felt at that time. "From outside the forest, I felt a pressure that refused to let me approach. The soldiers and skilled knights were reluctant to take even a step inside. I was able to cope, but it consumed a considerable amount of mental energy."

"It was a mental energy, not physical?"

“Yes. It was a type of rejection.”

A fear that spread across a wide area and drove the creatures out of the swamp…? A light flashed in Theodore’s head at this thought. It was a puzzle piece that wouldn’t have fit without Paragranum’s story.

‘Is this the influence of Dragon Fear?’

Dragons that grew to adulthood could release their presence and drive out all life forms in the area. Even ogres felt a sense of oppression that couldn’t be tolerated. Undoubtedly, the strong monsters in the swamp areas couldn’t compare to a dragon.

Marquis Fergana saw how Theodore was silent and asked with expectations in his eyes, “…Do you perhaps have any guesses?”

“No. I don’t know either. But…” Theodore casually turned his cup round and round. “I am going to the Southern Continent. I’ll try to investigate the cause during my expedition. If there is helpful information, I will give it to Soldun immediately.”

“Oh! That is more than I was expecting!"

From Soldun’s perspective, it was difficult to make a request directly to Theodore, who was the chief tower master and the backbone of the magic kingdom. However, to think that Theodore was now going to the Southern Continent and that he would help them…? This was an unexpected windfall for Marquis Fergana.

Theodore’s expedition to the Southern Continent was becoming more complicated.

*

A few days after that…

“What? Monster wave?” Randolph was surprised after coming to Mana-vil at Theodore’s call.

Randolph had received monster subjugation requests several times before, but he had never experienced a monster wave. A

wave of thousands, maybe tens of thousands, of monsters...? Moreover, these were swamp monsters that were twice as strong as the other monsters in the area. It was obvious that a careless person would lose their life.

Theodore saw his reaction and asked playfully, “So? Are you afraid?”

“No way! I am looking forward to the good picnic ahead!” Randolph grabbed his two swords and chuckled. “I don’t hate peace. Still, I am someone who likes battlefields. Any danger is welcome!”

“Savage human,” the high elf Titania scolded Randolph’s exuberance before turning to Theodore. There was no change in appearance for a high elf who lived for thousands of years. A period of five years for her was like a few months for humans. Nevertheless, she didn’t stop training and had a stronger momentum than before.

“I heard that swamp creatures are different from those living in other areas. Can I ask for an explanation?”

“Of course. I was already going to do that,” Theodore answered positively to Titania’s question. “The swamps in the Southern Continent contain more mana than those in other regions. If we compare the average concentration of mana to ‘water’, then the Southern Continent is a ‘swamp.’ After thousands of years, the mana is enough to alter the ecosystem. This is why the swamp monsters are stronger.”

Mana was a source of power. Both aura and magic were powers that converted mana. Monsters lacked the capacity to handle the powers as well as other species. However, by accumulating the mana in their bodies, they gained more durability and strength than natural.

Among them, the ‘mutants’ were the heads of the creatures. It was the case for the twin head ogres, mutant trolls with horns on

their foreheads, and wyverns that could shoot out breaths.

“These mutations are common in the swamps. It’s different from the central or northern part of the continent where there’s a big commotion if one mutant is found. The adventurer who explored the swamps a long time ago wrote in his autobiography that it was hell.”

“…Hrmm, that is interesting.”

“Yes, it is some fun after a long time.”

Both Titania and Randolph weren’t intimidated as they made curious expressions. Clearly, the elf hunter and mercenary weren’t concerned about monsters. In response, Theodore sighed and talked about the equipment he had prepared, “This is a place where humans haven’t stepped in for a thousand years. It is necessary to have the proper equipment.”

“Ohh…! This is enough for a war!”

There were dozens of artifacts more expensive than some estates, hundreds of magic scrolls, and more than 10 varieties of potions. Randolph’s eyes recognized the value of the items at a glance. He enjoyed a fairly abundant life as a noble, but the goods in front of him were equivalent to 10 years of budget for an estate.

While Randolph was staring blankly, Titania came to Theodore’s side and took something out. “Theodore, I was asked to give you this.”

“Hmm?”

It was a handful of flowers. Theodore stared at the purple and white petals and blinked. There was only one person who would send this gift to him.

“…Ella sent them.” (TL: Theo's new nickname for Ellenoa)

Theodore touched the stems with slender fingers and recalled her body odor. Ellenoa’s smile that he saw last week was still vivid in

his mind. A smile spread across Theodore's face.

Then Titania said, "Statice. Do you know what it means in the flower language?"

Theodore didn't know and looked at her blankly. Titania shrugged with a smile. "Eternal lo…ve. In fact, I don't know the language of flowers."

"What? It was just a good act?"

"I was made the messenger between you two, so give me this much. I have been getting goosebumps because of you."

"T-That…" Theodore had nothing to say.

Meanwhile, Titania moved onto another topic, "The recovery of the world tree is smooth. Thank you, Theodore. The young spirits who migrated to the forest are living well, and the reconstruction of the east forest is taking place at a rapid pace."

"How many more years until it recovers completely?"

"Well, around 50?"

Theodore's face stiffened. "…Too late."

"Well, you started it. There is no need to be impatient. You and Ellenoa will be able to live that long."

"But I can't let Ella be restrained."

"Hoh?"

Theodore ignored Titania's confusion and looked down at the map of the swamp.

The accuracy was frustrating, but it was better than nothing. Dragons were suddenly gathering in the swamps where humans hadn't stepped in for a thousand years. He wondered if there was a way to restore the power of the world tree more quickly.

"I don't want to make Ella wait anymore."

They had a promise for the day she was rid of this obligation.

Chapter 340 - Unknown Land (1)

This was the southernmost part of the Central Continent, the border of the Soldun Kingdom.

Flash!

There was a flash of light, and the shadows of a few people appeared on the ground. It was Mass Teleport. The traces of spatial magic soon disappeared.

From the capital of Meltor to the southern border of the Soldun Kingdom, Theodore and his group didn't make a single stop as they jumped nearly half the continent. They couldn't freely go back and forth like a space door, but one-time space movement was enough if Theodore used the auxiliary facilities of the magic towers.

It wasn't impossible for him to move to the East Continent beyond the sea if he was willing.

'I'll have to work a bit harder when I get back, but... isn't this much faster?'

Magic was truly convenient. A distance that would take a few months by foot or a month by carriage had been crossed in just a few minutes. In the Age of Mythology, space gates that connected the whole continent had existed. However, magicians who could use space movement like floating clouds in this era were rare.

Theodore stopped thinking about that matter and looked around. "...What are the conditions of those two?"

Magicians still hadn't resolved the difficulties of space magic. The further the distance traveled with space movement, the stronger the symptoms of nausea and dizziness would be.

"Uup, uuuup!"

"How terrible. You gave us a warning, but... Ugh."

Randolph was still half nauseous as he shook his head, while Titania took deep breaths with a pale face. In particular, she had a high mana resistance as a high elf, so she couldn't calm down. Theodore saw her failing to get up and spoke like he understood everything, "Don't overdo it and just sit. Space nausea isn't something that can be recovered with magic or potions."

It was as he said. As such, Orta had even tried to apply it as part of his attack magic. Unlike normal nausea which was caused by equilibrium confusion, spatial nausea was caused by the body's sense of dimension. It was confusion caused by entering another dimension momentarily, inducing an 'inexplicable sensation.'

Although Theodore, the caster, had tried to ease the difficulty of the effects, this space nausea could distort even a master's senses. Still, the recovery of the masters was quick. After vomiting out a few gastric juices, Theodore, Randolph, and Titania recovered their balance. Theodore looked at the gaits of the two people and nodded, knowing that they had returned to their original conditions.

"Let's check the equipment a final time and move south. There won't be much time to rest after entering the swamp."

Randolph and Titania once again confirmed the goods they had received at the magic tower. There were several magic scrolls to deal with special situations, as well as detox potions for the poisonous swamp zones.

Randolph couldn't help letting out a long whistle as he saw the artifacts worth thousands of gold. "Can't I buy a mansion or city if I sell all the artifacts on my body?"

Theodore laughed at the joking words. "What if you combine two people? You can buy at least three territories on the outskirts."

"Yes, really."

It was meant as a joke, but it was half true. Randolph felt

burdened by the value of all the artifacts he carried on his body. He might've become a noble, but at the core, he was still a mercenary who knew the weight of gold. Randolph automatically stiffened and changed the subject, "Cough. By the way, I didn't think it would just be the three of us. I thought you would bring that older sister or the little girl."

"...Then the power of Meltor would be reduced by more than half."

The yellow tower master, Paragranum, didn't reveal her strength or identity. Therefore, Meltor's defenses depended entirely on the other tower masters. It would be foolish to attack Meltor, that had a non-aggression treaty with the Andras Kingdom and was an ally of Elvenheim, but preparing for the worst was a magician's instincts.

However, this wasn't Randolph's point.

"Hrmm, I thought that sister was going to follow you anyway."

"What?"

"No, it's nothing. It would be awkward for anyone to interfere. You will realize it when the time comes."

"...?" Theodore stared at Randolph.

However, Randolph turned his head like he wouldn't speak anymore. All this while, Titania was listening to their conversation with a strange expression. Then Theodore realized that time was being wasted. "Let's go to the swamp. There are no monsters around here, so it should take less than an hour."

"Okay, let's go."

"I hope the stench of the swamp isn't too bad."

All three people kicked off from the ground almost simultaneously. The three shadows moved toward the unknown swamp that no one had stepped in for a thousand years.

*

The party soon arrived. As Theodore had expected, they were able to arrive at the entrance to the swamp in 30 minutes. This was their first encounter with the notorious swamp.

‘Indeed, this place is worrisome.’

In general, green was the color of life. However, no vitality could be felt from the green swamp. If Theodore had to describe it, he would call it rotten. With rot and decay, this place had become a poisonous land. Normal creatures could never survive in this swamp. Poison was being emitted from each piece of grass and falling leaf. The only living creatures inside would be monsters.

“…A-A terrible place like this actually exists!” Titania shuddered at the sight, despite being a high elf who should be friendly to nature.

The blooming buds, leaves, and branches were filled with poison. This was a world where bees and butterflies couldn’t survive. How could this swamp have existed for thousands of years? Theodore had doubts and called out, “Mitra, can you come out for a second?”

The girl sprang out from the ground as usual. [Hoing! Today is Mitra!]

“Yes, yes, good job.”

Mitra finished with a Y-shaped pose and looked up at him with an elated expression. He didn’t know what it meant, but she was always like this. Theodore stroked Mitra’s head and pointed in the direction of the swamp. If they could open the way with her power, the swamp exploration would be much simpler than he thought.

“Mitra, can you control the plants in the swamp?”

[Eung? I’ll try,] Mitra said. Then she walked to the entrance of the swamp and called out, [Hooing? Hoing. Ohunghung. Hoit? Hoooooi?]

She spoke in unknown words and sign language before making a confused expression. It was an unusual expression on her innocent face.

[Theo! Them guys are kinda weird!]

“How?”

[It doesn’t make sense! I can’t understand what they are saying. It is like we are speaking different languages!]

Indeed, Theodore nodded. The southern swamp area was a place where this material world and other dimensional worlds overlapped, and there were several places where ominous energy remained. If mana overflowed from it, then that meant the vegetation was already not part of this material world.

It was understandable that Mitra’s power didn’t work. After all, she couldn’t intervene in the nature of another dimension.

“Thank you. Then I’ll see you later.”

[Hoing!] Mitra returned to the ground.

Then Theodore spoke to the party, “It can’t be helped. Let’s go inside.”

It was impossible to investigate from outside, so the only way was to enter. If three masters couldn’t make it through this smelly and foggy space, it would be impossible for anyone else in this era. Titania’s response was a little late, but the party unanimously stepped into the swamp.

Squish… Squish… It was sticky.

However, it was fine when Theodore hardened the surface with ice magic. Though, he would rather burn it with fire. If he were Veronica, he would’ve done it without hesitation. Thinking of that, Theodore laughed and then looked around. The swamp was uncomfortable and sticky. It was a place that didn’t have anything pleasant at all.

‘Will monsters be present at the entrance of the swamp? Or…’

The monsters living on the outskirts of the swamp might’ve been killed by Soldun. Theodore couldn’t be sure as he continued walking cautiously through the mysterious swamp.

One step, two steps, ten steps, one hundred steps…

After walking quite deeply into the swamp, Theodore suddenly stopped. So far, he hadn’t seen any monsters.

“Too strange,” Theodore said. The two people following him naturally stopped and listened as he continued to mutter, “There is no crying, no trace of monsters, no sense of resistance. Surely not all the monsters in this swamp have gone to Soldun…?”

“…Theodore.”

“Hmm?”

“I want to correct one thing.”

Theodore looked back at Randolph and realized Randolph and Titania were soaked in sweat.

“Do you feel it? I’m enduring it somehow, but if I relax even a little bit, I will step back,” Randolph said.

“What are you feeling?”

“It is a feeling that I shouldn’t approach… It is hard to describe in words. In any case, my feet won’t go forward. It’s similar for this girl.”

Titania confirmed it with a tired face. “The elementals are about to leave me. It doesn’t have much effect on Geros, but the other elementals are afraid.”

“…I see.” Theodore guessed the reason for their words. If this reluctance was due to Dragon Fear, then Theodore might be immune to that effect due to Aquilo’s blood inside him. Therefore, he didn’t feel the resistance.

‘I have to pay careful attention to their condition.’

It wasn’t comparable to a direct attack, but the mental strength of the party would continue to suffer unless Dragon Fear was cut off. The consumption of mental power was a big variable on the battlefield. If Theodore made a reckless judgment when accompanied by Randolph and Titania, both of them could be significantly hurt or killed.

Above all, there was a bigger problem than their condition.

“From now on, pay attention.”

“Hmm?”

“What does that mean?”

Randolph and Titania asked in uncomfortable tones. Meanwhile, Theodore stared at the swamp hidden by a fog. “Maybe in the future, only monsters who can survive this rejection will remain.”

The monsters who could resist Dragon Fear were real monsters in this swamp area. There was no need for Theodore to explain any more as the shaking could be heard from far away.

Kung! Kung! The earth shook. The three people noticed that the shaking was moving closer. If it was a monster that weighed this much, there wouldn’t be more than 10 types found in Theodore’s mental encyclopedia. Unsurprisingly, the monster appeared in a dignified manner.

“Cyclops! They shouldn’t be living in swamps!” The astonished Titania shouted.

Meanwhile, Theodore noticed something strange ahead of her. Unlike the usual cyclops, this one had bright skin and a blazing red eye. However, the red eye wasn’t due to strong emotions. Theodore sensed something and paused. “…Magic eye?”

The moment he stopped moving…

Wiiiiiiing! The cyclops’ eye burned like lava as a ray of light shot

out from it.

Chapter 341 - Unknown Land (2)

‘Tch, it is too late to avoid it.’ Theodore reflexively stepped forward and reached out his hand.

A wall of shadow rose from the ground, blocking the trajectory of the light ray. Ray type attacks were threatening because of their speed, but they also had disadvantages due to being a pure form of energy. For example, Jerem’s wall of imaginary space had a property that sucked all the energy and turned it to zero, making shadow and darkness the nemesis of this light ray. However…

Jjejeok.

The shadow wall couldn’t handle the power of the ray and got a few cracks.

Theodore’s low proficiency was one of the reasons, but the power of the Cyclops’ ray was also stronger than he had thought it would be. It was a little below the level of great magic. Although it might be limited to this swamp, its level could be designated as a grade 3 disaster.

“Randolph! Titania!” Theodore didn’t need to look back at both of them. “As soon as this wall disappears, split to the left and right! I’ll scatter the ray attack somehow!”

“Then I will completely stop its breathing!”

“I understand.”

There was no need to separately specify the timing. Randolph’s two swords were drawn, and Titania’s bowstring was pulled taut. The shadow wall reached its limit and shattered. Kakang!

‘Now!’ Theodore triggered the magic he had prepared a few seconds earlier. The second weakness of a ray-based attack was deflecting using the nature of light. Theodore used the double attribute magic of wind and water, and a prism in the shape of an octahedron appeared, absorbing the red light.

Wiiiiing!

The refracted ray started to bend in eight directions. The moment the three people were exposed, Titania's bow cried out like it had been waiting. The arrow tore through the wind.

"Grrrruk?" The cyclops received an instinctive type of warning and noticed the arrow's presence.

Nevertheless, it didn't move its arms or step backward. Instead, it turned its gaze from Theodore to the flying arrow. The hot beam from the ray could burn even the arrows shot by Titania. The cyclops had a clever judgment.

"Heh, you have a good head."

However, Titania's archery skill was better than how cunning the cyclops was.

Chiik. The wind and arrow were burned by the ray. However, this was followed up with another arrow. It wasn't just one or two. Titania fired three arrows in the same orbit without any error. The first one couldn't reach, and the second was a bit lacking. So, she shot three arrows. The last arrow pierced the cyclops' one eye.

"Kuwaaah!?" The ray and blood scattered from the cyclops' crushed eyeball. The magic eye was ultimately dependent on the eye. It couldn't be used properly with damaged eyes.

Furthermore, the cyclops who lost an eye had forgotten something. The sword master of the twin swords, Randolph, approached it and swung his two swords. The cyclops' shin bones and femur were split apart in an instant. Randolph's blades broke the cyclops' spine and moved upward, cutting its carotid artery.

It felt like cutting a rock. The cyclops' skin was tough and full of swamp mana. A good aura user would find it hard to cut a single line. However, it was no match for a sword master's aura.

"Gruk...! Grr...ru...ruok." Just two seconds after the shadow wall disappeared, the body of the cyclops was bleeding and torn to rags.

Its opponents were too terrible. However, Theodore sighed bitterly. “Geez, I made a mistake.”

“What?”

Before Titania received an answer, they heard it.

Kwaaaang!

A pillar of fire rose in several places simultaneously, and black smoke appeared. There was a reason Theodore had been wary of using magic after entering the swamp. It was hard to guess how many flammable gases and liquids were present in a swamp area that was thousands of years old. The rays of light that Theodore had refracted caused the environment to burn up.

‘Fortunately, it isn’t all of the swamp…’

Theodore looked around at the flames and spoke to his group, “Be prepared while maintaining your breathing.”

“What?”

“The disturbance will reach quite far.”

The cyclops was powerful, but the group was still quite a distance away from the center of the swamp. It was just a little ‘strong’ here.

————————————————!!!

The disturbance would agitate creatures with a far bigger presence than the cyclops. That wasn’t all. The ground shook due to all the approaching creatures. Monsters were coming from all three directions except for the rear where the party had come from. If he had to count roughly, there were over 100 monsters. Theodore looked carefully at them with Hugin whom he had called in advance.

‘Let’s see the left side.’

It felt like the side had the most enemies. His vision greatly expanded, and he could see multiple creatures with green skin.

Orcs—they could be found everywhere on the continent, but Theodore hadn't expected to see them in the swamp. The experienced orc warriors could fight one knight alone, but most orcs could be defeated by a group of soldiers. He never thought it would be a species that could stay in this swamp.

'They are all mutated. They might be stronger than an ogre?'

Looking closer, there were scales on their skin, and they had some aspects of a crocodile. The orc was tall and oversized, being at least over 3 meters in height. It was appropriate to call this the hybrid of an orc and lizardman. Furthermore, there were other creatures approaching from the front.

There were twin head ogres with two horns and a pair of wings, reminiscent of chimeras. Their skin was hard like iron, and the flames coming from their mouths were alarming. The swamp trolls looked quite dangerous too.

Finally, Theodore looked to the right, and his eyes shook.

'Heok!'

Shortly afterward, the connection to Hugin was cut off. However, the scene he saw at that moment was truly shocking. There was a six-headed snake with a body length of over 100 meters long!

"Hydra…?"

The number of heads was lacking, but Theodore guessed this was a hydra. A hydra was a snake with nine heads and an immortal body, and it had a poison that was hard to decipher. Similar to Jörmungandr and Azi Dahaka, it was something that couldn't be opposed by mortals if it was in a perfect condition. In the myth, it was defeated by a demigod, but it couldn't be completely killed. It was buried alive…? The standard of a hero was needed to defeat it.

'…No, I can do it now.'

In the legends, the hydra's immortality came from its one head,

out of its nine heads, that had golden scales. However, this hydra didn't have any golden head. It didn't have nine heads either, so it might still be incomplete or was a variant hydra. In that case, its force wouldn't be as big, which meant Theodore could defeat it.

"How can I give up now?"

The odds weren't impossible. Theodore looked back at the two others who were smiling as they held their weapons.

"I knew it would be hard when I accompanied you."

"Well, it can't be helped. Let's do it!"

As it happened, the combination of the three people was the best. The combination of a sword master, archer, and magician could display the best combat power regardless of distance. If they could complement each other's weaknesses and maximize their strengths, it wouldn't be difficult to wipe out the monsters.

Theodore laughed at Randolph and Titania's answers. "Okay, shall I take care of the weak bastards?"

His eyes shone as he looked at the mutant orcs coming from the left.

*

If there were two words to describe the southern swamp, it must be 'fearful' and 'unknown.' They were afraid because they couldn't know, or they didn't know because they were afraid.

The sequence of the relationship wasn't important. All those who tried to conquer or explore the swamp were killed, making it a prohibited area. Transcendents didn't step into the area for an unknown reason, and over the years, humanity had lost the power to attack the swamp.

...At least, until today.

Kwarururung!

A few lightning bolts fell in the shape of a spear, causing the

ground to turn over and fry two trolls. The trolls, notorious for their sturdy skin and natural regenerative power, were fried by the lightning. Theodore set up a lightning spear and threw it at another swamp troll.

"Get lost!"

The power was so fierce that the swamp troll's head vaporized, leading the headless body to fall down. In retrospect, it was surprising that it didn't die in one 7th circle blow. There was time to sum things up, so Theodore looked at the twinhead ogre fighting the other two.

■■■■■■■———!!

'Strong' would be the only word he could say. The ogre had pure power and speed, and it used its power efficiently to handle two masters by itself. It used its two pairs of eyes to block attacks, the flying ability of its wings to accelerate, and the durability of its skin to withstand the aura blow. Additionally, he had an earth-shaking fist that contained all its power. It was almost like Superbia.

'But it is still lacking to deal with both of them.'

It was obviously the ogre's defeat. There was only one head left. Its wings were torn, and one area had been cut so many times that the bones were revealed. Randolph's blue blades once again shone brightly. "Ha! Your bottom will be exposed, you monster!"

Black blood splattered, serving as proof that Randolph was getting close to the bone marrow. Nevertheless, the response of the mutant ogre was fearsome. It ignored the pain and bleeding as it tried to kill the humans. The strike was too fast for Randolph, who had just finished his attack, to avoid.

Chaaeng!

However, its fist bounced off. The fist that contained the force of a thick wall was pushed back by a single arrow. It was Titania's

arrow which had flown in with perfect timing! The ogre had been subjected to this technique a few times and roared angrily. However, Titania's footwork exceeded its speed. Above all, Randolph's blades kept coming while the ogre was chasing Titania. Either way, the ogre was one-sidedly pushed and beaten. The monster that had never been pushed by force before reached its limit.

"This is the end!"

An arrow pierced the ogre's mouth, causing it to step back. Then it raised its left hand to its face to pull out the arrow. One hand was in view, and a sword master would never sit by idly when a gap was revealed.

Clovis Two Swords Style.

Hidden Technique.

Triple Lightning Strokes.

The two blades were charged with blue lightning as they moved. One blade accurately pieced the ogre's throat, and blood gushed up like a fountain. It lacked the power to completely behead the ogre, but the amount of bleeding couldn't be ignored. The ogre realized it had made a mistake and lowered its left hand.

"Too late you idiot!" Randolph shouted as a flash of lightning shot from his right hand.

The second strike was a diagonal split. From the left temple to the right jaw joint, the surface of the ogre split open. Its relatively thin skin was cracked into two.

■■■■■——!?!

This was a fatal blow. Randolph's blade gouged deeply into the ogre's skull and almost cut its brain. Before the ogre could back away, lightning struck it. Randolph's other blade once again struck the ogre's head in the same spot. It was the end of the mutant twinhead ogre. Half of its severed head slipped down, and the

ogre's body collapsed to the ground. The creature that would've caused a disaster outside the swamp had died.

"Sigh, the appetizer is done." Randolph shook off the blood on his swords and took out a bottle of potion. He hadn't received any direct injuries, but his skin had been scraped by the ogre's fist. Theodore wasn't the only one to think about Superbia when facing that absurd power. Randolph would've struggled if he had to deal with it alone.

"It is the first match, but there are more powerful monsters left." Titania couldn't hide her tiredness as she sighed.

Compared to Randolph, her role was easy. However, it was difficult to maintain a distance of hundreds of meters while shooting, and there was a corresponding consumption of mental power. Despite that, Theodore couldn't allow both of them to take a break. "It has come a lot closer. It will soon be in sight."

Although it might be imperfect, the hydra—the disaster which had been recorded in the old myths—was making its appearance. There was a chance of victory. Theodore had saved his magic when fighting the twinhead ogre, and he had also refrained from using scrolls and artifacts in order to save it for the hydra.

The three people were alert as they stared at the swamp and waited for the hydra to come.

Then they saw it.

"...Wow, it is huge."

It was much smaller than Hraesvelgr, who covered the sky with his wings, but this realistic size made it feel more real. The hydra's body length was over 100 meters, and it had six heads. It was like a small hill wriggling around. The hydra looked down at Theodore, and one of its six heads opened its mouth.

[Two humans, one elf... What a strange combination,] a cunning voice tickled the ears of the three people.

This dubious voice belonged to the hydra.

“Six-headed snake, are you the master of this swamp?”

The hydra answered the question with yellow eyes, [You don’t need to know.]

“…”

[By the way, in your body… I feel an unpleasant power. The strength and smell are that of the corrupted god who repulsed my ancestors long ago…]

The hydra’s killing intent grew stronger. In this breathless atmosphere, Theodore gave a hand signal to the two people. It was to prepare to fight. Simultaneously, the six hydra heads opened their mouths, and their poisonous fangs aimed at the three people.

[Die.]

Chapter 342 - Unknown Land (3)

Theodore's response was quicker. Before the snake could move, Theodore cast the magic spell he had prepared.

The target was the group of three people, and the target point was 500 meters away. Poison soon spilled from the hydra's mouth, but Theodore's group disappeared first.

Kuuuuoh!

Poison Breath—the poison from the hydra's six heads struck the ground. The damp ground crumbled, and bubbles rose like lava. It was a frightening sight.

There were various characteristics for all types of poisons in this world. For example, there was acid poison that corroded metals and rocks. There was also a poison that destroyed the nervous system, a poison that caused internal bleeding, a poison that caused unidentified diseases, and so on. It was impossible to count them with the fingers of both hands.

Nevertheless, Theodore was convinced that the hydra's poison was the most dangerous one.

'...I would've made a mistake if I faced it directly.'

In the old myths, the hydra's poison was one that was impossible to find an antidote for. If the hydra's breath was that terrible, Theodore would've decided to retreat without hesitation as the poison would have annihilated all three of them. However, his super sensitivity told him that he had a 60% chance of winning. It was proof that the measures he had prepared in advance were sufficient for the low-level poisoning.

Theodore assessed the situation in a matter of seconds and sent a signal to the others, (Come to this position now.)

He drank a detox potion and used a few auxiliary spells essential to fighting the hydra. He used Air-walk, which made it possible to

walk in the air, and Purification, which made harmful substances harmless, as well as Airflow, which scattered the air around the body and increased the resistance of the body. It made his respiratory tract feel a little tight, but it was better than inhaling poison.

After completing 13 types of secondary spells in an instant, Theodore realized that his clouded flesh became clearer.

'It noticed quicker than I thought. Is it sensitive to the movement of mana? That big snake?'

The hydra had raised its heads and stared at the three people with killing intent. Despite the gap of a few hundred meters, they hydra's big body gave off a foreboding feeling like it was right in front of them. If Theodore were lacking in courage, his heart would've stopped when faced with those yellow eyes.

However, Theodore's complexion was the same as he shouted in a loud voice, "Goetia! Automatically keep up the purification, detoxification, and airflow control! Reapply the spells every five minutes and give priority to assisting the two others above me!"

[Yes, Master!]

"Use some of the stored magic power in my circles for independent mobility. Isolate the circuit and use it! Do your best to last a long time!"

Goetia didn't answer. One circuit was isolated as soon as the instructions were received. Over the past years, Goetia had transformed into a loyal existence. Theodore focused on the imprint on his heart—the Artificial Yin and Yang. It was to use the power of Laevateinn from the Ring of Muspelheim.

"「 I declare. 」"

In the myths, the weakness of the hydra was fire. However, there was no way it could be defeated by ordinary fire magic. It had to be divine fire or a fire that was beyond the rules of this world. As an

example, yes, the fire of Muspelheim was valid.

“「 As your master, I command you. Fire of Muspelheim, become my weapon and manifest here. 」”

The crack of the dimension opened, and a white light spilled onto Theodore’s palms, turning into a few swords and spears. A fire that wasn’t bound by the laws of this physical world burned endlessly even in a vacuum and ignored the boundary between matter and non-matter. The body of the snake instinctively sensed danger and moved.

“Go!”

Several white spears were stuck into the hydra’s body. Shortly after that, the whole world was burning brightly.

————————————————!!!

The one thing Theodore overlooked was that the hydra’s poison was also flammable. The deadly gas caused a massive explosion of smoke and fire, and the earth of the entire swamp area seemed to be shaking. The shockwave caused by the explosion even tore through the clouds.

[Kiyaaaaaaack!]

Of course, the impact to the hydra at the center of the explosion was much greater. They hydra’s scales which couldn’t be cut by an aura blade were torn, and green blood gushed upward like a fountain. Theodore wasn’t pleased as he looked down at the hydra. ‘This is the extent of the injury? Its durability is better than a dragon’s.’

The explosion from a little while ago displayed power that was comparable to 8th circle wide-area magic. With an attack like that, even a dragon wouldn’t be able to avoid suffering a serious injury. However, only a little of the hydra’s skin had been peeled off.

This was a level of durability that couldn’t be destroyed with wide-area magic. Theodore quickly changed his tactics and

instructed his group, “Titania, shoot!”

Titania nodded as she was pushed by the pressure of the explosion, while the shape of a translucent giant emerged behind her. It was Geros, the ancient elemental who had been called Zephyrus in the distant past. The Hurricane Bow cried loudly, Kuooooh!

The hydra bowed down belatedly, but the stormy arrow had already hit one of its heads. The huge green snake bounced away like it was hit by a hammer.

[Kuaaaack! I will kill you!] Despite feeling slightly pained because of the Hurricane Bow, the hydra kept attacking the three people.

It was dreadfully fast for something as big as a hill. However, in comparison to the three masters, the hydra’s reflexes were lacking. Randolph and Titania scattered using Air-walk, while Theodore made some illusions and distracted the hydra. Randolph was the first to change his stance. “Your eyes won’t be as hard as your skin, you cunning snake!”

He accelerated with his Aura Ability and reached the hydra’s heads. Then his blades struck a pair of eyes.

Kaaang!

[Kiyaaaaak? Get lost, human!]

Randolph’s two blades clashed with the hydra’s closed eyelids, and flames emerged. The hydra’s eyeballs couldn’t be damaged, but the shock was transmitted. The confused hydra shook its heads. Meanwhile, Titania used this gap to only aim arrows at the eyeballs. Faced with multiple attacks, the hydra didn’t know which eyes to open or close.

Theodore felt a sense of incongruity. ‘It is too panicked. Does it not have much experience fighting despite its strength? It just needs to close its eyes and flounder around.’

The big snake shook its head, but the sword master didn’t budge.

The hydra had the high durability and toxic poison, but that was it. It was too weak to be a descendant of a creature from the Age of Mythology. However, it wasn't weak enough for Theodore to relax. He didn't hesitate as he prepared the next move.

"Mitra, I will ask you to do it."

The girl named Mitra popped out. [Hoing! Today is another transformation?]

After becoming a god at Elvenheim, Mitra had been able to regain her status for a short period of time.

Despite being contaminated, this swamp was part of the material world. As such, it couldn't rebel against Mitra, who had regained Dmitra's name. She nodded and sank into the ground where the poison was a little thinner. The poison of the hydra was incomplete, so Mitra wasn't affected by it.

A few moments later, the hydra thought of Theodore's idea and started to flounder.

Kukukung! Kukung...! Kukukung!

Massive amounts of dirt rose and fell back to the ground. The hydra's struggle without any eyesight was like a natural disaster. It was indeed a monster known in the Age of Mythology.

[Don't go up! These foolish bastards!]

The cliff was struck by six heads, and stones poured down. Randolph wielded his swords and stopped the obstacles from hitting Titania. Then the hydra turned its head triumphantly. However, Theodore was expecting this. 'Mitra, now!'

The hydra was looking at the three people when the swamp swirled, and a large muddy hand rose up. It wasn't just one or two hands but six, which was precisely the number of heads the hydra had.

[Hoiiit! This is huge!]

[W-What? Mud monster!]

The hydra was surprised by the unexpected situation, while Mitra grabbed the heads without missing one. Her grip was so tight that the hydra couldn't open its mouths. The hydra could only blink as it was caught, while Theodore waved his hands.

'Not even thinking about escaping… Is this really a hydra?'

It had absurd strength, durability, and deadly poison. Theodore had been determined to fight for half a day when this fight began, but it ended in just 30 minutes. He wasn't disappointed with the enemy's weakness, but this was the first time his expectations were betrayed.

"…Abraxas, deploy." As Theodore cast a spell to destroy the hydra's body, his colleagues had a similar expression. It would be better to win easily, even if he felt empty about it. Theodore's eight circles revolved, and the unstable mana gathered under his control. It was magic that could kill a dragon when focused on one point.

Wuoooooong…!

Once the huge amount of magic power started moving, the hydra began to struggle. However, it was too late. Dmitra's mud hands were firm and the binding force of earth wasn't easily broken. It took 30 seconds for Theodore's spell to be completed.

First water and fire phase—blue and red beads floated around him.

Second wind and earth collapse—the two beads increased to four and circulated around him.

Final chapter—as soon as the beads merged and divided, a small world was created with a huge destructive force.

It was enough to blow away more than half of the six heads. The four magic spheres slowly got closer, and Theodore waited for the right moment to throw it. Unless someone interfered with his

spell…

「рассеивание (Disperse)!」

As the powerful voice was heard from somewhere, the magic power around Theodore's body lost its strength and faded away. The three people looked in the direction of the third party who intervened. The person who prevented them from dealing a heavy blow wouldn't be an ally. Nevertheless, the three people were surprised at the sight of the enemy.

"…Don't tell me?"

The man had red hair and vertical pupils that were different from a human's. Theodore was familiar with these pupils. These eyes belonged to the strongest species, the guardians of this material world.

"Hrmm, I guess you know my essence." The unidentified red dragon was curious about the unexpected reaction and stood between the three men and the hydra.

Then he looked at Theodore and asked, "Are you willing to break the pledge, transcendent human? If you crossed the 'wall', you should know that you aren't allowed to enter the swamp."

Of course, Theodore made a stupid expression.

Chapter 343 - Unknown Land (4)

‘Pledge? Transcendent? Furthermore, not allowed in the swamp?’

As words, of which he couldn’t understand the context, poured out, Theodore inwardly estimated the power of the dragon. The superiority of power was a great variable in any situation. However, Theodore was soon forced to gulp. ‘Damn, a monster. He is literally on a different level.’

At first glance, the dragon was far stronger than the hydra. The dragon wasn’t a Desertio-level presence, but he was at least an ancient monster. He had stopped Abraxas with simple Dragon Words. If he wanted to hurt the three people, he would be able to temporarily seal Theodore’s magic.

The dragon hadn’t done this, so Theodore scattered the spell he had completed. He felt that this could be solved with words rather than fighting.

“Huh? Something is strange. Wait a minute.” At this moment, the dragon looked at Theodore with wide eyes. “You aren’t transcendent? Your spirit is high, but it isn’t over the limit. It seems you are at the boundary? It is interesting that you have a transcendental spirit.”

The red dragon didn’t ask for an answer because he could see through everything. After realizing Theodore’s abilities, the red dragon made a strange expression and then closed his eyes like he was thinking. However, there was someone who interfered with his silence.

[Kuaaaaaah! I will get rid of you! Tear you into hundreds of pieces!] The hydra finally shook off the mud hands.

The snake overturned the ground in a violent manner and was able to smash the solid clay. Its tail dug into the ground as its six

heads roared. This was an ignorant destructive force. As Theodore's group regained his vigilance, the red dragon opened his mouth and spoke in a low voice, "Hey."

The hydra's frenzied body stiffened. [...Yes?]

"Shut up before you make me angry."

[B-But Brasmati...!]

"I don't want to say it twice."

The hydra became aware of the irritation in the voice of the red dragon, Brasmati, and fell silent. There was a clear hierarchical relationship between them. Despite the difference in strength, there was a strange relationship between the dragon and endangered creature. Didn't it seem like Red Dragon Brasmati and the hydra were working together?

'My guess may be right, but let's put it on hold for the moment.'

There were so many problems before Theodore that he couldn't afford to worry about anymore. Theodore had to prioritize his thoughts while waiting for Brasmati to open his mouth. Randolph and Titania were also aware of the identity of their opponent and held their breaths.

"Ah," Brasmati soon spoke. "I just thought of something. Was it you? Aquilo, she said she has a blood contract with a human magician."

"Yes?"

"I suppose your body odor is familiar because of Aquilo's blood? It is mixed in with the smell of another... that I don't know."

Theodore remembered the face of his lover. Was Veronica, a quarter dragon who had inherited the blood of a red dragon, related to Brasmati somehow? However, Theodore didn't speak his thoughts.

Even if the dragon before him really was closely related to her, it

wouldn't be strange if Theodore didn't know about him. Theodore and Veronica were lovers, so he knew Veronica had an unhappy childhood because her grandfather, the dragon, hadn't taken care of her at all.

'...Dragons are a species who don't care about blood relations.' Theodore knew this, but he couldn't stop his gaze from becoming colder. If this dragon was one of those who had made Veronica suffer, then an unnecessary hostility would emerge.

It was much better to pretend not to know anything.

"Well, good. You wouldn't have made the pledge since you aren't a transcendent," Brasmati spoke without any consideration toward Theodore. "There are two options for you. If you were an outsider, I would've driven you out already. But you have Aquilo's blood, meaning you are no longer an outsider."

"What are the choices?"

"One, give up on moving forward and go back in good health. Stop searching the areas you haven't reached yet." Brasmati looked at them with calm eyes. There was no malice in his gaze, but neither was there a liking toward them. It was a dull gaze with no interest on whether Theodore died.

Then he shrugged and warned them lightly, "There is no reason to stop mortals from staying, but I can't let you act as a variable. If you dare move forward, I will stop you will be own strength."

"...Then what is the second choice?"

"Heh, you are wise."

Theodore didn't think he would die. However, it was true that the odds were slim. A dragon approached the area beyond the framework of life and was almost comparable to a god. The risk for a fight without any merits was ridiculously huge. It was a situation with a 70% chance of collapsing, a 20% of getting annihilated, and a 10% chance of having one or two deaths. In such a situation,

there was no reason to fight.

“Secondly, come with me to the middle of the swamp and cooperate with our work. If you do, I will allow you to move forward and promise a reward equivalent to your merit.”

“…Can I know the situation before choosing?”

“No. If you were another person, you would’ve been sent back regardless of your capabilities. Now, make your choice.”

Theodore shut up at Brasmati’s words. Brasmati didn’t want an 8th circle magician. He wanted a ‘competent magician linked to Aquilo.’

According to the information he’d gathered before heading to the swamp, there were at least five dragons gathered here. Assuming there were two or three on the same level as Brasmati, Theodore wouldn’t be able to endure it. What was the problem that they couldn’t disclose it yet had to ask for his cooperation?

‘The situation is serious enough that the dragons on the continent have gathered together. It is also so secret they have to stop the intervention of other species.’

Even without his super sensitivity, he could tell that the future would change dramatically depending on the choice he made here. To step back without obtaining anything or take the risk and move forward… The greatest magician in this age stood at the crossroads where no magician would hesitate.

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“First, let me explain the pledge related to the swamp.”

Once they started moving, Red Dragon Brasmati explained the history that they didn’t know.

It was a story that of what happened thousands of years ago.

In the latter half of the Age of Mythology, many superpowers and high-grade species had existed all over the world, even though it

wasn’t comparable to the peak of the period. During that time, the swamp didn’t reject civilization like it did now, nor was it a place where mutated creatures lived. More than 100 demonic energy sites had been sealed by strong hands, and the southern part of the continent had once been the most prosperous tourist spot in the continent.

Then the destruction started suddenly one day.

“13 transcendents living on the southern continent died in one day. The causes of death consisted of heart attack, brain death, respiratory arrest, and so on. The people who would live even when thrown out into the universe were wiped out. At first, we thought a demon king had descended.”

“…That wasn’t the case?”

“No, it would be easy to kill if a demon king had been summoned.”

For a demon king to be treated as a wild beast from another dimension… Theodore made a frightened expression.

After all, Nídhöggur was in the category of a demon king. He was a transcendent who could turn the horizon upside down with a single flap of the wings and who had induced the onset of darkness with a single command. Yet, in the Age of Mythology, even demon kings had been subject to subjugation. They would descend once a century and be defeated.

‘There is something more dangerous and difficult than a demon king? A great demon king?’ Theodore was mumbling these words in his mind.

It was then when Brasmati stopped walking and looked back. From here on out, he cut to the chase.

“A grimoire.”

“…Huh?”

“A grimoire. One grimoire ate more than a dozen transcendents at the end of the Age of Mythology. When we became aware of its existence, we sealed it with the help of a safe and over 40 people.”

Theodore’s expression became blank. He knew the power of a grimoire, but he didn’t know of a grimoire that could eat a dozen transcendents. He couldn’t help raising his voice, “If the transcendents really died that way, isn’t it a disaster for the continent? Why wasn’t such a disaster recorded?”

“There are three major reasons.” The hot and damp air stirred around Brasmati. “One, only transcendents, not mortals, died. It was a raid only on transcendents... Although, the word ‘raid’ is also strange. It is more suitable to say transition.”

“Transition..?”

“Two, we covered up the history. If someone got their hands on a grimoire that could threaten transcendents, it could jeopardize the world. The hydra is a guardian we prepared a long time ago. Transcendents don’t enter this swamp, and the hydra can easily beat mortals.”

The three people looked at each other with confused faces at this wave of truth.

The unknown land, the southern swamp that had been unexplored for thousands of years... It was an area where people had once flourished, and the cause of the swamp’s current state was a grimoire. Any historians who heard this would have a defining moment of their career.

“Then why doesn’t the hydra have any practical experience?”

“There are rarely any strong people who aren’t transcendents. Most of them can be defeated with just its poison and body, so it didn’t feel the need to sharpen its combat skills.”

“Then the third reason?”

Brasmati went silent for a moment. Then he replied with a stiff

expression without looking back, “It is simple.”

Only a dragon could intervene with this seal.

“The grimoire can’t be described by any means other than ‘memories’.”

The meaning of his words was vague, but Brasmati didn’t explain any further. No, he arrived at his destination before he could say any more.

“We’re here. I will tell you the rest after the introductions.”

As Brasmati spoke, Theodore felt a shadow over his face. Someone was approaching from above them. The approach didn’t involve an enemy, so Theodore’s reaction rate was slightly slow. He barely raised his eyes when something white and blue pounced on him.

“—Boy!” Theodore’s face was deeply buried in something. “Did you come to pick me up? I thought you abandoned me after calling a few times. I’m sorry I misunderstood.”

“A-Aquilo?”

“Uh, your voice is coming from my chest, not my mind? You have grown since I last saw you, Boy.”

“Uup, let me go, puhaah!” Theodore barely managed to escape from the slender beauty, stepping away from Aquilo with a reddened face.

A few years wasn’t a long time for a dragon who lived for thousands of years, but her welcome was more excited than he had thought it would be. She’d grabbed his neck and buried his face in her chest. The reddening of his face was caused by his breath being blocked, not because of Aquilo’s smell or texture… probably.

“It has been a while. I didn’t know we would be reunited here.”

Aquilo grinned at Theodore’s serious tone. “Really? I knew you would come.”

“What does that mean?”

“From now on, you will know. Our last lord is waiting for you.”

“…Lord?”

Facing Theodore’s wide eyes, the dragon of the sea laughed at him. “Yes, the dragon lord. Don’t you know about it?”

That’s right. It was impossible not to know.

Chapter 344 - Dragon Lord (1)

Dragon lord—using the dictionary meaning, it meant the ‘king’ of dragons. This was unusual for dragons who rarely gathered together.

It was a habit of dragons to nest in an area that wasn’t related to their parents and where there were no peers. A dragon was no longer protected after leaving their parents, but they weren’t commanded by anyone and enjoyed their own life. Even an old dragon couldn’t impose their will on another dragon. A dragon who reached adulthood had no obligation to follow the orders of others. They would have a thoroughly individualistic life.

However, no dragon could disobey the command of the lord. The leader of all dragons was at the peak of the species from the time they were born. In a sense, the lord was a god. Born without parents, growing up without a gender, and then dying without any offspring, the dragon lord deviated from the category of dragons and only showed its power when the material world was in a crisis.

The dragon lord had gold scales that didn’t belong to any clan, and they ruled over the mana of the world, regardless of its nature. As such, the dragon lord was literally the final weapon of this material world.

“…The lord came to this swamp?”

“Yes, if it wasn’t for the lord, would these people lift their heavy asses?” Aquilo placed her left arm around Theodore’s shoulder as she responded to Theodore’s trembling voice. Her cool and smooth skin felt good on his shoulder, but Theodore was concentrated on the dragon lord.

A dragon lord wouldn’t abuse their power on personal affairs. If the records were true, they only acted when there was a crisis that threatened the whole world.

‘It means they didn’t come here lightly.’

Legend had it that the appearance of a dragon lord was enough to gather people from all over the continent. Even Theodore, who could compete with an old dragon, was lacking in comparison. If he had known this would happen, he would’ve saved all his strength.

While Theodore was thinking, Brasmati turned his gaze to Aquilo and growled, “You are still talking nonsense, daughter of Surmidon. You are too old to be a child. Why don’t you have some decency?”

The situation suddenly became uncomfortable. However, rather than apologizing, Aquilo kept talking. She had no hesitation in provoking an opponent she couldn’t win against.

“Since when did our species follow the rules of seniority? Has your brain become ripe from living in the lava? What is behind your dissatisfaction?”

“This damn woman…!”

“Oh, my. How scary.”

Brasmati’s eyebrows twitched as heat flowed from his body and started to melt the ground. The moist ground dried, and the water vapor evaporated. Theodore had seen this a few times with Veronica, but the power controlled by the red dragon was more powerful than Veronica’s draconic state.

‘Damn, why are they arguing like this?’

As the atmosphere between them seemed as if they would fight at any minute, Theodore felt greatly disturbed being between them. He knew Aquilo’s capricious personality, but he didn’t think she would do something so reckless. Theodore looked carefully at the left arm attached to him and stopped breathing as fluorescent eyes appeared right in front of his nose.

“Boy, aren’t you on my side?”

“What?”

“If I fight this jerk, won’t you protect me?”

His nose was ticklish. The distance was so close that his nose touched hers with every word. Theodore’s eyes filled with an unknown excitement, and his breathing had gotten heavy. His body naturally reacted to this, and he realized that the question was a test. Aquilo’s attitude would change depending on how he answered.

However, the strange atmosphere between the two didn’t continue.

“I thought it was too boisterous. Guests have come,” a soft and cheerful voice was heard from the forest.

Brasmati mumbled with an expression like he was chewing a bug, “Erucus.”

It was the name of the green dragon that Theodore had heard of a few days ago. Theodore remembered the information related to him. Erucus lived quietly in the mountains, saved those who were lost, and raised endangered animals. He was a saint compared to Aquilo, who played with pirates and collected treasures, and Brasmati, who was easily enraged.

“A magician on the boundary line, a sword master, and…” Erucus looked at Titania standing behind Theodore, and a liking filled his eyes. “A child of Arv, a high elf. Can I ask your name?”

“T-Titania.”

“I am Erucus. It is nice to meet you.” The dragons of the green clan seemed to have a relationship with the elves since long ago. Erucus looked at Titania with a gaze that was as gentle as a grandfather looking at his granddaughter.

Furthermore, thanks to Erucus’ appearance, the two dragons stepped back from their fight. They weren’t angry enough to fight in this atmosphere. Brasmati settled down and asked Erucus,

“Erucus, where is the lord? Didn’t they accompany you?”

“They are coming. They sent me back first because they have something to check.”

“You can’t stay for a long time on your own?”

“Of course. In order to resist it, conditions of other attributes are needed. The problem is I don’t know what those conditions are.”

The words were confusing, but Brasmati nodded like he understood.

‘The matter won’t be explained until I see the lord.’

Theodore had to wait until the lord came. Erucus spoke with Titania, while Aquilo stuck to Theodore from beginning to end. Only Randolph didn’t have a companion, making him stand awkwardly. Fortunately, the dragon lord appeared quickly. There was a glittering light from the other side of the forest, and the dragons and Theodore’s group looked in that direction. Before they faced the lord, Erucus gave some advice, “The lord is coming. I don’t intend to force our manners on other species, but please don’t act in a rude manner.”

“Yes, I understand.” Theodore nodded. However, the promise was unnecessary from the beginning. The brilliant light wasn’t disturbed at all by the dingy swamp and vegetation.

Theodore couldn’t look directly at the light as his eyes narrowed. ‘Light…? No, this dazzling existence…!’

It wasn’t strange. Theodore had experienced this feeling somewhere before. He soon recalled the golden coffin he had seen in the basement of Lairon. This was a divine light that felt similar to Baldur’s. It was a bit stricter than Baldur’s warm light, but it was proof that the power was far from evil.

Suddenly, the two dragons and Aquilo, who was attached to Theodore’s left arm, bowed down to the light.

“Descendant of Bahamut, I greet the lord.” It was a polite greeting.

Theodore was surprised that the dragons would show formal courtesies, even if it was to their lord. They were a species without a hierarchical relationship, yet they showed such a polite attitude to the lord? As Theodore was blinking with surprise, a childlike voice emerged from the mass of light believed to be the dragon lord, [Stand up.]

The three dragons raised their bodies, then the light scattered, and the shape within became increasingly clear. The light that couldn’t be penetrated by Theodore’s eyes finally revealed the concealed entity. Simultaneously, the six pupils of the three people became bigger.

‘…A kid?’

It was a child who could be a boy or a girl. The child’s golden hair shone like sunlight, and the light from their eyes was also brilliant. This brilliance couldn’t be covered, even in a place with no light.

A gold dragon…

The gold dragon clan was one that didn’t move while looking at the whole world, defending the providence and mana of the world. Nevertheless, the lord had the body of a child that was less than 10 years old. At that time, a voice resonated in the heads of Theodore and the others, [Yes, I am a child. On a human basis, I’m not even 10 years old.]

“What? This voice, don’t tell me?”

[Yes, my vocal organs are still immature, so I can only speak like this. I should’ve said it in advance, I’m sorry.]

“No, rather, you are…”

[That’s right. I'm reading your surface thoughts. If you are uncomfortable, close your eyes. I don’t yet have the ability to consciously read your thoughts.]

Theodore lost his composure with just a few words. For the dragon lord to be able to ignore all barriers and reading the minds of an 8th circle magician, sword master, and high elf… This was a power that could be attributed to divine beings in ancient books.

[‘Ey, I’m not that strong. At a level like yours, I have to face you for at least a minute to read your thoughts in depth. Don’t worry too much. I’m not grown up yet and can’t fight well.]

“…I understand. But did you read our names?”

[Ah! Indeed. I haven’t introduced myself yet.] The gold dragon read Theodore’s intentions and spoke their name with an innocent expression. [I am the dragon lord of the present age, Clipeus. It is a pleasure!]

The dragon lord was different from what Theodore had expected, but he still didn’t relax. If Clipeus’ words were true, then they were still a hatchling. Rather than a proper ability of breadth, they were born with the worship of other dragons and the ability to see a master’s heart. The type of experience they would grow into was unfathomable.

Theodore tried not to shrink back and opened his mouth, “If the lord has read my mind, then you know the reasons why I came here. Right?”

[Well, I guess so. I sent Brasmati to bring you to me.]

“Why? If the dragons here can’t solve it, I can’t imagine what I can do.”

[That is the case if combat force is required. But we shouldn’t fight what is in the center of this swamp. If we don’t resolve it using another method, this world will be in danger.]

Before Theodore could ask, Clipeus read his question and replied, [It is simple, Theodore Miller. I’m not asking for cooperation from a ‘magician’ or the ‘chief tower master.’ I am asking you as the ‘owner of Gluttony.’]

“…You read that from my surface thoughts?”

[Haha, perhaps.] Clipeus laughed innocently after hearing Theodore’s sharp question. Then they looked at Theodore’s left hand. [It has been a long time, Gluttony. How are you?]

As everyone paid attention, a tongue emerged from the palm of Theodore’s left hand. -…Damn lizard, you still can’t read the mood.

The two monsters conversed.

-What did you call me for?

[Don’t you know the story?]

-Damn bastard. You know I can’t say it, yet you are still acting like this…?

[Hihi, think of it as revenge for the old days.]

This time, it wasn’t just the three people in Theodore’s party. Even the dragons didn’t understand what was going on. While everyone was feeling astonished, Clipeus eventually confessed the reason for their presence in the swamp, [Please reseal ‘Sloth.’]

Chapter 345 - Dragon Lord (2)

Titania and Randolph didn't know about this. It was a story that even the headstrong young dragons like Aquilo didn't know. An ancient dragon, Gluttony who was the grimoire from the Age of Mythology, and the grimoire's contractor, Theodore, were the only ones who understood the meaning.

Additionally, the grimoire was one of the Seven Sins. This was a secret hidden in the deepest part of the Age of Mythology, which remained unknown even when the 6th stage seal was released. 'There was a clue from Myrdal.' Theodore's eyes flashed as he recalled an old memory.

[It is because your thoughts are too different.]

-Me?

[That's right, Gluttony. Unlike the other six, you don't pay much attention to the fate of the world. Pride who wants to eat all species, the one who wants to stop the present world, ...]

The rest of Myrdal's words had been stopped by Gluttony's cry, but there were no more powerful candidates. Theodore put aside Pride and Envy that he had defeated, Gluttony that was contracted to him, and Lust that was on the Eastern Continent.

Wrath, Parsimony, and Sloth were the only remaining candidates.

Before continuing with this thought, Theodore intervened in the conversation between the two beings, "Wait."

He knew that the dragon lord was an absurd existence and that this situation was related to one of the Seven Sins. However, Theodore had the right to interrupt the story. Before he got caught up in a story he couldn't afford to be involved in, he had to regain the initiative. "If I am Gluttony's owner, is it okay to proceed with the story without me? Lord."

Erucus's eyes widened and he cried out, "Please refrain from talking, human magician!"

[...No, Erucus. He is right. It is my mistake. Please forgive me rudeness, Theodore Miller.]

"Then please answer my question." After Clipeus acknowledged their mistake, Theodore spoke the questions he had in his mind. It was a clever conversation where he refused to give the initiative to the other party. "What is a dragon lord? If you are less than 10 years old on a human basis, then you are still just a hatchling. If so, it is hard to understand how you know about Gluttony, who is contracted with me."

[Umm... You struck at the core. The contractor of Gluttony is always unique, but you are different.] The serious looking Clipeus smiled bitterly. [I authorize the disclosure of my personal information, Gluttony. You can tell him the information you have recorded about me.]

-Hah, you talk with such benevolence, Gluttony snapped angrily before explaining in a voice only Theodore could hear about the reality of the 'dragon lord' that no one in this world knew. -You did well, User. As you can imagine, the dragon lord isn't an object. It is a defense function of the material world itself.

Gluttony paused before adding more slowly, -It exists in the place where it should be and when it should be. The fact that you encountered it here and in the form of a hatchling is all planned. The dragon lord is a safeguard against the destruction of the physical world.

'...Wait, this doesn't make sense? The world has almost been destroyed several times. Why is it only showing up now?'

-Even if it didn't show up, you overcame it.

'What?' Theodore felt confused.

So, Gluttony explained in a low and calm voice, -The work of a

mortal can escape the plan for harmony in this world. The dragon lord being involved means it needs to intervene to overcome this crisis. And in this situation…

‘It is the end if the dragon lord doesn’t intervene?’

-That’s right. The dragon lord is a tool to block the hole that will be drilled no matter what.

Theodore understood the whole thing and shivered.

It hadn’t appeared when Laevateinn ran wild because it had foreseen that Theodore would defeat Laevateinn, and it hadn’t appeared at the time of ‘Pride’ Superbia’s attack because it had been foreseen that Pride’s purpose would be frustrated. There had been no reason to move with Envy or Nídhöggur because it had foreseen that Elvenheim and Theodore would repel Nídhöggur.

However, the swamp was different. It had summoned all the dragons on the continent to this place and still couldn’t resolve the problem without Theodore’s cooperation. This was the arrival of a global crisis that couldn’t be handled by mortals.

The moment Theodore recognized the situation, Clipeus spoke with an exquisite timing like they had read his mind again. [If you listened to Gluttony’s explanation, you should understand everything. I will explain more the moment you accept our cooperation.]

“…Yes, I understand.”

If Theodore refused, the world would perish. He didn’t have much experience with intimidation or blackmail, but he didn’t mind this one. Theodore was too brave to refuse because of fear, and his sense of responsibility was also high. Clipeus smiled softly with affection that seemed human. [I didn’t think I would see the qualities of a hero from the owner of Gluttony.]

“You’re overpraising me.”

[Will you respect your contractor’s intent, Gluttony? Will you

help me reseal Sloth?]

Gluttony was driven to a corner and gave a long sigh. -I can't give a definite answer until I directly observe it. It wouldn't be impossible if the 6th stage function is used well…

"Yes, the 6th stage."

Clipeus made a curious expression at their words. [Okay. Then let's continue with the story.]

There was no reason to refuse. Theodore nodded, and Clipeus turned toward the three dragons who were making subtle expressions. The three of them followed with puzzled expressions. It was finally time to meet one of the Seven Sins trying to destroy the material world, Sloth.

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Unfortunately, the three dragons were unable to confirm what 'Sloth' was. As they got closer to the center of the swamp, the dragons looked ahead with a serious expression. The three dragons were vigilant against something that could threaten them, but Theodore…

'…I don't feel anything?'

There wasn't even a flicker in the surrounding mana. Theodore walked a few more steps with a strange expression. Then a sharp voice rang out, "Boy, stop there!"

"What?" He was about to take a step when something grabbed onto his shoes. Theodore reflexively moved his right foot backward and felt a terrible pain rising from his toes.

The tip of his toe fell off along with the shoe!

"Ugh!"

He was hurriedly using healing magic when claws sprang up. It wasn't a big wound, but the pain of having his flesh torn was more than he imagined. During this moment in which he faced a threat

that wasn't sensed by his super sensitivity, his alertness soared to the limit.

What would've happened if he had put his head in?

"...W-What?" An unbelievable sight entered Theodore's eyes as he stared at what was up ahead after doing first aid.

His torn flesh was hanging from a claw floating in the air.

[Oh, the warning was too late. The domain has expanded a few meters more than before,] Clipeus mumbled. [This is the domain of Sloth. With your strength, you can take a few more steps. But please don't try it.]

"No, what is this damn space?" Theodore cursed after his toe was torn. The sight of his blood-splattered toe still hanging in the air was too vivid, making him feel nauseous when he saw it.

As a magician, it was impossible for him to not know this phenomenon.

"...Time Stop!"

The former blue tower master, Blundell Adruncus, had been limited to stopping time for a few seconds in a very narrow space. Nevertheless, he had exhausted all of his life and died from the magic. Yet the time of this vast space was stopped...? This was why the dragons were on alert. They wouldn't be able to survive if they were caught up in that power.

-Look in front of you, User.

"In front?"

At Gluttony's low voice, Theodore stopped shouting and looked beyond it.

Then everyone gulped at the sight ahead of them.

A darkness without the concept of color was swallowing the world beyond them. Birds that were flying stopped in midair and the falling leaves didn't move. Any signs of life in the material

world were frozen. The sight of the world stopping around the darkness was truly shocking.

-This is Sloth's unique power, the Cage of Chronos. It causes a time congestion that even light can't escape and freezes the entire world. The power to capture the area regardless of material or non-material—it is the purpose of the stationary collection grimoire, Sloth.

Only then did Theodore complete Mrydal's words. Sloth could stop the existing world itself; it was a grimoire that could end this world forever.

However, the sphere of darkness wasn't darkness. It wasn't dark because there was no light. Instead, it was because the light which entered it didn't emerge. This was a phenomenon that could be seen in a black hole, the ultimate gravitational magic that was only mentioned in the old records.

Then Theodore soon realized why the transcendents had died. If stagnating time was the unique strength of the grimoire, then their cause of death would also be this power.

What would happen if a heart only beat once or twice a year?

What would happen if the electrical signals in a nervous system were slowed by a thousand times?

What would happen if the rate at which the alveoli swelled were reduced to one-tenth?

Even transcendents beyond the limits of life wouldn't be able to hold on. No measures could be taken to combat it, and they would've suffered tens of thousands, maybe even more years of suffering.

Chill. Theodore trembled as he organized the situation in his mind.

'It would be better to die than to experience that.' Theodore barely regained his composure and thought about it. There was no

way he could resist the power that transcendents couldn't. The only thing that could be relied on here was the Seven Sins grimoire, Gluttony.

"Gluttony, is there any way you can destroy or enter the cage?"

-Destruction is impossible. Any attack will stop the moment it enters. Even an attack at the speed of light will require 10,000 years to break through the Cage of Chronos. It is impossible unless it is a power that can destroy a dimension.

"Then is there a way to enter?"

-Ummm... Gluttony normally answered without hesitation, but this time his voice trailed off. The means Gluttony possessed were poor, and Time Stop was too powerful. When it came to the heart of the darkness, Gluttony couldn't do much.

-Um? At that moment, Gluttony made a loud sound. -What? Originally, there shouldn't be a gap... Yet there is a slight gap. It is a gap that can be opened if the condition that is the 'key' is met, like a passage that someone has opened.

"A key? Do you know what the condition is?"

-I don't know that type of thing. I can't see it.

The possible path that was opened had closed again. Theodore and the others sighed. It was at this moment that Titania suddenly cried out from the rear and there was a gust of wind. This wasn't a naturally occurring wind but one with force.

"W-Wait a minute? Geros, why are you suddenly appearing?" Titania couldn't hide her confusion at the appearance of the ancient elemental Geros.

Then at that moment...

[It is time,] Geros spoke in a grandiose voice. [I am a piece of Zephyrus, god of the western wind, who remained in this world according to the will of Prometheus. I have confirmed that all the

conditions are satisfied.]

Thick, long arms extended from the body made of wind. As he spread open his palms, a brilliant light flowed from Geros' hands and shot straight into the darkness beyond them.

[You can enter. Or you don't have to enter,] Geros continued in a voice without any inhalation. His voice was clearly engraved in everyone's ears. [The time has come to turn off the fire of this world.]

TL Note: I double checked and the author definitely used Parsimony instead of Greed in the Seven Sins. I don't know why, but it isn't a translator mistake.

Chapter 346 - Dragon Lord (3)

Theodore couldn't understand the meaning of Geros' words. However, he soon realized that the ancient elemental didn't want them to understand. Geros was just delivering words that Prometheus had left behind in the distant past. After saying the words, Geros' body blurred.

In spite of her great confusion, Titania tried to maintain the summoning. However, despite her efforts, Geros disappeared after delivering the 'key.'

"Geros," Titania muttered blankly as she stared at the empty space.

The ancient elemental that had been with her for maybe dozens of years had a strange story she didn't know about. So, it was natural for her to be shocked. Theodore approached Titania and asked cautiously, "What happened? Why is the ancient elemental you signed with acting like this?"

"I don't know. I tried to summon him again, but he isn't responding to my words. It is as if he is sleeping."

"Titania, if it isn't something you ordered, then it must be an arrangement left behind by the previous contractor…"

Theodore was referring to the former contractor of the ancient elemental Geros, Myrdal Herseim. Clipeus watched the conversation between the two people and stepped forward. It was unknown what clues were found in their conversation, but it was time to move on.

[Gluttony and Theodore Miller. It looks like the situation has changed. Can you look over there?]

"What…" Theodore looked in the direction that Clipeus pointed, and his expression stiffened.

It was because there was a single crack at the center of the Cage

of Chronos where Sloth was located. Although it was difficult to get a sense of the size from this distance, it seemed wide enough to accommodate one or two human-sized creatures.

This was the only way to pass through the darkness.

'No, really?' Theodore couldn't accept his intuition. 'If that passage is a trap, we will be putting our heads in the tiger's mouth. It is hard to move on the outskirts of the time stagnation. Moreover, with the influence in the center…'

There was no way to escape, even for Theodore who could use space magic reasonably well. Strictly speaking, time manipulation corresponded to the upper levels of space manipulation. The possibility of escaping from a region with time stagnation was close to zero.

Even the dragons would inevitably hesitate.

…Except for one being—the dragon lord.

[Go inside.]

"Lord! You don't know what threat might dwell in there!"

[Your words are reasonable, Brasmati. But this threat is the reason why I have appeared in this material world.]

"Perhaps the passage itself is a trap?"

[Well, I don't think so. Isn't that right? Theodore Miller.]

Theodore smiled bitterly since he had come to the same conclusion. "…We can enter or don't enter. This means that our choice isn't important. Whatever we choose, things will happen. It isn't any safer staying here."

[I think so as well. However, we have to assume the worst situation in case we are wrong,] Clipeus added a few things to Theodore's words. [Sword master, you stay here. Your Aura Ability can unnecessarily stimulate time and space.]

"…" Randolph was dissatisfied with the instructions, but

Theodore nodded in agreement.

‘Acceleration’ and ‘Time Stagnation’ were opposing forces, so they could cause some backlash. Randolph simply didn’t have a chance to win against Sloth, who had killed over a dozen transcendents.

Clipeus’ words didn’t end there. [Erucus, Aquilo. You remain here as well. If Brasmati and I don’t come back, you must preserve the dragon species.]

“B-But Lord!”

[I won’t tolerate any objections.]

The dragon lord’s command was absolute. Erucus, who was about to raise objections, immediately closed his mouth. Then Clipeus turned to Titania. She was a high elf who brought great grace to this material world, and Clipeus wanted her to stay here if possible.

“I respect your authority, but I will go with Theodore.” Titania had decided that the moment Myrdal’s name had emerged. “My teacher might be in there. I came to this swamp in order to meet him.”

[...It can’t be helped. I respect your decision, child of the Arv. Brasmati and I, along with you and Theodore Miller, the four of us will enter.]

*

Thus, an expedition was formed. It was an expedition consisting of one human, one high elf, and two dragons, which would be unprecedented in any age. Dragon Lord Clipeus took the lead, followed by the other three. Just like how it had been seen from afar, the path was narrow. It was barely enough for two adults to pass through, so it was impossible for the two dragons to change into dragon form.

“There is a gap, but it is pretty dark inside.”

They were surrounded by an unknown darkness. Theodore summoned a ball of light and looked around. Light magic spread out before them, but the light failed to come back. The landscape where the light disappeared was even more mysterious. Even Brasmati, who was accustomed to ancient mysteries, found it mysterious.

“This is an unpleasant space. Both light and heat are stopped. It is no wonder that idiot Galatea was caught.”

“Galatea?” Theodore questioned the name.

Brasmati replied, “An earth dragon who became an adult 800 years ago. She entered the darkness without waiting for the lord. Now, she is somewhere in this darkness.”

[I wish it was just falling asleep...] Clipeus read the hope in Brasmati’s voice and muttered with a long sigh. [Maybe I can relieve her pain.]

Time was more powerful than anything else. An elf who lived for hundreds of years and a dragon who lived for tens of thousands of years were nothing in front of time. It might be temporary, but a spirit crushed by eternity would be ruined to the point where it couldn’t return to its original state.

Shadows filled Brasmati’s face, but no one could comfort him. So, they moved on. Shortly afterward, the party reached their goal. The four people could move no further down the passage, and a space where time moved normally greeted them. No, it was more appropriate to call it an empty space.

If the darkness of Time Stagnation was water that filled an aquarium, then this space was an air bubble. It was proof that the power of Sloth wasn’t functioning properly. The space which had been created by artificial means would collapse in 30 minutes.

An old man was sitting in an armchair in the middle. They couldn’t see his face because he was turned away, but his white

hair and wrinkles were impressive. However, this was a space that shouldn't exist. Brasmati guarded Clipeus while Theodore and Titania moved forward, but the two of them didn't try to fight the old man.

Once both of them neared, Titania called out before Theodore, "...Teacher?"

The old man sitting comfortably in the chair replied, "Finally, the time has come."

He turned around. With a beard that flowed down like hair and eyes that contained deep depths which anyone who saw it couldn't forget...

Titania's and Theodore's eyes opened wider. As expected, he really was inside. It was the greatest elementalist of the century, Myrdal Herseim!

"It has been a long time," Myrdal continued without caring about their reaction. "I have been waiting so many years for just today... in order to turn off the fire of this age and change my life into a handful of ashes."

"T-Teacher?"

As all types of emotions crossed Titania's face, Myrdal looked at Theodore's left hand with a grim expression.

"Do you understand the plan now, Gluttony?"

In response, a hole opened on the left palm, and Gluttony replied, -I see. You... Did you make a deal with Sloth?

"Yes."

-You used your brain quite well. You are the first to deceive Sloth in such a way, Myrdal Herseim. No, should I call you Prometheus's avatar?

The two beings didn't waste time.

"Call me Myrdal. Now that I've finished my last work, I am no

longer Prometheus' avatar."

-Hah, I see. How much time? When is your end?

Myrdal listened to Gluttony's words distractedly while also looking at Titania. "In the next 15 minutes or so. I can leave my goodbyes."

Emotions appeared on his expressionless mask. The old man emerged and smiled softly. "It has been a while, Titania. My only apprentice. I knew it would be like this, but it is nice to meet you again."

"I feel the same. But Teacher, what are you trying to do?" Fear, confusion, and joy filled Titania's eyes.

Despite reuniting with the person she missed for many years, her intuition made her reluctant to take a step forward. It was because she couldn't help seeing through to the true essence of her wise and affectionate teacher. Titania didn't know what 'Prometheus' avatar' meant, but he was different from the teacher in her memory.

"...Yes, you are right. There is still time left. Our hero must know my will." Myrdal looked at Theodore and then at the ground.

Four chairs of dirt rose up, with the particularly dirty one being in front of Clipeus. Myrdal laughed at the group of strangers. "Sit, Dragon Lord. It is just perfect for you."

"You dare!" Brasmati was outraged and begged Clipeus, "Lord! Please allow me to kill this old man!"

[It isn't possible.] Clipeus was calm despite the provocation. [The center of this space is that old man. If you kill him, we will be eaten by the darkness and drown forever. I don't want to suffer that senseless pain.]

"Hoh, it makes sense. As expected from the dragon lord."

Why was Myrdal acting maliciously toward the dragons,

especially the dragon lord? He didn't actually harm them, but it was obvious from his tone and behavior that there might be something bad between them that Titania and Theodore didn't know about.

Once the two dragons sat down, Myrdal looked at Theodore and started talking, "I want to ask you one thing first. You are now the greatest magician. Do you know 'me'? Not Myrdal, but Prometheus."

"Um..." Theodore thought for a moment about the question. Then he spoke what he had heard from Gluttony and his own investigation, "In the early days of the Age of Mythology, he rejected the ways of the old gods who ruled and handed the first 'fire' to the humans of that time. As punishment, he was cursed with immortality and forced to carry eternal pain. That is all I know."

"Well, it is okay. The story behind it wasn't passed on," Myrdal said, casually overlooking Theodore's words. Then he went on to ask a second question that was difficult for anyone to answer, "Before revealing my identity and purpose, guess what the 'first fire' is. What do you think 'fire' is an expression of?"

Theodore fell silent. However, the silence wasn't because he was trying to figure out the answer. He knew the correct answer from the beginning. The silence was because he was afraid to confirm if it was true. 30 seconds of silence passed by, but they felt like 30 minutes. He couldn't flee forever.

So, Theodore replied, "...It is the power to control mana."

Titania's eyes widened, and the eyes of the dragons sharpened. Meanwhile, Myrdal laughed loudly, "Hahaha! That is correct!"

One of the continent's greatest secrets was revealed.

Chapter 347 - Prometheus Plot (1)

10,000 years ago, during the Age of Mythology, the continent was too threatening for humanity. It was a time when countless monsters, that could tear apart mountains with their natural strength and power, wandered. Humans didn't have the same power as Vulcans or the Arv, making them a lesser species.

There were only two ways for humans to survive. It was to go under a more powerful species and beg for protection or become the slaves of another species. The beginning of humanity in the Age of Mythology hadn't been particularly good. However, there had been one being that recognized the possibilities of the humble species and threw away his life for them.

It was Prometheus, a titan of Olympus.

The giant god, who had been favored by Zeus for having more intelligence than any god, had dared to commit a rebellious act. He had handed untapped power to the mortals, rather than one of the upper species. This was the 'first fire' of humanity.

He had shared with humans the ability to feel and handle mana, the source element of this material world.

「 Look, Prometheus! You broke Olympus' great rule and hastened the chaos of the material world! This is Zeus' order. Prometheus, you will be immortal until you repay the error with your own hands. You will experience the pain of your liver being eaten until that day! 」

When Zeus, ruler of Olympus, became aware of it later, he was greatly enraged and cursed Prometheus. However, Prometheus didn't regret it. In fact, he had known it would be like this from the beginning.

Even the contents of the penalty that Zeus gave him—Prometheus had foreseen it all and was pleased at the thought of

being able to watch humanity's prosperity after this era. The 'first fire' that he had smuggled out would bring about the end of the Age of Mythology.

Human history had come about with the rebellion of a giant god. Of course, there were no big changes in the early days. Humans didn't have the concept of mana and had difficulty building up mana in their bodies, using it in a primitive manner. At first, it had been hard, like creating a fire without coal.

The gods, who had been wary of Prometheus' plan, were glad to see it. Then humans developed it with time.

Mana compressed at high concentrations—this power would be called aura.

A genius whose name was no longer known had come up with the concept of 'aura' and devoted his whole life to proving it. It was a crude feat compared to the later generations, but historically, it was a big step. The days when humans had difficulty dealing with wild beasts alone were forgotten.

The power of the gods, the demons' tricks... The beginning was just an imitation, but someday the same realm would be reached. This imitation was called 'magic.'

A priest of a clan had preached this method, systematically explaining the structure of the world and exploring what direction mana should take. It was something that could be seen in elementary textbooks now, but for the ancient people, this enlightenment had been just like the first fire.

The development of humans after achieving these two powers, aura and magic, was dazzling. It had only been one thousand years.

The two pioneers had spread the knowledge throughout the continent, and humanity threw off the chains around their neck. From a human point of view, it was a long time. However, consider the fact that the lifespan of an Arv was over a thousand years old.

Compared to other species in the Age of Mythology, humanity was developing at an impossible rate.

“Not long after that, transcendents appeared,” Myrdal told this old story with a warm expression. “Humans in those days were more spiritual than modern humans, and the mana concentration in this material world was dozens of times higher. It was a natural phenomenon.”

As transcendents appeared to lead humanity, the concept of ‘nations’ was eventually introduced into humanity’s history. Unlike the upper species in which each individual was powerful, humans were aware of their own weaknesses and cooperated.

There was no caste system, and no gap between the rich and poor. Before the gods, demons, and upper species, humans joined together and lent strength to each other. The first golden age of humanity began like that.

A few generations later, hundreds of transcendents were born. Humans were influential on the continent and faced the upper species and gods on an equal footing. It was a desperate situation for the gods, who weren’t coping with the demons. Fortunately, humans hadn’t forgotten Prometheus’ grace. They allied with the gods and fought a long battle against the demons who invaded this material world from the outside.

It had been the beginning of the ‘struggle’, the biggest turning point in the Age of Mythology.

“...Hrmm, I won’t explain what happened next. It is a history that isn’t related to my story.”

“Sigh...”

Myrdal let out a long breath after speaking so many words, and the breathless Theodore barely remembered to breathe. Even Theodore, who knew more secrets than anyone else in the magic tower, was struck breathless from what he heard in these 10

minutes. It was because all of the deeply hidden secrets of humanity's history had come pouring out at once.

'The starting point of humanity was the rebellion of a giant god. He is still on this continent and watching us…'

This summarized everything. The rest of the contents were worthwhile but held no meaning in the present situation.

Theodore arranged the information in his head before talking to Myrdal, who seemed to be waiting for something. The story wasn't long, but he could tell that this old man was similar to Gluttony. Myrdal was the type of person who answered a question with another question.

"What does it mean to turn off the fire? Do you plan to take away the ability to handle mana from humanity?"

Myrdal nodded. "Correct. Humans can now live without relying on mana. I became the host of Sloth for this moment and sucked up the mana of the continents for thousands of years."

"…The mana of the continents, don't tell me?!"

"Gluttony is aware of it. The mana concentration of this material world is gradually falling. Dragons will no longer be born, and the gaps between dimensions will soon close. There are fewer magic and aura users becoming transcendents."

Brasmati made a menacing face when he heard that no more dragons would be born. However, Myrdal just laughed at him without changing his expression.

Then he clapped and said loudly, "Isn't it the perfect plan? Until the day that they gain the power to explore outside this star, humanity can prosper without fear of destruction. Gods, demons, or dragons… No existence can threaten them. This is the plan that I, Prometheus, completed."

Theodore was speechless at the absurd story. Meanwhile, Clipeus made a bitter expression. [Complet…ed. It is already done.]

“You know. The moment you appeared in this form, I knew that the world had embraced my plan.”

[I wouldn’t have appeared as a hatchling if I was supposed to stop you. The material world is finally done with my species.]

As it was mentioned earlier, the dragon lord was the defense mechanism of this material world. If Prometheus’ plan was to bring ruin to this material world, then Clipeus would appear in the form of an ancient dragon and demonstrate a power that could destroy even Sloth.

However, the material world provided him with the form of a hatchling. It was a form that couldn’t interfere with Prometheus’ plan, but it could still help with any threats. The world preferred Prometheus’ plan over the conservation of dragons.

“This is the last gamble, arrogant species. But I will pay homage to those who have preserved the material world for all these years. Do your duty until the end.”

[No matter what you say, I will do so,] Clipeus replied with a resigned expression.

Then Myrdal looked at Titania, who still didn’t understand the situation. Myrdal had remained in this world as Prometheus’s avatar in order to ensure his plan worked. He had stopped by Meltor’s magic towers and left his knowledge, as well as a fragment of his memory at the world tree. However, this wasn’t the reason why he accepted a child as his disciple.

“Titania.” Myrdal had lived for over a thousand years and become familiar with pretending to be human. Now, he was shaking off his last lingering attachment. “I know your heart but I can’t accept. I am a puppet who moves according to Prometheus’ will. I’m not brave enough to be responsible for your life. I didn’t even have the courage to leave you until you were an adult.”

“T-Teacher?”

“Leaving Geros to you as well as a message to that young man were all planned. But...” The tool who only followed commands spoke his mind, “Be happy Titania.”

Originally, all of the world trees needed to be burned in order to lower the mana concentration. More than half the high elves would be killed. It would be easy if he intended to do that. However, Myrdal couldn’t do it. He denied his instincts and changed his plan.

As Titania made a pained expression, Myrdal turned toward the young man. “Theodore Miller.”

The young man who was the protagonist of Prometheus’ plan, a just and excellent magician who didn’t stop moving forward—it wasn’t an exaggeration to say that there were no other humans in the current world who could become transcendent. No, in fact, Theodore might reach a higher level after transcendence.

So, what choice would he make?

“There are five minutes left. I will stop the Cage of Chronos. Ban Sloth from this world and protect the future of humanity.”

Everything was useless now. Myrdal raised his palm with the last of his strength. He couldn’t interfere in ordinary space usually, but in this place, he was like a god. The moment that Theodore opened his mouth to reply, Myrdal’s space magic wrapped around the four people.

Surrounding by the stillness of nothing, the old man muttered, “...Is it finally the endgame? I’m sadder than I thought.”

It was the time for Myrdal Herseim’s long story to come to an end.

*

Flash!

A group of people suddenly appeared in the air, but the four of

them weren't confused or upset. Theodore, Titania, and the two dragons realized their surroundings were familiar as they descended to the ground. It was the point where they had separated with the rest of the group before entering the Cage of Chronos.

"Theodore?"

"Boy!"

"Oh, Lord! You're safe!"

Randolph's, Aquilo's, and Erucus' voices rang out respectively. They wanted to rejoice at the reunion, but Theodore couldn't afford it. According to Myrdal, the remaining time was five minutes. They had to overcome Sloth and find a way to expel it out of this material world.

[Theodore Miller.] Clipeus came to the same conclusion and looked at Theodore. [Is there a way to expel Sloth as outlined by Myrdal? Even if the Cage of Chronos is released, I don't think the Seven Sins grimoire will take it lying down. Maybe it will trigger a powerful defense.]

"Umm… I think so as well."

[Please tell me if you need anything. In the name of the dragon lord, I will give every support possible.]

Clipeus' words lifted Theodore's hesitation. It was impossible for a magician of the 8th circle to expel a grimoire like Sloth from this world, but it might be possible if he used the stage six function as Gluttony said previously. Theodore guessed that if he used the sixth stage ability properly, he would be able to exert a mythical-level strength. With that, it would even be possible to destroy the Cage of Chronos or expel Sloth.

However, there was a problem.

-Do you know, User? You only have 1,280 achievement points. It isn't enough to use the function.

A huge amount of achievement points was needed. Theodore was reminded of this fact and looked around at the dragons with a serious expression. They were a species with a powerful instinct to collect treasures. Even a young dragon like Aquilo had a pile of treasures. So, then what about the older dragons? They wouldn't hold back if the lord ordered them to.

Thus, Theodore could say it, "I'm not the one who needs it. It is Gluttony."

[What do you mean?]

At Clipeus' naive expression, Theodore let out a long sigh. "Take out all the magic worthy treasures or artifacts that you have. They should be at least of the rare quality."

The dragons looked dumbfounded.

Chapter 348 - Prometheus Plot (2)

[‘Ancient Kingdom’s Sword’ has been consumed. The amount of magic power it contains is large.]

[‘Glory’s Armored Ring’ has been consumed. The amount of magic power it contains is large.]

[‘Draconic’s Buckler’ has been consumed. The amount of magic power it contains is huge. It interacts with Aquilo’s Blood and the efficiency of the absorption is doubled.]

[‘Sage’s Orb’ has been consumed. The amount of magic power it contains is huge.]

[……]

Dozens, hundreds of artifacts entered Theodore’s left hand through the open hole. The four dragons, three to be precise when excluding Clipeus, made pained expressions because of the sacrifice. These were relics and treasures which would be preserved in museums of the present age. The dragons watched their treasures, of which the values couldn’t be calculated, be consumed with a devastated expression.

“B-Boy. The necklace that I’ve saved…”

Despite the beauty’s begging eyes, Gluttony’s tongue swallowed the necklace without hesitation. Aquilo sat on the floor like a broken puppet and stared into space with empty eyes. Brasmati and Erucus couldn’t escape the suffering either.

“Aaaah! You are absorbing all of them, human!” Brasmati screamed at losing the fortune he had gathered for thousands of years, while Erucus made a grim smile.

They would’ve kept some of their precious treasures hidden, but the promise Clipeus made was an absolute force that applied to all dragons. Their bodies would release all of the treasures, even if they didn’t want to.

‘Surely I won’t become enemies with the dragons because of this…?’

They were the strongest species… Theodore didn’t think those who defended the material world would have such a narrow mindset, but the expressions on the dragons’ faces were really terrible. There was no guarantee that Erucus, the green dragon who wasn’t known for being greedy, wouldn’t hold a grudge. However, Theodore had no other choice.

‘Gluttony, how many points do I have?’

-335,000 points. It is possible to do it maybe once.

‘Only one attempt is possible with 335,000 points. It is the worst.’

Once his achievement points reached the appropriate value, Theodore stopped eating, then he looked at the summoning conditions of ‘that person.’ Gluttony wanted to clear out the remaining property of the dragons, but it wasn’t the one who would bear the grudge of the dragons. Since there was only less than 20% left, it wouldn’t be a big help anyway.

So, Theodore said, “Okay, I can do it somehow.”

As soon as Theodore spoke, the dragons moved the remaining treasures into their spaces at lightning fast speed. He wondered what would happen if he asked them to bring the treasures back. Clipeus looked at them and sighed. [It looks like everything is ready. Is there nothing more we can do to help you?]

“No, this is enough.”

The 330,000 points were even more than what he gained from swallowing Jerem’s Tartarus a few days ago. Nevertheless, the points could only be used once. Gluttony’s 6th stage function had a high potential, but a corresponding cost needed to be paid. In retrospect, Theodore had wondered about it since the time that the Hall of Fame was opened.

Was it possible to call the souls directly using the achievement

points at the sixth stage? This hypothesis was verified with the sixth stage.

“Request for Evocation.”

There was a message in response to Theodore’s words.

[The A-Rank Evocation is invoked.]

[Please speak the name of the target.]

It was the strongest figure that required 330,000 points to be called. Theodore hesitated before calling his name, “Simon Magus.”

Simon Magus had been the magician who established the system of Gnosticism. He had challenged the trails of the 10th circle and lived a glorious life as a transcendent at the apex of the Age of Mythology, when all types of monsters had roamed around.

In the past five years, Theodore had spoken to a number of transcendents and made great strides through their advice. However, he hadn’t been able to even talk Simon Magus. The reason for that was very simple.

[Are you sure you want to open ‘Simon Magus’? 163,210 points will be consumed to awaken this soul.]

A huge amount of achievement points disappeared at once, and Theodore was able to see a light appearing around the portrait hanging in the Hall of Fame. It was an opportunity that had come unintentionally, but he could finally wake up one of the greatest magicians of the Age of Mythology.

Simultaneously, the 6th stage function, Evocation, was triggered.

[Simon Magus has been summoned to this material world.]

Shortly afterward, the light of an unknown character poured out from the hole in Theodore’s left hand. No, it probably wasn’t light. It was a higher level of power flow that living things couldn’t recognize. Only the dragon lord, Clipeus, could detect the shadow

of a human in the light.

“—Urgh.” There was no need to wonder who made the noise.

With the exception of Clipeus, everyone stepped back in fear of the unknown shadow. Even the dragons who could erase a mountain with a single breath felt crushed by the pressure on them as if gravity had increased by several times. A few seconds later, the light cleared away.

“The air is stuffy. I’m glad I wasn’t born in this age.” It was a cold voice. Simon Magus, the person who reappeared in the material world after thousands of years, turned to Theodore who called him. His gaze was filled with annoyance. “Hey, talk.”

“…Simon Magus?”

“Did you call me to ask me that? If so, I will return.” Simon Magus turned around.

Theodore cried out anxiously, “I-I need a spell of banishment from this dimension!”

“Hoh?” Simon Magus’ eyes narrowed, and he turned back. “This is a spell that no one uses, and there isn’t much need for it, so it was buried. Why?”

“I need to banish a grimoire from this world.”

“Hmm?” Simon Magus’ eyes shone as he saw the Cage of Chronos that was slowly starting to disappear. This was a magician who had been at the height of the Age of Mythology. “It is Sloth. It has gathered an enormous amount of mana. Did it suck up the continent’s mana for thousands of years? If it explodes, a hole will be blown in this dimension. You want to expel it from this dimension?”

To think that Simon Magus pierced through this matter with one glance…? Theodore thought it was ridiculous, and his mouth dropped open. While the rest of the people were drowned out by Simon Magus’ presence, Clipeus alone walked forward and spoke,

[Do you know what kind of changes will occur to this world if you banish Sloth?]

“The constantly circulating mana will leak in large quantities, and you will become extinct. It is already an inevitable fate. Accept it, Dragon King.”

[...I know. I just wanted to hear you say it.]

Just like what Gluttony said about inheriting old memories, Simon Magus and Clipeus knew each other. However, their relationship didn’t seem intimate.

Simon watched Sloth for a moment before speaking to Theodore, “Dimensional Banish will take about 10 minutes to expel the target. With your remaining achievement points, Dimensional Banish can only be used once. If I participate in combat or suffer a direct blow, my summoning ma may be cancelled. Be careful.”

Theodore was embarrassed by the one-sided words and asked carefully, “No, it will take 10 minutes?”

“From the beginning, it wasn’t a magic made for combat. It was magic designed for dealing with engineering wastes. The cost was a lot cheaper to blow them up through the atmosphere. The problem was that I drilled a hole in the dimensional plane.”

“Ugh.” It was a horrible side effect. Theodore didn’t need to ask why Dimensional Banish had gotten buried.

Simon Magus fell silent while looking at the Cage of Chronos, as he no longer had anything to say. Theodore gathered the dragons, and the two people together to prepare for battle. Yet there was one question that couldn’t be resolved. After the Cage of Chronos ended, what method would Sloth use to interfere with them?

However, that question was quickly answered.

*

Someone spoke, “It is starting.”

Five minutes after Myrdal warned them, the Cage of Chronos wrapped around Sloth started to collapse. The darkness collapsed like melted chocolate. This darkness that didn't allow a single light to exist slowly diminished in size, eventually shrinking to the size of a small carriage. Perhaps this mass of darkness was Sloth's body.

'What will it use to try and stop us?'

He didn't dare underestimate the power of the Seven Sins. Pride and Envy were both monsters that he didn't want to face again. After all, Theodore himself was the owner of Gluttony. If he were an ordinary magician, he would avoid fighting with Gluttony's contractor. As part of the Seven Sins, it was clear that Sloth would have a trump card to overturn this situation.

Crack. Unsurprisingly, his super sensitivity started ringing in alarm.

"...What?" Titania's fingers twitched as she stared into the darkness without blinking.

It was because four unknown lumps had fallen from the unmoving darkness that was Sloth. At first, their shapes were ambiguous, similar to mud or shadows. However, as the outline became clearer, the presence of the shadows was revealed.

-This is an impressive last hurrah. Don't die, User, Gluttony advised, having noticed their identity before anyone else. -They are the transcendents that Sloth has collected. They are just empty shells without souls, but their combat power is still a threat.

"What? Then we have to deal with four transcendents?"

As they heard Theodore's words, the faces of Theodore's companions stiffened. Grandmasters—they were monsters born in the body of a mortal but had surpassed their limits. One of them could demonstrate fighting abilities equal to those of a dragon, and now Theodore and his companions had to face four of them!

"One piece of advice should be fine," Simon Magus spoke as he

was creating a magic circle. “Dragon King, take the one in the rear. All of you can handle the rest. If possible, don’t come near me.”

[I understand.]

There was no more time to explain. Clipeus nodded as the four shadows finished looking human. There were swords in some of their hands, and the armor around them looked real. Their terrifying presence that one’s shook skin was evidence of their transcendence.

“—They’re coming!”

It took literally a moment.

Kwarururung!

Two of the transcendents flew faster than the speed of sound, only for Brasmati and Erucus to confront them and push them in the opposite direction. It was in order to fight as far as possible for Simon Magus, who was casting Dimensional Banish.

[I’ll leave the remaining one to you.] Clipeus also decided their opponent.

As Simon Magus advised, Clipeus targeted the transcendent at the rear. Clipeus’ dragon body was much smaller than the other two dragons. However, that didn’t diminish the power of their breath.

————————————————————!!!

Light poured from the mouth of the small golden dragon. No one could escape the speed of their breath, and the transcendent was blown a few kilometers away. Despite this, Clipeus hurriedly pursued the transcendent as there was a chance that it might escape.

“…Damn.”

Finally, a magician with glassy eyes remained. Theodore, Randolph, Titania, and Aquilo faced him. They had enough power

to wipe out some kingdoms, but the scale of power tilted toward their opponent. The opponent was a magician who reached the level of transcendence—a 9th circle magician.

The moment a black staff appeared in the hands of the mysterious magician, Theodore instinctively shouted, “Scatter—!”

Shortly after that, the space where the four of them were standing shattered.

Chapter 349 - Prometheus Plot (3)

‘Space magic!’

The space was broken without the enemy uttering one syllable. Space magic ignored normal defenses and could cause a fatal wound with just a light scratch, and this was at least at the level of an 8th circle killing magic! The tips of Theodore’s bangs were cut off the moment he warned his colleagues, causing his spine to turn cold. If he had delayed for even a few more seconds, his head would be gone.

However, Theodore regained his composure and shouted loudly, “Aquilo! Don’t transform! You will die as soon as you become a dragon!”

Common sense dictated that it was absurd, but his judgment was correct. Dragon bones were surrounded by scales even stronger than mithril, but they couldn’t overcome the magic that directly interfered with space. In particular, the enemy magician was a monster who had reached the 9th circle and could easily overcome a dragon’s magic resistance. If Aquilo took the form of a dragon, she would just be an easy target.

“I understand! I will trust you this time, Boy!”

It was unknown if the pride and arrogance of the dragons would allow them to follow Theodore’s instructions, but Aquilo was different. She had realized her limitations during the fight against Pride and that Theodore’s power surpassed her. Several compressed water beads appeared around Aquilo as she prepared to fight in human form, firing compressed water at extremely high pressures.

Kakiing.

However, there were one person who switched to attack mode quicker than she did.

“Showing a gap in front of me, what an idiot!” Randolph accelerated so fast that his body was a blurry afterimage, while the light of aura from his two blades stretched out like a comet tail. Exceeding the speed of sound, Randolph’s swords swallowed up the enemy.

Clovis Two Swords Style.

Special Hidden Meaning Technique.

Thunder Claws.

It was Randolph’s perfect deadly blow. The whirlpool of blue aura maintained its momentum, not leaving a single piece of flesh behind. This was different from five years ago. Randolph had perfected his family’s swordsmanship since then, and his speed had more than doubled. If he concentrated his aura, he could even cut mithril.

‘…What?’

However, the sensation under his hand was strange. It felt lighter than a thin piece of wood, like air—

“Randolph!” Theodore’s voice awakened him.

Jeeeong!

A merciless shockwave blew Randolph body far away. If he hadn’t blocked reflexively, he might’ve died from just one blow. As blood ran down his throat, Randolph floated through the air and realized his mistake. Transcendence—he had forgotten what this name meant in reality.

‘Damn, it would be a disgrace to die like this.’

The magician was aiming his staff at Randolph, who had yet to land on the ground and whose aura was still shaky. It was impossible for him to defend against or avoid this blow. The reaper’s scythe was aiming at his neck. It was at this moment that…

Pipipipiping! The tip of the staff was shaken by arrows that came at it from every direction. Titania had covered for Randolph from the rear. The transcendent stopped trying to kill Randolph and aimed at Titania instead.

“□□□□,” the transcendent muttered a word, and the arrows that could pierce through walls of steel turned toward their owner.

Complex magic that combined both distortion and refraction was completed in an instant! Titania started evasive maneuvers in response, while Theodore measured the capabilities of the enemy transcendent after seeing these spells. The spells drove Randolph into a corner and completely neutralized the projectiles. This wasn’t even the full extent of the enemy’s abilities. Monster was the only word that would emerge to describe their enemy.

‘He avoided Randolph’s aura by expanding the space. Shortly afterward, he shrank the space and created a shockwave. The magic that reflected the arrow is a higher application method that makes all physical forces flow in the reverse direction… I can’t beat him with space magic.’

Even if it was Orta with his magic eyes, there was no reason to fight a magician in the same field that they had already reached the peak. Theodore envisioned a few strategies in an instant and delivered a message to Aquilo. The two of them were connected by blood, so they were able to communicate at high speeds.

[Okay, I will attempt what you said,] Aquilo responded.

Unlike Randolph, who had just started to stand up, and Titania, who was avoiding the arrows she fired, Aquilo had room to move. The beads floating around her headed in one direction, and the transcendent looked back as he sensed them. However, Aquilo’s attack was quicker.

Piiiiiik.

The eight beads shot forward as water jets. It was an attack

method that exceeded Randolph's swords and Titania's arrows when it came only to speed. Several years ago, Theodore had almost been killed by this water jet when he first met Aquilo.

32 jets of water shot out almost simultaneously, aiming for the space where the arrows had been shot.

"□□□."

At that moment...

Wuuuong...!

Even so, Aquilo's attack was blocked. There was no time to reflect them, but the water jets coming from all directions were blocked. It was a simple response to an attack that was several times faster than the speed of sound, as well as proof that a surprise attack wasn't enough to put him in the wrong spot.

"No, you thought you blocked it." However, Aquilo ridiculed him as if she had foreseen this situation.

The 'real attack' wasn't the water jets. A blue dragon's true power was their absolute dominance over the 'moisture' that existed in this material world. The water jet was Aquilo's favourite technique, but she had other ways to attack when it came to just killing.

After all, no creature could survive without water.

Dehydration—the water stream that stopped at the transcendent's body faded, and the water dried up without leaving a drop. It was the method Blundell had used to kill Theodore a few times during Abe no Seimei's test a few years ago. Dehydration dried up all the water in the body, making creatures die instantly.

Wuuong!

One or two seconds passed by. The transcendent's flesh outside his robes split like rice paddies. It was then that he realized the seriousness of the situation and jumped through space. His soul

wasn't present, so his body moved instinctively. Theodore used precise timing to grasp the fatal weakness of the magician. He read the destination of the space movement and cast a special magic at the coordinates before the enemy arrived.

「Rise, imaginary fingers! 」

'Order!' It was the trick Theodore had learned from the warlock, Jerem. The Order, based on the power of Dragon Words, inflated Theodore's magic power by several times. The original Eternal Prison (Aeternum Carcerem), a high-level shadow spell, required five seconds to cast.

Once the transcendent finished his space movement...

「 Lock on for eternity, swallow it in your stomach! 」

Theodore's hands came in contact with each other, and the shadows under his feet crossed like steel bars. It was dimension magic that space magic couldn't interfere with.

Like ordinary shadows, they had no physical force, and once the target was completely confined, there was no way for them to get out of it. Although it might be possible with ultimate magic, Gluttony didn't think that was possible in this situation.

-Once the soul is worn, the ultimate magic can't be used. Using the soul as the key, that is the ultimate magic that dominates the world. An empty shell without an ego can't challenge that area.

A transcendent who couldn't use ultimate magic had their power halved. Thus, Theodore decided to fight. Based on the average magic power, Theodore was above an average 8th circle magician, and he still had three colleagues with him.

'Of course, it would be best if he spent the 10 minutes in this prison...' Theodore stared at the gradually diminishing 'Eternal Prison.'

The attribute of light was one which could never coexist with shadows. However, there was a dim light on the wall of shadows. It

was around 1 centimeter in diameter. It was a hole was that difficult to fit a finger through. The hole was only narrow enough for breathing, but Theodore smiled bitterly. '…Well, I thought it would be like this.'

The enemy might not be sane, but a transcendent was a magician who had crossed the limits of existence, touching the 9th circle. Perhaps he used instincts to find a way out of this shadow prison. He wasn't an opponent that would be blocked by something like this.

Theodore felt Randolph return behind him as he concentrated his senses.

"Be prepared. He is coming out soon."

"Yes."

Speaking was too slow in a real fight between masters. Their lives would be cut off several times before they could even speak the signal words. Therefore, Theodore and Randolph remained silent and concentrated hard enough that the powers of the two masters could serve as senses.

'Ah.'

Shortly afterward, the strike came.

Paijijik.

Theodore's supersensitivity cried out as his body flashed with a blue light. Using lightning, he momentarily pushed past Randolph's acceleration. The moment that a shadow popped out of the one-centimeter hole that was too narrow for an adult male body to pass through…

Fairy Dance's Direct Transmission.

Four Major Hidden Techniques.

Rain like an Axle.

Theodore's lightning fist scattered dozens of after-effects as they

landed on the transcendent, who showed no signs of blocking them.

Kwarururung!

The second hidden technique used one's fists. The power of one punch exceeded the level of 6th circle attack magic, and it was equal to Aquilo's water jet in terms of speed. A shockwave spread through the surroundings with a loud thunderous sound. It was a perfect surprise attack.

'What?' However, Theodore was the only one who felt surprised. 'Not one of them hit...?'

It was a different situation from when the transcendent avoided Randolph's sword. Rather than expanding the space, he bent it sideways and twisted it in all directions. Some of Theodore's blows lost strength by bumping against each other, and a few shot out in random directions.

The more surprising thing was that the origin of the space distortion was the staff in the transcendent's hand!

"Randolph! This bastard... close combat match is possible for him..." Theodore understood the situation at once and moved one step closer to the nameless transcendent.

Puhak!

No, it just seemed like a step. A common 'gap' was meaningless for a guy who could stretch and shrink space like a rubber band. The outstretched staff struck Theodore before swinging back and hitting Randolph's wrist. Despite two attacks, the sound only came out once.

"Kuk!"

"T-This!"

It was an experience similar to when he fought Zest Speitem, 2nd Sword of the empire. After the space was cut down, the two

masters felt a terrible feeling go down their spines. The transcendent continued to hold his staff expressionlessly. Nothing could be felt from him. His martial art was just efficient movements of the body.

However, space magic was added, and any gaps disappeared. What type of magician trained to the level of a master in melee combat?

-You are spitting in your own face, User.

'Shut up,' Theodore snapped at Gluttony who couldn't read the mood and used his lightning again.

A high-speed attack wasn't the answer. The duration had increased considerably over the years, but the consumption of magic power wasn't negligible. It was best to buy time with the recovered Randolph. In addition, both Aquilo and Titania were still alive.

-Let me ask you something. As I have said before, in the old days, humanity had much better spiritualities and physical abilities. It was an era when a monster would destroy a hill with a single fist. There will be magicians who are used to close combat.

'Indeed, there would be those type of magicians.'

It might not be explored properly, but if a magician who dealt with space magic, as well as his own hands and feet, was this powerful... What was the use of martial arts against a person who could change the distance or pull the enemy in front of them?

Grandmasters at the apex would laugh at this. However, Theodore and Randolph were still a long way from confronting it. But...

"Well, isn't it just ultimate self-defense?"

Any attempt to move through space was blocked by Theodore. However, if the transcendent ran away on both feet, he wouldn't be able to beat Randolph's and Theodore's movements. It was

perfect as long as they didn’t put their bodies in the range of the space shredding.

They would use the tactic of range to defeat the magician. As a great being once said, transcendents who allowed enemies to approach were rare. Once the pattern of melee combat style with space magic was detected, it wasn’t unbeatable.

“□□□□.” The problem came from the transcendent who recognized this crisis. “□□□, □□□□□.”

The transcendent’s expressionless face distorted slightly, and light of an unknown color emerged from the staff in his hand. Then…

Kiiiiing!

The world turned black and white, while Randolph’s and Theodore’s bodies and spirits froze. Due to being at the 8th circle, Theodore wasn’t completely stopped and struggled to break through this crisis.

‘Time magic? Moreover, this phenomenon is… Don’t tell me—!’

It was possible, although he wanted to deny the reality. Time magic had the top compatibility with space magic, and it was possible for a transcendent who trained in space magic to use time magic. However, time magic was usually in the ultimate magic realm, so Theodore had been sure the opponent wouldn’t be able to use it.

“□□□□□, □□…” In the black and white world where everything was stopped, the free transcendent muttered strange words alone. It was a considerable burden to use this ultimate magic, and the transcendent couldn’t keep his balance.

Theodore couldn’t understand the meaning of the words, but he sensed it.

‘I have to break this Time Stop somehow!’

Within the stopped world of black and white, Theodore's blue eyes flashed once. In a way, this was his first challenge against ultimate magic.

Chapter 350 - Prometheus Plot (4)

Fortunately, this Time Stop wasn't complete. Theodore was facing the 'wall' of the 9th circle, but if this were a complete ultimate magic, his mind would've already stopped working.

Theodore put his strength into moving his finger but soon changed his mind. Unlike his mind, the nervous system of his body had completely stopped. It was impossible and had nothing to do with his effort.

'I need to make the breakthrough with my magic.'

In order to overcome this situation, he had to break the transcendent's Time Stop with his magic. A non-transcendent was trying to break the ultimate magic...?

Any magician would answer that it was impossible to succeed. It was the same for Theodore. Even if this Time Stop was incomplete, it was still the ultimate magic. Randolph was already neutralized, while Titania and Aquilo were outside the sphere of influence and couldn't intervene.

Time magic was defined as the ultimate magic for a reason.

"□□□□...! □□□...!" The voice of the transcendent, who had been crying out like a madman, became thinner. His shaking body was gradually calming down.

'Damn, there is no time.' The transcendent would kill Theodore the moment this magic stopped. There was an illusion that Theodore's hair was bristling as he accelerated his thinking desperately.

Neither one minute nor one second could be wasted. He gave up on all meaningless hypotheses and concentrated on breaking the ultimate magic.

Elemental magic was removed from the options, along with summoning magic. He couldn't summon anything in a space

where time was stopped, and he would be interrupted before he could chant a few words. His priority was to get out of the area of Time Stop.

Pajijik.

At this moment, a very small light appeared inside Theodore's skull. It was a faint and weak electric current that he wouldn't have been able to feel if it wasn't for this situation. One second later, his super sensitivity screamed.

—It was coming!

Theodore didn't know what it was, but he pulled out the three defense spells he had kept in reserve.

Block of Space.

Force Decline.

Shield - Impenetrable Wall.

They consisted of an 8th circle magic, Seimei's shamanism, and a single wall of defense. These were enough to stop even a dragon's breath. Then suddenly, a terrifying shockwave ripped through Theodore's barrier.

————————————————!!

The world was cut off.

'Time, acceleration, space compression...? They've all been inflated at once!'

It was concentrated on the area within one meter around Theodore, and the shockwave caused him to fly kilometers back into the swamp. The word 'destruction' was insufficient to describe the devastation. The surface was cut, the trees were slashed, and the air had evaporated.

Theodore returned a few beats later and looked at the destructive power of this blow. He couldn't block it twice. If he hadn't realized that Time Stop was being released, he wouldn't be alive right now.

Moreover, if he hadn't prepared magic in advance or if he didn't have his super sensitivity... Just lacking one of these elements would've killed him. Theodore analyzed the situation with cold eyes.

Fortunately, he had survived. Then what about Randolph?

"Theo! I'm fine!"

Theodore discovered Randolph dozens of meters away and sighed with relief. 'Phew, the emergency escape magic circle seems to have worked properly.'

The escape magic circle was inscribed on Randolph's sword just in case of an unknown situation. It was a magic circle that performed a Teleport to a random space when there was enough power to instantly kill the person. Unlike Theodore, Randolph didn't have a means to stop the shockwave.

The problem was what came next. It was fortunate that Time Stop was released just before the attack—

"Hmm?"

No, that was wrong. Theodore looked back and his guess changed. It was a guess based on what the transcendent showed so far.

"Time Stop can't be used in conjunction with attack magic...?"

The spark in his head just before the shockwave arrived had obviously been him sensing his lightning. Accelerating his thoughts with magic and Memorize had saved him. He hadn't noticed it when he had been desperately using the spell, but he could see it now in hindsight.

"□□□! □□, □□!" The transcendent pointed the staff at him crazily and screamed out a strange grief. It wasn't magical or meaningful. The wisdom that remained in the old body and traces of the soul had become tangled up and unclear.

Looking at the transcendent grimly, Theodore organized his thoughts. It wasn't a perfect solution, but he envisioned a method to cope with Time Stop.

"Randolph! Stand as far as possible with the other two!"

"What? But..."

There was no time to explain. The transcendent was in an unstable state and could use Time Stop at any moment. After Time Stop, aside from Theodore, all of his colleagues would become helpless. With Theodore looking at him silently, Randolph processed the instructions with tight lips, "Tch, understood! Be careful!"

However, Randolph could tell that there had been an unrecognized attack and then he had appeared in a place that was dozens of meters away. He would've died if it hadn't been for Theodore's magic circle. His help would just be a burden to Theodore. So, Randolph moved away, and Theodore was finally left in a one-on-one situation.

'It looks like the transcendent has set me as the priority. It is fortunate.'

It would be an unpredictable melee if the transcendent chased Randolph as it wasn't possible for Theodore to protect his three colleagues, who were defenseless after the variable called Time Stop appeared. Nevertheless, Theodore's chances weren't high.

An imperfect transcendent and a mortal close to it... The difference wasn't something that could be jumped beyond with luck.

"If you can win, fight. If you can't win, don't fight."

It was a foolish way of living life. Clearly, he hadn't committed to a modest way of life after passing through Seimei's test. Theodore's eyes glowed as he prepared to win. "Come, I will end your pain!" The transcendent pointed out with his staff as if in

response to Theodore's provocation.

Kiiiiing!

Once again, the world became black and white. It was Time Stop targeted at both the transcendent and Theodore. Theodore wasn't a transcendent and was fine mentally, while the transcendent's reaction speed was slowed. However, Theodore had already experienced this deadlock.

Memorize.

Then he triggered a magic one beat late.

Forced Harmonization.

Astral Plane Walker.

It was his first attempt to harmonize with shadow magic!

Susususk.

The shadow rising from his foot spread throughout his whole body. He was wrapped entirely in black, not allowing a single ray of light to reach him. It was a shadow in a human shape that didn't feel three-dimensional. This was the moment that a senior magician overcame physical limits by harmonizing with shadow magic.

"...Success?" Theodore realized that his mouth moved and knew that his hypothesis was correct.

The negative dimension connected to the imaginary world wasn't influenced by time stopping. Of course, if it were just a shadow, then it would be stopped since the light didn't move. However, Theodore mixed with the shadow could move at will.

He wasn't helpless like before.

"□□□□....?" The transcendent muttered in confusion as it struggled with the phenomenon he couldn't understand. However, Theodore was different. The shadow body moved according to his will.

Peeok! He smashed against the transcendent, who had yet to grasp what happened.

‘I can’t use magic in this state, but it doesn’t matter!’

It was different from when he used shadow magic. Theodore assimilated with the negative dimension and lost the right to use the mana of the material world for a short time. Since he belonged to a separate time and space, it was no longer possible to use magic normally.

Theodore put these thoughts aside and kept moving.

“□□! □□!? □□? □□□…!” The transcendent’s face was hit several times and quickly became bloody. In the few seconds that the transcendent took to grasp the situation, his body was hit by Theodore’s fists several times. However, after a while of this overwhelming superiority, the transcendent wielded his staff with a groan of pain.

“Eh?”

Time Stop was released. Theodore looked at the transcendent, who had moved far away, and took in deep breaths. In his shadow state, magic couldn’t be used. In other words, there was no way to attack the enemy floating in the air.

‘Tch, I couldn’t break his windpipe. Still, I have a way to cope with Time Stop…’

The trancendent’s one-sided advantage was gone. Theodore tried to predict the next development.

“Fool,” a voice was heard saying clearly, despite the distance. “You are busy shoveling with that miracle force.”

It was Simon Magus, a magician at the peak of the Age of Mythology and a transcendent who challenged the trial of the 10th circle. He looked down at Theodore with a contemptuous attitude while casting his Dimensional Banish magic. Theodore felt uncomfortable despite his feelings of awe toward Simon and was

about to refute the words.

“Kuaaaak!” However, it was then that his assimilation with the shadow was lifted, and Theodore’s five senses raged. He struggled as thousands of colors and lights pierced his eyes, and scents pierced his nostrils. His eardrums burst from all types of noises and blood that flowed, while his stomach felt like he had eaten rotten meat.

It was a critical side effect that was completely unexpected.

“No living being can assimilate to the negative dimension. What happens if the coin is turned around again? It is more pathetic than you using garden scissors to cut the dimension,” the mocking words with some advice still flowed into Theodore’s ears as he struggled with the crazy sensations. “Listen carefully, fool. You already have the means to overcome your limitations. You just haven’t realized it. How can you be stupid enough not to realize?”

[Simon Magus’ advice has consumed 5,000 achievement points.]

“You don’t even know what ‘Gnosticism’ is and used the Abraxas. You almost completed it and don’t even know its value. If you were my disciple, I would’ve killed you a hundred times. Don’t worry about the shadows. If you have the strength to do that trick, hatch your own egg.”

[Simon Magus’ advice has consumed 11,500 achievement points.]

“Time Stop is a useful trick for mortals like you, but the bastard who relies on such a trick is nothing. If you lose despite my teachings, I will tear your soul into thousands of pieces.”

A system message followed every time the grim voice was heard. 5,000 points, 11,500 points… This abuse consumed achievement points? Theodore gritted his teeth as he struggled against the pain. He wanted to answer Simon.

‘Dammit, move it! Don’t talk anymore!’

His body trembled. Theodore looked in Simon Magus’ direction

and barely opened his mouth, only to close it. It was because he remembered what he heard a few seconds ago.

‘What the hell did that crazy person say?’ Theodore desperately rolled his head. ‘Abraxas, egg, hatch? Am I a chicken?’

That’s right.

‘…Eh?’

He was a chicken.

Great magic Abraxas (ΑΒΡΑΞΑΣ)

The selflessness that came with enlightenment led to its own mana. Yes, mana of all attributes gathered and struck each other as if they were attracted. It was also pulled into the eight circles engraved on Theodore’s heart.

‘A magician’s body is its own world. If I want to go beyond the limit, I have to destroy that world.’

He could see it. The teachings mixed in with Simon Magus’ words and raised the spirit of Theodore, who was injured, to a higher level. Abraxas, which appeared in Gnosticism, was an angel of God with the head of a rooster, the body of a human, and snakes for legs. Unlike humans, chickens and snakes were born in eggs.

If Theodore wanted to go beyond a human, he had to break his egg.

Forced Harmonization.

The power mixed into Theodore’s body, and the great magic Abraxas was turned on Theodore himself.

He spoke in a trance, “ABRACADABRA (It will be done as you say).”

It was the beginning and the end. The moment that Theodore’s eight circles were shattered, the last transcendent of this material world was born.

Chapter 351 - Overload (1)

If a human's vitality came from the heart, then the power of a magician originated from the circles.

The circle—they were a power that upgraded the status of humanity, a sub-species in the Age of Mythology. It was the heritage of the ancestors who tried to copy the powers of the god and a demon. The result was the ability to interfere directly with the laws of matter by constructing the cogs of the world in the body.

The power to make fire in a space that was empty, and the power to create wind to disturb the sky...! The value of the circles was infinite and eternal.

'No, that is wrong.' However, Theodore realized something after reaching the end. 'Eight circles are all that the human body can afford. From there, I have to give up my existing circles system and step into an unknown territory.'

The 8th circle was the end of mortality, the limit that humans could reach. No matter how much knowledge and power were obtained, it was impossible to exert more power in the soul and body of a mortal. This was why so many magicians had stopped at this level.

The path filled with the wisdom and experience of ancestors changed into the abyss of the unknown. If one wrong step was taken, it would be a waste of decades, maybe even a hundred years, worth of effort. Giving up the circles engraved on their true heart was a scary threat for a magician.

Wuuong...

However, Theodore broke his eight circles without hesitation.

Wuuuong...!

As the eight circles overloaded, collapsed, and released their

magic power, his whole body was enveloped in weightlessness and began to float. The amount of magic power was dozens of times more powerful than that of other magicians.

Old memories appeared in Theodore's mind. It was the day he had tearfully read books in the academy's library, desperately looking at the difference between his practical and written grades. The difference between his old self and his current self was like the difference between the sky and the earth.

'Ahh...'

Those days had created the present Theodore. Vince Haidel who took care of the class dunce, meeting Sylvia and the change in their relationship after the challenge, gaining Veronica's help with their first meeting, Ellenoa's affection as she whispered that she loved him... There were many other experiences that made him who he was today; he couldn't count them all.

Thus, he smiled. His magic power scattered, and all his effort flowed away like grains of sand. At that moment...

The phenomenon known as 'Shedding' in the East Continent took place. Theodore's body and soul became empty after losing all eight circles. Then his five senses that saw the surface of the material world sublimated to a higher level. That's right. For magicians, transcendence meant nine circles.

"Unifying the body and soul itself is like a circle. No, it is more than that." Theodore laughed as he reached enlightenment.

Simon Magus' words were correct. Simon was a person who had reached a higher level of transcendence. Looking at it from his point of view, Theodore's situation really was like a chicken and an egg. Theodore had ignored the shortcut in front of his eyes and dug at the ground. After a moment of floundering, he had then soon realized his mistake and was now reborn as a transcendent.

'I feel like a butterfly emerging from its chrysalis, a snake

shedding its skin. All the theories that were previously confusing and hard to understand are now organized.'

The small world, that had existed only in his body until now, had expanded outside his body. This feeling was difficult to express in words.

It felt like his head had poked out of his skin, and he could feel the spiritual world. Magic was composed without chanting or formula calculations. If he thought about it, the mana moved according to his will and finished the desired phenomenon with maximum efficiency.

In less than a second, he repeatedly constructed and cancelled a few magic spells.

"□□□□□…!" The transcendent instinctively sensed the change.

'Not a big deal... It is a bit hard to say, but the words certainly aren't wrong.'

It was as Simon Magus said. Interference in time and space was fatal for a mortal, but it was different for transcendents. The Cage of Chronos that trapped Sloth was an unknown, but time magic that couldn't escape the frame of the material world was available to transcendents.

Furthermore, Theodore's vision became more intense after being born again as a transcendent. He could now completely see through the enemy. The transcendent facing him was inferior, even if his soul wasn't gone. All the qualities that could interfere with the material world were far below Theodore's levels.

The transcendent noticed the gap and suddenly moved.

"□□□□! □□□!" The transcendent shouted like he was having a seizure, and time stopped again.

Kiiiiing! A ringing noise occurred in his ears as Theodore confirmed that his surroundings had turned black and white. Then his body moved normally and he laughed.「Get lost.」

The short words forcibly cancelled Time Stop!

Kaaang!

Color returned to the black and white world as the backlash of cancelling the magic hit the transcendent. The person who felt pain from the aftermath of Time Stop rolled on the ground. The expression on the transcendent's face was one of misery.

"...I will end your pain." Theodore made a bitter expression and pointed his left hand at the transcendent. Despite being his opponent, the transcendent was just one of Sloth's victims. Shortly after that, a green ray was fired from Theodore's left hand.

Wiiing!

It was Soul Calibre, a soul sword that could even kill high ranking demons. However, this wasn't Reynolds Spencer's sword. It was Theodore Miller's sword that pierced the unnamed transcendent, and it could free the grimoire-binding magic. Once the nucleus was broken, even stopping time couldn't save the transcendent. Sure enough, the transcendent's body stiffened.

-...I was wrong. I thought the soul was gone, and he was already dead. Was the flesh fixed to the time when it was still alive? It is in bad taste to keep the ego.

It was as Gluttony said. The body of the transcendent quickly turned grey and started to crumble, falling down like pieces of limestone. In a sense, it was like a marble statue being dissolved by acid. The scattered figure looked unrealistic.

"Hmm?" In the meantime, Theodore could see it without a doubt.

In an ancient language learnt from Vince's book, the unidentified man muttered his gratitude, "Tha-nk... you."

Then he was completely broken down before Theodore could reply.

Pusususu…

Theodore looked at the pile of ashes and muttered, “A person from Balcia? I wouldn’t have known if I hadn’t heard the language. What a coincidence.”

It was the only ancient language he knew. Vince could speak a few more, but Theodore had lost interest in ancient magic since gaining the strongest Dragon Words. However, to think that was the Balcard language? It felt like meeting someone from his home country in a faraway country.

“Theodore!”

“Boy!”

“Theo!”

At that time, his colleagues hurriedly rushed over from the distance.

“You won? How? No, is your body okay?”

“I knew you would somehow do it! I’m just sorry that my turn was too short this time.”

Unlike the clamoring Titania and Randolph, Aquilo looked at him closely before opening her mouth with a surprised expression, “…”

Then she said, “…You crossed the border, Boy.”

The dragon noticed the change in him before anyone else.

“Did you see it? Yes, you are correct.”

“How did…? All the magicians and swordsmen in the continent might fall down frothing.”

“If you say so… I can’t believe it yet.” Theodore laughed lightly as he looked down at his hands. He was still the same as he had been a few minutes ago, despite having a power that separated him from humans. Well, he couldn’t feel it, but he knew it with his

knowledge.

Transcendents were outside the framework of fate. They lived for a long time without getting older or sick; it was something like eternal youth. It wasn't impossible for Theodore's heart to be stopped, but he didn't need to worry about it now. Right now, there was another problem to worry about.

'I will be the last transcendent of this material world.'

Sloth, who had sucked in a large amount of mana, was going to be expelled from this material world. The average mana concentration in the world would fall, and it would be hard to build up magic and aura. Apart from transcendents like Theodore, it would be difficult to utilize atmospheric mana or exert the same brute force as before.

Of course, the situation would remain the same for a few hundred years before that happened.

"...Myrdal Herseim—no, Prometheus," Theodore muttered the name of the god, and his expression hardened.

The god, who had provided strength to humanity, would kill off the dragons and get rid of aura and magic in a few hundred years. Theodore didn't think it was done maliciously, but it was natural to feel displeased at the person who treated the world like it was at his own disposal.

"Hey," a voice with no distress or disturbance was heard. "It is done. Is it okay to activate it?"

Simon Magus spoke and gave power to the magic circle without waiting for a reply. He had no intention of listening to the answer from the beginning. Rather than feeling uncomfortable by his attitude, Theodore was struck in awe by the magic circle that had expanded to several meters.

'A-Amazing!'

His vision had grown since being a transcendent, and he could

now figure out Paragranum's wards. He could also release a few overlapping 8th circle magic circles in a few seconds. Yet he couldn't grasp the magic circle currently floating in front of Simon. It required a high level of knowledge and technique that magicians of the present age didn't have.

Indeed, this was the person who challenged the 10th circle and made Gluttony remember his name.

"————————." Simon Magus pointed a finger at the horizon.

It was the dark sphere that could be called Sloth. Sending out the four transcendents seemed to be the limit of its defense function, and it didn't resist anymore. Thanks to this, Simon's target assignment was a success, and the magic circle shone.

Kuoong—

Dimensional Banish—like its name, it was magic which blew the target across a distance in space that would take thousands of years to travel. Everyone paid close attention to the magic circle.

Jijijik! The space within a five-meter radius around Sloth was cut away. It was like the world was a thin piece of paper that was cut. As Simon Magus's Dimensional Banish activated, the world twisted and the dimension shook.

"Shut up."

However, the shaking couldn't withstand those two words. Simon Magus stopped the dimensional shaking, and placed his thumb and finger together. It was a finger snap.

Ttaak! A cheerful sound resonated.

Syuok! The cut-off space with Sloth in it was sucked somewhere. Even with Theodore's power, the boundary between dimensions couldn't be seen. The abyss engulfed the space in an instant, making a noise similar to a drain on a rainy day. However, after a while, the drilled hole was quickly filled. As the people watching stared blankly, Simon Magus rubbed his palms with an impatient

look. “Hrmm, it is over.”

This was a futile end to one of the Seven Sins.

Chapter 352 - Overload (2)

-Well, there is nothing to say except that the opponent was too lousy. Simon Magus is a monster that even the 6th stage Pride would lose against. Prometheus' Sloth wouldn't be a big deal.

'Not a big deal?'

-Originally, Sloth would've expanded infinitely if it wasn't for the Cage of Chronos. But Prometheus became its contractor through trickery and restricted its expansion, keeping it at the center of this swamp. Moreover, in the end, he released his power to act as a spear and shield at the same time.

It had brought out four transcendents as a last hurrah, but fortunately, Theodore and the others had the power to stop it. In the end, Sloth couldn't flee or fight and was struck by Simon Magus' Dimensional Banish. There was no way to escape, even for one of the Seven Sins.

"—It seems my job is over," Simon Magus stated.

Theodore, who was surprised by the unintentional checkmate, stared blankly at the person before him.

Theodore faced Simon Magus and said, "T-Thank you for the good work."

"Stop the silly greetings. I might be pretending to be human, but Simon Magus is just a piece of debris left behind in the grimoire," Simon spoke in a cold voice. Then he continued, "Slightly less dumb guy, I don't think you are smart enough to understand me, but I will leave you with a few more words."

Theodore hadn't known it right away, but he realized how mysterious Simon's words were. So, he immediately raised his head and listened. Then Simon Magic opened his mouth, "You made a contract with that damn tongue and will someday reach a crossroad."

“What…”

“Shut up and just listen. You understand that the 8th circle is the limit that a mortal can reach. Then what is the limit of the 9th circle and what wall will block you?”

It wasn’t a question that could be answered by Theodore who had just awakened his abilities. No, Simon Magus opened his mouth to speak again like he didn’t expect an answer in the first place. However, nothing came out of his mouth. Simon noticed it himself and glared at Theodore’s left hand. “You.”

-I won’t allow you to say anymore, Simon Magus.

“Hah, what will you do? Will you delete my soul? Or will you lock me like last time?”

-I promise that it won’t be as good an experience as you think.

The atmosphere suddenly became ugly, and Theodore watched the confrontation between the two with wide eyes. So far, dozens of magicians, aside from Simon, had been called using Gluttony’s function. However, this was the first time they had acted like they knew each other and were even hostile.

Simon Magus wanted to give Theodore a few clues, but Gluttony wouldn’t allow it…?

However, victory and defeat had already been determined from the beginning.

“Tsk, I’ll drop it. I will go back and sleep like a dead person.” Simon Magus might have been a transcendent in his lifetime, but he was currently just a fragment of a soul captured by Gluttony. Despite receiving higher treatment than other souls, he couldn’t resist the grimoire that he was bound to.

At least, he couldn’t do anything alone.

“…You too, you are speaking like that,” the words had escaped from Theodore’s mouth without him realizing. Simon Magus

couldn’t help turning his body in response.

Theodore didn’t miss this moment and asked quickly, “Can I know why?”

“Well, you heard it. You aren’t stupid anymore.” Simon Magus smiled for the first time. Perhaps Theodore’s direct question triggered something. “Yes, it is as you guessed. I am one of the magicians who contracted with Gluttony. Unlike you, I was a genius who reached the 9th circle on my own. But I guess I am a loser now.”

Theodore swallowed a breath. Gluttony had existed for many years and contracted with magicians before. Furthermore, 9th circle magicians had been much more common in the Age of Mythology. Among them, Simon Magus would certainly be qualified as the strongest person. The word ‘loser’ was a bit jarring, but Theodore’s thoughts were interrupted.

“I know there is more that you want to ask. But that damn tongue is restraining me, so I can’t talk about it. Dig into it with your own power.”

“Yes,” Theodore expressed his gratitude to the senior who led him to a higher level, “Senior, thank you for teaching me.”

“…” Simon Magus’ grim facial expression changed to a laugh. “Your personality is still the same despite awakening your powers? Indeed, I know why Prometheus picked you.”

“Huh? What does that…?”

“I can’t say. Listen to the rest from those who are coming soon. I will return now,” Simon’s body scattered after his last words. He disappeared in an instant.

The peak magician of the Age of Mythology—his actions were as fierce as his language. Any disciples he had would be troubled. Theodore couldn’t help laughing at the thought.

*

“That is what happened.”

Theodore gave a short description to the three dragons who returned shortly afterward.

‘It wasn’t an easy fight.’

The dragon lord was fine, but the two dragons were different. The traces that remained on their human bodies showed the intensity of the battle. Brasmati had lost one eyeball and one arm, while Erucus was covered with scars that cut down to the bone. Their power dominated the surrounding area but the overall amount of power was greatly reduced. Wouldn’t it be possible for Theodore to beat both of them now?

[I understand. You did well, Theodore Miller. I am deeply grateful as a representative of the dragons,] Clipeus said, bowing their head.

Theodore waved his hands. “It is nothing. I just did what I was supposed to do.”

[Even though it is necessary, the value is still unchanged. It won’t be a big problem if I hand over my baton to you.]

“Huh?”

Was it fashionable to talk like people from the old days? There was Simon Magus and Gluttony. Now, this gold dragon was also difficult to understand. As a distorted view was built up in Theodore’s head, Clipeus spoke with an embarrassed expression, [It is a story you will know when it is time. Someday when you get the key to this material world, I hope you will lead it in the right direction.]

“I don’t understand it at all, but okay.” Theodore nodded.

Then the dragon king pulled out another topic with a guileless face, [Ah, can you give me your hand once before you go? It won’t take long.]

“My hand?”

[Yes.]

It was a strange request, but Theodore didn’t hesitate to hold out his right hand. There was no reason for Clipeus to attack him in this situation. His super sensitivity which had evolved to a higher level was also quiet.

[In the name of Clipeus,] the golden dragon said, placing their palm lightly on the back of Theodore’s hand and invoking its power, [As infinite gratitude to the benefactor of this world, I will make him the successor to an old but great mission.]

‘This…!’ Theodore was greatly bewildered, but he didn’t pull his hand back. The ‘something’ that existed in Clipeus’ body was already moved to his hand, mixing with his magic power. Then a golden pattern was engraved on Theodore’s right hand.

Clipeus released the hand and smiled in a manner that was less sparkly than before. [I have definitely handed it over.]

Theodore’s voice was subdued, and he barely replied, “…The burden is heavy.”

[The order of this material world will be led by the human race in the future. Only you qualify for that role, Theodore Miller—humanity’s last transcendent.]

More than half of it had been handed over. Clipeus, the dragon lord had given him the ‘control authority’ of this material world. It was possible to drag out all of the existing resources and even temporarily reverse some natural laws. Theodore grasped all the abilities and was thrilled to realize just how powerful the child before him was.

‘Oh, my god. This strength is god-level, and it is possible to reverse the entire gravity of this star…’

As Gluttony had said, Clipeus was literally the final weapon of this material world. They would be the absolute destruction of any

‘enemies’ of this world. The dragon king, who had been born for this purpose from beginning to end, forsook the reason for their existence.

Theodore had no choice but to answer like this, “I will do my best.”

Fortunately, Clipeus grinned at the answer. Then they turned to the half-resigned dragons. [Now, let’s disband. In the future, it will be a world where we aren’t needed. So, let’s try to live our own way.]

“…I understand, Lord,” Brasmati spoke with a bitter face.

Meanwhile, Erucus sounded like the sage of the forest, “The leaves that have played their role are scattered, haha.”

Aquilo was still unsure of the situation and alternated between looking at both sides.

[Aquilo.]

“Ah, yes! Did you call, Lord?”

[Do you plan to follow him?]

There was a moment of hesitation at the unexpected question before Aquilo nodded with a determined expression. She had been called to the swamp due to the lord. Otherwise, she would have enjoyed playing around Theodore.

“Yes, if the boy will allow it.”

[Umm…] Clipeus made a strange sound and smiled. [Okay, be well.]

“Huh…? U-Understood.”

[The fate of our species hangs on you.]

“Why have my shoulders suddenly become so heavy?” Aquilo was greatly confused.

Meanwhile, Clipeus once again looked at Theodore. Then they

invoked their dragon power.

Flash!

It was space movement that functioned differently from magic. The light disappeared, and no one was left in its place.

“W-What happened? Boy, do you have any guesses?”

“I don’t know.”

“Why does the fate of my species hang on me?” Aquilo had a rare look of panic.

Titania and Randolph couldn’t help laughing, causing her to glare at them. It was a skit that couldn’t be found anywhere else in the continent. After all, there was no place in the continent that would include a sword master, a high elf, and a dragon.

‘Is it time to return?’

The disturbance in the southern swamp was somehow settled, and Theodore had no reason to investigate anymore after reaching the 9th circle. So, he decided to return to Meltor soon. Aquilo was still grumbling while the other two sprinkled potions on their wounds.

“Don’t move,” Theodore said.

He had never tried this before and never thought it would be possible. Going from the swamp in the southernmost part of the continent to Mana-vil in the middle of the north... It was a distance that Orta had never imagined jumping. Yet, a giant magic circle had now appeared at their feet.

‘I can do it.’ Theodore was confident. It wasn’t hard. He turned his palm over and felt the almighty feeling of the world moving according to his will. It connected to the magic circle in the underground laboratory in Mana-vil. The distance was more than a thousand kilometers and protected by several layers of magic, but the connection was easy.

「 Open. 」

ABRACADABRA (It will be done as you say).

Flash!

...And it was done.

Chapter 353 - Overload (3)

The difficulty of moving through space varied according to the distance from sky to land. Moving over one village or territory was something that senior magicians could do without much difficulty, and elders with the knack for it could travel from Mana-vil to the border.

However, the story was a bit different going on from there.

It was difficult to meet the amount of magic power required to travel to another country with less than seven circles. Moreover, it wasn't easy to control magic power beyond their capabilities, even if they took the needed time and prepared materials.

Even the current genius of space magic, Orta was exhausted when he crossed borders on this continent.

'...A success. Is it really this easy?'

However, Theodore had realized that his space movement was a complete success the moment he spoke in the southern swamp.

There wasn't the normal feeling of space movement. It was too quick as he passed through space without any delays. This was despite the fact that it was not short range space movement but long-distance travel between two borders on the continent.

Transcendence—it was the name of those who acquired the authority to intervene in time and space beyond the limitations of the lifeforms born in this material world. There was no relation to aptitude or proficiency in space magic. To put it simply, his eye level had changed.

If Orta's magic eyes could dissect an area of space in his vision, then Theodore could now close his eyes and figure out the spatial coordinates of anywhere in the world and the way to get there. Maybe it had something to do with Clipeus' 'control authority.'

'No, it isn't just that. Abracadabra—if this means what I think...!'

It sounded like a chant, but Theodore thought the phrase implied its own accomplishment.

ABRACADABRA (It will be done as you say)—at first glance, it looked no different from an Order. However, if he dug deeper, he could see the difference. An Order forced the phenomenon of the world to follow its will, whereas Theodore's enlightenment caused the world to transform to express his will.

A fireball, a ball of fire, a flame sphere or just a pop of flames—the name didn't matter. He only needed to think what he meant and he could use the magic. Ultimate magic was the area in which he needed to pay attention, but in the case of Simon Magus, he hadn't muttered a single word of a chant despite using a magic like Dimensional Banish.

Perhaps it was because Simon had reached the end of the road where he could use magic just by thinking.

"Hah," Theodore couldn't help letting out a laugh.

As soon as he got caught up in the almighty feeling of having the world under his feet, he realized the sky above him. Theodore didn't have an inferiority complex. This was natural for someone who bore the title of the greatest magician of the Age of Mythology. He just thought it was amazing that there was still so far for him to climb.

Thinking up to there, Theodore opened his eyes and saw Aquilo inside his familiar laboratory.

She greeted, "Oh, you woke up?"

The time Theodore had spent in understanding must've been long. He looked around for the other two people and realized they had headed for the bath and lounge respectively. They had tried to wait for him to wake up but had no patience for it.

Theodore faced Aquilo with a strange look.

Aquilo laughed and grabbed his right arm. "What? Are you

surprised that I waited?”

“Honestly?”

“This is too much. I didn’t touch any of the interesting things while waiting. Don’t I deserve some praise?”

“I think it is a natural courtesy to not touch…”

After all, she wasn’t a kid with junk food. Fortunately, those words hadn’t flowed out of Theodore’s mouth. Over a period of five years, his experiences had helped him automatically filter out what he could or could not say. Thus, he laughed lightly and responded to her, “Well, thank you for waiting. You are very kind.”

“K-Kind? Me…?” Aquilo, the evil dragon of the sea, gaped at him. She had ruined harbors, led pirates and plundered all types of treasures depending on her mood. The people of the sea would say ‘If the name of Aquilo is heard, people will stop fishing and even a crying child will stop.’

Yet Theodore said Aquilo, the evil dragon, was kind? Aquilo was paralyzed by the unexpected counterattack, and Theodore left the room. Her reason returned when he asked a question, “So, are you going to keep following me?”

“Ah, yes,” Aquilo replied one beat later. “Didn’t the lord say to be well? I don’t know what it means.”

Aquilo smiled shamelessly from behind him. ‘Huhu, I actually know. Isn’t this going to work better?’

There was no doubt that Aquilo had enjoyed many years of pleasure. The lord had spoken without any great expectations, but Theodore Miller was a prey she had personally pointed out. If things went well and it became a male and female relationship… It would be fine to have one child.

This was an environment where dragons couldn’t be born naturally, but transcendence could overcome this limitation. The

desire that could no longer be suppressed wriggled in Aquilo's body.

'It seems that he has a good relationship with the fireball... Since ancient times, male have been creatures who can't be satisfied with just one person.'

It was the same for a virtuous hero. She held his arm tightly and deliberately leaned her body in. Aquilo had enough experience in the methods to defeat a man to write a book. Theodore had a hunch that Aquilo was up to something and didn't respond.

'...Sigh, she doesn't have any malice, but I'm tired of dealing with her.'

He would rather have an opponent he could easily hit with his power. When it came to these seduction techniques, Aquilo was a type of opponent that Theodore couldn't handle. Unless he quickly pulled Veronica to his side, this would continue indefinitely.

Then at that moment...

[Welcome back, Master,] Gladio greeted Theodore politely once he crossed the threshold of the control room. Aquilo glanced over Gladio with interested eyes, then she noticed it wasn't a living creature and turned away.

However, Theodore asked him with a dark face, "Gladio, why are you in the control room?"

[There is something I need to report to Master urgently.]

"I see. What is the importance?"

[Grade 2.]

Theodore stiffened at the words. It was Grade 2, which could end up changing to Grade 1. This meant it was a national disaster or worse. What happened even though he had returned from the swamp faster than expected? It was as if someone had been aiming for Theodore's absence. Aquilo sat down while Theodore listened

to the report.

[It was just after Master left. There was a red warning light on the door connected to the East Continent. There was an emergency, and support troops were urgently requested. In Master's absence, I notified the heads of the other towers according to my behavior manual. I sent troops to the East Continent with their help.]

"A wise decision. Which of the three did you send?"

Aside from Paragranum who couldn't leave the capital, there were three people available. Only Veronica, Orta, and Sylvia could cope with a red signal. The red signal corresponding to the highest level of risk was something only a master could deal with.

Gladio answered Theodore's question immediately, [Red Tower Master Veronica and Blue Tower Master Sylvia.]

In that case, Orta still remained. Theodore thought about the situation quickly and turned away. He felt sorry for Aquilo, but there was no time for a break.

"Give me the coordinates. I will meet the White Tower Master."

Orta's location was found within seconds in the central tower. Then Theodore did what was necessary.

*

Following the peaceful reconciliation of the Northern Great War, the people of Meltor, the magic kingdom, were able to achieve prosperity faster than in any other time with many territories entering their hands. Facilities buried in the capital were quickly distributed throughout the kingdom, and new places to live quickly appeared in war-damaged places.

One of the most prominent figures behind this prosperity was White Tower Master Orta.

'...Please come back soon, Chief Tower Master.' How confused

was Orta when he first received the contact? He knew that the central tower had a space gate leading to other parts of the continent, but it was possible to move to the East Continent across the sea. He wanted to study and understand the principles.

However, the man who introduced himself as the manager of the central tower, a man who resembled the 7th Sword, had summoned the three tower masters because of an emergency.

-There has been a big uproar near the space gate on the East Continent. It is the red signal that Master designated as the highest risk. Sending non-masters is meaningless. It is within your freedom to accept my request. What would you like to do?

There was no emotion in Gladio's voice, but his dull tone touched Veronica, who had been bored. The incident was of the highest risk level determined by the Theodore whom she valued, and she wanted to be helpful to him. The problem was the number of people who could cross over with Veronica.

-I will accompany Red Tower Master.

Sylvia stepped forward before Orta, who was deliberating the situation. Her behavior couldn't be controlled because she was also a tower master. Additionally, Orta was the one who could best handle the space door. In the end, Veronica and Sylvia left, while Orta remained in the capital.

He looking impatiently at the space door where contact had been lost. "Sigh..."

Then right when Orta let out a long sigh...

Flash! A man suddenly appeared in front of him.

Orta stared at the space with astonished eyes.

This was the magic kingdom, and there were thorough measures against space magic inside the kingdom. There was a magic circle blocking the movement of space in important facilities including the royal palace and magic towers. However, in spite of these

obstacles, there was an uninvited guest.

It was the strongest magician on this continent, Theodore Miller.

“C-Chief Tower Master!” Orta immediately recognized Theodore and rose to greet him.

Orta had desperately wanted Theodore’s return, but more than that, his magician’s instincts stirred. Despite the success of the space movement, the magic circle in this area was still fine. In other words, Theodore had walked through it instead of destroying it.

It wasn’t just that. Orta’s eyes could see that Theodore looked different from a while ago.

‘An area I can’t interfere in? There has been a change in the Chief Tower Master…!’

Orta’s ‘magic eyes’ had absolute power in spatial manipulation, yet an area that Orta couldn’t intervene in was wrapped around Theodore’s whole body. It was a wall that even the 2nd Sword, Zest Speitem, wouldn’t be able to break through. Unfortunately, Theodore was the one to speak first, “Please explain.”

“Ah! Of course, Chief Tower Master.” For the first time in his life, Orta regretted that his position was lower than someone else and pushed down the words he wanted to ask. Then he spoke an unbelievable sentence, “Two days ago, the central empire collapsed.”

The largest empire in the East Continent had collapsed overnight.

Chapter 354 - Pandemonium (1)

The collapse of the central empire...!

The people of the East Continent were unsure of the situation, but Theodore could see it.

The central empire was literally the greatest empire in the East Continent. Even if all four of the other nations united to face it, the odds would be difficult to predict. The empire accounted for more than half of the East Continent's land, and it had a vast number of troops and a dense population. Additionally, there was the existence of 'Lust' at the heart of the empire.

It was too strong a country to collapse without any precursors.

"...The two tower masters left one last message before contact was cut off. They said they were going into a defensive battle with the local forces. It seems they are unsure of what type of force they are fighting and how many there are," Orta's lips moved under the white mask he always wore.

He believed in the abilities of the two tower masters. However, if there was no contact, there might be some variables in the fierce battle. Theodore heard a bit of information and came to a similar idea. 'The local forces must mean the Fairy Dance Lee family. If the two tower masters fight with the Fairy Dance Lee family in the Baekun Mountains, they won't fall easily.'

However, there were too many variables to believe in that power alone. He was concerned about the central kingdom that was stuck in the palm of Lust's hand. Theodore had met and fought with grimoires a number of times, so he was well aware.

A grimoire wouldn't do anything that would violate the purpose of its existence. If Lust's purpose was to be the 'ultimate womb', then the collapse of the middle kingdom was likely to be something she did herself.

The Receptacle of Solitude—this evil shamanism came to mind. It was the cave in the Baekun Mountains where the seven-tailed fox had formed from eating off the ‘rejects.’

Although this was a ridiculous story from a common-sense perspective, Theodore had already dealt with an entire country of human sacrifices. What if the entire population of a vast territory at least 10 times bigger than the Lairon Kingdom were devoured?

“I need to hurry,” Theodore muttered after he finished thinking.

Orta nodded. He hadn’t just been sucking his fingers waiting for Theodore to return, after all. “Yes, I gathered just enough people that it won’t exceed the limit of the space area. Combat ability isn’t the only thing needed. Personnel to secure the area and make a base is necessary.”

"That is a good judgment,” Theodore agreed and added a few more words, “Then I will leave the command of the later team to you.”

“Huh?”

It was anticipated that the Chief Tower Master would act alone since he had unequaled power. A magician with the power to overcome armies by himself shouldn’t be tied to the role of commander.

However, Orta intuitively sensed that this wasn’t what Theodore meant. “Chief Tower Master, do you intend to leave for the East Continent one step ahead of the support team? You just came back, and there are two more days of standby for the space gate.”

“It is okay. The role of the space gate is just for assistance. The standby time isn’t a problem if I use my magic power.”

“No, please reconsider,” Orta spoke with a more cautious expression than usual. “Chief Tower Master, I don’t doubt your ability, but the East Continent is currently in a state where I can’t see what’s ahead. I think it is better to go with the support team

rather than hastening the schedule and consuming a lot of magic power."

"I understand your opinion. I expected you to sound like this." Theodore smiled since he would've made the same judgment as Orta a few days ago.

The identity of the enemy was unknown, and the status of the land was unknown. Unnecessary consumption of magic power should be avoided in a situation where there were several undetermined variables. However, after becoming a transcendent, Theodore didn't have to worry about that.

"Sigh, it can't be helped." He didn't intend to brag about it, but this method was the best way to convince Orta.

As Orta waited for his answer, Theodore finally showed off some of his strength. He had grabbed a sense of it when he reached the end of the 8th circle, and it became possible after getting to the 9th circle. It was the power to move the world itself to his will—World Order. Theodore closed his eyes, raised his right hand like he was swearing an oath, and pressed down using the power of a transcendent.

People who could only see the hollow shell of the world wouldn't know. The general public might not be able to feel it, but countless invisible flows existed in the world. Knights who trained their body and senses to the extreme or magicians who turned their hearts into cogwheels could enter this area a little bit.

"...Heoook!" Orta had been born without sight in both eyes, so he was more sensitive to the invisible flow of power than anyone else. Theodore's 'will' stopped the world around him. Only time flowed leisurely, while everything else stopped like it was frozen. No, he could even stop time if he wanted to.

"C-Chief Tower Master! Surely... Surely you haven't?"

A magician couldn't not know. It wasn't reasonable to interfere

with the will of the world and force it to move. People were called transcendent because they had the power to shake this absolute rule. If their knowledge was sufficient, the transcendent could interfere with the structure of any material and reverse any physical phenomenon.

Before the astonished Orta, Theodore just grinned. “Is there anything else?”

Naturally, there wasn’t.

*

After Theodore convinced Orta using a violent logic, he instantly returned to the research building. It was a simple feat for Theodore who could cross continents with a single space movement. He heard Aquilo’s words once he appeared.

“You came back faster than I thought. Is it something urgent?” She asked after reading Theodore’s expression.

He ignored her question and changed the topic, “Will you follow me to the East Continent?”

“Of course. How can a young dragon like me defy the lord’s order? Isn’t it nice to take me to a place I’ve been before?”

“Nice… Well, it doesn’t seem like you will be a burden.”

Aquilo hadn’t been much help against Sloth, but she was a dragon who could fight equally with three masters. Veronica had more combat power, but Aquilo was probably more evenly balanced. Moreover, there was a reverence for dragons in the central empire, so there wasn’t anything bad involved in taking her. He looked at the pros and cons and reluctantly said, “…On the condition that you follow my words well.”

“Call!” Aquilo didn’t hesitate to raise her index finger and laughed as she approached Theodore. Her eyes were shining and playful. “It is quite funny when thinking about it. Boy, what do you feel when I say I will absolutely obey you?”

“It isn’t an official contract, so don’t exaggerate.”

“Hoh, really? I can listen to whatever you say…” Aquilo’s thin white fingers tickled his forearms, and her coquettish eyes gleamed brightly. Her moist and gentle fingers danced like a live fish.

However, Theodore didn’t fall for her temptation, poking her in the middle of the forehead. “Don’t do this.”

“Tch.” Aquilo was pushed back by his decisive attitude and turned the conversation to another topic. She understood that there was no chance in this atmosphere. It was different from five years ago when there were many gaps. “But Boy, are you only taking me? The knight or high elf will be helpful.”

“Oh, I won’t take Randolph and Titania with us.”

“Why?” Aquilo made a bewildered face.

However, Theodore shrugged without answering. After all, it was the private matter of those two people.

Titania had met the teacher she had missed for over a hundred years and left without being able to have a proper conversation. Meanwhile, Randolph had multiple wounds and was still recovering from the damage. It would be much easier to move with Aquilo than to take those two.

“Additionally, they won’t be able to do anything.”

It was cold but true. If the situation couldn’t be solved with the power of Theodore who was a transcendent, then it wouldn’t be meaningful to take Randolph and Titania. Aquilo stepped beside him in silence. Then Theodore reached out to the space gate connected to the East Continent. “Geotia, activate the space door.”

Simultaneously, a blue light appeared around the edges of the space gate.

[The space gate leading to the Baekun Mountains has been

confirmed. The magic power storage container is at 55%.]

"Cover the lacking amount with my magic power."

[Yes, I will do it according to Master's will.]

Once the ring on his finger stopped flashing, Theodore's magic power started to flow somewhere. An enormous amount of magic power, that even three 7th circle magicians weren't capable of, poured out. An 8th circle magician might be exhausted for a while, but a 9th circle magician could recover in a few breaths.

Shortly after that, Geotia's voice became louder, [Warp Gate 3, move!]

A radiant light burst from the space door. The empty space gradually distorted, and the inside of the glow showed a completely different landscape from the research center. There were dense trees without a trace of civilization. This was the scenery of the Baekun Mountains, located in the northeastern part of the East Continent that had been managed by the Fairy Dance Lee family for generations.

It was the dark of night, unlike Mana-vil where the sun was still rising.

"Let's go." Theodore held Aquilo's hand without waiting for an answer and plunged into the space gate. The amount of mana consumed every second to operate the space door, which spanned across the sea to the East Continent, was enough to kill three or four elder grade magicians.

Wuoooooong...! It took only a few seconds, but the distance of this space gate exceeded 3,000 kilometers. Of course, the intensity of this space movement was beyond imagination. Once the two shadows appeared on the other side, Aquilo let out a breath and started vomiting. "Haaap! Hah! Hah!"

She soon rebuked him with grim eyes, "B-Boy...! T-There, i-is, t-this, side, effect...!"

“I’m sorry, I had forgotten.” Theodore didn’t suffer any space nausea due to being a transcendent and smiled as he raised her up. He placed his palm on Aquilo’s forehead, and light gushed out, calming her dizziness. Aquilo barely managed to get herself together. Then both of them frowned.

“What is this mana? Didn’t you say this was a sacred land?” As a dragon, Aquilo was more sensitive to mana than any other species in the material world, and she looked around with a stiff expression.

The middle of a battlefield would be better than this place. Mana filled with blood and death flowed over the earth, while the malice in the wind caused discomfort. It was an atmosphere in which it wouldn’t be strange if creatures emerged right now. If this were the first time Theodore stepped on this land, he wouldn’t have known it was the Baekun Mountains.

‘There is something wrong. This type of poison in the Baekun Mountains…!’

Once he looked closely, all the mountain vegetation was sick. The green leaves were black like oil, and the branches hung down like ailing chickens. This was at the level of a child compared to the poisonous swamp. The problem was that it shouldn’t be occurring at all. Why had the mountain range which had been filled with clean power a year ago suddenly become rotten?

“Yes.”

“Ah.”

At that time, something touched the senses of Theodore and Aquilo.

“We’re surrounded…?”

Surrounded… It was likely that there was a large number of creatures in the area. Theodore tried to count the number but stopped after it passed 1,000. The creatures were different from

humans and beasts, and they soon started to reveal themselves.

Grrr! Grrrrrr!

Gruruk. Kuwoooook…

Kikikikikik! Kihihihi!

Theodore regretted waiting for their appearance. ‘Damn, these disgusting guys.’

Imagine a human and beast mix with mutations all over the body—it was a picture that could be mistaken for black magic. Pride could reproduce the characteristics of all creatures in one body, and it was quite ugly. However, the monsters that had just appeared were much worse.

Aquilo flinched at the sight. “Ugh, my eyes are rotting! Boy, is it okay for me to wipe them all out?”

“…No.” Theodore, restrained the disgusted Aquilo, blocking her vision as he raised his right hand.

The sight she was left with changed from grotesque to ‘splatter.’

“Leave it to me.” He didn’t use a spell as he twisted his magic power.

Chapter 355 - Pandemonium (2)

“Goetia.”

[Yes, Master.]

“Stop all support operations and wait. I will handle it alone.”

[Standby mode.]

The light from the ring stopped. Even without Geotia’s assistance, Theodore was able to complete the magic formula with his own ability. Theoretically, it could be executed at the 8th circle, but the spell couldn’t be used in practice due to complex random number calculations and extremely difficult control. However, it was possible for the current Theodore.

「 Come up, little sun. 」 Two beads of light flashed above Theodore’s palms.

It might be mistaken as light magic, but Aquilo sensed the inherent magic power and clicked her tongue. If she was just looking at the total power, it was more powerful than the breath she used in human form. Aquilo’s eyes filled with anticipation.

「 Eradicate. 」 The light beads exploded the moment Theodore gave the command.

————————————————!!

No, it was more accurate to call it a scattering of power than an explosion. The light beads floated 10 meters above the ground and scattered in hundreds of directions as rays. The magic power strong enough to match a dragon’s breath instantly burst out from the bead shell.

The name behind the spell was Solar Ray. It was annihilation magic that compressed heat energy in a sphere and released it in the direction specified by the caster. Understandably, the lethal force was fearsome.

Kuwoooook!

The monsters hit by the rays screamed painfully, but the wounds seemed insignificant. Perhaps, it was like poking them with a thick needle? It would've been a fatal wound on anything else, but for these monsters with shoulders as thick as trees, it was like an insect bite. He might've thought so until two seconds ago.

'It is all over once hit.'

The ray penetrated their skin through the muscle layer and entered their bodies. It took only two seconds to boil their blood, burn their bones and muscles, and then melt their flesh. A single ray contained such heavy power. The melted monsters flowed onto the ground.

Chiiiik!

One, ten, one hundred monsters… The same number of monsters as the rays became liquid on the ground. It was truly an eradication. Theodore erased hundreds of monsters with a single spell and got rid of the stench with a wind that he called. He wanted to evaporate the liquid, but it was more heat resistant than he thought.

"Wow, cool! Boy, are you trying to show me a cool look? It is a great success if it is really for that purpose!" Aquilo was fascinated by the bombardment of light and the wreckage of the monsters.

She loved beauty and strength while despising ugliness and weakness. Therefore, the monsters in front of her were the worst. If Theodore hadn't come forward, she would've wiped them out directly. However, Theodore ignored the praise.

'What are these monsters? Chimera? It was similar but slightly different. It isn't changing the body by manipulating it. It is a mutation of the body itself… It is the first time I've seen a twisting of the body and the soul.'

The insight of a transcendent didn't know the cause either. He

could see that something had twisted the soul, causing the body to quickly become deformed in the shape of a monster. Even so, there was no way to save these victims. If the 9th circle magician, Theodore, judged there was no way to save them other than killing, who in this material world could argue with him?

"Tsk, they are continuing to flock." Theodore's eyebrows twitched as he sensed more monsters approaching.

Was it the light from Solar Ray that brought them?

However, it was a bit strange. A little while ago, Theodore had deliberately used magic without suppressing the aftermath. That was in order to use the overwhelming mana to prevent the access of any more monsters. It was on the level of Dragon Fear, yet these monsters flocked like they didn't feel fear.

'Are they artificially-created weapons? It is annoying.' He might have to fight until the sun came up.

Theodore turned in the direction of the Fairy Dance Lee family. He wanted to fly there straight away.

"Excuse me? Aren't you going to take care of me?"

There was one unexpected problem. Aquilo couldn't fly at high speed in human form, and she would attract attention with her huge body if she transformed into a dragon. In the end, Theodore was forced to carry her.

"Hrmm, you have become so manly since the last time I've seen you. Look here..." As a compromise, Aquilo climbed onto his back.

"Don't bend your body or whisper in my ear."

"Then it is okay to kiss you?"

"It is forbidden."

Aquilo laughed while Theodore sighed and took off. He thought there would be a big problem once he met up with Veronica.

*

It was a long yet short flight. While restraining Aquilo's relentless touches, Theodore glanced at the Baekun Mountains which were teeming with monsters. There were at least 30,000 of them. The wild beasts of the mountain and forest had long since disappeared into the stomachs of the monsters, while the monsters who had lost their forms ate each other to fill up their appetite. It was literally a landscape of hell.

"…We will arrive soon. Are you heading down?"

"Yes." Theodore slowed down and stood on the hill overlooking the Fairy Dance Lee family's estate. The soft texture on his back disappeared, and the faces of the two people hardened as they looked down.

"Are they cockroaches?"

Theodore didn't answer Aquilo, but he agreed.

'There are at least 20,000 gathered here. 50,000 if I include all the ones surrounding this area. It is already at the level of an army.'

There was no room on the ground as only ugly heads could be seen. They seemed like ants crowded in one place, and Theodore and Aquilo looked down with disgust. Then the destination of the disgusting march was determined. It was the Baekun Mountain village with a total population of 3,000 centered around the Fairy Dance Lee family's estate.

"Hmm?" Theodore narrowed his eyes as he saw something. "The ward…? There is a shaman with this much skill in the Lee family?"

A translucent shield was protecting the entire village from the monsters that would run in without hesitation. It was at least at the level of a master shaman. The shield blocked the enemy's attacks and allowed allied attacks to pass through. Thanks to the one-sided attacks, the arrows fired by the soldiers knocked down some monsters.

‘It is stable. I don’t see any hope of winning, but they should be able to last a week.’

There was the terrain advantage, shaman’s shield, and the tiger and bear who sometimes emerged from the shield to break down the monsters’ formation before going back.

Theodore smiled when he saw the leaders of the Baekun Mountain spirits, the Tiger King and White Bear. Most of the other spirits in the mountain had gone to the forest of Elvenheim, but the two leaders had remained in the Baekun Mountains. It was because they couldn’t leave Lee Seol alone.

However, his smile didn’t last long.

“…The balance will soon collapse.”

“Why? They are blocking it.”

“Look beyond that hill.”

Aquilo increased her eyesight at Theodore’s words and looked at the scenery. A three-meter-tall monster, that was overflowing with mana, was approaching. It hadn’t gone through the proper training, but its mana concentration came awfully close to aura. Looking at just the mana, the monster was equivalent to a sword master and a 7th circle magician. Although the monster couldn’t be compared to the Tiger King and White Bear who had been training their power for hundreds of years, it was enough to damage the ward.

“I have to go out. Veronica and Sylvia aren’t in the village. If the both of them were present, this mana would collapse as soon as it approaches the ward."

“Okay, I will move as you direct.”

“Thank you.”

Aquilo readily accepted Theodore’s words, and Theodore reached out to the monsters who had yet to recognize their existence. The

monsters had master class mana, but they didn't know how to operate it properly. Skin harder than steel? Recovery beyond a troll? He had dealt with opponents like these before even becoming a master.

"Geotia, assistance."

[Starting the secondary assistance. Aligning the lightning formula.]

Lightning shone in front of Theodore's body.

Memorize.

All Slots Open.

Nonuple Keraunos.

Nine lightning spears emerged. The sparks coming from them was proof that they had the power to melt iron. Nevertheless, Theodore still wasn't satisfied. He had already been capable of shooting this magic before becoming a transcendent. Rising. As he grabbed them with his right hand, the lightning bolts grew and glowed blue. A colossal amount of energy was gathered in one place, transforming into plasma beyond electricity.

「I will borrow the authority of the lightning god.」

Then they noticed his existence. The people inside the ward looked at the hill while the monsters flocked to the man surrounded by lightning without feeling afraid. However, Theodore's ultimate magic was already completed.

「Destroy your enemies, Keraunos.」

The interval was set at several kilometers. His target was the dangerous element that could threaten the ward. The lightning spears that became plasma cried out loudly, ————————————————!!

The flash wiped out the land and trees it passed, eradicating the monsters it barely touched. From launch to hit, it took less than a

second. It defied the defense of the monsters and killed them instantly while shattering several hundred meters of the ground. If magma flowed under the Baekun Mountains, it might've erupted at the shock.

"Aquilo, create a fog all over the battlefield."

"Ah, yes!"

Aquilo recovered from her shock while Theodore prepared his next move. The moisture in this area quickly gathered near the ground, soaking the monsters and leaving no gaps for escape. The monsters would die from just a lightning strike.

"'Compression' was good, so shall I try 'spreading' this time?" Theodore mumbled to himself and opened his palm toward the sky.

Then an unexpected sight unfolded.

"Ahh..."

Someone looked up at the sky and fell to their knees. Someone else gathered their hands together while praising God's name. The monsters didn't dare look up and held their breaths.

In the dark moonlit sky, lightning shone through the clouds.

「 Hit it, Keraunos. 」

The sky was torn. A gap opened, and a golden divine punishment poured down. This was the moment when a thunderstorm descended from the night sky of the Baekun Mountains.

Chapter 356 - Pandemonium (3)

————————————————————!!

At the sound of the thunder, the people gathered in the darkness blocked their ears, while the shower of light blew away the darkness.

The lightning that poured from the sky was literally a divine punishment. One blow, ten blows, one hundred blows... A number of thunderbolts, that couldn't be counted with the human eye, struck. The monsters, that had only been injured by the warriors' swords, now let out pained screams as the lightning pierced through the fog and burned the surface of the earth.

Kwaaaaah!

Kieeeeek!

Even the monsters outside of the normal biological framework couldn't overcome the pain eroding their nervous system. The monsters let out deathly screams and collapsed to the ground. There was no way for their recovery ability to help, and they quickly turned to charcoal. The monsters killed by thunder fell to the ground and burned fiercely.

Chiiiik!

The solid soil melted like clay thanks to the boiling bodies. Of those left, a few had major seizures before falling silent. It took only 10 seconds for the 20,000 monsters to be destroyed. That was the amount of time it took for the thunderstorm to pour out from the magic circle which Theodore had created in the sky.

"..."

"..."

"..."

In front of the mountain of monsters that had become charcoal,

the whole world was soaked in silence. Those who had been desperately fighting the creatures a few minutes ago looked up at Theodore and Aquilo with pale faces. The horrible monsters that filled the horizon had been killed in a few blinks of the eye. It was a situation that didn't seem realistic.

Theodore didn't know their dismay and let out a sound on the hill, "Kuk!"

It was because he felt strong sensations from consuming such a huge amount of magic power. If he wasn't tensed up, he might've sat down directly on the spot. The consumed magic power was quickly restored. However, it wasn't possible for him to link several ultimate spells or talk quickly yet.

'It is a good thing I experienced it before meeting the right enemy.'

He might be the best magician at the moment, but Theodore's experience as a transcendent was still immature. If he didn't know what he was lacking and met a transcendent enemy, he might not be able to use ultimate magic to defeat the enemy. Theodore would've died in a few seconds with a feeling of powerlessness.

「 Blow, wind. 」

After a short reflection, Theodore blew away the remnants of the monsters in front of him. There was no smell of blood due to the thunder, but there was the burning smell coming from the dead bodies.

"Aquilo, fly up."

"What? Ah, yes!" Aquilo responded one beat late as the remaining monsters came into sight. There were as many as 20,000. It was a number capable of forming two armies. There were still more monsters in the nearby mountains, but now there was none attacking the ward. It was why Theodore had defeated the leaders first.

‘By the way, it is quite good. I didn’t know it when I saw it from a distance, but the ward is more efficient than magic. Shamanism can’t be ignored.’

Theodore examined the ward and raised his evaluation of modern shamans by a few stages. They might not be the same as Seimei but the current generation of shamans wasn’t inferior to magicians of the same level. It might be worth exploring in earnest.

Tak.

The moment both of them landed on the ground…

“S-Stop right there!” The voice was filled with obvious fear.

Theodore turned around to see a middle-aged man in a military uniform looking at him. It didn’t take long for Theodore to find the uniform in Seimei’s memories.

‘Dao…ist? It is a different type of shaman from an onmyōji.’

It wasn’t common in the East Continent, but it was said there were many of them in the middle empire. Unlike other shamans, daoists were those who pursued becoming a god. There were many hypocrites, but the tendency itself was toward religion. Theodore relaxed his wariness and spoke to the daoist who was being guarded by two people, “Who are you?”

“I-I should be the one saying that! How can you use that type of lightning treasured object? I can’t open the ward until you confirm your identity!”

“Treasured object?”

It seemed that this daoist thought that the ultimate magic wasn’t from Theodore’s ability but an artifact. This was a normal reaction. In this age where no one was a transcendent, people wouldn’t be looking for transcendents.

‘Well, it doesn’t matter.’ Theodore was convinced by the rational

misjudgment and didn't feel the necessity to unravel it.

He didn't know why this daoist was in the Baekun Mountains, but the Baekun Mountains were under the jurisdiction of the Fairy Dance Lee family. As long as Lee Seol didn't interfere directly, no one had the authority to stop Theodore. However, it would be annoying if he broke this ward.

'Let's see.' Theodore reached out his right hand and touched the ward.

"W-What? Stop touching it before you get hurt?" The daoist was surprised by Theodore's boldness.

However, Theodore was busy analyzing the ward with a transcendent's insight.

It was similar to the 'building path' of the Art of Yin and Yang Written Treatise, but it was slightly different. The blockade was based on the user's perception. It wasn't strong enough to stop master level intruders, but it had the ability to stop people from entering with force.

However, the ward had a common weakness.

'If it doesn't recognize the object as a target of rejection, then the exclusion function won't be activated.'

It was the same as a password that was commonly used in the army. If a person could trick the identification method of the ward, they could come and go freely. This was the method Theodore was trying now.

Pajijik!

The level of the ward was quite high, but it couldn't dispel the power of Theodore who had reached the apex of a mortal. His magic reached into the core of the ward in an instant and confirmed the 'identification' function.

'Those who are known and those who are unknown. It is a

standard procedure.’

In other words, the ward blocked any unknown presences. If so, adding an exception to this rule was enough.

【 Except for Theodore Miller and his companions. 】

Theodore added this sentence and grinned. Now the ward would recognize him.

“Aquilo, hand.”

“…Do you think I am a dog?”

“It’s not like that. And you are more like a cat than a dog.”

“Is that a compliment or an insult?” Aquilo murmured but held Theodore’s hand.

Then he stepped through the translucent circle.

Wuuong.

Theodore unquestionably passed through the ward!

“T-This is ridiculous!” Apparently, it was so shocking that the middle-aged man’s mouth dropped open, and he sat on the ground. He shouted as he saw Theodore and Aquilo get closer, “S-Superhuman! A great master…”

“Hoh.”

It seemed ‘superhuman’ was the word used to refer to transcendents. Perhaps Theodore’s ability was correctly measured when he passed through the ward. It might’ve been better to break or bypass the ward then. Even if magic evolved in different directions, there was no difference in where they reached. The daoist master lost his soul, but the crowd suddenly parted.

“-Theo!” A beautifully dressed lady with braided hair ran toward him.

It was Lee Seol who had grown after five years. She hadn’t neglected her training, and her steps were moderately excellent.

“Seol.”

“You finally came! I knew you would!” Seol used the running momentum and hugged him. She was someone who had to grow up prematurely at a young age. Theodore smiled bitterly and spoke as she hugged him, “You’re safe. I’m glad.”

“Hehe.”

“You have gone through a lot as head of the family. You are truly capable.”

“I am undeserving of your words.”

Theodore saw Lee Joonyoung appear behind Lee Seol and said, “Congratulations on becoming a master.”

Lee Joonyoung had crossed over the wall of a master during the time in which Theodore hadn’t seen him. The once violent momentum had calmed down. Lee Joonyoung was now like the sky that could change at any time. This was the path that the martial artists of the Fairy Dance Lee family pursued.

Maybe it was due to Lee Yoonsung’s teachings but Lee Joonyoung had solidified his position as the backbone of the family.

“There is a lot to talk about. Let’s go inside.”

“Yes!”

“I will follow your words.”

Lee Seol laughed cheerfully and walked toward the mansion with Lee Joonyoung and Theodore. Then Theodore realized something and turned back.

Wuuuong!

The daoist master was looking at him with astonishment. Other people might not know it, but the daoist master could sense it.

“I supplemented some lacking parts. I increased the shielding ability against remote projectiles and encouraged the vigor of those

inside the ward. The burden on you is less because it is connected to a nearby dragon vein," Theodore explained.

"...Thank you, great one," the daoist master said.

"The title is a bit burdensome. I also have something to talk to you about, so follow me."

"Yes..."

The daoist followed Theodore, while the villagers belatedly cheered that the village was safe. As if responding to their mood, the wall of the ward emitted a gentle light.

*

Theodore sat in the parlor of the Fairy Dance Lee mansion and drank tea while exchanging greetings. There were a few things he wanted to ask, but he refrained from speaking. In any case, the person who should explain had already been decided.

The daoist realized this relationship and didn't hesitate. "I am called Tae Rang, in charge of enforcing the laws of the Kunlun. In order to overcome the difficulties faced by the central empire, I visited to seek assistance from old members of the Fairy Dance Lee family."

"Kunlun?"

"Yes. It is a fabled place that the daoists devoted their lives to gaining entrance to. It is rare for anyone to come down from the mountain, but the recent situation is too serious."

Theodore nodded. 'The group of daoists was more powerful than I thought. Since he's a lawkeeper, this daoist must have excellent skills.'

It meant that the power of at least three masters was secured. The daoist, Tae Rang, hesitated for a moment at Theodore's nod before suddenly getting up and saying, "Before I explain the rest of the matter, can I say something to the great one?"

He fell on both knees and bowed, then he pleaded, “Please calm this tribulation! I heard it is an inevitable disaster but a superhuman beyond the laws of causality can overcome it! Please show mercy to the people of the center!”

“Tae Rang.”

“Those who came before were very supportive, but destruction is upon us!” Tae Rang lifted his head as he talked.

Theodore was surprised by the helplessness, self-doubt, and despair on the middle-aged man’s face. The strife in the middle empire was enough to make a shaman with master level ability feel despair.

“Tae Rang,” Theodore called him once more before sighing. “Let me hear your explanation.”

Theodore placed the cold cup of tea to his lips and sensed it would be a long story. Despite becoming a transcendent, he still had a mountain of work to do.

Chapter 357 - Lusts Apocalypse (1)

Tae Rang, the man who had introduced himself as a daoist, took a deep breath and told a long story.

It had been a month ago.

The great empire and middle kingdom occupied more than half the East Continent, so the speed of transmitting news was slow. Even an express horse would take several months to reach one end of the kingdom to the other, so it had been inevitable.

There were 256 castles that ruled the kingdom, and eight princes reigned over the lords. This feudal style of governance contributed to the slowing down of communication.

There were institutions like the magic towers, but the situation was different from the Western Continent where magic power and by-products were spread widely throughout the continent. The East Continent handled the problem of sending and receiving information using homing pigeons.

“The supreme justice read the heavens and said that a disaster would begin from the capital city.”

Theodore also had the ability to read the heavens, but he urged the daoist to continue.

“That night, the heavenly star was red, and the people in the middle kingdom started to turn into creatures, regardless of their identity, sex, and age.”

It was literally a nightmare.

A prince of the central kingdom had claimed that the kingdom’s population had already reached one billion people. The lords of each province had counted a significant number, and it was clearly over 100 million. What if all these people turned into monsters? Even half of it would be 50 million, and half of that would be 25 million.

A person who couldn't handle a single wild dog wouldn't be able to kill a top warrior who had turned into a monster. This catastrophe threatened not just the empire but also the material world.

'No, the monsters devoured each other, and the survivors protected themselves, like this village. Even so, the number was likely to be reduced considerably.' Unlike the first time, Theodore heard about the situation and was able to calmly measure the level of the disaster. 'I haven't figured out why, but the kingdom is under the influence of the Receptacle of Solitude. When the monsters eat each other, they fill their stomachs, but there is no sign of their power increasing. There is no one to do farming or other matters, so the survivors won't be able to last a year without sacrificing something.'

In some ways, it was the same with beasts. They had physical abilities several times stronger than that of ordinary humans, and their intelligence was enough to deceive hunters. A tiger or a bear couldn't be anything other than a predator in the ecosystem.

Then what was a predator's 'nemesis?' Something on the same level as a predator? A quick prey that couldn't be caught? No, the word 'nemesis' wasn't to that extent. A nemesis was something that couldn't be overcome. It was an empty stomach.

An environment in which all prey disappeared was deadly to predators, and these monsters were no exception. Once the monsters ran out of humans, wild animals, and wild birds, they would eat their own kind, and the numbers would be reduced.

Theodore got all these answers, but there was one problem left. "...The survivors need to defend themselves so that the monsters can't fill their hunger."

Tae Rang's eyes widened at Theodore's words. "Y-You are saying the same thing as the supreme justice. I only said a few words so how...?"

“It is obvious when calmly looking at the situation,” Theodore said. Then while ignoring Tae Rang’s eyes which were filled with admiration, Theodore asked about his colleagues who had come ahead of him, “Rather, my colleagues should’ve stopped in this village before me. Did you borrow the strength of those two people?”

“Ah, I’ll explain from here!” Lee Seol spoke on behalf of Tae Rang, who was too busy admiring Theodore. “If you are talking about Theo’s wife and the silver-haired girl, they went to help Hyungkang Castle 300 kilometers to the northwest.”

“Hyungkang Castle?”

“Yes! The residents of the castle have changed into monsters. But since there is an outstanding master present, there wasn’t any serious damage. All the nearby survives gathered in Hyungkang Castle along with a judiciary of the royal family.”

As the strongest empire on the East Continent, the lords were competent. The number of monsters that were changed might’ve been small at first, but it wasn’t easy to defend the castle and calm the confused people. However, if there was a master level shaman present, then the castle should be able to have defenses that wouldn’t be easily surpassed.

Nevertheless, there was one reason why extra power was needed.

‘The mutant monsters have master level mana.’ Thinking about it again, Theodore found it strange. The power of a monster shouldn’t change that much after the transformation.

According to the judiciary, there was little difference between a strong warrior and a monster. Then there must be a reason why the mutation was happening.

-User, Gluttony spoke as he came to this conclusion, -I am certain that I know the truth of this phenomenon.

*

After Tae Rang finished his story, Theodore asked for understanding from Aquilo and was left alone in a room without anyone else. Theodore confirmed that there was no one around with his senses and a transcendent's magic. Then he sat in a chair and spoke, "Start."

Gluttony replied like it had been waiting, -First, this is caused by Lust.

"I guessed. I wasn't sure until you confirmed it."

-I was the same. I realized the nature of this phenomenon after receiving a clue from User's reasoning, Gluttony continued in an excited voice. -Why did the mutations in shamanism occur? Why did the ability of an individual become so different and why is it irrelevant to their life before the change? The key to this question is Lust's struggle.

"Struggle?"

-That's right. It has to do with something you did. It is a little different but similar to the butterfly effect.

'The butterfly effect?' Theodore made a confused expression, but Gluttony didn't explain.

Gluttony raised its voice and exclaimed cheerfully, -Sloth! Prometheus' arrangement that you performed set fire to Lust. That is what caused this disaster.

"Crazy!" Theodore made a bug-eyed expression as he realized everything in an instant.

Gluttony's words were right.

By expelling Sloth, the mana concentration of the world would decline significantly after centuries. It was a future that couldn't be reversed and had struck Lust with a thunderbolt across the ocean. The decline in mana concentration would interfere with the conception of an upper species, blocking the purpose of her existence.

-Thus, Lust started the last chapter. How many children has she given birth to on the East Continent for over a thousand years and how many descendants did they give birth to? Lust has turned on the potential latent in those who inherited her bloodline!

“That is why they turned into monsters?”

-Perhaps. User, don’t you know better than anyone the appearance of monsters? They aren’t monsters but remnants of the parent species. Ulfheðnar, Arv, Vulcan… They were failures who disappointed Lust. Gluttony’s explanation was clear, accurate, and cruel enough to not leave any doubts.

Theodore wasn’t responsible, but he played a role in this catastrophe. The plan to expel Sloth and lower the mana concentration of the world had all come from the god who looked ahead to the future.

Theodore let go of his last protests. “I see.”

He wasn’t swayed by guilt and looked at the reality in front of him. “The mutation comes from the blood of the upper species flowing in their veins. She triggered all the blood relatives in an attempt to draw out a winner, and the monsters are just failures who didn’t become an upper species.”

-Yes.

“I don’t understand the method of throwing everything into an unlikely possibility, but it is a grimoire.” Theodore’s head was cold like the liquid in his brain had been turned into ice water. “…Let’s assume that at least one million people inherited Lust’s blood. Is there the possibility of a winner appearing among them?”

-Well, I can’t calculate it with my ability.

“Hrmm, I guess it is more like gambling than speculation.” However, Theodore’s eyes gleamed. “Can you answer my question, Seimei?”

It was a name that popped up without any context, but no one

wondered about it. Gluttony was silent, and no one spoke for a while. Theodore waited a few more seconds before glancing at his left hand. It was a silent demonstration that Theodore would call him using the user's authority.

[...Ah. Were you waiting for me to comment?] Sure enough, the genderless voice was Seimei's soul rising to the surface of his consciousness.

"Haven't I been waiting for a while? I crossed the wall as you stated in your advice. Now that I am a transcendent, you should be able to confide in me. Am I right?"

[W-Well, yes.]

"The reason you told me not to approach the capital must have something to do with this grimoire."

[Kuoong...]

As usual, Theodore waited for Seimei to speak on his own. However, Seimei was silent for a few moments. Seeming to sense Theodore's determination in his words and gaze, Seimei withdrew his hesitation. [I understand. I'll tell you everything that remains in my memories.]

Theodore's eyes dimmed, and a person who looked gender neutral appeared in his mind. The person was dressed in white and red, and he had ebony hair and golden eyes. This was the appearance of Abe no Seimei, the strongest onmyōji in Japan.

Seimei greeted Theodore with a blank expression. [Now, I will start from the beginning.]

Despite this being a disturbing story for him, Seimei's determination didn't waver. Theodore listened as the old shaman confessed the truth that no one else knew.

[It is as you guessed. I am the child of a yokai and Lust—a person who is a descendant of the white and golden nine-tailed fox, and is neither a human nor yokai.]

He was a half-man, half-yokai. Originally, it was something that shouldn't be possible. Seimei was an upper species that had been created using Lust's power.

It was far short of her ultimate goal, but Seimei was a monster who could compete with a dragon when fully grown. Thus, Lust had to raise Seimei well and use him to protect her. Unlike her other failures, she had planned to keep him and even imitated a maternal figure.

However, a problem had occurred in an unexpected place.

[My father saved me.] Seimei smiled as he recalled the proud memory. [Was it because a nine-tailed fox was attracted to a transcendent body or my father's great paternal instinct? I still don't know. Personally, I hope it was the latter.]

"Thanks to him, you escaped from Lust's grasp."

[Well, that is what happened. You should roughly know what happened next. I hid in Japan and walked the path of a shaman, reaching the level of a transcendent. I instinctively knew that I couldn't work for my mother.]

Despite being born from a wicked yokai and a grimoire, Abe no Seimei's nature was just and good. He couldn't stand injustice and rescued the weak.

At that time, Japan was a small place consisting of several villagers, rather than a kingdom. It was the advent of the onmyōjis, led by Seimei. After a century of hard work and struggles, he settled in Japan with his successor and completed his organization.

[I thought I could win.]

Lust exercised absolute power over her bloodline, but she couldn't interfere with a transcendent who had been removed from the framework of cause and effect. Abe no Seimei had crossed the border with that conviction. He had passed through the lands

of the empire, defeating everyone who went against him and entered the capital. Seimei had become incomparable from when he escaped from the empire, and he wanted to destroy his mother.

After revealing all nine of his tails, he had called down a meteor shower to hit the imperial palace in the heart of the capital. Then he was defeated.

[...It was my first and last mistake.]

Seimei erased the smile on his lips.

Chapter 358 - Lusts Apocalypse (2)

[Despite becoming a transcendent, the genes inside me obeyed her orders. Unlike my will, my fingers were paralyzed and my voice trapped in my mouth. As a result, I fought with 60% of my powers sealed, and my brothers died.]

It was too high a price for one mistake. Seimei had realized that a transcendent wasn't invincible and then lost his life. The genius of a century had gotten defeated and killed by his own inexperience and arrogance. If Seimei had used all his forces at the time, the outcome might've changed.

[Hahat.] However, he laughed instead of complaining. [Well, these are just the complaints of a loser. All my bad luck and the result are things I need to bear. Now, this Seimei will lead you to victory in the unfinished battle.

"What does that mean?"

[I will help you. It looks like you are quite likable.]

Seimei finally said he would cooperate with Theodore. Although it was a joke, it was true that he liked Theodore. An existence that was quite distant from humans was fickle. Even if Theodore was the only candidate, Seimei would bury the heritage forever if he didn't like the person.

[You might've realized it when listening to my story, but victory can't be guaranteed when fighting alone. My mother kept more than me in her womb.]

"Then how should I move?"

[Go to Japan to meet my descendants and ask for their help. Put your hands on my inheritance. It will make your unfinished power more complete.]

Theodore nodded and opened his mouth, "Can you tell me more?"

[They are the Heavenly Sword, the Eight Mirrors, and the Eight Jade Magatamas. The power of the three magic objects should accept a transcendent person.]

Even the clouds in the distant sky could be a sword, while the mirrors could bounce back even the power of a god, and the magatamas could create clones. Seimei had invaded the capital with his treasures, but he had sent them back before he died.

'...Amazing. I would've regretted it if I didn't hear about them.' Theodore couldn't help feeling in awe when he heard about the powers of the three treasures.

The Heavenly Sword, Eight Mirrors, and Eight Jade Magatamas would increase his magic power by more than double. The mirrors which reflected the power of the enemy and the magatamas which made clones were both worthy items. Furthermore, there was no reason not to use the Heavenly Sword. According to the tradition, it was possible for Yamato no Orochi to make a sword of water from his body.

[In Japan, there are a few youkai left. The leader of the Oni, the three-legged crow, and the Tsuchigumo will be helpful in this fight.]

"I don't know if they will follow my words."

[I will teach you to link to their souls. It isn't difficult, so you will learn it right away.]

This was more than expected. Theodore heard Seimei's explanation and decided to stop by Japan. Even Seimei had failed to destroy the capital... So, in order for the more inexperienced Theodore to take down Lust, he needed to mobilize all the unused power.

Between Japan and Hyungkang Castle, the scale tilted sharply to one side.

"I will go to the East Continent first."

If Tae Rang's words were true, then the defense of Hyungkang Castle was like an iron wall. It was important to secure Seimei's legacy as soon as possible, rather than checking on the safety of the two tower masters. Theodore made his decision.

*

"I will be away for a few days." There was an uproar at Theodore's words.

He had gathered together Lee Seol, Lee Joonyoung, Aquilo and Tae Rang to tell them that. Tae Rang looked like the sky had collapsed, and both of the Lees were quite surprised. It hadn't even been half a day, so they weren't expecting him to leave. Only Aquilo listened to his words in a calm manner.

"Aquilo."

"Speak, Boy."

"Go to Hyungkang Castle ahead of me. Convey my words to the two tower masters and tell them to wait for my return."

"Hrm," Aquilo made a vague sound like she wasn't interested. "I don't like this. I came here to follow you, but you want to act separately?"

"I'm sorry but I have something to solve as soon as possible."

Aquilo might be quite affectionate to him, but her nature was essentially one that was cruel. The evil dragon of the east sea—her name had been notorious for thousands of years, and apart from liking Theodore, she didn't have a reason to help the people of this land.

Aquilo pondered for a moment before reaching out a finger and pressing it against his lips. "Okay, I'll think of it as one of the two debts. Do you agree?"

There had once been a time when they would make an exchange, but now their positions had changed quite a bit. It wouldn't be a

big burden to owe her this much. Thus, Theodore nodded without giving it much thought. It was a mistake because he didn't know the ulterior motive of Aquilo, a dragon who had been indulging in pleasure for over a thousand years.

'The temptation isn't much different from being unarmed.'

Loosening the helmet, removing the armor, and taking off the belt around the waist... The analogy of being disarmed was really appropriate in that the other person's alertness was gone. Sometimes, it was effective to break down the person with a fatal temptation, but she shouldn't approach Theodore with this method.

'It will be easier to embrace me after becoming accustomed to my body temperature and smell. The next kiss will lead to one night and then... huhu.'

Like a snake slowly squeezing its prey, she would draw him into a relationship and situation that he couldn't escape from. Aquilo bowed her head so that Theodore couldn't see the desire in her eyes. It was irritating and discordant for her to act so mildly.

Shortly after that, Tae Rang recovered his spirit and opened his mouth, "B-But Great One... The barrier is stronger and harder thanks to your grace, but there are still many factors that make the safety of this village unstable. Please reconsider just once."

"Ah, you don't need to worry about this," Theodore spoke without hesitation and clapped once. Clap.

Simultaneously, the air in the front yard flashed, and several massive objects appeared.

The smallest of them was five meters tall while the largest was eight meters tall. They were the various combat golems that Theodore had placed in his laboratory. Paragranum's power had been borrowed to finish renovating the golems, which were now monsters with the raw power of a magician or aura user.

There were 12 battle golems, so they should be enough during a siege.

“This should be enough. They can use aura and magic, so they can deal with any type of monsters.”

“O-Ohhh…! The giant soul soldiers from old times…!”

“Additionally, support troops will be coming in a week, so you don’t have to worry about the area near the Baekun Mountains.”

If the White Tower Master led the battle, they could easily defeat 30,000 monsters. Theodore held a deep confidence in his expression as he moved slowly. He would move outside the barrier to carry out the space movement.

“Theo!” Lee Seol shouted to him from a distance. “Don't worry! I’m not a child who will just be protected anymore!”

It seemed she was still a young child.

“Haha,” Theodore laughed as he waved to her, left the translucent barrier and rose to the sky.

Given the unusual physical ability of the monsters, he had to rise to 200 meters in order to be safe. Theodore closed his eyes in the serene night. ‘Can I use it on the East Continent?’

The token he had received from Clipeus, the golden gate… With this authority, Theodore could read the spatial coordinates of the whole material world and ‘twist’ them. It was literally a power to protect this world. This power didn’t distinguish between the East Continent and West Continent.

Kiiing! A radiant light burst out as the coordinates were engraved in Theodore’s head. The place where Seimei left his heritage, the holy place of the onmyōjis in the capital of Japan—it was the precise spatial coordinates of Tsuchimikado Castle.

「 Transition. 」 Theodore’s body moved at this one word.

“—Eh?” During the space jump, an unidentified pressure caught

him!

『 Someone is trying to pass through my territory. You don't know your place, Human! Pay for your sin with your flesh! 』 There came a thunderous yell before Theodore could even grasp the situation.

There was no time to look back as several gusts of wind flew toward him.

Kwaaaaang! Theodore was struck by the huge storm and fell to the ground. There wasn't any big damage because the defense spells were properly deployed, but the surprise attack itself was a threat. Theodore's eyes lit up as he became combat ready. There was substance in the previous attack. It wasn't just wind that delivered a shock wave but a physical blow.

『 You aren't normal to survive my force! 』 There was a soft voice.

Then Theodore looked at the enemy. The being that had surprised him was far from a human.

They had one leg and two arms. The being also had two glowing eyes which emitted a strong sense of oppression and an unknown power that flowed from its bluish body. It seemed to be a monster that combined the cow and dragon in one body.

[A one-legged wind demon! I have never seen one before.] Seimei seemed to know what this monster was.

"One-legged wind demon? What is that?"

[They resemble a cow and a dragon and deal with wind and lightning depending on their birth. It is a wind demon if it controls the wind and rain, and a lightning demon if it controls wind and lightning.]

"Can I think of it as on the level of the youkai?"

[It is a different race from the youkai but... Well, there isn't a big difference when looking at just attack power. You can easily defeat

it.]

It was enough. Theodore raised a finger to the wind demon observing him from the sky. It might be from a species other than human, but there should be old memories in its subconscious. It would know that this action was insulting.

Unsurprisingly, it responded to the provocation, 『 You! How long can you survive? 』

In less than a few seconds, a giant whirlwind was created around the wind demon's body and fell to the surface. It was a destructive power that could break down huge walls in one strike!

'...All sense of human identity from back then has disappeared.' Theodore laughed bitterly in front of the wind demon.

The power of this whirlwind probably surpassed magic of the 7th circle. As a power that couldn't be used by the human body, it became a monster of the wind. The insight of a transcendent allowed Theodore to see things he didn't want to see. From humans to other wind demons, the number of people this wind demon had eaten reached more than 10,000.

"I'll kill you."

Its sense of space and dominance over an area were nothing. Before a true transcendent, this whirlwind was just a remnant.

Forced Harmonization—Phase 2.

The transcendent stepped forward and cast a strange fire—Extinguishing Flames Image, Mode "SURT."

Theodore became a crimson fire man as the flames he summoned from Muspelheim surrounded his body. It was time to show the wind demon who it was facing.

Chapter 359 - Lusts Apocalypse (3)

————————————————!!

Theodore's fire fist hit the ground, blowing out the surrounding air. Simultaneously... the wind moved faster than sound and clashed with the vacuum. It wasn't something that a human's physical abilities could cope with, and Theodore was knocked down by the clash of magic. Who would be able to tell that this fearful confrontation was just an 'exploration?'

'The power and speed are greater than those of a sword master, while the durability is dragon level.'

It was an absurd force that made Theodore take one step back. The wind demon's pattern of movement itself was similar to Veronica's, but the movement and force of the wind were unpredictable. It was hard to grasp the rhythm, so a frontal confrontation was stupid.

Kkuok.

However, Theodore raised his fists and faced it head-on.

Fairy Dance's Direct Transmission.

Hand Counterattack Technique.

Left Palm Lone Peak.

He read the timing precisely and stretched out his left hand toward the wind demon. Then the direction of the shockwave shifted. Originally, this attack should've hit Theodore directly and thrown him back. However, despite hitting an empty space, the shockwave still ended up shattering rocks dozens of meters away. It was a fearsome power that couldn't be ignored.

'Gotcha.' Theodore didn't shrink back. It was impossible to escape from the range of the wind demon.

Instead, he aimed for the monster's body with his burning red

left hand. Theodore wasn't trying to beat it with his hands. Martial arts might be a part of him, but Theodore Miller was a magician in the end.

'Blaze Chain.' Flames in the form of chains emerged, and the thickness of the chains made of Muspelheim's flames was thicker than the large line of a mast. This was the true ability of the second phase of Forced Harmonization. Beyond integrating magic with the body, it was the power to manipulate completed magic like it was his own body.

『 What, a human can control flames...? 』

There was a vacuum, but the flames didn't collapse. Muspelheim's flames were unrelated to the combustion process. The wind demon saw through the essence of it and retreated in panic. Normal flames could be turned off by a vacuum, and it would be enough to blow them away with wind. However, the wind demon had to avoid this fire as much as possible. Instincts awoke inside the wind demon.

Kuooooh!

It used the wind to push its body in the opposite direction in order to escape the chains coming from every direction. In the midst of its escape, some of the wind demon's flesh was peeled off by the flames, but that was a cheap price. Of course, Theodore had no intention of ending it with this much.

"Do you think I will let you leave so easily?"

These were flames that blazed well without combustion. However, if they came into contact with the atmosphere, they would be no different from ordinary flames. Theodore used the red flames to aim at the wind demon's back at a terrifying speed. It was an accelerated flight which used a method that was even more ignorant than the one Veronica had used.

Reading the path of the wind demon's escape, Theodore reached

out with his right hand.

Firefly.

Chain Bomber.

Something similar to small bugs emerged from his burning fingertips. Of course, the movements weren't slow. They moved ahead on the path of the wind demon that Theodore had predicted. Then the 'fireflies' played their role.

Ku kwa kwa kwang! There was a big explosion.

The contrast between their cute appearance and the power of the explosion was like the difference between the sky and the earth. The clouds split from the rising pressure, and some of the surfaces on the ground melted, turning into lava. The trail of Muspelheim fire, which was several times hotter than ordinary flames, was intense.

『 Y-You! You, youuuuuu—! 』 The wind demon soon emerged from the fiery hell.

Its scaly and leather body had been distorted to an extent that it was difficult to recognize. However, it hadn't lost its strength. Theodore increased his evaluation of the wind demon by two stages.

"I'll admit that you are quite tough." Theodore looked at the wind demon and laughed coldly. It had survived an attack that Theodore thought was a kill shot. However, that was all.

『 H-Human! A lowly human is looking down on me! 』 The wind demon became furious at Theodore, who couldn't hide his derision.

Although the wind demon might not be able to win, it couldn't endure this derision. There wasn't a single piece of its human self left, but the upper species simply couldn't bear this humiliation. The descendant of the extinct wind demon clan was ready to run wild. If it used up all its vitality to control the wind, it would be

able to crush this cheeky human.

『 Look! Feel awe! This is the last of the great wind god! 』

If all the winds were gathered together, wouldn't this area be devastated...?

『...What? 』

The wind demon's call didn't work. Then the wind demon looked down at the enemy with a puzzled expression. There wasn't a problem with itself, so it felt the problem must be due to the enemy. The wind demon guessed right.

Theodore opened his mouth with a smile, "Do you think you are the only one with the privilege to control the wind?"

That's right. It wasn't possible to use it well in everyday life, but Theodore's body contained the divinity of the wind god, Aiolos. Now that Theodore had become transcendent, it was simple to awaken the divinity and take away the dominance of the wind. The reason he hadn't used this method right from the beginning was to test stage two of Forced Harmonization.

"Well, thanks for letting me play. I was able to loosen up my body."

After feeling like it had played in the palm of Theodore's hand, the wind demon muttered, 『...You, are you really human? 』

"Yes, just like you were once." Then Theodore didn't say anything more. There was no need, and he didn't want to talk to a monster that wasn't human. A huge fire fist appeared.

『————————————————!!! 』

The wind demon was in despair, but Theodore's fist didn't stop until it was dead. It was burned by Muspelheim's flames and crushed by the high pressure. This was a destruction technique that even a youkai couldn't avoid. It was a formidable attack that Theodore devised on the spot—a destructive magic which blocked

the possibility of the wind demon running away using the wind.

Soon after, the moving fist became quiet.

“Is it dead?”

As the fire fist opened up to its palm, a handful of grey ash powder fell to the ground. It was the futile end of the idiot who had tried to fight Theodore. Theodore let go of Forced Harmonization and went over the battle again.

‘It was nothing for me. Veronica would struggle for a while before catching the pattern. It is also the case with Aquilo.’

Theodore had been experimenting, but the wind demon had been quite strong. Its physical ability had been like that of a sword master, and it had magic power equivalent to a 7th Circle magician. However, it had lacked practical experience and hadn’t known how to complement its weaknesses.

Orta, Sylvia, Randolph, and Titania might have a hard time if they hadn’t known its identity.

“Tsk, things are becoming more troublesome. These guys might come out to interfere if I use space movement, and I can’t kill them all…”

The wind demon was easy to take down, but the other upper species were still unknown. What if there was a monster whose strength was comparable to a transcendent? It was more efficient to fly with lightning than to risk space movement.

“It is a bit less than 800 kilometers in the southeast… I’ve moved quite far. Perhaps those who can interfere with space movement are rare.”

Theodore checked the position of Tsuchimikado Castle and moved through the air. After becoming a transcendent, the duration of becoming lightning wasn’t as burdensome as it had been before. If it wasn’t in a combat situation, then he could probably last one day like this?

It was difficult to think of a means better than Lightning when it came to merely moving at high speed.

Pajijik. Shortly after that, Theodore turned to lightning and crossed the sky.

*

The most secretive place in Tsuchimikado Castle, Japan, was a shrine which contained intact records from ancient times.

A woman stood quietly in front of Seimei's tablet. "...It is an unusual day."

The white and red cloth, which was different from the uniform of the onmyōji, this woman wore proved that she was a miko (shrine maiden). Born as a human, living as a vessel of the gods... For the sake of their mission, the mikos were people whose lives were like dandelions. The 13th Seimei's miko, Suzuka, was such a person.

She rose slowly from her seat without disturbing her skirt and looked at the divine artifacts next to her: a great tachi which seemed to be around 1.6 meters in length; a stone mirror which didn't shine even though it was smoothly wiped; and eight jewels which were sewn on a string like a necklace.

They were the great artifacts which had never found a master after Seimei's death.

The three sacred artifacts from old traditions—those who weren't qualified couldn't own the artifacts and those who had an evil mentality were burned when touching them. She didn't know how many swordsmen and shamans had turned to ashes because of the artifacts.

"Why?" Suzuka tucked the hair like a night sky behind her ear and looked at the three artifacts with strange eyes.

She couldn't tell from the outset, but she quickly realized something. Even Suzuka, who had inherited the role of the miko,

couldn't touch the artifacts except for when wiping off the dust, but she had just noticed that the surfaces of the artifacts were currently shaking slightly.

"May the great Seimei reveal the way," she prayed with palms raised in a sense of reverence. It was a prayer that never had any meaning.

Yet this time, a voice came back after her prayer, [Oh, you are the present miko?]

"——————."

[I don't know whose descendant you are. Still, it is nice that you haven't forgotten your origins. You pass,] the voice that Suzuka thought was a hallucination continued speaking. [Young miko, the man who will be the owner of the three artifacts will soon come to you. Give him my legacy and guide him to the great youkai sealed in Mount Inunaki.]

"…S-Seimei?"

[Are you still surprised? You are a bit dull.]

The voice was different from what Suzuka had imagined, but there was an undeniable weight to it.

Abe no Seimei was a great hero who had established the framework of Japan and calmed the continent where monsters were flocking, making a place where people could live. There were no records of him in other kingdoms, but in Japan, his name was equivalent to a god's.

Was this truly the voice of Abe no Seimei? The confused Suzuka couldn't answer.

[If you are uncertain, call me in front of him. You should know what to do as a miko?]

"Ah, yes! I know, Founder!"

[Yes. I will see you soon, kid.]

As Seimei spoke for the last time, Suzuka seemed to lose her soul. She heard the voice of Founder Seimei, and the owner of the three artifacts would soon appear... Suzuka was a miko, but anyone would think she was crazy if she said these to them. However, she didn't have much time to settle down.

"M-Miko! It is serious! Miko Suzu—!" The urgent voices coming from outside the shrine were getting closer.

Chapter 360 - Seimeis Legacy (1)

Kwarurung! There was the rumble of thunder and a flash of light. However, there were no rain clouds, and the lightning moved in a horizontal rather than vertical direction.

It was strange to see lightning cross a dry sky, but most people who saw it thought it was just a whim of heaven. Theodore would arrive at Tsuchimikado Castle before the news spread to anyone's ears.

'There isn't long left.'

There weren't any landmarks. It was said that mountains and rivers changed after 10 years. Now that it was hundreds of years later, there weren't many parts left that were consistent with Seimei's memories. However, unlike geographical features, spatial coordinates didn't change. Even if the mountains collapsed, the rivers were filled in, and there were no cities, the absolute numbers remained the same.

He moved forward maybe around 100 kilometers. It only took a few minutes for the lightning mode Theodore to start decelerating.

"Seimei," Theodore spoke as he split a cloud into two, "I have crossed the border. Are we moving to a secret place? If I enter this way, there might be some friction."

[I understand, but it doesn't matter,] Seimei spoke in a decisive way. Then he explained why, [The power of space movement is convenient, but you should've understood after you were caught by the wind demon. There are many means to interfere with spatial movement, and there are independent forces with authority over the sky.]

"Umm..."

[In the first place, if space movement were a flawless trick, then there would be no need for flying. Do you want to repeat constant

short spatial jumps in order to fight?] Seimei said. Then he added a note, which was, in fact, the real reason for the frontal entrance, [My wards include the ability to block spatial movement and will attack any person who tries to go through. If you move through space blindly, you will be a wreck, even with your current power.]

"…It is overly impressive for a crime prevention function."

[Just think about the times. At that time, the ability to block space movement was essential. It was an age when famous people appeared in the cities in the double digits.]

In modern times, there were few people who could use space movements. However, they had been common in Seimei's time. The hard walls hadn't been able to stop anyone. Thus, the shamans had strengthened their wards for the purpose of protecting their valuables. Fortunately, spatial movement was vulnerable, and there were many methods to interfere with it. Moreover, if the obstacle was a transcendent like Seimei, it would be hard for Theodore to break directly through.

"Sigh, it can't be helped. I will go through the front door." Theodore was convinced and shook off his hesitation.

Kwarurung…!

He added a secondary spell as a boost, and the lightning bolt was twice as fast. If a conflict was inevitable, then it was better to take the initiative.

Theodore might have Seimei in his body, but it was difficult to prove this relationship. How many people would trust Theodore, who had the appearance of an outsider, if he showed up and said he had been given permission by a great man who had been dead for hundreds of years?

He would be treated as a madman, and they were likely to be hostile.

'I don't like this trick, but it is for the best…'

Some emotions were quite rational. Just as people who suffered great damage in a natural disaster didn't harbor hostility, there were people who stayed cool when faced with an absolute power gap. It took a lot to make a cooled down enemy burn with the will to fight. For example, things such as hatred or a sense of duty. Theodore intended to aim for the gap between these.

'Blow out the spark before the fire of hostility lights up.'

He would crush it all with strength.

Kwarururung!

The momentum of the lightning increased until it was like a lightning dragon. Simultaneously, it fell from the sky and down into Tsuchimikado Castle. It seemed like the sky was collapsing! The ward around Tsuchimikado Castle sensed the approach and immediately created a shield, but there was no collision.

[Emergency Order, open the way,] Seimei borrowed Gluttony's mouth to cast a spell, and a hole was bored in the middle of the ward.

Theodore dug in without missing this moment. "I have entered the castle."

[Turn right 30 degrees and go straight. My shrine is there.]

The lightning dragon moved following Seimei's guidance. People were shocked by the lightning, but none of them dared to fight him. Lightning had appeared in the clear sky in the shape of a dragon...? Theodore, the only transcendent since the Age of Mythology had ended, was like a god.

'No, some people are quickly approaching my destination.' Theodore was moving through the castle when he frowned at an overwhelming sensation. It was slower than him, but it was still pretty fast. They were master level, but their reaction speed was hard to understand.

"Nice move. Their speed suggests they knew about my approach

beforehand.”

[…….]

“Seimei, why do I have a bad feeling?”

[Well, I think you’re mistaken?]

“I will see.”

Theodore was filled with doubts as he arrived at his destination and landed on the ground. It was precisely the area around the shrine.

“Is this your work as well?”

[Yes, it is a moderate seal, but it still remains.]

There was a different type of ward protecting Tsuchimikado Castle. The Senbon Torii (shrine gates) were the main source blocking unqualified access. It might be a seemingly simple structure, but there were thousands of seals carved on them. Of course, Theodore could break through with his power, but what was the point of breaking down a legacy that contained great historical value?

“Stop!” A warning called out in a strange language. Based on Seimei’s memories, it was hard to learn. Both the word order and pronunciation were different.

Theodore turned in the direction of the warning.

‘Um.’ All of his preconceived thoughts were blown away.

There were only three master class people. The combination was one shaman and two swordsmen. Among them, the swordsman who gave the warning was the strongest.

‘Well, I will win.’

It might have been different back when he was in the 8th circle, but it wasn’t enough to deal with him now that he had become transcendent. The swordsman also understood this and had cold

sweat on his frowning forehead. His gut instincts told him that this unknown person was an existence beyond him.

They shouldn't fight. After deciding that, the swordsman said, "...A great person has come to see us. I am Nobutsuna of Japan. I would like to ask for your indulgence."

Likewise, the shaman, Toman, acted in a manner similar to the swordsman. The problem was that his grandson was immature despite being a master and lacked self-control.

"Grandfather, why are you lowering your posture? Who on earth is this ruffia—"

As the young master shouted, the faces of two elders paled.

"You! Don't speak rashly when you don't know anything!"

"G-Grandfather."

"If you say one more word, I will cut off your arm."

The young swordsman shut his mouth with surprise. Meanwhile, Nobutsuna hurriedly bowed to Theodore. "I'm sorry. I educated my grandchild wrongly."

"I will accept your apology."

"Thank you for your generosity."

Did Nobutsuna, a sword master of Japan, normally have such a submissive attitude? No. He was never like this. Neither the powerful nor the rich could compel him. Nobutsuna was able to overthrow thousands of warriors alone. Yet, he was now surrendering to a stronger power. Nobutsuna had built up life experiences over a hundred years and was forced to be careful.

'I don't think there is any hostility, but if we need to fight...'

Staring from Tsuchimikado Castle, the whole of Japan would turn into a sea of fire. Nobutsuna and Toman didn't see any future existing after. However, while the two of them were feeling fearful, a clear and gentle voice rang out, "It is nice to meet you."

Standing on the first threshold of the Senbo Torii, Miko Suzuka greeted them, “I am Suzuka, the miko of Founder Seimei.”

“I am Theodore Miller.”

“Can I call you ‘Theodore’?”

Theodore nodded, and Suzuka licked her dry lips nervously. If the voice was true, then she knew this man’s purpose. “Did you come to pick up the three artifacts?”

The eyes of the three masters widened while Theodore complained to Seimei, ‘Hey, did you spread a rumor before I came?’

[N-No! I only told my miko. Wouldn’t it be a mess if you met the miko without her knowing anything?]

‘You didn’t need to hide it from me.’

[Surprise…?]

‘I will talk to you later.’ He ignored Seimei and cut off the connection.

Theodore cleared up his mind and confirmed her words, “Yes, I think you received his message.”

“That… Isn’t it a bit rude?”

“Our relationship isn’t a formal one.”

It was a conversation involving only two people, but Suzuka felt like she was being ridiculed. Theodore had omitted the title for Founder Seimei and claimed he didn’t have a formal relationship with the Founder… A living person was acting like he had a friendly relationship with the dead.

In that case, the voice she had heard might be a trick performed by this man. However, Suzuka hid her doubts, smiled faintly, and clapped her hands.

“Ah, it is like this. I’m sorry,” she spoke in a gentle voice, “But

Theodore, if you want to enter the shrine, you have to pass the test that the founder arranged. Outsiders aren't allowed to cross this torii." Apart from the seals on the Senbon Torii, Seimei had set up a test for those who wanted to cross this threshold.

It was to judge the personality of the strong person who appeared to become the master of the three artifacts. Catastrophic damage could be caused if the wrong person got their hands on the artifacts.

Suzuka warned Theodore, "If you walk up the stairs, please keep this in mind. Not one person has passed the test so far. "

The masters' eyes narrowed as they realized the meaning of Suzuka's words.

The test wasn't that easy to pass, and there had been many cases of mental or physical damage. This was a test, but it didn't mean it was safe. It was why no one had challenged it for over 300 years.

"Kuk." Why…? Theodore just laughed at her words.

"I understand," he gave a short reply and stepped on the stone stairs.

Tak.

Then he casually took two steps.

"…"

"…?"

"…!"

"…!!"

The expressions of the four people, including Suzuka, distorted with surprise, astonishment, dismay, and wonder. The test was terrifying to the soul, so why was this man okay? The reason was simple.

"I'm sorry but I passed the Heaven and Earth test a long time

ago.”

That’s right. The identity of the test that Seimei wrapped around this shrine was the Heaven, Earth and Person test. It was something Theodore had experienced in the past after consuming the book, the Art of Yin and Yang Written Treatise.

Saving lives, keeping your will, bowing to fate—they were the trials that tested these three problems. Two were easy to solve, but Theodore had died hundreds of times in the last part. The same problems couldn’t hinder him after he already passed them.

Then at that moment…

Huuuuuuong!

There was an unknown resonance. Theodore and the four other people stiffened. Suzuka knew what was at the epicenter of the resonance. “The three artifacts? Why?”

The three artifacts sleeping inside the shrine woke up. The oscillation was due to them stretching after having slept for a long time.

Flash! A light rose from beyond the Senbon Torii, flashing three times. There was no need to explain the identity of the artifacts again. The Heavenly Sword, Eight Mirrors, and Eight Jade Magatamas—those who possessed only one would gain the power of a hero. Yet, all three rushed toward Theodore now.

“Eh?”

Then they penetrated his body.

Chapter 361 - Seimeis Legacy (2)

Wuuong!

There was no room to avoid it. Theodore couldn't cope with the speed of this light despite being transcendent. The three artifacts were the true nature of the light.

If they contained any hostility, his super sensitivity might be able to read it. However, there were no such feelings at all. After a moment, Theodore realized that the three artifacts were assimilating with his body, and he could use all three powers naturally without any sense of incongruity or rejection.

'...Amazing. They truly are treasures worthy of being called 'divine artifacts.'

The concentration of power flowing throughout his body was unreasonable. He could now fully handle a dragon heart, but the power of the three artifacts went beyond that. If possible, he wanted to try using it right now. Theodore felt a sense of fulfillment and was looking down at his palms when there was a sudden sign of an attack.

"You thief—!" Kamiizumi, the young swordsman couldn't shake off his pride despite being reproached by his grandfather.

Magoshiro was a genius who became a swordsman at the age of 30 and whose grandfather was called the greatest samurai. Who would've taught him to be humble? Nobutsuna sometimes told him to control his temper, but Magoshiro had a thick head and only listened with one ear.

'How dare this outsider?! The Heavenly Sword is my fortune!' Magoshiro thought this despite not having the courage to challenge the Heaven and Earth test. While the people present were baffled by the unexpected event, Magoshiro raised his sword and stepped forward. Nobutsuna belatedly tried to stop him, but

Nobutsuna couldn't move faster than another master.

Kiiing-There was the sound of Magoshiro's sword emerging from its sheath.

'Hoh, it is faster than I thought?' Theodore watched the sight and understood Magoshiro's acceleration. The technique of acceleration by using the opposing force of the sheath and blade was quite fresh. It was a difficult technique to use unless the blade was a dao, but Randolph used two swords and had more application possibilities.

'No, can I imitate this acceleration with the magnetic field?' Theodore only thought up to there as the tip of Magoshiro's sword arrived at his neck. From here, Theodore had to move quickly.

Pajijik. He turned into lightning in a flash and raised two fingers. His right hand was clenched into a fist, with two fingers raised like a blade. It was an action to borrow the power of the Heavenly Sword. A sword energy formed around one finger while Theodore struck forth like he was holding a real sword.

"Heok!" It might be due to his mood but Sword saint Kamiizumi Nobutsuna saw it one step too late.

At this moment, lightning broke the whole world into two.

"Kuook! M-My arm...!" Simultaneously, Magoshiro's right arm was cut, spraying out with blood. The aura blade of the god-sword, which could slice apart the clouds, tore up the opponent's arm.

Theodore inwardly felt a sense of amazement, but he spoke in a detached manner, "You can see that I wasn't too excessive on that boy."

"...Of course."

Magoshiro collapsed. His injury wasn't more severe because Nobutsuna had used his sword to block the attack. Otherwise, Theodore would've taken Magoshiro's life.

However, could this prideful grandchild overcome the reality and the sense of loss? Nobutsuna sighed as he thought about the difficult future. He picked up Magoshiro and took a few steps back, expressing his intention to not intervene in this situation.

“There is no need for things to be difficult.” Theodore said

It was an irreversible situation. Theodore thought so, but it was too much to come here and leave with only the divine artifacts. He needed their help to overcome this disadvantageous situation.

“It may be hard to believe, but I came here because Abe no Seimei told me to. It is why I could pass the Heaven, Earth, and Human Test right away and also why the divine artifacts recognize me as their master.”

“…”

“…”

The Japanese people looked at Theodore with disbelieving eyes. Even so, they didn’t have the courage to antagonize Theodore, who had used their founder’s name. Besides, there was some evidence despite it not being confirmed. Theodore naturally perceived their thoughts but couldn’t do anything. Then at that moment…

“Hmm?”

Something wriggled inside his body. Theodore felt uncomfortable and concentrated on the sensation. Suddenly, it burst out of his body like a popcorn kernel popping. A blinding light poured out.

“Oh! It is as good as I thought. Is my soul treated as part of the subject?” It was the same Seimei as the one Theodore had met in the spirit world.

“…Seimei. Did you use the Eight Jade Magatamas?” Theodore immediately grasped the situation. Seimei nodded with admiration. “That is correct. You understand quite quickly. I can’t use my strength properly, but this is the immediate effect. Isn’t

that right?”

The last question wasn’t toward Theodore but to the Japanese people, who were facing someone who seemed to be a ghost.

A living legend, Abe no Seimei—his portraits were still hung in many places, and there were hundreds of adaptations of his biography in literary works. He might be over one thousand years old, but it was rare for a person in Japan to not know his face.

"I-I greet Founder Seimei!” Suzuka realized his authenticity before anyone else and fell to her knees, with Nobutsuna and Toman quickly following. It was a bow that even the Japanese monarchy didn’t receive. However, Seimei just nodded lightly and gestured for them to rise. “That greeting was enough. Child, I have a long story to tell you. Can you provide me with a space?”

“Of course, Founder! We will do our best!”

“Yes, thank you. And…the descendants of Kamiizumi?”

“Yes, Founder,” Nobutsuna replied in a heavy tone.

Seimei pointed to Magoshiro. “I will pay my respects to all your hard work so far. But that child doesn’t have a good spirit.”

Nobutsuna blushed and bowed. “I am sorry.”

“He must’ve been born with that temperament. I will reattach the severed arm as soon as he grows.”

“Yes! I will teach him strictly.”

“I believe you.”

After speaking a few words with Toman, Seimei finally turned to the waiting Theodore. The humiliation of handing over the three divine artifacts to him was already forgotten. Seimei ignored the shocked and delighted Japanese people as he pointed in a single direction. “Now, let’s separate. We have become two bodies, so can’t we move more efficiently?”

“To where?”

“It is determined. The mountain nearby.”

It was the great mountain where Seimei had sealed the youkais in the past. In front of a place that was more dangerous than anywhere else, Theodore accepted the proposal with a calm expression.

*

Kuoong— Kuoong— There were sullen cries as a bird flew away from the dreary and twisted mountain. The bird’s reddish eyes, black feathers, and distorted body were proof that it had been bitten by a youkai. Theodore stepped on decaying leaves while thinking. The Oe Mountain that Seimei brought him to truly had a different interior. The flora and fauna were beyond the standards of living. Ordinary humans wouldn’t be able to survive for more than a few minutes after entering this mountain.

“...At the very least, their instincts will be left behind. But for how much longer?”

The creatures knew instinctively not to approach Theodore and didn’t dare do so. It was proof that the beast’s instinct was suppressing the urge to attack and kill the living, but there were limits to self-control. Once the urges surpassed their instincts, the creatures would pounce on Theodore.

‘I want to face the big ones before that.’

It wasn’t scary. It was just annoying. If the number of creatures reached the thousands or tens of thousands, fatigue would pile up. He didn’t want to waste unnecessary energy in a situation like this. The flora and fauna of the mountain had been influenced by the youkai for centuries. Once they emerged, he would need to sweep away all the worms or weeds without leaving a single one behind. At that moment, Goetia’s voice filled the quiet mountain air, [Master, there is one life form approaching Master. No, two, three, four... They are continuing to increase. There are at least 10.]

“This seems to be the right place.”

Once Goetia finished speaking, Theodore’s super sense shook sharply. It was proof that the power of those approaching could threaten Theodore. The monsters from the old days were coming. In Oe Mountain, his detection ability didn’t work well. The sensitivity of a transcendent fell to less than half, leaving Goetia to do the work. Therefore…

—Tuhwak!

Theodore moved quickly as something reached his location. It was teeth strong enough to chew steel armor and crush rocks, and its speed was comparable or even faster than an aura blade.

Chaaeng!

However, its level wasn’t high enough. Theodore unleashed one punch, and the monster’s body was thrown out in the opposite direction. Some of its prized teeth shattered, feeling the air with debris. Even so, it wasn’t enough to take the monster’s life.

‘Besides, there isn’t just one or two. Are they small fries?’

They were on the same level as the creatures he had seen in the swamp a while ago. It would be difficult for a master to cope if the number was in the double digits. The creatures left their injured colleague and came rushing in.

“Hrmm.” Theodore changed his mind about his actions regarding the power of Magoshiro’s aura blade and his right arm. He wanted to apply some of the original strength of the Heavenly Sword. In his lightning state, he was able to mix lightning with his brain. Then he consciously used his Sorcery.

Synergy-Harmonize.

Soul Calibre on his right arm was combined with the Heavenly Sword.

Fusion Complete: Beheading Heavenly Sword.

Theodore swung his right arm horizontally at the monsters. He didn't care about distance and just emitted power. A green flash filled the mountainside, but there were no visible changes. There were no rushing monsters, no chaotic atmosphere… Nothing.

The leaves cut in two scattered in a lonely manner, while the bodies of the monsters were cut in half as the momentum drove them past Theodore. Some were cut at the waist, some from the throat, and some from the chest. The sword that cut the soul ignored any regenerative power, cutting at the flora and fauna that had become youkai. It blew them away! Theodore opened his mouth after sweeping the battle line away with a single swing.

"I won't talk with these small fries," Theodore's harsh words filled the Oe Mountain. "The man who is the leader of this mountain should come out."

Theodore had come to a forbidden zone, which had been sealed for a thousand years, and spoke haughtily while spilling blood. A youkai growled at the provocation. It was a one-eyed giant holding a club. The whole mountain was filled with tension like a fight would begin at any moment.

…Kuhat. Then someone's laughter broke the silence.

"Kuhahahahahat!" A giant appeared with a loud laugh. They had purple skin and a monstrous presence.

The giant had a metal clasp on his leather clothes and stood near Theodore. His pace was relaxed as he gazed into Theodore's eyes. This giant was much stronger than Nobutsuna. Theodore looked up confidently and asked, "You are the leader?"

This caused the giant to laugh with delight and nod. "Kuhuhu, you are a funny guy. That's right! The name of this elder is Shuten-doji, leader of Oe Mountain."

Chapter 362 - Seimeis Legacy (3)

Theodore's eyes sharpened as he heard the name of Shuten-doji. It was one of the great youkai Seimei had mentioned before Theodore entered Oe Mountain. Among the hundreds of youkai on the mountain, Shuten-doji was in the top three. He was the leader of the Oni and someone worthy of being called the strongest! Even Theodore, who had become transcendent, felt a tingling sensation on his skin. It would be difficult for the current masters of Japan to endure Shuten-doji's presence.

'If the youkai in the mountain are to be released without a collar... It would be an even more terrible disaster than what happened in the middle empire.'

Most of the mutants were driven by their instincts and were busy eating each other. They might be strong, but they were simple beasts. It was possible to find a way to break through somehow.

However, Shuten-doji and the youkai were different. They were cunning creatures who had lived for nearly a thousand years... Monsters who could skillfully use their strengths. They were so terrible that Seimei had sealed them up. Otherwise, there wouldn't be a weed left in Japan.

"I am Theodore Miller. I have something to say to you." Theodore subconsciously spread open his feet. It was like meeting the gaze of a predatory beast. The moment he turned around or stepped back, the beast would surely rush in to prove its superiority.

His intuition told him that Shuten-doji was such an existence. If Theodore exposed the slightest weakness, Shuten-doji's hidden bloodlust would rise and his fangs would become exposed. Would it be the prey's blood or his own blood that spilled in the end? Either way, it wasn't the ending that Theodore wanted.

"Hrmm? Did you want to speak to this old man?" Shuten-doji

gazed at Theodore with a smile on his face.

“I want to speak to everyone.”

“Kuhat! It must be a big topic. How long has it been since someone called me out like this? Well, good. If you are the owner of the Heavenly Sword, I have to acknowledge it!”

“…How did you know?”

“I don’t know about others, but I can’t not know it!”

While Theodore was feeling astonished, Shuten-doji eyed the large scar that crossed his own upper body in a diagonal direction.

“Seimei, that swindler used the sword to cut my intestines! He tore up a body that couldn’t be cut. Kuhaha! I can’t forget such a hot and wonderful strike!”

“You didn’t die.” It wasn’t a taunt. Instead, they were sincere words coming from Theodore.

The Heavenly Sword’s power was much greater than that of aura blades, and just like Magoshiro, it could cut 8th circle magic like paper. Shuten-doji grinned and nodded. “It was too good an attack to be content with one blow. Thus, I came to this Oe Mountain while believing in the promise of a rematch…”

Then the expression of the laughing Shuten-doji distorted. “That damn fox! Abe no Seimei! I have waited a thousand years while he forgot his promise! I knew his nature was close to a scammer, but to think he actually dared to trick me!”

Kurururung.

The mountain was surprised by the intense anger, and the trees shook. The monsters surrounding Theodore and Shuten-doji fell to the ground, while the youkai breathed in and waited for the tsunami to pass. It was truly a lion’s roar! The mountain had shaken with one roar from the youkai.

Shuten-doji looked at Theodore with blazing eyes. “Okay! I won’t

wait any longer! Tell me what you have to say, master of the Heavenly Sword! If it doesn't make sense, I will throw you out and go down Oe Mountain, stepping on the worms!"

The leader of the Oni was serious. In a crisis where one wrong word would turn the whole mountain into his enemies, Theodore contemplated the use of the word 'master.' It was a treasure of Seimei's, the one who had made a mountain of youkai submit to him. If Theodore used it, even Shuten-doji would have to comply with his words. However, was that judgment the best?

'There is a limit to the 'master.' The burden will grow tremendously if I try to control so many monsters.'

Then Theodore changed his mind and opened his mouth, "A fight."

"Hoh?"

"I will provide a battlefield and the enemy. There are monsters that can be a threat to you. You can trample, crush, and eat them without leaving a trace. How about it?"

"Kuhat, it is tempting." Shuten-doji realized the words were sincere, and a bit of his previous good mood came back. The youkai, who had come to Oe Mountain based on the promise of fighting Seimei again, had been born of violence and impulses. For him, Theodore's proposal was no different than a nail in the throat. However, he wasn't the only youkai on Oe Mountain.

"It is up to here, Shuten-doji," a giant crow fell down between the two of them and spoke in a profound voice. "I acknowledge that you are stronger than us, but you aren't qualified to represent all of us."

Following the crow, a spider youkai walked forward. "I, Tsuchigumo, agree with Daitengu."

This caused Shuten-doji to frown. "I never asked for your opinion! Birdie, spider! Do you want to fight today?"

“Well, you won’t be able to deal with both of us at the same time.”

“I would die rather than submit. That is what I think.”

It seemed like a big fight was going to start between the top three youkai. The youkai who couldn’t withstand the pressure were thrown back or spitting out blood. The strengths of Shuten-doji, Daitengu, and Tsuchigumo were that great. Shuten-doji would be the strongest in a 1:1 fight, but he couldn’t be sure of winning or losing when it was 1:2. It wouldn’t be good for Theodore whichever side won.

‘That can’t happen.’

It would end up like that if Theodore wasn’t here.

Kiiiiing!

A moment later, a wave of pressure swept over the three youkai. It was an outrageous force that could wreak havoc on the entire mountain. The youkai naturally stopped their war of nerves and shifted their gazes to Theodore.

“Are you fighting without listening to me? Won’t you regret this?”

“Human! Even if you are strong…”

“Freedom.”

This one word caused Daitengu and Tsuchigumo to stiffen. Filled with desperate longing after being trapped on Oe Mountain for a thousand years, the two youkai stopped after hearing that word. Were Theodore’s words true or false? Without missing this gap, Theodore continued speaking, “If you cooperate in my fight, I will provide you with a place to live freely out of this narrow mountain.”

“How can we believe you?”

“If you don’t believe me, I will give you a vow. How about it?”

Shuten-doji wasn't much interested in a free life, but the reactions of the two great youkai were immediate. They would become allies depending on the severity of the vow. If a transcendent vowed using their name, it wasn't unusual for them to die if the promise was broken. So, it was a promise that even the great youkai could trust, despite knowing human malice.

"Can you explain in detail? I will listen and decide."

"Me too."

"Okay, I was already going to do that."

Daitengu, Tsuchigumo, and the other youkai focused their attention on Theodore. Maybe 100 or more youkai were caught by his words, drawn by the promise of freedom. Theodore's lips curved at a pleasant thought. 'The southern swamp will be able to accommodate all these youkai.'

This wasn't something he had thought of on the spot. He had been planning it since knowing about Oe Mountain.

Despite Sloth's disappearance, the swamp was still unstable. It was the epicenter where an excessive amount of mana gathered, so it would take a long time for the transformed ecosystem to return to normal. The swamp wasn't a place for an average person to go in and out, and it went without saying that the ecosystems of the nearby areas couldn't adapt to it either.

'But the youkai can adapt to this ecosystem.'

Youkai were a phenomenon, rather than creatures. The high mana concentration in the swamp would just be a life force for them. It would be a place where they could leisurely relax and wouldn't have to eat each other to maintain their existence.

Of course, there were a few violent ones who would attack humans, but he would add restraints so that they couldn't leave the swamp. In any case, humans needed several centuries more to open up the southern swamp. By that time, the youkai that moved

to the swamp would've disappeared due to the greatly diminished mana concentration.

"...Okay. We will be your force if you keep your promise."

"I, Tsuchigumo, will follow you."

Once the two great youkai agreed, the rest of the youkai raised their respective voices. It felt like the entire Oe Mountain was crumbling.

"I swear by the name of Theodore Miller!" With his right hand shining a golden colour, Theodore proclaimed the liberation of Oe Mountain in a loud voice, "—Follow me!"

Oe Mountain—the knot of a thousand years was broken.

*

Wuuuong—

There was a hole in the air where there was nothing, and a black-haired young man slowly walked out. Theodore Miller—the greatest magician of the present age, according to Seimei—returned from Oe Mountain. He didn't even get a moment to enjoy the blue sky as the waiting people rushed toward him.

"You are back!" The crowd split apart as Seimei spoke in a bright voice. "Is the story good?"

"Well, it is okay."

"It wouldn't be difficult to convince Shuten-doji, but how many others did you convince to come along?"

Theodore nodded and pointed at the hole that hadn't yet been closed. "All of them."

"...What?"

"They all said they would follow my orders."

"Don't tell me..." Seimei's eyes widened with astonishment as a palm appeared through the hole. With purple skin, an ugly face,

and a strong presence, this was the appearance of the youkai that many Japanese people had nightmares about during their childhood.

“Kuhuhu, the outside air after a thousand years isn’t bad.” Shuten-doji looked down at the frozen humans behind Seimei and laughed. It was because he saw a human who shouldn’t be here.

“Seimei! You damn bastard! You’re still alive!” Once Shuten-doji saw his enemy, he roared loudly, and the air became several times heavier.

An explosive aura emerged, and most of the people present collapsed, aside from Nobutsuna, Toman, and Suzuka. The power that Shuten-doji spontaneously emitted was terrible. However, Seimei just laughed. “No, look carefully. Why would I send him if I had been alive all this time? I’m not without conscience.”

“...Damn fox!” Shuten-doji said, gritting his teeth after he realized Seimei’s condition. “You broke your promise to fight again because you died! I have nothing to talk about with a person like you!”

“I didn’t want to break it. I’m sorry.”

“Shut up!” Shuten-doji moved past Seimei who was making excuses. He outwardly looked angry, but the appearance of his back was different. Theodore sent Seimei a subtle look. However, Seimei just shrugged. “I thought we would fight once before I died. I didn’t know I would be defeated in the empire.”

“Don’t give excuses.”

“I’m not. I didn’t mean anything. You should know that.”

Seimei might be shaped by the power of the Eight Jade Magatamas, but his current self was just a fragment of his soul. He might be able to act independently, but he was just a fragment who couldn’t be far from Theodore. As such, he wasn’t in a state to keep his promise with Shuten-doji.

Kung. Kuuong. Kung.

Subsequently, the youkai emerged after Shuten-doji. Each one was a national threat stronger than the top rated creatures. Daitengu and Tsuchigumo were surprised to see Seimei, but they passed by him without caring once they realized his state. It was a different reaction from Shuten-doji's. As the youkai quickly filled the area, Seimei spoke with half surprise and half excitement, "You did a lot better than I expected. The more you have, the better. This should be enough."

"What are you thinking?"

"It is impossible to mix humans and youkai together in the same unit. So, I will do the opposite."

The best shaman, Abe no Seimei, had been named as a great master, and there were countless records about how he had tricked the youkai. 'Strange trickery' was a synonym for 'Seimei'.

"I will split the troops into two forces between the north and the south, and use a blitz attack to crush each base!"

It was the earnest start of the war.

Chapter 363 - Seimeis Legacy (4)

"...A blitzkrieg is the key to this war." Theodore understood Seimei's intentions in a matter of seconds.

It was expected that the army would be split into two. The onmyōjis of Japan wouldn't be able to fight alongside the youkais. Furthermore, the violence and strength of the thousand-year-old monsters, who were stronger than the top-rated creatures, wouldn't be able to be controlled by an army. As such, the formation of two separate units of humans and youkai was natural.

"Correct. And as you know, transcendents are too powerful to move in one unit. It is inefficient in situations where we need to move quickly."

"So, it is a blitzkrieg? Then the burden on my shoulders will be heavy."

"Kik, don't exaggerate. Your abilities have been boosted to their prime after possessing my three artifacts. No enemy outside of Geongun Castle can threaten you," Seimei said while smiling lightly and poking Theodore in the chest. Then he took a few steps back and continued speaking, "Then shall I summarize the points we must penetrate?"

The most important thing with a blitzkrieg was to break down the sustainability of the war by rapidly breaking the enemy with mobility and speed. Even a big building or a big country would collapse when the pillars crumbled. Like an arrow shot in the dark, they had to penetrate the enemy's backbone.

"Now, everybody pay attention!" Seimei clapped a few times to get everyone's attention before raising his hand in empty space.

Wiiiiing!

Then a translucent map appeared in the space, showing the borders and boundaries of each territory. It was like a map of the

East Continent had been drawn from the sky and then copied and pasted in front of them. Theodore thought he might learn something about the magic when Seimei snapped his fingers.

“Ah...!”

“Hmm?”

“What is it, Fox? Are you going to act like you are surprised?”

The people present reacted differently. There was someone who understood the meaning of the change and was surprised, someone else who didn’t understand the meaning, and another person who picked a fight just because it was Seimei. Red and blue dots filled the map.

Seimei looked at the crowd and asked, “Theodore, you know what these points and colors mean?”

Theodore nodded with a long sigh. He knew it with one glance and became aware of the seriousness of the situation. There were countless red dots, while less than 30% of them were blue. Once they were placed over the territories, anyone could understand.

“The red dots are the mutants while the blue dots are the survivors. A dark color indicates the strength of the object or a large number of people in a small area.”

“That is correct. Then can you see the goals of our army?”

“Apart from the capital of Geongun Castle, there are eight castles.”

Nobutsuna and Toman agreed when they heard the answer. However, the youkai didn’t know the situation and could only listen with puzzled expressions. There were 256 castles at key points in the central empire. Each castle had a lord they needed to pass before reaching the empire. The lords who ruled 32 provinces each were said to be the core power of the empire.

“That's right. Only the royal family, apart from the heir, is

eligible for the title. The goal of this blitzkrieg is to defeat their armies as soon as possible."

"Seimei, I want to ask one thing."

"Hmm?" Seimei looked back at Theodore's question.

"At present, the empire isn't a proper kingdom but a den of monsters. What is the point of subduing the strongholds? It won't change the situation unless we defeat the main culprit of the disturbance."

"You are half right, half wrong," Seimei said, shaking his head. Then he added, "As you said, the empire has lost most of its functions as a kingdom. Their fingers won't stop even if their shoulders are cut. However, there is meaning in disconnecting the shoulder and fingers. If we do this, won't it be possible to hit the arm with the shortest distance?"

"Are the eight feudal princes that dangerous?"

"I think so," Seimei stated. Narrowing his eyes, he then explained the threat of the eight feudal princes, "They are the same as those with a slim chance of becoming an upper species. They are creatures created by the generations of breeding between the royal family and Lust. There is a higher possibility of them become upper creatures, as well as obtaining variant powers."

"...Can the creatures form armies and use military strategy?"

"If that happens, it is all over." Despite his mischievous tone, Seimei's eyes were heavy.

They were outnumbered, and there were strong individuals that were hard to win against. Instinct told them to run away. Humanity's only hope of winning was breaking through the creatures, but there would be no breakthrough if the creatures could be controlled like an army.

The humans could only fight to the death.

“Sigh, we can only try.”

The core of this blitzkrieg was entrusted to Theodore, who was faster than anyone else as he was a magician who transcended space and could become lightning. Beyond the limits of a mortal, he was a lightning bolt that would pierce the hearts of the eight feudal princes.

“Please specify a goal.”

Coincidentally, once Theodore woke up his fighting spirit, dark clouds on the horizon let out thunder.

Kururung—

The sound of thunder resembled that of war drums.

*

Kwarurung! There was a loud sound as a single lightning bolt cut apart the clouds. The lightning bolt moved horizontally across the blue sky. The identity of the lightning was Theodore. He kept moving without looking at the torn wind and landscape below.

-It might be a blitzkrieg, but you don’t have to do it all. Two masters will be in charge of two places, and the big armies will be in charge of two places. The two princes in the west are too far away... You only need to take care of the two eastern regions.

Theodore thought back at Seimei’s words and muttered the names of the two eastern castles. The names of the princes’ castles were similar in that they started with Cheon (Heaven).

‘Cheonkang Castle and Cheonju Castle. I am close to Cheonju Castle. At my pace, I will arrive there in 10 minutes.’

It was an hour after the meeting in Japan ended. Even if there was a mole present, the speed of the raid was so fast that informing the middle empire was useless. Theodore moved a dozen times faster than the speed of sound and passed several territories in one blink of the eyes.

The blitzkrieg was a lightning fast attack. However, the strategist who invented the concept wouldn't have known that an attacker could turn into real lightning.

-Don't spare your strength. The enemy's armies will have Lust's eyes present. The longer you fight, the more your information will be exposed. Defeat the targets as quickly as possible.

'I know that much.'

Who would mention the importance of information to a magician? Theodore smiled as he flew over a few rivers and four mountain peaks before starting to slow down. Lightning was a favorite technique of his because of its tremendous speed, but the shock wave caused by the discharge phenomena was too loud. Theodore stopped 10 kilometers away in order to avoid the attention of the enemy.

Kwajijijik.

Theodore halted only after his speed became safe. His eyes could already see Cheonju Castle.

"Hugin."

A large crow, three or four times larger than its original size, emerged in the empty space. It was the remaining pet of the summoning master, Satomer.

"I'm going to borrow your eyes."

Kyaack-! Hugin cried out in agreement, and Theodore's vision was further expanded. Crows like Hugin and Muninn were a species that served the gods in the Age of Mythology. Of course, Odin was equivalent to the king of two species. However, after Hugin signed a contract with Theodore, he wasn't lacking any power.

"...Umm, it is a pretty solid castle." Theodore was briefly impressed by the defenses of Cheonju Castle.

‘It is several times stronger than Tae Rang’s ward, and there are no gaps. It would be much faster to break through than to try and manipulate it. If the other castle is like this, it might take more time than I think…’

There were two ways of passing through a ward—either trick the ward or destroy it. However, these choices were only possible for Theodore. It was almost impossible for others. Although it was possible for youkai like Shuten-doji or a Nobutsuna-level swordsman to break through, it was difficult to concentrate on only the ward during a siege.

‘A ward based on the feng shui method and a castle swarming with variants… The risk level is equivalent to grade 1.’

Theodore’s lips curved as he declared, “So what?”

Wanting to discuss a fortress in front of a great magician?

Forced Harmonization.

Four types of magic spells were activated—fire, water, wind, and earth.

All four elemental magic were mobilized for only one thing—Abraxas.

The force that had destroyed Theodore’s mortal wall and placed him in the domain of an immortal—it was powerful magic made for going beyond his limits, but it was also possible to exert more destructive power than imagined by colliding strong magic with each other.

Kiiiing-!

The space screamed from the enormous force gathering together. As four beads became one, the dimensional shaking shook the surroundings. If Theodore gathered a bit more strength, the dimensional wall would tear, and an empty space would open its mouth.

A bead made of pale light…

A force that could blow away a mountain was leashed on his palm.

‘Not yet.’

However, Theodore moved the power in a strange way.

“Your turn, Heavenly Sword.”

He pulled up the power of the new sword in his body through his right arm. A strand of light stretched out faintly, and the wind passing over him was cut. This was the power of the sword itself, despite it not doing anything. Couldn’t it show enough power to cut the world to pieces?

“Beyond the clouds in the sky, cut through the world!”

The power of the great magic, Abraxas, permeated it. The fearsome output was a burden on the god-sword, and it felt like the bones in his right arm were being crushed. However, Theodore didn’t give up.

Synergy-Harmonize.

The first attempt at the fusion of the great magic and god-sword had succeeded!

Fusion Complete: Unprecedented God-Sword.

As the whole world seemed frozen, Theodore didn’t miss the gaze coming from the distant castle. The eyes of the monster were filled with malice, bloodlust, and astonishment. This monster was one of the eight feudal princes of the empire.

“—Die!”

The god-sword struck down vertically from the sky. It broke the clouds, split apart the ground where the castle was located, and broke the ward in a line. This was a blow that surpassed even Seimei in the past!

The destruction of Cheonju Castle started with this absurd surprise attack.

Chapter 364 - Final Evolution (1)

Kukukukukung!

The earth under the sky was torn apart. A shockwave emerged from the space where the Unprecedented God-Sword had cut, and the ward protecting the castle shattered like thin glass. The same was true for the enemies lurking in the castle. A few managed to dodge a direct hit, but the numbers inside Cheonju Castle were reduced by nearly 80%. The monsters, which were hard to kill even with the right magic, died instantly in the aftermath of the incident. It was as if a violent earthquake had occurred as buildings collapsed and remnants of dead monsters flowed down.

"Ah."

One more swing could wipe out the remaining 20%, but Theodore didn't do this. No, it was more correct to say that he couldn't do it.

'I somehow succeeded in combining the Heavenly Sword with the great magic, Abraxas...'

However, the fatigue that came immediately afterward was several times more than the ultimate magic.

Kukukung...! The earth shook below him as he staggered in the sky. The blade, which had soared to the stratosphere, fell vertically. It was no wonder that magma sprang up since the sword had penetrated a few kilometers below ground and thinly cut into the mantle.

The castle collapsed in two pieces with a loud sound. In the meantime, Theodore didn't lose sight of the dwindling variants. There was one whose momentum became stronger rather than weaken.

"My aim was a little off. Even so, I didn't think he could survive that attack."

The aftermath alone caused changes in the earth. Looking at all the monsters that didn't survive... Theodore himself would've avoided the attack if it had been coming for him. The god-sword, Heavenly Sword, and the great magic, Abraxas—the combination of these two was enough to shake the world.

Kuoooooh—!

Nevertheless, the variants that survived in the castle soared into the sky. With wings that resembled a bat's and a body that resembled a tiger's, the variants were monsters that couldn't be called a species. Despite their broken bodies, they could fly hundreds of meters at a time. These monsters could treat wyverns as their prey if their physical condition were normal.

Memorize.

Theodore didn't miss the monsters' unguarded moment.

Ice Magic: Diamond Dust.

Compound Magic: Lightning Vortex.

No Attribute Magic: Force Cannon.

Three types of spells were cast in an instant. A snowstorm, a lightning storm, and bullets of pure energy poured out of the sky. The monsters were first frozen by the blizzard. Then they fell due to the lightning, and their bodies were turned into beehives. Of course, their breathing ceased.

"Their vitality is amazing, but I can't acknowledge anything other than that."

After a few deep breaths, Theodore slowly descended to the ground of Cheonju Castle. He cared about neither the corpses of monsters nor the variants that stepped back as he walked. They realized that the person before wasn't prey and that the relationship between prey and predator had been reversed.

[Huhahahaha!]

At that moment…

[How exciting. A foreign shaman! It isn't enough to cut Cheonju Castle apart. You have to exercise magic powers to stir up trouble! I don't know who the monster is!]

"You are?"

It was different from the other monsters. Theodore read the humanity mixed up in that laughing tone. In this situation, only one person came to mind.

[It isn't possible for a visitor to come to this Cheonju Castle without knowing me. Maybe it is because my appearance is so different!]

"You use the imperial I/we."

[That's right. I am the feudal lord of this Cheonju Castle, King Zhouyan.]

Power could be felt from his exposed bones, and he had skin that looked like a rice paddy and scales that covered his face. However, the dignity in his body couldn't be hidden. He was a person who received the worship of all people in the empire, who ruled 32 provinces on behalf of the emperor. King Zhouyan, one of the eight feudal lords, sat on the throne. Of course, Theodore's god-sword had broken the throne, but he still looked quite imposing.

"You didn't lose your sense of self."

[Do you think that someone who carries of the name of a king will be someone else's puppet…? I want to shout, but this is my limit.]

"Can you talk?"

[Before that, get rid of these wastes. I can't concentrate when they are around me.]

The variants growled at the king's words.

Grrrr….

Kuhuhuhu…!

They looked quite impressive with their horribly distorted faces and muscular bodies that were holding onto knives and chains. These variants were different from those who didn't know how to fight. Theodore realized the reason and spat out, "A yaksha? It is a shame that enforcement officers who judge evil have fallen to this state."

If they were yaksha who were responsible for the punishment of sinners, their combat instincts would've awakened. Unlike the others who lacked rationality, their instincts were still alive as the yaksha looked around. They looked ugly, but they couldn't be happy about becoming Lust's minions.

Kyaaaack!

'I will kill them quickly.'

In order to avoid the god-sword, they had to be faster than the speed of sound. Moreover, they had powerful bodies that could even threaten a master class person. A sword master's winning percentage would drop to half or less if they had to deal with more than a dozen of the yaksha, and they were difficult to defeat in one blow with a great magician's firepower.

Therefore, Theodore stretched out both palms. He had never used it in practice before but now was as good as ever a time to use it.

Fire Magic: Inferno.

Ice Magic: Blizzard.

Wind Magic: Gust Tornado.

Ground Magic: Gravity Bound.

Four elemental spells emerged from both of his hands. A person would be called a great magician if they could cast just one of these spells, let alone four. It was an astonishing sight, but this was from

the point of view of a magician who went by common sense. They were fools who didn't understand the relationship between attributes.

'It is time to transcend common sense.'

Just before the four spells burst against each other, Theodore's Sorcery intervened.

Coexist in harmony—it was neither a harmony that enhanced the power nor a forced harmonization that forcibly combined conflicting attributes.

It was a waste to put these four elements together in the shape of Abraxas just to get rid of the yaksha. Therefore, Theodore came up with a different application—Elemental Cluster!

The yaksha were sucked into a vortex of four elemental spells. A heat wave, cold winds, a storm, and a gravity phenomenon occurred independently in one space.

The vortex burned, froze, tore things apart, and destroyed. It was absurd, like an iceberg floating on top of magma. This was a scene that never could've happened with the normal laws of physics.

■■■■—!

Nevertheless, it pierced through.

■■■■■■■——!

The yaksha couldn't stop the violence of nature itself. With half their limbs torn off, the monsters were turned to charcoal. Theodore had read this ending from the beginning.

Kakiing. With Soul Calibre in his right hand and the Heavenly Sword in his left, they crossed in an 'X' shape.

"...Sigh."

This was the end. The yaksha spasmed one last time before they finally stopped moving. They had been reborn as imperfect beings and died challenging a transcendent.

[Fantastic!] King Zhouyan clapped loudly. [The double sword is the romance of all men. In fact, it is actually weaker than one sword, but I don't think that is the case with you.]

"In the end, it is about the user's capabilities rather than the weapon."

[Hahaha! You are absolutely right. Now, we are ready to talk. I don't have a lot of time.] King Zhouyan laughed like the conversation with Theodore was interesting and got up from his seat. The throne was broken, but neither of them cared because there would be no further use for it in the future.

King Zhouyan wiped away all the laughter from his face and said, [I was born with great blood and tried my best to watch over thousands of people.]

His dry tone might be his way of hiding his true heart. [I killed my loyal servants and people with my own hands, making them the prey of monsters. I have tried to stop a few times, but I can't do anything about this cursed body.]

"It isn't your sin."

[It doesn't matter who holds responsibility. I carry the name of the king. Since I couldn't prevent this tragedy, I became a deadly sinner.] Guilt, hatred, and a desire for revenge filled the eyes that were looking at Theodore.

The king had a tortoise's shell and a dragon's head. With such distinct characteristics, it was rare for humans not to recognize it. Thanks to Seimei, Theodore remembered the details of the top species on the East Continent. Spirit tortoise, one of the four axis beasts and a symbol of longevity—it was a higher species comparable to a divine creature.

[Please. End this life before I tell you everything,] the king said, putting down his pride.

Theodore responded to this request, "Yes."

Shortly after that, the king who turned into a beast confronted the magician.

*

Kururung! A slight thunderous sound was heard.

However, it wasn't magic. Instead, it was from the dark clouds that came to wash away this bloody earth. Theodore looked up at the sky where one or two raindrops had started to fall from, before looking in front of him again.

[...Cough.]

The tortoise's shell, which was harder than a dragon's scale, was shattered. The king knelt down while bleeding from the dragon's mouth. At the end of his life, he finally regained the freedom of his body.

[Behind the imperial family... The monster, who is acting behind the scenes... in front of us, talked...] The hatred grew stronger as his voice faded. [...You. Great one... nutrients. Obediently serve him... die like a lowlife. And, you... a few words about you, too.]

"Tell me."

[This... world, last transcendent. Perhaps you, being watched... from the moment I met you.]

Theodore knew it as well. There was a gaze licking at him from a distance that couldn't be measured. It was surveillance that had started from the moment he attacked Cheonju Castle. Perhaps Lust had read his attack from behind the eight feudal lord's eyes. Otherwise, the response wouldn't have been so quick.

[Please... careful. You... Birth of evil... have to stop...] Until the end, King Zhouyan was concerned about his kingdom as his eyes stopped.

It was great that he could speak despite his heart being torn and his body burned. This was a feat only possible because he was a top

species.

“…Rest easy. You have fulfilled your duty.”

It was a horrible-looking body, but Theodore didn’t turn away, watching the king to the very end. Then Theodore moved his fingers, and earth assembled around King Zhaoyan, creating a grave. He couldn’t give the king a proper funeral, but he didn’t want the body of King Zhouyan to be used for anything. Just as Theodore was about to fly back into the sky…

“Tch.” He felt dizzy, and his feet were shaking.

‘I consumed more power than I expected. I didn’t know that such an enormous presence would appear, and the fight took longer than expected because I didn’t want to kill him immediately.’

The other variants were unknown, but King Zhouyan was a species similar to a divine creature. Having used ultimate magic and then the god-sword, it was natural that Theodore couldn’t hide his fatigue. Among the Japanese troops, only Shuten-doji, Tsuchigumo, and Daitengu might be strong enough to win.

“It can’t be helped. I will take a short rest before going.”

Then he decided to have a conversation with Gluttony.

“Gluttony.”

-I know what User wants to ask.

“Yes, King Zhouyan’s will. What does he mean by ‘birth’?”

It was a lightly spoken question. At the most, a strong mutant would be born. This was what Theodore thought. However, Gluttony didn’t answer for a while.

“…What?”

Theodore felt the weight of the silence and was about to ask one more time when the grimoire sighed.

-The advent of a heavenly demon—it is the starting point of the

disaster.

Chapter 365 - Final Evolution (2)

“Heavenly demon?”

If he took the literal interpretation, it was a ‘demon of heaven.’ It didn’t seem to refer to a specific species, but it was a very unusual name for demons who were usually associated with hell. Yet a demon from the sky was the symbol of the greatest authority on the East Continent?

From the standpoint of the West Continent, it might be the same as a ‘demon king.’

As Theodore got that thought, Gluttony spoke in a heavy voice, -Demon king… It might be a bit different from User’s guess, but it has been called that in other dimensions. The demon emperor, the first demon king of heaven, only king existing in heaven, and Māra-pāpīyas are some aliases?

“…What?” Theodore’s froze at the unexpected words.

-Only king existing in heaven, master of the sky, the ruler of the demon world. It is true that it is an unclear existence in User’s mind.

“No, what nonsense are you saying?” Theodore’s patience finally broke.

Māra-pāpīyas was an existence that could crush this material world with one finger! Such a being hadn’t existed in the world at the height of the Age of Mythology.

No, it was almost impossible for it to exist. Just like a bowl couldn’t contain a larger volume than its size, Māra-pāpīyas was a monster that this small-scale material world couldn’t afford. This was also true of the seventh stage of the Seven Sins. Calling Māra-pāpīyas to this material world meant the destruction of this dimension.

“It is ridiculous enough to leave rationality and irrationality

behind! Isn't the purpose of existence the primary goal of you grimoires? Even if it is a dead end, what is the meaning of shattering this material world itself?"

-You misunderstand.

"What?"

-My description hasn't ended yet, User. I tried to explain the concept of 'heavenly demon', but I never said that the heavenly demon is the same as Māra-pāpīyas.

Theodore escaped from the hell of despair, closed his mouth, and listened to the following explanation.

-I'll explain it in a manner easy to understand. 'Heavenly Demon' is the name of the project, not the name of a specific entity. Lust started this project when she thought she exhausted all possibilities of this dimension and concentrated all resources on the birth of one creature.

"Not the ultimate creature?"

-The goal itself is the ultimate creature. However, the problem is the probability of success. The heavenly demon will be born from the failure of the 'ultimate creature.'

The failure of the ultimate creature was the heavenly demon.

Theodore's complexion was currently slightly better than before, but it was still pale. He didn't have to fight a fearful threat like Māra-pāpīyas, but the threat was more than he had imagined. It was a monster that could be reborn as a great god in other dimensions! He didn't know how much resources Lust had collected, but it would be a threat to the entire material world.

"Wait, then that means Lust knows that failing will create the heavenly demon?"

-That's right, Gluttony replied without any hesitation. -It is because data can be obtained even from failures. Lust will give up

this dimension to the heavenly demon project, analyze the ‘defects’ of the created heavenly demon, and send it onto the main body. The large-scale mutation of the East Continent is just a process of materials supply to complete the heavenly demon.

“Dammit! That is the only reason for killing billions?”

-Common sense and ethics are meaningless concepts for grimoires.

An eerie sound emerged from Theodore’s tightly clenched teeth. He suppressed his boiling rage and admitted that his way of thinking was too normal. A grimoire could sacrifice the population of the entire continent for one experiment, just like finding a herb root in the back mountains. High intelligence and logic were just a small breakwater in front of the madness that was the ‘purpose of existence.’

“…We must stop the birth of the heavenly demon itself.”

-That’s correct.

There was nothing more foolish than waiting for the enemy to prepare. Every time Theodore breathed, he gained strength inside his body. The presence of the 9th circle meant communication with the world. Even if he didn’t have maximum magic power, he could recover perfectly in an hour. He learned a few tricks with the Heavenly Sword and found ways to apply it to ultimate magic. If Theodore could fully control the two artifacts that he was still unfamiliar with, he would be half a notch stronger than he was now.

“Gluttony.”

If he knew himself and the enemy, then he could fight and win 100 times. So, to prepare for any unforeseen events, Theodore consulted Gluttony.

“Teach me about the common strengths and characteristics of the heavenly demon.”

-Okay. The heavenly demon has a body ability close to the limit of the genetic factors that make up its body. It also possesses an absorption capacity resulting from incomplete spiritual scars, as well as transcendent power. This means it can eat a soul without a physical substance just by touching it and also eat any creatures killed by its hand…

Theodore's blue eyes stared at the wind that started to swirl while he listened to Gluttony.

It was because he felt that an unbelievable wind was blowing.

*

Wohhhhhh!

At Hyungkang Castle, a castle approximately 300 kilometers to the northwest of the Baekun Mountains, there was a fierce battle going on.

It was because the monsters swarming the mountain smelled the people still living and flocked for three days, regardless of whether it is night or not. The variants piled up beneath the walls were half the height of the castle. It was natural that things would become more difficult.

If it wasn't for one man, Hyungkang Castle would've already become a feast of the dead. A middle-aged man rushed in the lead, raising the morale of the soldiers with a loud voice, "If you are alive, swing your swords! Don't give our families to these monsters! I will join you along with the rest of Hyungkang Castle!"

Chwaaaaak!

The aura blade, which was called the energy sword in the East Continent, sliced through the necks of the monsters. The charge of the soldiers was reminiscent of the armed forces from olden times.

'Not yet, not yet. We can buy two days if we hold on.'

Unlike his energetic behavior, Wichung was watching the scene

with sober eyes. He was a superhuman who was beyond the limits of humanity, a swordsman who reached the level of a master... Wichung hadn't been able to close his eyes for three days, and his body was as heavy as a wet cotton pad.

He felt the sense of responsibility and pride of being a warrior. Now, there were only two pillars remaining to support him.

-Castle Lord, please take a few steps back.

As soon as he followed the instruction, a blue lightning bolt fell from the sky and struck. Wichung kicked the body of a monster, which had been turned into charcoal, and glanced over. He couldn't afford to perform a sound transmission. If it wasn't for timely assistance, he would've fallen a few hours ago. Thus, this battlefield was on the edge of a cliff.

'...No, it would've been over a long time ago if it wasn't for these women.'

After breaking a leopard variant in two, Wichung squinted at those who were supporting the front lines from a distance—two foreign magicians who resembled fire and ice. It had been absurd when the two beauties first arrived as reinforcements, but that had only lasted a few seconds. The silver-haired woman with the cool atmosphere couldn't promise victory or defeat, but the woman with blazing hair was overwhelming.

They called themselves the Blue Tower Master and Red Tower Master, and they were the last bastion of this castle.

Kwaaaaaaah-!

Fire pillars appeared. One, two, three... Eight pillars tangled together, burning the monsters in the area into a handful of ash. It was a destructive power that bought a bit of time to breathe on the battlefield. Of course, Veronica was the caster of the spell.

"Shit!"

However, the gap from killing the thousands of monsters was

filled in seconds. Where did so many cockroach-like monsters come from? Veronica had a huge amount of magic power, but even she was becoming tired little by little. If she fought efficiently, the loss of troops would be too great. If she used a lot of magic spells, she would lose strength.

'Sylvia... She's still okay. It looks like she gained some experience from the northern war. Blundell trained a reliable talent.'

The monsters rushed in Sylvia's direction once again.

Veronica punched out before drawing a deep breath, intentionally reducing as much power consumed as possible. It was the dragon's breath that hadn't been seen in the East Continent for thousands of years.

————————————————!!

The incandescent glow that emerged from Veronica's lips ripped through all the monsters within a distance of one hundred meters in an instant. The force was less due to not using as much strength, but it wasn't a level that the variants could endure.

100 meters, 200 meters, 300 meters...

As the variants near the castle ceased to exist, cheers calling for her rang out all over the castle.

"Goddess! Goddess!"

"The Goddess of Fire has done it!"

"Don't turn your eyes away, you idiots! Move quickly so that the goddess can rest!"

Was it thanks to experiencing life and death together? Veronica laughed a little and took a few steps back. The fullness of her magic power had been reduced significantly after using Dragon Breath. If it was this much, the castle could cope. However, if the number of variants kept on increasing, it would be a tough battle by noon tomorrow.

[You are good, Woman.]

A verbal message.

Kaaang!

A fist moved through the air. Sparks flew as Veronica's fist collided with the enemy. The shock waves that flowed from the midway point cut at the wall, pushing the passing wind away. It was a collision of two forces that was closer to a bomb than a conflict of powers.

Veronica realized that the enemy wasn't pushed back and interest filled her golden eyes. "…I have to say it. Aren't you good, white cat?"

A monster in the form of a white tiger let out a low roar. [Know who you are speaking to, exotic woman! It is enough that I have to come and pay a visit directly when I carry the blood of a sacred creature. I will deal a terrible punishment onto you 100 times!]

"'I'? It is strange. These days, cats also use the royal 'I'?"

[—This bitch!]

Kuhuhuhung! It felt as if the air in the area had become heavier by several times.

Fear—it was a mind and body dominance that can be used by the top species like a dragon. Veronica was inwardly amazed at the Fear, while she was smiling outwardly. There was no species in the world that could apply Fear to dragons.

"Why, kitty? Nyang nyang, do you want to play with this sister?"

[Maybe you won't stop flapping your tongue until your breath is cut off!] Finally, as it stood on two legs, the monster who awakened the power of the sacred creature, the White Tiger, unveiled its identity. [I, King Hodae, will kill you! Regret your fearless tongue before the great king!]

"King? King? Are you the leader of these crooks?" Unlike King

Hodae's intentions, Veronica just giggled. "Okay. It is good to know that I just have to kill you."

Veronica formed two fists as flames started to emerge all over her body. "Bring it on kitty. I will give you a present."

[—Kuwooong!]

The literal dragon and tiger fight began.

Chapter 366 - Final Evolution (3)

Kwaaaaang!

King Hodae's fist hit empty air, producing a shockwave that broke the wall. Even a stray fist contained enough power to break down the wall. If even one blow landed properly, Veronica's movements would be hindered. Veronica thought this and immediately changed her balance.

She saw it not once but twice. King Hodae's attack had the speed of the wind and the strength to break the castle, but that was it.

'The strikes depend on physical strength while the power to control the wind isn't as strong. Perhaps his skills weren't that different from before he changed.'

She avoided King Hodae's fist and moved her hand without hesitation. It was simple. An object moving quickly in a straight line was vulnerable to attacks from the side. It was the same principle as when arrows were deflected off leaves.

Teong!

[Huh?] As his fist moved vertically into the empty sky in vain, the ferocious face of the tiger king took on a dumb expression for a moment. It was because his fighting capacity was so low he couldn't grasp the situation. Veronica wouldn't miss this moment of inexperience.

「ускорение (Acceleration)! 」

Dragon Words—this was a hand that allowed her to overturn the limitations of a quarter dragon a few times a day. Veronica became three times faster and shot forward, leaving blurry afterimages behind. It happened before King Hodae could even adjust his position. At a speed faster than sound, Veronica's fists struck.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

The solar plexus, the ribs, the lower part of the abdomen—she hit King Hodae's body three times before aiming for any part of his face that was within distance. It was an all-out barrage. Veronica's fist came shooting forward again only for King Hodae to fall back a few meters.

"…Tch!" However, Veronica clicked her tongue at the result. She had tried to break bones. Yet, rather than bones being broken, only some of the leather was peeled off. It might be a perfect counter, but it meant Veronica couldn't defeat him in her current state.

Unsurprisingly, King Hodae soon regained his balance. [Y-You dare! You dare swing a fist at me…!]

The force increased in response to the irrational wrath. It wasn't a lie that the blood of the sacred creature, the white tiger had awakened. Before Veronica could say anything sarcastic, a storm blew.

Kuooooh!

This was a whirlwind that was like the blade of the sword. The tiger king wrapped himself in the sword-storm and rushed at Veronica. The storm would tear steel with just a touch. Veronica realized that this was several times more annoying than before and increased the flames around her body. As long as these flames survived, the storm couldn't hurt her.

[Using little tricks!]

"You are one to talk, damn cat!"

This was the dominance of a superior relationship, with the fire burning the wind. The wind might respond to the white tiger's call, but it couldn't remove the flames of a red dragon. Veronica would've overwhelmed the situation if she was at full strength. However, after the last few days, her strength was much less than what the perfectly fine King Hodae possessed. Additionally, this battlefield itself was like a shackle to Veronica.

‘I can win if I turn into the draconic state. But if I transform now… the castle won’t make it through the night.’

It was a technique that had, for a few minutes, held back Invidia who boasted more destructive power than a transcendent. If Veronica transformed into the draconic state now, she had the confidence to destroy that tiger in a few minutes. The problem was that she would be drained and would have to rest from defending the walls for half a day. Was it possible for them to maintain the current situation without Veronica?

‘No. If I’m not present they won’t be able to endure for two hours, let alone half a day.’

It was a battle where she couldn’t be defeated and also a battle where she couldn’t fight with all of her strength. Considering all these variables, was there a way for her to defeat this cat? Veronica thought about it while avoiding the still crude punches and came up with an answer. It was impossible alone, but it was possible for two people.

‘Will that kid notice my intentions?’

One step, one more step… She pretended to be pushed back. Veronica didn’t dare look away and had to rely on luck. Sylvia who had come to Hyungkang Castle with her… Veronica had to join up with Sylvia and knock out the tiger in a two against one match. There was no other solution.

Chaaeng!

At this moment, King Hodae swung his fist with a big action, and Veronica took advantage of this momentum to lift her body. It was to approach Sylvia as naturally as possible. Nevertheless, the impact of lowering her guard was significant.

“Cough!”

She had never met a human more powerful than her before, and now there was a whole area full of monsters. The muscles in both

her arms were torn, but fortunately, the bones were okay. However, they would also break with two more hits.

[Huhaha! You will finally die!] King Hodae ignorantly swung his fist without even guessing Veronica's intentions.

One hit, one more hit... Their positions changed every time a shock wave burst out. As Veronica planned, it was slowly heading toward Sylvia. Unfortunately, the soldiers in the way were adversely affected. However, Veronica was getting closer to her destination.

-Red Tower Master, Sylvia's voice rang in her head at that moment, -I'll match the timing. Red Tower Master, give the signal.

There was no time to answer magically, so Veronica responded with her flames. Now was a chance to win, to cut off the head of the enemy. Veronica's two golden eyes narrowed as she moved like she was dancing through the storm that King Hodae had caused. There was only one chance. If this failed, only a gamble remained.

Huuung!

A big fist moved above Veronica's head.

'-Now.' Veronica saw the right timing and took a step.

Flames flowed from her fist as three magic spells worth of magic power was consumed from her body. From now on, Veronica's strength would increase for a few seconds.

'Victory Fist.'

Theodore wasn't the only one who had grown over the last five years. Veronica had gotten to know her weaknesses and gained some knowledge in other fields, including martial arts.

Jeeeong! The sudden blow hit King Hodae's body. The attack was unexpected, and the power was ridiculous. King Hodae stopped breathing for a moment as his body stiffened in the air. As he lost control of the wind, his unprotected body caught Sylvia's waiting

eyes.

“I call the guide of permanent frost!” Sylvia called out, and cold gathered around the end of the large staff that was the remains of Blundell. It was a cold that could freeze wind, water, and even fire. Now, the greatest attack spell that Sylvia could use was unleashed. “Absolute Zero!”

Absolute Zero’s pale light wrapped around the tiger king’s body.

Jjejeok. Jjejejeok…!

Freeze… It didn’t care about the magic resistance of a divine creature as the cold captured the body. Absolute Zero perfectly entered the gap caused by Veronica’s attack. The tiger king couldn’t resist the overwhelming strength, and the wind couldn’t melt the frozen body.

Veronica also saw it.

“Suuuuop—” She opened her mouth toward King Hodae, who was sucking in all the air around him. Veronica was trying to use her second breath today. No matter how strong a variant, he would be dead when hit with these type of attacks in succession. Veronica intended to destroy him completely.

Kakiing.

However, at this moment, someone interfered.

“What?” Veronica cried out in shock as she narrowly avoided the blade aimed at her. It wasn’t because it was an aura blade. Just like there was a variant wielding the power of a sacred creature, there wasn’t a big difference when dealing with a variant using the power of a sword master. However, the two magicians felt shocked because the person who prevented the end of King Hodae was a well-known person.

“Lord of Hyungkang Castle, Wichung! Why are you doing this?”

Wichung didn’t respond to Veronica’s question that was filled

with surprise and anger. No, it was more accurate to say that he couldn't answer.

"...Red Tower Master, look at his eyes."

"Eyes?" Veronica looked at the eyes as soon as Sylvia spoke and gasped.

Wichung's eyes looked cloudy and lost! As a magician, Veronica figured out the reason and muttered, "Mind control? They managed to do it on a sword master?"

The mental defense of a sword master was stronger than imagined. Unlike magicians, sword masters were monsters who dedicated their lives to training their bodies and minds, and achieved their own accomplishments. If they were killed and turned into a death knight, a force equivalent to a transcendent was needed to control them.

The two magicians looked at each other in alarm and realized all the noise around them had stopped.

"Stopped... moving?"

The variants, soldiers, and all living creatures had stopped, but time hadn't stopped. Their breathing and pulses were normal. The beings who were killing each other just a few minutes ago were now standing idly. Everything in Hyungkang Castle seemed to have become puppets of someone.

"—Huhuhu, I'm a bit late." The silence was cut off as a voice seemed to melt their ears. "If I was a bit later, I would've lost an important chess piece. You are more active than I thought."

'Don't look back.' As horror that was beyond fear froze her spine, Veronica turned in the direction Sylvia was facing.

Then she could see it. "—Ah."

All reason melted down. Despite being a woman, she couldn't resist the beauty. Pleasure emerged in Veronica just by touching

her with her eyes, and Veronica was willing to lick her feet if that was what it took. She was going crazy. An endless madness eroded her head. This was a being that humans shouldn't face. It was one of the Seven Sins grimoires that Theodore had warned her about before.

Crunch. Veronica's molars broke. There was a sharp pain as soon as Veronica remembered Theodore, and she regained her sanity.

"Hah! Hah!"

It was risky. She had been only a few seconds away from becoming a slave to that fascination. Veronica looked at the ground to avoid 'her' and focused her attention on the 'string' inside her body. As long as the agreement existed, her soul belonged to Theodore. Lust's mythical fascination couldn't overpower this.

"Oh, my, not bad. To be able to see me and endure, even if you aren't gay... What a great person."

"Y-You, are you, Lust?"

"Yes, did you hear about me from Gluttony's owner? Then I'll have you talk with me a bit more." Lust had on a relaxed smile that prevented the eyes from moving away. Every gesture of hers showed a deadly attraction.

While Veronica was stiff, little cracks appeared on the frozen body of the tiger king.

Kakakang!

He shook off the ice and was restored to his original state.

'...Checkmate. My side has lost,' Veronica thought in despair.

According to Theodore's explanation, Lust had no direct combat ability. It meant she could kill Lust if she endured that fearsome attraction. However, was it possible to break through King Hodae and Wichung? The odds didn't exceed 30%, even in draconic mode.

“Stop trying, passionate guest.” Lust smiled and pointed beside Veronica. “Your friend doesn’t want it either.”

“Ah.” Veronica looked around and saw Sylvia’s blurred eyes. Sylvia was weaker than her and didn’t have the contract with Theodore, so this result was natural. Could she kill Lust through all the soldiers, variants, two masters, and a sacred creature?

‘Of course, it is impossible.’

Thus, Veronica quickly made a decision.

“Haaaap!” Her body burned. Scales rose, her blood boiled, and a pair of horns sprouted through her hair. Her draconic mode came quicker than before! It happened before King Hodae or Sylvia could do anything to stop it. Heat emerged from Veronica’s back as she rushed away from the castle at a tremendous speed.

“…Wise. Escaping because she can’t win. It is efficient,” Lust said, watching the sky with dull eyes. Then she said to King Hodae, “I will trust you. Catch and even kill her. There are plenty of red dragon samples.”

[Yes.] The faithful servant, King Hodae rushed out of the castle using the wind. He left in the exact direction that Veronica had disappeared in. Then Lust reached out and touched the jaw of the blankly staring Sylvia. She had risked moving for a reason.

“…I’ve received an unexpected windfall.”

This could be used as a means of inducing that ‘man’ and would be a useful tool as a vessel. The beautiful woman chuckled as she thought of some evil plans. It wouldn’t be long before the completion of the final project.

Chapter 367 - Final Evolution (4)

A single ray of light crossed the sky. The sky was getting darker and darker because the sun had started to set, so a person would've been able to see the light if they raised their head in a timely manner. It was a fireball that divided the sky like a meteor. The identity of the fireball was naturally Veronica, who fled from Hyungkang Castle.

Kwaaaaaaah-!

In the draconic state, her output was three times higher than usual. Furthermore, all the power was poured toward the flames on her back as she accelerated without caring about her limits. The momentum was enough to reach supersonic speed. The clouds near her were torn apart, and the sudden heat burning in empty space produced a tail of light. People thought it was a shooting star and sought the trail, but Veronica was already kilometers away.

'C-Choking! The pressure is too high! I won't last for another three minutes!'

If she were a complete dragon, it would've been possible for her to not rely on oxygen to breathe. However, she was only a quarter dragon. She couldn't exceed a human's biological limits, even in draconic mode. Veronica's eyes were bloodshot, and she was breathing heavily. She couldn't breathe, but she had to exhale in order to release the heat in her body.

"Haack! Hak! Haaaah..." Her heart beat like it was going to explode, and her boiling blood made her dizzy.

How comfortable would she feel if she could close her eyes right now?

If she hadn't cooled down occasionally in some dark clouds, even the vitreous of her eyes would've evaporated. She just escaped without resisting the heat of friction. Moving without knowing the

direction, she was just being dragged by instincts.

How far away was she from the hideous, beautiful monster? 100 kilometers? 200 kilometers?

‘My mind is fine. I won’t go back.’

Veronica’s limit came before she could complete the calculations.

Peeng! Her wings exploded and scattered. Her skin that was covered in scales returned to being smooth skin, and her dragon pupils returned to those of a normal human. The draconic mode was forcefully turned off! She had consumed this much power just trying to escape and survive, not in a battle.

Kwang! Kuwang! Kukukung! Her body plummeted to the ground, breaking through a few trees and rocks, and then bouncing tremendously off the ground. Veronica would’ve died instantly if she were an ordinary human being. Fortunately, the strength of her flesh was like steel even before the transformation.

“…Uh, urghh!”

If her body condition were normal…

‘Oh, I have to move. A pursuit is obviously coming.’

She could be reassured about escaping quite a long distance, but her instincts were sharper than ever now. Before crossing the castle wall, Veronica had seen it.

‘That monster wants to kill me.’

The red eyes of Lust were filled with killing intent. Those dull eyes didn’t find any value in Veronica. A madness in which all living things were just seen as a means to be used… Regardless of strength or weakness, that transcendental darkness was fearful to face.

“—Ku, ock!” Veronica tried desperately to raise her body. She didn’t have the strength to escape, but she didn’t want to sit back and wait for death.

Veronica took a deep breath before walking. The priority was to recover her magic power rather than widen the distance by running. One breath caused a handful of magic power to fill her circles. It was quite strange to feel her hollow and empty circles, which were usually overflowing all the time.

Still, five or maybe ten minutes would be enough. The moment Veronica was trying to catch her breath…

Roaaaaar!

A storm struck her body from the sky.

“Aaaaack!”

Despite her high body strength, she was cut by the wind, and a red haze of blood was blown out. She tried to fly up, but there wasn’t enough strength in her knees. Veronica used her arms instead of her legs and barely managed to get up. The tiger king laughed when he saw it.

[Kuhahaha! You ran away well, girlie! Are you doing to try and beg for your life from this king?]

“…Hah.” Veronica twisted her lips. “You… Are you a dog instead of a cat?”

[What does that mean?]

“You are barking without context, bark bark! And my hips are already taken. I don’t desire a son of a bitch like you.”

King Hodae’s face twisted dramatically due to the words. […You bitch, I will pull out your tongue and eat it.]

With black stripes on white fur, the tiger variant raised his big fists. Veronica also raised her fists, but it was hard to maintain her posture. It would be fortunate if she died instantly, rather than endure this. However, King Hodae didn’t know it was bravado and carefully aimed for a gap. He had insufficient experience, and the previous fight made him cautious. He didn’t know that he missed

his last chance due to these four or five seconds of hesitation.

Kwarurung!

Simultaneously, thunder was heard above their heads.

[Hrmm? Thunder when I don't see any rain clouds?] King Hodae felt uncomfortable. Meanwhile, Veronica released her posture at the sound of the thunder. Her vision became blurred because all her tension was released. She let out an involuntary giggle as she spoke, "Ahahat, I don't think you should be looking here."

[What?]

"Get your guard up, you asshole!" Veronica cried out happily as strength returned. "My fiance is here!"

Before he could understand her meaning, six lightning bolts fell from the distant sky in different directions.

It was the ultimate electrical magic—Keraunos.

The six branches of the ultimate magic surrounded King Hodae.

This was the Art of Onmyōdō taboo spirit method—Hexagram curse.

A hell that could burn even sacred creatures was created.

————————————————————!!!

Lightning, lightning, lightning, and lightning. King Hodae was surrounded by countless lightning strikes, and the air burned. The boundary between matter and non-matter became meaningless. This was the counter that Theodore had developed for immortal creatures.

The hell turned into a pillar of pale light. Screams weren't even allowed as the bloodline of the sacred creature burned meaninglessly.

"Becky, I'm back."

"Yes," Veronica changed positions as she replied. She looked at

Theodore's back, which seemed bigger and more dependable than ever, and sat down without any hesitation. Simultaneously, the lightning god curse finished.

■■■■■■■——!! King Hodae emerged as a lump of charcoal. Despite his brain being boiled up, the instincts of a sacred creature aimed precisely at the enemy. The fist that had the strength of a dragon aimed for Theodore—

Fairy Dance's Direct Transmission.

Four Major Hidden Techniques.

Moon Breaking through the Clouds.

However, it couldn't touch one hair on him.

Puk. A blade protruded from Theodore's right hand and pierced King Hodae's heart.

「Burn him.」 Theodore added hellfire to make up for what was lacking. King Hodae was torn apart by Soul Calibre, then the flames quickly spread over his body. The end of the already dying body was determined.

Kung.

Even a golem made of mithril couldn't maintain its form after all this firepower, yet the variant of the sacred white tiger managed to keep his shape. Theodore remained vigilant to the end, cutting off the charcoal head. He didn't bother trying to capture the sacred creature since it could escape with an unknown power. That's why his first attack was to kill, and it was an effective strategy.

"Becky." Theodore turned away from the tiger king's body and saw her.

"Theo!" Unlike her usual self, Veronica's hair smelled of blood. Theodore continuously used healing magic on her and didn't ask what happened. He just increased the strength in his two arms that held her.

Veronica buried her face in his chest and said in a drained voice, “Ahaha, it is strange. Why do I keep crying?”

“It’s okay.”

“Theo, do you know? I ran away. I couldn’t win by myself. I left Sylvia there alone…”

“Veronica,” Theodore said, feeling his chest gradually become wet, “Sorry to keep you waiting.”

She didn’t need to hear consoling words right now.

“No.”

“I was too late. And…” He embraced her tightly and closed his eyes. “Thank you for surviving.”

“…Yes.”

The two people stood there for a while. They leaned on each other and rested their tired and injured bodies from the last few days. There was still a long way to go, but they could rest for a while.

*

Flash!

There was the unique light of space movement, and two shadows stood in the moonlight. It was the middle of a quiet night, near the walls of Hyungkang Castle. Theodore and Veronica regained their strength after a few hours of rest. They knew it was dangerous to do space jumps in the East Continent right now, but they couldn’t be moving any slower in this situation. Lust might’ve already gone, but they needed to arrive at Hyungkang Castle even one second faster.

‘However, I don’t know why Lust did it.’

Theodore, unlike Veronica, had a lot of power left and could afford to think about the situation during the half day of rest. One of the things he couldn’t understand was why Lust had come

personally to Hyungkang Castle and taken Sylvia. It wasn't a cool judgment. If there had been another person beside Veronica who had been able to shake off her bewitchment, Lust would've lost her life in vain.

'A master-level power isn't a big advantage in this situation... Of course, a magician is quite useful, but it isn't great enough for Lust to move directly. She also wouldn't be seeking hostages. A grimoire based on rationality won't make a gamble...'

Hypothesis after hypothesis popped up, only to collapse. No matter how hard he thought, he couldn't find the answer. Theodore had great objective and subjective reasoning, but he couldn't see Lust's intentions.

"...It is an unknown problem."

There was only one hypothesis left—Lust had information about 'Sylvia' that he didn't know. Theodore Miller didn't know the value of Sylvia Adruncus. This was still a hypothesis, but based on this premise, he could understand Lust's dangerous outing. If it helped to carry out her purpose of existence, she wouldn't worry about the risk. Theodore's boldness was based on this impulse.

"—Theo." At that moment, Veronica's stiff voice woke him up. "The castle, look at it."

"Huh? ...This?"

The expressions of the two people stiffened as they climbed the castle walls without any resistance. They had no choice. Before they arrived at the castle, they thought that all the soldiers and variants would be in Lust's hands. If even a master could be controlled, then they were all puppets the moment they saw Lust. Nevertheless, this sight couldn't be imagined.

"Suicide. Both humans and variants."

The soldiers had stabbed themselves with a spear or a sword, while the mutants choked each other or pulled out their own

hearts. It was different from a battle. The living creatures had taken their own lives without any emotions. The scene of 'death' in front of them caused even the two people, who were accustomed to the horrors of war, to feel nauseous.

Veronica formed tight fists and growled, "Why? Why? She killed all her subordinates."

"Because they have no value." Theodore was accustomed to the way that grimoires acted and realized it immediately. "The soldiers of this castle, as well as the variants she made—they are equally worthless to Lust."

"Crazy woman."

"I agree."

After replying to Veronica, Theodore was about to say something else, but he then shut his mouth. There was one sign of life remaining in the castle. The two of them turned their heads, and the person soon appeared. He had a stately gait despite his blurred eyes.

"…Head of Hyungkang Castle, Wichung," Veronica stated.

As if in reaction to Veronica's murmur, Wichung spoke, "You are Theodore Miller?"

"That's right."

"Theodore Miller, I have a message to pass onto you. Please listen carefully." He didn't wait for Theodore's reply as the message flowed out. For some reason, Wichung's attitude was unfriendly. "Sylvia Adruncus. Go to the village 50 kilometers north to talk about her treatment. It is a place where the people who escaped from Hyungkang Castle have gathered. I will send an incarnation there so wait for them."

"You son of a bitch."

"You! Don't disgrace the great lady!" Wichung, who was known

for his noble personality, drew his sword at the insult. It was completely different from his personality before becoming enamored. Despite his regret, Theodore raised his magic power with a deep sigh. As Gluttony had explained, the fascination caused by the 6th stage Lust couldn't be turned off once a person was caught. Even the owner of a Seven Sins grimoire was only capable of resisting the indirect fascination. If they had sex with Lust, they would become a subordinate.

"…You won't want to live like this."

This was a sword master who had lost the people he had striven to defend, who had lost his soul to the grimoire that caused this tragedy… The determined Theodore raised his hands to meet the sword rushing toward him. The skill of the sword was no different than before. Despite being manipulated by Lust's power, Wichung was still a sword master.

"Rising Sword." The aura blade soared. Theodore was still at ease despite the blue aura arriving in front of his neck. He foresaw that it couldn't reach him.

Gravity Bound.

Force Grab.

Fusion Complete: Coffin of Gravity.

A ball of black magic captured Wichung's body. Metal couldn't endure this squeezing pressure, but a sword master was truly amazing. The pressure of the gravity was reduced using his magic resistance, and he raised one hand to try and destroy the magic.

However, Wichung was already defeated by this point. From the beginning, he shouldn't have been caught by the gravity. During the time in which Wichung's movement was bound, Theodore carried out his next attack.

Kiiing.

As a flying sword shot out from his left hand, something round

fell from Wichung. Theodore looked down at Wichung's head and said quietly, "I will pay back your grudge, Lord Wichung of Hyungkang Castle."

It was an unpleasant finish.

Chapter 368 - Choice and Responsibility (1)

After checking Wichung's body, the two people searched the castle in case there were any survivors. However, there was none. Only death remained inside and outside the walls.

Lust hadn't spared anyone except for Wichung, who had been used as a messenger. Brothers held the spears they used to stab each other, and parents held the blanket that strangled their child... This was an artificially created hell. After opening the doors to a few private houses, Theodore accepted the futile reality of Hyungkang Castle.

"Veronica, please."

"Yes."

She didn't need to be told. Veronica let out a deep sigh and produced fire from her fingertips.

Incinerate.

Veronica burned down a mansion, and the fire spread to nearby buildings. If left alone, it would set the whole castle on fire. With the corpses and buildings as firewood, an unprecedented cremation began.

'Cremation... It isn't a sentimental thing.'

Theodore looked around the burning castle with dry eyes. Hyungkang Castle wasn't very big, but neither was it small. Looking at the total population of the castle, it might be at least 10,000. Just the number of variant corpses alone exceeded that number. If this hell were left alone, it would become the dining place for the variants who would soon come.

"...What are you going to do?" Veronica asked after she finished spreading the flames.

"Well, I guess I have to go to that village and see."

“It might be a trap for you.”

“I don’t think so.”

The present Lust didn’t have the combat forces to take Theodore’s life. If she had such power, she wouldn’t have fled Hyungkang Castle before he arrived. Instead, she would’ve tried a surprise attack. It would be hard to kill Theodore with the defense system of Geongun Castle which had killed Seimei, let alone a trap in a remote village.

“Perhaps it is true that she has something to say to me.”

The problem was that Lust would need to be prepared for danger when talking to Theodore. It involved the reason why Lust had left Geongun Castle in order to kidnap Sylvia. Unless he knew this reason, Theodore couldn’t speak at the same level as Lust.

“Won’t it be a hostage situation?”

“Considering all the uncertain assumptions, it is likely. Still, it is hard to understand why.”

If Lust offered Sylvia’s life, it would be enough to keep Theodore’s feet tied up until the heavenly demon was born. However, there was no guarantee that the offer would be accepted. It was illogical for a Seven Sins grimoire to take action for such an uncertain possibility.

“Well, I can’t think of an answer to the problem.”

It was good to think, but this was a time to move. Theodore didn’t worry about it anymore and held Veronica in his arms. Her wide eyes which held no resistance were pretty cute. Theodore briefly chuckled before saying,「Transition.」

Then a light appeared around their bodies.

Flash!

The two magicians disappeared from Hyungkang Castle and appeared again 50 kilometers north, near the village that Lust was

about to visit. For Theodore who once moved across continents, a distance of 50 kilometers was just like a stone's throw. The two people looked around with a similar expression.

"This village...?"

"...Nothing?"

There was only a wasteland to the north, south, east, and west.

"No, wait a minute." Theodore wanted to check if Lust had left the wrong coordinates, only to realize a faint discomfort. Mana flowed in a calm but strange direction. There was a distortion of light that couldn't be detected with ordinary vision. Around 30 meters from where the two people were standing, there was a 'boundary' that couldn't be seen through. A ward that even Veronica couldn't detect...?

'Amazing. An illusion like this... the person who did it must be at least at the 8th circle.' Not long after, Theodore realized that his evaluation was wrong.

'No, they wouldn't have gotten away from Hyungkang Castle if they were that strong. Tae Rang is on a similar level to a grand master, and he would find it impossible to make this ward.'

Nevertheless, seeing as this barrier was established, the person who did it was likely to be in possession of an artifact. If broken by force, the barrier would undoubtedly break down. Theodore didn't feel the need to cause hostility. So, instead of attacking the ward, he opened his mouth, "Great monk, if you are inside the ward then please listen."

It might be funny to talk to air, but he knew his words would be heard by the great monk maintaining the barrier. Theodore's voice continued, "I have been asked by Tae Rang who is in the Baekun Mountains. He asked me for help with Hyungkang Castle, but it has long been captured. My identity will be proven with my companion Veronica, who has been fighting with you for the past

few days.”

Despite his persuasion, the ward didn’t open. Instead, he heard a voice in the air, -Impossible. I know the identity of your companion, but how can I trust her mental state?

“W-What? Hey! Open it immediately! Otherwise, I will blow it away!”

Unlike the furious Veronica, Theodore just laughed. It seemed he wouldn’t be able to persuade the monk with words.

“It looks like you saw Lust’s power. You have no choice but to feel doubt.”

It was a power that made a sword master into a slave at once. Theodore didn’t know how the monk overcame the fascination, but if he had seen the scene, then it was natural that he wouldn’t believe Veronica.

‘The Heavenly Sword or attack magic is too dangerous... It is appropriate to shake the flow a little bit.’

This was a ward that focused on secrecy, so its defense was relatively inferior. If attacked with ultimate magic or the god-sword, it would not only be destroyed but the survivors in it would suffer major damage. Theodore thought so and carefully raised both his hands. No intense destructive power or sharp breaking force was necessary. He just gathered his concentration and took away the flow of one point.

‘Break.’

At a point where nine lines overlapped, a large crack appeared on one side.

Jjejejeok...!

There was a line in the foundation of the ward that shouldn’t be broken. The same was true no matter how good the ward. If one hole was made with a needle, it would collapse from there. Just

like how a dam that failed to overcome the internal water pressure would collapse, the ward that isolated the space would collapse at that point of connection.

-W-Wait a minute! I understand! I will face you directly, so don't break this ward!

"I accept."

-Sigh...

With one stage left until the collapse, Theodore let go of the power. The monk made a sound, and the crack in the ward started to be filled again. This was because the monk knew it was useless when Theodore could effectively neutralize the ward.

"Sigh, I am the monk, Taeryun. Who are you?"

"Theodore Miller, the chief tower master of Meltor."

"...I didn't believe it when the crimson goddess said it, but you are a real person."

"Crimson goddess?" It was Theodore's first time hearing this title. Taeryun looked in Veronica's direction. "The crimson flames always fought at the forefront, so the castle's people called her that. The other one is called the blue goddess. Both of them were shy about it."

"Ack! I told you not to say that!" Veronica cried out indignantly.

However, the middle-aged man continued without a smirk, "Didn't you say that he is your military superior? Missing information is a felony on the same level as false reporting."

"Y-You!" Veronica couldn't kill the monk, so she formed tight fists and gritted her teeth. To think that this shameful nickname was actually uttered in front of Theodore! If there was a mouse hole around, Veronica wanted to enter it immediately.

Of course, Theodore thought that her struggles were cute. "Thank you for complimenting my lover. I heard that the monks

are reluctant to engage in worldly affairs, but they are good at speaking."

"It is useless for someone born as a person to imitate a cloud. I also have to get rid of the prejudice that all zen answers are boring."

Taeryun's behavior was flexible compared to Tae Rang's. If Tae Rang were here, the ward would've ended up completely broken. Theodore considered Taeryun's eloquent way of speaking while the situation was still unclear. The monk's skills were unknown, but Taeryun was superior to Tae Rang when it came to adaptability.

"Here, this is something Tae Rang gave me as a token." Before starting the story, Theodore pulled out the token he got from Tae Rang.

It was a wooden plaque with the word 'Kunlun' carved on it. At first glance, it was a poor piece of craftsmanship. However, perhaps it could only be understood by a monk? It seemed to be the case as the hardness in Taeryun's eyes softened. "I have been very rude. Please forgive me."

"The situation was understandable to don't worry about it."

"I am grateful for your generosity."

The misunderstanding was cleared up with a few words. Then Theodore opened his mouth, "I have more to talk about. We should be as quick as possible."

Taeryun must've felt the weight in Theodore's words because he replied with a cautious attitude, "Please tell me. I won't neglect a single word."

*

The long night passed, and the sun came up. Light poured from the horizon on the east, while the flower buds opening announced that day had come. As always, white clouds floated in the blue sky.

Sometimes the wind would scatter the clouds in strange shapes. The green leaves and chirping birds were signs of life. It was a cliche morning from a storybook.

"..." He sat in the middle of the village where everyone had disappeared and waited for the guest who said they would come.

Meanwhile, he refilled the energy that had been consumed by several battles. The usage of the three artifacts were still mysteries, but their abilities were intact. If he had a few hands-on experiences, he might be able to demonstrate equal or an even better performance than their previous owner.

He was the master of Gluttony and the unique transcendent of this material world. Theodore was in a perfect state for battle.

'—She's coming.'

His senses, sharp enough to catch a dandelion, perceived a presence a few kilometers away. It was coming at a pace that was neither fast nor slow. The presence didn't have much fighting power. Was it a master? If Theodore moved to kill, he would be able to annihilate the presence before they could even recognize the attack. He could also make them talk after getting rid of all their limbs.

Currently, Theodore was very powerful and very angry.

Step.

However, he didn't attack the person who appeared in this place. He gritted his teeth instead. As Gluttony had said last night, there was some leeway for this. He just hoped it wasn't as he thought. Theodore took a deep breath to control his vision that was distorted by red, trying to suppress the overflowing anger.

"Hello! Gluttony's owner, hasn't it been a long time?" In a voice that couldn't help being familiar, 'she' had come to talk. "Huh? What is it? Ah, yes. This is the first time you are facing me in this body."

With a sly manner, the beautiful woman standing there with silver hair made a strange expression. If it hadn't been for the voice, Theodore wouldn't have known it was a smile. A sinister light appeared the eyes of Lust, who had taken possession of Sylvia Adruncus' body.

Theodore barely endured his anger and asked in a heavy voice, "...Didn't you say you would send an incarnation?"

"Ah, there was such a promise," Lust spoke like she had forgotten. "That is why I came in this body that I am not used to."

"...You!"

"Why are you suddenly acting like a brat? Think about it from my perspective. Is there a better protection for my own neck? Can I trust you? It is impossible. We are the worst grimoires ever, the Seven Sins."

Sylvia's blue eyes were reddish. Being Lust's terminal was eroding at her body, and she was also robbed of control of it.

The only comfort was that no apparent change was seen. In a same-sex body where Lust planted her terminal, the erosion would first accelerate by making a placenta. After that, there was no turning back from being one of Lust's people. If Sylvia were in that state, Theodore would've killed her without any conversation.

"....What do you want?" He cut to the chase.

Standing before him with a dreadful momentum, Lust wore Sylvia's body and licked her lips sexily. "Okay, shall we weigh the pros and cons?"

Chapter 369 - Choice and Responsibility (2)

Lust's sincere voice melted with sweetness. It was too shallow to shake Theodore's composure, but the temptation accompanying Lust's power could also capture a transcendent.

The appearance was the same, but Lust was so different from Sylvia. The hand gestures she made using the long white fingers and the eyes that curved like crescent moons when smiling... The whisper that rose in volume and then suddenly dropped sounded eerie.

"Theodore Miller."

Theodore hated the way Lust called out his name, and anger filled him. "What?"

"Before discussing the terms, is there anything you want to hear from me? I will answer any questions honestly if I can."

"...I see. Then I won't hesitate." Theodore took a breath and pointed at her. "Why her? Why did you take Sylvia Adruncus?"

That was it. It was the question he couldn't solve, and the reason he was caught by Lust. If he knew what Sylvia was worth to Lust, he wouldn't have gone too far or allowed her to act alone. Lust giggled and opened her mouth, "She is worth using. There are two reasons."

"Worth using?"

"Oh, I'm not talking about the usefulness of a magician. The magic system of the West Continent might've reached a fairly usable level, but it is still outdated compared to the magic of old times. The efficiency might be a bit lower, but there is no big difference if I just change shamans."

Theodore ground his teeth, and his blue eyes cooled as he heard her words. Other people might not know, but he knew. It wasn't an analogy. She meant it literally. Using human sacrifices which

involved live offerings was also a technique used in shamanism, not just black magic.

He didn't know how many victims there were, but it should've played a major role in reducing the shaman population of the East Continent. If he measured it in simple magic power, Lust might've collected enough to be equivalent to a few dragons.

'If she turned all that power into defense... I won't be able to break through the defenses of Geongun Castle with my power.'

Theodore was thinking this when Lust said, "Do you know what my power is?"

"Reincarnation through birth, right?"

"That's right. The child will be better than the parents, and this cycle will repeat infinitely until the end. That is the purpose of my existence and the work I have been doing since the beginning of the Age of Mythology. At that time, I used the name Thetis, not Lust."

'Thetis?' Theodore hesitated, thinking he had heard that name somewhere before.

Then Lust touched her chest. Sylvia's body part, which had grown after five years, was touched by Lust's hands. Heat burned in Theodore for two different reasons when he saw it.

"Don't play games."

"Don't I look good? What is so bad about being loyal to a reproductive need? Won't it be better to touch once?"

All of these provocative actions were to draw out his reactions. Theodore realized this and stood silently. He wouldn't show any answer to the same harassment. Unsurprisingly, Lust became bored at his dull response and soon stopped her actions.

She started talking again, "Where did the story get up to? Yes, the past. I have the power of the 'mother' and can measure the

potential of the womb. What type of genetic factors are better suited and what qualities can be inherited? Well, I can make a comprehensive evaluation."

"So?"

"What is it? You asked. Why did I take Sylvia Adruncus?" Lust licked her lips and stroked her belly. "This Sylvia is an excellent product."

"Lust!" Simultaneously, killing intent was projected from Theodore's body for a few meters around him.

If a normal person touched this air for a few seconds, their brain would accept death and their heart would stop. The killing intent he was emitting right now was terrible.

"Ahaha, I'm scared. Actually, it isn't scary at all!" Lust waved her hands as she spoke. Sylvia's body was instinctively terrified but couldn't overwhelm Lust's control. "If it is this womb, yes. 782 years. A mutation in the constitution that is loved by mana. It is a characteristic that can be expressed in an unconnected lineage and carried on to the third generation. She isn't lacking to be the mother of the 'last child' to be born in this material world."

"Don't think I will just be watching!"

"Ahahaha! Why else do you think I came to negotiate? Listen to a person's words to the end."

Theodore's fingers tightened as he let out a low growl, "Talk."

Lust swept a hand over her hair that was moist with sweat and pointed to his brow.

Then like she had been waiting for this moment, she made a proposal, "It is simple. I had a bit of interest in you the last time I saw you, but now you are a transcendent, an existence beyond causality. I think the result will be quite interesting if I conceive with your 'seed'."

“…What?”

“I don’t mean to give birth to your child. The idea is to use it as a material. The possibilities of this world are closed due to Sloth, that son of a bitch. But it might be possible if your lineage is mixed in. It might be possible after a few centuries to reach the perfect…” Lust uttered confusing words.

Then Theodore realized the conversation was entering a realm he was unfamiliar with. However, Lust’s offer wasn’t a mockery. She mixed in a few threats as she urged him to make a choice, “Now, make your choice. Will you offer me your seed or throw this child away? These are your final choices.”

“…Then I will ask you three things,” Theodore said. Then in order to make a decision, he asked, “What if I give up Sylvia and destroy her body here? Won’t you lose both of what can be used in exchange for this ridiculous story?”

“Ah, don’t worry about it,” Lust whispered with Sylvia’s mask while wearing an innocent smile on her face. “I have prepared a few ways to recover this body. If you don’t believe it, you can try it. But at that point, the negotiations will be over. You will never see this child again.”

“Next. If I have a direct relationship with you, I won’t be able to escape your binding power even if I am a transcendent. Is this a power that you can control?”

“That is why I came in this body. In the early stages, the terminal can collect genetic factors, but it can’t control the mind. Besides, this kid is a long time friend of yours, so there shouldn’t be any problem.”

“…Hah.” Why would there not be a problem? Theodore wanted to lose his cool, but he somehow kept on talking. “…Finally. What guarantee do I have that you will completely free Sylvia?”

“The principle of the Seven Sins is that we don’t interfere with

each other's work. But sometimes there is a function that can enforce a relationship before we sometimes cooperate. Isn't that right, Gluttony?"

Gluttony responded to the call, -The 'Pledge of Sin.' It has been a while.

"What is that?"

-A conditional command added to the core system of the Seven Sins. Even if we unlock the seventh seal, we can't break this promise or bypass it. Even so, I never thought it would be mentioned. She is serious.

Gluttony was certain. Even if Theodore didn't trust Lust, she couldn't break this promise. So, if Theodore agreed to this contract, Lust couldn't injure Sylvia through any means. It was why the last line, 'Return Sylvia Adruncus to the West Continent' was added, but the conditions were a matter of concern.

'Whatever I choose, I will lose something.'

What if he gave his seed to save Sylvia and the result was the unstoppable heavenly demon? Was Sylvia's life more valuable than the many lives in this world? On the other hand, what if he abandoned Sylvia? The lack of Theodore's seed wouldn't interfere with Lust's plan. If he forsook Sylvia for an uncertain future, could Theodore Miller and justify her sacrifice?

After a few moments of contemplation, his firmly closed eyelids opened again.

"Your answer?"

To Lust who whispered as if she knew everything, he gave his response.

*

It was a shower.

Swaaah.

The weather was clear and sunny, but water abruptly poured from the sky. The dried ground became moist, and the buds held their heads stiffly. A sound similar to a musical instrument came from water dripping on tiles, and the distant sound of thunder was the accompaniment.

“Um…”

On the floor of an unknown person’s house, thin silvery eyebrows trembled. Sylvia Adruncus, who had been sitting at the bottom of her consciousness, returned to reality. She stared up at the ceiling with hazy eyes before opening them as if something had struck her.

“T-Theo!” She screamed.

Then a voice came back immediately, “What is it?”

“Ah…!” Sylvia reflexively turned in that direction. At first, she was relieved, but then she fell into deep despair. She might’ve lost control of her physical body, but she was well aware of what the grimoire that occupied it had done. It wasn’t enough that she couldn’t protect herself, she had also given Theodore trouble. Sylvia would’ve preferred if he had rejected the dumb suggestion and just killed her.

Dduk.

Tears flowed before she could thank him or apologize. “…Uh, sob, soob!”

Why was she always like this? She had been called a genius since childhood, yet she couldn’t stop holding onto his ankles.

Sylvia didn’t say a word and just cried. There was no shame in crying aloud as she buried her face in her knees. She wanted to stand next to him. For five years, she had been suppressing her heart. She had turned away as he got increasingly closer to Veronica, hoping to one day become a person who was essential to Theodore.

“I… sob, why? Always, like this, soob…!”

However, look at this. Despite being a master, she had pushed him onto a cliff. She cried with regret. This wasn’t good enough. It was different from Veronica who fought together with him. As always, Sylvia Adruncus was a burden clinging to old ties. Her eyes became increasingly dim as she became lost in her self-deprecation. Sylvia had no friends and her one family member was gone. She leaned against Theodore but realized that she was a nuisance even to him.

‘I… Why… am I alive?’

‘Die…’ Theodore couldn’t touch her, but there were many ways to kill herself. Before Theodore was in any more danger, she could break her circles and die in a way where she couldn’t be saved. A woman like her could only help him like this—

“Sylvia.”

At that moment, a warm body temperature was transmitted to her damp body.

“I was really worried.”

Without any words of reproach, he was just worried. Theodore dragged her onto his knees and hugged her. Sylvia was aware of it as soon as she noticed the situation. No, she couldn’t not know.

‘Ah, I really—’

She was a shameless woman.

“…Theo.”

The guilt cutting at her bones and even the determination to kill herself all scattered with a single hug. In Theodore’s arms, Sylvia melted like a piece of ice in summer. If he wanted it, whatever. She knew everything she had to do. Although she didn’t have experience, she would do her best.

“Sylvia.”

If she hesitated, her chance would be taken away.

“Can I hold you?”

Sylvia held her breath. Her joy, all the years she had been waiting for this moment, pressed down on her conscience. Even if it was only one time... She just wanted to forget everything. Instead of answering with words, she opened her arms and pulled Theodore to her. It was an awkward temptation. He smiled at the stiff gesture and followed where Sylvia led.

As she closed her eyes and her lips waited for a kiss, Theodore slowly moved his hands. It was time to take responsibility for their own choices.

Chapter 370 - Choice and Responsibility (3)

Chiiiik!

It was a strange landscape. The ground was dried out from a drought, and the countless scattered chunks of charcoal were barely recognizable. The haze rising from the ground and the heat that melted rocks like butter added goosebumps. Had a pyroclastic flow occurred here? No, it was still strange.

“Hrmm.”

Above all, one had to look at the figure in the center. The ice golem melted in a matter of minutes, while the beauty who breathed naturally was the source of the discomfort. As she stood on the lava that wasn’t set, she looked around and muttered casually, “…Okay, this much is fine without me.”

The beauty, Veronica, flew away from this spot after knowing there were no more variants in the area.

This was after the negotiations between Theodore and Lust were finished. Veronica followed his instructions and led the survivors to the Baekun Mountains. Escorting wasn’t her style, so she used her own method. However, the effects were good. She was moving one step ahead of the party and getting rid of all variants!

Veronica preferred head-on confrontations due to her nature, but her capability for high-speed flight and her overwhelming firepower made her a fearsome guerrilla.

‘Pour out attacks from the sky in a one-sided manner and then escape at a speed that can’t be followed. It is a winning strategy of one against many.’

Veronica had used this to tie up the feet of the Andras Empire back when masters were lacking. The sword masters hadn’t been able to catch up with her.

She had gotten the nickname, Witch of Heat, when she cut off

the supply routes of the empire with her bombardments. In comparison, these monsters were nothing. They didn't have any tactical ability and couldn't cope with unexpected situations.

'Sometimes strong ones pop out, but... it is useless.'

They were so dumb that they would chase her desperately her for dozens of kilometers. Once they were exhausted by the chase and unable to fight properly, she would kill them. The variants who were capable of high-speed flight would be led into the trap that Veronica had laid in advance. Thus, she had killed tens of thousands of variants in just three days.

Tak.

Once she returned to the point where the survivors were, they were just getting up and packing to leave. Simultaneously, the monk who had been on watch throughout the night welcomed Veronica.

"Welcome back. How is it at the front?"

"I swept them all away. There were around a hundred that fled, but you can handle those, right?"

"It isn't a problem. Will you be going back to your husband?" Taeryun said while riding on a bony horse.

"Hey! My husband is coming to me! Are you making fun of me? Yes?" Veronica couldn't repress her shout.

Taeryun laughed, raising both hands, "Huhu, don't be so angry. It is because the two of you look so good together."

"R-Really? Then, well..."

"Thank you for escorting us this far," Taeryun bowed and thanked her sincerely.

They were saviors from foreign lands. Theodore, Veronica and Sylvia—if it hadn't been for the three of them, there would be no survivors. Taeryun didn't know what ties there were, but he

promised to return the favor if they met again. As the two of them talked, the survivors started moving.

“I will be going now. Do you have anything left to say?”

“Um… Ah, yes,” Veronica remembered something. “Once you arrive in the Baekun Mountains, tell that guy something for me. Not in my name but in Theodore’s.”

“What is it?”

“That…”

The story wasn’t a long one. Once she told him Theodore’s message, Taeryun nodded and turned away. It would take a day or two for the message to reach Orta’s ears. Veronica’s task was up to here. She waited as the procession headed toward the horizon and gradually became invisible.

There was something she hadn’t said in advance. Deeper than the heart, the connection from inside her soul was getting closer and closer.

‘Ah, they’re coming.’

She had a hunch before the signs of space movement occurred.

Flash!

Unsurprisingly, two people appeared inside the light.

“Theo!” Veronica knew he was safe thanks to the contract, but she was excited to see his face again. She was about to jump into Theodore’s arms when she paused. It was because he had a passenger.

“…R-Red Tower Master.”

Why was Sylvia staring at her with wet eyes trembling with guilt? Veronica saw the way Sylvia was half-leaning against Theodore on rubbery legs and laughed as she grasped the situation. “Hah.”

Sylvia stiffened as she interpreted the laugh in her own manner.

“Well, I knew this would happen one day.” Veronica winked at Theodore before looking at Sylvia leaning on his chest.

Red and silver…

Blue and gold…

The two beautiful women with contrasting colors faced each other.

“But shouldn’t we organize the hierarchy?”

“Huh?”

"The title is… Yes, will you call me older sister in private?”

“T-That…” Sylvia was embarrassed.

As Veronica glanced at Sylvia’s legs, she whispered, “You. Did you intentionally not use healing magic? I thought you were old-fashioned, but you’re quite cute.”

“Ah, t-that…”

“You’re mature enough not to be a child. I’m looking forward to the future. I hope you can show me the same face you are making now.” Veronica patted the cheek of Sylvia, who turned red because she was unfamiliar with this type of contact. Looking at the relationship that went more gently than expected, Theodore recalled a forgotten fact.

Veronica was much older than she looked. Moreover, Veronica had the blood of the red dragons, who were big on love. This made her flexible about old-fashioned notions of sex.

“Theo.” After Sylvia melted from a few words and actions, Veronica approached him and spoke in a small voice. “Let me know what happened.”

“Ah, yes.”

It was a shortcut that was only possible with her. Theodore

closed his eyes and sent the full story of what happened with Lust a few days ago through the string of their contract. Veronica made an unpleasant expression while viewing the content, then she frowned like she was worried about something. “Tch, so that is what happened. Then what are you going to do?”

“Once we return Sylvia to the kingdom, we must join the supporting forces in Japan and move to Geongun Castle. If it is as I expect, the defenses will already be complete…”

“Hrm,” Veronica made a subtle noise and poked his side.

“What is it?”

“That isn’t all. With your nature, you won’t move according to the wishes of another party. Did you do something? Just let me know.”

“Let’s see?” Theodore smiled with a strange expression. It was neither positive nor negative. Veronica saw his expression and laughed. It was clearly a suspicious expression. If he couldn’t tell her, then there must be a reason. It was enough to know that the foundation was laid.

Theodore turned away from the laughing Veronica and smiled coldly. In any history, the winner was the last one to smile.

*

From that day on, the landscape of the East Continent started to change at a speed that no one could catch. Variants were created through Lust’s work, and those who refused had their lands stained with blood and death. They were residents who ran away from the castle, shamans hidden deep in the mountains, and warriors who knew honor.

Of course, there were separate factors that caused a change. On top of a mountain peak, a voice entered Theodore’s ears, “South Army, the 5th unit under the command of Kamiizumi Nobutsuna. We have come.”

Seimei's strategy was to advance southward and have the forces of Japan to meet up at a promised place. Kamiizumi Nobutsuna and his immediate relatives had made it. They were injured in the process, but it wasn't a big loss because Suzuka and Seimei had leeway to heal them.

"Kuahahat! North Army, I, Shuten-doji, have come to play!"

Following the southern army, the northern army soon arrived at the mountain peak. The blood-covered Shuten-doji gave a hearty laugh and looked much more lively than when they first met. He lived to fight and fought to die. For Shuten-doji, the strongest of the Oni clan, the last few days had been more pleasurable than the one thousand years he had spent on Oe Mountain.

"Shuten-doji, I don't see Tsuchigumo?"

"Oh, he died. The feudal lord was quite strong. They left together, so there is no lingering attachment."

"…I see."

Indeed, it was an oni-like way of thinking. However, Daitengu had no objections and just nodded. For youkai, there wasn't much difference between life and death.

Theodore looked at those gathered here and arranged the present situation.

'The two feudal lords in the west have escaped to Geongun Castle, and I missed one of them. This means there are at least three sacred creatures at Geongun Castle.'

That wasn't a fatal mistake. After all, there wouldn't be a big difference with Geongun Castle's defense system. It was troublesome if the feudal lords controlled the variants, but their combat power wasn't enough to control this phase. The first objective was to enter Geongun Castle.

The last troops arrived as he reached this conclusion.

Flash! It was a spatial movement. Theodore recognized a familiar flash and heard familiar voices.

“Theo! This bastard went and left us alone!”

“…I am embarrassed. I’m glad we’re not too late.”

Randolph and Titania, the companions Theodore had left behind when he crossed to the East Continent, looked disgruntled but didn’t care about the danger. The reason to not be defeated increased by one more factor. Theodore smiled happily and thanked them while apologizing. Randolph grunted while Titania accepted the apology.

Then it was at this moment that…

“—Eh?”

“Huup!”

“Heok!”

Everyone went into combat mode as an enormous magic power was felt above their heads. It felt like the sky was falling down. Out of nowhere, a big shadow shrouded the sky. Only Theodore was able to greet them with a slightly surprised expression.

“…I didn’t know you would come.”

He didn’t know why they had come to the East Continent despite their battle wounds from last time still not being fully healed.

[We didn’t come to help you, human. Don’t be complacent.]

[Huhu, we can’t help you much. Please use us properly.]

A dragon of the red clan, Brasmati, and a dragon of the green clan, Erucus—the dragons whom Theodore met during the battle against Sloth were now staring at him with golden eyes.

Theodore welcomed them with open arms and thought, ‘I will win.’

Chapter 371 - Advent of the Heavenly Demon (1)

The magnificent mountain, Hwang Mountain, had a height of 3,000 meters and was the barrier that surrounded the capital of the middle empire. There were many places which were difficult to ascend or descend due to the mountain, and the roads leading to the capital were fiercely guarded.

An unidentified intruder would be killed on the spot. No matter how prestigious their standing, they wouldn't be able to avoid a serious punishment if they entered without permission from the imperial family.

Theodore stepped foot on Hwang Mountain and made a ridiculing expression. '...The country looks like this.'

The empty guard posts and remnants of scattered soldiers looked miserable. There were no bloodstains, and fighting didn't seem to have occurred. They had probably entered Geongun Castle under the imperial order. Lust needed more sacrifices than guards.

Theodore broke down the closed door that had no guards and made a beckoning gesture. The present Theodore didn't need to speak any chants. The moment he decided to destroy it, this structure collapsed like a sand castle before waves.

"Hmm, your hands are hot today. Did something bad happen to you?" Seimei, who accompanied him, came over with a strange expression. Theodore hadn't realized it, but his current method of using magic was a bit rougher. He belatedly noticed the difference and shook his head with a bitter smile. "It isn't a big deal. The final battle is approaching, so I'm probably just tense."

"Is that so? From my point of view... No, I guess it is okay," Seimei tried to say something before shrugging it off. "You can handle it. This isn't a story for an old man who has already died."

“What…?”

“It is nothing. You will realize it yourself without having to listen to me. Let’s focus on the problem we are facing right now.”

Theodore wanted to hear about it, but Seimei climbed the mountain like he didn’t want to speak any more. Additionally, it was better not to know if it was a story that would disturb the upcoming conflict with Lust. So, Theodore shook off his curiosity. The two of them climbed to the top of Hwang Mountain and looked down at the scenery below them.

“…There.”

“Yes, that is Geongun Castle.”

Theodore saw the capital of Geongun Castle for the first time and had to admire the fortress that was at the center of enemy forces. It couldn’t be compared with Belfort, the capital of the Andras Empire. The labor and cost of the building process, as well as the defenses of the castle itself, couldn’t be underestimated. It was a phenomenal building, as if all of human civilization over time had squeezed it out.

“The castle’s name of Heaven and Earth isn’t just arrogance… It boasts a ridiculous function. This castle is the reason why I didn’t choose an all-out war.”

Even Seimei, who could proudly claim to have been the strongest in the east at that time, had been limited to putting only one body inside the castle, and he had eventually fallen. Seimei’s white eyebrows bent slightly as he looked at Geongun Castle which had caused his death.

Then he pointed out his left index finger toward Geongun Castle. “Kagutsuchi, stab.”

There was no time for Theodore to stop him. The spell was already complete when Seimei spoke these two words. It was an attack magic that borrowed the divinity of fire. Simultaneously, a

flaming giant appeared and threw a big sword all the way to Geongun Castle.

Kwaaaaang!

It had enormous speed and power. After leaving the giant's hands, the greatsword reached the castle and caused a massive explosion 15 meters away from the wall. That was an attack which could be felt from a few kilometers away. It was magic that would be found among the top of the 8th circle.

"...Ward?"

Even so, there wasn't a single bit of damage on the translucent barrier around the castle. Theodore's face stiffened as he saw the ward that was revealed the moment Seimei attacked. However, Seimei didn't look surprised that his attack was so easily nullified. The defense of this barrier greatly exceeded even the ultimate spells.

"Dammit! How many people were killed to make this? At least 800 million, considering the inefficient structure..."

"Seimei."

Theodore stopped Seimei, who was muttering gibberish with anger, and looked at him for an explanation.

Seimei closed his eyes before explaining with a cold expression, "As you know, the more complex the structure of the ward, the better the efficiency. If a barrier with a complexity of one can stop one force, a barrier with a complexity of 10 would be able to handle 10 or maybe 20. Do you understand up to here?"

"Yes."

"But if you follow this principle, it doesn't mean the barrier will become stronger indefinitely. The more complex formulas that are used, the more ways there are to break them. Therefore, a ward must inevitably find a compromise between these two elements. Increase efficiency or eliminate gaps? This doesn't change even in

the ultimate state.”

It wasn’t a perfect analogy, but it was similar to a mechanical device. The more complex the structure of the machinery, the greater the performance of the system. However, one empty space could lead to a fatal flaw. Focusing on the complexity wasn’t necessarily the best thing for a ward. However, Seimei was disgusted by this ward. “Now, here is the question. What is the level of the ward surrounding the castle now?”

“Isn’t it at an excellent level?”

“Perhaps. It isn’t that much.”

The vague answer left Theodore confused. Seimei ground his teeth together. “The system is beginner level, with no basics. The efficiency isn’t even at 1:1. It is a trash barrier that wouldn’t even be taught to first-time shamans. That is the essence of the Geongun Castle ward.”

“B-But! The ultimate spell couldn’t break through the defense of the ward. How can such a defense—”

“It is simple. If the efficiency is low, just pour in energy. There are plenty of sacrifices on this land.”

“…!”

After hearing those words, Theodore was able to see them—the transcendent defense power of Geongun Castle and the foundation of this force. He now understood the meaning of Seimei’s previous words. 800 million—no, maybe more than that—was the number of people consumed to form and maintain this inefficient ward.

“…The efficiency of the ward wasn’t considered, and this method was just used to stop it from breaking?”

“It is obvious but perfect. It is so stupid that I can’t think of a way to attack. If you describe the ward as a wall, breaking it is like cracking open the bricks that make up the wall. Yet this ward is a piece of stone, not a wall. It can only be crushed with strength.”

The problem was that even that method was impossible. It was a stone made of 800 million or more lives.

Imagine the case with Lairon. The legendary black magician, Jerem, had used all the people of Lairon as sacrifices to call Nídhöggur. It was only a partial force, but it was enough to call down a demon king that threatened the whole material world.

Now, 30% of a continent was focused on one inefficient ward!

'Goetia.'

[Yes, Master.]

Theodore calculated his maximum firepower and what would happen if they collided with the ward.

'With the power of the Eight Jade Magatamas, I can create seven clones and use the ultimate magic. I can also invoke the fusion spell that borrows the power of the god-sword. Calculate the possibility of breaking through if I hit a single point.'

[I understand.]

The prohibited book Goetia was silent for a few seconds before coming up with an answer.

[Less than 0.105% chance. It is impossible.]

However, Theodore continued without stopping, 'Summoning Fafnir and maintain his Eraser for 10 seconds.'

[0.312%, error range is 0.027%. It is impossible.]

'Summon a top soul. Use one of Simon Magus' spells.'

[0.289%, error range is 0.012%. It is impossible.]

'The deification of Dmitra. Can she break down the ground that makes up the ward and weaken it?'

[0.138%, error range is 0.02%. It is impossible. Additionally, Dmitra's deification can only be done in the Great Forest, so this situation is impossible.]

Theodore clicked his tongue as he was reminded of this fact. Why hadn't he called Mitra the whole time he had been in the east?

Now that the world tree had lost its vitality, Mitra was the one sustaining the Great Forest. Her deification was based on the faith of the elves, so she could only exercise the power of a god in the Great Forest. Outside of the Great Forest, she was just a powerful ancient elemental.

"...It is impossible to break through the front."

Seimei nodded with a bitter smile. "That's right. In my time, I could enter alone. But they seem to have learned a lesson from that. My mother, who has no interest in anything other than mating, seems to have used her brains."

"Maybe the 'great monk' who will soon arrive can do something, but... I don't think there will be a breakthrough."

"Tsk, can we only come this far?"

The expression 'a pie in the sky' came to mind. The home where their enemy was plotting was right in front of them, yet there was no way to enter. However, Theodore shook his head and denied it. He was ready for this frustration. "It is too early to give up."

"Hoh?" Seimei's eyes shone and he responded immediately, "It seems you still have a trick remaining. What are you thinking?"

"It is a simple matter. If they want to buy time, then we can prepare something."

"What are you going to prepare?"

"A hunt."

During the negotiations with Lust, Theodore prepared a trap that he knew couldn't be escaped from.

The advent of a heavenly demon...

He planned to drop that ghastly ceremony into hell.

*

After he went up to Hwang Mountain with Seimei, Theodore started to prepare an unknown work. There was nothing they could do as long as there was no way to destroy the ward around Geongun Castle. They reconstructed a vacant lot near Hwang Mountain, set up an empty place by digging at the ground in the wilderness, and installed something in the land.

“Theodore, what is the point of this construction?” Suzuka asked him out of curiosity.

However, Theodore didn’t answer her question.

There was a possibility that someone here might leak information, but more than anything, the enemy’s capabilities were unknown. If they could read minds with just a look… It was clear that more than half the plans Theodore was preparing would be lost.

“I am bored so I will help you.”

“I will also help. Don’t damage the forest as much as possible.”

“…That elf there, did you say something to me?”

Additionally, the colleagues that Theodore brought directly took the initiative to join Suzuka and Nobutsuna. The Japanese warriors didn’t know the meaning of the labor but were forced to take part in the simple work. Several of them were qualified to be masters. Once such a labor force was mobilized, a part of the mountain was quickly changed to the form that Theodore desired.

After seven days and nights of construction, he went to the next stage.

“Masters, I want to have a talk with you.”

If a heavenly demon were born, then Theodore was the only one who would be able to confront him head-on.

According to Gluttony, the heavenly demon wasn’t a

transcendent but was a monster that demonstrated combat power beyond transcendence. In another dimension, he would climb to be demon king and spread blood and nightmares all over. No matter how strong the people gathered here were, they wouldn't be able to endure more than a few seconds in front of him.

Thus, Theodore prepared a few tricks.

"Hah..."

"T-That is possible?"

"Wow, I pity that guy called the heavenly demon. If we do this, won't we be able to win?"

"...If the prey is strong, it is the hunter's job to design a strategy. Okay, I will be the arrow in your snares."

Each master received the description over hours and nodded in admiration or surprise at Theodore's words. If they couldn't do this, they would die anyway. Nobutsuna was obsessed with a 1:1 match and wasn't convinced, but he couldn't say anything against the strategy of the much stronger Theodore.

A few days after that...

As soon as the hands of the masters training diligently started moving at the right tempo, a guest found Theodore. He was an old man in a wheelchair, unable to walk. There were familiar faces on both sides of the old man, so Theodore easily guessed his identity. Taeryun and Taerang were escorting the old man on the left and right.

"It is nice to meet you, Supreme Monk. I am sorry to greet you in this shabby place."

According to what Theodore had learned, the supreme monk had lived for over 300 years.

Once Theodore showed politeness according to seniority, the supreme monk laughed in an old voice, "Haha! You are as humble

as these two children, Taeryun and Taerang, said. This old man has no regrets because I get to meet such a person of distinction."

"Huh?"

His tone sounded like he had been waiting for Theodore. Theodore was surprised by the meaningful tone and raised his head. Blue eyes and black eyes met each other silently. No, the silence was just Theodore's illusion. It was just like when time slowed to the extreme when he was concentrating.

'What is this impression?'

Why did he get the feeling that he had met this person before? Inside his puzzled brain, a flash of light glowed. If it had been a few more months, he would've missed it. Since there was a recent encounter, Theodore was able to recall the person at the source of this deja vu. "...You were also on the East Continent."

The two monks blushed at Theodore's lack of honorifics.

However, they were stopped by the supreme monk, who smiled and nodded. "It might be a bit different from your thoughts, but yes. Can I talk to you for a few minutes? I have something to say to you."

Chapter 372 - Advent of the Heavenly Demon (2)

Theodore held the handles of the supreme monk's wheelchair, leaving the others behind. It wasn't a story that could be heard by other people, and he needed time to sort it out in his head. Not a single word was spoken until they entered a quiet and empty lot, with the only noise coming from the wheels of the chair.

...Kirik.

Once the wheels finally stopped, Theodore opened his mouth, "How long have you been on this continent?"

The question came out of nowhere, but the supreme monk didn't question it. Rather, his white eyebrows gathered together like he was worrying over something. Theodore waited a few seconds. Mixed in with the crisp sound of the leaves, the old man replied, "Before I answer that question, I want to let you know one thing."

"What is it?"

The supreme monk made eye contact with Theodore. "I am sure that you have guessed my origin. But the life of the supreme monk is mine. I hope you don't identify me with the 'me' that you met before."

"Then you are separate entities?"

"Yes. I am an avatar born from Prometheus' divinity, but each self has an independent ego. The 'me' that you met in the West Continent is a different person."

Myrdal Herseim hadn't been the only avatar that Prometheus left behind in this world.

The supreme monk looked at Theodore as he gave this explanation. After meeting his eyes, Theodore could understand. The weight of time on the monk and his eyes resembled Myrdal,

but there were differences.

In the West Continent, Myrdal was one of the greatest elementalists. In the East Continent, he was the supreme monk. Both of them were amazing as avatars of a god, but they weren't the same person.

Myrdal Herseim was dead. Theodore considered it for a few seconds before nodding. "…I understand."

Then the supreme monk said with a wrinkled smile, "Now this old man is going to answer. I have been living since the black dragon fell to the ground and the end of the Investiture of the Gods era… It was enough for the snake to ascend three times."

"3-3,000 years?" Theodore's eyes widened as he immediately understood what that meant. It was said that once a snake lived for 500 years, it would become an imoogi. Once an imoogi lived for 500 years, it would become a dragon and ascend to the sky. If this was true, it meant the supreme monk had been in the East Continent since the days of the Age of Mythology.

"Well, I didn't play any star role. It was around 1,000 years ago that I took a position as a monk. Ah, please don't reveal this about me. The children under me think that I inherited the position."

"Of course. It wouldn't be good to have these words leaked."

"Thank you," the supreme monk thanked Theodore for his promise and took a deep breath. It seemed that the supreme monk had an unhealthy body. Perhaps the body that lived for 3,000 years was reaching the end of its lifespan.

"Before I return to the dust, I have something to tell you."

"I'm listening."

"My connection to this world of gods has long been broken, but the things they left behind still remain. I will hand them over now. In exchange, will you listen to one of my requests?"

Theodore’s eyebrows raised slightly. He was reminded of Taeryun’s ward.

The ability to defend and the secrecy were details that Theodore didn’t miss. Unlike magic which artificially manipulated the world, shamanism naturally induced the power that existed in the world. It might fall behind magic in areas such as efficiency and destruction power, but it could exercise greater strength in barrier making and stealth.

“As you know, the qi of this world is greatly reduced,” the supreme monk started the story regardless of whether Theodore knew, seeming to have accepted Theodore’s silence as consent. “The creatures born from nature will reduce, but humans will become weaker over the next 300 years. It won’t happen now, but there will be great sacrifices over the next century or so."

“Umm, maybe not.”

The descent of the heavenly demon was something that would never be seen again in this material world. Unlike the West Continent, it would obviously have a big influence on the East Continent. The number of people had greatly decreased in this war, and the monsters would increase. It wasn’t enough to influence the material world, but it could potentially be a great disaster.

“I don’t know if a big enemy will appear again. But this old man won’t be alive until then. Please don’t turn away from the people of this land.” The supreme monk couldn’t raise his body from the wheelchair, but he turned his pale face toward Theodore.

One of the most mysterious figures in the East Continent, the supreme monk, bowed his head humbly.

“Raise your head.”

Why did a non-human want to protect humans? Prometheus treated this world like a chessboard, yet his avatars were devoted

to humanity. It was the same for both Myrdal and the supreme monk. Thus, Theodore didn't think about becoming angry.

"The dragon lord gave me the responsibility to defend this world, and the East Continent is also under my jurisdiction. For as long as I live, I will not neglect this duty."

"Ohh...!" The supreme monk made an admiring sound at this short declaration. "You are truly the right person to be a hero of this age... A person who doesn't care about the arrangements of the old era and walks the right way. This old man can sleep now."

His tear glands had also dried up. The old man's eyes wrinkled several times before he pulled out something that was wrapped up. It was a scroll, and once opened, it looked like a watercolor painting. Three rings decorating a staff, a crescent-shaped sword, and a rope wrapped in light had been elaborately drawn in the painting.

"The Mountains and River drawing, open."

Once the supreme monk activated the scroll, the image popped out like it was reality!

Pasasak.

Subsequently, the scroll was torn apart since it had a limited use. Still, the Mountains and River Drawing that poured out was fine.

"There is no owner. Will you give it a try?"

"Yes," Theodore accepted the proposal without hesitation and picked up the staff with the three rings with his left hand. Gluttony smelled the treasure and extended a tongue straight away.

[+17 Fleeing Dragon Staff (Treasured Object)]

[A sacred relic from ancient times, it controls the power of the mountains and rivers. The three rings symbolize the heavens and the earth. It can be used to supplement techniques, but the proper

method to use it is to throw it. Once thrown at a target, the Fleeing Dragon Staff distorts the space around the target, sealing it off.

* The rating of the treasured object is 'Legend.'

* When used, the target is sealed in the spatial coordinates.

* When consumed, your ability in space magic will greatly increase.

* When absorbed, space magic understand and aptitude will increase slightly.

* When absorbed, you can obtain clues about the space system.]

'Hoh.' Theodore wasn't shocked since he encountered several divine objects, but the staff wasn't something that could be made in this era. If a master were caught off guard, it could be used to disable them at once. If put into the hands of a proper owner, its sealing ability would amplify several times.

It wasn't just this Fleeing Dragon Staff, but the other two objects as well. There was the Wugou Sword, which cut off the head of a giant monster, and the Immortal Rope, which could tie up a sacred creature. They were treasures which exerted more power than a master if handled properly.

Even so, the supreme monk said reluctantly, "Huhu, it is my fault that I couldn't preserve the Tashinpyeong or the Taegukdo. These objects could be compared to the three treasures of Japan..."

"Why are you blaming yourself? Just these items will be a great help. Thank you, Supreme Monk."

The supreme monk smiled at Theodore's words and pointed in one direction. "But I can help you with one more thing. I will complete the work that you are preparing on that mountain. When it comes to barriers, I pride myself on being better than onmyōdōs."

"...You saw through it with just one glance. I understand."

Theodore was unable to deceive the supreme monk and smiled.

It was something he would use to deal with the soon to be born evil spirit. The fighting strength of a magician increased in proportion to their preparation. They would regret giving him nearly a month to prepare.

*

The sun was just about to set. It had been a day since Theodore met with the supreme monk, received the three treasured objects, and had the gaps in his magic circle filled up. Theodore felt it this morning—the sign that the whole world was sinking into a deep sea, just before something terrible was going to happen.

'...There isn't much time left.'

As light cast a shadow on the ground, everyone got a foreboding feeling. The energy of evil was constantly flowing from Geongun Castle. All the wickedness in the heavens and the earth seemed to be drawn into an abyss in the ground. After preparing for battle, the party stood gazing in the direction of Geongun Castle. Their concentration was so extreme that they could see the trajectory of a lightning strike.

—Thump.

At that moment, all life in the area felt a single vibration.

'T-This...' Theodore noticed the reality before anyone else and was shocked.

"This vibration... Surely, it isn't?"

"It isn't born yet...!"

As the party members were confused, Theodore was used to mythical presences and reacted immediately, "All members! Keep in mind my instructions and wait in your positions!"

It had been a long time since there came about the existence of a power that all the masters couldn't face. Even with full support

and the strength of magic and shamanism, it was a mythical disaster that mere mortals simply couldn't face.

Randolph Clovis, Kamiizumi Nobutsuna…

Miko Suzuka, Veronica, Titania, the dragons, and so on…

Shuten-doji, Daitengu, and the two monks…

Flash!

Theodore left his 11 colleagues and climbed to the top of a familiar mountain peak with a single space transfer. It was a place from which he could clearly see Geongun Castle. Although it was difficult to see inside the castle due to the influence of the barrier, he could see the approximate landscape. Given the distance and the situation, the enemy was bound to aim for Theodore. Thus, Theodore moved away from the party.

—Thump. There was the sound of a heartbeat again.

Theodore was convinced that the next time he heard the heartbeat, 'he' would be born. His super sensitivity that reached the realm of foresight was sharper than ever, so Theodore waited tensely as he got closer to the moment he didn't want to arrive.

One second, one second, one second, and one second… Time flowed mercilessly. Then that moment came.

—Thump.

Beyond the wall of time and space, the sense of its existence was delivered to Theodore's body like a lightning bolt. A great demon that reigned in the sky, he was born into this material world.

Wuoooooong…!

It was at this moment that…

"Ha, it is like this." Theodore looked at the pattern on his right hand and felt power start to flow in front somewhere. A source with no limitations—it was the strength of this material world itself.

“A force that can only be used if the enemy of the world appears.”

Theodore couldn’t use it blindly. If he borrowed too much power, then this material world would be ruined. It was a fatal blow to the world that had lost a lot of mana because Sloth had been expelled. He dropped his right hand, which felt heavy, and looked at Geongun Castle. Then...

“Dimensional Leave.”

The power of Umbra suddenly spread out from his body!

「Search with administrator authority. #Space coordinates # Theodore Miller,」 he invoked the search function as he disappeared from this material world.

Right now, Theodore had entered the astral world with Umbra’s power. Thanks to this, Theodore wasn’t caught in the search function of this administrative authority. However, he caused this situation because he predicted the result.

[Object name “Theodor Miller” can’t be found.]

[Showing the spatial coordinates and names of the entities with a link to object name ‘Theodore Miller.’]

[Veronica, Aquilo, Sylvia Adruncus, Ellenoa, ■■.]

Aside from the previous four, Theodore concentrated his attention on the final target. The information couldn’t be published completely, even with administrative authority. There was only one such monster in the world. The world couldn’t endure the endlessly pouring information.

[Heavenly demon, X12745 Y98329 Z82712.]

Kiiing—

Simultaneously, Theodore released Dimensional Leave. His body returned to the material world, and he raised both hands. From now on, he would be using summoning magic. It was an accomplishment beyond Summoner Satomer.

‘Normally, it would be too much for a new transcendent. However, now that my administrative authority has been activated, my magic breaks down even dimensional boundaries.’

It was impossible with ordinary space magic. The Geongun Castle ward was more solid because it was so simple. It was unreasonable even if Theodore used Orta’s technique. However, what if he reached the realm of dimensional magic? The ward was proven to block physical phenomenon from this material world, but it was relatively defenseless against interference from other dimensions.

「 Authorizing as the administrator. Opening the dimensional door, specifying coordinates—」

Theodore had one key to another dimension.

[Dimension coordinates have been recognized. The key is activated.]

[CODE: Lævateinn]

[Correctly enter the space coordinates to open the door to the dimension called ‘Muspelheim.’]

Theodore scoffed while enduring the stifling pressure of the world. The heavenly demon was just happy to be born while Lust caused this disaster. It was time to open fire before them.

「 Door to Muspelheim, open!」

Exactly three seconds later, the inside of the ward surrounding Geongun Castle was lit by a pale light.

Chapter 373 - Advent of the Heavenly Demon (3)

It was incandescent! The air around Geongun Castle burned steadily and emitted a white light. The concept of wavelength wasn't well established yet, but the heat could be estimated based on the color. White was the most dangerous state. Theodore looked at the white light that went beyond an average person's eyes.

'I didn't know that the absolute defense system would be so extreme.'

It wasn't an exaggeration to say that the ward that Lust had established around the castle was at a mythical level. The ward could endure even a transcendental attack from Nídhöggur. There wasn't a straightforward means of entering. Thus, Theodore changed his method of approach itself. If he couldn't break in from outside the castle, he would break it from inside the castle. It was possible by using this technique to find the space coordinates of the heavenly demon.

"The amount of heat energy trapped in Muspelheim, the land in which Fafnir resides, is literally close to infinity. Can you afford to endure this power in a confined and narrow space?"

Of course, Geongun Castle was larger and more extensive than Belfort of Andras, but Muspelheim was a dimension. It was like trying to put the ocean in a portable bottle. The defense of the ward was so strong that it endured for a while, but the end was scheduled the moment the door to the dimension was opened. Theodore could see the walls start to melt.

Chiiiik!

The special metal, which was more expensive than gold, and the magically treated stones melted like butter. The structure inside

had melted a long time ago. The strong variants gathered evaporated after a few seconds, and it could be said that Lust had already lost 99.9% of her power at this point.

Theodore sweated at the sight that was several times more fearful than he had expected. “No, isn’t this enough to kill a red dragon?”

The output was actually lower than Veronica’s Breath as Muspelheim was too large and it took a lot of time to move the power to the material world. However, as a result of accumulating heat in a confined space, the heat inside the castle surpassed even the ultimate fire magic. Even a red dragon that could swim through magma would burn in this castle.

Jjejeok.

At this moment, a sound was heard in Theodore’s ears.

“Already?”

He thought it would take at least three minutes, but the heat overflowing from Muspelheim was more than expected. There were many cracks in the ward. The air leaking through the gap distorted the atmosphere, and some of the birds passing by were burned. They were burned deep into their bones in a few seconds.

Jjeok! Jjejejeok! Jjejeok!

Once there was a crack, it spread quickly. The surface of the ward split like a spider web. The light swirling inside came in contact with cold air and found new prey. This was the moment when the seemingly impregnable ward collapsed.

‘Now, it is adequate.’

Simultaneously, Theodore closed his eyes and focused. It was good that the ward was destroyed and the enemies in the castle were eliminated, but if he let it go, the heat in the ward would run all over the place. Now was the time to close the door to Muspelheim. It was easier to close than to open because the world

wanted to restore its original shape. A few seconds after the administrator's command was dropped, the door that appeared in Lust's presence disappeared.

Theodore opened his eyes and raised his right hand above his head. The ultimate electrical magic—a golden flash of light—struck Geongun Castle.

「Penetrate, Keraunos!」

It was the finishing blow.

Kwarururung!

Like a wedge in a collapsing dam, the lightning bolt from the sky pierced a big hole in the middle of Geongun Castle. The heat trapped in the narrow space overflowed. Look at the white pillar of fire that rushed through the atmosphere and into the sky! No, the torrent of energized plasma from inside the castle reminded him of the spear of a god piercing the ground.

"...It is a sight that I won't forget even after 1,000 years pass."

If the concept of 'night' were a part of life, it would've died a while ago. A glowing whirlpool broke through the clouds and tore the sky. If the flash had struck in any direction other than the sky, it would've caused astronomical damage.

Theodore sighed with relief and stared at the inside of Geongun Castle. 'There are four life reactions that can be clearly detected in the castle... Perhaps they're the three feudal lords gathered in Geongun Castle. However, it is a bit difficult to confirm Lust's disappearance.'

Thanks to the awful heat inside the castle, Theodore's detection magic didn't work well. In the case of the heavenly demon and feudal lords, it was possible to know due to the size of their forces. However, Lust was hard since she didn't fight directly.

But soon after, Theodore expanded his senses. Since the heavenly demon project was completed, her life or death wasn't important.

Even if she survived, she could be killed in a few minutes if he won this fight.

‘All three of the feudal lords are dying. Not one of them is a sacred creature of fire? Then there is nothing to worry about other than…’

Setting aside the three presences wavering like a candle, he focused on the fourth that was like a nightmare.

Chill. The feeling of ‘death’ that he had never felt after becoming a transcendent froze Theodore’s spine. Not even one second after Theodore detected it, he entered combat mode. It was just after this that…

————————————————————!!!

One strike. A mass of light shot out of the burning white Geongun Castle and blew toward Theodore’s location faster than lightning. The historic Hwang Mountain was shattered. Dozens or hundreds of tons of rock rose into the sky and poured down like rain. Thanks to the fire that was still burning white, the night sky was as bright as daylight, and the whole area was shaded by the shadows of falling rocks.

「 Reflection. 」A word sent the rock shower back.

Huoong! Hung! Huuung!

The rocks that were attracted to the ground because of gravity soared into the sky again, and the eyes of the monster curved. The eyes held nothing but feelings of murder and malice.

————Huook.

As the rings of light extended once again, all the rocks around the monster evaporated without a trace. They were neither melted nor burned. Instead, the instantaneously applied heat energy caused sublimation.

‘Yes, this is the power of Karura…!’

It was said that Karura had even received a lightning strike from Indra, one of the heavenly kings. He had some of the power of the sun god, so he couldn't be hurt by lightning. Theodore saw through the reality and raised tension. Everything disturbing his vision disappeared as the red and blue eyes of the two beings faced each other.

'There is a lot of resemblance to Lust.'

The black-haired man had a neutral beauty and an unknown magic power.

"How interesting," the heavenly demon's face twisted as he spoke. "This is a world where only insects can be seen. I thought I wouldn't be able to cure the endless hunger of this body, but you will be pretty good."

"Ha, where did you learn to bluff after just being born?" Theodore endured the heavenly demon's presence and continued to talk sarcastically to him. "A child who is speaking nonsense after not even being born for half a day. I really wonder about your parents' faces. Ah! I'm sorry. I just burned your mother."

"...You." The heavenly demon was completely immune to mental attacks, but the limits of his patience quickly broke.

He spat a piece of tooth out of its mouth. With white and red eyes, the heavenly demon sentenced the person who made him uncomfortable to death, "I will kill you. I won't leave a single piece of flesh behind."

Then at the moment when he was about to distort space and take a life...

Kiiing.

The world stopped. The heavenly demon took half a step forward, his lips shaking as he tried to speak. In a world where time had stopped, he wasn't completely frozen.

[Yes, you, now, act, once...]

Additionally, he was rapidly adapting to this Time Stop. It would take him a few minutes or even a few seconds to adjust perfectly. He was indeed a monster that wasn't lacking when compared to the title of a demon king.

「 Now I am faster. Absolute Zero. 」

It was the ultimate ice magic from Sylvia. A pale light wound around the body of the heavenly demon. It was a cold that stopped the movement of molecules, living existences, and inanimate objects. In fact, this Absolute Zero couldn't exert its power in ordinary space. It was because the space would lose its power when the ultimate ice magic was implemented, and the absolute power couldn't be maintained before reaching the target.

However, the situation changed greatly if it was combined with Time Stop. Theodore's Sorcery strengthened the ice surrounding the heavenly demon.

「 Freeze to death, Cocytus. 」

Frozen a second time... The body might hold on, but the mind couldn't. This was the ultimate magic that went beyond the physical and non-physical boundaries which could harm even a newly born transcendent. It was an ice that could seal an ancient dragon permanently.

Jjejejeok...!

Even so, the heavenly demon made a big crack in the ice.

[This body, freezing... won't work!]

Jjang! One arm protruded from the ice. The ice that couldn't be broken by physical force was broken. The body of the heavenly demon, whose skin was blue, gradually escaped from the flow of Time Stop. Had he acquired resistance to the ice attribute? No, it was faster than that. He used another power instead of Karura. It was something that couldn't be used together without Theodore's Forced Harmonization ability.

「 Well, I thought it would come out like this. 」

By the time the heavenly demon escaped from the ice cube and opened his eyes, Theodore had already carried out the next attack.

Hellfire x Heavenly Sword.

Fusion Complete: Hellfire Sword.

A blade of fire suddenly appeared in Theodore's hand and pierced the heavenly demon's heart. It wasn't a sharp penetration but an overwhelmingly destructive stab!

Ku kwa kwa kwang!

One stab pierced through the top of the already damaged mountain peak. Rocks weren't an obstacle in front of Hellfire Sword's destructive power. Hellfire was terrible enough to slice through adamantium. After a few hundred meters or kilometers, they both stopped falling. No, it was that Theodore's thrusting power was blocked by the heavenly demon.

"C-Cough!" The heavenly demon e spat out black blood and looked at the curved blade that had cut a few ribs like it was interesting. "Sword, is it? It seems you are well equipped."

"Tch!" Theodore realized it wasn't a fatal blow and moved. However. the heavenly demon stretched out one hand like he was shaping something. It was a hand with nothing... yet a bloody sword sprang up from his hand.

'Aura Blade...?! It is also master level!'

This was a state where he could materialize his own weapon. The heavenly demon held the distinctive nine-ring dao and moved his wrist like it was an unfamiliar feeling.

"It is okay. Let's try it once." The heavenly demon jumped one step and hit Theodore.

The sword in his hand wasn't clumsy as it contained a profound essence.

Peng Jia’s Secret Dao Technique.

Decisive Hidden Technique.

Five Tigers Open Dao, Three Liquid Fall.

The aura blade split into three, and Theodore couldn’t escape in any direction. Theodore admired the attack briefly as he was surrounded.

Fairy Dance’s Direct Transmission.

Four Major Hidden Techniques.

Fierce Wind and Rain.

He held Soul Calibre in his right hand and the Heavenly Sword in his left hand, and tore up the three tigers. The wind blew like a blade in response. The third hidden technique, Fierce Wind and Rain, broke through the encirclement and surrounded the enemy’s body. It was a strike at the wrong time. The heavenly demon faced the storm that Theodore created from the front.

‘I can’t give him time. He is getting stronger at a ridiculous rate!’

The momentum of the storm was further amplified. The power of the two blades, which already contained forces that were difficult to confront, was extremely dangerous to a person’s body. However, the heavenly demon took two steps calmly.

“You have pretty good tricks. Let’s hang out for a while.” The heavenly demon had a relaxed expression as he smiled and moved.

He used a martial art used in Japan. It was based on onmyōji ideology and had the power to control all types of phenomena. The technique that had been cut off in ancient times now emerged.

Wudang Faction Esoteric Law.

Wudang Supreme Intelligent Fencing.

Extreme Opposite Direction.

‘What, he can use this sword technique?’

Rather than go against the rough momentum of the storm, the heavenly demon turned the flow. Once an object reached the end, it was turned upside down. Or if a bowl was full, it would fall down. Theodore hurriedly raised both hands to deprive the storm of Fierce Wind and Rain, making it lose its power. However, he couldn't stop the heavenly demon who aimed at the gap.

[I will first cut out these eyes.]

There was no room to speak, but the two beings who were monsters could convey their intentions directly to the mind. The heavenly demon grinned wickedly as his sword aimed at one of Theodore's eyes.

Chaaeng!

It struck Soul Calibre, which protruded at an abnormal orbit.

[Eh?!]

'Um?!' Theodore was also amazed as he prepared to take out a defense spell.

-I was only helpful at the end. I can't beat my age.

It was natural for Theodore to feel this way since his right hand hadn't moved on his own will. The soul fragment of the great hero Reynolds Spencer, who remained in the imprint of Umbra, exerted the last of his power.

-Don't lose to this strong monster, Junior.

'Yes, Senior!' Theodore moved as he felt Reynolds presence gradually fading in his body. Reynolds' one move reversed the situation. The blade was deflected, causing the heavenly demon to be defenseless before Theodore. It was an opportunity to deal a big blow with either ultimate magic or the sword. Theodore saw the perfect timing and reached out a hand.

Jingle.

He held the three-ringed staff—the Fleeing Dragon Staff—and

threw it at the heavenly demon.

“Hey, let’s move to another place!”

“What nonsense are you saying?”

Before he could speak, the heavenly demon was stuck in the Fleeing Dragon Staff’s distorted space. Based on his resistance, he would be out soon. However, Theodore could act freely until then. Instead of attacking, Theodore picked another option.

「Teleportation.」

The trap that Theodore had spent a month preparing was waiting for him.

*

Flash!

The transition took a few seconds, and by the end of the space transfer, there was a crack in the Fleeing Dragon Staff prison trapping the heavenly demon. After Time Stop, freezing space didn’t work either. Theodore clicked his tongue and made preparations. As time passed, the heavenly demon’s performance rose steeply. He could also utilize the skills and memories of the lives sacrificed to him.

‘I need to destroy him before he is reborn as an undefeatable being.’ Theodore wanted to do it himself it possible, but it was too hard.

“…Nasty human. You brought these lowlifes to fight with you? It is insulting,” the heavenly demon spat out once he noticed the group surrounding him. Theodore acknowledged that compared to a transcendent, the others were just insects. Getting involved in the fight between two ultimate beings was just an insult.

“Well, I think it is still too early to judge.”

“Huh?”

It was the intended place and the intended timing. Theodore

knew that it was perfect and quickly connected to the magic power source beneath his feet. If he could cope with the power consumed, then it would be the strongest trap. Theodore spoke in a voice too low for the heavenly demon to hear, 「 Dao Yuan Nine Palace Troops, activate. 」

The arrangement of nine colleagues at the points corresponding to the palace meant this unexpected method could be utilized. It was the concept of gam, gon, jin, son, jong, geon, dae, gan, and yi. The concept of magic resonated with the nine circles to fill up power.

In order to tie up the feet of the heavenly demon, Randolph, Nobutsuna, and Shuten-doji were placed in close proximity. Veronica and Daitengu could respond to every type of attack, so they were placed midway, while the other four were supporting from a distance.

“I don’t know what you have prepared, but these lowlifes…!”

At this moment, the power of the Dao Yuan Nine Palace Troops was revealed.

Kuoooong———!

A tremendous amount of power poured out, causing the heavenly demon’s knees to bend. No, in fact, he was biting his tongue due to being suppressed. “Kuk!”

The ground couldn’t withstand the pressure and sank, burying the heavenly demon down to his ankles. His body could hold out against the pressure, but the environment was different. Thus, his response was delayed by one beat.

“Hey, little monster.”

“What? Your safety—” The heavenly demon frowned at the rude call and looked in that direction.

Kwaaaaang! Shuten-doji’s club struck his head firmly.

Chapter 374 - Advent of the Heavenly Demon (4)

Kwaduduk!

The heavenly demon was buried up to his ankles, and his knees touched the ground. The trap involuntarily lost half its power, but it was worth it. It would be a big blow if he were hit in this defenseless state.

“Dumb oni...!” The heavenly demon overlapped his palms and blocked the club, grinding his teeth as he felt an unpleasant sense of danger.

This was a powerful oni, but his strength was strange. Despite analyzing the factors making up the oni’s body, the strength that the oni was displaying was completely out of the ordinary. Did he have bones with higher tensile strength than mithril? As he looked down at the distorted expression of the heavenly demon, Shuten-doji jumped back and nodded. “You are good at blocking my club, but I’m afraid I didn’t come alone. You better move your gaze.”

“What?” The heavenly demon didn’t want to listen to Shuten-doji’s words, but he grew an eyeball in the back of his head.

It was the Third Eye technique that had been suppressed 500 years ago! A third eyeball was created in the back of the head in order to compensate for a field of view in magic spells. As soon as the eyeball sprouted among the hair, three flashes of light could be seen. It was a surprise attack launched by the two sword masters who had appeared all of a sudden.

Clovis Two Swords Style.

Special Hidden Meaning Technique.

Thunderbolt Fang.

New Life Born, New Cloud Flow.

Shooting Star.

Randolph was the one with the Acceleration ability, but Nobutsuna was fast enough to keep up with his speed. There was a tearing sound as three blades of lightning or fire aimed at three points on the heavenly demon—his forehead, heart, and abdomen. In half a beat, three holes would be left in the heavenly demon's body.

"Tsk!" Nevertheless, the heavenly demon didn't hesitate to throw himself into the hell with an expression of hesitation. The starting point of his evasion was two spans above the ground. Once, twice, three times… As if there was a footstool in the air, he rotated his body and avoided the three rays of light without a single speck of blood. The eyes of the two monks widened at his movements.

"…C-Cloud Dragon Eight Patterns movement!"

"How could that wicked being steal that technique?"

Just like a dragon in the clouds, it was a footwork that allowed the body to move in the air. It was a form that had already disappeared centuries ago. If it was mastered completely, the user could dance elegantly in a storm. The heavenly demon only spun three times to avoid the sword. However, if he turned eight times, he could touch the realm of a god.

'No matter what happens, I must kill him here!'

Everyone had the same opinion. If this monster escaped from this place and gained more experience and skills, yet another chance to fight him would disappear. He already had the techniques of a shaman, an apostate, and so on. Adding on the techniques that had disappeared or were buried in history together with the power of a new generation… If the heavenly demon were to become 10 times stronger than he was now, he would destroy the world.

The alliance of those who were ready to fight sincerely began.

「 пламя нож (Flame Sword)! 」 Veronica's explosive sword struck the right arm of the heavenly demon without giving him a chance to respond. It burned his skin before bouncing off hard. If the heavenly demon hadn't borrowed the power of Karura, it would've been more than his body could endure. The heavenly demon belatedly realized his own missteps.

Ping! Piiing!

There was an eerie sound, and two holes were developed in his shins.

"Interesting. I never thought I would team up with someone from the pointy-eared clan."

"...I am an elf. Don't call me pointy-eared."

Titania's and Daitengu's cooperative attack involving the wind penetrated the shins of the heavenly demon. Of course, a troll-like healing ability activated as soon as the arrows hit, but this gap wasn't missed. The swordsmen ran over to make up for their previous mistake.

Kakiing. Randolph's double swords moved one step ahead and gave a short howl.

'If he can flip his body in the air, then I will cut the whole area, making it impossible to avoid!'

It was an ignorant idea, but it wasn't impossible if his swordsmanship accelerated several times more than it had in the past. The two swords split into afterimages of four, eight, sixteen, and so on. The shadows of the swords grew to more than one hundred and swept everywhere. Even a leaf wouldn't be able to escape.

Kamiizumi Nobutsuna's judgment was the opposite.

'One blow in an instant. That is the only thing that will reach

him.’

Nobutsuna needed sharpness rather than tremendous power. Reaching this conclusion, he lowered his posture. He lowered his center of gravity so his whole body could move quicker. The technique was actually still incomplete, but he was able to complete it thanks to the power coming from the magic circle.

New Life Born, New Cloud Flow.

Secret Technique.

One Blade Single Water Moon.

Like the illumination of the moon, the blade melted into thin air and appeared at the heavenly demon’s neck without any precursor. It was indeed impossible to escape!

The heavenly demon moved his body hurriedly, but he couldn’t use Cloud Dragon Eight Patterns footwork properly due to the injury in both his legs. Additionally, the magic circle amplified the sword master’s power by more than three times, allowing the sword master to easily penetrate through the heavenly demon’s overwhelming defense power.

Chwaaaaak! Blood splattered in a clockwise direction, and the heavenly demon fell to the ground in an unstable position. The attack didn’t reach his jugular, but this was still a serious injury. To think that it was caused by a lowlife who he didn’t take seriously… The heavenly demon laughed once in fury. His eyes darkened as he raised his power in earnest.

“Lowlifes, you dare…! You interrupted me without knowing your place!”

His body teemed with the power of sacred creatures and demonic creatures. There were those who had distinguished military achievements in the Eastern Continent. The heavenly demon intended to use all of his power to kill these bugs.

The evil eye, absorbing soul method, extinct poison, curse

method, and so on—dozens of terrible techniques were used. The evil eyes blurred, and the ground under the heavenly demon turned black, giving an idea of the wickedness of the techniques.

It was at this moment that…

“Eight Mirrors.” Theodore, who had been maintaining the Dao Yuan Nine Palace Troops, immediately pulled out a mirror. It was unknown if it was a stone or metal mirror, but this was the last of the three artifacts that hadn’t been used until now.

“Open your eyes! Banish evil!” The eyes of Yata no Kagami, which hadn’t been seen since Seimei’s death, finally revealed themselves.

Paaaat!

A sphere of light burst out from Theodore, and the curses pouring all over the place were washed away cleanly. It was a divine power of the Eight Mirrors (a.ka. Mirror Of Eight) which could even return the power of a god. Of course, it couldn’t be done without using a lot of power. The heavenly demon stiffened at having his curses shot back at him.

The masters saw this gap and reached out.

“Control Heaven and Earth!”

“Various Heavenly Assistance!”

Two different people each cast a spell, causing the righteous power to stab the heavenly demon like a stigma. They were spells to rescue evil spirits and suppress evil. The strength of the Dao Yuan Nine Palace Troops was added to the skills, and even the heavenly demon couldn’t endure them. With this, the heavenly demon could no longer use the techniques he had just attempted. Even so, this was a strategy to tie his hands and fight together, rather than actually pushing him in an attack.

“■■■■■■■■——!” At last, the heavenly demon leaped high into the sky in a frenzied manner. Unlike his angry manner, his

instincts told him that fighting on this magic circle was disadvantageous. However, he couldn't escape even in the empty sky.

[Kuhuhu! Stupid!]

[Seed of evil, don't blame me.]

Brasmati and Erucus—the two dragons, who had come across the sea to help Theodore, stared at the heavenly demon with cold eyes. The dragons showed up and opened their mouths. They were in the form of dragons, not humans. As such, the heavenly demon paled as he guessed the development that would soon follow. "Not only are there lowlifes, now the damn lizards...!"

The breaths were fired before he could finish the cursing.

————————————————————!!!

Two breaths intersected in a cross shape, cutting the black night sky into four pieces. The superheated breath left a mark in the sky, while the poisonous breath left a green mist trail that disappeared into the distant horizon. It was a linked attack that could kill a sacred creature and the eight feudal lord variants instantly!

"Kuaaaaak!" The heavenly demon was burned and poisoned before falling to the ground.

No matter how strong he was, the heavenly demon couldn't overcome the breaths of dragons with a body that was less than an hour old. It was strange that he even managed to survive. Even so, he was in a critical condition, and his body that lay on the ground was like a corpse.

'It would've been nice if it finished here, but that isn't possible.'

However, Theodore didn't push it. He talked to the dragons looking down at him, 'Thank you. Please back off here.'

[I understand. Don't be defeated, human. Remember the reason why our king crowned you.]

[It will only be a burden if we remain. I will follow your will.]

The dragons said these words before disappearing. A few breaths were the best help from the dragons who were still wounded. There was a risk that if they stayed too close, it would destroy the plan Theodore had for the heavenly demon.

"...It is starting now." Theodore became tense as he looked at the heavenly demon lying on the ground. The name of 'the heavenly demon' would be a waste if he fell from this much. That guy still had yet to use 30% of his power.

"—I see." The heavenly demon raised his upper body casually and stood on two feet. The burns on his body disappeared, and his glass bead eyes looked around.

"Bugs are bugs, but not. Yes, there are poisonous bugs. I thought it was a broken moth when I grasped it, but it was actually a wasp." The heavenly demon laughed coldly while acknowledging the strength of the enemy. "I have to admit it. It is worth it to kill you directly."

The demon that reigned in heaven invoked his power.

Kukukukukung...

The earth shook, the sky was afraid, and all beings tried to escape from the area. A door to the void was unlocked in this material world. The power to eat up the spirituality in all beings, regardless of what they were—it was a power that raised a monster, which should merely be a mixture of genetic factors, into a demon king.

"Absorption Star Method, activate."

Red and bluish blood lines appeared all over the heavenly demon's body. No, the shape was different from blood vessels. It was a structure that replaced all the aura and magic power eaten with basic mana. According to Gluttony, it was a deteriorated version of the absorption ability that all of the Seven Sins possessed.

Kwajik.

However, unlike the Seven Sins who couldn't perform all their functions due to the seals, the heavenly demon's absorption ability was 100%.

'The Dao Yuan Nine Palace Troops is breaking...!'

Theodore was standing on it, but all the power was being sucked backward. He hurried to stop maintaining the Dao Yuan Nine Palace Troops before it took away his magic power. The heavenly demon grinned when he sensed it. The power of the Dao Yuan Nine Palace Troops had disappeared.

Jeeeong!

The heavenly demon disappeared and appeared again, causing the two sword masters to be thrown away with broken swords. They blocked it somehow, but both of them were seriously injured.

To think that the sword masters were overwhelmed by the swordsmanship of a monster that had just been born...? Randolph and Nobutsuna were dumbfounded. However, they had no answer as to the cause of the heavenly demon's overwhelming strength and speed, as well as the memories and experiences left behind by masters of the empire.

"Uhuh! You dare to take your eyes off this old man!" Shuten-doji swung his club again in this gap. However, he couldn't achieve his goal this time. The big boss was too strong to be reached without the assistance of the Dao Yuan Nine Palace Troops.

Puhak!

Rather, the heavenly demon's hand grabbed the swung club. It wasn't just once. Shuten-doji was beaten several times and, blood burst out. As Shuten-doji received a critical wound, the heavenly demon moved again.

"Kuaaack!"

Veronica barely escaped it, while Daitengu couldn't avoid it. It was unknown how it happened, but the right half of Daitengu's wings were torn away. The youkai barely avoided instant death, but he would die soon. The heavenly demon looked at Veronica, who had dodged his attack, and threw his fist into the air.

Shaolin 72 Arts.

100 Stages Soul Boxing.

Shoot.

A shockwave traveled hundreds of meters and pierced her.

Kaaang!

"Kkuk!"

It wasn't a fatal wound. However, Veronica took a few steps back from the momentum. Theodore had already given her an order to leave the battlefield if the situation continued like this. Rather than chasing after the escaping Veronica, the heavenly demon turned his eyes toward Theodore.

'The positions have reversed.'

The Dao Yuan Nine Palace Troops had collapsed, and the area was now destroyed. The two sword masters and Shuten-doji were still alive, but they wouldn't be able to endure the heavenly demon for 10 seconds. The same was true for the two monks in the rear. Their lives were at risk once the front line was destroyed.

However, Theodore laughed lightly and opened his mouth, "...You would think so. Isn't that right?"

Chapter 375 - Advent of the Heavenly Demon (5)

“What nonsense are you saying?”

Did it mean the heavenly demon would no longer be swayed by the words? The heavenly demon glared and changed his posture. The power of aura, magic, and the sacred creatures united in one place, forming an unprecedented shape. As long as the Absorption Star Method was activated, the heavenly demon would be difficult to overcome with a transcendent’s power alone. Therefore, Theodore had to prepare a trump card.

“Let’s see?” As he felt the power rising behind him, Theodore playfully said to the astonished heavenly demon, “I brought your brother to you. Isn’t it your duty to thank me?”

Theodore had brought a miko with no battle experience onto a dangerous battlefield for a reason. Although he felt sorry for her, it couldn’t be helped. It would be too bad to miss the opportunity to borrow the power of a transcendent—Abe no Seimei.

“The old gods of Takama-ga-hara, Suzuka who keeps the legitimacy of the heavenly deities is here—”

It was already too late for external interference to interrupt it. This fact was known to the heavenly demon. A ceremony of such great power couldn’t be completed in seconds. It would’ve taken at least a few minutes. The chanting would’ve started the moment the heavenly demon’s feet were tied up by the joint attacks of the Dao Yuan Nine Palace Troops. Moreover, with Theodore blocking the front, it was impossible to kill Suzuka in a matter of seconds.

“Great Founder Seimei! I give you my body today!” Then Suzuka, miko of Japan, completed the ceremony.

[I’m sorry for bringing you to such a rough place, my child.]

The Possession Ceremony! It was much less advanced than

obtaining a divinity, but it became much more difficult if the subject was a transcendent like Abe no Seimei. Fortunately, Suzuka was a distant kin of Seimei and was able to easily succeed because Seimei cooperated.

Flash!

A light glowed and a translucent figure appeared behind Suzuka. It was the soul fragment of Abe no Seimei, who had escaped from the Eight Jade Magatamas.

“No? That aura, that power! You are...!” The heavenly demon was aghast when he recognized Seimei.

However, Abe no Seimei and Theodore people spoke like the heavenly demon wasn’t there.

[There is only one chance. Don’t make a mistake.]

Theodore replied, “Of course. I am aware.”

There was a limit to using Suzuka’s body as a vessel. Only one technique could be used against the heavenly demon. If Seimei exerted more than that, Suzuka’s body and soul would be crushed. Therefore, this move had to hit.

Kiiing.

There was a sharp ringing sound, and the whole world turned black and white. Time Stop was activated within a certain range! However, the one who had already experienced this once scoffed. The heavenly demon had already fully adapted to Time Stop. “Ha! Are you stupid enough to try to use this to tie my feet for a few minutes?”

“I will return your words. Don’t you know after seeing it once?” However, Theodore laughed at the unexpected situation. “I didn’t stop time in order to tie up your feet!”

“What?”

It was just after that...

Inside Suzuka's body, Seimei completed the chant, [Taboo, Soul Incantation Killing.]

Chill.

It was dangerous. Despite his sky-high pride, the heavenly demon suffered from a sense of crisis and moved his body. He couldn't allow the other party to finish this incantation. The heavenly demon had to kill before it could be cast, and avoid it if he couldn't kill the caster. In the world where time had stopped, wings of fire rose. It was the power of the sacred creature, Karura. The heavenly demon was going to control the fire and leave this place.

"Hold on, Immortal Rope!"

At this moment, ropes flew at the speed of light and tied up the limbs of the heavenly demon. It was one of the three treasures Theodore had received from the supreme monk—a rope that could even hold a sacred creature.

"Eek! This crude thing...! Kuk, why?"

"Now, who is stupid?"

The Absorption Star Method wasn't activated. No, the absorption didn't work when time was stopped. It was useless in the area of Time Stop, where even mana flow was stopped. The heavenly demon grasped the situation too late and struggled.

[For a full day, I will seal your spirituality predation,] Seimei uttered in a loud voice and held his two fingers in front of him like a blade as the shape of a sword formed.

The maximum sealing taboo—it was a magic blade that could wedge into the soul of a god. This was one of Abe no Seimei's ultimate techniques, which could seal even an immortal heart.

Puk!

Despite the heavenly demon's desperate struggle, the sword leaped from Seimei's fingertips into his heart. The heavenly

demon's hard skin was meaningless because it wasn't a physical technique.

It was a sword blocking the soul. From now on, the heavenly demon would be in a state where he couldn't use the Absorption Star Method. His body was fully recovered due to the forces he absorbed a short while ago, but the attack power of the heavenly demon fell by half now that he could no longer use the Absorption Star Method.

'Seimei, from now on I will fight alone.'

[Can you win? He is a monster, even without that absorption method.]

That's right. The Absorption Star Method was a trick that relied on external forces. The fearful thing was the heavenly demon's infinite resilience and recovery. The combat power of the heavenly demon got stronger with every minute and every second. This meant Theodore needed to defeat the heavenly demon as soon as possible, before he could fully embrace his power.

'Man proposes but God disposes. The heavens will stand by me.' (This Proverb statement tells that whatever man proposes as his objective to achieve by exercising his willpower, efforts, and intellectual potentialities, there is a limit to his abilities and that there is some supernatural power—God—to determine the shape of things and their end.)

There was an emblem on Theodore's right hand—a sign that stood for the guardian of the world. As long as the Absorption Star Method was cut off, the material world could be used as backup. Theodore had a 70% advantage in the battle while the heavenly demon had a 30% advantage. Seimei read Theodore's will and sent Suzuka off the mountain. Only two monsters were left on this vacant lot.

Duduk. Duk! Tududuk! The heavenly demon broke through the Immortal Rope tying him.

It wasn’t with any spell or technique, just strength. He broke through the rope with simple strength. Then the heavenly demon turned to face Theodore. “Are you done?”

“What does that mean?”

“Did you use all your tricks?”

A bloody-colored aura overflowed from the heavenly demon, who held a sword and spear in one hand while the appearance of Karura showed up behind him. No, it wasn’t Karura. His body was surrounded by lightning, and his two legs, which had become hazy, looked like power from a sacred creature. With the practical experience of fighting Theodore and his group, it made the heavenly demon even more advanced.

‘I’m glad.’

However, Theodore raised both hands instead of retreating.

‘I am still stronger.’

Eight jewels started moving. The Eight Jade Magatamas—it was one of the three divine artifacts that could create separate bodies. The Eight Jade Magatamas recognized their owner’s will and shone.

Flash!

One, two, three… Theodore’s clones appeared in the air, lined up at regular intervals. Magic power flowed out of his body into the ground, scattering enormous pressure. Including Theodore, there were nine people. They couldn’t copy the main body’s defense and Gluttony’s power, but the magic power of nine circles was terrible enough.

The pupils of the heavenly demon shook for a moment.

“I couldn’t use this function due to the Absorption Star Method… but things have changed a bit. Isn't that right?” Theodore said half seriously, half as a bluff.

There might be nine bodies, but that didn't mean Theodore was nine times stronger. After all, the clones were created using ultimate magic. Once the ultimate magic was used up, the body of the clone would be reclaimed. A body that disappeared could only be summoned again in seven days, so it couldn't be used again in this fight.

'Well, I have no intention of telling him that.'

Theodore flew into the air, and his eight clones followed him in a semicircle. The nine Theodores and the enemy of the world, the heavenly demon—the moment their two pairs of eyes collided…

"How do you feel about your death day being the same as your birthday, monster?"

"—You!"

The next generation was marked by the end of a great battle.

*

Hwang Mountain collapsed.

This was a simple summary. If he wanted to express the landscape in words, he would need dozens of pieces of paper.

The altitude of the lowest mountain peak exceeded 3 kilometers. This was high in comparison to any famous mountain on the East Continent. The splendor of Hwang Mountain wasn't inferior either. A sword master's aura blade or great magic, which could burn thousands of people, wouldn't be able to shatter even a tenth of this mountain.

Flash!

However, there was a flash of light, and dozens of mountain peaks on Hwang Mountain collapsed, causing a major earthquake.

Kukukukukung!

The surface of the ground was peeled off like flesh, and some of the rocks that fell from the edge of the cliff rose to the height of

clouds. There were rising air currents, and it was like a massive volcanic eruption had occurred! The dark night sky was covered by thousands of pieces of rubble. The catastrophe that was already beyond the realm of a mortal crashed into Hwang Mountain, crumbling several times a second.

“Kuaaaaahhhhh!”

Lightning storms, fire pillars, and other great magic aimed at the heavenly demon, who raised both hands. In addition to the power of the two beings—the power of the sacred creature, Karura, and the evil dragon’s steel storm—he called on the dao king.

Thunder Hegemon Dao Final Skill.

One Dao Precipice.

It was great enough to cut a cliff with a human body, but the heavenly demon literally carved the heavens and earth. Heat, pressure, and gravity all twisted arbitrarily. Dirt disappeared, and light and sound collapsed. It was a destructive power that shook the laws of physics of the world.

Theodore, who opposed him, didn’t look human either.

「 Absolute Shield. 」

「 Reflection. 」

「 Void Wall. 」

The ultimate defense magic of eight magicians centered on one point, stopping even the destructive power that could tear the world. The material world screamed as both forces offset each other. The ecosystem of this area had long collapsed. Even the forest and mountain animals hundreds of kilometers away were fleeing as far as possible.

‘Number 7 didn’t escape. There are four left.’

It had gone on like this for an hour. Theodore frowned as one of his clones disappeared. With his mental power, it was impossible

to control all nine bodies perfectly. Goetia controlled two clones, but every time a discrepancy arose, one clone was lost. As such, there were only four of the eight clones left.

'The speed of his strength increase is too fast. 14 types of great magic and Supercell no longer work, and neither do the lightning acceleration and Time Stop. More than anything, he is trying to steal my magic in the midst of the battle…!'

The two presences crossed nearly a thousand times in one minute and one second.

"Kuoh…!"

"Hu!"

If the battle lasted for another hour or even 30 minutes, Theodore might be the one losing his life. In fact, if his preparations had been lacking or he was missing even one colleague, it was likely he would already be dead.

'But…'

He won.

Two swords of light sprung up from Theodore's two hands and crossed in front of his chest—the Heavenly Sword and Soul Calibre. Theodore poured out all the magic power supplied by the material system and grabbed the swords of light. Was it because he had sunken into a state of enlightenment as the bloody struggle continued…? It seemed the horizon was flickering.

Fairy Dance's Passed on to the Lord of the Family.

Four Major Hidden Techniques.

Boundary of Heavy and Earth.

He didn't know the technique, but his body still remembered. It was the skill of a man who had conveyed his will to Theodore before disappearing.

Great magic Abraxas (ΑΒΡΑΞΑΣ)

Final Chapter.

Elemental Buster.

Two swords—one was the peak of magic, and the other was the peak of martial arts. Theodore forgot his own existence and moved both hands. He drew a cross shape. A sword technique that could cut the heavenly demon's heart into four pieces. This technique was unique to Theodore. It was the sum of magic and martial arts that no one else had reached.

"Transcendent."

Grand Cross.

The two rays of light passed through the flesh of the heavenly demon, and a fountain of blood gushed out.

Chapter 376 - Advent of the Heavenly Demon (6)

Chwaaaak!

Blood soared from the heavenly demon's heart which received a cross-shaped cut. The blood that was blacker than ink soaked the land around the heavenly demon, and weeds started to mutate into a weird form. It was blood that turned normal plants and animals into monsters in a matter of seconds!

The phenomenon proved that the wound was a fatal injury. Blood was concentrated in the heart, but the pollution wouldn't normally occur to this degree. This meant there was great damage dealt in an area that even the heavenly demon's regenerating ability couldn't intervene in.

"You, you, you will regret this...!" The body of the heavenly demon fell to the ground while letting out curses.

Kung.

Light disappeared from his red eyes, and the presence that could crush the heavens gradually faded. This was the moment when the heavenly demon, the demon king born from Lust, died. Simultaneously, Theodore coughed up blood. "Weeeeeek!"

However, it wasn't dead blood. Red blood, the blood of life, overflowed from his lips. There was something strange about the appearance of the winner who defeated the enemy. Theodore's knees collapsed because of a lack of blood, and he sat on nearby rocks.

'I-I almost died... It is self-destruction. It isn't something that can be used as a joke.'

Grand Cross, the transcendent technique which had been used as the last trump card, was a problem. At that moment, Theodore had looked at an area that went beyond Lee Yoonsung, the one who

had delivered the martial arts to him. It wasn't a purely off-limits area, but it was a power he couldn't endure right now. In any case, the force, which shouldn't have been allowed, had lent him strength in the name of the guardian of the world. Despite being a transcendent, the two ultimate things shouldn't be used as one. Their combination produced a fearsome reaction.

Clang! Two of Theodore's clones broke like glass while the artifact cracked.

It wasn't due to a direct hit; the tremendous treasure broke in reaction to the technique. Moreover, this was despite the fact that he had handed more than half of the burden over to the Eight Jade Magatamas. In the case of the Heavenly Sword he had used directly with Grand Cross, the sword's tip fell off the blade.

"…Still."

He had won. Theodore was relieved as he straightened his back.

'The circles are a bit creaky, but it isn't bad. They can recover in a month or so.'

Since he had been prepared to die together with the heavenly demon, this result was sensational. There would be no future for the material world if Theodore had been defeated in this fight. Theodore had seen this and prepared a trap. It had been from the moment he negotiated a hostage with Lust.

"Mutual Destruction, release."

Needless to say, it had been implanted in the 'seed' that Lust had taken. If he hadn't won the battle, he had intended to use Mutual Destruction in order for both of them to die together. No matter how great a vitality they had, there was no way to stop the suicide spell that was contained in the soul.

At that moment…

"……■■■■■." There was a growl that couldn't be understood.

Then the body of the dying heavenly demon turned to black mist.

“What?” Theodore put up a shield faster than the black fog’s movement and was immediately amazed. It was because his left arm was being eroded by something black.

It wasn’t physical. ‘If this… this erosion—no way.’

“Coming back through the path of the suicide magic that I planted…!”

It was ridiculous. The heavenly demon turned his body from physical reality to information and jumped on the suicide spell that had targeted him. In fact, the heavenly demon lost 80% of his existence during the course of the reversal. Nevertheless, the erosion was indeed a threat to Theodore.

「 Pause! 」

The speed dropped remarkably once this order was applied, but the erosion didn’t stop due to the magic resistance inherent in the heavenly demon. If this continued, Theodore would become another heavenly demon. It was inevitable. Theodore decided and pulled out Soul Calibre using his right hand. He was going to stop the erosion, even if it meant cutting off his left arm.

[Wait.]

If Seimei hadn’t intervened, he certainly would’ve done so.

“Seimei? When did you come back?”

[It has been quite a while. My soul, which was removed from the Eight Jade Magatamas, belongs to the grimoire. Once removed from Suzuka’s body, I returned.]

“No, I don’t need an explanation for that! Why are you stopping me?” Theodore asked in an urgent voice.

Seimei replied with a laugh, [Well, you sure have a temper. Since you have released my regret, I’m just giving you a reasonable reward.]

“What is this situation…?”

[It doesn’t look good if the main character of the victory loses an arm,] Seimei spoke lightly of the reward like it was a joke.

[Object name ‘Abe no Seimei’ has requested to complete his quest. Reviewing the achievements of the target, the progress and the surrounding situation…]

[The request of object name ‘Abe no Seimei’ has been accepted.]

[Verified the completion of the quest. After 30 seconds from the present time, the Transmission of Abe no Seimei will begin—changed. Verified that your current capacity is close to saturation. Confirming a separate compensation…]

[In conclusion, it has been left to object name ‘Abe no Seimei’s discretion.]

After compromising with the system, Seimei explained, [You should know it already, but if you accept my power with a body that has already become transcendent, it will only burst. Therefore, I will give you my power in a different way.]

The soul dispersed. Mana was another concept. The innate power of onmyōdō wasn’t studied in magic. The soul split into small particles, interfering with the astral dimension. The ultimate magic which controlled the spirit transformed Seimei’s soul into a string and weaved it around Theodore’s left arm, which had turned black. Theodore felt the erosion, which had swallowed his arm, come to a stop, and sensation returned to his arm.

[Yes, it is now time to say goodbye,] Seimei said goodbye in a hollow voice. [I will take my little brother away. There will be some impact on you, but you can handle it well. Eat and live well for a long time. We will meet again on the other side.]

“Wait, Seimei…! You are leaving this way as well?! Why are all the great people like you?”

[Hahaha! I have nothing to say. I’ve heard many things since I

was alive!] Despite the increasingly blurred voice, Seimei laughed pleasantly.

Abe no Seimei—this was the end of the onmyōdō master, who had been born between a youkai and a Seven Sins' grimoire, and was the savior of Japan. As Seimei's soul burned up, he left a final message, [When the day comes and you stand at a crossroads, remember yourself.]

Before Theodore could ask what Seimei meant, he realized that Abe no Seimei's soul had already completely disappeared.

"...Tsk." He replayed it several times in his mind before muttering, "I will see you again, Seimei."

If an afterlife really existed, they would one day meet again at the end of a long and distant time. Theodore turned his gaze from the empty space and looked down at his left arm. The erosion ran from his shoulder to below his elbow, but the consciousness of the heavenly demon no longer remained. Then Theodore discovered why Seimei had said that there would be some impact.

"...30%—no, 20%?"

In response to Theodore's confusing words, a voice replied, -To be precise, it is 18%. That is the portion of the heavenly demon's database that was implanted.

"Gluttony."

-You can't force a load that doesn't fit your body...

However, it was still a big profit. Maybe he could use some of the methods. The power to absorb the spirituality of others was a force that had raised an immature heavenly demon to the level of a demon king. It wasn't unreasonable that Gluttony would drool after indirectly obtaining it. However, Theodore didn't talk anymore about his arm. He moved to finish what was left.

"You would know. What is the location?"

-Yes.

Theodore read the space coordinates from Gluttony and took a step. Simultaneously, a light flashed, and nothing remained.

*

Kukukung…

The collapse of Hwang Mountain, which had started due to the collision of two transcendent beings, was still ongoing.

Dozens of mountain peaks were falling, and the ground was overturned. The dirt rose up like a volcano and seemed to reach the moon and stars, while darkness covered the place. The mountain was shattered by magic, and the slope collapsed again as the axis shook.

"…Hoh." In the middle of the hellish landscape, an unrealistic beauty was sitting there.

Her lower half was torn apart by heat and an explosion, while her beautiful appearance was distorted by ugly burns. Even so, it was the existence of someone who could take away a person's reason. It was the Seven Sins' grimoire, Lust. In contrast to her dying voice, she spoke in a lively voice, "You knocked that child down, Gluttony."

The rumbling footsteps were like an answer to her words. Of course, it was Theodore who was making the footsteps. "Did you know this would happen?"

"Perhaps."

Despite knowing that the heavenly demon died, there was no chance in her complexion. The reason was obvious. Lust didn't have any sentiments of a mother. Her children were conceived and born for the purpose of her existence. She didn't care about them after giving birth. They were just trials and failures, cornerstones of the ultimate creature that would someday be born. The fearsome heavenly demon didn't escape these standards.

“Your arm… Yes, that’s what happened. How interesting. I got satisfactory data. Isn’t that right, Gluttony?”

“Shut up.”

Theodore pointed a finger at her. Ping!

Despite the light from his fingertip piercing Lust’s abdomen, she just stared at Theodore without moving an eyebrow. “Why are you angry? Well, it doesn’t matter. This terminal will die soon, even if you don’t do anything. It will take 10,000 years for me to show up again, so you will never see me again.”

“…”

“Yes. Should I say congratulations before I disappear? Now there is no threat to this planet.”

It was as she said. After the heavenly demon was defeated, there wasn’t a threat left to Theodore in this material world. An ancient dragon? He could now fight three by himself. A senior demon? If it wasn’t a demon king, he could defeat them one-sidedly. Furthermore, Sloth’s banishment thickened the walls of the dimension system. A demon-king class existence could no longer step foot into this material world. There would be no one stronger born in this material world.

“So?”

However, Theodore could feel it…

“What do you want to say?”

…The sexual desire, ridicule, and mocking of Lust, a Seven Sins’ grimoire. Lust smiled and licked her lips at the question, but no sound came from the friction. “—Why should I tell you when I am dying? Ask Gluttony after I am gone.”

“What?”

Lust ignored Theodore’s question and smiled ominously. “I mourn the destruction that will come…”

That was her last action.

Jjeok.

Lust's body became like plaster, with her skin falling off as her body collapsed. She had no fighting ability like the other Seven Sins, so her end was futile. Theodore stood in front of the debris of Lust and frowned. "Glu..."

"...Theo!" Before he could talk to Gluttony, he heard a voice calling him from far away.

"Sigh."

It was up to here for today. Theodore finished his thoughts and turned to look at the destroyed Hwang Mountain area. He had annihilated the terrible monster and eradicated its source. It wouldn't be too late to think of the next thing tomorrow. Theodore wrapped his left arm with a torn robe and turned in the direction of his colleagues' voices.

This was a victorious return after stopping the disaster.

Chapter 377 - Through Adversity and Towards the Stars (1)

At dawn on the Baekun Mountains, the wind flowing down to the foothills was quite cool, and there were a few dew drops. The altitude of the surrounding mountain range was so high that the morning sun reached it late, and the clouds caused the mountain peak to be swallowed by fog.

The fog was like a tide of calmly flowing waves. It covered the window frames of the Fairy Dance Lee Family home a few meters above the ground.

"...Um."

The wind blew through the window and hit the eyelids of the man sleeping serenely on the bed. He had a young face, but it contained a lot of weight. His black hair, white skin, and balanced facial features created an intellectual atmosphere like that of a scholar. Theodore Miller—he was the world's strongest magician and only transcendent. He was a great magician at the peak of the magic kingdom.

'It is morning.'

Theodore opened his eyes and slowly raised his body.

"Ah."

His heart was throbbing. He was almost recovered, but the aftereffects of the fight still remained. Theodore looked down at his hands with a bitter smile.

The Eight Jade Magatamas was broken, the Heavenly Sword had lost its sharp blade, and two artifacts had been used as consumable items. He had also almost lost one arm. If he had fought the heavenly demon with nothing, the winner and loser might've changed.

Suddenly, a thought came to Theodore's mind, and he called out to Gluttony, "Hey Gluttony."

-What is it?

"I forgot that I had something to ask you."

As soon as he had been about to lose his left arm to the heavenly demon, Theodore had tried to cut off his arm as a last resort. The situation had been so urgent that he hadn't thought about it, but what if he had cut off his left arm which contained Gluttony?

Gluttony heard Theodore's question and responded concisely, -The question is sillier than I expected, User.

-If the contract is canceled because the connection is cut off, how many people in this world would be afraid of grimoires? If this was the case, I would take one eye and one arm.

"Of course, it wouldn't be that easy. You are right."

-I have a contract with User, not User's left arm. It is just convenient to set the connection point at that location. If you had cut off your left hand, I would just set the connection point on your right arm instead, Gluttony said in a slightly rough voice.

Theodore nodded. "I'm glad."

-Um?

"If this is the case, then I don't have to put a gauntlet on my left arm?"

-...That's right.

Theodore received Gluttony's assurance and looked at his left arm with a lighter expression. The skin that had been blackened down to his elbow had returned to its original appearance apart from a few places. Seimei had also left a Sanskrit word there carved in black.

The strength of the heavenly demon...

After the suicide magic, the heavenly demon had lost more than 80% of his strength, but the force was still considerable.

'Seven types of sacred creature abilities, five types of different powers. There were more than 100 types of magic, shamanism, and so on... It is hard to believe this is only 20%. It will take me 100 years to consume it all.'

There were a few tricks beyond Theodore's eyes after he became a transcendent, but there was room to expand his current magic knowledge. This was a fairly large gain, but there was a separate power left by the heavenly demon—the Absorption Star Method. It was the ability to disassemble all entities he made contact with into the smallest form and then absorb that power. This had been the power which raised the just born heavenly demon to the level of a demon king.

"...There is room for me to become a demon king if I make a mistake, but it isn't a useless ability.

In particular, Theodore needed to be alert. There was a possibility that the management authority of the material world and the Absorption Star Method would collide with each other in his body because it was a power that could make him the enemy of the world. He would explode on the spot, even though he was a transcendent.

"Damn, I have bad luck this morning."

Theodore shook off his imagination and changed his clothes. Then he felt someone approaching the door.

"Taishang, you are awake." (Taishang= title of respect) It was the number two person in the Fairy Dance Lee Family, Lee Joonyoung. He was renowned as a genius and had worked hard to become a master using Theodore's teachings in the past.

Theodore arranged his clothes and replied after opening the door, "You can send a subordinate rather than coming yourself."

“I wanted to see to Taishang directly. I can’t neglect you.”

“Isn’t it too much for someone who is almost a lord in name?” He playfully asked Lee Joonyoung, who shook his head with a stiff expression.

“Nobody in the family would think so.” Lee Joonyoung didn’t have a joking nature.

Theodore knew this from past experiences and laughed without saying anything else. It was because Lee Joonyoung was such a person that Theodore could entrust Lee Seol to him. He knew grace and didn’t hesitate to be polite. The East Continent didn’t have knights, but his chivalrous nature was no different to a knight’s.

“Thank you for your words. Now, let me guide you.”

Theodore knew the structure of the mansion but he didn’t say it. Lee Joonyoung smiled and bowed deeply. It was time to meet the leaders of this war.

*

“Theo!”

As soon as he entered the dining room, a woman called out, and the heads of everyone present turned toward him.

Theodore Miller was the person who had overthrown the catastrophe that had been about to hit the East Continent by himself and who exercised the greatest rights in the empty territories. He was a person who couldn’t help attracting attention.

“Did you sleep well, Becky? And…” Theodore held Veronica in his arms and looked around.

White Tower Master Orta was wearing a white mask as usual. Lee Seol was sitting on a chair and swinging her palms. There were also the two representatives of Japan, Suzuka and Nobutsuna.

Then finally, he saw a miserable looking woman whose body was bandaged.

“A-Aquilo?”

“…Boy.”

A bandage was wrapped around her body, and her right arm was in a splint. Who would imagine seeing the evil dragon of the sea like this?

Her beautiful face looked no different than before, but the paleness in her complexion meant that the injury was pretty serious. It was a serious injury that couldn’t be repaired with her natural recovery power. Considering that it had been a long time since the injury, she must’ve been at risk immediately afterward.

“How did you get hurt?” Theodore couldn’t help being angry on her behalf.

Meanwhile, Veronica answered for Aquilo, “Theo killed it.”

“Huh?”

“The tiger that came after me. He attacked her. It was a serious injury since she was in a human body.”

King Hodae had been the variant who rode the wind and fought with Veronica in her draconic state. No matter how strong she was, Aquilo hadn’t been able to stand against him in a human body. She had received a surprise attack from King Hodae on the way to Hyungkang Castle.

‘…Moving while avoiding the eyes of the variants. I should’ve told her to fly in the distant sky.’

It was also fortunate in some ways. Encountering King Hodae and suffering a serious injury meant she hadn’t been able to meet with Lust. Aquilo would’ve suffered quite a bit if she had been there. Theodore felt sorry for the evil dragon and reached out a hand.

「Full Recovery.」White light shone.

The light coming from Theodore touched Aquilo a few times. Soon after, Theodore pulled the bandage off Aquilo's finger.

"Ah, wait..."

The bandages were removed before the confused Aquilo could stop him.

"Ohh, it is fine? As expected of Theo. You fixed her."

"What?" Aquilo stopped at Veronica's words and conjured a water mirror in the air. She saw that her smooth skin and color had returned and immediately rushed to Theodore. The shock of her defeat and the pain of her wounds were removed at once.

"Boy, I love you!"

Veronica's eyes burst into flames. "Hey, this woman! Who is in front of you right now?"

"Oh, my. Can't you sense the atmosphere, halfling?"

"You are the one who can't read the atmosphere!"

"How many days do you want me to say thanks? Do you have no conscience? You would've been in big trouble if it wasn't for me!"

"Have you forgotten that I saved you? You are the one who needed defending!"

As soon as they got better, they started fighting. It seemed like they were half joking and were unlikely to get to throwing blows, so Theodore sat down in the right spot for him. The meal began, and the story unfolded with the sound of tableware. It was White Tower Master Orta who started it.

"I'll report first," Orta said as he organized the documents. "The number of variants is declining every day. It is estimated that 15% of the total population of the empire is still alive. Our troops and those of Japan have cleaned up three areas... The empire has already collapsed."

“It is an ownerless territory?”

“Yes. The north and south still haven’t figured out the situation and are defending their borders, but Western Xia is already showing signs of moving a large army. They will soon cross the western border.”

Theodore ate a spoonful of eggs and asked, “The variants in the west of the empire haven’t been cleaned up yet?”

“That is why I would like to make one suggestion.”

“I will give you permission to delay the subjugation of the variants in the west. Focus on protecting the survivors of that area. You don’t need to do the job of Western Xia.”

“Yes, I will do as Chief Tower Master says.”

It was obvious what would happen to the East Continent once the supreme empire disappeared.

The greatest nation on the East Continent was gone!

This would be an era where a war to occupy the territory and resources would occur. It was clear that the countries who had been suppressed by the empire—the Bukhae Kingdom (North Sea) where there was almost no agricultural land, the people of Western Xia who held a long grudge due to the tributes, and so on—would gather their soldiers to take possession of the land.

It wasn’t a big deal for Theodore, but the majority of refugees were likely to be slaughtered or become slaves.

‘I didn’t defeat Lust to see this happen.’

Even if he couldn’t completely replace the empty seat of the empire, he needed an organization to fill the gap. That organization had been planned for since a long time ago.

“Sir Nobutsuna.”

“Yes, Lord Savior.”

In this situation, Nobutsuna was more suitable for dialogue than Suzuka, who had no experience with politics. He soon understood Theodore's intent and opened his mouth, "Japan will treat the refugees of the former empire as if they are our own people. We will consolidate 20~30% of the old territory at the border."

"I will give you time to discuss it with the officials. Choose someone appropriate to deal with it and send them to me."

"As you wish! I will make sure they aren't too greedy."

Theodore received Nobutsuna and Suzuka's words and looked back at Orta. Japan couldn't miss the chaos that would come to this land. Power was needed. Theodore needed the strength of a nation, rather than the power of a transcendent. Meltor, which had a large number of troops and space gates, would be able to suppress three countries alone.

"White Tower Master. Our Meltor base will be in the Baekun Mountains, and we will follow the laws of the Fairy Dance Lee Family as they are the rulers of this area. It will work much better than the words of foreigners from another continent."

"I will keep that in mind."

They would need to talk over the details in a few weeks, but he said all he could say here. In the meantime, Theodore put down his empty bowl and turned his eyes to appreciate the scenery outside the window. No, the moment he turned his head...

"Chief Tower Master." Despite finishing the story, Orta had something else to say.

"Why are you calling me?"

"His Majesty asked me to deliver a message to you."

"His Majesty?" Theodore was surprised by Orta's words.

Orta smiled through his mask. "In the East Continent, Meltor managed to occupy territory that is almost the size of a country.

There was no need to wage a full-scale war, and we acquired land with a lot of resources and farmland. Most of this achievement is due to Chief Tower Master."

"...I had no choice about it. What do you have to say?" Theodore frowned as there was no need to repeat the story.

Then Orta cut to the chase. "It is a simple evaluation of a meritorious deed. His Majesty made a suggestion."

"Suggestion?"

"Chief Tower Master has a position with a land. This means you have the right to have a manor. However, His Majesty can't make Chief Tower Master a duke when you deserve more than a dukedom. Therefore, he had a good idea."

The conclusion could easily be reached if he connected it with the words mentioned above.

As Orta spoke of the idea, Theodore realized what it was. "A royal duke."

Orta disregarded Theodore's stiff expression and kept talking, "Chief Tower Master, His Majesty has said that he will raise you to the position of royal duke. If you wish, you can be called a royal duke, and the Miller family will be raised to a royal household." (TL Note: Literal translation is duke king. So someone who is more than a duke and is considered royalty, but below the actual king)

Chapter 378 - Through Adversity and Towards the Stars (2)

It was a truly shocking offer.

Royal duke! The title belonged to the same level as a grand duke, but the handling was very different. A grand duke was a noble with great authority while a royal duke was literally a king.

He wouldn't be bound to the Meltor Kingdom but would wear the crown as the master of an independent state in a hierarchical relationship with Meltor. Moreover, since all the territories in the East Continent would be recognized as his, it would be possible to build a kingdom that was larger than the Meltor Kingdom.

It was a temptation that ordinary people couldn't turn away from.

"Hrmm."

However, Theodore thought about it without shaking.

'His Majesty knows... This isn't an offer he would've thought of. Then the appointment of royal duke must be something that the nobles gathered together and petitioned for.'

The loyalists in his home country would have a fit, but it was Meltor that would lose out if he became a royal duke.

Theodore hadn't lost his magic abilities, but he had a lot to deal with as Chief Tower Master. If he vacated his position, the work would accumulate in seconds and the necessary budget would have to increase. Additionally, compared to making a manor, the amount of money and labor required to establish a new kingdom was a totally different story.

Meltor had just overcome a war and would be disturbed by financial difficulties again. The only ones to gain from a weakened kingdom were the corrupt officials.

‘…Well, it might be a suggestion for His Majesty to try and control me. He is a man who would weigh the gains and losses. Even if I accept the offer, he would’ve already prepared a backup method.’

The stupid nobles didn’t know it. Kurt III was certainly a wise king, but he didn’t have a meek mentality. Rather, he was a king who could be ruthless when needed. Since his youth, he had walked a bloody path. Kurt III was a monarch who knew how to draw a sword at any time.

If Theodore accepted the offer, it was obvious that Orta would squash all the relevant nobles when he returned.

“Hahat.” Theodore thought this and looked ahead with a laugh. “You don’t need to listen to my answer, White Tower Master.”

“…”

“Do you need a pledge? I won’t become a royal duke. So, please speak with ease.”

“Sigh, of course. I will deliver it to His Majesty,” Orta sighed and smiled after releasing his anxiety. In retrospect, he shouldn’t have acted on the spur of the moment. Theodore was a 9th circle magician, a transcendent located in legends.

‘Ah…!’

As one of the few magicians who understood Theodore’s position, Orta realized that it was meaningless for him to seek wealth and power. This didn’t mean that a transcendent was abstinent. It was just that the laws of society or providence of the human world weren’t valid for Theodore.

‘What does a magician long for after achieving the 9th circle?'

If he wanted wealth, he could snatch it with force. If he wanted power, he could show off his strength.

Orta was able to see it because he had fought a few times with

transcendental existences. To Theodore, a nation and its army were just a bunch of weeds that could be wiped out at once. Another transcendent would be needed to fight against him.

However, in the modern age, there was no longer anyone who could stop Theodore.

"...Chief Tower Master," Orta asked as a mortal, not a tower master, "What are you going to do now?"

He wasn't simply asking about tomorrow's schedule. Theodore felt the weight of Orta's words and looked up at the sky outside the window before replying, "I'm not sure."

The boy who had shed sweat and tears in the academy's library, wishing for a good reputation... He had dreamt of finding a beautiful girl and becoming a respectable magician. However, once all those wishes were fulfilled, the wish that remained was simple.

"I will love those who love me, use my strength to fulfill my responsibilities, live today like it is yesterday, and seek the truth as a magician."

Some people might say that this conclusion was stupid. Why should he do nothing when he had the power to do anything? It was human nature to attain the things one desired with their own abilities. However, Theodore would laugh at their stupidity.

A person who wielded their power just because they could was simply an idiot. There was no need for shallow and offensive desires. His desire was to pursue infinite wisdom by exploring the laws of the world, as well as to love his family and lovers and to keep his friends alive.

"Isn't it luxurious enough?" Theodore kept looking outside the window.

Once he heard Theodore's wishes, Orta stood stiffly like his whole body had been struck by lightning.

Theodore could put the whole world under his feet but didn't

covet any power. He valued his own bonds and didn't want to be higher than anyone else. Instead, he smiled comfortably in the morning sun, which would be the same today and tomorrow.

'I see.' Orta seemed to know why Kurt III wasn't very worried about Theodore's choice.

The man in front of Orta, Theodore Miller, was such a hero.

"Once again, I salute you. Chief Tower Master," Orta said politely with a sincere heart.

He was someone with a quiet character, and the sincerity of a transcendent stirred him. Theodore unintentionally settled the atmosphere and looked over with a strange expression. '…?'

This day in the Baekun Mountains started with silence.

*

"Theo!" After breakfast, Veronica laughed from where she was lying on Theodore's bed. "I'm really impressed. I knew you wouldn't accept the proposal, but your words were so cool!"

"Eh? What?"

"I will love those who love me, use my strength to fulfill my responsibilities, live today like it is yesterday, and seek the truth as a magician? I should one day publish a book of Theodore's sayings!"

"T-That…" Theodore's face turned red, and he waved his hand. He hadn't felt it when he said those words, but he became a bit embarrassed hearing them from someone else's mouth. A quotation in a book? How would he endure the embarrassment if he later saw a book like 'Theodore Miller's Book of Sayings' in a bookstore?

"I can't do this?"

"No."

"Tch," Veronica clicked her tongue at Theodore's stubborn

attitude and switched to another topic. “By the way, Theo, putting aside Orta’s story, what is the schedule after returning home? Do you intend to return to the central tower where work has piled up as usual?”

“Well, I would like to take a break. Would you like to take a vacation for one month?”

“Really?” Veronica blushed at the thought of going with him and couldn’t hide her joy. If any red tower magician was present, they would deny the reality. They couldn’t imagine her gentle expression and trembling voice.

‘Ah, that reminds me.’ Theodore was reminded of something he had wanted to talk about but had forgotten after becoming too busy.

“Becky.”

“Huh?”

“It might be a bit unexpected, but I’ve made you wait too long. When is the best time to schedule a wedding?”

“…” Veronica’s eyes widened at the words.

Some people might complain about Theodore not being able to read the atmosphere since he talked about a wedding so casually. However, Veronica’s reaction was more violent than his imagination.

Hwaruruk!

Her red hair started burning, and the room filled with heat.

“Uwah, Becky! Becky? Veronica! Wake up!”

“—Ah.” Fortunately, Veronica regained her spirit and put out the flames. However, some black soot remained in a corner of the room. It was proof that the heat she emitted was attack magic. The red-faced Veronica remained silent as Theodore erased the traces with a restoration spell.

“————————!!!”

The meaning of the unknown words was as followed:

Marriage, marriage! Now she wouldn’t be an old spinster! Some people might call her a thief, but who cared! Theodore asked her to marry him! If anyone interfered, she would burn them! Ah, how should she answer? She couldn’t speak or breathe. Ah, too embarrassing!

This continued until Theodore put a hand on her shoulder. She barely regained her complexion, but there was still slight red stains on her cheeks. Veronica cited high-level magic formulas repeatedly and barely managed to calm herself down. “W-We! Where should we go on our honeymoon?”

No, she just looked okay outwardly. She was still panicking.

Veronica finally burst out and stood up. “Waaaaah! I'm embarrassed! Why am I taking it so seriously at this age? Theo, I'm sorry but talk to me later! I’m not rejecting you. At any time, the wedding date will be good…”

“W-Wait a minute. Becky?”

“N-Next time! The next time! I need my heart to be prepared!”

Before Theodore could nod, Veronica quickly flew out of the room.

‘Why is the topic of a wedding so stimulating?’

He didn’t know despite being a 9th circle magician. Theodore was still in his mid-20s and didn’t understand everything in the world. Looking at Veronica’s empty space where the blankets were still crumpled, he couldn’t say anything for now.

「 Silence. 」

It was enough. The world killed all sound according to his will, and only Theodore’s breathing was heard in the room. All sound was blocked from going in and out of the invisible wall.

“Gluttony.”

It was a bit late due to his chat with Veronica, but Theodore had originally returned to the room to have this conversation. His foresight was warning him that the moment he asked this question, an irreversible flow would be created. This wasn’t unhappiness or bad luck; it was the inevitable law of causality. Even if he didn’t know this, it wouldn’t pass him by.

‘To be unaware…’

This feeling was a bit different. He felt that ignorance wouldn’t be good this time. It would not be much different from trying to cover the sky with his palm. If he ignored what was going to happen, he would delay the despair. However, it wasn’t a fundamental solution. Following that, Gluttony was woken up by Theodore’s call.

-…Kung.

It seemed that Gluttony was unwilling to answer the question it knew Theodore would ask.

“Gluttony.”

Theodore had no choice but to ask one question.

“Explain what Lust said. What is my destruction that will come soon?”

-……

Gluttony was silent for a moment. It rarely expressed that it didn’t want to answer something. Nevertheless, Theodore kept waiting. The nerves of the two beings filled the wall of silence before Gluttony eventually spoke.

-Maybe she was talking about Wrath, Gluttony said, with its voice sounding resigned and helpless. -She is talking about that damn chunk of metal that receives a signal when the majority of Seven Sins are evicted.

“Chunk of metal?”

-That’s right. I have been banned from talking about it until Wrath is activated, and it is impossible to reveal its existence. To be precise, I had forgotten about it until this point. I only remembered when Lust was destroyed.

The only Seven Sins remaining in this material world, Wrath… It was good to know about its existence, but that still didn’t answer Theodore’s question.

Why were the conditions regarding Wrath so restrictive?

-User, Gluttony didn’t answer the question directly, -How much do you know about astronomy?

“What? What are you suddenly saying?”

-Do you know what a comet is?

The concept of asteroids and meteorites were learned after reading Paracelsus’ books.

Gluttony saw Theodore’s curiosity and started to explain with a long sigh, -Humans might not know it, but there is a comet that circles the world at an observable point every 120 years. In the Age of Mythology, this comet was called Deus, and there were a few religious groups who worshipped it as a destructive god with infinite power.

“So?”

-…That comet is Wrath.

As Theodore froze with an ominous hunch, Gluttony’s words penetrated his flesh like a sharp blade.

-It’s a weapon that waits on the outskirts of the stars to destroy the planet when the signal comes.

This was the Seven Sins whose purpose of existence was focused on ‘destruction.’ Gluttony’s voice was rather dull as it added to its terrible explanation, -We call it Planet Buster.

Chapter 379 - Through Adversity and Towards the Stars (3)

"…!"

Shocked by the unexpected truth, Theodore was at a loss for words.

Planet Buster—he was able to understand the fearsomeness of Wrath just by its absurd alias. Anyone with a little bit of knowledge about astronomy would agree.

Magicians exploring the laws of this world had already known for centuries that this world was just one celestial body, and it could be deduced that every star shining in the night sky was tremendously huge. As the study about celestial bodies continued, the magicians came to understand the greatness of the stars.

「 The ground we live on is just the shell of a star! 」

The ground surface with an altitude of 0 meters and the bottom of the deepest sea were just the skin of a star. A mountain falling? Breaking the sea into two rivers?

For a mortal, it might seem like the wrath of a god. However, the transcendental people with cosmic vision would merely sneer at this. The same was true for creating typhoons that would sweep over the whole world, destroying the crust of the continent and exploding all volcanoes.

"A grimoire that can destroy stars exist?" Theodore muttered in a disbelieving voice. "No way."

The thickness of the crust that humans and other creatures lived on ranged from several to hundreds of kilometers. Beyond the perception that the mantle was thousands of kilometers in thickness, there was the outer core and inner core of enormous energy.

Let’s calculate based on the laser that Fafnir fired in the past. This laser had penetrated through a few kilometers of sea and overturned the mantle as it pierced through the crust at the bottom of the deep sea. It reached a depth of at least a few hundred kilometers. However, the depth of this material world was at least 6,000 kilometers.

‘It is nothing other than a cat scratch.’

If the laser were swung horizontally, it would burn several countries. However, it couldn’t go through more than 2% of the world.

The laser needed to be 60 times more powerful to destroy a star, and even that wasn’t certain. The durability of a planet became stronger as the depth increased. Putting aside the thousands of kilometers of mantle, the rotating core emitted an enormous magnetic force, blocking almost any energy interference. It couldn’t be broken with 600 times the power, let alone 60.

-I know that User can’t accept this easily. However, my words are true. Wrath is a weapon used to destroy any world that threatens our Seven Sins. Even the Dragon’s Paradise, which was dozens of times larger than this star, couldn’t bear the power.

“Dragon’s Paradise?”

-It was the dimension where dragons lived and where the dragon god, Bahamut, and his kin nurtured and managed the dragons of every dimension. That was also a dimension where the dragons gathered in the millions.

Theodore’s eyebrows raised slightly at the interesting story.

-Maybe if Bahamut and his kin had gathered their strength at the same time, they could’ve prevented it. But the moment the dragon god left to manage another dimension, Wrath fell and the planet shattered.

“...Gluttony, I want to ask one thing.”

-What?

It was hard to be more surprised than this. Theodore's expression calmed, and he opened his mouth, "Wrath is referred to as a comet? What the hell is its size that it can exert such a ridiculous destructive power?"

He was well aware of the destructive power of a meteorite. No, he thought he was well aware. The ultimate magic of the summoning type was to call an asteroid from outer space. The remains of the Grand Canyon had been caused by a few pieces of meteorites dropping in the Age of Mythology.

Nevertheless, the destructive power of Wrath was beyond these specifications. Even if all life in this material world were extinguished, the power to collapse the star itself couldn't even be imagined.

-Three kilometers.

Now, Theodore could imagine it and feel despair.

-It is three kilometers in diameter and made of a special metal. Wrath ignores the laws of physics, and space-time magic doesn't work against it either. It accelerates using a built-in engine and increases the penetrating power by rotation. Once it reaches the core of the planet, it absorbs and amplifies its power, becoming a supernova.

"..."

-The special material isn't present on this planet and has been altered to not respond to any solvent. It collects information on the technology and resistance of the civilizations remaining on the planet from the Seven Sins and then pushes forward with more power.

That was truly a metal star. Studies showed that a stone-like meteorite around one kilometer in diameter could reset civilization once. What about a meteorite three kilometers in

diameter, made out of a special metal and had various powers? It was hard to picture because the numbers were so huge, but Theodore paled.

‘This… It can’t be blocked, even if there are transcendents gathered in three digits.’

It would be Doomsday.

-Cough! Well, don’t despair. I have thought about a way out.

“What?!” Theodore raised his head as he was about to despair.

-It isn’t possible to stop the fall of Wrath itself, but it is possible to affect the timing and power of the ‘fall.’ I will delay the fall by using the purpose of my existence as an excuse and reduce its power to the point of only reducing civilization. If you make a shelter prior to the arrival and evacuate your people, there won’t be a problem.

“My people? Who else?”

-If you design a large shelter, you can protect as many as you want. However, I wouldn’t recommend it. As the number of people who know about the threat of Wrath grows, Wrath will recognize it as an increase in resistance and increase its destructive power. I can’t do anything about it either.

Theodore understood Gluttony’s words and gritted his teeth instead of asking a question. Sometimes he forgot that Gluttony was also a grimoire. It didn’t care if humanity was destroyed or if a star was damaged. As long as it fulfilled its purpose of existence, it didn’t care if the world fell tomorrow. For Gluttony, the value of the whole human race wasn’t worth a single grimoire.

‘…No, wait a minute.’

At that moment, a flash went through Theodore’s head.

“Gluttony! Wrath exerts its power on the basis of the world’s technology or resistance?”

-That’s right.

“Then if only I am aware of the approach, will it remove most of the power to reset civilization?”

-...User, what are you thinking? Gluttony responded with confusion, but its subtle attitude meant ‘yes.’

Of course, it was too difficult and close to impossible, but...

“Listen to me.”

Theodore didn’t speak for long. It was because the idea that emerged spontaneously hadn’t been organized yet. However, the meaning was clearly conveyed. After listening to Theodore speak for 10 minutes, Gluttony gave its opinion, -I have to ask something. User, are you sane?

“I am sane. More than ever.”

-User’s plan is a gamble and pure foolishness. I would rather you be crazy.

“So, what is the prospect of it? Is it possible or not?”

This time, a few minutes passed before Gluttony responded heavily, -It is possible, though the odds are low enough to be meaningless.

“That is enough.”

If it wasn’t a dead end, it could be overcome. Theodore had always opened the way with that belief. Subsequently, he sighed and said, “Did you say you can slow down the fall time? What is the maximum time?”

-Considering the location at the present time and the movement speed... Four months. 3,048 hours. The error range is 8 hours and 13 minutes.

Theodore nodded and muttered, “...It isn’t easy. I have to hurry.”

There were four months before the world was destroyed. It wasn't a long time. Still, there was a lot he could do. After finishing up the arrangement, he opened his two clenched fists. Long shadows stretched out in the sunshine outside the window. Theodore was silent as he stared at the shimmering shadows of the willow leaves.

*

After three days of adjustment, the first round of negotiations was completed. Japan wanted farmland, which was scarce compared to its population, while the remnants of the empire, centered on the Fairy Dance Lee family, wanted a fortress area that was easy to protect from foreign invasion.

Meltor would preempt some gold mines, land, and so on in exchange for strength.

'Time is already flowing like this.'

Once both sides finished a satisfactory consultation, Theodore realized it was time to return. Finally, he spoke with Lee Seol before leaving, "The secondary and tertiary groups will assist with the cleanup. Do you understand?"

Lee Seol held a scroll with his signature on it and answered with a bright smile, "Yes, Theo! Leave it to me!"

Despite having lost her country, the Fairy Dance Lee family could be said to have gained the greatest benefit from this catastrophe. Theodore had started a large-scale magician force here, and the power of the combat unit led by Lee Joonyoung was stronger and more trustworthy than any refugee group. They were an organization that was temporarily taking on the role of a 'country,' so they could perform the task of gathering refugees well.

"Yes, I believe in you." Theodore patted Lee Seol's head a few times before turning toward the space gate.

The personnel who were to accompany him had already been

arranged. Theodore saw one of them and said softly, “White Tower Master, who are you putting in charge of this base?”

“Elder Hesel of the Red Tower and Elder Ole of the Blue Tower are co-heads. There are some differences in personality, but I gave them the same permissions. They should coordinate well.”

“I understand.”

Orta knew the members of each tower and how to put the personnel in the right place, making him extremely competent in this area. Theodore nodded without saying anything more. Orta wouldn’t be leaving for long anyway. After reporting to Kurt, Orta would return to the East Continent to be in charge here.

Then Theodore handled the last issue. “Suzuka.”

“Yes, descendant of the founder,” Suzuka politely replied to his call.

“Shuten-doji won’t break his promise with me, but I don’t know about the rest of the youkai. In case of an emergency, you should place onmyōjis around the mountains where they are isolated.”

“I will do as you say.”

“Ah, and…” Theodore pulled out a mirror. “Take back the Eight Mirrors and keep it in Seimei’s shrine. It is something that has no relationship with me.”

“T-Thank you.”

“The Eight Jade Magatamas were shattered without leaving one behind, and I have a place to use the Heavenly Sword. I’m sorry I can’t give them back.”

It wasn’t entirely as he said. He possessed foresight and could see it. The Eight Mirrors wasn’t necessary in the fight against Wrath but the Heavenly Sword was. However, there was nothing to say about the Eight Jade Magatamas that had broken in the fight with the heavenly demon.

Rather than being saddened, Suzuka just bowed deeper. “No. We aren’t blind to the wisdom of Founder Seimei, and he entrusted the three artifacts to you. Please give me whatever you want.”

“I’m thankful for your words. Give my well wishes to Nobutsuna.”

“…Be well.”

After the conversation with Suzuka, Theodore approached his colleagues in front of the space gate. Veronica and Orta could open it, but only Theodore could jump between continents without any after effects. Theodore touched the magic crystal attached to the space gate and opened his mouth,「Central Tower, Opening Warp Gate No. 1.」

Simultaneously, there was a dazzling light in every direction.

Hwaaak!

Beyond the glare, a familiar landscape could be seen. The research tower of the central tower, the facility designed and built by Theodore, was waiting for its owner’s return. Theodore took one step ahead of everyone else and entered the space gate.

“Let’s go back.”

…To the magic kingdom of Meltor.

Chapter 380 - The Marriage of the Century (1)

Wuuuong...!

The space gate connected to the Baekun Mountains shone, and people started to emerge. Starting with Theodore in the front, Veronica, Aquilo, and the others traveled over thousands of kilometers back to Meltor. Once the last person emerged, Theodore cut off the supply of magic power that was being consumed with every second.

「 Close. 」

It was scary to see the space gate close immediately.

“Eh? It takes a bit of time when I do it.” Veronica was surprised when she saw the space gate close in a matter of seconds.

Theodore answered with a smile, “It is due to the priority of the command authority. If users other than me use it, the power is reduced by a few percent. To be exact, I am the user with the ‘key’.”

When designing the structure of the central tower, including the space gates, Theodore had created ‘keys’ and designated several people as the sub-masters.

There was a ring of pure silver on his right hand. It was the prohibited book, Lemegeton, that controlled all facilities in the central magic tower. Despite having lost close to 80% of his function, he was the prohibited book that been made personally by King Solomon. There was no way to break through the security system.

[Ahem! I am a precious body!]

Theodore smiled at Goetia and spoke to the people nearby, “Now! Let’s disband. We have traveled a long way. Rest, or move if you

have any work to do.”

The people gathered around him started to disperse. Randolph and Titania were tired from the battle and moved toward a room to rest. Theodore hadn’t healed Aquilo completely, so she moved to the infirmary as he recommended. Only three people were left behind in the research laboratory.

“White Tower Master, please give your report to His Majesty first. I will visit you in the afternoon.”

“Yes, Chief Tower Master. I will do so.”

“Sorry to bother you, but I have a lot of work to do. I will leave it up to you.”

“It is nothing.” Orta was already accustomed to being overworked and left at the same pace as usual.

Theodore looked at his back with a bittersweet expression and opened his mouth, “Goetia, please call the Blue Tower and contact Sylvia.

[Yes, Master. What business do you have?]

“Just a private matter. Is it so uncommon?”

[Yes… I have called her. She said she is coming.]

“Well done.”

Veronica watched him from the side and asked, “Theo, why Sylvia? I am also here… Do you have a story for us?”

“Yes. Please wait a bit.” He could only talk about it once Sylvia came.

Veronica understood this and stepped back.

A few minutes passed by.

[Identifying visitor. Blue Tower Master Sylvia Adruncus. Opening door E-5.]

There was a machine sound, and the entrance to the research

laboratory was opened.

“Theo!” A woman with beautiful shining silver hair and feminine curves entered. It was Sylvia Adruncus, the master of the Blue Tower and one of the axes of the magic tower. She was about to plunge into Theodore’s arms but hesitated when she saw Veronica. However, Veronica just laughed and pulled Sylvia down.

“Aye, don’t be like that. What are you doing? Come here!”

“W-Wait a minute…!”

Without magic, Veronica’s strength couldn’t be blocked.

Ah! The three people’s nose struck each other as they became much closer together. Their warm, moist breaths mingled together. Sylvia’s face was red because she didn’t have much immunity to skin-ship. Furthermore, the place where she and Theodore shared love had been a dark room. Yet, in a bright place right now, their noses were now close enough to touch.

“Are you a bit more relaxed?”

“H-Huh? Ah, yes…”

It was counterproductive in a way. Sylvia returned to being a teenage girl and shook her head. Veronica saw her face but didn’t release her. Theodore realized this was the right atmosphere to talk and looked between the two of them.

“—Veronica, Sylvia. I have something to say.”

He had decided on what to do after hearing the reality of Wrath from Gluttony. It was so he could leave with no regrets. However, it was also something necessary to solidify his will.

“I’m sorry. Thank you. I love you.”

Theodore hadn’t spoken these words because he hadn’t been ready until now. It was really adorable as both women’s eyes widened due to the sudden confusion. He was relieved to see the eyes fill with delight a few minutes later. Then he blamed himself

for waiting until now.

After a few deep breaths, he said, “Veronica, Sylvia Adruncus.”

Theodore grasped the hands of the two women and barely spoke in a trembling voice, “Will you marry me?”

*

It was unknown to others, but there was another reason why Theodore didn’t accept the offer to be a royal duke.

The kingdom of Meltor was now in its second golden period. It might suffer financial difficulties building the Miller Grand Duchy, but it would be able to grow into a superpower in one or two generations. In fact, it might become better than Andras and the greatest empire in the East Continent.

‘In 300 years, it will be a nation with no opposition in the whole world… I can’t leave it alone if it blocks the development of all humanity.’

A number of wars had killed many masters. In a world where mana had started to diminish, it would be more difficult for masters to emerge. Let’s assume that both sword masters and great magicians had disappeared. Then what would dominate the flow of a war? It was a magician who could destroy dozens or hundreds of enemy troops in a single attack. In such a situation, the Meltor Kingdom had large-scale magic units and developed magic further than any other nation. So, they would have absolute power.

It was the birth of a nation that would place the whole world under its feet.

‘Well, it is still okay.’

There was no concept of good and evil in human history. It didn’t matter if a hegemonic nation was born. The thing Theodore was worried about was a setback in civilization. If Meltor became a hegemonic nation as he predicted, all nations would be swept into a single magic civilization, and a magic civilization was confirmed

to decline after centuries.

‘As long as I stay as the chief tower master, I can thoroughly prepare for this.’

It would be better if he could study magic engineering, which linked magic and science, or spread out into disciplines that could develop without magic. This was a blueprint that would cover almost a thousand years, but it wasn’t impossible for a transcendent who had overcome the frame of life. It was hard to separate what he could do and couldn’t do from one another.

Theodore drew the future and let out a deep sigh.

“Chief Tower Master, we’ve arrived.” A few steps ahead of him, a palace servant awakened Theodore from his thoughts.

They had come all the way to the audience room where Kurt III was waiting.

“From here on, I will go alone.” Theodore opened the door without any hesitation. The king’s room wasn’t bright or dark. It was adjusted to the proper lighting with magic, and the light from the chandelier created faint shadows.

Theodore walked down the red carpet past the sculptures and arrived before the throne. “The Chief Tower Master, Theodore Miller. I am reporting that the eastern expedition has finished today, and I have returned to Capital Mana-vil.”

Kurt III nodded at the formal words. “Yes! I have heard about Chief Tower Master’s efforts from the White Tower Master earlier. I am relieved that you have come back without any problems.”

“Thank you for your concern.”

“Haha, I should be thankful. I didn’t do anything for Chief Tower Master.”

It made sense. The following group led by Orta had a great deal of success against the variants, but Theodore was the main

protagonist who had ended the disaster. Without him, all of the group members would've been lost. The value of the mines and land obtained in the East Continent was so large that the people of Meltor wouldn't have to pay taxes for the next 50 years.

"Do you really think so, Your Majesty?"

However, Theodore had a strange look, and Kurt III played along.

"Of course. I am even willing to bring out national treasures. However, I don't think there is anything to help you now that you are a transcendent."

"It seems so. Therefore, I would like to ask for help regarding something else. Can you please do me a favor?"

"Hoh, the Chief Tower Master wants something? It is rare."

Theodore had refused even the position of royal duke, yet he now wanted a favor. As such, Kurt III waited to find out what it was with an excited expression.

...However, it was completely different from his expectations.

"What?" Kurt's mouth gaped open with amazement as he heard the story from Theodore.

"I am going to marry the Red Tower Master and Blue Tower Master. I will do it in secret and want to ask for your cooperation."

"...I know about Veronica, but since when have you been in a relationship with the Blue Tower Master? Did something happen in the East Continent?"

"Well, let's say that."

"Young people these days, your progress is very fast... I didn't realize it, but I have become quite old." Kurt III stared into the air due to this shocking news, but he soon recovered.

Theodore said to keep it confidential. Now that there was a nonaggression treaty with Andras and the enemies had

disappeared, why did he want to keep it a secret from the outside? The world's greatest magician stood firmly as the king questioned it.

"We're keeping it a secret from everyone except Your Majesty, the tower masters, and a few guests."

If he wanted to be luxurious, he could raise the scale as much as he liked. However, neither Theodore nor his two lovers wanted this. The guests were just his family, Vince, Randolph, and a few others. Sylvia and Veronica would also want to invite a few people too. Including them, the number of guests wouldn't exceed 30.

Kurt III thought about it and asked, "...Don't you need a holiday? How long would you like?"

Theodore answered with a smile. "It doesn't need to be long."

"I'll give you three months. If the three tower masters are absent for more than that, the national projects will be shaken."

"Thank you, Your Majesty."

"By the way, the marriage of a 9th circle great magician and two tower masters... Looking at the brides and groom, it will be a bold stroke in the continent's history."

The half-resigned Kurt and Theodore faced each other, and the two people filled the room with laughter. Kurt was the first to stop laughing. "But you are marrying two women at the same time. Didn't Veronica say anything?"

"She didn't...?" Theodore smiled bitterly and opened up the front of his robe. His abdomen clearly showed a fist mark where Veronica had punched him. There had been no killing intent in it, but the blow had contained her criticism. After the proposal and acceptance, the groom had been hit.

"Veronica's jealous punch, it is eerie just imagining it."

"No, it wasn't jealousy."

It was blaming him for his insensitivity in suggesting a three-person marriage in front of Sylvia without any consultation. Unlike Veronica who had been willing to accept Sylvia, Sylvia hadn't been prepared for this situation. It was also part of his reflection that he couldn't use healing magic.

"Then I am asking this favor of you, Your Majesty."

"Well, leave it to me. I will do my best."

After finishing the story, Theodore was about to leave the room when he remembered something and came back. He looked up at the throne and said, "Your Majesty."

"What is it?"

"Can I take some jewelry from the royal treasury? I wish to find a gift for both of them."

"...I will allow it." The king maintained his steadfast expression and barely refrained from revealing his smile. It was true that he had gotten a bit nervous after Theodore became a transcendent. If a monster without any human emotions was born, the mortals would have to obey him.

However, Kurt III was no longer worried. A person who would ask for gifts for his lovers... Such a man couldn't be non-human.

Chapter 381 - The Marriage of the Century (2)

—Kung.

The door of the treasury closed behind Theodore. As the golden light pouring through the crack in the door was cut off, there was only one man holding a small pouch left in the hallway of the royal palace. It was good up to when he got the permission of the king to enter the treasury.

The glow of precious metals and the treasures piled higher than the height of some men caused even Theodore to feel in awe.

“Hah, it will take me around three hours to look through everything.”

However, this impression only lasted for a moment. Theodore was upset about having to spend hours searching through the mountains of gold. He couldn’t neglect a wedding gift, but he didn’t know anything about women’s decorations. Thus, he was forced to lean on someone’s advice.

[Please believe in me, Master! There might be a difference in trends between generations, but the aesthetics of the human species can’t be that different from how they were during the Age of Mythology! Magic King Solomon also entrusted the election of his brides’ gifts to me!]

Lemegeton’s ego, Ars Goetia, emerged like he had been waiting for this time. Theodore was a bit nervous since Goetia was more than 3,000 years old. However, he couldn’t ask the great people sleeping in Gluttony’s Hall of Fame. Of course, if he had foreseen what would happen next, he might’ve thought about it a bit longer.

‘I didn’t know I would dig up more than half of the treasure piles.’

If the level of discernment was proportional to the fuss, Goetia must be a very high-level appraiser. There was a necklace with an awkward color combination and a ring made of low purity precious metal. As a result of searching through the ornaments in the treasure piles while using Theodore's analysis magic, only half a dozen jewelry passed Goetia's standards.

[Believe in me! I'll sure the two of them will love it!]

"Well, it looks good to me."

If there weren't any gains in three hours, trusting Goetia would be a waste. Theodore thought this and pulled out two rings from his pocket—a ruby ring with a border of gold and a sapphire ring with a platinum border. He was satisfied because the colors reminded him of the eyes and hair of the two women—Veronica and Sylvia.

[Isn't that right? Do you like it? I told you it would all be okay if you trust this Goetia! Let me take care of the dates and honeymoon too!]

"…Ars Goetia, stay silent until I say otherwise."

[Oof oof!]

However, apart from having that moment of satisfaction, Theodore's patience had reached its limit. Theodore silenced Lemegeton with a few words of command and quickly left the treasury. It wouldn't be a big disadvantage if someone saw him, but it wouldn't be good to create rumors.

'Oh, I should stop by my family.'

It would be strange to proceed with marriage without saying anything to his family. Theodore set the destination and moved a finger.

Ttaak!

There was a distinctive sound, and space movement was used.

*

The Marquis Miller manor, located near the capital, was an unusual manor in the Meltor Kingdom.

It was a land that contained considerable power and authority but wasn't subordinate to the nobles. Even if there was a fight against an enemy, the enemy would never invade the Miller Manor. There was a tendency to even avoid an argument with the Miller family.

However, there was no need to explain why.

It was due to the presence of Chief Tower Master, Theodore Miller. He was a war hero who had ended the long war with Andras, the magician who had brought about the second golden period of Meltor. How could the nobles, already oppressed by the king and the magic towers, go against his authority? Their future would collapse if they made the slightest misstep.

Robinson, a knight of the Miller territory, thought so. "Today is peaceful. I hope these days will continue."

"I agree. I didn't know if I could continue being a knight."

"Haha, I agree. I wanted to know what would happen when the northern war ended and a nonaggression treaty was signed with Andras..."

Once the age of war was over, there were people of certain occupations, the magicians and knights, that would lose a place to go. However, unlike magicians who had a lot to do besides combat, the knights only had places in armed forces. Even so, was it so easy to abandon the land of their birth and migrate? Despite the fear of the future, there were still a few knights left in Meltor. Fortunately, unlike their predictions, there were many ways to survive.

"This is thanks to Theodore."

"Mm, yes."

If they wanted peace, they had to prepare for war. Theodore had said that the end of the war didn't mean peace for the whole world. As such, he thoroughly took care of the knights and soldiers who lost their jobs. Despite the end of the war, there was a lot of need for armed forces as security guards, border guards, and pioneers. Those who wanted to retire would receive a retirement payment corresponding to their merits. The rest were placed in each region according to their wishes. The same was true for the two knights guarding the door of the manor.

It was at this moment that...

Flash! Suddenly, there was a bright light.

Robinson and Gruber stared at the center of the flash. Their instincts from long periods of experience told them they would die if they went against the new arrival. However, they didn't back down at all. The dazzling light was quickly lifted, and the figure of the person moving through space was revealed.

"Your reaction is good. It looks like you have been trained well."

The knights' eyes widened as they saw black hair, blue eyes, and an intricately embroidered robe. Unless they were seeing the same hallucinations, this person was...

"Knight Robinson Pater! I greet Chief Tower Master Theodore!"

"Knight Gruber Levian! I greet Chief Tower Master Theodore!"

The two knights quickly put away their swords and kneeled down. Setting aside his career as a war hero, Theodore was the core of Meltor's power.

He wasn't a person they could raise their heads to.

Theodore received their greeting, "You've worked hard. Is it okay if I go in?"

"O-Of course! Ah, if you need a guide...!"

"No, it is okay. This isn't my first time here."

The faces of the two knights were sullen for some reason. Theodore opened the silver gate of the mansion and stepped into the courtyard. It was made with mithril, so it made almost no sound.

‘Hmm?’

No, he heard a metal sound. He took a few steps and grasped the epicenter of the noise. It was coming from an empty space in the garden. Theodore was interested and glided there. He used a combination of Grease, Slide, and other magic. As he slid over like a raft drifting down a river, he soon faced an interesting sight.

Kakang! Kang! Kakang!

It was the sound of two swords colliding. As the two blades met each other, the leaves around them vibrated. This was a level of swordsmanship that didn’t seem perfect.

‘Hrmm, it is Leo’s lesson.’

Leonardo Miller, Theodore’s younger brother, was in the midst of fencing with Rebecca. Additionally, there was haze around his blade. It was definitely aura.

‘He is only 15 years old. Is he growing so quickly because he met a good teacher?

Of course, the shape was still unclear, like a fog. However, it was still aura. Several years of training were required to reach this level. However, this wasn’t the case when he had been training with Rebecca who, like Leo, had the talent of a genius.

Kaaang! Leo’s sword bounced up with a single upswing, and the spar between the two ended.

“Ha! Hah! Hah! I-I lost.”

“Good work, Young Master.”

Unlike the sweaty Leo, Rebecca didn’t have a hair out of place or rough breathing. Theodore watched them before taking a step

forward. Rebecca grasped Theodore's position and cried out, "M-My Lord!"

She bent down onto one knee with an astonished expression. Theodore lightly waved his hand at her greeting and said hello to Rebecca and Leo.

"It has been a while, Rebecca and Leo."

"Eh, Brother?! How long have you been here?"

"I just arrived. You have really improved. Learning how to use aura at this age... You might become a sword master before your ceremony of adulthood."

"R-Really? Heheh, Sister Rebecca has taught me well."

"No, it is thanks to Young Master's talent and passion."

Theodore smiled and held out his right hand to Rebecca. It was to see if his intuition was right.

"Rebecca, raise your sword. I'll give you five blows."

"...I understand."

Before Leo could interrupt, Theodore and Rebecca moved.

Kakiing.

Rebecca attacked with a sword that struck without hesitation. She believed in Theodore's strength more than anyone else, so she used all her strength. However, despite using all her strength, she couldn't touch a single strand of his hair. It was a knight's duty to devote themselves to their lord.

Blue aura flew like flames and formed at the edge of the sword. This was a technique of the Clovis family that specialized in stabbing, unlike Randolph's swordsmanship.

'Fast. Randolph's double swords are sharper.'

However, Theodore struggled with her speed. He deflected the incoming sword and struck the next two strikes with his fists.

Theodore was already close to being a master in martial arts. The power of ether, which got thicker after becoming a transcendent, exceeded the aura blade. Rebecca had yet to become a sword master, so she had a hard time receiving the power. However…

Chaaeng!

Rebecca was pushed back, with her feet creating two troughs on the ground. She was obviously pushed back with power, yet the sword that stood up to the blow wasn't shaky nor did she lose her center of gravity. It was a feat that wouldn't be possible if she didn't have master-level aura.

"Congratulations, Rebecca. Did you find the clue to the next level?"

"It is a shameful achievement that hasn't woken up yet."

"There is just one step left. I was worried that you wouldn't reach it while teaching my brother."

"Rather, I learned many things while teaching Young Master."

It wasn't uncommon for a teacher to realize what they were lacking when they raised a student. Now, Rebecca said it was the same for her. Perhaps it was a desire not to pass on blame to her master's kin, but Theodore believed her. That's why he spread out his left hand without hesitation. "This is a sword from the east. It is a gift."

He took out the Wugou Sword and handed it to Rebecca. It was a curved blade in the form of a crescent moon. Rebecca instantly realized its value. "M-My Lord. I don't think this is suitable for me. Thank you for your grace, but I can't accept it."

"There is no need to worry. It isn't enough now, but you can use it after you have achieved your full potential. I think it is a good reward for teaching my brother and looking after my family."

"My Lord…"

Theodore tapped the shoulders of the touched Rebecca and then hugged Leo, who was looking at them.

“This guy, you have grown a lot in a few months.”

“B-Brother! Put me down!”

“Didn’t you want me to do this every day when you were a child?”

“Sister Reb is watching! It is embarrassing!”

Theodore’s little brother blushed as he was carried on Theodore’s shoulder into the mansion. His parents were waiting. It was quite different from the humble and poor Miller Barony, but what difference was there when his whole family was gathered together? Theodore smiled brightly and walked with Leo and Rebecca.

He was thinking about how his family would soon grow.

Chapter 382 - The Marriage of the Century (3)

It was less than 10 minutes later.

Theodore had carried Leo on one shoulder and entered the mansion with Rebecca. It was a house that he hadn't been to in almost three months since the work of a Chief Tower Master overlapped with him going to the east. However, the Miller Mansion had now become a mess due to Theodore's words which were like a bomb.

His mother, Isabella Miller, regained her spirit first and asked, "Just now... what did you say? Say it again, a bit more slowly?"

Looking at his father who shrugged, Theodore said indifferently, "I am getting married."

"It isn't a joke?"

By default, a senior magician was good at hiding their feelings. It wasn't something he wanted to hide, but he didn't want to show his turbulent mind. His parents thought it was a joke due to his expression, but Theodore was serious. Dennis, his father, took a few deep breaths before asking, "M-Married? You aren't in a position to be dragged into an arranged marriage, but this is too sudden."

"It is a normal love marriage. I'm just rushing because I don't want to wait too long."

"You should've given us some time..." It was a one-sided notice, making Isabella complain a bit. Even so, it was nice to see that her adult son had found a bride. Since childhood, Theodore had always acted older than his age. If he was planning this wedding, then he must feel affection for the bride.

"So, when is our son going to introduce us to the bride? Do we know her? Please tell us everything from now on."

“Yes, your mother is right. Our family is in a very special position, so shouldn’t there be a meeting?”

The surprised faces of the couple filled with laughter. Their son was good looking and capable. However, he was so talented that it was hard to find him a bride. They had been watching him for years, hoping he would find someone to take care of him. They wouldn’t object if he chose a non-marriage, but they wanted a daughter-in-law and grandchildren.

“Hmm, this is the real deal.”

His parents could tell without having to use foresight. Theodore coughed as he anticipated the reaction of the two people. Dennis’ and Isabella’s eyes shone with curiosity. Eventually, a second bomb was dropped from Theodore’s mouth, “She is the Red Tower Master, Veronica…”

“Oh! The rumor that you have a good relationship with her is true.”

“—And the master of the Blue Tower, Sylvia.”

“…”

“…”

The couple’s mouths dropped open as they were at a loss for words. It was a marriage involving two brides, and all three people were tower masters? This was an event that would receive great attention from all the kingdoms on the continent. If Theodore had ulterior motives, the Meltor Kingdom would one day be turned into the Miller Kingdom!

“Ah, you don’t need to worry about attention. I have already requested for it to be confidential.”

“R-Really? I’m glad. No, isn’t there another problem?”

Unlike the confused Isabella, Theodore’s response was calm. “I understand what you are concerned about, but it is okay. The

magic towers are the pillars of the Meltor Kingdom, not a group of soldiers to be used at their disposal."

"Umm, your words are true, but..."

"Well, if that happens, I can just give up the position of Chief Tower Master."

Someone might laugh when hearing this, but there was no chance that the situation would flow this way. Other people might not know it, but Kurt III knew. For the 9th circle transcendent, the crown was just a piece of scrap metal to Theodore. However, his parents didn't know this and could only think he had great determination.

"...Sigh, I get it. Your will is firm, so we won't go against it anymore."

"Father?"

Dennis patted Theodore's shoulder with a friendly face, and Theodore stepped back with surprise from the warm atmosphere. However, his left arm was grabbed before he could move.

"I was worried because you were precocious as a child, but our Theodore is also a man. I am surprised and impressed. Did you politely ask the two women for permission?"

"Huh? Ah, well..."

"Surely you didn't hurt the two of them? I didn't raise my son like that."

It was a coincidence that he had been hit just after proposing marriage. Theodore couldn't help sweating nervously as he struggled to answer the question. He thought it would be better to fight the heavenly demon one more time. Having finally escaped his parents' questioning, an unexpected person appeared just as Theodore was heading to his room.

"Brother Theo!" Suddenly, Leonardo appeared and grabbed

Theodore's collar. "Brother! I heard from Mother! You are getting married to multiple people?"

"Leo, this..." Theodore tried to say it was only two people but then shut up. It was because there was one woman who was promised to him, but he couldn't hold a wedding ceremony in the style of human society for her. However, Leo took the silence was acceptance and held Theodore's waist. "No matter what, you can't have Sister Reb!"

"...What?" Theodore looked down at Leo. "Sister Reb. Are you talking about Rebecca Clovis?"

"Huh? Is there another person in the house with that name?"

"...Pfft! Puhuhu!" Theodore couldn't help laughing as he realized the situation. Then he whispered, "You... Do you like Rebecca?"

"Ah! Brother, I-I..!" Leo's face turned red as he was held in Theodore's arms. He was quite shy for someone who had yet to have the coming of age ceremony. "W-Why not? Sister said she would wait until I am older. That's why Brother can't take her!"

"Hahahaha! My little brother is already grown up. You don't have to worry about me taking your beloved."

"Really? Brother, really?"

Theodore ruffled his brother's hair that was just as black as his own. Perhaps Rebecca had promised him without thinking, but Leo's eyes were serious. Maybe his relationship with her might be quite interesting in ten years' time. What would Randolph's reaction be if he found out?

Theodore foresaw that he wouldn't be bored for at least a decade and laughed. It was a good day.

*

After a cheerful dinner, Theodore returned to a room and stared out the window.

Was it because the mansion was built on a hill…? The view of the Miller territory was visible with one glance. At the outskirts of the estate, abundantly growing wheat fields were rustling, and warm light leaked from the homes of people who had finished their work today. There were no strays scattered around the streets, and the guards were patrolling the alleys.

“Even if it isn’t luxurious, everyone is living well. Well, the people weren’t starving even when we were in a barony.”

His rustic peace-loving father, Dennis Miller, wasn’t an outstanding leader, but he was a good lord. He might not have the ability to make money or command troops, but he wasn’t lacking the ability to rule a territory. In fact, the expressions on the faces of the people wandering around the streets at night were bright.

“Times of peace.”

The warring history of the Northern Continent had come to an end. Andras and Meltor forgot their old grudges and were starting a new era. The scars left behind by the war were great, but the resilience of life went beyond them. Even if there were severe injuries, new flesh would grow. People returned to the devastated cities, built new homes, and grew crops in the devastated fields. It wasn’t possible to immediately erase a long history, but it would fade as generations flowed. The role of ‘fighters’ could be said to have ended.

-Not yet, a voice bluntly interrupted Theodore’s thoughts. -An existence that destroys civilization… There is a possibility that 99% of the human race will be annihilated if Wrath falls. If you can’t stop it, this village will disappear.

Theodore frowned at the unlucky words. “…Why are you mentioning the situation again?”

-Hmm, User seems to be too easygoing. I have to say it in case you have forgotten. Don’t forget.

“How can I forget? Why are you complaining?” He grunted in a dull voice.

Glutton’s mouth moved on the palm of Theodore’s left hand, -It isn’t enough to reserve magic power and prepare countermeasures. Don’t you realize the seriousness of this time? Yet you are planning a wedding? Are you going to throw it all away and enjoy the end of your life?

“Hey, didn’t you say that you are sending my data in real time to Wrath? Why do I have to prepare more than I already have?”

-Umm.

Theodore’s point was correct, which caused Gluttony to groan and fall silent. It was because there wasn’t much of an answer to Wrath.

‘It is something that can’t be defeated using common strategies.’

Gluttony weakened the power that would destroy the planet and reset civilization, but it was a super destructive weapon which would perform its own reinforcement and crush any creature that resisted. Additionally, Theodore was registered as a user of the Seven Sins. So, Gluttony’s and his data was being transmitted in real time. Whatever Theodore prepared, there was no way to hide it from Wrath as Gluttony was in his body.

Thus, he decided not to prepare anything. If he stored magic power, Wrath would increase its magic power. If he obtained artifacts, it would add more power to its output.

-...I acknowledge that you can’t act in a reasonable way. However, the strategy that User has set up as a countermeasure is ‘crazy.’

“I already know that. The problem is that no other method comes to mind. If you have a method that is more successful than my strategy, I will take that gamble straight away.”

There were no odds of success to be found even after he

calculated it a few times. Strategies and preparations were pointless before a violent weapon that increased in strength in response to the opponent's strength. It was a numbers game where the result couldn't be reversed, even if he added or subtracted any variables.

In the end, Theodore had to accept those odds of 0%.

'It will never miss whatever I prepared or any magic I develop. It is a weapon that grasps my limits thanks to the data it receives from Gluttony.'

The reasoning of a magician had already confirmed his death. There was no chance. Even if a god descended and even if he used Fafnir, Theodore Miller still had no power or means to block this destructive existence. Thus, Theodore chose madness. He abandoned the duty of a magician to maintain reason until any circumstances. Forgetting about resistance, he just looked at the future.

"What I need now isn't preparations or research. If there is a grain of potential left, I will bet on it in the last moment."

If he could awaken at that moment and go beyond the limitations that Wrath knew, there would be a light in the future.

"I need an instrument to help me jump over myself. Family, lovers, friends. It doesn't matter. In preparation for the moment I clash with Wrath, I have to build up more bonds that allow me to go beyond the limits of Theodore Miller."

He didn't resign himself to it. He didn't give up. He was in a hurry not to keep his fears away but to not leave behind any regrets. It was the context that hastened the wedding with the two people. Thus, he would love them more and dream of a future with them. In order to not give up and to overcome his limitations, Theodore decided to be faithful to his own life.

He was interested to see how Leonardo and Rebecca would

progress, and he felt a sense of responsibility toward his parents. Everyone would live. This was for the tomorrow that he hadn't seen. It was for a future that hadn't arrived.

Even Theodore, who had cast off the bonds of cause and effect, couldn't be freed from the cycle of life. No, he chose to be entangled. He was a transcendent who could escape to another dimension, but he refused to turn his back on this dimension and decided to fight against the destruction.

"I will smash Wrath."

It was in order to protect the world where everyone lived and to live with the people who loved him. Theodore Miller clenched his fists while looking at the destruction that was still far away in the universe.

"—Definitely," he vowed.

Chapter 383 - The Marriage of the Century (4)

A few days later, Meltor Palace was submerged in a strange atmosphere.

In the early morning, the officials of each department and the nobles in the vicinity of the capital were given a decree they didn't understand. Furthermore, the information was really short.

『 For today, any entrance to the palace is prohibited. 』

Regardless of title or position, no one was allowed to cross the threshold of the palace without the king's permission. However, this was Kurt III, the best king in Meltor's history who had succeeded in growing the kingdom. As such, although there were a few nobles who questioned the sudden command, no one was dumb enough to oppose the edict. The central tower magic tower, which shared the duties of the palace officials, was exceptionally silent. Meanwhile, the palace corridors were empty.

Thump, thump.

However, there was the sound of footsteps in the corridor. There was no disturbance in the half-tempo as the sounds which were like those of a musical instrument arrived at a gorgeous door. The master of the footsteps pushed open the door without hesitation.

Kkiiik.

Was the door lacking a bit of oil? The door creaked open, and the people in the room turned to look at it. The middle-aged wife, Isabella Miller, raised her voice first, "Wow, you're well dressed! I don't know whose son you are but you are very handsome. Isn't that right?"

"Hahaha! How do you not know? It is our son."

"Mother, Father." Dressed in a tailcoat made of luxurious

materials, Theodore laughed. He had expected these reactions, but knowing it in his mind was different from experiencing it. There was perfume dispersed all over the place, and the makeup on several faces was also unfamiliar. It was uncomfortable to wear the layered, tailored clothes, but it was a courtesy to endure such inconveniences on such days.

“Wait, your tie is a bit crooked.” Isabella, who was appreciating the appearance of her great son, stepped toward Theodore and adjusted his collar. She straightened his slightly torn tie and then stepped back as she couldn’t see his face unless she raised her head. Theodore had been one handspan shorter than Isabella when he left for magic school, yet her little child was already getting married now. Somehow, she felt a lump in her throat.

“Mother?”

“Oh, my.”

As Isabella’s tears fell involuntarily, Theodore wiped them with his thumb and looked at her with his pair of eyes that had been clear since childhood. There was the depth of a lake in them, and Isabella had to admit that her son had grown up. He was no longer a child to be pitied but one to be proud of.

Soon afterward, Isabella grabbed Theodore and whispered into his chest, “…Shouldn’t you live well? Be happy. Understood?”

“Yes, Mother.”

“I know that my son is very busy, but keep in mind that you shouldn’t be half-hearted toward your family.”

“Yes, I definitely won’t forget.”

After Isabella finished speaking, Dennis hugged Theodore and patted him on the back. The span of his father’s arms, which had seemed so wide when he was a child, was now narrow. It wasn’t only Isabella who became sentimental. Theodore too struggled not to shed any tears.

Dennis felt Theodore tremble and said in a calm voice, “From a long time ago, you were a very precocious child. I still remember your small body helping with the housework. You studied hard enough to pass the academy’s entrance exam despite no one teaching you. You also persevered for a few years until your talent woke up. You were such a good child.”

“Father, I…”

“You don’t need to say it. I know. I believe in you. I believe you will do well if you don’t worry. Still, you should often show your face to us. Think about a parent’s mind.”

“…Yes, I will visit often.”

Dennis gave Theodore one more firm hug before standing side by side with Isabella. The atmosphere was joyous but bitter. Their last job as parents was letting go of their grown child.

Knock knock.

At this moment, there came a knock like someone had just arrived outside the door.

“It seems like the ladies have arrived. Theo, open the door for them.”

“Yes.”

Generally, a bride and groom wouldn’t see each other until the ceremony. However, this wedding ceremony was a bit different. Theodore slowly approached the door and pulled it open.

“Ah.” He froze as he saw the appearances of the two brides.

Veronica and Sylvia, the beauties with unique colored eyes and hair, greeted him in pure white wedding dresses. Was it due to the skill of the palace maids…?

Veronica’s neck contrasted with her crimson hair and presented a bewitching beauty, while Sylvia had wintery, fairy-like white skin and moistened lips. Despite the abundant amount of lace, the

feminine lines of the two women weren't concealed, creating a tempting atmosphere.

"What, did you fall in love with us again?"

"Huhuhut, Theo. You have a funny expression."

The two beauties seemed satisfied with his response as they grabbed Theodore's arms with smiling faces. The thin lace didn't obstruct the soft and warm texture, making him dizzy. Dennis and Isabella chuckled as they saw the three lovely people. For those who had no family, the parents-in-law were like new family members. So, the brides approached the Miller family, and they talked for a few minutes.

Then a servant entered the room. "Everything is ready, Chief Tower Master."

The people in the room became pale and tense. They looked at their clothes and looked in the mirror to check their makeup. The reason why Kurt III had forbidden access to the palace at once was that it was now time for the wedding of Theodore Miller and his two brides.

*

Truth be told, Meltor's palace wasn't that gorgeous. The absence of luxuries was influenced by the practical nature of magicians, but the main reason was the war with Andras which had lasted for hundreds of years. They had needed funds to expand the armaments and raise soldiers, so their civilization had only advanced one or two steps. If they had spent money on the luxuries of the royal palace, Meltor would be ruined. However, today, they lay off on the frugality for a while.

"Ohh, His Majesty did quite well? The decorations of the palace are more attractive than those of the magic tower."

Theodore and Sylvia nodded at Veronica's surprised words.

The clean, white palace, which didn't have great merit, had been

transformed by the presence of a variety of statues and garlands which had come from an unknown place. Kurt III must've instructed workers to come to the palace today without anyone knowing.

Thump, thump, thump.

The three people walked leisurely inside the palace toward a special room in the palace where people were waiting.

One step and another step…

As if to enjoy this moment in life that they wouldn't experience twice, the three of them walked without speaking. They could feel their body temperatures coming from the palms of their hands, and they could hear each other's breaths as they were wrapped in calmness.

Finally, they looked at the door of the wedding hall.

"…Go?" Theodore asked his two brides without looking back. Sylvia's silver hair shook on Theodore's left side, while Veronica was warm on his right side. There was no need to speak, and their intentions were clear.

Kuoooong—

There was no need to use their hands. Telekinesis magic, the power that obeyed Theodore's will, pushed at the pair of big doors. Then there was a massive noise, and the guests turned to look at the three people. There were only familiar faces present. After all, they had only invited people close to them.

There was Vince, the middle-aged magician who had a busy schedule, Randolph, the swordsman who changed from casual clothing into formalwear, and Titania, the high elf who had waited without returning to Elvenheim. The members of Quattro who had dissolved after the war in the north, William and Paragranum in the female avatar, were also present.

'No, wait a minute. I thought Paragranum wasn't invited?'

Theodore looked at her blankly, and she just shrugged. She had used her own method to be in this position. So, he ignored Para and carried on looking ahead. Theodore, Veronica, and Sylvia passed by the guests and family members, arriving at the podium.

"...Haha." When Theodore saw it, he couldn't help laughing. It wasn't a sound that should be made at this place, but the two brides and other guests were laughing like they understood his reaction. After all, his reaction was natural.

"You look good, Chief Tower Master."

It was because Kurt III, who wasn't wearing his usual crown, was standing in the palace to officiate the wedding. Veronica snorted while Sylvia was just embarrassed because she didn't know what was going on. Theodore thought the king's appearance was absurd and asked, "Your Majesty, don't tell me...?"

"If you don't mind, I would like to officiate this marriage. What are the thoughts of the three tower masters?"

The groom and brides looked at each other, but Kurt didn't seem willing to step down unless he was outright refused. In retrospect, it wasn't like there was no precedent to this. The last time a marriage was officiated by a king had been several hundred years ago. The three people laughed and made their decision.

"Please look after us."

"Yes! Of course."

Pleased that he wasn't refused, Kurt III laid his left hand on the book of laws with an excited expression. He placed one hand on the book of laws and one hand on his heart. It signified a sincere pledge to the laws and to the heart.

Kurt started to speak with a serious expression, "As time flows eternally, today we know that the fates of three people have flowed into one stream. They were born with different names, lived in different times, and met with different meanings. May their ends

one day come together, so that they may be beautifully completed in their own way."

This was the officiating so far.

After completing the words of blessing, Kurt III turned to the three people and said, "You are the hero who stepped onto the path of magic and elevated your name. Will you swear to love and cherish your brides for the rest of your life?"

Theodore placed his right hand on his chest and answered firmly, "Yes, I swear."

"You are the one with a dragon's bloodline who has decided to live among humans. Will you swear to love and cherish your groom for the rest of your life?"

"Yes, I swear," Veronica replied in an unusually polite voice.

"You who have been loved and raised as the family of a wise man —will you swear to love and cherish your groom for the rest of your life?"

There was no need to mention who the wise man was. Sylvia's eyes were slightly red as she replied one beat late, "...Yes, I swear."

Once the brides' and groom's vows were over, Kurt spread his hands over the open book of laws. It was time for the expected ritual at a wedding.

"Then can the brides and groom please give each other the kiss of oath."

The ceremony was based on the idea of sharing the weight of the words with each other, but it didn't have much weight. It was an event where the guests enjoyed seeing the shy bride and groom. Kurt and the guests smirked. Sylvia, who still wasn't immune to skinship, was busy cooling down her red skin. However, there was someone with a 'passionate' pedigree in this place.

"Theo."

“Huh? Ah—”

She released their held hands and tugged on his waist. The force was strong, but the momentum was so great that Theodore couldn’t reject and was dragged into Veronica’s arms. In a flash, the lips of the two people touched each other, with their breaths and tongues entangling. It wasn’t a ceremonial act but a kiss that would be done by those in a relationship.

“Oh, my! It is really genuine!” Isabella laughed and clapped as she saw Veronica’s unbelievable kiss.

The partnerless male guests sighed and cleared their throats, while Dennis was relieved that he hadn’t brought Leo to the wedding. After nearly 10 seconds, the two mouths separated.

“Huhu, I ate well,” Veronica said, licking her lips like she had eaten something delicious. Then she whispered, “If you aren’t in a hurry, shall we do it once more?”

“T-That!”

“If you keep hesitating, I will continue eating. Isn’t it good?”

From the beginning, it was a provocation. Theodore realized the meaning of Veronica’s words, while Sylvia barely maintained her courage as she stood before Theodore. This was Sylvia’s limit. Theodore smiled, held Sylvia’s cheeks, and kissed her.

Chu.

He didn’t use his tongue like Veronica, but the kiss lasted a long time. That alone caused Sylvia to stop breathing, then she flushed red for other reasons. Once the kiss was over, the silent guests raised their hands and started to clap.

Clap clap clap clap clap! The sound of applause filled the palace.

The three people stood next to each other and bowed to the people who had come to the wedding. The wedding ceremony was completed. Theodore held his brides’ hands again and walked

down the red carpet.

“Veronica, Sylvia.”

The two people turned at his call. He laughed and pulled them toward him by the waist.

“Aing.”

“Ah, what?”

Veronica was playful while Sylvia was embarrassed. With the two beautiful brides in his arms, the mightiest magician of the material world proclaimed proudly, “Now, we can go anywhere and do anything. I will give you anything you want.”

He would show them all the scenery of the world and give them all the treasures of this world. The man with the power to do so moved with self-interest for the first time. Theodore laughed as the eyes of his wives’ widened.

“Now, let’s go on our honeymoon.”

It was time to enjoy the springtime which wouldn’t come again.

Chapter 384 - The Marriage of the Century (5)

Swaaah.

Every time a wave washed up against the sandy beach, a cloud of foam would burst and spray out. Drops of water were born from the low waves, and sunlight shone over the clouds. The aquamarine sea was so beautiful that it couldn't be expressed in words.

It was an attraction in a distant land. This was Piris, where all ships of the coastal kingdom, Soldun, passed by. It was the city with the most beautiful beach on the continent. During the civil war which was several years ago, this scenery had been unknown as Theodore had landed on an uninhabited island far from the beach. Many things had changed in a few years.

Theodore looked at the peaceful scene and raised a glass cup on the table to his lips. A refreshing lime-flavored liquid flowed down his esophagus.

"...Mm, this is good." Theodore didn't like the bitter taste of alcohol, but this alcohol fit his taste well. Veronica laughed as she raised the glass at a similar timing. "Really? I know how to make this. If you want to have a drink when we get home, just say it."

"What? Becky, you know how to make cocktails?"

"It is a small hobby. Don't you know my temperament? I can't get drunk, so I often drink alcohol. Few people know this, but there are some cocktails that were named by me."

Maybe it was due to the excuse of taking it with food, but many people didn't know that 'alcohol' was a deadly toxic substance to the body. The blood of a dragon, which broke down all types of poisons with its innate immunity, couldn't leave that ingredient alone. However, putting aside the context, it was an interesting

story. Veronica was someone who drank more and more of the cocktails because she couldn't get drunk.

Theodore laughed inwardly without showing it and looked at Sylvia.

"Hiccup."

He was concerned since Sylvia was hiccuping with a red face.

"Sylvia, are you okay? Would you like a cleansing spell?"

"Ah, hiccup. No, I'm fine. I like drinking and can use the cleansing spell afterward."

Sylvia was different from Veronica, whose expression didn't change even after a few drinks. Cleansing magic was available, but Sylvia didn't want to ruin the atmosphere. Clearly, she didn't want to be treated as a child by Theodore and made excuses. Sylvia leaned against Theodore's left shoulder, giving off a more bewitching allure than usual.

"Theo…" A lime-flavored voice reached him.

It had been several days since the wedding. At first, the young man and women acted subtly, but they soon became familiar with each other's flesh. Theodore stroked Sylvia's disheveled hair a few times and kissed her exposed forehead.

"What, are you playing alone? Huh?"

"—Becky, oof."

Veronica kissed his right shoulder and his earlobe, before moving to his lips. This was an embarrassing gesture of affection in bright daylight. It would be shameful if someone saw her act so blatantly, but fortunately, the area with the table that the three people were sitting at was of the deluxe class. So, they were the only ones in the room overlooking the seaside.

Veronica removed her lips and said in a deep voice, "Hua! It would be better if we were alone, but it isn't bad to have three

people. We have visited the beach of Piris. Where will we go next?”

In response to Veronica’s words, Sylvia asked, “Wouldn’t it be nice to wait for the night sea?”

“Well, is there anything other than a lighthouse on the sea at night? If you want a good night view, Austen’s capital of Edirne is good.”

“Austen? I thought it was just a desert…”

The two of them had become sisters in a few days. Theodore watched their conversation with strange emotions.

Red and gold, blue and silver… From personality to appearance, there wasn’t one thing that matched. The relationship, which would’ve never become a close one without Theodore, was tangled up by ties of marriage, making the two women family.

‘There are many lessons to be learned from life, even if I am a transcendent who has realized the principles of the world.’

After the wedding ceremony, every day was new. It was like he was born again every day. Yesterday, they ate seafood dishes cooked in the East Continent. The day before yesterday, they visited sophisticated craft stores in the Andras Kingdom. As he promised to his brides, Theodore could go anywhere and do anything. When they thought about what they wanted to eat, they visited the place that day. When they thought about a place they wanted to go, they crossed the continent and the sea.

‘…Come to think of it, it is different from the books.’

If his past self in the academy had seen it, he would’ve sighed. Unlike during the days when he only saw magic, Theodore now had the luxury of seeing things apart from magic. Theodore looked between his two brides and smiled. “Now, where shall we go?”

Veronica and Sylvia responded like they had been waiting.

“Belfort Harbor! I have to pick up the pendant I ordered the day

before.”

“Then let’s go to Edirne. Sister says that the night view of Edirne is very good.”

“Okay, then shall we get up?” Theodore left a few gold coins as a tip.

Then the three people raised their bodies from their chairs. It was a bonus to pretend to be drunk and hold each other. Theodore held the waists of Sylvia and Veronica lightly. They were walking down white marble stairs when they encountered an unexpected figure.

“Um…?!”

“Ah.”

The half a head of white hair and wrinkled face made it possible to imagine the depths of the past years. The person’s attire was a mixture of eastern and western clothing and was quite unique. That was natural since the person was the head of a family who had moved from the East Continent to Soldun.

They had encountered Baek Jongmyung of the Baek Family.

“It has been a long time, Lord Baek.”

Hearing Theodore’s greeting, Baek Jongmyung was speechless with surprise for a moment. Then he regained himself and greeted politely, “It has been a while, Sir Theodore. I didn’t know we would meet again in a place like this. Have you been well in the meantime?”

“It is as you can see. I am better than ever.”

“Hahaha! A true hero, it is good. Since there was no news that you came…” The quick-witted Baek Jongmyung gathered his eyebrows together in a humorous manner. “This Baek has taken up your precious time. I will not tell anyone about this, so please enjoy yourselves.”

“Thank you.”

“Huhu, it is a great grace that you are teaching my son. I am looking forward to the future.” Baek Jongmyung bowed one more time and walked past them. He knew it would be difficult to get involved in the love affairs of young people.

Not long after Baek Jongmyung left, a huge burst of laughter emerged next to Theodore.

“Kuk! Ahahahaha!”

“Huhut, huhuhuhut!”

The two people on Theodore’s arms laughed belatedly after Baek Jongmyung left. They couldn’t help it since the encounter had been so sudden. Each one of them was one of the top five magicians on the continent, so this was a story that might be talked about even 10 years later.

“I-It is really indecent.”

The two women laughed while Theodore opened his mouth, 「Transition, Belfort.」

There were still many places that the three people wanted to go, and time was flowing urgently. Magic flashed as he intended to relax once again. Their honeymoon was still far from over.

***

Two months passed by.

It wasn’t a long or short period of time with the full moon rising up and descending four times. In the meantime, Theodore, Sylvia, and Veronica wandered around the entire continent, leaving countless memories. They saw a flickering aurora. They searched through sandy wind and found a city of mirage in the sky. They walked in the deep waters of the sea and found the volcanic crater where Brasmati resided, which only Veronica explored.

There were numerous beautiful sights in the world, and the three

people saw them again and again.

“The sky is already dark. Shall we go back?”

Even so, they returned to the same place whenever they wanted to rest.

“Yes, I’d love to take a bath.”

“Let’s go. To our home.”

Veronica and Sylvia nodded at Theodore’s words and grabbed his hands. The feelings weren’t as sharp as when he first experienced them, but the warm body temperatures of the two women were still conveyed to him.

Flash!

They were now accustomed to the timing and closed their eyes. By the time the flash faded, the three people had already arrived at their destination. Then in front of Theodore’s party, somebody bowed. He wore plain clothes which had no wrinkles. With wrinkles and a white mustache that showed he had the wisdom of life, Armand, the owner of the gorgeous old house, greeted the return of the three people, “Welcome back, Master.”

Theodore had never promised a certain time to return, so Armand came out at a really amazing timing. Was it his half a century worth of experience that made it possible for him to achieve? Having received Armand’s greeting, Theodore handed over his coat. “You got the right timing today, Armand. Do you really have foresight?”

“Huhu, it is just an old man’s intuition. Just like how farmers know if it won’t rain tomorrow and how merchants can smell money.”

“Then there are too many magicians in the world. I hope I don’t lose my employee soon.”

Armand smiled at the joke and clapped his hands, calling the

maids to accompany Veronica and Sylvia. Similarly, the maids had considerable experience. The maids took off Veronica's and Sylvia's shoes with familiar movements, removing the dust and debris from their hair and clothing. They were afraid to even blink.

'I am now quite familiar with it, but I can't help feeling a sense of discomfort when looking out the window.' Theodore gazed out the window with a subtle expression.

Their honeymoon home was located in the birthplace of the Miller family, while the Miller Barony was now under direct control of the royal family. Dennis Miller had become a marquis and moved with the residents to a new area. There was no good mining vein here, and the farmland wasn't wide either. Thus, Kurt III had a villa built on this land.

-It is a place that holds great significance in its own way.

The king had then sent a few maids and a retired butler. Although Theodore had heard the story, he hadn't known the villa had been transformed into a honeymoon house.

"Theo!"

Theodore was following Armand's instructions and heading to the bathroom when he turned back at the voice. Veronica and Sylvia stood on tiptoe at the same time and kissed his lips.

"You know that you are dealing with both of us tonight, right?"

"Are you planning to sleep alone?"

They were soft whispers, seemingly planned in advance.

"...Yes, I'll be waiting."

Satisfied with Theodore's soft answer, the two beautiful women smiled and stepped back. They then disappeared with the maids. Armand, who had been watching the exchange, said to Theodore, "There won't be any servants walking around the bedroom

tonight.”

Theodore’s eyebrows twitched as he asked, “Armand, what does that mean?”

“I’m just letting you know. Cough!”

Theodore looked at Armand before looking out the window and sighing. Was it because he felt that the stars in the night sky were brighter today? His expression darkened as he looked at the stars. There were two months left until Wrath would fall to the ground. Theodore was reminded that the day of destruction was approaching.

The end of their happy days was near.

Chapter 385 - The Marriage of the Century (6)

There were the sounds of insects coming from somewhere. The noise tickling his ears woke him up. Then Theodore opened his eyes and gazed up at the ceiling. Beyond the glass ceiling, moonlight shone. Theodore blinked a few times and calculated the time.

'Not yet midnight.'

He looked at the desk clock and saw that there were a few more hours until the sky would brighten. He tried to close his eyes again, but once he woke up, all drowsiness was cleared. Should he drink a glass of water? Theodore was about to raise his body but was forced to stop moving. It was due to the heavy weight on his shoulders.

"Um..."

"...Ung..."

Veronica and Sylvia... Even in the darkness, their hair colors shone. Their skin that wasn't covered by the quilt was white and smooth. Theodore couldn't help looking at their sleeping appearances, particularly at the dark marks made by his lips which remained near their necks. As his gaze heated up, Veronica opened her eyes and laughed with a whisper-like voice, "—At any rate, you are very sneaky."

Sylvia hadn't yet woken up, so Theodore replied in a low voice, "Becky, you aren't sleeping?"

"Huh? No. You are looking at me with such beastly eyes. How can I sleep well knowing this?"

"A beast..." Theodore tried to refute it.

However, Veronica lifted her blanket with a look like she knew

everything. The only lighting present was from the moonlight and the stars. Ordinary people might not be able to see the dim shapes, but fortunately, Theodore wasn't an ordinary person. Veronica's curves, not covered by a single piece of clothing, choked him. He was rendered speechless and could only open his mouth.

Veronica giggled in a teasing manner at the sight. "Look, this is a beast."

He couldn't win. Theodore smiled bitterly and raised his eyebrows. Veronica kissed his collarbone and abs as if to celebrate her victory. Although Theodore wasn't ticklish, he couldn't help laughing. He endured the prank for a while before holding her hands and kissing her on the forehead.

"Stop."

"Theo is stopping me before I'm satisfied. How stingy."

"What if the bed almost completely bends?"

It sounded like a joke, but it really wasn't. This bed, which never had a single person lay in it before the first day they arrived at the villa, had bent slightly over the course of two months. Despite being a bed made of solid iron and wood, its durability was like a cheap timber bunk.

Veronica's face flushed red after hearing it. "Oh, no. I didn't do it all alone, but it is my fault?"

"The number of times… Becky is very violent."

"Theo!"

Theodore smirked as he took the initiative in this conversation. His words were actually true. Despite being a 7th circle magician, Sylvia was still a human who trained herself. It was difficult to compete with Veronica in everyday life, not just combat. Above all, Veronica had inherited a red dragon's blood and was famous for being faithful to her 'desires.' In the environment of their honeymoon house, her desires burned more intensely every night.

After exchanging sexually explicit words, the two people looked up at the same sky and were silent.

“…Is it time to go back?”

Theodore didn’t immediately answer Veronica’s question. However, his silence was a positive reply. It would be a tremendous loss if three tower masters were away for more than two months. Kurt said he would give three months of vacation, but this overloaded the entire kingdom.

“They were the most enjoyable two months of my life.”

Theodore was feeling burdened when Veronica leaned against his shoulder and said in a bright voice, “We could go anywhere and eat anything. It lasted two months, and Theodore is the best part.”

“Am I the beast or is it someone else?”

“Omo, you don’t know? I am a dragon.” Veronica playfully bit his earlobe. It was a charm that was closer to that of a cat than a dragon. Theodore tickled her chin and laughed.

Veronica stroked her belly and whispered, “Will it happen? Our baby.”

“I’m not sure.”

It was hard for Veronica to become pregnant due to her dragon blood. However, the story was different when her partner was Theodore, a transcendent who wasn’t bound by cause and effect. From then on, it was a matter of pure luck.

‘A baby…’ Theodore became a bit nervous at the unexpected thought of the birth of a life that would inherit his blood and surname. He knew it well in his mind, but it was hard thinking about it becoming real.

‘Me… A father.’

He wondered what color the hair would be. Black? Red? Silver? It would be nice to have a child with their lovely coloring. A child

with small limbs who would call him ‘Father’... His mouth twitched just thinking about it. This vision of the future was broken by Veronica’s words, “Theo. From now on, do you plan to go to that kid?”

“...Yes.”

There was no separate explanation about who they were talking about. Ellenoa was unable to leave the Northern Great Forest while acting as Mitra’s Saintess, so he had to find her. With two months left until the fall of Wrath, Theodore planned to spend half of the time limit with Ellenoa. Hearing the expected answer, Veronica pinched him.

“Ouch.”

“A person with two people needs a third? You are really a bad guy.”

“I love you, Becky.”

“It’s fine, you bastard. If you are sorry, hold me a bit harder. I won’t forget your arms...” She murmured in a lovable manner. Theodore gripped her shoulders. Her body came closer without any resistance, and hot heat was transmitted through their touching skin. It was a temptation that couldn’t be endured if they were alone. However, right after that, Theodore’s other shoulder became numb.

“...Sylvia?”

Sylvia looked at him with blurred eyes and punched his shoulder. Unlike her usual gentleness, her eyes were filled with lust and a desire to monopolize. Veronica read her expression and laughed as she threw back the blanket. “Okay, my younger sister wants to do it first?”

“What?”

“This is the last night of our honeymoon. Look at my strength!”

Theodore realized what she meant by this time, but it was already too late. The two beautiful women, Veronica and Sylvia, took the lead and knocked him down. Just before his resistance was broken, Theodore realized that Armand's words were right. Other people shouldn't hear these sounds.

*

The next day, breakfast at the Miller villa was late. The three people only emerged from the room after the sun was already in the middle of the sky. Unlike Theodore who looked haggard, the faces of the two brides were bright. Only Armand made a complicated expression when he saw the aftermath. He approached Theodore, who just finished breakfast, and handed him a small bottle. "Master, have some of this."

"…This?"

"It is a popular remedy for fatigue in my industry. The effect isn't large, but it is good for rapid physical exhaustion and malnutrition."

"Sigh, I won't refuse."

It was different from consuming stamina or magic power. This refreshed the mind…? Still, it felt like something was empty when he drank the glass bottle that Armand gave him. After drinking, Theodore found some spare energy and thanked him.

"Thank you, Armand."

"It is nothing. It is my duty as your butler."

There was no fault in Armand's behavior as a butler. Kurt hadn't appointed him to this villa for no reason. Theodore wondered about Armand's career and opened his mouth, "There will be no one in this villa for a while. In the meantime, run this villa as you wish. I completely trust you."

"Huhu, this old man doesn't deserve this."

“Are you sure? I haven’t met a better employee than Armand. The king’s chamberlain won’t be able to do the work like you do,” Theodore finished their conversation with a hearty compliment.

“…”

“Please make a villa that I will visit one day with my parents. Please.”

“…I will do as Master commands.” Armand Gustain, the former chief servant of the palace, bowed down with a faint smile. The situation seemed to be pretty interesting for an old man.

“Then I’m going.” Theodore turned to the two people waiting for him and hugged them. Veronica and Sylvia—he liked them a lot before but they were now an indispensable part of his life. A ring shone on the ring finger of his left hand, and their heartbeats made him happy.

“Be well for me. Of course, don’t be any better than me, okay?”

“I’ll be angry if you don’t come back soon. For around half a year.”

The two of them gave him words of encouragement and complaints as they stepped away from Theodore. Veronica and Sylvia were returning to Meltor. He regretted the warmth that disappeared from his chest and reached out a hand.

“I’m too scared to do that. Then…「 Transition. 」” At Theodore’s words, there was a flash of light.

Flash!

While the two people moved to Mana-vil’s central tower, he continued teleporting without a break.

「 Transition, Northern Great Forest. 」

As always, the flash of light blinded the caster. Theodore passed through a gap in space where nothing could be seen, moving thousands of kilometers. If he wanted, he could move to another

place inside here or he could stop the transition and go back. However, Theodore was silent and arrived as usual.

“Hmmm.”

As soon as he arrived, the smell of a dark forest tickled his nose. The smell of life, the scent of the soil and vegetation mixed together, was so rich that it was difficult to sniff out anything else. Theodore slowly opened his eyes once he arrived. Some trees were the height of ordinary buildings while others were big enough to be half the height of the magic towers. This was proof that the vitality of the world tree had gone beyond its limit. It was at this moment that…

“…Eh?” Theodore’s eyes widened as he saw something.

There was something that shouldn’t exist here. He had set his arrival point at the outskirts of the forest and not the center so that the elves wouldn’t be surprised. As such, he wasn’t surprised by the forest that had been rejuvenated after several years. Then why…?

“Mitra?”

Mitra was the embodiment of the world tree.

[Hoing? Deo?]

Her height didn’t even reach his knees, and the bud on her head was like before she had grown up. Why had she degenerated instead of evolved? Having heard his voice, Mitra smiled widely. [Deoo! Deo came!]

Mitra was still Mitra. Theodore was about to hug her when…

[Eh? Deo?]

[Hooing? Really Deooo!]]

[Deo! Deo!]

[No! Give to me!]

One, two, three… Soon, the Mitras, that seemed to number in the two digits or maybe over 100, started to flock. They were cute kids, but more than 100 of them had gathered. It was so terrifying that Theodore was stunned. His magical knowledge was useless as he didn't know why Mitra had multiplied. Mitra grabbed his leg, Mitra climbed onto his shoulder, Mitra climbed onto his head before anyone else… Theodore was confused by the unfathomable sight.

[Theo! You finally came!] His savior arrived. No, his savior was still Mitra. However, unlike the other Mitras, this Mitra was a teenage girl riding on something.

Theodore recognized the three wagging tails and exclaimed, "Tres? This is ridiculous!"

The number of tails was the same but the body was bigger…? The series of incomprehensible situations left Theodore feeling lost.

Chapter 386 - Forest that Leads to the Future (1)

The ecology of the Great Forest, the forest where Elvenheim was located, was unique and mysterious. It was life between the Red Plateau and the ice-colored Arctic, where even weeds couldn't be found. From an ecological point of view, there shouldn't be an environment, yet the rate of growth for the flora and fauna was unimaginable.

However, everyone knew the cause of it—the world tree, Yggdrasil. In the old myths, its branches extended to distant stars. It was the source of life that fertilized the soil and allowed plants and animals to live here.

'But aren't the trees too big? It will block all sunlight and raindrops.'

Trees that couldn't grow to 10 meters outside the Great Forest were ~25 to 50 meters tall inside it. Theodore had been concerned back when he flew above them, but according to Mitra, there was no problem.

Due to the influence of the world tree, the deficiency wouldn't occur because the plants received nutrients and moisture as one body. The reason why the forest remained abnormally sized was that the world tree created an ecosystem that transcended the environment.

At this moment, Mitra puffed up her cheeks from a distance.

[Theo, are you listening to my story?]

She noticed due to being connected to him by the soul. Theodore was surprised by her words and replied without hesitation, "Ah, I heard it all. The power of Dmitra is a heavy burden on the world tree. Therefore, you concentrated your efforts on boosting the natural abilities of the forest by dividing your body into smaller

ones?”

[Yes! I worked hard as Theo asked!]

After she demanded praise a few times, Theodore stroked Mitra’s head and admired her idea. He knew that a god could fall to an ancient elemental after losing their divinity. However, after regaining her divinity, Mitra had turned part of her strength into ancient elementals. Moreover, the bodies also had the ability to act on their own. Theodore had thought that the speed of the forest’s growth was oddly strange after being disrupted by so many battles. That was actually all due to Mitra.

“You did a lot better than I thought. Great job, our Mitra.”

[Hoing! Hooing!] Mitra pushed her head against his hand as she was once again praised. She also let out her distinctive cheers. Anyway, she seemed to be ticklish at the top of the head, so Mitra was laughing too hard. Theodore barely managed to place a finger against her mouth. “Mitra, I want to ask you one more thing.”

[Yes?]

“You were riding on Tres. I remember that he was small a few months ago…” Theodore looked down at his cloud-covered feet. There was a fox running while shaking his three tails. Tres couldn’t fly in Theodore’s arms because he was too big, but he managed to keep up with Theodore by running. Of course, Theodore controlled the speed.

[Tres? Ah, Yellowy.]

“…Yellowy?”

[The fur color is like this, so he is Yellowy!]

The name was so tacky that Theodore got chills.

“Y-Yes. Yellowy. Why did Yellowy grow so suddenly?”

[Umm… Tiger Auntie taught him. Ah.] Mitra was reminded of something and started to chatter again. [That’s right. Yellowy said

that this was his original size. Due to one aspect of his being a creature and the other aspect being a spirit, his mind needed to develop to in order for his body to grow bigger.]

"...I see. The mental age was lower than his spiritual power. Thus, his body is slow to grow."

[From now on~ the longer he lives, the bigger he will become!]

In fact, it was strange that a three-tailed fox would be the size of a dog. As Mitra explained, this was the right size. He wouldn't get bigger or smaller for a while. Theodore thought about it while moving unconsciously.

'By the way, is 'Tiger Auntie' a nickname for the Tiger King?'

The Tiger King couldn't complain since Mitra was the mountain god.

'She didn't like leaving the Baekun Mountains, but it seems like she is doing well.'

At that time, the Tiger King had lost a lot because of Lust and was humiliated. It wasn't just the living creatures. The millions of variants had also destroyed the natural environment.

Meltor had quickly regained control of the Baekun Mountains, but it had become a land where no spirits could live. The damage to the animals and plants was a secondary problem. The main problem was that the dragon vein itself was greatly damaged. In the end, the spirits were forced to choose the option of migrating.

"Mitra, what about the other spirits here? Are they doing well?"

[Yes! They were a bit awkward at first, but now they are fine. They often talk to the elves and have helped restore the forest.]

"Yes, help them to make it a second home."

[Of course! If you live in this forest, everyone is a friend of Mitra's!] Mitra's bright smile was particularly dazzling today.

'Let's walk a bit before going to Elvenheim.'

After hearing Mitra's story, Theodore didn't perform space movement. Instead, he looked at all the changes that had occurred to the Great Forest. He looked at the forest which had burned in the fight against Laevateinn and the ground which had blackened in the battle against Jerem and Nídhöggur. The battles that had once threatened the world tree and Elvenheim were over, and the organisms in this forest were living for tomorrow.

"Eh? M-Mitra!"

"Mitra! Go eat potatoes!"

"These days, the raspberries are ripe!"

Sometimes the elves looked up at the sky and greeted Mitra.

"I-Is that?"

"He has come! Everybody say hello!"

"The sixth dancer, Ziavisida, greets you!"

They immediately recognized Theodore and showed a polite attitude.

'...It is going well without me having to intervene. With Mitra, the elves, and the spirits working together, they will revive this forest in 15 years.'

No one else knew it but the role of the Northern Great Forest and the world tree was to control the resentment of several species.

Sloth was dispelled, and the mana concentration of the material world was destined to decline over the centuries. The elves were more sensitive to the concentration of mana than humans and would find it difficult to live outside the Great Forest after around 500 years.

There would be no problems with their daily activities, but they wouldn't be able to use spiritual medicine and it would be easy for them to get sick. Thus, Elvenheim and the Great Forest had to remain.

Tak.

Theodore drew out a distant future and realized that his feet had landed on the ground. He arrived at the point he had set as his destination.

“Um? Who?” Coincidentally, there was someone in this place. The person’s dark skin and silver hair belonged to the dark elves who were known to be extinct in the outside world. Additionally, he was one of only six high elves.

“It has been a while, Alucard. Has it been almost half a year?”

“…Theodore!” Alucard rose from his seat, approached Theodore, and aimed his fist without hesitation. Theodore’s abdomen was so strong that a loud noise was heard.

“Keok.”

“You foolish child! Why did you go so far as to leave behind the child you promised to marry?”

“I-I’m sorry. I was a bit busy. That’s why I’ve come now.”

Sigh… Alucard kept grumbling, “You are the one driving the incidents every time, so you must’ve been caught up in something nasty. Of course, half a year isn’t that long for us elves, but you are human.”

“…Sorry.”

“Don’t apologize to me. Be good to that child.”

Alucard’s words were right. Theodore could’ve stopped by once before his honeymoon. Theodore scratched his head, a sign that he was reflecting.

“Ellenoa has many things to do today and will return in the evening. I also have a shift. It doesn’t matter wherever you go, but there is someone you should talk to.”

“Um? Who is it?”

The place where the two people were speaking was a viewing area where only the high elves could go. It was a branch of the world tree that overlooked Elvenheim. For the high elves who could grasp precise situations with Ratatoskr, this view was a useful facility. It was at this moment that…

"…Me," a dreary voice spoke out from behind Theodore.

"Naia?"

"Yes."

As always, her dull hair and half-hooded eyes reminded him of a student who stayed up all night studying. It was the high elf Naia, who was well-known for her wisdom and poor self-management. Alucard put down his book when he saw her. "You came at the right time. I am going."

"Ah, work hard."

"Yes. Naia, don't fall asleep again."

"…Nagging."

"What?"

Naia's head drooped, making Alucard sigh before he disappeared. Thus, only two people remained on the branch of the world tree.

"It has been a while, Naia."

"…Yes, a while…"

Theodore greeted Naia first to try and resolve this awkward atmosphere, but it didn't work. Naia sat in the chair where Alucard had just been sitting and stared blankly into empty air. If her eyelids weren't moving occasionally, he might've thought that she had fallen asleep with her eyes open.

'Why did you ask me to talk to this person, Alucard?'

Theodore would rather talk to Alisa or Lumia. Just talking to Naia felt disturbing. Look at those blurry eyes. Was she going to

fall asleep?

“Excuse me…”

However, breaking Theodore’s prediction, Naia turned her head and talked to him, “You… have become the ‘great one’… right?”

“Great one?”

“Border… surpassing… existence.”

Theodore’s eyes widened at the unexpected words. The other high elves didn’t show any signs of awareness, so how did Naia correctly point out that he was a transcendent? He was unable to hide the question in his blue eyes.

“…Don’t be, surprised. My clan can see another person’s ‘star’…”

“Star? What is that?”

“There is no clear notion. Vessel? Destiny, soul… I have never seen one before, so I am just guessing.”

As the conversation continued, Naia’s sleepy voice became sharper. She didn’t speak well normally. The unused vocal cords loosened, and a clear voice was heard. It was a voice that even the high elves would only hear once every few years. Naia gazed at Theodore with clearer eyes. “A being born as a mortal and overcoming his birth. A transcendent who can break the thread of fate. If you are such an existence, why?”

Naia’s eyes filled with mysterious colors as she seemed to penetrate Theodore’s heart. “Why are you ready to die?”

“…You can guess once but not twice.”

“Of course. The eyes of this old clan are just a mere trick in front of a ‘great person.’ There is no way to read you once you close your mind like you have now,” Naia said. However, she continued muttering like she was confident, “You were shaken when you first heard me? I saw it in the gap. I don’t know the meaning because it is uncertain, but ‘red star’—”

“Naia, stop.” The words that were as sharp as a blade stopped Naia. It was because she realized Theodore’s words contained a ‘warning’, not malice.

Naia understood through her intuition. “I see. Am I not supposed to know?”

“Well, something like that.”

“Okay, I understand. I will forget everything I said just now.”

“Thank you.”

If Naia had ignored the warning, Theodore was willing to erase her memories using forceful means. A high elf’s resistance to magic was ineffective against a 9th circle magician. However, he didn’t want to use such means against an acquaintance who wasn’t an enemy. Theodore was also very grateful that he knew to take precautions against something he hadn’t known about previously.

Naia’s eyes blurred again as she lost interest, but she said a few more words, “...Still, I am curious. Tell me when things are over. At this old age, I am always curious.”

Theodore accepted it.

*

The sun sank below the western horizon, and the cool night covered the land. Theodore watched the light change to darkness from a place that was closer to the sky than the land. It was one of the many branches of the world tree. Among them, there were long branches which stretched out to make an observatory.

“Theodore!” Finally, Ellenoa finished her work for the day and called out to him.

“Ella.”

“Why didn’t you tell me that you were coming? You have been here for a few hours.” Ellenoa felt sorry to keep Theodore waiting. She grabbed his sleeves with a pout.

Theodore saw her expression and smiled. “It’s okay. For the time being, I will stay in Elvenheim.”

“Ah! I see. If you want to have a cup of warm tea…”

“—Before that, Ella.” Theodore grabbed Ellenoa’s hand that was holding his sleeve. “There is something I want to talk about.”

“…”

The two of them looked into each other’s eyes for a moment. What did she read in his eyes? Ellenoa smiled and answered, “Shall we take a walk?”

Chapter 387 - Forest that Leads to the Future (2)

Theodore didn’t say anything more. Naia was still looking up at the sky with a blank expression. The two people, Theodore and Ellenoa, left Naia and started climbing the world tree for a walk. The wide and round branches at the top of the world tree made it seem different from the world on the ground. They passed through the knothole that connected to another space, and the two people reached the height of white clouds.

“This place…?”

It was a place that Theodore was seeing for the first time, despite having come to the world tree several times. Ellenoa walked a few steps ahead of him before slowing down. Then she shyly held Theodore’s hand and said, “The top of the world tree. Aside from Theodore, there is only one other person allowed to access this height.”

“If the admission is controlled… there must be something special about this place.”

“Yes, the symbolic meaning is big,” Ellenoa said, pointing above her head as she spoke. “Do you see over there?”

“This…” Theodore’s eyes shook when he saw where she was pointing. It was because there was something hanging from the world tree that he had never seen before despite the world tree having green leaves in all four seasons. Instead of a bud, something with a roundish shape was hanging there.

“Fruit?”

There was a fruit on the world tree, Yggdrasil. In the past, Theodore had received a seed of the world tree and given it to Mitra, but he didn’t recall there being any fruit. It wasn’t comparable to those of the Age of Mythology, but the fruit of the

world tree was like an elixir. Of course, most of them didn't have seeds and the efficacy wasn't as good. However, the fruit was even better than advanced potions.

"Yes, there are 80 years left until it is fully ripe. This isn't a place that can be exposed to outsiders."

"I see. Now I know why the path was so twisted."

There was no great efficacy in fruit that wasn't ripe, but that didn't matter to those who were blinded by greed. It was right to hide it beyond the reach of other eyes.

'There are at least four or more branches leading to the wrong place. Isn't it much more difficult than a labyrinth in terms of trying to advance?'

It was insignificant for a transcendent who could freely read and write space and time, but this had an absolute effect on other people. A magician in this age who could access this road... Besides Theodore, it had to be a person who could read the space at one level higher than Orta.

In other words, this was the perfect place to enjoy themselves. It meant she was ready to talk. Ellenoa sat on a stump that looked like a chair and called out to Theodore, "Theodore."

Theodore sat down and faced her.

"Ella," he used his nickname for Ellenoa. "Do you remember my promise?"

"Yes, of course. I remember every word."

"...Dmitra's Saintess, the one who revives the world tree. It is a burden I put on you, Ella. Heavy shackles bind you to the world tree until you fulfill that role."

"Theodore—" Ellenoa tried to say something, but Theodore held up a hand to stop her. He knew it was inevitable, and she did as well. Unlike Ellenoa who casually accepted the role, Theodore felt

really guilty. He wanted to free her sooner, even if he couldn't reverse what had happened. Thus, Theodore had made a promise to himself and Ellenoa... for them to get married on the day these shackles were released.

"I'm sorry, Ella. I have something to say to you."

Ellenoa's face became as pale as wax once she heard his words. She couldn't stop the words that followed as Theodore declared, "I have to break this promise."

"...Ah, ahhh...!" Water filled Ellenoa's eyes. Her lips, which were always curved in a gentle smile, opened with shock, and mournful sounds emerged. Her neutral beauty fell in despair, causing a stone to fill the chest of anyone who saw it. Theodore, who made her like this, wasn't an exception.

"Ella."

He carefully grabbed Ellenoa's hand, and she held onto him like it was her last strand of hope. Then she started crying, "I-I don't want to... Theodore, promise, you promised..."

"Ella."

"Rejection, sob, Theo...dore, I...!"

"Ella, just wait and relax. Yes?" Theodore was surprised by the reaction that was bigger than he had expected and pulled Ellenoa into his arms. The green hair buried in his chest moved several times, and his chest became moist. Ellenoa was crying as if the sky had collapsed. Theodore took a deep breath before whispering in a sweetly affectionate voice, "I'm not going to leave you."

"...L-Lie, sob..."

Theodore felt a bit of regret because of his mistake. In retrospect, his words had caused a misunderstanding. He wanted to fix it, but Ellenoa shook her head, not wanting to listen to him. She could only choose partners once, and she didn't want to be rejected twice. Theodore inevitably chose shock therapy.

“Ella.” He pulled off the two hands that were covering her ears. “Let’s get married.”

“S-Sob…Yes, eh?”

“I can’t wait until then, so let’s get married right away.”

Ellenoa removed her face from his chest, revealing wet eyes and a wide open mouth. The shock therapy turned out better than expected.

“Are you saying this sincerely?”

“Ella.” Theodore smiled and corrected his mistake. “I broke my promise because I proposed before your duties finished.”

“Ah…”

“Ella, I need a connection with you so that I can think of this bond anytime and anywhere.”

Ellenoa stared blankly for five minutes once she heard these words. Then her white complexion became rosy again. Maybe it was due to the shock she received before, but she just realized that Theodore had proposed. To think he wanted to get married right away? Ellenoa wasn’t immune to this approach and blushed.

She reached out her hand in a different way. “P-Please wait a moment…”

The world tree responded to the high elf’s will and moved its branches. It was a branch where the fruit that needed 80 years to ripen hung. Ellenoa didn’t hesitate to pluck the fruit. Maybe the fruit was already loose or Ellenoa’s power was greater than he thought, but the fruit burst and the fragrance covered her palm.

Ellenoa handed a piece to Theodore and explained why she took the fruit, “We elves don’t place a great deal of emphasis on ‘marriage’ like humans, and a big ceremony isn’t required. For us, it isn’t unusual for two different genders to come together to continue the bloodlines.”

“It is a wedding but not a wedding.”

“Yes, if two hearts are brought together, there is no need for formal rituals. Thus, we will have a very simple ‘wedding’ ceremony.”

That’s why Ellenoa grabbed this fruit.

“Two people will share one fruit, writing each other’s names with the seed before splitting it in half. An elf’s wedding requires planting the two seeds in a precious place.”

Theodore was convinced but asked Ellenoa about something he still didn’t understand, “Must it be the fruit of the world tree?”

“…”

“Ella?”

“…I-It was nearby. Yes, I am selfish.” Ellenoa, who always seemed selfless, was currently overflowing with greed. She had learned she wasn’t special, but everyone wanted their wedding ceremony to be a bit more special. That’s why the atmosphere was playful. The two people faced each other and slowly put the fruit in their mouths. Theodore’s blue eyes and Ellenoa’s green eyes filled with unknown colors.

‘…It feels good.’

Maybe it was due to the neural network ‘Ratatoskr’ that they shared, but both Theodore and Ellenoa felt that their emotions crossed the boundaries of their bodies and mixed in each other’s minds. It seemed like Theodore Miller changed into Ellenoa, and Ellenoa changed into Theodore Miller. Maybe it was a prank by the world tree on the lovers who dared to use its body part in an act of affection.

“I love you, Ella.” Theodore was surprised by the words that slipped out.

“Yes, I love you too. Theodore.”

Honest words flowed out of Theodore's mouth, and there were more than ever before. The fruit wasn't large and the seed was on Ellenoa's side. She carved her name on the surface of the seed and placed it in Theodore's hand. Theodore wrote his name next to 'Ellenoa.' Then the seed was broken into two pieces. Each of them got a piece, and the cozy wedding ceremony came to an end in just a few minutes.

Theodore placed the seed in his pocket and wondered where to plant it. Soon after, he got an answer.

'The backyard of the Miller manor.'

The world tree could no longer be born. Even if a bud emerged from the seed that was split into two, it would be nothing more than a small tree. Nevertheless, it would be born with the power of the world tree to protect lives and enrich the soil. He hoped that his family would be a bit more secure.

"The night has deepened."

Hearing Theodore's words, Ellenoa nodded shyly at. "Yes, shall we go down?"

"Let's go down my way. I know where Ellenoa's room is, but where am I sleeping?"

"…"

"Ella?"

She held the treasured piece of seed and spoke in a soft voice. Theodore could barely hear it.

"N-Now Theodore is my husband."

Less than one minute after the relationship changed, Ellenoa's face reddened as she tugged at Theodore's collar. "I-I mean… You have to stay in my… room?"

In response to the courageous request of the new bride, Theodore embraced her. Just like Ellenoa's, Theodore's face was hot. The

days when he rescued her from the Austen warriors who pretended to be slave merchants and from Superbia emerged again.

"...Let's go." He firmly held Ellenoa and entered the coordinates for the familiar space movement. Only the lonely sound of wind flowing through the branches of the world tree remained.

Chapter 388 - Forest that Leads to the Future (3)

A month passed by. Since the day he shared fruit with Ellenoa, Theodore had been staying in the Northern Great Forest and enjoying his daily life with her. The time spent in the forest was a bit longer than the time he had spent in the city. However, like a rippling stream, time never stopped flowing, and it was soon the time to part.

“Sigh…” Theodore sighed with deep regret when he realized he had to leave. When he had his body and mind ever been so calm?

If the honeymoon with two brides had been filled with new things, then life in Elvenheim was peace itself. The day would start with lively birdsong and end with Ellenoa. The high elves treated him with respect and friendliness. He was called benefactor everywhere he went, even by the elves harvesting crops and fruits.

‘It is a situation I can’t dream of if I am in Meltor… I don’t feel bad. Rather, I am coming to grips with my old memories.’

Now, Theodore was the greatest magician on the continent and Chief Tower Master. However, 20 years ago, Theodore had just been someone from a rural village—the Miller Barony.

The inhabitants of the land, which had no special products and farmland, had lived while helping each other, regardless of status. Even those born a noble weren’t different. His mother, who had been suffering from poor health and weight loss, had still worked to gather flour and potatoes.

It had been a territory where the title of ‘lord’ was hollow. Theodore had been born with a lot of love and had grown up without being crooked.

Crunch. He bit the apple that a child, whom he did not know, had given him.

‘Delicious.’

Thanks to the elves’ long experience, the fertile soil of the Great Forest was incomparable to that of other regions. Theodore was eating the apple when someone returned.

“Theodore!” It was High Elf Ellenoa, who was more beautiful than she was a month ago. Was there an old saying that those in love became more beautiful?

Theodore greeted her and asked a question, “Ella, isn’t it okay to speak to me more casually now?”

“E-Even if you say that…”

Theodore had asked her many times already. Ellenoa liked her nickname of Ella, but she found it difficult to call Theodore by an informal name. However, there wasn’t a sense of distance now. Ellenoa wriggled her fingers and said, “…I am shying calling you so casually.”

It wasn’t a deliberate fox-like act. Theodore dragged Ellenoa into his arms.

“Omo!” Ellenoa’s eyes shone as she was pulled into his arms. She looked like a deer rather than a fox. There was a floral aroma coming from her hair, and Theodore could feel her body temperature. He felt her shyness would break if he hugged her faster. Theodore moved his mouth closer and playfully bumped his nose against hers.

“Ahaha, it tickles.”

“It is a penalty for calling my name with an honorific.”

“That—ahit. W-wait, ahahaha!”

In addition to her nose, he tickled her ears and waist. Ellenoa lost strength as she laughed, while Theodore hugged her and held up her waist. The unique scent of vegetation surrounded their bodies. She faced him and soon realized it. “…You are leaving.”

“I’m sorry, Ella.”

“No, honestly, I already guessed.”

Ellenoa was a high elf and had a woman’s senses. There was no way she could have been unaware. She could see it just looking at Theodore. There was a heavy burden on his shoulders—a weight that was difficult to fathom. Ellenoa didn’t have the power to bear that burden. As such, Theodore was resolved to stand alone against the painful consequences that could happen to Elvenheim.

“Do you remember? The first time we met,” Ellenoa started. In the back alleys painted with blood and sin, the two of them had met there. Then she continued, “You were much smaller than you are now, yet you didn’t step back from the monster that emerged from a nightmare. Eventually, you saved not only my life but the lives of everyone in this forest.”

“…”

“I was really worried. I was always the one being saved, and I wondered if I was qualified to be your spouse.”

“Ella.”

“Therefore, please tell me, Theodore.” Her pair of bright green eyes shone gently. “Can I be your strength?”

“Yes.” Theodore placed both hands on her face and nodded without hesitation. “Even now, you will be my strength in the future.”

Ellenoa stopped breathing for a moment as she listened to the words. Then she hugged him around the neck. “…Go safely, my love.”

It was something Theodore couldn’t promise. Therefore, he didn’t speak. He just kissed Ellenoa quietly. The moment that Ellenoa realized the meaning of his silence, Theodore’s body was surrounded by a bright light and he disappeared somewhere.

It was time to prepare for the end.

*

With one month left until Wrath would fall, Theodore left Elvenheim and literally moved around the whole world. Sipoto in the Kargas Kingdom, the ruins of the Lairon Kingdom, the Babarino Plains in the Soldun Kingdom where he had fought Pan Helliones...

Theodore left no stone unturned from the past events in his life. He had a good conversation with the old man who was famous for being an 'Old Books Maniac.'

-Oh, how are you? Tell me some stories.

Then he met Canis, who he had encountered as a client and customer at Bergen Academy.

-Kukukuk, the kid who used to run around is now a hero. I am living well thanks to you. There is no need to worry about me.

In addition to those, there were many other meetings. The friend who had abandoned Theodore after he failed, the current king of Andras...

They didn't even take a day, but somehow he timed the meetings properly. In this one month that might be his last, Theodore spent the last week with her.

-Hmm, you came to see me. Isn't this praiseworthy?

She was the evil dragon of the sea, Aquilo. The bond which had started from the Pirate Archipelago continued to this day. Aquilo was surprised by Theodore's sudden visit but immediately responded to the conversation, recalling the time they confronted Pride and drank alcohol. She also showed him her pile of treasures.

-Please keep this in mind, Boy, Aquilo had said seriously as he left her lair.

-What do you mean by 'in the future'?

-Boy, you are now an immortal, a transcendent being who can live for more than a thousand or ten thousand years. Perhaps there are few people in this world who will exist as long as you?

-...Maybe it is a future you can't think about due to the upcoming death. If that day comes, can you be an old friend of this dragon?

Theodore hadn't been able to deny it and left Aquilo. He had made a subtle expression, knowing that his atmosphere was strange. However, he hadn't revealed the story about Wrath. The only one who noticed anything had been Naia.

"—Go."

Theodore had finished all the conversations. There was no one else he wanted to meet, and his heart wouldn't waver. A magician was the strongest when his mind was perfectly clear.

Flash!

A light flashed once, and Theodore's surroundings became covered with snow and ice. This was the Arctic. It was the middle of the northern hemisphere. The cold was fine. Even a master level magician could use their magic power to unconsciously change the surrounding temperature, let alone a transcendent.

"...Gluttony, how much time is left?"

Nevertheless, Theodore couldn't help shaking.

-There isn't much time left. There are exactly 11,489 seconds left until Wrath enters the planet's atmosphere.

Once converted, that amount of time was 3 hours, 11 minutes, and 29 seconds. Immediately after that, the meteorite, which could completely destroy civilization on this world, would fall. Theodore got goosebumps on his arms. Unlike his hardened mind, the foresight telling him of inevitable death stimulated his body's instincts. He gritted his teeth as he fought his unreasonable instincts.

‘Can I do it?’

As frosty wind swept through Theodore, he gazed up at the sky. It didn’t matter if there was an earthquake or volcanic eruption. Either of those would be less threatening than the destruction that would fall from the sky. Some time later…

*

[Mission scheduled time, 972 seconds remaining.]

‘It’ was still in space. A silent space filled with cold air, as well as all types of electromagnetic waves and radiation. ‘It’ continued to travel at a speed of 10 kilometers per second, passing several planetary systems in order to carry out the task assigned to it.

It had a smooth silver surface. This sphere moving through outer space with an unknown force was Wrath of the Seven Sins.

[Activating the observation function, setting the drop point coordinates.]

Gluttony had spoken. There was no reason for it. It was half right, half wrong.

Wrath had very good thinking. It had the intelligence to identify the target before performing the mission and to carry out the destruction with maximum efficiency. Wrath had a calculation speed that could analyze navigational coordinates several light years ago in dozens of seconds. It was never swept away by emotions or impulse.

[Observing.]

In the interior of Wrath which was was several kilometers deep, its ‘eyes’ opened. Once used to their maximum, its eyes could observe supernovae hundreds of light years away in real time. Wrath would arrive at the planet in 16 minutes. It was only a matter of time until Wrath arrived at ‘Designated name: Earth.’

A crackling noise occurred a few times before the screen became

clean like a new mirror. This was a technique difficult to understand even for the creator.

[Video Enlargement.]

Covered with ice and snow, the northern hemisphere of the planet was beautiful. However, for the emotionless grimoire, the scenery was nothing more than an investigation point. Wrath soon discovered a speck of dust on the observation video.

[—Identifying obstacles on the local planet and beginning the analysis.]

The video was enlarged to 2x, 4x, 8x, until the object was large enough to be recognized. Red robes, black hair and blue eyes—it was a common creature of the ‘human race.’ The amount of energy the human had was considerable, but he was an obstacle Wrath could easily crush.

[Uniqueness, Gluttony’s contractor.]

Wrath didn’t care. It didn’t worry about that for even a second as it decided to erase the unique presence. As a matter of fact, it wasn’t a big loss if Gluttony was destroyed. Wrath’s priority was to neutralize the civilization that could threaten all of them. Then at that moment…

-…It is good. Chunk of scrap metal, the human that appeared on the observational video started to speak, -The welcome is a bit big but please accept it!

It was just after this that…

[A high energy reaction. Grade 2 boundary. Reacting to the presence of a dragon. Searching for the object name.]

An enormous heat swallowed Wrath’s body.

[…Fafnir’s ‘laser’ has hit the outer wall!]

Chapter 389 - Armageddon (1)

Around five minutes before the battle began, when there was still a gap of 10,000 kilometers, Theodore was watching a wonderful landscape. It was a scenery which couldn't be glimpsed by humans, unless civilization was several generations ahead of what it was now.

The sky beyond the sky... It was an infinite space where the sun and moon shone regularly—the universe.

'...This is the cradle of stars!'

This was a world that many pioneers had failed to return from. Theodore was filled with fear and joy as he gazed upon the magnificent scenery. His material world was nothing more than a small crumb before this infinite space.

Wasn't this huge thing amazing by itself? Theodore desperately agreed with this point. He was reminded of words left behind in old books. When people looked at this universe without knowing anything, the small brain of a mortal wouldn't be able to withstand its grandeur and size.

However, Gluttony's tone was blasé as usual as he explained, -Well, it isn't that special. There are phobias everywhere.

'Like a phobia of heights?'

-It is a bit different. The fear of height arises from knowing what will happen when you fall from a high place. It is a reaction from learning rather than instincts. A similar phobia is... Yes, it is like thalassophobia (a fear of the sea). Cognitive dissonance is one of the reasons for that. It is different from knowing with your head and feeling with your body. The discomfort and anxiety of the things that can't be seen are what cause the hair on the back of your neck to rise.

Fortunately, it wasn't that bad for Theodore. He was able to

regain his composure with simple mental focus. This ‘wasn’t’ his vision.

“…It will be soon.” Theodore was still standing on a glacier in the northern hemisphere as he watched the upcoming destruction. The shining pattern on his right hand was the key—the administrative rights to this material world.

It was the responsibility and right of the guardian of the world, which had been handed to him by Dragon Lord Clipeus. The administrative rights were a force that couldn’t be used unless a global threat was getting close, but it had recognized Wrath’s approach for a long time. However, it wasn’t possible to use it to draw mana like last time.

‘It is likely that Wrath will interfere with everything in this material world. If so, it is over.’

It was breathtaking to use the administrative privilege to watch this scene from the perspective of the world. Fortunately, there was no sign that Wrath’s power was increasing. Theodore calmed his head and said quietly, “Gluttony, a count from ten.”

-Understood.

Detection magic was useless when the distance was thousands of kilometers. It depended on one of the Seven Sins, Gluttony.

Color started to gradually disappear from Theodore’s eyes which were concentrating in earnest, and it seemed that time was slowing down. A monster was approaching at a speed of more than 10 kilometers per second. If there was even one second of error, he would lose 1 kilometer.

-Ten.

Theodore stopped breathing as Gluttony started counting.

-Nine, eight, seven, six…

As soon as the count reached five, Theodore aimed at the sky

with his left hand. Just like how it had been mentioned before, there was a limit on the use of the administrative authority. However, this function was usable without any problems.

「 Opening the dimensional door with the authority of administrator ‘Theodore Miller.’ 」

This was a shortcut he had thought of a long time ago. A normal summoning would consume a great deal of power and magic. However, by becoming the administrator, Theodore could connect two dimensions in an instant at his own convenience.

Just after that…

「—Come, Fafnir! 」

The dragon, Fafnir, who guarded Muspelheim—in the past, it responded to Theodore’s call and wiped out Pride in seven seconds. The air whitened. Everything was burning up as the atmosphere of Muspelheim flowed into this material world. The minus 50 degrees Celsius Arctic didn’t shrink back from this heat.

『 Complete. The limit of activity in this dimension is 43 seconds. 』 As the dragon spoke in a loud voice, the sacred white flames were like a living sun.

During the Age of Mythology, Fafnir had burned the world tree and created the place called the Red Plateau. Now, according to the will of the summoner, Fafnir turned its head toward where Wrath would fall.

-Two.

The moment that Gluttony counted down to two…

“Fafnir, now!”

『 Obliterate. 』

At Theodore’s command, Fafnir opened its mouth and let out a breath that was like a ‘laser.’

————————————————!!

In the aftermath, the glacier melted, and the blizzard turned to steam. The extreme heat caused a catastrophic event despite the breath not landing a direct hit. If this place wasn't the northern hemisphere, it would've been visible to everyone. The pillar of light that shot up from the ground toward the sky seemed to cut straight through the night sky.

'Okay, the speed is perfect!'

There was one second left in the countdown as Theodore's vision filled with the light exiting the planet's atmosphere. He managed to tune in his vision with the perspective of the planet using the administrative right. The moment his eyes came into contact with Wrath...

"It is good. Chunk of scrap metal!" Theodore shouted as he raised his left hand. "The welcome is a bit big but please accept it!"

He didn't know if it was transmitted or not. Regardless, the laser crossed 10,000 kilometers and swallowed it up.

This was the destructive laser that Fafnir had shot out with all its power. There was no noise. In the universe where there was no air, there was a fierce light. The laser caused an explosion once it came into contact with Wrath. Half of the continent would've been blown away if it had exploded in the material world. However, Theodore kept staring vigilantly at this scene.

[External wall damage. Checking the changes in physical properties from the 1st to 14th layer due to the superheat. Self-recovery. Running a separation sequence.]

Wrath wasn't able to defend against the most powerful attack of Fafnir, the incarnation of Muspelheim. On the sphere that was several kilometers in diameter, a portion of its damaged outer wall peeled off like a snake's skin. The unrecoverable part separated before the accumulated heat could be conducted further.

Even so, Wrath was neither surprised or confused. In addition to

the orichalcum that could endure the heat for a few seconds, it ran countermeasures against this laser.

[This laser is an eraser, a primitive type of ultra-high heat ray. The unique weakness of the ray-based attack means reducing heat conductivity will be effective. Repair. The dimensional boundary surface on the outer wall surface will block heat conduction.]

The surface of the huge silver Wrath turned blue.

[Summoning a dimensional boundary. Dimensional name 'Cocytus', width kept at 15 meters.]

The dimensional boundary that appeared on Wrath's outer wall started to absorb most of the heat. As an absolute dimension like Muspelheim, the chill that overflowed from Cocytus canceled out the heat.

"That damn metal can...!"

It was a wonderful response worth of admiration if Wrath wasn't the enemy of the world. Theodore was chilled by the swift action and realized that Fafnir could no longer help. Wrath moved through the terrible heat. 43 seconds. The dragon, which would've caused millions of victims on the material world, ended up being sent back with little profit.

"Kuk, I wasn't expecting anything in any case!"

It wasn't entirely as he said. No matter how great the power of the laser was, Wrath was still a destructive weapon that could crush a star. It was amazing that the outer wall was even slightly damaged. Theodore sympathized with the world since he could tune into the senses of the planet.

Wind was blowing in the vacuum that was infinite space. It was a name for the waves generated by radiation, ultraviolet rays, and all types of other energies. Interstellar wind... Feeling the wind that couldn't be felt with human senses, Theodore invoked the wind magic he had inherited from a senior—White Tower Master

Heathcliff. Theodore read the sky with the body of a mortal and wielded the energy storm. Before he became a transcendent, the sky had been incomprehensible, but he could now handle this wind.

「 Together! Wind that flows between stars and planets! 」

He wouldn't have been able to control it for one second without the administrative privilege. Theodore constantly suppressed the interstellar wind that was trying to escape his control while staring at Wrath, which had returned to silver again. The threat that was Fafnir had disappeared, so Wrath's original outer wall was restored. It was in order to reduce the consumption of power as much as possible and to carry out an efficient 'eradication.'

'...Yes, keep looking down on me.

'I will smash you to pieces!'

「 Supercell, activation. 」

Theodore released the reins of the interstellar wind. It had reached a terrifying scale despite having only gathered for a few seconds. He had no choice but to do so since he couldn't control the overflowing forces in this limitless space. The sunlight that fed life in the material world and the phenomenon which caused the tides were just a fraction of the power that was present in the universe.

「 Aiolos' withdrawal! 」

The starlight was distorted by Theodore's hand gestures, and a tremendous power wound around Wrath. This was a power which would blow away the planet's atmosphere if it hit kept striking the silver sphere.

Jjejeok! Jjejejeok!

Air currents gathered and made noise. Part of Wrath's outer wall became like cracked pottery. The silver surface was split apart by the interstellar wind, revealing a rugged form.

Theodore's Supercell magic proved to be a valid blow.

[Sensing a large-scale pressure. Interstellar wind. Primitive magic that circulates compression and emission. It is suggested to form a vacuum area while simultaneously using repulsive force to offset the pressure. Repair.] Wrath, however, responded as if it knew. [Reflect Force is deployed, vacuum wave launched on the path.]

The power of the magic which controlled the interstellar wind was far superior to ultimate magic. However, its scale was so large that there was no room for sophisticated magic formulas. Simply generating a force field that dissipated the magic's force meant that more than half the pressure disappeared.

Once the 'vacuum' was turned toward Wrath's path, the curtain made of interstellar wind tore, and a hole was created for Wrath.

[Breakthrough.]

The interstellar wind was torn apart. As Theodore coughed up a bit of blood from the recoil, he calculated Wrath's accelerated path again.

"Dammit. I heard it was strong, but this is too dirty...!"

Theodore thought that at least 100 meters would be overcome with these attacks, but his calculations were already wrong. He gritted his teeth as he looked up at the sky. A star was falling rapidly. The brightness of it couldn't be seen on the surface of the planet yet. However, if Wrath kept approaching at this speed, then it would be seen in five minutes. When Theodore thought about this, he missed a few seconds from hesitation.

'Let's go.'

Theodore's body turned cobalt.

Forced Harmonization - Phase 2.

Mode 'INDRA'.

It wasn't lightning but the next step. This was plasma, something

which would be classified as a class 4 material in a scientific civilization. Theodore passed through the atmosphere of the planet in an instant. The output and speed of plasma were better than those of lightning.

Kwarururung! There was a thunderous sound as Theodore rose into the sky. A plasma tail trailed behind him as he left the atmosphere in a matter of seconds, reaching Wrath that was thousands of kilometers away. Theodore was moving absurdly fast in an unobstructed space. It was at a speed of 100 kilometers per second or more.

'I will blow it away!'

Shortly after that, Theodore rushed forth without the slightest deceleration and reached the silver sphere!

Chapter 390 - Armageddon (2)

Ku kwa kwa kwang!

In a space where sound didn't exist, the normal roar wasn't heard, but a powerful shock wave burst out from Theodore. This was the best of a 9th circle magician! The plasma body was empowered by accelerating spells and gaining power and speed. Its destructive power could carve out a mountain. It would be difficult for even an ancient dragon to survive if hit by this.

This was obvious.

'Kuk! This is ridiculous!'

The moment that he clashed with Wrath's silver outer wall, Theodore realized the absurdity of this. His instincts told him that it was impossible to break through this outer wall with the collision of his accelerated plasma body. Indeed, his intuition was right without any errors.

Kukukung...!

At the point where Theodore collided, there was a crater with a radius of 20 meters on the outer wall. A few pieces of debris from the outer wall were thrown into space, and Wrath slowed down to 9.8 kilometers per second. This was the best result of Theodore's preemptive attack. For a monster several kilometers in diameter, a crater with a radius of 20 meters was no different from an insect bite.

"No, not yet!"

However, Theodore didn't feel despair at this extraordinary gap.

"I already knew you were such a monster!"

Theodore had heard it several times. Wrath was the final weapon of the Seven Sins and was a destruction that no one could prevent. It couldn't be prevented or avoided. The only way to survive was

to escape outside the planet.

“—I will smash you!”

Theodore had come here in order to overturn the hopeless future.

Synergy-Harmonize.

Magic power, which contained four elements, rose up around Theodore’s body. Abraxas, the most powerful attack magic he could use, formed and pushed at Wrath’s outer wall. The pressure of the wall reduced but didn’t disappear. Abraxas’ strength couldn’t stop it completely. Theodore quickly completed the fusion magic and reached out a hand.

Great magic Abraxas (ΑΒΡΑΞΑΣ).

Divine Artefact Heavenly Sword.

He fused it with the Heavenly Sword, recreating the attack that had split apart Cheonju Castle.

Fusion Complete: Unprecedented God-Sword.

It was a force that was two or three times stronger than before.

————————————!!

If it had been possible to make noise, the unpleasant noise would’ve spread out over a few hundred meters. As soon as the Unprecedented God-Sword penetrated the outer wall, there was an unpleasant vibration in the area. That might have been due to Wrath’s defense function working or it might be a feature of the metal that made up the outer wall.

‘I don’t know!’

‘Don’t look at unnecessary situations.’ Theodore focused his concentration on the god-sword, trying to push it 30 meters deep. According to the characteristics of Wrath that Glutton had mentioned, Wrath would respond to this attack immediately. So, Theodore had to gain as much as of an advantage as possible before

Wrath pulled out the countermeasures. It wasn't as exciting as cutting Cheonju Castle, but the god-sword continued to move forward.

The god-sword pierced through 30 meters and then several meters per second after that. Theodore didn't know what this felt like to Wrath, but he knew it wouldn't be pleasant!

[Detecting the attack of a divine weapon. Analyzing the properties of compressed magic power and the collapse of the four elements. The elements can't be defended against. Suggesting the destruction of the divine weapon that is the medium. Repair.] The logic circuit built into Wrath responded promptly to the means of attack. [Generating a killer bot, fixing the force pattern of the core to 'deicide.' Command to move until the object is disarmed.] (TL: Deicide - killing/killer of a god)

This was the first time Wrath was encountering Theodore's magic, but it had experience dealing with gods in countless ways. After detecting the divinity in the attack, Wrath summoned the weapon that was a god's nemesis—Killer Bot. It was an autonomous maneuver-type weapon made by consuming a large portion of Wrath. In the past, the Killer Bot was designed to confront the gods and heroes who opposed Wrath.

[13 Sword Breakers are created.]

A design was instantly generated. Theodore sensed the situation one step ahead, but he was confused when he saw the monsters coming out of the hard outer wall. They had forms similar to humans, but instead of having hands, there were sickle-like blades similar to those of a praying mantis? The pale inanimate body was just one of the reasons for his confusion.

-Killer Bot! You must've made Wrath angry if it is already bringing this out.

"What is it?"

-Be vigilant. I don’t know how it is designed, but 13 of them can tear apart a grandmaster.

As Gluttony spoke, they moved.

Syuok!

They were fast because there was no air resistance. The killer bots moved at supersonic speed and were able to get past Theodore’s defense. Almost simultaneously, a gossamer-like web poured down. Theodore’s neck got shivers as he sensed his imminent death.

「 Time Acceleration! 」

If he focused on destroying the outer wall, he would be torn apart. Theodore read the future and accelerated his time by 30 times, escaping before he was completely surrounded and defeated. An acceleration of more than 20 times was unreasonable for him, but it was the only way to escape. One killer bot was as fast as Randolph Clovis.

‘The weapon—the blades for hands—are also irritating.’

Neither magic power nor aura could be felt, but there was an ominous feeling. The discomfort caused by his foresight told him to avoid the net. Theodore had escaped the net, but the killer bots moved again. They didn’t use a mechanical type of walking but a footwork that could be seen in martial arts.

Theodore’s brows furrowed. “They know how to use techniques? If I brought Gladio… No, then another one would’ve popped out. What annoying pieces of tin.”

There was no answer. No, their voices weren’t even heard. Theodore summoned the air stored in the vicinity of his mouth and breathed like he was on the ground. That’s how he was talking to himself. It was a type of self-suggestion to overcome the anxiety and fear filling him.

Kakiing.

Theodore held Soul Calibre with his left hand and the Heavenly Sword with his right hand as he faced the killer bots.

“Hey, aren’t you coming?”

Whether or not Theodore’s words were transmitted, the killer bots understood the provocation.

Syuok!

The killer bots once again accelerated.

‘Ha, I’m sorry but I am already accustomed to this speed.’

However, a trick wouldn’t work twice on a magician. Supersonic? An attack that he couldn’t react to? It wasn’t necessary for his body to respond to that. He just needed to respond to the enemy’s speed. A magic circle with a radius of 10 meters appeared under Theodore’s feet. Six killer bots stepped forward while seven retreated. Were they trying to figure out Theodore’s intentions by putting in half the number first?

「 Time, 」 Theodore said solemnly as he raised his blades, 「 Return. 」

Simultaneously, the bodies of the six killer bots that ran into the magic circle were shattered. Theodore laughed at the terrible performance that didn’t include a regenerative power. “I cut it three seconds ago. How does it feel to be a tiger moth?”

As mentioned earlier, the technique of interfering with the time axis wasn’t meaningful to a transcendental existence. It was because the resistance was so intense that the time magic was essentially invalidated. However, it was possible to use a technique like Time Acceleration which affected his body or on a space other than the enemy. The trick that Theodore used was to cut the air in advance.

[Checking the use of time magic. Time Restore, which calls a few seconds to remove the six killer bots. Raising the enemy’s risk level by two stages. Give the ability to detect magic to the remaining

seven killer bots. Create 13 identical objects.]

Nevertheless, Wrath just increased the number. The eyeballs on the flat faces of the killer bots emitted a red ray. It was an eye magic to detect time and space magic.

This was an evil eye that was more obvious than Orta's.

"…It really turns things around."

This was more difficult than fighting the heavenly demon. Theodore stopped thinking when he saw 13 killer bots emerge behind the already existing ones. His purpose was to buy time before reaching the material world. He needed to clean up these cans as soon as possible.

Hidden technique.

Theodore crossed his two swords. "Boundary of Heaven and Earth."

Lights protruded from the ends of the swords. The power of the technique wiped out five killer bots without a trace, and the remaining 15 killer bots ran through the gap. On the asteroid that was flying at 9.8 kilometers per second, the second match between a magician and the slaughtering machines began.

*

Kaaang!

There was a sound as sword and sword collided. Theodore kicked the cut apart pieces of a killer bot and pulled back his right hand. A strange impact was accumulating on the right hand which held the Heavenly Sword. Was it a coincidence? Theodore thought about it as he stabbed Soul Calibre into the head of a killer bot.

Jjeok.

The killer bot didn't stop moving despite its head being split into two. Unlike humans, there was no brain. The persistence of the machines even after being cut into several pieces reminded him of

the trolls. However, once Theodore used Hellfire, the movements stopped.

‘This is the 93rd one… They are easier to destroy than I thought, but if this continues, I won’t be able to block Wrath. What can I do?’

The killer bots were moderately threatening. He could somehow hold on when facing 20 at once. The problem was blocking Wrath. Wrath had slowed down for a bit, but it had now recovered to a speed of 10 kilometers per second. The crater on the surface caused by the plasma and Heavenly Sword were completely restored.

“…Dammit.”

Whenever he tried to think, a few killer bots would interrupt him. Was it their role to hold onto Theodore’s ankles? Theodore stared at the glowing red light and pointed his sword.

「 Time Acceleration! 」

He made a swift cut. Time seemed to have stopped in the black and white world. In fact, his senses had accelerated so much that his optic nerves couldn’t distinguish color. Theodore drove the Heavenly Sword into the chest of the killer bot. Soul Calibre was a pretty good offensive tool but it wasn’t comparable to the cutting power of Heavenly Sword. The Heavenly Sword killed the machines in succession and searched for its next sacrifice.

Kang!

Then the sharp blade broke at the midpoint.

“…Eh?”

The divine artifact was damaged. Theodore stopped at the unexpected situation, and two killer bots dug in through this gap. Their curved blades like those of a praying mantis danced around. The barrier Theodore had created reflexively was cut apart, and his red blood dripped down. It might’ve been a fatal wound if he hadn’t been using Time Acceleration.

[Confirming the destruction of the divine weapon. Continuing the battle by converting the killer bots into human form.]

Then the form of the killer bots changed. The two arms increased to six, taking the form of hands rather than blades. The killer bots resembled the asura that was seen in Buddhist mythology of the East, and they emitted a tremendous force.

“Hah,” Theodore laughed bitterly.

The Heavenly Sword had broken. One excellent means of attack had disappeared.

‘The impact that was accumulating before… It meant the Heavenly Sword being damaged. It happened every time the blade collided with these guys.’

He hadn’t known it but the killer bots made by Wrath had the power to destroy a ‘god.’ When touched, the god would lose strength, and if the exposure was constant, they would lose full strength. Wrath had destroyed a number of gods so far and was a natural enemy of the gods. It wasn’t something a sword which contained the power of a god could endure.

“But half still remains.”

Theodore watched the slow approach of the remaining killer bots and held the half blade that remained. It was a bit more difficult than before. Now that they had achieved their purpose of destroying the Heavenly Sword, it meant they would concentrate on killing him.

“Not yet, you cans!”

Theodore continued using the half remaining Heavenly Sword, instead of using magic to fill the gap. According to mythology, this god-sword was obtained from a demonic beast. The original name was Ame no Murakuma no Tsurugi, and it was obtained from the body of a serpent with eight heads. If so, it was possible to invoke the demonic beast using this sword.

「Aura, the snake that made eight valleys with its head and tail.」

The pattern on his right hand emitted light again. As long as he had the power to control this material world, no sacrifice was needed for Theodore's summoning magic. All he needed was an intermediary for the summoning.

"Show yourself here! Yamata no Orochi!"

The Heavenly Sword in Theodore's hand turned into a handful of dust. A gap was torn in the dimension, and a monster descended.

■■■■■■■■■■■———!! The eight-headed dragon, which spanned more than half the width of Wrath, let out a terrifying roar.

Chapter 391 - Armageddon (3)

The roar was heard even in outer space, where sound didn't echo! Orochi's roar wasn't just loud. It also contained a physical pressure. The eight killer bots that got caught in the roar shattered, while the rest had their limbs twisted in a gruesome manner.

In the past, the old gods of Japan needed to work together to beat it. However, this power exceeded Theodore's expectations.

'Okay, I can reverse the situation.'

Theodore was shocked by this and smiled. He thought he could use it well if it was only a hydra, but Orochi's strength was more than a dragon's. The killer bots harassing it were crushed like cans. Even if another 30 appeared when 10 were broken, it was meaningless in the presence of Orochi. The surface area of one scale was wider than a small mansion. It was like there was a storm swirling around Orochi's huge body as the bodies of the killer bots were torn into many pieces and thrown out into the universe.

■■■■—?! ■■■■■——!!?

Orochi was confused about being summoned before Wrath in outer space, but Theodore didn't explain why. No, he never had any intention of holding the reins from the beginning.

'I would've tried if the Heavenly Sword was still intact... but now I can't afford to deal with Orochi. I will leave it alone to do its work!'

The killer bots were nothing but toys that Wrath controlled. The worst development was not being able to stop the material world from being destroyed by Wrath. Theodore took deep breaths as he rested for a few seconds, concentrating all the magic power of his nine circles.

"Gluttony, number 17."

-Yes.

A hole appeared in the palm of his left hand, and an artifact in the inventory emerged through Gluttony's mouth. It was a dagger made of a mysterious metal, with a bright crystal on the hilt. This was the favorite tool of the alchemist, Paracelsus—the Azoth Sword. The Azoth Sword was a legendary tool which omitted all alchemy processes.

「 Substance conversion. 」

The blade which accepted the magic shimmered with light. This was the magic Theodore had used to fight Paracelsus's creature, Mercurius, a few years ago. The magic consumed the 'Philosopher's Stone' set in the hilt and turned any substance the dagger touched into another substance. It wasn't a difficult spell for Theodore, but the Azoth Sword was being applied to ultimate magic.

「 Ars Magna. 」

At this chant, the blade shone.

「 Become water, Wrath! 」

As soon as the stone embedded in the hilt of the Azoth Sword shone with a golden radiance, a beam of light was fired from the blade. This was the light of the ultimate magic, matter conversion.

Wiiiiing!

Surprisingly, the light worked on Wrath. The wall, which had seemed like an ultimate obstacle, shook and started to boil as it changed into water! It was because the vacuum of outer space lowered the boiling point. The surface of the outer wall evaporated quickly, causing holes that were 100 meters deep and gradually becoming deeper. The result was greater than that of the attacks Theodore had made using plasma and the Heavenly Sword.

■■■■■■■——!!

As the object beneath it turned into a puddle, Orochi glared at Theodore. It didn't know what this situation was, but it knew Theodore had called it here.

-Die.

There was no desire to communicate. Instead, poisonous smoke emerged from Orochi's eight heads. It was a poison that melted away at anything, without a distinction between inanimate objects and living things. This was closer to a 'corrosive' breath than poison. It dissolved cell walls, destroyed the molecular structure, and eroded the surface of the target.

"Ick!"

However, despite its lethal force, the poisonous smoke was too slow. Theodore maintained a plasma state and pulled out of the range of the poisonous smoke without difficulty. His nerves were accelerated, causing one second to feel like one minute. It gave him enough time to look at the water and the poisonous smoke.

'Isn't it much worse than I thought?'

Wrath's outer wall and the space in this area were contaminated. Moreover, it wasn't a material poison but a conceptual poison. Theodore couldn't completely resist it in his plasma condition. The poison couldn't be burned with force or blown away with wind. The only way to get rid of it would be to use 'purification' or a greater destructive power.

"...Why should I?"

However, Theodore had no intention of getting rid of this poison. Orochi's poison, which could threaten a god, was melting even Wrath's outer walls. Wrath would quickly come up with countermeasures but Theodore would let the poison cause as much damage as possible in the meantime. Theodore decided on his actions and extended his feet again.

Pajijik!

He was a lightning bolt of an unidentified color, leaving an afterimage behind him. Orochi's poison poured toward him, but it couldn't keep up with the lightning. The outer wall of Wrath was abused as the two transcendent beings played tag. The substance conversion ray caused large holes in Wrath's outer wall while the poison melted its surface.

[Reconfirming the damage situation. There is an urgent need for exclusion of the object.]

Finally, Wrath came out to counterattack.

[(Damage 1) 312 meters worth of damage to outer wall due to Ray of Material Conversion. Minimize the interference of the light ray by changing the surface wall to glass. Recover the material lost using the other exterior walls. Emergency restoration.]

[(Damage 2) Persistent damage observed on the outer wall due to the toxic attack of Yamato no Orochi, a serpent dragon type. Remove contaminated areas. Urgent need to isolate the object. The entity is a demonic beast from this material world. Requires a physical attack. Repair.]

The logic circuits thought of an answer in a few seconds.

[Super Vibration Smash]

At this moment, Theodore realized that a reaper's scythe was descending toward his neck. He predicted the future 0.03 seconds ahead and executed an emergency avoidance, 「—Dimensional Leave! 」

Theodore's body turned from plasma into a spiritual body.

Wouuuuuuong!

The silver sphere, 3 kilometers in diameter, was now a little smaller and started to vibrate at an enormous speed! The frequency exceeded the limits of what could be measured. It was a super vibration, a vortex of power that crushed all objects it touched. The remnants of the killer bots left on the surface of the

outer wall returned to a handful of dust. All the materials in Wrath's resonance range were decomposed into atomic units.

Theodore and Orochi were no exception.

"Uwaaah!"

The impact of the few seconds it took to change from a plasma body to a spirit body tore at him. After taking a few bottles of potions, the blood rising in his throat disappeared. However, the damage done to Theodore wasn't the problem.

■■■■■—!

Orochi was the greatest victim of this destruction.

■■■!? ■■■■■!!!

It was useless no matter how much poison it poured out. Wrath's outer wall no longer melted. Even if it did attack the vibrating wall, it would only receive a shock back. The body of Yamato no Orochi exploded, with flesh and scales scattering everywhere. The more durable bones and skeletal muscles held out a bit longer.

Peeeeeong!

However, every head exploded, causing a red blood mist to spread everywhere. A demonic beast from myths was destroyed with one counterattack.

'Crazy...! Orochi couldn't even last 10 seconds?'

If Theodore hadn't become a spirit body, he would've died too. Plasma wasn't immune to physical attacks and it was even more vulnerable to attacks that cut off the flow of electrons. Additionally, Wrath followed up with a second vibration attack.

[It has been confirmed that object name 'Yamato no Orochi' has been destroyed. Survival of object 1, escape to the Astral Plane. Searching for effective means to attack a spirit body—complete. Performing the wide-range Soul Stake.]

The ability to move between the spirit and reality states was

fairly rare, but it wasn't difficult for Wrath who had destroyed many worlds. If a physical attack didn't work, Wrath would have to use other means. There were a number of attacks which allowed both physical and spiritual interference.

"What—" Theodore felt an eerie sense of foreboding while he ran through the air just as sharp awls emerged under his feet.

Like the killer bots that emerged from the surface of Wrath, this was a surprise attack that couldn't be read.

Kkikikikik! An unpleasant metallic sound pierced Theodore's eardrums.

'No, it can't be metal!'

It wasn't a vibration of air. The noise resonated in the Astral World. The soul stakes clashed with each other, and the wavelengths tore at Theodore's body. They were very difficult to endure, even if they weren't direct strikes. Simultaneously, the soul stakes kept on appearing.

Kikikikik—!

The silver spikes were bigger than lances, and they sprang up to skewer him. Theodore read the paths and evaded, but he couldn't completely avoid a thousand awls springing up from the ground. Blood flowed from his shoulders, thighs, and sides.

"Ugh!"

It was blood, but it was white, not red. This was proof that the damage was dealt to Theodore's soul. If this damage kept accumulating, restrictions might appear on his magic ability.

'If I can't avoid, then I can only attack!'

The translucent Theodore's body shone brighter as he created two blades in both hands. Soul Calibre. The technique passed down by Reynolds Spencer became much stronger in this spirit body. If it was an object able to interfere with a spirit body, that

meant the spirit body could also interfere with the object.

Kiiing——

There was a sharp sound as several soul stakes broke. More than 100 soul stakes aimed for him, but Theodore avoided half of them while breaking the rest. It was a perfect defense. The soul stakes specialized in spiritual attacks and were less durable than the killer bots, making them easier to destroy. However…

[Identifying a unique astral weapon. Please respond.]

Wrath's database responded even to this.

[Refining a part of the spirit body, raising the durability of the 'soul stakes' to a proper level. Searching for defensive means to damage the astral weapon. Complete. Departed Soul Summoning. Release of a spirit corresponding to the target object and homogeneous species.]

Wrath's response wasn't a killer bot or a silver stake. Instead, red swords started to emerge from Wrath's surface. They were unlike Theodore's green swords. The red swords, dark red like clotted blood, increased endlessly in number. They were evil spirits with human forms. Each spirit was on the level of Hipatia. 10… 132… 487… Theodore stopped counting once it went beyond 1,000.

"Only doing things I hate. Isn't this a nasty personality?"

He didn't know. Theodore could exercise physical force as ghosts and undead were vulnerable to holy swords. However, Soul Calibre embodied the soul of a user. If it clashed with the sword of the evil spirit, Soul Calibre would absorb the 'dirtiness' or 'wicked desires.' It wasn't a big deal if he was facing a demon like Reynolds had done. The real problem was if Theodore continued maintaining his spirit body.

'If a sword is stabbed into mud, it will dull and rust.'

Wrath's move was an excellent counter to Soul Calibre.

‘Should I withdraw? If I use other means—’ Theodore stepped back and organized his thoughts. He still had a lot of means left.

The conversion had damaged Wrath quite heavily. If Theodore didn’t give it a chance to fill up the holes, the damage would accumulate. It was at this moment that…

Kuoooooh—!!

Suddenly, the whole area was covered with bright flames, and Theodore’s field of view became a scene of white. He hadn’t received any impact or injuries, but he had to turn his eyes away from this shocking fact.

‘Flames? The surface is burning in space? No, don’t tell me—?!’

The meteorite was burning wildly because of the friction from the atmosphere. As the meteorite, which had enormous energy, collided with the air resistance of the planet’s atmosphere, it caused a combustion phenomenon. As he looked at the planet they were approaching, Theodore shouted, “Gluttony! Time remaining!”

-11 seconds until the entry of Wrath. Hurry, User, Gluttony said, with irritation rising in its blasé tone.

Theodore couldn’t do anything. As he stared at the evil spirits that filled his vision, he rushed without a chance.

“Shitttt——!”

The destruction had arrived at his world.

Chapter 392 - Armageddon (4)

The atmosphere had been broken through. Using the layer of hydrogen and helium as fuel, Wrath entered the planet's atmosphere by burning its surface. The thickness of the atmosphere was around 1,000 kilometers.

The speed started to decelerate after entering the zone where air resistance existed. However, it was clear that even if Wrath only moved at 2 kilometers per second, it would destroy all life on this planet. Before that, he had to reduce either Wrath's speed or mass no matter what.

Kieeeeek! The cries of more than a thousand evil spirits rang out at once, echoing in Theodore's ears. Theodore pushed away the pressure with Soul Calibre but realized it wasn't a fundamental solution.

'Kuk, there is no time to think of a way!'

10 seconds were left. After entering the thermal layer, Wrath would burn far more intensely than right now. It would become visible to the people on Earth, and at that point, it would all over. It was because Wrath's destructive power would increase with the number of observers.

"Emergency order! In the name of the victor!"

He unsealed the knot Seimei had left behind.

"Yin and Yang Bind, release!"

The band on Theodore's left arm was released. His blood blackened, and the blood vessels bulged from all the magic power —the strength of the heavenly demon. It wouldn't be hard to get rid of the evil spirits with just 20% of this power. In fact, as soon as this was released, the evil spirits were so afraid that they scattered in all directions.

'No! This isn't enough!'

Nine seconds were left. Theodore needed to somehow deal an effective blow.

“…Shit.”

There was one moment of hesitation before Theodore cried out, 「Absorption Star Method, activate!」

It was the ability to disassemble all the entities he made contact with into the smallest unit and then absorb that power. Lust’s final weapon and the strongest ability given to the heavenly demon revealed its teeth again. It wasn’t just in the material world. The mana in the atmosphere, as well as the seeds from soil, plants, and animals, were absorbed. This was the power of predation to eat everything, regardless of species, property, or system.

Kieeeeeeek-!

Those who could threaten a city or a nation were just prey in front of this power.

Theodore’s left arm stretched out and dragged in the evil spirits that were trying to escape. It was similar to a scene of water pouring down a drain. The evil spirits with a high density disintegrated into mana as soon as they reached his arm, filling the circles which had been drained after the previous battle. Theodore’s magic power became saturated in just two or three seconds.

“Haaaap!”

Theodore concentrated all the overflowing magic power into his right arm. As he pushed all the power of his left arm into Soul Calibre, the emerald blade grew to a length of several hundred meters in a flash. It could be called a blessing in disguise. The pure power of the Absorption Star Method increased the power of Soul Calibre. Eating over a thousand high level evil spirits was enough for that.

Synergy-Harmonize.

Add the power of Abraxas to wreak havoc!

Fusion Complete: Four Elements Exterminating Sword.

Once the fusion spell completed, Theodore jumped up and wielded the emerald blade that had become a pillar. The sword accelerated as the faint atmosphere separated. The sword's length increased, making the sword's speed increase as well. The edge of the blade broke through supersonic speed and cut the outer wall like it was butter.

Kakakakak!

It pierced through properly. Theodore felt the sensation and didn't retreat, raising his magic power instead. He couldn't miss this opportunity. Based on this resolution, he demonstrated more magic power than usual. This was his last chance since there were only 500 meters left until Wrath would become visible to the world. What if the 800-meter-long blade turned into a powder keg?

「 Sword, blow up! 」

It penetrated deeply and exploded. Theodore was unaware of it, but demolition was the simplest and most effective technique. The moment Wrath was about to enter the thermal layer, there was a big explosion.

————————————————!!!

The sky was torn. The air burst and a vacuum occurred, putting out the flames and making everything quiet.

Jjejejeok...! Jjeok...!

The state of the sphere was miserable. In the spot where Soul Calibre had been stuck into the outer wall, more than one hundred meters of debris were scattered like a meteor shower. Wrath had lost more than one-third of its volume, and the orbit seemed to shake.

'That's it! At this rate, one more blow before it hits the ground—'

However, Theodore wasn't allowed even a moment of hope.

[The number of observers on the target planet is constantly increasing. 3... 9... 17... 30 people. Upgrading the available power based on the increase in hostility by two stages.]

The lost volume was restored, and Wrath started accelerating. It was now falling at a speed of 4 kilometers per second. As if the damage Theodore dealt to it hadn't existed from the beginning, Wrath's outer wall became smooth and it fell to the ground.

This was when Theodore realized, '...Had it already expected this?'

Wrath had the highest logic circuits among the Seven Sins. It collected accurate data and could make future predictions using this data. If so, how easy would it be for Wrath to calculate the range of Theodore's actions? It had guided the situation to this moment by expecting 'Theodore Miller's full power.' The killer bots, soul stakes, and evil spirits that it had sent out had just been paving stones to this moment.

Theodore had lost. Thinking this, he tried to deny it, "No, not yet! It isn't over yet!"

The magic power he had absorbed was still overflowing. By rotating all nine circles, as well as using Gluttony's functions and the assistance function of Goetia, Theodore used six ultimate magic—lightning, storms, hellfire, blizzard, gravitational field, and space waves.

Jeeeong!

The firepower, which could erase a mountain, struck the outer wall and bounced far away. The defense had increased to a different level from when they fought in outer space. The number of observers was still increasing, and Wrath's output amplified significantly.

'Limit...!'

Theodore couldn't do his best. This wasn't his best. He hadn't used all the means he had and hadn't revealed the depths of his creativity.

'If I don't exceed the limits...!'

Theodore knew that he had to go beyond his limits. He knew that if he crossed the wall in his mind, a mouse could kill a lion. However, this world wasn't so hospitable. Theodore repeatedly made meaningless attempts as the number of observers who saw Wrath on the ground reached almost 10,000. Wrath's surface became so hard that both the ultimate magic and Soul Calibre didn't make a single scratch.

"Uwaaaaah!" Theodore became so desperate that he lost concentration for a moment.

Puk! A soul stake rose from the bottom and pierced his feet and thighs.

Peeok! Suddenly, two killer bots struck his defenseless sides and abdomen. Theodore's remaining magic power was strong enough to stop the fatal attack. However, once his bones were broken and internal bleeding occurred, there would be no way to maintain his spiritual body. His translucent body regained its physical form.

Then...

[Second vibration activate.]

It was the vibration that had destroyed Yamato no Orochi.

"Kuweeeeeek!" Finally, Theodore was thrown off Wrath's surface, with blood spraying from his eyes, nose, and mouth. It was a miracle that he didn't die instantly. He was saved by the sheer force of kicking off the surface. The power of the super vibration was fearsome, but most of the power was consumed as Wrath fell by centimeters. Theodore was no longer an obstacle, and Wrath kept moving forward.

"...Ah...ahh...!"

He reached out to Wrath, but it had accelerated to 10 kilometers per second and was now out of his reach.

“…N-n…o…!”

It was over. Theodore was convinced of the destruction of this material world as blood flowed from his eyes. Like ants in front of a flood, like a frog in front of lightning… In front of absolute ruin, Theodore was just a crumb, a crumb that fell apart once it was kicked.

-Not yet, User, Gluttony’s voice penetrated his body and mind. -Take your family, lovers, and a few other people to another dimension. Then return after Wrath is gone. Even if the civilized planet is reset, User’s power can restore the ecosystem within a hundred years.

It was exactly as Gluttony said. Wrath was still falling, and Theodore had a few minutes to escape from this world. If the fight couldn’t be won, then why shouldn’t he flee?

His valuable family…

The women he loved…

Was it a sin to evacuate with them?

‘Ah.’

This was closer to the unconscious desires of a human than a cowardly judgment. In the future which was only filled with despair, a faint light shone through. Who would blame Theodore for thinking this before the imminent destruction?

Kiiing!

However, right after that, a faint light sprang up from his right hand, and something flowed into his consciousness. The people that Theodore Miller thought was precious—his father, mother, and little brother, as well as Veronica, Ellenoa, and Sylvia…

Theodore’s eyes flinched. He felt a sudden sense of discomfort as

their locations poured in.

‘…What?’

The discomfort was sensed from Sylvia’s location. There were two life reactions coming from her coordinates. Theodore was troubled for a moment before he received a shock like he had been hit by a hammer.

“…D-Don’t tell me.”

He had no doubts about the precise location. The stirring of life was vividly conveyed from Sylvia Adruncus’s body. A child… His child existed in a world that would soon be destroyed.

“————————.” Theodore reached out without speaking, pulling an elixir out of his inventory and pouring it into his mouth. His shredded limbs recovered in an instant. After a few seconds, his body was restored to its original state, and Theodore gritted his teeth.

‘Run away? Leave this world?’

What would he tell his child who would be born in a few months?

‘Your dad abandoned his world and ran away?’

He didn’t want to. He would have to kneel down and bow his head in shame. Theodore couldn’t say this… He didn’t want to have his son live in the shadow of a shameful father. Although he felt sorry for Sylvia, he had made up his mind… just like her grandfather, Blundell Adruncus, had once done. For those who were precious to him, Theodore’s life was trivial.

“Gluttony.”

Hearing his voice, Theodore’s companion sighed.

-…I knew you would eventually do this. It will fail.

“Just 0.1 seconds. It doesn’t matter if it is only 0.1 seconds. If I can maintain my consciousness for even a moment…”

-It has a close to zero chance of success. It isn't even 1%.

"Won't you do anything for your purpose of existence?"

Gluttony fell silent at those words, and Theodore immediately concentrated mentally. From now on, he would make a mad gamble. He awakened his sorcery, Forced Harmonization, and reached for the next level. Theodore's harmonization was able to ignore attributes, elements, and opposing forces, mixing them together. It was possible to even join with magic weapons or foreign bodies that weren't of magic.

That's why Theodore had a thought.

'Maybe it is possible to assimilate with the concept of magic itself.'

Gluttony had heard the hypothesis a few months back and immediately responded, -It is impossible. No, you will die even if it is possible.

'Why?'

-I didn't want to let you know this, but the 10th circle comes from the source of magic. However, User wants to throw yourself into the center of this force. Do you want to dissolve in the infinite flow of information?

-Simon Magus went through proper training and was well prepared, yet he failed at the 10th circle. Jumping into the source is a shortcut, but you will surely die.

That's why Theodore had erased this shortcut. Now that he had found something more fearful than death, Theodore was able to choose this method without hesitation.

'Let's go.'

His destination was the source of all the wisdom in the universe. Theodore shook off his fears and took a step as he felt his body and soul moving beyond certain boundaries which were neither of time

nor space. However, why did he feel that he was going away?

Fate laughed at him as it created a path he couldn’t come back from.

Akashic Harmonize.

Shortly after that, Theodore Miller's life activity ceased.

Chapter 393 - Armageddon (5)

‘—Ahhh.’

Theodore’s voice didn’t emerge. His lips didn’t open. He couldn’t move any fingers or feel the flow of mana through his heart. It was unfathomable for a magician who could cast magic. There was nothing in front of his eyes, and no sound reached his ears. All of his five senses were out of order as he fell into a calm feeling. No, there was nothing.

‘—Ahh.’

It was negative and meaningless. The boundaries of Theodore’s consciousness became increasingly blurry. There was a force that couldn’t be resisted. The fruits of 30 years of struggle were being released. He forgot the unimportant memories—the faces of his classmates at Bergen Academy, the contents of books, the information window of the defective goods he bought from the black market dealer…

‘—Ah.’

Even if they didn’t matter, these memories were part of him. The pillars holding up the brick building started to shake. A page of the book called [Theodore Miller] was torn. He forgot someone whose name he didn’t know. Then he forgot landscapes and the distances he had walked. There was no room for resistance. As if an eraser was going through his brain, oblivion spread like wildfire as his 30 years were erased from the edges.

‘Ah.’

Theodo□ sensed he had forgotten something precious. He had just lost something he shouldn’t have forgotten. It was like a big hole had been punctured in his body. Who was it? When he thought about it, he knew he had forgotten someone. He wanted to scream, but his mouth was forced shut and he couldn’t even

wriggle around like an earthworm.

A fearful sense of futility filled him.

‘…’

As this swamp of nothingness rose to his throat, Theo□□ realized he was the only thing left. Theo□□? No, that wasn't his name. Th□□□. The moment he thought about it again, he lost more letters. Now he was on the brink of losing his name. Then he even forgot the last letter. □□□□. No, how many syllables were there? Something in the darkness of his body laughed loudly.

.

This was the end. The moment he stepped into the Akashic world, Theodore Miller no longer existed. It was an ending he had prepared for.

The determination of life, the power of a transcendent, wasn’t worth a penny here. It wasn’t a place where life could survive. In this infinite place, a finite consciousness wasn’t recognized. There were many people who came here, but no one went home.

This was the truth that every investigator was afraid of.

Even if only one drop was drunk, it was a source that could awaken a god’s wisdom. If the density of information was compared, it was no different from a star that had become a supernova while the ego of life was nothing but a lump of sugar. In the case of transcendents like Theodore, they might be the tip of an iceberg. However, the ending was still the same.

Simon Magus, the most powerful figure in the material world, hadn’t been able to bear a piece of this infinite wisdom and had melted away.

[……]

In the myths, there was a superglobal collection of information in which everything in the universe was recorded. If a

transcendent obtained it, they could wield the omnipotent power without distinction between past, present, and future. The Akashic Records, or the Hollow Records—this collection of information was the last target of those who searched beyond the realm of a god, but only one person had reached it.

[...No, he didn't get there.]

After that, he drowned. The information contained in the Akashic Records, the life of the universe, was overwhelming to any investigator. The same was true for the swordsman who could cut a star with a sword, as well as the apostles who dominated over dozens of planets.

No matter how strong they were, how could they bear all of the universe? Numerous transcendents had died due to their arrogance.

[It is a shame.]

It was said that 6,700 stars must multiply by 3,000 times to form one world. Multiplying that world by 3,000 times would form a great wide world, then multiplying the great wide world another 3,000 times would form the cosmos. However, even the cosmos was just dust. It was something that could be seen with the calculations. Even if someone managed to reach this infinity, it was impossible to maintain their ego. Someone eventually called it nirvana.

[Today, I have increased by 'one',] the sum of the universe, 'Akashic', muttered in a dry tone. [What did you come here hoping to find? Sublimation? Ugly desires? Well, good. No matter what you intended, it is meaningless. Everyone who is sullen, cowardly, humble, or arrogant becomes a few written letters...]

No one would know this. There was an independent self in the information collection, the Akashic Records which recorded the beginning and end of the universe. In retrospect, it wasn't unusual since it was a book containing all the wisdom in the world. It

would be more strange if such an existence had no will. Akashic's white body was like a spirit body, but it couldn't be observed in any dimension. The form resembled Theodore Miller, because he was the last investigator it saw.

[I will see you.]

Anything that Akashic, the incarnation of omniscience, wanted was achieved. In the middle of the universe, the black hole that would send everything back to naught was his residence. He always wanted to observe the person who had become part of 'Akashic.' It was his obligation to any investigators who reached him.

[Theodore Miller.]

Once he recited this name that was gone, Akashi traveled a few trillion light years to the relevant planet. It was 10 seconds after Wrath shook off Theodore. A three-kilometer-wide sphere made of a special metal was falling. Theodore's previous moves were useless as it fell at a speed of 10 kilometers per second toward the planet.

Akashic wondered about the result and was able to see it immediately.

The moment the metal sphere hit the ground, more than 50 kilometers of the planet would be destroyed and 98.128% of the population exterminated. The intelligent civilization would be destroyed without a trace, and it would take at least 200,000 years for the destroyed ecosystem to recover to its current condition.

[It is a common thing.]

This was his short impression of the situation. Akashic watched emotionlessly as this world was soon to be destroyed. The Seven Sins, an autonomous research group which had been made by external investigators—in the whole universe, dozens of civilizations or stars were being destroyed by them this very

second.

To celebrate the end of the investigator called Theodore Miller, Akashic kept watching.

[I am the one who records the end of creation. The weights of all life and death are the same. The truth is to be born and destroyed. It is something I can't intervene in.]

He wouldn't do anything even if he could. That would be ignorant, the incompetence of an almighty. It was possible for Akashic to bend a little finger and shake the physical laws of the entire universe, killing all living creatures or saving the dead. However, this action was meaningless. The guardian of the Akashic Records didn't feel such an impulse.

[Hmm.]

Therefore, he would observe this material world out of respect for the investigator.

[I will watch.]

He focused his attention on the planet that the investigator, Theodore Miller, had lived on.

Humans, elves, dragons, spirits, elementals... As all life forms in this material world came into view, Akashic penetrated into the reality of the collective. Unlike an omniscient entity, this was the essence of the Akashic Records. The power of recording observations was more familiar to him than any other authority.

Inside it, he found the name of 'Theodore.'

-Theo, where are you? Where are you now? No way... right? Sylvia Adruncus, who recently became pregnant, held her belly and thought of Theodore.

Wrath was already close enough to be seen from the surface. A red color in the sky—it was a sight that made everyone on the planet convinced of their destruction.

-...Shouldn’t you return safely, Husband? Otherwise, I will be angry. Veronica instinctively searched for his whereabouts.

-Ahh, Theodore...! This is what you were worried about...! Ellenoa belatedly realized why Theodore had been so nervous, and she looked up at the red meteorite with trembling eyes.

Many other people thought about Theodore—the hero of the northern continent and the greatest magician on the continents. Despite knowing it was ridiculous, they had faith that he would somehow do something.

-Son, please be safe. On the terrace of the mansion, Dennis Miller closed his eyes.

-...Sigh, if I knew the end would come today, I wouldn’t have slept last night. White Tower Master Orta sighed.

-Dammit, god dammit! I still haven’t gotten married! Randolph shouted as he swung his double swords.

[Five seconds left.]

Akashic turned away from Theodore Miller’s acquaintances to Wrath.

A falling meteorite was one of the most common disasters in the universe. As soon as the silver sphere with a diameter of three kilometers fell to the ground, this planet would become like a broken eggshell as the boundaries of land and sea disappeared. The magma flowing under the crust would explode like a fountain, and the blue sky would be filled with a red light, creating a hellish landscape.

Despite knowing all this, Akashic didn’t stop it. No, he knew he shouldn’t stop it. It was just a disaster occurring to a single civilization that Akashic was attracted to through a whim.

Kukwaaaaaang!

One second before the crash, shock waves ripped through the

sky. The air was pushed down by the clouds and darkness covered the sky. The learned and unlearned both knew…

This was the end of an absurd fate, the end which any religion described in one word—doomsday.

At the very last moment, Akashic's little finger moved weakly.

*

————————————————————!!!!

The meteorite was destroyed. Its silver surface was crushed like an egg, and the entity called Planet Buster was shattered. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of fragments were scattered. Before the fragments reached the ground, they went through an incomprehensible combustion and disappeared without a trace.

This was the futile end of Wrath, the last weapon of the Seven Sins.

[…Hrmm?] Akashic was surprised that he had destroyed Wrath. He was expressionless, but his tone went up one step higher. It was an impossible level of destruction. To think that it had accelerated through the distant universe to the surface of a planet, in order to destroy a meteorite? Furthermore, it saved the surface of the planet from the debris and restored the torn atmosphere. Akashic wasn't something to be led by emotions.

[Why?]

This was a common thing. It was just one planet filled with civilization. He could observe dozen such places if he turned his gaze now. Had the story of one investigator attracted him? Akashic thoroughly denied this reasoning. So, why did he watch Theodore Miller's planet? As Akashic was questioning his actions, the left hand of the omnipotent being gave him the answer.

[—Surprising.]

Akashic nodded. He was surprised. Despite emotions existing in

him, he was close to an inanimate object. In this case, he couldn't help feeling shocked. Theodore Miller…

Yes, it was such a name. Knowing that he and 'Theodore' had been separated, Akashic made a curious expression.

[Answer me. How could you survive inside of me?]

Theodore Miller stood naked but with no injuries. He had returned from death and smiled bitterly.

"I didn't survive. I died once, without a trace… and then I was reformed. It wasn't due to my strength. People helped me."

[Hoh.] Akashic was honestly interested. [I can easily find out but I want to hear it from your mouth. Can you tell me how it happened?]

"Yes. It is an honor to teach the Akashic Records something."

It was a feat which would never happen again in the history of the universe.

Chapter 394 - Armageddon (6)

Flap.

Before explaining, Theodore spread open his hands, and a robe appeared out of nowhere, wrapping around his body. Space wasn't hot or cold, so this was a matter of atmosphere. Akashic saw through Theodore's actions and felt in awe of him. [Denial of nothing? Reversing the phase of existence and non-existence. It is different from the recorded 'Theodore Miller'.]

The robe hadn't come from Theodore's inventory, nor had it been made using existing materials. Creation magic had literally created the robe from nothing. It was one step beyond the realm of ultimate magic. Interfering with matter and non-matter was a metaphysical concept.

"It is pretty good for someone who just came back from the dead. Isn't that right?" Theodore answered with a wry smile.

It would be difficult to catch a clue about this, even if he studied hard for more than a thousand years. The creation spell he used just now was just a minor amusement.

Theodore's eyes widened as he stared at Akashic. "The throne of omnipotence... I didn't know why it was called this, but now I know better than anyone else. A collection of dimensional information? That is ridiculous nonsense. It is just gathered information. It is the self-consciousness that can wield infinite power."

The origin of this mystery was denied by the source. However, Akashic didn't refute the remark. He just waited quietly without saying if this matter was true or false. In the face of omnipotence, no concept was absolute. Good and evil, justice and injustice, yin and yang...

It was possible to end the universe at this moment and restore it

at the next. Theodore was convinced when he saw the true Akashic Records.

[So?] Akashic asked. [Who am I?]

Theodore gave an answer that any scholar would give the rest of their lives to hear, “The Will of the Cosmos.”

There were intelligent beings who called a planet ‘Earth.’ That was a world which had developed at least four steps more than Theodore’s material world. It was a place where scientific civilization had developed due to the absence of mana.

Fractal cosmology was a delusion that some of the world’s fools had come up with. It was some nonsense about the similarity between the body and natural phenomena, a fancy notion that this universe could be someone’s body and that their body was made up of hundreds of universes.

“It is a little different but you are the consciousness of this universe. You have no choice but to be omnipotent. All the laws that make up the universe are part of you. Magic, shamanism, aura, science, gods… No matter what path they choose, the investigator is the same. It is like saying that a river will lead to the sea and the stars to the galaxy.”

[Right.] Akashic nodded in confirmation for the first time. [Birth and death. The beginning and the end are the same. Destruction is also the same. You all come from me and will return to me.]

It was the same as the reincarnation cycle in Buddhism.

An investigator was a person who drowned in the power and wisdom they had longed for before meeting the end that would someday be met. They achieved this earnest desire by becoming one with Akashic, and they couldn’t return to what they originally were.

Therefore, Akashic requested from Theodore, [Answer me, Theodore Miller.]

A figure who climbed back from the brink of infinity opened his mouth, “Now, where should I start…”

The story wasn’t long.

*

The moment he stepped into the Akashic Records, Theodore realized his own stupidity.

0.1 seconds? 0.01 seconds? He couldn’t maintain his ego in the vortex for that long. Gluttony’s advice had been correct. Compared to the vastness of the universe, one planet was just a speck of dust. How light was the weight of the people living on it?

The moment it entered the Akashic Records, Theodore’s soul shattered and melted like butter in just a few seconds.

…….

Theodore lost his ego and became a ghost, destined to wander for infinity.

The throne of omnipotence—it was a place where one second felt like one year and one centimeter felt like a galaxy. A place where all concepts were established and scattered, and the boundaries were meaningless… It was a place that suited the word ‘pāramitā.’

[Idiot,] someone at the other side of the river shot at Theodore. [You couldn’t even grasp the subject. I didn’t realize the person who received my teachings was so stupid.]

A person who had charred hair and eyes burning with indescribable wisdom gazed at the wreckage that was Theodore.

90% contempt and 10% pity… With these conflicting emotions, the existence picked up the wreckage. Based on the size of the wreckage, Theodore must’ve been torn into thousands of pieces.

The great man, Simon Magus, criticized Theodore coldly, [You would have gradually melted down in the normal way. Yet you rushed into the center, forcing your soul to be crushed. Just a few

seconds would've been able to save the world.]

Of course, that wouldn't have been possible. It had been less than 10 years since Theodore reached the 9th circle. His original talent was insignificant, and he had borrowed the power of the grimoire Gluttony. Nevertheless, Simon had passed down his teachings to Theodore.

[...I can't admit it.]

This loser was the one who had received his teachings? Simon Magus couldn't accept reality. Therefore, he raised his voice and cried out without hesitation, [I, Simon Magus, calls you! All investigators from the material world, please gather here!]

Despite being fully assimilated into the Akashic Records, the investigators' souls protected their egos. There was no practical use, but they could be considered as single cells in an organism. Simon Magus could also be said to be a part of Akashic. Most of them hadn't been able to make this distinction and had melted down. However, some investigators had managed to maintain a degree of personality.

[What? Is there something interesting?] A handsome man with a somewhat languid expression walked out from somewhere. He wore 10 rings on his fingers and was called Solomon.

[What did you call me for, grand master?] Ahasverus, the great magician who had followed Simon Magus during his life, looked at Simon with a questioning expression.

In addition to those two investigators, many other investigators gathered beside Simon. Simon had been at the forefront of the Age of Mythology when investigators had been the most common. He had been stronger than anyone else. It was the same inside the Akashic Records.

Around 100 people gathered, then Simon opened his mouth.

[I know the situation.]

[Um…]

[Ah.]

[…Hoh.]

They were all part of Akashic. The investigators shared their observations in real time and nodded.

There was one person who spoke gruffly, [Yes, a crisis where our home will be crushed to pieces. So?]

[Faust.]

[What does it have to do with us when we are just dust in the universe? I have no interest in peace or the lives of the living.]

It was half right, half wrong. Some people lived with a sense of justice. On the other hand, there were those who indulged in wealth, fame, and beauty. Investigators had weak ids and directions in life. Nothing could be done about the deaths of the living.

[I am the same.] Rather than denying it, Simon Magus accepted it. [Everyone who is gathered here will know. Living things are born, become old, get sick, and die. Nations will rise and fall, repeat the ebb and flow. A planet isn't an exception.]

[…I know. Then why have you gathered us?]

[It is simple,] Simon Magus haughtily declared to the investigators with folded arms, [I don't like it.]

[What?]

[The fact that there is only one last investigator of this material world—I don't like it.]

The investigators were stunned while Simon showed them the wreckage of Theodore on his palms. The life of the magician called Theodore Miller—his life was given to the investigators. Simon Magus told them his reasoning, [Can you stand it? The magician who defended the place you called home? He was ashamed to see

his child and jumped into the Akashic Records.]

[…….]

[…….]

[I don’t know about you but I can’t admit it. I, Simon Magus, dedicated hundreds of years to exploring the truth. I gave up the honor of a human and lived while only exploring magic. But in an instant, he reached a level higher than me! The driving force of one young man!]

It was an end without any profit, but Theodore Miller had reached deeper into the Akashic Records than anyone else. The dumbfounded investigators suddenly opened their mouths.

[P-Puhat, puhahahaha!] Solomon broke the silence with a loud laugh.

[Ahahaha! What, are you jealous of that kid? You gathered us here to show us that?]

[Right. Is this it?]

[You gathered us together to motivate us?]

The rest of the investigators nodded in agreement.

Then Simon spat at them, [What do you know? I do this because I want to. I know that it isn’t something I can do alone, but I will still try. Anyway, we are all garbage. We have just become cosmic voyeurs! I don’t care if you aren’t interested. I am Simon Magus! This fact won’t change even if I become the dust of the universe!]

[…….]

[…….]

This was different from the previous silence. After Simon’s speech, the investigators started to think about it with different facial expressions. There was an investigator who came to a conclusion sooner than anyone else.

[Okay, let's try it.] The king of wisdom, Solomon raised a hand with a smile. [In any case, he seems to be someone who has a relationship with me.]

[Lemegeton.]

[That is right, but I can't acknowledge him as my successor.]

The second applicant appeared soon. It was a young man with a neutral type of beauty and a golden tail behind him. He was the transcendent born from a grimoire and great youkai—the strongest onmyōji in history, Abe no Seimei. [He is the one who granted my wishes. I will also help.]

[Anything is fine. Anybody else?]

At that moment, a strange old voice was heard, [...I would also like to participate. Is it okay?]

[Huh?]

The investigators turned their heads at the unfamiliar voice and saw an old man with an excellent physique. He had lost his life a few years ago and only recently regained his ego. The old man was Blundell Adruncus, a magician who had transcended the moment he breathed his last breath.

[You are new. Isn't your ego still unstable? If things go wrong, you might not be able to regain your personality again.]

[It doesn't matter. That rotten boy is giving me a great-grandchild.]

[Indeed, then I won't refuse.]

There were four of them. Even a transcendent person felt the instinct to go with the flow. There were those who were bored, those who were interested, or those who felt jealous like Simon. With the exception of a few pessimists, the investigators stepped forward. Faust grunted in an awkward manner because he had no choice but to cooperate.

[I can’t forgive anyone who knows the pain of a child.]

[Go back and look after the child!]

[Aren’t you like a nagging wife? I bet that I’ll be back in 10 years.]

[…Weren’t you poisoned to death while cheating?]

[He is too young to end up this way.]

The hundreds of people added their voices, making it hard to hear. This was a rebellion of the investigators, led by Simon Magus. No, since they were also part of Akashic, it was more of a ‘deviation’ than ‘rebellion.’ How far could the single cells go?

Simon smiled on behalf of all investigators of the material world.

[Okay, I will twist a finger.]

Who knew? Simon Magus and the investigators were successful.

*

[…….] Akashic was speechless after hearing Theodore’s story. Was it checking the facts with its cells? Just as Theodore had this thought…

[Hah.] Akashic gave a small smile. [Interesting. There were movements inside me that I wasn’t aware of. Based on your explanation, it wasn’t you who destroyed Wrath.]

“Yes.”

[It is mysterious. I didn’t manage the investigators who make up a part of me. There was no reason or need for it. The investigators who became one with me aren’t able to do anything. I didn’t think hundreds of investigators would cooperate for ‘another’.]

The transcendents were monsters with their own ego. They did things for their own sake, like the grimoires. There was someone who changed a country for an experiment and someone else who sacrificed their kin. Even Simon Magus had been unable to make them move, until now.

[This is the first time.]

The investigators throughout the history of this planet had devoted themselves to one person and lent their strength. In retrospect, this had never happened before. Simon Magus was the one who had called for help, but the investigators were also part of the Akashic Records. It was possible to make 'Akashic' move if they gathered their strength. However, there was no case where this possibility had occurred.

[I'm glad I didn't observe the future. This is so interesting I don't know if I can see it again in the future. Theodore Miller, I will take the part of me that you took as an admission fee.]

"Yes, take it." There was no reason to argue, so Theodore nodded without hesitation and looked at the blue star far away.

It was blue and green. A planet with an ecological environment like this material world was rare in the Akashic Records. The average planet's environment was said to vary because the atmosphere was so thin, and there were extreme temperature changes. Collisions with asteroids were also frequent.

[Do you want to go back?]

Theodore immediately nodded at Akashic's question, "Yes."

[...There is no hesitation in your heart. Good. I will take it back. Before that, let me know one more thing,] Akashic opened his mouth with no expression. [When you became one with me, you were omnipotent. You would've realized it after the investigators restored your soul. Isn't that right?]

"That's right."

[How can you give up that power? There are some investigators who came to me after training for a long time and didn't lose consciousness for a while. But they were also attracted by the temptation of this omnipotence and became a part of 'me.' I'm sorry but it is hard to say that your mental strength is higher than

theirs.]

The pleasure born of being almighty was beyond imagination. They could go anywhere and do anything.

It was more addictive than drugs. Theodore thought for a moment and answered without difficulty, “I wasn’t looking for you or hoping for this.”

Akashic laughed and clapped for the first time. It was the answer he wanted to hear... that in this world, there was something more precious than omnipotence.

[...Indeed, indeed! Those who are left in this world are more important than omnipotence! Good. Let’s go back to your world, magician! I respect you for not choosing to sit on the omnipotent throne and return to dust again!] The jubilant Akashic said to Theodore. [A human has chosen to return to being a bug. Some people might say you are stupid but you did what no one else could. This spirit led to the investigators stepping forward. I will wait for our reunion one day, Theodore Miller!]

“Then we will meet again. Farewell, Akashic.”

[Huhahahaha! This is the first time someone has said this to me. I will see you again at the end of your life. Then, goodbye!]

There was a brilliant radiance, and Theodore closed his eyes.

*

“...Eh?” Theodore realized he was lying on the ground.

Chapter 395 - Goodbye, Dear Friend (1)

In a silent and empty space, the cold wind of the northern hemisphere was blowing. Theodore looked up and around slowly.

White... The whole world was a pure white because of a raging blizzard. Nevertheless, there was no problem recognizing where he was lying down.

'...A crater?'

The radius was approximately two kilometers wide. If he looked down from the sky, he would see a round pit. Theodore was precisely at the center of it.

There was a clear reason for trepidation. One of the Seven Sins, Wrath had disappeared from this material world without a trace. However, look at this crater. It was a sign that the atmospheric pressure caused by Wrath's fall had reached several kilometers and dug at the ground.

'If even a small fragment had reached the surface... A disaster at an irrevocable level would've occurred.'

At that moment...

-...User? Gluttony, who had fallen asleep for an unknown reason, opened his mouth.

"Gluttony."

-What happened? You were in space and just about to enter... It is strange. I don't remember what happened next. I seem to have forgotten something. Why is User here, and where did Wrath disappear to?

Theodore grasped the situation. Somehow, Gluttony didn't have any memories of what happened after Theodore entered the Akashic Records. After struggling for a moment, Theodore changed his mind. Gluttony wasn't an opponent he could trick

with flimsy lies. Theodore had been with Gluttony for a long time and knew that well.

“In a few simple words, it was successful.”

-What?

“Harmonization.”

Gluttony was muttering to itself when it stopped. -……

There was just silence. It wasn’t because Gluttony couldn’t understand Theodore’s words but that it couldn’t accept them. This was more so because it was Gluttony. Numerous entities, including those who came to the material world, had challenged it countless times and had never been successful. This was the purpose of existence which none of the Seven Sins had ever achieved! Gluttony couldn’t feel that it was real.

-I-Is this true?

“Yes.”

-User, this is Akasha you are talking about!

“Yes? Ah, wait a minute. There is something I have to do before that.”

Theodore turned away from Gluttony’s voice, which was trembling with amazement, and raised one hand, pointing it at the sky. Wrath had disappeared, but Theodore still needed to deal with the aftermath.

‘Hrmm, this is the feeling.’ Theodore closed his eyes and focused on himself.

A strange wisdom was boiling in his body. It was the power he had gained directly from the source, the fragment of the Akashic Records that had been brought back as a by-product of restoring his soul. This wasn’t an ability to learn but the power to change magic. Nothing was impossible in front of his power.

-What?

The sky moved. The gigantic hole caused by Wrath falling was gradually being filled in. The cracks in the ozone layer recovered, and the atmosphere, which had been pushed away, returned. The darkness was lifted as the sky returned to normal. It took seven seconds. Theodore's hand lowered after fixing the sky of the northern hemisphere. This was enough, even if it wasn't perfect. As long as the damage wasn't too bad, the world's natural recovery ability would intervene.

-Synchronizing with the planet's atmosphere...?! That needs a different level of understanding compared to interfering with the interstellar wind...!

"I don't know even if you ask me. I just thought that things should be returned to what they were."

Gluttony responded with even more surprise, -...Akasha gave you strength? That miser?

"The miser spent money. Otherwise, I would be dead."

-It is surprising. No, it is a profit beyond my imagination. I thought I would have to wait more than a thousand years. I never thought it would be shortened in this way.

"A thousand years?" Theodore couldn't help asking.

However, Gluttony didn't reply. Like always, the silence was unpleasant. There was an unknown atmosphere between the magician and grimoire that shared one body.

-User, Gluttony opened its mouth a few minutes later and spoke to him, -I have something to suggest.

"What is it?"

-Why don't you release my 7th seal?

Theodore's eyes widened at the unexpected words.

-It is possible if it is User who has come back from Akasha. No, it would be easy. The amount of information accumulated in my

body is nothing compared to Akasha.

“…Synchronizing with your body is the 7th stage?”

-That’s right. My body that is scattered in many dimensions… Focus the power and information gathered by those terminals in one body. This is the sword that can capture Akasha’s throne of omnipotence. This is my purpose!

The words were shocking, but Theodore was able to accept them without much confusion. If Gluttony’s final goal was the Akashic Records, then this process wasn’t unusual. The aim of becoming something was common everywhere. It was no exception for the Seven Sins.

-No one has succeeded. I thought I wouldn’t be able to succeed. But User, you have defended yourself against the infinite vortex and can do it!

Theodore measured it. He didn’t know how much information was stored in Gluttony’s main body, but he could faintly guess…

It wasn’t an impossible story, as Gluttony said. This was a chance to gain absolute power, even if it wasn’t the Akashic Records. He also had a piece of Akashic’s wisdom and would be able to place one or two galaxies below his feet. However, Theodore firmly rejected the proposal, “I don’t want to.”

-W-What?

“I don’t want to. I won’t release your seal.”

Gluttony was speechless. Then Theodore explained why he refused, “I can succeed as you said, but I also might fail. I’m not running away because I’m afraid to face the consequences. I just don’t want this, so I am stopping my feet.”

-You don’t want to progress?

“Yes. I realized it after entering the Akashic Records. Moving on is irreversible. If I release your seal and move onto the next stage…

I will have to leave this life.”

This was the biggest difference between Theodore Miller and the other investigators. He had no faith that he could do anything after becoming an omnipotent person. For instance, sacrificing his loved ones to become almighty... If he brought his lovers back to life after becoming omnipotent, had he lost anything?

‘This isn’t true.’

Even if his lovers didn’t remember anything, the almighty being would remember the past and feel alone. He couldn’t forget. As the incarnation of omniscience, anything forcibly forgotten would eventually rise up again. Therefore, those who had something to lose couldn’t become almighty. An almighty being must be perfect. Therefore, they had to throw away the things which would grab their ankles on the way.

-Don’t weaken, User! Gluttony, however, dismissed it as feebleness. -One step ahead. Are you thinking of leaving the target before you alone? If you succeed, you can regain the life you gave up before. No, I am confident that it is possible! You can play with that prideful draconian or play with the sun and moon!

“...That isn’t good, Gluttony.” Theodore let out a sigh. It was because he felt the boundaries of a perception that couldn’t be overcome. “I am Theodore Miller, a husband who married three women and a father who will have a child... The most powerful magician in the current material world, the Chief Tower Master of Meltor. If nothing is left out, I am Theodore Miller.”

-So?

“You heard it and still don’t know. ‘Now’ won’t come back if I unleash the seal. I’m not talking about time. ‘I’ won’t come back.”

Theodore wasn’t Gluttony or the Akashic Records. Would Theodore be the same as he was now if he made contact with a transcendent existence? He firmly believed it wouldn’t be the case.

Theodore understood it when he had an overwhelming view of humans. The ‘price’ of existence was too high, and he wouldn’t be able to love a ‘lower status’ object. Even if he could feel something, it would be nothing but compassion or pity.

“If I can reach it one day, I won’t come back. Then isn’t it better to cherish the present? That’s why I will refuse your offer.”

-Trivial! Despite Theodore’s long persuasion, Gluttony wasn’t convinced. -The continuity of time is uncertain. Every minute that passes would decrease the clarity of information! You don’t want to leave your life now? It is unlikely that User will remember these feelings. They won’t last!

“Well, I guess so.”

-...User!

They had incompatible ideas. A line was drawn between Theodore and Gluttony, who shared one body. If one more step was taken, an irreversible line would be crossed.

The first one to cross that line was Gluttony. -I will suggest it one more time, User. Release my stage 7 seal right now. If it isn’t now, you won’t be able to reach it! There is no guarantee that the opportunity to surpass Akasha will come again until the end of the universe!

Theodore hesitated one beat before smiling bitterly. “I refuse.”

-...It is a pity. I wanted to maintain a good relationship with User.

Then red eyes appeared in the palm of Theodore’s left hand.

-From now on, I will have to eat User?

Simultaneously, Gluttony’s mouth opened wide. It swallowed Theodore’s wrist, elbow, and moved upward. The power of Gluttony, ‘predation’, was trying to devour its contractor.

Seook.

His left arm flew—Theodore's arm. Blood dripped down Soul Calibre in Theodore’s right arm as new flesh, bones, and nerves grew from the severed left arm. Theodore had cut off his left arm as soon as Gluttony revealed itself as an enemy. It was a quick response.

However, Gluttony chuckled rather than panicking at the action. -Didn’t I already tell you, User? My contract is directly connected with you! There is no sense in cutting the connection point!

“Let’s see?” Theodore didn’t raise a single eyebrow.

Gluttony became startled as it belatedly realized an incongruity. -...N-No? Why is the contract broken?

Theodore smiled bitterly at the panic. It was something Gluttony couldn’t know. The moment Theodore accessed the Akashic Records, his soul had been shattered and reassembled.

No matter how strong Gluttony’s contract was, it couldn’t remain with a shattered soul. As such, Theodore’s left arm, which was the connection point, had been restored when his body was rebuilt. Therefore, Gluttony didn’t know that the contract had been cut off. However, Theodore had been thinking of signing the contract again if Gluttony lost its greed.

‘But it’s impossible.’

The grimoire lost its sense of reason now that its purpose of existence was right in front of it. In the end, Theodore settled his thoughts and prepared for battle. Gluttony felt magic power rising and cried out, -User!

“No more,” Theodore spoke bitterly.

There was a heavy silence for a moment before something like mud overflowed from the severed left arm containing Gluttony. The darkness which flowed from the left arm formed a body. The body’s shape resembled Theodore. Apart from the red eyes, the body’s height, hair, and skin were the same as Theodore’s.

The two beings faced each other in a snowstorm.

-...Theodore Miller!

The fight to finish the relationship between the two of them began.

Chapter 396 - Goodbye, Dear Friend (2)

Kukukung...!

The magic power overflowing from both beings shook the earth. The outskirts of the crater collapsed, and the clouds that had just formed were torn apart again. Theodore's eyes shone just before the collision. Due to his contact with the Akashic Records, he was able to see a few dimensions higher. It was possible for him to peek at the power of the grimoire, Gluttony who had separated from him.

'It is equivalent to 'me' before entering the Akashic Records? No, the grimoire has perfect arithmetic abilities and its other functions, so I should assume it is more than that.'

Gluttony was stronger than most transcendents. It couldn't be compared to the ones they had fought in the swamp and might be even stronger than the heavenly demon. Nevertheless, Theodore didn't feel any fear. The reason for that was very simple.

-You will regret your stupidity, Theodore Miller! Gluttony cried out furiously and stretched out both of its palms.

Memorize.

All Slots Open.

Nonuple Keraunos.

This was the ultimate magic Theodore had created personally. Nine of Gluttony emerged at the same time. It was a destruction which could crush a mountain and tear the sky. Only one second was required to complete the nine ultimate spells. Then the world was filled with a pale light as the lightning assault began.

Kwarururung!

The surface of the crater, unstable due to the aftermath of Wrath, collapsed with a loud roar. Meanwhile, the inside of the

crater started to melt quickly, and the blizzard, which had raged for many years, was blown away. White lightning flashed and changed the ions in the atmosphere. Even adamantium would evaporate. The lightning bolts of huge power struck down tens of thousands of feet. They turned the heavens and the earth upside down, making a strange mark.

It wasn't a power that could be safely handled even by a transcendent.

-Hmm. However, Gluttony stared ahead with calm, dark eyes. It might be in the form of a human but dust couldn't block the vision of a grimoire. The Keraunos was perfectly aimed. This was the consequence of ranged attacks, but it didn't mean much if the attack didn't hit directly.

"Kuwabara kuwabara." (TL: Knock on wood, said to especially ward off lightning)

There was no doubt that Theodore had survived without getting hurt. Gluttony grunted when he heard the spell and realized what the countermeasure was. -The lightning god's blessing. Learning to avoid lightning from me—it gives a bad taste.

"If you knew, you shouldn't have used it. Isn't it no different from knowing the answer to a problem?"

-...If lightning doesn't work, how about this?

Did Gluttony want to avoid communicating? Without responding to Theodore's friendly words, Gluttony cast two spells—Hellfire and Absolute Zero.

Just one of these great magics was enough to destroy an army. Theodore's magic could be summed up in one word—Abraxas.

It was dangerous. Theodore had a carefree expression and moved his palm one beat late. There was no proper countermeasure to Abraxas, a magic that caused collapse. It could only be hit with a similar magic or offset. The two Abraxas clashed in the middle.

Pak!

The space burst without a sound. The power of Abraxas overlapped twice and further extended the crater. The pit with a radius of two kilometers was enlarged to a radius of four kilometers, and the light was lifted.

‘It will come.’

Shortly afterward, Theodore sensed something. He sensed that Gluttony would aim for this moment. The flash of Abraxas wasn’t a real light but part of the collapse. Creatures based in the three dimensions couldn’t recognize this light with their five senses. However, the senses of the grimoires were different from life forms. If Gluttony could observe the dimensional vibrations, he wouldn’t miss the advantage of this moment.

‘Can it do it?’

Theodore’s nerves accelerated to 0.3 seconds and gave up on this thought.

Gluttony wasn’t an autonomous maneuver-type grimoire. There was a clear limit to the ability to act independently from its contractor. Gluttony would self-destruct if Theodore just ran around without fighting. If Theodore held on until it ran out of power, would it let go of its greed?

“That would be the ideal end.”

The moment Theodore mumbled that and smiled…

Puhak!

Gluttony soared high into the sky and created a magic circle. - You have forgotten what was on your left arm…!

A strong suction force was felt from the darkened body. It was neither wind or gravity. There was only one source of the ominous pull. It was the heavenly demon’s power which was tied to Theodore’s left arm—the inherent ability of the incarnation of

disaster, the Absorption Star Method.

Kiiing!

Subsequently, Theodore's right hand shone. The moment the power of the Absorption Star Method was recognized, the management authority of the material world lent him its power. If he didn't act soon, the world would dry up.

"No, I don't need it."

However, Theodore didn't accept the power. Although Gluttony might've drawn a great deal of power through the Absorption Star Method, Theodore was confident enough to win at this stage. Gluttony tried to say something but realized it was stupid to give advice and shut its mouth. In any case, wasn't this a fight where one of them might die?

-...It doesn't matter.

Simultaneously, the entire sky was covered with a red magic circle.

"Hah."

It was ridiculous. Theodore was speechless since he knew that these magic circles were the ultimate magic launcher. This was hard even for a grimoire. It was obvious that Gluttony's body had collapsed from the repulsive force. However, it didn't deal significant damage to Gluttony, since it wasn't a real body except for the left arm.

'At least 15... If I had to guess, there are at least 23 spells.'

Would this magic transformation have been possible during the Age of Mythology? This was the unreasonable result of adding Theodore's abilities together with a grimoire's computing ability. From here on, Theodore had to do well. If he made a single mistake, he would die.

-Die.

The sky was torn.

*

The battle after that wasn't long, but it was fearsome enough to be reminiscent of those during the Age of Mythology. Even if all the power in this present material world were collected, it wouldn't be able to hold against this firepower for 10 seconds. With a single lightning strike that created a cliff and a fire that ate the wind in the form of a dragon, this was a landscape where all types of natural disasters gathered in one place.

Blade of Chronos—a translucent sword was shot out at the speed of light. It was a magic that sealed any time and space it touched, a technique which sealed defense magic.

During the Age of Mythology, some magicians had sealed gods with this. It was a magic that Theodore couldn't use even though he knew about it, yet Gluttony seemed to have grasped the logic behind it.

「Instantaneous acceleration, 132 times! 」

However, Theodore didn't panic as he carried out his defenses. If it was an acceleration that the seal couldn't follow, then the sealing sword would self-destruct. The translucent sword was squished and vanished. Without seeing the result, he immediately attacked with four ultimate spells.

Dimension Buster.

Immovable Fire.

Eternal Force Blizzard.

Keraunos.

As the space burst, the ultimate magic of three attributes came into play. This retaliatory attack was really bloody. If he didn't know how to deal with it, it would be a fatal blow. Without any delay, the energy of three attributes rushed into the space which

was shattered by Dimension Buster.

Theodore envisioned some of his old ideas and put into action a magic he had never used before.

「 Arcane Barrier! 」

Even so, he quickly responded to the damaged space, restoring it by transferring space from elsewhere, while the three ultimate spells of different attributes were frozen at their space coordinates. It was a unique counter skill that could only be done by Theodore Miller.

Forced Harmonization.

Of course, this trick couldn't control the ultimate magic. Additionally, the caster was an existence with unmatched computer power—Gluttony. Theodore's actions were just a minor intervention. Gluttony twisted the normal circuit and let it go.

————————————————!

Without the intervention of Forced Harmonization, the magic of three attributes couldn't coexist. Once Theodore's Sorcery was lifted, the three spells trapped in the same coordinates exploded. It contained significant power. Theodore took a step forward without any fear. With this, Gluttony had exhausted 25 ultimate spells. It had the initiative and would continue the one-sided offensive.

'...Is that what you thought?'

Theodore smiled calmly and spread open his right hand.

「 Tathagata's Hand. 」

Gluttony floating in the sky was grasped firmly.

-Kuk?

Gluttony's black body froze as it was squeezed by the space around it. It tried to use space movement or time acceleration, but nothing worked. This magic had never been seen in the history of

this material world! Theodore revealed the trick as Gluttony watched him with astonishment.

“Don’t be surprised. It is a power for a one-time use—the ability of a top-level deity that can’t be escaped.”

It was a technique used by the Great Sage, the Equal of Heaven. Theodore himself would have no way of escaping. Meanwhile, Gluttony was using the Absorption Star Method and was treated as an eternal presence, making the binding force ten times stronger.

-A magician relying on this trick instead of magic…!

“Didn’t you cover for your lacking magic with the Absorption Star Method? How about you surrender? Take a look at the seal.”

-Trivial nonsense! Gluttony fiercely shook off Theodore’s goodwill. -I will dissipate the strength of this seal. If I disassemble it with the Absorption Star Method and use it as my strength…!

“So… you still haven’t seen it?” Theodore appeared behind Gluttony’s back with a single space movement and reached out without hesitation.

Yin and Yang Binding—it was the same technique as Seimei’s, but the intentions were a bit different. Seimei had been just a piece of a soul and he had been prepared for his extinction. However, it wasn’t as difficult for the present Theodore. He took a part of his soul and made it into a string, then he tied it around Gluttony’s left forearm.

Seook.

Theodore cut if off just like when he cut off his own arm.

“I won’t miss this time.”

-Kuk…!

Theodore personally demonstrated the magic to Gluttony. He put a ‘time-binding sword’ into Gluttony’s left foot. The translucent sword sealed Gluttony to the spot. Actually, Theodore had been

able to do this from the beginning. He could have overpowered Gluttony without giving it a chance to resist. However, Theodore had let this unnecessary fight go on.

“…Hey, my friend.”

It was the companion who had been with him for dozens of years, the existence that had raised the dunce of Bergen Academy to become the strongest magician of this material world… Theodore had known this would happen. He was confident in this fight. Still, he arrived at this moment due to his heart. For him who had seen another dimension, his past self was nothing. Theodore just mourned that the end was coming and dragged out the fight.

“…”

It wasn’t too late even now. He could sign the contract and go back to the previous state. Sadness and foolishness burned up inside of him. Theodore swallowed down these thoughts.

“I won, Gluttony.” There was remorse in Theodore’s voice.

Gluttony was silent and didn’t respond for a few seconds.

-Yes. Before long, it replied in the same voice as always, -…It is my defeat, Theodore Miller.

Chapter 397 - Goodbye, Dear Friend (3)

A quiet voice announced the end of the fight.

Theodore stepped back and saw Gluttony stuck to the ground. Gluttony was caught in the ‘sword that sealed time’. It had lost its Absorption Star Method and couldn’t lift a finger. Though Theodore’s body, which had lost its left arm, was wary of the possibility of resistance, Gluttony’s artificial body had already scattered into the air.

It was literally world-shaking. The fight between the two transcendent beings had caused the earth to shake wildly, triggering a localized earthquake. In a sense, it was fortunate that this was finished now. If Theodore hadn’t stopped the offensive and actually competed with the power of the management authority, the northern part of the continent would’ve been blown away.

Theodore closed his eyes for a brief moment and sighed deeply.

‘Almost half of the restored atmosphere has been blown away again. The glacier melted from the heat, causing the sea level to rise by a few meters. It won’t be fixed for a while.’

In the end, he had no room to complain. Theodore delayed thinking about reality and turned to Gluttony. The sky was crying out, and the earth was shaking. The end was approaching. Both of them knew this and didn’t speak. Time passed without a word. Eventually, the shaky ground and sky calmed down.

-Hmm. Finally, Gluttony opened its mouth and spoke calmly, -You are strong, User. You have surpassed my expectations.

“...Really?”

-That’s right. You easily suppressed me without using my strength...

There was no big difference between Theodore and the heroes of

the Age of Mythology. Most of them wouldn't be Gluttony's opponents unless they were like Simon Magus or Solomon.

It wasn't an exaggeration. Theodore's clone, created by Gluttony, was stronger than it was originally. From the magic power and computing power through to the overwhelming amount of knowledge and magic linkage that fired spells in seconds, Theodore's clone had been a near-universal magician.

Among the heroes of the Age of Mythology, approximately only 10 of them would be a match.

-Now you might be able to knock down Nídhöggur if he appears in the material world. Some preparations are needed but you can be born as a new god on this planet.

"I don't want to be a god."

-I know. You don't even want to overthrow Akasha's throne of omnipotence. You are such a person, Theodore Miller.

Theodore couldn't say anything. It was a strange relationship from beginning to end, but Gluttony was the one who best understood him in this world, even more than the family members who were connected to him by blood or his lovers.

The grimoire was a part of him that was so close he couldn't speak about love. Gluttony knew everything. It was Theodore's second soul and companion, the one who had reached out a hand of salvation to Theodore when he had fallen into inferiority.

"Shit!"

Thus, Theodore had to hesitate. He had already wasted a few minutes on the opponent whom he could finish off with one chant. No matter how powerful the 'sword that binds time' was, he couldn't keep Gluttony in this state forever. It meant there wasn't much time left to talk.

At that moment...

-Don’t hesitate, Gluttony opened its mouth before the hesitating Theodore. -Why are you so agitated? Why are you hesitating? Do you think that I’ve regained reason? No. This chance doesn’t exist. Once the binding power is lost, I will attack again.

“I know even if you don’t say this.”

-You have made your choice. You didn’t look at the end of all truths and decided to stay in this world. Continue to the end of this path without looking back. This is the responsibility of the winner.

“Hah,” Theodore laughed bitterly at the words. ‘Advising me to finish it off.’

It was really annoying that Gluttony was always right. Theodore didn’t hide his heart as he spoke in a sarcastic tone, “Why don’t you speak words of surrender instead of death? Why don’t you ask me to seal you or something like that?”

-Will you do it if I ask?

“No.”

-The result is obvious, so there is no point. You wouldn’t want to see me like that either.

The penetrating words caused Theodore to bite his lips. Otherwise, a bad sound would emerge.

“…I still can’t get the final word in, dammit.”

-I won the argument. With this, it is 1:1?

“How funny.” Theodore couldn’t help laughing and realized that his heart had become lighter. The lingering attachment between the two of them was settled. It was clear that the shape of the sword holding onto Gluttony had become increasingly blurred.

“—Yes, let’s finish it.”

The two who met must now part. Theodore realized the inevitability of this and raised his palms. He couldn’t buy any more time. As his nine circles revolved and the magic power in his body

boiled, a complicated magic circle rose from his palms as he spread them out. This was a magic that he had previously cast once by borrowing the power of others.

-Dimensional Banish? It is a decent way.

A Seven Sins grimoire wouldn't disappear from this material world unless the host was destroyed. What if it had a defenseless structure like Lust? As such, in order to combat the grimoire, Theodore needed to pour out firepower like he had done with Pride or to banish it from the dimension like what had happened with Sloth.

Wuuuong... The space started vibrating. It was the sign that the circle around Gluttony was punching a hole in the dimension. Theodore was surprised since the speed was faster than he had expected. However, he soon realized why.

'I see. Thanks to the experience with the Akashic Records, it seems I have learned how to deal with dimensional boundaries...?'

Theodore's speed was two times faster than that of Simon Magus, who had spent 10 minutes to launch it. However, this didn't mean that Theodore was a magician beyond Simon Magus' level. The Akashic Records was the center of the most profound dimension in space. After blending with it, Theodore had reached another level of dimensional magic.

-Umm... At this time, the silent Gluttony spoke up. -I have something to say... but I can't really remember. No, I don't know how to say it.

"..."

-This is the first time I've had a contractor like this... I'm sorry that I've missed a good chance. I thought I understood human emotions, but I should analyze it again from the beginning...

It wasn't a normal voice but a powerful one, and it sounded like a farewell rather than a complaint. Theodore bit his lips until blood

flowed and focused on the magic circle. He didn't want to show an ugly appearance while saying farewell. Subsequently, the banishment magic circle was completed without any mistakes.

"Goal, designated."

The space around Gluttony distorted. No, it wasn't the space but the dimension. The passage leading to the outer dimension opened its mouth, and everything inside it would disappear without a trace. The specified action of a finger snap was the key to start it. Theodore didn't hesitate to snap two fingers. He didn't look back as his friend had advised.

"Activate!"

Before his mind could hesitate, his fingers moved.

Kuuong!

Dimensional Banish—its magic circle started to vibrate at super speed. This was the preliminary work to tear apart the walls of the dimension.

Gluttony's voice was almost inaudible due to the noise. -Ah, that's right... Is this the feeling of 'regret'...? It hasn't been a long time. No, maybe that is why it is more...

Theodore didn't answer.

-Meeting a lot of people up to today... talking to them... fighting... going to sleep... The ones who left the deepest impression... most of them occupied one corner of the storage space...

Again, Theodore didn't answer.

-No... this isn't what I wanted to say. Theodore Miller... you are the most mysterious of all the magicians I have contracted with... the greatest magician to the end. The journey with you... It was a special experience for me...

"..."

Gluttony's voice was now muffled. Theodore wouldn't be able to hear it unless he focused. So, he listened quietly. His heart was whispering. Theodore couldn't miss this moment, the end of a friend he wouldn't meet again.

Jijijik!

The final step of being expelled from the dimension was completed, cutting away the coordinates designated by the magic circle and blowing it outward. Now Gluttony's voice was distorted like it was on a low frequency. -...The time that we have spent together... It, has, been, fun... Use..r.

Simultaneously, the banishment was carried out perfectly.

Syuok!

The space, that had been torn off, disappeared somewhere before returning to its original state. There was a pit on the ground, like something had been dug up. Nobody would know what had happened here just a moment ago. Theodore was the only exception.

"...Yes," the words that he couldn't suppress emerged after everything was over, "I also enjoyed it."

It was all thanks to Gluttony that he could come here. He had gained strength, fame, and people who loved him, and he had saved the world. Theodore stood before the pit and looked at the sky. Due to the fight between the two beings, strange colors swayed over the northern hemisphere like an aurora.

'Long... It wasn't long...' Theodore looked back on his journey. Gluttony advised Theodore not to look back, but it had meant for Theodore to not feel regretful.

Theodore didn't feel regretful. So, he looked back without hesitation on everything that had allowed him to reach this day.

He'd met a grimoire in a library.

He’d met a good teacher who had seen a talent he hadn’t had.

He’d overcome his inferiority complex and saved his home from danger.

He’d met the elves from fairytales and survived a monster.

He’d saved the world tree, made friends, and also met an evil dragon.

He’d killed a monster, jumped over a wall, and inherited a power.

He’d made bonds in distant lands and become the hero of a kingdom.

He’d thrown down the monster behind the empire.

He’d repelled an invader from another world and become protector of the world tree.

He’d defeated a disaster on the distant continent and a threat to the world.

He’d smashed a falling meteorite and rejected all truths.

And… he’d sent away a friend.

“…Go.”

How was his life? Theodore asked himself. He remembered the day it had started and how he’d met many people. There were both good and bad people, along with bargaining, fighting, talking, pointing his sword, and talking again. Theodore had developed relationships with many of them.

‘One day, all of them will leave me. But not now.’

By denying omnipotence, he would enjoy the happiness he held on to. As a friend of his had said, this was the right and responsibility of the winner. Theodore would follow these words.

‘Let’s live the right way…’ Just like how he was always told. He inadvertently looked up and saw a shooting star streaking across the sky. Tomorrow would come as always.

Chapter 398 - Happy Ending (1)

Time passed by. Some people forgot, some people didn't.

It was a memory of the day when a meteorite had fallen from the sky.

A night sky had enveloped the whole world, and it had seemed like all life would end. From dragons to daylight, everything had been equal before the falling red meteorite.

Doomsday—as soon as the myth became reality, nobody had been able to resist it and had to accept fate. On that day, infants and adults were equal, a farmer and a sword master were the same, and a human and dragon were no different. Before absolute destruction, all living things had lowered their eyes, afraid to even look at the sky.

A sword master's aura blade? A great magician's 7th circle magic? The abilities which the talented humans had trained all their lives had become no better than trash. It was like how the differences between a rabbit, a bear, and a tiger were all meaningless in front of a pouring landslide.

Only one magician had flown against the ruin. It was just like how long ago, Icarus had challenged the sun and crossed the sky. This magician struggled to prevent the destruction that had yet to arrive, making his living body move beyond the boundary of the planet.

Then the old god-sword broke, and his five viscera burst.

Nevertheless, he had fought without stopping. He had fought alone without telling anyone. Had it been like an egg hitting against a rock? The magician had continued to knock against it despite knowing what the results would be. Finally, he was exhausted and defeated. Then he was revived at the end. Like a phoenix reborn from ashes, he had eventually beat the destruction.

Very few people knew about it. The vast majority of people didn’t.

One magician had saved the world. Tomorrow shouldn’t have come.

The skeptics, those who had intuition, and those who understood were silent—the people who had looked up at the red sky and trembled from an uneasy feeling soon forgot about this day. Thus, life went on. Just like yesterday, somebody died today while somebody else was born in this world.

Six months had passed since the day the meteorite fell.

*

New days constantly arrived in the world, as if the end hadn’t been one step away. The struggle between Theodore and the Seven Sins led to a transformation of the times. Just as yesterday and today were different, today and tomorrow were different.

First, let’s look at the happenings of the West Continent. Due to the empty land of Lairon in the center, a war of nerves began. It was difficult to occupy the land immediately after Lairon’s fall due to the undead that remained in the territory. However, after Jerem’s death, the land was ownerless.

-I will get payback for the persecution of our people! The nomadic people crossed the western border of Lairon.

However, the people of Austen and Soldun, who lacked agricultural land due to a long drought, also started acting. After all, one of the largest and most fertile lands in the central region was abandoned without an owner. Any nation’s leader would covet it. It had been a few years since the end of the drought. After regaining its national strength, Austen claimed without any fear, -We should take at least one third!

Meanwhile, King Elsid of Soldun scoffed at their request. It was ridiculous from his point of view. -Don’t make me laugh. It was

our elites who got rid of the undead remaining in Lairon. If you covet the land, I will give you a chance to use the same bed as the zombies.

It was a declaration which left no room for compromise. Wasn't it the same as Elsid saying Soldun would kill them? On the surface, Soldun was threatening a war. As such, Austen became very angry and soon called the army to show the majesty of the Sultan.

As the clouds of combat spread across the central part of the continent, Meltor was aghast and informed both countries, -We are the ones who killed the warlock who destroyed Lairon. Why are you guys fighting over the land?

The central countries were dumbfounded by the absurd remark. They could push forward with force, but the present Meltor Kingdom was the greatest power that had reached its peak. The Meltor Kingdom had the 7th circle Blue Tower Master and White Tower Master, as well as the 8th circle magician Red Tower Master who had the lineage of a dragon. Above all, Meltor had the top magician and Chief Tower Master, Theodore Miller. It was doubtful that the other countries would last for several days if Meltor wanted to immediately unify the West Continent.

Consequently, the war was canceled just before it began. However, there was no break as things started happening in the East Continent. It was the aftermath of the devastation caused by Lust, the so-called Lust's Apocalypse. The empire was bordered by all countries, and the land was so wide that it was hard to compare to Lairon. Furthermore, it was difficult for Meltor to reach out its strength.

Of course, if Theodore acted properly, he could destroy all invaders and rebuild the middle empire. However, if he did that, he would be no different from a dictator.

'I need to combine the remnants of the empire with the youkai led by Shuten-doji in order to form an alliance.'

It was diplomatic of a country to be weak in front of the strong and strong in front of the weak. If they showed that they had the power to resist, the momentum of the other countries would be reduced. If they pretended that they couldn't occupy the outskirts which were now difficult to defend, the predators' greed would somehow be filled.

Theodore's plan went well. The New Central Kingdom, based around the Fairy Dance Lee family, kept close to half its territory. It was unlike the Western Xia and the Bukhae Kingdom, which had moved without the help of others.

'The situation of the East Continent isn't stable yet but...'

Theodore was forced to leave without seeing the results. There was something more serious than the restoration of the world, which had been damaged by the Seven Sins. He moved across the sea to the other continent with one space movement. Theodore couldn't waste even one minute or one second. He walked down a familiar corridor with a stiff expression.

Step, step.

As the sound of his footsteps echoed, someone on the other side of the hall heard it and raised their head. Then they looked at the approaching person with a look of bitter grief.

"You are late, my soul. You took more than an hour?" She tapped Theodore on the shoulder before lightly kissing his cheek. Her hair shone brightly today. It was Veronica, the second strongest person in this magic tower and master of the red tower. Her mood was softer than before as she whispered, "I guess there was a lot of work in the East Continent? Otherwise, you wouldn't be late."

Theodore kissed her and smiled wryly. "Well, that and I had one place to go first."

"Is it a big deal?"

"You don't have to worry."

“You said the same thing about fighting that meteorite. You should specify if you are suddenly going to die like last time.”

“I understand, Becky.”

Theodore had nothing to say about this topic. His soul had shattered when he entered the Akashic Records to fight against the falling Wrath. The problem was that Veronica was linked to his soul. As soon as Theodore fell into the Akashic Records, her heart had stopped before restarting. Even the contract of a Seven Sins contract had been cut off, so her soul had gotten damaged. Back when Theodore’s soul shattered and entered a dimension that was several levels higher, it had broken all of his contracts.

‘It is lucky I recovered the connection along with Gluttony or I would’ve regretted it.’

Thinking about it now, it was shocking. If it hadn’t been for the vitality of Veronica’s bloodline and Theodore’s quick perception, Veronica would’ve died. How stupid would it have been to save the world while losing a lover? Her body temperature which he felt belatedly was now even more precious.

After hugging her for a few seconds, Theodore asked, “Am I late?”

“By my standards.” Veronica smiled and patted his head. “If that old man was still alive, he would be trying to break your head right now.”

“…There are still others. How is Sylvia?”

“She’s fine. She has a slight fever but that is normal.”

“I see…” Theodore sighed with relief and flopped down onto the chair. It was an expression that he hadn’t shown when he dealt with a dragon, a demon, or even Wrath.

Veronica saw his expression and teased him, “Control your face. You look like you are possessed by an evil spirit. Won’t people misunderstand?”

“Sigh… I know but I can’t control it.” This was different from the trials Theodore had faced so far. “It is hard for me.”

It was hard to believe that every parent had gone through this once or several times. Having a clear enemy was much easier. Theodore couldn’t even imagine the trial that was going on beyond the shabby door. It wasn’t even close to how he’d felt when he fought Pride. When he fought Wrath, he had been desperate but hadn’t given up. This was the first time he had such a feeling of helplessness.

At that moment…

Creak. The door of the room containing Sylvia opened.

“Ah!”

The medical magician saw the two tower masters when he exited and bowed. However, Theodore stopped him and asked desperately, “Sylvia, how is her body? Is there anything wrong?”

The medical magician was a bit surprised at Theodore’s desperate appearance. It was the attitude of a father that could be seen everywhere. He had thought the Chief Tower Master would have more composure, but his prediction was wrong. It was different from what had thought, which caused the medical magician to smile. So what if Theodore Miller was the strongest magician? He was also a father.

“Don’t worry. She is a bit tired, but she is fine. And… you should hear this from the Blue Tower Master.”

“T-That’s right.” Theodore reddened as he glimpsed his own behavior with the benefit of hindsight. “Thank you for your hard work. Then… Becky?”

“I will wait a bit. The two of you should spend some time together.”

“…Becky, thank you.”

Thanks to Veronica stepping back, Theodore crossed the room to where Sylvia was. It was only a few steps but it felt like the other side of the universe. He barely maintained his steady pace.

“Theo, you came.” Sylvia sat on a wide bed, holding a white blanket.

“Sylvia.”

“Yes.”

His mouth didn’t open well. Theodore silently took one step and then two steps toward her. The caregiver stepped back like she knew the thoughts in his heart. Now there were only two people at the bed. Theodore stood still and waited for Sylvia’s words. Her face was a bit more worn than usual, but she was a few times brighter.

“Theo.” Sylvia showed him the fabric that was moving slightly. “Look, it is our child.”

“…Ah.”

Objectively speaking, it was hard to say that the child was beautiful. After all, as a newborn baby, it was wrinkled and red. However, Theodore’s vision blurred. Tears that he didn’t know had formed were spilling, dripping like melting ice. No words emerged as he embraced his child with trembling hands.

‘Ahh…’

He thought that he had been born for this moment, the birth of the child who inherited Theodore’s and Sylvia’s blood. Theodore had been afraid of this moment. There were more people he had to protect at the risk of his life. He had hesitated for a bit because the burden on his shoulders had gotten heavier.

However, at this moment, Theodore forgot all his regrets.

“…Caregiver,” Theodore whispered so that the sleeping child wouldn’t wake up, “Give this leaf to Sylvia in a tea.”

“C-Chief Tower Master. Excuse me, but this leaf…?”

Even if Theodore was the Chief Tower Master, the caregiver couldn’t feed anything to a new mother when she didn’t know what effect it would have. Theodore smiled at the careful caregiver. “A bud of the world tree.”

“Heok!”

“Hurry. The strength weakens quickly away from Elvenheim.”

“U-Understood!”

The caregiver moved busily while Theodore looked down lovingly at his child. There was a faint breathing sound. The tiny body seemed like it would break when he touched it. Theodore barely suppressed the urge to hug the child as tightly as possible.

‘Open.’ Theodore placed an index finger to the child’s lips.

He wouldn’t have been late if he had come directly from the East Continent. However, the reason he was perceived as late had been to get ‘this.’ A clear drop of liquid flowed from the space connected to his fingertips. There were only a few drops, but that was a huge amount from an elf’s perspective. It hadn’t been easy for them to extract sap from the barely recovering world tree because they thought of the world tree as their ancestor.

Theodore once again glanced over the baby’s face. If a baby was fed this sap, they would grow up with the love of all the elementals and spirits. Indeed, it seemed as if the baby’s color improved.

“Theo.” Sylvia watched him from the side and held out both of her hands.

Theodore suppressed his regret and placed the baby back in her arms. Sylvia kissed the sleeping child’s forehead and looked at him with a profound gaze in her eyes. It was more loving than passionate. These were definitely the eyes of a ‘mother.’

“If you have a name that you’ve thought about, can you tell me?”

“Um…”

He had one. It wasn’t an exaggeration to say that this person had contributed to Theodore’s victory—a pleasant old man who had always laughed energetically for his age. If possible, Theodore had wanted to end their wedding with getting the old man’s beating. No, the old man might’ve laughed and cried. He was the person characterized by a white beard and a large staff.

The name Theodore had in mind drew inspiration from Blundell Adruncus. “Adellia.”

The meaning of the name was obvious to Sylvia as soon as she heard it. Her eyes widened like she was surprised. Then she smiled brightly. “It is a good name.”

Chapter 399 - Happy Ending (2)

Theodore wanted to stay longer with his first child, but he could see that Sylvia was tired despite drinking tea made from a leaf of the world tree. It wasn't a medicine or magic after all. He kissed the foreheads of Sylvia and the sleeping Adellia, then he left the room.

Creak.

Once he left the room, Veronica's eyes widened from where she was waiting for him. What on earth was she seeing? She stretched out a hand and touched Theodore's cheek. Her fingers touched the dry tear marks. "...Theo, you cried?"

Come to think of it, he hadn't wiped them up. Theodore nodded lightly. Once he opened his mouth, it felt like his voice wouldn't come out. Veronica didn't tease him. Rather, she held his face affectionately and patted it slowly. The two people calmed down by sharing their body temperatures.

"Oh, I'm jealous." Veronica had a faint smile on her face as she let out warm breaths. Her heart was affected when she saw this man looked so defenseless. She felt a bit envious that Sylvia had seen this face first. Veronica's affection for Theodore, who truly loved her, was overwhelming.

She held his face and said playfully, "You will be hurt if you don't cry when it is my turn. Understood?"

"Of course," Theodore replied without any hesitation. This was a joy that he wouldn't be able to get used to, no matter how many times he experienced it. It was a feeling he never knew before he became a parent. Despite extra weight being put on both of his shoulders, Theodore didn't break from this weight.

"All of you are my treasures. I don't intend to change this priority, even if the world is at risk."

It was the reason why he had been able to refuse the Akashic Records and the throne of omnipotence. The role Clipeus had given to him was light compared to this. Adding a few things to his burden wouldn't tilt the balance towards him leaving.

Veronica blushed at his words. She looked cute since it was unlike her. Then Theodore whispered in her ears, "Can I see Becky's child next time?"

"I-I don't know!" Veronica exclaimed, slipping out of Theodore's eyes. Her eyes were big as she shouted, "Tonight is my turn, so don't go anywhere!"

Theodore replied with a smirk, "I know. That is why I said it."

"This beast!"

"Shouldn't I say that about Becky?"

Veronica's face was as red as a persimmon as she looked away. With her red dragon's lineage, all her passion had been released after the wedding. As such, she wasn't in a position to call Theodore a 'beast.' However, he stopped teasing her and spoke in a gentle voice, "Don't stay for long because Sylvia is tired. Understood?"

Veronica nodded without saying anything. She felt like she would receive more damage the more she watched. After stroking Veronica's red hair several times, Theodore turned and walked down the corridor. The sound of the door closing behind him was strange.

Theodore calmed his mood as he stepped out of the tower. He walked lightly.

'...Ah.'

Then he soon realized...

'The world looks different.'

Theodore even welcomed the boiling hot sun. His eyes were

captivated by the rustling of unnamed flowers and by the fresh clouds floating in the sky. Was this the feeling of having the whole world? All riches and honors were useless.

“Sigh…” Theodore was happy for a moment before calling out behind him. He had been aware of the presence from before, but now the gap between the two of them was narrowed. “Paragranum, what is it?”

It was a pale blonde girl with two eyes like rubies and soft brown skin like chocolate. She was a beautiful girl who looked no different from a doll. With a smile that seemed like it was drawn in a picture, the grimoire that was the Yellow Tower Master spoke about something else instead of answering. “You are really interesting.”

Her red eyes glowed with dangerous interest. “Despite being a transcendent, you are faithful to keeping your human emotions. It was beyond my expectations that you would defeat Wrath and your contractor.”

“Don’t sugarcoat it.” Theodore looked back with no expression. “Why did you come here?”

“It is a regular report.”

“…Hmm.”

Without any hand gestures or chants, a wall of silence surrounded the two of them. Paragranum’s mouth gaped open as she realized it, but Theodore didn’t respond at all.

“Start.”

“You really are unfriendly,” Paragranum said with a shrug. Then she finally explained, “I have built more than half the blueprints. It’s the beginning of a cornerstone of a civilization that combines science and magic. This will lead to the opening of schools that will spread the two disciplines throughout all of Meltor. It should take 10 years?”

“10 years until the starting point… It is a long way to go.”

“It can’t be helped. This country is already attached to the magic system. If you want to change the sheets, you either have to wait until they turn around or flip them all over.”

If Theodore went in a radical direction, he might see three times the progress. However, in that case, the civilization of this material world itself would be placed in Theodore’s palms. Yet if he didn’t intervene, they wouldn’t be able to become self-reliant, and there was the possibility of a big problem rising. Therefore, Theodore aimed for a gradual reform. The blueprints were just a light push for a new world order centered around Meltor.

‘I have too many things to do.’

He didn’t have time to enjoy Adellia being born. This was the reason why Theodore didn’t choose a radical way. There was no reason for him to gain wealth or power, nor did he want to take care of things he didn’t need to do. He also had no intention of making this world his own model garden. The people who lived in the present era should walk along this path themselves.

“Still, I think that magic engineering is fun. The world will be quite different after completing this plan. 1,000 years… No, will it be 1,500 years?”

“Maybe it needs that long,” Theodore confirmed Paragranum’s prediction. Then he added, “Tell me if there is anything you don’t like, especially considering the circumstances.”

“Huh? No, I’m fine. Creating a ‘human’ is just another means for my purpose of existence. In the first place, alchemy is the halfway point between magic and science.”

“Certainly, if you are sure.”

After 1,500 years, the mana level would be much lower than it was now due to Sloth. However, the utility of magic engineering was better than magic in certain fields. The alchemy grimoire,

Paragranum, would show a higher synergy with it than anyone else. In the future where all masters would have disappeared, Theodore would be the only deterrent to control Paragranum.

“This is the end of my report.” Paragranum delivered some more reports before taking two steps back and staring at Theodore. It was like she was looking inside him. “The future world is interesting, but I am also curious about your future. Despite being able to reign, you choose not to reign. You also have no desire to leave this world. Isn’t that right?”

“So?”

“Theodore Miller, the last transcendent of this world, how long can you insist on this life? I will be watching.”

Then Paragranum left in an instant.

‘Until when?’ Theodore gazed at the blonde who was moving further away from him. No matter the purpose behind her words, it didn’t feel like she was antagonizing him. It was purely curiosity and was quite meaningful. Perhaps the few words of this grimoire would stick with him until the end of this world.

“…Go.”

Theodore left this spot and returned to the central tower.

*

Two months later, Sylvia’s state steadily improved after she giving birth to Adellia. Additionally, the distribution of the Lairon territory finally finished after six months of negotiations. In the process, there was strong resistance from the Austen Kingdom. However, they had to close their mouth after Theodore visited.

It was a prelude to the Age of Great Peace.

Envy’s death had resolved the long conflict in the northern part of the continent. The territory of Lairon, which could’ve been the seed of a dispute, was then divided among nations without a single

armed conflict. Over the next 20 years, they would be too busy clearing the land to turn their eyes elsewhere.

In the southern part of the continent, the swamp was receding, and there was so empty space. However, it wasn't easy to deal with because the monsters in the continent renewed their grip on this land. In particular, the southern kingdoms lacked strong combat power.

As long as this balance didn't collapse, there would be at least one or two centuries of peace.

"On behalf of the Meltor Kingdom, I will declare to all countries!" In this unprecedented golden age of Meltor, Kurt III declared to the world, "From this day on, Meltor is no longer a kingdom! As a true magic empire, I declare that we are the Magic Empire of Meltor!"

The Magic Empire... Andras had been downgraded to a kingdom after being defeated in the war. Even the empire in the East Continent had collapsed. No nation objected to Meltor's claim to becoming an empire. In the central square of Mana-vil, Kurt III, now an emperor, stood on the high podium and raised one hand to the cheering people. "Wait! The auspicious news doesn't end here!"

Expectations filled the eyes of the people gathered in this square. It was already surprising that Meltor was reborn as an empire. Now there was something else? Kurt III raised the tension for a few seconds before glancing at someone standing by. Then he shouted in a voice that rang through the square, "You must know as well! The chief of the magic towers that oversees the whole of the Meltor Kingdom—no, the best magician of the empire!"

Theodore walked slowly and stood before Kurt III on stage.

"The hero who has built up countless achievements, the one who ended the war with Andras and whose reputation stretches to the East Continent...! I will give Chief Tower Master Theodore Miller a

position worthy of these merits!”

At least thousands, perhaps even tens of thousands, of people forgot how to breathe as they looked at this scene. This was a day which would be written in Meltor’s history books and a day that they wouldn’t forget. It was Kurt III’s accession as the first emperor of Meltor and the appointment ceremony for Theodore Miller.

“Listen up, Theodore Miller.”

Theodore bowed slightly without kneeling. As a 9th circle magician, he was qualified to do so.

“Will you give wisdom to this Meltor as a teacher of the state? Will you be the pillar of the empire’s strength and honor?”

“Yes.”

“Are you willing to become a companion of this Meltor Empire and pursue a future with it?”

“Yes, Your Majesty.”

Kurt III smiled at the answer and pulled something out from under the podium. “Then all the people here will stand as witnesses! If you have eyes, look! If you have ears, listen! I, the first emperor of the Meltor Empire, will give my first imperial order!”

He held a luxurious item with a mysterious glowing gem hanging from its end. The item was 50 centimeters in length, and the magic power rising from its surface proved that its value was huge. It was a rod. The rod, known as a magician’s special weapon along with a staff and an orb, was a national treasure managed by the royal family.

“You will be treated as the head of our imperial court, a teacher, and a guardian. You can exercise any command equal to an imperial order in any domestic or foreign affairs. The leader of all magicians, the head of the magic towers, Theodore Miller! I, Kurt III, today appoint you as the Imperial Guardian!”

It was a position prepared only for Theodore.

“It is the glory of my life, Your Majesty.” Theodore politely stretched out his hands and accepted the rod. Feeling uncomfortable, he laughed. It had been more than half a year, yet he still couldn’t adapt to this. There was a faint smile on his face as Theodore raised his left hand up to the sky.

“Wahhhhh!” The roar of the crowd shook the heaven and earth.

Chapter 400 - Happy Ending (3)

‘There is a commotion.’

Cheers reverberated throughout all of Mana-vil. The whole castle seemed to be shaking. The pigeons sitting on the castle walls flew away, and the flags of each house fluttered vigorously. It was the day that the Meltor Empire was announced. After grabbing the rod which symbolized the Imperial Guardian, Theodore looked down at the landscape below his feet. The people currently looking up wouldn’t know about how a person raised in a rural area had reached this place and what hardships he had overcome.

The world’s best magician was once the dunce of Bergen Academy…? It was a story that even he couldn’t have believed in those days. The sky, which he looked up at, was blue as always and clear without any clouds. Emotions rose and sank quickly. He wasn’t so immature as to be swayed by this. Still, wasn’t it okay to return the cheers once?

“Um.” Theodore raised the rod in his right hand and aimed it at the sky.

The people who saw his movements became silent. They watched the best magician of this century with curious eyes, wondering what he would show on this auspicious day. Would it be fire? A lightning strike? This was the perception of those who didn’t know much about magicians. They thought Theodore wasn’t that different from the other great magicians.

‘Okay, this is fine.’ Theodore visualized it in a matter of seconds and carried out the magic. The gem at the end of the rod shone once before dimming. The central square fell silent, expecting something tremendous. However, nothing happened.

One of the disappointed people sighed and looked up. “…Eh?”

Then his loud exclamation shattered the heavy silence, “T-The

sky! Look above you!”

People raised their heads as soon as his voice was heard. It wasn’t just the people gathered in the central square but the magicians around the stage as well. All the citizens of Mana-vil looked up at the sky, which had blackened. Like the sky from half a year ago, night had come despite the sunshine. However, unlike Doomsday, this night sky was beautiful. The blue sky still remained at the edge, a color border that decorated the night sky. Additionally, starlight shone in the warm darkness. Due to Theodore’s magic, the night sky was closer and clearer, captivating everyone’s eyes.

He was a magician who covered the sun in daytime and brought the night! This alone was enough to cause awe. However, Theodore’s magic didn’t end there.

“Ohh! The curtain of light in the sky…”

“These jewel-like lights… are really beautiful!”

“An aurora over Mana-vil…!”

There was a whirl of light where the color couldn’t be determined. Some people recognized it as an aurora, while others didn’t. However, everyone didn’t hesitate to admire it and rejoice. In front of Theodore’s magic, both the young and old were joyful. The aurora in the sky gathered in one place and started to draw several complex patterns.

Someone saw through the meaning and cried out in a loud voice, “That… is the flag of the empire!”

The first and most dramatically drawn pattern was the flag of Meltor. The eagles, spires, and crown pattern planted a flame in the hearts of the crowd. The next pattern consisted of the symbols that represented the magic towers.

Owl, owlet, crow, and osprey—when the four wise birds flew in the sky, the people became speechless. The symbols of the nation—the magic empire, Meltor—they would live as in the future were

filling the sky.

“…Hooray!”

Nobody knew who opened their mouths first.

“—The Imperial Guardian, hooray!”

Once one person cried out, the ten people around them also shouted. It wasn’t long until ten people grew to the hundreds, and hundreds grew to the thousands. The crowd in the central square cried out in one voice.

“Imperial Guardian, hooray!

“His Majesty the Emperor, hooray!

“Theodore Miller, hooray!

“The magic empire, hooray!”

The voices of the 10,000 people were almost like a storm. The passing wind was broken, and the surprised birds fell out of the tree. The patriotism and pride that resulted from Theodore’s magic inspired the people. Later, historians would assert:

It was said that the endless glory of the Meltor Empire began with the first cheer.

*

The Imperial Guardian could speak on the same level as the emperor and be involved in any policy domestically and abroad. It was legally absurd, but Theodore’s transcendent power and achievements made the exception possible. In the first place, if he decided on something, who would dare argue against him? The position of Imperial Guardian was just a deception.

Of course, it seemed great for those who didn’t know the circumstances behind it. It did make it easier for Theodore to do his work.

“Sigh…” Theodore returned to his office on the top floor of the

central magic tower and took off his tie.

Despite obtaining a tremendous position, his work hadn't changed much. Theodore was still mediating disputes between nations, dealing with the aftermath of wars, and stabilizing the unstable dimension. He wandered around the world from dawn to early evening and then checked the faces of Adellia and his brides.

Theodore buried himself in the armchair and whispered in a low voice, "Goetia, assistance."

[Yes, Master,] a voice emerged from the ring on his right hand. [Aquilo has sent a message that she has normalized the water vein in Austen. Elvenheim said that the condition of the world tree will be normalized in approximately two or three months. In the East Continent, the Western Xia has dispatched reconnaissance troops across the border. Half of them were wiped out by the border guards in the south. The establishment of the Science Academy is 72% completed as scheduled. The screening of magicians who are suitable as researchers for the 'magic engineering' is delayed a bit.]

"…I see," Theodore said and closed his eyes, summarizing the situation before replying, "I will return to talk to Aquilo directly. It is pleasing that the recovery of the world tree is twice as fast as expected. Mitra and the spirits added strength. I need to get some gifts."

[Yes, I will act according to Master's will.]

"But the Western Xia…"

It was Baek Dongil's native kingdom. Theodore could understand why the Baek Family left the East Continent. When did a person reveal their true colors? The leader of the Western Xia was filled with inferiority and jealousy. Now the leader had no more patience left to watch.

"Just leave it alone. The power of the South Kingdom and the New Central Kingdom isn't bad. They will take care of it."

[I understand.]

“And the lack of researchers for ‘magic engineering’… There aren’t many magicians interested in science? We can support it with the budget.”

Thanks to the 9th circle magic, Materials Conversion, money and materials wasn’t a problem. Additionally, the materials which were essential to magic engineering were steel and lead, not mithril or orichalcum. There were many studies that could be done with rare metals. However, there was still a long way to go from the beginning.

Goetia laughed at Theodore’s words and said, [The magicians of this age are only focused on magic. It is hard to study a new field.]

“It would be quite helpful for magic too… Well, it can’t be helped.”

There was no point forcing magicians to participate. If he built an academy and taught people from childhood, the problem would be solved after one generation. This was a blueprint made for a thousand years. He could afford a margin of error that was one generation. Therefore, Theodore abandoned his impatience.

“Is there anything else to report?”

[Yes. There are a few more things, but I can handle them autonomously.]

“Okay, you have worked hard today. Get some rest.”

[I understand, Master. Please have a comfortable night.]

The blinding light of the ring stopped shining. Theodore took it off and placed it on the desk. The darkness that came in from outside the window cast shade over the small silver ring. It was the night view of Mana-vil with countless stars and lights.

‘It was quite busy today.’

Theodore sat in the chair and looked at the scenery as he thought

back on this day. It was better to be busy than to be bored enough to yawn. If he didn't enjoy life, then he wouldn't be able to live for a long time. He calmly looked out the window at the lights and the people wandering below.

'...How long can I carry on with my life?'

When there was no work to do, many thoughts were born. Theodore recalled the words that Paragranum had said a few months ago. He was different from the people down below. He would live endlessly, unlike the people caught on the wheel of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. This was why transcendents left the world or went into hiding.

Those who lived finite lives and those who were immortal—there was a gap that couldn't be narrowed down between the two.

Theodore could live like this for another 100 years. There would be no big problem after 200 years. But what about 1,000 years? 2,000 years? After everyone he loved died and he was alone in this world, it wouldn't be possible to live like he did now and he would stop breathing.

Once he closed his eyes, the infinite vortex appeared in his mind. Right now, it was like he could grip omnipotence in his hands. It would be easy to lead all the surrounding people to transcendence and build a paradise that would remain until the end of the universe.

"Hah!" Theodore scoffed and shook off the temptation. "It isn't funny."

Even if his loved ones left, there would be children connected through his blood and name. It was the bond he'd created with Sylvia and Adellia which kept him in this world. Remembering the past and preparing for the promising future was the right way to live. It was against Theodore's principles to fear the unfamiliar future and hold onto a past that should be let go.

Theodore sat back in his chair and said cheerfully, “We are born, born, born, and born again. But we can’t understand where life begins.”

Those were the words of grand Buddhist master in the East.

“We will die, die, die, and die. But we won’t know the end of death.”

Even a transcendent who had seen a part of the truth couldn’t understand universal life and death. Theodore was the same despite having looked at Akashic. If he were asked why the universe existed, he would answer that he didn’t know. This answer was the truth of everything. The existence of life and death was an existence complete in itself.

“Without her, without him… As long as there are traces of them left in my descendants in the future…”

Theodore Miller wouldn’t forsake this world. He pledged this once more and picked up a book from his desk. There was no title, and the notebook had no words.

“Hrmm.”

Life wasn’t meaningless. He wasn’t sleepy and there was still time left in the night, so Theodore didn’t hesitate to pick up a quill pen. He thought it wouldn’t be bad to write about his own life in print. It would be an autobiography. Theodore brought the tip of the pen to the notebook. There was a text that should precede the table of contents.

One title came to mind—[The Book Eating Magician.]

The palm of his left hand tingled. Theodore wrote the first chapter without disturbing the illusion. It was a story which began by meeting a bad book in the library.

…And that story wasn’t over yet.

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