# Chapter 452. The Second Coming of Gluttony 2

Going back to when Seol Jihu just arrived at his apartment room, Haramark was on the verge of being conquered.  
  
Fires were soaring from several parts of the city, and clouds of acrid smoke were rising to the sky.  
  
The city wall had countless holes like swiss cheese, and it broke and sunk wherever the Parasites touched, losing its function of protecting the city against invaders.  
  
The number of soldiers defending the meaningless city wall paled in comparison to the number of soldiers attacking it. The wall was crawling with all sorts of parasites.  
  
Though small in number, strong, experienced teams were holding their ground, relying on each other. However, there was no fighting against such an overwhelming number of enemies.  
  
One would think that the enemy forces would have shrunk in size by now, but it felt like they increased in number instead.  
  
“Aaaaack!”  
  
A soldier who was guarding the city wall despite being surrounded by enemies finally fell. There was no way to defend fully against an overwhelming swarm that the Parasites boasted.  
  
The soldier resentfully glared at the Nests in the distance that were endlessly spewing out parasites. Then, as the parasite that was attacking him opened its jaw, he closed his eyes and braced for death. He could see the fate he would meet.  
  
Kwak! The parasite swallowed the soldier’s head and bit down. Along with the cracking of bones, blood spurted out from the gap in the parasite’s teeth.  
  
The collapsed soldier flopped like a fish before his convulsing limbs stopped moving. Once one person fell, the rest of the defense line was quick to collapse.  
  
Paradisian soldiers, Earthlings, and foreign races of the Federation were all swept away by the tsunami of parasites.  
  
The group of parasites that rushed at the crying creatures and devoured them to their hearts’ content happily filling their bellies before scattering to find more food.  
  
The same thing was happening in many areas of the city. With the city wall being in such a state, it wasn’t so hard to believe that the city gate had been broken through long ago.  
  
The Parasites had already entered the city, and there weren’t enough forces to prevent them from entering. After all, any remaining troops were either running away or meeting a tragic fate after resisting until the end.  
  
In truth, the battle was practically over. The defenders had lost. Their total annihilation was inevitable, but there were still a few who had not given up.  
  
Teresa was swinging her sword with only a few soldiers at the southern gate, which was about to fall.  
  
“Princess!”  
  
Just as she pushed a Death Knight back after much struggle, Teresa heard someone shout her name.  
  
It was Jan Sanctus’ voice.  
  
There had to be a good reason that the general defending the southern gate alongside her gave up his position to find her.  
  
“Hold on!”  
  
A silver longsword flashed. Teresa sent the Death Knight’s head flying before quickly putting up her shield and falling back. When she looked back stealthily while keeping an eye out on her surroundings, she couldn’t help but be surprised.  
  
The soldiers that she thought were protecting her rear were nowhere to be found. She could only see the corpses of what once must have been the soldiers.  
  
That wasn’t all. Jan Sanctus, who was charred black from head to toe, suddenly stopped moving with his eyes widened.  
  
“Sanctus?”  
  
The moment Teresa called out, a stream of blood fell from Jan Sanctus’ mouth.  
  
“The western gate has fallen… please retreat….”  
  
He completed his sentence with great difficulty before placing his hand on his chest and falling on his knees.  
  
Tang!  
  
Just as Teresa began to rush up to him, she halted and jumped back at an explosive sound. It was because a beam of light abruptly shot toward her and bounced off her shield.  
  
Seeing the white smoke rising from her shield, Teresa raised her eyes subconsciously.  
  
A blonde-haired succubus was floating in the sky behind Jan Sanctus, looking down at her with hollow eyes.  
  
Teresa’s expression contorted. The fact that Vulgar Chastity’s army was here was a clear sign that the western gate had been breached.  
  
It was difficult enough to deal with Unsightly Humility’s army that was knocking on the southern gate.  
  
Seeing the succubus’ hand glowing with light once again, Teresa gripped her longsword tight. The grimace on her face never disappeared as she could see a scene of total pandemonium without even having to look around.  
  
‘So this is… really…’  
  
The end.  
  
“….”  
  
…No, it’s not over yet. I might die here, but Eva is still standing. It’s a shame I won’t be able to see my Darling before I go, but if he revives in Eva before it’s too late… then my death here wouldn’t be in vain.  
  
Teresa fixed her posture while holding in her tears.  
  
Still… I wanted to see him at least once before dying….  
  
It was then. Kwang! A sudden explosive sound struck her ears. The sound was so loud that the succubus and Teresa simultaneously turned their heads.  
  
A glint flashed across the succubus’ eyes as she stared toward the north. She then flapped her wings, flying off.  
  
Teresa bit her lower lip while watching the succubus fly away. Seeing not just that succubus but other succubi from Vulgar Chastity’s army gathering north, she suddenly had a bad feeling.  
  
Judging by how the north side abruptly turned quiet, something must have happened there for sure. And the organization in charge of defending the north was none other than Valhalla.  
  
Valhalla’s members were fighting rather well against Sung Shihyun. Not only were they powerful Earthlings in their own right, but they also had the Star of Lust, Seo Yuhui, and the Successor of the Eternal Light of Wisdom, Eun Yuri, performing magnificently.  
  
However, the situation took an abrupt turn a moment ago. The cause was Vulgar Chastity joining the battle after conquering the western gate.  
  
“I finally got you.”  
  
Vulgar Chastity grinned. Eun Yuri was hanging in the air, her limbs pierced through by Vulgar Chastity’s hair.  
  
When Vulgar Chastity tilted her chin up, Eun Yuri was pulled up along with her hair. Collapsed below her were other members of Valhalla. They were either knocked down by Sung Shihyun or caught off guard by Vulgar Chastity’s sudden burst of energy.  
  
“Why don’t you try that again? You know, Freeze~ World~”  
  
A strand of hair poked Eun Yuri’s head again and again. Eun Yuri glanced down with a pair of half-open eyes. She then closed her eyes and went limp.  
  
An elated smile flashed on Vulgar Chastity’s face.  
  
“Now, now, what should I do with this cutie~?”  
  
‘Should I stab her to death or tear her to pieces? No, it would be a shame to merely kill her. Should I corrupt her as I did with that Magician in the past?’  
  
Just as Vulgar Chastity fell into blissful thoughts, her hair was suddenly chopped off. Seeing Eun Yuri falling, Vulgar Chastity blinked. It was because the one who cut her hair was none other than Sung Shihyun.  
  
“Don’t kill her.”  
  
Sung Shihyun smacked his lips as he retracted his sword.  
  
“I don’t care about the others, but that one and that one can’t die. I chose them to be my fourth and seventh concubines.”  
  
Sung Shihyun pointed at Eun Yuri and Phi Sora, who were groaning on the ground.  
  
Vulgar Chastity sighed and shook her head.  
  
“Nice timing, by the way. Yuhui and that girl were annoying the hell out of me…. Shit, anti-evil energy is irritating enough, just what the hell is that strange light?”  
  
Sung Shihyun lightly kicked Eun Yuri. As he dusted his clothes while grumbling, bits and pieces of ice fell to the ground.  
  
“…Anyway.”  
  
He then placed his longsword on his shoulder and smiled.  
  
“Looks like it’s over now.”  
  
The cheeky smirk on his face was really asking to be punched. However, no one from Valhalla could open their mouths. Not only were they exhausted with fatigue and injuries, but the sense of despair coming from the feeling of defeat was also suppressing their bodies.  
  
Valhalla’s line of defense was also on the verge of being broken through. The fact that they held out against Sung Shihyun until now was miraculous enough. Being told to handle another Army Commander was no different than a death sentence.  
  
“Hey now, why the long faces? I would be proud. Thunders, miniature Thunder arrows, Spirit Arrows… I wasn’t expecting all this, really. Who would have thought humans and the Federation would have such a quick exchange?”  
  
Sung Shihyun spoke mockingly as he looked around at everyone. He seemed to be enjoying looking at everyone’s faces.  
  
“Good job. You can hold your head up high if you have lasted this long against me. I was planning to capture the city in a day and have fun with Yuhui while lazing around in the palace, but you lasted four whole days! If that’s not something to be proud of, then I don’t know what is.”  
  
Seo Yuhui furrowed her brows after standing up with great difficulty.  
  
“Or what, did you really think you could beat me? Come on, you know you weren’t. Mm? Right, Yuhui?”  
  
As Sung Shihyun asked with a beaming smile, Seo Yuhui shuddered in disgust.  
  
“You…”  
  
Breathing heavily, she eked out a few words.  
  
“You must be proud of defecting to the Parasites.”  
  
Sung Shihyun’s face stiffened slightly.  
  
“Yep, of course! Why wouldn’t I be?”  
  
He then nodded his head and remarked sarcastically.  
  
“Unlike a certain retard, I made the smart choice early on.”  
  
“What was that?”  
  
“Ah, don’t you know him? Some guy tried to fight us by himself when he was surrounded.”  
  
Seo Yuhui’s eyes shot open. Sung Shihyun snickered.  
  
“What a poor bastard. He acted all cool, thinking he was the main character or something, but then got beaten the hell up. In the end, he got captured and begged on his knees, please, please let me go. Even his snot and tears flew everywhere.”  
  
“Bullshit!”  
  
Unable to bear listening to him, Marcel Ghionea shot up and shouted.  
  
“Representative Seol would never have done such a thing!”  
  
Sung Shihyun’s eyebrow went up. He glared at the man with a look that clearly said, ‘Who the hell is he?’ Then, he scoffed indifferently.  
  
“Iya… you’ve got courage, I’ll give you that. That’s right. I lied.”  
  
He acknowledged it readily, even going as far as admiring Marcel Ghionea’s courage.  
  
“To be honest, he was quite incredible. I’ll admit it. Yes, I do… but…”  
  
Sung Shihyun shrugged.  
  
“But he still is a retard.”  
  
“Shut it!”  
  
“No, no, hear me out. With so much strength, why wouldn’t he join us? The world would be in his grasp, and both sides would have nothing to fear.”  
  
Sung Shihyun clicked his tongue.  
  
“Like, no one was asking him to defect alone. He could have you guys along, and Her Majesty even gave her word that she would do her best to make things more convenient for him.”  
  
Then, Sung Shihyun shook his head.  
  
“I just don’t understand it. Why would he sacrifice himself for such trash of human beings? Especially those idiots who are always yapping on about rights and interests need to get stomped down a notch…”  
  
Sung Shihyun muttered the last line in a cold manner that was unlike his usual self.  
  
“Anyway, what a shame. All he had to do was swallow his pride and switch sides. He got too absorbed in playing the hero and couldn’t see what was better for him… hm?”  
  
Sung Shihyun swung his hand in the middle of talking and caught an arrow that Marcel Ghionea shot toward him.  
  
“Haa…. This son of a bitch….”  
  
Sung Shihyun clenched his teeth and turned his head. He flickered into the distance with Ethereal Shift, and Marcel Ghionea, who was just about to shoot another arrow…  
  
Tong!  
  
“Kuk!”  
  
…was stomped to the ground by Sung Shihyun’s foot.  
  
“Don’t chirp when I’m talking, insect. So annoying….”  
  
“Someone like you… as long as Representative comes back….”  
  
Marcel Ghionea glared at Sung Shihyun with his head shoved against the ground.  
  
“…Oh?”  
  
Sung Shihyun snorted. He got annoyed whenever he thought about Seol Jihu, so he couldn’t help but seethe with killing intent with Marcel Ghionea mentioning him like this.  
  
He raised his foot.  
  
“Alright, I’ll take care of you first then.”  
  
“Don’t!”  
  
If Vulgar Chastity didn’t interrupt Sung Shihyun right there and then, Marcel Ghionea’s head would have popped instantly.  
  
Sung Shihyun furrowed his brows.  
  
“What do you want?”  
  
“Don’t kill him. Give him to me.”  
  
“Give him to you?”  
  
“I did you a favor too, didn’t I? Besides, I know who this guy is. I remember him well.”  
  
“Him? He’s nothing special. I don’t know him either.”  
  
“Hear me out….”  
  
Vulgar Chastity giggled and then whispered into Sung Shihyun’s ear. Sung Shihyun blinked in a fluster before looking back at Marcel Ghionea.  
  
“…Oh, oh, Marika Larisa…. Photon magic, I’ve heard of it. So it was her?”  
  
Marcel Ghionea flinched when he heard a name he was all too familiar with. Confirming this reaction, a vulgar smile hung on Sung Shihyun’s lips.  
  
He beckoned one of the succubi flying in the air, and a blonde-haired succubus flew down.  
  
“Strange, I thought there was no succubus left that hasn’t gotten a taste of my club. I haven’t seen this one before….”  
  
Sung Shihyun scanned the succubus from head to toe before suddenly pulling her in by her waist.  
  
“Larisa!”  
  
Marcel Ghionea shouted. But paying no attention to his struggle, Sung Shihyun nodded while caressing the succubus’ butt and fondling her breasts.  
  
“Mmm, why have I only seen her now? She’s half decent. She’s got a nice rack and a juicy ass. I would have eaten her out a few times before if I knew.”  
  
“Larisa! Snap out of it! Please!”  
  
“Alright, I’ll let him live. Fucking her in front of her old fiance sounds exciting too. Anyway, what a bombshell. Westerners surely have glamorous bodies.”  
  
Sung Shihyun’s hand was reaching toward the succubus’ private parts. However, the succubus that was once human did not so much as bat an eye inside Sung Shihyun’s embrace. She was only looking down at Marcel Ghionea with eyes that seemed to have lost intellect.  
  
Tears eventually streamed down from Marcel Ghionea’s face as he grit his teeth and shuddered.  
  
“…Huh?”  
  
Sung Shihyun stuck out his tongue after seeing Marcel Ghionea cry.  
  
“You’re crying, dude?”  
  
“Keuk…!”  
  
“You really are! Damn, take a look at this guy’s face. He was so brave a moment ago too.”  
  
Sung Shihyun raised his voice and laughed out loud in schadenfreude. Vulgar Chastity also laughed along while watching keenly.  
  
“Hahahaha!”  
  
“Hohohoho!”  
  
Vulgar Chastity was especially delighted as she had faced multiple defeats in a row. Finally subduing the humans with her strength made her overly excited, and the two Army Commanders’ laughter grew louder and louder.  
  
Meanwhile, the faces of Valhalla’s members sank. Chohong, who was collapsed on the ground, shut her eyes with frustration. Phi Sora turned away as if she couldn’t bear to watch them any longer, and Hugo, who was resting on the ground with heavy injuries, glared at the Army Commanders while panting roughly.  
  
Oh Rahee, who was lying in a corner, dropped her head while coughing, and Yi Seol-Ah bit her lower lip until blood began to come out. Even Hoshino Urara was glaring at Sung Shihyun with a disgusted face.  
  
What made the situation worse was that there was nothing they could do, and in the midst of their despair, they suddenly thought of Seol Jihu.  
  
Just how did he fight against such powerful enemies alone and even break through them?  
  
“Ah~ That was fun. Now then…”  
  
Sung Shihyun spun his sword after cackling for some time.  
  
“…Oana.”  
  
Clunk. Vlad Halep, covered in blood, stood in front of his sister with his scythe. He then murmured in a quiet voice.  
  
“Run.”  
  
It couldn’t be helped. Most of their comrades were on the ground with fatigue, and now they fell into despair. Some even looked ready to accept their fate. Although they would undoubtedly resist until the bitter end, no one seemed to see a chance of victory.  
  
“No.”  
  
However, Oana Halep’s voice was calm.  
  
“It’s fine.”  
  
“What?”  
  
Vlad Halep looked back at his younger sister. Surprisingly, Oana Halep had a very relaxed expression. In fact, she was looking up at the sky with a faint smile on her face.  
  
“He’s back.”  
  
Vlad Halep furrowed his brows. He was just about to ask what she was talking about when he felt something strange.  
  
“….”  
  
Their surroundings had suddenly turned silent. Perhaps it wasn’t so strange for the heart of the battlefield to be quiet, but there was no sound coming from the nearby areas either.  
  
The city seemed to have been consumed by a strange aura, becoming a soundless, bleak space.  
  
It wasn’t just Vlad Halep that noticed this oddity.  
  
“…The hell?”  
  
Sung Shihyun looked around the area with a dumbfounded look. There was no sign of it coming. The battles in the nearby areas had abruptly stopped. The parasites that were in their line of sight were stepping back in fear.  
  
“Did these fuckers all lose their minds or something? Why are they suddenly….”  
  
At that moment, a chilly wind brushed past his nose. Sung Shihyun’s arm froze amidst carrying his longsword down. Then, his eyes trembled faintly as he looked up at the sky.  
  
“That’s….”  
  
Dark clouds were swirling in the sky, gathering into a single point at a rate that made it impossible to believe it was a simple cloud.  
  
“I’m sure of it.”  
  
Oana’s voice flowed out.  
  
“I can feel him. He’s really come back.”  
  
As if in response to her words, a faint golden light broke through the clouds.  
  
Oana smiled.  
  
“It looks like he’s incredibly angry.”  
  
Sung Shihyun stared at the girl who was murmuring to herself.  
  
He wanted to ask just what the hell she was talking about, but his mouth refused to open. Because from a particular moment, he could feel the aura of a terrifying existence emanating from the city.  
  
That wasn’t all. He even felt a boundless, identifiable energy, one that far surpassed his own even though he had fully absorbed and controlled a divinity.  
  
As the deathly silence continued, Seo Yuhui suddenly lowered her gaze. The red egg that she had tightly bound up was twitching. Cracks began to appear on its surface, and a rainbow-colored light began to peek out.  
  
“The egg…”  
  
The egg was hatching.  
  
It was then. Rumble! The sky suddenly roared.  
  
Sung Shihyun and Vulgar Chastity simultaneously dropped their jaws, seeing a massive discharge of electricity from the dark clouds. They looked at each other with doubt and then nodded their heads at the same time.  
  
“Burn!”  
  
Vulgar Chastity hurriedly flew up and spread out her arms. Meanwhile, another thunder roared from the sky.  
  
“World!”  
  
In the next moment, pillars of lava erupted out of the ground as thousands of lightning bolts struck down from the sky.  
  
“Kaaheeu!”  
  
Vulgar Chastity gasped in fright before she could even calm down. Her outstretched hands were shaking visibly.  
  
She couldn’t believe what just happened. Not only did the pillars of lava fail to absorb the lightning bolts, but they were also easily pushed back upon collision.  
  
Vulgar Chastity’s jaw dropped as she saw the lightning bolts push the pillars all the way down.  
  
Tzzzzzzzzzt!  
  
“Kyaaaaaack!”  
  
Only a piercing scream rang out. Vulgar Chastity, struck by immeasurable lightning, convulsed violently before falling.  
  
Sung Shihyun, who was watching this scene, abruptly turned to the side. He swung his sword in a hurry. Clang! The white longsword cutting through the air, drawing a huge arc, suddenly lost its path and flew off.  
  
In that split second, Sung Shihyun felt a terrifying power pushing his arm back. The most surprising thing, however, was that he could not see whatever it was that attacked him.  
  
He straightened his neck nervously. Focusing on his senses, Sung Shihyun swung his sword again. A sword strike clad with a powerful sword qi flew out, but it was bounced to the side by a bolt of lightning that flew in with a flash.  
  
Flustered, Sung Shihyun gathered his energy and stabbed forward. The sword blade shot out like a whip, instantaneously multiplying and making ten thousand sword qi rain down.  
  
However…  
  
Chachak!  
  
Even these were extinguished by a single powerful lightning bolt.  
  
“Impossi…!”  
  
He did not even have time to speak. The faint, invisible presence had already appeared in front of him.  
  
Clang!  
  
Sung Shihyun pulled his sword back in a hurry and brandished it again. However, his body shook to the side fiercely instead.  
  
Clang! Clang!  
  
He swung, stabbed, and sliced with his sword wildly, but not only was the master of the presence striking them back, but he was pushing him back even more while accelerating.  
  
Sung Shihyun staggered back. In the end, unable to win in speed and power, his body lost balance and leaned toward one side.  
  
“Uwoaaah!”  
  
He did a run-up just before falling and corrected his posture. Of course, the enemy’s spear shaft had already struck him by then.  
  
Kwang!  
  
A powerful ringing spread throughout Sung Shihyun’s body. When he opened his eyes, he was flying through the sky. The heavy impact had momentarily sent his consciousness flying.  
  
Koong! Koong!  
  
His flying body struck the watchtower, breaking through it and violently crashing into the city wall.  
  
“Kuk!”  
  
His back arched backward from the recoil, and blood spurted out of his mouth. However, rather than falling forward, Sung Shihyun had to raise his sword in a hurry, scraping up every ounce of divinity from his power.  
  
“Kuhuk!”  
  
With another flash of light, Sung Shihyun flew up and crashed into the other side of the city wall.  
  
“You son of a bitch…!”  
  
Sung Shihyun released his divinity even in such chaos. Just as a faint light exploded out from his body, Sung Shihyun’s pupils trembled. It was because his divinity shrivelled away as soon as it exploded out.  
  
To be more precise, it was disintegrating as soon as it touched the golden light. Though he couldn’t believe what he was seeing, he knew that his enemy was equipped with all sorts of power that incinerated evil, like the Godslaying Authority and the anti-evil energy.  
  
But this… this was just too unexpected. He wasn’t incinerating evil. Rather, he seemed to be devouring it….  
  
“It’s been a while.”  
  
At that moment, a man walked out from within the blazing golden light.  
  
As Sung Shihyun checked the face of the sudden intruder, his face contorted visibly. He was so sure that he wouldn’t be able to come back, that it was impossible, and yet….  
  
“Have you been well?”  
  
Sung Shihyun could not answer. Though he was expecting as much, confirming it with his own eyes gave a whole different level of shock.  
  
“You must have had fun while I was gone, huh?”  
  
Sung Shihyun’s face contorted, his mouth agape. His eyes furrowed like cracks on a broken window, and the corners of his mouth twisted bizarrely.  
  
However, he winced in the next moment as his opponent suddenly shoved his face against his own. With an absolutely emotionless expression, the opponent glared at Sung Shihyun with wide-open eyes.  
  
His eyes were so wide, in fact, that his irises looked like tiny black beans on his sclerae. For a moment, Sung Shihyun thought that a demon had crawled out from the deepest depths of hell to glare at him.  
  
“Look forward to it.”  
  
A soft whisper entered Sung Shihyun’s ears.  
  
“I won’t give you a peaceful death. Ever.”  
  
Sung Shihyun shuddered at the declaration filled with ill-intent. Then…  
  
“Keeeuuu!”  
  
He got angry at the fact that he was scared for even a moment.  
  
“Uwaaaaaaaah!”  
  
Pushing forward with the sword that the spear forced back, Sung Shihyun shouted and charged forward, shaking off his fear.  
  
Seol Jihu snorted, his mouth going crooked.  
  
“Shut the hell up.”  
  
Kwang!  
  
Seol Jihu’s fist smashed into Sung Shihyun’s mouth. Crack. A few broken teeth scattered into the air. The city wall, which had only been barely holding on, shattered at the same time, and Sung Shihyun fell to the ground with his head arched back.  
  
Valhalla’s members and everyone else in the vicinity stared at the man dusting off his hand at a loss for words.  
  
All sorts of thoughts flitted across their heads, but there was one thing that everyone was thinking.  
  
Seol Jihu had returned.  
  
\*  
  
Same time.  
  
The Parasite Queen was feeling rather anxious. She was so surprised that she shot up from the Corrupted Throne and looked up at the sky.  
  
[Just what…]  
  
The Parasite’s crimson star was flickering. Any force had its own adversarial star. For example, if Seol Jihu were the Parasite Queen’s adversary, then Sung Shihyun was Seol Jihu’s adversary.  
  
And currently, the Parasites’ one and only adversarial star was shaking.  
  
Almost as if it would plummet soon.  
  
The Parasite Queen, who was watching the celestial bodies, suddenly felt a gaze.  
  
Hehehehe. A faint laughter flowed out.  
  
[You’re….]  
  
An enraged look flashed on the Parasite Queen’s face as she realized the identity of the being that was sneaking a peek at her while laughing.  
  
[You’ve gone mad! Mad! You dare to show yourself like this in front of me…!?]  
  
She roused her spirit and tried to threaten the unknown being, but the being’s gaze only turned colder. It did not stop sneering as well.  
  
It was then.  
  
The Parasite Queen’s surroundings suddenly turned bright. A never-before-seen bright-yellow light showed itself.  
  
[This is….]  
  
The Parasite Queen lowered her gaze and scanned her body.  
  
[!]  
  
Then, when she instinctively looked up at the celestial bodies, an indescribable emotion flashed across her face. She froze like a stone statue.  
  
It couldn’t be helped. After all…  
  
[O, Goddess of Parasitism…]  
  
A new giant star was appearing in the celestial bodies.  
  
Illuminating the nearby stars that were flickering off, it gathered the stars, forming a single giant nebula, and rose as if to devour Paradise with its golden light.  
  
Finally evolving a step further from a supernova, a golden constellation radiating a brilliant light showed itself.  
  
[The Son of Gula has returned…!]  
  
Gula’s excited voice faintly resounded from the distance.   
  
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# Chapter 453. The Second Coming of Gluttony 3

The situation took a sudden turn.  
  
Sung Shihyun, who was rampaging as if he owned the world, fell. Vulgar Chastity was struck down by the lightning bolt, and Unsightly Humility had also stopped his advance and was dazedly looking up at the city wall.  
  
It wasn’t just the three Army Commanders. Every parasite ravaging Haramark stopped their attack. Not only that, but they were also slowly backing off.  
  
They were half acting out of instinct, but it was also because the fear was passed down from the Nests and the Army Commanders.  
  
It was all because of one man.  
  
“He really…”  
  
He really came back.  
  
Teresa was at a loss for words seeing Seol Jihu standing on the city wall.  
  
She thought it was over. She thought the war that had gone on for more than 20 years would finally end today.  
  
With humanity’s defeat.  
  
That was what she thought, but…  
  
“Uk….”  
  
At the end of her despair, the light of hope that seemingly flickered off rekindled again.  
  
It was a brilliant golden light that drove the darkness away.  
  
“Keuk… heuk…”  
  
The tears she had been holding in finally began to fall. Her eyes were tightly closed as her lips trembled faintly. It was because all sorts of indescribable emotions that went beyond simply happiness raged inside her.  
  
It wasn’t just Teresa.  
  
“Hmph….”  
  
Phi Sora’s eyes also welled up with tears.  
  
“You should have come earlier….”  
  
She sniffled and wiped her tears with her finger.  
  
“Huha… huhahaha!”  
  
Chohong laughed like she lost her mind.  
  
“Oppa’s here….”  
  
Eun Yuri closed her eyes with a relieved look.  
  
“Representative…!”  
  
And Marcel Ghionea slammed his fist on the ground and shot up excitedly.  
  
“Uwoaaaah!”  
  
Hugo, who was sprawled on the ground, picked himself up with a roar.  
  
“F-Fuck!”  
  
Maria cursed.  
  
“Iya… Captain Seol!”  
  
Hoshino Urara also shouted with a broad smile.  
  
“You’re back, Captain Seol!”  
  
While everyone expressed their happiness in all sorts of ways…  
  
“….”  
  
Seo Yuhui closed her eyes quietly, though her eyes trembled as if she would burst into tears at any moment.  
  
The Seol Jihu Effect was incredible. Just his appearance made humanity’s and the Federation’s morale skyrocket.  
  
On the other hand, the Parasites’ morale was plummeting all the way down to the deepest depths of the earth.  
  
Koong!  
  
Vulgar Chastity became speechless, seeing Sung Shihyun fall from the city wall to the ground. Unsightly Humility was the same.  
  
“What…”  
  
What the hell do we do? was what both the Army Commanders were thinking.  
  
Strictly speaking, only a single person had joined the fray. But it was a different story if that person was Seol Jihu. To the Parasites, the Brightest Star was no different than an all-purpose strategic weapon, one that far surpassed the Seventh Army Commander.  
  
It was simple, really. The Parasites had devised a sophisticated trap that dragged the Brightest Star into it. Three Army Commanders then took turns wearing him down, yet they still failed to defeat him.  
  
Seol Jihu held on even when Sung Shihyun and Twisted Kindness joined the fray, and it wasn’t until all six Army Commanders simultaneously attacked that his death was barely finalized.  
  
But now, they weren’t in the Empire’s territory and only three Army Commanders were present. To top it off, Seol Jihu was in his peak condition. Furthermore….  
  
“Uk!?”  
  
Unsightly Humility winced in the middle of his thoughts. It was because he felt a terrifyingly dense mana sweep past his body. Not once, but five or six times.  
  
‘Just now….’  
  
How could he not know what it was? It was the same attack that partially destroyed him and his army before. Unsightly Humility turned around in shock and roused his energy to prepare for a terrifying explosion.  
  
However, in the next moment, Seol Jihu abruptly raised his arm. A dazzling electric discharge erupted from the bottom of Seol Jihu’s feet and gathered at the tip of his spear.  
  
Pzzt! Golden electricity sparked from the white spear blade pointing toward the sky.  
  
Seol Jihu’s Unique Spatial Ability — Thousand Thunder, Hell Severing.  
  
Krrr, krrrrr! Thunder rumbled once again.  
  
Just as Unsightly Humility did a double-take…  
  
Tzzzzzzzzzt!  
  
Thousands of lightning bolts accompanied by a roaring thunder struck down on the land.  
  
Boom! And following suit was a deafening roar that rippled out in all directions.  
  
Seol Jihu’s Unique Spatial Ability — Supernova Explosion.  
  
Behind Seol Jihu, a sun-like orb rose from the earth. Its surface cracked open, and its condensed energy brimmed over. Golden waves rippled out in all directions.  
  
With two of Seol Jihu’s strongest abilities being used consecutively, it was a calamity on the level of massive natural disasters to the Parasites.  
  
Hell descended in Paradise. The golden wave spread out at an alarming rate and devoured the groups of parasites that were stunned from the lightning strikes.  
  
The lightning energy not only destroyed the parasites’ physical bodies but it also ravenously guzzled them down. Rather than losing strength over time, the energy became denser the more it ate, sending out more ripples.  
  
With the chain effect, the screams ringing out from the surroundings stopped before long.  
  
‘Impossible…!’  
  
Unsightly Humility, who was holding on with all his might, doubted his eyes at the scene of boundless chaos unfolding in front of him. Seol Jihu’s energy was getting stronger the more it destroyed its enemies, and meanwhile, it did not harm even a hair on his allies.  
  
Both Sung Shihyun and Twisted Kindness were incapable of such a feat. It was proof that Seol Jihu obtained an Authority rivaling Godslaying, and also reached the level of existence needed to use the Authority freely.  
  
All by walking a different path than the Army Commanders.  
  
[Second Army Commander.]  
  
It was then. A familiar voice entered Unsightly Humility’s ears.  
  
‘This voice….’  
  
It was the Third Army Commander, Abhorrent Charity’s voice.  
  
He had been watching from afar, hurriedly intervening once the situation turned awry.  
  
[We don’t have much time. Listen well. From now on…!]  
  
Same time.  
  
“Hm…”  
  
Seol Jihu nodded his head after looking around. This was enough cleanup.  
  
Seol Jihu jumped down from the city wall right away. Sung Shihyun was in a complete daze. His brain was ringing just from a single punch. This was the first time he was feeling such dizziness since he became a parasite.  
  
‘I….’  
  
Sung Shihyun blinked in a half-awake state.  
  
‘What am I…’  
  
When he came to his senses, he realized he was subconsciously circulating his divinity to the point it turned his body hot. His skin was stinging with a scorching pain.  
  
‘No….’  
  
His blurring vision focused.  
  
‘There’s no way… that I…’  
  
He saw someone jump down from the city wall.  
  
‘Lost…!’  
  
“Get up.”  
  
Sung Shihyun’s eyes shot open. Veins popped up on the hands that were touching the ground. He clenched his fists, scraping up dirt.  
  
“Kuheu…!”  
  
Sung Shihyun picked himself up with a grunt. He was in a sorry state, to say the least. His neck was stretched out, and his scorched skin had cracked up and revealed his red inner skin.  
  
With white smoke rising from the black soot covering his charred wounds, he looked no different than a beggar. Only, his eyes revealed a fearsome glint, peeking out of his lowered head.  
  
“That’s more like it.”  
  
Seol Jihu grinned with the spear shaft resting on his shoulder. Sung Shihyun did not say anything. He creaked his head to the side and then swung his right hand forcefully.  
  
Chwararak! His white longsword, which was buried in the ground, flew into his hand. Sung Shihyun then pointed at Seol Jihu and fixed his posture.  
  
Seol Jihu gestured at him with his spear.  
  
“Come.”  
  
Sung Shihyun raised his head. At the same time, he kicked off the ground hard. Rushing in at breakneck speed, he swung his longsword fiercely.  
  
“Are you joking?”  
  
Seol Jihu read the movement of the sword perfectly and swung his spear shaft in the same spot.  
  
Clang!  
  
Sung Shihyun’s body shook strongly. Losing in terms of pure strength, he couldn’t help but furrow his brows.  
  
‘There’s no way…’  
  
Tong! Sung Shihyun moved behind Seol Jihu just as he was about to collapse.  
  
“What are you doing?”  
  
Their eyes met. It meant Seol Jihu was seeing through his movements perfectly despite his instantaneous speed.  
  
Sung Shihyun brandished his sword like a thunderbolt striking from the east and west simultaneously. The problem was that Seol Jihu’s spear was hitting his chin up before his sword could stab his neck.  
  
Puk! With a dull sound, Sung Shihyun’s jaw tilted back. His arms also tilted up to the sky.  
  
‘There’s no way…!’  
  
Sung Shihyun’s face became dazed as the view of the sky flashed before his eyes.  
  
“Keeuuu!”  
  
He scraped up his divinity as soon as he landed on the ground. A clear light shot out of his body and undulated like waves. Then, just as an orb gathered at the tip of his sword and bubbled up to explode…  
  
“Aaaack!”  
  
A piercing scream burst out, and a fountain of blood shot out from his shoulder. Sung Shihyun’s right arm, which held the sword, fell to the ground and flopped around.  
  
Sung Shihyun grabbed onto his bleeding right shoulder and fell to his knees. Sensing that the Spear of Purity’s Authorities had returned, Seol Jihu had severed Sung Shihyun’s arm with a Mind Spear.  
  
“Don’t look at me like I somehow wronged you.”  
  
Seol Jihu said with a grin.  
  
“You knew how this fight would turn out before it even started.”  
  
Sung Shihyun couldn’t deny this. Detonating an orb of divinity was a new technique he came up with, but he knew things would only be a continuation of what happened on top of the city wall.  
  
Anti-evil energy, Godslaying, Gluttony… Seol Jihu’s mana, which formed perfect harmony with all sorts of evil-destroying energy, would simply devour his attacks.  
  
It wasn’t as if he didn’t know, but…  
  
Sung Shihyun clenched his teeth until they were on the brink of breaking. Knowing something and acknowledging something were two completely different things.  
  
“Heh…”  
  
Sung Shihyun got up. After staggering left and right a couple of times, he dropped his head.  
  
“…What?”  
  
After a brief moment of silence, a growling voice leaked out of Sung Shihyun’s mouth.  
  
“Just what… is it…”  
  
“?”  
  
“Just what’s the reason…!?”  
  
Did he give up already? Seol Jihu’s eyes flashed with a glint.  
  
“I… I was the strongest Earthling!”  
  
Sung Shihyun huffed.  
  
“I was at the center of attention from the start, and I lived up to everyone’s expectations! Executors! And even Baek Haeju! I surpassed them all until I could look down on them! There wasn’t anyone stronger than me!”  
  
Sung Shihyun was crying. Strength, agility, mana—he was defeated in all aspects. He shed tears as if he couldn’t believe this situation and glared at Seol Jihu.  
  
“Now I even became a parasite…. I fully digested Diligence’s divinity…! Yet, how can you be… stronger…!?”  
  
He threw a tantrum like a child. Seol Jihu spat out a sigh watching this. He then activated his Future-Gauging Nine Eyes.  
  
[Sung Shihyun’s Status Window]  
  
[1. General Information]  
  
Summoned Date: 2013. 03. 22  
  
Marking Grade: Gold  
  
Sex/Age: Male/27  
  
Height/Weight: 178.6cm/72.8kg  
  
Current Condition: Healthy  
  
Class: Lv 7. Pinnacle-Rank Mana Swordsman  
  
Nationality: Korea (Area 1)  
  
Affiliation: N/A  
  
Alias: Son of a Bitch, Jackass, Traitor, Defector, Sexual Harasser, Motherfucker, Dick, Loser  
  
[2. Traits]  
  
1. Temperament  
  
—Scummy (Despicable and contemptible)  
  
—Show-off (Likes to put on airs to flaunt himself)  
  
—Tenacity (A deeply rooted temper of wanting to endure pain and struggles)  
  
—Sexoholic (Always concerned with sexual relationship between a man and a woman)  
  
—Competitiveness (Desire and mindset to win)  
  
—Cruel (Is lacking or has no humanity)  
  
—I Am My Own Lord Throughout Heaven and Earth (Believes that he is not inferior to anyone else in the world)  
  
2. Aptitude  
  
—Prodigy (A rare talent that is rarely seen in the world)  
  
—Cold-blooded (Tries anything and everything to achieve his goals)  
  
—Unrelenting (Confidence that does not bow down to authority and physical strength)  
  
—Sixth Sense (The ability to analyze situations by intuition rather than relying on an analysis of the thought)  
  
[3. Physical Level]  
  
Strength: Pinnacle  
  
Endurance: EX  
  
Agility: Pinnacle  
  
Stamina: EX  
  
Mana: Half-God  
  
Luck: Intermediate (Low)  
  
Remaining Ability Points: 0  
  
[4. Abilities]  
  
1. Authorities (2)  
  
—Divinity (Grade Unknown)  
  
—Super Regeneration (Special)  
  
2. Innate Abilities (0)  
  
3. Class Abilities (8)  
  
—Secret Art: Sword Qi Wave (Pinnacle)  
  
—One With Nature: One With the Sword (Pinnacle), Flying Sword (Pinnacle), Formless Sword (Pinnacle)  
  
4. Miscellaneous Abilities (1)  
  
—Intuition (Special)  
  
[5. Level of Cognition]  
  
Turncoat (Someone who betrayed others’ loyalty and changed sides) / Despairing / Chaotic (Many things are jumbled up and is impossible to unravel)  
  
Seol Jihu turned off Sung Shihyun’s status window. He felt there was no point in reading any further.  
  
“You know, there’s something that a friend of mine said to me.”  
  
Seol Jihu began to speak.  
  
“That the Army Commanders, who have been bestowed divinity by the Parasite Queen, are monsters that are hard to defeat with a human’s strength.”  
  
And also, to become a monster just like them in order to defeat them.  
  
“He said there’s nothing to be afraid of once you meet a condition… especially you.”  
  
“Who!?”  
  
Sung Shihyun shouted.  
  
“…There’s a guy.”  
  
When Seol Jihu gave a chilling smile, Sung Shihyun flinched.  
  
Right, there definitely was a guy like that, a man who was not given the Godslaying Authority, a man who was not chosen to become an Executor, yet managed to kill an Army Commander with nothing but his strength alone.  
  
“I didn’t really understand him back then…. But, after being forced to accept a divinity, I finally understood.”  
  
Seol Jihu continued.  
  
“Well, I can see where your confidence is coming from. Becoming a parasite improves your physical body and vitality significantly, and other external powers like the Parasite Queen’s Authorities must have made you feel empowered.”  
  
“External powers? I fully digested a divinity!”  
  
“I wonder if that’s true.”  
  
Sung Shihyun frowned at Seol Jihu’s comment.  
  
“It was obvious for the other guys, but in the end… you and Twisted Kindness were no different.”  
  
“We’re no different…?”  
  
“I’ll give you an example… When I rose to Level 9, Gula bestowed the class name, Divine Spear, to me.”  
  
At that moment, Sung Shihyun’s brows shook from great shock.  
  
“I assume Level 10 will be Spear God. What do you think the difference is?”  
  
A spear that has the power of a god, and a god that has complete authority over something.  
  
The two names were similar but had entirely different meanings.  
  
“The point is this. You might be able to control the mana flowing in your circuit without trouble… but it doesn’t change the fact that you have Diligence’s divinity, does it?”  
  
Sung Shihyun’s expression stiffened.  
  
“I would have acknowledged it if you formed a new divinity that holds your, Sung Shihyun’s, essence… but that’s not the case here.”  
  
Sung Shihyun became speechless. He wanted to refute, but he couldn’t find anything to say.  
  
“Half-god is putting it nicely. You obtained divinity by inheriting the qualification that Diligence originally had. Isn’t it the case that you yourself haven’t reached that point yet?”  
  
“Keuk!”  
  
“You ceased to be human but haven’t quite reached the level of godhood. Rather than a half-god, it’s probably more accurate to call you a flood dragon that wasn’t able to rise to become a dragon.”  
  
Sung Shihyun shook at Seol Jihu’s clarification.  
  
“Being so arrogant when all you did was steal someone else’s achievement and pretend like it was yours… can it get any more shameless than that?”  
  
“Then what about you!?”  
  
“Yep, I’m the same.”  
  
Seol Jihu acknowledged it readily.  
  
“That’s why I have nothing to fear from you. Look, you’re powerless when the divinity you’re so confident about is useless.”  
  
Sung Shihyun’s eyes widened.  
  
In reality, the two of them were exactly alike. Just like how there was a difference between the Divine Spear and Spear God classes, there was a clear difference between someone in the Half-god rank and someone in the Divine Beginning rank.  
  
Seol Jihu just didn’t feel the need to explain it.  
  
“So if you understand that, then come, Pinnacle-Rank Mana Swordsman.”  
  
When Sung Shihyun heard these words, a frightening glint appeared in his eyes.  
  
“You…!”  
  
Not only did Seol Jihu preach arrogantly, but he had also poked Sung Shihyun’s reverse scale.  
  
“You son of a biiiiiitch!”  
  
He pulled out his sword from his severed right hand and roared in anger.  
  
Kwang!  
  
A terrifying energy sprouted up around him.  
  
A white cluster of light slithered out in multiple directions like snakes and charged toward Seol Jihu. As they gushed out while crossing paths, they dyed the area white.  
  
“….”  
  
In this blinding light, Seol Jihu felt a strange sensation envelop his body.  
  
He was familiar with it. He had felt it once before, and because he had been yearning for it, it felt all the more familiar.  
  
It slipped out of his hands last time due to the Parasite Queen’s meddling, so Seol Jihu vowed to grab ahold of it this time.  
  
Activating the Spear of Purity’s Authority, Seol Jihu smiled and jumped forward.  
  
“!”  
  
In the next moment, Sung Shihyun dropped his jaw in astonishment. Not only did Seol Jihu purposely enter his range, but he was also making all of his attacks flow by.  
  
‘No way…!’  
  
It wouldn’t have been so shocking if he was devouring his divinity like before. But now, relying solely on his spear, he was shortening the distance like an immortal who was out for a walk in the clouds. Such an awe-striking display would provoke fear in anyone.  
  
Sung Shihyun gripped his sword instinctively. There was no time to worry about the next move. Completely disregarding what would happen to his body, Sung Shihyun released more energy in a final stand.  
  
More than a dozen beams of light shot out of his body and bloomed like a lotus. Then, they all struck down at one spot.  
  
However, Seol Jihu fluidly brushed past even this, just like how the sun rises when the moon sets, like how water flows from top to bottom—simply like it was a matter of fact.  
  
Sung Shihyun saw all this with a dazed face. The hand that was holding onto the sword trembled. He felt like he was fighting boundlessness itself, and he was showing off his strength in front of a vast, endless sea.  
  
Inside this ultimate boundlessness, Seol Jihu looked free and unperturbed. The possibility that gave birth to this freedom was also boundless. He moved his body and used his skills at will.  
  
The scene of mind, technique, and body acting in such perfect harmony was beautiful enough to earn the admiration of any spectator.  
  
Sung Shihyun could not even fathom the depth of this realm.  
  
“I… I was a legend too…!”  
  
In his fit of anger, Sung Shihyun shouted in jealousy and envy.  
  
“Who’s the one who saved humanity multiple times from the brink of ruin? Who’s the one who forced the Parasite Queen to the Corrupted Throne!? It’s me! I made achievements that don't lose out to yours!”  
  
Seol Jihu finally broke through the light and stepped in front of Sung Shihyun.  
  
“Who the hell are you anyway!?”  
  
Whoosh! Sung Shihyun swung his sword and cut down.  
  
“I’m supposed to be the main character…!”  
  
He did a double-take in the middle of his shouting. Although the sword cut Seol Jihu in half, the feeling in his hand was void.  
  
‘Ethereal Shift!?’  
  
Sung Shihyun turned around instantly and flinched. His intuition, which was based on sixth sense, sent powerful warning signals. It was telling him that this wasn’t Ethereal Shift.  
  
Just as he turned back forward, Sung Shihyun ducked his head low, following his instinct. He felt like a spear was flying toward his head. It wasn’t until he looked down that he realized it was Seol Jihu’s trick.  
  
It was because a second later, Seol Jihu was looking at him after having returned from the Spirit Realm. With his two legs kicking off the ground and his spear pointed at Sung Shihyun.  
  
In that instant, Sung Shihyun could distinctly feel the boundlessness in front of him compressing down layer by layer and ultimately forming a single point.  
  
Level 9 Divine Spear, Class Ability — Trinity Harmony.  
  
I can’t dodge it. Sung Shihyun’s sixth sense told him so.  
  
“Ah….”  
  
His face sunk in despair.  
  
…In truth, he already knew. That Seol Jihu would have killed him multiple times already if he wanted to. He knew from the moment Seol Jihu returned.  
  
Sung Shihyun just did not want to admit this. Because…  
  
[Supernova, a large nova that is millions or even billions of times brighter than an ordinary star.]  
  
[The Brightest Star… an infinite star with a growth speed and potential that not even a god can estimate.]  
  
The moment Seol Jihu, who had been irritated to the extreme, revived…  
  
[The most frightening thing about that star is its limitless potential and frightening growth rate.]  
  
[Once it explodes with light, it expands in size while evolving at a terrifying speed.]  
  
[In the time you do a double-take, this star surpasses everyone’s expectations and shoots forward. By then, it would be too late to catch up to it.]  
  
[That is the reason I am so fearful and wary of the Brightest Star.]  
  
…He would be back stronger than ever before.  
  
So much so that no one could ever irritate him again.  
  
“I…!”  
  
Seeing the spear blade rushing toward him, Sung Shihyun’s face contorted.  
  
“I’m also…!”  
  
Pk! The golden energy pierced Sung Shihyun’s stomach and came out the other side.  
  
This wasn’t sword qi. It was far too large to be considered sword qi. If he had to describe it, it was more like an essence formed from an infinite number of sword qi condensed together.  
  
Sung Shihyun’s feet flew off the ground.  
  
“Kyak…!”  
  
Skewered by a giant pillar, he went up into the air, struggling, while vomiting blood.  
  
Seol Jihu’s arm shook violently. Next, Sung Shihyun’s body, which was wrapped up in a brilliant golden light, bloated up like a pig.  
  
Level 9 Divine Spear, Secret Art — Reinforced Sword Qi Explosion.  
  
BOOM!  
  
Then, his body exploded magnificently.   
  
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# Chapter 454. The Second Coming of Gluttony 4

Sung Shihyun was thrown into the air by the power of the explosion.  
  
His body drew a curve, swaying like a tattered piece of cloth in the air.  
  
His eyes were out of focus, blank.  
  
Only the sky filled his vision. Gray clouds drifted slowly before his eyes like a panorama.  
  
‘I….’  
  
His mouth slowly closed. His eyes, looking fixedly at the sky, also lost their vitality.  
  
Perhaps it was because he was close to his death that everything that happened to him since he first entered Paradise began to flash through his mind.  
  
Sung Shihyun quietly closed his eyes.  
  
Sung Shihyun, the first Invited to receive a Gold Stamp, and the next in the line of the elites from Area 1, following Baek Haeju and Seo Yuhui.  
  
In March 2013, he was named the top graduate in his class in the Neutral Zone and joined the ranks of the ‘Irregulars’ by successfully completing an impossible mission alone while beating others by a landslide.  
  
Even after graduating from the Neutral Zone, nothing stood in Sung Shihyun’s way.  
  
The Daughter of Luxuria, who became an Executor in the shortest amount of time in the history of Paradise, accompanied Sung Shihyun and helped him grow. Of course, his own talent was remarkable, too.  
  
As he began to earn contribution points and achieve greater success, he grew more and more fond of Paradise.  
  
He still remembered exchanging some of the rewards he earned on his first expedition for money and buying several bowls of abalone porridge, which cost more than 20000 won a bowl, on his way home.  
  
[Shihyun, where did you get the money to pay for all this…?]  
  
[Aw, come on, Mom! You gotta try something like this once in a while. And don’t worry! I make a lot now.]  
  
[I know you got a job, but still, this is….]  
  
[I’m telling you, it’s nothing. You have no idea how successful I am.]  
  
And he was successful in Paradise.  
  
Sung Shihyun had an aptitude for all that was useful in Paradise, and he quickly blossomed into one of the strongest Earthlings in Paradise with the help of his comrades, combined with his own efforts.  
  
It was only natural that he fell in love with Paradise. In Paradise, he was given infinite opportunities to change his life, which had been considered a failure on Earth. He especially liked that he could obtain rewards commensurate with his efforts.  
  
But as is often the case with those who greatly surpass their peers, he too became a target of jealousy.  
  
Those who envied Sung Shihyun were too afraid to face him head-on, so instead, they began plotting against him in secrecy.  
  
When he first experienced their malice, he felt as if he had been hit in the back of his head with a rock.  
  
It began when he set out on an expedition to a site near the Parasites border.  
  
It was widely known that there were ancient ruins in that area, but most Earthlings dared not approach it because of a nearby Parasites fortress.  
  
So, Sung Shihyun destroyed the fortress first before heading to the ruins.  
  
It was then that he ran into an expedition team trying to set foot inside the ruins.  
  
They fought over the right to explore, and in the process, insults and punches were exchanged.  
  
For Sung Shihyun, who had destroyed the Parasites fortress, only to have his reward almost taken away from him, the fact that he kicked the expedition team out without seriously hurting them was already an act of benevolence.  
  
But when he returned from the expedition, he discovered that he had become a scumbag who claimed possession of the ruins by force.  
  
The rumor spread quickly, and no one listened to his protest. Not even an article was written that shed light on his position.  
  
But that was okay. Sung Shihyun didn’t need everyone to like him. He was fine as long as he got what he rightfully deserved.  
  
Baek Haeju told him these things happened all the time, that he shouldn’t pay much attention to it. Seo Yuhui told him that he should bear with it. So he did. He chose to consider it a price for fame.  
  
But his mystery haters were not only persistent but also malicious.  
  
Everything he said and did, which would not have been a problem had it come from anyone other than Sung Shihyun, became exaggerated in rumors circulating all around Paradise.  
  
One day he decided to visit one of the organizations that wrote a wrong article about him. The organization apologized and promised to conduct a more thorough investigation before publishing an article, at which point he returned home.  
  
But the next day, Sung Shihyun had become a thug who threatened the said organization with force.  
  
Once Sung Shihyun became preoccupied with what others thought of him, he unknowingly began to place restrictions on what he should or shouldn’t do, and his patience quickly began to run out.  
  
It was around that time he learned about the kind of rumors that were circulating regarding Baek Haeju, who made significant contributions for Paradise, and Seo Yuhui, who sacrificed herself more than anyone else for Paradise.  
  
Sung Shihyun didn’t want to be like the two.  
  
No matter how hard he thought about it, he couldn’t figure out what he had done wrong. But since everyone seemed to hate him so much, he decided to give them a reason for it.  
  
At last, Sung Shihyun whipped out his sword, despite Seo Yuhui’s attempts to stop him.  
  
His first target was the informant organization that ran an inaccurate article about him. He beat them up, and once he got a name for who ordered them to write such an article, he proceeded to destroy them as well.  
  
That was the beginning of an all-out war.  
  
The more persistent his opponents became, the more tenacious Sung Shihyun became.  
  
He found the expedition team that first framed him and killed them after cruel torture.  
  
He captured those who had come to assassinate him, tortured them, and brutally killed all teams and organizations associated with these assassins for everyone to see.  
  
In the process of carrying out his revenge, Sung Shihyun changed. He also earned various nicknames.  
  
Disappointed by his cruelty, comrades left him one after another. But Sung Shihyun didn’t care about that. It wasn’t like nobody wanted him.  
  
Even after becoming a member of Sinyoung, Sung Shihyun’s attitude remained the same. No, in fact, it got worse. Sung Shihyun had nothing to be afraid of, with such a powerful organization supporting him.  
  
He wasn’t any less cruel to his comrades. If he didn’t like the way they looked at him, or if he heard them talking behind his back, he threw a fit. It wasn’t until he saw them kneel before him and beg for their lives that he felt any better.  
  
It didn’t take long for everyone to become afraid of Sung Shihyun.  
  
Years of harassment and unfair criticism directed toward him quickly began to diminish.  
  
This gave Sung Shihyun confidence that everything he did was right, that he was right.  
  
But that was before he heard that his mother had passed away.  
  
She died in a car accident.  
  
It was a common cause, but the way it happened wasn’t common at all.  
  
A car drove onto the sidewalk and hit his mother on her way home from work. The driver, a foreigner, went missing immediately after the accident. Everything about this incident reeked of Paradise.  
  
Sung Shihyun returned to Earth as soon as he heard the news.  
  
He stood for hours in front of his mother’s smiling portrait.  
  
Even then, his anger was directed at those responsible. He had no intention of defecting.  
  
But everything changed when Yun Seohui and others from Sinyoung arrived at the funeral.  
  
[It seems there has been a mistake on our part. I’m sorry we couldn’t protect her.]  
  
[But you should have paid more attention. She’s your mother, after all.]  
  
[You have to understand. We did our best, but you know better than anyone that you have enemies everywhere. There are at least 10 organizations that I know of.]  
  
[You dummy. Why weren’t you more careful?]  
  
Sung Shihyun watched Yun Seohui bow to his mother’s portrait before stepping outside the funeral home, but immediately stopped when he heard voices coming from the outside.  
  
[Did you see his face? It was quite a sight.]  
  
[I feel bad for the deceased, but at the same time, I feel a little bit relieved too. He’s been such a pain in the ass.]  
  
[Right? Maybe this will bring him down a notch or two. I don’t know who it was, but I’m thankful to them. That’s right, there’s something I heard before coming here.]  
  
[Oh, that? Yes, I’ve heard it too, but it’s an unconfirmed rumor.]  
  
[But it’s true that Director Park has been holding grudges against Sung Shihyun ever since the bastard beat him up.]  
  
[Well, yes, but….]  
  
[So Director Park talked to the guard team in charge of Sung Shihyun’s mother, and….]  
  
When Sung Shihyun heard that, he felt something snap inside him.  
  
Should he kill Director Park? Should he do the same to his family? Perhaps he should just destroy Sinyoung.  
  
Countless thoughts flashed through Sung Shihyun’s mind, but in the end, he shook his head.  
  
Director Park wasn’t the actual culprit. And, given how meticulous he was, he would have already wiped out all the evidence.  
  
…No, the truth was, he didn’t care about evidence.  
  
He was sick of all this.  
  
Sung Shihyun emptied his head of everything.  
  
He decided to do what he had always done.  
  
The opponent crossed the line. Now, it was his turn to do the same.  
  
After the funeral, Sung Shihyun returned to Paradise. He secretly crossed the border into enemy territory.  
  
He faced the Parasite Queen.  
  
[Power.]  
  
And he spoke.  
  
[I want power.]  
  
[The power to destroy all Earthlings.]  
  
The Parasite Queen accepted his demand.  
  
Seeing Sung Shihyun’s potential, the Parasite Queen offered him two privileges. The first was that the Parasite Queen would personally turn him into a parasite. The second was that she would create a vessel for him to use, even if it took her some time, in case a vacancy emerged in the position of the Army Commanders.  
  
Fortunately for Sung Shihyun, when he successfully completed the two procedures, Undying Diligence died.  
  
After absorbing the divinity of Diligence into his body, Sung Shihyun entered the nest specially prepared for him by the Parasite Queen. He promised himself that, on the day he came out as the First Army Commander of the Parasites, he would keep the vow he made at his mother’s funeral….  
  
Koong!  
  
Sung Shihyun fell from the sky and rolled across the ground.  
  
WAAAAAAAH!  
  
Cheers erupted from everywhere.  
  
They couldn’t help it. The First Army Commander of the Parasites, the defector of humanity, who had lured Seol Jihu into a trap and killed him, thus facilitating the fall of Paradise, had finally fallen.  
  
Seol Jihu withdrew his spear and calmed his breathing.  
  
The fact that he had finally reached the state of perfect harmony, and the power of his own Reinforced Sword Qi surprised him, but instead of staying complacent, he quickly glanced around.  
  
Seol Jihu’s eyes subsequently narrowed.  
  
‘Vulgar Chastity and Unsightly Humility are….’  
  
…Gone. He couldn’t sense them anywhere. They had vanished without a trace.  
  
Apart from Sung Shihyun’s divinity, which was rapidly diminishing, the only divinity he could sense nearby was that of Abhorrent Charity.  
  
Seol Jihu quickly shook his spear over his head. Teresa saw his signal and shouted for her soldiers to gather.  
  
It was then.  
  
All of a sudden, the roaring cheers stopped.  
  
Sensing the heat coming from in front of him, Seol Jihu turned his head forward.  
  
Surprisingly, Sung Shihyun was standing up. There were holes in his chest and abdomen, but his eyes were still burning furiously.  
  
“Kuhuk!”  
  
Blood spurted from Sung Shihyun’s mouth.  
  
His legs were shaking. Even standing still was a challenge for him now.  
  
Nevertheless, his one remaining hand held on tightly to the white longsword.  
  
“…”  
  
Seol Jihu turned and faced Sung Shihyun, who was now staggering.  
  
The Army Commander’s injury was fatal, but he was still alive. His divinity struggled desperately to revive its vessel. But the harder it struggled, the faster it was burned down by Seol Jihu’s mana left inside him.  
  
“Huuuu….”  
  
Moments later, a long sigh escaped Sung Shihyun’s mouth.  
  
He slowly raised his head and looked at Seol Jihu with eyes full of spite.  
  
“You….”  
  
Sung Shihyun’s lips quivered.  
  
“So you never really considered it…? Not even once…?”  
  
He asked in a hoarse voice.  
  
Seol Jihu’s eyes widened.  
  
“Defecting…. It wouldn’t have been a bad offer for you either….”  
  
Seol Jihu clicked his tongue.  
  
“I know you experienced it, too….”  
  
Sung Shihyun clenched his teeth.  
  
“You’re famous…. So you must have, at least a few times….”  
  
“Stop.”  
  
Seol Jihu interrupted him.  
  
He sighed as he looked at Sung Shihyun, who was shaking.  
  
“I know. Everyone has an excuse or two.”  
  
“…”  
  
“I’m sure you have a lot to say. You have a reason for betraying humanity. I get that. I do. But….”  
  
Seol Jihu continued.  
  
“Can you really hold your head up high?”  
  
Sung Shihyun’s breath quivered.  
  
“Can you say with confidence that everything you’ve done since entering Paradise is fair? Were your actions all just?”  
  
“…”  
  
“I know I can’t. And I don’t think you can either.”  
  
Sung Shihyun’s face contorted.  
  
“I don’t want to criticize you for taking revenge on people who have been shitty to you, but you’ve lost your right to claim innocence the moment you hurt innocent bystanders.”  
  
Seol Jihu raised his spear and pointed it at Sung Shihyun.  
  
“You can’t seriously be trying to instill pity…. Or do you really believe that everything that has happened to you isn’t fair, but everything you’ve done to others is?”  
  
Sung Shihyun remained silent. He only stared at Seol Jihu with resentful eyes and bit his lips.  
  
“In short….”  
  
Seol Jihu started toward Sung Shihyun.  
  
“I’m trying to say that I don’t want to hear your excuses. Forget about everything else, and just focus on the two of us, capeesh?”  
  
Tuk. The longsword slipped out of Sung Shihyun’s hand and fell toward the ground.  
  
“Let’s just say that we made different choices.”  
  
Seol Jihu stopped before Sung Shihyun, who was now twitching and shuddering, before giving a bitter smile.  
  
“You wanted to destroy this fucked up world, and I wanted to change it, forcefully, if necessary.”  
  
“…”  
  
“…That’s all there is to it.”  
  
He pushed Sung Shihyun down with his spear.  
  
Then he raised his left hand into the air to invoke the Authority of Gluttony.  
  
Seol Jihu’s left arm stretched toward Sung Shihyun on the ground, gasping for breath.  
  
“Uk!”  
  
Sung Shihyun flinched as he felt a mysterious energy pass through him from head to toe.  
  
“What….”  
  
Sensing the changes taking place inside him, Sung Shihyun began to tremble with fear.  
  
The mysterious energy permeated his circuit and spread to every nook and cranny of his body.  
  
It began devouring the divine energy dissolved into his mana.  
  
“No….”  
  
When he felt the powerful energy leaving his body, Sung Shihyun raised his arm with much difficulty.  
  
“Give it back….”  
  
But his struggle was meaningless.  
  
Seol Jihu withdrew his arm to check the energy that Gluttony had devoured.  
  
The divinity of diligence. When he saw the faintly glowing mass of energy over his palm, Seol Jihu smiled.  
  
With this, Sung Shihyun could no longer wield the kind of power that he used to wield in the past. Now, he was nothing more than a parasite who was only slightly stronger than the rest.  
  
“I told you I wouldn’t let you die so easily.”  
  
“Give it back…!”  
  
“No. I’m only paying you back for everything you’ve done to me.”  
  
Seol Jihu put the divinity into his pocket.  
  
“Go to sleep now. Although I can’t help it if you die in the process.”  
  
Seol Jihu raised his foot and kicked Sung Shihyun in the head.  
  
Sung Shihyun’s eyeballs spun and his body went limp.  
  
He was able to stand up only because he had fully absorbed his divinity. Other Army Commanders would have died as soon as the Reinforced Sword Qi struck them.  
  
So Sung Shihyun was now out of the picture.  
  
But the war wasn’t over yet.  
  
Seol Jihu looked around the battlefield and saw Teresa retreat in the distance.  
  
He thought he saw a light flickering in the direction in which Abhorrent Charity’s energy was felt.  
  
‘What was that?’  
  
Even though Seol Jihu had signaled Teresa to pursue the enemy, he never expected her to succeed.  
  
The present Seol Jihu could detect a divinity’s presence from miles away. But he couldn’t sense the divinities of the Second and the Sixth Army Commanders anywhere at the moment.  
  
This could only mean one thing: that they had gone so far away that even his mana, which had reached the level of Divine Beginning, could not reach them.  
  
‘It looks like they ran away while I was fighting Sung Shihyun….’  
  
He wondered how they could travel so far in such a short time.  
  
Toong! He used the Ethereal Shift to move closer to Teresa and realized almost immediately why she was retreating.  
  
The parasites and Nests that survived Seol Jihu’s attack had formed barricades, blocking Teresa and her soldiers’ route of travel.  
  
Abhorrent Charity was above them. There was a bright glow coming from under his robe.  
  
“So it was you?”  
  
When Seol Jihu saw that, a possibility crossed his mind, and he immediately called out to Abhorrent Charity.  
  
“What did you do?”  
  
[I merely used teleport magic to transfer the two Army Commanders as far away from here as possible.]  
  
His answer was well within Seol Jihu’s expectations.  
  
“When?”  
  
[When you first appeared before us. I notified them and then forcefully transferred them while the First Army Commander bought us time.]  
  
“I’m surprised. I thought you’d all release your divinities and come at me.”  
  
[We still would have lost.]  
  
Abhorrent Charity replied calmly.  
  
[Given the possibility that the Arcus Spirit will regain its powers and that the Executors will recover from their injuries and come to your aid, our chances of winning are very slim.]  
  
“So you moved them…. You sure are quick to act.”  
  
Seol Jihu clicked his tongue. The enemy’s argument was logical, and he couldn’t find any fault with it.  
  
“Why didn’t you save yourself?”  
  
[You ask when you already know the answer. The moment I decided to use my divinity, my fate was sealed. My divinity will soon go out of control, so even if I run away now, the fact remains that the same thing that happened to Raging Temperance will happen to me.]  
  
All Army Commanders, with the exception of Sung Shihyun and Twisted Kindness, needed to rest for nearly a year once they released their divinity.  
  
But that didn’t mean they couldn’t use their divinity at all during the resting period. They could, as long as they put up with the consequences, including losing control of their divinity, which could eventually lead to their deaths.  
  
[Once my divinity gets out of control, the chances of you discovering our location would increase. If you had caught up with us while we waited for my divinity to subside, my efforts would have been useless.]  
  
[Perhaps I am being much too careful… but isn’t it better to be careful than to be sorry? After all, you are the Brightest Star, who transforms the impossible into reality.]  
  
“That’s too bad.”  
  
Seol Jihu chuckled.  
  
He would be lying if he said he wasn’t sorry, but at least he had the Third Army Commander in checkmate. He remembered Black Seol Jihu saying that Abhorrent Charity was far more troublesome than Vulgar Chastity.  
  
Dried tentacles were constantly falling out of Abhorrent Charity’s sleeves. Blood, sweat, and other secretions dampened his robe and dripped down. The light emanating from under his robe also grew bigger and bigger.  
  
The enemy finished all the preparations. Now everything was only a matter of time.  
  
Seol Jihu shrugged his shoulders.  
  
“If you’re going to do it, do it quickly. I’d be glad if you die without making a fuss.”  
  
[I’d like to say you’re underestimating me, but…. Huhuhu….]  
  
He was at his limit. Suddenly Abhorrent Charity opened his arms wide with a low laughter.  
  
Woong!  
  
An ominous energy spread under his robe.  
  
[Huhahaha…!]  
  
Abhorrent Charity cackled madly.  
  
His robe began to swell, and rays of light stretched out and through the cloth.  
  
[Your Majesty!]  
  
Abhorrent Charity tilted his head back and shouted at the sky.  
  
[I will be watching from the other side! Please show me that you can beat the golden constellation!]  
  
It was then that a bright ball of light shot out from Abhorrent Charity in a spherical motion.  
  
FLASH!  
  
A loud explosion erupted. Light swallowed everything in the vicinity. This light was stronger than a dozen special thunders combined.  
  
Abhorrent Charity’s energy passed through the barriers prepared by the Priests. It rushed toward the city at an alarming speed.  
  
But it was only for a moment that his color filled the sky and the earth. Soon a brighter golden light rose from the ground and clashed into Abhorrent Charity’s energy.  
  
The two energies pushed each other for a brief moment before the golden energy shattered its opponent and dyed the world yellow.  
  
[Curse you, Seven Sins….]  
  
A bitter smile spread on Abhorrent Charity’s lips as he watched the tide of electricity rush toward him.  
  
[You… created a monster….]  
  
The golden tsunami swallowed Abhorrent Charity before he could finish his sentence.  
  
Amidst the flashing light, his shadow shook violently in zigzags and then scattered like a spray of water.  
  
Once the storm subsided, nothing remained in the air.  
  
Only a faintly glowing ball of light had fallen onto Seol Jihu’s palm.  
  
Abhorrent Charity, the Third Army Commander, had perished.  
  
The Parasites’ Seven Army Commanders, once feared by everyone, were reduced to just four in number when the fall of humanity was just around the corner.  
  
On that day, the Parasite Queen’s roar spread far and wide beyond the imperial territory.   
  
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# Chapter 455. Different Choices

Haramark regained tranquility after Abhorrent Charity perished, almost as if the battle that shook heaven and earth never happened.  
  
A loud cheer erupted not long afterward. The surviving soldiers, Earthlings, and foreign races all embraced each other in joy. While everyone shed tears of relief at having survived, Teresa recalled Jan Sanctus and hurriedly ordered the soldiers to search and treat the injured.  
  
As the battlefield was close to getting cleaned up, Sung Shihyun was still alive. Perhaps because he was a parasite that the Parasite Queen took personal care in creating, his body was continually regenerating even as it was instantly burned away. He was truly like a cockroach in that aspect.  
  
Seol Jihu woke up the twitching Sung Shihyun and pulled him up. Then, he released him. Since the border region wasn’t too far from Haramark, Seol Jihu even promised that he would not chase after them if he crossed the border with his own strength.  
  
Sung Shihyun let out an empty chuckle. He wasn’t so foolish as to think this was mercy.  
  
Despite this, Sung Shihyun walked. After all, there was a chance that help might come near the border region. And if he could somehow make it to the Parasite Queen’s territory, the chances of him recovering would go up dramatically.  
  
Because of this small hope, he dragged his feet and walked forward. However, he had to stop before he even took a few steps.  
  
It was because he saw Taciana Cinzia and others waiting for him at the border. Seol Jihu said he would not bother him if he went past the border. That obviously meant he would not be free of obstruction until then.  
  
“Haha… son of a bitch…”  
  
Seol Jihu surely must have gone through the same thing. After all, when he fought for a dozen days without stop and finally broke through the encirclement, the Parasite Queen and the remaining Army Commanders had been waiting for him.  
  
Sung Shihyun began to understand how Seol Jihu must have felt back then.  
  
“God damn it….”  
  
Sung Shihyun sprawled down on his back. He no longer thought about returning alive.  
  
The sky cleared up before he noticed. It regained its azure color as soon as the war was over as if it was never dark in the first place.  
  
“….”  
  
It wasn’t that he wasn’t aware that Seol Jihu had no intention of sending him back alive. But he also knew that there was nothing he could do to return alive.  
  
The reason he played along with Seol Jihu’s farce despite this was that he felt wronged.  
  
Looking up at the sky, the faces of three people flashed across Sung Shihyun’s mind. They were all friends who once stayed by his side.  
  
[Shihyun, is it true? Did you really do that? It’s not true, right?]  
  
[What do you mean? I just came back from chopping up another team. Rumors sure fly fast, huh.]  
  
[What?]  
  
[Oh, are you talking about the organization I destroyed four days ago? Yeah, I did it. I killed every single one of them without exception.]  
  
[W-Why….]  
  
[Their representative pointed his finger at me, calling me trash, with a news report that hasn’t even been confirmed. I meant to just break his teeth and fingers, but I went a little overboard.]  
  
[But you didn’t have to kill everyone…!]  
  
[Nah, it looked like the organization was closely related to the intelligence organization I destroyed not too long ago.]  
  
[Still, how can you….]  
  
[Well, it doesn’t matter even if that isn’t the case. It’s their fault for trying to protect that trash of a representative. Haven’t you heard of guilt by association?]  
  
Seo Yuhui.  
  
[Are you mad? Why would you do that when everyone is watching?]  
  
[Ah~ You mean the public humiliation and execution show? That fucker was acting mighty arrogant for someone who tried to kill me, so I captured everyone related to him. Turns out he has a family and girlfriend, so… kekekeke!]  
  
[You… you’ve really gone mad. Haven’t you thought about the aftermath? You might be okay, but what about the people around you?]  
  
[Iya~ Come on, Haeju, is this really coming from you? What happened to your live alone, die alone creed?]  
  
[I’m acting independently because of personal circumstances. I’m not acting without regard for consequences like you.]  
  
[You have to do at least this much. Otherwise, people won’t fear you. I wouldn’t have started if I was going to stop halfway. And I’m the one who decides how thoughtless I am. Don’t impose your standards on me.]  
  
[I’m not telling you not to do it. I have told you before—if you want to do something like this, form a force that can support and help you justify your actions. There’s a limit to how many times Yuhui and I can help you. Don’t you know we get criticized because of you?]  
  
[Aren’t we comrades? You can put up with that much, right?]  
  
[Comrades? Even though you don’t listen to a single word we say? Listen up. Yuhui and I aren’t your subordinates. Don’t you feel bad for Yuhui, who always has to clean up your mess?]  
  
[Oh come on, I didn’t ask her to, did I?]  
  
Baek Haeju.  
  
[Sung Shihyun, do you have to go that far?]  
  
[What was that? You want to get beaten up too?]  
  
[Since you entered my company, you are my employee. As the future representative, I have a duty to protect Sinyoung’s employees, so if you keep acting that way, I’ll have no choice but to change my thoughts.]  
  
[Acting what way?]  
  
[Are you a psychopath? Don’t you think beating someone up and stabbing him just because he glared at you is going too far?]  
  
[Hmm, I think the father who treats a kingdom’s queen as a whore and his daughter who pretends to be oblivious are the real psychopaths.]  
  
[…Listen, if you keep that up, you’re going to get hurt. There’s a limit to how much we can protect you.]  
  
[Aigoo~ I’m so scared. I got it, so shut the hell up, please.]  
  
[I’m warning you out of concern for you. Don’t forget that.]  
  
[I’m warning you too. If you want to keep those pretty teeth intact, shut up. Don’t forget that.]  
  
Yun Seohui.  
  
“….”  
  
Looking back, it wasn’t as if he didn’t have chances. Chances to not lose his mother, chances to not resort to the extreme measure of defecting.  
  
[I’m sure you have a lot to say. You have a reason for betraying humanity. I get that. I do….]  
  
Seol Jihu said he understood him, saying that everyone has a reason or two.  
  
[But can you really hold your head up high?]  
  
Indeed, Sung Shihyun did always go beyond what was justified.  
  
[Can you say with confidence that everything you’ve done since entering Paradise is fair?]  
  
No, that wasn’t the case at all. If his house was broken, he carried out revenge with the purpose of destroying a hundred buildings of his enemy.  
  
[Were your actions all just?]  
  
No, they weren’t. Because that was the only way he thought others would fear him.  
  
[I know I can’t.]  
  
Seol Jihu said his actions weren’t always fair and just.  
  
[And I don’t think you can either.]  
  
Sung Shihyun also knew his actions weren’t fair and just.  
  
[Or do you really believe that everything that has happened to you isn’t fair, but everything you’ve done to others is?]  
  
Instead… he was just curious. He wanted to know why they ended up differently, even though they were in similar positions and were equally unjust and unfair in their actions.  
  
[Let’s just say that we made different choices.]  
  
[…That’s all there is to it.]  
  
Just what choice made their futures so distinctively different, Sung Shihyun thought about it with his head on the ground.  
  
He tilted his back a little, and in the upside-down world, he saw Seol Jihu looking down at him. Beside him and behind him were countless people watching over him. Among them was Baek Haeju, looking at him with a sympathetic gaze, and Seo Yuhui, looking at him with pitying eyes.  
  
Sung Shihyun turned his eyes and looked around him.  
  
There wasn’t anyone. Not a single person, not even a single parasite.  
  
“…Ah.”  
  
He finally began to understand. If he had held himself back a little more, found comrades and a force to support him, or at the very least, didn’t turn his allies into his enemies, and if he didn’t consider himself his own lord throughout heaven and earth….  
  
“Whew….”  
  
Sung Shihyun heaved out a long sigh.  
  
‘Was I…’  
  
His eyelids slowly came down until his eyes closed halfway.  
  
‘Too egotistical…?’  
  
Soon, Sung Shihyun’s eyes closed all the way.  
  
And he ceased to move again.  
  
\*  
  
“…I think he died.”  
  
Phi Sora murmured after a few minutes of absolute silence. Seol Jihu nodded his head silently.  
  
Sung Shihyun met his death alone without anyone beside him. It was a somewhat melancholic ending for someone who was once a legend of Paradise.  
  
Seol Jihu’s expression was complicated. Sung Shihyun was certainly similar to him in many aspects. However, the future they arrived at was completely different.  
  
‘It’s probably…’  
  
[That’s what it means to be a leader. You have the authority and the position to use that authority. That’s why you, of all people, should not have done that.]  
  
Kim Hannah.  
  
[…Alright.]  
  
[I don’t know what’s going on, but you must have your reason. Let’s go. You can explain later.]  
  
Chohong and Hugo.  
  
[That’s why I… would like to see you overcome your past. If you feel like you can’t do it alone, I will gladly lend you a hand. I am your teacher, after all.]  
  
Jang Maldong.  
  
[Don’t waver.]  
  
Phi Sora.  
  
[Don’t you have any thoughts about becoming a King?]  
  
Hao Win.  
  
[I’ll be cheering for you. If you run into any trouble, give me a call. This time, I will definitely be of help.]  
  
Teresa.  
  
[Don’t worry too much. I will help you. No matter what it takes.]  
  
Eun Yuri.  
  
[Do you think you’re Hegemon King Xiang Yu, exterminating all your enemies?]  
  
Philip Muller.  
  
[Don’t get swayed.]  
  
[If I had given in to my feelings back then… I might have become a Parasite and stood against you as an enemy. If that happened, I wouldn’t have been able to enjoy the happiness I have now.]  
  
Vlad Halep.  
  
[It’s okay.]  
  
And Seo Yuhui….  
  
[My Jihu can do anything.]  
  
Wait, no, that one wasn’t quite right.  
  
Anyway, it was thanks to everyone that he came this far. Whenever his eyes rolled back, they were there to hold his hand. Whenever something was about to happen, they supported him categorically.  
  
If it weren’t for his comrades helping him with their heart and body, he would not be standing here today.  
  
“…Why are you staring so much?”  
  
Phi Sora asked. Seol Jihu had been looking at his comrades one by one for a while.  
  
“…No reason.”  
  
Seol Jihu spoke calmly.  
  
“I was just grateful.”  
  
Phi Sora’s eyes widened.  
  
“What…”  
  
She blinked in a fluster at his honest confession and scratched her head while feigning annoyance.  
  
“Don’t just stare and say something. Because you’re doing that…!?”  
  
Phi Sora was interrupted, frightened out of her mind. It was because Seol Jihu suddenly collapsed.  
  
“W-What’s wrong!?”  
  
“Ah! Hey!!”  
  
With Chohong leading the way, everyone else rushed forward.  
  
“What happened!? Don’t tell me, you…!”  
  
“No….”  
  
“Priests! Someone call for Priests! Wait, no, we have two Priests here already. What are you two doing?”  
  
“No, it’s not that….”  
  
Seol Jihu licked his lips while collapsed.  
  
“I’m… hungry….”  
  
Growl! His stomach roared out a thunder.  
  
Everyone became dazed.  
  
Seol Jihu looked away furtively and blushed.  
  
\*  
  
The war came to an end. Thanks to Seo Yuhui’s wide-area healing spell, Wings of Salvation, acute injuries were taken care of for the most part. Although the battlefield was cleaned up as well, Haramark was still bustling with the aftermath of the war.  
  
Eun Yuri, who fainted during the war, woke up as soon as she was moved to the intensive care unit. Her injuries were healed completely, and although she overburdened her mana, there wasn’t much trouble with Roselle’s help.  
  
Eun Yuri headed to the Haramark Royal Palace as soon as she woke up. After grabbing the first maid she saw and asking for Seol Jihu’s whereabouts, she hurried to the dining hall.  
  
Her steps were light, elated to finally meet her oppa after so long.  
  
But when she entered the dining hall, Eun Yuri stopped in her tracks.  
  
“It’s not ready yet?”  
  
“What do you mean? We just brought you some!”  
  
“I’m almost done with them!”  
  
“What? Shit! Someone run to Earth and get some bread!”  
  
A fierce war was underway in the dining hall.  
  
“Is your body okay?”  
  
Oh Rahee, who was running to the kitchen, saw Eun Yuri and asked.  
  
“Yes, I’m okay.”  
  
“Good. Then give us a hand.”  
  
“…Excuse me?”  
  
“You can cook, right? Anything is fine. The ingredients are in the kitchen, so let’s cook something up.”  
  
Oh Rahee grabbed Eun Yuri and headed to the kitchen. All Eun Yuri could see before she was forcefully dragged to the kitchen was Seol Jihu sitting in front of the dining table amidst a pile of plates.  
  
Munch, munch, munch!  
  
Seol Jihu was devouring food as if he was possessed. He stuffed a baguette sandwich filled with ham and lettuce into his mouth, and he spun his fork to roll pasta around it and then swallowed it in one bite.  
  
Immediately afterward, he emptied a bowl of rice with toppings, scraping up every grain with his spoon, and then gulped down beef-bone soup.  
  
He was even showing bizarre tricks like putting a chicken leg in his mouth and pulling it out with bone only.  
  
“Yo! Try this too!”  
  
Hugo walked out of the kitchen, carrying a giant iron plate. Although he suffered a massive wound from Sung Shihyun’s attack, Seo Yuhui’s Cure Critical Wounds had whipped him back to shape, and now he was helping the royal cook prepare food.  
  
“Meat is best for recuperating strength…?”  
  
Hugo blinked. He brought a heated iron plate to the table just now, but the perfect medium-rare steak had disappeared as soon as he put the plate on the table. When he turned his gaze up in a daze, he saw Seol Jihu licking his lips that were smeared with sauce.  
  
Next, Kazuki also brought food. It was only then that Hugo saw how the steak disappeared. Seol Jihu lifted Kazuki’s plate of sushi and poured it down his throat. Over ten pieces of sushi disappeared into his mouth in an instant.  
  
“…Luffy?”  
  
Hugo murmured while doubting his eyes.  
  
“I didn’t think Oda Eiichiro based his main character on a living person.”  
  
Kazuki wiped the sweat on his forehead with an exhausted look.  
  
“Tell me about it.”  
  
Vlad Halep walked through them and said while placing down a plate.  
  
“Starting from today, I might believe the saying that the human body is a microcosmic space. The stomach then must be a black hole.”  
  
And precisely one second afterward, he pulled the plate back up. It was empty.  
  
“Huh? Why’d you bring an empty plate?”  
  
Hugo yelled angrily.  
  
“I didn’t. I brought food. It just disappeared into that place.”  
  
Vlad Halep protested calmly and pointed his finger at Seol Jihu, who was pulling out empty skewer sticks from his mouth.  
  
Hugo looked speechless. He found it hard to believe despite seeing it with his eyes just now.  
  
“It can’t be helped. He became the Apostle of Gluttony.”  
  
Philip Muller walked up to the three men.  
  
“Is it normally that bad?”  
  
“You can hold it in if you really want to, but…”  
  
Philip Muller put down another plate of food while shaking his head at Hugo’s question. It was a frankfurter sausage that was the size of his forearm.  
  
“How you usually take care of your desires is important. You have to let it out every now and then, and this is what happens if you hold it in for too long before it bursts out. Come to think of it, I recall it was the worst when I first got appointed as an apostle. Because I wasn’t used to it.”  
  
“Uh… is that how it works?”  
  
“For Representative Seol, the memory of starving for twelve days must be etched in his head. I heard he didn’t eat well on Earth either. That must be why it’s so hard to resist the urge.”  
  
Hugo tilted his head before peeking toward the kitchen.  
  
“Then what about Lady Seo Yuhui?”  
  
“She’s not called a saintess for nothing. This is only my guess, but there are ways to relive that urge alone.”  
  
“A-Alone?”  
  
“Hello? Men?”  
  
Phi Sora raised her eyebrow while flipping over a strip of pork belly.  
  
“Enough with the chit chat. Go, make more food!”  
  
Hearing this, Philip Muller, Hugo, and even Kazuki and Vlad Halep turned around.  
  
“Hmph… why are y’all so interested in another man’s woman anyway?”  
  
Then, Phi Sora furrowed her brows while cutting up the pork belly. She couldn’t feel anything being grabbed on her tongs. When she turned her head in disbelief, she saw Seol Jihu swallow the pork belly by the strip.  
  
Phi Sora’s jaw dropped.  
  
“Can you slow down a little!? You’re going to upset your stomach!”  
  
“Cough!”  
  
Like a jinx, Seol Jihu coughed and smacked his chest. Phi Sora sighed and poured barley tea into a cup. Seol Jihu gulped down the drink before wiping his mouth and looking around the dining table.  
  
“…What are you looking for? Do you want more water?”  
  
“No… do you have any black bean noodles…? And some fried dumplings too…”  
  
“What? Listen here, if you have any conscience, just eat what you’re given. Or what, are you going to ask for spicy seafood noodles too?”  
  
Phi Sora grumbled because all Seol Jihu did after coming back was eat, eat, and eat. Tak. At that moment, four bowls of black bean noodles were placed in front of Seol Jihu.  
  
It was Seo Yuhui.  
  
Seeing her, a bright smile bloomed on Seol Jihu’s face. Just as he was about to call her, Seo Yuhui turned around without saying anything.  
  
Seol Jihu flinched.  
  
‘Ah.’  
  
He thought about why she was acting so cold and remembered. She must be angry that he forced her unconscious after saying they should escape together.  
  
Although Seol Jihu did so for Seo Yuhui’s sake, it made sense for her to be angry, given that she didn’t know the circumstances. It wasn’t as if he didn’t feel wronged, but after recalling Seo Yuhui’s past, he became even sorrier.  
  
‘I should apologize…’  
  
Seol Jihu put down his chopsticks and smacked his lips. Phi Sora must have felt bad seeing this as she glared at Seo Yuhui.  
  
“Ah, why are you making him walk on eggshells like this!? Can’t you see he’s eating!?”  
  
She yelled grouchily.  
  
Baek Haeju, who was coming out of the kitchen with fried dumplings, must have heard Phi Sora’s voice as she also gave Seo Yuhui a sidelong glance.  
  
After putting the plate of fried dumplings down, she picked up Seol Jihu’s chopsticks and put them back into his hand. She even tapped his back to urge him to eat.  
  
As for Seo Yuhui, who ignored all this and headed to the kitchen…  
  
“?”  
  
She came to an abrupt stop.  
  
It was because she saw Eun Yuri, who was dragged to the kitchen by Oh Rahee, coming out with a huge plate in her hand. Seo Yuhui’s hand flew out as soon as she saw the plate.  
  
“Kyak!”  
  
The plate flew into the air.  
  
“What are you doing!?”  
  
Eun Yuri shouted out loud in a rare fashion.  
  
“T-That should be what I’m asking. What did you make, Miss Eun Yuri!?”  
  
“Rolled omelettes! Do you know how hard I worked on those!?”  
  
“Rolled omelettes? Are you sure you didn’t make them using parasites or Nests?”  
  
Seo Yuhui flew into a rage, asking if she planned to kill Seol Jihu when he only just revived.  
  
Hearing this, Seol Jihu quietly retracted his hand, which was about to pull the plate in with Spatial Grasp. He quietly went back to eating black bean noodles and fried dumplings.  
  
\*  
  
Seol Jihu ate and ate and ate.  
  
Becoming an apostle resulted in two changes. One was sharing their god’s values, personalities, and everything else. The other was having a stronger desire.  
  
He wasn’t sure about the former, but he certainly experienced the latter. Perhaps because he starved for so long, as Philip Muller said, he could not stop being a glutton once he began to devour food.  
  
It wasn’t until another forty minutes went by that Seol Jihu felt full and asked everyone to stop. By this point, the royal palace’s cooks and every member of Valhalla were in groggy states.  
  
“Fufu… we won against an Executor….”  
  
Chohong fell asleep peacefully, satisfied at the fact that she satiated the Star of Gluttony’s voracious appetite.  
  
“Right… even the Parasites couldn’t defeat him….”  
  
Teresa also dropped her head as drowsiness swept in. Soon, two snores rang out in the room. It couldn’t be helped since they started cooking as soon as they were healed from a prolonged war.  
  
Seol Jihu looked a little embarrassed since what should have been a touching, happy reunion had turned into a feeding contest because of him.  
  
“Don’t worry about them. You must be tired. You should get some rest too. I will have the maids move the other two.”  
  
Seol Jihu tried to take Chohong and Eun Yuri to their rooms, but Prihi stopped him.  
  
“Well, I suggest you try to cheer up one person in particular. She’s been suffering from guilt every day ever since she came back.”  
  
Prihi picked up Teresa by her arms before glancing toward the kitchen.  
  
“I wanted to support my daughter at first… but watching her made me pity her.”  
  
Seol Jihu hurriedly stood up. He didn’t understand what Prihi meant by supporting his daughter, but he felt like he knew who Prihi was talking about.  
  
Seol Jihu went into the kitchen and saw Seo Yuhui cleaning up the mess.  
  
Should I call her Noona or Yuhui? Just as he was pondering in hesitation, Seo Yuhui turned around.  
  
“Yes?”  
  
“Ah, um…”  
  
“Would you like me to make you more food, Representative?”  
  
Seo Yuhui smiled stiffly.  
  
“No, um, we can clean up together….”  
  
“It’s fine. I will take care of the kitchen, so please go rest.”  
  
Seo Yuhui turned around and went back to cleaning.  
  
Seol Jihu was taken aback. Seo Yuhui was smiling and not smiling at the same time, and her tone was exceedingly business-like.  
  
[She’s more extreme than you think. It’s true that she has a naturally benevolent personality and broad-mindedness, but once someone loses favor in her eyes, she will never give that person a second look.]  
  
[It’s because I am someone who lost her trust. Lady Seo Yuhui will never give her trust to someone she has turned her back on once.]  
  
Seol Jihu recalled what Yun Seohui and Roberto Serviollo said and trembled in fear. Thinking about it now, didn’t he betray Seo Yuhui’s trust?  
  
“Are you angry?”  
  
“No, I’m perfectly fine.”  
  
Seol Jihu asked in a fluster, and Seo Yuhui replied without even turning around. Seol Jihu scratched his head.  
  
What should I do?  
  
After pondering for a long time, he decided to crack a joke to lighten up the mood. For example, something with a nice alliteration like, ‘So sad, so sad, so Seo Yuhui~’  
  
But he swallowed the joke that was just about to come out of his throat. Gula’s values, which he began to share after becoming an apostle, were strongly telling him that wasn’t it. He felt like these values were vehemently pleading with him to shut up.  
  
‘…Then what am I supposed to say?’  
  
He felt like he could hear Gula’s sigh. In the next moment, Seol Jihu’s mind and body moved on their own.  
  
Standing behind Seo Yuhui, he coughed. Then, he spread his arms and gently embraced her.  
  
“…I’m sorry.”  
  
He whispered behind her ears.  
  
“I know why you came back, back then.”  
  
Seo Yuhui’s busily moving hands stopped.  
  
“It’s not like I was thinking, oh, it will be easier by myself. I had to make you go back even if I had to lie. I had a reason…”  
  
Seol Jihu continued calmly.  
  
“Of course, I know it might be hard for you to understand me right now….”  
  
“….”  
  
“And I don’t know if you ever will… but please listen. I will tell you why I did it, why I had no choice but to do it, all of it.”  
  
Seol Jihu swallowed his saliva. He rambled on about random thoughts that came to his mind and didn’t think about whether it would be okay. Perhaps it might have been better to lighten up the mood with a joke.  
  
At that moment, Seol Jihu felt a faint trembling in his hands. He saw Seo Yuhui’s shoulders shaking.  
  
Is she laughing? Was she actually pretending to be angry? Seol Jihu shoved his face forward with an awkward smile. Then, his jaw dropped.  
  
“Hic…”  
  
She was crying. Seo Yuhui’s eyes were tightly shut, and streams of tears were flowing down her cheeks.  
  
Seol Jihu’s head blanked out as this was the first time he was seeing her cry.  
  
Meanwhile, perhaps from the influence of becoming an apostle, Seol Jihu’s mouth was continuously apologizing for making her worry, and his hand was caressing her shoulder.  
  
“Huaaang….”  
  
Seo Yuhui spun around. She buried her face in Seol Jihu’s chest and bawled her eyes out.  
  
“Sorry… I’m so sorry…. Because of me, you….”  
  
Seo Yuhui trailed off, but Seol Jihu had an idea why she was acting this way. She must be thinking that it was her fault that Little Chick and Flone separated from Seol Jihu and ultimately led to his death.  
  
“If it wasn’t for me… if I didn’t go back on my own… maybe…”  
  
For all she knew, Little Chick and Flone wouldn’t have left Seol Jihu if it weren’t for her, and maybe he would have escaped alive.  
  
Of course, since the Parasite Queen personally took action, the chance that Seol Jihu would have survived even with Little Chick and Flone was close to zero. However, Seol Jihu didn’t say this out loud.  
  
“Uaaaaang….”  
  
He only said it was okay, that she was wrong, and gently caressed Seo Yuhui’s hair and back until she calmed down.  
  
Of course, he didn’t forget to thank Gula.  
  
\*  
  
[Wheeeeew….]  
  
Gula let out a sigh of relief as she watched over the pair.  
  
[Good job. Your naming sense is terrible, but it turns out your talent was elsewhere.]  
  
Luxuria also breathed a sigh of relief as if she had been scared to death previously.  
  
[I think I meddled a bit too much….]  
  
[No, I think that was very well worth it.]  
  
[I agree. If he had really cracked that joke back then…]  
  
[…My daughter is kind, but she would have been sulky for at least two months.]  
  
[Tsk, I know he’s my son, but I just don’t get it. How can he think about making a joke like that in that situation?]  
  
Gula lamented as if she was completely incapable of understanding Seol Jihu.  
  
[T-That’s… true….]  
  
Luxuria reluctantly agreed. Luxuria always defended Seol Jihu whenever something happened, but…  
  
[So sad, so sad, so Seo Yuhui~]  
  
No matter how she thought about it, this was just going too far.  
  
[Anyway, this is good to see.]  
  
[Mmn. Isn’t this the first time my son is embracing your daughter and not the other way around?]  
  
[Oh my, you’re right!]  
  
The two goddesses, who got out of their shock shortly afterward, looked at the pair with heated gazes and had a pleasant chat.   
  
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# Chapter 456. Sign of Reconciliation 1

The news of Seol Jihu’s revival and his immediate killing of two Army Commanders spread throughout Paradise in less than a day.  
  
It was breaking news that every organization, team, and individual paid close attention to, but the hero in question was sleeping soundly without a care in the world.  
  
He slept in Seo Yuhui’s embrace for one day and was carried over to Teresa’s bedroom for the other, all the while being completely unaware. He slept like a dead man, perhaps from fatigue left in his system, but he knew he couldn’t sleep forever.  
  
There was a lot to do even though the war ended. The current situation was undoubtedly advantageous for humanity and the Federation.  
  
The number of Army Commanders going down played a significant role, but what mattered, even more, was that an Earthling who far surpassed the Army Commanders appeared within humanity.  
  
The Parasite Queen was no fool, and it was likely that she would stay in her territory for a while. This was easy to guess from seeing how Exploding Patience and Twisted Kindness, who had been holding the Federation’s reinforcements at bay, retreated immediately.  
  
Seol Jihu had no intention of waiting for the Parasite Queen to devise a method to break through this crisis. Of course, he wasn’t so reckless as to rally humanity and invade the Empire’s territory.  
  
He had taken into consideration the aftermath of the month-long war with the Parasites. Both humanity and the Federation had deep wounds that needed to be healed before marching into the enemy territory.  
  
Seol Jihu was contacted by Gabriel on the morning of the third day. After a ceremonial congratulation, they discussed plans for the future. As a result, the Federation and humanity both decided to focus on healing the wounds from the war.  
  
However, neither Gabriel nor Seol Jihu disagreed on having to have a final battle with the Parasites soon.  
  
Because of the large scale destruction humanity faced, Seol Jihu was worried that they wouldn’t recover in such a short period of time, but thankfully, the Federation stepped up to the plate.  
  
Since the Federation suffered the least amount of damage in this war, Gabriel promised that the Federation would focus more on invading the Empire’s territory, and also give their all to help restore humanity’s destroyed cities. She also promised to supply Earthlings who were promoted from this war with equipment.  
  
With this, urgent matters were taken care of. However, Seol Jihu still had one worry left.  
  
It was Little Chick. According to Seo Yuhui, Little Chick had hatched from the egg when Seol Jihu had revived. The Spear of Purity’s Authorities had returned as well. But for some reason, Little Chick, who had hatched out of the egg, was still asleep.  
  
It never woke up for even a second. Seol Jihu was worried that Little Chick would never wake up again, but thankfully, it turned out his worries were unfounded.  
  
He got an answer when he went to the temple. According to Gula, this was the first time the Arcus Spirit’s master came back to life.  
  
Just like how Seol Jihu returned to his past state, Little Chick was supposedly regaining his lost strength by returning to an egg. Gula assured Seol Jihu not to worry too much, and that Little Chick would wake up naturally before long.  
  
Only after this matter was settled did Seol Jihu get on the carriage ride to Eva along with the rest of his comrades.  
  
\*  
  
“So…”  
  
On the way to Eva.  
  
“Why are you over here?”  
  
Maria asked while looking at Teresa, who was sitting on half of Seol Jihu’s knee.  
  
“I don’t know.”  
  
Teresa retorted joyfully.  
  
“I’m only here because this person told me to come.”  
  
She pulled Seol Jihu in by his neck before giving a goading smile at everyone else.  
  
“I heard he even asked Father for permission. Isn’t that right~?”  
  
She neared her face to Seol Jihu’s. At the same time, Seo Yuhui showed an uncomfortable look.  
  
Seol Jihu nodded his head quietly. Then, the beamingly smiling Teresa suddenly tilted her head.  
  
“But really, why did you bring me along?”  
  
“What? Did you come without knowing anything?”  
  
Maria marveled, asking if Teresa really was a princess of a kingdom. Of course, Teresa turned deaf ears to her.  
  
“Well… there is a reason.”  
  
Seol Jihu didn’t say much.  
  
“You’ll find out soon enough.”  
  
He only gave a furtive smile.  
  
\*  
  
When Valhalla arrived in Eva, a huge crowd was waiting at the gate to greet them. As Seol Jihu was not a fan of such things and wanted to go back home quietly, he was not happy in the slightest.  
  
“Uk…. Heuk…”  
  
Charlotte Aria cried. It was obvious that she was holding herself back, given her status, but she could not hide her tears. Eventually, she scurried up to Seol Jihu, buried her face in his chest, and bawled her eyes out like a child.  
  
“Your Majesty, everyone is watching.”  
  
Seol Jihu patted Charlotte Aria’s back while saying she should be embarrassed. In reality, because of Sorg Kühne pulling strings in the background, Eva’s residents were looking at their endearing interaction as if it was to be expected.  
  
“But… but….”  
  
“Haha, don’t you think you like me too much?”  
  
“N-No!”  
  
Charlotte Aria flipped. She then displayed a pondering expression before doing a double-take.  
  
“It’s… it’s because Teacher didn’t choose me as her successor…. That’s why I’m crying… because I’m sad…!”  
  
And just like that, she blamed her crying for not getting the Eternal Light of Wisdom. Seol Jihu smiled bitterly, thinking that she came up with a good excuse.  
  
For the record, Odelette Delphine, who was the branch head of Eva’s Magicians’ Guild, also cried.  
  
“I’m upset…! I tried hard too… so why…!?”  
  
…It seemed Odelette Delphine was really crying for that reason.  
  
Eun Yuri held her head high as she watched the two shorties cry.  
  
‘What a tough job!’  
  
It wasn’t until two hours later that Seol Jihu could squirm his way out. At long last, he came back to Valhalla. But just as he was about to go through the main entrance, he halted his steps.  
  
Six imposing dogs resembling Jindo dogs had come out to greet him. They were all large and had long legs. Upon closer inspection, their ears had gotten stiffer, the color of their furs had turned clearer, and one, in particular, had black stripes on its white body like a zebra. Its long, thick eyelashes and alluring eye shape looked pretty.  
  
“Wait, you guys…”  
  
Seol Jihu asked, half in doubt.  
  
“Are you guys the pups…?”  
  
“Wan!”  
  
The large, striped dog barked.  
  
Seol Jihu suddenly remembered hearing how the Beastmen grew quickly. It seemed that everyone became adults while he was away.  
  
Seol Jihu was so touched that he was at a loss of words. It was because he recalled how they clung to his leg and tugged at him before he left for Scheherazade.  
  
“If I had listened to you guys back then….”  
  
When Seol Jihu wiped his tears, one white dog and one yellow dog turned around. Behind them, he saw several fuzzballs. The yellow and white ones were hiding behind their parents, sneaking a glance at Seol Jihu with only their heads peeking out.  
  
“Uh…”  
  
Seeing the tiny fuzzballs, Seol Jihu’s eyes spun.  
  
“Are they… your kids?”  
  
“Wan!”  
  
The pretty-looking dog barked again. It raised its foreleg and pointed at the white and yellow dog.  
  
The Beastmen’s reproductive ability was said to be incomparable to that of other races. It seemed the old fuzzballs grew up and even had kids while he was away.  
  
Seol Jihu could not hold it back any longer.  
  
“You…”  
  
With shaking legs, he stepped forward. Then…  
  
“You little buggers…!”  
  
He threw himself toward them. The six grown-up Beastmen smiled as if they were waiting for this very thing. Seol Jihu hugged the six of them and rolled around in the garden.  
  
The little fuzzballs, on the other hand, broke out into a panic. From their perspective, a human had suddenly appeared and tackled their parents.  
  
Chasing after Seol Jihu, who was rolling around like a wheel, they yapped at him to stop messing with their parents.  
  
Warm sunlight, a lush green garden, soft fur that felt like a luxury carpet, squishy flesh that could be felt underneath it, and a group of fuzzballs going all out…  
  
‘So happy.’  
  
Seol Jihu laughed out loud as he rolled around the garden. He finally felt like he was back home.  
  
“Who’s… ack.”  
  
Rolling around for a while, Seol Jihu suddenly bumped into someone. He looked up from the ground. Underneath the bright sunlight, a pony-tailed woman was looking down at him.  
  
A grey suit, an H-line skirt, and….  
  
“…T?”  
  
“Hm?”  
  
Kim Hannah blinked…  
  
“Ah!”  
  
And then stepped back in a startle.  
  
“You…!”  
  
She raised her eyebrows, lifted her high-heel, and stomped down.  
  
However, Seol Jihu wasn’t hit as he rolled to the side and dodged at the last second.  
  
“Too slow.”  
  
Kim Hannah’s eyes widened at Seol Jihu’s leisure.  
  
“Eek! Eeeek!”  
  
Stomp, stomp, stomp, stomp! Kim Hannah stomped down like she was playing whack-a-mole, but she failed to hit her mark even a single time. Seol Jihu was truly showing inhuman movements.  
  
“Huk… huk…”  
  
In the end, Kim Hannah had no choice but to put her foot down panting. Then again, even the First Army Commander was beaten one-sidedly by Seol Jihu. There was no way a non-combatant like Kim Hannah could hit him.  
  
“Thanks, by the way. You helped me rip the paper slip without hesitation.”  
  
Seol Jihu hopped up and offered a handshake with a wink.  
  
“Screw off!”  
  
Kim Hannah slapped the hand away.  
  
“You just came back, and this is the first thing you do?”  
  
“Hold up, that one wasn’t my fault.”  
  
“You could have pretended not to have seen anything!”  
  
“I was too surprised to think properly…”  
  
“Excuses, excuses.”  
  
Kim Hannah, who was glaring at him sharply, lowered her head and sighed. It was then.  
  
“You’re back.”  
  
An aged voice cut in between them. It was Jang Maldong. He was standing at the entrance and looking at him with the same stern look he always had.  
  
“Master.”  
  
Seol Jihu fixed his posture right way.  
  
“I’m…”  
  
“It’s fine.”  
  
Jang Maldong grinned.  
  
“Think about the number of people you have to thank. Doing it to me too would just be too cumbersome.”  
  
“Still…”  
  
“It’s fine. Just give Ian a word of thanks later. He’s the one who really worked hard.”  
  
Jang Maldong turned around with a smile.  
  
“Anyway, hurry up! The other brats have been preparing a welcoming party for you all morning!”  
  
“…Yes!”  
  
Seol Jihu ran after Jang Maldong with a hearty shout. Kim Hannah smacked her lips and also went after them.  
  
“Anyway, I heard you became the Star of Gluttony.”  
  
“Yes, Gula has accepted that I passed her trials.”  
  
“I would be surprised if she didn’t. So, how is it?”  
  
“Ah, I think I’m a little special in that I’m not influenced as much. The reason for that is…”  
  
Kim Hannah smiled as she watched Jang Maldong and Seol Jihu having a friendly master-to-disciple talk. Then, she sent a killer kick at Seol Jihu’s calf.  
  
“Try and dodge this!” was what she shouted, but Seol Jihu jumped up slightly and dodged the kick without even looking back. As a result, the kick only connected with poor Jang Maldong.  
  
“Uaaaah!”  
  
“Ah! Master! I’m so sorry!”  
  
Jang Maldong and Kim Hannah’s voices echoed out in the first-floor lobby.  
  
\*  
  
The welcoming party lasted for a long time. Seol Jihu was buffeted by a hoard of questions, and it wasn’t well into the party that Seol Jihu used having a headache as an excuse to leave the scene.  
  
As Valhalla’s welcoming parties traditionally lasted until the next morning, running away before things got to that point was the smartest thing to do.  
  
Splash!  
  
“Ah, that feels so good.”  
  
Seol Jihu went into the underground hot spring to relax and get rid of some of the alcohol in his system. Perhaps because everyone was at the welcoming party, he didn’t see anyone else there.  
  
No, there was one other non-human existence here.  
  
[Ooh…!]  
  
Flone, who dove into the water, slowly floated up in front of Seol Jihu.  
  
[Wow….]  
  
She gasped in astonishment, looking at Seol Jihu in a new light. For some reason, her face and neck were flushed red despite being a ghost.  
  
“What’s wrong?”  
  
[Nothing… you’re just really big.]  
  
“…Big?”  
  
[Mn, mn. I’ve never seen it before, but are all guys that big?]  
  
Flone glanced downward. To be more precise, at his crotch underneath the hot spring water.  
  
Seol Jihu, who was tilting his head, suddenly widened his eyes.  
  
[It was thiiiiiiiis big!!]  
  
Flone spread out her arms until they wouldn’t go out any further.  
  
“What are you talking about!?”  
  
Seol Jihu shouted.  
  
“Do you think I’m a Horus or something? How can anyone be that big!?”  
  
Flone giggled, seemingly enjoying Seol Jihu getting mad.  
  
[I’m saying that’s how shocked I was. Anyway, seeing it up close, it was scary but also kind of cute….]  
  
She wrapped her hands around her cheeks and shook her head left and right. Seol Jihu grunted and crossed his legs together.  
  
[Beh~ You can hide it all you want, but I can see it if I want to!]  
  
“….”  
  
Around the time Seol Jihu became lost for words, he heard another splashing sound near the door. Turning around, he saw two women walking in with only a towel in their hands.  
  
It was Chohong and Phi Sora.  
  
“Uh, what happened to the welcoming ceremony…?”  
  
“We sneaked out after seeing you leave. We’re still a bit tired from the war.”  
  
Phi Sora replied.  
  
“This is the first floor. Isn’t the women’s hot spring on the second?”  
  
“Ah, who cares? Since when did anyone care about such stuff in Paradise?”  
  
Chohong grumbled and walked in. Seol Jihu nodded his head since he couldn’t really disagree.  
  
“Phew, the hot water really washes away your fatigue.”  
  
“Why does the water here feel better than the one downstairs?”  
  
Chohong and Phi Sora chatted for a bit. Chohong then glanced at Seol Jihu, who was splashing around with Flone.  
  
“By the way, are you truly okay?”  
  
“Hmm?”  
  
“I’m asking if you’re all healed. There’s no problem anywhere?”  
  
“My body’s fine.”  
  
“Not your body. What about here?”  
  
Phi Sora poked the side of her head.  
  
“Is your brain okay? Did you regain all of your memories?”  
  
“I thought I answered everything at the welcoming party….”  
  
“Can you really blame us for having doubts? You always try to shoulder everything alone…”  
  
“You said your head hurt and went back early. We came to check up on you, just in case. We can’t have you collapse like back then….”  
  
Seol Jihu stared fixedly at Chohong and Phi Sora. What he said was only an excuse to get out of the party. Phi Sora aside, he was a little grateful that Chohong, who loved drinking, came to see him in the middle as well.  
  
“Ah, shit, here he goes again.”  
  
Chohong snorted, interpreting Seol Jihu’s silent staring in another way.  
  
“What, are you going to say you don’t remember me again?”  
  
“?”  
  
“Ah, I knew it. Let me warn you. Don’t even think about pulling a prank.”  
  
Phi Sora nodded her head and chimed in. The two of them seemed to have had enough of being pranked by Seol Jihu.  
  
“Are you Lee Kyung-kyu? Why are you so obsessed with pranks?”  
  
“Maybe you can trick us the first time or the second time. We would be dogs if we got tricked a third time.”  
  
‘Oho.’  
  
Seol Jihu had no intention of pulling any pranks, but this sounded like a challenge. Seol Jihu was just about to say, ‘Didn’t I trick you guys more than three times already?’ But he shut his mouth and, instead, revealed a wistful smile.  
  
“Ah, I guess it’s not easy to prank you guys anymore.”  
  
“I knew it! Don’t think we’d fall for it again!”  
  
Phi Sora wagged her index finger left and right. Chohong also giggled with a look of satisfaction.  
  
Seol Jihu cleared his throat and then said to Chohong.  
  
“Well, to be honest… I’m still a little dizzy. There was a slight mishap during the revival process and my memories got slightly jumbled up… but it’s nothing Miss Chung Chohong should worry about.”  
  
“…Hmm?”  
  
Chohong was flustered. Seol Jihu then turned to Phi Sora.  
  
“Also, it’s not like I tricked you that many times, Sora. Why not just play along a little?”  
  
Phi Sora’s laughter stopped.  
  
“Anyway, it’s not a big deal. It doesn’t affect my day to day life…?”  
  
Seol Jihu widened his eyes in the middle of speaking. The two women were staring at him fixedly.  
  
“Why are you suddenly talking so politely?”  
  
“Why are you suddenly talking so casually?”  
  
They asked at the same time.  
  
“Hmm?”  
  
“Not hmm? You just said, Miss Chung Chohong.”  
  
“You only used Miss with me. What’s up with calling me Sora?”  
  
“Ah, did I?”  
  
Seol Jihu looked back and forth between the two of them and spoke evasively.  
  
“Haha, I must have gotten confused.”  
  
The more he tried to give an excuse, the more suspicious they got.  
  
“Uh…. You see, Gula said I didn’t have enough contribution points to fully restore my memories… huh?”  
  
Seol Jihu blabbered on with a flustered look. Chohong and Phi Sora stared at each other.  
  
“Hey, you!”  
  
“Dear, don’t tell me…”  
  
Seeing a grave look appear on their faces, Seol Jihu blinked. He didn’t know what to say.  
  
“Chohong, I understand….”  
  
“?”  
  
“But you’re easy to trick too, huh, Miss Phi Sora?”  
  
“?”  
  
Question marks popped up above their heads.  
  
“Chung Tricked-Again, Phi Tricked-Again, the two of you.”  
  
It was only then that they realized they were played again. After a short silence…  
  
“…You son of a bitch!”  
  
“Fuck, grab that bastard right now!”  
  
Chohong and Phi Sora cursed and pounced on him. It was like watching two female lions jump on a rabbit. The trio tossed and turned in the hot spring and made intense noises.  
  
[Aaah? I wanna join in too!]  
  
A certain ghost that was watching the scene joined the two women. That night, Seol Jihu slept exhausted after intensely wrestling in the hot spring.  
  
\*  
  
The next morning. Seol Jihu planned to go to the temple as soon as he woke up, but he had to change his plans before he even left his room. It was because an unexpected guest had visited the office.  
  
“Congratulations on reviving.”  
  
The woman in a white ceremonial robe, holding a green spear, was none other than Baek Haeju. She had come at the break of dawn to visit him.  
  
“Thank you.”  
  
Though he was a little surprised, he had an idea why she came, so he greeted her with a bright smile.  
  
“Um, by any chance…”  
  
Baek Haeju was a little, no, a lot different than usual.  
  
“Are your memories… okay?”  
  
She was being careful as if she was walking on eggshells.  
  
“Yes, I’m okay. Why do you ask…?”  
  
“Ah, it’s because I’m curious about the penalty. I’ve been in Paradise for a long time too, you see.”  
  
When Seol Jihu poked her once, Baek Haeju gave an excuse as if she already had one prepared.  
  
Seol Jihu knew about Baek Haeju’s identity because he saw Seo Yuhui’s past with his Future-Gauging Nine Eyes. Naturally, neither Seo Yuhui nor Baek Haeju knew about this matter.  
  
Although he revealed this to Jang Maldong and a couple of others….  
  
“It wasn’t so bad. I mean, it wasn’t easy, but Master got me a novel that had a written record of everything that happened in Paradise.”  
  
“Ah… and he didn’t say anything else?”  
  
“Master Jang, you mean? No, he didn’t say anything else.”  
  
“…I see.”  
  
Observing Seol Jihu closely, Baek Haeju nodded her head. It seemed she still thought he didn’t know about her identity. Although she left a note at the end of the novel saying that she would take care of his family, there was no way Seol Jihu would know who wrote it.  
  
“I understand. And if I may tell you something….”  
  
“If it’s not urgent, can you tell me next time? I have to go back to Earth soon. I’m already a little late.”  
  
Seol Jihu took the initiative seeing as how Baek Haeju seemed troubled. This was probably why Baek Haeju, no, Yoo Seonhwa, came to see him in the first place.  
  
Seol Jihu was planning to go back sometime today anyway.  
  
“Ah, yes, of course. I won’t hold you up, so please go ahead.”  
  
As expected, Baek Haeju seemed relieved, almost like she was hoping he would say this.  
  
“Thank you. I’ll be back within a week in Paradise’s time.”  
  
Seol Jihu bowed with the intention of making Baek Haeju feel relieved before leaving the office.  
  
‘So it looks like she’ll tell me when I go back this time….’  
  
For now, he planned to wait until Yoo Seonhwa told him the truth. That said, it was fine even if she didn’t, since he could bring it up himself at the right time so that she wouldn’t be flustered.  
  
‘And when I come back….’  
  
Seol Jihu fiddled with the three divinities in his pocket and smiled sweetly. He hummed while walking down the hallway.  
  
It finally felt like everything was smooth sailing.  
  
Of course…  
  
‘Though, it would be interesting to see Seonhwa’s reaction too.’  
  
He thought about pranking Yoo Seonhwa just for a moment.  
  
1. Hunting dogs originating on the Jindo island and native to South Korea.  
  
2. A Korean TV celebrity who is known as the father of hidden camera pranks on TV.   
  
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# Chapter 457. Sign of Reconciliation 2

After placing the newly acquired divinities inside the temple storage, Seol Jihu returned to Earth.  
  
His room, which he hadn’t seen in a long time, had been cleaned very thoroughly, he assumed, either by Kim Hannah or Yoo Seonhwa.  
  
Seol Jihu smiled bitterly, recalling how he threw and kicked everything he could lay his hands on when he first woke up from his death in Paradise.  
  
‘I should thank Mister Hao Win.’  
  
If Hao Win hadn’t taken him to the hospital, Seol Jihu might really have jumped out the window that day.  
  
Vowing to repay him later, Seol Jihu picked up his cell phone from the desk.  
  
The time was around 6 p.m.  
  
Only a few days had passed in Earth time since his discharge from the hospital, and he felt fortunate that time passed differently in the two worlds.  
  
There were no missed calls from his family, just two text messages from his mother and brother asking how he was doing.  
  
It seemed that Yoo Seonhwa’s explanation had worked well enough to settle their concerns.  
  
And then there was the text from Yoo Seonhwa.  
  
It was the explanation she gave everyone that Seol Jihu had regained some of his memories and was traveling with her to the place in his memory for further recuperation.  
  
Yoo Seonhwa had already talked to the hospital, and she needed him to tell the same story. The text ended with her urging him to delete this message after he was done reading it.  
  
His family wouldn’t have allowed his friends or coworkers, whom they didn’t know very well, to take their son and brother, but Yoo Seonhwa was like their family.  
  
They trusted her and were comfortable with the idea of her accompanying Seol Jihu.  
  
The only surprising thing about the text was that it came from Yoo Seonhwa.  
  
Had she still wanted to hide her identity, she would have told him that she’d heard it all from his ‘acquaintance’ and only did as she was told to do, hoping he would get better.  
  
‘I knew it.’  
  
As he had expected, she no longer seemed interested in keeping her identity secret.  
  
‘Anyway, so this is what’s been happening on Earth.’  
  
Seol Jihu started right away.  
  
First, he called Yoo Seonhwa and decided to meet up with her.  
  
After joining her, he called his mother.  
  
His mother answered the phone even before the first ring ended.  
  
—Jihu?  
  
“Yes, Mother, it’s me. Yes, yes, I’m fine now. No, I’m not lying. I’m with Seonhwa right now.”  
  
Seol Jihu walked toward his parents’ house, trying his best to sound cheerful.  
  
\*  
  
His mother was waiting for him in an alley near her house.  
  
Tears welled up in her eyes as soon as she saw Seol Jihu walking up in her direction with Yoo Seonhwa by his side.  
  
“Jihu!”  
  
Seol Jihu licked his lips when his mother took him in her arms, crying. He had seen too many tears lately.  
  
‘It’s all my fault.’  
  
He knew she had been worried about him, and of course, he was grateful for her concern, but he couldn’t help feeling down.  
  
He wanted to see his loved ones smile rather than cry.  
  
To make his wish come true, he could not afford to make the same mistake again.  
  
Seol Jihu consoled his mother, and they headed inside the house.  
  
His brother and Yoo Seunghae were waiting for him inside.  
  
Surprisingly, his father was there, too.  
  
He sat in the chair at the head of the dining table with his arms folded across his chest and a solemn look on his face.  
  
Seol Jinhee had yet to return from school.  
  
“Are you okay?”  
  
“How do you feel? Are you really fine now?”  
  
As soon as Seol Jihu sat down, he was bombarded with questions.  
  
With a smile, he began to answer them one by one.  
  
“Yes, I’m fine. In fact, even while I was in the hospital, I could feel some of my memories slowly coming back….”  
  
He was able to answer them fluently because not only were these questions well within his range of expectations, but he had also already answered them a dozen times during Valhalla’s welcome party.  
  
But of course, he couldn’t be 100% honest. Also, because it sounded too unrealistic that all his memories suddenly returned after one trip, Seol Jihu decided to improvise with a better story.  
  
He checked his father’s reactions from time to time as he spoke. Fortunately, his father listened quietly without objecting.  
  
“Wait, so your memory hasn’t come back completely?”  
  
“Yeah, but that’s how the brain works in the first place. Even you can’t remember what you had for lunch last month, Hyung.”  
  
“Me? I probably had a bowl of rice with some soup and side dishes. I always have the same thing for lunch.”  
  
“That’s not what I meant.”  
  
Seol Jihu glowered, and Seol Wooseok chuckled.  
  
“I’m just kidding. I get it.”  
  
“There’s still some stuff I can’t remember about Sinyoung… but I think that might be for the best.”  
  
“Yes, I think that’s better for you. You might get stressed out again if you remember….”  
  
His mother agreed, and Seol Wooseok seemed convinced as well.  
  
Seol Jihu thought the rooftop incident would surely come up in their conversation, but it didn’t.  
  
While his family might be avoiding the topic on purpose, he thought it was more plausible that Yoo Seonhwa made sure that Seol Jinhee kept her mouth shut.  
  
“Jeez, what am I doing? Jihu, you’re hungry, right?”  
  
As their conversation neared its end, his mother headed for the kitchen.  
  
Seol Jihu could see that she was about to prepare a meal as she had always done when he visited home, and hurriedly got to his feet.  
  
“We don’t have to eat at home. We should go out to eat.”  
  
“But….”  
  
Seol Jihu led his hesitant mother outside, saying they should go out to celebrate his recovery.  
  
From the start, he had planned to treat his family to a nice dinner as an apology for making them worry so much and also as a token of gratitude for taking care of him.  
  
Seol Jihu took his family to their favorite restaurant and ordered a plate full of pork ribs. He also emptied two bowls of cold noodles on top of that.  
  
“About Sinyoung….”  
  
Just as the dinner was ending, Seol Jihu’s father began to speak.  
  
“What are you going to do? Are you going to stay?”  
  
Seol Jihu straightened his posture at the low voice.  
  
“No, I’m going to resign.”  
  
“…Is that so?”  
  
He thought his father sounded a little relieved, but he could be mistaken.  
  
“Yes…. With everything that’s happened recently, I don’t think it’s a good idea for me to keep going to work.”  
  
“Right. Sinyoung is all over the news these days.”  
  
Why wouldn’t it be? Sinyoung’s executives, whom Yun Seora had personally executed, were probably all showing symptoms by now.  
  
And then there was the suicide incident….  
  
‘…Bitch.’  
  
It still angered him that Yun Seohui almost tricked him.  
  
How could she still be like that, when neither she nor Seol Jihu had any memories of the past?  
  
“First it’s their eldest daughter, and then their former chairman, too…. What is wrong with that family?”  
  
Seol Jihu’s eyes widened.  
  
It just so happened that the TV on the restaurant’s wall was broadcasting news about Sinyoung. He saw Yun Seora on the screen.  
  
But Seol Jihu’s mother quickly grabbed the remote and changed the channel.  
  
“Do you have to talk about that? It’s not exactly a laughing matter.”  
  
His mother snapped, and his father coughed in slight embarrassment.  
  
“I already told them I wanted to quit. The company didn’t stop me. In fact, they said they’d make up for the accident as much as possible.”  
  
“Of course. They've already got so much on their plate; they don’t want a new problem…. But you still have to be careful.”  
  
He knew what his father meant, but there was nothing to worry about.  
  
Sinyoung would never again have as much influence in Paradise as it did in the past.  
  
As long as Yun Seora was the representative, Sinyoung would form an alliance with Valhalla or even come under Valhalla.  
  
“What are you going to do after you quit your job?”  
  
“I was going to take a break. I have to go to the hospital for some follow-up appointments, and… I’m going to be traveling.”  
  
“Good.”  
  
“Yeah, just quit it. I haven’t liked them ever since you told me you work overtime every day to pay off your debts…. As Mother said, you shouldn’t be putting yourself under that kind of stress.”  
  
Seol Wooseok chimed in.  
  
His father returned to being silent. He began stuffing his face with pork ribs and cold noodles, which he had barely touched until then.  
  
Nothing noteworthy happened after that.  
  
The Seol family returned home. They had some fruit for dessert and chatted some more.  
  
Seol Jihu thought it was time for him to leave.  
  
He worried that the pleasant atmosphere would be ruined when Seol Jinhee arrived home.  
  
But once he saw his mother roll out a futon, he couldn’t bring himself to say goodbye.  
  
“Just stay. Jinhee’s busy with school, so we hardly see her these days.”  
  
“Still….”  
  
“Wooseok Oppa’s right. And even if she comes home, what can she do? I’m sure Seonhwa Unni will take care of her.”  
  
Seol Wooseok and Yoo Seunghae made it harder for him to leave.  
  
That night.  
  
Seol Jihu slept in his parent’s house for the first time in a long time.  
  
The futon was warm throughout the night.  
  
\*  
  
The next day’s morning dawned.  
  
“Hey!”  
  
Seol Wooseok stopped Seol Jihu, who was about to depart after a hearty breakfast.  
  
“Come with me for a moment. It’ll only take a second.”  
  
Seol Wooseok grabbed Seol Jihu and dragged him up the stairs.  
  
“Remember that laptop you brought a while ago? The one that Jinhee threw.”  
  
“Oh, that? That wasn't a laptop, that was an ultrabook."  
  
“Yes, well, that’s expensive, right?”  
  
Seol Jihu nodded. He remembered that it cost about 3 million won.  
  
“The truth is I’ve been using it all along.”  
  
“What?”  
  
“Jinhee said she didn’t need it, and I didn’t want it to go to waste.”  
  
Seol Wooseok stopped in front of Seol Jinhee’s room.  
  
“So I’ve been using it, but recently it disappeared without a trace.”  
  
Seol Wooseok whispered quietly, then smirked.  
  
He told Seol Jihu to wait and swung the door open to Seol Jinhee’s room.  
  
Through the crack in the door, Seol Jihu saw his sister sprawled across the bed, sound asleep.  
  
“Hey, wake up.”  
  
“…What? What do you want….”  
  
Seol Jinhee opened her eyes only slightly and mumbled in a sleepy voice.  
  
“Jihu left.”  
  
“…Left…?”  
  
“The trip seemed to have done him some good. He left after breakfast, and it looked like he was doing well.”  
  
“…So what….”  
  
“I just thought you should know.”  
  
Seol Wooseok said, and Seol Jinhee furrowed her brows.  
  
“Okay…. Get out of my room now…. I came home late last night, and I’m so tired….”  
  
“Alright, go back to sleep. Ah, that’s right.”  
  
Seol Wooseok grabbed the ultrabook from Seol Jinhee’s bag before leaving.  
  
“I’m taking this with me.”  
  
“Mm? What do you…. What the?”  
  
Seol Jinhee’s voice shot up a notch.  
  
“Why are you taking that?”  
  
“Because it’s mine. I should ask you the same question. Why did you take my laptop?”  
  
“Are you insane? How is that yours? Jihu Oppa gave it to me, so what are you talking about?”  
  
“But you said—”  
  
“Give it back!”  
  
Thud! Seol Jihu heard the sound of a scuffle.  
  
“You said you didn’t want it!”  
  
“Get out! Did you come here just to annoy me so early in the morning?”  
  
Seol Jinhee snatched the ultrabook from Seol Wooseok’s hand and proceeded to kick her brother out of the room.  
  
KWANG!  
  
The door slammed shut.  
  
The kick made Seol Wooseok stumble, but he was clearly holding back his laughter.  
  
He turned his gaze to Seol Jihu, who was standing near the wall, and then eyed the door. ‘Did you see that?’ He seemed to be asking.  
  
Seol Jihu smiled bitterly.  
  
“When you come over next time, get her a little gift or something. I wonder how she’ll react.”  
  
Seol Wooseok said with a playful cackle and walked down the stairs.  
  
\*  
  
Seol Jihu and Yoo Seonhwa left the Seol residence after exchanging goodbyes.  
  
Seol Jihu originally planned to take Yoo Seonhwa to a nearby coffee shop for a talk.  
  
But he stopped as soon as he stepped outside.  
  
His father was waiting for him next to the car.  
  
“Are you heading home?”  
  
“Pardon? Ah, yes.”  
  
“Get in.”  
  
“That’s okay. I’ll just take a taxi….”  
  
But his father had already shut the door and was now starting the car.  
  
Yoo Seonhwa giggled softly and pointed at the passenger seat before she climbed into the back seat.  
  
Vroom!  
  
The car started with a loud roar.  
  
Seol Jihu was tense with worry, but the silence didn’t last long.  
  
“I heard.”  
  
His father began to speak as the car moved forward onto the road.  
  
“Even when you lost your memory, you didn’t gamble.”  
  
Seol Jihu flinched in surprise, and then glanced at the back seat.  
  
Yoo Seonhwa shrugged, pouting her lips cutely.  
  
“Jinhee told me.”  
  
“Oh….”  
  
“Anyway, your decision is wise.”  
  
His father continued as he turned the steering wheel.  
  
“Wooseok is right. You’re always bound to get stressed at work, but once it starts affecting your health, it becomes a completely different story.”  
  
Seol Jihu got the feeling that his father wanted to praise him for quitting gambling but changed the subject at the last minute because he was just too shy.  
  
“You should always prioritize health. I mean, you’ve already paid off your debts.”  
  
Seol Jihu nodded quietly.  
  
“Also, about Jinhee.”  
  
Seol Jihu’s head stopped moving.  
  
“You should pay more attention to her.”  
  
“Pardon?”  
  
“She was the last person in our family to trust you. Naturally, her sense of betrayal is greater than ours.”  
  
Seol Jihu clamped his mouth shut.  
  
“You know well that Jinhee pretends to be tough, but she really isn’t.”  
  
“Well, yes….”  
  
“It will take more than one or two apologies. But you should reach out to her until she decides to forgive you.”  
  
‘If what you told us before is really true.’  
  
His father added quietly.  
  
“…In order to do that.”  
  
He threw a quick glance at the passenger seat and continued.  
  
“You’ll have to come home more often.”  
  
Seol Jihu’s eyes shot wide open.  
  
Doubting his ears, he turned his gaze to the driver’s seat with a dazed look.  
  
“Well… I don’t think it will take a lifetime.”  
  
His father was looking at the side-view mirror, even though he didn’t have to.  
  
“But for now, focus on your treatment, go on a trip, and cool your head. I’m sure Jinhee will understand that much.”  
  
Seol Jihu scratched his head.  
  
“…Okay!”  
  
But soon, he answered brightly, with a small smile on his face.  
  
A faint smile spread across his father’s lips too.  
  
The car moved swiftly across the road like a boat sailing before the wind.   
  
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