

Chapter 970

"Hmm..."

Raon accepted the letter Glenn handed him with both hands. It was clear that there was nothing inside but a sheet of paper, yet it felt strangely heavy.

"Is the Conference of the Five Kings being held again?"

"The collapse of the Black Tower has broken the balance between the Five Kings and Five Demons, no, the Five Kings and Four Demons now. Naturally, we have to hold a conference to celebrate our victory and show the world that we're still standing strong."

Glenn's eyes gleamed coldly as he said that through the conference, they could further widen the cracks within the remaining Four Demons.

"So, the plan is to draw the neutral factions, those who haven't chosen a side yet, over to us?"

Raon clicked his tongue lightly as he looked at Glenn.

"Correct. As expected, you figured it out."

Glenn nodded, a proud look in his eyes.

"There are still neutral factions who haven't decided whether to side with the Five Kings or the Four Demons. And there are countless unaffiliated

warriors and mages as well. This conference is an important event meant to bring such individuals to our side."

He slowly closed and reopened his eyes, saying that this upcoming conference could very well determine the outcome of the coming war.

"It's definitely an opportunity we can't afford to miss."

Raon nodded, gazing at the lake bathed in moonlight.

'If we weren't holding it, it wouldn't matter. But if we are, we must succeed at all costs.'

If they could use this conference to expand the power of the Five Kings, it would give them a huge advantage in the battles to come. Just as Glenn said, it was a crucial event.

"But... is it really alright for me to attend something so important?"

Raon narrowed his eyes slightly, looking at the five stars engraved on the envelope.

"Raon, the very reason this conference is being held is because of you."

Glenn smiled faintly and placed a firm hand on Raon's shoulder.

"If you hadn't defeated the Black Tower's master, this conference wouldn't even be happening. If you don't go, no one can."

He gave a small nod, saying that the whole conference itself was practically being held because of Raon's achievements.

"Besides, others said they want to meet you as well."

Glenn smiled proudly, saying that even the heads of the Five Kings wanted to see Raon.

"Well... in that case, I guess I have to go."

Raon scratched the back of his neck and nodded. Hearing all that made him feel a little embarrassed.

"Raon, you didn't just destroy the Black Tower, you shattered the entire balance between the Five Kings and Five Demons. It's something even I couldn't do. Hold your head high."

Glenn lifted a finger, saying it was an achievement that would go down in history.

Hmph, how grandiose!

Wrath wrinkled his nose in displeasure.

You only managed it because the King of Essence helped you!

He clung to Raon's shoulder, demanding he buy ice cream as payment for all his help.

"I wasn't alone when I defeated the Black Tower's master."

Raon brushed Wrath off and shook his head.

"It wouldn't have been possible without Lady Chamber."

And not just Chamber, without Wrath, Gluttony, and Lust, he and the Light Wind Palace swordsmen would have been buried in that hellish darkness.

"You're still as humble as ever."

"No, it's not humility. It's simply the truth. Right now, I still can't defeat the heads of the Four Demons."

Raon lowered his calm gaze as he admitted he wasn't strong enough yet.

"Right now,' huh..."

Glenn stroked his beard, the corner of his mouth lifting slightly.

"Sounds to me like you're saying you will soon."

"Of course I will. I still have a lot to do."

Raon nodded firmly and calmly stated that he would definitely reach the same level as the heads of the Five Kings and Four Demons.

"...Hoo."

Glenn raised a trembling hand to cover his face.

'Impressive. Truly impressive!'

He never thought he would feel this proud.

Raon had always been humble, to the point of excess. Glenn thought he would once again try to give all the credit to others, but hidden beneath that behavior was a firm confidence that he would become stronger.

It seemed there had indeed been a shift in Raon's mindset after his time in the Chamber of Self.

"Head of house?"

"Ah, no, it's nothing."

Hearing Raon's concerned call, Glenn quickly wiped away the faint moisture in his eyes.

"Where is the conference going to be held?"

"Balkar."

"Ah, because of Lady Chamber, then."

Raon let out a small sigh, recalling Chamber's condition when they last met.

"Yes. She still hasn't fully recovered."

Glenn clicked his tongue, saying that Chamber was still in the process of recovering.

"Then what about King Lecross? Is he alright?"

Hearing Chamber's name made Raon also worry about King Lecross, who had been attacked by Derus.

"He's fine. His injuries haven't fully healed, but they didn't affect his martial strength."

Glenn nodded, saying that Lecross was able to move around without issue.

"That's a relief."

Raon lowered his eyebrows slightly, recalling King Lecross' kind face.

'Come to think of it, our Five Kings side isn't in great condition either.'

Chamber and Ogram had lost their original strength, and Lecross was still heavily injured. Right now, the only ones in good shape were Glenn and the Magic Tower's master, Larian.

'Of course, the Four Demons aren't in perfect shape either.'

Derus, the White Blood Religion, and Eden were still standing strong, but the Holy Sword Alliance had already parted ways with them.

Even if the Holy Sword Alliance couldn't actively help the Five Kings side, there was absolutely no way they would join the Four Demons.

There's still that one.

Wrath climbed onto Raon's head and jerked his chin.

That madman who was so obsessed with the sword that he gouged out his own eyes.

'The former master of the Holy Sword Alliance...'

Raon bit his lip as the memory of the grotesque swordsman, more monstrous than anyone else, surfaced in his mind.

"He's definitely a problem."

The former master of the Holy Sword Alliance had promised not to interfere with the Alliance itself, but he had never promised to stay out of the war.

'He'll show up for sure.'

It wouldn't even be an exaggeration to say that he lived solely for the sake of crossing swords with Glenn. He would surely jump into the war, even if it meant siding with the Four Demons.

"You don't need to worry about Zieghart while the conference is underway."

Glenn, seemingly misunderstanding Raon's serious expression, smiled reassuringly.

"Chamber and the Magic Tower's master have developed a new spell that allows for instant return directly to Zieghart. It might be detected and exposed once it's used, but for now, it's safe."

He clenched his fingers slightly, vowing that he wouldn't let another incident like the ambush on Lecross happen again.

"That's good to hear."

Raon had been worried that, just like King Lecross was attacked, Zieghart might also be targeted, but it seemed that wouldn't happen.

"So, will you go?"

"Of course."

At this point, he had no reason to refuse. And besides, using his reputation and strength to bring neutral factions to their side wasn't a bad idea.

"Good decision."

Glenn lowered his hand and said that they would depart in a week.

"Head of house, I have one question—"

"Call me grandfather."

Glenn gave a light shrug, as if indicating that this wasn't an official matter anymore.

That old man really is a hassle.

Wrath shook his head in exasperation.

"Grandfather, how's aunt doing?"

Raon looked at Glenn, recalling the last time he had seen Aris.

"After returning from Mirtan Village, she went to the main building and hasn't come back since..."

Just as Raon had expected, Aris had gone to Mirtan Village and retrieved the cursed sword.

But ever since then, she had stayed in the main building without returning, and it made him worried.

"She's doing almost too well."

Glenn lowered his eyelids slightly, saying it was to the point of being exhausting.

"If you're worried, why don't you go see her yourself?"

He immediately turned around, as if suggesting they head there right away.

"No, she's probably asleep. Maybe tomorrow, or later...."

"No."

Glenn shook his head firmly, as if to say that wasn't an option.

"She's still awake. In fact ..."

He smiled faintly and raised two fingers.

"Both of them are."

* * *

Raon followed behind Glenn as they made their way toward the head of house's training ground.

'Huh...?'

There was a barrier set up around the training ground that erased sound and shockwaves. It was silent, but he could feel someone inside.

"From here on, suppress your presence. You might disturb them."

Unlike usual, Glenn entered through a side door that made no noise.

"Understood."

Raon nodded and quietly crossed through the open door into the training ground.

Boooooom!

The moment he set foot inside, a series of thunderous booms erupted, as if the ground itself were collapsing.

When he turned toward the source of the noise, he saw Karoon and Aris lunging at each other, aiming their swords directly at one another's throats.

Clang!

Their swords, wrapped in aura, collided violently, scattering bursts of blue sparks throughout the training ground.

Pheeeeek!

Despite their flesh being torn by the collision of their powerful energy waves, neither of them retreated. They continued hurling sword strikes drenched in killing intent at each other.

'Are they sparring?'

Amid the massive waves stirred by the clash of Transcender-level aura, Raon turned his gaze toward the black sword held in Aris' hand.

'So she really did obtain that black sword.'

He had guessed it from the moment she left Frederick's mansion, that she had gone to Mirtan Village to retrieve it.

It seemed she had already grown fairly accustomed to wielding the power contained within the sword.

'Are they trying to vent the emotions they've built up against each other?'

Raon let out a quiet sigh as he watched Karoon and Aris cross swords.

'But... why are they fighting so viciously?'

Karoon and Aris weren't merely sparring, they were thrusting their swords toward each other's hearts as if locked in a fight to the death.

Watching how they swung their swords with all their might, completely oblivious to the fact that Raon and Glenn were watching, it felt like they genuinely intended to kill one another.

Rumble, rumble, rumble!

The two of them continued exchanging strikes without pause until the strength drained from their arms and legs.

After about an hour, the relentless barrage of sword strikes finally began to slow down.

Thud.

As if on cue, Karoon and Aris dropped their swords and collapsed to the ground.

"You're too predictable."

Aris frowned as she looked at Karoon.

"Sometimes you need to move provocatively and aggressively to create unexpected variables. But because you fight so predictably, your moves are too easy to read."

She snorted, saying he was an easy opponent to deal with.

"I'll give you some advice too. You're fighting purely on instinct without using your head at all."

Karoon let out a deflated laugh, as if he found her hopeless.

"Fighting instinctively isn't necessarily a bad thing. But if you don't use your head at all, you're no different from a beast.

No, actually, you'd be worse than a beast."

He firmly pointed out Aris' flaws just as she had done to him.

"I was thinking while fighting!"

Aris frowned, insisting that she was swinging her sword while thinking hard.

"Maybe you're just not very smart.

In that case... there's no helping it."

Karoon waved his hand in mock pity.

"At least I'm not too scared to fight up close! Bet you don't have the guts to step into my range!"

Aris glared at Karoon and ground her teeth.

"Then why don't we go at it again? Savage, like beasts."

"Fine by me. I'll crush you, while thinking!"

Karoon and Aris immediately got back up and slammed their swords against each other once again.

Although much of their strength and aura had been drained, a flow and vitality that hadn't existed earlier was now beginning to bloom between their blades.

"This is..."

Raon swallowed dryly and turned to Glenn.

"It's mutual training. It's a method where warriors of similar skill push each other to realize their strengths and weaknesses and grow together."

Glenn nodded, saying that although Karoon was a bit stronger, the two were adjusting to match each other quite well.

"Mutual training..."

Raon clicked his tongue softly.

'I'm honestly a little envious.'

To be able to clash head-on with someone of similar strength and grow together, it made his chest ache with envy.

'Who matches me right now?'

The only one he could think of was the Thespian Emperor. Maybe, if he stretched it a little, the Demon Slaying Spear too.

"Do you know why those two are pushing themselves like that?"

Glenn pointed at Karoon and Aris, then turned his finger toward Raon.

"It's all because of you."

"...Because of me?"

The answer was so unexpected that Raon's mouth fell open on its own.

"Karoon said he doesn't want you standing ahead of him. He swore he'd catch up to you no matter what it takes. And Aris said she wants to repay the debt she owes you."

Glenn smiled, saying both Karoon and Aris were pushing themselves because of him.

"....."

Raon silently turned his gaze to Karoon and Aris, who were swinging their swords with all their strength, soaked in sweat and blood.

It felt as if a drum was beating inside his chest.

To keep going even after seeing how much you've grown... he's more impressive than the King of Essence expected.

Wrath let out a rare, dry chuckle.

The King of Essence always thought he was nothing special, but it seems he needs to reconsider.

He nodded heavily, saying that Karoon wasn't just the shitty eyes' father for nothing.

'Yeah...'

Raon bit his lip as he watched Karoon wielding his sword even while dripping with cold sweat.

'He's the first one to chase after me like this without surrendering.'

To be honest, Raon knew he was practically cheating in this world.

Wrath's stats and traits, the *Ring of Fire*, the *Ten Thousand Flames Cultivation*... By combining them, he had reached Transcendence in his twenties.

Anyone seeing that ridiculous growth would normally lose heart and give up, but Karoon didn't, even after falling behind, he gritted his teeth, stood back up, and started running again.

Seeing Karoon training through the night alongside Aris just to catch up to him, Raon couldn't help but feel both admiration and a sense of astonishment.

'And aunt Aris too.'

Aris still hadn't completely sorted out her feelings. Her body and mind must have been exhausted, yet she stood here, fighting, because she wanted to help him.

"....."

Raon silently watched Karoon and Aris cross swords for a while, then slowly rose to his feet.

"Leaving already?"

"My hands are getting itchy."

He smiled quietly as he gripped the hilt of Heavenly Drive.

"I need to climb higher too, so those two don't catch up to me."

Vowing never to lose, he headed towards the training ground exit.

"Hmm..."

Glenn leaned back in his chair, a deep smile spreading across his face.

"Looks like, in my old age, I've been blessed with both children and grandchildren. And it's all thanks to you."

He smiled warmly as he watched Raon's back disappearing from the training ground.

'Thank you, Raon.'

* * *

A week later.

Dressed in his black uniform, Raon stood atop the platform, looking down at the Light Wind Palace swordsmen.

"Today, we're heading to Balkar, the center of the continent, where the Conference of the Five Kings will be held."

He nodded toward the Light Wind swordsmen, who were emanating a sharp and fierce energy wave like statues of knights.

"This conference could reshape the entire course of the coming war. And we, the Light Wind Palace swordsmen, have the important duty of representing our house and escorting the head of house there."

Raon let out a slow breath and raised his finger.

"As you all know, there are still plenty of people who refuse to believe that we completely destroyed the Black Tower.

Some may be spies planted by the Four Demons, some might simply be chronic doubters, but wasting time trying to persuade them is pointless."

He stepped forward once from the platform.

Behind him, golden flames rose like the wings of a devil.

"Show them our strength. Prove to the doubters, through your strength, who we are and what we have accomplished. Make sure to engrave the three characters 'Light Wind Palace' into their heads."

"We receive your command!"

The Light Wind Palace swordsmen placed their right hands over their hearts and shouted so loudly that the ground seemed to tremble.

"Then, let us depart."

Raon stepped down from the platform. His black dragon coat, trailing down to his knees, billowed as he walked straight through the center of the swordsmen.

Step.

Each time Raon took a step forward, the swordsmen behind him placed their hands on the hilts of their swords and followed in unison.

Whooooosh!

Raon and the Light Wind Palace swordsmen, as if they had become a masterwork blade forged by a grand craftsman, raised a noble, solemn energy wave as they set out toward Balkar.