



Elsword Time Trouble Volume 7

Author: NZ

Illustrations: Octoman

Unofficial translation: 2nafish

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0. Reversed Relationship

Add's obsession with Eve turns him into D.

Add sighed from this hypothesis dwelling in his head then pushed away Eun's hand that was tickling his chin.

"That was a long sigh.... You don't believe me?"

"So you've played all your cards now with this."

"....."

Eun frowned then backed out when Add responded calmly.

Add suppressed his chaotic mind and dizzy head while repeatedly closing his hand into a fist then opening it again to compose himself.

The reason Add becomes D... this was difficult to accept all at once but it was somewhat understandable.

"So I guess it means if Eve was the start, then it ends with Eve as well. Kukukuk...."

"....."

Eun slightly dropped her gaze when she saw Add laughing emptily. Add shrugged then asked with a raspy voice.

"So? Is there anything else you wanted to say?"

".....It seems you believe what I said but your reaction is bizarre."

"What reaction did you expect? Denial that it cannot possibly be true? Or did you want me to burst into tears in despair?"

Add smiled coldly as he gripped his fist so tightly to the point where his hand felt like shattering. The pain revived his sense of judgement.

"I believe what you said. I'll believe you. But what I must do doesn't change. I'll return and get rid of D. Then....."

"You'll steal the girl's core and go back to the past?"

Add shook his head from side to side. That was what he was planning originally but there was another way now.

“I’ll steal the core of this universe’s Eve. I’ll apply its data to my tech to enhance my Dynamos and defeat D...then I’ll return to the past. It’s perfect.”

“.....”

Eun had a blank face as she listened to Add’s plan then she let out an empty laugh.

“Will that really go well as you think?”

“Is there any other reason why we came to this universe?”

There was another Eve in this universe and she also possessed the core. This couldn’t be a coincidence.

But Eun only smiled coldly in response.

“Boy must have not understood what I told him. I said it’s boy’s obsession toward the girl that brings him to ruin. So why isn’t he fixing his habit of always thinking with the girl as the center?”

“Because that’s the fastest way. Or is there any other way? If there was another way to defeat D, then you either would have told me already or it was a failure.”

Add opened his arms widely.

“You and I have failed countless times. You could say that we exhausted pretty much every other option. But this must be the first time that we used this method of escaping to another universe right?”

“.....”

“If D knew about this beforehand, he would have prepared a countermeasure already. The reason I’m safe right now is because this move had never been done before and wasn’t something D had expected.”

Add smiled gladly when Eun gave a silent nod.

“So this method is correct.”

“I cannot agree to it. I don’t understand why you’re concluding that there’s only one way.”

“Then what else is there?”

At those words, Eun pointed towards Add’s pocket. She was pointing towards Memory of Time and Space inside.

But Add pointed out the flaw in her suggestion.

“Memory of Time and Space.... Yes, I'll surely become stronger if I awaken to this. Others became stronger too after all. But can you grantee that it will give me enough power to defeat D?”

“.....Boy being too smart is problematic.”

“Elsword, Ara.....and Eve all awakened their Memory of Time and Space but couldn't defeat D. I don't think the result will change even if I awakened to it.”

Other El Search Party members that awakened their Memory of Time and Space couldn't handle D.....So will it make any difference even if Add joined in?

“Even if there was a difference, I have no idea how to awaken this. So we're discarding this option.”

Eve, Ara and Elsword all awakened theirs but Add still couldn't do it and there wasn't any grantee that he'll be able to.

It was a lottery that he haven't scratched to see the result yet..... But he had no idea how to scratch it in the first place.

“We can't rely on luck. We'll target Eve's core.”

“I clearly stated that the obsession boy has towards the girl is the source of all problems. I disagree with this.”

There was no reason for Add to get dragged around by Eun now. Add purposely made a mocking smile.

“Your agreeing or disagreeing isn't important. I'm not interested in that. We'll do things my way from now on.”

“As I thought.... I immediately get treated coldly.”

Add stayed firm despite Eun's bitter remark.

“There's no more information I need to get out of you. Or is there any information you're still hiding from me?”

“.....”

The reason Eun could half control Add's actions until now was because she was concealing information.

It was only possible because she had hidden things like D's identity, that Add had failed countless times and the reason Add turned into D.

But Add now obtained all the information he needed.

“Now we'll do what we need to do. I also want to get rid of D after all.”

Add didn't know why D wanted to become the king that ruled over time and space but it didn't matter. D wasn't someone that could be negotiated with so there was no other way but to get rid of him.

“.....What happens after he's defeated is the bigger problem.”

“What more problems could there be? Are you thinking I'll threaten Ara after D is defeated? I'll promise that I won't.”

Add made his final decision.

“Everything will be solved if D is defeated. Do you have any objections?”

“.....That's true at least on the surface.”

Eun's words had a strange nuance but Add didn't ask further.

He had finally turned the tides of his quarrel with Eun to determine who had the lead in their relationship. All Eun could do now was assisting with time travel if needed.

It was a situation where he could get his revenge on her for deceiving and messing with him all this time. Eun had to assist Add in order to defeat D anyways.....so she had no choice but to put up with at least light payback from Add.

Wasn't there a phrase 'get rid of the dog after the hunt is over'? Wait, isn't it 'get rid of the fox after the hunt is over' now?

Add laughed with a low voice. Eun would have already seen ahead that Add would think this way. That was why she had hidden various information until now.

“Don't do anything useless to distract me anymore. I won't take them lightly.”

“.....So you're not going to bring up old grudges?”

Eun sharply raised her eyebrows as if she was puzzled.

“My course of action has already been decided, you messing about will just be a needless distraction. Just watch from the sidelines quietly from now on.”

“I revealed this information while being prepared for boy's vengeance. That he'll let out all the hatred he harbored against me all this time. Isn't this a time to let all the pent up shady desires explode?”

“.....Target who we'll raise the affection points of will be Eve.”

“I'm at a position where I'll have to bark or even strip if boy tells me to. But will he really let me go with just a warning?”

When Eun shrugged, her disheveled clothing slid down slightly. Well, both sides ignoring each other and saying only what they had to say couldn't be called a conversation.

Add had no other choice so he replied.

“Stop saying nonsense and put your clothes on properly. And don't cut me off when I'm trying to say something. It's a waste of time.”

“Isn't this a time where you say I'll give you hell! Or how dare you hide this information from me all this time! then make me suffer? I revealed this preparing to go through all kinds of insults and humiliation. It's time for all of boy's suppressed desires to burst into a huge explosion!”

Well.... it was true that he had a lot of piled up negative emotions against Eun. But bringing up past events just for just a petty vengeance wasn't Add's way of doing things. He would rather just destroy or kill if necessary.

“What will I get out of doing such a thing? Venting my anger out on you will just waste my time and buy your hate. It doesn't help me in any way for what's to come.”

“I'm prepared to willingly take any punishment boy gives me.”

“.....”

What is this? Does she want him to whip her or something? When Add stared in disbelief, Eun wagged her tails.

Five tails that was less than the usual amount moved softly.

Should he tell her to stop moving her tail because it was annoying? Add was about to warn her when Eun sighed sweetly.

“Haah.... Since boy is so rough and cruel, I who's powerless have no choice but to do whatever he says. Even if that may be some odd fantasies boy had been hiding deep inside his heart, I have no choice but to follow what he says.”

“.....”

The reason Add couldn't answer was because he was too dumfounded. Who was it that threw Add into the hot springs just before?

But if you only looked at the way Eun was sighing, she looked like a frail girl who got captured by a terrifying monster and was worrying about horrible things that might be done to her.

Add was staring in bewilderment when Eun dropped on the bed as if she was pushed down by something. Her belt must had been untied because her shoulders got revealed and front part of her collar widened dangerously.

Then she stared at Add miserably with a teary gaze then lowered her eyes.... It objectively looked like a frail and innocent girl being oppressed with sorrow. But looking at her subjectively, it made Add so dumfounded that he was about to pass out.

“Hey.....”

“Don’t do it too roughly. I understand boy’s heated heart, but this bed isn’t that sturdy.”

He wanted to punch her. He really wanted to..... but wasn’t Eun stronger?

Add did take the upper hand in their relationship.... But considering two of their raw strengths, Eun was much more powerful so nothing had actually changed.

Add had no idea how to react because Eun became half naked like this.

He couldn’t hit her, she was getting on his nerves but she might strip even more if he was not careful.

Add sighed from the bottom of his heart then shook his head from side to side. Closing his eyes or turning his head away would have been better.....but showing such startled reaction will make him get caught up in Eun’s pace.

“Stop saying nonsense and put your clothes on properly.”

“I’m serious right now.”

Seeing her dangerously lift the hem of her skirt and waving it made him really want to punch her. But Add kept patient as he possibly could.

All the light-colored skin made his vision dizzy but complaining wasn’t going to solve anything.

“I said I wasn’t going to bring up what happened before. And I’m not going to do something so.....”

What should he call it? Add paused because he didn’t know how to say it when Eun smiled and told him.

“Something so erotic.”

“.....”

“Doesn’t the word something so erotic make your heart beat loudly?”

His heart was beating so much from rage that he was going get a high blood pressure. No, he was about to have a stroke already.

She shouldn’t have any information to control him anymore.... But she was trying to harass him and keep him in control by creating a strange atmosphere like this.

There were previous cases of Eun tempting and provoking Add like this and Add could have just ignored or sternly scolded her each time. If those didn't work, he could have always just attacked her.

But.....it was a bit different this time. When Add hesitated, Eun spoke to him in a seductive voice.

“If I'm going to be punished by the boy anyways, wouldn't an erotic punishment be more fitting? I'd also like to strengthen my partnership with the boy with this chance.”

“There's no such partnership in the world.”

“Boy, you don't understand how the world works at all. Relationships between man and a woman is always like this. Isn't it an eternal truth that no matter how angry a man gets, he becomes soft in front of woman's breasts?”

Eun smiled then spoke about something practical this time.

“Doing something erotic with me should also help you get a kiss from one of the girls in the El Search Party later.”

“It hasn't even been an hour since you confessed that you don't know much about human emotions.”

Add spoke sharply but Eun didn't pretend to listen and was just stroking the wrinkles on the bedsheet.

Light-skinned fingers moved about on the bed dizzily.

Should he just ignore her and leave the room? But Add forcefully ignored this choice. It felt so awkward that he wanted to give up everything but nothing would be solved by running away from here.

“Eun.”

“Call me more sweetly if possible.”

Eun's was giving a bold request but this was the time for Add to speak honestly. He cleared his throat and spoke to Eun seriously.

“I won't say that I have a positive feeling towards you. I don't like your way of doing things and how you deceived me all this time makes me angry. But I don't intend to nitpick or take revenge on you because of that.”

“How come?”

Eun who lay sideways on the bed sunk her face halfway into the bedsheet and asked.

“Your help will also be definitely needed in defeating D. That’s why I won’t bring up past grudges and I’ll pretend they never happened if we can get rid of D.”

“Burying the past wouldn’t be that easy.”

“It’s possible.”

If Add could just achieve his goal by defeating D, he had no intention of bringing up Eun’s past misdeeds. But Eun who basically almost had her chest revealed shook her head from side to side lightly.

She looked like a playful cat when she did that while her face was buried in the bedsheet.

“Maybe boy can move on like that but that’s not possible for me.”

“What?”

“Boy might be able to say it’s just something that happened in the past and forget but I can’t do that very well. I’ve lived and fought for too long.”

Add who was a victim was saying he’s not going to make a big deal about what happened in the past..... but Eun was saying that Add shouldn’t do that. Add was feeling confused when Eun stopped rubbing her cheek on the bed then got up. Her clothes got dishevelled even more because of that and her cleavage got revealed.

But Eun didn’t even bother fixing her clothes and stared at Add with a strange gaze.

“Boy might be able to ease his mind like that but I can’t do that. How much more embarrassing words is he going to make a girl say?”

“.....”

Add thought for a moment at these unexpected words.

Add had been cooperating with Eun so far but wasn’t too fond of her. Her various harassments were annoying....and it was obvious to be suspicious of someone who orders you around while not sharing much information.

There was no way you’d be fond of someone who orders you around while sitting on top of your head.

But.... Add had never thought about how Eun felt about herself in those situations. Add not being fond of Eun was obvious, but what did Eun think about her own situation?

They had conversed many times but she had almost never revealed her inner thoughts.

“If you....”

Have a sense of guilt or a guilty conscience? Add was about to instinctively say this but closed his mouth. Eun's gaze right now, this wasn't an harassment that she had done up till now.

She was serious.

".....If you think you've wronged me in the past then repay me by cooperating with me from now on. That should be fine."

"Like I said, that kind of conclusion is only considering boy's perspective."

One who should be giving the punishment, one who should be taking revenge was saying he was just going to let things slide but the perpetrator was demanding that she couldn't accept this.

"What I mean is, there needs to be something to tie things up for us to shake off all the negative feelings and fight together."

"....."

This stupid seduction was for that sake? She wasn't provoking him?

When Add stared dumbfounded, Eun flapped her collar.

But Add didn't turn away his gaze this time. He clicked his tongue instead and spoke as if telling Eun to listen up.

"What a stupid fox....."

"I may not look it but I'm...."

"That wasn't even a seduction. How useless."

Eun frowned when Add spoke sharply. But Add's words were faster than Eun's response.

"I can't trust you in the first place so doing something like this will just make me think you have something else up your sleeves. Do you think I'm an idiot?"

"It's normal for men to just jump in when they see women's breasts."

"That's something only mindless beasts do."

Well Add didn't know what other men were like and he wasn't interested anyways. What was important right now was his method.

"Stop trying to gloss this over with something stupid like this. It's not like I'm going to trust you even if you do this, and what you've done won't be erased. I said I won't make an issue of it, I didn't say I'll forget about everything."

"That's why....."

“So if you have any sense of guilt or aching conscience.....”

He had never thought Eun had such emotions but if it was true, then there needed to be something to tie this all up.

“So cooperate properly with me until the end.”

“That’s why....”

“I have the upper hand now so why are you keep doing something that I didn’t even ask of you? Not only that but you even threw an injured person into the hot springs, you’re keep making me say tiresome things.”

Talking with her won’t get anywhere. Add boldly approached the bed and sat.

Eun seemed slightly surprised but Add didn’t pay attention to her and lay down putting his head on her tail.

“At least your tail is useful. I’ll use it as a pillow from time to time.”

“What?”

“This is my first demand. I’m tired so I’m going to sleep for a bit.”

Add said this and closed his eyes.

Well, if Eun really had a guilty conscience from what she did to Add then there needed to be a gesture of reconciliation. Add could also accept if it was just borrowing her tail.

Also, it was comfortable when he slept on it before.

“Sigh.....”

Add could hear Eun’s sigh but he ignored by pretending he was asleep. Then other tails moved to cover Add’s body.

“Boy is also too soft-hearted.”

Add wanted to refute her but he was asleep right now, let’s ignore her. When he didn’t answer, Eun didn’t say anything more.

Add who was covered by tails sighed in relief internally then started to make plans for his future actions.

Problem with Eun was roughly resolved. Only Eve’s core and getting a kiss from the El Search Party remained. He should also defeat Scar while at it.

There were various issues but he just had to solve them one by one. Add was coming up with an order to solve these issues but then got startled when he actually started to get sleepy. But he gave up resisting.

He wasn't fully healed yet.....and the real fight started tomorrow when the other members arrived. It was a reasonable choice to sleep in order to prepare for tomorrow.

Also

Her tails were warm.



1. From kiss

El Search Party group that headed to the Temple of Fire arrived at Hot Springs. Add heard that members who just arrived went to bathe to relieve their fatigue so he made up his mind and also headed to the men's bath.

He didn't like bathing with other people but he needed information.

When Add arrived, Raven, Elsword, Ciel and Chung were already inside the water enjoying their bath. Elsword waved his hand to greet Add.

"Big Brother Add, was everything fine on this side?"

"....."

'Lu and Rena had a big fight and Elesis and I got captured' was too long of an explanation.

"Listen to what happened on our side from the others. How did things go on your side?"

"Didn't Ms.Ignia come before us?"

".....I haven't talked properly to that priestess."

Add couldn't make the time to talk with Ignia because the information Eun revealed was too shocking. Raven explained simply.

"There were demons lying in ambush. It took some time to defeat them."

"Didn't Lu cause trouble?"

Add shrugged when Ciel asked amiably. The reason Add came to the men's bath wasn't to give trifling explanations.

"Things seems to be complicated amongst girls. It's difficult for me to explain."

".....It must be."

Raven must have guessed what might have happened because he sighed. He must also understand Rena's feelings.

Anyways, the main topic starts from here. Add nervously looked at the other guys then carefully brought up the topic.

"I have something I want to ask. But I first want a promise from all of you that you'll keep this a secret from the girls."

“What?”

“Secret?”

Chung asked confusedly and Ciel stared at Add with a strange gaze for a bit then made a mischievous smile.

“Interesting. I’ll keep it a secret.”

“Is it something you can’t tell them? What is it?”

“If it’s just consulting.....”

Elsword and Raven seem to have accepted as well. Add gulped then.....warned again.

“I’ll say it again, if you don’t keep this a secret.....”

“There must be a girl that’s on your mind, who is it?”

Add shut his mouth when Ciel asked while smiling. He wanted to deny Ciel’s words so strongly but he didn’t know if denying right now would help with the conversation that will follow.

“Let me first say that this doesn’t concern this universe.”

“Alright, so?”

Add got wary when Ciel unexpectedly showed strong interest in this topic.

Come to think of it, Add didn’t have any information about Ciel unlike the other search party members. You could conclude others were just generally naive despite this being a different universe, but there was no precedent information about Lu and Ciel.

But to catch a tiger, you must go into the tiger’s den.

“.....I’ll be straightforward. Have any of you ever kissed a girl?”

“Hmm?”

“K, kiss?”

Elsword and Chung’s eyes widened and Raven and Ciel had no responses.

Attitudes of two men keeping their silence strangely contrasted each other. Raven had an expression as if he was reluctant about this topic while Ciel looked like he was trying to prevent himself from laughing.

It will look lame if Add withdrew the topic now that he started it.

“There’s someone I have to kiss. But I don’t know how I should do that. If any of you have experience with it, I’d like to hear about your experience or any other information regarding it....”

“.....”

Add trailed his words because he got troubled from the stares of the guys.

“.....I know it’s strange to ask something like this.”

“N, no. I, it’s not strange at....all.”

Ciel was covering his mouth with his hands and shivering. Add became annoyed when they made eye contact because Ciel was looking at him with a strangely warm gaze.

Add ignored Ciel then looked around at the other three.

“.....What does that mean?”

“Hmm.....”

Elsword was making a face as if he was bewildered and Chung was embarrassed with his face all red. Two of them didn’t seem like they’d be much of a help.

Raven had his head turned away with his mouth shut. It seemed like he was going to spare his words much as possible.....and Add didn’t have intentions to pressure him to talk.

“Pfft, pfft.”

The problem was.... only one remaining after the elimination rule was Ciel who was currently struggling not to laugh.

When Add looked back at Ciel with a reluctant gaze, Ciel covered his mouth with his hands then turned away.

“Don’t laugh at me.....”

“I, I’m not..... ah.”

Ciel was shaking trying not to laugh. Add felt like hitting his bare exposed back.

The reason for Add’s face becoming red probably wasn’t only because heat from the hot spring.

“.....I’m asking seriously.”

“Hmm.....”

Elsword must have realized this wasn’t a joke and groaned troublesomely then spoke.

“Want me to ask Big Sis about it for you?”

“.....Don't do it ever. I already said this is a secret from the girls. I won't forgive you if you do.”

Elsword scratched his head troublesomely when Add glared at him.

“But isn't that something guy and girl does together? Wouldn't it be better to ask what girls think about it?”

That was a rather mature(?) opinion coming from Elsword but Add shook his head. Add said this was about his universe but that was just an excuse. This was something that had to be done in this universe in order for him to go back to the original universe.

It was an information that shouldn't be revealed to the girls of the Search Party. He wanted to keep it a secret much as possible.

“I'm sorry Mr.Add. I don't think I'll be much help.”

“I didn't expect much from you.....”

Chung made a complicated expression at Add's sharp response. Raven was still keeping silent and Ciel was struggling to hold in his laugh.

“.....”

Add anticipated only ones amongst the El Search Party that likely had this kind of experience was Raven and Ciel who were older.

But Raven's atmosphere was as if he didn't want to talk and Ciel was.....

“Pfft, hahahaha.....”

Going to die from laughing too much. Add internally wished he really did drop dead right now.

“I was skeptic but you guys can't help me after all. Let's stop talking about this. Remember, don't.....”

“Ah, wait Add. Pfft, hahaha.....”

Ciel waved his hands to stop Add. It was annoying how he burst out into laughter in middle of his words but Add decided to listen to what he had to say for now.

“Alright, so do you mean there's a girl who's on your mind in your universe? Who is it?”

“Do I have to reveal that?”

“I can't give any advices if I don't know who.”

Add didn't answer right away to Ciel who finally stopped laughing, no, who was still laughing but stopped laughing out loud.

Who will he kiss?

“.....”

Although Add bought time by keeping silent, he couldn't get a quick answer to this question. Add had asked the guys because it might be a good reference if he heard about the guys' experience.

This had been originally for gathering information. But Add couldn't ignore Ciel's suggestion.

“I see, so it changes depending on who.”

Eun did also say something similar while mentioning about affection points. Add delved into his thoughts while stroking his chin. So far, he had blindly thought that he was going to raise the affection point of someone.... But that was too vague.

It needed to be more thorough.

“I see, that's right.”

Ciel was watching with an excited gaze as Add delved into his thoughts. Although Ciel was being annoying, he was the only consultant right now.

“You said Lu and I weren't there so that leaves the girls except Lu..... Is it one of Aisha, Rena, Eve, Elesis or Ara?”

Chung stared straightly at Add when names of the girls were mentioned. Elsword stared piercingly at Add when Elesis was mentioned.

And Raven was just staring quietly.

Add's expression became nervous when gazes of three naked(because this was a bath) guys focused on him. Three of them didn't say anything.....but were giving off a strange pressure.

The atmosphere was as if there might be trouble if Add said something wrong.

“Big Brother, you can't possibly be.....”

Elsword stopped in middle of his words and scratched his head. Elsword was groaning as if he couldn't organize his thoughts then glared at Add.

“Thinking about Big Sis right?”

“.....You think I'm that suicidal?”

He'd be glad if he didn't lose a limb or two after kissing her. Add wasn't putting Elesis in the list of candidates in the first place.

Just dealing with her was bothersome enough, so affection points? Ridiculous.

Add answered with detest at the idea but Elsword didn't seem like he was listening.

"I don't want to meddle.....but you have to beat me first if you want to do it with Big Sis."

"....."

Elsword was acting like he would have pulled out his sword if this wasn't a bath. Add was so bewildered that he retorted.

"Do you think I'm crazy? Why would I make approaches to that girl? Stop speaking nonsense....."

What do you call these kinds of guys again? Sister complex? But Elsword calmly expressed his opinion despite Add's annoyed response.

"I won't accept anyone who's weaker than Big Sis. Fight me first."

"....."

Is he saying if anyone wants to kiss Elesis, they must beat him first? How does that process come about? If you want to kiss the older sister, you must fight and beat her younger brother? What universe is that culture from?

"Drop it. Didn't I say clearly that it wasn't Elesis?"

"Then who is it, Mr.Add?"

Add closed his mouth at Chung's question. This situation felt like he fastened the first button of a coat wrong. Add hasn't been wary of the other members because he was focusing only on his own tasks, but.....

"Wait.... So guys here are mindful about girl members as well?"

Hypothesis that Add hadn't even thought about passed through his mind.

Elsword cares about Elesis. Although Elsword's reaction was over the top, this was understandable since they were siblings..... But others too?

"....."

It felt like he carelessly touched upon complicatedly tangled feelings and relationships of the Search Party. When Add wasn't saying anything, Raven who had been keeping silent all this time opened his mouth.

"It's about something from that universe, so it's not something we should meddle in."

".....I know. But you can't with Big Sis. I won't accept anyone who's weaker than Big Sis."

Just by what authority did he have the right to say something like that.....? Also, saying that he won't accept any man who was weaker than Elsis was not too different from saying he was going let his sister be single forever.

"I also think that's a bit...."

"So, Add. Who's the girl you're concerned about?"

Ciel, the culprit who inflated this issue asked again without hiding how much he was enjoying this. Add who was feeling like he was cornered rolled his eyes for a while looking for a way to answer then stood up quickly.

This calls for a tactical retreat.

"I wasn't thinking right. This conversation doesn't seem too useful so let's stop here."

Gazes of the guys followed him but Add ignored and quickly escaped from the bath. This was running away even thinking subjectively, but he had no choice but to escape in this situation.

Hot springs lounge, it was a place located between men and women's bath.

Add sat down on a chair in the empty lounge then sighed in relief. It felt like he was freed from a pressure.

"Phew, this is giving me a headache. Seriously....."

Add, with his face red from getting out of the hot springs organized his thoughts while drinking a bottle of water. He was retracing the events just now to figure out how this error, this awkward atmosphere came about....

"So the El Search Party that I was in was just Eve, Elsword, me, Rena and Ara...."

Chung did join later too. Anyways, the other El Search Party's relationships had been rather straightforward.

For an easy comparison, you could say Rena was the eldest sister who embraced everyone, the youngest kid was Elsword, Eve was the brainy second sister, Ara was the clumsy third sister, and Add himself....was the rebellious eldest brother who didn't like how things were going in the household.

"....."

Eldest brother? It was funny even though Add was the one who thought it. Add pressed on his forehead then sighed.

Anyways, although this kind of relationship existed..... Add had never thought about love relationship amongst the old group. Making Eve turn to look at him was.....how should he describe it? It was because a cat that he was fond of was not even giving him a single glance and was always playing with some strange red haired kid.

“So that means....”

But circumstances must be different in this universe in this El Search Party. First of all, 9 of them had gathered and even Lu and Ciel joined so their relationships must be a bit different.

No, he won't be able to arrive at the core detail if he merely said relationships.

Let's say male-female relationships.

“.....”

Although the word felt a bit reluctant, Add couldn't deny that it was a correct expression. People with different circumstances and personalities have gathered so it would be stranger if things had progressed per Add's previous knowledge.

Add had to think of this El Search Party as a similar but different group than the El Search Party he had known.....

“No.....”

Add might have been just unaware and maybe there had been a strange atmosphere between males and females in 5-member El Search Party too. Add shook his head from side to side when things became even more complicated the more he thought.

“This is driving me crazy.....”

He had planned to ask the guys first to obtain knowledge and information but it felt like he ended up unnecessarily touching upon something he shouldn't have.

“Not only that, but I have to do it with someone from this universe to go back.....”

If Add tried to kiss this universe's Elsis, Elsword will come to attack him with his sword drawn. Not only that but similar problem could happen with the other girls as well.

“What should I do?”

Figuring out a way to defeat D and stealing Eve's core was already a handful, but did he really have to worry about male-female relationships that he had never been interested in all his life?

Add was letting out heavy sighs when he heard a voice from behind him.

“Mr.Add?”

A familiar voice, Add looked back to see Ara with her eyes wide open.

“Do you have something you’re worried about?”

“Mind your own business.”

Ara didn’t mind Add’s cold reply and sat beside him. Wondering why Ara was acting like this, Add took a brief glance at her but she just had her mouth shut and was looking forward.

She must have been in the hot springs just now because her skin was dyed red.

“Umm.... Would you mind if I asked one question?”

“Don’t ask.”

Ara was hesitant but nodded. She was looking at her own feet with a gloomy air about her....but it didn’t seem like she was going to get up and leave.

Add frowned then changed his words.

“Just say it if you’re going to act depressed beside me. Although I won’t promise that I’ll answer.”

Ara’s expression turned bright at the approval then she asked.

“Me in your universe..... Was I successful in turning Elder Brother Aren back into human?”

“.....Ran huh.”

Add’s universe and this universe were different yet similar.

It seems the fact that Ara’s older brother became a demon, and that Ara was fighting to turn Ran back into human was the same.

“Why do you want to know that? Whether you turned Ran back or not in my universe doesn’t have anything to do with you.”

“.....That’s true.”

Ara acknowledged quietly then sighed. Her appearance was that of a beauty drenched in sorrow when she was keeping quiet.

Add who was staring at Ara’s face realized he was making observations he hadn’t done before in his life so he turned his gaze away while making fake coughs.

“I said this already but my universe is currently being ruled by D. Ran also works under D so he’s enemy of the El Search Party. If I find a way to defeat D and go back.....then maybe a way to turn my universe’s Ran back into human might open.”

“Really? I’m very glad!”

Ara’s expression turned bright suddenly as she clapped. How her expression changed drastically from a depressed sigh to a smile was reminiscent of a flower blooming. When Add stared at her, Ara got surprised from Add’s gaze and covered her mouth.

After a while, Ara slowly confessed her thoughts.

“Just like Mr.Add said, even if Elder Brother Aren returned to normal in that universe....it doesn’t have anything to do with me. But I’ll still be happy if that happened.”

“Why?”

“Because it means that there’s a possibility that I can turn Elder Brother back to normal.”

Ara spoke while staring at her feet.

“Ms.Aisha explained it to me. Parallel universes are worlds of possibilities, that they are places with all possible events that could happen. If Elder Brother Aren returned to normal in Mr.Add’s universe, wouldn’t that mean that there’s a possibility that it could happen in this universe as well?”

“You’re speaking nonsense.....”

Add cut her off abruptly.

“The theory that parallel universes are portions of possibilities is correct but it encompasses an immensely large range. It’s actually just a wordplay. Even universe where Elsword is a girl or universe where Rena is a man can theoretically exist. According to probabilities anyways.”

“Really? Mr.Elsword is a girl?”

“.....”

When Ara opened her eyes widely in surprise, Add kept quiet from being awestruck. But Ara must have interpreted the silence in a positive way because she made a very curious expression.

“Mr.Elsword would be very cute if he was a girl. How is she like? I want to see her too. Of course, he’s cute right now too.”

“Don’t change the topic in a weird direction. It’s annoying.”

“Ah, sorry. Did I act too excited?”

At Add's words, Ara meekly lowered her gaze and apologized. It felt like looking at a puppy that had been energetically moving around its owner then become saddened after being scolded.

It was difficult to ignore.

"I don't know in detail about relationship between you and Ran in here.....but I can only say something irresponsible like try your best. It might work out if you try. I'm also willing to help you long as it doesn't get in the way of my objectives. "

"Thank you! But Elder Brother Aren is....."

"I'm not saying this emptyly. You did....."

Recalling past events, Ara did help Add out in various ways. In their first battle with Elesis, Ara believed in Add's plan and bravely threw herself into the danger zone.

Come to think of it now, Ara who was in charge of the front line was Add's most trustworthy chess piece. Precious chess piece that followed his order without a question no matter how strange the order was.

He had never thanked her.....but come to think of it now, she was a very important individual.

"You did help me out in various ways after all."

"I did?"

Ara obviously couldn't comprehend but Add didn't explain further. Add was confident that he knew better than anyone about feeling of wanting to get back the person precious to you.

Just like he helped Elsword who was trying to get Elesis back, there was no reason he couldn't help Ara who was trying to get Aren back.

"I have to return soon as possible but tell me if you need help with anything during that time. You don't even have the brains to think after all."

Add's tone ended up becoming like how he treated Ara that he knew. But Ara nodded innocently without complaints.

"Yes, I'll ask right away if I have anything I'm curious about."

"....."

So this Ara was also naive in the end. Her actions were sharper and she had a strangely darker air about her but how she was a well-mannered and innocent girl was still the same.

If you were to compare her to an animal, she'd be more like a dog or something else in the dog family. She trusts people easily and it feels like she'd readily follow you while wagging her tail if you just said couple nice things to her.

“Well, fox is also in the dog family.....”

“What do you mean?”

When Ara tilted her head at what Add said to himself, Add just waved his hand up and down in response. Then Ara's gaze followed the hand's movement and she nodded quietly. This was rather cute so Add unknowingly waved his hand repeatedly then Ara's gaze kept following his hand without saying a word.

“.....”

He had never thought about this before...but isn't Ara way too easy to handle? Add who was staring at Ara with his hand on his cheek tried applying this thought while still half in doubt.

“Hand.”

“?”

“Hand.”

When Add spoke two times in a row, Ara tilted her head while politely holding out both of her hands forwards. She looked like a kid getting her hands examined.

.....She really held them out? Add was bewildered but still moved on to the next experiment.

“Try doing a backflip.”

“Okay.”

Without asking why, Ara stood up to kick the ground lightly then spun around in midair once then landed. After performing a magnificent backflip, Ara stared at Add without saying a word.

Like a puppy waiting for her next order.

“.....”

Add wanted to deny the comparison that he made in his head but he was already making the conclusion.Ara was way too nice of a person. No, saying that she was a nice person was a bit different than this.

“What should I do next Mr.Add?”

“Sit.”

Ara immediately sat beside Add again. Add chuckled at Ara's attitude that looked like she was waiting for his next words.

Ara was dog-type. She obediently carries out orders she's given and leaves question about the order for later. Add did know she had this kind of tendency before but.....

Add was thinking when Ara suddenly pushed her face closer to him. Add got surprised from the sudden lack of distance that he lost his balance while trying to back up.

Add was about to fall when Ara hastily grabbed his arm.

"Watch out Mr.Add."

".....T, Thanks."

Add was in an awkward position where he was half fallen on the ground. But Ara didn't let Add up right away and asked carefully.

"Mr.Add, do you have something you're worried about after all?"

"What?"

"Didn't Mr.Add say you'll help me? I also want to help Mr.Add."

"First....."

Add was about to say let go of his arm first but froze from the thought that came up in his mind. Ara's determined gaze, her exquisite facial features.

And her red lips.

"....."

Dog-type, she holds out her hands if you ask for them. She doesn't demand an explanation for orders she's given. Not only that, but according to Eun, she's the easiest candidate to raise the affection points of.

What will happen if he asked her for a kiss?

Add felt a strange reluctance at his own thought but his brain was running logically.

Biologically speaking, something like a kiss was just a simple membrane contact. Others seems to be all worked up over something this insignificant and applying various emotions to the act..... But Add who was an engineer could coldly conclude that it was just a simple membrane contact.

I need a kiss in order to go back, please do it with me. How would Ara react if he said this? She'll obviously be embarrassed....but wouldn't she agree if he spoke his words right?

“.....Mr.Add?”

Add who was deep in thought while looking at Ara's pretty lips came to his senses when Ara called him. But he still didn't know what to say. Should he ask her to let go of his arm? Or.....

Add was thinking while staring straightly at Ara but then turned around from feeling a strange presence.

Cold gaze, Eve had appeared before anyone had realized and was staring coldly at Add and Ara who was holding onto his arm.

Add really didn't know what to say.

Eve approached slowly as Add stayed frozen. Let's hope that her gaze being frostier than usual is just an imagination.

“Don't do something weird in a public lounge, useless person.”

“That's not it Ms.Eve. Mr.Add was about to fall so I caught him.”

Eve tried to push Add down after hearing Ara's explanation. Add staggered but barely managed to not fall and stood up right after.

“You could have just fell down, useless.”

When Add didn't answer and fixed his crumpled clothes, Eve's gaze became even colder.

“You could have just stayed rolling on the floor, useless.”

“What's wrong Ms.Eve?”

Ara asked carefully because the air felt was like Eve was scolding Add.

“I'll explain it to you later so return to your room. I have something to talk about with this man who should have been better off rolling on the floor.”

“.....Can I?”

Ara asked carefully after looking at Add. It seemed Ara could at least read that this situation was serious. Add nodded silently.

“Then.... two of you have a nice talk.”

Ara reluctantly left the lounge. Soon as Ara left, Eve glared at Add while expelling an icy aura. She seemed more even more offended compared to when Add had first arrived in Lanox.

“I won’t forgive you do something indecent to Ara.”

“What?”

Eve spoke sharply with an icy voice.

“Ara opens her heart to anyone and treats them kindly. I won’t forgive anyone who disrespects her good will.”

“.....”

Were those words something that Eve should say? When Add was taken aback and stared back crookedly, Eve stretched her arm out as if there was no point in talking anymore. Then Oberon and Ophelia were summoned immediately.

Add laughed emptyly at this gesture of resorting to display of force.

“You must be like this because you saw what I did just now. That was just a light experiment. Why are you so upset?”

“My comrade was insulted. I can’t let this slide.”

Well, Eve that Add knew could have acted like this as well. Eves were alike in this and other universes so her showing this kind of reaction was understandable.

“Comrades....? Since when were you so close with Ara?”

“Don’t judge me by your standards.”

Eve was treating Add with a tone as if she was disgusted with just having to talk to Add. It seemed Eve became very upset after seeing Add train(?) Ara.

Was the observation that Eve’s reaction was like ‘how dare you try to mess with our puppy!’ a bit twisted?

“Kukukuk, so.... Seeing me play with Ara a bit upset you that much?”

Add asked while sneering because Eve’s words were unexpected for him. Eve sighed then folded her arms. Then Oberon and Ophelia disappeared through the dimension gate.

She must have realized she got too riled up.

“Ara tends to be fooled easily by others. I especially don’t want her to be involved with a useless person like you that only tries to come up with petty schemes. If you want to speak with Ara from now on, then you’ll have to speak through me.”

“.....”

Why was she being so overprotective? This was a bit surprising but Add continued the conversation to get some more information out of this.

“Are you saying I should speak everything through you if I want to talk with Ara? Isn’t that a bit over the top?”

“This rule will stand until I determine that you won’t insult Ara anymore.”

“.....”

That’s right. Come to think of it, Eve was the second sister and Ara was the youngest sister.

So should he think of this as the second sister being protective of her naïve younger sister and trying to keep an eye on anyone that might harm her?

Add went over the relationship chart in his head then acknowledged Eve’s actions. But he still asked with a thought of what else he could find out.

“Why? What did I do? I just lightly consulted with her. I did play a little joke at the end but this shouldn’t be anything you should get so worked up over.”

Eve must have not expected this question because she hesitated for a bit then spoke slowly.

“....I felt something very indecent from how you treated Ara. Although I’m not exactly sure what it was.”

“.....”

She was right on the mark. To think Nasods could be this sharp.

Add was in shock and admiration at Eve’s superior senses but Eve must have interpreted that as Add being suspicious. Eve made an unpleasant expression.

“Anyways, it will be like I said for a while. I’ll also tell Ara to not talk with you alone. If you do not comply with this, I’ll speak about this to Elesis.”

“.....”

Totally forceful and even with an added threat. But her instinct was right on the mark.

Add was taken aback at this turn of events but was keeping quiet for now. Eve was very furious right now so saying something to retort back will only fuel her anger.

Of course, Eve will never admit that she was being angry right now.

When Add kept silent, Eve must have determined that Add understood and turned around to leave. That was the moment Add was aiming for.

Time to go on the offensive during the moment when she thinks everything is finished.

“Eve.”

Eve who was about to walk away glanced back. Add issued a challenge while Eve still had a confused and loosened expression.

“What do you think a kiss is?”

“.....”

Eve thought for a moment then answered confidently.

“Isn’t that just a membrane contact? Why do you ask?”

“.....Kukukuk, never mind. It’s fine.”

Add shrugged as if it was nothing then Eve walked away. Add withdrew his smile after Eve disappeared from his view.

“To think our point of views would align in this.....”

Well, Add was a Nasod engineer and Eve was a Nasod. Two of their thoughts and point of views were similar. Of course, Eve had the tendency to distance herself from Add.... But you couldn’t deny that two of them had similar point of views.

“I’ll first organize all the information.”

Let’s head back.

Add saw someone unfamiliar as he was returning to his lodge. Red hair, but it didn’t belong to Elsword or Elesis.

The one who was holding a spear and looking far out towards the volcano was Ignia.

“If I’m correct she was... priestess of fire.”

Add never heard about Ignia in his universe so he had no information on her. But he did know from experience that Ignia was very powerful. Ignia must have sensed someone was nearby so she turned around. Then she waved her hand towards Add.

“Ooh. Nice to see you!”

Ignia gave a weird greeting then approached quickly and cut to the chase.

“You, is it true that you came over from a different universe? Elesis said so.”

“What do you want?”

Elesis must have determined that this wasn't an information that had to be hidden. Well, a lax group like the El Search party couldn't possibly understand the concept of controlling and hiding information.

Although Eun was a very special case.

“Ah, not much.... I'm Priestess of Fire, Ignia. Did I have to explain that? I have something I want to ask you.... you saw me in your universe too right?”

“No, this is my first time seeing you.”

Ignia asked brightly but her expression turned stiff when she heard the answer. She asked again reluctantly.

“Could it be..... that I died on that side?”

That was a miss. Add spoke while frowning.

“This is the first time I heard about a priestess. I've never heard about a priestess or have been to a village called Lanox where I came from.”

“So I wasn't even there?”

“It's not like all conditions are same between parallel universes. It's not a big deal if you didn't exist on our side.”

At Add's answer, Ignia let out a huge sigh then crouched down then sighed again. She looked totally let down so Add just passed by her.

.....But he couldn't walk forward. Ignia who was crouching down had grabbed Add's sleeve.

“Wait, here I am being really depressed and you're going to ignore me and go on your way?”

“I don't know the information you want.”

Despite being a girl with the power to incinerate hundreds of demons.....tone of her voice was light. So she wasn't asking how herself from another universe was doing out of curiosity like Ara?

At Add's answer, Ignia made a very displeased face then forcefully dragged Add down.

She was unexpectedly strong so Add ended up being dragged down and hitting his bottom on the floor. Add got annoyed at how he was sitting on the floor....but Ignia protested as she glared at Add.

“If someone is having a hard time like this then it’s a common courtesy to stay beside and protect their side! How dare you try to ignore me.”

“.....”

It seemed she was talking about something but Add couldn’t understand. Add even forgot being angry and made a blank expression from the words that he was trying to translate in his head.

But Ignia restlessly spewed out words at Add.

“Do you even know how much I looked forward to meeting you ever since I heard you came from a different universe? Do you think I arrived a day earlier for no reason? It was to meet you! But I got scared to confirm things from you so it took an entire day until I settled my mind. So how dare you try to end this with just couple words? Also, didn’t I appear and help you guys? Of course, I would have eradicated all the demons anyways but I think I’m in a position where I deserve some thanks from you. So me, who helped you is really depressed right now but rather than worry about me and asking what’s wrong, you try to ignore me instead? Just what’s wrong with you? You’re not popular, right? Do you not know about a girl’s heart?”

“.....”

I can’t understand what you’re saying in the first place. While thinking this, Add listened to the rain of complaints coming at him with a blank expression then barely managed to catch some words that he could understand.

“.....Yes, you appearing and cleaning up all the demons was very good. Thanks.”

“Are you trying to end this by just saying that? Then what about my heart that was beating so much before I met you? Do you think you can get away by just saying you don’t know anything?”

Add got startled unlike himself when Ignia glared at him with sizzling gaze.

“.....I, I’m sorry.”

“Do you think it will all end with just an apology? Maybe they let you get away with that in your universe but it’s different here.”

Just what do you want from me then? Add couldn’t understand why Ignia was so angry at him so he just kept his mouth shut. It didn’t look like this girl will let him go....and he didn’t have enough strength to escape from her grasp so having her let all her emotions out felt like the correct response.

When Add kept silent, Ignia who was fuming with anger looked like she calmed down and steadied her breath.

Ignia got up by stabbing her spear on the ground and leaning on it. She sighed as she brushed her bang to the side then held out her hand towards Add.

“Sorry, I said too much because I got too worked up.”

“.....”

It might not be over. When Add silently grabbed her hand and stood up, Ignia leered at him.

“But you’re also at fault. Do you realize how shocked I was when I heard that I don’t exist in your universe? Shouldn’t you say something like that more carefully?”

“Is that really something you should be so shocked about?”

“What?”

Ignia stared at Add in disbelief as if trying to say ‘how can such a person exist? Is he even a human?’. She looked quite appalled so Add traced back on what he said to check if he really did say something wrong.

Ignia withdrew her appalled gaze then spoke. Her tone was calm unlike before.

“.....Ah, yes. If you came here from the other side, then you wouldn’t know how things are going in here. Things aren’t going too well in this universe.”

“I heard about it roughly. Elves are about to go extinct, there’s a dragon as our enemy and Velder Kingdom was destroyed.”

“Yes....but it seems you didn’t hear that all other priestesses except me are dead.”

The word priestesses felt fresh for Add. No, it seems he did hear it somewhere..... Add was rummaging over his memories when Ignia spoke depressingly.

“All other priestesses were killed by the demons. Even those two kids that I promised to protect.....”

Ignia’s eyes were filled to the brim with tears as she spoke. She wiped her eyes then bit her lower lip as she tried to collect her emotion.

“I know that those kids won’t come back. But I had a thought that if an alternate universe existed, maybe they might be living happily in there.....I thought that would be really nice.....”

“.....They must have been important to you.”

Ignia gave a small nod.

“Of course, I know that confirming something like this doesn’t have any meaning. I couldn’t protect them in the end. Still... I ended up thinking how nice it would be if there was a universe where those kids were safe.”

“.....”

Add also knew what she meant. That’s right, Add jumped over time for the possibility of protecting someone precious to him, possibility of getting back someone precious to him.

But time travel wasn’t something that others could use.

You can’t ever meet people that have been lost or dead again. That’s the cruel rule of the world.

Add didn’t say anything as he looked at Ignia sorrowfully lower her gaze.

Add chose the path of jumping over time but telling others to do the same was impossible. If there was still a possibility of protecting the ones important to them, and possibility that it could be achieved, then Add can encourage them and even lend his help.

He could help Ara with turning Ran back.

But Ignia had already lost people that were important to her. What words from him could possibly hold any meaning for her?

As Add was thinking, a single line of thought flashed by in his head. His mouth spoke faster than his head could organize this thought.

“Legend of the water priestess.”

“.....What?”

“Legend of the water priestess, story....about a priestess who fell in love with a demon.”

Add became shocked at this information that he just remembered. This was a story he heard from Chung back in Hamel. Add hadn’t been interested in it back then but its significance changes now that he’s face to face with Ignia, the priestess of fire.

“It’s a legend that has been passed down in my universe. I thought that it was just a simple legend.....”

“There’s a priestess?”

Ignia’s mood changed then she asked while pushing her face closer to Add almost as if she was going to grab him by the collar. But Add responded level-headedly.

“It’s a legend from hundreds of years ago. But from your reaction, priestess of water did seem to exist.”

“.....Yes, Hamel’s Sasha.”

There was no proof that the water priestess from the legend and this universe’s water priestess were same individuals. But there was a high chance that they were.

“I didn’t mention in detail about what’s happening in my universe to others. Keep what I’m about to say from now on only a secret between us.”

“.....”

Ignia looked at Add with eyes filled with anticipation as she nodded. Well, she didn’t look that trustworthy to keep a secret but it wouldn’t be a big deal for Add if this detail was leaked.

“I think the time has been distorted in my universe.”

“What does that mean?”

“I don’t know in detail either. But there’s someone called D trying to rule over time and space and time is being distorted in that process. Things that shouldn’t be happening are happening.”

Add from present and future existing at the same time was something that should normally be impossible.

‘Eun also spoke about this as if D was cheating, breaking the rules.’

Add recalled the wooden lattice board that Eun showed him, a stone on top of another stone then nodded strongly. D was existing in a form that shouldn’t be possible and was bending the world to his will.

And the order of time has been distorted in that process.

“So because of D’s work, water priestess might have changed into a person from hundreds of years ago and is being passed down as legend.”

“Then.....”

“If I defeat D, then the priestesses might return to present.”

No, it will certainly happen. D who rules over time was trying to obtain space that Aisha had been controlling to become the king of time and space..... But what will happen if Add defeats D?

There will be a vacancy for the throne. Not just any throne but the throne of king of time, a position of enormous power.

Then who should take up that empty position? Shouldn’t it obviously be the winner?

Add gripped his fist tightly at this thought surging up from within him.

“If I..... defeat D. Then everything will be solved.”

He'll become the king of time after D. He'll obtain the power to go back to the past freely..... then he'll get back the person that was precious to him.

Defeating D was same as achieving his goal. These two shouldn't be thought separately.

Add became assured that he had to defeat D not because of others, not because Eun said Add was the only one who could defeat D.....but to achieve his ultimate goal.

There was no detailed explanation but Ignia seemed like she understood.

“I see, so in that universe.....there's still a chance that Gloria and Darkmoon can be happy?”

“Well, if I go back and achieve my goal.... Then I could consider it.”

He could consider doing it as a favor for Ignia to commemorate his goal becoming clearer. Ignia bowed when Add spoke slowly.

“Yes, I'll be counting on you. Although it will be impossible in this universe.... But please protect them so those kids can be happy on that side.”

“.....I'll do that.”

“Thanks.....”

Gloria, Darkmoon. They were names that Add haven't heard before but he could sense that they had been very dear to Ignia.

When Add accepted readily, Ignia made an expression as if she was relieved then leaned her spear on her shoulder.

“I won't be able to help directly with what's going on in your universe but tell me if there's anything I can do to help you. I'll do my best.”

“Kukukuk. That's.....”

Add was about to say he'll tell her later when he thinks of something but paused.

The condition Eun spoke about was to kiss with someone from the El Search Party, but did Ignia count as El Search Party?

“...What I'm about to say is an absolute secret. I'll cancel what we talked about before if you tell this to anyone.”

“Don't worry. I'm good at keeping secrets. So what can I help you with?”

Ignia replied with an extremely willing expression. She would have rolled up her sleeves if the design of her clothes allowed her to.

Add explained the situation slowly while wishing this didn't sound weird.

“For me to go back to my universe..... I need to kiss one of the girls from the El Search Party.”

“What?”

“Don't doubt me. I'm not joking.”

Add ignored Ignia's confused reaction then continued speaking.

Well, it sounded as if he could also do it with a guy but omitting that....

“I don't want to do it either. But there's no other way. But I.....haven't done that kind of thing before. I don't even know where to begin.”

“.....Uh, so are you asking me to do it with you?”

Add shook his head from side to side when Ignia got startled.

“With El Search Party from my universe. So, I have to do it with someone except Lu and you.”

“Hmm.....”

Ignia didn't seem convinced because she scratched her head. It would be weird if she easily believed that a way for Add to return to his original universe was a kiss. It was as if story about science fiction had suddenly turned into a story about magic and fairy tales.

Ignia repeatedly tapped the ground with the tail of her spear as she asked.

“Let's say I believe you, so how can I help?”

“This isn't something many people should know about. That will only make things more complicated and troublesome since there should be some established....personal relationships between the Search Party members as well. So I want to figure this out quietly as possible.”

“Ah, of course. There's probably something like that.”

That's right. He needed an informant.

Eun was still untrustworthy and was from same the universe as Add. She wouldn't be much help. So he tried to get the help of the Search Party's males but that failed. What remained was a help from the 3rd party.

Someone who knew the situation well, and someone who would support him fully without any trickery.

“So find out who’s the target that I can kiss most easily..... Find out what girls are thinking.”

“This is a really strange story..... so you’re basically asking me to gather the Search Party’s girls in one place then ask them which guy is on their mind the most?”

“.....I didn’t tell you to do that.”

Ah, why was my ears turning red just from hearing that? Add hoped Ignia wouldn’t notice his state as he rubbed his ears.

“But that should be the fastest way. Isn’t it basically gathering all the girls then having a chat about love relationships?”

Rather than Add asking the girls, Ignia who was a girl asking instead should yield more honest answers.

Ignia frowned.

“You aren’t messing with me right? I won’t let you off if that’s the case. I’ll burn you to crisp.”

“I’m not doing this because I want to.”

“.....Really?”

Ignia stared at Add for a while then nodded as if she accepted Add’s circumstance.

“Alright, then so that Gloria and Darkmoon in your universe can live happily..... I have to find out who is the girl that has the most chance of kissing with you. I may not look it but I’m still a priestess...and yet I’ll have to become some sort of love diviner for this.”

“There’s not much time so hurry.”

“Alright, alright.”

Ignia made an expression as if it couldn’t be helped then turned around.

“I’ll check it out right away tonight. But don’t get your hopes up too much.”

“You better come through.”

At Add’s words, Ignia sighed then walked away while sulking.

“Just my luck. Love divination all of a sudden.....”

Ignia was openly expressing her complaints but she will certainly try her best. Although by improvisation, Add acquired a cooperator on the girls’ side.

Even though Add had lived so far without interest in love relationships, he at least knew that this sort of topic became more honest when only people of same genders were gathered. Ignia was a magnificent cooperater in this situation.

“Alright, should I go and wait for the result?”

Let’s finish repairing the Dynamos while waiting for Ignia’s information. Add headed back to his lodge.

Moon rose high in the sky.

All of the El Search Party’s girls gathered inside the hot springs open-air bath where the golden moon was clearly visible.

“.....So why did you call us out this late?”

Aisha who was rubbing her shoulders muttered as if she had some kind of complaint. Ara modestly sat beside Aisha then replied.

“Ms.Priestess called us out here.”

“Alright, is everyone here?”

Ignia sat on top of a stone with her legs crossed then spoke cheerfully. Eve who had been bathing shoulder deep inside the water objected.

“Lu isn’t here.”

“We don’t have to wake up a sleeping kid. And....”

Ignia shook her head after recalling Add’s words. Lu didn’t count so she didn’t have to care about her.

‘...I don’t get why I have to be a love consultant.’

Ignia muttered internally while looking at the faces of bathing Search Party members one by one.

Aisha had a reluctant expression, Rena had a stiff face, Eve unexpectedly looked like she was enjoying the hot springs, Ara was politely waiting for Ignia to speak and Elesis was playing around by rubbing her chin on top of Rena’s shoulder.

‘So it just has to be one of these five? Ah, I can’t figure this out at all.....’

Still, as someone who called them out here she shouldn’t remain silent for too long. Ignia muttered internally then spoke whatever that came to her mind.

“Since this is our last night in the hot springs. I called all of you out here to have a chat with just us girls. The reason why we’re doing this at night is because guys might try to peep on us.”

“Peep on us?”

Aisha looked around while openly expressing hostility. It looked like she was going to attack immediately if she just saw a guy’s hair.

“Would there really be someone who’ll do such a thing?”

“There’s nothing bad with being cautious, Ara.”

When Ara made a surprised face as if that was impossible, Eve warned Ara saying she shouldn’t let her guard down too much.

Rena narrowed her eyes as if she didn’t like what she heard.

“Raven will control everybody on the guys’ side so that shouldn’t happen.”

“Well, if they show up thinking strange things, then I’ll send them off flying in a strange direction.”

Ignia sang inside her mind when Elesis grinned as if she needed a chance to warm up. Everyone was worked up over what Ignia had said without much thought.

She had casted the line without any bait but they bit.

When everyone spoke their minds, Ignia measured her timing then spoke appropriately.

“Come to think of it, guys in the El Search Party seems quite nice. They are good and fighting and handsome.”

Aisha denied as if she was saying drop the nonsense.

“Ah, take Elsword out of there. He’s such a kid.”

“That’s not true, Mr.Elsword is more thoughtful than he looks.”

“Only ones deserving of that praise is Big Brother Raven or Big Brother Ciel. Although Chung is cute he’s still young.....”

But Ara disagreed with Aisha’s evaluation.

“But Mr.Chung tries his best very earnestly.”

“If you considered their mental ages, Raven would be highest.”

“Even Ms.Eve? Aren’t all of you treating Mr.Elsword and Mr.Chung too much like kids?”

“Well he’s my dependable brother.... But it’s still hard to take my eyes off him.”

When even Elesis joined in, Ara became sullen and shut her mouth. It looked like she didn't agree with everyone else but was keeping silent to avoid conflict.

Ignia spoke mischievously on purpose to prod.

“Ooh? It looks like Ara likes Elsword.”

“.....Huh? Eh? Eeeh?”

“What?!”

Startled voice from before was Ara's but who's scream was that after? Ignia and the other girls looked towards where the loud voice came from.

Aisha who suddenly became the focus of attention replied as her face turned red.

“W, why are you all looking at me strangely like that? I didn't say anything yet.”

“Although... I do think that Mr.Elsword is cute....”

“What? He's cute?”

At Ara's words, Aisha forgot the circumstances and leered at Ara. It was as if she forgot being startled and now she couldn't admit such description existing in this world.

“Just what about him is cute? Even this time he almost read the map wrong and we almost got into trouble. We were glad I was keeping an eye on him. Otherwise we wouldn't have reached the Temple of Fire in time. He's such a handful troublemaker. Just who does he take after?”

“Hmm, yea. I wonder who he takes after.”

Aisha who was muttering froze from the voice that came from behind her. Soft arms were hugging Aisha's neck from behind her.

“B, Big Sister Elesis?”

“What's wrong? I'm not being angry. It's true that Elsword is still lacking. I'm thankful that Aisha is always taking care of him.”

Aisha pouted from what Elesis said while hugging her from behind.

“I wouldn't have to if he was at least half like you Big Sister Elesis.”

“Oh? You flatter me Aisha.”

“Kyah!?”

Aisha got surprised and twisted around when Elesis smiled and kissed her on the cheek.

“W, what are you doing?”

“I’m praising you instead of Big Sister Rena.”

“.....Why are you mentioning me there?”

Rena who had been keeping silent spoke up as if she couldn’t accept what was being said. Then Elesis who was hugging Aisha stole a glance at Rena as if she was very saddened.

“It’s because Big Sister Rena doesn’t give us goodnight kisses recently.”

“.....You’re all at an age where you don’t need them.”

“But you gave them before. Are you abandoning us now that we’ve grown up? As I thought, Big Sister Rena only likes little girls.”

“Don’t say something strange when the kids are listening!”

Rena got startled and raised her voice when Elesis faked a sad voice. She knew that Elesis was just messing around but she couldn’t ignore this.

But Elesis was already in full throttle and didn’t stop.

“Sniff, I see. So since I’m taller and have bigger breasts now I’m not Big Sister Rena’s type anymore? You’re only going to adore Lu from now on? Just you wait, I’ll become younger too somehow and become Big Sister’s type! If that time comes, it won’t be any use even if you beg and cry to let you touch me because I’m so cute!”

“Like I said, don’t say something strange when the kids are listening! Just when did I ever do those things!!?”

Everyone looked curiously when Rena who usually stayed cool denied so aggressively with a reddened face.

Ara asked with a surprised expression.

“So Ms.Rena will give you a goodnight kiss if you become younger?”

“Yes, how about Ara Big Sister Rena? Her body is mature but her face still looks young!”

“.....Let me go first before you talk about something like this. Big Sister Elesis.”

Aisha who was still being hugged by Elesis sighed.

Ignia’s couldn’t dare to intrude in this mess. Things seemed to be going as she intended....but then the topic flew off to a totally strange direction after Elesis joined in.

Elesis let Aisha go then she made Ara stand up, grabbed her by the shoulder then pushed her towards Rena.

“Here, Big Sister Rena! It’s Ara! Ara who looks young, is cute and strong! Adore her instead of me! I’ll be watching while bitterly shedding tears from here.”

“.....”

Rena’s face turned red as she put her hand on her forehead then sighed. She couldn’t keep up with Elesis.

“I’ll really get angry if you keep saying things that kids will misunderstand, Elly.”

Elesis shrugged then took a step back once she was called by her nickname.

“If Big Sister Rena won’t give you one, then let me give you one instead Ara.”

“Ah, yes.... thank you.”

Ara nodded with a dazed expression when Elesis lightly kissed her cheek then let her go.

Aisha who was watching from a distance sighed.

“Just what kind of mess is this.....”

“Ah, did you get jealous because I was cheating on you Aisha? Don’t worry my dear Aisha, even though I kissed with Ara, I’ll always come running for you no matter what.”

“I don’t know what you mean but please take out the word ‘cheating’ first.”

Aisha muttered as Elesis laughed merrily.

When it seemed like the situation had settled down a bit, Ignia made some fake coughs then turned back to the original topic.

“Then.... what about guys other than Elsword?”

“What do you mean?”

Eve who didn’t join in on the ruckus from before because she was enjoying the hot springs opened her eyes then asked.

Ignia didn’t want to say it herself so she just shrugged.

“Well.... you all know what I’m talking about.”

“Hmm?”



“If Big Sister Rena won’t give you one, then let me give you one instead Ara.”

Ignia felt somehow troubled at how Elesis was staring at her piercingly so she hastily continued her words.

“Although I may not look it, I’m a Priestess. I can at least do something like read people’s love compatibility.”

“Compatibility?”

Aisha seemed strangely interested. Ara also opened her eyes widely.

“Compatibility? Do you know how to do divination Ms.Priestess?”

“Well, I’m a priestess after all.....”

There was no rule that priestesses couldn’t lie after all. When Ignia answered appropriately, Elesis withdrew her gaze from Ignia then sat down.

Ignia became sweaty not because heat from the hot springs, but because she became nervous. Ignia started to become cautious towards Elesis.

‘...Why did she stare at me like that?’

Ignia could tell right away that Elesis held a strong position not only amongst girls of the group but in the entire El Search Party. Even possessing playfulness and sociability, she was technically the leader of the El Search Party.

And she was bit difficult to handle right now.

Was it because she had to follow Add’s request and prod for girls’ reaction even though she didn’t want to? Ignia felt guilty for some reason as she examined the girls’ reaction.

Rena spoke dazedly.

“Love compatibility....”

“You all must be interested.”

When Ignia grinned, Aisha folded her arms then looked away.

“Love compatibility? What use would that be? There’s no handsome guys here anyways.”

“But I’m bit interested in divination. Can you read my compatibility?”

In contrast to Aisha, Ara seemed quite interested.

Ignia had been throwing anything that she could think of trying to bring about a situation where they talked about guys of the Search Party. But she got a bit startled at Ara's overly interested reaction.

"A, alright. I'll take a look at yours after."

"What happens if you have good compatibility?"

"Well, it means you two will get together well, Eve. Although I didn't think priestesses could look into such things."

Ignia felt somehow guilty from what Elesis said so she replied however she could.

"It's just a hobby that I learned because I was bored. Don't expect too much."

"Then should I ask for my readings too? Although I think I'll get the best compatibility with Elsword."

Aisha responded sharply to Elesis' words.

"Do you believe that too Big Sister? It's just a baseless myth."

"I don't think that's something a magician should say." Eve replied to Aisha's words.

"It's just for fun. Why don't you get yours read too Aisha? Maybe you'll get a good compatibility with Elsword."

Aisha's face turned red.

"Why are you keep putting me together with that idiot?"

"Just like what you said, Elsword is still lacking. So until Elsword grows up, I want Aisha to stay beside and look after him."

"...That's something you should be doing Big Sister."

Elesis shook her head from side to side.

"But you did great in going to Temple of Fire and bringing the Fire Priestess."

"Although Big Brother Raven and Big Brother Ciel took care of almost everything..."

"So I want to entrust Elsword to you until he becomes like them."

".....What if I said I don't want to?"

When Aisha replied with a tone as if she half gave up, Elesis looked back towards Rena.

"Big Sister Rena, Aisha won't listen to me. Give me a kiss so I feel better."

“.....I told you not to say something that kids with misunderstand! And when did I ever do something like that?”

“When I just entered the Red Knights and met you for the first time? You gave me one saying I was cute.”

“Just how long ago was that?! That was just as a joke!”

Then Elesis covered up her body with her arms then looked away as if she was embarrassed.

“I’d like Big Sister to keep playing more jokes on me.....”

“....I’m going to be angry.”

It was clear that Elesis was just messing around, but Rena couldn’t help but to react because many people were watching.

Actually, Rena and Elesis had been together as comrades the longest in the El Search Party....so they knew each other’s weaknesses well. But because how their personalities were right now, Elesis was using Rena’s past and weaknesses efficiently while Rena was avoiding joking around.

Thus, Rena was overwhelmingly disadvantageous and she couldn’t get seriously furious from something minor like this. Two of them had been together for long and wanted to be together from now on as well.

Ignia who was watching the two’s squabble carefully opened her mouth.

“You keep talking about kisses.....”

“It was just a kiss on the cheek, Ms.Priestess! And I only did it because she couldn’t sleep from being scared!”

Rena protested with a loud voice as if she was falsely accused. It was as if she was saying how could someone like a priestess say such indecent words.

“Yes, anyways since stories about kisses keep coming up.....”

The story kept going off in a weird direction but Ignia’s objective tonight was collecting information. Ignia spoke carefully while hoping she wouldn’t sound odd.

“Anyone ever done it with a guy?”

“.....”

Everyone suddenly became silent. It felt like a cold wind blew by even though they were in warm hot springs.

“.....You mean on the mouth?”

“Are you talking about that pointless membrane contact?”

Ara acted embarrassed but Eve concluded biologically. And Elesis spoke regrettably while looking at Rena.

“It would have been great if Big Sister Rena was a guy.....”

Rena must have decided to ignore Elesis because she kept silent, Aisha’s face had turned bright red and she wasn’t saying anything. It seemed like Ignia finally got the control of this chaotic conversation so she sang internally while pressing for a response.

“No one is saying anything. So none of you have done it?”

“My first kiss was with Big Sister Rena during a sweet night.....”

“I’ll really get angry if you steer the topic in that direction again, Elly.”

Elesis turned around to glance at the other girls when Rena spoke sharply to her. Everyone had their own thoughts while keeping silent.

Elesis clenched her fists then nodded.

“It can’t be helped. I’ll go do it with Elsword right now.”

“What are you going to do?! No, why are you doing it!?”

Aisha got surprised and got up to stop Elesis. Elesis smiled mischievously at Aisha as if she had been waiting for her to react like this.

“Why can’t I do it? Then who should?”

“Eh? T, that’s.....”

“Is there a reason why I can’t? Is there someone already reserved for Elsword?”

Aisha’s face turned bright red at Elesis’ question as she remained silent. Ara must have imagined something as well because she asked as her face became red.

“Uh..... Is that something you must do?”

“It an pointless act, Ara.”

“It’s not pointless, Eve.”

Rena unexpectedly joined in on the conversation.

“It’s something you do when you want to convey your feelings to someone who’s important to you. I think Eve would understand too if you try it one day.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Someone important....”

Unlike Eve who responded sharply, Ara closed her mouth tightly as if she was thinking about something. Seeing this, Eve spoke as if she was reluctant to ask.

“Why are humans so interested in this ‘kiss’? Add asked me about it before too.”

“Mr.Add asked Ms.Eve about a kiss?”

Eve nodded when Ara got surprised and asked.

“He asked what I thought about kisses so I answered it’s just a membrane contact. He understood right away for someone who’s useless.”

“.....Hmm, it will be difficult to explain it in a way that Eve can understand. I think you’ll understand when you try it yourself one day.”

When even Elesis joined in, Eve looked reluctant but nodded.

“I’ll keep that in mind.”

“It’s good if you do it a lot once you have someone who’s important to you. Isn’t that right, Ms.Priestess?”

“.....Y, yes. I think so too.”

Ignia nodded in response when Elesis asked while staring carefully at her. Actually, Ignia who grew up as a priestess had never done such a thing before. But the opinion Rena and Elesis presented was reasonable.

Anyways, Ignia managed to turn the topic towards kiss... but it seemed difficult to ask what they thought about Add. She had originally planned to bring up each guy one by one until they got to Add, but the conversation went off in a wrong direction soon as Elsword’s name came up.

‘.....Do I have to be satisfied with just this?’

Although the result so far hadn’t been satisfactory, it would be troublesome if she tried to dig deeper than this and got caught. Even Ignia could sense that the fact that she was asked by Add to do this shouldn’t be found out.

Also how Elesis was looking at her was strangely bothersome. When Ignia didn’t speak anymore, Elesis muttered regrettably.

“But the reason why Big Sister Rena doesn’t give me kisses anymore.....is because I’m not important to her anymore right? But I’m always looking at Big Sister Rena.....”

“Didn’t you say you were always looking at me before.....?”

When Aisha spoke up from being confused, Elesis made a very regrettable expression.

“My heart is looking at Aisha... But my body cannot forget Big Sister Rena’s passionate kiss. How Big Sister comforted me who was shivering from fear and worry with her hot and tenacious.....”

“Elesissss!!”

Rena finally exploded.

Late night.

Add was repairing the Dynamos when he realized it was almost the appointed time and raised his head. Add was rubbing his eyes when Eun sleeping on the bed came into his view. She wasn’t in her small fox form and was instead in Ara’s form. Her 4 white tails were lying about on the bed.

‘4?’

Didn’t Eun originally have 9 tails? Come to think of it, there were 5 tails when he was using them as pillows yesterday and now she had 4.

“It shouldn’t matter.....”

Add exited the room and headed downstairs. He examined the condition of his Dynamos floating around him. Number of Dynamos that could be used now were 5, he just needed to repair one more.

He would like to pull an all-nighter to finish the repairs... But the El Search Party was heading out for the final showdown with demons early tomorrow.

“Although, it doesn’t look like I’ll have to fight much.”

Every individual in this El Search Party had enormous combat capabilities. Almost to the point where even D would struggle against them.

Of course, due to law of the universes it will be difficult for them to face each other.....

“After time travel, it’s now universe travel.... How ridiculous.”

Add looked back at his life and chuckled while walking along the hallway.

He was researching time travel then arrived at a distant future, Eve who held the key to him going back to the past was being destroyed by demons and finally one who was commanding those demons was his future self.

Now he escaped into another universe to avoid getting killed and to search for a way to get rid of his future self.

What a ridiculous life. Although Add didn't usually dwell in self-pity, just recalling his life made him sigh.

Add stopped at the stairway landing heading downstairs then leaned on the wall and closed his eyes. She didn't arrive even though it was little over the promised time.

Just when Add was thinking about going to see her, footsteps were heard and red haired girl appeared.

Ignia who somehow looked exhausted walked up the stairs while shaking her head then spoke after noticing Add.

"You're rather early."

"And you're late. Try to be on time, time is...."

Precious? It seemed quite empty when Add was the one saying it.

When Add stopped in middle of his words, Ignia walked up the stairs and complained.

"It's not like I was late because I was putting on makeups, I was listening to your request."

"So, the information?"

"That's...."

Add asked Ignia to find information on what El Search Party's girls thought about him.

To figure out who would be easiest to kiss.

"We should refrain from asking the girls directly from now on. Don't expect too much."

"I wasn't joking...."

"No, this is because we might get found out."

Add who was about to lecture Ignia stopped. Ignia spoke as if something was hanging on her mind.

"Elesis was giving me a weird look. It looked like you were going to get found out if I asked more specifically. That would be bad for you right?"

"...That girl is really a bother."

She was too strong as an enemy and really a bother as an ally. Add nodded after acknowledging Ignia's troubles.

“I got it. Just tell me whenever you get any more useful information. It’s probably better not to raise Elesis’ suspicion.”

“Okay. So what I got from today was....”

Ignia paused for a moment then spoke.

“Most of them seems to be interested in Elsword.”

“.....”

So you’re popular even in this universe? Add’s frowned from his mood turning fowl.

“I don’t care about that idiot. I need an information about me.”

“I’m sorry but I couldn’t find out that much. Elesis kept making the conversation go astray whenever I tried to go in detail. Although she probably didn’t realize I was doing it because you asked.....”

Girls of the El Search Party are mostly attracted to Elsword, Hahahaha!

...What use did this information have for him? As Add’s made a very agitated expression from the information that was better if he didn’t hear, Ignia raised and wagged her index finger adorably.

It was strangely cute.

“Don’t get so frustrated like that and think positively. You can cross out girls that like Elsword from the list instead.”

“So, who are those?”

“Aisha and Ara....? Maybe not her. Anyways, I think we should give up on Aisha.”

“I know that too.”

Wasn’t this something that already came from Eun’s affection point(?) parameter? Raising affection point of that very prideful and arrogant Aisha wouldn’t be easy.

“And.... it seems Elesis and Rena had kissed each other before.”

“.....”

What kind of crazy talk was this? Ignia explained herself when Add looked on with an empty expression.

“She was acting as if she was joking...but although Elesis expresses physical affection freely towards other girls..... It didn’t look like she knew a lot about guys. She did get embarrassed when I asked if she had ever kissed with a guy.”

Even though Ignia had been cautious of Elesis, she did manage to examine her reactions. Elesis had continuously steered the mood by teasing or playing with other girls but she couldn't answer properly at the question asking her if she had ever kissed with a guy.

Saying she'll go kiss with Elsword...was also probably something she said to steer the mood.

"I don't intend to put Elesis in list of candidates..."

"What? Did you already make up your mind? I'm not going to be fussy or arrogant because I'm a priestess or anything.... But if you're going to make me do something for you, shouldn't you explain what you want more in detail?"

"No, that's not what I mean...."

Kiss with Elesis? He couldn't imagine it no matter what. When Add kept quiet, Ignia narrowed her eyes then asked.

"Wait, could you possibly...."

"Don't say it."

"Have not kissed with a girl before?"

I told you not to say it. Please.

Add glared at the wall as if nothing was wrong then replied while hoping he sounded cool as possible.

"Stuff like that isn't important."

"It's very important."

Ignia was waving her arms then stopped. It seemed intended to lightly smack Add's head with the spear she usually carried around but she was barehanded right now.

Ignia put one hand on her waist then looked straightly at Add.

No, she was glaring at him.

"What is this? You asked me to look into girls' hearts but you've never done it either? Is this a joke?"

".....Because there were more important things."

Saying that someone important to him gave him one before as a sign to grow up well would sound pitiful.

Ignia became furious when Add tried to evade the topic.

“Are you joking? You said you must go back so that situation in your universe can be solved right? So are you going to do things this half-heartedly?”

“I’ll deal with it when the time comes by myself.”

“That’s funny coming from a guy who never kissed with a girl. Have you even held hands with a girl?”

“Hey, I at least did that much. Not only girl’s hands but.....”

Add got furious for a moment and tried to retort but stopped after realizing what he was saying. It was such a low-class conversation.

Ignia scoffed.

“Since you said it so boldly that you needed a kiss to back.... I thought you were some kind of infamous womanizer in that universe.....”

“...I’m not doing this because I want to. And I wouldn’t have asked you if I was knowledgeable about this kind of thing.”

Ignia must have accepted because she nodded then sighed.

“So you’re saying... you can only go back if you kiss a girl from the El Search Party except Lu and me, but you’re a complete brattish kid who’ve never kissed a girl?”

“.....Who’s a brattish kid?”

“This stupid guy right in front of me.”

Ignia spoke sharply as if to say don’t try to refute her then muttered again.

“.....I thought your way of speaking was strange from the start. So I can assume that you don’t know anything about a girl’s heart?”

“.....”

Why? Do you need to know that to time travel?

But Ignia who couldn’t possibly know about time travel was groaning as if she was struggling to think of a solution. This was Add’s problem but it looked like she was worried about it as if it was her own problem.

Ignia spoke with a tone as if she made up her mind.

“Fine, let’s narrow down the candidates. Aisha is omitted. Do you have any particular requests?”

“Not really.”

“How can a guy lack so much backbone? Speak more clearly, like who you want to kiss, or who you’re attracted to, stuff like that. Didn’t you say you travelled with the El Search Party on your side as well?”

“I’m an engineer.....”

Ignia looked at Add as if she discovered most useless mechanical part in the world.

“Ah, is that so Mr.Engineer? So you were struggling with mechanical parts all your life that you don’t know anything about girls and haven’t even held a girl’s wrist, is that it? And you’ve never thought even once about girls?”

“...Even if the El Search Party in this and other universes have same names and faces, they aren’t completely same people. It’s questionable if they should be treated as same.”

Add expressed a logical opinion but Ignia laughed it off.

“What you said is morally correct but let’s push it aside for now and speak about something immoral. If it comes to worst, we’ll have to tell this directly to the El Search Party’s girls and ask for their cooperation.”

“What?”

“What do you mean what? If you reveal that you need a kiss from a girl to go back, wouldn’t they help you out of pity?”

“.....”

Just listening to it felt very repulsive. Wasn’t it too stupid and pitiful?

It was basically begging on one’s knees. Feeling like a beggar, Add shook his head furiously.

“I don’t.... want that.”

“I don’t want to go down that route too much either. It’s such a low class and non-delicate way. But we have to consider this option as well since you’re saying you’re Mr.Engineer who never held a girl’s wrist. Got it?”

“....I did hold hands with a girl before.”

Although he didn’t want to say it because it sounded sad.

At Add’s final protest, Ignia scoffed coldly then she suddenly held Add’s hand.

“There, it’s second time now right?”

“.....”

Add couldn't say anything in protest. Although he was offended because it felt like he was being looked down upon, he could feel that unlike Eun, Ignia was being sincere. It was true that Add had been only interested in Nasod research and time travel that he had never taken interest in girls.

Ignia was much more logical and better assistant than Eun. When Add acknowledged, Ignia let go of Add's hand then started counting with her fingers.

"So, what should we do then..... So summing it up again, you have to choose who to kiss from Rena, Eve, Elesis and Ara? I took out Aisha since it felt like she'd be difficult."

"Well, probably....."

Add agreed to Ignia's seamless continuation of the main topic. Although he didn't like Ignia's tone and her descriptions of him, he couldn't deny that she was speaking reasonably.

"Alright, let's think together about who to choose from now on. When do you have to do this by? Is there a time limit?"

"....."

Add couldn't say that it was until he stole Eve's core so he replied appropriately.

"Before we destroy Scar and other demons, or right after."

Repairs on Dynamos will finish by then and even if it wasn't, El Search Party will be weakened from battle against demons. It was the perfect time to act.

"Alright. Got it. Leave the big picture to me. I'll try to craft a situation where you can control what's going on."

".....I'll be counting on you."

Although Add didn't know what Ignia was thinking, he didn't have any reason to refuse her when she was saying she'll help. It was just that he didn't expect she'd help this actively.

After Add's answer, Ignia walked towards Add. Add instinctively backed out when Ignia suddenly closed in and they were at a distance where their chests were almost about to touch. But Ignia didn't stop even when Add backed out.

"What are you doing?"

"....."

Ignia approached without answering Add's question so Add had to back out to prevent making contact with her. But this place was a stairway landing, it wasn't such a wide place so Add's back hit the wall.

There was no way to run. Ignia thankfully stopped her steps at a risky distance where they were almost touching.

It felt like something was about to happen so Add became alert.... Then Ignia spoke with a pointy voice.

“You’re really a wimp.....”

“What?”

He’s been through all sorts of dangers and obstacles and this is the evaluation he gets? Add became furious but Ignia ignored him and stood on her tiptoe.

Not just her chest but her face was getting closer. Add had to stop being angry and close his mouth.

Ignia spoke after bringing her face closer.

“You’re trying to escape when a girl is coming closer to you. What else are you but a wimp?”

“...What are you thinking?”

If what Eun did was a tease, Add could feel that Ignia was serious.

Add could tell because just like how he was forcing himself to hide his uneasiness from two of them standing so close together, Ignia’s face also looked uneasy as well.

“.....Let’s say I help you and the perfect chance comes. Are you confident that you can do it at that time?”

“.....”

To describe it simply, Ignia was asking if Add could finish the meal properly if she cooked it for him. Add was about to reply of course but his words stopped when he stared at Ignia’s eyes looking up at him at a close distance.

Ignia’s face was bright red as well.

“When the chance comes.... Can you do it without hesitating?”

“.....”

If you compared this to proving theory using experiments..... Scientific experiments are done by changing the variables continuously in order to prove a theory.

The reason Add could say he can control Dynamos as if they were his hands and feet was because he went through enormous effort to reach this state of mastery. He wasn’t proficient at it from the start.

The point was that... No one was ever good at something from the start. One needed a lot of effort and experience in order to be good at something.

But never mind kissing, Add hadn't even been interested in girls before.

Ignia was pointing this fact out. When the time comes, can he actually do the act properly?

".....So what are you getting at?"

When Add asked coldly on purpose, Ignia lowered her gaze slightly.

"I told you. I'll help you in any way I can."

"....."

So, did this mean he should kiss Ignia to gain experience so that he didn't make mistakes later? Add did assume this was the case but actually hearing it made his mind go numb. He understood that Ignia was correct but felt an indescribable reluctance at the same time.

".....You kept talking about how I haven't done it before, but did you?"

".....Do you think a priestess would have done such a thing?"

Ignia's face turned red as she criticised. She was completely different from when she was scolding and blaming Add before.

It was no doubt that this situation where she was so close to Add was very embarrassing...and difficult to withstand for her as well.

When Add didn't say anything, Ignia kept quiet as well.

It was a moment where both couldn't decide what to do next and was wondering if they should close the distance or not. Awkward moment where they were looking at each other's eyes then looking away continued...then it seemed Ignia finally made up her mind as she pushed her face closer.

And Add moved as well.

".....I'll handle it okay even without doing this."

Add spoke clearly after grabbing Ignia's shoulders. After getting stopped, Ignia looked at Add with a blank expression for a moment then made a bitter smile as she took a step back.

"You're really naive aren't you?"

".....Why do I have to be called that?"



“Shouldn’t you accept right away if a pretty girl like me asks for a kiss? You won’t say that I’m not pretty right? I’ll roast you if say it.”

“I’ll look forward to the big picture you’ll come up with. Try your best. I’ll act according to that.”

When Add turned his head away to avoid her gaze, Ignia made mysterious expression then backed out while putting both of her hands behind her back.

“Alright, fine. Continuing to ask after being refused isn’t classy as well. Like I said, tell me if there’s anything I can do to help. I’ll cooperate with anything I can.”

“...Just go back for now. They’ll get suspicious if you’re away for too long.”

“Refusing Fire Priestess’ first kiss. I don’t care if you get cursed.”

“.....”

When Add didn’t answer, Ignia plodded down the stairs. When her footsteps couldn’t be heard anymore, Add sighed as he closed his eyes.

“Phew....”

He did stop Ignia because.... that feeling of reluctance. But he rightfully deserved to be called a wimp.

That petty membrane contact, wouldn’t it be better to experience it few times to get used to it? Add knew as an engineer how important previous experiences were.

And that he might hesitate or make mistakes if the time came.

“I’m.... really foolish.”

Add sneered at himself then looked up at the moon through the window. The moon was shining brightly regardless of how bleak Add’s mind was.

Kiss with someone from the El Search Party is needed to go back.

Eun and Ignia will cooperate with Add from behind the scenes and set up the stage for him. With their help, even Add who was unknowledgeable about girls will be able to grasp a chance somehow.

But.... Add wasn’t confident if he could actually go through with the kiss when the chance came.

He didn’t know what this reluctance in his heart was....

“So is boy’s night stroll over now?”

“.....”

Add didn't look back to respond. Voice's owner approached silently, stood beside Add then opened the window widely.

Night breeze came in through the window. Add opened his mouth first when fox standing beside him didn't say anything.

“Why are you quiet?”

“Boy must have his own thoughts as well. He didn't refuse for no reason.”

It was a reasonable reaction from her for once. Eun spoke serenely as she looked up at the moon.

“Things will go well since Fire Priestess is going to help. I'll also lend my hand.”

“Just don't get in the way.”

“Why would I after coming this far? Can't you trust my sincerity now? Foxes only lends their tails to someone they accepted from their heart.”

Well she wouldn't have anything else to tease him with anyways. Add agreed wordlessly then Eun made a bitter smile.

“Looks like I trapped boy within my tails.”

Eun's eyes as she looked up at the moon was soaked with sorrow.

“Looking at another universe's moon is rather enjoyable. It's especially special since I'm looking at it together with one that's together with me till the end of time.”

Eun spoke while still staring up at the moon.

“Do you know? Phantom Foxes gather power from basking in moonlight. First dozens, hundreds of days merely gives more vitality. Then after thousand days of receiving moonlight, you obtain wisdom, then after ten thousand days, you realize how to breathe with heaven and earth.”

“You become like that just from receiving moonlight?”

“Of course, you must first know how to breathe in moonlight. Anyways, you gather moon's essence inside your body in this manner. That's the source of my power. It's basically something equivalent to the girl's core.”

“Hmm....”

This unexpected story was rather interesting but Eun didn't speak anymore. Add didn't ask further and just strengthened his resolve for what will come after.



“Looks like I trapped boy within my tails.”

After tonight they will face off against the demons. He will achieve his goal during that battle and go back to his universe.

Final battle with D was waiting for him there.

“.....I'll destroy D no matter what.”

“Yes, I'll cheer boy on hoping he'll achieve his goal.”

“Don't speak as if you're not involved. Isn't getting rid of D your goal as well?”

Eun only made a mysterious smile and didn't answer. Add didn't mind and grasped his fist lightly.

“During the road toward final battle against demons, we must obtain a way to go back and a way to defeat D tomorrow. Cooperate with me.”

“.....Yes, if boy believes that hurting the girl is the only way.”

Eun's response was as if she was lamenting and somehow mocking Add, but Add pretended he haven't heard. He wasn't going to hesitate after coming this far.

“But I ask you, at least keep these words embedded in your heart. Boy, just don't become a devil.”

“Devil? What are you saying? This isn't the time to care about ways and means. To defeat a devil, there's no choice but to become a monster worse than a devil.”

When Add spoke sharply, Eun only made a bitter smile as if she had nothing to say in response. When Eun didn't say anything and looked up solely at the moon, Add also looked up at the night sky as well.

That's right. He couldn't hesitate. He will become even worse monster than a devil so he can kill the devil.

For the sake of someone precious to him.

For the sake of people that believed in him and treated him preciously.

Because Add was resolving himself, he didn't realize what kind of eyes Eun was staring at him with.

Fox staring at Add's resolute face twitched her lips. Fox swallowed the words she was originally going to say then spoke to herself inside her mind.

‘The end is slowly approaching.....’

Time to close the curtains on a stage where two of them moved about together.

2. Wandering Heart

Grand Cavern where Scar was carrying out a ritual to revive the demon god. You originally had to go through Temple of Fire to get there but that was impossible now because Temple of Fire collapsed during Ignia's battle with the demons. So the group had to unfortunately use a cave that connects hot springs to the Grand Cavern.

Add who was walking on his feet without using his Dynamos spoke as if he was questioning himself.

“Why did we divide teams?”

“Because demons might be planning something. It will be better than everyone moving together and falling into a trap all at once. Also, caves are rather...”

Rena walking near the front spoke when Elesis trailed her words.

“They could try to bring the entire cave down.”

“.....”

Well this cave was located underground so it was all over if they got buried. Ara got surprised and hastily looked around.

“Then wouldn't demons really try to bring the cave down? We have to hurry!”

“That probably won't happen. Temple of Fire route is blocked so demons would lose their way out as well if they destroyed this path.”

At Eve's voice coming from the back, Elesis added.

“Yes, also Scar is a hotblooded one. He'll want to settle the score with me. Although I'm bit worried about Karis.....”

Add closed his mouth as he examined the group's reaction. Dividing up the team just in case the cave collapsed was fine.... But this team composition looked totally suspicious.

Ignia who was walking at the very front looked back then smiled.

“This cave has lots of different paths so such thing is impossible. We'll get some fresh air if we go straight this way for 3 more hours. People of Lanox call it the 'garden'. It has a really nice view.”

“Then shall we have lunch there?”

“That sounds wonderful.”

Ara's face brightened from hearing about a meal. Add who was listening to the conversation sighed internally.

.....Why am I the only guy here again?

Rena, Eve, Elesis, Ara, Ignia and Add were this team's composition. But Add could guess who formed this team.

The one responsible for this looked back and gave a cute wink.

.....Yes, you're rather capable Ignia.

He didn't know what Ignia said to compose the team like this but it was a correct choice. To kiss someone you needed to raise their affection, and to do that, you needed to create a situation to be face to face with the target. Aisha and Lu were exempted so this was perfect members to achieve Add's goal.

Add was thinking about this then gasped for air when his neck was suddenly strangled.

"Why are you so quiet suddenly Add?"

Elesis put her arm around Add's neck and was pulling him towards her. Add couldn't speak even if he wanted to because of pain in his neck.

Ara nodded when Add desperately hit Elesis' arm.

"Mr.Add must be hungry too."

"It looked like he didn't eat much during breakfast. Add, you have to eat a lot to grow taller."

I'm going to die before I get to eat anything! When Add hit Elesis' arm faster, she must have finally got the message because she let him go.

"Ah, sorry. I was treating you same as Elsword. Did it hurt?"

"...You're strong like a monster as always."

Elesis became embarrassed and scratched her head when Add spoke distastefully.

"Thanks for the compliment."

"....."

Her reaction annoyed Add because it was just like Elsword's.

Wouldn't it have been better to send Elesis off to the other team? Noticing Add's gaze, Elesis pushed her face closer to Add.

"It must have hurt a lot. Can I take a look?"

"There's no need."

She might do something dangerous again. When Add hastily covered his neck and backed up, Ara stepped forward this time.

“Want me to take a look instead?”

“You don’t need to Ara.”

Eve pulled Ara’s arm to stop her. Add rubbed his neck as he muttered internally.

‘I’m getting too much attention.....’

“Why do you look so down? Is there something you’re worried about?”

“.....I just have some things to think about.”

Add quickened his steps when Elesis stared directly at him.

If the team composition last time was Elesis’ scheme, it was Ignia who prepared the situation for Add’s scheme this time.

His only problem was affection points.

The garden Ignia talked about was an empty field between two steep cliffs.

Add was scanning the area for potential enemies....when Ara looked up at the sun and made a joyful expression.

“Looking at Mr.Sun after so long feels nice.”

“Yes it does. There’s even a clear lake over there where travellers take a break.”

“Really? Then... shall we rest here for a bit?”

Elesis’ eyes gleamed as she started to rummage through her bag. Rena saw how Elesis was completely loosened up and scolded her.

“Elesis, don’t become too relaxed. There might be an ambush.”

“That’s even better. Numbers we’ll have to face in their main base will decrease. We just have to smash through anything that comes in our way.”

“.....”

Rena didn’t expect such a response so she couldn’t complain any further.

“What do you mean.....?”

“It would be great if Karis showed up right now. Our job will be much easier that way.”

Elesis was wishing Karis to show up. On second thought.... Rena realized that Elesis' opinion wasn't too far fetched.

“Scar should know very well that sending only minions won't be able to stop me. But Karis also didn't come out when I provoked her last time right? She didn't show up despite her looking like an impatient type. That means there's some reason that's preventing them from coming to face us directly.”

“What do you mean?” Eve who was listening asked.

“I don't know exactly how the demon god resurrection ritual works, but Karis and Scar that could directly threaten us aren't coming to face us directly. It seems they can't do anything but wait even though they know we're coming to the Grand Cavern.”

Elesis stopped rummaging through her bag then grinned while looking around at the group.

“So its more advantageous for us if they send more minions to attack us. Because that means there will be less enemies we have to face in the Grand Cavern. So let's clean things up if demons like In and Jin shows up.”

“.....What you're saying is oddly persuasive.”

Ignia spoke for everyone else with an empty expression.

It was an unbelievable opinion. She was saying it would be better if they were attacked. Although it was true that El Search Party did have the strength to back that opinion up....

Rena also didn't have any words to refute so she spoke begrudgingly.

“But let's not let our guards down too much.....”

“No, we have to show them how vulnerable we are so they attack us. We have to let our guards down. At least on the surface.”

“It's not a bad idea but I sense something strange in your motives.”

Elesis listened to Eve opinion then looked straightly at Rena.

“...What? Why are you looking at me like that?”

Rena must have sensed an unhealthy intent because she trailed her words. Elesis showed a clothing in her hand with a grin.

“Please wear this Big Sister Rena.”

“.....No.”

“It’s a swimsuit and there’s a lake over there. Ah! And there’s beautiful Big Sister Rena over here. There’s even a swimsuit that perfectly fits you! Wouldn’t this be El’s providence that you should wear it? Isn’t that right Ignia?”

“.....Ah, well.”

Ignia awkwardly nodded. After getting the fire priestess’s approval, Elesis held out a swimsuit while smiling.

“Here, let’s change into these and have some fun Big Sister Rena.”

“.....I refuse.”

“You’re being stubborn as if I have some ulterior motives. That’s not true Big Sister Rena. Didn’t I say it already? Demons will attack us only if we show them we’re vulnerable. Then shouldn’t we disarm and show them how much we’re enjoying playing in the lake? Wouldn’t demons waiting for us in that dark underground cavern become enraged and jump out at us?”

“.....You’re smiling weirdly.”

Rena understood what Elesis was saying but still looked very reluctant. This was because Elesis had face of a mischievous child looking at the most entertaining event in the world.

Then Elesis made an extremely sorrowful expression.

“...Sob, I’m saddened. I prepared such a pretty swimsuit for you but you won’t wear it? Are you going to betray my efforts and expectations like this? Was our relationship only physical?”

“Story is heading towards a weird direction, Elesis.”

Elesis shook her head at Eve’s cold deduction.

“It can’t be helped. I’ll have to make Eve wear it. Here Eve, wear it!”

“.....I don’t expect swimsuit prepared for Rena would fit me.”

Eve replied with a slightly hurt tone. Then Elesis spoke while looking at Rena.

“Big Sister Rena, this is a trap. A trap to lure in demons. Could it be that you, a Night Watcher is suspecting my motives?”

“.....”

Conflict rose up in Rena’s face when she heard the word ‘trap’. Elesis murmured with a gloomy face.

“I thought Big Sister Rena would obviously cooperate with my plan. Fine, we’ll only do it by ourselves. Eve, Ara, let’s go have fun by ourselves.”

“.....We’re really just laying a trap right?”

Elesis grinned when Rena asked suspiciously.

Girls had to change into swimsuits so Add got kicked out from the lake.

“.....Anyways.”

Since he got kicked out anyways, Add lay down and put his hands on his back as he looked up at the sky. Sky had a detestable red color because they were near Lanox.

“This is giving me a headache.....”

He understood what the big picture Ignia spoke about was. She was probably trying to create a situation to where Add could improve affection points by composing a party only comprised of potential candidates.

“In the end it will be either Eve.... or Ara.”

Ara was easy to handle, she gets one point for being easy to convince. She was the easiest candidate just like Eun said.

“What is the reason for putting the girl in that list again?”

Eun poked her head out from Add’s jacket. She wasn’t in Ara’s form anymore and was instead in small fox form.

“I don’t know what you mean by me being obsessed with Eve..... but she cannot be excluded from the list. This is a cold and level-headed conclusion.”

“.....”

“Stealing the core and going back. Both can be solved with Eve.”

This was the logical choice, Add had a good reason for this choice.

“And approaching Ara won’t be easy. Eve is being too protective of her right now.”

“There’s a saying ‘if you want to shoot the enemy’s general, then aim for his mount first’. Yet boy only intends to go for the mount?”

Add had never heard of such saying but he understood what it meant right away. Eun sitting on top of Add’s chest rested her chin on her hands then looked straightly at Add.

“So boy is going to steal the girl’s lips by seducing her with sweet words then mercilessly rob her heart? What a horrible man.”

“.....I didn’t say I decided on Eve.”

All he said was it could be Eve or Ara if you narrowed down the candidates. He haven’t made any concrete decisions.

Although Eve was the most efficient choice since she would satisfy both requirements of obtaining a way to defeat D and going back.

Add asked causally when Eun didn’t respond.

“You’re not going to stop me?”

“If that’s boy’s decision then it can’t be helped.”

Eun had so far worked hard towards making Add interested in girls other than Eve. Her methods had been improper.....but she was giving up rather quickly for working towards that goal for such a long time.

Eun shrugged.

“Even with the power to turn heaven and earth upside down or power to peer into all creation, one cannot do anything about a person’s heart.”

“.....”

Eun spoke poetically then went to hide inside the jacket again as if she was done speaking.

Since there was no one to talk to anymore, Add closed his eyes then thought. Awakening Memory of Time and Space would make him stronger but he didn’t know how to activate it.....and it wouldn’t give him enough power even if he awoke it.

Then would he be able to beat D if he obtained Eve’s core?

“Hmph, when was I sure of anything in the first place....?”

He’s been jumping over time and space. So desiring certainty was already lost to him at this point.

Add was making up his mind when sounds footsteps on the grass was heard.

“I didn’t expect you to be waiting here so quietly, Add.”

“.....”

What else was there to do except wait here?

Add opened his eyes to see Elesis making a thin smile.

She kicked him out saying they was going to change but her clothes were still the same.

“What is it?”

“Big Sister Rena is changing. I came to keep an eye on you just in case.”

“.....”

That didn't even sound like a joke but Add quietly raised his upper body. Even if she really came to keep an eye on him.....she didn't need to reveal that fact.

Thus, what Elesis said just now was an excuse.

“So there's something you want to talk about by ourselves.”

“Don't you have something you should say to me.....”

“If this is about what Ignia did. I asked her to do it.”

Add cut off Elesis's words then spoke sharply. Elesis looked surprised. She must have not expected Add to confess so easily.

“I didn't think I'll be able to hide it from you in the first place.”

Wasn't it Elesis who figured out Add's identity the first amongst the entire Search Party? Even putting that aside, her senses and insight was extraordinary.

‘You could guess she noticed just from how the story in the hot springs went off in a different direction.....’

That situation was probably Elesis noticing that Ignia was up to something then changing the topic in a weird direction.

“Okay, then tell me what you're up to.”

“No, you're the one who should be telling me that.”

Add stood up calmly but spoke with anger in his voice. It was true that Elesis was difficult to face but he had to clash with her eventually.

And now was that time.

“I asked Ignia to help me with some business related to my universe. Although I have nothing to say back to you if you suspect that I'm plotting something else.”

Although Add was secretly acting behind the scenes, he didn't have any shame about what he did.

The kiss part was quite troublesome.... but everything in the end were just means for the result he needed.

“But what excuse do you have for me?”

“Excuse?”

“Don’t play dumb with me.”

Add threw a rage filled gaze in response to Elesis’ calm answer.

“Why are you in such a hurry?”

“.....”

“Clash between Lu and Rena, your purpose did make sense but there was no reason to hurry. It hasn’t even been that long since they met each other yet you put them through such a situation.”

The excuse Elesis gave at the time for her actions did make sense but Add couldn’t accept it.... Even if he could accept it, there was absolutely no reason to hurry.

“Even how you tested me by saying you’ll hand me over to that mermaid. There was no need to use such a forceful method if you wanted to test my intentions. Just observing me over time would have been enough.”

“.....”

This was the conclusion Add arrived at. For some unknown reason, Elesis was being hasty as if something was chasing her.

Elesis responded with a face devoid of smile at Add’s question.

“Would saying I did it because I believed in Big Sister Rena’s personality....make a good excuse?”

“Don’t say something stupid.”

All of Elesis’ methods that Add observed so far were actually close to a gamble.

Everything was working out because of Elesis’ overwhelming strength and her leadership to keep the El Search Party in check. Normal people wouldn’t be able to use the same methods as her.

“Why do you keep rolling a dice? What are you trying to obtain?”

“.....”

“Even this situation right now is the same. You’re going to have a swimming party to lure in demons? Is that really your intention?”

Add shook his head.

“Wasn’t it to create a situation where you could question me about Ignia’s actions?”

“It’s true that I wanted to ease Big Sister Rena’s mind....”

“Stop it already.”

Add suddenly felt fatigued and rubbed the back of his neck. Having to question someone so much stronger than him gave him a headache.

Threatening with a force suited Add better. He wasn’t used to trying to understand others like this so it was making him tired.

“Elesis, I revealed this already but you’re our enemy in my universe. I was sick of you because you were so disgustingly strong.I had no idea what was on your mind or why you became our enemy.”

“.....”

“But since you are part of the El Search Party right now and is basically acting as their leader, tell me what’s on your mind. I don’t know what’s making you so desperate but I might be able to help.”

Add spoke while looking directly at Elesis.

“I experienced situations and information in the other universe that you don’t know about. I might be weaker than you but I might know something you don’t know.”

“.....”

“I’ll keep this conversation a secret.”

Elesis made a small sigh then grinned.

“You better not break that word.”

“Tell me already. Just why are you so....”

Elesis cut off Add’s words then started to speak.

“Umm, to put it simply....”

It must have been something difficult to say because Elesis hesitated despite opening her mouth. Add felt anxious but kept patient. This was a good chance to know what kind of circumstances were driving Elesis’ reckless actions.

“It’s because I might get killed.”

“.....”

Just who would kill this girl? Wouldn’t even diseases get scared of her and run away?

Add looked at Elesis confusedly but her expression was serious. She didn't look like she was joking so Add replied seriously as well.

“Killed? By who?”

“This final battle in the Grand Cavern, there will be many variables but there's a high chance I'll get done in by Scar. My chances of surviving this battle is probably less than 30%.”

“.....”

There's only 30% chance for Elesis to survive? This was unbelievable but Elesis wasn't joking.

“Yes, I was in a hurry. I wanted everyone to accept Lu and Ciel as comrades quickly....so we can enter the battle in best shape possible. It's not like I want to die... but I had to add those two to supplement our strength just in case there were losses.”

“.....”

“Even though I knew doing this would increase the burden on Big Sister Rena's mind.”

Elesis had a dark expression but her voice remained calm. She probably had never revealed these thoughts to anyone, even to Rena or her own brother Elsword.

Add understood this then made a thin groan.

“You.....”

“It will drop our morale if we talked about our losses even before we started fighting.... But I'm in a position where I have to think about it. El Search Party is the strongest group in Elrios at the moment to face the demons after all.”

“.....”

Elesis continued to speak without wavering.

“I wanted to organize things much as I could since chances of me dying in this fight was too high. That's why it must have looked like I was being hasty.”

“.....Is Scar really that powerful?”

“Yes. He almost got me last time and he would have become even stronger now. I honestly cannot grantee I'll be able to beat him.”

Elesis' expression was dark. Her usual cheerfulness or mischievousness was nowhere to be seen.

“No, never mind not being able to grantee a victory.... If Scar and I fought one on one, my chances of survival probably won't even be 20%.”

“Then you could....”

“But we must stop the demon god’s resurrection. And others might get sacrificed instead if I don’t face Scar myself. I’ll at least... try to take him down with me.”

Add could tell Elesis came to this conclusion after much deliberation.

Elesis’ reckless actions became more understandable now. Her hasty way of handling things must have been based off her conclusion that she won’t survive the battle with the demons.

“Elesis, how old are you again?”

“Nineteen.... Ah, isn’t it rude to ask something like that?”

Elesis answered then became upset for some reason. At her answer, Add looked over Elesis from her feet to head.

Elesis must have thought something strange because she took a step back.

“.....You’re not thinking something rude right?”

“It’s nothing like that so be quiet for a second.”

It never crossed Add’s mind since he was always overwhelmed by Elesis....but Elesis wasn’t even twenty years old and yet was standing as a vanguard for the battle that will decide the future of Elrios.

Even while knowing she won’t survive that battle.

Add tightened the grip on his fist without realizing. Feelings that he couldn’t distinguish rose up and his mouth opened on its own.

“You deprived the chance for Rena and Lu to reconcile properly.”

“.....”

“If you know Rena then I know Rena as well. Even though her personality changed like that.... they will certainly understand each other with some time. But you left the scene knowing that they will have a huge fight as if you were rolling a dice.”

“Yes.”

Elesis must have lots of words to say for her defense.

Like not wanting to fight while it was uncertain if Rena, Eve, Lu and Ciel would cooperate with each other, or that it couldn’t be helped because she didn’t know what might happen after she died.

But Elesis calmly admitted she was wrong.

“What irritates me the most is.....”

Add paused before he spoke. He never imagined a day would come when he would say something like this.

To think he was going to say something he won't ever say even in his dream.

“Why don't you believe in others?”

“.....What?”

Elesis looked surprised but Add ignored her best he could. His ears would be red if he were to look in the mirror right now.

But Add couldn't stop the words he already started to speak. These feelings were bursting out from within him.

“Scar is stronger than you? So what? Didn't we El Search Party always fight against demons stronger than us? It was so at least in my universe.”

“.....”

“You were recklessly trying to tidy things up while hiding your feelings because you feared Scar....? You were afraid you couldn't defeat Scar by yourself? Don't make me laugh.....”

It wasn't like he didn't understand how Elesis felt. No.... he knew that feeling the best across all universes.

This was because Add also fought recklessly up till now by turning back time. Even now he was fighting to get the result he wanted.

Add raised his head and glared at Elesis. Her eyes were wide open and she had an empty expression. She must have not imagined Add out of all people would say something like this.

Yes, even Add had never imagined it himself. But everything was already in motion.

“I'll tell you a phrase that was popular in my universe. If you can't win this time.... you just have to win next time!”

“What?”

“This is how everyone fought.”

If you can't win this time then you just have to win next time. Suppress your shame of defeat and collect yourself for the next fight.

Everyone believed in this and bought Add the time to escape from D.

“Next time? Such thing is.....”

“I know. If that demon resurrection is dangerous as you say then it should be stopped now. So.....”

Add conveyed the words that came directly from his heart.

“If you can’t win by yourself then fight together.”

“.....”

Elesis’ methods weren’t completely wrong since the battle against powerful enemies was approaching. Add used time travel so far to create a result where no one in the El Search Party was killed, but Elesis couldn’t do this.

Telling Elesis to relax since Add can time travel was one way. But that would unnecessarily complicate the story. This was the only way to convince Elesis without revealing that.

Believe in others and fight.

“Isn’t that what stupidly soft El Search Party is?”

Add raised up his tightly held fists.

“Since you’re extremely strong you must have never felt the need to borrow other people’s strength, but that’s wrong. If Scar is that powerful, then think about winning with help from others. Why are you only thinking about an ending where you fight all by yourself?”

“.....”

“Your chance of survival is only 30%? Don’t make me laugh. Do you think I’ll let that happen? Seeing someone that doesn’t think about living irritates me the most!”

Add could jump across time or even universes to save someone precious to him. He could understand feelings of people that did anything possible to save people precious to them. He was even willing to lend them his hand long as it didn’t get in the way of his goals.

In contrast, it enraged him to see someone like this who lacked the will to live. Add shouted as he stretched his fist out towards Elesis.

“Stop saying stupid things and live with all you got!! Think about how you’ll survive together with everyone else!!”

“.....”

Elesis who was listening quietly suddenly burst out laughing. It felt awkward for Add to withdraw his fist now.

Just when Add's face was becoming red.... Elesis shook her head then slightly met Add's fist with her own.

"Yes, you're right. I was being too closed-minded. Thank you for the great advice Add."

"....."

Add wanted to hide somewhere from embarrassment. He just wanted to end this conversation now that he lost all the heat from before. But Elesis wasn't done talking.

She looked far away with a sentimental expression.

"I must have gotten some bad thoughts too after watching.... Velder Kingdom's destruction. That's right, I should be thinking about how to survive together with everyone else. I can't be thinking about dying. I still have to protect Elsword after all...."

"....."

Can I stop doing this now since she's talking by herself? Add thought this as he carefully tried to withdraw his fist but Elesis' fist followed his fist as if attached to a magnet.

"What's wrong Add? Weren't you trying to convey your passionate heart to me?"

"That wasn't my intention."

When Add angrily pulled his arm behind his back, Elesis didn't say anything more and withdrew her arm. She was smiling but it didn't look like she was going to tease him anymore.

"Thank you Add, things have been so hectic that I've forgotten. We're the El Search Party....."

".....If you understood then don't do anything weird anymore."

"Yes, I should also apologize to Big Sister Rena and Lu."

Elesis said this then turned around with her hands behind her back. She turned her head back to look at Add.

"Come to think of it, you must have been pretty upset at what I said to Seirena. You're not going to bring that up?"

"....."

It did upset him a lot at the time but her reason was understandable....and it was somewhat bothersome to bring it up himself so he kept silent.

Elesis lowered her head and apologized when Add stayed quiet.

“I’m sorry Add. I wasn’t thinking correctly. We’re comrades even if universes are different.... I shouldn’t have doubted you.”

“.....It was a necessary process.”

It also felt awkward to receive this apology since he was ultimately aiming for Eve’s core. Elesis spoke quietly when Add tried to move on.

“As a sign of apology, I want to help with what you’re trying to do. Can I help you together with Ignia?”

“.....”

Will everything be solved easily if he asked her for a kiss here? Add pondered for a moment but quickly shook his head.

“It’s already in progress. I don’t need any more help. Just don’t get in the way even if it catches your eyes.”

“Alright, just tell me if there’s anything I can do to help.”

Elesis said this then smiled again. It was a refreshing smile as if she was eased from a burden.

“Thank you for scolding me from bottom of your heart, Add.”

“.....Others would have changed into swimsuits already. Go ahead.”

Elesis stared at Add quietly for a moment then walked away when Add turned his head away to avoid her. Add sighed when Elesis’ footsteps became further.

It was good that Elesis became friendly towards him.... but he didn’t know if it was to the point where request for a kiss would work.

“No, in the first place.....”

How much affection points do you need for it to be ‘kiss switch, on!’? And how do you make it a situation where kissing won’t bring about any side effects?

As Add thought, Eun spoke from inside the jacket.

“I’m surprised at boy’s skills. Cooking Elesis like that in one go.”

“We’re excluding Elesis anyways.....”

It seems Add did buy some affection from Elesis although unintentionally..... But he wasn’t sure if it was a switch-on state. Not only that, but Elsword will react if he approached Elesis.

“That kid is seriously nothing but trouble.....”

Raising Elesis' affection points was pointless in the end because of Elsword. Finding a way to defeat D, and getting a kiss to go back was important.... But the El Search Party coming out of the battle in Grand Cavern without losses was important as well.

He had to refrain from doing something that will cause disturbances or fracture within the El Search Party.

“I'm seriously.....”

Soft hearted too. He couldn't deny that he had a feeling of not wanting to see anyone in this universe's El Search Party get killed as well.

Add was muttering when Eun said something strange from within the jacket.

“To think boy would tell someone to believe in others and fight. I honestly would have never imagined.”

“.....I wasn't serious.”

That's what he said as an excuse since he couldn't tell Elesis that he could stop the result she feared by turning back time. Add was trying to change the topic when he heard footsteps.

Ignia was approaching. There must have been not enough swimsuits because she was wearing her usual clothes.

“Elesis came from this direction. Did she say anything?”

“It was just an idle conversation. Don't mind it.”

Ignia nodded then stated her business.

“I didn't form teams like this for no reason. I'm bit worried about Elesis.... but it's time to act Add.”

“.....”

I have a bad feeling about this. Add thought as Ignia made a fake cough once then announced with a confident voice.

“Operation, Oops! My hands slipped!!”

“.....”

Why does it sound like an operation that would break his hand?

Add reluctantly followed Ignia back to the lake.

“So what’s your exact plan?”

“First of all, this might be hard for you to hear.....”

Ignia walking at the front looked back slightly then spoke.

“I don’t think you’re that attractive as a man.”

“.....”

Ignia stopped her steps then tilted her head.

“You’re not that tall or muscular. I guess only your proportions and face is alright.”

“.....I can’t do anything about that.”

Add had never been interested in his and other people’s outer appearances. He had his hands full with researches so there was no time to spare for things like body building. He wasn’t a type that battled physically in the first place..... Never mind Elesis, Add would be beaten by even Ara or Rena in physical strength.

.....No, Add was most likely weakest in the group in terms of physical strength. Could he say he was stronger than Lu who looked the youngest?

Add was looking back on himself when Ignia spoke blatantly.

“Raven and Ciel looks very attractive from perspective of girls. No words are needed for Raven and Ciel looks very manly as well.”

“.....Is it the chest after all?”

Is it because I have a smaller chest? So do men need big chests too?

Add bit his lips in frustration after remembering what happened in the men’s bath. To think this ridiculous reason would come back to haunt him now.

Should he pay more attention to his physique if he gets some time later?

“Chest.....? Ah, well.”

Ignia peered at Add’s chest then smiled briskly.

“You still have a future. Cheer up!!”

“.....Drop the fake consolation. So you’re saying I lack manliness because of my physical appearance?”

Appearance was important for creatures to raise affection of member of the other sex. The key point was how they appealed.

“In ecosystems, males tend to appeal how superior they are when trying to win over a female. So what you’re saying is I lack appeal as a male right now so supplementing that part should be advantageous in raising affection points of the girls. Peacocks use their fancy tail feathers and cicadas use loudness of their cries to appeal their superiority.....”

“.....”

Add analyzed coldly without realizing that Ignia was staring at him with a disgusted expression.

“Thus, I just have to figure out how humans males can appeal to females then supplement that part. So how should I do that Ignia? Tell me your opinion as a human female.”

“.....Chest?”

“I can’t do anything about that right now. There’s no time to develop a drug that increases chest size. And even if I do, it won’t show any effect in short term.”

“Does that mean it can be effective in long term?!”

Add nodded cleanly when Ignia asked in surprise.

“My major is Nasods and mechanics.....but I know some biology as well. I’ve refined anesthetics couple times before. Human body is comprised of mostly protein and fat. If you wanted to increase your chest size you just have to attach some muscles. I can develop a steroid for that.”

“.....Um, h-how about just supplementing with fat and not muscles?”

“What I mentioned right now was for males only. To apply it to females.....”

Add was answering readily to the student’s(?) question then his gaze coincidentally stopped at around Ignia’s chest. Ignia hastily waved her arms at Add’s gaze.

“Don’t say it! Don’t say it!”

“.....I think it’s sufficient for your age.”

“I told you not to say it!”

Add skipped the topic when flames formed in Ignia’s hand.

“Anyways, taking fat out of certain body part is possible. I tried constructing a theory about it out of curiosity before. If there’s a plus then there’s a minus as well so oppositely, it should be possible to supplement fat in certain body parts as well.”

“.....R, really?”

“But biology isn’t my speciality after all and there’s a high chance there will be side-effects. This is why I don’t like biology..... Mechanics is simple and beautiful because everything fits perfectly, but in biology there’s too many side effects that you cannot predict.”

Add was enjoying talking about his speciality but stopped after realizing he wasted too much time.

Ignia was slightly peering down at her chest.... But Add ignored her.

“Okay. I understand I lack manliness in the outer appearance side of things. There’s nothing I can do about that right now so I’ll make up for that in the other side.”

“Hmm.....”

“So what’s the plan you came up with? You wouldn’t have evaluated my appearance for no reason. You must have something in mind.”

Operation, Oops my hands slipped. Add didn’t like how it sounded but Ignia could have thought of something useful since she was a priestess.

Ignia replied to Add’s hopeful question.

“This might sound cruel but you lack appeal as a man. Even though I divided the teams like this..... there’s totally no air of anyone being conscious of you as a man.”

“So you were behind it after all. How did you convince Elesis and Rena?”

“I told them I had a prophetic dream. I’m a priestess after all.”

Ignia spoke as if it was an easy task. Add asked in surprise.

“Prophetic dream? Is such a thing possible?”

“Of course not. If I could.... I wouldn’t have lost those two.”

“.....”

When Add kept silent, Ignia unnaturally brightened the tone of her voice.

“Anyways, there’s not much air of anyone being conscious of you even though I divided the teams like this. So you’ll have to make them be conscious of you as a man while we’re playing in the water here. It will all depend on your appeal after that.”

“Make them be conscious of me as a man....”

It hurt Add’s pride but according to Ignia’s observation, Add wasn’t even being accepted as a man to girls of the Search Party. Well.... it did make sense. It was true that Raven and Ciel looked much more manly even in Add’s perspective.

If you considered only manliness.... wouldn't even Elsword be better than him?

Ignia spoke to console Add when he let out a tragic groan.

"Well you have a pretty face so it's fine. Wouldn't you look more manly when you grow up? Although the pretty impression is stronger right now....."

"So what do you want me to do precisely?"

"....."

Ignia was silent for a while then wordlessly raised up her thumb.

There was a bad feeling about this. Ignia spoke sternly but seriously.

"Cause an accident."

".....Denied."

"Didn't you say you have to finish this until we finish things with Scar? Go cause an accident."

Accident while playing in the water? It didn't make him want to hear the details too much. But Ignia was serious.

"There's not much time. Let's go with My Hand Slipped!"

".....Just what is that? You want me to take off a girl's swimsuit saying it was an accident or something?"

"H, how could you say something like that.....!"

Ignia raised a flame in her hand as if trying to threaten Add then suddenly covered her mouth and thought.

"...Yea, that's good. Do it! Isn't there that old story? One about woodcutter stealing a celestial maiden's robes then marrying her. Although it's a swimsuit this time!"

"I refuse....."

Because Ignia grew up as a priestess, she didn't seem to be too bright in romantic affairs either. She does have general curiosity and basic tastes about it but things became a wreck when she went in details.

She was still better than completely clueless Add but her ideas weren't completely reliable.

Well, was it too much to ask from someone with no romantic experience?

“Didn’t you already prepare yourself? I know this whole thing is irrational.... But wouldn’t it work out somehow?”

“Even nonexistent affection points will get shaved off if I do that.”

That was basically becoming a criminal. Wouldn’t it be stranger if girls didn’t get enraged?
.....Although he did get caught up in similar situations in the past thanks to Eun.

“Forget about this. What was your original plan?”

“Event where you ‘accidentally’ make the target moderately sprain their ankle then carrying them in your arm?”

“.....”

“Man who carries an injured woman dearly in his arms. Wouldn’t it be a chance to make them see you in a different light? Other girls will think you’re manly too.”

Add answered coldly when Ignia spoke lively like a dreamy girl.

“I get what you’re saying. But.....I don’t have enough strength in my arms to do that.”

“.....”

Sorry, I don’t have enough arm strength to carry a single frail girl to a safe place. If that was possible I wouldn’t be worrying about my lack of manliness in the first place.

“Although it would be possible if I used Dynamos.”

Ignia scratched her head at Add’s honest confession.

“Fine, then let’s go with Oops My Hand Slipped 2 that you suggested. Say it was an accident then...!”

“I told you I refuse to do that. Anyways, I’ll handle this somehow by myself so you go back first.”

“.....Well fine. Just tell me if I can help you with something.”

Ignia readily nodded then went away. Add slightly pressed on his jacket when Ignia couldn’t be seen anymore.

Then Eun poked her head out as if she was waiting.

“That was quite an entertaining conversation. I had trouble keeping myself from joining in.”

“What do you think about Ignia’s indication?”

There was no choice but to agree with the observation that girls weren’t conscious of Add as a man.

“It does make sense. Girls of the Search Party all packs a serious punch..... and aren’t they stronger than boy? It should be impossible to appeal with combat skills.”

“.....As I thought.”

It was impossible to appeal manliness with his outer appearance. Having them see him in a new light by showing off combat skills was no good either.

Add wasn’t a peacock nor cicada. He didn’t have fancy tail feathers or cries to seduce someone.

Add walked forward as he fixed his jacket.

“....So the answer is Eve.”

“Boy.”

“Ara might be easy to approach like you said. But I lack elements that I can appeal to her. I need a same topic of interest to close the distance between my target but Ara and I don’t have anything like that. Ara uses spear arts in combat but I have zero physical combat skills.”

This evaluation was more like self-reprimanding but Eun didn’t say anything as if she accepted. It was true that Ara was easy to talk to and deceive.

But Eve was on guard being protective of her right now.

“But Eve is different. There’s a same topic of interest between us called Nasods and engineering. Even if Eve is treating me coldly, it’s better to have an element where we can have an argument about. Raising each other’s voices in a heated argument should be better than having no conversation at all.”

“.....When did boy make that kind of judgement?”

“Just now.”

He just thought of it while talking with Ignia.

The reason peacocks spread their tail feathers? That’s to appeal to members of the other sex. That meant fancy feathers of a male peacock was an appealing element to female peacocks.

“Knowledge is all I’ve got in the end. Only way I can appeal how I’m different from other men is engineering.”

“.....”

Since Add was an engineer, only candidate he can improve relationship with within short period time was Eve who had the same topic of interest as him.

Eun didn’t complain further and hopped down.

“It can’t be helped if that’s what boy wishes. Change into swimsuit then come after 5 minutes.”

“What?”

Eun didn’t explain herself and quickly dashed off.

Add assumed Eun had something in her mind so he arrived at the lake after 5 minutes. Rena, Elesis, Eve and Ara had already changed into their swimsuits.

Elesis and Rena were swimming across the lake as if they were having a race.

“So laid back.....”

They were going to battle Scar tomorrow.... Just what kind of farce was this? El Search Party was always naïve but this was the first time he saw something so ridiculous.

Eve spoke while looking back after noticing Add had arrived late.

“You’re late, useless. Demons might attack so be on your guard.”

“Mr.Add, water here is very clear. Let’s go in quickly.”

Ara in her swimsuit saw Add too and waved her hand.

“I cannot swim.....”

Add was about to answer but his gaze got stuck on Ara’s head. Fox ears on top of her white hair. She had red eyes and three tails. Ara gave a cute wink when Add kept staring numbly.

.....It wasn’t Ara. It was Eun.

When Add kept standing numbly, Eun stuck close beside Add and spoke brightly.

“Then let’s walk together with three of us. View here is very nice, Mr.Add!”

“.....”

Eun had imitated Ara’s way of speaking before but she had never seriously disguised herself as Ara like this before. Just as her motives were being put into question, Eun waved her hand towards Eve.

“Come here too Ms.Eve. Let’s all be friendly.”

“.....It can’t be helped.”

Eve reluctantly held Add’s hand. As Add was being startled by this unexpected development, Eun started to walk forward as if nothing was wrong.

Eun could imitate Ara's appearance.... And she was trying to make use of that to fool Eve.

Add decided to follow along for now.

How Eun was disguising as Ara to guide Eve's actions was confirmed.

Eve was walking hand-to-hand with Add as if she was only doing so because Ara was.

Game board was set. The problem was how to improve their relationship a step further.

Add's original plan was to use his Nasod related knowledge to buy Eve's interest then create a mood where they can have a debate, thus increasing the number of communications between them.

Understanding each other through a fired-up debate then seeing each other in a new light at least just a little.... This kind of methodical plan of his was already set.

But this kind of walking along the lake while holding hands wasn't in his plans. It was uncomfortable because it strangely made his heart beat and made him nervous.

Eve was walking wordlessly while just looking forward.

The silence between the three of them continued then Ara(disguised Eun) started a conversation.

"Would everything be alright on Mr.Elsword's side?"

"Even if Elsword makes a mistake Aisha will correct it. There's also Raven so there shouldn't be any big problems."

Eve spoke shortly then looked at Add discretely.

"Don't stay quiet and say something. Ara is getting bored."

"I'm fine Ms.Eve. Just walking together like this is fun for me."

"No, Ara. Although I only know from information, human males have to do their best for human females in this situation. It's rude otherwise. I won't accept it even if you're okay with it."

At Eve's stern attitude Ara(Eun) made a bitter smile then changed the topic.

"Come to think of it, this place is quite wide."

"It looks like a basin created between cliffs. Since there's a lake there must be a passage where water is flowing in. This place must have been created from radical changes in terrain. Lanox seems to have many volcanic activities so that must be the reason."

Add who was keeping quiet between the two girls opened his mouth. This was his specialty.

Eve must have been a bit surprised at Add's explanation because she looked around. Then she winced from Add's gaze and pretended to not have seen anything.

Add did a terrain analysis before just in case and it came in handy in this situation. Finally getting the chance to speak, Add continued the conversation.

"So we're supposed to arrive at Grand Cavern tomorrow..... It's final battle against the demons. Are you ready?"

"Of course. We must not let demon god resurrect!"

"I'll can handle myself. But Add....."

Eve suddenly changed the tone of her voice.

"Did you find a clue to defeating D?"

"....."

He couldn't answer that it was her core. Eve who had no idea what Add's silence meant spoke calmly.

"After defeating Scar, we'll prepare for our battle against the dragon. But you're not from our universe so you should have things to take care of in your own universe. I understand your motives of trying to find a way while helping us on this side, but you can't afford to stay here too long. Am I right?"

"....."

"You must go back to fix the problems in your universe. We'll handle our universe's problems by ourselves."

She was absolutely correct. Add agreed as well.

"Yes. I'm thinking about going back after business in Lanox. It will be bad if I stayed here too long. And...."

Add spoke calmly while suppressing his feelings.

"I already found a way to defeat D."

"Really? That's really great, Mr.Add!"

Ara, no Eun exclaimed even though she knew Add was lying. But Eve who didn't know asked coldly.

"I'd like to know what that is. We might be able to use it against our battle with the dragon."

"It's something only I can do."

“I can just order the original slightly useless Add who will come back when you leave.”

So I'm a useless Add and the one who was originally here was a slightly useless Add? Add was about to retort but then asked a question out of sudden curiosity.

“Come to think of it. What kind of person was original Add from this universe?”

“He was overly fastidious and slightly useless researcher. I don't want to talk about him too much.”

Original Add must have been quite competent. Add felt bitter for some reason as he asked.

“Was there any other traits?”

“What do you mean?”

At Eve's calm question, Add focused his gaze on the core on Eve's forehead. Come to think of it, this was strange.

Why was Eve still unharmed?

It didn't mean it was wrong for her to be unharmed.... But despite some discrepancies in personalities and abilities, Add B and him seemed like a same person at the base.

Just like how Ara was Ara and Eve was Eve, Add was Add as well.

Then Add B would have obviously went after Eve's core since he needed the technology to go back to the past and become stronger. You had to say there was some other reason for Eve being unharmed despite D not being here.

Add was thinking when Eve spoke stiffly.

“Recalling it now, slightly useless Add did say he time traveled to here from the past.”

“.....”

You imbecile.

Eve added as Add's head became numb and he just stared blankly into space.

“Although I ignored him since it was a gibberish like always.”

“He didn't tell me exactly but he must have had a very difficult time in the past.” Eun spoke as if she knew what Eve was talking about.

“.....Ah, is that so?”

It didn't sound like he kept it a secret at all. He basically announced, hey everyone I came from the past!

Add suppressed the feeling of wanting to twist Add B's mouth off as he forced himself to smile.

"Kukukuk, I-I didn't know there was a weirdo like that."

"Although that's you."

Eve spoke sharply then shook her head soon after.

"He's you but not you at the same time. Slightly useless Add and very useless Add.... But it still doesn't change the fact that you are both useless."

"Anyways, I can't tell you about....how to defeat D. I cannot tell you since it's related to our universe."

"But we won't ever cross to your universe anyways. I don't see any problems in you telling me."

Eve unexpectedly asked persistently. Fight against the dragon won't be easy so she must want to prepare much as possible.

Add agreed with her wholeheartedly but shook his head.

"It's a secret. I cannot tell you no matter what."

"Eve, you won't be able to accept me if I hold a secret against you. That's what slightly useless you who's not you said."

"....."

Was he a blabbermouth? Why didn't he just confess that he was after her core as well?

"I still can't say it."

"Ms.Eve, Mr.Add seems troubled. You should stop....."

".....Fine."

Eve stopped her persistent attitude then closed her mouth when Ara dissuaded her. She reacted quite softly to Ara(Eun). He had to make good use of this.....

Add was thinking this when Ara suddenly hugged his arm and stuck close to his side.

"We have to fight tomorrow so let's relax and play today."

"....."

Add understood her intention but he wanted to avoid this type of excessive physical contact. Most of all, since Ara was in her swimsuit attire, it was touching his arm.....

Eun spoke in a prissy tone without caring about Add's troubles.

"Mr.Add, do you not like being with me like this?"

"....."

Eve was glaring at Add with an ever so cold gaze. One who hugged him first was Ara but Eve didn't seem like she cared.

"Ms.Eve. Let's all be friendly. Friendly."

".....I don't understand what you mean."

Eve stuck close to Add's opposite arm while sighing.

Add's face heated up and turned red when Ara and Eve stuck close to him from both sides. He also felt annoyed at himself at the same time. He was frustrated at himself for not being able to keep his cool in this situation.

Should he just play along with them to achieve his goal?

"Kukukuk....."

Although Eun's bold actions got on his nerves a bit, shouldn't he be glad that Eun was creating opportunities?

That's what he thought but he couldn't stop his face from turning red.

He wanted to give up everything and run away. Falling into a situation that he couldn't control was too unfamiliar and scary. It felt like sky diving without Dynamos.

".....This is why I hate biology."

There were too many uncontrollable variables. Add himself was also uncontrollable in this case.

He knew he had to use this chance to get something out of Eve.... But his body couldn't move.

Damn biology, mechanics for the win, engineering is the king of all studies.

Add was muttering when Eve abruptly started to be on guard.

"Ara, no... are you Eun?"

"Hmm? What are you saying Ms.Eve?"



“Ms.Eve. Let’s all be friendly.”

“.....I don’t understand what you mean.”

Eun's personality didn't always show even when Ara was in Celestial Fox state. Eve must have known this and wasn't guarded at first but Eun must have overstepped her boundaries.

Eve unhanding her arms holding Add despite Eun's denial.

"I thought I told you not to do whatever you want with Ara's body."

"...Hmm."

Eun was about to say something while narrowing her eyes.....

Wrrrrr!!

Then shockwave occurred as a dark hole opened in the sky. Succubi and Incubi poured out from the dimension gate.

Rena and Elesis must have anticipated this beforehand because they were looking up with sharp gazes. Eve also completely switched into battle state but they were all unarmed because they had been taking a break.

No matter how strong the El Search Party was, taking care of hundreds of demons unarmed was.....

"Here, everyone catch!!"

Then with a shout from Ignia who had been absent, a spear, sword and a great sword flew in. Everyone caught the weapons that came flying towards them.

This was a plan to lure in demons in the first place. Ignia had been on standby at a hidden place waiting to hand over the Search Party's weapons.

Elesis still in her swimsuit and now carrying a sword shouted with a grin.

"Alright, then let's clean them all up!"

It was a declaration of victory filled with confidence despite the hundreds of demons in front of them.

Late night when everyone was asleep.

Add and the other El Search Party members were resting in a secluded area in the cave. They will arrive at the Grand Cavern tomorrow. It will be the final battle against demons.

"....."

Add confirmed that everyone was asleep and slowly got up. Add looked at the campfire for a moment then sighed as he scratched his head.

Battle this afternoon was overly bland. Only small fries appeared and they were annihilated by the El Search Party with Elesis and Rena in the lead. It was a complete victory without anyone having even a strand of their hair harmed. Long as this El Search Party stuck together, they should be able to win no matter how strong of a demon Karis and Scar were.

And Add can change the result with time travel otherwise.

“.....I’m not strong enough.”

Add’s original plan was to take advantage of chaos of the battle to steal Eve’s lips and her core.

But the El Search Party was much stronger than he expected.

“Kukukuk.....”

To think he’d be in a pinch now because the Search Party was too strong. Add let out an empty laugh as he shook his head from side to side. Ignia was being cooperative right now but he couldn’t expect her to stay as his ally after he stole Eve’s core.

No, the entire El Search Party becomes his enemy soon as he steals Eve’s core.

Wasn’t it obvious? They won’t forgive someone who killed their comrade.

“.....This is unexpected.”

Add smiled bitterly as he looked up. He didn’t like how the low cave ceiling was.

Add had been certain that it was a piece of cake for him to steal Eve’s core in the original universe’s 5 member El Search Party.

Only danger was Rena but he was confident he will be successful if he used the element of surprise.

Of course, the difficulty did go up after Eve and Ara awakened to Memory of Time and space and Chung joined.....

“.....”

But each individual in this El Search Party had much superior skills. Add probably couldn’t beat anyone if he was to fight them 1 on 1.

He thought if attacking Eve while the team was divided like this would be better.... But he didn’t obtain the return condition called the kiss yet.

‘Should I just turn back time? Go back and raise Eve’s affection points step by step?’

Although he didn’t know how to increase a lot of affection points at once, he might get the hang of it if he tried it over and over again. Add was struggling to figure out an answer when he sensed someone wake up.

Eve who had been sleeping with Ara hugging each other raised her upper body then turned to look at Add.

“I thought there was ghost wandering around but it was just you useless.”

“.....There’s no such thing as ghosts.”

“So there aren’t any in that universe?”

“.....”

Does that mean they exist in here? Add suddenly felt the chills but didn’t let it show and asked.

“Why did you wake up? What do you want?”

“Nasods don’t need to sleep.”

“You can sleep if you want but you don’t have to right?”

“.....”

Add let out a small laugh when Eve paused with a surprised expression. He was a Nasod Researcher so this was basic of basics.

“Come sit beside me if you have something to say.”

Well, he might make some progress while talking to her. When Add made a room for her, Eve quietly sat beside him.

Sound of campfire burning, sound of water drops falling somewhere.

Add and Eve sat side by side amongst the harmony made by fire and water. Eve revealed her intentions after a long silence.

“My recent attitude might have been bit harsh. I apologize Add.”

“I won’t understand if you say it vaguely like that. Because I’m useless.”

“.....”

Add had an idea what Eve was trying to say but he answered sarcastically on purpose. Eve must have not expected this kind of sharp response so she looked at Add with a startled expression.

It was more entertaining reaction than he thought. Actually, continuing to call Add useless every chance she got already made her reactions full of emotions.

This Eve expressed her emotions much more openly than Eve that Add knew. This was intriguing.

“I see. I should explain more in depth so it’s easier for you who’s useless to understand. Although how you’re useless is true, I might have hurt you somehow by kept mentioning it. I might have been careless.”

“.....”

Wasn’t this a provocation rather than an apology? Add became bewildered as he looked at Eve but Eve pompously finished her apology(?).

“I’ll be careful from now on, Add.”

“You don’t need to. It’s true that I’m weak. I got nothing to say in response if I hear that I’m useless. It’s correct to struggle in order to improve if you don’t have the skills. You shouldn’t care about ways or means to get stronger if you’re desperate.”

Well, Add wasn’t particularly offended from Eve keep saying he was useless.

Because it was true.....and being conscious of it wasn’t something bad.

Add was determined to do anything necessary to achieve his goals and became stronger because of it. Since he needed even more strength to defeat D, realizing his strength was lacking was important.

“What you said was motivational.”

Add took a glance at Eve’s core. Everything will be solved easily if he could just obtain that.

Of course, it wasn’t like he instantly became stronger like magic when he obtained it.....

“...No, I seemed to have acted too harshly so I was reflecting on my actions.”

Add lowered his gaze from the core after hearing Eve’s words. Eve who was hugging her knees spoke while looking at the campfire.

“I determined you were pulling a prank on Ara so I overreacted. I’ll admit it. Although I won’t apologize.”

“Really?”

Add wasn’t too surprised because he had expected those words from Eve.

“Ara pestered me to apologize but I won’t apologize for this. I’ll act the same way even if I can turn back time.”

So she admits she went overboard but she doesn’t regret it or will apologize. Add snickered at her rigid reaction.

Eve must have interpreted this as mockery because her eyes became cold.

“If you’re really serious about Ara then treat her seriously.”

“You must have some weird imagination..... But I don’t have any particular feelings towards Ara.”

“Aren’t you confusing your emotions from that universe?”

Her words were compressed but Add knew what she meant instantly.

She was asking if Add was confusing feelings he had for Ara in the other universe with Ara from this universe. Add shook his head.

“Both here and there, I’m not particularly interested in that idiot.”

“She’s not idiot, she’s Ara.”

Eve warned then asked as if she couldn’t understand.

“I judge that Ara is an attractive human female. Of course, Rena and Elesis are attractive as well but from human male’s perspective, isn’t Ara someone who you’d like to protect and be together with?”

“.....So what are you telling me to do?”

Add’s compressed words meant “So are you telling me to be interested in Ara or not? You misunderstood me for being interested in her and became wary on your own’.

Eve understood what Add said right away as well and retorted.

“If you want to be together with Ara, you must be cautious, careful, mannerly, situational, prudent, patient, delicate and gentle.”

“.....”

Just how many precautions were there? How to describe this situation.....? Mother-in-law saying a man like you isn’t good enough for my daughter~?

Eve strongly finished her words.

“That’s the minimum requirement.”

“Why do I need your permission to interact with Ara?”

“Then will you take Elesis’ examination instead? I already consulted this with Elesis.”

.....Do you want to fight a bear or a tiger? Add didn’t understand why Eve was giving him this kind of question. When Add looked confused, Eve warned stiffly.

“Ara doesn’t know about this. I won’t forgive you if you tell her.”

“I don’t intend to. Although I don’t understand why you’re so protective of Ara.....”

“It’s natural for human males and females to meet each other. Ara trusts in other people too much so I’m concerning myself.”

Well although this was bit outrageous.....was Eve the only one who could take care of Ara by the elimination rule? Rena would normally be in charge of something like this but her personality changed like that.....and it was not something you’d leave to a guy so Eve was right person for the job in the end.

“I don’t know too much about this but I’m planning to try my best within my knowledge.”

“Like I said, what’s the reason for.....”

“Because she’s my comrade.”

Eve said this proudly then looked sideways at Add.

“It’s obvious to be concerned about comrade you’ve been together with all this time. Wasn’t it like this in your universe?”

“That’s.....”

Add unknowingly put strength in his fists.

El Search Party standing against D to buy Add time to escape. He could recall the image of their backs whenever he closed his eyes.

He probably won’t forget that scene for rest of his life.

Add was clenching his teeth.... When a small sensation touched the top of his fist. Add looked in surprise to see that it was Eve’s hand.

Eve who put her hand on top of Add’s hand spoke calmly while only looking forward.

“I won’t ask what kind of hardship and worries there were in your universe. So you don’t have to say it.”

“.....”

“You’re our comrade too long as you’re here. Me and anyone else here will fully support you in defeating D and returning to your universe.”

Add’s face was empty for a moment then he unknowingly frowned.

“You’re all too soft.”

“That might be true.”

Calm answer.

“...Things in this universe should already be difficult enough but you’re saying you’ll also care about me who came from a different universe? You’re all seriously too soft.”

“Even though useless, you’re still our comrade. We can give you a hand.”

“I’m....”

Not anything like a comrade. Add swallowed the words he was about to say. He became emotional without realizing.

Long silence started again. But the small hand on top of Add’s fist didn’t move.

“What if....”

At the end of the silence, Add spoke up without realizing. There was a thought that he shouldn’t be doing this, but feeling that he just could turn it back with time travel came first.

“The one I long for is you?”

“.....”

He said it. Eve turned to look. She was wordless but it was certain that she was surprised.

It already started. Add let out the words inside his heart.

Feelings that have been trapped inside all this time, across time and universes, slowly flowed out.

“Over countless fights, across time and even across universes....what if the one I longed for and was obsessed about is you?”

“....I don’t understand what you’re saying.”

“Of course you wouldn’t know. I’m not saying this to you.... No, no one would ever know.”

Add sighed then slowly stretched out his hand. Eve only blinked and didn’t evade even though she saw Add’s hand coming close to her.

Add laughed in a low voice as he slowly stroked Eve’s face.

“Kukukuk, seriously....”

This Eve wasn’t the Eve he knew, and nothing would change even if this was the Eve he knew.

For Add, Eve was a bridge, a method to go back to the past, a research material at best.

What kind of value, what kind of feelings was he supposed to give to her? Add was proud of his Dynamos....Yes, he might have an attachment towards it.

Just like the feeling he has towards his Dynamos, did he have a same feeling of attachment towards Queen of Nasods?

“Attachment..... what a stupid story.”

But according to Eun, Add becomes D because he was too obsessed with Eve. He didn't want to admit it but he had a feeling Eun's words weren't a lie.

“Everything I did for you, what I'll do from now on, you'll never know. I'm not asking you to understand. But.....”

“Add.”

Eve slowly shook her head then grabbed Add's hand then started push it aside.

“I'm not the one who should be hearing this.”

“I know that already.... But I can't help but to say it.”

“.....”

Revealing his feelings to a Nasod with just the same face was a meaningless thing to do. Wasn't Add planning to steal this Eve's lips and core then run away in the first place?

What kind of hunter shows a gap in their heart, a weakness to their prey?

“Here's one.....”

“.....”

Eve didn't answer but didn't push Add's hand away further. His hand was at a distance where he could stroke Eve's face again if he just moved the tip of his hand. But Add restrained himself.

Nothing will change no matter how much he touched her. It will only increase the gap in his heart.

“Will you cooperate with me if needed.....so I can return to my universe?”

At Add's words Eve stayed still for a moment then nodded slightly. It felt like he got a permission so Add grabbed both of Eve's shoulders then slowly moved his face closer.

Eve stared intently at Add's face getting closer to her.

“.....”

Add stopped at the closest possible distance. The prey was completely off guard, he could end her life just with one wave of his hand.....

But her quiet gaze.....

“.,...Thanks for that.”

Add whispered quietly then backed out as he took his hands off Eve’s shoulders.

Eve blankly stared at Add.

Add lay down hoping he looked natural as possible then pulled up his bedsheets.

“I’m tired. I’m going to sleep first.”

“.....”

No answer came from behind him but Add forcefully closed his eyes. He didn’t know if stopping what he was about to do was right.... It seemed he won’t be able to sleep easily.

Because his heart was beating strangely.

Grand Cavern.

Karis approached Scar who was looking at a giant hole in the air. Karis looked extremely furious unlike how she usually composed herself in front of Scar.

“Just what are you doing Scar? Only my minions got destroyed by the El Search Party! Those twins said they couldn’t assist because of your orders! Why did you let only my minions go to waste?!”

“I should have told you already to just let them come.”

When Scar spoke rigidly, Karis got bewildered and retorted.

“Don’t you know that situation can always change? Then are we not going to do anything and just let them come here?”

“This place will become their grave in the end.”

“Just what makes you so confident? I admit you are strong. But....”

Scar smiled bitterly when Karis folded her arms and glared detestably at him.

“Why are you so impatient Karis? The demon god resurrection ritual is already reaching its final stage.”

“I won’t let them die peacefully after mocking me. I have to make them beg for their life!”

“Don’t worry. We’ll finish them off here soon.”

As Scar spoke and gripped his fist, blue flames rose from his hand.

“Red haired knight, I’m the one who’ll end her life.”

“That’s why.....”

Shouldn’t they smash the El Search Party now while they were divided? Scar was acting too confident. Even he should know that the El Search Party banding together will make it troublesome to defeat them. Of course, Scar does possess enormous power so his overflowing confidence was understandable.... But shouldn’t they at least be slightly cautious just in case?

However, Karis who was trying to get Scar to change his mind became surprised by his next words.

“Dragon is coming here.”

“.....What?”

There was only one being Scar could be referring to. Karis got shocked and looked around. Scar smiled bitterly at how Karis was on guard thinking maybe dragon was already here.

“We’re on the same side until demon god is resurrected. And if the demon god resurrects, even that dragon cannot stop us.”

“.....That’s true. But can we trust him?”

Karis stopped trying to convince Scar after realizing his source of confidence. She spoke with an uneasy voice.

With In, Jin, Scar and Karis that were already here... and if that dragon also joined them, then this place will certainly become the El Search Party’s grave.

“Then do you think that dragon join with the El Search Party and disrupt the demon god resurrection ritual? He’s not someone who’ll do that. Haha”

“.....”

At Scar’s laugh, Karis sighed then turned around.

“I’ll go prepare for the battle. You should get ready too.”

“Alright.”

Scar raised his head and looked up at the air when Karis walked away. The giant hole was gathering enormous amount of mana.

Demon god will resurrect soon.

“Red Haired Knight, we’ll finally settle our score this time.....!”

The moment when grand wish of the demons will be fulfilled was approaching, and the moment when he'll settle things with his arch nemesis was ever so close. Scar clenched his fists from excitement.

El Search Party? Priestess? There was no way they were going to leave this Grand Cavern alive. Even Karis who had been uneasy before acknowledged.

Dragon was coming.

Red Demise, the most ferocious, greedy and strongest dragon that's been ever recorded in history.

Perkisas.

3. Final Battle in the Grand Cavern

Grand Cavern entrance.

El Search Party regrouped in front of the entrance. Something must have happened between Elsword and Aisha because there was a strange atmosphere between thembut everyone else seemed fine.

“Then let’s enter the Grand Cavern. This place is Scar’s lair so even I don’t know too much.” Lu spoke cautiously.

“Karis should be here as well. We don’t know what tricks she might use so let’s all be careful.”

Lu nodded when Ciel warned.

“Yes, and I’d like to settle things with Karis personally if possible.”

“The battle could get chaotic so I can’t grantee that. Do you understand Lu?”

Elesis cautioned and Lu reluctantly accepted.

“Fine.”

“Our objective is to defeat Scar and stop the demon god resurrection ritual. Don’t forget that everyone.”

Elesis spoke gravely then loosened her expression then looked at Add.

“Add, thanks for coming together with us. You shouldn’t have to help with fights in our universe.”

“Hmph, don’t say something useless. I’m just sticking around you guys for my own goals.”

“Then, I’ll be thankful if you stuck with us till then end.”

Add nodded quietly when Elesis asked with a grin. During this battle, Add was planning to search for a way to go back while putting his plans into motion.

Although that didn’t mean he will overlook it when the El Search Party came into danger.....

Add stole a glance at Eve. Eve who was staring at Elsword must have noticed Add’s gaze so she turned to look at Add.

Add felt somewhat guilty after meeting her eyes so he quickly turned his head away and looked only forwards.

“Okay, let’s go everyone!”

Aisha got surprised when Elsword took a deep breath then dashed forward by himself with a shout.

“Wait! Why are you running off on your own?!”

“Let’s go everyone!”

Elesis spoke refreshingly then dashed forward as well. Other El Search Party members all started to run after Elsword.

Elsword energetically ran forward, Aisha had a disgruntled face as she followed behind Elsword, Rena followed with a cold expression beside Aisha, Raven followed as he quietly scanned the situation from beside Rena, Eve followed calmly behind Raven, Chung followed with a determined face beside Eve, Elesis followed with her sword gripped tightly behind Chung, Ara followed nervously to the left of Elesis, Add followed on his Dynamos behind Ara and Lu who was excited for battle and Ciel who guarded her side followed after Add.

It was the start of their final battle in the Grand Cavern, the fight to stop the demon god resurrection ritual.

“.....Huh?!”

The first irregularity of this battle was a shout from Elsword who had been running in very first. Elsword’s body seemed to get surrounded by a light then he disappeared in an instant.

Aisha looked down at the floor in surprise then shouted urgently.

“Be careful! Forced teleport.....!”

A light surrounded Aisha’s body too as she spoke. Everyone tried to react somehow but they didn’t have enough time.

Add also felt his body being surrounded by the light as he instinctively forced himself to dash forward.

Somewhere inside the Grand Cavern.

Elsword who got teleported first looked around with his sword raised. It was a place he was seeing for the first time and he couldn’t see the other party members that were with him just before.

“Where is this place?”

“.....That’s what you get for running in without any plans.”

Elsword turned back due to the muttering voice from behind him. Aisha was glaring at him angrily.

“There’s not enough time to stop the demon god from resurrecting. We should hurry.”

“But nothing is going to get solved by running in recklessly. Just how long are you going to fight while only looking at what’s ahead of you? Grow up a little you idiot.”

“.....What happen to the others?”

Aisha made even more of an upset face when Elsword ignored her words and asked where the others were. But she quickly regained her composure.

This place was a wide platform floating in midair and there were only two of them on top of it.... Aisha thought at least she had to stay calm.

“We got caught by the forced teleport magic circles. It was hidden in a very clever way. Was it Karis’s doing? She didn’t look like she had this much power. There could be someone else behind all of....”

Elsword only focused on the main point as Aisha trailed her words.

“Then did everyone else get separated like us? They should be safe, right?”

“You should worry more about yourself. You would have been separated all by yourself without knowing how to come back if I didn’t follow right behind you this time. Just how long do I have to take care of you?”

“I never asked you to take care of me.....”

“What did you say? Who do you think I’m going through all this trouble for?”

Elsword closed his mouth when Aisha’s eyes turned furious.

It was tiresome for Elsword to deal with Aisha since she tended to get angry from him merely mentioning the truth. Elsword couldn’t grasp which part of what he said was always making her angry.

‘Come to think of it, she always seems to get angry only at me.....’

Didn’t she get along with everyone else rather fine? Of course, she did seem slightly at odds with Add but Add was that kind of person in the first place.

Elsword responded by keeping quiet as Aisha kept glaring at him with a face as if saying ‘try to refute me if you can’. It was better for him to keep quiet.....

In that moment, Elsword’s face became serious as he held his sword up.

“I know how we can get back to the others.”

Then dimension gates opened in front of the two as Steel Lava Fighters started to pour out. Aisha spoke as she became nervous.

“This platform is too small. It’s all over if we fall from here.”

“Aisha, I’m going to weave through them so get ready to fire off a big one!”

“Wait!”

Aisha got frustrated at being ordered one-sidedly but Elsword didn’t listen to her as he dashed out towards the demons.

Somewhere in the Grand Cavern.

Rena narrowed her eyes then scanned her surroundings when the light finally disappeared. She was on top of a floating platform, she couldn’t see any way out.

“.....I don’t see the others.”

Rena nodded gravely to agree with the man standing beside her who just spoke.

“Attacking us yesterday was.....just a trick to get us overconfident. We only thought about beating Scar and Karis quickly after our easy victory against the minions.... I never imagined they had laid this kind of trap.”

“Rena.”

“This is my fault. I should have anticipated something like this.”

The man slowly shook his head.

“Even if this was a trap by the demons, it’s not something you should feel responsible for.”

“But.....”

Elsword was still young and while Elesis was skillful she could be overly reckless. So shouldn’t it be Rena’s job to level-headedly analyze the situation then come up with a countermeasure?

This was how Rena thought of her position in the El Search Party all this time.

“You shouldn’t blame yourself for this all alone.”

“.....”

Raven looked at Rena with a complicated expression. There were so many piled up words that he should be saying to her but he couldn’t get a grasp of how he should convey them. When he quietly stared at Rena without knowing which words to say first, Rena sighed then spoke with a calm voice.

“Thanks Raven. I calmed down a bit thanks to you. We can’t do anything about what already happened.... We should be thinking about what to do now.”

That’s not what I meant... Raven was meaning to say Rena was taking too much responsibility upon herself. But his timing to say this had already passed.

Rena seemed to have pushed all her self-blame to the corner of her mind and was now observing their surroundings sharply. She was scanning the terrain, tapping the floor and trying to figure out where they were. She was completely focused on how to regroup with the others.

Raven who was looking at Rena’s back closed his eyes. Bringing up the past won’t mean anything now. Even so.....

“Even what happened to the Elves wasn’t your fault.”

“.....”

Rena who was moving her hands winced then froze up. As Raven thought, these words had come too late after all.

He should have been beside her long ago and told her these words when she was in pain.... But Rena had already strongly shut off her emotions on her own by the time when Raven realized the situation.

Despite how this elf went through a tragedy which tore her heart apart, it won’t be an exaggeration to say that Rena possessed mind of steel that allowed her to recover all on her own. Rena’s mental strength should be stronger than anyone else in the El Search Party.

Incomparably beautiful steel sword, but could there be a dent in that sword right now?

Raven always kept these thoughts in his mind and couldn’t bring it up until now. There weren’t many chances to talk to Rena alone.... And he hadn’t been confident if he had the strength to reforge the possibly damaged sword, if he had the strength to comfort others and ease their minds.

This uncertainty was because Raven himself was also a sword remade by somehow scraping together the shattered pieces.

Raven who was looking down at his left arm...his Nasod arm, clenched his fist.

He wasn’t certain if he had the ability or right to comfort others. That’s why he had neglected this conversation with Rena all this time.....

“Raven.”

Rena who had been sitting examining the platform pushed on the ground then stood up. She made a light sigh then shook her head. This was a much lighter reaction than Raven had prepared for.

“I’m sorry for making you worry.”

“No, I was.....”

Raven tried to convey the words that he kept for himself all this time. But Rena shook her head again.

“Elesis keeps teasing me more recently. She’s really like a mischievous kid.”

“.....”

“She must be concerned because she thinks I’ve changed. But everyone tends to change.... Although I guess it’s strange for this to apply to long-living elves.....”

Rena spoke up to that much then looked back at Raven.

“Honestly, I wasn’t particularly interested if I had changed. I left those matters for later. All I thought about was defeating the enemy. I was in a position where I had to lead the Elf squadron so I had no time to look back upon myself. I only recently got some chances for personal activities after arriving in Lanox.”

“.....I see.”

“But I plan to think about this carefully after finishing this fight. Of course, I won’t change all of a sudden.... But the fight against demons should get somewhat wrapped up after solving this crisis in Lanox.”

Rena was serenely speaking about the future.

“I don’t know what kind of person I’ll be then.... but I imagine I’ll be a better person than right now. Does this sound strange for me to say?”

“No.”

When Raven shook his head stiffly, Rena approached him then sighed.

“I ended up making you worry too. I’m sorry.”

“I did what’s obvious. We’re.....”

Raven hesitated for a brief moment then gave an obvious sounding answer.

“Comrades after all.”

“.....Yes, comrades.”

Rena closed her eyes and savored the tone of that word. She tried to make a thin smile.....then changed her expression drastically then turned around. Raven also noticed someone else's presence and drew his blade.

Dimension gate opened as In and Jin appeared.

“We can't let you get to General Scar.”

“We'll finish you two here.”

Raven asked shortly.

“Are they the enemies you told me about?”

“Yes, they seem like Scar's direct subordinates. They are quite skilled. Be careful.”

In laughed with a loud voice.

“Two of you looked quite skilled amongst the El Search Party so we'll take care of you two personally by ourselves.”

Jin didn't say anything as she ran in swinging her serpentine sword. Rena also didn't say anything more as she drew her sword while running in.

2 vs 2 fight started.

Somewhere in the Grand Cavern.

Chung and Ara who also got teleported to some platform were in middle of a battle. Ara's energy blast sent the Steel Lava Fighters flying and Chung's cannons attacked the Incubi that were waiting for their chances in the air.

But there were too many of them. The two that's been fighting the enemy for a while stood back to back in middle of the platform as they caught their breaths.

While they did that, dimension gate opened once more as demons poured out again.

“There's really no end to them.....”

“What should we do Big Sister Ara?”

At Chung's question, Ara made her decision.

“Others should be fighting somewhere else too. Let's do our best here as well.”

“Then what about Scar or Karis.....?”

“I don’t think this is the time to be conserving our strengths. We’ll think about what happens later when the time comes, Mr.Chung!”

Chung nodded at Ara’s words then closed his eyes. After taking in a deep breath, he abruptly opened his eyes.

“Haaaaaah!!”

Chung’s armor seemed to get larger with his shout then it transformed into a full body armor that protected his body perfectly. Berserk mode, it was an ability passed down in the Seiker family.

“Haah!”

Ara also seemed to do a backflip as her appearance changed into a form with white hair, red eyes and blindingly white nine tails.

It was the Celestial Fox state which brought out the power of the fox within her.

“I’ll go first, Mr.Chung!”

Ara ran to the left as Chung also ran towards the right. How they didn’t look back at each other and ran into the enemies alone seemed like they were making a suicidal attack.... but the truth was different.

Boom!!

Impact multiple times larger than the ones two had been showing in the previous fight swept over the demons. Demons fell like leaves before the storm whenever white fox flew in swinging her spear. Demons got utterly shattered whenever white armor ran in swinging his Destroyer.

Fox and armor moved about in the darkness as they crushed their enemies.

No matter how many enemies they faced, they could never lose when the two of them were fighting together.



Grand Cavern, under the dark hole in mid air sucking in everything.

Elesis closed her eyes then shook her head. After sighing, she opened only one eye then glared at the enemy showing his back toward her.

“Long time no see.... Blue Lava Scar!”

“Yes, it’s been a long time. Red Haired Knight.”

Demon general Scar slowly turned around. Scar’s rank was equal to Karis and Ran but he was the most powerful amongst demons in terms of pure physical and destructive power.

Just him turning around made the ground platform he was standing on shatter and make the debris fly away.

Of course, this kind of destruction wouldn’t happen since Scar normally controlled his power. This was a side-effect of him having no intention of controlling his power right now.

Elesis knew this as well and smiled.

“I was skeptic at first but I didn’t think you’d really invite me alone. Are the others okay?”

“There can’t be any distractions in our fight.”

It was a simple answer but Elesis confirmed Scar’s motives. What happened just now was nothing more than a simple forced teleport. Other Search Party members should be fighting their own respective battles.

And in front of Elesis was Scar. The strongest amongst demons was standing by himself.

“Strongest amongst demons.....”

Elesis smiled as she raised her sword. Scar smiled back at Elesis as he raised his sword. It was a very satisfied smile.

“Strongest amongst humans.....”

No one would dare object to Elesis and Scar representing their race. Humans or demons, who was stronger will be decided by their fight.

“No, calling you the strongest amongst humans isn’t enough. Red Haired Knight, strongest in Elrios, let’s finally settle our score today!”

“Yes, strongest in Demon Realm. I’ll destroy you for certain today. I’ll also stop the demon god resurrection ritual while at it.”

“Kahaha. If you can.”

Storm suddenly started to blow as Scar unleashed his full power while laughing. The air was shaking due to Scar's unleashed the power.

Elesis smiled energetically as she confronted the energy storm blowing against her.

“Alright, let's do this!”

Red Haired Knight and Blue Lava Demon charged towards each other.

The strongest in Elrios versus the strongest in Demon Realm, one who survives this fight will truly obtain the title of the strongest!

Somewhere in the Grand Cavern.

Lu who was standing on top of a platform blinked.

“Oooh, it suddenly became bright then we got moved to somewhere else. How intriguing.”

“Nothing seems to be wrong with our bodies.”

Ignia frowned when Ciel who was standing beside Lu answered.

“Just what's going on? Did demons have this kind of power? I don't know about others....but to move me, a priestess?”

Ignia's remark sounded arrogant but she could say it because she was actually incredibly powerful. You could tell how powerful Ignia was from how she was the only priestess that survived while other priestesses were being murdered by the demons and from how she protected Lanox as final line of defense against the demons until the El Search Party came to assist.

Lu tilted her head as if she couldn't understand either.

“It was an unfamiliar magical wave.”

“Lanox would have fallen already long ago if there was someone this powerful amongst the demons....”

Ignia was more worried about what kind of incredibly powerful being made this event possible rather than being glad that she was okay after the teleport. But even Lu who was previously lord of the Demon Realm didn't have any clues.

Ciel spoke as he looked forward.

“Looks like someone with an answer is showing up.”

“Yaaawn.”

Dimension gate opened then Karis walked out from it while yawning lightly. She even stretched as if to show off then glared at Lu with narrow eyes.

“So we meet each other like this. Lord Luciela.”

“Karis, was calling me here your doing? You shouldn’t have this much power.”

Lu demanded with a cold voice. The reason Lu lost her original power and ended up wandering in Elrios was because of betrayal by Karis who had been her direct subordinate.

Although Lu never liked Karis’ actions, she took good care of Karis regardless. Lu did scold Karis from time to time whenever she did things wrong but Lu never imagined to get betrayed by her.

“Even a dog recognises their master.... But apparently, demons don’t.”

Karis laughed with a low voice after hearing Lu scold her.

“Aha, no matter what you say, you don’t look dignified at all in that small weak form right now. Don’t worry, I’ll take away whatever remaining power you have.... Then make you a decoration in my room. I guess could leave behind at least your arms and legs if you beg for your life now.”

“Nonsense! This war would never have happened if you didn’t betray me! That foolish warmongering faction must have shifted the popular opinion in the Demon Realm towards invading Elrios when I who was against the war disappeared!”

“Yes, that’s correct. That’s why I betrayed you after all.”

Karis licked her lips as if saying it was obvious then twisted her body. Looking down on her old master whom she betrayed must be giving her a quite stimulating pleasure.

“It’s not like I hated you Lord Luciela. Your words were always drastically ideal but you were pretty after all.... And you always came to save me whenever my life was in danger. You treated me who was powerless kindly and adored me. Honestly, I might have loved you... No, I certainly loved you.”

“.....”

“Come to think of it now, I completely fell for you. Yes, so this is love. I fell in love.”

Lu was bewildered by this sudden confession but Karis smiled seductively as if she was getting excited.

“Isn’t that true? When a demon lord who’s so beautiful like a goddess, takes care of you and adores you.... wouldn’t you naturally fall in love with her?”

“You say you love her yet you betrayed her? You’re insane Karis.”

Karis made an extremely dissatisfied face when Ciel replied boldly.

It was if Karis didn't approve of Ciel's existence itself. She glared at Ciel with a murderous intent but sighed in the end then shook her head.

"But Lord Luciela treats everyone equally and was too idealistic. I knew that she didn't adore me because she particularly liked me or because I was lovely. I already knew it was only because I was her subordinate. Not just that, but I wanted to exact vengeance against the Celestial Realm.... That's when Scar timely asked me to join hands with him."

"So?"

Karis burst out laughing when Lu asked calmly.

"Wasn't it same as catching two birds with one stone for me if I betrayed you Lord Luciela? I can both start a war and keep my beloved Lord Luciela caged within my embrace at the same time? Oh my! I had no choice but to betray you after all."

"Are you finished blurting out nonsense Karis?"

Lu frowned as she summoned her magical gauntlets. Karis stared at Lu with extremely overjoyed eyes.

"I love you Lord Luciela. So I'll kill anyone who gets in our way. Then I'll make you submit to my words. No matter how much you try to resist me.... You'll be tormented when people you know start to die in front of your eyes, right? You wouldn't let that happen, right? I'll continue to make you watch Elrios get destroyed until you listen to me, until you accept my feelings."

".....You guys are talking about something very weird. But."

Ignia who had been listening quietly pointed her spear at Karis. She glared at Karis as if she was her sworn enemy.

"If what I just heard is correct.... Lu, demons invaded Elrios because you were exiled from the Demon Realm?"

".....Yes, I could have stopped this war from happening if I stayed in power. It's all my fault."

Flames burst up from Ignia's body when Lu painfully admitted. Ignia's powers were flowing out of control because she was too enraged.

"And Karis' betrayal got you exiled?"

Ignia was grinding her teeth as if everything was clear now.

"So that means, the reason Gloria and Darkmoon died, the reason other priestesses lost their lives....the reason so many people of Elrios died in this war against demons was because of this lunatic demon in front of my eyes?"

“Ah, I get it, you’re the fire priestess.”

Karis gazed at Ignia with bleary eyes as if she just figured out.

“You look pretty too but is a bit arrogant. Well, I guess I can let you into my collection.... But you should know your place. Fix your insolent stare first if you want to stay alive and become my slave.”

“.....I’ll burn you until nothing remains.”

Karis laughed loudly when Ignia gripped her spear tightly while grinding her teeth.

“Ah, is that it? Are you here for revenge? Come to think of it.... there were other priestesses too. Yes, there were.... Scar asked me to kill them so me and my minions took care of them.”

“.....”

“Security was quite lax so they were easy to kidnap. I toyed with them one by one then killed them when I got bored. It wasn’t bad for entertainment. Who were the youngest amongst them again? There were some twins....were they sun and moon priestesses? Am I right?”

Karis smiled brightly as she looked at Ignia.

“Their names were Gloria and Darkmoon, right? Do you know whose name they called before they were mangled to death? Please spare me Master Karis, don’t hate me, Master Karis. I’ll do anything, Master Karis.....”

Boom!! Ignia became an orb of fire in that moment and ran into Karis.

Somewhere in the Grand Cavern.

Add was on his knees and panting after the forced teleport. He recalled the sensation he felt when infiltrating the Velder inner castle so he immediately ran forward to not get separated from Eve.

And the result....

“It’s heavy, useless.”

“.....”

He was holding Eve down on the ground by pressing on her shoulders. Eve looked at Add displeasingly from being pushed down.

“I said it’s heavy, useless.....”

“...Wait.”

Eve looked annoyed because Add didn't move aside but she didn't try to push Add away by force. Come to think of it, Eve always judged Add as useless....but she was treating him as someone she needed to take care of at the same time. She won't instantly retaliate with force even if Add does something rather rude.

She was like that when Add was touching her face before too. Anyways... Add was successful in securing Eve from the forced teleport.

They were by themselves now so this was the perfect chance for Add to achieve his goal.

Add was staring down at Eve while making cold calculations in his head when.... A voice came from above.

"That's a nice scene there. So how long are you two going to stay like that? I'd like it if you proceeded quickly if you're going to do something."

Add raised his head from the sudden voice to see Ara looking down on them as she sat on the tip of her spear which was diagonally stabbed on the ground.

White hair and red eyes, 3 tails waving in the air, it was Eun who was borrowing Ara's appearance.

".....Excuse me."

Add realized Eun was watching so he quickly moved away from Eve. Showing this kind of scene was embarrassing....even if Eun was his ally with the same objective as him.

Eve stood up by grabbing the hand Add held out to her then summoned Ophelia to hit the dust off her back. Eve's gaze as she was tidying up headed towards Eun who was sitting on the spear.

"You're.....not Ara."

"Yes, I'm a nameless fox borrowing Ara's appearance just for a while. I'm an old friend of that boy in front of you."

"Friend?"

Eun shrugged when Add responded to that unreasonable word disgruntledly.

"It's true that we're lovers in time but I shouldn't be saying that in front of the girl. Please do understand."

".....It's getting worse."

Eun gave a beautiful disapproving glance at Add when he frowned from not even wanting to retort.

“My, boy can be quite cruel. Can’t he vouch for me since we’ve fought alongside each other for so long? I should definitely pass for his lover after all we’ve been through. I mean we did sleep on the same bed couple times already.”

“Where is this place?”

Eun purposely made an audible sigh when Add ignored her and started the area scan.

“You’re ignoring me after licking my tails so much in your sleep? That’s so harsh boy. You were only interested in my tails after all”

“.....So Eun was here too.”

Eun nodded when Eve spoke as if she understood.

“That’s correct, girl. But let’s talk about the details later. Boy’s business should be more urgent.”

“Yes, so Add. Where is this place? Where are the others?”

Oberon and Ophelia that Eve commanded were proficient in battle or other petty tasks but they didn’t have any features to scan for life signatures in a wide area.

That feature was for Dynamos alone.

“Everyone seems to have gotten separated....”

Life signatures from far away... El Search Party’s signatures and other signatures around them...

“They must be engaging the enemy.”

“Then let’s go assist.”

Three of them were currently on top of a circular platform floating in midair. While Eve, Oberon and Ophelia had features to float temporarily, they didn’t have any long flight feature.

“What are you doing Add?”

“Dynamo’s flight isn’t perfect yet....”

Dynamos surrounding Add still hadn’t reached their maximum number of 6. Eve noticed this as well and made a disappointed face.

“How useless....”

“.....”

Previous remarks from Eve had been only light teases but she looked really disappointed this time. This hurt Add's pride quite a lot. He wanted to prove that there was no problem in flight with only 5 Dynamos, that he could transport 2 people easily.

But he couldn't. He didn't secure a time alone with Eve for no reason (Although Eun appearing was outside his calculation). He originally planned to achieve his goals during the final battle with the demons....and a great chance to go through with that plan was here.

Add collected his voice as he stared at Eve. He had to start his plan now.

"Wait, there is still a way....."

"Girl, boy is saying he'll give you a ride on the Dynamos if you give him a kiss later."

Add froze from the sound that came from behind him.

This situation akin to him putting a vegetable on the cutting board to start slicing...but someone else taking the entire vegetable and eating it whole.

Eve asked as she looked over Add's shoulder.

"What does that mean?"

"Boy will give you a ride if you give him a kiss later. That's the condition."

".....You mean that membrane contact?"

Eve looked at Add with an expression as if she couldn't understand at all.

Add felt like jumping off from here since all his plot was revealed. Eve's direct stare was....strangely tormenting.

Just battling the demons would be much easier.

"That's an incomprehensible request. According to Rena and Ethesis, humans seems carry out the act as a sign of affection.... But I'm a Nasod."

"But boy is a human. It shouldn't be too difficult of an exchange condition."

Ah, he seriously wanted to tear this fox's mouth apart. After everything he planned was ruined, Add clenched his fists and started to turn around.

I'll tear that fox's mouth off for sure today.....

"I understand. So let's head out quickly now."

"....."

Add who was about to settle his score with Eun froze in place. Eve spoke coldly towards Add who was slowly turning around suspecting if he had just misheard.

“I’ll do it after the fight. So let’s head out quickly.”

“R, really?”

He just asked such a stupid question with such a stupid voice. Add seriously wanted to jump off into that abyss below. Dying would be better than living like this.

Eve became very offended when Add asked again.

“Do you think Queen of Nasods would tell a lie? I promise.”

“.....”

No, was it really okay for her to decide so easily like this? She’s going to do it just as a travel fee(?)?

What has all of Add’s struggles about affection points been for?

“Others could be in danger if we stall too long. Hurry.”

“Uh.....”

Add didn’t realize his face was turning red. Eve made her decision calmly as ever but Add was the one who was flustered right now.

Was this result okay? No, why did he worry so much in the first place if this was going to happen? Didn’t this make him look like an idiot for being so worried?

“Add.”

Eve grabbed Add’s cheeks with both of her hands then made him look straightly into her eyes.

Beautiful Nasod met her eyes with Add then explained clearly with a voice that rang in his heart.

“I know you’re confused about fighting in this different universe and how everyone’s all separated. It’s the same for me, but your Dynamos are the only things that can move without being restricted by the terrain.”

“.....”

“Chance for you to be useful has finally arrived. Try displaying your skills.”

Cool slowly returned to Add’s head when his eyes met Eve’s direct stare and heard her logical decision. Add made a forced smile then started to move his hands.

“Alright, let’s go.”

Five Dynamos opened up like flower petals then floated up while supporting Add's feet. Eve held the hem of her skirt as she stepped on top of the Dynamos.

Add hesitated for a moment then put his arms around Eve's waist to hold onto her tightly.

Eun who was watching turned into the small fox then dived into Add's jacket pocket.

Add spoke strongly after finishing his preparations.

“Let's go.”

Although his mind was cluttered and dizzy, he got a kiss promise from Eve. Let's leave aside the feeling of wanting to question Eve's actions for later.

Even though this Search Party was from a different universe, he didn't want to watch them get killed by demons again.

Everyone was struggling from the battle that ensued after falling into the demon's trap. But their crisis was also their chance. This was the chance to turn this trap against them and achieve victory.

And the only thing that could turn this situation around was Add and his Dynamos.

Eve must have read Add's intentions because she quietly stuck close to him then put her arms around his waist. Human and Nasod held onto each other as they flew across the darkness towards the battle.

The platform turned into a sea of fire. Ignia burned everything in front of her with all her strength then started to pour rain of fire as if she wasn't satisfied.

Grrroowar! Flames hot enough to instantly kill anything they grazed rained down on the platform.

“Wait! That's enough, it's dangerous!”

Ignia managed to withdraw her spear after hearing Lu's complaint coming from behind her. The rain of fire started to subside gradually. Ignia felt like destroying everything but remembered they were standing on top of a floating platform.

The platform had tilted off balance due to Ignia's firepower but was returning to normal once she withdrew her rain of fire.

Ignia glared at the area in front of her where the flames were slowly subsiding.

She poured all the firepower she had because she couldn't hold in her rage. No regular demons could have possibly withstood that.

“With this much.....”

Even Karis, a demon general wouldn't have gotten unscathed. Ignia still focused her attention in front of her just in case. Then she heard a frightening voice.

“That’s a violent way to greet someone, priestess.”

“.....!”

Karis had appeared from behind Ignia without any noises. Ignia instinctively turned around to swing her spear but Karis easily stopped the spear's shaft with her palm.

Then Karis smiled cruelly while stroking Ignia's face with her other hand.

“Wasn't that reaction too much from a little tease? I even praised you for being pretty.....”

“Why you!!”

Enraged by the taunt, Ignia quickly surrounded her body in flames. But Karis read this beforehand and dodged by immediately letting go of the spear and flapping her wings to fly above.

“You're making such a fuss over nothing. Well, it did annoy me how I got to kill all the other priestesses except you. How you lose your temper quickly is quite cute so I'll toy with you for a while then kill you when I get bored. Fire priestess....”

Karis who was mouthing spiteful words urgently turned her head. Bullet that Ciel fired grazed by her cheek.

It didn't end there as Ciel took up position with a cold expression then took his aim toward Karis in the air.

“Death Sentence of Marbas!”

Ratatatatatata! Karis was momentarily surprised by the endless hail of bullets but smiled seductively after as she swiftly dove down. Cruel smile appeared on Karis' face as she dove down while dodging the storm of bullets Ciel fired at her.

“I have no intention of toying with you! I'm going to kill you this instant....!”

Karis was approaching rapidly but her face suddenly got distorted in pain. Lu who was looking for her chance had suddenly jumped up and scratched Karis' side.

Karis' body got flung sideways from the shock of her side being torn apart.

Lu didn't look satisfied even though she had just landed a perfect hit. Lu scolded gravely while glaring at Karis who wasn't moving after falling on her side.

“Stop pretending to be hurt and get up Karis. This shouldn't be all there is to your power.”

Karis' shoulders shook from laughter from hearing those words then she raised her head slightly. Her gestures were enough to seduce any man..... but the smile on her face was indescribably heinous.

“My, that’s so cruel. Getting hit by Lord Luciela hurts my heart more than my body. It’s my side that got hit but it’s also hurting my heart.”

“.....”

Lu stared at Karis without knowing how to respond. This subordinate betrayed her, stole her power, and made her a lone wanderer and now was suddenly making a love confession to her?

Lu treated this as nonsense at first.... But it seemed Karis was being honest after all.

“It looks like your heart has been quite twisted while I wasn’t paying attention to you. I do not wish to speak with you anymore. I’ll take your life right here....for old times sake.”

“Twisted? I don’t understand what you mean. Isn’t it obvious for a demon to steal and destroy to obtain what they want? So if I wanted to obtain you, Lord Luciela and make you a decoration for my room so I can love you whenever I get the chance..... Then I should obviously take your power and make you inferior to me. Wasn’t making you my slave without caring about ways or means the only way for me to fulfill my desires?”

“.....”

Ciel aimed his gunblade with a disgusted expression. He harbored grudge against Karis for killing him when he was still a human but the words she was speaking disgusted him beyond his grudge.

“Ciel.”

Lu clenched her fists as she called Ciel. She was telling Ciel that they should attack together to finish Karis once and for all. But Ignia who had been looking for her chance ran in first.

“Haah!!”

Trail of fire emerged whenever Ignia waved her spear towards Karis. Normal demons would have gotten burnt completely from just being grazed by these flames.

One could block Ignia’s spear but couldn’t block the flames that came after.

Thus, these were attacks that must be dodged. They were incredibly bothersome attacks but Karis calmly dodged all of them then managed to swing her scythe in response.

“You’re cute too.... But you’re in the way right now!”

“Ugh!”

Ignia who didn't expect a counter quickly raised her spear to block. No one ever challenged the Fire Priestess to a close quarters combat because they could get burnt by the flames following her spear attacks and blocking those flames required enormous power.

Karis was a demon general but did she really have the power to block Ignia's flames? After blocking Karis' scythe, Ignia gritted her teeth as she conjured up a huge wall of flames around her. Flames larger than Ignia's height rose up as it spread onto Karis' scythe as well.

But Karis gave up on her scythe without any regret then dodged the flames by flying backwards.

“Spectral Spear!”

Lu's eyes gleamed at this chance as she threw a magical spear at Karis who was flying backwards. This was the perfect chance to get Karis while she had abandoned her weapon. Karis' eyes widened as she hastily dodged to the side but Ciel was already waiting in the line of fire.

“Triple shot!”

Three consecutive shots, three bullets directly hit Karis who had just barely dodged Lu's spear. Karis' eyes opened widely after getting shot on her leg, chest and shoulder in an instant.

“Huh, how did I.....”

As Karis fell to the floor, Lu kicked the ground then dashed in for the finish.

“It's over! Shadow Bolt!”

Lu waved her arm widely as she ran in then magic circle opened above Karis' head. Countless magic spears started to fall from the magic circle as they pierced through Karis' body. Karis who was blocking with her arms couldn't withstand the spears and fell down on her knees while groaning.

As Karis knelt on her knees making painful groans from the spears falling from above her, Lu stood in front of Karis and spoke coldly.

“I'll turn back all the wrongs you've committed. So go to sleep now, Karis.”

“Uuuugh..... uuuhahahahaha!!!”

As a chill went down Lu's spine from Karis' sudden laugh..... arms suddenly came around Lu's neck. Lu looked back in surprise to see Karis smiling with her arms wrapped around Lu's neck.

“You're still good at speaking idealistically Lord Luciela.”

“You.....!”

Was Karis they've been fighting until now an illusion? Lu got frightened and quickly tried to escape by striking Karis with her elbow. But Karis who read this beforehand grabbed Lu's arm tightly then waved her around.

"Now, beg for your life! Lord Luciela!"

Bam! Bam! Bam! Karis repeatedly bashed Lu down on the ground as if she was some kind of toy. Even through all this, Lu gritted her teeth as waved her magic gauntlet.

Slash!! Lu's attack was effective as it made a huge scar on Karis' stomach. Karis got startled and let go of Lu's arm then backed up while pressing down on her wound.

"Ow, it hurts.... Lord Luciela. I just wanted to play....."

"....."

Karis was groaning miserably in pain but Lu was pressing down on her own bleeding wound and was panting as she glared at Karis. Lu's feeling of caution right now was mutual between Ciel and Ignia as well.

This was because.... Karis that was getting struck by the Shadow Bolt and Karis that was in pain from getting hit on the stomach was existing at the same time.

There were two Karises. But they couldn't be twins....

"Did you create duplicates using your mana? But...."

"You would have noticed if it was a trick like that?"

The first Karis stood up after the Shadow Bolt ended. When she put her hand on the shoulder of second Karis who was pressing down on her stomach wound, two Karises combined into one.

Then the stomach wound on Karis healed immediately.

"....."

The three of them closed their mouth from this shocking scene. Duplicating ability was usually for distracting the enemies with an illusion. But what Karis was doing wasn't a normal duplication.

"Do you want to know what this is? I might tell you if you beg me, Lord Luciela."

Tsh! Ciel's gun answered instead. Bullet aimed at Karis' forehead hit its mark.... but Karis was merely frowning in response.

"How dare a lowly human male butt into conversation between me and Lord Luciela? I was originally going to use you to torture Lord Luciela but.... I'm going to kill you after all."

"....."

She could still frown with a bullet stuck on her forehead? Ignia groaned from being aback.

“.....You’re trying to bring about a disaster Karis! You made a foolish choice! How dare you lay your hands on space-time!”

Lu screamed in anger after realizing what was going on. Karis grinned while making a cute wink. As she did this, bullet stuck on her forehead came out on its own then the wound healed by itself.

It was as if time was getting rewound.

“That’s correct. Aaaaah, as to be expected of my Lord Luciela. You have the right to be my favorite slave.”

“Laying hands on space-time is the greatest forbidden act. No demon has gone down that path! Just why.....”

“We’re going to blow away Elrios and the Celestial Realm. So what’s the use in caring about some taboo like that? Scar didn’t complain about this.”

“I’ve made a grave mistake! I helped to raise a disaster!”

Lu glared at Karis with a revolting expression. Lu had been acting emotionally before taking her old relationship with Karis into account but she now looked determined to erase Karis from this world no matter what.

Lu answered quickly when Ciel standing beside her asked what was going on with an eye gesture.

“Karis must have laid her hands upon domain of space-time. What we just saw wasn’t a duplicate, it was Karis that exists in another timeline.”

“.....She’s controlling time?”

Lu nodded nervously when Ignia asked with a surprised voice.

“Thankfully, she can’t seem to use it properly yet. She can only turn back her own time or summon herself from different timeline for now.”

“Aww, Lord Luciela. I won’t get the chance to boast if you keep telling them everything.”

“Laying hands on space-time is not just a forbidden act amongst demons, it’s forbidden across all those who live in this universe! Karis, I’ll punish you today in the place of all lifeforms of this universe!!”

“Will that even be possible? Only thing on my mind is how I’ll play with Lord Luciela.”

Karis seemed to make a seductive groan..... then two Karises appeared beside her. It was 3 versus 3 now. Lu, Ciel and Ignia all exchanged glances then raised their weapons.

Their opponent was a demon who controlled time, even if only just a bit. The fight from before was just Karis playing around. The real fight was about to start.

“Then let’s.....”

“How intriguing.”

Just when Lu was about to make her decision, a voice of admiration came from above. Karis and the Search Party members all looked up to see Add with his eyes gleaming with curiosity.

“That’s very intriguing.....”

Eve who jumped off from the Dynamos landed lightly on the ground then summoned Oberon and Ophelia at the same time.

“So it’s Karis. I’ll fight as well.”

“.....Small fries are mixing in all of a sudden. Just what is that dragon doing?”

Karis put her hands on her waist then complained. Add came down by lowering Dynamo’s altitude then asked after looking curiously at three Karises.

“So they are not copies but are you from other timelines? But from what I know, same individuals cannot exist at the same time in this universe.”

“That’s why I can’t maintain it for too long. Of course, it’s more than enough time to kill all of you.”

Karis unexpectedly answered Add’s question willingly. This was because everyone who saw her time controlling power was scolding her as if she did something wrong..... But some odd guy who recognized its value was praising it.

“Isn’t it burdening even for a short time? How are you maintaining it right now?”

“You must be interested in space-time domain as well..... To put it simply, I’m maintaining it with my enormous mana. Of course, I can’t use any big magic while maintaining this, but it’s still worth it.”

She was easily exposing her weaknesses during this question and answer session..... El Search Party that was about to go into battle were astonished by this turn of events but Add ignored their stares and asked again.

“So that means you’re the original inhabitant of this universe and there isn’t much problem with you multiplying? Even if same person from different universes can’t co-exist.... The original existence of this universe multiplying must be treated as mere cell proliferation. The problem is if the universe has a will of its own....”

“Space-time has a will. Although it’s not an individual will.... But if you think about how time and space is the universe’s core, then saying universe has a will isn’t necessarily wrong.”

“I see. So why is that forbidden?”

Lu who was listening to the questions and answers sighed.

“.....Disturbing time is an immense sin. I need not explain how much disaster someone who bends the past according to their personal desires would bring about.”

“So that’s why you forbid research on time and space?”

Lu frowned when Add asked with shine in his eyes. Eve spoke with an icy tone.

“Add, I don’t think this is the situation to have a friendly chat with an enemy.”

“No, we can talk a bit more. I like his attitude.”

Karis who was their enemy was saying it was okay for Add to question her some more. She looked quite satisfied with Add’s enthusiastic attitude.

Karis had face of a researcher who found a sponsor who recognised the value of her research.

“That means you’re separating the past timeline with you from the present.... Is that possible?”

“It’s not too difficult if you’re powerful as me. The issue is figuring out how to. Even Lord Luciela could do it without much difficulty if she got her powers back. Of course, such a day won’t come.”

“Why would I do something so foolish?”

Lu glared at Karis and then at Add with a frustrated expression. She couldn’t help but to get angry when a Q&A session occurred just when they were getting into the decisive battle.

Of course, Add’s priority was his intellectual curiosity so he didn’t care about how others looked at him.

“No, what I’m curious about is.... There are three of you but how can you maintain your consciousness? Are you all acting after deciding each one of you as Karis A, B and C?”

“I thought it would be like that too but that’s not true. Even though I summoned myself from the past, our consciousness is unified inside me. There are three Karises but we move as one consciousness of the present’s Karis.”

“Thus, even if you summon your past.... They won’t have individual consciousness. Am I right?”

Karis nodded slowly then looked at Add with a captivating gaze. Her gaze was filled with desire.

“You’re not too bad. I didn’t think there was a guy like you in the Search Party....How about it? Want to become my slave? Your face is rather nice so it will be nice to adore you.”

“You’re smarter than I thought as well.... I didn’t think there was a demon that I could discuss this topic with.”

Karis laughed when Add didn’t hide his admiration.

“You’ll have to be taught how to obey your master.... But this is amusing. Come to my side.”

“.....Add.”

A sudden recruitment happened at the end of the Q&A session. El Search Party that were staring in confusion all looked at Add with surprised faces. The original Add would have obviously refused.... But Add right here wasn’t originally from their universe.

He was outsider from a different universe that didn’t need to assist the El Search Party in their battles.

Lu, Ciel and Ignia stared nervously at Add when he didn’t refuse right away. If Add turns into their enemy right now.....

“Add, what are you doing? Keeping your mouth shut won’t hide your uselessness.”

Add just shrugged when Eve spoke to him coldly.

“My calculations are over. I refuse, demon.”

“Is that so?”

Three Karises were about to step forward as if they didn’t mind..... when the ground suddenly got dyed in purple as their bodies became restrained. They tried to escape but they couldn’t.

Add stretched his hand toward Karis then smiled coldly.

“I figured out everything I needed to know. Get lost, demon.”

Then a gate opened above Karis’ head.....and gravity orbs started to fall. Simultaneous activation of Void Field and Stardust Shower, Add was keeping Karis in place with questions so he could calculate the necessary spatial equations for this.

Of course, Karis hadn’t let her guard down completely. She was confident in her ability to summon her past selves and she could even use teleport. That’s why she could spare a moment talking with Add....

But she couldn’t teleport right now!

Sense of dismay showed on Karis’ face for the first time.

“How come?! Just what is this!?”

“Everyone, focus fire!!”

Ignia’s eyes gleamed soon as she heard Add’s shout then she waved her spear widely. Rain of fire started to fall. Lu and Ciel also held their hands together then started to increase their mana flow. Blue demonic energy started to gather..... then two of their wavelengths started build up as overwhelming energy sprouted up.

Lu and Ciel opened their eyes at the same time then shouted burningly to blow away their enemy.

“Eschaton!!”

Space got torn from their harmonious shout as countless demonic spirits flew out of the gap and flew towards Karis. Getting assaulted by Stardust Shower’s gravity orbs, Ignia’s rain of fire and Lu and Ciel’s Eschaton, Karis covered herself with her arms as she screamed.

“Aaaaaaaaah!!”

“Void Field!!”

Her scream meant she was still alive! Add opened up another Void Field to be thorough. Even though Karis could control a bit of time.....even if she obtained unimaginable power....!

“There’s no one who can surpass me in regards to time!!”

Along with Add’s prideful declaration.... Karis’ scream subsided. Eve who couldn’t join in due to the nature of her abilities frowned while looking forward.

“There’s still a life signature.”

“.....What?”

Add who was panting opened his eyes widely from shock. They still couldn’t finish Karis even though Add, Ignia, Lu and Ciel attacked her all at once?

Ignia held her spear tightly as she glared forwards.

“I’ll finish her. That binding move, can you do it one more time?”

“.....I’ll have to even if I can’t.”

Add forced himself to smile while hiding the tremor of his left hand with his right hand. This was a decisive battle against demons, there was no time to cry about little feedbacks.

But Eve shook her head as she stood beside Add.

“You already did your part. I’ll finish it from here.”

“Hmph.....”

Add was about to say this much was nothing when Lu looked at where Karis was then sighed.

“You don’t have to compete with each other. Looks like it’s finished.”

“.....Hah, hah.”

Karis was pressing down on the ground with both of her hands and panting heavily.

Her beautiful face was covered with blood and her arms and legs were burnt so she couldn’t stand up on her own. Karis also knew it was all over if she didn’t do anything so she was trying her best to get back up. But the part below one of her legs was missing already.

She wasn’t acting this time, she was really in dire straits.

“That’s what happens when you lay your hands on time and space, how foolish.”

“.....Lord Luciela, you’re so beautiful even when your saying something like that.”

Karis smiled as if she could recover from this easily but anyone could tell it was over from a single glance. Ignia took a step forward to end Karis’ life when Lu shook her head.

“I’d like to finish her. Please concede, Ignia.”

“.....I can’t. I’ll erase her with my own hands.”

Karis looked at the two argue over who gets to take her life then burst out into a quiet laughter.

“Ahahaha, you’re treating my life like some object ready to be taken? Do you really think you’ve beaten me with just this?”

“Acting tough is useless. I already know your abilities because I’ve fought you in a different universe.”

Add had fought Karis momentarily in the other universe’s Hamel. That’s why he knew Karis utilized teleport and bound her using Void Field. In contrast, Karis had never fought Add(Time Tracer) so she didn’t have any idea about Void Field. She had been overconfident in her ability to control a bit of time and that was what led to her downfall.

El Search Party’s victory would have been uncertain if they had fought Karis directly.

The match had been determined by the difference in amount of information they held.

Add was still on guard for any final desperate struggle from Karis when Karis laughed frantically.

“You knew my ability because you were from a different universe? I see, so you’re the foreign substance that dragon talked about. I didn’t think you’d really exist.”

“.....”

Dragon? But Add didn't intend to drag this conversation longer. Add's only reason for talking with Karis before was to prepare for simultaneous activation of Void Field and Stardust Shower. Although he did get some useful information out of it.....

Karis stopped laughing then made a sorrowful expression. She then pulled out some sort of gem from between her breasts. The gem had an ominous glow to it, it was Dark El.

Lu's eyes widened from recognising this.

“Wait, you can't be thinking about.....”

“Wait just a bit longer, Lord Luciela. I'll love you in a most brutal way possible.”

Karis gave an unpleasant remark then brought the Dark El close to her mouth without any hesitation. Stunned from this unimaginable situation, the El Search Party blankly stared at Karis. Only Ciel reacted to this and shot Karis.

Bullet flew in piercing Karis' shoulder but this didn't stop her from swallowing the Dark El.

Lu was utterly abhorred.

“S, she's seriously insane!”

“That was.... Dark El, right?”

“What happens if she eats it? Will she recover?”

Eve summoned Oberon and Ophelia to prepare for attack when Lu shook her head from side to side.

“Dark El is a crystalized energy. It's not something a lifeform can dare to embody in their body. It's no different from a suicide!”

“Ahahahaha, Ahahahaha!!”

Karis staggered as she stood up as if answering to Lu's scream filled shout. Her burnt body had already recovered. It didn't end there as extraordinary power started to flow out of her body.

White part of Karis' eyes had been dyed black. You could tell she obtained much stronger power than before from how....an enormous amount of mana flowed out of her just from her tightening her fist.

“Perfect! This is the perfect power!! Power that I always wanted!! Now I can shatter anyone that stands in my way, even Scar or original Lord Luciela!! I can destroy the Celestial Realm!!”

“.....Just what is that?”

Ignia clenched her teeth as she asked in disbelief. Ignia was strong enough to gauge her opponent's strength. If Karis from before was still within the range of combatable, this Karis now possessed unimaginable power.

Lu also replied gravely in a wary tone.

“She made the mana in her body explode by using the Dark El. Be careful, Karis right now will be.....at least three times stronger than she was before.”

“Why doesn't other demons do this?”

Add questioned level-headedly. As Lu looked back at him, Add spoke while still glaring at Karis.

“There's no way that kind of doping doesn't have any side effects. Other demons would have done it as well without any hesitation if it just gave them power. But judging from your reaction, it must be the first time you saw this as well. What's its weakness?”

“.....”

Lu who had been surprised at Add's level-headed analysis explained.

“That Karis won't hold out for long. Dark El she swallowed beats instead of her heart as it greedily sucks in all her mana. No matter how long she lasts.....”

“No matter how long she lasts.....?”

They might be able to drag the fight on to make Karis destroy herself. At Add's expectant gaze, Lu spoke clearly as if Karis had committed the most foolish act ever.

“She won't last 100 days.”

“.....”

Concept of time for demons was too lenient. Eve joined in as if she read Add's thoughts.

“That's more than enough time for Karis to destroy Elrios entirely.”

“And that's more than enough time for love confessions. She seems totally obsessed with you. Since she's already out of her mind, wouldn't she stay put quietly for 100 days if you soothed her well?”

Of course, Karis who was now insane wouldn't do that but Add was just following up after what Eve said.

Lu became troubled from seeing Karis expelling her energy for a bit then shook her head disgustedly.

“I don't want to.... I don't want that no matter how benevolent I am.”

“I have no intention of handing Lu over to Karis either.”

Ciel spoke calmly. Ignia also glared at Karis with a new-found determination.

“.....And I have to get my revenge. I’ll end your life this time for sure Karis!!”

“That name doesn’t fit me too well now. Shouldn’t I be called something else since I became this powerful? But I like the name I’ve been using as well....”

Karis licked her lips seductively then made an alluring smile.

“From now on, my name is True Karis!”

“.....That’s a horrible naming sense.”

“I agree.”

Add couldn’t resist pointing that out and Eve unexpectedly agreed with him as well. True Karis didn’t care about their remarks as she stared at Lu like a dreaming girl. Karis’ tenacious, dreamy and obsessive stare bothered Lu and made her wince.

True Karis laughed loudly like a predator facing a frightened prey.

“Ahahahaha!! Just you wait Lord Luciela!! I’ll destroy everything starting now then destroy you very last!! I’ll destroy this world that you love so much! After that I’ll make you sit on a throne surrounded by ruins then ridicule you all I want!!”

Countless magic orbs started to fly towards the Search Party once completely insane True Karis waved her hand. The determined El Search Party all shouted at once.

“Here it comes!!”

“Dodge!”

“Ignia, hit away the magic orbs using rain of fire!!”

Fight with True Karis started with Add giving strategic commands.

Red and blue blades aimed at their foes repeatedly clashed then separated. Elisis wielded her sword composedly but she was getting pushed back slowly.

She was losing.

She had already anticipated this outcome before arriving at the Grand Cavern but she was falling behind after all.

“Is that all you got, Red Haired knight? Come at me more intensely! Stronger!!”

Scar triumphantly swung his sword. You might mistake him for being overzealous just from his words but his attacks were quick and didn't have any unnecessary movements. His attacks were based off brute strength....but Elesis wouldn't be able to dodge the next attack if she tried to lunge in aiming for the openings.

'His strength is phenomenaland his defenses are good as well. He's much stronger than before.'

Elesis had prepared for this final battle with Scar by drawing simulations in her head but this was more than she had imagined. She was still holding out somehow but there was a slim chance that she'll win.

She had accepted Add's advice and changed her mind to think about various ways to defeat Scar. But it was all for nothing soon as it turned into a 1 vs 1 fight like this.

Scar frowned displeasingly then withdrew his sword when Elesis only defended carefully.

“Why aren't you coming at me properly, Red Haired Knight?”

“I was thinking you're stronger than I thought.”

“Hmph, and you became weaker than I thought.”

Scar scoffed as if he was displeased but a flash of joy passed by his face for a moment. There was no one who wouldn't be happy from having their strength acknowledged by their arch rival.

“I wasn't lazy with my training..... but you became far stronger than I would have ever imagined. I'm honestly not sure if I can win.”

“So what will you do? Will you run away?”

Scar glared displeasingly at Elesis then turned his head away for some reason.

“Alright then, get out of here.”

“.....Huh?”

What did that mean? Scar wanted to spare his words but explained bluntly when Elesis couldn't understand.

“I left our fight last time. So I'll give you a chance to leave this time. Get out of here before I change my mind. Go back....then come back after you hone your skills more. We'll finish this next time for certain.”

“.....You're just going to let me go? Just because I'm weaker than you expected?”

“This is your last chance. Become stronger by doing whatever necessary then challenge me again, Red Haired Knight.”

Elesis laughed from Scar’s words. Scar was their enemy and he was the supreme commander of the demon army that invaded Elrios. She shouldn’t be having these thoughts about their enemy. But.....

“I really like how you think, Scar.”

“You’re the only one that gets to go. Others can’t.”

“Don’t worry. I have no intention of delaying our fight. I would never run away by myself and leave my comrades behind.”

Scar frowned from hearing Elesis’ answer.

“I honed my strength while gnashing my teeth since that day. I trained countless hours to become stronger. Was this boring fight the result we’ve been preparing for, Red Haired Knight?”

Scar waved his arm then a large shockwave swept past. Each of his actions were causing tremors in the air. Even a light wave of Scar’s fist could annihilate dozens of regular soldiers.

He was literally a walking disaster, demon general that shook the skies with his fighting spirit alone. Only Elesis who was undoubtedly the strongest in Elrios could match him blow to blow until now.

But the result could be seen already. They say you never knew until you actually tried, but Elesis’ skills will barely not be enough..... Both Elesis and Scar realized this.

“Are you going to waste all of my efforts I’ve put into defeating you, this fight we’ve been longing for, in such a boring manner? Are you going to disappoint me because you’re worried about those weaklings? Red Haired Knight?! No, Elesis!!!”

“.....”

Elesis sighed from hearing Scar’s rage filled howl. Although her opponent was a demon trying to resurrect the demon god and destroy Elrios..... at least his anticipation towards fight with Elesis was pure.

Although it was an unfit description, Scar was a true warrior.

He was a warrior who could tolerate giving his arch rival a chance to escape so he could settle the score later after returning stronger.

“Scar, regardless of our species.... If you’re a warrior then I’m a warrior as well. I appreciate your generosity and I’m honestly impressed. But not abandoning one’s comrades is also what being a warrior is all about.”

“Comrades? How stupid. You’re choosing a foolish death despite knowing the difference between our strengths.”

Scar realized Elesis was determined to not back down so he raised his word again.

But unlike his resolute face, his next question was still overflowing with regret.

“I’ll ask for the last time. Do you have any intention of finishing this fight later?”

“.....I’m going to ask just in case but will you stop the demon god resurrection ritual if I back out?”

“Of course not.”

“But Elrios will be destroyed if the demon god resurrects. I’m not demanding you stop the destruction..... don’t you think it’s strange for me to hone my skills when Elrios is being destroyed?”

She didn’t have any intention to run away but even if she did what Scar said and escaped to fight another day..... Wouldn’t there be no time to train since Elrios will be destroyed?

But Scar replied with a tone as if he just heard a strangest question ever.

“If the world is in chaos, isn’t it the perfect condition for honing one’s skills?”

“....Ah, I understand. That idea is a bit too macho for my taste.”

Elesis sighed then gripped her sword with both of her hands.

“I tend to forget these days but I’m a girl too..... I like a peaceful world and has been training all this time to protect that peace. The world falling into chaos is completely against my methods.”

“It’s fine if you made up your mind. It’s regretful but let’s finish this here.”

Scar spoke in a heavy voice as if he abandoned his regrets then raised up his sword. Elesis also shouted as she gathered her strength. Elesis’ sword became surrounded in red light then became gigantic.

According to Elesis’ original plan, this secret skill was supposed to be used as a finisher after securing her victory..... But she ended up using it now to cover for her inferiority.

But Elesis didn’t let herself feel down as she poured courage into herself.

“Here I come, Sword of Victory!”

“Insignificant trick, I’ll shatter it!!”

Elesis ran in against the enemy she couldn’t defeat despite knowing she’ll lose.

Raven quickly backed out as In's restraining orb flew towards him. Jin was about to swing her serpentine sword at maximum length towards Raven but leaned her body backwards urgently. Rena's arrow grazed by the place where Jin's head was.

But this acrobatic movement made it difficult for Jin to dodge consecutively. Rena was about to shoot her next volley of arrows but backed out displeasingly. In had thrown his restraining orb at Rena.

In was about to throw more orbs at Rena but he backed out then frowned. Raven was running toward In.

“Tch!”

In quickly gave up his attack then backed out behind Jin. In was in charge of ranged support so it was obvious who was advantageous if he fought with Raven at close range. Raven didn't chase further when he noticed Jin was poised to sling her serpentine swords again.

Rena sighed then wiped the sweat off her forehead. In and Jin were also collecting themselves so a mutual ceasefire was established.

“.....There's no end to this. We can't afford to get stalled like this.”

If one person was in danger then their teammate covered their back. This dicey confrontation of chasing each other's tails seemed to be endless.

“Got any good ideas, Rena?”

“Well.....”

Rena was an all around type that fought by mixing sword and bow skills while Raven was a close combat type. Compared to that, In was a long range attack type while Jin could handle both close and long ranges.

Honestly, Rena and Raven were superior if you considered only their individual skills. This wasn't a boast.... Rena came to this conclusion with cold and level-headed comparison.

But compatibility with their enemies wasn't too good. If In and Jin kept fighting passively from the long range then Rena had to respond with her bow as well....and Raven who could only shine in close combat had no choice but to watch.

Although the situation was at a stalemate, In and Jin must have realized their skills fell behind so they were being cautious with their attacks. It was a situation where one single wrong move could not only endanger one's own life but could endanger their partner's life as well.

And their partners were people precious to them. Both sides couldn't engage in battle carelessly.

Rena was pondering for a solution while drawing a frown on her beautiful face when Raven took a step forward while clenching his fist.

“.....There’s no time. We’ll have to make a move first.”

“Raven!”

What was he thinking? Rena got alarmed and tried to dissuade him but Raven wasn’t acting thoughtlessly.

“They just have to stall for time. But we have to break through.”

“.....”

They were on time limit since they had to stop the demon resurrection ritual. Not only that, but other members that got separated could be in danger.

Rena was also thinking Raven’s method was correct. They had to break through and achieve victory no matter how reckless of a method they used. But she wanted to deny Raven’s words in her heart.

Because she wasn’t the only one who’ll be in danger if this went wrong.

“Rena, other kids might be in danger.”

“...But that doesn’t mean it’s okay for you to be in danger.”

Raven smiled vaguely at Rena’s scolding voice. It was a smile that this blunt man rarely showed.

“I’m strong.”

“.....”

Rena was about to shake her head to deny Raven’s unreasonable words but he was already moving forward. After collecting his breath, Raven ran straightly towards Jin without any hesitation.

In obviously didn’t let this chance slide and tried to throw his restraining orbs..... but Rena fired multiple arrows to distract him.

Rena pressured In without giving him any moment to rest as she hollered towards Raven’s back.

“I’ll get mad if you get hurt even a little!”

The tight stalemate started to be shaken off balance. This confrontation will decide the victor. Rena had no choice but to believe in Raven’s victory as she faced In in front of her.

“.....”

Jin coldly swung her serpentine sword at Raven who was charging directly towards her. Raven's fist had too short of a reach compared to her serpentine swords that could adjust their lengths freely.

No matter how skilled Raven was, there was no way Jin could be at a disadvantage.....

But Raven was still running towards her without any hesitation despite seeing the serpentine sword coming right for his throat. Confusion flashed by Jin's face when her check was completely ignored. If he isn't trying to commit suicide.....

Sword that flew in aiming for Raven struck its target.

Clank!!

Ring of clashing metal was heard. Raven blocked the serpentine sword flying towards his neck by raising his left arm, his Nasod hand. It was an unexpected obstacle. Nasod hand was too sturdy for the serpentine sword to cut through so the sword got tied around the hand instead.

But the serpentine sword winding violently caused injuries nearby Raven's neck as blood trickled down and soaked his chest.

But Raven didn't make any sound from the pain as he clenched his fist tightly then focused on the target he was about to blow away.

“.....”

Jin only hesitated for a moment then swung her other serpentine sword right away. Raven must be trying to drag this into a contest of strength but Jin was a dual wielder. She just had to finish Raven off with her remaining sword.

Rena couldn't help him since she was tied up from facing In.....

“Haaaaaaaah!”

In that moment, Raven let out a boiling shout. It was an unwavering howl that disregarded the immediate danger approaching him. Jin instinctively sensed danger and quickly tried to escape. But Raven's charge was even faster.

Almost like the tempest about to blow everything away!

“Wild Charge!!!”

“!!”

Jin got shocked and attempted to escape somehow as Raven closed the distance in an instant with unimaginable speed.

Jin had already used all the weapons she had and Raven's charge was just too fast. Her sibling that could cover for her in this crisis...was currently struggling desperately against Rena.

Baaaaam!!

Punch that destroyed anything standing in its way struck Jin's body. Jin's body flew into the air and out of the platform as she spewed out blood.

It was all over.

Jin sensed this as she used small remaining strength she had to turn her eyes to search for her sibling.

In who was in middle of his battle with Rena also noticed the disturbance and was looking at Jin in shock.

“.....”

Gazes of the siblings crossed only for a moment. Jin quietly fell towards the bottom without letting out any screams. In was about to shout....but then Rena ran in with her blade drawing a chilling arc.

In's body also got lifted in the air then flew out of the platform from the large slash and a kick that came after.

“Kugh.....”

As In fell, he sent an enraged glare at Rena but resignation dwelled in his face soon after.... He turned his gaze towards the bottom.

To search for his sibling that fell before him.

“Phew.....”

After the situation was over, Rena withdrew her sword as she collected her breath. In was a quite bothersome foe as well but she was able to finish him off easily once he let down his guard from the shock of seeing Jin fall down first.

“.....and we already heard how you guys fought from Elesis.”

In and Jin's combat methods were already known to the El Search Party but In and Jin didn't know how Rena and Raven fought.

Jin wouldn't have fell from trying to finish off Raven right away otherwise.

“.....”

Rena let out a long sigh then turned her head around while shooting an angry gaze.

Raven who about to stretch his back received this gaze then winced. His reaction was like a big dog getting scolded by his master.

Rena approached Raven angrily then demanded one-sidedly.

“.....I told you not to get hurt!”

“It was an accident.”

“That wasn’t an accident..... You did it again thinking it was okay to get hurt, right?!”

Raven kept silent as Rena shouted angrily. The reason they could get out of this stalemate was because Raven had charged in without regarding his safety. But Rena wouldn’t have allowed this strategy if she knew about it beforehand.

Rena kept glaring at Raven but then let out a sigh as she shook her head from side to side.

“I kept telling you to stop doing something like this.”

“That wasn’t it.....”

Raven tried to speak but closed his mouth. Rena tore a large chunk of cloth off her outfit’s waist decoration. Raven realized what she was trying to do and tried to stop her but it was already too late.

“Stay still.”

“.....”

Rena wiped Raven’s neck with a cloth made from tearing apart her own clothing. The bleeding had been severe..... Raven was covered in blood all the way down to his chest.

Raven finally opened his mouth when Rena quietly and carefully wiped the blood off.

“.....I’ll be more careful next time.”

“Forget it. I don’t even expect you to listen anymore. You always try to fight like that.”

Raven didn’t have any answer to her feisty response.

After wiping the blood all the way down to his chest.....Rena let out a weak sigh as she spoke sternly.

“.....But I will never forgive you if you die. Never.”

“Rena.”

“You of all people, don’t ever die, in front of me.....”



Rena's shoulder shook thinly as she spoke in a quiet voice. Raven hesitated for a moment.... then slowly stroked the back of Rena's head. Rena must be having trouble suppressing her surging emotion because her body was shaking thinly and she didn't make any other movements for a while.

Rena used to express her emotions freely in the past. But she never let her emotions out like this ever since she witnessed the tragedy that befell her race.

Maybe he had wished for Rena to show her emotions again like before. Since smiling face suited her better.

Raven blankly thought about this....but didn't have any idea what he should do right now.

Although crudely, all he could do was hold her until her shaking shoulders calmed down.

Raven's mouth as he gently held Rena opened on its own. Words he didn't prepare were coming from his heart.

".....Rena."

"....."

Raven spoke with a softest voice he could manage, but resolutely as well.

"I'm strong so I won't die. I promise."

".....I'll believe you."

Rena nodded with a shaky voice then slowly grabbed Raven's hand. Rena sadly stroked Raven's cold steel left arm for a while then slowly stepped back.

Raven wanted to grab the warmth that was leaving his embrace but didn't.

Rena who had her gaze lowered slowly shook her head from side to side then raised her head. Her face was cold as if her dishevelled voice and emotional moment from before had been an illusion.

"In and Jin has been taken care of. If our information is correct then only problematic demons left are Scar and Karis. The problem is how to escape from here....."

Although Rena and Raven were amongst top fighters in the El Search Party, they didn't have any means to fly. Was there any other way out of here? Two of them were looking around the platform again.... When a dark hole suddenly appeared at the center of the platform.

Two of them immediately poised for battle at the familiar scene.

"It's a dimension gate."

"Nothing's coming out."

According to the usual pattern, demons poured out whenever the dimension gates opened. But nothing came out from this dimension gate. The portal just remained open emitting an ominous aura.

“.....Raven.”

“I have the same thought.”

Two of them had been together for a long time so they could both come to a same conclusion easily. Did this dimension gate appear so two of them could use it?

“The problem is.....”

“It’s too suspicious.”

They had seen many demons utilize the dimension gate, but the El Search Party had never used it before. Of course, Rena and Raven didn’t have any experience using it either.

Rena shook her head.

“This is obviously a trap. Why would demons do a favor for us? They went out of their way to separate us so there’s no way they would let us join up again so easily.”

“That should be normal. But....”

Raven agreed too but couldn’t avert his gaze from the dimension gate. Their foes could have deployed more demons or isolate the two of them on this platform. There was no reason for them to open a path.....

“They’re provoking us.”

“.....How cheap.”

Rena and Raven both agreed that they were reluctant but also agreed there was no other way than this one.

Only way to escape from this place... It was suspicious no matter how you looked at it, but they didn’t have any time to waste.

More the two delayed, more their comrades could be in danger. After coming to an agreement, two of them stepped towards the dimension gate.

“.....Wait, since you never know what might happen.”

Rena said this then carefully grabbed Raven’s right hand. Although hesitating for a bit, she locked her fingers with his so they wouldn’t be separated.

“I don’t know where this will lead to.... but don’t let go.”

“Yes, let’s go together.”

Raven got startled for a bit but nodded then began to walk towards the dimension gate. Path ahead was filled with endless darkness but Raven didn’t have any hesitation.

Since he was going together with her.