

심판의 1 군주

오늘도요 현대 판타지 장편소설
DONG-A MODERN FANTASY

Sovereign of Judgment

- 심판의 군주 -

**- Episode 2 -
Exodus**

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오늘도요**

[Myoniyoni Translations]

CHAPTER 14

ENCOUNTER (1)

My mother worked at a design company. She liked to make everything. The fans and mobiles she made would always be my toys. I wasn't good with my hands. Instead, I would watch my mother as she made things. My mother would put snacks next to me as I watched her make pants and bags. I spent my childhood eating snacks while watching her quick hand movements.

When I was alone, I usually read books. Once I went into high school, my mother allowed me to use the T.V. and the computer... but I kept my habit in reading books. Although I read things like travel magazines, I would mainly read books on design, architecture and programming. Perhaps it was the influence of my mother but I wanted to be a person who made things when I grew up.



Choi Hyuk opened his eyes. Early morning. He slowly relaxed his heightened senses. He wrapped the Fang Saber and Predator's Blade he untied yesterday and put on the Tireless Boots. He took out a toothbrush and toothpaste from his bag and roughly brushed his teeth. He checked his smartphone just in case but his smartphone still wasn't working.

He stepped out into the hallway. He could smell something delicious.

And there was Jung Minji.

"You should eat before you go."

She started to boil and fry the leftover food that she had eaten with her followers. Her followers returned in an orderly fashion.

The people who smelled the warm food naturally found their way to the cafeteria. Choi Hyuk followed Jung Minji to the cafeteria as well. All 452 survivors gathered in the cafeteria. Among them, 349 people were part of the Crazy Knight King Jung Minji's troops and 103 were part of the Slave King Song Simin's troops.

24 people deserted them at night and Kim Hyunbaek and his executives, in total 7, had died. The 98 people left from Kim Hyunbaek's group were absorbed into Jung Minji's troops. Above their heads was a symbol of a bloody knight.

7 of the deserters came from Jung Minji's group, 15 from Kim Hyunbaek's and 2 from Song Simin's. Unexpectedly, Song Simin's group had the least number of deserters.

While everyone was eating, an announcement appeared.

{The 24 who didn't return in the morning. Perished.}

"As expected..."

People murmured to themselves. They would never see the 24 who had left yesterday night. And 'deserter'... Jung Minji's guess was right. They were making them into an army. Although, he didn't know what the army was for.

Choi Hyuk just grinned.

Soon after, the mission for today was announced. No... a 30-day mission was announced.

{Throne Game + Survive and Escape}

1. All of Gangdong district has become a war zone. You cannot go past Gwangjin bridge in the north and the stadium in the south.
2. On the 30th day, the location of escape code will be announced. Only the troop who has obtained the escape code may escape.
3. The locations of places with living supplies will be announced.

{Locations of supplies that are currently close to you}

1. D Mart
2. Herb Astronomy Park

The locations of supplies were all within 30 minutes of the school.

“Survive...? Is it telling us to have a free-for-all for supplies?”

Choi Hyuk bit his teeth.

The somewhat lively atmosphere became chilly. To survive and escape... it may be as hard or harder than yesterday.

In this atmosphere, Jung Minji made an announcement.

She was troubled over it during mealtime but after seeing the new announcement, Jung Minji made up her mind.

‘The rule about absolutely following king’s orders is gone. Unlike the test yesterday, this time, they want us to really show our leadership skills. Then, I need to clarify the issue about Kim Hyunbaek.’

So that she could justify herself if a controversy arose. Jung Minji announced.

“As everyone knows, yesterday, Kim Hyunbaek died. No, Kim Hyunbaek and 6 executives of the Heckler troop died. In their drunken stupor, they molested a female student and committed other devious acts. They ignored our restraining order and even launched a pre-emptive strike. All 7 died in the fight. I am sorry we couldn’t resolve it peacefully.”

The cold atmosphere of the cafeteria calmed down a level. There were many points of suspicion. Who was molested? Did the Heckler King really launch a pre-emptive attack? Luckily, the fight began after Kim Hyunbaek took his close friends to drink elsewhere. There were no witnesses. But who would speak out? After the survivors said so. They even said they were sorry they couldn’t resolve it peacefully.

Only Song Simin raised his hand and asked.

“Did you have to kill him?”

“There was no other choice.”

That was it.

Afterwards, their destination was decided. Jung Minji and Song Simin allied together and went to D Mart.

There were some who suggested visiting their homes but they were quickly shot down. As the sun rose, they could see the area in front of the school lay in ruins. Smashed cars. As if someone had gnawed on the bones, there were pieces of bones and flesh everywhere. It was unreasonable to split up and visit their homes in this situation. Besides one person, Choi Hyuk.

“Are you going to be fine by yourself? We don’t know what it’s like outside.”

“It’s fine.”

“Okay.”

Jung Minji wanted to be with the strong Choi Hyuk but once Choi Hyuk refused, she didn’t ask again.

Choi Hyuk left the still eating troops of Jung Minji and Song Simin and walked out of the school entrance by himself.

As soon as he left the entrance, he ran towards his home.



Just what happened? In a day, the city lay in ruins. The more he ran, Choi Hyuk’s worry for his mother turned to anxiety.

However, Choi Hyuk didn’t find any traces of his mother in his home. Looking at the sink filled with dishes, it seemed like his mother never made it back home yesterday.

‘Is this despair? Or hope?’

He couldn’t guess. That it was hopeful since she didn’t walk through the ruined streets. Or if she couldn’t return due to a catastrophic event.

His heart raged with a burning anger and anxiety. Choi Hyuk swallowed those emotions down.

He walked down the stairs because the elevator was broken. He left the apartment complex. And Choi Hyuk stopped when he felt a chill. A different air blew in the apartment complex. His 20/10 vision looked at his surroundings. There were one, two, three people looking down at him from the apartment windows.

And a disgusting smell.

He saw those people waving their hands, it was desperation. He could clearly see their meaning. 'Leave! It's dangerous!'

Choi Hyuk clenched his teeth. The reason why he decided to move alone was first to check if his mother was safe. But, that wasn't all.

'Throne Game + Survive and Escape, this time, two games are combined into one.'

If you only looked at the mission itself, you would think that this was mainly about the 'Survive and Escape' but it was definitely a continuation of the Throne Game. If that was the case, there was a need to faithfully uphold his role as the 'King without Subjects'. To make the eyes of the creators who were hidden behind the scenes widen, to become the real winner, he couldn't be lazy or compromise.

'The fact that there is a rule about the King without Subjects means that there is a way to become the king of this game without any followers.'

Choi Hyuk threw away all the weak thoughts of 'Maybe? Perhaps. Dangerous!' It might even be somewhat overkill. However, the more he compromised, the more his goal would crumble.

Choi Hyuk jumped on top of a smashed car, much less ran away. He examined his surroundings with his keen senses. His eyes saw the 'thing' that was curled up between smashed up cars.

"Ruuuuuun!"

Someone's scream. A sudden stench. Instead, Choi Hyuk raised his Predator's Blade and charged forward.

A claw as sharp as a blade swept above his head. He still wasn't able to clearly see the figure of the 'thing'. However, it was big and fast. Ooze seeped out from its black skin. Even its smell was repulsive.

Choi Hyuk slashed the wall-like figure in front of him. Black blood spurted out. Choi Hyuk reflexively fell back and avoided the black blood. As soon as the blood made contact with the asphalt, it melted. Although he did try to avoid it, he was still splattered with blood. Perhaps, it was due to his 70 Endurance. The karma in his body

grew hotter and evaporated the black blood. Though, his clothes were riddled with holes.

{Graaawr!}

The wounded thing screamed. A very low sound. It wasn't loud. The despair that sounded out below what a human could hear made Choi Hyuk's body shiver.

Puunch!

At the same time, Choi Hyuk's body bounced back. He was hit in the arm. Because he was reflexively able to avoid the claw, he was hit in the elbow. He was able to reduce the impact.

As he flew away, Choi Hyuk was able to see the 'thing'.

It was big. It seemed to be 2m tall and 5m long. Its back was hunched like a ferret's and its large head and horn was like that of a rhinoceros as well as ghastly claws and thick legs. Its killing intent filled his vision with red. It was literally a monster.

Only when he slammed into a ruined car did he stop. If it was like any other day, the impact would have instantly killed him. However, his 70 Endurance let him avoid any big injuries. He lifted his aching body and ground his teeth.

'It was hiding that much killing intent?'

The killing intent it was emitting was like a sunset as it covered his surroundings with a red light. But, when it was hiding between the cars, nothing was reflected by his Eyes of Distinction. Fucking bastard.

{Graaawrawwrawwwr!}

It roared as if it was trying to pressure him. But because of the low sound, it wasn't very loud. Instead, his whole body vibrated.

Clank!

The nearby windows shattered.

"Damn it."

Choi Hyuk's body leaned forward as if it was about to fall and he put strength in his ankles before shooting forwards. It just seemed unfamiliar because it wasn't human. Choi Hyuk had already understood its body structure.

Whoosh!

Its right claw missed once again. At the same time, it raised its left.

"I already saw that."

Choi Hyuk slipped through the armpit of its lifted arm. The Predator's Blade sliced its armpit and drank its blood.

{Graaahhhhh!!}

He didn't pay attention to its scream and continued slicing its side. The monster jumped at him wielding its claw. Choi Hyuk avoided the claw with a paper-thin margin. Choi Hyuk didn't lose his balance nor did he fall back but stood there as he watched the monster jump at him.

It jumped 5 meters into the air. Choi Hyuk met its eyes. Their killing intents tangled together.

Its heavy body fell to the ground. It wasn't really an attack. More like a landing. But normally you would avoid whatever was falling down from the sky. Let alone a claw-wielding monster.

But Choi Hyuk used his keen senses to find an opening. He found a path where he could avoid being hit and picked a location where he would be able to endure its weight with his Power and Endurance.

Choi Hyuk jumped.

Stab!!!

A flesh wrenching sound was heard.



“Ahh...”

A 31-year-old unemployed Kim Chulho who lived in an apartment plaza was in despair. Another person died. He even shouted his lungs out to warn him of the monster but he died.

The monster that appeared yesterday night, the ‘Crook’. Ignoring the message in the morning was the source of his troubles.

{Assemble}

Location. Shinmyung Middle School.

The attack of the Crooks is approaching. Gather and wait at the assembly area.

“I am seeing things.”

Kim Chulho snorted as he turned on his computer.

“What? Why isn’t it turning on?”

And the television didn’t work either. He should have thought something was weird then. However, Kim Chulho went to the manhwa store to borrow a manhwa and rolled about in his home. He then ate food and slept early. And in that state, he was isolated in his home.

When night fell, hell broke loose. Kim Chulho woke up from the roars. They weren’t loud. But whenever they roared, the apartment would shake. Although it was a strange day where his phone and television didn’t work, there still were people walking and working like a normal day. And that day was destroyed in the end.

People were eaten while still inside cars. One would die with their every step. Even their screams were overwhelmed by their roars. Their souls might have even been eaten. His parents never returned. And the day brightened.

Kim Chulho felt like everyone besides him had died. Dread. Loneliness. It was when he was like that he saw a man. He felt so happy to see him. On top of that, he was really, really strong. He fought with the Crook. He even wondered if he was really human. The

two swords at his side were strange and some sort of black flag like thing lingered above his head. But what did it matter if he was a human or not? Anyone who resisted the monster was on 'his side'!

But... he was squashed by the Crook. Kim Chulho despaired.

However...

The body of the Crook which seemed to weigh a few tons started to lift up. A boom sounded out and a human popped out from underneath. It was Choi Hyuk.

Spit!

In the apartment complex quiet as death, even the sound of someone spitting could be heard clearly.

Choi Hyuk cleaned the blade stabbed into the body of the Crook and shouted.

“Up there! Come down!”

Of course, no one answered. Kim Chulho foolishly stood there thinking, ‘He survived? He killed the monster?’

Then Choi Hyuk cut the Crook’s heavy head off and lifted it up high before throwing it on the ground. Its head was so big that it looked like it weighed half a ton...

Slam!

A sound of an explosion sounded out. Choi Hyuk stood on that head and shouted again.

“It’s dead so don’t worry and come down!”

Before he knew it, Kim Chulho was already on his way down.

CHAPTER 15

ENCOUNTER (2)

The three people who came down were the unemployed 31-year-old Kim Chulho, an elderly man and a middle-aged woman. Choi Hyuk listened to their situation.

Unexpectedly, the situation outside the school was completely different. First, there wasn't anything like the Ring of Rebirth or the Throne Game.

"Ring? I don't know about that. Just the television didn't work and some weird words appeared but nothing happened. In the morning."

"Once it became night, the monsters attacked. Like the one you fought just now."

"Besides that, there was a re~ally big monster. It only appeared for a second... I'm telling you it was the size of an apartment. I couldn't see it very well because it was dark... but light shined out from its eyes and mouth... yeah. A dinosaur. It was like a dinosaur."

"That exaggeration! I didn't see anything like that!"

"I didn't see it either..."

"I'm telling you I saw it!"

Choi Hyuk was deep in thought. How many slashes would it take to kill an apartment-sized monster? Would that be enough?

Anyways, that was all the useful information they had.

"I understand. I am going to Shinmyung Middle School. What are you going to do?"

The three looked at each other. In the end, the elderly man decided to stay in the apartment while the middle-aged woman and Kim Chulho followed him. It looked like the middle-aged woman held some expectations that her husband and child might be there.

They were currently imagining Shinmyung Middle School as a refugee shelter.

However, in reality, that place was a war zone.



There were quite a few people who found the message that appeared in front of their eyes unusual. Since it didn't only appear for them. On top of that, all communication was cut and those who wanted to leave Gangdong district were blocked by a weird wall. A situation they couldn't understand... That was why people gathered at the assembly area, Shinmyung Middle School.

Those who arrived at Shinmyung Middle School received a message.

{Throne Game + Survive and Escape}

1. All of Gangdong district has become a war You cannot go past Gwangjin bridge in the north and the stadium in the south.
2. On the 30th day, the location of the escape code will be announced. Only the troops who have obtained the escape code may escape.
3. Occasionally, locations of places with living supplies will be announced.

Besides the fact that they had yet to receive the locations of the supplies, the message was the same as the one the students received.

At the same time, they received a message and their bodies filled with strength.

{You have arrived at the assembly area. Karma has been distributed.}

At Shinmyung Middle School, there were many supplies necessary for battle. Food, weapons, item scrolls as well as a 3-day 'Weakening Barrier'.

The 'Weakening Barrier' was especially important. While the barrier was in effect, abilities of monsters that entered the school would be reduced to less than half. If that

wasn't the case, with the stats of these people who had just received karma, they would no be able to avoid annihilation on the first monster attack. But, even these weakened monsters were too strong for these people.

When night fell, monsters came while these people were buzzing in confusion and anxiety. That was when hell broke loose.

“Gahhhhhh!”

“Aaaahhhh!”

“This bastard!!”

The battlefield rampant with curses and screams.

The actions of the monsters, Crooks, were similar to wolves. They were shrewd. They never fought humans head-on. First, people blockaded themselves in the school. But the Crooks stepped on each other as they jumped onto the 2nd floor. Although they were distributed karma, the old and the weak who weren't mentally prepared were located on the 2nd floor.

It resulted in massive losses. As the people at the frontlines hurriedly gathered on the 2nd floor, the Crooks fell back to the field like a receding tide.

The Crooks excelled in psychological warfare. They all disappeared together and once people relaxed due to their absence, they launched a surprise attack. This battle continued on the whole night. Now people no longer set up a blockade in the school building but rather herded them into the field and started a bloodbath. They had realized that instead of fighting in narrow hallways, it was more effective to fight in formation in a large area. One-third of the people died in vain before they realized this. Although it was a fight between around 2000 people and 60 monsters, currently there were 1371 people and 46 monsters left. Luckily, if not for the fact there were many men who had military experience{1}, it wouldn't have been strange for them to be annihilated that night. An unorganized group was no better than delicious candy for them.

However, such dire situations were opportunities for outstanding individuals to showcase their talent.

“Fucking monster bastards...”

Kang Dongsoo was like that. He who had become acknowledged by everyone for his command felt that it was time to end the fight. Although they obtained a mystical power known as karma, after prolonged skirmishes and brawls, everyone was extremely exhausted. It was obvious that if this was to continue, they would crumble like a sand castle.

So Kang Dongsoo organized a suicide squad{2}.

‘While we still have strength, we need to clear out the Crooks and rest a bit.’

However, that wasn’t easy.

‘The biggest problem is that the Crooks fall back when they are at a disadvantage.’

The Crooks would fall back even if they were slightly disadvantaged. There was nothing they could do. Since they weren’t faster than them nor could they leave the Weakening Barrier. The moment they left the barrier, against the Crooks that regained their true strength, humans would break apart like tofu.

There was another problem. The Crooks recovered much faster than humans. That was why they would run out of the barrier, recover then charge back in. The Crooks would become energetic while the humans became sluggish.

‘I have to stop them from retreating.’

That was why the role of the suicide squad was important. The suicide squad’s mission was simple. Secretly leave and hide and once the Crooks charged into the field, they were to cut off their retreat.

“We will end it with this! Let’s go!”

“Go! Kill those bastards!”

“Oorahhh!”

The moment Choi Hyuk’s group arrived at Shinmyung Middle School was when these 300 people of the suicide squad were desperately trying to block the Crooks’ retreat.

“Gaaaah!”

“Stop them!”

“We can’t let them pass!!”

The surround Crooks ferociously lashed out but like their name, the suicide squad blocked their retreat with their lives. Because of that, they were able to kill an additional 7 Crooks. However... the suicide squad was dying at a rate much faster than that.

Choi Hyuk looked at the scene and said one thing.

“...They’re going to break through.”

At the same time, his body shot forward. Kim Chulho and the middle-aged woman who were suddenly left behind in this dangerous place quickly hid.

‘Fuck... This won’t be enough... ’

The leader of the suicide squad, Kang Dongsoo, felt nervous. It would be dangerous if this continued. They had to at least reduce them to a single digit for them to be relieved but at this rate, there would be at least ten left.

He put more strength into it. Due to his insufficient Stamina, the karma relaxed but he gritted his teeth as he brought out more power.

“Stop them!”

Just when the shield user in front of him was pushed away, Kang Dongsoo stabbed the monster’s forehead.

Pusch!

It definitely was an E rank sword made from an ‘item scroll’. If it was an F rank weapon, it wouldn’t have been able to penetrate its skull and would have slipped off... the sword pierced its forehead.

“Dongsoo hyung{3}! Watch out!”

The suicide squad member behind him shouted out. He became startled. He looked and found a Crook charging towards him. It made his blood freeze. Facing a perilous

situation, Kang Dongsoo's cognitive ability exploded into full gear. The oncoming Crook seemed to move in slow motion. What was tragic was... that unlike his cognitive ability, his physical abilities didn't improve.

Dongsoo tried to avoid it by rolling backwards... his speed couldn't match that of a Crook's. In his focused state, Kang Dongsoo looked at the Crook as it slowly came closer.

'So this is how I die.'

Just when all kinds of thoughts were flashing through his mind, something jumped over Kang Dongsoo. He couldn't even see him in the slow motion he was seeing the world in, On top of that, he was swiftly wielding a blade. Slowly, the Crook began to split apart.

Splash!

The Crook that was split in two slipped past both sides of Kang Dongsoo.

"Wh... what? Who?"

Only then did he wake up from his stupor. However, the person, Choi Hyuk, had already moved on to the next Crook.

"What the... I feel lighter than before?"

Choi Hyuk who didn't know the existence of the Weakening Barrier felt strange. He put a lot of strength into it since he thought they would be as tough as the one he killed at the apartment but if it was like this, he could use less strength.

"Good... Anyways, I should finish this as fast as I can."

Choi Hyuk started to squeeze out the karma in his body.

One in the apartment, another just now, he had only killed two Crooks but his Control was already at 92. Every time he killed one, his Power would increase by 5, speed by 4 and the rest would increase by 3. Even his stamina that didn't rise rose by 0.1.

{Choi Hyuk}

Power: 81 (+5) Speed: 83 (+5) Control: 92

Endurance: 76 Stamina: 0.2 (★) Recovery: 96 (+10)

{Before killing monsters}

Power: 71 (+5) Speed: 75 (+5) Control: 86

Endurance: 70 Stamina: 0 (★) Recovery: 90 (+10)

With a Control stat that exceeded his Power and Speed, he was able to freely control the karma in his body. Therefore, it was possible to momentarily squeeze out the karma in his body. He thought of this after seeing Choi Junsung's {Lightning Strike}.

'If you use Power exceeding that of your Stamina, your muscles will relax and you will have to wait until you can use karma again. And if your Stamina is similar to your Power and Speed, you can only go all out for 5 minutes. So it means that my consumption of Stamina is similar to before. But, Choi Junsung would pant after a single use of {Lightning Strike}. Why was that? Was it that if you used your Control stat to completely control your body, even if it is for one strike, you could bring out enough strength to make your body unable to use karma for a short time?'

Before he knew it, Choi Hyuk was figuring out the basics of the skills 'they' received. And that understanding was currently coming to play. Techniques he felt he didn't need when facing other humans. However, his opponents, this time, were monsters. He had prepared this move to make up for the difference in size.

On top of that, it provided the best impact in reversing the attitudes of people who were being pushed into a corner.

The problem was his Stamina... Choi Hyuk was most confident in his Stamina. And for some reason, they were weaker than the one he encountered at the apartment.

'7... no, if it's like this, I can use it 14 times.'

Choi Hyuk relaxed his strength a little more. Even though he said he relaxed, the karma in his body seemed to inflate to an abnormal degree.

Choi Hyuk's body momentarily exploded out as his blade swung downwards.

Splaash!

The monster's claw ripped apart. The D rank Predator's Blade didn't even chip after ripping apart its claw.

"Two down..."

Mumbled Choi Hyuk. By his calculations, he could still kill 12 more but there was a chance that he would in pain until tomorrow if he did that. So.

'Let's kill 8 more.'

'In a single strike.'

Choi Hyuk's blade seemed as if it was on fire.

{1} Korean men have mandatory military service.

{2} Sorry I couldn't resist xD

{3} Honorific. Younger male to older male.

CHAPTER 16

ENCOUNTER (3)

There were 37 Crooks left by the time Choi Hyuk slew 2 of them.

However, the formation of the suicide squad was on the brink of breaking apart. Though you could say what difference would killing 8 more make in this situation...

‘This one then that one.’

He had already picked the path and his targets so he just needed to place his blade in the right position.

This act closer to that of an art than a fight.

Puak!!

Kill the most dangerous in the cruelest way. Choi Hyuk sliced a Crook that was 1.2 times bigger than the others, the one that was definitely the leader, in two.

It was split horizontally, splitting its upper and lower jaw. The ferocious Crooks were shocked as they looked over to see their leader split in two.

Choi Hyuk didn't lose that opportunity.

Pibik!

He lightly cut the ankle of the next one. He then tilted his body where his head was almost touching the ground and used the monster as a stepping stone to shoot towards his next target.

Stomp!

Puakk!

He even chose the precise area to slice. When he sliced off a head, he made it so that it would hit another monster's head. When he split a monster at its waist, he made it so

it would obstruct the path of another.

The charging Crooks became tangled up and splattered with the blood of their comrades.

Pikpi!

He even left wounds on some of them so that it would be easier for others to fight them.

“Hooo...”

After killing three with a single slash and wounding four, Choi Hyuk was already at the rear of the Crooks. He had charged in facing them and ended up at the rear. There was only one Crook in front of Choi Hyuk.

Choi Hyuk didn't slow down as he raised his blade and the oncoming Crook tried to stop. But it was moving too fast that it was unable to.

{Kuahhahhh}

The Crook raised both its arms and covered its face. No matter how you looked at it, it was scared.

Choi Hyuk let out his breath and swung his arm. The Crook curled up more pitifully. But Choi Hyuk's blade didn't touch the Crook. Instead, he used the power behind it to swing his body around.

Stomp.

Choi Hyuk's foot stomped on the Crook's forehead and jumped up. Instead of slicing the frightened Crook, he decided to use it as a stepping stone.

The mobility of the oncoming Crook doubled with Choi Hyuk's powerful leg strength allowed Choi Hyuk to jump over the charging Crooks and arrive in front of them again. The flow of the battle reversed.

Stomp!

Stooomp!

A horrifying sound sounded out twice. Choi Hyuk charged an additional two times. The fight ended with that.

{Kuaahh... }

{Kahhh... }

The vigor of the Crooks died out the moment Choi Hyuk cut their leader in two. Afterwards, Choi Hyuk's merciless breakthroughs divided the Crooks and when the humans surrounded them, they were defeated one after another.

The Crooks who used charging tactics against the humans were, in reverse, defeated by charging tactics.

The Crooks that were still alive were bathed in the blood of their comrades and their own and were hurriedly being taken care of.

The flow of the battle had reversed in only a few minutes.

“Hooo... hooo...”

Choi Hyuk caught his breath.

He used more stamina than he thought. No... besides that.

‘I’m not recovering as fast.’

Though others might not be able to notice, Choi Hyuk was someone who could observe his body better than anyone else.

The penalty for using power that exceeded his Power and Speed stat wasn't only a rapid decline in Stamina but also a temporary decrease in Recovery as well.

That wasn't all. Choi Hyuk stretched his wrists and his ankles. They throbbed as if they were on fire.

‘I guess I need to rest the whole day.’

Overusing his Endurance stat put a strain on his body. His joints cracked. As even his Recovery stat decreased, it seemed he would have to rest the rest of the day if he didn't

want it to affect tomorrow.

{Klahahahah kuh heuk... kuhuk... }

With its throat pierced, the final Crook drew its last breath. During the operation, 97 people died. Considering they were on the brink of annihilation, it was a great victory.



The post-war treatment.

Swish.

Thud!

The item scrolls were similar to the effect of the Bonus Game. When they used the scrolls on dead monsters, a golden hammer would appear smashing the corpse and leaving an item behind.

They used a considerable number of the item scrolls in Shinmyung Middle School to change all 46 monsters into items. The sight of golden hammers falling from everywhere was magnificent.

“We were able to keep our lives because of you. Thank you very much. We, the Shinmyung Stronghold, won’t forget your kindness.”

Kang Dongsoo offered Choi Hyuk to choose 8 items of the 46. To come to this offer, Kang Dongsoo and the seven leader figures of the Shinmyung Stronghold (that was what they called themselves) gathered together and debated for 10 minutes.

What should we do? Since we used our item scrolls, we should take a fee and reduce it to 5, shouldn’t we? No, we can’t be stingy after such a dangerous situation. Let’s go big and offer 10. What are you talking about? It’s fine to give him the 8 he killed. No, that’s not right. There’s a need to show goodwill to people as strong as him. We can’t just give him 8.

After going through the pros and cons, they decided to allow Choi Hyuk to choose whatever 8 he wanted.

Although he wasn’t able to hear the specifics, Choi Hyuk thought the scene of their

discussion was fresh. To hold a discussion in the middle of a field... to Choi Hyuk who had been through the {Ring of Rebirth} {Bonus Game} and the {Throne Game}, it was something he couldn't imagine. Didn't the students who fought naturally end up creating dictatorships?

Their actions seemed cute in Choi Hyuk's eyes, even a little heartwarming.

Anyways, the results were a bit iffy. It was better than killing 8 by himself but not by much. If it was like the school, they wouldn't be able to say anything if he shouted, "The treasures here are all mine. Come out if you're offended!"

However, Choi Hyuk didn't feel like being greedy. He didn't even need to. 8 E rank items were enough. If he took any more, he wouldn't be able to use them all and just become baggage.

"Okay."

He willingly accepted their offer.

Choi Hyuk first picked an armor while he stretched.

The moment he encountered a Crook, he regretted not taking armor from the school. There was someone who had an E rank armor among those he killed but Choi Hyuk only put two rings in his bag and threw out the rest.

'Since I didn't know there would be monsters then.'

He thought that he wouldn't get hit when fighting humans so an armor would only get in the way.

However, the current situation was different. The monsters were large and fast and had better fighting instincts than humans. The hit he took at the apartment and the few hits that brushed him during that battle, they were enough to make his body sore as if he had gotten into a car crash.

'I need armor to fight more aggressively.'

That was why Choi Hyuk chose a 'set of Crook Leather Armor' first.

Besides that, he chose the 'E rank, Flash Sword' that was like the estoc he used in the

past. He then chose 3 ornament items that could raise his stats, the 'Handy Bag', a magical item that could store more things, a chest of Recovery Potions that healed his wounds and a chest of Karma Recovery Potions that reduced the time he needed to wait before using karma again.

"There are even these items."

Choi Hyuk's mood became better after placing the potion chest filled with 6 potions in his Handy Bag. He was worried by the fact that today's fight put a strain on his body but with these potions, he would be able to fight even harder. It was something that wasn't any worse than the armor. And there wasn't anything to say about the convenience of the 'Handy Bag'.

"It would appear occasionally... huhu."

Kang Dongsoo seemed to be sad at the loss of the potions as he looked at Choi Hyuk's Handy Bag. However, he quickly changed his expression and energetically asked.

"So, are you planning on staying here?"

"No. After resting and collecting some information today, I will leave tomorrow."

"Why?"

Kang Dongsoo was surprised. The outside with the Weakening Barrier would definitely be more hellish than here. He couldn't understand why a young student would go out alone in a place like that.

Choi Hyuk bitterly smiled. This was the difference in perception.

Choi Hyuk thought.

'Survive and Escape. But is this a game where you can survive by locking yourself up?'

Choi Hyuk's senses told him. That that wasn't possible. Wasn't it already shown in the Bonus Game? They said that it was break time but hid weapons and rules throughout the gym.

The 'ones' who created this game would no doubt want the game to become more intense and desperate.

‘There is definitely something hidden this time as well.’

And to catch the attention of ‘them’, Choi Hyuk had to take the lead.

Not surprisingly.

After choosing his items and investigating, Choi Hyuk was able to find a clue.

It was from a man who was barely able to escape to Shinmyung Middle School after encountering a monster on his way back from work.

“Shinmyung Middle School wasn’t the only assembly area. Dongjin Hospital, Hyunhae Department Store, there were people who said those were also assembly areas. And I saw this on my way here. I think I saw the monsters’ lair. Yeah. I definitely saw it. It’s where the ecological park is located. There is a dark hole-like thing there. A hole appeared in midair. I saw some monsters coming out of it. Not Crooks, something else.”

Choi Hyuk was able to find a clue on the location where monsters spawned.

The man asked after telling him.

“But why do you ask? Don’t tell me you plan on going there?”

Of course, he was.

“Yeah, yeah.”

Choi Hyuk loosely answered the man before returning to his spot and lying down.

This place even had a sleeping bag. No matter how he looked at it, this place had it much easier compared to the games the students had to endure.

‘... Well, that’s good.’

Choi Hyuk lied down and opened his status.

{Choi Hyuk}

Power: 5.8 (+5) (★) Speed: 5.5 (+5) (★) Control: 0.6 (★)

Endurance: 0.1 (★) Stamina: 1.1 (★) Recovery: 10.4 (+10) (★) *Currently overused
karma: 99(+10)

*Free karma points: 12 *Retribution: 84

{Innate Skill}

- Eyes of Distinction

{Accomplishments}

- You have killed someone with karma before it was distributed to you!
- Qualifications of a Sovereign 1/3
- First to kill a monster in a 1-on-1 fight!

Following his Stamina, the rest of his stats passed 100. The moment they hit 100, they were refreshed and a star appeared next to them. Instead of increasing in quantity, it seemed like there was a qualitative change.

‘Will there be another star if I pass another 100?’

The feeling of the karma that wrapped around and support his body was very pleasant. He felt like he would become addicted to it. Choi Hyuk called his previous stats ‘no star’ and his current stats ‘1-star stats’. He believed that since there was one, there would be another and more after that.

‘How much could karma strengthen a human?’

Choi Hyuk was excited.

'I guess I need to hunt a ton of monsters.'

From what he tested at school, a 1 star stat wouldn't increase anymore by killing other humans.

'Though I don't know if it'll always be this way or if it's because I am the only with 1-star stats.'

Anyways, if he wanted to raise his stats in the meantime, he had no choice but to hunt monsters.

However, even if he killed monsters, the increases in his stats were too small. When he had no stars, his power would increase by 5 while his other stats would increase by at least 3... but after getting 1 star, it felt like his stats were increasing by 0.1, at most 0.2. At least his Power, Speed and Recovery all had integers next to them due to items or else it would have looked too pitiful.

Choi Hyuk decided to test something out.

'The stats increased by items are the same. Then I wonder what will happen if I invest some of my free karma points?'

Choi Hyuk invested one of his free points into Stamina.

{Retribution does not match the grade of the stats. The effectiveness decreased to 10%. Stamina 1.1 points -> 1.2 points.}

"...Should have told me before."

Only a 0.1 increase. Choi Hyuk felt bitter but he decided to just think of it was the price for the lesson.

'Retribution...'

He didn't know what it was for but it seemed like it really did have a purpose.

Because of this, he was able to decide his next goal.

'First, let's increase the Retribution grade. Will it increase when it hits 100? Until then, I won't use my free points.'

The first time he hunted a Crook, he received the {First to kill a monster in a 1-on-1 fight!} accomplishment and received 2 free points and his Retribution had increased by 3. From then on, his Retribution only increased by 2 per crook kill.

'8 more. After that, let's investigate the location where the monsters spawn. And tomorrow, I'll check Hyunhae Department Store as well.'

Choi Hyuk planned out what he would do tomorrow.

While everyone was busy trying to survive, he would look beyond that.

"Ohh god... Sungjoo! Ohhh...! Sungjoo's dad^{1}!!!"

That moment, a sad cry sounded out from somewhere. A familiar voice. It was the middle-aged woman he came to Shinmyung Middle School with in the morning. Kim Chulho and the woman had been hiding and had joined Shinmyung Stronghold.

However... it seemed like the woman failed to reunite with her family.

She wasn't the only one. Shinmyung Stronghold, which won the fierce fight, was like a mourner's house that night.

"Damn it!"

It was to the point where there were people who threw a tantrum and walked out.

Choi Hyuk briefly thought of his mother in this commotion.

What would it be like if his mother was at an assembly area like this one? Unlike the {Ring of Rebirth}, there was a higher chance of her being alive.

'It could be... but might not be...'

He only thought to there when he closed his eyes. Because he couldn't let his resolution waver. Because there was no way to know right now.

'I will catch their attention more than anyone else.'

He fell asleep hypnotizing himself. Though, it was not a very deep sleep.

His whole body tingled pleasantly.

{1} Koreans tend to be called 'XX's dad/mom' when they have children.

TL/N: The places the author mentions are real and while some, for example, Shinmyung Middle School, haven't been changed, the names others, Hyunhae Department Store, Dongjin Hospital, were.

Hyunhae Department Store -> Hyundai Department Store

Dongjin Hospital -> Dongshin Hospital

CHAPTER 17

ENCOUNTER (4)

10:30am on the day when messages suddenly appeared. There were approximately 500, 000 people in Kangdong District. And in three days, only 350, 000 survived. Among those, the ones who hid in their workplace or homes numbered 120, 000 and 230, 000 gathered in the assembly areas. The assembly areas, large and small, numbered 54 places and there were troops like Jung Minji's from other middle schools and high schools.

Only 3 days. Only a short time had passed. A situation where people locked themselves up with no hope. A situation where supplies were insufficient and where you have to face the dangers in front of your very eyes. 3 days was enough for people to throw off their masks and reveal their true face.

After an intense battle, Shinmyung Stronghold was definitely better off than others. Chaos ensued for 3 days in places where they weren't able to defend against the monsters as well as Shinmyung Stronghold. The prejudice and fear they normally had exploded out.

"Fuck? Did you just say fuck to me? Who the hell do you think you are to swear at me?! Fucking bastard!?"

A situation where a gang of middle schoolers lynched a man they swore at occurred. One couldn't simply ignore their strength after getting karma. Eventually, the beaten man breathed his last breath.

It was a shocking event. In a situation where they couldn't rely on the police or the law, the adults recalled that 'teens these days weren't afraid of anything' in the papers and immediately turned to frantic fear and anger.

Even in this situation, the teens didn't behave properly.

"You killed someone?"

Just when another man ran up in surprise and asked.

“Fuck. What does that have to do with you, mister?”

Replied the immature teens. As if they hit a bee hive, the group began to stir up. “What, that bastard?” The fists of hot-headed men rained down. The middle schoolers tried to counterattack. Ackk! That moment, as if they added oil to the fire, a fight broke out. Fists punched out towards middle schoolers in every direction. A pitiful retaliation followed afterwards.

“Uackk! I’m sorry!”

“They are children! Stop it!”

“No! It wasn’t me!”

As it was with mob psychology, the target of their anger wasn’t clear. Their targets weren’t just the kids who lynched the middle-aged man but others around them. Teachers and parents got involved trying to stop the men who were engulfed in madness. Innumerable students were ripped apart. Afterwards, whenever students saw a man, they would lower their gaze. Irrational violence firmly carved itself into reality. Fear and taboos were created.

Each group had similar situations to this. Sometimes at selfish people who didn’t participate in the battle against monsters, sometimes at the director of the daycare who left the children and escaped by himself, sometimes at foreign laborers... an indiscriminate slaughter occurred and innocent people lost their lives.

The people realized.

That in this place, loners meant death. And even if it was rubbish, authority was needed. As only when they stood up for the chosen authority could they ensure their safety.

Fear and taboo created order. Quickly, ranks were being assigned. In some places, gangsters and company employees, others, local company presidents and even the women’s association, each with their own methods, dominated the people and created order and the people willingly accepted this. Also, depending on who and how they gained power greatly influenced the characteristic of the group.

It was like the age of civil wars. People who gathered in the assembly areas were busy establishing order and, like Jung Minji’s troop, those who started with a battle royale

instead of an assembly area were trying their best to secure their first supplies and base.

During this time, there weren't many who thought to investigate Kangdong District and figure out the secret behind this game.



Early morning.

“Can I go with you?”

Kim Chulho, who Choi Hyuk saved in the apartment, grabbed Choi Hyuk who was about to leave. Choi Hyuk shook his head.

“You’ll be a hindrance.”

Kim Chulho’s head drooped.

Choi Hyuk arrived at the ecological park. An intense battle was already going on.

A young man who looked to be in his mid-twenties held a sword and shield and was fighting monsters by himself. Though his movements were sloppy, he was strangely fighting well. As if he knew where the monsters would attack, the young man was steadily slaying monsters even as he stumbled.

The monsters here were weaker than the Crooks. They were {Bladed Starving Ghosts}. They were about waist tall, ran on two feet and instead of hands, they dragged 1.5m long blades behind them.

Crash!

When the giant blade of a Bladed Starving Ghost struck down, the young man would do whatever it took to deflect it with his shield. As their blades were huge, a large opening would follow the Bladed Starving Ghosts’ attacks. The young man would use those opportunities to stretch out his sword and stab them.

“...He’s strangely good at fighting.”

Choi Hyuk remarked. 7 Bladed Starving Ghosts lay on the ground. Even though he said

they were weaker than the Crooks, the young man's abilities were incredible. However, there were still 8 Bladed Starving Ghosts left. On top of that, there was a 2m tall monster behind them looking at the fight as if it was amusing. When he looked at the monster, a message popped up saying {Bladed Ghost}.

On the other hand, the young man was completely exhausted.

The young man suddenly yelled.

“Help me!”

Choi Hyuk was quite surprised that moment. Choi Hyuk didn't reveal his presence and stood behind the young man. However, the young man had sensed Choi Hyuk's presence without looking back.

“Quickly!”

At the young man's request, Choi Hyuk unsheathed his blade and charged forward.

Splash!

Choi Hyuk rushed in a step quicker than the Bladed Starving Ghosts' blades. When he instantly killed five, the Bladed Ghost, who was sitting at the back, stood up.

2m tall with 2 legs and 4 blades instead of hands.

“Guahhh!”

As if trying to pressure him, it screamed unpleasantly and charged at Choi Hyuk with its arms spread.

Swish!

Choi Hyuk reflexively dodged the first slash. He couldn't even see the blade. Choi Hyuk was barely able to avoid the second and the third as well.

Choi Hyuk admired.

“Wow...”

It was the strongest monster he had faced until now.

Its physical abilities made it seem like it would easily slice up 10 Crooks. Its Power and Speed were much greater than Choi Hyuk's. Its continuous attack with 4 blades was like a saw with no opening.

Choi Hyuk's lips lifted up by themselves.

'It's fun...'

It was different from his past opponents where he could avoid by looking at their obvious movements. He had to have total concentration to avoid its attacks. It was too late if he couldn't predict its attack pattern from its movements. Every time the blade dangerously passed by his cheek or knee, his spine would tingle in excitement.

Choi Hyuk fell into a trance as he avoided and deflected its attacks. Steam expelled from the monster as it attacked more ferociously. Choi Hyuk became more absorbed into the fight and was able to see 2, no 3, 5 steps ahead and narrowly avoided or blocked them.

Pshuuuuu...

The monster had increased its pace. However, after it let out all its steam, its vigor died down. On the other hand, Choi Hyuk had already read his opponent's attack pattern.

The exhausted Bladed Ghost kept wielding its 4 blades. That moment its first and second blade struck down and when it was about to raise its third. Due to exhaustion, its speed had slowed down a little. Choi Hyuk's eyes flashed. He squeezed out the karma in his body and slashed out with his Fang Saber with the shortest distance and quickest speed. A quick draw where the saber momentarily hung in its sheath before shooting out. The slightly curved Fang Saber exploded out of its sheath.

Slice.

A sound of cutting air.

He struck at the monster's neck with a focus on speed over power. However, just before making contact, a strength that felt like it would shatter the saber was added.

Choi Hyuk instantly added all his strength into his slash.

Riip!

The Fang Saber ripped apart the Bladed Ghost's neck.

Slash!

If the physical size wasn't too different, it only took a moment to be victorious.

{You have exceeded 100 Retribution. First to succeed in upgrading your Retribution!
You have received another Qualification to be a Sovereign.}

{You have dealt with a mid-boss. Retribution increased by 3 and granted 2 free karma points.}

{Qualifications of a Sovereign 2/3 Effect}

Applying the effect of the King without Subjects.

-You can have 5 followers. Your followers' karma will increase by 20%.

-You can hide the symbol above your head.

"Finally..."

He finally upgraded his Retribution. Choi Hyuk poured his remaining free karma points into Stamina. This time, his free points were applied without penalty.

{Choi Hyuk}

Power: 13.3 (+10) (★) Speed: 14 (+10) (★) Control: 23.1 (+20) (★)

Endurance: 2.6 (★) Stamina: 26.7 (+10) (★) Recovery: 12.9 (+10) (★)

*Retribution: 1 (★)

With the items he earned in Shinmyung Middle School, his stats became much more outstanding. However, Choi Hyuk felt a bit bitter.

"It was just getting fun..."

Choi Hyuk glanced over the Bladed Ghost with regret and stabbed its heart with the Predator's Blade.

A message that never appeared before showed up for the first time.

{The Predator's Blade absorbed the blood of a worthy opponent. Evolution 1/100}

"As expected..."

It was a message that never showed up when he fought the Crooks or the Bladed Starving Ghosts. It seemed like you had to be at the Bladed Ghost's level to be a match for a D rank weapon.

The Predator's Blade quickly absorbed the Bladed Ghost's blood and the mummified Bladed Ghost turned to dust.

Flop.

The dust passed through the portal it was protecting and scattered.

"That... You have to destroy that."

The young man, who was there first, pointed at the portal. He had finished off the remaining 3 Bladed Starving Ghosts and sat his wounded body against a tree. The wounds would heal over time due to his Recovery stat.

Choi Hyuk didn't reply as he examined the portal.

The portal floated above a black altar. It was like a cave had opened up in mid-air. As he peeked into the portal, information appeared.

—————

{Long Distance Teleportation Portal}

A portal leading to the E rank Bladed Starving Ghosts' habitat. Revitalized every midnight.

*Destroy Target

—————

'A destroy target...'

An ill-natured intent. There was nothing about destroy targets in the announcements. You could only find out on your own.

Choi Hyuk wielded his Predator's Blade and split the altar.

Crash!

With a vibration, the portal turned into smoke and disappeared.

{First to destroy a target. Granted 2 additional free karma points.}

{Additional Rule Revealed}

Every night, the number of monsters that cross over the portal increase by 20%.

"Oh my god..."

While Choi Hyuk was still processing the meaning of the 20% increase, the young man screamed. It seemed like he saw the same thing. The young man started to mumble something.

"1.2 to the power of 29 is around... 200. 5, 000 monsters should have crossed over the first day... then on the 30th day... a million?"

The young man despaired.

"Fuck! I'm already depressed with just the 'Wyvern of Destruction'! You're telling me that hundreds of thousands are going to pour in in 15 days?! There are only 500 thousand people in Kangdong District!"

Choi Hyuk thought as he looked at the despairing man.

'He's quite fast at calculating.'

Then he turned around. The young man, who was despairing by himself, called out to Choi Hyuk.

"He... hey! Where are you going!"

“...Going to hunt monsters.”

Choi Hyuk absentmindedly replied. If he could, he wanted to fight one that was as strong as the one he fought just now. Only then could he take the lead. And could he evolve the Predator’s Blade.

It seemed like he would have to look for more information on portals as he ran around.

“Wait! Let’s go together! I know the way!”

The young man shouted.

Choi Hyuk did stop but he was a bit doubtful.

‘How?’

It was only the third day and he was finally able to find one. He didn’t think that there would be anyone who explored Kangdong District (and was still alive) more than him. But he knew the location of another portal?

“Intuition! My innate skill is Intuition! I already knew that you would come here! You have to go together with me!”

The questionable young man shouted more doubtful words.

However, Choi Hyuk saw the white light (goodwill) shining out of the young man.

‘He had good intentions. Is he not lying?’

If he had an innate skill called Intuition like Choi Hyuk’s Eyes of Distinction... it would be an incredibly valuable skill in situations like this where he lacked information.

Choi Hyuk decided to listen.

“So?”

Though he didn’t speak kind words.

Either way, the young man’s urgent expression became a shade brighter.

And that was how Choi Hyuk met his first follower, Baek Seoin.

It was on the third day when people gathered in assembly areas didn't know that death was approaching by the minute.

CHAPTER 18

BERSERKERS (1)

Baek Seoin was at the veterans' hospital when it happened. Due to the sudden assembly announcement, crowds of people were gathering in the hospital parking lot. Though the assembly announcement Baek Seoin received indicated the hospital as well, the reason why he was there was a bit different.

He was in his father's ward. His father lay there suffering in pain without the ability to speak. The doctors said he couldn't last for much longer. His father who wasn't in his right mind. For the first time, Baek Seoin realized how painful the illness known as cancer was.

"Uh... ueh..."

He had leukemia. The common illness that hit his parent's generation who worked since young to support their children and their parents- and for the revival of their nation, cancer.

Baek Seoin never liked his father. Because the values of his paternalistic and worldly father and the more free-spirited Baek Seoin were too different, they would always fight at home.

At that time, to Baek Seoin, his father could have been somewhat of an enemy.

An enemy who would never break under his youthful follies. An existence who would last forever strong.

However, his father was currently so thin that he had a hard time speaking.

The insults at the previous president and the participation in rallies that would always become topics of dispute... even if those things happened, his father couldn't say one word.

He never knew that that would be so painful.

'Forgetting that my dad was human as well... I acted all cocky in front of him... '

A year after his father was hospitalized. Baek Seoin was in a state of deep depression.

His mother came to substitute for him.

“Oh. Seoin. Go home and rest.”

“No. I want to stay a bit longer.”

“You must be tired, you should rest.”

“No, it’s okay.”

“Okay... but did you also see strange things too?”

“Yes. Hah... whoever they are, aliens or gods, couldn’t they have helped father if they had that much power?”

“Yeah... It did seem a bit scary. A surprise attack and an assembly area... It’s not like it’s the 6/25 incident{1}.”

“Our assembly area is here anyways so it’ll be fine.”

“Yeah... Still, go rest a little.”

“Okay. Then I’ll come back after a drink. Father. I’ll be right back.”

That was how Baek Seoin left the room holding a drink.

Late at night. There were much more people waiting in the parking lot than before. There were even some who wanted to enter the hospital by passing through the security guards. There were even people who were speaking nonsense, something about seeing monsters. Perhaps he would have thought about it more seriously if he had seen the weapons inside the hospital. However, due to the fact they quickly hid them to prevent disorder amongst the doctors, Baek Seoin didn’t think much of it. Instead, he was busy worrying about his father.

Just when he had taken a sip of his drink, Baek Seoin suddenly had an ominous feeling. Cold sweat ran down his back and his heart raced.

‘Leave!’

It was as if he heard a scream coming from within him. He felt like he would suffocate.

{You have awakened the innate skill 'Intuition'!}

A message suddenly appeared but due to the fact his heart felt like it was being squeezed, he couldn't pay it any heed. Baek Seoin was in a panic as he hurriedly left the hospital. His heart was pounding and his vision narrowed. He hid in a building nearby. Immediately, as if it was all a lie, his heart relaxed.

"What was that...?"

Just then. He heard the sound of a large explosion. Flames erupted in various places around the city and he started to hear desperate cries.

Craash!

A monster the size of an apartment that spewed flames from its eyes and mouth suddenly appeared as if it had dropped down from the sky. The tyrannosaurus-like monster kicked the building right next to the one Baek Seoin was hiding in.

Crash!

Baek Seoin's body stood up.

The scenes afterwards passed by as if in slow motion. The monster stomped towards the hospital and people dispersed like a swarm of ants. The monster blew flames and those flames spread out in a circle, completely burning people in its path. The advancing monster swung its tail and bashed its head on the hospital and meticulously burned the people under the wreckage. Behind it was a swarm of monsters that hunted and killed the escapees. People were popped like tomatoes and boiled in flames.

"Nnn... nnn!"

Baek Seoin cried.

Unable to do anything, he stifled his cries and could only let tears drop from his eyes. The monster that smashed the hospital suddenly disappeared. Just then, Baek Seoin received another message.

{You have survived a close call with the Wyvern of Destruction. Additional rule revealed.}

{Additional Rule Revealed}

The Wyvern of Destruction will appear again on the final day. The Wyvern of Destruction will protect the escape code.

That was Baek Seoin's story.

"My Intuition... It only cared about my safety... It didn't matter if my parents lived or died as long as I ran for my life."

Baek Seoin's eyes were bloodshot to the point as if they would drip blood.

However, he settled his emotions with deep breaths before calmly continuing.

"Currently, most people don't know that the number of monsters will slowly increase and that the Wyvern of Destruction will appear on the final day. At this rate, everyone will die. The Wyvern of Destruction is already unstoppable, if a million monster underlings charge as well, no one will be able to escape. We need to form a suicide squad that will destroy the monster-spawning portals ahead of time and kill the Wyvern of Destruction. And to do that, I need your help."

That moment, Choi Hyuk was deep in thought.

"The Wyvern of Destruction... How can I kill it?"

Was it possible to kill an apartment-sized monster with a sword? Perhaps it was not meant to be a monster to kill. Maybe they were supposed to lure it away and escape.

However, his fighting instincts knew no limits and he had a reason to fight.

'If I kill that thing, I will definitely catch their attention.'

Choi Hyuk resolved himself to kill the monster. It was fine if he looked for the method

starting now.

“First, okay... Then show me the way to the portal. Let’s see if your Intuition is real or not.”

Choi Hyuk suggested. Baek Seoin revealed a slightly hopeless expression.

“Right now?”

“Yes.”

“...My Intuition tells me that the monsters over there are going to be stronger than the ones here. Wouldn’t it be better to look for more people before then?”

“It’s fine.”

“...What if I told you that, even if you don’t, I get the feeling I will die there?”

However, Choi Hyuk just shrugged his shoulders.

“Let’s just think of it as a test. If you want to stay with me, it’s a bit troublesome if you die facing monsters at that level.”

It was checkmate for Baek Seoin.



The foot of a mountain.

Leaning against an altar split in two, Choi Hyuk and Baek Seoin were drinking a potion next to each other. The almost fatal wounds were washed away.

Around them, the corpses of 20 Crooks and a {Mountain Orc} who rode on a Crook wielding a hammer were sprawled on the ground.

Baek Seoin groaned.

“I almost died...”

However, Choi Hyuk who was still immersed in the pleasant feeling of the fight said

nothing. Although it wasn't a fight he thought he would lose, it was definitely more thrilling than the fight against the Bladed Ghost.

The Crooks were twice as hard to deal with than the Bladed Starving Ghosts. On top of that, there were more of them and Baek Seoin wasn't helpful as he was wounded. All he did was try not to die.

And riding on the leader of the Crooks, the mid-boss, the Mountain Orc, was terrifyingly fast and strong.

'If I didn't upgrade my Retribution, I might have had to run away without being able to kill them all...'

If that happened, then perhaps he wouldn't but Baek Seoin would have died.

Luckily the effect of upgrading his Retribution wasn't only letting him distribute the full karma point instead of 0.1. The moment Choi Hyuk entered the fight, he felt it. A more refined cognitive ability and quicker reflexes. His upgraded Retribution changed his neural network that was locked into the limitations of a human's into that of a superhuman's. Perhaps the type itself enhanced?

Even before that, Choi Hyuk was already a genius. With the addition of quicker reflexes and a more refined cognitive ability due to the upgrade in Retribution, he was like a fish in water. He was able to slaughter 20 Crooks and a Mountain Orc by himself.

The Crook Leather Armor and the Necklace of Protection did their job as well. Due to the attack-intercepting necklace and the impact-reducing armor, he was able to fight even more aggressively. If not for them, even if Choi Hyuk didn't die, Baek Seoin definitely would have.

Choi Hyuk stretched his arm to stab the Mountain Orc. The Predator's Blade absorbed the blood of the Mountain Orc. Baek Seoin who watched this mumbled.

"Let's first secure supplies before fighting next time. What a waste."

Baek Seoin looked at the corpses of the Crooks that were wasted with regret. Choi Hyuk laughed. He had already somewhat acknowledged Baek Seoin. Although he wasn't strong, he wasn't weak either. Even if Choi Hyuk did help him a bit, eventually it all relied on his ability. And didn't he also have a useful ability called Intuition?

So he decided to confirm a few things.

“You said that your Intuition is only sensitive to your wellbeing.”

“Yes.”

“Then how do you know the locations of the portals?”

It was strange when he thought about it. Why would the Intuition that only activated when he was in danger lead him to danger? It was the same when they met. If it wasn't for Choi Hyuk, he would have died fighting the Bladed Starving Ghosts.

Baek Seoin took a moment to organize his thoughts before explaining.

“It's because I resolved myself to kill the Wyvern of Destruction. From that moment, I started to fight with my Intuition. I thoroughly ignored my heart that wanted to find and trust a safe group. After a day of looking for information and ignoring my Intuition, a new Intuition formed. It's probably telling me a way to survive even after fighting the Wyvern of Destruction. I felt that I had to find a portal and fight and that someone would come. And someone really did come. That moment, I realized. That the only chance of surviving while killing the Wyvern of Destruction was you.”

While listening to Baek Seoin's answer, Choi Hyuk thought about followers. An ability he received once he obtained two Qualifications to be a Sovereign.

Choi Hyuk liked Baek Seoin. He especially liked the 'crazy' thought of needing to kill the Wyvern of Destruction.

So he asked another question.

“Why?”

This 'why?' was asking why he was trying to kill the Wyvern of Destruction. Baek Seoin knew what he was talking about even without any context.

His face distorted. His calm face was once again filled with an intense emotion.

“...I was always an unfilial son. So I'm planning to be unfilial one last time. Even if I die. That lizard bastard... I will definitely kill it.”

Baek Seoin ground his teeth.

Choi Hyuk was able to understand him better than anyone else.

He liked his thirst for revenge.

The moment Choi Hyuk decided,

a message appeared in front of Baek Seoin.

{The King without Subjects, Choi Hyuk, wants to accept you as his follower. Once you accept, all your karma points will increase by 20%. Do you accept?}

Baek Seoin looked at Choi Hyuk with surprised eyes.

He examined Choi Hyuk's face, bit his lips once and nodded his head.

Flutter.

Above Baek Seoin's head, a fluttering flag appeared.

"Ah..."

Baek Seoin looked above his head. He was tightly biting his lips.

His eyes were filled with raging flames as he looked at Choi Hyuk and respectfully said.

"If we really hunt the wyvern... I will truly serve you as my king."

However, Choi Hyuk didn't care for those formalities and was only interested in his goals.

"You said we needed a suicide squad?"

"Yes. The number of monsters will grow, even tomorrow, it'll be too difficult for the two of us to clear the portals."

"Good... Then let's go fight."

Choi Hyuk lifted his nearly recovered body. Since it was obvious that if it was going to

be harder tomorrow, it was best to destroy more today.

However, Baek Seoin, who had almost died, couldn't help but forget the seriousness he had just now and groan.

"...Already?"

"You said let's hunt an apartment-sized monster."

Only then did Baek Seoin stand up.

Choi Hyuk grinned as he walked in front. Baek Seoin hurriedly shouted.

"I... Still, no matter how much of a hurry we're in, let's first secure some supplies! And eat!"

"Okay."

Choi Hyuk continued to walk. Baek Seoin hurriedly followed behind him. When he caught up to him, Choi Hyuk's steps were strangely light. Instead of being nervous, it was like he was happy that he was able to fight more.

Baek Seoin recalled the savage smile Choi Hyuk had during the whole fight.

'A berserker crazy for battle...'

He somehow naturally came to that thought. A frightening person. However... that was why he trusted him more.

'I can't become a hindrance.'

To calm his fear, Baek Seoin raised his fighting aura and rage.

It was still far from night.

{1} Reference to the start of the Korean War. June 25, 1950.

CHAPTER 19

BERSERKERS (2)

Baek Seoin asked.

“But leader, why are you trying to hunt the Wyvern of Destruction?”

“Because I need to get the attention of the ones who created this game.”

“...Is there anything good in catching their attention? Normally staying in the middle is the best.”

“I don’t know if my mom is alive or not. Kangdong District closed down at 10:30am. She should have been at work. I need to go to her workplace in Kwangjin District.”

“...Hopefully, she’s okay... But what does that have anything to do with catching their attention?”

“Once I confirm if she’s dead or alive, I have to either protect or avenge her. For that, I need to become stronger and more unique.”

Choi Hyuk was calm.

Like a criminal on death row accepting the verdict. No... like a judge who raised his gravel to announce the verdict. He rid himself of useless emotions and only looked at the result.

Baek Seoin felt slight shivers down his spine.

He realized that behind Choi Hyuk who purely enjoyed fighting was a frighteningly cold and sharp rage.



Groups were such a pain. If everyone was confined together and lived looking at each other face to face, all kinds of troubles were bound to arise. Not only were there simple complaints like ‘too smelly,’ or ‘too loud,’ but molestation, violence, isolation and other

absurdities.

However, just because you didn't like it didn't mean you could just leave. Death would approach the moment you were alone. A monk who leaves the temple would live without a home or temple and eventually end up in a beast's stomach.

But, even despite these circumstances, there would always be people who couldn't stand to live among others while constantly considering other people's feelings. And there were some who couldn't endure it any longer.

That day, Lee Jinhee resolved herself not to fall asleep. She held two 30cm gladii in her bosom and waited for nightfall.

Her assembly area was the shopping center situated opposite of the Olympic Park Station. The monsters who were targeting this place, the {Shadow Teeth}, were very unique. They stood less than 1m tall and their whole body was surrounded by a black fog. They possessed great stealth abilities so people didn't notice when they passed by right in front of their eyes.

The only time they would show their appearance was when they slashed the neck of a sleeping person and drank their blood.

Every night, three Shadow Teeth would enter and each one would take one life and disappear.

Three at a time, one person each. That was the gist of it.

'You turn away from monsters even after seeing them because you're not a victim?'

Lee Jinhee ground her teeth.

The first day, no, up until the second day, there was a fierce battle against the Shadow Teeth. The Shadow Teeth wanted to slash people's necks and drink their blood. The surrounding people who saw them would scream and raise their weapons. A Shadow Teeth who was caught once couldn't hide again. However, even though they were small, they were monsters. If a fight broke out, the Shadow Teeth would at least take 5 people down with it on the road to death. The first person to noticed them would definitely be killed.

That wasn't all. If the fight was drawn out, the Shadow Teeth would cry out a strange

sound to call its comrades and its comrades who were waiting outside would enter and save the Shadow Teeth. There were times where people would die but they would be unable to kill the Shadow Teeth in the end.

There was no way to know how many Shadow Teeth were waiting outside. On the first night, they killed two but the next night, like the first, three entered the shopping center.

The second night after the chaotic first.

There was a disturbance that night as well but unlike the first, only two fights broke out. The other person died silently and when the people who slept next to him testified they didn't hear anything, Lee Jinhee just thought that was the case.

The situation became clear the third night. No fights broke out that night. But it wasn't like no one died either. Three corpses were found. And the ones who slept right next to them all testified saying they never saw the Shadow Teeths.

...It was a lie.

Just when did that rumor start to spread? She didn't know how but somehow everyone knew in just three nights... The fact that three Shadow Teeth would enter and that each one would kill one person. People would look the other way even if the person next to them was dying. Because the moment they took notice of it, the chance that the Shadow Teeth would go into a frenzy and kill them as well was high.

However, Lee Jinhee couldn't stand those people.

"I'll kill them."

Of course, she was scared that she would die as well. However, she was someone who always fought with and challenged fear. She was the type who thought it was better to die than become a coward.

In a dark shopping center. The room Lee Jinhee was in was originally a PC Bang. In a room with no furnace, people were lying on sleeping bags on the cold, hard floor. Lee Jinhee was sitting next to the door holding blades. Most electronics were dead but simple ones like lights were still working.

"Fuck... That's scary."

In the dark hallway, a green exit light added to the bleakness of the night.

The light would occasionally flicker and each time, the shadows would waver. Lee Jinhee endured her increasing drowsiness and looked out into the darkness. Just in case she saw the shadow of a Shadow Teeth. However...

“Urk...”

A suppressed scream sounded out from inside the PC Bang.

Shiick... Schiick... Save... Shiiick...

Rustle, rustle.

A hoarse cry for help was barely able to escape from the victim’s ripped throat. She could hear him struggle with his suppressed body. A Shadow Teeth had passed by Lee Jinhee, without her noticing, and had gotten on top of a victim and slashed his throat.

Lee Jinhee got up abruptly. And she saw it. A person who was lying next to the victim waving his hand telling her to sit back down.

She ground her teeth.

Stomp.

She jumped swiftly like a cat. She grabbed the partition with her hands and jumped over it. She stretched her arms out holding onto the next partition before jumping over it as well. In two jumps, she had approached the Shadow Teeth. She held her two gladii in her hands and shouted out loud to wake the surrounding people.

“DIE!!!!”

{Kyahhhhh!}

The Shadow Teeth looked at Lee Jinhee and screamed.

“You scum! You fucking bitch!!”

The man next to the victim, who waved his hand at her previously, stood up in surprise and swore while running away. The people who were still lying down didn’t pay any

attention to the commotion.

Kakang!

The Shadow Teeth's claws and Lee Jinhee's gladii tangled together. A scream. People who were still half asleep ran away in confusion.

The Shadow Teeth was cunning. As Lee Jinhee's attacks were tough to deal with, it jumped up like a cat and attempted to escape, "Hak!" "Urk!" while piercing the necks of the escaping people on its way.

"Hup!"

However, Lee Jinhee was quite formidable. Her awakened karma added to her energy. In two jumps, she leaped over people and blocked the path of the Shadow Teeth.

{KiKik!!}

Lee Jinhee ferociously slashed her gladius at the flustered Shadow Teeth. The Shadow Teeth blocked it and

Slam!

Lee Jinhee's foot stepped on it.

"You're only a monster bastard..."

Lee Jinhee suppressed the Shadow Teeth and stabbed its neck with her blade.

{Grrk... Grrr... }

Lee Jinhee had gone outside on the excuse for reconnaissance and was even victorious against three Crooks. The weaker Shadow Teeth was no match for her.

"Hooooo."

Lee Jinhee let out a breath and stretched her back.

Soon after, criticism poured down on her.

“What the hell were you doing!!”

The man, who was lying down next the victim, shouted.

If a student who experienced the {Ring of Rebirth} saw this, he would be surprised. The strong in this situation was Lee Jinhee, not the man so the student wouldn't be able to comprehend the man who lashed out.

However, this place was a normal assembly area. A place where no one had committed murder. A place where even fighting monsters had a limit. There were still lingering signs of everyday life.

It was the same for Lee Jinhee. She was slightly taken back so she replied.

“What am I doing? I saved a person and killed a monster.”

“Save? What the fuck do you mean by save! Don't you see there are wounded people because of you?”

The man who saw the flustered Lee Jinhee inwardly felt delighted.

‘I have to take this opportunity to take her down a notch!’

Vigor was half the battle. The man flapped his arms as he increased his vigor.

“What are you going to do about the wounded people?! Huh?!”

There were many people who were wounded and were bleeding. They, too, looked at Lee Jinhee in resentment.

Lee Jinhee was at loss for words.

She knew there would be people unhappy with her actions but she never imagined someone so full of themselves that they would confidently lash out at her.

“...Then, are you telling me to let someone die?”

“So did you save him? Huh? Did you?!”

The man shouted at the top of his lungs. But it was the truth. The first victim who had

his throat ripped by the Shadow Teeth had already died from shock.

“...So... What are you saying? Since you gave away someone else as food, the end? Are you saying that we are to shut up and let it happen?”

“What? This greenhorn bitch... Who are you to be so self-centered? You who walked around saying that you had to do parkour or whatever... What did you say yesterday? That you think we need to destroy some sort of portal? You crazy bitch, if you want to die, die by yourself. Why are you harming others in the process?”

The man let out all the animosity he accumulated. He felt disgusted by the young woman who kept going outside raising her voice. He couldn't forgive her useless sense of justice that almost led to his death.

While he was taking it out on her, he meticulously packaged his selfishness as consideration and her conviction as selfishness.

Lee Jinhee was unable to get out of the man's wasteful dispute.

“...I already told you! If we stay stuck in here like cowards, we'll die!”

“What? Cowards? Listening to this bitch... Do you think everyone here stays still because they have no courage? Don't you see because of your high and mighty justice that others are dying? That's not justice but simply you having no sense whatsoever. You bitch!”

“Haa...”

Lee Jinhee felt like her energy was escaping her. If you looked at it mathematically, it was true. If everyone stayed still, only one person would die, while if they fought, many would die. But...

“Mister, currently one person dies at a time. But will that be the case in the future? When we have lost our will to fight and when our numbers are much less than now? Will they still only kill one person at a time then? Do you have no brains?”

Lee Jinhee became agitated.

However, the man didn't tolerate it.

“What? Haa... This dumb bitch, do words not get through to you?”

If it was like any other day, the man would have grabbed her collar at this time. However, he knew very well that he wasn't able to overpower Lee Jinhee. So he looked at the surrounding people and urged for their responses.

“Isn't that right? It's not just me who thinks this, don't you all think this as well?”

As soon as he looked around, people who came to be on friendly terms with the man over the past few days all spoke.

Starting with,

“Young woman, your words are too harsh.”

“Just stay still. Stop inserting yourself into matters.”

“Why is she like that? Is she just looking for attention?”

All kinds of criticisms fell on her.

The man knew a lot about these people who stood for so-called 'justice'. These kinds of people were weak against the pressure of many. They weren't able to use their power. 'Idiots...'

The man was experienced with the power of authority and Lee Jinhee was still young so she held onto upright values.

Her body trembled as her blood boiled but she didn't go out of control. She suppressed her boiling anger in her chest. You couldn't kill someone just because you were angry. That was what she thought.

'... Okay. Then just live like that. Thinking that you're safe because the person next to you died.'

She put away her gladii without another word. The man flinched when he saw her actions. Lee Jinhee revealed a grin as she packed up her things.

“...I just need to screw off right?”

“Look at this bitch? Compensate us before you go!”

As if he was dejected by his sudden flinch, the man forced an unreasonable demand.

‘Like hell, I’ll give you compensation...’

Lee Jinhee ignored him as she left the shopping center.

“Fucking bitch!” his voice that was filled with a sense of victory followed her out.

Lee Jinhee was boiling with anger. Still, she was able to barely contain it.

“Hooooo...”

She let out a sigh.

Stomp!

She started to dash forward.

She crossed the street and went down the tens of steps of the Olympic Park Station in a single leap. She didn’t let out a sound. She used the cat’s technique to alleviate the shock at the last moment and used her athletic ability to kick the ground and charge forward.

She had to run like crazy. If not, she felt that she would turn back and stab the man’s forehead with her gladius.

“Uahhhhhh!”

Lee Jinhee screamed as she jumped down from the subway station.

She was 20 years old.

She was experienced in parkour since her first year in middle school. An exercise where one would jump from one building to another and climb walls a few meters tall and lightly land on a palm-sized post. A freerun where she would instantly overcome all obstacles. A life enjoying the wild feeling of hitting the limits of human ability and leaving the territory of ‘safety’ behind. An experience that allowed one to look at the city from a whole new perspective.

She was so immersed in this feeling of freedom that she went to Seoul as soon as she graduated high school. It was to simply enjoy and practice parkour with more people.

She who wanted to be freer than anyone else. She who resented the fact she was unable to follow the male crews' explosive dashes as a woman.

She was currently using the power of karma to exceed her limits. She was able to steadily increase her karma by killing monsters. There were no rough movements in her run.

She arrived at the underground in a single breath and was running along the tracks. As she ran jumping over 5, 10 ties at a time, she was finally able to cool off.

"Haaa..."

She stopped and sighed. As her head cooled, she became embarrassed.

"Ah... damn... What do I do now?"

She was happy she left after losing her temper but she had no plans. No place to go.

"Ah... Why did I come here?"

In a straight tunnel like this, it was difficult to escape from monsters. On top of that, she had shouted out loud as if she was advertising her location.

Fortunately, there were no monsters around her but it was a situation where she could have died. She felt chills going down her back.

Her mother's words were repeatedly playing in her mind. "You, you! You're going to get in big trouble because of that temper! This girl."

Lee Jinhee scratched her head.

"Sigh..."

She had no choice but to keep walking.

It was too late to go back now so she thought she would look for another assembly area at the next station.

“Do I have to stay quiet there... Ah... I can’t just kill them all, what do I do?”

She kept walking while thinking pointless thoughts.

“Huh?”

She suddenly heard noises and smelled the distinctive stink of monster blood.

At the same time, in the darkness, sounds of fighting and shouting approached her.

“Leader! I’m dying!”

“...”

“Leader!!! Leader!! Say something... Uak! Ah damn. You there, not leader! You! Behind there! In hiding! You’re there right? I think you are. I get that feeling! Hey! You hear me? Can you at least help me!”

It was an earnest cry for help. Lee Jinhee hesitantly stood up.

‘What the? Don’t tell me... he’s calling out to me?’

That moment, as if he had heard her thoughts, she heard the faint voice again.

“You! You! You’re right! No... You are correct{1}! Please save... Gak!”

As if he was hit at the last moment, he let out a suppressed cry and she heard banging and sounds of something getting jammed.

Though she wasn’t sure what was happening,

Lee Jinhee instinctively ran towards the sounds.

{1} Baek Seoin was speaking casually in the beginning but changed to formal to beg for her help.

CHAPTER 20

BERSERKERS (3)

Four days later.

Jung Minji and Lee Jinhee were sitting down across from each other.

Chu Youngjin was silently standing behind Jung Minji.

“So... You’re saying that the rumor about the enormous monster wasn’t a rumor.”

“Yes. There are two conditions to win. One is destroying all the portals and suppressing the monsters. And the second is to either kill the Wyvern of Destruction when it appears on the final day or at least keep it busy. If we fail to do either of the two, it is impossible to obtain the escape code.”

Lee Jinhee’s explanation. Jung Minji tapped the table with her finger. Her troops had already destroyed a portal nearby. However, that was it. She feared that the number of monsters would grow and wanted to destroy more portals but she was met with opposition so she put it on hold for now.

‘So that wasn’t a completely wrong choice. Since we are able to penetrate past the growing number of monsters. However, if the Wyvern of Destruction shows up on top of that, it becomes too difficult... So it’s not a situation where we can’t survive just by staying put.’

Jung Minji had almost decided. She asked her last question to confirm.

“You said that the King without Subjects sent you? Can you prove that?”

The same time she asked.

Flutter.

A black flag fluttered above Lee Jinhee’s head. It was without a doubt Choi Hyuk’s symbol. Jung Minji smiled.

“I have heard about the prestige of the Berserkers. Anyways... A King without Subjects having followers, how ironic. I understand. I will accept your offer. From now on, our troops will try our best to destroy the portals. And we will dispatch our elite troops in a week. The assembly area was...”

“Hyunhae Department Store. We looked around and currently they have the most power. There are a few troops gathered there.”

“Not far. Good.”

Jung Minji held out her hand. The two shook hands.

Lee Jinhee left Doonchon High School with light steps. Jung Minji’s troops who have distinguished themselves recently would be of great help.

In a week, Jung Minji, who had left Hanyoung High School, took over Doonchon High School as well as the shopping center across from the Olympic Park Station where Lee Jinhee was at previously.

“Hmmm... I wonder if that shitty man is still there?”

She didn’t care as she looked around Doonchon High School before running off to the next location.

A week after the game had started.

During that time, they destroyed 12 portals but the fight was becoming more and more difficult. Tens of thousands of monsters started to pour in each day and the number of monsters they didn’t kill grew. Currently, it was almost too much to destroy one portal in a day. Choi Hyuk became much stronger than Baek Seoin’s expectations but one hand couldn’t fend off ten.

To do away with this situation, like Baek Seoin suggested previously, Choi Hyuk decided to form a suicide squad and had dispatched Lee Jinhee as a messenger.

“She runs fast...”

Jung Minji stared at the Lee Jinhee who easily jumped over buildings. Her movements didn’t waste any energy. She was able to jump over a 4 or 5 story building with just two steps on the wall and she would overcome or brush past obstacles like the wind.

This wasn't something one could do just because they had karma. Others wouldn't have been able to control their strength properly and would have smashed into walls but she controlled her movements flawlessly. Lee Jinhee disappeared from her sight in an instant. A speed even monsters wouldn't be able to follow.

"...Good, I decided. Youngjin senior. Call the kings please."

"Yes."

Jung Minji's troops currently consisted of students from their alma mater, Hanyoung High School, students from Doonchon High School and the people who assembled at the shopping center across from the Olympic Park Station.

She was able to become the leader of these three groups with her daring, precise decisions and reckless show of power. However, it wasn't like her position was stable.

Currently, at Doonchon High School, there were three people who had the title of a king besides her.

First, the Slave King Song Simin who had allied with her since Hanyoung High School.

And Doonchon High School's student body president, the Student King Min Kyungchul.

Lastly, from the shopping center, the Pig King Ma Dongshik who obtained a Qualification to be a Sovereign and became king after habitually forcing people to take sides.

Ma Dongshik was the man Lee Jinhee previously fought with.

Jung Minji sat down in a circle with the three kings.

She announced her plans on dispatching troops to destroy portals and forming a suicide squad to support Choi Hyuk.

"Sure, why not."

The Slave King Song Simin, like his reputation of being Jung Minji's yes man, immediately agreed. When others asked him why he would always agree to Jung Minji's plans, he would half-jokingly say that he was not the Slave King for nothing and smile. He was insulted, saying that he had no guts but he had lots of friends and was

equally well-known for being a good-natured person who took great care of his people.

On one hand, the Student King Min Kyungchul was quite cooperative with Jung Minji but there were many times when he couldn't understand her.

"I understand that there will be a huge loss... but how much are you thinking of..."

"As many portals as we can. And dispatching all available elite troops. The goal is to minimize the casualties on the last day."

Jung Minji already wholeheartedly decided to cooperate. Even if there were losses on her side, it was to reduce the number of casualties overall.

This kind of decision was made because of her personality. If the door to hell opened on the final day and countless people were slaughtered by monsters and the Wyvern of Destruction, she had no doubt that she wouldn't be able to endure her (fucking) sensitivity to others' pain. If her troops who had power could do something, then she believed a weight would lift from her shoulders. From a broad perspective, her decision could seem selfless but, on the other hand, it was also selfish.

Min Kyungchul couldn't understand her. Even if he believed it was for a great cause, wasn't it natural to make sure your forces were safe first?

He couldn't oppose her outright but he showed a disgruntled expression in silence.

"How about, instead of that, we act like we are doing it? It's not like we're the only ones doing it."

It was the Pig King Ma Dongshik who wanted to oppose her.

"We're not the only ones... wouldn't everyone have the same thought? If it's like that, even a possible plan will fail. If that's the case, everyone might die. Among them could be lost family members. Someone has to actively take the lead."

"That's why... Why does that someone have to be us... If we want to take the lead, then everyone should... That's my thought."

While he talked, Ma Dongshik read at Jung Minji's mood. Jung Minji was a bitch younger than Lee Jinhee who fiercely talked back at him a few days ago... His insides

squirmed at the fact he had to treat her with respect, however, she wasn't someone he could handle. When the people in the shopping center endured saying that they wouldn't fight the Shadow Teeth, she raised her sword. 'Then instead of the Shadow Teeth, will you fight with us?' she calmly asked with eyes overflowing with bloodthirst. She seemed experienced in killing people. After that, Ma Dongshik only watched out for Jung Minji's mood.

'However, no matter how I think about it, this is wrong.'

It wasn't like they were playing hero, there was no need to take the lead and fight a bloody battle with the monsters.

Jung Minji motionlessly stared at Ma Dongshik. In her mind, she already looked down on him. He wasn't someone who would listen to words.

Also, she didn't think that she could beat him with logic. Since, from the start, this was a decision she made for herself. She never once thought that she was righteous. If she did, then she wouldn't have killed people without hesitation. She couldn't help but simply act on her irrational emotions and nature.

Since she had power, she decided to use it. For her wellbeing.

She, who was motionlessly staring at Ma Dongshik, opened her mouth.

"I didn't call you all for a meeting..."

With her words, the atmosphere grew cold. She had gathered the kings not to discuss these matters but to announce it. At least, it was different from her original demeanor of listening to their opinions after their groups merged.

The Slave King Song Simin only rolled his eyes. The Student King Min Kyungchul frowned and tightly sealed his lips.

Ma Dongshik froze momentarily before finally opening his mouth.

"...I... understand. However, please think over the number of dispatched people. There are families who were finally able to reunite with each other, we can't have them go into mourning so suddenly, can we? Let's have it so that only one person from each family be dispatched."

Ma Dongshik spoke out for the adults who were his main supporters.

And that was the reason why Jung Minji was so passive all this time.

When the survivors of Hanyoung High School and Doonchon High School gathered at the shopping center with the adults, there were quite a few people who found their family members among them.

Those with families couldn't help but act more protective. They were able to unite their strength to destroy the portal near them but that was all, nothing more.

Also, unlike the naïve students who were used to announcements and regulations, the adults were much more self-assertive and were able to laugh their way out of proposed regulations and moved only for benefits. It was hard to control them at her will.

That was the reason why Jung Minji, who wanted to fight the monsters more aggressively, couldn't help but accept the opposition and endure until now.

However, now that she had heard about the Wyvern of Destruction, Jung Minji resolved herself to no longer care about their circumstances.

Though it seemed it was complicated and time-consuming to make people act according to your will, sometimes it was very easy. Even if there was a resistance, if you pushed it hard enough, it would eventually fall. Only 3 weeks were left. She was confident in suppressing all resistance during that time.

“No. Then what about the students who couldn't find their families? We won't treat those with families any differently. With strong karma, even the elderly can run around. Haven't you observed this in the past few days?”

Ma Dongshik's face distorted at her words. Jung Minji used this chance to pour more cold water.

“Don't be mistaken. If you're weak, you die. It's that kind of game. It means that not fighting won't be great forever.”

Ma Dongshik wanted to let out his anger and slam the table but he desperately endured it. He was barely able to suppress his anger and force a smile.

He lowered his head.

“Haha... Yes... You’re right. I understand.”

The first thing he did after being absorbed into Jung Minji’s troops was take out the hidden stash of alcohol for the students from Hanyoung High School. During the drinking session, he clearly heard what happened to Kim Hyunbaek who opposed her. Ma Dongshik would always remember that example.

Jung Minji carefully examined Ma Dongshik’s expression. Ma Dongshik was barely able to squeeze out a smile as cold sweat dripped down his back. Finally, Jung Minji nodded her head.

“I look forward to working with you.”

And that was how the troops assembled at Doonchon High School started their preparations for war.



As time passed, the fact that the rules of the first game were quite varied were revealed.

The places with the most numbers would usually be assembly areas that were normally targeted at adults.

After them were all the high schools, middle school and the library where the {Ring of Rebirth} appeared. Places with a high density of people and people who weren’t too young. These two things could be seen as the conditions for the {Ring of Rebirth}.

Besides them, there were more customized rules.

Such as the modified assembly area method applied to the students of the Korean National Sport University next to the Olympic Park.

They were given the option to choose a weapon and goblins appeared inside their school. They were monsters who had the fighting ability of an average adult. Only after they disposed of them was karma distributed to them. {Qualifications to be a Sovereign 1/3} and {Knight Captain} was given to the person who had the most kills.

There were even rules that only applied to veterans of the Korean War and the Vietnam War. They were given weapons and distributed karma with no strings attached and there was an assembly area just for them. They even received a friendly announcement, {When you hunt monsters, karma will increase}.

Although the veterans weren't all familiar with each other, once they gathered together, they looked like an army. Veterans who knew better than anyone else what a real battle was like, when these grandpas learned of the pleasure in becoming as strong as superhumans, exceeding their former physical prowess, they fought even more vigorously than the monsters.

They became a prominent force that controlled Kangdong District.

However, there was a group composed of only three members who were equally famous.

Warriors who went around the entire Kangdong District and fought at the very front. While everyone was fighting to defend their assembly area, with only three members, this group smashed apart monsters' headquarters. Crazy warriors soaked with blood that wouldn't dry.

People called them, 'Berserkers'.

Especially the leader of the Berserkers who wielded a pitch black sword, Choi Hyuk. He became the center of an unbelievable rumor that he could smash apart most groups by himself.

"Hooo... I feel like I'm really going to die without Jinhee here."

"Did you ever feel like you were going to live?"

Baek Seoin who complained and Choi Hyuk who nonchalantly accepted them were once again wading through a forest of monsters to destroy a portal today.

{Kuakk!}

{Giik!}

Choi Hyuk had memorized the different vital points for each monster and now monsters were unable to endure a single attack.

However, Choi Hyuk's expression wasn't good.

'... We aren't able to catch up the speed at which the monsters are growing. There's a limit to killing one monster at a time.'

No matter how much he tried, the best he could do was kill one monster with a single strike. A restriction that felt like a natural limit. However, he wouldn't be able to break through the growing number of monsters with that speed. What was more,

'It's completely illogical to try to hunt the Wyvern of Destruction.'

No matter much stronger he became, it was impossible to slay an apartment-sized monster with a blade that was slightly longer than a meter.

'As expected... I have to try it.'

Choi Hyuk recalled the skill he obtained recently. A skill he couldn't currently use.

'... Soaring Slash.'

Choi Hyuk tightly grasped the hand of his blade.

CHAPTER 21

BERSERKERS (4)

{Soaring Slash}

Rank: C

Release a blade condensed from karma.

The only skill Choi Hyuk had, Soaring Slash. Its description was simple but it was an incredible C rank skill.

The most players could obtain from the {Throne Game} were E rank weapons and skills and the Predator's Blade he received as a reward from a secret rule was the only D rank weapon which was a level above the others.

It was similar to that. The regular items and skills that would drop from killing normal monsters in the game, {Survive and Escape}, were E rank while to the special ones who hunted mid-bosses would normally receive D ranks.

But since 'Soaring Slash' was a C rank, like the Predator's Blade, it was a reward that exceeded the norm.

So Choi Hyuk wasn't able to use the skill yet.

{Failed. To use C rank skills, you must have at least one stat and Retribution at C rank (3-star).}

Choi Hyuk recalled the moment he obtained the skill.

That day was the day he met Lee Jinhee.



Four days after {Ring of Rebirth}. They were on their way to destroy their third portal. Although he was low on stamina, he thought that he could end the day after this. However, his opponents were stronger than he thought.

“Leader! I’m going to die!”

Choi Hyuk was clearing the monsters approaching Baek Seoin but due to the monsters who went around him, Baek Seoin was in a critical situation. However, he was unable to recklessly go save Baek Seoin either. If he did, then the monsters he was currently blocking would gather around Baek Seoin as well and that could put him in more danger.

There were around 40 monsters which were similar to the number of monsters at the previous portal... but it was different. Usually, there would be one type of monster protecting a portal but this place had various monsters and they moved according to the mid-boss’s orders. They were monsters that used tactics.

On top of that, to hide this fact, only the mid-boss and around 10 large {Boulder Bears} were guarding the front of the portal while the rest waited in ambush. “Huh? What the? Something feels off?” Baek Seoin hesitated but Choi Hyuk didn’t pay him any heed. And they were currently in a difficult fight surrounded by a combination of tanks, close ranged and long ranged attackers.

‘We can’t continue like this. I have no choice.’

Choi Hyuk resolved himself. He was worried about Baek Seoin but he decided to believe in him.

‘Since he has Intuition, he probably won’t die.’

He felt that dragging the fight any longer would be more dangerous. Choi Hyuk decided to take the chance that more monsters would gather around Baek Seoin and attack the mid-boss.

The mid-boss had the appearance of a 3m tall bat but since it was wary of Choi Hyuk, it never stepped onto the frontlines. An annoying existence that only controlled monsters from behind and cast debuffs on Choi Hyuk and Baek Seoin.

Choi Hyuk instantaneously overloaded his karma. If he did this, his Stamina and Recovery would rapidly decline but he had no choice if he wanted to offset the debuffs and surprise it.

Choi Hyuk took a deep breath.

Bang!!

He kicked off the ground.

“Are you okay?!”

The moment Choi Hyuk shot up was the same moment Lee Jinhee ran over to save Baek Seoin.

Stab!

Lee Jinhee stabbed the head of the monster that was targeting Baek Seoin. She then swung Baek Seoin who lost strength in his legs after taking a hit and kicked the wall. She jumped over the heads of the incoming monsters.

The scene of Choi Hyuk piercing the forehead of the giant bat was reflected in Lee Jinhee’s eyes.

“Wow...”

A perfect takeoff, the artful movement of putting all his strength into the tip of the blade. She was truly amazed.

Thud. The moment she landed on the ground, the flow of the battle had already reversed.

The monsters became a herd of sheep with no shepherd. Choi Hyuk chose the most effective method and branded the heads, throats, chests and joints of the monsters with his blade. He was like a lion that had pounced on a herd of sheep.

Lee Jinhee couldn’t take her eyes away from Choi Hyuk. There were plenty of movements that she wanted to film and repeatedly view and practice.

“Uhh... I’m fine now so can you let go?”

She didn’t even hear Baek Seoin’s words. Even while carrying Baek Seoin and stepping on the swinging arm of a Boulder Bear, rolling to avoid a charging Crook and kicking off the subway wall to reach the edge of the battle, she never took her eyes off of Choi Hyuk’s fight.

The situation finally settled.

Choi Hyuk was reading a message.

{Additional Rule Revealed}

After half a month, the monsters start to move in a more organized manner.

{First to defeat an army-like group of monsters. Calculating... You have obtained more than two additional rules. Cleared more than five portals. More than one Qualifications to be a Sovereign... Satisfied the conditions. Granted the hidden reward, a C rank skill 'Soaring Slash'.}

Two peculiar messages appeared.

Lee Jinhee approached while Choi Hyuk was deep in his thoughts. Along with the haggard Baek Seoin.

Only then did Choi Hyuk remember he was helped and gave his thanks.

"Ah, than..."

However, Lee Jinhee cut him off and said.

"Hyung! You're the best! How did you do that?"

"...Hyung{1}?"

Choi Hyuk was taken back. A girl who looked like she was in university was calling him hyung...

"Yeah. Yeah. Hyung. Hyung, teach me! Especially that takeoff you used to kill the bat monster! That was amazing!"

Lee Jinhee who was a parkour otaku{2} was deeply moved by Choi Hyuk's concise movements which used his momentum (mobility) to the maximum. Though it was different from parkour, it was cool.

Not dashing in an open area but a dash that narrowly brushed passed monsters by a

paper-thin margin, a non-stop dash where if there was no room, he would make it by cutting down and pushing monsters away! Not running around the outside of a group of monsters but freely moving within! Strength!

However, Choi Hyuk was dazed.

“...I am hyung?”

“Or course! The one who’s better is the hyung! I’m asking you, please teach me!”

The conversation between Lee Jinhee who had her eyes wide open asking Choi Hyuk to teach her and Choi Hyuk, a genius who didn’t know anything besides ‘just do it, went nowhere.

At some point, they ended up talking about the ‘Wyvern of Destruction’.

“What? You’re going hunt an apartment-sized monster?!”

Lee Jinhee’s eyes shined brightly. This time, it was worse than before.

“As expected... Hyung! I respect you!”

To challenge an apartment-sized monster... Lee Jinhee panted heavily from the excitement.

‘Okay! Weren’t we the ones who climbed walls with only our hands? If we have karma, shouldn’t we be able to take down an apartment-sized monster?’ were Lee Jinhee’s thoughts. ‘This is a revolution!’

Like this, that day... Choi Hyuk obtained a skill and a new follower.



“Ha...”

Even when he thought about it now, she was a weird person. Lee Jinhee.

However, he had to end the fight now, so he cleared himself of distracting thoughts and yelled.

“Mid-boss, portal, confirmed!”

“Come back before I die!”

Baek Seoin said as he smashed the head of an oncoming Crook. Baek Seoin became experienced after fighting monsters for a week. He was currently able to fight normal monsters without difficulty.

“Speed, Vigor.”

Choi Hyuk coolly activated the skills of the {Ring of Speed} and the {Ring of Vigor} he obtained. Each increased his Speed and Power by 10% for 1 minute. There was no additional consumption of Stamina.

Karma condensed throughout his whole body.

Grip.

Choi Hyuk gripped the {Fang Saber}.

Bang!

He shot forward at full speed.

As there were too many monsters stationed around the portal, it was impossible to kill them all. So starting two days ago, when he saw the mid-boss and the portal, Choi Hyuk would charge forward, smash the two and escape.

Choi Hyuk charged forward.

He jumped off the shoulder of a Boulder Bear, stepped on a Crook’s head and jumped over a Bladed Starving Ghost while pushing away its blades. The monsters that were caught by the Fang Saber spurted blood.

Ingrained in his movements were parkour moves Lee Jinhee showed off. Lee Jinhee accused him of being a cheat for being able to copy, no improve her movements with a single glance but he didn’t care.

Choi Hyuk instantly broke through the monsters.

Crack!

First, he slashed with the Fang Saber and split the portal then unsheathed the thin Flash Sword.

{Kuahhhh!}

Crab? No, a crayfish-like mid-boss. Choi Hyuk easily avoided the mid-boss's attack and stabbed his Flash Sword between the folds of its exoskeleton.

Pkkht. Pkkht. Pkkht.

Not just once, he circled around it stabbing multiple times. The attacks of the mid-boss couldn't even touch Choi Hyuk.

{Kkrr... }

After the Flash Sword severed its joints, all it could do was cry.

It lost its mobility and was completely defenseless.

Crack!

He took aim at its wide chest and stabbed it with the Predator's Blade. The Predator's Blade which was stabbed vertically was even able to pierce its hard exoskeleton.

{The Predator's Blade absorbed the blood of a worthy opponent. Evolution 13/100}

He had killed 20 mid-bosses up until now. Among those, the ones he fed to the Predator's Blade were 13. There was still a long way to go before it would evolve.

"Tsk."

Choi Hyuk clicked his tongue once then turned around and yelled.

"Retreat!"

Even retreating wasn't easy. A tiring task of shaking off an endless amount of monsters.

Baek Seoin and Choi Hyuk would take a step back and stab one,
then take two steps back and split another,
four steps and five. That was how they slowly sped up their escape.

The corpses of the monsters extended in a long line- until, at one point, it stopped.



“Wow... You were a monster before but now that you evolved your stats again, is it completely different?”

Baek Seoin said in admiration.

It was as he said. After he had evolved even his Retribution to two-star two days ago, there was a huge change in his stats.

{Choi Hyuk}

Power: 10 (+10) (★★) Speed: 10 (+10) (★★) Control: 54 (+54) (★★)

Endurance: 18 (+18) (★★) Stamina: 18 (+18) (★★) Recovery: 0 (★★)

*Retribution: 0 (★★)

*Free karma points: 50

{Compared to the stats he had around the time he met Baek Seoin}

Power: 35.3 (+10) (★) Speed: 36 (+10) (★) Control: 45.1 (+20) (★)

Endurance: 25.6 (★) Stamina: 49.7 (+10) (★) Recovery: 35.9 (+10) (★)

*Free karma points: 4

As his stats and Retribution passed 200, they evolved into two-stars. After that, a lot of things changed.

On top of that fact his stats wouldn't increase when he killed normal monsters (he decided to call them 1-star monsters for convenience), even when he killed mid-bosses (he called them 2-star monsters), his stats didn't increase automatically.

Before, if he killed something, all his stats would go up by at least 1. Even his Retribution would go up by 1.

However, it was different now. When he killed 2-star monsters, none of his stats or Retribution would increase and he would only earn a single free karma point.

What was more, he even needed to spend free karma points to raise his Retribution now?

Because of this, besides the stats increased through items, Choi Hyuk's real stats and Retribution were all 0.

After evolving his stats, he had killed 6 2-star monsters but all they became were 6 free karma points. Fortunately, as a benefit of killing mid-bosses, he was granted 2 free karma points per kill and for evolving his Retribution to 2-stars, he received 4 free karma points for a total of 50.

And, after obtaining 2-star stats, the stat increases from 1-star items became nullified.

Because of this, he distributed the accessories and enchanted items to his followers or put them in his Handy Bag and created new D rank items. From this, he was able to keep all his stats besides Recovery at 2 digits...

All things considered, things weren't easy.

Choi Hyuk grumbled.

"It's too hard to develop."

The hurdles he had to jump over to increase his stats and Retribution all of a sudden became too high.

To achieve 1-stars, he needed 100 points.

200 points for 2-stars.

Then didn't it mean that he needed 300 for 3-stars?

To increase a necessary stat, even if he hunted a monster, he would only earn a single free karma point.

On top of that, killing ordinary 1-star monsters was useless.

“I know right? It’s like the tutorial has finished.”

Baek Seoin smiled as he said strange things.

“...Tutorial?”

“Yeah. If you looked at it like a game, we should now be choosing our classes. Which means that we can’t increase all our stats like before.”

Sensible words. However...

“It’s still hard. It’s not like there are a lot of 2-star monsters.”

“That’s because leader became too strong by himself. My stats increased after I met you... but aren’t they still less than a quarter of what your stats were back then? So, it’s like this. Currently, the {Survive and Escape} game is a tutorial but leader’s stats exceed its level. I bet even the creators never imagined that there would be someone who easily clears monsters with just 1-star stats and reached 2-star stats long before the game ends.”

They weren’t very encouraging words.

“Anyways, it’s hard to use Soaring Slash.”

A 3-star stat and 3-star Retribution. Those were the conditions to use Soaring Slash. He needed 600 karma points. Even if he included the amount he currently had, he still needed to kill 170 more mid-bosses. It might be possible if he tried his best and his stats increased significantly through items but... at this rate, it was impossible. Due to the increasing number of monsters, it was taking longer and longer to kill a mid-boss.

However, even if that was the case, he needed Soaring Slash if he wanted to kill the Wyvern of Destruction.

‘Release a blade condensed from karma.’

Wasn’t that sword energy? If he could slash 5 meters away with sword energy, Choi Hyuk thought it was possible to take down the Wyvern of Destruction.

He was deep in his thoughts.

Baek Seoin merrily said.

“Don’t worry. My Intuition believes in you, leader.”

“That Intuition... doesn’t it not care if I kill the wyvern or not as long as Baek hyung isn’t in danger?”

Lee Jinhee’s way of talking rubbed off on Choi Hyuk as he now called Baek Seoin, Baek hyung.

At Choi Hyuk’s keen words, Baek Seoin changed the topic.

“Ahahaha. Aren’t you hungry? Nearby supply locations... Let’s see... It’s Kangdong Library! It just came down. Let’s obtain the supplies and call it a day! Haha!”

Baek Seoin laughed wholeheartedly as he led the way.

Pfft.

Choi Hyuk laughed once before following behind. Since it wasn’t like he could do anything by worrying about it now.

The sun was setting.

{1} Hyung is what a younger man would call an older man but Lee Jinhee is a girl (which means she should have used ‘Oppa’) so Choi Hyuk was taken back. Also, she’s older than him.

{2} Parkour otaku means she is extremely obsessed with parkour

CHAPTER 22

BERSERKERS (5)

Late at night, Hyunhae Department Store, employee's break room.

A man woke up from his nightmares. The moment he woke up, his body bounced up and he slashed out with his sword.

“Ue... Uackkk!!”

Crash!

“Haaa... Haaaa...”

The man broke into a cold sweat as he looked around his surroundings. The room was dark and no one was there.

“It was a dream...”

The man lowered his head and calmed his breath.

The man's name was Ryu Hyunsung. He was the {Knight Captain} of the Korean National Sport University.

Ryu Hyunsung pulled out the sword deeply embedded in the floor. Nights like these were when he thought it was good that he decided to use a room all to himself despite the dissatisfaction among his colleagues. What kind of gruesome tragedy would occur if he slept next to others... even thinking about it sent shivers down his spine.

“How embarrassing... It's not like it's only happened once or twice...”

When he said that, he started. It wasn't a day or two... but if he thought about it, it had only been a week.

On an ordinary day, monsters suddenly appeared. His colleagues, juniors and professors were driven into a corner and ripped apart.

Ryu Hyunsung was a national level sabre fencer. He lived half his life as a swordsman but had never even cut a chicken's neck. That Ryu Hyunsung was bathed in blood again and again. If someone was to pick the top three people who killed the most monsters, Ryu Hyunsung would definitely be on that list. That was why it was more exhausting for him than anyone else. The times he didn't know when or where fangs or claws of monsters would strike. In a completely nervous state. He clenched his teeth and fought against monsters that were stronger and faster than him.

But, the horrible and tiresome feeling only lasted for a moment. Ryu Hyunsung's conscience quickly adjusted to this hell. However, occasionally, his unconsciousness would shudder at the terror and horror. The nightmares were proof of that.

"Huuu..."

Ryu Hyunsung stood up and hung his sword on his waist.

He became accustomed to examining the condition of his equipment in the morning as if he had done it his whole life. If he looked back, it had only been a week... but his university life of ordering jajangmyeon and baigan liquor^{1} seemed to be from a previous life.

Ahh, for that to be all.

"Is it human blood now?"

He bitterly laughed at himself as he stretched his body.

His body that was previously trembling from the nightmares had already become calm. Even his heightened senses were becoming dull.

It probably wasn't a unique morning that only Ryu Hyunsung experienced.

As everyone did their best to calm their panic and confusion to endure this hell.



To anyone, monsters were entities that brought fear and horror.

Even the students who experienced the {Ring of Rebirth} and the {Throne Game} panicked and received heavy casualties when they first fought against monsters.

Existences that were larger and more experienced than humans. When facing their killing intent straight on, there weren't many who could keep their minds straight. Perhaps the people who defended the assembly area while it was under the Barrier of the Weak were able to endure it but the students who didn't have a designated assembly area and the exploration teams who went out to find supplies all fought with their lives on the line.

When they were finally able to calm down after enduring these nightmarish days, the people realized. In a reality where monsters were eating humans, humans weren't necessarily all on the same side.

“Sa... save...”

“Shh- Shh- It's okay. It's okay.”

Puscht!

Blood spurted out.

“Hey... You! Bastards! Are you even human?!!!”

“Quiet, quiet.”

Puscht!

“Woah! They were on their way back after collecting supplies. They have the Barrier of the Weak?”

What would people's reactions normally be when they spotted a team of wounded people who fought monsters?

Of course, there were people who helped. However, there were plenty who ignored them. Among them, there were even those who 'hunted' them. They would earn karma as well as items. They were people who thought it was better than fighting monsters. Those who didn't see others as fellow humans.

Because people were humans, they sympathized with each other. It was an instinct. However, just who was considered a 'human' depended on the individual.

It even happened during peaceful times.

There were many, many people who nonchalantly stole from others. And beat them. And could still stand tall and shout, “This bastard is unbelievable!” at the victims. Adults did, obviously, but there were even occasional cases where young students would kidnap someone weaker than them then torture and kill them.

The reason why they could do that? Because they were born psychopaths?

No. It was simply because these people didn't consider others as fellow humans. Because 'Us' and 'You' were different. They were existences who could pour boiling water on you to see what happens but could also go crazy and even cry when 'their' friends bled even a tiny bit.

The assembly areas were deeply divided.

As they needed to fight monsters, there was a side who wanted to unite everyone's strength even if it was hard and a side who took an uncaring attitude as if nothing mattered as long as they were alive and safe. On top of that, there were villainous cockroaches who only took care of their people and saw others as people who existed only to give them karma and supplies.

And like always, the bad became more eye-catching and grew at a faster pace than the good. There were cases all around where people killed others and in less than a week, assembly areas no longer trusted each other.

This situation became a major obstacle for Choi Hyuk and Baek Seoin who needed to unite everyone to hunt the Wyvern of Destruction.

On top of that, a newly discovered rule.

{Supplies will reduce significantly every 10 days.}

The currently insufficient supplies would become even smaller. Then, the number of people would inevitably get smaller.

Who would be left behind? There were suggestions of throwing out the weak but that was rejected. If they started to cast out people who were on 'their' side, cooperation would become forever impossible.

Then what solution was there that would reduce the number of people but still keep themselves united?

There was one.

So Choi Hyuk thought.

'All the better.'

"These bastards are unbelievable! Just who do you think you are to come crawling here like that?"

The ones who came and held Choi Hyuk and Baek Seoin, who came to get the supplies, back were a group of gangsters who took the KTT building near Gildong Station as their base. An assembly area with an especially large amount of gangsters. They dominated that place and ruled as kings.

"Oh? Someone else came. Then let's split it evenly."

Said Baek Seoin.

That was Choi Hyuk's group's rule. It didn't matter who found the supplies first, they would always split it evenly with everyone. However, the gangsters had a different rule

"Ha? What? Look at these fucking bastards."

The gangsters surrounded Choi Hyuk and Baek Seoin. Choi Hyuk clearly saw the dark red light they were emitting. They planned on killing Choi Hyuk and Baek Seoin from the start. To steal their karma and items.

"...What the. We're in a dangerous situation but my Intuition isn't activating."

Baek Seoin laughed.

Choi Hyuk laughed as well and looked at the symbol above the gangsters' heads. A symbol of an axe. It seemed like there was a leader who earned a Qualification to be a Sovereign.

Choi Hyuk counted his opponents. Twenty people.

Who would he keep alive and get information from? What path would be the simplest?

That moment, another party appeared. They were old men whose assembly area was

quite a distance from here but perhaps they came all the way here because they lacked supplies.

“Hey, you punks. Put your hands away.”

Around ten grandpas. The Association of Comrade in Arms. War veterans who fought in the Korean and Vietnam War.

“Who are these fogies?”

Even though the gangsters swore, their spirit died down. They too have heard about the bravery of these grandpas.

“Now, now. You, civilians, leave. Think of yourselves as lucky. And you punks. We knew that your assembly area was near here but since we came from a long way, let’s split it evenly.”

A grandpa wearing sunglasses offered.

They weren’t intimidated even though they knew they were close to the gangsters’ headquarters. Well, they were men who lived their whole lives like that. People who have walked down Jongno Street all knew this. These old men who went through hell never shied away from anything.

“The fuck...”

The team leader of the gangster exploration team thought. This was their territory and that if they backed down now, it would be incredibly humiliating. So he allowed them to use ‘them’. The things they stole from the empty police station.

Bang!

“It has nothing to do with you so go on your way.”

The gangsters took out their guns. If one reached 1-star stats, they would have physical abilities close to that of a superhuman’s but it wasn’t to the point of blocking or dodging bullets. They would still be affected by bullets.

But the grandpas just laughed.

From their Handy Bags,

Cachink,

Thud,

They took out pistols and even a makeshift flamethrower created by remodelling a rifle and a gas tank.

When all hell broke loose and people were panicked, the ones who robbed the police station and the reserves before anyone were these grandpas from the Association of Comrade in Arms.

The grandpa wearing sunglasses said craftily.

“What did you say? I couldn’t hear properly cuz I’m old!”

“...Urk...”

“Can’t you speak? Then I’ll say it again. You civilians quickly run away. And you, we split the items 2:1, of course, we’re 2. Okay?”

And that was how the gangsters and the grandpas started to negotiate again.

Choi Hyuk who was looking at them laughed.

“Puhahaha.”

Instantly, everyone’s gazes fell on Choi Hyuk.

Stomp!

Choi Hyuk disappeared. Their eyes widened.

A method to reduce the number of people while internally staying united.

There was a historic method. That was, go to war with powers who were preventing unification.

{1} Jajangmyeon – a common Korean Chinese noodle dish. Baigan Liquor – Chinese Liquor

CHAPTER 23

BERSERKERS (6)

Just because your eyes are open doesn't mean you see everything.

One of the main reasons is saccadic movement. People's eyes make 3-4 rapid jerk-like movements every second. Even if you think that you are concentrating on one thing, your eyes are constantly moving. The length of time your eyes are fixed and are taking in information is about 0.1-0.3 seconds. Excluding that, while your eyes are making rapid (saccadic) movements, you are in fact not taking in any information.

Along with that, within a 180-degree field of view, only the middle 2 degrees can be constantly maintained. If something was even 2 degrees away from the center, your vision would plummet by 50%.

Choi Hyuk laughed loudly. Everyone's gazes turned towards him. They were like 'What the?' In that short period of time, there were some whose eyes were locked onto Choi Hyuk and others whose eyes suddenly looked at a gangster or a grandpa. And then,

Bang!

Without any notice, Choi Hyuk jumped forward.

The people whose eyes were looking at something else obviously weren't able to follow him. Even the people who already had their eyes on him lost him.

Choi Hyuk didn't jump in a straight line but up, in a parabola. Eyes had more difficulty tracking vertical movement than horizontal. Choi Hyuk, who jumped up, was instantly 2 degrees away from the center of their vision. His enemies tried to follow Choi Hyuk's movements but the eyes have a 0.1-0.2 second delay. Even if they wanted to follow him, 'tracking' was comparably slow when targeting a moving object, while 'saccadic movements' limited their field of view.

A swiftness that aimed for both weaknesses of the eyes and the mind! The result was brutal.

Boom!

A sound that was too frightening to believe. The sight that was captured by their eyes was a cloud of blood exploding like flour.

The endurance of the gun-holding gangster wasn't even 1-star. The moment Choi Hyuk's fist imbued with 10 (★★) Power and 10 (★★) Speed stats made contact with his face, it literally turned into powder.

Four gangsters held guns in the beginning and since one had just died, three were left.

However, Choi Hyuk didn't need to prioritize the gangsters who held guns.

Crack!

Slam!

With a single jab, another man's neck bone shattered and with a kick, another one's chest collapsed. Only then did the gangsters hastily start to react.

While leaning forward slightly, Choi Hyuk glanced at his enemies. As his Retribution was already at 2-stars, Choi Hyuk's eyes, which had already exceeded the limits of humans, were incredibly fast and precise as they distinguished their enemies. Instant saccadic movements. Instant perception. The gangsters felt their hairs stand on end.

'Our eyes met...!'

At the same time, everyone thought they had met eyes with Choi Hyuk. A predator looking at its prey.

Bang!

Someone shot their gun in a last-ditch effort but Choi Hyuk had already run to the side. Once again, he disappeared from their vision.

'Huh?'

The gangsters looked like they were bewildered spectators at a magic show.

"Uaackkkk!"

Was there anything scarier than an enemy you couldn't clearly see? Choi Hyuk's

movements had a strange movement. They weren't able to properly lock onto him. The moment they thought they caught up to him, he was already two steps away, killing one of their comrades. Would an ant being squashed by a child feel the same way? A certain fear and despair they hadn't felt when they fought monsters overcame them.

Bang! Bang! Baang!

Guns fired off in a last-ditch effort.

The grandpas of the Association of Comrades in Arms moved back to avoid stray bullets but Choi Hyuk was calm even at a close distance.

And that was the same for Baek Seoin.

Pew!

A spark flew off in front of Baek Seoin's eyes. The intercepting ability of the {Necklace of Protection} he was given had activated. A bullet bounced off. Although it would only activate three times every hour, that was more than enough in this situation.

Ffftt!

The shield Baek Seoin threw slammed into a gangster's face. The teeth of the gangster who shot the bullet sprayed out. Bits of flesh were still attached. Baek Seoin charged forward. He stabbed and sliced at the gangsters with his longsword. He was a warrior who had 1-star stats. Gangsters who had maybe 1 or 2 1-star stats or none at all were no match for Baek Seoin.

"Sa... save me."

After Baek Seoin finished off 3 people, Choi Hyuk had already ended the situation. He had beaten everyone to death with his bare hands.

The gangsters couldn't even leave behind their moans. They only ended up as brutally beaten corpses. A strange silence fell.

The only living person was begging Choi Hyuk for his life.

Choi Hyuk's left hand was tightly clenched around his neck. He was young. He seemed

to be at most twenty or perhaps he was even the same age as Choi Hyuk. He was the youngest among the gangsters.

He begged with a face splattered with tears and snot.

“Please...”

Choi Hyuk asked.

“Headquarters?”

“KT... The KTT building. I’m sorry. Please...”

Choi Hyuk indifferently let the pleading man down. Choi Hyuk wasn’t moved because the young gangster was young. He was Choi Hyuk’s age. Choi Hyuk himself believed he was all grown up. Then, the young gangster too was all grown up.

So Choi Hyuk tilted his head.

“When you came at me shooting guns, did you not think of the consequences?”

The young gangster opened his mouth as if wanting to say something but.

Crunch.

Choi Hyuk’s hand was faster. He was unable to let out a word and slammed into the ground, leaving him with a shattered neck.

Baek Seoin who was watching this slightly frowned. However, that was all. He didn’t say anything. Though Choi Hyuk’s ruthlessness didn’t fit well with Baek Seoin’s morals... he didn’t think Choi Hyuk’s judgment was wrong either.

‘What’s it to me when the world is ending.’

Baek Seoin was originally an emotional man. He was even quite the worrier.

However, once he resolved himself to avenge his parents, he decided to think more simply. His values were slowly changing.

‘It’s easier if they die.’

Above all, it meant that they wouldn't be held back by them again.

A sudden thought even crossed his mind that it might be good to use this situation more aggressively to their favor.



“Let's split it evenly.”

Choi Hyuk calmly said.

“No, we have way more people...!”

A grandpa wanted to express his dissatisfaction.

“Uh, okay. Let's do that. You're quite amazing for a young fellow. It's like what I've heard.”

The sunglasses wearing grandpa who was the leader held the others back.

Choi Hyuk wordlessly took exactly half of the supplies.

Rations, clothes, toiletries, Weakening Barrier, item scrolls, amongst others.

At the same time, Baek Seoin was scavenging items off the gangsters.

“Ah damn... He has a Speed Enchant. What a waste for it to end up with a guy like him.”

As a follower of Choi Hyuk who goes around killing monsters by the hundreds, Baek Seoin almost had a complete set of items. No matter how many new items came out, he didn't really feel like replacing them.

However, enchants were an exception.

Enchants were unique items. They were presented in a jewel-like shape and the moment you used it, it would be drawn on your skin. In other words, you couldn't forcefully steal it.

Baek Seoin needed a Speed Enchant. So he felt sad to see the Speed Enchant drawn on the dead gangster's arm.

Enchants were very valuable.

They were limited to 5 stat-increasing items, a fact they figured out as they equipped various items. It meant that if you had a sword, armor, necklace, ring and shoes that increased your stats, you couldn't have any more.

However, enchants were an additional way to increase your stats. You were able to overlap up to five enchants of the same grade as your Retribution. And the more enchants you overlap, the bigger the bonus.

For example, Choi Hyuk had 3 Control Enchants, 1 Stamina and 1 Endurance.

{Control, Stamina and Endurance Enchants}

Rank: D

A combination of 3 Control Enchants, 1 Stamina Enchant and 1 Endurance Enchant.
Bonus +3

Control: +54 Stamina: +18 Endurance: +18

Besides them, Choi Hyuk only had 2 rings to increase his stats. He still needed 3 more but he held off looking for them since D ranks were hard to find.

{Ring of Speed}

Rank: D

Speed: +10

You are able to use the skill {Speed} once a day. For 1 minute, Speed increases by 10%.

There is no addition consumption of Stamina.

{Ring of Vigor}

Rank: D

Power: +10

You are able to use the skill {Vigor} once a day. For 1 minute, Power increases by 10%.

There is no addition consumption of Stamina.

There was an addition skill included in the rings but still, while his rings increased his stats by 10, including the enchant bonus, each enchants increased his stats by 18.

As enchants simply helped you plan out your stats unlike items where you had to look at their different functions, it could be said that getting the necessary enchants took priority over items.

Baek Seoin who had 2 Speed Enchants, 2 Stamina and 1 Endurance wanted to another Speed Enchant to increase his survivability. As there were times when his Intuition would activate but he was too slow to react.

And since the Speed Enchant he had been looking for was engraved into a dead gangster's arm, he couldn't help but explode in anger.

"Ah damn... There isn't anything to use this time as well."

They had piles of items but none were useful. As they were a waste to throw away, they simply collected them.

"Huh? Wait."

That moment, a great plan crossed Baek Seoin's mind. Baek Seoin looked over at Choi Hyuk and the Alliance of Comrades in Arms. They were about to split ways.

Baek Seoin called for them.

"Grandpas! Please wait!"

The grandpas, as well as Choi Hyuk, looked back at him with strange expressions. Baek Seoin approached Choi Hyuk and whispered.

'Are you going to go wipe out the gangsters now?'

'Yeah.'

'Then let's take those grandpas as spectators.'

'... Why?'

‘Since we need to start showcasing our power. Why would people fight the Wyvern of Destruction? Because there’s a chance if they fight with us! Let’s promote ourselves once. The grandpas were already one of the groups you wanted to win over anyways. Jinhee probably went over to see their leader.’

‘... Okay. But would they want to watch us fight?’

‘We should give them some gifts.’

‘Gifts?’

‘Yes. Let’s give them some of the items we don’t use. You were planning on distributing them later anyways. I mean I think it’s good if we have good relations with these grandpas anyways.’

Choi Hyuk thought that Baek Seoin’s words made some sense. He nodded his head.

“Okay.”

As soon as he agreed, Baek Seoin took the lead.

“Grandpas! We are going to go clear up the punks now and we were wondering if you would like to watch us?”

“...Why would we?”

“You probably haven’t heard yet but we requested an alliance to your leader. We were hoping you would watch our skills and discuss it with him later.”

The sunglasses wearing grandpa didn’t feel inclined at his words.

“We already know that your skills are amazing...”

“Hey, that was nothing. Ah, and afterwards, as a show of friendship, we won’t let you leave empty handed.”

Those were the decisive words.

“...Then shall we go?”

“Okay! Then let’s go!”

As soon as the grandpa agreed, Baek Seoin led the grandpas. Choi Hyuk had already started walking way ahead of them.

The sunglasses wearing grandpa was slightly taken aback so he asked.

“We’re going right away?”

“Yes.”

As Baek Seoin answered simply, the grandpa slightly tilted his head.

At this point, the grandpa thought.

‘Don’t tell me... we are going like this? The two of them? No way. They probably have forces elsewhere.’

Though the grandpa felt this wasn’t the case when looking at Choi Hyuk and Baek Seoin’s unyielding steps, he tried his best to believe that was the case.

CHAPTER 24

BERSERKERS (7)

Baek Seoin and Choi Hyuk's plans were similar yet different.

Unlike Baek Seoin who only thought to increase their fame, Choi Hyuk was also thinking about 'reducing the numbers'.

{Supplies will reduce significantly every 10 days.}

Soon, it would be the 10th day.

'People will kill and be killed anyways.'

Choi Hyuk only thought to that point. To him, the lives of the group of gangsters and people who cooperated with them weren't anything special.

If Baek Seoin expected to quickly infiltrate and assassinate, Choi Hyuk was expecting an all-out war.



"Hey. Where are your comrades?"

When they saw the KTT building, the steps of the grandpas of the Alliance of Comrades in Arms slowed. They were a bit nervous as they had yet to see their comrades. However, Choi Hyuk didn't even look back. Instead, Baek Seoin turned around and explained.

"Don't worry and just spectate from a distance. Don't go anywhere."

Then he followed Choi Hyuk while waving his arms. The grandpas who were left behind were dumbfounded. Did that mean that there would be more comrades or not?

The grandpas discussed amongst themselves.

"What do we do?"

“...Don't tell me... they are young'uns who don't even value their lives? They didn't look that way...”

He didn't care.

Choi Hyuk confidently approached the front of the building. Baek Seoin caught up to him and whispered.

“Are we not going to sneak in?”

Choi Hyuk didn't say a word as he turned around and looked at him with a dumb expression. As if he was saying, ‘Sneak in? Why would I do that?’ Baek Seoin became slightly uneasy.

“If we just fight them outright, it becomes hard to distinguish between friend or foe.”

“Friend or foe? There are only two of us.”

“No. Not that. It's not good to just kill people who are forced to cooperate with the gangsters.”

“Cooperators... are they any different from the gangsters?”

At Choi Hyuk's question, Baek Seoin was at a loss for words.

Choi Hyuk gazed at Baek Seoin's face and nodded.

“I don't kill people who aren't cooperators.”

“...”

Baek Seoin closed his mouth.

If they used Choi Hyuk's method and just pushed forward, civilians wouldn't know what was happening and would oppose Choi Hyuk. Baek Seoin didn't think that killing those people was right.

‘However...’

There wasn't a suitable reply. ‘Were cooperators really without guilt?’

That was a long-time worry of Baek Seoin.

For example,

To live, to support their family, were people who cooperated with the Japanese Empire without guilt.

There were businessmen who would sell out their fellow Koreans and send them to coal mines or sell them as comfort women. There were even landowners who offered bribes to the Japanese Empire and overworked their farmers under their protection. Did they have sins? Then what about the people who used their parents' hard earned money and had no other job except working as a public official of the Japanese Empire?

If there was a difference in limits and it varied on their circumstances, just what standards did he need to have?

'I did it to live.' 'Everyone else does it as well.' How far could these excuses be used? Then what about the people who couldn't even do 'what everyone else was doing' and starved to death?

A head-aching worry. Baek Seoin would always trouble over this but he could never find an answer.

However, Choi Hyuk was different.

"Baek hyung. I'm telling you this just in case you've misunderstood something."

Choi Hyuk didn't look back and said.

"What we are doing isn't kindness. We're doing it because we need to and because there just so happens to be a group who picked a fight."

"Ah..."

Baek Seoin lowered his head.

'... I was too soft.'

He inwardly engraved the word 'revenge' into his heart once again. As soon as he did

so, many things became simpler.

Perseverance. Eating bitter bile and sleeping on rough straws.

That was what revenge was. You weren't supposed to forget your rage. You had to grow your malice before goodwill.

Those who lowered their heads because they were scared of the gangsters wouldn't really be of much help when fighting the Wyvern of Destruction.

In a situation where supplies were insufficient and people were fighting amongst each other, it would be difficult to unite everyone. It was better to reduce the numbers when they had the chance.

So... As long as their opposing groups had numbers, they would wipe them out.

More than what they thought.

'It will be a bloody battle... '

Baek Seoin ground his teeth. His face stiffened and he followed behind Choi Hyuk.



As soon as they approached the KTT building, 5 guards who were lying in ambush jumped out.

Among them, only one wore armor and just by looking at his figure and his hair, it was obvious he was a gangster.

He asked.

"Why are you here?"

Choi Hyuk replied.

"To hunt gangsters."

An absurd reply. It was even childish. However, in this situation, being simple was more effective.

As soon as Choi Hyuk spoke, he watched his opponents with his Eyes of Distinction. He read his opponents' reactions.

'One red (killing intent), 2 black (ill will) and 1 white (goodwill).'

"What... This f..."

Slice!

The armor wearing gangster emitted a red light. Just as he was about to spout a four-letter word, his head was sliced off with Choi Hyuk's blade. Blood spurted out like a geyser.

"...Uackkk!"

There was one person who reacted late that attempted to run away.

"Hiiiiiek!"

Another who sporadically swung his sword.

Slash!

The body of the man, who attempted to attack him, split in two along with his sword.

Piiiiiii!

An escapee blew a whistle. Piiiiii! Piiiiii! People who were watching this scene through a window inside the building blew their whistles as well.

Choi Hyuk looked at the last remaining person.

The man who looked to be in his thirties was the only person who emitted a white light. Currently, faint traces of black were mixed into the white light. It seemed he was wary of him.

When Choi Hyuk lifted his sword and looked at him, he trembled before asking.

"You... you're here to hunt gangsters?"

“..”

“I want to join!”

Only then did Choi Hyuk finally nod his head.



There were about 1,300 people who chose the KTT building as their assembly area. Among them, 500 were gangsters while 800 were normal people. It seemed like all the gangsters near here had gathered.

Although gangsters had many problems with the law and morals, as they were experienced fighters, they were quite courageous even when fighting monsters. A world where you become stronger as you live. This actually made them more passive.

Not too many days had passed when the gangsters became the king of this place. And then, they revealed their true nature. If there was a woman that caught their eye, they would rape her and they would even beat people to death when they were drunk.

Tyrants.

However, they weren't fools. They didn't only resort to violence. They treated people who cooperated with them nicely and even gave them chances to get stronger by taking them out for reconnaissance. During this time, they murdered people and even gifted them the women they kidnapped to slowly turn them into 'accomplices'.

Now, the only normal people left in this assembly area were those who were the same as the gangsters and those who looked the other way and only cared about their own safety. Those who weren't either died resisting them or risked their lives and went out to find a new assembly area.

Choi Hyuk didn't know everyone's circumstances.

And honestly, he didn't need to know. He was only after numbers anyways.

Choi Hyuk shouted at the gathering people.

“As the gangsters here attempted to kill me, I am just here for payback. Those who aren't part of this, screw off!”

To the people who ran over here after hearing the guards outside had died couldn't help but find all this sudden.

A short silence fell.

Some burst into anger while others read the mood.

The ones who were reading the mood looked around to see if Choi Hyuk had any reinforcements. No matter where they looked, they couldn't find any.

Only then did people react to nonsensical Choi Hyuk's declaration.

"Is he a crazy bastard?"

"He's the one who murdered people!"

The jeers and rage of hundreds of people were much more chilling than one would think.

The man in his thirties who Choi Hyuk had saved just now was trembling behind Baek Seoin.

'Ah damn... for there to be only two people...'

He felt regret. However, he shook his head.

'Damn it. I can't do anything about it. Instead of getting killed by these people, I'd rather die fighting these fucking gangsters.'

While the man was at a crossroads, Choi Hyuk grinned before charging forward.

His eyes could see people emitting red lights as bright as the sunset.

"Ahhhh!"

"Sav... Save me please!"

It was filled with screams and tears.

The fight that occurred outside the building took 30 minutes and it continued inside

the building. Choi Hyuk hunted and killed the people who attempted to run. He even killed those who kneeled and begged for their lives.

Even if they emitted a white light, he killed them.

‘You were quiet when I looked weak but now that I look strong, you beg for your life?’

Although they weren’t hostile, Choi Hyuk was someone who was merciless to his enemies.

‘They won’t be useful in future battles.’

Sphhlt!

There was only one type of people he saved.

“Ahh! You bas-tard!!”

“What, you fucking bastard!”

One youth gave up on fighting Choi Hyuk. Instead, he stabbed the backs of the gangsters, filled with resent.

The color reflected in his Eyes of Distinction was a pale black. He had a bit of hostility towards Choi Hyuk but it wasn’t excessive.

‘He knows how to fight and he isn’t an enemy.’

Choi Hyuk didn’t kill that youth and moved on.

It was simple to tell who was on his side. Eyes of Distinction and the direction of their swords. The choice to abandon their weapons had already passed by when Choi Hyuk told everyone who wasn’t part of this to leave. Now, the direction you swung your sword determined if you were friend or foe.

Choi Hyuk’s rule that depended on their swords slowly spread.

Of course, there were exceptions.

“Huh... Fuck, why me...”

He was someone who stabbed his comrades to live. After seeing how Choi Hyuk left certain people alive, he stabbed his comrades and felt that he was safe. However, Choi Hyuk clearly saw the red light. He pierced the Flash Sword through his heart.

‘What the? You die even if you kill the gangsters?’

‘Just what is the criteria?’

The people who saw this scene fell into a state of confusion. Choi Hyuk didn’t care to address this confusion.

Even then, there were numerous people who came out and started to stab the gangsters out of their own free will.

Slice! Stab! Stab! Slash!

Choi Hyuk was a death-producing machine. It seemed like he killed a person every second.

Wherever he was, there was a stream of corpses trailing behind him and around him, people started to kill the gangsters.

At that time, Choi Hyuk found the leader. He was abnormally large and above his head was a large axe symbol.

He came down escorted by his bodyguards with a distorted expression and swore.

“This motherfuc... You son of...”

Of course, he wasn’t able to finish his words.

Slice!

Slaash!

Swish!

Choi Hyuk made his way towards him as he swung his Fang Saber.

Unlike monsters, humans were thin and long, so if he swung properly, he could even

kill multiple people with one swing.

In three slices, the leader, along with his bodyguards, split into two.

As soon as the leader died, the axe symbols around them disappeared.

But, nothing would change. As Choi Hyuk was planning on indiscriminately killing people who were outside the standards he made himself.

He killed and killed. It was to the point the durability of the Fang Saber hit bottom and shattered.

Only when there weren't any more people to kill did Choi Hyuk raise his head. Blood splattered on the hallways, the stairs and the walls. At some point, a pool of blood had formed in front of the building.

People gathered around Choi Hyuk.

The ones who were still alive were the ones who swung their swords in the other direction. Around 200 people.

Choi Hyuk examined them with his Eyes of Distinction.

They only emitted a mix of white and black light or a pale black light, none possessed red (killing intent) or dark black (hostility). He had already killed those people.

'Of course, it won't be precise.'

Choi Hyuk felt his skill was a bit lacking. It was difficult for him to accurately judge if someone would be useful or not during a battle just by knowing what intentions they had towards him. All he had was a hunch that 'they probably weren't'.

'Still, it's better than nothing.'

Anyways, he was able to make a rule without much difficulty because of it. Who to kill and who to leave alive. Though he did kill most of them, he still had a rule.

Choi Hyuk was currently satisfied with that.

That was how the fight ended. It only took an hour.



“Grandpas. Here, receive your gifts.”

Baek Seoin brought some of the items he placed in his Handy Sack after emptying out the building.

Because of the extremely brutal fight, his previously shameless face had stiffened.

“Uh... Okay... Sure.”

As he received the Handy Sack, the grandpa thanked his sunglasses. If not for them, he might have shown the scared expression on his face.

A one-sided battle, No, a massacre.

Though they were people who had seen this in wars and had even participated in it...

‘No, it’s on a different level.’

The grandpas of the Alliance of Comrades in Arms felt chills go down their backs.

It was a world where everyone had exceeded the limits of a human. A generation where running 100 meters in 8 seconds and long jumping 8-9 meters weren’t brag worthy.

However, these grandpas felt like carrots being diced in a blender. They had seen a true monster.

Just how cute was the nickname, Berserkers, compared to the real thing?

Though they knew they weren’t enemies, they felt pressure just by being near Choi Hyuk. They wanted to leave this place as soon as possible but they felt uneasy and were wary of Choi Hyuk so they just stayed put.

But, it was time for them to return.

The sunglasses wearing grandpa hastily said.

“You worked hard. Then, we’ll take our leave.”

Even his speech become polite.

“Okay, take care. Ah, and -”

Baek Seoin called out to the grandpas who were about to leave. With an overly threatening expression.

“Please discuss when you return.”

It looked like he was trying to smile but perhaps it was due to the stiffness he felt after the battle, the tips of his lips distorted weirdly.

“Ah... I’ll make sure to do that.”

The grandpas broke out in a cold sweat as they hurriedly left.

Not long after a wild rumor spread throughout Kangdong District.

‘The leader of the Berserkers, Choi Hyuk, annihilated an assembly area!’

CHAPTER 25

WYVERN OF DESTRUCTION (1)

The number of monsters Choi Hyuk killed in a day was absurd but it still wasn't enough to reverse the flow.

If Choi Hyuk tried his best, he would barely be able to hunt 400 monsters a day.

At first, he would be able to kill one every second but as his stamina decreased, the speed slowed down as well. When he started to get out of breath, his performance would drop rapidly and if he was surrounded by monsters in that state, he would die. He always had to check his condition and retreat when it was appropriate.

On the other hand, the number of monsters was piling up.

After 10 days had passed, situations started to arise where Choi Hyuk was unable to destroy a portal every day.

The number of monsters that crossed through the portal would increase by 20% every day. This was an exponential growth. Even if he killed continuously, it was becoming harder and harder to catch up that increase.

On the 10th day, 20,000 monsters poured in from the 33 portals. With the help of his allies, they were able to reduce that number to 20 on the 15th day, but even then, approximately 30,000 monsters poured in every day.

On the 15th day, the streets were filled with over 130,000 monsters. It was the main reason why it was becoming more difficult to fight them.

However, that wasn't all. The amount of supplies would reduce by a third every 10 days.

Instantly, supplies that were originally able to feed 500,000 people could only sustain 170,000. But, there were 300,000 people still alive on the 10th day. During this time, due to the amount of supplies, they didn't starve to death but faced with survival, intensified the temptation of the groups.

The key reason for their temptation was the portals.

And this temptation became a framework for Jung Minji.

‘While we go out and destroy portals, those who just sit there, only caring about their safety have no right to supplies!’

It was a strategy that was necessary for destroying portals but, at the same time, it was risky. It was because normally, assembly areas set up Weakening Barriers, which makes the monsters two times weaker, but to destroy a portal, they had to step out and fight against the full strength of the monsters.

Because of this, the number of deaths and victims continued to increase in groups allied with Choi Hyuk. And those assembly areas who only sought after supplies were becoming more secure. While there were people who fought for the safety of everyone, there were others who just wanted a free pass.

Eventually, faced with this crisis, Jung Minji raised her sword. It was a clever move that would relieve the dissatisfaction of the groups who destroyed portals onto others.

She dispatched an envoy to a neighbouring assembly area. The rule she imposed was simple.

‘Tomorrow. You are to spearhead the fight to destroy a portal. Or you give up your right to supplies.’

Her proposal was ignored. And the next day, that assembly area turned to ash. They weren’t able to endure the attack of her troops who were tempered through fights against monsters. And Jung Minji didn’t accept surrenders.

“Do we kill them all?”

“Kill them all. Except for those who are less than 14 years old.”

“How do we determine their age?”

“Just... If they look young, let them live...”

“Let the children live... then what about their parents?”

“...Kill their parents.”

Jung Minji easily empathized with the weak. She wasn't confident in being able to kill those who surrendered so she left Chu Youngjin in command.

Even when she hardened her heart, she was still unable to order the death of the children. Of course, instead of being respected, her ambiguous attitude brought sarcasm. To some, she was extremely merciless and to others, she was half-baked.

Still, her decisive actions displayed a surprising amount of power. The neighbouring assembly areas who were shocked at her merciless slaughter decided to take part in fighting the monsters.

The other 6 powers who were allied with Jung Minji also took similar actions.

At that time, two rumors about slaughter were spreading like wildfire.

Choi Hyuk and Jung Minji's slaughter.

Because of this, the allied forces were able to take advantage of this fear to win over other forces more easily.

Not long after, everyone had started to destroy the portals in unison. Due to this, they were able to reduce the number of portals to 20... but the number of casualties were significant as well.

And the number of monsters were still growing.

250,000 survivors. 130,000 monsters.

It was already an established fact that at some point, the number of monsters would exceed the number of people.



After fighting monsters, Choi Hyuk would always train.

“Soaring Slash!”

When he shouted the skill, the karma in his body would automatically move. The

karma that enhanced his bones, joints and muscles gathered at his hand. By using the pressure of the gathered karma, he was able to transform it into a sword... but eventually, it wasn't able to even reach half the blade before returning to its previous state.

{Failed. To use a C rank skill, you need at least one stat and Retribution to reach C rank (3-star).}

And a message would pop up.

Choi Hyuk sighed as he examined his status.

—————

{Choi Hyuk}

Power: 0 (★★) Speed: 0 (★★) Control: 114 (+114) (★★)

Endurance: 18 (+18) (★★) Stamina: 18 (+18) (★★) Recovery: 0 (★★)

*Retribution: 0 (★★)

*Free karma points: 68

—————

As there weren't many worthy opponents, even though he killed all those monsters and people, he wasn't able to grow that much. All he earned were 18 free karma points from killing 6 2-star monsters.

That was only because he received an additional 2 free karma points for killing 'mid-bosses' or else he would have only earned 6 points.

And Choi Hyuk changed his items... He got rid of the items that increased his Power and Speed and pushed Control.

Because of this, his Power and Speed became 0.

Of his newly equipped D rank items, 3 were new and he traded for the remaining 2. Control was a relatively unwanted stat so it wasn't hard finding someone to trade.

As they were all normal D rank items, the items Choi Hyuk earned weren't unique. He even had two 'Rings of Concentration'.

{Ring of Concentration} x2

Rank: D

Control: +10

You are able to use the skill {Concentrate} once a day. For 1 minute, Control increases by 10%.

There is no additional consumption of Stamina.

{Necklace of Concentration}

Rank: D

Control: +10

You are able to use the skill {Concentrate} once a day. For 1 minute, Control increases by 10%.

There is no additional consumption of Stamina.

{Longsword of Desperation}

Rank: D

Control: +20

Durability: 271 / 300

{Shoes of a Dancer}

Rank: D

Control: +10

Your reflexes are slightly faster.

Durability: 48 / 50

A set of items with only Control.

Choi Hyuk had decided on Control after racking his brains over it.

'It is impossible to get a stat and my Retribution to 300 by the 30th day.'

The number of monsters was continuously increasing. And the number of mid-bosses increased accordingly. However, as there were too many underlings, it was becoming more difficult to hunt down the mid-bosses.

He needed 418 more points but at his current rate of 18 points every 5 days, he would only earn 54 points.

‘Killing those who aren’t a match won’t even give me the slightest benefit...’

At this rate, it would be impossible to use Soaring Slash. But, if he didn’t have Soaring Slash, he didn’t have a blade made of karma and if he didn’t have that, he didn’t have an area attack... which meant that he wasn’t able to make a breakthrough and decrease the number of monsters and that meant it would be impossible to kill the Wyvern of Destruction.

As a result, his last resort was enhancing his Control. He had pretty much staked everything.

‘Will it work? No, it has to.’

Up until now, it was best to increase his stats harmoniously. Control or Endurance, as long as they were able to handle his Power and Speed, it was enough. What would he do with Control that well surpassed his Power and Speed?

But, Choi Hyuk’s thoughts were completely different. The clue was provided by Baek Seoin.

He said.

‘I know right? It’s like the tutorial has finished... If you looked at it like a game, we should now be choosing our classes. Which means that we can’t increase all our stats like before.’

After reaching 2-stars, the increase in points rapidly decreased. Only 1 free karma point. His suggestion could be correct. That you shouldn’t focus on every stat but choose to focus on certain ones.

That meant that a Control stat that exceeded Power and Speed was definitely useful.

There was also another evidence. That was Choi Hyuk’s senses.

The more he increased his Control stat, the more easily Choi Hyuk could manipulate karma. It was especially different when he exceeded 100 points of the 2-star stat.

Now, he wasn't only able to control his Power and Speed. He was able to control his karma.

'Like this.'

Choi Hyuk focused on the karma in his arm. His arm inflated to twice its size. In that state, he punched a car.

Baaang!

It wasn't pushed back but exploded as if it was hit by a bomb. As it wasn't satisfying enough, this time, he slammed a wall of a building with his palm.

Thud!

An entire side of a wall exploded. The impact from his palm was enough to visibly shake the 4-story building.

"Ahh..."

However, Choi Hyuk's arm wasn't unscathed. An obvious result as the explosive force exceeded his Endurance.

Choi Hyuk's face distorted and retracted the karma concentrated in his arm. It felt like his arm had fractured but with his current Recovery stat, he would naturally recover in 5 minutes.

But, Choi Hyuk didn't rest. This time, he held a sword with his left hand.

"Concentrate!"

The skill embedded in the Necklace of Concentration and the Rings of Concentration, {Concentrate}.

Each one would increase his Control stat by 10% for a total of 30%. 148 Control!

In this state, Choi Hyuk once again attempted the skill.

“Soaring Slash!”

Instantly, the karma in his body automatically moved. It moved beyond his hand and towards the sword. However, the result was the same. Once again, it wasn't able to reach half the blade before returning to its previous state.

However, Choi Hyuk's original motive wasn't to succeed. He remembered the pathways and direction the karma moved in.

“Huuuu...”

He calmed his breath.

‘I need to see results this time.’

Choi Hyuk personally moved the karma with his 148 Control stat. Choi Hyuk, who remembered how the karma was pushed back when it reached half the blade when he activated the skill, squeezed out all the karma in his body and compressed it. He then sent it to his hand. The karma that was compressed to the point it was hard, tangled up as it made its way to his hand.

“Grkkk...”

It felt like his arm would explode. However, Choi Hyuk continued to push the karma. The karma passed through the handle of the sword and filled up the blade. And just when it reached the point the skill couldn't pass,

“Gah!”

Choi Hyuk used all his strength to push the compressed karma up. Karma shot up like a geyser. Bang, bang! It felt like fireworks were shooting out of his hand. And then,

Swish...

“Ah...”

Choi Hyuk clearly saw it.

It was only for a split second but a blue blade had formed. Karma that filled up the sword had emerged.

And,

“Urkk...”

A side effect. Exhaustion and injuries from forcefully pushing karma.

Flop.

Choi Hyuk who had lost all strength in his body collapsed. His hair was dripping with sweat. However, the tips of his lips curled upwards.

His guess that he could make a blade made of karma without the assistance of a skill... was right.

CHAPTER 26

WYVERN OF DESTRUCTION (2)

There were 7 groups who were allied with Choi Hyuk.

Three were very aggressive -Jung Minji's troops, The Alliance of Comrades in Arms and the Knights of the Korean National Sport University.

And although they lacked the explosive power of the aforementioned three, the other four allies were robust – Shinmyung Stronghold, Kangil Riverpark Stronghold, Seonsa Hyundai I'Park Stronghold and lastly, Cheonho Hyunhae Department Store Stronghold.

These strongholds were a large scale force centered around company employees and independent businessmen allied with students and people preparing for examinations.

On the 16th day, all allied forces assembled at the Hyunhae Department Store. They had initially discussed the formation of a suicide squad but the appearance of new rules made it so that they had to unite together.

{Additional Rule}

Every night, the number of monsters that arrive through the portal increase by 20%.

{Additional Rule}

After half a month, the monsters start to act in groups.

{Additional Rule}

Supplies reduce significantly every 10 days.

The additional rules that seemed the test the limits of humanity.

There were more than enough reasons to unite. To face the increasing number of

monsters that will start to act in groups, humans had to be more tightly unified.

And another deciding reason was the reduction of supplies, to be exact, the limited supply of the Weakening Barrier. Food could be handled with emergency rations, adjustments of rations and from the stores that haven't been emptied out yet. The number of people was also decreasing. However, if the Weakening Barrier collapses, there was no way to fight against the hordes of monsters.

Because of this, the more groups there were, the faster the consumption of these Weakening Barrier. There was a need to gather together and reduce the consumption of these barriers.

So all the forces, a total of 130,000 people, started to gather towards Hyunhae Department Store.

The reason they chose Hyunhae Department Store was simple.

There was a healer here.



There were a few large hospitals located in Kangdong District – Sungshin Hospital, Kyung Hee University Hospital, and Hyang Hospital.

On the first day, a game that was modified for these hospitals commenced.

A rule was given to the medical team.

{You are unable to leave unless you kill 3 patients.}

A rule was given to the patients.

{You are unable to leave unless you kill someone.}

After confirming the fact that they really couldn't leave, chaos erupted. Still, no one immediately started to kill each other. Unlike the schools, the hospitals endured it a while longer.

However, four days... that was the limit. It had been a while since the food supply had been emptied out. The scene of monsters wandering around at night. These people

who were starving and stressed became extremely sensitive.

The first to be killed were the critically ill patients who couldn't resist.

The first time would be difficult but the second and third were easy. In one night, the dignity they had kept all this time collapsed. The medical team grouped up and attacked the weak patients. It was the same for the relatively healthy patients. And they left the hospital as a group. The hallways were filled with screams and profanity. Those who wanted to kill and those who resisted as well as those who wanted to stop them tangled together. While the people who wanted to kill and the people who wanted to stop them got into a fight, an incident occurred and someone died.

Eventually, someone had died.

Bae Jinman was a respected doctor. He wielded a baseball bat at his juniors and even those he could call his disciples who were pushing their way through the hallway.

“Bastards! You call yourselves doctors?”

At the criticisms and the resistance of the respected doctor, the doctors who were pushing their way through retreated. A reason being the swing of the baseball-loving doctor was quite impressive.

After chasing the group away, Bae Jinman entered the critical care ward he was looking after. He locked the door and moved the beds to block the door.

The patients who laid on these beds looked at the doctor in fear. However, Bae Jinman smiled.

“Don't worry.”

He looked after the patients.

After 5 days had passed, only dropouts remained. Those who had ensured their safety by hiding. Those who were unable to kill others. More than ten of these people were spread throughout the hospital as they held the guard against each other.

Bae Jinman exited the critical care ward and he took care of the remaining people. In a hospital without any food, he nursed these patients alone.

After a week, a message appeared.

{Calculating your Retribution... Type. Healer. Patients Killed 0. Has continuously looked after the patients. Meets the requirements. Granted the 'Guardian Trait'.}

At the same time, the around 20 patient he looked after turned into lights and were absorbed into his body.

“Uh... Huh?”

Every time a light was absorbed into his body, his Retribution and karma increased. Especially his Control and Recovery stats.

However, Bae Jinman wasn't happy. In his eyes, he only saw the figures of the patients who had disappeared.

“So...”

Tears welled up in his eyes.

“So they ended up dying in the end...”

He slumped onto the floor and bawled. A body that had not eaten or had drunk anything, he sobbed his heart out but only a few drops of tears would drop at a time before drying up.

And that was the birth of the only healer in Kangdong District.



Guardian, Bae Jinman's blessing has been cast.

“Get up!”

With his shout, a hazy light shined above the heads of the 40,000 people assembled in front of Hyunhae Department Store.

Lalala.

It was almost as they could hear the music. Without realizing it, these people started

to mumble to the tune. Though it was as hazy as a fog, the small lights above countless people's heads were connecting to each other.

They felt a feeling of unity and fellowship that one would feel at a huge concert. They all mumbled and watched as these lights connected with each other. An exceptional scene that brought tears to their eyes.

The skill {Get up} was a support skill that would increase one's courage, awareness as well as their sense of comradery.

As the skill was cast on tens of thousands of people, its effect was slight. However, as these people experienced the same scene at the same time, they did feel a sense of security and kinship. And one couldn't ignore the sense of comfort it gave them as well. To these people who continuously lived in a cruel environment with their lives on the line, the comfort felt from {Get up} was much greater than expected.

Just as the scene was about to end, the leader of Shinmyung Stronghold, Kang Dongsoo took the lead. He was chosen to be the commander of their first expedition. They had decided that they would form an expedition team every day and that the position of commander would switch between the leaders of the various allied forces.

Kang Dongsoo shouted.

"We have 13 days left! There are currently 19 portals left! Currently, around 40,000 monsters are pouring through them every night! The situation looks bleak! I even feel that our demise is imminent. However, will that truly be the case? Will our strength only amount to that? Is this all the strength we humans who rose to the top without hides or fangs have? Let's show them how strong we are! To them! And to those unknown bastards who created this fucking game! And above all, to ourselves! It is time to show our strength!"

"Ouahhhhh!"

Due to the high amount of karma, there was no need to use a microphone. Kang Dongsoo's words that were shouted from his guts clearly embedded themselves into each of the tens of thousands of people's ears.

When the cheers hit their peak, Kang Dongsoo shot his hand up and shouted.

"Remember! The shielders block the front! Then the spearmen stab and the

swordsmen end it! Ranged attackers will stay behind the lines and follow the vice commander's orders! The detachment will support the crumbling frontlines! Let's go! For victory!"

"Ouahhhhhh!"

"Vanguard!"

At Kang Dongsoo's command, the vanguard charged forward. The area of the expedition was the point near three portals.

It was the place Lee Jinhee scouted in the morning. Countless monsters were gathered in the Amsadong Pre-historic Settlement Sight.

The large-scale troops started their expedition to reduce the number of monsters and to destroy the portals.



Crash!

Humans and monsters were crashing into each other.

After 17 days, the abilities of these people had increased insignificantly. On average, at least two stats had reached the 1-star. As they were still in the process of increasing all their stats, it wouldn't be long until all their stats reached 1-star.

However, humans were still unable to face against the monsters one-on-one. Still, due to the use of a variety of tactics, 3 people show the power of 10. The only problem was that the monsters were using a variety of tactics as well.

"Ackk!"

A 2m tall, 5m long crook charged forward. It was difficult for the shielders to block it. If the shielders were unable to endure and were pushed back, the whole line would break down. Then the Bladed Starving Ghosts would take that opportunity to slash at them with their long blades and the Shadow Teeth would penetrate their lines.

"Push them back! Push them back!"

If the monsters penetrated their front lines, they would stab with their spears, slash with their swords and the returning shielders would push them back. It was an intense fight.

There were areas where humans had the advantage. Due to their tall body structure, they were quite agile and were quite talented in using formations in group battles. However, as the monsters had much better stats overall, all they could do was not be pushed back and endure.

“Keuk!”

A person’s head was cut off by the blades of a Bladed Starving Ghost... and that very ghost was stabbed with a spear...

Even while taking losses the vanguard was advancing one step at a time.

“Endure! Follow them! You can’t fall behind! If we fall behind, the suicide squad will die!”

That moment, Choi Hyuk and a suicide squad made up of 100 members were doing their best to open up a path. A dream team made up of Choi Hyuk and only the most elite members of each of the 7 groups, excluding their kings. They were powerful members whose stats have all already reached 1-star.

In addition to that, Choi Hyuk distributed the E rank items he had collected up until now.

The 100 members of the suicide squad were warriors who had the skills, karma and the items to call themselves strong.

And with Choi Hyuk at the front, they were a crushing force. In a triangle formation, they penetrated the main force and opened up a path. Then the vanguard would follow. Of course, that wasn’t easy.

“Are we still not there yet? At this rate, we’ll be exhausted before we even reach the portals.”

Lee Jinhee who didn’t slow down and slashed the necks of the Bladed Starving Ghosts asked with a tired expression.

“We have to go a bit further. We have to stand at the center of the main enemy forces.”

Baek Seoin explained.

Currently, the main force was in a HakIkJin^{1} formation surrounded by monsters.

10,000 members of the vanguard troops were treading forward penetrating the enemy forces. Perhaps it was due to the fact that this place had 3 portals but the strength of the monster army was formidable. It looked like there were more than 30,000 monsters. It was a number that the vanguard couldn't handle by themselves. Still, the main force was on standby as the vanguard tried their best to pierce into the center of the enemy forces.

For that one moment.

Choi Hyuk had finally reached the center and took out a Weakening Barrier scroll.

“Barrier, activate!”

At his shout, the scroll burned up and a snow-white cover spread out in a circle.

Whoosh!

The moment the cover passed over a monster, it would falter. In the case of the crooks that moved quickly, there were some that smashed their heads on the ground. As their physical abilities dropped to half in an instant, their movements became all tangled.

Kang Dongsoo who saw this from afar smiled. However, he said in a teasing tone.

“Ha... why does a fellow who doesn't have many men have so many Weakening Barrier?”

While everyone was having difficulty with the amount of Weakening Barrier scrolls, Choi Hyuk, who had monopolized the supplies, had 10 Weakening Barrier scrolls.

As soon as the suicide squad was formed, Choi Hyuk took out the Weakening Barrier scrolls not for defense but instead, for the offence. Like now.

“All troops! Charge!”

At Kang Dongsoo's command, the main force that was in the HakIkJin formation rushed towards the monsters' headquarters. The monsters that had their abilities reduced to half were not a match for them.

As Kang Dongsoo started his charge, Choi Hyuk and the suicide squad started their real mission.

"Suicide squad! Destroy the portal! Battle of speed! We ignore those who fall behind!"

Kiririk!

His karma explosively compressed and expanded. The Predator's Blade was splitting the monsters in two.

Swoosh! Stab! Stab!

The spear thrown by a javelin thrower from the Korean National Sport University pierced two Bladed Starving Ghosts like a kabab.

Thud! Thud!

Lee Jinhee lightly jumped up and, without intending to land on the ground, stepped on the monsters as she stabbed the foreheads of monsters.

Bang!

Baek Seoin's shield bash shattered the face of a large crook.

The attack of the suicide squad had begun.

{1} A crane wing formation developed by Admiral Lee Sun-sin who developed the renowned turtle ship.

CHAPTER 27

WYVERN OF DESTRUCTION (3)

To hunt the Wyvern of Destruction, they needed to fulfill three conditions.

Two had to be satisfied by Choi Hyuk. The other one was added by Baek Seoin.

Choi Hyuk compressed his karma and coiled it around the Predator's Blade.

The first condition was a blade of karma.

Five mid-bosses at the 2-star level reflected in Choi Hyuk's eyes. A shadow monster- a dusk teeth, looked to be the commander as it stood in the center flanked by two mountain orcs and two bladed ghosts.

There was an increase in mid-bosses along with the increase in monsters.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The two mountain orcs charged forward riding crook leaders. Choi Hyuk swiftly rushed in front of them. At the same time, he exploded the coiled karma wrapped around the blade's edge. The exploding karma spun around as it propelled itself away from the blade.

Swish-

A faint blade made of karma. In fact, it was more like a faint haze than a blade. However, its effect was surprising.

The moment the oncoming crook leader was about to stomp on Choi Hyuk's shoulder, the Predator's Blade slashed out in a crescent.

Slash!

An exquisite arc made by a single blade. Just as the two mountain orcs riding their crook leaders at full speed and Choi Hyuk were about to collide, his blade slashed out a single time.

First, the neck of the crook on the left was sliced along with its rider's waist, then the blade continued to draw a diagonal line from the chest to side of the orc on the right until the last crook's head fell.

A slanted crescent was drawn.

Leaving the crescent drawn by his blade, Choi Hyuk's body passed between the monsters.

Thud-thud. Pshhh.

Black blood splattered out into the air and onto the ground. He took four down with one blade. If it wasn't for the karma reinforced cutting force, it wouldn't have been possible.

The karma gathered at the tip of the blade slowly contracted and returned to his body. The exhausted karma dulled as if filled with lactic acid.

"Hooo..."

Cho Hyuk let out a short breath. The single slash consumed a lot of stamina. To the point it would have been better to just attack twenty times.

Still, Choi Hyuk once again coiled the karma around his blade. To fight the Wyvern of Destruction, he had to polish this technique.

It was already much more natural than before. His previous method of recklessly compressing karma and pushing it up his blade consumed so much stamina that he had lost strength in his legs. However, the situation became better when he started to coil the karma around his blade.

'It's still far off.'

To fight against the Wyvern of Destruction, he had to extend his blade by 5m. And he had to be able to maintain it. He couldn't even begin trying to maintain it but attempting to lengthen the blade was doable.

'More... more.'

Choi Hyuk wrapped more karma around his blade. Even during this time, his feet

didn't stop moving as they dashed towards the monsters.

“Kuaahhh!!!”

“Kreeah!”

The two bladed ghosts screeched in an attempt to put pressure on Choi Hyuk. The 2m wolf-like shadow slightly moved back. It looked like it was trying to avoid him.

But Choi Hyuk was one step faster.

Palalak!

The karma wrapped around his blade unravelled. He consumed all his karma; ‘The fight will end soon anyways.’ Choi Hyuk poured in all his remaining strength.

Swish!

The blade emitted a clear sound. The almost transparent haze of karma extended 1m past the blade.

Slice!

The extended blade sliced the two bladed ghosts and even the dusk teeth that had moved back. The dusk teeth looked like it was a shadow but as soon as it was split in two, its blood and guts splattered out as it collapsed. He split 3 monsters in two in a single exchange.

“Huuuu...”

Choi Hyuk let out a larger breath than before. His body felt heavy as if it was submerged in water.

“Kuek!”

“Die!”

Portal destruction complete!

Sounds of fighting sounded out from everywhere. The battle progressed smoothly.

Choi Hyuk slowly dragged his heavy body and stabbed the monster corpses. The Predator's Blade drained the monsters' blood.

{Predator's Blade}

Rank: D (Unique, Growth-type)

Sharp and sturdy. The more blood it spills of strong foes, the stronger it will get.

Durability: 726/1,000

Evolution: 29/100

The second condition for hunting the Wyvern of Destruction was evolving the Predator's Blade.

Though he didn't know what kind of monster the Wyvern of Destruction would be, it was clearly stronger than the mid-bosses. Looking at the current situation, it looked like F rank was equivalent to no-star, E rank was 1-star and D rank was 2-star. If that was the case, to fight the Wyvern of Destruction which was at least a C rank, he needed a C rank weapon.

Choi Hyuk indifferently gazed at the Predator's Blade as it drained the blood of its enemies and turned them into mummies. He still needed 71 more.

"Since I took out 7 today... at this pace, it'll be possible."

Normally it would be hard enough trying to take down 2 a day but now that there was an army it would be much easier. An expedition made up of 40,000 people that faced off against the monsters while the 100 members of the suicide squad made a path towards the portals. Due to this, Choi Hyuk had the time to fight while testing his Karma Blade in real combat.

"Huh?"

After calming his breath, Choi Hyuk saw items that had appeared between the dead corpses. They were items he was seeing for the first time. A transparent quartz rod and a wooden ball. When he closely examined it, information appeared.

{1-Person Escape Code}

The owner of this code is able to escape on the final day.

{Dragon Hunting Weapon – Vine Cannonball}

A cannonball packed with magic. Use it with ‘Dragon Hunting Weapon – Extraordinary Dragon Cannon’.

Tough, thick vines will grow in the place of impact. They react to dragon blood and will bind the dragon. If a few overlap, they can make a dragon momentarily falter.

Choi Hyuk, who examined the items, smiled bitterly.

“This is good news and very bad news...”

There were three conditions that needed to be met to hunt the Wyvern of Destruction.

First was completing the blade of karma and the second was evolving the blade. Then there was the last condition. The additional condition that Baek Seoin said they absolutely needed...

An ‘army’ that would fight until the end.

The addition of Dragon Hunting Weapons was welcomed as they would be a way to fight against the Wyvern. However... for there to be a 1-person escape code... it was the worst.

Just then, he heard commander Kang Dongsoo’s orders.

“Push! Push! Last one! Push with all your strength!”

Following Kang Dongsoo’s orders, people used their last remaining strength and pushed against the monsters. They pushed with shields, stabbed with spears and slashed with swords.

The ranks of the monsters collapsed and were hopelessly pushed back as their commanders had almost all been wiped out. There were even some that looked at their comrades before running away. These monsters that were slowly being pushed

back had at some point all started to run away.

Uahhhh!

The roars of the humans shook the ground. They used the last of their strength to bang their weapons together and slam the ground. Some were so agitated that they even started the chase the fleeing monsters.

“Stop!! Stop the chase!”

Kang Dongsoo shouted. As they had surrounded the monsters with the HakIkJin formation, they definitely had the room to chase them. However, Kang Dongsoo decided to stop here.

It was because everyone’s stamina had reached their limits. If they were to fight in this condition, casualties would quickly pile up.

People who were extremely exhausted paused and gathered their breath. There were some who held their knees and panted.

They saw the scattered monsters fleeing in front of them. The people once again roared, forgetting their exhaustion momentarily.

Uoahhhhhh!!

4 hours of fighting. Three portals were destroyed. 20,000 monsters were wiped out. On the other hand, 3,000 humans died and 2,000 were critically wounded to the point that their recovery stat would be of no use.

It was a great victory.



The guardian Bae Jinman greeted the expedition in front of the Hyunhae Department Store. The first thing he did when they arrived was examining the wounded.

He started to treat those who had critical injuries like cut limbs or split heads. There were plenty of people who had lost fingers but they were pushed to the back.

Paah!

Light emitted out of Bae Jinman's hand as the wounded's arms and legs regrew.

"No matter how many times I see it, it's amazing."

Lee Jinhee who was observing from afar remarked.

"It looks like it's harder to regrow limbs than cut them off... I'm telling you, he treats hundreds of people a day!"

An exposition was tacked onto her admiration.

"They say that when he regrows limbs, he uses the Retribution of the wounded. To regrow one limb, they say you have to spend 100 Retribution. And a portion of the consumed Retribution is used to help him grow."

"Really? It's still amazing..."

"Well... he's the only healer. Even though I'm not completely certain, I bet he has more karma points than our leader?"

As he said that, Baek Seoin glanced at Choi Hyuk. Choi Hyuk was deep in his thoughts.

Baek Seoin abruptly asked.

"Is it because of the 1-Person Escape Code?"

Choi Hyuk nodded.

The 1-Person Escape Code was quite a serious problem.

Originally the rule stated that {Only the troops who have obtained the escape code can escape} which meant that escape codes were only given to troops, meaning only those who had received the king title would be able to obtain them. A rule that made it so that the members of the troops cooperated with each other. That rule had become the foothold in uniting everyone's strength.

However, in this situation, these {1-Person Escape Codes} could become the poison that could destroy these troops. If one took extreme measures and ignored their assembly area and troops, couldn't they just hide on the outskirts of the war zone (Kangdong District) and use it when the time came?

It felt a bit better knowing that the drop rate was low but he couldn't help but trouble himself over it.

"There is no way I can kill the Wyvern of Destruction without an army backing me up."

This fact was something Choi Hyuk was becoming glaringly aware of. Without an army, he might collapse trying to pierce through the monsters. However, a temptation that could break apart that army had appeared.

'And I still wasn't able to solve a bigger problem.'

Choi Hyuk closed his eyes in deep thought.

Baek Seoin said.

"First, it's not like we can do anything about the 1-Person Escape Code right now. Isn't there a problem we have to settle beforehand?"

Choi Hyuk replied, nodding his head.

"We have to persuade the kings."

The other kings still didn't know Choi Hyuk's other objective. They were only told that the suicide squad's role would be to destroy portals and grab the Wyvern of Destruction's attention. They were under the belief that the suicide squad would keep the wyvern busy until they obtained the escape code and once they did, they would retreat. If that happened, Choi Hyuk, who planned on killing the wyvern, would be isolated.

Because of this, he had to persuade the kings. Either persuade them to kill the wyvern together or at least, make them stay and fight longer. However, there wasn't a suitable method. Was there any reason to put others in more danger and fight the wyvern?

'I wish I could just kill them all myself...'

Choi Hyuk felt frustrated. He thought that he wouldn't have to painfully rack his brains over this if his opponent was instead an incredibly strong human-like monster. Too many enemies. And to fight against such a large opponent... problems he couldn't handle himself cropped up one after another. However, politics wasn't Choi Hyuk's strong point.

Choi Hyuk looked to be in pain as he knitted his brows. Looking at him, Baek Seoin smiled.

“Why are you worrying about it yourself when you have such great followers?”

Baek Seoin tapped his own head.

“I already had a plan when I said we needed an army.”

Choi Hyuk looked blankly at Baek Seoin. Now that he thought about it, the first one to suggest an army was Baek Seoin. He would obviously have some thoughts on this matter. However, Choi Hyuk, who never really had a friend, never had the idea of asking someone for help. He only tried to solve everything himself.

So, to Choi Hyuk, Baek Seoin saying that he could do it was like a breath of fresh air.

As if he was captivated, he asked.

“How?”

Baek Seoin replied right away.

“The Crazy Knight King.”

“Jung Minji?”

“Yes. We are going to persuade her.”

Baek Seoin revealed a hidden smile.

CHAPTER 28

WYVERN OF DESTRUCTION (4)

The Slave King Song Simin and Yoon Girim.

Jung Minji had rescued Yoon Girim who was about to become an item during the Bonus Game, but even afterwards, Yoon Girim had trouble getting used to fighting. However, these days, she was very bright.

Jung Minji found Song Simin and Yoon Girim talking in the hallway. They were so affectionate that they didn't even notice Jung Minji approach them. Jung Minji briefly looked at Yoon Girim's smiling face. It was the same smile she remembered. It was very beautiful... so unpleasant.

"Yoon Girim."

"Oh? Minji?"

Yoon Girim was surprised when Jung Minji called out to her. Song Simin awkwardly greeted Jung Minji. "Ahahaha, hello." Jung Minji lightly nodded and replied, "Yes. Hello." And then, she immediately turned her gaze towards Yoon Girim.

Yoon Girim was afraid of her. She couldn't even meet her eye and kept her head lowered.

At her actions, Jung Minji became even more uncomfortable. She said in a strict voice.

"Yoon Girim, lift your head."

"Uh... uh?"

Yoon Girim opened her eyes from nervousness. Jung Minji stared into her eyes. Yoon Girim didn't know what to do. Just as Yoon Girim was about to break out into cold sweat, Jung Minji said,

"You doing well?"

“Huh? Yeah... because of you...”

“You say you’re doing well?... You’re doing well, huh...”

Jung Minji briefly thought over those words. And then, she coldly said,

“I heard you ran away last battle but you’re doing well?”

Yoon Girim’s gaze once again fell to the floor. However, Jung Minji didn’t have the slightest thought of letting her go.

“Yoon Girim, look up. Are you going to look away when you face monsters?”

Yoon Girim couldn’t lift her head at Jung Minji’s words. Her chin was trembling. Tears were welling up in her big eyes. Jung Minji only silently looked at her.

Yoon Girim and Jung Minji were in the same class three times. Although they weren’t best friends, Jung Minji had quite detailed memories of her. During peaceful times, she was such a lovely girl with no shadows.

One summer day, during middle school, Yoon Girim told Jung Minji,

“Minji, you must be happy that you’re so pretty.”

With an expression void of any jealousy. No, instead, as if she thought, ‘for such a pretty girl to be my friend!’ she showed a boastful expression as she looked at her with a bright smile.

That damn friendly smile.

Jung Minji was endlessly jealous of her beautiful smile.

Even though she possessed such a smile, currently she was in a trembling state where she couldn’t even meet her eyes... Because she was so absurdly weak, Jung Minji felt angry.

Jung Minji clasped Yoon Girim’s cheeks with her palms. Yoon Girim trembled like a chick. A beautiful yet pitifully weak life that received endless amounts of love. Jung Minji pushed her face together so Yoon Girim’s eyes had gathered.

“Yoon Girim. If you don’t kill, you’ll die. Are you scared? If there’s something you’re scared of, kill it. Don’t just tremble like a bitch. Do you think they are going leave you alone just because you smile friendly or because you tremble?”

Unlike her usual cold self, she poured her emotions.

“Girim. Nice Girim. You have to live. Right? You have to make those damn things unable to kill you. Right? How long are you going to lean on others? Do you think men are going to help you until the end? Hmm?”

Every time Jung Minji said, “Right?” her voice would get louder. Yoon Girim only trembled.

“So, sorry.”

What was she apologizing for? However, Yoon Girim apologized with a mosquito-like voice.

Jung Minji bit her lips once before moving back.

“You shouldn’t apologize to me... Haa... Whatever.”

Then Song Simin closely stuck to Yoon Girim’s side.

“Haha, don’t worry too much. I will protect Girim.”

Step.

Clank.

However, the moment Song Simin approached, Jung Minji reflexively took a step back. Chu Youngjin who was behind her like a shadow stepped forward with a sword in his hand.

An awkward moment passed by.

However, Jung Minji acted as if nothing happened as her face returned to its cold appearance. Song Simin smiled even brighter to get rid of the awkwardness.

Jung Minji looked at Song Simin before nodding with an expressionless face.

“It’s a relief that the Slave King will protect her. I am always thankful.”

“No need. Instead, it is me who is able to live safely because of you.”

“I’m glad then.”

Jung Minji nodded her head and passed by the two. Even the moment she was passing them, she kept an appropriate distance.

As she was Jung Minji who had taken the throne through spilling blood, besides Chu Youngjin and a few elites, she didn’t give anyone her full trust. Especially if they were other groups and even Song Simin who was her long-time ally wasn’t an exception.

“I say, she’s one sassy queen.”

Song Simin shrugged his shoulders before comforting the crying Yoon Girim.

“Whew... Girim. It was scary, right? The Knight King was saying that because she was worried about you. Still, it was scary. Even I was about to piss myself. Still, it’s okay.”

Song Simin hugged Yoon Girim as he patted her back whilst Yoon Girim tried to hold back her tears.

“Hello.”

“Ah, yes. Hello.”

Baek Seoin passed by them after giving them an awkward greeting. Song Simin smiled with an embarrassed expression as he pulled Yoon Girim closer to cover her tears.



Baek Seoin started to move seriously on the 24th day. There were only 6 days before the game would end. He chose a time when it wasn’t too relaxed yet not too constrained. It would be difficult if someone changed their decision but there was enough time to adjust. It was a time Baek Seoin carefully chose.

Though he boasted in front of Choi Hyuk, in reality, he had a lot of worries.

Of course, he decided to leave it to his analysis. He believed that he could definitely

persuade Jung Minji. However, weren't people unpredictable? Even his Intuition was useless. As his Intuition only activated when his life was in danger.

So Baek Seoin's heart was beating furiously on his way to meet Jung Minji.

'Thank God.'

It was good that he coincidentally watched Jung Minji and Yoon Girim's conversation. Baek Seoin became more confident in his plans.

"Why should I?"

So when Jung Minji said these words, he was able to keep his calm.

"Because we are able to save more people."

Baek Seoin smiled calmly whilst Jung Minji frowned.

"Do I have to save people?"

A faint ridicule was blended in her voice. However, Baek Seoin replied with confidence.

"The number of people who haven't joined Hyunhae Department Store must not be small, correct?"

"So?"

"Have you ever... thought about this? As to where all the preschoolers and elementary schoolers are?"

"..."

Jung Minji closed her mouth. A chilly expression appeared. He couldn't tell what she was thinking right now.

But Baek Seoin recalled the fussy reaction she showed Yoon Girim. Wasn't she unable to simply watch these weak people she despised? Even when she acted coldly in real life, he heard that she was always giving Yoon Girim preferential treatment.

And another thing. He remembered that she ordered to 'exclude those who were less

than 14 years old' during the slaughter she led. He had dug up a lot of rumors related to that incident.

So Baek Seoin believed his words would get through to her.

“The proportion of adults in this assembly area is unusually high. There are barely any children. However, there were originally over 50,000 children in Kangdong District. When the game started, these children were at their preschool or elementary schools, and the majority say that they never returned home. Though there were a few who returned home or were left alone but... most of them never returned. Now, where do you think these children went? Did they all die?”

“...What is it you're trying to say?”

“Lee Jinhee discovered this when she went out for reconnaissance. There was a group that protected many elementary schoolers and preschoolers. Their leader said different rules were given to the children. Meaning, there was a way for these children to live. Though the detailed rules were different, anyways, the majority of the children hid in the sewers before the monsters started their attack. That leader was trying his best to find and protect these children, as they had all scattered, there wasn't a suitable method to find them all. These children will probably hide in the sewers until the end of the game. Now, let me ask you this. Would these children, these children who are living in the sewers eating rats, be able to obtain the escape code on the last day?”

“...”

Jung Minji was silent. With this, he smoothly connected the 'ki' and the 'seung'. Then, with a sense of surprise, he would introduce the 'jeon'^{1}.

“But, didn't we find a new rule? {On the final day, anyone can transmit a rescue signal.}”

Jung Minji immediately refuted.

“...At the same time, {On the final day, the monsters will start a large-scale invasion.}”

Baek Seoin shrugged his shoulders.

“Then, I guess it'll be hard for these children to live. They might pitifully send a rescue signal but who would even care?”

That moment, Jung Minji inwardly thought.

‘Bastard...’

If Baek Seoin didn’t say that then Jung Minji would have been able to keep her calm. However, when he involved ‘children’ in this, her imagination had already pictured children getting slaughtered by monsters.

Throb.

Her heart tugged as if a rough blade was pushing its way between her ribs. However, when she thought of how to rescue these children, she didn’t know where to start. How many more did she need to kill? What did she have to do and what did she have to sacrifice to persuade the other kings? Jung Minji bit her lips. She replied mixed with bitterness.

“...The children were distributed karma as well. There is no reason for them to be weak. They are no different from adults.”

Baek Seoin stared into Jung Minji’s eyes. He could see her pupils trembling. Checkmate. He completed ‘kiseungjeon’. And Baek Seoin was setting up ‘kyul’.

“Really? Do you think that simply because children received karma that they would be able to fight like us? Hmmm... Maybe they will. Perhaps they will lift their shields and swords that are bigger than them and organize an army to fight the monsters. Since kids these days are scary.”

Baek Seoin’s lips revealed traces of ridicule.

Jung Minji was silent for a while.

Her mind was picturing the final day. Rescue signals shooting up from everywhere. Groups who ignored them and retreated with the escape code in their hands. Rescue signals shooting up behind them... those damn rescue signals... and the children... a scene where the children were being slaughtered by the monsters.

Throb.

Jung Minji closed her eyes. Baek Seoin was suggesting that they should fight longer instead of escaping.

‘But why?’

If they were to rescue on top of escape, they had to keep the Wyvern of Destruction busy longer. And didn’t that responsibility fall onto Choi Hyuk and the suicide squad?

‘Why are they putting themselves in danger? Don’t tell me they really want to save the children? No way.’

No matter how she thought about it, Choi Hyuk wasn’t such a kind-hearted person.

Jung Minji’s mind became filled with confusion. However, the thing that was greater than the confusion...

Throb... Throb!

The pain in her chest.

‘Damn it.’

Grit.

Baek Seoin could hear Jung Minji grind her teeth. And at that moment she opened her mouth.

“...So what is your plan?”

A smile appeared on Baek Seoin’s lips. It was his victory.

{1} 기승전결 ki-seung-jeon-kyul –Ki is the start of your story. Seung is the progression your story by increasing the listener’s immersion. Jeon is the change and reversal. Kyul is the end.

CHAPTER 29

WYVERN OF DESTRUCTION (5)

Jung Minji walked at a quick pace. A meeting with the allied forces was held that night.

“...Your motive is good... but do we have the time?”

The one who replied was the one who led the Alliance of Comrades in Arms, General Cha Taeshik.

No one else said anything but they all had the same thought. No one could say, “I don’t care if those children die or not.”

However, there were still 7 portals left. 55,000 monsters poured in every day. Even though they went on an expedition every day, the number of monsters were slowly approaching the number of humans. At this rate, they may not be able to reduce the portals to less than five by the final day.

It was because the locations of the portals weren’t specified. Even though Lee Jinhee heroically went out for reconnaissance, there were days when she couldn’t find a single one. Also, perhaps it was because he wasn’t in immediate danger but Baek Seoin couldn’t locate the portals with his Intuition.

If there were 5 portals remaining on the final day, there would be almost 100,000 monsters pouring in.

However, if monsters appeared by the ‘masses’, they couldn’t even imagine how difficult of a fight it would be. Also, that word was vague. Masses. Just how many were there it to be called masses?

As leaders of their respective groups, they couldn’t help but become passive facing these conditions.

Jung Minji said.

“...This might not be the end.”

At those words, everyone directed their gazes at Jung Minji.

“The fact that the police and the military have disappeared, everyone is aware of this, correct?”

That was right. Right after the game started, for some reason, the reserve force and the police stations were empty.

“Do you remember the fact that games vary depending on their target? Then the police and the military. What kind of game would they have to play? Where are these people who seem to have evaporated from Kangdong District?”

The mood turned solemn at Jung Minji’s words. It was already the 24th day. While living with their lives on the line every day, they didn’t have the time to look at things in a broader perspective.

A new, but obvious, question came across their minds.

‘What was it like outside of Kangdong District?’

“Everyone should know how the guardian Bae Jinman awakened as a guardian.”

At Jung Minji’s words, everyone’s gazes turned to Bae Jinman. He had his eyes closed, deep in thought.

“What we learned from this was that these games are much more complicated than we initially thought. At first glance, it might seem like we only need to kill and survive but that is not everything. It’s the same with the issue regarding children. Why did they give them a separate rule and make them live in hiding? Why is it that they are able to send rescue signals on the final day? Are these children really discardable?”

Jung Minji made a slight pause before continuing.

“If the guardian disregarded the patients like other doctors and if because of this, we didn’t have a healer in Kangdong District, do you think we would have been able to retaliate against the monsters as united as we are now? Like I said before. There is a high chance that it won’t end with us just escaping Kangdong District. In fact, couldn’t these children actually be a key to survival?”

Hmmm...

Silence fell.

“We have to save the children. Not simply to survive this place but they will definitely be useful in the long run. Getting out of Kangdong District isn’t everything.”

However, they weren’t able to decide so easily. The cause became more resolute but it wasn’t concrete enough. It could be but wasn’t there also a chance it wasn’t?

This time, Jung Minji called out to specific people.

“Leader Kang Dongsoo. Aren’t there a lot of parents under your command who have lost their children?”

“..”

“I also heard that the whereabouts of Leader Seon Jisoo is also unknown.”

“Ah...”

There weren’t many survivors who worked and lived in Kangdong District with children less than 14 years old. As there was an increase of dual-income families and younger couples who worked away from home, a lot of the parents were outside of Kangdong District.

However, that didn’t mean that they could ignore the number of parents in Kangdong District who hoped to find their children. As there was no way, they gave up and fell into despair, living in a world without their children.

Jung Minji provided specific motives to them with her comments. Of course, she had some bait prepared for General Cha Taeshik of the Alliance of Comrades in Arms who had an aloof expression and the Knight Captain of the Korean National Sport University, Ryu Hyunsung, who was deep in thought.

For this, Jung Minji had to take a loss. She bit her lips and decisively announced.

“And my troops will spearhead the operation.”

The heads of these leaders instinctively raised. They looked at Jung Minji with surprised expressions. She had just volunteered for the most dangerous mission.

“And I will not forget the people who help me.”

As soon as she said that, the guardian Bae Jinman opened his eyes and stood up. He nodded his head.

“I will stand next to you. I, too, will not forget those who help us.”

Choi Hyuk raised his hand.

“I agree.”

Jung Minji was known, even among the allied forces, to be domineering. With one move, she had gained the support of the strongest fighting power, Choi Hyuk, and the only healer, the greatly influential Bae Jinman.

These two had lowered their heads. (Of course, Choi Hyuk was different.) And she declared she would take the most dangerous role. They calculated. They wouldn't take any losses from helping them. It was also for a good cause.

“Since you are all so determined, of course, I need to partake in this. Wouldn't this also be patriotism? Huhuhu!”

“I am ashamed. We will go with you.”

Starting with General Cha Taeshik and the Knight Captain Ryu Hyunsung, everyone declared they would participate in rescuing the children.

‘Like expected, it was good to persuade Jung Minji.’

Baek Seoin who stood behind Choi Hyuk exclaimed to himself. Choi Hyuk turned around to look at Baek Seoin and nodded once.

Afterwards, another discussion ensued.

“But isn't there another issue? The 1-person escape code.”

This problem was a headache to the leaders who had gathered here. Since, in the perspective of these leaders, it was better for their groups to remain as they are than disperse. There also weren't many 1-person escape codes either.

“It’s a problem. However, there isn’t a suitable method to handle it. There is no way to know who obtained an escape code... it seems like the only way is to brand those who use the escape code as traitors.”

Everyone nodded their heads at Leader Kang Dongsoo’s words.

“Still, it looks like a sense of camaraderie is forming.”

They fought together and had always won. And they couldn’t ignore the impact of Bae Jinman’s blessings that were akin to large concerts. They had no choice but to use this to crackdown down on traitors.

“Okay. Everyone, make sure to do a roll call every day as well.”

Everyone agreed to General Cha Taeshik’s suggestion.

That was the conclusion of important discussions. While the situation was becoming slightly disorderly, General Cha Taeshik asked Choi Hyuk.

“But what do we do about the Wyvern of Destruction? The King without Subjects was supposed to handle it but if we try to rescue others as well, it will take a lot of time. Is it possible to keep it up for that long? Though we will try to clear out as many monsters as we can...”

Baek Seoin replied in Choi Hyuk’s place.

“There’s no problem! If there’s a chance, we’re planning on just killing it. Isn’t that right, leader?”

Choi Hyuk gave a short nod.

“Wahaha! As expected, the young are spirited!”

He laughed loudly, throwing his head back.

No one believed that Baek Seoin’s words were the truth.



The next day. The results of the meeting were announced. The forces under Jung Minji's command caused an uproar.

"No, why did you decide that all by yourself?"

The Pig King Ma Dongshik protested to Jung Minji.

"In the very least, aren't you supposed to tell us beforehand?"

Ma Dongshik's face had turned red. He was someone who cared about his safety to the point of even criticizing Lee Jinhee for attacking a shadow teeth. As someone like that, he was unable to take this situation.

However, Jung Minji's expression did not change.

"I am sorry I was unable to tell you in advance. However, this is something we must do."

"So why are you deciding this all by yourself? Good. Okay. Let's let the issue about rescuing children slide. Since I'm also an adult. But to be the spearhead? You mean just the troops under the Crazy Knight King, right? We aren't going to do it."

Jung Minji shook her head.

"Of course, Leader Ma Dongshik's forces are included. It's including all six forces that are with me."

A heavy silence. The other leaders who followed Ma Dongshik showed flustered faces.

"No, why? Why do you decide our lives all by yourself?"

Ma Dongshik was angry to the point of being unable to suppress it any longer. He felt this was irrational.

Jung Minji's eyes turned cold.

She didn't look back. This would be the last time she would grab hold of them. Even if their solidarity broke apart, she had to make them go on this mission.

“That’s right. However, everyone here owes me a life debt.”

Jung Minji stared at each and every king gathered here.

“Pig King Ma Dongshik. Do you think you would have been able to block the invasion of shadow teeth without my intervention? Do you remember the 400 shadow teeth that were hiding near your assembly area while you sacrificed three people every night?”

Ma Dongshik momentarily flinched.

“It’s the same for all of you. My followers have always fought on the frontlines. And there’s no one here who hasn’t benefited from this. Do you think, without me, you would be able to join Hyunhae Department Store? And now you guys want out?”

Jung Minji’s eyes were like those of a crazy bitch. These people who knew that she would indiscriminate purge the opposition when she was like this quickly avoided her eyes. It was the same for the agitated Ma Dongshik. It was like cold water had poured on him. ‘I went too far after becoming agitated.’ He regretted as he trembled while tucking his hands.

However, there was a single person who did not avoid her stare. The Slave King Song Simin. He, instead, was smiling brightly.

“Ahh... though it’s a bit suffocating... I actively support you. Even though we’re the spearhead, with the support of the Weakening Barrier and the support of the other troops at the back, we shouldn’t have too many casualties. Above all, it’s an honorable deed.”

Jung Minji’s yes man. It was definitely something he would say.

Creak.

Jung Minji slightly nodded towards Song Simin before getting up. Then she lowered her head.

“Once again... I apologize. This will not happen again after this mission. We are going to dissolve our alliance and with an indebted heart, I promise I will wholeheartedly cooperate with you at least once.”

An uncomfortable silence.

After creating an atmosphere that felt like she would kill anyone who opposed her, she suddenly asked for a favor. Though they were taken back, they couldn't show it. Shame, their hurt pride, fear, worries about the future, absurdity. With a mixture of these emotions, the kings under Jung Minji's command were unable to say a word.

They had no choice but to do what the strong ordered them to do.

"...Alright."

The kings exited the meeting room with stiff faces. It wasn't acceptance but submission. Jung Minji was aware of that.

'It's fine. Since this is the last time.'

Even if it was submission, it was fine as long as they moved. As long as she could rescue children with these actions, it helped bring peace to Jung Minji's heart.

'Anyways... Look's like I'll be able to sleep tonight.'

She had nightmares ever since her talk with Baek Seoin.

After all the other kings had left, the last one to stand was Song Simin. He comforted Jung Minji.

"It's because everyone was surprised. I will try to talk to them."

After smiling friendlily, he hurriedly left. Soon after,

"Ah~ Dongshik hyungnim^{1}! I was so surprised! Don't be so stiff and how about we go have a drink?"

The cheeky voice of Song Simin was heard.

The Slave King Song Simin who had accompanied her since Hanyoung High School. He had fully revealed his unique sociability during this time. The size of his troops had increased and he had good relationships with other kings. He was a lubricant-like existence who complemented the cold Jung Minji.

Once even his voice became distant, a stillness overcame the meeting room.

“Ha...”

Jung Minji buried her head into the desk.

“I’m tired...”



The 29th day.

There were 4 portals remaining.

A pitch-black night. Everyone was sleeping except those on night watch.

Choi Hyuk stood alone on top of Hyunhae Department Store.

Seoul, a place that used to light up colorfully at night, however, now, no matter where he looked, it was pitch-black. There was no light brighter than the moon. And because the moon was unexpectedly bright, he was able to differentiate the pitch-black darkness and the waves of the Hangang River.

And there was another place that was emitting a faint light. Above Choi Hyuk’s hand.

Woong, woong, woong...

A mysterious symbol that wasn’t engraved on the Predator’s Blade previously was emitting a light.

A blade of karma had wrapped around the entirety of the blade.

It wasn’t the hazy appearance of the past. It maintained a transparent sword appearance while being fluid-like, as it flowed slowly. It was 5 meters long.

Choi Hyuk slowly raised the Predator’s Blade above his head.

Shah-

He lowered it. Even though he was moving very slowly, the sound of it slicing the air

echoed out from the rooftop. And the blade didn't disappear as it flowed leisurely.

Choi Hyuk smiled.

The preparations to hunt the Wyvern of Destruction were complete.

{1} Hyungnim is what a younger male would call an older male.

CHAPTER 30

WYVERN OF DESTRUCTION (6)

On the morning of the decisive day, an announcement was made at 6 a.m.

{Throne Game + Survive and Escape}

1. In two hours, Weakening Barriers will be nullified. Kings are able to send rescue signals.
 2. Location of the Escape Code: Myeongil Neighborhood Park.
 3. The Wyvern of Destruction has been summoned.
 4. 500,000 monsters have infested the entirety of Kangdong District.
 5. Only kings or individuals who are not affiliated with any forces are able to obtain the escape code.
-

‘... So difficult.’

He hadn't thought that they would nullify the Weakening Barriers. The number of monsters that were added was formidable as well. He estimated that, including the monsters they weren't able to kill, there were over 700,000 monsters. It was certain that this would be a tough fight.

Choi Hyuk looked at the announcement and then armed himself before making his way to the rooftop. As soon as he stood on the top of Hyunhae Department Store, he could see the hordes of monsters that filled Kangdong District. In the very least, it was fortunate that the Weakening Barriers were still working and that the newly invaded monsters were acting on their own and not in groups.

When he looked towards the distant Myeongil Neighborhood Park, he saw an

enormous monster. It was the size of a 20-floor apartment building and looked like a tyrannosaurus with flames coming out its jaws and eyes.

“You... think you can really beat that?”

Jung Minji stood next to him as she asked. Choi Hyuk glanced at her before replying.

“Yeah.”

As if she wasn't satisfied with his simple reply, she made him promise.

“...You must do it. Since you're the one who manipulated my damn personality... Since it's already like this, I'm going to save as many as I can. No matter how bad the situation gets, I'm not going to back down... so do it right.”

Jung Minji was definitely unique. Even though she herself was strong, the ones who moved her heart were the weak. ‘There needs to be at least one king like this,’ Choi Hyuk chuckled inwardly.

“Don't worry. That thing is going to die by my hands.”

He declared as if he wasn't affected by the imposing figure of the Wyvern of Destruction.

Jung Minji giggled. Choi Hyuk tried to recall if she had ever laughed. She did. In the past, when it was still peaceful, though it wasn't often, there were still times when she laughed. He seemed to recall that there were quite a few male students whose hearts fluttered at her laugh. However, this was the first time he had seen her laugh ever since the situation changed.

“You're strong. It's cool.”

The moment she said that, she wasn't the Crazy Knight King. She was simply Jung Minji, the 2nd year class 7 president. It was as if a flower was blooming on this grey morning.

Choi Hyuk saw Jung Minji wrapped in white light with his Eyes of Distinction. It was the first time she, who had always been colorless, had shown goodwill.

“See you later.”

Jung Minji turned around and left, waving her hand behind her back,



The one who had obtained the 1-person escape codes moved in a systematic manner. One would be a traitor if he did it by himself but if others did it as well, it would become a rational decision. 10,000 people secretly communicated with each other. What was more surprising was that no one knew that these 10,000 people organized a plan. There were some who knew but chose to let it slide due to friendship and some who knew and might have been killed when they fought monsters.

Approximately 20,000 people had obtained the 1-person escape codes and among them, 10,000 had already escaped early in the morning. Those who found out were either killed or won over and because of this, the 110,000 soldiers in Hyunhae Department Store had low morale.

Grrrr. Grrrk!

Kaaah.

While these 110,000 gathered, monsters crowded around the outside waiting for the Weakening Barrier to nullify. They were like vultures waiting for rotten meat.

Pitter-patter.

At a time when they were gloomy, rain started to fall. Due to the transparent wall that covered Kangdong District, the rain did not drop onto the ground. Only, they heard the loud noises of raindrops hitting the wall and saw streams of rainwater flow down. They simply saw a sky dyed in water.

Even the guardian Bae Jinman's {Get up} wasn't very effective that day. The existence of traitors that had left had left a huge impact on their unity. It was already going to be a difficult fight... but now they felt like they were fools for remaining and were struggling with a sense of defeat.

The 100 members of the suicide squad stood in front of the discouraged army. Bae Jinman had finished drinking a Karma Recovery Potion and was preparing for another blessing. This one was different from last time. It was a blessing meant only for Choi Hyuk.

“Karma Grant.”

Bae Jinman poured all the karma he possessed into Choi Hyuk. Bae Jinman’s powerful karma stimulated Choi Hyuk’s karma.

{Your Power, Speed, Stamina, Endurance and Recovery have been increased by 100 each for 12 hours.}

The message that appeared made Choi Hyuk’s eyes bulge. He had already heard Bae Jinman’s explanation beforehand but for it to be this impressive.

“Now I can’t do anything for the next 12 hours.”

Bae Jinman, who had spent all his karma, said with a haggard face.

“Good luck.”

Choi Hyuk deeply bowed his head.

He then raised his head and turned around to face the 110,000 soldiers. He raised the Predator’s Blade that had evolved to C rank.

Swish!

A 5-meter-long blade of karma extended past the blade. The symbol engraved on the Predator’s Blade emitted a light as if it was burning.

Everyone gazed at the blazing blade and carved Choi Hyuk’s figure into their memories.

“Let’s go.”

Though he didn’t say it in a loud voice, Choi Hyuk’s works clearly rang out to the 110,000 people gathered in Hyunhae Department Store.

Bang!

Choi Hyuk kicked the ground and dashed out of the Weakening Barrier. There were a few monsters hanging around.

Slash!!

The 5-meter-long blade of karma split 10 monsters into two.

Boom!

Choi Hyuk slammed onto the ground with his momentum. The asphalt cracked as if a cannonball had exploded.

“Let’s go! For survival!”

Wahhhh!

First, the 100 members of the suicide squad charged forth. Their roars were unbelievably loud.

Uahhhhhhhh!!!

Behind them, the whole army shouted even louder than the suicide squad and charged forward. With Choi Hyuk’s actions, their morale had boosted a little. Their last battle for their survival had begun.



It was a battle of speed.

Before the Weakening Barriers became nullified, they used up the remaining Weakening Barrier scrolls unsparingly to open a path.

Even though there were 700,000 monsters, they were scattered while the humans were united as an army.

The actions of the suicide squad were once again remarkable. They drank Karma Recovery Potions like water and used all their strength. After being tempered constantly for 30 days, the suicide squad members’ karma levels were over 2-stars and were easily tearing monsters apart.

A nonstop attack. The army of humans that charged forward at full speed while in formation were able to splatter the blood of the monsters that attacked individually onto the asphalt.

They arrived at the Myeongil Neighborhood Park in about 30 minutes. The mood was

good up until here. It even seemed like their low morale had recovered.

However, their spirits were crushed with a single blow.

Thud! Thuud!

Their bodies bounced up from the sheer force of its steps.

{Kuaalaalaa!!}

The Wyvern of Destruction looked up at the sky and roared. The air shook and their hair fluttered.

Crash!

It smashed its head onto Kyunghee University Hospital that was situated in front of the park. The building smashed apart as if it was hit by a rockslide.

The high-spirited army stopped in their tracks. People fell in shock.

Clack, clack, clack...

Their teeth chattered and their weapons trembled. For such a large building to be smashed apart just like that...

Kirik!

Keurik!

And behind the Wyvern of Destruction, more than 100,000 monsters made their appearance.

“Ah... Fuck...”

“I should have escaped... Should have escaped... I also had a 1-person escape code... Fuck...”

The soldiers lost their courage.

That moment, a swish of a sword strangely grabbed their hearts.

Swish...

It was Choi Hyuk.

“Suicide squad, prepare to charge. Support troop, deploy the Extraordinary Dragon Cannon.”

His voice was clearly heard even in this commotion. However, these people who were stricken with fear couldn't react. Choi Hyuk frowned.

“Get a- hold of yourselves!!”

Bang!

Choi Hyuk's karma-enhanced voice sounded out and smashed onto their chests like a cannonball. Only then did the support troop start to deploy the 'Dragon Hunting Weapon – Extraordinary Dragon Cannon'. It was a 4-meter long cannon-like object.

Its silver barrel was packed with unknown engraved symbols. It didn't have wheels but the bottom was rounded like crescents. It was unknown how it slid towards the direction it was pushed but because of this, two people were able to push it with no problem.

The support troop was the troop that operated the 20 or so 'Dragon Hunting Weapon – Extraordinary Dragon Cannons'. There was a total of 80 people.

Once they regained their senses, their bodies moved according to their training.

“Vine cannonball loaded!”

“Loaded!”

“Shoot when ready!”

Bangbangbang!!

The Extraordinary Dragon Cannons spat flames.

Bang! Bang!

The cannonballs exploded on the Wyvern of Destruction's body. Vines grew from the where the cannonballs hit and entangled its body.

{If a few overlap, they can make a dragon momentarily falter.} This was the description of the Vine Cannonball. The wyvern, hit by 20 cannonballs, faltered momentarily. However,

Thud!

{Kualaalala!!}

The Wyvern stomped the ground and used its strength.

Riip.

The vines ripped apart like paper and fell to the ground.

{Kuaalaalala!!}

Instead, it seemed like it only made it angrier.

"Continue to shoot!"

Urged the support troop leader who used to be an artillery officer.

The Wyvern of Destruction lowered its stance and advanced slowly even as the vines held it back.

Choi Hyuk could clearly see its motives. It was planning on gathering its strength and breaking out in one go.

It was clear that if that thing charged forward their ranks would be smashed apart.

'I have to stop it.'

"Hooo..."

Choi Hyuk took in a deep breath. The karma in his body twisted into spirals. He had obtained this secret method by repeatedly using the skill {Soaring Slash}. Though he didn't meet the requirements to use it, he traced the movements of the karma until

the skill failed.

{Soaring Slash} was a skill that elongated karma and released it like a whip. From there, Choi Hyuk imitated the technique of elongating karma, but he didn't stop there. He twisted the elongated karma into spirals.

He sent the long spirals to the Predator's Blade.

Pabang!

The tip of the spiral unravelled and formed the blade of karma. However, before the karma completely unravelled, he recalled the unravelled karma back while twisting it. The elongated karma spiraled up from his hand to the blade then back to his hand to form a single shape and during this time, he kept twisting and unravelling the karma. A technique that required a ridiculous level of control. Its effect was as powerful as it was complicated.

Swish.

A 5-meter-long blade of karma formed from the Predator's Blade. The karma wrapped around the blade while unravelling and twisting itself.

Even though the transparent energy was moving in a complicated manner, it still retained its shape. It looked calm on the outside but it was filled with energy about to erupt.

The energy of the Predator's Blade, which had transformed into a C rank, mixed with Choi Hyuk's karma and flowed around the blade.

'I can slice into it.'

Choi Hyuk looked at his status for the last time as he resolved himself.

{Choi Hyuk}

Power: 203 (+76) (+100) (★★) Speed: 203 (+74) (+100) (★★) Control: 0 (★★★)

Endurance: 100 (+100) (★★) Stamina: 100 (+100) (★★) Recovery: 10(+100) (★★)

*Retribution: 0 (★★)

*Free karma points: 0

His Control actually hit 3-star.

He changed his equipment and put everything into Power and Speed. He even used the difficult to find {Enchant Change Scroll} to change his enchants to Power and Speed.

Lastly, with Bae Jinman's {Karma Grant}, he was able to increase all his stats, excluding Control, by 100. It seemed like the effect didn't apply to his Control which was a 3-star stat.

This time, he examined the evolved Predator's Blade.

{Greedy Predator's Blade}

Rank: C (Unique, Growth-type)

Sharp and sturdy. The more blood it absorbs of strong foes, the stronger it will get.

Blood Drain: Absorbs the blood of enemies to replenish its owner's karma and heal their wounds. Able to absorb 5L of blood per second.

Durability: 9,998/10,000

Evolution: 0/100

The reason why Choi Hyuk didn't invest any points into Stamina and Recovery was because of the evolved Predator's Blade. The new 'Drain' trait was the greatest present when facing a long and difficult battle against the Wyvern of Destruction.

After finishing his inspection, Choi Hyuk saw the wyvern's bulging calves. It looked like the thickness of its ankles was the size of a house.

Choi Hyuk used its enlarged calves to speculate its anatomy. It wasn't something he was actively thinking of but was an observation that extended from his instincts.

And he figured out its weak points. If you were to look at it as a human, it would be its tendons and Achilles heel.

"About 10..."

Choi Hyuk dashed towards his first target. The Wyvern of Destruction was concentrating all its strength into its calves to break out of the downpour of Vine Cannonballs.

Its vulnerable ankle concentrated with power.

Slash!

The blade of karma slashed out.

Kyajajak!

One swing of the 5-meter-long blade was enough to wipe out a 5 pyong room.^{1} Following Choi Hyuk's blade, its grey flesh split apart like a ravine and black blood gushed out.

{Keulak?}

The Wyvern of Destruction immediately wobbled.

Thuud!

As it wobbled, it hurriedly stomped its uninjured left foot.

A single blow from an ant-sized human was able to make a monster the size of a high-rise apartment wobble. The people who saw this couldn't help but shudder.

However, Choi Hyuk clicked his tongue.

"As expected... I couldn't cut it off with one slash?"

Cho Hyuk had targeted its ankle tendon. Its flesh was sliced into but he was unable to cut its tendon.

"If one time isn't enough, I'll do it until it is... Suicide squad! The target is its left foot! Spread out and attack!"

Choi Hyuk's orders exploded out.

Uoahhhhh!!

The suicide squad spread out. At the same time, Choi Hyuk was a step faster as he charged towards the wyvern's left foot. The flustered and hesitant Wyvern of Destruction.

Bangbangbang!

Flames shot out of the Extraordinary Dragon Cannons above it.

The Wyvern of Destruction's attention was wholly on the suicide squad. Jung Minji didn't miss this opportunity.

"All troops- Charge!!!"

Jung Minji unsheathed her sword and bypassed the Wyvern of Destruction. 200,000 monsters were lined up in front of her.

"Charge! Charge! Do not fall behind!"

The other forces were right behind them as they charged.

Choi Hyuk, 100 members of the suicide squad and 80 members of the support troop VS The Wyvern of Destruction.

110,000 humans VS 200,000 monsters.

A gruesome war had begun.

{1} 16.52 m²

CHAPTER 31

WYVERN OF DESTRUCTION (7)

“Team 5! Go up!”

At Baek Seoin’s shout, team 5 of the suicide squad jumped up. However, there was one member who was too late.

Puakack!

The wyvern’s swinging tail was like a train travelling at full speed, comparable in both its size and power.

The member was crushed like a mosquito. The protect order from his armor and his 2-star Endurance stat were useless.

Fighting an apartment-sized monster was similar to fighting a calamity.

Only when you looked up until your neck felt like it was about to break could you see its face and flaming jaws.

To humans, fighting was looking at each other, gathering your spirits, and bashing into each other. However, what they were experiencing now were feet that fell down above their heads like a landslide. When the steep cliff turned around, its tail would come forth like a tsunami.

That was why the role of the commander was very important.

“Team 1! Team 3! To the left!”

The suicide squad that was near the wyvern couldn’t see its overall shape. All they could see was one leg and the tip of its tail.

Because of this, the existence of a commander who stood at a distance was crucial. And Baek Seoin was the right man for the job.

Baek Seoin grit his teeth as he performed his role as a commander. The reason for

gritting his teeth was simple.

“Fucking bastard...”

It was because the wyvern was his sworn enemy that killed his parents. His anger had become even colder and sharper as he carried out his commands.

“Team 7! Jump in! Left foot!”

Team 7 charged in at his orders. The members of Team 7 lashed out at the wound left by Choi Hyuk’s blade. They were all armed with blunt weapons. However, when they hit the wound, it only let out a slapping sound, it didn’t seem like it actually hurt the wyvern.

“Kuaahhhh!”

Except for when Chu Youngjin hit it with bloodshot eyes.

Bang!

The sound his iron mace made when it hit was different. Scraps of its flesh exploded out.

And at its impact, the wyvern momentarily flinched.

Jung Minji had thoroughly resolved herself for this expedition. She had sent the strongest of her elites, Chu Youngjin, to the suicide squad. Chu Youngjin, who activated the innate skill {Berserker}, was able to double his Power and Speed.

However, it was still far from being enough.

{Kualaalaak!!}

Stomp! Stomp!

Shocked by the sharp pain, it stomped its feet like lightning. Baek Seoin’s orders couldn’t match its quick movements. 3 members of Team 7 became blood splashes at its feet.

But, the bigger problem was that the wyvern charged and attacked the main army. To

the army, it was as if a fortress had suddenly fallen from the sky.

Baaaannng!

The large wyvern was swift as well. The moment one foot contacted the ground, it rotated its body and cleared its surroundings with a swing of its tail.

Crash!

In an instant, more than 100 people became plastered onto the ground.

“Charge the Ice Cannons! Fire!”

Bang, bang, bang!

Light beams shot out of the Extraordinary Dragon Cannons.

Crackle, crack!

The wyvern was, for an instant, frozen from head to tail.

“Team 9! Assemble the Extraordinary Dragon Battering Ram!”

Baek Seoin frantically ordered. The members of Team 9 each took a barrel-like object from their Handy Bags and assembled them together. A long, thick spear was formed after connecting 10 of these barrels. The 10 members of Team 9 stood on either side of it and held it up.

{Dragon Hunting Weapon – Extraordinary Dragon Battering Ram}, a spear made to slam into a dragon, was prepared. It took 30 seconds to fully complete it.

Choi Hyuk had taken action to gain that time. He was the only warrior who could clearly see the wyvern’s movements up close.

{Kualaak!}

The Wyvern of Destruction tried its best to smash the ice that covered its body. Crack! As the ice started to crack and fall apart, Choi Hyuk jumped onto the ice.

Bang!

On top of the shattering ice, Choi Hyuk madly charged. Avoiding the avalanche of falling ice, Choi Hyuk stepped and jumped as he made his way up.

And just as the wyvern was about to lift its head and shake its body.

Craack!

A long, thin blade of karma swept at the wyvern's neck. Because of his insufficient strength, he wasn't able to cut the nerve, but it was definitely painful.

{Kuaaaaaah!!}

As if hit by lightning, the wyvern jumped up and took a few steps back.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

One step, two steps, each step crushed a few tens of people, but the wyvern did retreat away from the main army.

And Team 9 who held the Extraordinary Dragon Battering Ram charged forth and slammed it into the wyvern's right heel.

Boom!!

At the same time, the magic implanted in the Extraordinary Dragon Battering Ram exploded out. Instantly, the wyvern's right foot was pushed back. It wobbled. However, the thing swung its tail to regain its balance and, instead, shot flames at Team 9.

Blaaaze!

"Uack!"

"Keahhh!"

One member was unable to avoid the flames and let out a wretched scream before turning to ash. Even the members who avoided the flames caught on fire so they drank a Recovery Potion and rolled on the ground.

{Grrr!}

The Wyvern of Destruction stared at the suicide squad who had spread out to avoid its flames. It was 40 minutes into the fight. During this time, they made it wobble and cry out so it seemed to be injured but... the Wyvern of Destruction was quite unscathed. Didn't humans cry out in surprise when they were poked with a needle? It wasn't very different for the wyvern.

The wyvern was quite annoyed and angry.

Thud! Thud! Slaamm!

It charged forward and ran through the suicide squad. It was unbelievable that an apartment-sized monster was able to move so quickly while swinging its tail. Baek Seoin didn't even have the time to call out orders. Even the blocking attempt from the Extraordinary Dragon Cannon came too late. The suicide squad scattered to avoid it while the support troops switched the cannons to stealth mode then spread out and hid.

Grit.

Baek Seoin ground his teeth.

{Kuaaah!}

The wyvern cried out.

But, even during this time, Choi Hyuk was faithfully attacking the Wyvern of Destruction. He was with Lee Jinhee, making their way up its back.

"Leader. Do I really have to do this?"

"You said you wanted to conquer an apartment-sized monster."

"Ah... damn... that..."

"Hold tight."

Choi Hyuk didn't even bother to listen to the rest of her excuses. He raised the Predator's Blade extended with karma and sliced the wyvern's thigh.

{Kuaaahh!!}

It slapped its thigh with its tail. However, Choi Hyuk and Lee Jinhee had already hidden inside its flesh that was dug out like a trench.

“Uack! I almost became a flattened bean!”

“Just hold tight and keep slicing. If we keep doing this, we should be able to slow it down.”

“My sword probably won’t even slice it well. Leader, you should just do it.”

“If I stay here, the ones outside are all going to die. And look.”

Choi Hyuk raised his blade to show a blade of karma that was as dim as a candlelight.

“I don’t know if it’s because we’re inside the monster but it’s unstable. If you understand, good luck!”

Choi Hyuk didn’t wait for a reply and ran down the wyvern’s body.

“Uahhh...”

Fortunately, since Lee Jinhee was experienced in parkour, she was confident in hanging on.

‘Wait? If I didn’t know parkour, would I not have been dragged here in the first place?’

With mixed feelings, Lee Jinhee stabilized her body with her two feet and started to carve the wyvern’s flesh. She first needed to create a stable foothold.

“Ah damn... The blade doesn’t even cut. Its. Flesh. Well.”

Stab! Stab! Stab!

She let her anger out on the wyvern but it only resulted in her hands hurting more.



The main army thought optimistically of the suicide squad’s fight since, from the beginning, their intention was to hold the wyvern back, not to kill it. Everyone besides Choi Hyuk thought that this was the case. Although there were times when the fight

would splash onto them, it wasn't to the point where they couldn't handle it. It was still acceptable.

“Push! Soon the Weakening Barriers will become nullified!”

Kang Dongsoo shouted.

1 hour and 40 minutes had passed since the announcement had popped up. There were still 20 minutes left before the Weakening Barriers would become nullified. Though the Wyvern of Destruction wasn't affected by the barrier, they had to at least kill more of the 200,000 monsters before the barrier lost its effect.

This desperation united them.

It was the same for those kings under Jung Minji who didn't want to spearhead the operation.

“Bastards!”

Even the extreme self-preservationist, the Pig King Ma Dongshik, stood on the frontlines with a shield and axe splitting monsters' heads. The Student King Min Kyungchul charged forward with the elite troops and broke through the enemy lines. The king who used to hide in the assembly area and whine to Jung Minji supported their backs. They even created a retreat route for Min Kyungchul who headed deep into the enemy lines.

All of them had become warriors who were used to fighting. They fought together as one. The past 30 days might have helped them differentiate when they should be political and when they should be wildly fighting.

“Damn it! You're telling me I have to fight again after doing this shit? Fuck, just wait and see what happens if you forget your promise! Fuck!”

The Pig King Ma Dongshik loudly mumbled to himself so others could hear. With an “Urk!”, he pushed back a Bladed Ghost and embedded his axe in its head. Even 2-star monsters became weaker inside Weakening Barriers.

“Hey, hyungnim, are you a tsundere? Why are you like this when you were eventually going to do it anyways?”

It was the Slave King Song Simin who was shamelessly passing by. Song Simin held a large shield and behind him stood Yoon Girim with a determined expression. She held a two-handed sword that was as long as a spear.

“Why is she fighting next to the Slave King when she’s with us?”

An executive of Jung Minji’s troops, Kwon Saehyuk, clicked his tongue. However, Jung Minji looked at it optimistically. Since Yoon Girim became brighter and was even able to fight well when she was with Song Simin.

Song Simin would block with his shield and Yoon Girim would stab from behind. It looked like Song Simin trained her well as her unhesitating actions were quite good.

While Jung Minji was vacantly looking at her, Song Simin gave her a wink.

Everyone was fighting with their lives on the line. Even the cowardly Yoon Girim.

“Now that’s more like it.”

Jung Minji who was sweating profusely in her helmet smiled.

Three hours had passed since the war began. The humans had just obtained the escape code. They automatically obtained the escape code when they stepped into a suspicious looking golden puddle located in the center of the park.

{Escape code obtained.}

A light came down from the sky along with the message. A small wing was added onto the king’s unique symbols. In Jung Minji’s case, a blazing wing appeared on the right side of the bloody knight.

“Hoo...”

Jung Minji caught her breath and lifted her right fist.

“Uahhhhh!”

The escape code. For the past month, everyone only had the escape code on their minds.

'I have to leave this horrific Kangdong District.'

'Who knows, it might be peaceful outside of Kangdong District.'

'I wonder what happened to my friends?'

They had finally survived and grasped the escape code in their hands.

The progress of the war was looking good.

The army of 200,000 monsters had scattered and the suicide squad was still blocking the Wyvern of Destruction. 13 people had died in the suicide squad... If you looked at how there were no casualties for the last 2 weeks, it was a big loss but in the grand scheme of things, it was quite small.

'Time to go back.'

That was the thought on everyone's mind.

And.

Riing! Riing!

With the sound of a siren, red lasers shot up from different places. Everyone knew without being told.

"...Rescue signals."

Were there still this many survivors? Red laser shot up from all over Kangdong District. With the ominous sound of the siren and red flashes, Jung Minji's heart tightened in terror. Signals that erupted from everywhere. Cries for help. This was able to make Jung Minji feel like she was in hell.

She couldn't delay it any longer.

"Let's go."

Jung Minji unsheathed her sword and took the lead.

"Urk... Ah, fuck..."

Even though the Pig King Ma Dongshik ground his teeth, he still followed behind. He even shouted with great force.

“Let’s go! To save everyone!”

The forces under Bae Jinman’s command stood next to Jung Minji. They were the spearhead. The army of 90,000 who had survived the fierce battle advanced towards the nearest rescue signal.

‘You better endure.’

Jung Minji glanced at the suicide squad fighting the Wyvern of Destruction one last time before charging through the monsters.

The fight was much harder than they had thought. The Weakening Barriers had lost their effect and they were completely exhausted after fighting for such a long period of time. They were diligently drinking potions but there was a limit to that.

Obviously, there were a variety of people who sent rescue signals. There were children who were hiding in the sewers but there were also adults who hid in assembly areas only caring for their own safety and delinquents who hunted humans rather than monsters.

The army quickly began to tire.

“This, it’s too difficult to go around all of Kangdong District,”

Suggested the Student King Min Kyungchul.

“We already talked about this.”

“...The losses of our troops are the highest. And, honestly, I don’t know why we need to spill blood for those pathetic bastards.”

Min Kyungchul said roughly while pointing to the rescued people. The children were fine but there were guys who called themselves adults who were passive towards fighting. They only asked, “So aren’t we going to get the escape code?” with obvious intentions.

“There are children.”

“...So let’s just search half the district. This isn’t something we can do with our strength. Even if we rescue people, they don’t help with our overall strength.”

Frustrated, Min Kyungchul looked at Song Simin. He only shrugged his shoulders.

Park Solam who was Jung Minji’s executive and dedicated supporter, stepped forward. As an ethics teacher, she received a lot of respect from students.

“Student King Min Kyungchul’s words are valid. However... isn’t this the time to use a bit more strength? Are there any forces besides ours who can rescue the isolated children?”

As she said that, another executive, Kwon Saehyuk, added in.

“The Crazy Knight King’s decisions haven’t been wrong until now.”

The members of her troops who were with her since Hanyoung High School had complete trust in her. Since she was the one who survived after taking down a countless number of strong individuals.

It was these people who made Jung Minji’s dictatorship possible. Jung Minji’s bodyguards. Their strength was extraordinary.

“Haa...”

Min Kyungchul only sighed.

“I’m sorry. I will definitely repay this favor.”

Jung Minji sincerely said to Min Kyungchul. Min Kyungchul replied with a complicated expression.

“Do what you want.”

Their small break concluded. The troops once again prepared to march. The sky was still red. The sky was embroidered with red lasers and the siren continued to ring.

Jung Minji felt like she would go crazy just listening to the sirens. One’s rescue signal would bring out a certain girl inside her. A girl covered with blood who didn’t receive any help. A foolish bitch who waited for someone’s help. She recalled the despair of a

damned bitch.

Jung Minji felt like her mind was becoming distant. She couldn't stop it. No matter how shitty it was, she had to go save them.

"Minji, are you alright?"

That moment, Yoon Girim approached her.

Park Solam and Kwon Saehyuk who always kept a close guard around her were unconcerned with her appearance. Because of that.

"Here, drink this."

When Yoon Girim handed Jung Minji a water bottle she was about to drink and when Jung Minji grinned before gulping down the bottle and even the next scene, they were all too natural.

"You fought well."

Perhaps this was the first compliment she gave Yoon Girim... and her last.

Jung Minji lifted her head to take another drink.

Cough!

"Huh?"

Jung Minji felt like her throat was burning. A burning something spewed from her mouth.

"Cough...?"

Bloody foam rose up from her mouth. She lost all strength in her legs.

"Yoon Girim?"

The ethics teacher Park Solam was taken back. A long spear-like sword pierced through her throat.

Splash!

Blood splattered into the air. It felt unreal.

'Ah... Yoon Girim backstabbed me.'

Only then did Jung Minji realized what had happened.

The Slave King Song Simin held the blood-stained longsword as he patted Yoon Girim's head. He shouted.

"You can't let one bastard we discussed in the morning get away!"

Yoon Girim stood next to him as she shouted at Jung Minji with bloodshot eyes.

"You told me to kill whatever I was scared of!"

It was the words Jung Minji had said to her. Jung Minji wanted to reply but her throat felt like it was melting and no voice came out.

'So I was that scary... damn bitch.'

Thump.

Jung Minji's body fell to the floor. The rain-stained sky reflected in her eyes.

There was no one who could help her.

'So tiresome.'

She thought about when she sent her one and only father to a mental hospital and afterwards when she reported her uncle who had sexually assaulted her. Even then, it was like this.

Because there wasn't anyone who would help her, besides herself...

Her biggest enemy was her foolishness that was waiting for someone's help.

'You did good. Bitch... '

It wasn't certain if she was saying that to Yoon Girim or herself. She wanted to say those words but the sounds escaped through the side of her throat.

Then she suddenly felt at peace. 'Whatever, the world's fucked up anyways,' and her thoughts travelled to Choi Hyuk and the 100 members of the suicide squad... before cutting off.

Slide.

The troop that was known to be dominating even among the allied forces. Jung Minji's troops had somehow increased to 5,000 people, but now the bloody knight that stood above their heads disappeared.

"Retreat! Retreat!"

And the forces under Jung Minji started to retreat. This happened 4 hours after the war had begun.

The exodus (mass departure) had begun.

CHAPTER 32

KING WITHOUT SUBJECTS

“What? Just what happened?”

“Just shut up and follow. We’re all fucked.”

“Jung Minji died? Why?”

“Ah geez...!”

“I mean it doesn’t make sense.”

“Haa... Song Simin betrayed her.”

“Song Simin? But, what about her guards? He went passed them?”

“Yoon Girim backstabbed her.”

“Yoon Girim?!”

“Ah geez...! Don’t talk so loud. Can’t you read the mood?”

“...But how does that make sense? Why would Yoon Girim? No, is that even possible? Jung Minji’s Endurance was pierced?”

“Yoon Girim’s always around Song Simin these days. She probably reached 1-star and Jung Minji’s Endurance probably didn’t hit 2-star yet... With stat buffs from items, do you think she won’t be able to pierce that? You can’t even endure D rank (2-star) weapons with 1-star Endurance.”

“But still... What about her Recovery stat?”

“She specifically cut her throat. Blood was gushing out. The speed of her brain shutting down was probably faster than her recovery.”

“...Fuck...”

“It’s not like it’s a game... If your vitals are pierced, no matter how strong you are, you’re dead. Because Jung Minji knew that, she always brought guards with her... Chu Youngjin going to the suicide squad probably had a lot to do with it. If it was Chu Youngjin, he wouldn’t have taken his eyes away even if it was Yoon Girim.”

“Fuck... Her death was so sudden.”

“Shut up and get your mind straight. We don’t have the escape code anymore. That was granted to those with the symbols of the kings.”

“Ah, right!”

“That’s why, let’s quickly follow them!”

“You... Don’t tell me you’re going to stick to Song Simin?”

“It’s fucked up but what can I do? Other troops are full and I don’t know any of them. Song Simin is probably the best choice.”

“Ha... still.”

“Hey! Geez! If you’re going to be like that, why don’t you just go to Kang Dongsoo!”

“...Fuck...”

With Jung Minji’s death, 5,000 people had lost the escape code. Jung Minji’s former followers had no choice but to defect to other troops and around 3,000 followed Song Simin. People he had secretly planted beforehand had persuaded others. From the start, the majority didn’t know what exactly happened and those who did justified themselves.

“I gave you a chance. Didn’t I tell you? That she wouldn’t listen to the whole ‘half of the district’ shit.”

Song Simin said while looking at the Student King Min Kyungchul.

Min Kyungchul bitterly nodded his head.

“...Yeah.”

Jung Minji's troops dispersed and many groups followed Song Simin's lead and broke away from the war.

This scene made other forces fall into a state of confusion.

"What the? What's happening in the front? Did something happen to the Crazy Knight King?"

"Was it an ambush? Monsters? There's a hole in the spearhead!"

To the forces who were behind them, it looked like the spearhead was ambushed and had become chaotic.

Just then, hordes of monsters appeared. Few tens of thousands. This many wasn't a big deal but with the chaotic spearhead, the hordes of monsters seemed larger and more overwhelming. They believed that what they saw wasn't everything.

The soldiers fell into a state of fear. Their karma was almost spent, the ranks were disordered and their spirits had hit rock bottom.

A frightened army was no army. Just like the times when a few hundred soldiers armed with cannons and guns defeats an army of tens of thousands with melee weapons.

Even if they considered that the fact they became stronger over the past 30 days, they were still ordinary civilians who had never killed not too long ago. They weren't able to calm themselves after becoming panicked. They just couldn't muster up the courage to fight.

Commanders were also unable to understand the situation.

"Damn... just what the hell happened? Just what happened for them to be routed? Shit... if we take a wrong step, we'll all die. Let's retreat!"

The Alliance of Comrades in Arms were the quickest to come to a decision. Once they decided to retreat, other forces started to follow suit. A long line of groups started their retreat.

"No! If we retreat, what happens to the suicide squad?!"

Bae Jinman proposed they help the suicide squad, however, the forces under his

command refused.

“Right now, we need worry about ourselves. Other troops are leaving. We can’t be the only ones who go back!”

The group of humans couldn’t come back after falling into a state of confusion. Like flames, chaos bred more chaos. There wasn’t even a chance to do anything. It all happened in an instant.

‘How did it become like this so suddenly?’

Even among Bae Jinman’s troops, there were some who fled from the ranks. They had already obtained the escape code. They didn’t fear becoming outcasts. If people fled, others would flee as well. Kangdong District was already bustling with monsters. Mass panic spread rapidly.

However, Bae Jinman didn’t give up. It was his personality.

“We still need to go back! I’ll even go back by myself!”

“I’m sorry.”

The person who directed Bae Jinman’s guards crammed Bae Jinman under his armpit. Bae Jinman, who had lost all his strength after Karma Grant, couldn’t resist.

“Retreat!!”

Eventually, even Bae Jinman’s troops retreated. If they properly understood what was going on, they would have gone to the suicide squad... but the situation had progressed so ridiculously.



The support battalion who pushed back the surrounding monsters, the support troops who shot the Extraordinary Dragon Cannons and the suicide squad all fell into state of confusion. As the main army retreated, more and more monsters gathered nearby. Of course, they didn’t know why.

“Block them! If the monsters reach the support troops, we’re done!”

The distinction between troops began to fade.

It was a free-for-all. The support troops started to shoot cannonballs at the oncoming monsters and not the wyvern. Even some suicide squad members turned around to block the monsters.

“Fuck! We have to retreat! Call the King without Subjects!”

“He won’t listen! That bastard’s done for!”

There were even some troops who left Choi Hyuk who was fighting the Wyvern of Destruction behind and retreated.

“Hey! What the fuck! You can’t leave in the middle of a fight! What about the King without Subjects?!”

“I called him but what can I do if he doesn’t listen?”

“Let him be! He said he’ll hold the wyvern back!”

Among the suicide squad, a portion stood next to Choi Hyuk until the end and another portion, due to them holding the wyvern back, hurriedly retreated.

It was utter chaos, however, that didn’t affect Choi Hyuk as he became more immersed into the fight.

‘If I want to create an opportunity to attack, I need to move one step faster.’

Just as he thought this, Choi Hyuk discovered a new method. He tossed away his method of using karma like muscles. He shot a string of karma at a target and contracted it like a rubber band.

{After endless consideration, you have realized a new way to use karma. Retribution increased by 10.}

Choi Hyuk didn’t even read the message.

Swoosh!

Following the contracting karma, his body shot forward and his vision instantly

shifted. His body was so fast that it left afterimages.

Crash!

The wyvern's foot stomped down too late. Choi Hyuk sliced into the wyvern's ankle.

'I need to be faster.'

This time, Choi Hyuk elongated all the karma in his body and coiled it up. The coiled karma circulated his body.

{After endless consideration, you have realized a new way to use karma. Retribution increased by 30.}

Swoosh!

The coiled karma gathered below his feet and, like a spring, bounced Choi Hyuk high up into the air.

Swish!

He released karma around the Predator's Blade and formed a blade of karma.

His 3-star Control stat let him freely manipulate karma. Choi Hyuk's movements slowly broke past his physical limits.

He wasn't an existence who moved with his arms and legs anymore and had become one who moved with karma. Karma wasn't supporting his body anymore, instead, his body was supporting his karma. The karma in his body continuously changed its form.

At some point, Choi Hyuk had forgotten the world. His eyes didn't see the escaping suicide squad members or the ones who staked their lives to fight the monsters. His ears didn't hear the shouts of Baek Seoin. Choi Hyuk had completely erased everything besides himself and the Wyvern of Destruction.

Pabapak!

Boom!

Zip!

Choi Hyuk's movements kept getting quicker. Just when you thought he jumped up into the air, he was already on the ground and when you thought he slashed the wyvern's left ankle, he was already hanging onto its right thigh.

Batatak! Bam!

Chiiiiii!

The wyvern's black blood continuously dropped onto the ground. It was a black rain.

However, the wyvern's stamina and recovery abilities were incredible so the rate it was wounded and the rate it healed were similar.

{Kuaalaalaalaa!}

The Wyvern of Destruction blew flames and Choi Hyuk actually headed into the flames. The fog-like karma that was released from the Predator's Blade protected him from the flames.

Puah!

Choi Hyuk pierced through the flames and had jumped up to the wyvern's head which was lowered to blow flames. He stabbed its eye with a transparent blade made of karma.

{Keahhhhhh!}

A frightening cry. Blue flames surged out of its wounded eye. Choi Hyuk who had been shaken of by the wyvern's shaking head landed on the ground and immediately drank a Karma Recovery Potion. The karma that had become heavy and sluggish became taut once more.

Just like how Choi Hyuk's eyes only saw the Wyvern of Destruction, the wyvern only concentrated on Choi Hyuk. It vented its rage and resentment. The moment Choi Hyuk was hit, the fight would end but Choi Hyuk wouldn't give it the chance.

Black rain continued to fall. The asphalt dissolved and the dirt beneath melted into glass.

How many hours or days they fought, Choi Hyuk had forgotten everything.

The more he fought, the more he admired the wyvern's strength. The bastard didn't fall. The wounds he inflicted had all healed. Its attacks were so swift and precise that his hair would stand on end even as he dodged it.

So Choi Hyuk realized his own strength. His strength that was able to go toe to toe with the wyvern.

A fierce joy wrapped his body. For a fight be this exciting.

Choi Hyuk fully demonstrated his abilities. He found new ways to fight as he fought. He developed and utilized better methods of manipulating karma in real time.

Fight! Let's fight more!

Thump! Thump! His heart beat rapidly. The Predator's Blade sliced into its flesh. The blood that flowed from the wound was absorbed by the Predator's Blade. The already black sword became darker.

As it absorbed the blood, the burden on his body and the exhaustion of his karma were relieved. Adding to that, Choi Hyuk drank another Karma Recovery Potion. Ping! Then, he once again shot forward and carved the wyvern's thigh.

A heightened excitement that made him feel as though he could fight for days! The cells in his body seemed to awaken.

After a time, the wyvern's recovery started to slow. More and more wounds accumulated on the wyvern. Its blood flowed out like waterfalls. The clothes Choi Hyuk wore had become destroyed and a portion of his hair and brows had been burnt to crisp.

The wyvern became sluggish but that was the same for Choi Hyuk. The Predator's Blade's bloodsucking ability and potions were maintaining his karma and body but their effect was slowly decreasing due to possible overuse.

'I have to cut its bones.'

Choi Hyuk felt it was time to win. Now, when the karma that filled the wyvern's body had weakened.

Could he cut it? No, he had to. If they continued to draw out this fight, the one to

collapse first would be Choi Hyuk.

Choi Hyuk calmed his breath.

‘Stronger...’

As he resolved himself, he discovered a different method.

He compressed his karma into his lower abdomen, the so-called dantian. He coiled and twisted all his karma and placed it where the dantian was located. The centrifugal and centripetal forces created by his karma opposed each other in his dantian. His karma wriggled like a newborn star. A beating heart of karma!

{You have discovered the fundamentals of the karma organ yourself! Retribution increased by 50!}

Choi Hyuk was unaware how ridiculous his current actions were. His mind was only filled up with thoughts on how to take down the wyvern.

Choi Hyuk released a small portion of his condensed karma. The thinly stretched karma attached itself onto the wyvern’s right leg. Its left leg was in the air, ready to stomp on Choi Hyuk.

Bang!

The moment he was about to recall the release karma, he leaned his body forward.

Pak!

He disappeared, leaving an afterimage. It was like short-distance teleportation. Choi Hyuk’s body closed in on the wyvern’s right foot. He manipulated the karma in his dantian again.

Bang!

The karma released from his dantian was like compressed gas as it shot past his arms and out his sword. It returned the instant it shot out.

Unlike the previous blade of karma that flowed slowly, this one was like a torrent, it accelerated as it shot out.

Riip!

The ligament of the wyvern's right leg was cut.

{Kuaalaalaa!!}

The wyvern let out a cry. As if an enormous mountain was falling, it fell to its knees. Stepping on its thigh and back, Choi Hyuk jumped up to its neck. As it had already consumed a huge amount of karma, the karma that had protected its skin and bones had become faint.

Choi Hyuk pushed the karma that was gathered in his dantian towards his wrist.

“Guahh!”

As he endured the pain erupting from his wrists, he swung his sword at the wyvern's neck. The moment he swung, a tempest broke out from his hands. The blade of karma spread out like the rays of a morning sun.

Chop! Slash!

The wyvern's head was as large as a 3-story building.

Booom!

Its head fell to the ground. Its flesh was ripped and bones were shattered.

{An unbelievable achievement! Granted 200 Retribution. Granted 100 free karma points. Obtained Qualifications to be a Sovereign 3/3. Granted Sovereign Trait.}

{Congratulations to the King without Subjects for his Sovereign Awakening}

A sovereign is originally a position for those who command a massive army and leads a nation.

However, the path of a sovereign is also reserved for those who overturn situations as a one-man army.

This is the rule of the King without Subjects.

The most difficult trial the King without Subject faces to obtain his Qualifications to be a Sovereign.

We pay our respects to you who has tread that hardship.

-You are able to accept an unlimited number of followers.

-You have obtained the qualifications to be the representative of humans

{As a reward for the corpse of the Wyvern of Destruction, the {Flame Wing Tribe's Karma Heart Discipline' has been passed down.}

A constant flow of messages. They weren't the frightening messages of the past. In fact, the sovereign awakening message was even courteous.

"Hahaha..."

Choi Hyuk couldn't contain his laughter. He flopped onto the ground laughing. A black hill was collapsed in front of him. Choi Hyuk had personally taken down that mountain, that enormous dragon. He laughed again.

He was happy.

It was the first time he had such an enjoyable fight and it was also the first time he felt such a happy victory.

Choi Hyuk looked up at the sky. The rain-stained curtain that covered the sky. The gradually fading wyvern corpse. Everything was pleasant.

'I won! I beat my opponent who I thought I would lose to! I was stronger!'

Choi Hyuk had never truly felt danger his whole life.

When he fought 5 middle schoolers as an elementary schooler and when he received a blow from Kang Minho before he was distributed karma, even when he first fought a crook, he never thought he would lose.

However, this time was different. He fought desperately and won.

Choi Hyuk himself didn't know that he was this strong.

"Ouahhhhhh!!!"

Ecstasy surged out from deep within him as he let out a roar. He wanted to boast and

only then did he look at his surroundings. He wanted to share this joy. He was proud of and felt close to the suicide squad just because they had fought with him. He felt like he could even bombard them with kisses on their foreheads.

‘A trait of the sovereign is that I can accept an unlimited number of followers, right?’

If it was possible, he wanted to accept them all as followers. He just wanted to. Since he was just so happy.

However,

“...Huh?”

He couldn’t see anyone no matter where he looked.

Everyone had died. Corpses of monsters and members of the suicide squad were scattered everywhere. Besides the panicked members of the suicide squad, support battalion and support troops who retreated, the remaining loyal members had all died in battle.

However, it was hard for Choi Hyuk who had forgotten his surroundings and was immersed in the fight to figure out what happened. He only thought everyone had died.

“...Everyone’s dead? Lee Jinhee!! Baek Seoin!!!”

Choi Hyuk called out for his followers. As expected, there was no reply.

“Ha...”

All of a sudden, Choi Hyuk felt lonely. This was very unfamiliar feeling.

Though he was victorious and had awakened as a true sovereign...

He was still the ‘King without Subjects’.

“...Everyone’s so weak...”

His bitter words echoed out through the corpse-filled ruins.

Just then, a woman fell from the disappearing wyvern corpse.

“Cough! Cough! Cough! Wh... what the?”

The woman who seemed to have passed out and had stood up while coughing was Lee Jinhee. She had continuously chopped the wyvern’s flesh inside its thigh.

Choi Hyuk vacantly looked at her. Then,

“Whoa! Looks like you won?”

Baek Seoin ran towards them from afar. As Choi Hyuk stared at him,

“I got a bad feeling and hid in the middle of the fight. Just in case you misunderstand, it wasn’t just me! Did you know because of your fierce battle, even the nearby monsters fled?”

The master of survival, Baek Seoin, laughed awkwardly.

Choi Hyuk’s lips reeled up to reveal a smile.

Finally, there was one more survivor.

“Grrr!”

Though Choi Hyuk didn’t remember, there was a warrior who hung onto the wyvern’s leg until the end, Chu Youngjin. Although his organs were injured after getting kicked by the wyvern, he was able to survive with the power of {Berserker}’s ‘regenerative’ ability. Choi Youngjin slowly lifted his body.

“Haha...”

Choi Hyuk laughed. He didn’t know what happened. He didn’t know why the suicide squad was annihilated but, in any case, he wasn’t alone. This fact alone made him happy.

Choi Hyuk said with an embarrassed expression.

“I won.”

It was a voice filled with pride, like the ones of his fellow high schoolers.

The King without Subjects who everyone thought would die had survived. Stronger than before.



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