

심판의 군주

1

오늘도요 현대 판타지 장편소설
DONG-A MODERN FANTASY

Sovereign of Judgment

- 심판의 군주 -

- Episode 4 -
The Great Colonizing Age

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[**Myoniyoni Translations**]

CHAPTER 50

INVESTIGATION (1)

[T/N] There is a bit of a time skip from the last chapter.

The great colonizing age had begun.

Colonization was profitable, and you had no choice but to take part even if you wished to avoid it.

Both the resources only produced in these lands and the alien products, which could only be bought from the sovereigns' shops, were undoubtedly valuable and worth a lot of money.

However, that wasn't all. The ground on Earth kept becoming drier. All experts claimed that if they didn't start farming in these new lands, humanity would no longer have a future.

On top of that, the number of missing people increased. In 2 years, 5% of the total population had disappeared. And, like Bae Jinman had predicted, they were found in the colonizing lands, 'Dragonic'. Earthlings called these people 'immigrants'.

Choi Hyuk had colonized half of Barhaloleun Hill and was now looking to expand to the wide plains beyond it. 3,000 soldiers participated in this expedition. There wasn't much. Even though Choi Hyuk was the first colonizer, his growth was slower than other sovereigns. Still, his berserkers were all known to be elites.

The nickname he received during [Survive and Escape], 'Berserker', had been spread through word of mouth and now each of his followers was known as a 'Berserker' while he himself was known as the 'Berserk Sovereign'. His troops were collectively called the 'Berserkers'.

It had come to the point where Choi Hyuk would react to 'Berserkers' and 'Berserk Sovereign' naturally.

It was a smooth march. The plains continued endlessly and because they had already annihilated the 'Plains Shark' monster tribe that had a tight hold on the nearby land,

they weren't met with many monsters either. The weather was refreshing. The sky still looked like whirlpools of milk and the Berserkers were marching in the direction of the largest whirlpool.

Baek Seoin, who was walking next to him and looking at a transparent tablet, suddenly became surprised and said.

"Leader, there's a reaction from a native!"

"Native? Not an immigrant?"

"Yes. It's the first time it's rung since I downloaded this app."

They called earthlings who had been forcefully moved to Dragonic 'immigrants'. Unlike regular people who could freely move back and forth between Earth and Dragonic as long as they had enough Mission Points, immigrants, who had been forced here, couldn't use the portals that led to Earth. Because they were 'people who could not leave Dragonic', they were called 'immigrants'.

On the other hand, you had the descendants of the fallen dragonics. They called the indigenous people, who survived by avoiding the monsters' attacks, 'natives'. They were rare. Only three colonized lands, Israel, Thailand, and Germany, had sighted the natives. As they were a bunch who survived on a planet occupied by monsters, they possessed many mysterious and useful techniques. The benefits they could gain through interactions with them were endless. Many colonizers dreamed of encountering the natives. As a result of this, Baek Seoin had bought a transparent tablet made with alien technology and had downloaded a native tracking application on it.

Choi Hyuk looked around. Endless plains. He occasionally saw foaming mouthed monsters rushing towards them, and the search party, having been dispatched ahead, dealing with them. There were no other living beings besides them.

"I don't see any?"

"Since they have lived until now by avoiding monsters' eyes, of course they are hiding in a hidden place."

"...For example?"

“Underground.”

Baek Seoin coolly pointed to the ground.

Choi Hyuk looked down towards the ground. It seemed possible. However, if they were hiding underground, it would be hard to find them. He began to think.

‘Would finding natives really be helpful?’

There was a clear goal for this expedition. Of course, finding the natives would undoubtedly be beneficial in the long run, but he couldn’t help but wonder if he needed to find them right this moment.

“Don’t we have to wait for Chu Youngjin and Ryu Hyunsung to come back before we decide which direction we go? If we find the natives, we will also be able to obtain information about our surroundings... I think we should search.”

Baek Seoin advised on searching. His judgment was usually correct. Choi Hyuk nodded.

“Fine. We stay here.”

3,000 soldiers quickly dropped their bags and set up tents.



It had been 2 years since Choi Hyuk successfully colonized his land. The world had changed greatly. Many sovereigns had succeeded in colonizing and new sovereigns had emerged as well. There were currently 40 activated portals. The number of people who received the sovereign title was about the same.

Chu Youngjin and Ryu Hyunsung were entrusted with a separate mission and had headed out to another sovereign’s land. The colonized land of Lao Ban, a sovereign from Macau.

There they saw people locked in cages. They were ‘slaves’. This place was a hot springs town called ‘Pyungryu’ situated deep in the colonized land near the portal between Macau and ‘Dragonic’. This was a common sight here.

Unattractive men and women were in a dirty state, while beautiful men and women

had all been dolled up. They were sorted into different cages. Both sides had no hope in their eyes, seemingly dead inside.

Ryu Hyunsung sounded sick.

“Ha, fuck...”

They had heard stories, but the shock they felt from looking at this personally was completely different.

The people within the cages were those commonly called ‘immigrants’. The people who were the cause of accelerated colonization, the ‘immigrants’. They were the earthlings who had disappeared and were forcefully transported to Dragonic. They were unable to go through the portal and return to Earth. It was also a place where the corresponding sovereign could exercise their extraterritoriality and control over those who passed through the portal. In a place where crime was rampant, these immigrants, who had nowhere to go, became easy targets.

“We need fellow colonizers and they are overflowing with them here.”

Chu Youngjin clicked his tongue. Of course they had found immigrants in Choi Hyuk’s colonized land. Choi Hyuk took them in as equals and allowed them to live in his colonized cities. And, in the case their goals and skills were appropriate, he would even accept them as Berserkers.

This fit well with Choi Hyuk’s aim, which put everything on the line for combat. As many immigrants were ready warriors. They had suddenly been dropped onto a planet filled with monsters, Dragonic. All they possessed were weapons and karma. For them to have succeeded in surviving in these conditions meant they were already proven warriors. Only, they were usually weaker than Earth awakenees because Earth awakenees had generally awakened earlier than them. The awakenees also had access to a greater variety of items and had formed into different powers.

“But... Aren’t those people too weak? It’s either because it hasn’t been long since they became immigrants or because they were weak even compared to other immigrants... Where are all the strong ones?”

Chu Youngjin questioned.

“I don’t know... It doesn’t seem like they’ve accepted them into their colonized land

either.”

When he heard Chu Youngjin’s words, Ryu Hyunsung felt something was weird. Even in Lao Ban’s other colonized cities they had passed until now, ‘Zhiyu’, ‘Yeshi’, and ‘Wanwu’, they had not heard about any immigrant warriors being accepted into their land. And only weak immigrants were being sold in ‘Pyungryu’, which had a slave market.

“Then is that really true? That Sovereign Lao Ban has the fate, ‘Plunderer’?”

Ryu Hyunsung mumbled.

Chu Youngjin indifferently replied.

“No doubt he’s a crazy bastard. Since they are bastards who had even killed our Berserkers.”

“Though they flatly denied doing that.”

“Coincidences can only happen once or twice... All sovereigns are hostile against Lao Ban... But it seems like this place is doing well.”

With a bitter expression, Chu Youngjin observed the guests who filled the slave market. There were a lot of people even though this was a remote place. There were all sorts of people who had gathered here in ‘Pyungryu’, from people seeking pleasure and pimps looking to recruit people for their adult entertainment establishment to plantation owners who had come looking for workers. Even though it was a city far away from the portal, guests from all over the world gathered here for the only slave market in the world.

Even when 30 sovereigns, including Choi Hyuk, had banned trading with the Sovereign of Dark Secrets Lao Ban, it was to no avail.

The Sovereign of Dark Secrets Lao Ban was a headache of the current world. He received two big criticisms. One was continuously killing other colonizers and the other was inhumane treatment of immigrants.

If Berserk Sovereign Choi Hyuk had put everything into ‘battle’ for the development of his land, then the Sovereign of Dark Secrets Lao Ban had put everything into one concept, ‘money’.

Not only did he possess a natural talent for money, he was obsessed with it. Choi Hyuk's shops were all filled with consumables and equipment necessary for battle, whilst Lao Ban's shops were filled with convenient alien products. Even the transparent tablet Baek Seoin was using was first sold in Lao Ban's shops. Instead of the supplies from the 'Supply Store of the Flame Wing Tribe', Lao Ban was more interested in trading with the aliens in the marketplace. And that was how new products from different cultures arrived on Earth.

If that was all, no one would condemn him, but he went a step further. Disappeared earthlings who would have been someone's family or lover... He even started a wicked act of selling these immigrants as slaves.

Other sovereigns were enraged at his actions and continuously sent warnings, but they weren't able to actually act. As long as your base was situated in a colonized land on Dragonic, you could only enter their territory through a portal. But the portal leading to Lao Ban's territory was under his management. He was able to instantly kick out anyone he refuses, which meant that using military force to control him was impossible. Although they eventually decided to impose economic sanctions against Lao Ban by officially announcing a trade ban with him, people who had become engrossed in the products and pleasure offered by Lao Ban would continuously enter his territory by hiding their identity. Both Macau and mainland China, who enjoyed the benefits they brought with them, acted as nothing was happening and remained bystanders.

They were frustrating efforts. Though all colonized lands were located on Dragonic, their locations were very far apart from each other. Currently, colonized lands were no different from unreachable islands, and controlling what goes on in a territory was an incredibly difficult task. It was natural for all sorts of crime to be rampant. Yet, it was difficult to close their eyes to the sheer scale of Lao Ban's evil deeds... Even though multiple sovereigns cooperated together, they weren't able to come up with an effective restriction due to Lao Ban's outstanding ability.

Ryu Hyunsung revealed a bitter smile as he approached a cage. He had to gather information to complete his mission.

"Hey."

He called out to a youth inside the cage. Surprised, the youth instinctively turned his head. He had been trained to obey orders. Though unspeakable acts of violence were

committed during training. Ryu Hyunsung hid his expression and calmly asked.

“Where did you get captured? Can you tell me which direction it is from this city?”

At his question, the youth looked as if he was about to cry. Truthfully he had heard similar questions before. Horrible tortures were committed by slave traders to figure out where other immigrants were. The youth trembled in fear and lowered his head.

“That-that way. That’s all I know. That’s really all I know.”

The youth pointed at a white whirlpool in the sky. Ryu Hyunsung was familiar with this whirlpool. He nodded.

“Thank you.”

Although he had unintentionally distressed the youth, he had obtained the information he wanted. Ryu Hyunsung left the cage and joined up with Chu Youngjin. They both attempted to leave the city.

If only they weren’t caught by slavers...

“Ey. What did you do just now?”

In colonized lands that were no different for lawless regions, there was a clear-cut difference in the treatment of guests and non-guests. If you had a lot of money or was a regular, then you could receive a 5-star hotel treatment, however, it was common to beat wanderers like Ryu Hyunsung and Chu Youngjin, who only looked and didn’t buy anything, to death. It was a characteristic of slavers to be the part-merchant part-gangster type.

Ryu Hyunsung calmly observed the oncoming slavers. He saw black corpse silhouettes with a red background on their shoulders. They were patterns indicating their ‘fates’. Ryu Hyunsung had one as well. He was hiding it now but it was the pattern of a ‘Battle Addict’, a red trajectory slicing through a black background. It was the same fate as the Berserk Sovereign, Choi Hyuk.

Ryu Hyunsung indifferently asked.

“Are you guys working under the Sovereign of Dark Secrets?”

The pattern the Sovereign of Dark Secrets had was exactly the black corpse and red background. The exact name of the fate wasn't known. Only, there were rumors it was the 'Plunderer'. Unlike other sovereigns, he only allowed his followers to use his fate.

Because of this, Ryu Hyunsung had in fact asked a useless question. There was no doubt those with that pattern were his followers. However, it wasn't completely useless. As it was an impressive provocation.

"What? The Sovereign of Dark Secrets? Is this bastard crazy?"

The nickname, Sovereign of Dark Secrets, wasn't one Lao Ban made himself. It was a nickname created by enemy sovereigns. It was a forbidden name within his territory.

The four slavers became enraged and raised their weapons.

Swish.

Chu Youngjin partly unsheathed his sword and looked at Ryu Hyunsung.

'What should we do?'

He asked with his eyes.

Swish.

Instead of a reply, Ryu Hyunsung unsheathed his sword and extended a Karma Blade. Then, introduced himself.

"Berserker Ryu Hyunsung."

He had no thought of avoiding a fight. Ryu Hyunsung and Chu Youngjin had two motives for coming here. First was to investigate. And the other was to give them a warning.

As they had quietly come to their destination, it was now time to give them a warning.

Rumble.

Chu Youngjin roused his own unique karma. A soft rumbling sound could be heard.

“Berserker Chu Youngjin.”

He smiled as he unsheathed a blood red sword.

CHAPTER 51

INVESTIGATION (2)

When Choi Hyuk opened a fate and trait shop on Barhaloleun Hill, everyone was happily deciding what they would choose. There were three fates that could be chosen from, 'Undying One', 'Battle Addict', and 'Raging One'. Also, karma traits were much more diverse than the fates. Whatever they chose, they would become stronger. However, there was a combination that would let them become even stronger than that. What should they choose? Once a trait or fate was chosen, it would (depending on the situation) cost a lot to change it, so they had to choose wisely.

However, as everything was new, no one could tell what was good or bad. This eventually led to the popularization of Choi Hyuk's chosen fate and trait, 'Battle Addict' and 'Mind's Eye'.

Yet, Chu Youngjin chose a different trait and fate from his leader, Choi Hyuk, and created his own extraordinary style. So the fighting style of the Berserkers separated into two main styles.

Choi Hyuk's style and Chu Youngjin's style.

Rumble, rumble!

As if starting a large machine, the rumbling sounds emitting from Chu Youngjin's body became a level deeper. He had activated the karma trait, 'Explosive Blood'.

Explosive Blood would, with the exception of Control, sharply increase Power, Speed, Endurance, Stamina, and Recovery when activated. It was number one in terms of power. Only, it had a side effect that made it a trait unusable by some.

Rumble!

The karma that was packed in his body stirred and started to boil. The karma that was protecting his body reversed and started attacking it. A pain that felt as though each cell was being sliced apart overcame his body.

Yet, Chu Youngjin didn't even bat an eye. What was more, he even activated his innate

skill 'Berserker' along with it. His karma became even more ferocious as his Power, Speed, and Recovery increased even further. Then, his muscles started to shrink and his joints became frayed proportional to the aggressive karma. As if his whole body had become an engine, it continued to boil and emit heat and pain. Chu Youngjin's body was repeatedly becoming damaged due to his karma and simultaneously healing. The pain was enough to make any normal person insane. Even the Berserkers, who had gone through all sorts of hardships, found it difficult to fight whilst enduring this pain.

Because of this, Explosive Blood had become a trait that not anyone could choose because it was powerful.

Nonetheless, it seemed as though Chu Youngjin didn't feel anything. Only his reddening eyes burned.

{Due to intensive rage, free karma point increased by 1.}

Although Chu Youngjin didn't feel the pain, it didn't mean that he didn't feel anything. Only, because his insides were constantly filled with incomparable loss and pain, did this pain not feel like much.

'Raging One' was the most suitable fate for him. His aptitude was a whopping 96%!

"...What? Chu Youngjin? Don't tell me... The Sword Demon?"

The slavers froze when they heard that name. Their faces turned deathly pale. However, it was too late. Rumble! On the next sound of thunder, the slaver in front was crushed and blown away like a tomato.

"Fuck!"

It was surprising, but they were still experienced battle veterans. They immediately prepared for battle and targeted Chu Youngjin. One stabbed with a spear while the other two threw throwing knives.

Whoosh!

The bladed weapons flew, with a bluish tinge, making a refreshing sound. Karma trait 'Resilience'. One's karma would become resilient, making it better to shoot with, and when it is attached to a weapon, it increases its penetrating force. As it was useful and

had a decent performance, it was a trait chosen by many awakenees with no particular talent.

Instantly, a spear was aimed at Chu Youngjin's chest, while throwing knives flew to his forehead.

Rumble!

However, another thunderclap erupted and the spear and throwing knives aimed at Chu Youngjin bounced off.

Chu Youngjin's Karma Barrier wasn't continuous like Choi Hyuk's. Rather, it had a much more explosive power to it. When used at a necessary moment, karma would explode with Chu Youngjin at the center and push back everything in his vicinity.

The enemy spear bent significantly before wobbling in different directions.

"What bastards!"

As a commotion arose from one area, the whole market became noisy. Slave traders from different places started to gather.

Ryu Hyunsung acted this time.

"Hey... I'm disappointed. You're all only targeting Chu Youngjin. Am I not surprising? I'm Ryu Hyunsung. Berserker Ryu Hyunsung."

"The Knight Captain Ryu Hyunsung?"

"Yeah, that's what they call me too!"

Swish!

Ryu Hyunsung revealed a satisfied smile. A 30cm karma blade extended out from his sword. As there was no need to make it longer when facing humans, this was enough.

Ryu Hyunsung was the best expert among the Berserkers, after Choi Hyuk, who practiced Choi Hyuk's style. His fate was 'Battle Addict' while his trait was 'Mind's Eye'. The same as Choi Hyuk's.

“Use throwing weapons first to drain their strength!”

As expected, in a slave market where many interested parties gathered, the power here was significant. The pressure from 5 awakenees simultaneously throwing knives and spears was powerful. However, the trajectories of all the attacks were clearly visible in Ryu Hyunsung’s eyes.

The karma trait ‘Mind’s Eye’ made controlling karma much easier and made it into a sensitive organ that could gather information on one’s surroundings. Although it didn’t raise one’s offensive strength directly like ‘Explosive Blood’ or ‘Resilience’, there was no better weapon for someone with extraordinary senses.

Ryu Hyunsung’s saber elegantly flew in the air. The quickly approaching throwing weapons seemed to be caught by his senses and moved in slow motion. Looking at their trajectories, he chose the best path. He stretched his saber and lightly pushed the closest spear away. Afterwards, he turned his wrists and flipped his saber to deflect two throwing knives at the same time. He then rotated his saber once more and hit the head of the next oncoming spear.

Clink, clink, clink!

The last spear, which was hit on its head, rotated and bounced away the throwing knife behind it. After cleanly clearing the five weapons, the enemies were now within Ryu Hyunsung’s range.

“Gahk!”

“Ahh!”

There was no enemy that met his sword. Ryu Hyunsung, the national saber athlete at Korea National Sport University. With his world-class sword skills and the addition of a weapon known as ‘Mind’s Eye’, nothing could obstruct his path.

The saber that was about to split someone’s head suddenly turned and cut someone’s wrist. The saber that was about to block an oncoming enemy sword, pushed the sword down and charged towards the enemy’s undefended neck.

The severed arms and necks of the slave traders rolled on the ground. Even when tens of people rushed at him, the result was the same. Either they were ripped apart by Chu Youngjin or cut into pieces by Ryu Hyunsung.

“Boring. I can’t raise my karma fighting like this.”

The fate of ‘Battle Addicts’ would increase one’s karma the more intensely one fought. So Ryu Hyunsung preferred to have more intense fights.

Both Chu Youngjin and Ryu Hyunsung didn’t try to conceal their identities, but neither did they let any of their enemies live.

There were other spectators around them, but once they annihilated those directly involved, it would take a longer time to understand the truth of what happened. As it was impossible to communicate electronically in ‘Dragonic’, it would take quite a bit of time for this to be reported to the center, for the center to dispatch an investigative party, and for the investigative party to investigate and report back.

It was better to reveal their identities. However, as they needed to create time for them to escape, they didn’t want their identities to be exposed too quickly. These were the actions taken after taking these factors into account.

“Why... Why would the Berserkers...”

The last remaining slave trader asked whilst leaning against a cage and breathing heavily. Ryu Hyunsung crouched down in front of him.

“You guys ignored our warnings several times. You even killed two Berserkers who were on a mission last week.”

“That wasn’t us...”

“The fuck that wasn’t.”

Thud.

As Ryu Hyunsung gestured with his fingers, Chu Youngjin, who was next to him, unhesitantly sliced the slave trader’s neck. A bloody stench. An unpleasant sight. This sight would become a clear warning to the groups who figured out what actually occurred later. Why ‘Berserkers’ were called berserkers. What would happen if you got on their nerves.

Ryu Hyunsung raised his head and looked at the sky. A milky sky. The weather was fine. Perhaps it was because it was a hot springs city, but he felt a pleasant humidity

and could see pretty little buildings beyond the cages.

“Now, should we cause even more of a mess?”

Bang! Clank!

Chu Youngjin and Ryu Hyunsung smashed apart the cages that had locked up the immigrants. There were occasionally “What do I do now?” questions, but every time the two would reply, “Whatever you want.” In fact, the two immediately left after smashing the cages apart. They didn’t care if the immigrants fled or stayed there.

Once they left the city ‘Pyungryu’, Chu Youngjin stretched and then said in a happy tone.

“We’re almost done with our mission. We can return once we’re done examining the topography, right?”

“You want to return quickly?”

“Yes. Home is good.”

“Kay. Let’s finish quickly and go back.”

They had finished with their first warning. However, if they stopped there, they wouldn’t be known as the ‘Berserkers’. And this sort of warning wasn’t enough to bring the Sovereign of Dark Secrets Lao Ban to his senses.

Ryu Hyunsung and Chu Youngjin began their topography examination for their next move.



A few berserkers, including Choi Hyuk, were slowly walking around their camp with their eyes closed. It was to utilize their ‘Mind’s Eye’ the best they could and look for the native’s underground abode.

Choi Hyuk and Baek Seoin were the best at using ‘Mind’s Eye’ so it wouldn’t be a stretch to call them executives.

Lee Jinhee who had chosen ‘Explosive Blood’ over ‘Mind’s Eye’ stood next to them

bored.

“I wonder if Ryu hyung and Youngjin are doing well.”

With nothing to do, she walked next to Baek Seoin, who was hard at work, and constantly asked him questions.

“We got their report on a mission they did together 2 days ago. Everything went smoothly.”

Even though he was bothered, Baek Seoin still replied.

“It’s already been 2 days since then. How do you know nothing happened during those 2 days?”

“Just wait a little. They are expected to return 3 days from now.”

“Baek hyung, aren’t you worried? After sending them to the enemy camp?”

“Worried? About who? It’s not like we sent only Chu Youngjin or only Ryu Hyunsung, we sent them together so who am I worried about?”

“Still, it’s the enemy camp...”

“Don’t worry. We’ve decided to only cause commotions on the outskirts. In a world where people kill each other near the portal, they can’t help but be slow when dealing with events that occur on the outskirts. Unless they dispatch an expedition like us.”

At his reply, Lee Jinhee stopped her protest and silently followed next to him. She was more bored than worried about them in the first place.

Baek Seoin’s forehead wrinkled. It seemed he was using ‘Mind’s Eye’ the best he could, but the results weren’t good.

Looking at his figure, Lee Jinhee grinned.

“You always bragged about not losing to the leader in terms of using ‘Mind’s Eye’, but why are you so bad at it? What happened to the innate skill that was optimized for ‘Mind’s Eye’?”

At her teasing words, Baek Seoin let out a groan.

In reality, Baek Seoin was as confident in using 'Mind's Eye' for perception as Choi Hyuk was. As he really had a natural talent in that regard.

A karma trait meant that you were granting specific properties onto your neutral karma.

However, before artificially granting them, there were some people whose karma naturally possessed certain properties. They were the awakenees who had awakened a special power known as 'innate skills'.

Also, when a person who possessed an 'innate skill' used a karma trait that was compatible with their innate skill, it would sharply increase its effectiveness. It was to the point where there was even a hypothesis that the concept of karma traits was created with 'innate skills' as a reference.

Chu Youngjin's 'Berserker' and 'Explosive Blood' fitted together like a set.

Innate skills like Choi Hyuk's 'Eyes of Distinction' and Baek Seoin's 'Intuition' were very compatible with 'Mind's Eye', which possessed a sensing ability. That was why Baek Seoin, who had better 'senses' than anyone else, was confident that he wouldn't lose to Choi Hyuk in terms of perception ability.

Even still... there was no result.

"It's really weird... We checked around where the reaction from the native came from, but for us to still not be able to find it..."

They started this exploration thinking it would only take a day. Yet for there to be no results after half a day... as the one who suggested exploring, Baek Seoin was concerned.

As she stared at Baek Seoin, Lee Jinhee suddenly asked.

"Maybe it's like that?"

"What?"

"Magic. There's stuff like that in fantasy novels. An illusionary magic that covers the

entrance.”

“Ehh... That’s only in novels...”

Baek Seoin, who was about to reject her idea, suddenly stopped.

It was definitely impossible for humans to use their karma in such diverse methods like magic from fantasy novels. However, because it was impossible for humans, did it mean that it was impossible for the natives here?

“Huh?”

If this hypothesis was correct, then their searching method was wrong. What they had to find was not an underground tunnel but an awkward karma that was hiding the tunnel.

“Wait. It is really like that?”

“Right? I’m right, right?”

“Be quiet for a moment.”

Baek Seoin told her to be quiet as he concentrated to his limit. He extended tentacles of karma out in every direction. The world was filled with faint karma. Among them, he tried to distinguish between natural and awkward parts. It was difficult at first as he had no prior experience in what was natural karma and what wasn’t. Nonetheless, he soon found a spot.

“...Eureka...”

A trembling voice came out from Baek Seoin’s mouth.

CHAPTER 52

INVESTIGATION (3)

“It’s here?”

Choi Hyun ran here after hearing Baek Seoin’s call, and the Berserkers gathered here all had puzzled expressions.

The place Baek Seoin said was the entrance looked no different from any other place. It was flat with lots of grass. They didn’t see anything that resembled a tunnel entrance and even when they heightened their perception ability, they didn’t feel anything that felt like a tunnel.

“This is the place. Try to feel the karma here rather than the surrounding terrain.”

Even when Baek Seoin explained, the others were still puzzled. Only Choi Hyuk felt something was weird.

“Now that I think about it, karma only ripples here?”

Natural karma changed unpredictably. There were times when the density of karma would increase and even ripple. However, it was rare to see only a specific part move completely differently from its surroundings.

Other Berserkers had a hard time comprehending what the natural state of karma was so they were slow in realizing it, but Choi Hyuk instinctively felt what was wrong.

“Yes, leader. It looks like the natives are much better at using karma than we expected. There’s no doubt they used karma to hide the entrance.”

“Like illusionary magic...”

“Maybe.”

Choi Hyuk nodded.

“Okay, I know what to do.”

Whether it was magic or not, as long as it was created with karma, the solution was simple.

Choi Hyuk gathered a karma storm in his right hand.

“Void Wave!”

Boooooom!

Void Wave had the effect of blowing away karma near its vicinity. As the storm of karma rampaged on its surroundings, tree roots started to appear from the ground which was only filled with grass previously.

“Huh? There?”

People became surprised when they saw the tree roots. However, once the effect of Void Wave was over, the tree roots were concealed, turning into a grassy area once again.

“As expected, it’s not enough with just this.”

Choi Hyuk had controlled his strength to test it out.

Huuu.

This time he took a deep breath and became serious. He created another karma storm. Unlike last time, he created three storms and repulsed them in his hand. This was the critical skill that allowed the Void Wave to be recorded in the supply store. A resonance and explosion utilizing repulsion. It required precise control but, with it, it was possible to bring forth a large effect without using a lot of power. The storm of karma resonated above Choi Hyuk’s hand and exploded.

...

A silent explosion. The karma that blocked their vision was blasted away.

As if snow had melted to reveal the world’s true self, tree roots appeared above the grassy ground. The ground they had thought was a shallow furrow was, in fact, all tree roots. The scale was quite significant as well. To the point that they filled the whole area the Void Wave affected. This most likely extended beyond the Void Wave’s range.

Something was strange. They saw tree roots, yet they didn't see any trees. They didn't even see a single trunk or branch, only tree roots covered the ground.

“Wow... It's like magic.”

Lee Jinhee admired as she walked on a tree root that was stuck in the ground. Half the area was dirt while the other half was made up of roots. She, who was plodding along, suddenly stopped. At her feet lay a door made of carved roots.

“This looks like the entrance? For us to not notice it even though it was right here.”

There didn't seem to be other security measures on the door either. When Choi Hyuk nodded, Lee Jinhee opened the door. She was able to easily open the door that seemed to be four times larger than regular doors.

Creaak. Thud!

The door opened wide.

“Wahhh...”

The door led to the inside of a tree root. The roots on the surface were only a small portion. The giant hollow tree root formed a long underground tunnel.

Lee Jinhee jumped in and brushed her hand against the walls. It was smooth like wooden furniture. The tunnel wasn't dark as light flowed from the wood grain.

“This is no joke. The groups found until now were from small-scale villages of 100 natives... Looking at the illusionary magic... and this amazing tree, we might actually meet a city of natives instead of a village.”

Baek Seoin said in a voice filled with wonder and suspense. He jumped into the wood tunnel and looked around before carefully suggesting to Choi Hyuk.

“The natives might feel threatened by us and try to attack. Wouldn't it be best if we sent an envoy first?”

Those with good intentions do not come and those who come do not come with good intentions^{1}. To humans, this may be an exciting adventure in a mysterious world, but there was no guarantee that the natives didn't see them as invading plunderers who

had deactivated their defense system. There are no good men among those who trespass.

However, Choi Hyuk shook his head.

“No. Everyone will enter except for 1,000 who will stay up here. And Baek hyung, how do you feel?”

“Well... Calm now. Actually, I’m a bit excited.”

Just in case, he checked Baek Seoin’s Intuition. There wasn’t any problem.

“Good, enter!”

They began their march inside the long tree root. The wood tunnel slowly kept going deeper.

At first, the tunnel was wide enough for 3 people to walk side by side, but as more and more tunnels joined together, it became wide enough for 6, then 12, then 24 and so on the deeper they went.

“This... feels like an upside down tree.”

Baek Seoin noted as he gazed at the faint light that wrapped around them.

A tree where the roots led to the surface, and the trunk and branches reached deep into the ground. A faint scent of wood wafted in the air, and they would occasionally see unidentifiable green ores. Every time they came across a green ore, Baek Seoin would crack off a portion and collected them.

“But why are you collecting those unknown rocks every time we see them?”

When Lee Jinhee asked, Baek Seoin clicked his tongue.

“You call yourself an executive and you still don’t know? I’m making a map. As there are no constellations here, we are only able to roughly approximate our location using the whirlpools in the sky and the distribution of ores.”

“Ah, a map... So, if we find rocks similar to those ores found near other portals, we might be nearby... like that?”

“Something like that. We can even use this directly as a resource as well.”

As they continued down the tunnel while investigating their surroundings, a large gate blocked their path.

It was a fortress built with dark wood and a yellowish-green mineral. The fortress walls seemed to be 30 meters tall. It was like a terrifyingly tall dam.

“Wow... Look at that.”

Lee Jinhee exclaimed.

“Do we finally get to trade with natives? But the size is no joke? Considering the illusionary magic as well, it seems like this civilization is more advanced than the other natives who have been discovered already. The scale is large too.”

Baek Seoin couldn't contain his excitement. Sovereigns who had traded with the natives had all developed significantly. If they traded with them, how many benefits could they gain?

“Heh... But it looks like they even have an alarm device. It looks like they knew we were coming?”

Lee Jinhee whistled as she looked at the native's solemnity.

“Halt!{2}”

Just then, they heard a familiar language.

“English?”

Up on top of the fortress, they saw the silhouette of a relatively small earthling.

“...I think he might be an immigrant. It seems they sent him as an interpreter.”

Baek Seoin narrowed his eyes as he observed the top of the fortress. Either he was dimensionally teleported here in the first place or he was discovered as he wandered around Dragonic, either way, he was a lucky immigrant. As the city would be safer than the surface.

“Is he an interpreter? Not needed. I’ll speak directly.”

Choi Hyuk raised his voice. He had already undergone a language resonance procedure at the supply store. The general idea of his words would appear in the other’s head. Also, the words of the other party would be translated and appear in his head. It was because of this language resonance that he was able to converse with the other aliens he met on missions.

They seemed to be surprised by Choi Hyuk’s language resonance. A small commotion erupted before the immigrant was replaced by a native behind him.

{For what purpose did you bring an army here?}

The language of the natives seemed similar to whistling and bird calls... Even from afar, he could hear it clearly. Choi Hyuk silently observed them.

He saw two colors with his ‘Eyes of Distinction’. Black (ill will) and white (goodwill). It seemed that there was a bit of ill will because they came as an army. Then, what was the goodwill?

‘Are they happy to see intelligent beings instead of monsters? It also looks as though their treatment of immigrants is good.’

If his guess was right, then they were a good group to trade with. However, was it really like that?

‘I just need to confirm it.’

Choi Hyuk decided to not bother weighing every detail and to rather face them head on.

“To ally with you.”

{Do earthlings bring armies when they come to ally with someone?}

Choi Hyuk happily brought it up, but the reaction was blunt. It was an expected reaction. This was why Baek Seoin warned him from the beginning.

However, bringing an army wasn’t a completely bad idea either. During the days of imperialism, Westerners established diplomatic relations by revealing their

firepower, as it was sometimes necessary to demonstrate your military strength when trading with others. This was why Baek Seoin didn't really oppose it either.

'But... for them to have such a strong fortress... Maybe I should have stopped him a bit.'

Baek Seoin licked his lips. It was because their opponents weren't weak enough to show a military demonstration. Instead, it seemed to have been a negative factor.

Yet, Choi Hyuk was composed.

"That's because I don't want a simple alliance. I want a strong alliance where it's okay to post each other's troops in either of our cities."

Even Baek Seoin was surprised at his words. He thought that they were going to simply do what the sovereigns from Germany and Thailand did. Was he trying to create a semi-colonial state like the sovereigns from Israel by bringing an army? He thought about it briefly. But what did he mean by an alliance where it was okay to post each other's armies?

Like birds twittering and the rustling of leaves, whistling sounds erupted from everywhere. It seemed the natives were dumbfounded, wondering what he was talking about. When Choi Hyuk examined them with his 'Eyes of Distinction', he saw that both white and black lights had disappeared. They seemed to be unsure of how to take his words.

Just then, the representative of the natives said.

{Ridiculous... Why must we?}

"Because you're tight on time. Don't you have to rid the monsters off this land?"

{... }

At his reply, the surrounding commotion died down. 'Get rid of monsters.' Was there any task above this for these natives whose land had been snatched by monsters?

Choi Hyuk continued.

"This will be an opportunity for you. You might not know this, but currently, my

species is conducting a large-scale migration to Dragonic. In the future, all earthlings will migrate here. There are only two futures for this planet. One, where the earthlings lose and it continues to be occupied by monsters. Or two, earthlings are victorious and it becomes occupied by us. Then, a question. How many of your ‘descendants of dragonics’ will remain? There are currently millions of earthlings. Even if we consider earthlings successfully getting rid of all the monsters, do you think you can compete and survive against us?”

Choi Hyuk’s speech had improved over the past two years he spent being a sovereign of tens of thousands of people.

{... What is it you want to say?}

“If we combine our strength, we don’t need to needlessly come in conflict with each other and can prosper together. Let’s start with the premise we will one day join together and first create a strong alliance. I will get rid of the monsters and let you live on the surface.”

{... How can I trust in a species I’ve seen for the first time... No, even if I exclude that, you’ll let us live on the surface? Do you even have the power to?}

Choi Hyuk was continuously looking at them with his Eyes of Distinction. It was interesting. The white (goodwill) and black (ill will) in the beginning had disappeared with the commotion, but now a dim white light remained. They held a bit of expectation after being taken aback by the unexpected proposal.

A picturesque smile formed on Choi Hyuk’s lips.

“Of course. Want to confirm it for yourself?”

{How?}

“Let’s have a light spar.”

{... What?}

Looking at Choi Hyuk smiling like a devil, Baek Seoin face palmed.

‘You want to get friendly with the aliens by fighting them?’

Now that 2 years had passed, Choi Hyuk was an adult by Korean standards. Through many experiences, he was now quite a good talker and his judgment had become better... but he was still a 'Battle Addict'.

CHAPTER 53

INVESTIGATION (4)

“So what do you call yourselves? We call ourselves earthlings.”

{... A tribe of the El race^{1}. Other inhabitants of Dragonic call us ‘els’}

What was unexpected was that they were els. The moment Choi Hyuk said, ‘Let’s spar’, their initial confusion had disappeared. They tensed themselves and observed Choi Hyuk and the Berserkers. They were experienced fighters.

‘Good.’

Choi Hyuk felt cheerful.

“Everyone back off.”

The Berserkers stepped back, and Choi Hyuk’s stretching figure stood out to the els.

“I’m Choi Hyuk.”

Remember it. No, I will make you remember it. Though he didn’t speak those words, his immediate charge forward seemed to emphasize them.

Whoosh!

Choi Hyuk’s charge was strange. He wasn’t kicking the ground physically, but rather, it seemed as though the ground was pushing him forward and the fortress was pushing him upwards.

When they were still going, ‘What the?’ Choi Hyuk had already climbed to the top of the fortress.

Bang!

Choi Hyuk’s palm thumped into an El Tribe soldier’s chest. Several soldiers behind the el rolled on the ground in an instant.

Boooo.

Vibrations that sounded like daegeums^{2} erupted. It seemed to be the els' special groaning sound.

{... }

The el, who looked like the leader, didn't give them any orders. Even still, as if it was engraved in their bodies, the El Tribe's soldiers got into formation and started to fight back.

Cold air fogged up the swords of Choi Hyuk and the nearby soldiers. An aura that felt as if the blood and flesh of nearby enemies would freeze and pop. If there were only one or two, it would have been fine, but as ten soldiers surrounded him, it was quite menacing.

Choi Hyuk utilized his karma trait, Mind's Eye, to its limits. He could clearly see the thrashing karma, and he could also see its weak point. He skillfully hit away the oncoming karma that attempted to freeze his flesh. Then he punched the weakest point of the karma, where the blade and handle of a sword connected.

Gong!

The magic was broken and the sword itself was shattered as a result.

{What!}

The El Tribe soldiers became baffled. Booo. He heard the sounds of daegeums once again.

Bang!

He struck the soldier whose sword had been shattered.

Thump.

His Karma Heart thumped loudly. Karma rode his body and accelerated. Previously, only the pathway on his right arm was open, but now, pathways were open on all four of his limbs. His karma had become even faster and stronger.

Goong!

The shattering swords were like snow, flying everywhere, and the soldiers looked like they had experienced an avalanche. The els, who attempted to face him in close combat, had scattered like withered leaves.

“This is boring.”

Choi Hyuk’s provocation.

Bang! Shhhhhriek!

At this moment, an unexpected attack flew towards him. Choi Hyuk felt something approaching with great speed and dodged it. He first heard the projectile smashing against the fortress and only then heard a sharp whistling sound.

Choi Hyuk looked at the watchtower the projectile flew from. He was surprised.

“Guns?”

He could only think of them that way.

On top of a tall watchtower sprouting from the fortress, El Tribe soldiers were shooting with human-length wooden guns.

{The opponent’s senses are extremely good! Treat him as a monster that is at least Draco ranked! Platoon 1 to 3! Open fire!}

Bang, bang, bang! Shhhhhriek!

Sounds of gunfire rang out rhythmically.

To fool Choi Hyuk’s senses, they shot bullets immediately behind one another and changed the bullets’ trajectories. Sometimes, one bullet would even split into 3-4 pieces like magic baseball throws in comics.

“Wow...”

The guns didn’t use gunpowder. The bullets were shot with the power of karma. As these bullets were filled with hostile karma, if he tried to defend himself sloppily, his

Karma Barrier, or anything in their way, would be ripped to shreds.

3-star monsters weren't affected by human guns. However, if they had those guns, they would be effective against 3-star and early 4-star monsters. Unfortunately, their opponent was the wrong match.

Choi Hyuk's Endurance was currently at 3-star, but his fighting style was to use his Control, which was on at the extreme limits of 4-star, and his senses to cover his other stats. This wasn't a problem.

When he pushed his Mind's Eye even further, Choi Hyuk's eyes were dyed with a bluish tinge. The bullets flying from everywhere flowed like leaves and their tips were pointed. Choi Hyuk was even able to clearly distinguish the shapes and it wasn't hard for him to dodge them.

{Oh my god... }

The els murmured amongst themselves with sounds of daegeums. If he had endured the bullets with his body, they wouldn't have been so surprised, but he avoided them all?

'Wouldn't this be impossible for the great warriors?'

Buds of respect began to sprout in the hearts of the els.

At the same time,

Goong!

As if trying to firmly brand him into their hearts, he pushed his palm at the chests of the El Tribe soldiers.

The els shrieked as they flew away and fainted.

{Don't get cocky!}

This time, an el wearing a smooth robe made of intertwined leaves instead of armor appeared. Karma gathered on the arm-length branch in his hand in a strange way. The karma surrounding Choi Hyuk seemed to synchronize with him as it started to roll around strangely.

{Restrict him!}

Whoosh!

When the el waved his branch, roots grew out from everywhere and started to bind Choi Hyuk's arms and legs.

"Huh?"

Choi Hyuk became surprised at the fact he wasn't able to avoid being bound by the roots. His body felt strangely heavy.

"What is this? Now I see, there wasn't only one of you..."

While the el wearing a robe had grabbed Choi Hyuk's attention, other magicians hidden amongst the soldiers had cast magic that numbed Choi Hyuk's body and made him feel a strong pressure from his surroundings.

Choi Hyuk's eyes shined blue. He analyzed the karma near him. It was quite elaborate. It wasn't to the point of being unable to free himself, but he would either take a long time or have to push himself.

Unfortunately, the situation didn't allow for him to take his time.

{Squadron 1 and 2! Volley!}

Many more soldiers than before simultaneously shot at him.

The Berserkers were spectating this scene.

"Wow... They're strong. What would happen if we fought them? Would we lose?"

Individually they were weaker than the Berserkers when they compared fighting skills and the strength of their karma. However, if they considered their extraordinary weapons, skills, and tactics, it wouldn't be an easy fight.

"I dunno. We'll probably have to fight to be sure..."

Baek Seoin answered in a serious voice. The Berserkers prided themselves in never losing against opponents of equal numbers. Yet, when they saw how the els fought, it

was difficult to guarantee this.

“That... Anyways, I bet the leader won’t lose.”

“That’s for sure.”

Baek Seoin nodded at Lee Jinhee’s words.

—————

{Choi Hyuk}

Power: 365 (+213) (4★) Speed: 371 (+201) (4★) Control: 453 (4★)

Endurance: 100 (3★) Stamina: 359 (3★) Recovery: 371 (3★)

Retribution: 400 (4★)

*Free karma points: 0

{Innate Skill}

-Eyes of Distinction

{Skills}

-Instant Void Annihilation (Deteriorated)

-Flaming Wing Dance (Deteriorated)

-Heart Injection (Deteriorated)

{Achievements}

-You have killed someone with karma before it was distributed to you!

-First to kill a monster one-on-one!

-Sovereign (King without Subjects, First to kill a 2-star monster, Killed the Wyvern of Destruction)

-First Colonizer of Humanity

-First Human to reach 4-star stats

—————

Choi Hyuk admired. It was difficult to free himself of the magic that restrained his body. If a monster took his place, it would have used all its stamina trying to escape by brute force. That would be fatal.

It was essential for Choi Hyuk to watch his Stamina. He increased his Power and Speed with enchants and items to exceed the midrange of 4-star, yet his Stamina was still at

3-star. An unstable state.

If he accidentally overworked himself and his karma relaxed, then no matter how extraordinary his Control was, it was of no use. Afterwards, it would be a domino effect. If his Control collapsed due to his Stamina, then the next to fall would be his Endurance.

‘Endurance’ didn’t only resist enemy attacks, but it was also important in enduring your own strength. When you simultaneously used your karma and body in a physical fight, the more strength you used, the harder it was on your body, unless you expelled karma outside your body and used it like the El Tribe. However, Choi Hyuk’s Endurance was only in the early stages of 3-star. The only reason he was able to endure his 4-star strength with that Endurance was because of his precise Control. If that Control fell, then his bones and joints would undoubtedly collapse. Even if he dodged his enemy’s attacks, his own strength would crush his body.

Of course, he did have a skill to account for this. Over the past 2 years, Choi Hyuk had diligently sold useless skills and only possessed skills useful to him.

‘However, it’s not the right time to use it.’

There was a way to free himself without overworking his Endurance to waste.

Woong.

The blue light that gathered at his eyes turned into streams of light and spread to his surroundings.

—————

{Trait Mind’s Eye, Second Level: Identical Mind}

Karma becomes easier to control and easily penetrates objects.

—————

When you broke through 200 (4★) Retribution, you had an opportunity to awaken another trait. There were two methods. One was choosing a completely different trait, such as ‘Resilience’ which granted resilience to your karma or ‘Explosive Blood’ which sharply increased your strength but was also painful. In other words, it was like becoming a dual-class. However, Choi Hyuk chose the other method. He had opened the next level of Mind’s Eye, Identical Mind.

Identical Mind, like its meaning, specialized in ‘manipulation’ rather than ‘sense’. Like Mind’s Eye, it didn’t have a direct affect on combat, however, depending on who used it, the results would change completely.

Choi Hyuk’s karma penetrated through the magic restraining him and destroyed its structure from the inside. The restraining magic untangled like kalguksu^{3} noodles in boiling water.

{What the...?}

Bang, bang, bang! Shhriek!

The bullets fired by the second squadron definitely possessed a lot of power, but that was useless if they didn’t hit. Choi Hyuk had already disappeared from that spot. He was dashing forward. As ‘Identical Mind’ naturally spread out, the environment surrounding him moved according to his will. The ground and fortress pushed him forward while his target pulled him in.

Baang!

{Kyak!}

Even as he swung his fist down at the magician’s chest, he didn’t slow down. Choi Hyuk was heading towards the great warrior of the El Tribe, who he talked with in the beginning.

The great warrior regarded Choi Hyuk as he swept towards him. He was like a blizzard and a landslide. To be honest, he was amazing. That was what all the els thought.

{That’s enough. I acknowledge you are a splendid warrior. Now let’s talk. I can’t guarantee your life if the fight intensifies even further.}

Choi Hyuk looked at the figure of the great warrior. The white (goodwill) light emitted from him became a shade brighter. Either the great warrior thought of him as an equal or he gained a bit of respect for Choi Hyuk.

That didn’t satisfy Choi Hyuk. Equals? How could his equal liberate him? Choi Hyuk definitely said, ‘I will bring you to the surface.’ To prove that his words were true, ‘equality’ or ‘respect’ wasn’t enough.

That was what he thought after 2 years of experience.

‘Fear over half-baked respect. Awe is much better.’

A faint ill will due to fear. Yet, he needed a goodwill that well exceeded that fear, a desire to be seen in a good light.

Choi Hyuk shouted loudly.

“Then fight me with your life on the line! Don’t worry about losing your life. I have no thoughts of killing you!”

{... Huh.}

The great chieftain’s eyelashes fluttered. He had good feelings towards Choi Hyuk because he was a superb warrior but his current remark was extremely rude. Didn’t it mean that even if the El Tribe came at him with all their strength, they wouldn’t be able to beat him?

{Don’t regret it. First Regiment! The enemy is a Dragonian ranked monster! Focus on restraining him and send in the elite troops!}

The moment the great chieftain’s command sounded out, the restraining magic on Choi Hyuk increased heavily. Not only that, soldiers with freezing swords immediately attacked him. Chilling air covered his surroundings, roots shot up and bounded themselves onto his arms and legs and the atmosphere became heavier, slowing his movements. They also bombarded him with bullets.

Cho Hyuk’s whole body surged with blue karma as he tried to use ‘Identical Mind’ to his utmost limits in an attempt to destroy the attacks, however, his steps towards the great chieftain slowed significantly. The elite troops, who targeted the slowed Choi Hyuk, rushed in.

Swish!

A wound appeared on Choi Hyuk’s body for the first time. His Stamina was starting to drop.

{You should stop now.}

The great warrior suggested again. Choi Hyuk smiled.

“Screw that.”

Choi Hyuk activated a skill. The karma in his body automatically rearranged itself. A high-level skill that Choi Hyuk couldn't even create with his Control and senses, no, it was a skill he didn't even fully understand. One of the strongest skills Choi Hyuk found in the past 2 years exploded out.

“Heart Injection!”

Thump!

His heart starting beating explosively. His karma that had become lax after using up all his Stamina forcefully became taut again and bulged.

{Heart Injection (Deteriorated)}

Instantly recovers your karma that is currently on cooldown. Stamina and Recovery increase sharply. After the skill effect has ended, you will be in an exhausted state for an hour. You are unable to recover any karma during this exhausted state.

This was originally a top skill that could only be used by 5-star and above. Someone had deteriorated and supplied this skill so lower levels could use it.

Bbabang!

Choi Hyuk still didn't unsheathe his sword. However, the elbows and ankles of the elite troops charging at Choi Hyuk were smashed, and they fell on the floor.

“Checkmate!”

Choi Hyuk left the El Tribe soldiers behind and charged towards the great warrior. With a stiffened face, the great warrior unsheathed his sword.



“Haa... Haa... Mister, you're amazing. Haa...”

Choi Hyuk was gasping for breath as his left hand pressed against his neck, trying to

stanch the bleeding. Even though he attacked him suddenly, the great warrior's counterattack was sharp. He dodged and dodged and blocked and blocked, and yet he almost had his neck cut off.

{... It's not mister, it's Lantz. But what was that attack just now? I blocked it with the blessing of the inverted tree... }

The Great Warrior Lantz was on the ground, blood spilling from his lips. His speech was fine, but because he had been hit in the chest multiple times, the damage to his insides was severe. It would take approximately a month of rest to heal.

However, Choi Hyuk changed the topic.

"I'll tell you later. First, let us in the fortress to rest."

He once again requested to let his 3,000 soldiers into the city as if it was nothing. Even if one didn't read the 'Romance of the Three Kingdoms', even a child would know how absurd this request was. Yet, Choi Hyuk stood tall.

{... }

"Quickly! If I was planning on fighting, I would have already infiltrated and opened it! If you don't open it up, I'm going to!"

He was now being stubborn. If Baek Seoin had seen this, he would have face-palmed.

Unexpectedly, this attitude actually worked. Was it due to their long experience in cooperating with other surface dwellers to fight their common enemy, the 'monsters'? The great warrior held up his hand.

{Okay.}

Grinning as he lay on the ground, he raised his trembling hand and ordered his subordinates.

{Open the door and let's welcome the grand warriors!}

"You should have done that from the start."

Choi Hyuk relaxed as he grinned.

His legs kept trembling so he put his strength into it. Even though he had activated Heart Injection, he had consumed all his Stamina while fighting the great warrior. He was simply that strong of an opponent.

Choi Hyuk stood up while leaning against the El Tribe soldiers and looked at the great warrior. Looking at how a smile crept up his face by itself... It seemed he had obtained a good ally.

{1} Not too sure what els are. I found something similar to it. In a Korean game called DK Online, there was a race called diels whose power came from contracts with ancient dragons.

{2} Korean instrument: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daegeum>

{3} Just in case you forgot what kalguksu was: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalguksu>

CHAPTER 54

INVESTIGATION (5)

Chu Youngjin and Ryu Hyunsung, who had left the hot springs city 'Pyungryu' which had a slave market, had escaped to the outskirts of the Sovereign of Dark Secrets Lao Ban's territory. They checked the whirlpool in the sky and examined the terrain.

"Ha... What a beautiful scene."

Ryu Hyunsung took pictures as they explored a hilly region that seemed to have been cut cleanly by a sword, plains that seemed to have experienced a drought as the ground was split into deep cracks, and tens of lakes which seemed as though the ground had been punched to make uniform holes.

He held an expensive item in his hands, a transparent tablet. He used an application on this tablet that could analyze the pictures he took and automatically create a map. Electronics from Earth couldn't function properly in outer space, but this tablet was originally created by alien technology and therefore worked anywhere. It was said to be an essential item for each faction. Choi Hyuk's group only had two tablets. One was in Baek Seoin's possession while Ryu Hyunsung brought the other one with him.

"Well... There are unexplainable terrains on Earth as well... But this is really amazing. Is it even possible for these to form naturally?"

Ryu Hyunsung held the transparent tablet in his hands as he admired the scene in front of him, while Chu Youngjin picked up a white rock that was rolling on the ground.

"This rock is strangely warm."

It was warm. Its warmth seemed to exceed 40 degrees. When he heard those words, Ryu Hyunsung placed his hand on the ground. The ground itself was warm.

"Is it because we're in a hot springs region?"

He recalled Pyungryu, the hot springs city not far from here. He then compared their location and Pyungryu as he examined the map that had been automatically created by the tablet. Ryu Hyunsung left a memo, 'the ground is warm'.

“Done. Let’s go to the next place.”

After he finished recording, the two continued to their next destination. Ryu Hyunsung’s map already included the territory of the Sovereign of Dark Secrets, but they were extending even beyond that.

The land was split like rice paddies. However, the scale was a hundred times larger than a rice paddy. When they saw it from afar, it looked like a rice paddy, but as they approached, the crevices between the pieces of land were as wide as the gaps between buildings. When they dropped a rock to figure out how deep it was, they didn’t hear a sound. Hot air that seemed to come from the depths of hell would occasionally blow from the cracks.

Here, Chu Youngjin discovered some traces.

“This... looks like traces of humans?”

On one side of the crack, there was a cave. Wooden tools that looked like lamps rolled in front of the cave. Since it was two stories below, it was a great place to hide from monsters. They jumped into the gap and entered the cave.

“This stench...”

Chu Youngjin took immediate notice of the blood and flesh on the walls as well as the sickening stench.

“Seeing as how there is a stench, it doesn’t seem like it’s been very long.”

Ryu Hyunsung agreed with him. He examined his surroundings and said,

“Yeah, even though we don’t know when or how this cave was made, immigrants definitely used to live here. That corpse is wearing jeans.”

The upper and lower body of that corpse had been separated. Chu Youngjin frowned and asked.

“...Why were they annihilated? Monsters?”

“What monsters. In my perspective, it’s Lao Ban, that bastard. They probably only took those who could have been used as slaves and killed the rest.”

Ryu Hyunsung took out the tablet and took pictures. Even though it was obvious, they hadn't had visible evidence of slave hunting and immigrant slaughter until now... Well, it wasn't as though evidence like this meant anything nowadays.

"The world really is strange. Even when a sovereign pulls this kind of shit, we can't do anything, right? Because it's impossible to enter Dragonic without the sovereign's permission... And the future of Earth lies with Dragonic. Same with the law. It collapsed the moment the military and police became awakenees."

Ryu Hyunsung complained while taking pictures of the cave. The cave was quite deep. When they went deeper, they saw places that seemed to be sleeping quarters and a kitchen. Though they didn't know who first dug this cave, they were quite functional.

"Our leader contributed to that as well."

Didn't Choi Hyuk kill someone in front of the president? From that point onwards, at least to the awakenees, it was no different from having no laws.

Ryu Hyunsung shrugged. He had been present then.

"Well, at least the leader was discussing the relationship between favor and spite. This, this is just killing people unrelated to him for greed. It's very different. No matter how low the morals of the strong have fallen..."

Chu Youngjin nodded at his words. His gaze turned towards a couple who had been stabbed by a spear and had died alongside each other.

Chu Youngjin felt jealousy, pain and rage all at the same time. A pain that was incomparable to the pain he experienced from Explosive Blood.

"...That's true... It'd be nice if we met a slave hunting troop."

His eyes reddened as though he had unknowingly activated Explosive Blood. If any slave hunters met with Chu Youngjin now, it would be the day of their calamity.

Ryu Hyunsung seconded Chu Youngjin's wish.

"It'd be nice. We can give them another warning as well."

After they finished recording, they left the cave. And they checked a distant whirlpool

in the sky. It was a dented whirlpool that looked like stirred milk.

Chu Youngjin observed the familiar whirlpool and said,

“Is that really... the whirlpool we saw in our territory? It’s really small...”

“Even if it’s small, the shape is almost identical. There’s a high chance they are the same whirlpool.”

“If that really is the case, then they must be colonizing in that direction.”

“Yeah. So let’s quickly finish our mission and return.”

They were almost done. The two set that whirlpool as their target and started to walk.



Had Chu Youngjin’s words about wanting to meet a group of slave hunters come true? They really did meet them. It was at a place that was about three days away from Pyungryu. A place that seemed to be slightly closer to the dented whirlpool.

They were in a terrain where blue boulders emitted a thick fog. When seen from a distance, the combination of the blue rocks and fog looked like a mysterious ocean. While Ryu Hyunsung was taking pictures, he spotted fleeing immigrants making their way through the fog. Immigrants who couldn’t receive supplies were easily identifiable as they wore tattered clothes from Earth or covered themselves up with a cloth.

“We’re quite lucky. Immigrants are being chased.”

To be able to meet slave traders, whom they wanted to teach a lesson to, and find skilled immigrants, it was like killing two birds with one stone.

Immigrants who survived here for a long time were of great help to Chu Youngjin and Ryu Hyunsung’s mission as they would undoubtedly know the terrain, infestation of monsters, and the distribution of the native population better than anyone else. Due to the increased sightings of monsters, it was about time for them to leave as well. If they could obtain the immigrants’ cooperation, they could even leave with information about a place they hadn’t scouted yet.

“Do we charge in?”

Chu Youngjin, who was spectating the fleeing immigrants, asked Ryu Hyunsung as if informing him. Ryu Hyunsung nodded.

“Explosive Blood.”

The next instant, Chu Youngjin dashed forward after activating Explosive Blood.

Crash!

His transformed figure kicked the ground and dashed towards the distant foggy area. Ryu Hyunsung followed behind him.

“Huh?”

Although Chu Youngjin’s explosive movements were loud, the enemies were late in discovering him. It was because Chu Youngjin’s speed was as fast as the sound was loud. By the time they figured out it was him, blood had splattered into the air.

Rumble! Rumble!

Chu Youngjin’s special karma usage emitted loud thundering sounds. His movements accelerated and decelerated, matching the erratic thundering sounds. Unable to follow his tempo, the eight slave hunters were cut into pieces one after another.

Using this opportunity, Ryu Hyunsung blocked the immigrants’ path.

“Please wait. We are on the same side.”

Two male and three female immigrants. They were black and white foreigners, however, as long as he had language resonance, there was no problem communicating with them. Ryu Hyunsung held up his hands and showed with his words and actions that he didn’t intend to fight.

Of course, the immigrants didn’t trust him.

{Bullshit!}

A black man, out of the blue, swung his large sword. Not only him, the rest did so as

well. They spread out as quick as lightning and wielded their swords and spears, flanking him on either side. 'Ha~ They are better than most colonizers.' They were very experienced movements. They seemed to have been immigrants for quite a while. Veterans who survived more than a year against monsters.

Unfortunately, their attacks were easily seen through by Ryu Hyunsung's 'Mind's Eye'. After experiencing hellish wars under the 'Battle Addict' Choi Hyuk, this much was a given. Ryu Hyunsung retreated precisely three steps. As he retreated,

Clink! Clink, clink, clank! Woong!

Then, he wielded his sword three times and cleared their attacks. Their spears embedded into the ground and their swords flew up into the air. All five of them simultaneously staggered and lost their balance.

{Ack!}

However, they weren't easy opponents. They rebalanced themselves with force and once again, targeted Ryu Hyunsung. Despite this, Ryu Hyunsung was faster.

{Kahk!}

The black swordsman was struck with the handle of his sword and rolled on the ground. A spear wielding white woman fell to the floor when he kicked her shin. Ryu Hyunsung's restrained actions instantly left them lying on the ground.

{Eu... }

They weren't simple hits but ones reinforced with karma. The immigrants groaned and were unable to get up easily.

"Are you now ready to talk?"

{Bull... shit... }

The black swordsman's spirit was unbending. But, he shut his mouth when he heard the screams.

{Euahhh! You bastard! Do you know who we are?!}

They were the screams of the slave traders. Chu Youngjin was already cutting the neck of the fourth one. Ryu Hyunsung shrugged his shoulders.

Looking at Chu Youngjin's figure as he fought the slave traders, the captured immigrants' eyes moved quickly. Ryu Hyunsung thought that they would finally be able to talk. He thought that they had let down their guard a little after seeing Chu Youngjin fighting for them.

Unfortunately... He was mistaken.

The reaction he wanted was ‘... What business do you have with us?’, but he didn't receive such a calm reaction.

The immigrants, who had stared at Ryu Hyunsung with killing intent, quickly changed their attitude and revealed their impatience.

{Quickly! We need to leave quickly!}

It seemed as though they judged they weren't enemies, but they showed extreme anxiousness. They had no hint of thanks and looked as if they were in big trouble due to being delayed by Ryu Hyunsung.

“Wait, wait. Calm down. We are dealing with the enemies.”

Ryu Hyunsung attempted to calm them down, but he was met with a strong opposition.

{No! They aren't all!}

It looked as if he was screaming.

Then a low pulsating sound passed Ryu Hyunsung's ears. Ryu Hyunsung turned around without thinking.

The fog suddenly started to sway like waves in the ocean. As it did, the immigrants fell into a state of panic.

{Ahh! Escape!}

They hurriedly got up, pushed Ryu Hyunsung aside and started to flee. ‘Just what is happening?’ Ryu Hyunsung was taken back.

“Hey!”

Ryu Hyunsung was about to follow after them, but he hastily stopped in his tracks.

Shrrieeek! Thud!

{Kahk... }

A spear appeared out of nowhere and pierced the black swordsman’s back. That wasn’t all.

“Just when did they...”

Ryu Hyunsung’s voice was strained. Cold sweat dripped down his back. The enemy was stealthy. Just when did they arrive? Enemies appeared from everywhere. They had already been encircled.

It was a complete miscalculation. This was a remote area beyond the Sovereign of Dark Secrets’s territory. They believed the enemy’s power would only be a small scale slave hunter group. They never dreamed to be caught in this sort of situation.

“This much... Isn’t this at the level of the Sovereign of Dark Secrets’s most elite troops...? Why would the main force be here?”

The situation reversed in an instant. The fleeing immigrants had all been captured, and Ryu Hyunsung and Chu Youngjin were isolated in the middle of the enemy camp.

Chu Youngjin, who had been fighting the slave traders, retreated back to Ryu Hyunsung. His back against Ryu Hyunsung’s. The heat from his body was transmitted through Ryu Hyunsung’s back.

“Which direction should we break through?”

However, Chu Youngjin didn’t seem discouraged in the slightest.

CHAPTER 55

INVESTIGATION (6)

{T/N: Unique skills are now innate skills. Example, Choi Hyuk's 'Eyes of Distinction' is an innate skill.}

He activated Mind's Eye to its limits. Ryu Hyunsung's karma became as sensitive as eardrums. Sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch, and even senses living beings on Earth weren't aware of; his sensitive karma could capture all of them.

All sorts of information were transmitted to Ryu Hyunsung, the locations of the 50 people surrounding them, the direction they were looking in, as well as how tense their muscles were. This was 'Mind's Eye'. Unfortunately, that was all. Analyzing the given information was up to the individual. Mind's Eye was like a pearl. One could create fine jewelry with it while another could drop it down a drain.

Because of this, it became frightening when the Mind's Eye trait was given to those who had a talent for it.

Ryu Hyunsung, who was a national saber athlete, was a 'Battle Addict' who had experienced the most intense missions over the past 2 years. Of course, he had the talent and experience to use Mind's Eye to its extreme.

Ryu Hyunsung and Chu Youngjin didn't communicate through words. With only the angle Ryu Hyunsung held his blade, Chu Youngjin was able to know which direction to charge at. At the same time, he was able to understand the speed of the charge and their target by looking at the weight shifted on Ryu Hyunsung's legs.

'No killing, a fast speed breakthrough.'

Chu Youngjin nodded his head and a rumble sounded out as he shot forward. Both his trait and innate skill sharply increased the output of his karma. As he lacked precision, fights were relatively more dangerous when fighting against strong enemies, but against weaker ones, he was able to crush them easier than anyone.

Clink!

However, his opponents were also elites who represented an organization. There were no cases, like with the slave traders, where they would be split in two. Still, all they could do was narrowly parry Chu Youngjin's crashing strike and even then, they would be pushed away due to the differences in their strength. At Chu Youngjin's charge, the encirclement seemed to ripple as if it had been hit by a cannonball. Ryu Hyunsung quickly followed behind him.

It was the same this time as well, there was no need for words. Chu Youngjin was able to determine the direction by looking at Ryu Hyunsung's footsteps and his sword.

Rumble!

Ruumble!

Each step Chu Youngjin took, and each time he swung his sword, enemies would scatter.

"Keep your positions! Endure! They won't be able to keep this tempo for long!"

The leader, Cha Ohjin, tried his best to keep the scattering encirclement enclosed. Although he couldn't be said to be Sovereign Lao Ban's right hand, he was someone who could at least be his right thumb. He was a leader who followed the orders of the executives. He had rushed here when he heard a commotion as he was hunting 'sacrifices' for the 'festival' that was held every half year.

His judgment was correct as he had a lot of experience in battles as a leader. Chu Youngjin was showing off his incredible skills, but the encirclement only wobbled, there were no casualties. If they just stuck to them like rabid dogs, they would undoubtedly win.

{Explosive Blood}

All stats, excluding Control, increase explosively. The amount of increase depends on the user's aptitude.

The karma, excluding Control, goes crazy and you feel an extreme pain. Although your Recovery stat increases as well, the burden on your body was greater, and thus, you accumulate more damage the longer you fight.

There was a limit to Stamina. On top of that, because his Control couldn't keep up, the

explosiveness accelerated his rate of exhaustion.

Because of this, Cha Ohjin's judgment was correct. If only Ryu Hyunsung wasn't present.

Chu Youngjin wasn't moving without thinking. He moved precisely according to the signals Ryu Hyunsung was giving him. Ryu Hyunsung's orders, which were supported by Mind's Eye, were marvelous. They weren't piercing through one direction but were instead charging in various directions, tangling their enemies' movements and collapsing the encirclement itself.

The elites, who attempted to stick to their role and position, had, at some point, become jumbled together like a herd of sheep without a shepherd.

And in the opening created by this confusion,

Slice!

Ryu Hyunsung's Karma Blade sliced into the neck of the enemy leader, Cha Ohjin.

"Ack!"

Cha Ohjin screamed as he pressed his hand on his half-cut neck. However, no matter how hard he pressed, his blood splurged from his neck like a geyser. Not only that, but a part of his nerves had been cut too, making him unable to move his left arm and he began to lose strength in his legs as he flopped to the ground. Because his karma acted to maintain his body structure, he didn't die immediately, but he began losing brain functionality due to the heavy loss of blood.

His eyes became muddled and saliva dripped down his lips. It was a fatal blow that even a Recovery Potion would be hard pressed to cure.

"Huh?"

The enemies froze at the unexpected turn of events. During this time, their attention had been on Chu Youngjin instead of Ryu Hyunsung. The enemies were unable to take their eyes off Chu Youngjin because of his frightening sword strikes that would split their weapons and body in two if they weren't careful, accompanied by the rumbling sounds emitted by his body.

That was how Ryu Hyunsung, who had erased his presence by quietly following behind Chu Youngjin, was able to slash the enemy leader, Cha Ohjin, at a critical moment. The hole in their mindset, their textbook approach and attack, the confusion amongst the enemy after their tactics, and the Karma Blade of the Berserkers that was known to be the best amongst all colonizers. Once all these factors came together, Cha Ohjin, who was known to be an expert, was wounded.

After slicing Cha Ohjin's neck, Ryu Hyunsung turned around without hesitation and created a path. They escaped. Now that they had weakened their enemy's tracking abilities, it was now time for them to leave. It was skillfully done. While Ryu Hyunsung and Chu Youngjin were going further away from their sight, their enemies were simply a mess.

Yet, what was most surprising was what happened next.

"Leader! Damn it..."

The vice-leader Ye Chu placed his hand on Cha Ohjin's drooling head.

Blaze!

As he did, a fiery haze covered Cha Ohjin's body. The haze surged towards his head and passed through Ye Chu's hand. Ye Chu absorbed Cha Ohjin's karma.

"...My karma isn't returning to me."

Ryu Hyunsung said as he glanced sideways at the scene behind him.

"Well... They plunder their opponent's karma. The rumors about the 'Plunderer' were right."

There was a rumor like that. The fate where the individual would become stronger the more intense battles they fought, 'Battle Addict', the fate which would make the individual increasingly stronger over time, 'Surviving One', and the fate where the individual would get stronger the more respect and thanks he received from others. There were many different types of fates in the world, but amongst them, there was a rumor about the existence of the 'Plunderer' fate. They said that it was a fate where the individual would get stronger by directly absorbing the karma of whoever they killed. And that the owner of this fate was the Sovereign of Dark Secrets, Lao Ban.

Looking at the situation, it seemed as though those rumors were true.

“...Would the disappeared Berserkers have also met that fate?”

“There’s a good chance. Strong immigrants were probably absorbed like that too.”

From absorbing the Leader Cha Ohjin’s karma, Ye Chu’s actions changed. He commanded.

“You, immediately go tell the sovereign. Two enemies. The Sword Demon Chu Youngjin and the Knight Captain Ryu Hyunsung, Chu Jung... No, Chu Youngjin and Ryu Hyunsung. Report this to him. As for the rest of you, chase after them!”

At his command, a single person jumped into the fog while the rest chased after the distant Chu Youngjin and Ryu Hyunsung.

“It’s dangerous... This isn’t the end. Let’s leave quickly.”

Ryu Hyunsung bit his lip as he sped up.



An area where blue rocks emitted a thick fog. It wasn’t a great place to live, but as it was a good place to avoid monsters, quite a few relatively large villages were founded and immigrants survived here.

It was a region that was filled with a thick fog and the silence of the immigrants living here. However, today was different.

Today was the festival day of Lao Ban and his forces. This foggy region was chosen to be the location of the festival. As if it was always like this, a search operation, that was as tight as a net, was being conducted here. Lao Ban’s faction attacked immigrant villages they discovered and separated the immigrants into either slaves or sacrifices. Colonizers, who were exploring remote places alone or those with no connections, were kidnapped and prepared as sacrifices as well.

From Sovereign Lao Ban to the lower ranks, it was an important event where the majority of Lao Ban’s followers were gathered here, killing sacrifices, absorbing their power, and checking the unity amongst each other. They called this event that took place twice a year, a ‘festival’.

It was a day where the ones who killed and absorbed others without the slightest hesitation would watch those who were hesitant, checking their spirit and courage, as well as observing their transition into fellow accomplices. It was also a day where they would perceive themselves as special existences above others as they gazed at the pleading sacrifices.

Ever since Lao Ban had received the fate 'Plunderer', the 'festival' was always packed.

However, a troubling mood hung in the air today.

"Berserkers?"

Lao Ban frowned.

"Yes. They were the top executives of the Berserkers, Chu Youngjin and Ryu Hyunsung."

"...You said Cha Ohjin died?"

"Yes. The position was passed down to vice-leader Ye Chu and he is currently in pursuit."

"Why would the top executives come to a remote place?... Novices are definitely the unruliest. Ye Long!"

"Yes."

"Personally lead my personal guards and bring them here. Don't kill them."

"I understand."

"I will take them as sacrifices as well. The festival will halt momentarily until the new sacrifices arrive. Ye Long! Two days should be enough?"

"More than enough."

'Cruel Killing Sword Ye Long', who was known to be the most skilled amongst Lao Ban's followers, brought the personal guards and left.

Lao Ban left the Berserkers to Ye Long and started to direct orders concerning the preparation of the festival once again. As he had more time now, he was preparing

slowly. Looking at Lao Ban's relaxed demeanor, his follower who was famous for being careful, Tsu Chin, cautiously suggested.

"Still... They are famous Berserkers. Wouldn't it be better for you to act personally to make sure we don't create any trouble in the future? I think it would be best to deal with the matter thoroughly to prevent information about us leaking and to weaken our enemy forces."

Yet, Lao Ban reacted indifferently.

"It's fine. If we do that, the festival mood will be completely broken. Even if we lose them, this festival is more important."

Tsu Chin was still nervous. Lao Ban comforted him. His cautiousness had helped him several times, but there were times when Lao Ban thought he was exceedingly cautious.

"Don't worry. We are already in bad relations with the Berserkers. Since we don't have anything to gain from them, we don't have anything to lose by our relationship becoming any worse. Also, they can't do anything. Koreans are going to invade Macau, a Chinese territory? Then a war will break out. And, even if they did invade, as long as we're in our territory, there isn't anything they can do. What if they are strong? If I don't open the portal for them, they can't do anything."

"Still, the Berserk Sovereign is an enemy we need to be wary of. No matter what anyone says, wasn't he the first sovereign to colonize a land?"

"I don't know... I'm more scared of the 'Sovereign of Balance' than the Berserk Sovereign. I can't comment on his fighting skills, but the Berserk Sovereign's political ability is zero. To be honest, as long as there isn't a way for the Berserk Sovereign to use his military power against us, he isn't a threat. People like the 'Sovereign of Balance' are scarier than him. Those who have the potential to isolate us with just a few words... In the end, there's a limit to physical strength. Tsu Chin, I understand you're worried. However, I don't feel that a sovereign's provocation is serious enough that I need to stop the festival and handle it myself. Instead, that would be falling for their ploy. As it would mean letting our biggest event fall apart because of two men. Since I've sent Ye Long and my guards, that's already enough."

As Lao Ban went this far to explain, Tsu Chin eventually backed down.

“I understand.”

To be honest, any more words would be useless. The Berserk Sovereign was ultimately known for his military strength. However, if he wasn't able to use that force, wasn't it useless? If that was the case, then there was no need to fear him. And, didn't Lao Ban already dispatch his best experts? Logically, he believed he handled it appropriately.

‘But... Why am I so nervous?’

Tsu Chin tried to recall if he missed anything. However, he was unable to come up with anything.

CHAPTER 56

REVOLUTION (1)

“When were we expected to return?”

“Tomorrow.”

“We’re screwed.”

After a brief exchange, Ryu Hyunsung and Chu Youngjin tightly closed their mouths once again. Heavy breaths leaked out from the gaps of their lips.

Ppiiiiii~ Bang!

Red and yellow fireworks were exploding behind them.

Bang!

They exploded next to them as well.

Bang!

This time, one exploded in front of them. They were quite pretty.

Ryu Hyunsung’s eyes were tightly closed. He activated ‘Mind’s Eye’ to its limits which dyed his whole body in a blue tinge before disappearing. The reason why his lips were blue wasn’t due to Mind’s Eye but because of extreme exhaustion. It was also due to the fact they were being pushed to a corner.

Thump!

Ryu Hyunsung suddenly changed his direction.

Rumble!

Chu Youngjin let out a rumbling sound and followed behind him. Chu Youngjin’s face was haggard as well.

“This won’t work. We have to give up escaping through the gate.”

Ryu Hyunsung explained as he tried to calm his haggard breathing. Chu Youngjin only listened.

“Even those who are based in the cities are coming after us. Breaking through that is impossible with our current Stamina. Instead, we support each other and head for the targeted whirlpool.”

“...You want to pass through unexplored lands? Is there even a chance of us meeting our main troops?”

“That, no one knows. We don’t even know whether it’s a traversable distance or whether we’re even going in the right direction in the first place. Still, if we continue like this, it’s certain death. We need to look at other possibilities.”

“Well... It might be better to die by the hands of monsters than by those bastards.”

Chu Youngjin agreed coolly.

“Okay... If we succeed, we make history, if we fail, it’ll still be better than dying here.”

When he thought of it that way, he felt a little better.

A day had passed since they started their escape. Yet, the encirclement was only getting tighter. An endless number of enemies appeared and blocked their path, making them run in circles, unable to advance any further. To be honest, individually the enemies were lacking and it was possible for them to pass them in a pinch, but the real problem was something else.

The one who was known to be the strongest under the Sovereign of Dark Secrets’s command, the Cruel Killing Sword Ye Long, and his personal guards.

As they were truly strong, Chu Youngjin and Ryu Hyunsung didn’t have confidence facing them. If they were slightly delayed by small fries, Ye Long and the personal guards would be right on their tail, and thus, they even had to flee from opponents who were weaker than them.

Ppiiiiii~ Bang!

This time, a signal flare was shot near them. Ryu Hyunsung looked back and sighed.

“Haa... It’s them again.”

If the Berserker’s unique method of utilizing karma was added to their 3-star stats, they could run with the speed of sportscars. However, Ye Long and the personal guards weren’t any slower. Currently, they were even faster because of the superiority in Stamina. They who were quite distant from them had, at some point, almost caught up to them.

“Just where did they get those... Sovereign of Dark Secrets. He’s quite a skilled fellow.”

The object that Ryu Hyunsung was complaining about were the ankle brackets Ye Long and the personal guards had.

Ring! Ring!

The karma resonated with the clear sound of xylophones as the object allowed them to fly as if they were on hoverboards. As it had a device that would change the karma that you injected into it into energy that was specialized for transportation, it allowed you to reduce your karma consumption while maximizing your speed. It even possessed a separate ability that could store a bit of your karma as well.

Since they caught up to Ryu Hyunsung and Chu Youngjin, who simply relied on their skills for their speed, with equipment, Ryu Hyunsung and Chu Youngjin would obviously tire faster. They were already in a disadvantageous situation as they were being chased... This was really a difficult difference to make up for.

If they didn’t have Void Wave, they would have already been captured.

“...We’ll attack them first!”

Since they were already near them, they had no way to break apart from them with simply speed. Ryu Hyunsung turned at the right moment. Due to his rotation, he was able to instantly reduce his forward momentum.

Crash!

He kicked the ground and shot between the ones who were chasing him. Ryu Hyunsung went left while Chu Youngjin went right.

“Gak! Spread out!”

As they had already fallen for this a few times, the enemies began to scatter after understanding Ryu Hyunsung’s intentions. However, since Ryu Hyunsung and Chu Youngjin relied on their bodies instead of equipment, they were able to change their direction faster than them.

“Void Wave!”

Void Wave had now become a representative skill of the Berserkers. When this resonance swept past the enemies’ equipment, they would momentarily stop functioning.

Their momentum suddenly vanished, but, like the elites they were, none of them rolled on the floor.

Thud!

They lightly kicked the ground and once again targeted Ryu Hyunsung and Chu Youngjin. Of course-

“Breakaway! Breakaway!”

-The two didn’t face them. If they ran at full speed, they couldn’t catch up without the help of the devices.

Ye Long clicked his tongue as he saw them get further and further away. How many times had it been... He couldn’t help but acknowledge their swiftness that made them suffer over and over again even when they knew they were coming.

“These slippery bastards... We’ll chase them by running until the ‘Flying Rings’ become normal. They are probably starting to get exhausted by now.”

Ye Long looked in the direction Chu Youngjin and Ryu Hyunsung disappeared to and commanded. Then, suddenly, his eyes shined.

‘Isn’t that direction towards the unexplored lands?’

He smiled.

'It's finally time to slowly end this.'

They couldn't enter the unexplored lands. They didn't know anything about these lands, what kind of monsters lived there and how many. Rashly entering unexplored lands would only result in their deaths. Because of this, the encirclement had been set up to trap them towards these lands.

The ones who attempted to return through the portal they came through had completely changed directions for the first time. It meant they were cornered. They would soon find themselves in a situation where they were caught between the hunting group and monsters.

The finale of a hunt was always pleasant. Ye Long smiled as he ran.

The direction his enemies headed towards was the unexplored lands. No more fireworks were shot into the sky.



Every sovereign created a map of Dragonic, since maps were important. It was important and essential for maintaining their territory, to understand and disrupt the distribution of monsters, and when they wanted to expand their territory.

There were 40 different maps of Dragonic. The number was exactly the number of sovereigns. Each sovereign created his own map. And not a single map overlapped with each other. Dragonic was expressed through 40 different maps, these maps were never connected.

During the Age of Exploration, Europeans firmly believed that India was to their east. That was why they thought that traveling through the Atlantic Ocean, which was to west, to get to India was ridiculous. However, the well-known truth was that Columbus's voyage shattered their prejudice. Of course, the place he arrived wasn't India but the Americas, his belief was still correct in the end. As the Earth was round.

And the current colonized state of Dragonic was similar to then. If they were on the same planet, then there was no doubt that the territories each sovereign colonized would be interconnected. However, there weren't many who believed that was true. First, it was difficult to estimate their direction with the starless Dragonic sky. While there were some suggestions about using the whirlpools in the sky to approximate direction, but because each whirlpool looked similar, there was a lot of room for error.

Even if the direction was correct, there was a problem. It was difficult to approximate the distance between colonized lands and there was no guarantee they wouldn't meet a monster that was impossible to fight. Although Dragonic was the hope of humanity, the speed at which they colonized was pitifully slow because of the monsters. It was hard enough to expand their colonized lands, but to try to create a passage between territories? The predominant view was that it was impossible.

However, the Berserk Sovereign Choi Hyuk was in the middle of carrying out this reckless challenge.

“So Lantz... You're telling me you have a bit of information on the humans living in that direction?”

“Yeah, there was information sent through the leaves. If I'm being honest with you, it wasn't good information. They said they were a bunch who killed their own kind.”

Currently, Choi Hyuk and Lantz were at the lowest level of the inverted tree, the 'nest'. This place was the heart of where the branches of the inverted tree spread out. Thick leaves grew from the branches that stretched into the ground. Because the tree was so large, each of its leaves was the size of townhouses.

The leaves of the inverted tree were metallic with a very unusual property. It was durable enough that it could grow while penetrating the ground and bullets couldn't pierce through it, but at the same time, it was flexible enough to flow through the gaps in the ground.

A special magic was cast in the nest, allowing them to see the branches and leaves spread out from the tree. Just beyond the table Lantz and Choi Hyuk were sitting at, they could see branches that stretched out like mountain ranges and thick green leaves hanging from the branches. Occasionally a leaf would fall and disappear through the gaps in the ground. These leaves that fell would spread throughout the world through an underground passage. By engraving special characters and magic on these leaves, the El Tribes were able to communicate with one another.

Because of this, Lantz already learned that humans were coming to Dragonic. Of the information he heard, some were positive and neutral while others were negative. Lantz had no choice but to be wary of humans entering his territory because of this information. Yet, a friendly atmosphere covered Lantz and Choi Hyuk.

They had only stayed in the El Tribe's territory for a day, but the Berserkers and the El

Tribe really hit it off. In one night, they had exchanged their various battle techniques and had acknowledged one another.

“Existences who hunt their own kind... Then there’s a high chance that they are the ones I’m looking for.”

Choi Hyuk was pleased with the information Lantz provided him. The expedition others thought was too early was an expedition forging a path to another territory.

However, Choi Hyuk daringly led this expedition banking on this small possibility.

A reason? Of course, there was one.

Lantz asked.

“This Sovereign of Dark Secrets... He killed your comrades?”

“Yes. Not just once or twice. Though he himself will never admit it, there have been countless times we’ve been stabbed in the back. We need to get revenge. Some say that he’s contributing to humanity, that he’s speeding up the rate of colonization, but I don’t think so. He’s cancerous. He’s cutting down our potential in the long run.”

Choi Hyuk coolly conveyed his thoughts.

“We humans still haven’t gotten rid of our Consumables (Deferred) circumstances. There are only 3 years left to the grace period. Although there are optimistic views that we would be able to get rid of this deferred state within 3 years because we are continuously colonizing and getting stronger, I’m pessimistic. First, we probably didn’t receive the Consumables judgment simply because we are weak. My friend in the past, Jung Minji, said this to me once. That they watched and judged each of our actions. They are not simply looking at individual strength but our organizational power and unity. We became Consumables after they evaluated how far we could go as an organized army and handle the missions. Meaning, the Sovereign of Dark Secrets is simply cancer who is bringing down our evaluation.”

Choi Hyuk stopped momentarily before continuing.

“And, I have no thoughts on taking 3 years to get rid of our deferred state. I need to get much stronger than I am now.”

In some ways, this could be Choi Hyuk's true goal. To open a path between territories to accelerate their colonizing speed. Once one person started it, it would only accelerate afterwards.

In Choi Hyuk's perspective, the progression of humanity was too slow. This slow progression had once again become a handicap on Choi Hyuk's own growth.

Lantz showed a serious expression as he listened to Choi Hyuk's words.

"...Okay. I still can't believe it. Do those god-like existences truly exist?"

Lantz, who was the great warrior of the El Tribe, didn't know anything about the 'Flame Wing Alliance' who created the system. Because he had only heard of this yesterday, he would show a bewildered expression every time they talked about them.

Choi Hyuk grinned. He would naturally learn about them when the time came. There was no need to explain any further right now. Instead, it was time to resume their expedition.

"Thanks for the information. We don't have any more time so we need to get going. Let's see each other often from now on."

Choi Hyuk wanted to confirm this information even a second faster. If there really was a colonized land if they continued in that direction. And if the owner of that territory was the Sovereign of Dark Secrets.

He learned that it wasn't far from their talks. It would take them no more than 5 days if they ran at full speed. Of course, there was another problem.

"Are you really planning on going? A monster that is the peak of Dragonian ranked monsters lives in that direction. I know you're strong... but it's almost a Dragon rank. Sorry, but your strength falls short."

Lantz wanted to stop Choi Hyuk.

And these kinds of impossible-to-handle monsters were the main factor that made colonizing difficult. This was also the reason why the predominant opinion was it would be difficult to create a passage between territories.

Yet, Choi Hyuk simply laughed.

“That’s welcoming news. I haven’t been able to fight with my life on the line these days.”

That was how Choi Hyuk and 3,000 Berserkers resumed their march towards the unexplored lands.

At the same time, Chu Youngjin and Ryu Hyunsung were already passing through the unexplored lands.

CHAPTER 57

REVOLUTION (2)

There was no end to the various different kinds of monsters. The moment they stepped into the unexplored lands, they saw monsters they had never seen before. Like how the Berserkers endlessly fought the spartoi created from dragon bones near their base, they were now ceaselessly fighting four-legged tree monsters.

“I think it must have been an amazing forest in the past.”

It was as Baek Seoin said. The ground was fertile and large building-like trees sporadically sprouted up from the ground. Mysterious karma flowed on the tree bark and there were three different colored leaves. Silver, yellow, and blue.

It was undoubtedly an amazing forest in the past. However, the distance between the trees had become wider over time. There were quite a few dead trees collapsed on the floor, and they saw half-dried withering trees as well. The tree monsters were continuously gnawing on the living trees and creating new tree monsters.

“If only there weren’t these ‘tree dogs.’”

With his naming sense, Baek Seoin decided to call these monsters ‘tree dogs’. It possessed two meanings; ‘a dog made from trees’ and ‘something you couldn’t see with your eyes open^{1}’.

It was a humorous name, but it fitted oddly well with their appearance. The monsters were called ‘dogs’ because they possessed wooden figures contaminated by a black bodily fluid, wagged a weirdly twisted trunk, and had four legs. Rather than saying they looked like dogs, their figures were similar to dogs, therefore the name, tree dog, fit quite well.

The tree dogs latched onto the trees and struggled to gnaw on them. These weren’t ordinary trees. Even when these monsters diligently gnawed on them, it didn’t seem like they left a visible mark. However, it seemed as though these trees couldn’t resist for a long time as there were hollowed out trees here and there. A trunk would grow from tree dogs that had gnawed on trees for a long time and create a new tree dog. It wasn’t hard to find small tree dogs that were attached to the foreheads or thighs of

larger tree dogs.

“These monsters do not only kill people but are existences that even destroy the environment itself. Ah, damn! Just! Die!”

As these tree dogs would still attack even when split into two or three pieces, Baek Seoin had to put a lot of karma into each slash as he impatiently dealt with them.

“At this rate, there will be monsters who eat the ground.”

Baek Seoin lamented, looking at the destroyed forest in regret. And his prediction was correct. The most problematic monster that stood in their way in colonizing a passage. The name of the overwhelmingly powerful monster that the great warrior of the El Tribe, Lantz, described as ‘the apex of Dragonian rank monsters’ was the ‘ground devourer’.

“Woah... This is...”

The Berserkers’ relentless march came to a halt. The sparse trees had disappeared, and they saw an area where the fertile ground had been cracked opened. These were traces of a new monster.

The El Tribe called this monster the ‘ground devourer’. A monster that ate rocks. Even when the powerful monsters that annihilated Dragonic went into a deep slumber, this strong monster continued to be active. It wasn’t a monster that ate the living creatures who were on the brink of extinction, but one which devoured the planet itself. That was why there were basins that looked as if it had been scooped out like ice cream where this monster inhabited.

The dirt slowly started to fade away, and at some point, they could no longer see any dirt from the surface. They saw layers upon layers of different kinds of rocks exposed in an endless downward slope.

Choi Hyuk closely examined this overwhelming and frightening sight before commanding.

“We enter.”

The basins weren’t similar to each other. Some were deep, while others were a bit shallow. The terrain went up and down like the KOSDAQ index^{2}. However, it became

clearly deeper the further they marched towards the center. The relatively tall entrance covered the sky and the basin gradually became darker.

Crunch! Crunch!

They heard the sound of hundreds of rocks being crunched on.

In the darkest place, the 'ground devourer' was shattering rocks and shoving them in its mouth.

"It isn't as enormous as I thought."

Choi Hyuk glanced at it as if he was admiring it. Its size was smaller than the Wyvern of Destruction. Around the size of a 5-story building. However, its head took up half its body and its mouth, which was located at the center, could open to the size of its face. Its thick limbs shattered the ground and shoved the rocks into its mouth. It seemed to possess a black hole in its body as even when it consumed as its body size in rocks, it showed no signs of being full.

"Like the El Tribe said, this is a strong foe that sits at the top of all the opponents we've faced so far. Everyone, be prepared. We'll go with the large monster hunting formation."

Choi Hyuk commanded them in a low voice. There were no replies. However, there was no need to check. They were only silent to avoid being discovered by the monster; they all understood. After experiencing over 100 fierce battles together, the Berserkers showed perfect coordination with each other without the need for words.

"Then... Begin!"

The moment Choi Hyuk commanded, the Berserkers spread out and scattered throughout the surroundings. Unexpectedly, they took out long-distance weapons. The majority of the weapons were bows and throwing spears.

However, they didn't begin shooting yet.

Baek Seoin, who became the real commander after Choi Hyuk ordered them to attack, stared at a white male. His name was Handke. Amongst the Berserkers, he was known as the artillery captain. The main weapons of the 'artillery', made up of approximately 30 people including Handke, were quite unusual. While they possessed weapons that

looked like bazookas, they also used long rods, bracelets, and rings. Sometimes they would use a hat with an unusual design as their main equipment as well. Handke, who was concentrating with his eyes closed, suddenly opened his eyes and stared at Baek Seoin.

That moment, Baek Seoin's body had already been dyed blue by activating Mind's Eye as he examined the 'ground devourer'. When he felt Handke's gaze, he commanded.

"Right leg!"

The moment Baek Seoin's command fell, Handke's rod shot through the air. Lightning gathered at the tip of the rod as it flew towards the ground devourer. The members of the artillery behind Handke each started shooting their own weapons. Some shot flames, others shock waves, each attacked the ground devourer's right leg with an attack that matched their own karma traits.

These people, who were known as the artillery amongst the Berserkers, were long-distance attack specialists. They were experts who raised their Control and Power to 3-star, and, supported by their Control and equipment, trained in throwing their karma through long distances.

Because their Endurance stat was low, they weren't suitable for close combat, and because they would often choose karma traits with properties like 'Blaze' or 'Shock' to suit their long-distance combat style, they were often called magicians by others.

The power of the Berserkers' artillery group was quite significant. Although the Berserkers were known to be strong in close combat, their power was this strong because their Control was high while their Endurance was low like their leader, Choi Hyuk. Choi Hyuk and the magicians got along really well and this was how the artillery captain, Handke, who was considered to be a top expert, joined the Berserkers.

Rumble!

Like their name, the attacks of the 30 members of the artillery group were powerful. The ground devourer's body staggered.

{Krrrr!}

The ground devourer became enraged. And the Berserkers shot their arrows and spears at the enraged ground devourer. Although their attacks weren't as powerful as

the artillery, they were great in number.

{Kwawoo!}

Most couldn't pierce its skin and bounced off, but they were necessary for messing up the monster's surroundings. Using the monster's momentary stumble, the strongest amongst them, the Berserk Sovereign Choi Hyuk, closed in.

Slice!

His powerful Karma Blade sliced into the ground devourer's left leg. However, it was only able to cut into its leathery skin.

Crash!

As if it was smacking away an annoying fly, the ground devourers slammed its arm at Choi Hyuk.

The ground shook and the bodies of the Berserkers trembled. Luckily, Choi Hyuk was able to avoid the attack and, instead, jumped on top of its arm. He ran up its arm and shouted.

"Let's play!"

After a long time, Choi Hyuk was finally able to fall into a deep battle trance.



Ryu Hyunsung and Chu Youngjin's escape was also spectacular. A chase in an unexplored land no one had walked on. The further they went, the more dangerous the terrain became, and the more monsters appeared.

In a swamp with water up to their ankles, Ryu Hyunsung, Chu Youngjin clashed with the Cruel Killing Sword Ye Long and his personal guards for the final time.

"Let's stop now."

The Cruel Killing Sword Ye Long thought this was the end of their long chase. They had fled tirelessly. It seemed they didn't even value their lives as they went further into these unexplored lands. It didn't seem like they cared whether a monster appeared or

not, or whether they were exhausted or not. Just by looking at them, he could tell that they were at their limit. Even if they fled from this place, they wouldn't have the strength to return. They weren't even able to use that great Void Wave of theirs properly anymore. The hot water that went up to their ankles also seemed to make these exhausted fellows suffer even more.

Ring. Ring.

On the other hand, Ye Long and his personal guards, who were riding on these ankle bracelets that emitted ringing sounds like a xylophone, were floating slightly above the water. Because of this, they were relatively unhindered by the flesh-meltingly hot water.

They were at a dead-end.

“Kik. I'd rather smash my head into this water and die than be captured by you.”

Ryu Hyunsung kept his composure even when his lips were pale blue due to severe exhaustion.

“...”

Chu Youngjin silently stared at Ye Long as if he was going to take at least one of them with him.

“You tiresome bastards...”

Although Ye Long was disgusted by their present condition, he was also filled with expectation.

‘How much stronger would I get if I absorbed them?’

They seemed to be the biggest catch of Ye Long's life as a plunderer. Filled with expectation, he commanded.

“Don't kill them. Cut off their arms and legs.”

“Yes!”

His guards answered with vigorous voices and charged forward. However, Ye Long had

no luck, while Ryu Hyunsung and Chu Youngjin had the heavens on their side.

A monster suddenly appeared from the marsh floor.

Splash!

An intense heat blasted out alongside its appearance. It was so intense that the already hot water evaporated altogether. Instantly, four red eyes peered through the thick steam.

Frightened, Ye Long shouted.

“Dodge it!”

Rip!

Unfortunately, the guard in the front wasn't able to avoid the sudden attack and had his waist ripped in two. The steam was dyed red with his gushing blood.

“Damn it...!”

Ye Long grit his teeth and jumped into the red steam.

Clash! Clash!

Sparks flew as sounds of swords and the monster's claws clashing against each other sounded out.

“...Wow. Was our luck this good?”

Perplexed by their sudden fortune, Ryu Hyunsung and Chu Youngjin hastily escaped. They were able to overcome a desperately dangerous situation due to the monster. And the monster wasn't weak like the monsters that had appeared until now, it was truly strong.

‘Since we're getting this much help, we need to survive.’

Ryu Hyunsung and Chu Youngjin gathered their remaining strength and began to run towards the whirlpool that had gradually been getting larger.

“But... it seems we’ve awoken the monsters.”

It was like he said. This marsh had initially only been hot and silent, but now, monsters were getting up one after another. They were all formidable. It seemed the monsters wanted to attack the more dangerous looking Ye Long’s group as they all ran towards them.

Of course, there were the occasional attacks on Ryu Hyunsung and Chu Youngjin, but they avoided, blocked, or even used the momentum to keep running without facing them. When they did, instead of giving chase, the monsters turned their attention towards Ye Long’s group.

“Run. I can’t stop...”

Ryu Hyunsung continued to run while pounding his trembling legs as he tried to allude himself by mumbling these words. His Stamina was at its limit, but if he stopped here, he would undoubtedly die. He gritted his teeth and continued.

“Damn it...! Retreat! Retreat!”

They heard Ye Long’s distant voice. He sounded dejected.

That was how they were able to leave Ye Long behind, but that didn’t mean their situation became better. Their Stamina had already been exhausted and more and more monsters appeared. Ryu Hyunsung had no choice but to forcefully continue activating Mind’s Eye. Since they didn’t have the strength to fight, they had to avoid them before encountering them. When it was unavoidable, Chu Youngjin would step forward and deal with the monsters blocking their way. As if walking on a tightrope, the two squeezed between the monsters and fled.

They happened upon an enormous basin. Like a quarry, shattered rocks lay exposed in the basin. Below the basin, they could hear deafening roars and vibrations from the center of the basin, which was covered by a boulder.

“...Are the monsters fighting with each other?”

“...They don’t seem normal. But do monsters even fight with each other?”

“I haven’t seen it myself but... you never know. They might fight considering monsters are split into different territories.”

“Like you say, considering we can’t see any other monsters, this seems to be the territory of a powerful monster.”

“...And these monsters are currently fighting each other, right?”

Ryu Hyunsung was silent for a moment as he thought. They had almost exhausted their Stamina getting here. If they continued to overwork themselves, it would only lead to their deaths. They had to rest at least once.

Ryu Hyunsung decided.

“Let’s go down and observe them.”

Chu Youngjin’s eyes widened in surprise.

“Why?”

These monsters possessed such incredible destructive power that the top of the basin shook. Why should they risk it and go down to observe their fight?

“The fight is intense. If the two kill each other, or even if they critically injure each other and are unable to pay attention to their surroundings, we can stay and rest here for a few days before heading out. Since this is a place where nearby monsters won’t approach.”

If they didn’t plan on dying here, they needed to rest. Although it was dangerous, if they could rest, it was worth taking the risk. Chu Youngjin agreed with Ryu Hyunsung.

The two nervously hid behind boulders and made their way down. As they went further down, the clouds of dust from the fight started to completely cover their vision.

“You... are still on cooldown, right?”

If Ryu Hyunsung activated Mind’s Eye, he could easily look through the dust, but he was completely exhausted.

“Yeah... It’s recovered a bit, but I can’t use it for long so we’ll use it when we get closer.”

Eventually, the two dangerously made their way towards the center of the basin, grabbing onto boulders as they couldn’t see very well.

Thump!

A loud noise suddenly sounded out.

Then, it seemed the fight had ended as there were no more roars or vibrations.

“Doesn’t it seem the fight is over?”

“Yeah...”

What would be the conclusion of the fight? The two became even more nervous as they continued to make their way down.

Then, once they were at a suitable distance, Ryu Hyunsung activated Mind’s Eye.

He was able to sense a 5-story sized monster with his sensitive karma. It looked dead. Karma had left its body and he couldn’t perceive any movements.

‘Where’s its opponent?’

Ryu Hyunsung pressed down his trembling, exhausted leg and searched for the dead monster’s opponent. He had difficulty because he was so small, but he was eventually able to find him. He was sitting on top of the monster’s corpse. He seemed to be the size of a human. Though he possessed powerful karma... his karma felt very familiar.

“Uh?”

Ryu Hyunsung was stunned.

“What’s wrong?”

When Chu Youngjin asked, Ryu Hyunsung blankly replied.

“He saw me...”

“The monster?”

“Yeah...”

“Then... doesn’t that mean we’re in big trouble?”

“Well, that’s...”

Just then, a loud voice erupted and blasted the thick dust hanging in the air. A very happy voice.

“Hey! Chu hyung! Ryu hyung! It’s been a while!”

It was the voice of their leader, Choi Hyuk.

This was the moment a passage between colonized lands was discovered.

{1} The raws use 목불견 to refer to tree dogs. Depending on which hanja characters you use, it can mean either of the two meanings. (목 - tree/eyes, 불 - similar/can’t, 견 - dog/see)

{2} KOSDAQ (Korean Securities Dealers Automated Quotations) is a trading board of the Korea Exchange (KRX).

CHAPTER 58

REVOLUTION (3)

{Due to the intense battle, free karma points increased by 3.}

The fight against the ground devourer had ended. A message appeared. As even a single karma point was precious these days, Choi Hyuk was extremely happy.

For example, it took him one month to get his Control to reach 3-star. However, it took him 2 full years to get it to the outer limits of 4-star.

When his stats were at 1-star, meaning during in the {Ring of Rebirth} and the beginning of {Survive and Escape}, he was overflowing with karma. All his stats would increase by 1 when he killed a similar ranked opponent. However, when he reached 2-star, it changed so that he would only gain 1 free karma point every time he killed a similar ranked opponent. The level of difficulty had increased greatly.

However, when he looked back at it, those days were still good. They would reward him with tons of karma, claiming his feats as surprising achievements and/or results when they weren't really all that amazing.

When his stats reached 3-star and 4-star, they really became hellish to increase. It was then where it started to get harder to find similar ranked opponents. Of course, his stats would increase when he killed a lot of lower ranked enemies... The fact that he really had to kill a large number was the problem. Now, however, he wouldn't even be given any points for doing this anymore. The only thing he could rely on were the karma points he received from the 'Battle Addict' fate.

However, since last year, even that didn't satisfy him. Earthlings, who were Consumables (Deferred), usually had cooperative missions with the lowest ranked warriors. The main stats of lowest ranked warriors were at about 3-star. No matter how difficult the mission he chose was, they no longer matched Choi Hyuk's level. There were occasional large-scale battles with low ranked warriors who were at the 4-star level, but besides them, there weren't any times where he could 'fight intensely'. What was more, even if they were recruited for a large-scale battle, the roles of earthlings were mostly supportive so it was hard for Choi Hyuk to play an active part.

This meant that the Consumables fate of earthlings was hindering his growth.

Because of this, he couldn't help but be happy whenever he saw a message stating that his karma increased due to intense battles. He had finally fought with all his strength and he even obtained 3 free karma points... His mood was really good.

On top of that, he finally reunited with Ryu Hyunsung and Chu Youngjin, whom he had sent on a dangerous mission, and hadn't seen for a long time. How could he not feel elated? Before the obvious curiosity of why they were here in the first place struck him, a welcoming feeling burst out instantly.

"Chu hyung! Ryu hyung! It's been a while!"

And because of his shout, Baek Seoin, who had flopped on the floor after becoming exhausted from commanding the troops, widened his eyes.

"What?"

Lee Jinhee, who had dropped to the floor, suddenly got up and addressed her pain.

"Oh? Youngjin and Ryu hyung? Owowowow..."

She was a mess. It was the result of getting close to the ground devourer to attract its attention so that Choi Hyuk could land the fatal blow at the final moment. She contributed this time as well. She would always risk her life and survive, and she always had swollen bruises, fractures, and wounds.

Even in this state, Lee Jinhee got up to welcome Chu Youngjin and Ryu Hyunsung, who were staggering over from exhaustion.

Everyone survived.

One of the main criteria when Choi Hyuk chose Berserkers: Survivability. And fitting their roles as the top executives of the Berserkers, Chu Youngjin, and Ryu Hyunsung returned.



That day, they camped at the basin where they slew the ground devourer.

The sky always shined with a milky hue. Although Dragonic didn't have nights, their surroundings were dark as the night due to the basin. The Berserkers, who had no choice but to sleep in the light, were happy for this darkness.

When everyone was busy getting ready to sleep, the top executives held a meeting. Choi Hyuk, Baek Seoin, Lee Jinhee, Chu Youngjin, Ryu Hyunsung and finally the artillery captain, Handke, had gathered.

"Oh my god. I never thought we'd discover a passage on this expedition."

It was as Handke said.

They thought that it would take two or three more attempts to see a small progress. They all implicitly believe this. However, they had reached their goal on their first attempt.

Though they were happy, they were just as much taken back.

"It's difficult to attack the Sovereign of Dark Secrets with our current force. Since it wasn't a seizing expedition to begin with..."

Baek Seoin's suggestion was to withdrawal and prepare properly before going to war. It was a rational suggestion, but there was an objection. It was Lee Jinhee.

"I don't think there will be much difference if we withdrawal and come back. Our numbers are small in the first place. Even if we include everyone, our numbers would be around 20,000? But if we exclude those who have been recruited for missions and those necessary to maintain our cities, wouldn't the numbers be around 5,000? I don't think there will be much of a difference between 3,000 and 5,000. Instead, why don't we go earlier and release the slaves?"

"No. 3,000 and 5,000 are completely different numbers."

Baek Seoin immediately opposed Lee Jinhee's words. However, she wasn't convinced.

"The Sovereign of Dark Secrets has 80,000 soldiers. 80,000 against 5,000 or 80,000

against 3,000, aren't they similar?"

"Even if we say there are 80,000 colonizers, less than 10,000 of them will have at least 2-star. There's a big difference between 5,000 and 3,000 against 10,000. And if we are thinking about occupying their territory and not simply going to war, then it makes sense every person counts."

"Then can't we strike first and come back again?"

"Why would you do that? We can just finish everything in one go."

"But what are we going to do about those slaves who are being sold right now? And Youngjin and Ryu hyung suffered like this, and you want to just go back?"

Baek Seoin and Lee Jinhee argued. But, at some point, the discussion didn't progress, and they simply said what they had already said over and over again.

Choi Hyuk wordlessly listened to them before cutting them off when he felt it was getting nowhere and addressed everyone.

"To be honest. My goal wasn't to occupy them from the start."

When other sovereign thought of 'conquests', they easily thought of 'conquer and occupy'. Because of this, when Choi Hyuk proposed they 'attack the Sovereign of Dark Secrets', his followers all thought this was a 'conquest'. Yet, Choi Hyuk was thinking much more simplistically than them.

"Our first goal is the Sovereign of Dark Secrets himself. If Sovereign Lao Ban dies, his forces will have no choice but to collapse, and their authority over the portal will disappear. Occupy their territory? Of course that's good, but our first goal is killing Lao Ban."

Choi Hyuk really hated the Sovereign of Dark Secrets, Lao Ban.

The fact that he used immigrants, who were from Earth like him, as slaves, and that he killed colonizers and used them to increase his strength. He could overlook the fact that Lao Ban's immoral actions that received the immense hatred of many. What was really unforgivable was that the actions he did habitually ruined the people's trust in humanity and hindered their unity, which, in turn, obstructed his performance. This was something Choi Hyuk couldn't endure.

During a seemingly normal day, the {Ring of Rebirth} opened. Afterwards, he was able to leave Kangdong District after overcoming a competition of kill or be killed. Everyone had become murderers, and they were also victims.

Then his mother passed away.

That day, Choi Hyuk's personal world had already collapsed. Afterwards, he felt as if he was simply living in a doomed earth. He was always enraged by this collapse, and he fought and struggled to get revenge on the ones who brought along this collapse. Yet, there was someone who was happy about this and was happily enjoying the 'fruits' brought on by this collapse. What was more; their actions left a large scratch on the great cause of those who sought to fight against this collapse. They would say, "Why do you fight so hard in such a great world?" but the pleasure they enjoyed had all come from the blood and sweat of others. Humans would repeatedly become divided the stronger they became, and animosity amongst them would increase. The hearts of those who want to fight against the collapse couldn't help but become dull.

Starting with Lao Ban, Choi Hyuk wanted to stomp on those who filled their bellies by snacking on this damned world. Those people didn't have the right to be a 'sovereign', who represented humanity.

No lamps were lit, so the inside of the tent was dark. Cho Hyuk's black eyes seemed even darker in this darkness.

"So I don't think we need to reorganize ourselves. From Ryu hyung and Chu hyung's reports, it seems that Lao Ban is currently on the outskirts of his territory so there is no better chance. We attack now."

If his goal was Lao Ban himself, they didn't need to withdraw. Although Lao Ban was with his main force, his city guards were far away, and he had only brought his elite troops so there was no need to fear their numbers. Since there was no force that could match the Berserkers in terms of elite troops... 3,000 was enough.

"Hmm... Now that I think about it, no one knows what happens when a sovereign kills another sovereign. If everything, such as the authority of the portal, gets transferred over... then we don't necessarily need reinforcements to occupy their territory. We can just deport resisting forces."

Everyone nodded their heads at Baek Seoin's words. If the authority of the sovereign was transferred over, there was nothing to fear. It would be game over the moment

they killed Lao Ban.

The artillery head Handke asked.

“Then what is our plan of attack? Target the sovereign with a single-point breakthrough? Or annihilation?”

Choi Hyuk didn't think twice and answered.

“Annihilation. We will not accept their surrender. The ones gathered there will all be Lao Ban's henchmen. They are 'plunderers' who kill others and rob their strength. Although we won't chase them too far if they run, if possible, it will be total annihilation. Also, we will thoroughly track and take down Lao Ban and his executives.”

It was a resolute action.

Handke continued to ask.

“Then, next, what do you plan to do if the full authority of the sovereign does get transferred to you?”

He paid attention to the chill emanating from Choi Hyuk's tone. Choi Hyuk wanted the death of the Sovereign of Dark Secrets. Then what would he want afterwards? What kind of decision would he make about the colonizers who cooperated with the Sovereign of Dark Secrets? Deportation? Or punishment?

“If that happens... We advance towards the cities. We will destroy all of Lao Ban's workshops and free the slaves. And if there are still organizations operating under Lao Ban's command, then, we will undoubtedly punish them. If these organizations break up and scatter, that's fine. However, if they are still maintaining their organizations by the time we get there, I will use the authority to ban them from using the portal and sweep them all up. I have no thoughts on clumsily letting them live.”

Choi Hyuk was giving his enemies two small chances. First, he would let those who flee the battlefield, without looking back, live. Second, he would let those who flee after hearing the news from the escapees. He clearly declared he would kill everyone else besides them. A risky, yet powerful method.

A silence hung in the air momentarily.

A large-scale slaughter of humans. Their hearts were heavy.

“Mmm... Now that we’re about to kill them, my heart’s a bit...”

It was Lee Jinhee’s gripe, who was naturally kind. Although she was in favor of a war against the Sovereign of Dark Secrets, she was generally thinking of a way to minimize casualties. A rule of accepting their surrender if they did.

However, Choi Hyuk was planning on thoroughly stomping on his enemies.

Baek Seoin didn’t say anything. He was psychologically more resistant to the notion of killing humans compared to others. Still, he was inwardly trying to justify this decision.

‘Since it’s a world that’s already out of control... Because it’s a world where humans openly sell other humans as slaves... Since we already gave them a chance to talk. Is it time for them to take responsibility... ’

The more chaotic a situation was, the quicker the effect of creating a rule by blood was. Although telling them hundreds of times to not have slave markets had no effect, if they hit them hard once, its effects were clear.

While everyone was judging the necessity of this operation, the artillery head Handke said.

“...It’s already inevitable we will face off against the Sovereign of Dark Secrets’s forces. Then it’s better to properly step on them when we inevitably face them. Since it’s cleaner if we fight them properly once than fighting them multiple times... I think it’s a good idea.”

Everyone else nodded at his words. It was like this ever since humanity first started to record history. There was no easier or cleaner method of dealing with others than killing and removing them. Only...

‘I still wish we could find a better way.’

Lee Jinhee couldn’t let go of this fantasy. She wasn’t scared of fighting them, however, fighting humans was tiring and difficult. Although her worry was an important one that advanced human civilization, but in the current situation, where history had degenerated and humanity had collapsed, it was a powerless worry.

The Sovereign of Dark Secrets and the Berserkers were already in a relationship of kill or be killed. They killed Berserkers, and Ryu Hyunsung and Chu Youngjin killed their slave traders. Although there was a difference in scale, they had already killed one another.

Only, the colonizers clashed in local fights, there hasn't been a case of a full-on battle yet. The war that was about to begin would be the first. They felt a psychological resistance to the fact that this first war would have to be an annihilation, crushing their enemies thoroughly.

However, the fact that if they did this properly this time, it could reduce future losses was a big strength to them.

"I know. It's just a gripe."

Lee Jinhee looked somewhat depressed. Choi Hyuk tapped her shoulder. If they were in a different group, then Lee Jinhee, who said these words before a battle, may garner some hate, but Choi Hyuk was already familiar with this side of her. Since she fought the most courageously when they actually went into battle. She was different from Choi Hyuk, but they walked the same path.

Eventually, they decided on annihilation. Everyone looked at each other with determined eyes.

The very next morning, the march towards the very first territory war began.

CHAPTER 59

REVOLUTION (4)

It was a cruel day.

Although she resolved herself multiple times, the new member was unable to act, and repeatedly apologized to her senior in vain.

“I will do better!”

I will do better. I will do better. She had repeated those words a few times, yet, her hand didn't move.

A slim beauty, however, she was an outstanding warrior. In the past, these words might have been ridiculous, but it was very foolish to estimate someone's fighting ability from their looks these days. Weren't they in a generation where civilians could awaken karma if they simply came over to Dragonic?

Because she possessed outstanding talent, she overcame countless competitors and had become a clan member. Afterwards, the clan had invested mission points to send her over to Dragonic. Above all, the fact that she was invited to this 'festival' clearly showed that she would later become a cadet, a rising star who would lead her clan's future.

The panic she was feeling now was simply something she had to overcome.

Because he understood this fact, her superior didn't punish her but gently reasoned with her.

“It's okay. It's okay. This is normal for your first time.”

“Yes! Yes! Thank you!”

When she heard her superior's gentle tone, her heart, which was beating like a drum, calmed slightly. Yet, her hand still didn't budge.

“Now, now, take a deep breath. That's it. Breath out.”

Her superior continued to calmly coax her.

“Try closing your eyes.”

She closed her eyes at his suggestion. His tear-stained face, pleading eyes and shaking gagged head all disappeared from her eyes. She no longer saw the ‘sacrifice’.

She only heard her superior’s voice now. He guided her hands in the darkness. Nudge. Her guided hands took aim at a specific area. It was undoubtedly the chest, the beating heart of the ‘sacrifice’.

“Just push the sword through here. Then you just need to place your hand anywhere on the sacrifice’s body and receive his karma. It’s not hard. It’s like eating noodles.”

There wasn’t the slightest hint of cruelty in her superior’s voice. He instructed as if he really was teaching her how to eat noodles.

“I understand!”

Although his calm voice calmed her down even further, unlike her loud reply, she was still unable to stab out with her sword.

“It’s okay. It’s okay. Deep breaths.”

Her superior continued to speak softly until he suddenly grabbed her shoulders and shouted.

“Stab!”

Shhkh!

The surprised new recruit reflexively jolted her sword forward. The sword smoothly slid into the ‘sacrifice’s’ flesh and stabbed into his heart.

“Ah... Ah...”

Warm blood splattered onto her hands. The new recruit opened her eyes. The dying ‘sacrifice’ was a man who looked to be in his forties. Looking at his non-ruined suit, he seemed to be an immigrant who had only recently migrated here. She clearly saw the lights in his eyes dying out.

'It's hot...'

Was blood ever this hot? The blood that splattered on her hands not only felt hot but heavy as well.

Her shoulders were trembling, and her superior comforted her.

"Shh. Shh. You did well. It's normal for it to be difficult. You did well. Now, you can smoothly absorb his strength."

To be honest, this part didn't require any technique. As long as one possessed the 'plunderer' fate, they would absorb their dying foe's karma once they placed their hand on them. Her body trembled as wisps of karma entered and spread throughout her body. It was incredibly refreshing. Although she felt guilty at the fact she killed an innocent person, a euphoric sensation spread as the refreshing karma entered through her hand.

'Am... I a monster?'

Her mind became torn and confused.

'No... Come to your senses!'

She hated her weak self whose determination still swayed after resolving herself constantly. However, it was useless.

As she fell into a state of shame, thinking 'Do I not belong here? I didn't know it would be like this,' her superior calmly guided her.

"There's no reason to be distressed. Enjoy it with a thankful heart. This is the power of one life. It's a noble sensation."

Her superior looked at her with solemn eyes.

"You know how the first awakenees awakened, right? You probably heard of the <Ring of Rebirth>. From the start, there are no awakenees who haven't gotten strong by killing others. Don't concern yourself with what those hypocrites and politicians say. They talk as if our Lao Ban clan is the only one who kills other people, but that's not true. Even though they may act as if it's not true, they all kill others to get stronger. If you kill a person or monster, you obtain a set amount of karma. It was this kind of

game from the start. The system itself was already like this. In short, even if you aren't of the Lao Ban clan, as long as you're a colonizer, you will have no choice but to kill people. If that's the case, isn't it better to thoroughly absorb that karma? It's like that. With our fate known as 'plunderers', we aren't doing anything others aren't. It's only a fate that increases the efficiency of what everyone else is doing. When other colonizers gain 1 karma from killing a colonizer, we simply earn 2 or 3. So, is that bad?"

"No, it is not."

She had, at some point, been drawn into her superior's words which were filled with his own conviction.

"Yeah. That's right. We only need to think about getting stronger. Forget about the rest. Killing people. Selling slaves. Don't waver from their criticism. That's not all. Because our business is flourishing, more earthlings are coming over to Dragonic and the speed of colonization has become that much faster... You are aware that our clan's contribution to Earth is enormous, right?"

"Yes... Yes! That is correct."

"Yeah. We only need to think about our job – Getting stronger. And honor our homeland, China. We only need to think about becoming stronger and tougher as warriors."

"Yes, that is right."

"Yeah. Kill. Then absorb their strength with a thankful heart. That is our job."

"I understand."

The new recruit stopped trembling. Her eyes shined brightly. Her superior grinned and said,

"Good. Then try to properly absorb a 'sacrifice' this time. He's a strong one so the sword won't go in easily. Still, you'll eventually pierce him if you just keep on stabbing your opponent until he becomes exhausted, so don't be too flustered. I'll lend you my weapon. Try it out."

Within the thick fog, sacrifices, whose limbs had been cut off, were prepared. The sacrifices were tightly bounded, unable to let out a scream, unable to resist, and died

with open chests. Those familiar with this enjoyed the slaughter and would sometimes go and rape slaves or sacrifices, indiscriminate of gender. As these horrible acts were being done, the mood within the fog became trancelike.

New recruits, who had never done this before, overcame their initial shock and gradually began to become familiar with this mood. They started to look at it from whatever perspective they pleased. Beliefs to those with beliefs, pleasure to those who enjoyed it, Lao Ban clan's festival was drawing to its peak.

It was a cruel day.

"...What a load of bullshit."

They suddenly heard someone swear within the fog.

"What?"

At the sudden swear, a superior and a new recruit turned around with widened eyes. Although the fog was thick enough that it was difficult to see someone's face in the distance, they were able to identify a person's figure. While everyone was becoming engrossed in the festival, a single shadow approached them.

"What the? Who is it?"

The superior asked. The person replied with a sword that suddenly slashed out, slicing through the fog.

Creak!

Worthy of being an elite of the Lao Ban clan, his Endurance was high so the sound of the sword scraping metal sounded out. However, a misty Karma Blade sliced through his tough skin and ribs.

Pshhlt!

"Ack..."

His heart split apart without being able to do anything. Although she got into a battle stance after seeing her collapsing superior, her opponent was much faster than her.

Piick!

Thud.

Her head rolled on the ground in vain.

“As I thought, killing people feels disgusting...”

Lee Jinhee didn't even look at the corpses as she spat out a complaint and continued. Berserkers started to pour in from different locations within the fog.

Choi Hyuk declared one principle.

“Complete fear.”

A trauma that would prevent them from lifting their heads when they heard the ‘Ber’ of ‘Berserkers’. He wanted to implant them with PTSD.

The Berserkers, who moved under this principle, were viciously brutal.

Thud, stomp, dash!

It sounded like a rain shower. The Berserkers charged at full speed. They didn't stop for a moment. If someone blocked them, they would avoid them while wielding their swords. They slashed out with their swords even as they jumped up or slid below.

“Ahh! Acckk!”

Lao Ban's clan members, whose legs had been cut off so that they couldn't run away, were crawling along the ground and screaming like children.

Sounds of rain showers flooded in as blades stabbed out. No one could tell who was killing who. Only, they would suddenly come close and stab them. The fact that they didn't know when or where these swords would target them was fear itself. The fog was dyed red.

“Who are these bastards!”

At that moment, the executives of the Lao Ban clan started to act.

Thud! Clink!

The Berserkers, who were recklessly rushing forward, were pushed back.

Slice!

Some unlucky ones were cut in two.

“Wake up!”

With the executives’ urgings, Lao Ban’s clan hastily began to get into formation. However, it would be breaking the Berserker’s principle if they let them do that.

Rumble.

“Explosive Blood...”

Wherever Chu Youngjin passed, the fog would split like the Red Sea.

Crash!

A strong, single strike. His opponent reflexively lifted his weapon to block it, but Chu Youngjin’s sword cut his body in two along with his weapon. Although their weapons were clouded with karma and physical Endurance stats, his explosive blows would ignore them all.

The impact of his strike was enough to blow people’s hair from far away. One of Lao Ban’s executives, whose skull had been split in two, became a geyser, still in an upright position. Shudder. At the blood drops that took a moment to fall, at that horrifying feeling, Lao Ban’s clan members shuddered slightly.

If Chu Youngjin’s overwhelming single strike broke their spirits, Lee Jinhee’s speed brought panic.

Dash!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Although she used Explosive Blood like Chu Youngjin, her movements were more mechanical than his. She chased down the fleeing foes as if she was a cheetah hunting

her prey and planted them into the ground. No matter which direction they fled or how they blocked, she would skillfully grab her opponent and stab them with her sword. They couldn't block her. As if their fates were already predetermined, even her tempo was consistent. The figures of their comrades being pinned to the ground, like butterflies being pinned on display, brought on additional panic.

"Ahh! Ahhh!"

They fled even though they knew it was hopeless. And they were soon hunted down.

At this time, Choi Hyuk was facing Lao Ban.

Lao Ban had fallen into a state of confusion.

"Why? Why aren't you guys getting deported?"

This place was Lao Ban's territory. Rationally, all the colonizers here must have had passed through the portal under his authority. If that was the case, Lao Ban should have been able to deport them whenever he wanted. In fact, it was impossible to revolt. However, Lao Ban was unable to deport these bandits who had come for him. That was what made him fall into a state of confusion.

"It's our first time seeing each other face to face."

Unlike the flustered Lao Ban, Choi Hyuk started to talk leisurely. The situation had already progressed to a point of no return. Lao Ban was no match for Choi Hyuk. Both Lao Ban and Choi Hyuk were aware of this fact.

"This punk bastard!"

Yet, Lao Ban didn't admit it and began his last-ditch effort. Karma Blades had become universal. Lao Ban's sword was covered with a faint yellow-green light. However-

Crack!

His weak Karma Blade was ripped apart by Choi Hyuk's Karma Blade that was as deep blue as the ocean's depths.

Riiinging!

“Kaahk!”

Lao Ban’s sword didn’t split in two, but instead, vibrated intensely before shattering, gruesomely shredding Lao Ban’s hand. Lao Ban, who grabbed his hand as he fell to the ground, saw the corpse of his strongest expert, the Cruel Killing Sword Ye Long, which had been split in two. Beside him was the corpse of Tsu Chin, who had advised him about being cautious of the Berserk Sovereign.

“Urggg... You crazy bastard. Why do you have to do this?!”

Lao Ban despaired.

“I warned you.”

“What? About selling slaves? Ha! What a joke. Do you even know how many of your Berserker bastards are among our clients?”

Lao Ban snorted.

“Hypocritical bastards.”

As he realized he couldn’t match him in strength, Lao Ban started to make cynical remarks.

“Colonizer. That’s when you look it from a bright side. How many of these colonizers are of their right minds? Hmm? No, is that wrong? We are people too so do we always need to live in hell? I simply provided them with a comfort zone for their own sake! If it wasn’t for me, do you think colonizers could maintain their sanity? Do you think they could endure the stress from endless missions?! People are only coming out to become colonizers because there’s a way to relieve that stress. If it wasn’t for me, who would fucking become a goddamn colonizer?!”

Although many sovereigns criticized Lao Ban’s slave market, their followers, with or without their knowledge, came to Lao Ban’s territory to relieve the stress that piled deep within them. It didn’t matter whether they were men or women. Especially Berserkers. Following Choi Hyuk’s policy, they underwent more intense missions more often than anyone else. Because of this, once they started to take a liking to the slave market, there were many cases where they would become known perverts.

Lao Ban brought out all the malice inside him and cursed Choi Hyuk.

“Didn’t you guys kill others? What’s so different about you? You hypocritical bastard!”

However, Choi Hyuk’s face didn’t change. Instead, it became even colder.

“That... isn’t something a dead man should be worried about.”

At Choi Hyuk’s cold reply, Lao Ban harbored even more malice. ‘What? A dead man? Me? This bastard!’ He was about to spit curses once more. That moment-

Choi Hyuk’s sword pierced through Lao Ban’s throat.

Shhii. Shhii.

Lao Ban’s lips moved, but no words were spoken, only the sound of air rushing out could be heard.

Choi Hyuk grabbed Lao Ban’s hair, stuck his head out and stared directly into his eyes. In that state, he slowly moved his sword and cut Lao Ban’s head off.

“You lost, and I won. And the slave market is no more.”

Thud.

The completely severed head fell into Choi Hyuk’s hand. Choi Hyuk continued to stare at it and said.

“If you have something to say, say it.”

Perhaps it was due to karma, but the lights in Lao Ban’s eyes still shined. He moved his facial muscles to speak another curse, but it was for naught. As there was no one who could speak without their body.

Choi Hyuk looked disinterested as he threw the head far into the distance.

{Sovereign Choi Hyuk has killed Sovereign Lao Ban. If you prove your qualifications in the ‘Sovereign Mission’, all of Lao Ban’s authority will be transferred to you. Until then, Lao Ban’s colonized lands will be shut down. It is possible to return to Earth through the portal, but it is no longer possible to enter Dragonic.}

“So it’s this kind of system.”

A Sovereign Mission.

“Will there be a proper fight there?”

Choi Hyuk mumbled as he looked around at the battlefield. It was normal. They properly executed their blitz strategy, and their prior reconnaissance to find the executives' locations turned out well. After all their commanders had died, the Lao Ban clan had turned into nothing but a simple mob.

“How boring.”

Baby chicks who believed they were strong. Battles against these chicks were always bitter and boring. He had to fight against real enemies, not these fools. He wanted to fight against a true foe. Choi Hyuk's body became heated. He had to get stronger. He wanted to fight against stronger opponents. Whether this was because of his instincts that wanted to enjoy fights or because of revenge, it had come to a point where it was hard to distinguish which one it was.



That day, the Lao Ban clan collapsed. The situation became known to the world by the survivors who had fled through the portal. A passageway between colonized lands, the collapse of the slave market, the shutdown of Lao Ban's portal, the Berserker's terrifying fighting ability, news of this incident made waves throughout the world.

CHAPTER 60

DEMON KING (1)

Full name: Alexei Romanovich Ivanov.

Alexei was a 15-year-old boy who had come from Russia. He was also a famous Berserker who was amongst the first to awaken through the {Ring of Rebirth}.

The reason why Alexei, who was Russian, joined Korea's main clan, Choi Hyuk's 'Berserkers', was purely because of Lee Jinhee.

He fell for her at first sight after coincidentally watching a video of her fighting. He came to Korea and became a member of the Berserkers partly because of his puppy love and longing, and partly because he seriously respected and wanted to learn from her.

Although he was young, like many members who were the first to awaken, he had lost his family and had become an orphan so he didn't have anything holding him back. At first, he used the Language Resonance Device to converse with Koreans, but perhaps it was because he was young, he quickly picked it up.

Alexei was tagging behind Lee Jinhee. Lee Jinhee looked at Alexei who appeared to be holding filming props and let out a sigh.

"Lyosha, Youtube again?"

'Lyosha' was a nickname only his family members and close friends could call him. Out of all the Berserkers, Alexei had only told Lee Jinhee his nickname. There was a time when a Berserker shouted, 'Hey Lyosha!' and that day, an intense fist fight broke out. Although he was a boy with a small figure, Alexei was an expert as one of the first to awaken, and the majority of the Berserkers never called him Lyosha after that day.

Only Baek Seoin would occasionally tease him with a 'Lyosha~'. Alexei had become famous for never replying back.

"Yes! Please take care of me, Director Lee Jinhee!"

Alexei replied in fluent Korean and began to film. Lee Jinhee said, as if dumbfounded.

“Just from where did someone like you join our clan? You should have gone to Jessie’s clan, why’d you come here?”

Jessie was a popular American sovereign. He was handsome and had gained popularity from both his stylish fighting style and lectures on fighting techniques posted on Youtube. He liked to be in style and was known for being showy. Even the name of his fate was ‘Superstar’. ‘Superstar’ was a fate that increased his karma the more his fighting techniques were complimented and the more people were influenced by his techniques. It matched well with Jessie. As the sovereign was like this, his followers were the same. The fighting lectures and best battle videos that dominated Youtube were mostly from Jessie’s clan.

Lee Jinhee often teased Alexei, who liked to film, with this.

And whenever she did that, he would hop up and down.

“What mean words...! I have no interest in those with flashy outer appearances. The legit ones are those that are compact and fatal! And if you combine that with Director Lee Jinhee’s beauty! Keeu...!”

“The heck...”

As if embarrassed, Lee Jinhee pressed her hat down.

“In any case, for Baek hyung to permit something so useless... Haa.”

“Useless?! How is filming Director Lee Jinhee’s techniques and using them as the Berserker’s training aids useless?”

“You said you’re going to release it to others.”

“That’s to promote ourselves. You can’t ignore the effect of promoting ourselves. Even I came running here after watching a video. You need to show something cool if you want to gather really talented and passionate clan members. Berserkers are already known for their small numbers, and the flow of new recruits is declining as more time passes. Promoting ourselves is very important.”

“Brrr... Did you know you’re saying exactly what Baek hyung said?”

“Although Director Baek does a lot of useless things, I think he really did well with this decision.”

Alexei replied without a moment's hesitation. Of course, his heart was filled with happiness for being able to film Lee Jinhee's movements to his heart's content and being able to show such treasures to other people.

“Haa... I don't know. Anyways, what I am going to teach today is running vertically using karma.”

Lee Jinhee eventually surrendered and looked away from Alexei to stare at a building in front of her. It was a high-rise apartment with 30 floors. Lee Jinhee put her foot on the wall.

“There are two main methods. One where you focus on body control and another where you focus on your karma control. First I'll show you the method focusing on body control.”

Lee Jinhee jumped slightly and stepped on the wall with her right foot before dropping down.

“In parkour, we usually tilt our upper bodies back when we step on walls. If we don't and we lean forward, our bodies get too close to the wall. If we do that, our strength isn't applied vertically but horizontally, and we slip. Like this.”

Lee Jinhee explained with her words before showing a few good and bad examples.

“We can now apply original parkour movements to go up even further. I mean, our physical abilities have completely changed, right? First, you run towards the wall faster than before. The trick where you lean your upper body slightly back and step is the same. It's like shooting towards the wall like an arrow. Next, you need to move your body in rhythm. The movements of your upper body and toes are important. You need use your toes to create thrust while you still have vertical momentum to go up the wall. At the same time, you need to lean your body forward and kick upwards. Then, when you step forward with your left foot, you need to lean back slightly to get a better grip. And you repeat that. Like this.”

Lee Jinhee swiftly dashed forward and ran up the wall of the building. Her body swayed rhythmically. Her breathtaking balance between her toes and body was beautiful.

Alexei filmed her figure with a blank expression.

Lee Jinhee, who had climbed to the top, shouted,

“This is the technique that focuses on body control. Now I’ll teach you the second method! If you are confident with your karma control, you can move karma between you and the building and grip the wall yourself. If you try hard, you can even do this.”

Lee Jinhee walked down the wall. She used her rotating karma to grip the wall. As if gravity had been reversed, she walked down the wall to the ground naturally. A few drops of sweat hung on her forehead.

“Even though I invested a lot into Control because my trait is Explosive Blood, it’s still not easy. However, those guys with the Mind’s Eye trait should have an easier time. Also, in my opinion, the best method is combining these two techniques.”

She said before going up and down the wall a few times. She used her karma to create a decent grip while performing effective movements to minimize her karma consumption.

Alexei filmed each movement with shining eyes.

After she finished her demonstration, Lee Jinhee came down and said.

“That’s enough. Stop filming.”

“No, a bit more...”

“Shush. Now you try, Lyosha.”

After refusing Alexei’s right to talk, Lee Jinhee sat on the floor. Alexei ran up and down the wall while being criticized by Lee Jinhee and had even fallen a few times due to mistakes.

Lee Jinhee grinned while she looked at him. Although he said he couldn’t be bothered to, Alexei was a talented warrior, and she enjoyed teaching him. He was cute too.

“Lyosha! You have to move your hips there! Are you going to move like that?!”

“I’ll do it again!”

“Of course you will!”

Alexei and Lee Jinhee were, in fact, quite similar. They both became Berserkers because they longed to make everyone stronger.

Of course, not everyone felt that way.



South Korea was under martial law.

To be honest, they should have already declared martial law when unknown hemispheres covered Kangdong, Seongbuk and other districts. However, it couldn't be helped but be pushed back until after the awakenees had returned because the military, including full-time reservists of the reserve forces, had all disappeared.

After the awakenees returned, and Choi Hyuk killed Song Simin's group in front of the president, the South Korean president, Shin Woojin, did his best to not fall behind global changes.

He accelerated weapon production and established a new military called the Superpower Headquarters, which was an army of awakenees consisting of the surviving military, youths with conviction, and veterans from the Alliance of Comrades in Arms.

What he had been most concerned about was establishing a system to maintain the current industry. A way to keep people working in their companies and getting people to purchase items with Korean currency. He used all his energy trying to continue their normal lifestyle. Public order, economy, diplomacy, national politics, he need consider all of them.

Once it was predicted that there would be a food crisis caused by the international drought, he used his right as a 'preliminary sovereign'. He mobilized awakenee troops to pass through a portal and created a new colonized land. He used the mission points of awakenees as currency to bring farmers, researchers, and miners over. Sometimes he would dispatch awakenee troops to protect Korean national treasures located overseas and to protect trade, which had become dangerous due to increased acts of piracy. He would either suppress internal conflicts with strength or compromise.

As it was impossible to conduct these acts under existing laws, he had activated

martial law in order to be above these laws.

And there were two results. One was, like his original motive, that he somehow maintained their daily lifestyle. The other was... dictatorship.

It was like this. Presidents served terms. However, 'sovereigns', who possessed colonized lands and were essential to human survival, were permanent positions. As long as the survival of Korea rested on Shin Woojin, who was both the president and a sovereign, absolute authority and dictatorship had become expected.

Also, the new troops Shin Woojin established did not have the culture and order that came from a long history like the original military, and because they were hastily established, they couldn't help but have problems with discipline and morals. However, because Shin Woojin needed them to maintain his authority, he didn't aggressively restrain their deviations but rather accepted a moderate level of these acts and would occasionally encourage these acts to strengthen his footing. Illegal and evasive acts were committed as an open secret.

Because of this, safety was a distant goal. Chaos continued to spread. Disharmony would spread day after day, and each day would bring about more and more absurd rumors. Despite all this, normal people still went to work, shoved food they bought from the market into their mouths, and occasionally, even enjoyed dates... but the world had changed immensely.

Bars were packed early into the night. Alexei, who had finished filming Lee Jinhee, sat in front of the bar and drank a beer. No one cared that he was underage. In a world like this, minor rules like these weren't properly upheld. This was especially the case for awakenees.

Alexei, who was drinking leisurely, poked a fellow Berserker next to him and asked.

"Hey, aren't they 'Super Soldiers^{1}'?"

Alexei pointed towards a table with three or four awakenees who were drinking and had their arms around women. The awakenee troops President Shin Woojin had established, the Superpower Headquarters. Their members shortened the name and called themselves 'Super Soldiers'.

Although the nation propagated that they were martyrs who possessed 'loyalty and patriotism'... they weren't all like that. Like how the majority of any group were more

interested in the food offered for sacrifice than the ancestral rites^{2}. The police, military, and especially the Super Soldiers benefitted a lot during these times of extreme chaos. First of all, they had a free pass in any store. It could be said that it was a very good job that allowed one to enjoy all sorts of pleasures for free.

Perhaps it was because of this, but the relationship between the Super Soldiers and Berserkers was rocky. The Super Soldiers thought they were the best in Korea and believed that everyone else had to crawl beneath them, while the Berserkers subtly looked down on them.

So, as per normal, Alexei decided to provoke the Super Soldiers. Still sitting, he raised his voice.

“Since when did Super Soldiers crawl to this area to drink alcohol?”

There were many bars near Yeouido Park that catered to awakenees, but the ‘Frontier’ pub Alexei was currently in was a bar Berserkers frequented. This was why Super Soldiers didn’t usually come here to drink.

At his provocation, the drunken Super Soldiers, who were groping the women next to them, turned around in a fit of rage. However, Alexei stared directly at them and shouted.

“It’s okay you’re drinking here, but at least pay for your drinks. Okay?”

A very drunken Super Soldier tried to jump up from his seat when he heard Alexei’s words. If the person who looked to be his superior didn’t grab his wrist and sit him down, he may have tried to start a fight.

“Sit. He’s Alexei of the Berserkers.”

When his superior whispered those words, as if spitting them out, the Super Soldier, who had been about to get up, revealed a nervous expression. Alexei was well-known as an elite amongst the Berserkers.

His excitement died down when he saw they weren’t getting up, so he continued to drink his beer.

That moment, a group of Berserkers entered through the door. Alexei raised his hand up and acted familiar.

“Lee Kijin! You came here too.”

Lee Kijin was a man with a hazy focus in his eyes. He looked around at Alexei and smiled brightly.

“Ohh! It’s Alexei.”

Lee Kijin was a Berserker who possessed a similar ability to Alexei. He was also an elite amongst the Berserkers. He was also one of the comrades Alexei was a bit competitive with.

“Did you hear the news? The Sovereign Mission carried out by the leader! You were assigned to it as well, right?”

Alexei brightly asked Lee Kijin with a ‘You’re going to the party too, right?’ tone. As someone who longed for strength, he loved fighting more than anyone else and being assigned to a great mission like the Sovereign Mission was really exciting to him.

However, Lee Kijin’s reply was gloomy unlike Alexei’s.

“Well... I was assigned. How tiring.”

As he said that, his eyes really did exude an exhausted aura.

“Ha. As someone who goes crazy in the battlefield, stop being so coy all the time.”

As this wasn’t the first time Alexei had seen him like this, he ended their greeting with a raised glass.

Lee Kijin grinned, and the group of Berserkers joined the table of Super Soldiers.

“Huh? They knew each other?”

Alexei looked at this scene with a strange look. They chatting noisily amongst themselves, and not long had passed before they got up to leave.

Alexei suddenly shouted after continuously looking at them.

“Hey! Pay before you go!”

The Super Soldiers, who were leaving in a good mood, suddenly became angry and turned around at his words. Lee Kijin consoled them. Then he shouted at Alexei.

“They are my friends. Don’t mind them!”

At his words, Alexei tightly shut his mouth. Although he personally didn’t approve of eating food for free because they had a bit of power, he didn’t want to say something to fellow comrades who had gone through life or death situations with him.

Lee Kijin smiled as if thanking Alexei, before leaving with the group.

Alexei looked at them with a sullen expression before asking another comrade next to him.

“Since when were they close with the Super Soldiers?”

His comrade didn’t seem to know as he simply shrugged his shoulders.

{1} The raws say 초능사 which is taken from 초능사령부. Although this isn’t the literal translation, I chose to use ‘Super Soldiers’ as their short version instead.

{2} I couldn’t find a good English equivalent to this. It means putting the reward before the cause.

{T\N} Alexei’s nickname has been corrected. It is Lyosha. Thanks to al103 for the correction!

CHAPTER 61

DEMON KING (2)

The death of the Sovereign of Dark Secrets, Lao Ban, caused an immense change to occur in the world. Among others, the hit to China's economy for losing one of their colonized lands, and the preparation of other sovereigns to connect colonized lands after Choi Hyuk were the most prominent.

However, there was a different burning question that was on everyone's mind.

'How strong were the Berserkers?'

They brought down the powerful and prosperous Sovereign of Dark Secrets in a single day. How strong were they?

There was speculation based on a few points.

"Lao Ban's clan was no match for them. The battle ended in an instant."

"...Screw off! Screw off! Hiiii! Don't come close!"

The people who escaped from Lao Ban's colonized lands. Those who didn't participate in the battle all claimed it was one-sided, while the participants... shivered in fear, unable to speak properly.

Although there was a problem of morals, Lao Ban's clan was famous for being incredibly wealthy and for possessing many experts. So the reactions of the survivors greatly resonated with the colonizers.

A large discussion would break out whenever colonizers gathered.

"It's an exaggeration. Of course, the Berserkers are good at fighting. However, they aren't that good. It was one-sided because they were attacked unexpectedly, completely unprepared for it. When fighting, one strike is enough if you're caught off guard."

"Hey. Even if you say that, look at the numbers. Even if you count every Berserker, they

barely number 20 thousand, but Lao Ban has more than 80 thousand! And if you include the small subordinate clans operating in his cities, they easily number 150 thousand. So, let's assume only 80 thousand could be mobilized immediately. But, the number of Berserkers who participated in this expedition may at most be 5 thousand. 5 thousand vs 80 thousand. No matter how unexpected it was, isn't it ridiculous that they were able to sweep through cities with just that?"

"That's because Lao Ban and his important executives had already been ambushed away from the cities. They obviously wouldn't be able to face the Berserkers without a proper line of command after the clan itself was wiped out."

"Hey... hey. I met some Berserkers on a previous outer space mission, okay? They are no joke."

"Really? My friend was drunk and got into an argument with one. He said he could take them?"

"The hell he could. He was probably beat up. Those who haven't fought against a Berserker need to shut up."

"But, Alexei of the Berserkers? I saw some of the videos he posted, and while they were good, they weren't that good? To be honest, Jessie's clan has better techniques on Youtube."

"Ah geez... Do you think those videos and fighting are the same? Those Berserkers are real beasts. Let's say two sides have the same specs, right? Then the Berserkers' side will undoubtedly win. Honestly, aren't Berserkers the strongest in real combat?"

"That is something we'll only know once they fight."

The word 'Colonizer' was used to define warriors who had awakened karma and fought in colonized lands and outer space missions. However, when used in a more general sense, 'colonizer' encompassed a wider variety, as not everyone who awakened karma became warriors, in fact, warriors were the minority.

Those who worked in primary industries, producing food and minerals, workers in secondary industries, processing these raw materials, researchers, and even merchants who went around to various colonized lands to buy and sell products. These non-combative workers made up a significant portion of colonizers.

Because they too had to go through forced missions in the beginning, around half of them could be considered combat ready. However, once the colonization had passed a certain point, the number of forced missions noticeably dropped, and even if they were occasionally assigned to forced mission, it became possible to be exempted from them if they paid a certain amount of Mission Points. The number of colonizers, who worked in production, increased significantly since then. They would sell their wares to buy Mission Points, and then use those points to be exempt from forced missions.

So these production colonizers were usually the ones who collected a great deal of information as they went to and from different territories, and amongst them, merchants collected the most. Combat colonizers usually wouldn't leave their bases often, and because of this, there weren't many cases of them fighting against each other.

This was why it was difficult to come to a consensus on the Berserkers.

Eventually, the majority opinion was that 'While Berserkers are strong, wasn't this case an exception due to various fortunes and tactics aligning with each other?'

"Still, I heard the Berserk Sovereign was strong beyond imagination."

"Beyond imagination? Then are his main stats at the mid-4-star level?"

"Like hell they are. Probably around 3 of his stats just reached 4-star. Maybe one of them is close to mid-4-star level."

"Yeah, it's a bit much to assume all his main stats are at the mid-4-star level. Even the strongest expert, Jessie, only recently got his second stat to 4-star."

"But there are rumors that the Berserk Sovereign already had 3-star stats on his first mission, 2 years ago."

"Pfft, no fucking way."

"Really. They even say he singlehandedly killed the last boss of <Survive and Escape>."

"Yeah, I heard that's true."

"Hey. Even if that's true. You know, it becomes almost heinous to increase karma later on."

On top of that, there wasn't a proper evaluation of Choi Hyuk's fighting abilities.



Choi Hyuk was sitting face-to-face with Lieutenant Colonel Lee Kangjin^[1]. In Choi Hyuk's eyes, Lt. Col Lee Kangjin was emitting a white (goodwill) light.

Lt. Col Lee Kangjin was one of the influential figures in the Superpower Headquarters.

Although Choi Hyuk didn't remember, he had coincidentally saved him from getting killed by Deer Antlers, Keushisuit.

Since then, Lt. Col Lee Kangjin wanted to maintain a good relationship with the Berserkers. The reason for him coming here today was the same.

"We noticed some rebellious movements."

Lt. Col Lee Kangjin got straight to the point.

"The loyal followers under Lao Ban's immediate command and the groups, who had lost their workplace in a single morning because the colonized lands had been shut down, are targeting you."

Choi Hyuk figured something out from Lee Kangjin's words.

"We actually received requests asking us to allow them to continue to do business there once I received Lao Ban's authority."

"What was your reply?"

"Since they sent their pawns, we didn't kill them, and instead sent them on their way after cutting off one of their arms."

After listening to Choi Hyuk's story, Lee Kangjin understood why these merchants were trying to kill Choi Hyuk.

"Hu... How direct."

Lee Kangjin, who had momentarily blanked out at Choi Hyuk's brutal answer, continued with a serious tone.

“However, the problem isn’t simple. Colonizers, who used Lao Ban’s slave market, may even target you. And there may be... I’m sorry to say this... but there may be traitors from within the Berserkers.”

Colonizers from other groups... And traitors... Choi Hyuk showed interest in those words. Lee Kangjin calmly explained.

“They simply didn’t do it as openly as Lao Ban, but there were sovereigns who secretly ran slave markets, and those who did business with products they received from Lao Ban. They will feel greatly threatened by your actions. And...”

Lee Kangjin momentarily paused before almost spitting these words out.

“There are drugs.”

“Drugs?”

Choi Hyuk asked in a doubtful voice. This was because normal drugs had almost no effect on colonizers who had restructured their bodies with karma. Even the purest drugs in existence had no effect on colonizers.

“Yes. It’s a new drug that makes you sensitive to karma. They say it is secretly being supplied through slave markets. Although we don’t know exactly how they make it, there’s no doubt that it is a technique that followers under Lao Ban’s immediate command manage. From what I’ve figured out, it seems the scope of addicts is quite large. Although I’m embarrassed to say this, but even amongst the Super Soldiers... I feel there will be a significant number of addicts. There’s a very likely chance they may be requested to assassinate you under the pretext of receiving a supply of drugs.”

Lee Kangjin spoke with a serious tone while Choi Hyuk’s eyes shined in interest.

“This doesn’t seem easy.”

Drugs couldn’t help but become bestsellers. For there to be a drug that works on colonizers who lived through combat hell and the nightmares of loss day after day. For there to be a drug that works on colonizers when even alcohol and tobacco had no effect.

They may even be able to win Berserkers over. Choi Hyuk grinned.

“How exciting. Betrayal...”

He had always thought of this after Jung Minji had died from betrayal. Things that could destroy a strong existence in an instant. Betrayal. Mutiny. ‘Their blades can target you at any time.’ Choi Hyuk always bore that in mind. And that moment had really come...

“Betrayal...”

For some reason, his heart started beating.



Berserker Lee Kijin blew smoke.

“Hooooo...”

They were in a rooftop lounge that had been remodeled from a pool at a luxury hotel. The ceiling and walls were made of glass, and, with the pool as the center, a bar and a dark, remote room were arranged. It was an accommodation with a great view overlooking the Han River. The inside was currently filled with thick fog-like smoke.

The smoke wasn't as thick as tobacco smoke, a bit more transparent, and it was smooth like vapor. The smell wasn't that potent, it was like an aroma, pungent yet sweet. Simply smelling this scent made one feel better.

“Haa... It feels good...”

Sitting at the bar, Lee Kijin took another breath of smoke before downing a bottle of strong whiskey.

“Keuu...”

Lee Kijin's body shivered pleasantly.

It was a drug called ‘Water Fog’. This drug, supplied by the Lao Ban clan, was rolled up and smoked like cigarettes. Only, it didn't burn with fire but rather with karma. Perhaps it was because of this, but it did have an effect on bodies protected by karma. In fact, while you were smoking Water Fog, your karma's defense would drop enough that you could get slightly drunk.

‘Although there may be colonizers who have never smoked Water Fog, there are no colonizers who’ve only smoked it once.’

This was a popular line between them.

Lee Kijin couldn’t help but agree 100%. After becoming a colonizer, the only time he felt happy was when he was smoking Water Fog.

“Haa... But... what did you say?”

Lee Kijin, who was happily enjoying the lingering sensation, suddenly focused his hazy eyes and stared at the bartender. The bartender’s expression didn’t change as he repeated his words.

“Please cooperate with us in eliminating the Berserk Sovereign.”

Lee Kijin’s lips fell limp. Then he smiled.

“You want me to die?”

“That’s not it. We will create a careful plan with our best warriors.”

“The best warriors? Who? Is even that team leader of the Super Soldiers over there joining as well?”

“Of course.”

The bartender confidently nodded his head. However, Lee Kijin’s smile became even thicker. He smiled to the point where his wrinkles covered his eyes. With that expression, he said.

“Hehe, what a load of bull.”

“Pardon?”

“Hehe, fuck... who’s going to kill who?”

At his words, the bartender and the surrounding Super Soldiers’ moods turned sour. Yet, Lee Kijin didn’t care in the slightest. The other Berserkers, who accompanied Lee Kijin here, were smiling as well. The bartender thought that this was most definitely

not a positive sign.

“Are you more loyal than we thought?”

The bartender muttered bitterly. Then he needed to get rid of them. However, Lee Kijin sneered at him.

“Puha... What loyalty. It just doesn’t make sense. Who’s going to kill who? Choi Hyuk? You guys? Puahahaha...”

“Puhehehe...”

“Kikik.”

The other Berserkers couldn’t contain their laughter anymore. After laughing for a while, Lee Kijin said.

“You guys are misunderstanding something.”

Lee Kijin slowly stood up and placed his hand on his sword. The mood became vicious in an instant. The Super Soldiers sitting around the bar, the guests who were smoking Water Fog, and even the administrators, approximately 30 in total, stood up one after another.

Lee Kijin stared at the various faces surrounding him before spitting on the ground.

“You guys... Do you even know what Berserkers are? Let alone Choi Hyuk... You guys can’t even take the three of us on.”

He said as he unsheathed his sword.

Once he had unsheathed his sword, like a domino effect, everyone raised their weapons. Metallic sounds rippled out.

That moment, Lee Kijin disappeared from their sight. A speed their eyes couldn’t keep up with.

Slice!

“Kaaahh!”

The Super Soldier, who had stared at Alexei in the afternoon, had his arm sliced off.

“Die, bastards. Die.”

Stab. Stab.

It was like a magical scene. Even if they excluded Lee Kijin, whom they couldn't match in speed, they couldn't block the other Berserkers' strikes even though they didn't seem very fast. As if they were peeling an orange or eating a live octopus, they didn't hurry as they neutralized their opponents' defenses and stabbed their arms and legs.

Lee Kijin, who had acted first and neutralized his opponents' elites, said while leisurely cutting the tendons of other guests and stationed bodyguards.

“We could take a dozen of you on with similar specs, but what to do when there's also a difference in specs?”

The difference between their specs was fine, but the difference between their fighting experience was too large. In the past 2 years, even if they compared themselves to groups who completed as many missions as they could, the Berserkers completed at least double their missions. Especially due to those who chased after fights with their 'Combat Addict' fate, the Berserkers specialized in dogfights and close fights.

A small-scale fight in a small area with no commanders. On top of that, their opponents were Lee Kijin, a top elite of the Berserkers, and the other two who were also elites.

Puddles of blood flowed down and dyed the pool red.

Of course, the Berserkers weren't completely fine. They had wounds in various places and were panting. However, Berserkers would usually start fighting properly from this point. Since the level of 'intense combat' was quite high. These wounds and Stamina consumption were only a warmup for Berserkers.

“Hey, bartender.”

Lee Kijin grabbed the collar of the bartender collapsed on the floor and lifted him up. His voice sounded oddly happy. Like a 'Combat Addict', he had become refreshed after a bout of fighting.

Lee Kijin grinned.

“So what. You’re saying you will provide an unlimited supply of drugs or whatever if we cooperate in killing Choi Hyuk? Right?”

“Th... That’s right. Ah, no, sorry.”

The bartender was trembling as he barely replied. No, he didn’t know how to reply. He couldn’t tell what exactly was going on in the minds of these druggies.

He asked them because he believed he could win them over, but they suddenly wielded their swords. His voice was currently friendly. Then how should he reply? Should he apologize for the blasphemous conspiracy, or should he ask them to cooperate by offering even more?

The bartender could only tremble.

Lee Kijin grinned and relaxed his grip on the bartender. He slowly stood up. It seemed one of the glass walls had shattered during their fight as a cool breeze ruffled through his hair.

The effects of the drug and the excitement from the battle still remained. And a cool breeze. Lee Kijin enjoyed this moment.

‘To the point where I want to just die like this.’

Behind the momentary happiness, a bottomless futility approached him. It was the same ever since that day with the <Ring of Rebirth>. Without the effects of the drug, without the excitement of battle, the daily life he faced... was always unbearably horrible.

He was only alive because he couldn’t die. No, perhaps it was because he wanted to die. He might have joined the Berserkers as a means of suicide.

Perhaps it was because of this. Lee Kijin unknowingly declared.

“I’ll help you. For my last opponent to be Choi Hyuk... That’s not so bad.”

It was exciting simply thinking about it. Though he would probably die. But he felt even more excited. Dying while fighting that monster? His comrades showed surprised expressions at first, but they too nodded their heads in understanding.

Amongst the Berserkers, there were many who had no attachment to life and were semi-insane. And they were druggies on top of that. This meant they were complete lunatics.

“Still, create a good plan so I don’t die too futilely. See you next time.”

Lee Kijin waved his hand as he left the hotel with his comrades.

Leaving bloody footprints and sounds of moaning behind them.

[1] Do you guys remember the military guy introduced in Ch 40? I do, and so does the SoJ ‘Dead or Alive’ List, where we keep track of whether a character is dead, alive or unsure! But besides this shameless promotion, he’s the military guy who eventually killed the cocoon at the last moment and lived.

CHAPTER 62

DEMON KING (3)

The only path to humanity's survival – Colonization. Although becoming a colonizer was dangerous, there were many young men and women who wanted to become colonizers. Like the young, penniless colonizers who crossed over to the New World, and like the outlaws who roamed the West, many left the world of civilization behind and headed towards the colonized lands, sword in hand. On top of that, wasn't it 'outer space'? It was a suitable place to act on impulse when you broke up with your lover and the word 'outer space' was enough to boil the blood of people for no reason.

Those who were determined on becoming colonizers would normally either take a test to enter a clan or buy Mission Points with money to move to Dragonic. This aspect was very different from the first awokenees who had no choice but to become colonizers.

That was why Lumin was saying this today again.

“What I'm saying is that being a colonizer is nothing compared to the past.”

Did kids these days know what suffering was? Even without saying, it felt like they could hear the bragging coming from within his heart.

Like most clan leaders, Lumin was also one of the first awokenees. The generation who became colonizers after overcoming more vicious fights than anyone. He had achieved a few feats within that hell and obtained '2/3 Qualifications to be a Sovereign', becoming a Leader of Ten Thousand, the clan leader of the 'Lumin Clan'.

That was why he was calm while everyone else was nervous. He was saying those words, how becoming a colonizer wasn't anything, in an attempt to cheer up his clan members.

Although Lumin's new recruits felt that his words were a bit cocky, they were also strangely reassured by them.

Their clan leader, Lumin, sat his butt on the rampart and confidently said,

“Don’t worry; you’re not going to die. I survived through worse conditions than this.”

His composed figure, even with the growing number of monsters outside the rampart, was brazen but also felt reliable.

The Lumin Clan was a skilled, mid-sized clan. They considered themselves as one of Lao Ban’s subordinate clans and were active in his capital city, ‘Zhiyu’. It was also a profit-oriented clan that surrendered immediately once Choi Hyuk captured ‘Zhiyu’ a few days ago.

The hot springs city ‘Pyungryu’, the mining city ‘Wanwu’, the farming city ‘Yeshi’, and the capital city ‘Zhiyu’, whose market had developed so much that it was known as ‘the market of all things’, had all fallen under Choi Hyuk in an instant. Amongst them, there were mid and small-sized clans that confronted Choi Hyuk out of loyalty towards Lao Ban, and some, like Lumin, who immediately backed out, saying they never had that kind of relationship. Choi Hyuk left the clans who backed out intact. Not only that, but he even ordered them to manage the city for the time being.

To be honest, his actions weren’t very understandable. Choi Hyuk didn’t come with enough soldiers to safely occupy the four cities in the first place, and immediately left the cities after capturing them. After telling the surrendered clans that they would be back, all the Berserkers headed towards their capital city, Barhaloleun, before returning to Earth.

In reality, the four cities were left alone in a state of anarchy.

Within these cities, the mid and small sized clans began a bout of wits. To swallow the cities for themselves? That was impossible. If Choi Hyuk inherited Lao Ban’s authority, then they would be deported without even being able to fight. Then, there were two remaining choices. Either obediently manage the city, or flee and look for another colonized land.

Each of them did their own calculations and eventually around half stayed while the other had left the cities. The clans that remained were usually those that yearned to revive themselves in a city with fewer competitors, rather than finding a new foothold in a different colonized land teeming with competitors.

However, the problem was the monsters.

“The fight must have been noisy for monsters to swarm into the city territories...”

Perhaps it was because of the noise and the scent of blood.

A few days after Choi Hyuk left, the number of monsters gathering around the cities started to increase. At first, it was 'I see some?' to 'There's a lot of them?' and now, a week later, there were enough to call them an army.

Yet, they normally wouldn't fear them. They had thick ramparts as well as the blessing of the Territory Pyramid that weakened the abilities of monsters and strengthened the abilities of allies.

However, now that the position of the sovereign was vacant since Lao Ban's death, the Territory Pyramid stopped functioning. They had to fight the monsters without buffs. This was the reason why they couldn't help but resolve themselves on top of the ramparts.

It was to the point where clans, who decided on leaving late, stayed. However, Lumin was still confident.

"This place is our hometown. If we leave once, we will have to forever live as fellows without a base. Just erase the thought of running away. And don't worry! You won't die. The Berserk Sovereign said so. That he would return after inheriting Lao Ban's authority. You know that those monsters out there are nothing if the Territory Pyramid functions again, right?"

It would be fine if the Territory Pyramid functioned. They only needed to endure until then. The goal he proposed ignited the fighting spirits of his clan members since it was a more realistic goal than trying to block all the monsters.

Then all that remained was in the Berserk Sovereign's hands.

'Hey, Berserk Sovereign. No, Mr. Berserk Sovereign. I don't know what it is, but finish it quickly and return...'

Even Lumin's heart was burning with urgency.



The reason why Choi Hyuk suddenly withdrew was, in fact, because of the Sovereign Mission.

{Sovereign Mission}

Complete the dimensional transmission and obtain the code that can lift the dimensional isolation. Among the three dimensionally isolated areas, Kangdong, Mapo, and Seongbuk, release one and annihilate the monsters dominating within.

It was a mission with a time limit and one that also took place on Earth. It was a situation where Choi Hyuk, who prioritized inheriting the sovereign's authority, couldn't help but quickly withdraw. Once he returned to Korea, Choi Hyuk immediately issued a draft for Berserkers and put the Berserkers, who returned from space missions, on standby at their headquarters. 12,000 soldiers could be recruited. This was the largest soldier recruitment since the formation of the Berserkers. The deciding day was tomorrow.

Since he was recruiting within Seoul, he had already discussed it with President Shin Woojin. Shin Woojin had introduced him to nearby civilians and actively promised to cooperate with the Berserkers for food supplies and other problems.

Although there were frequent disputes between Berserkers and Super Soldiers, Shin Woojin and Choi Hyuk's relationship was amicable. In reality, in Shin Woojin's perspective, nothing good would come from being on Choi Hyuk's bad side.

Though he was still the president, due to his recent dictatorship, his political legitimacy had fallen greatly. Only, he still had the support of the military and colonizers because of the crumbs he could give them, and with their support as his foundation, he was able to give citizens the minimum level of safety, not completely lose his popularity, and obtain political power. But to get on the bad side of Choi Hyuk, who was known as a mythical existence among Korean colonizers, in that situation? The military power of the Berserkers was already frightening, but there was no doubt that the reactions of other colonizers, due to this, wouldn't be soft. If the political situation became that chaotic, then even hearts of the citizens would leave him.

The president had even acknowledged the current fighting-oriented colonizers', the members of large and small clans, exercisable rights. Because their support was his most important political foundation, he usually let their commotions and unlawful acts slide as long as they weren't too severe. He especially paid no attention to disputes amongst colonizers. He had already decided on this policy the moment Choi Hyuk sliced Song Simin's head during the dinner party.

Since he treated regular clans that way, it was obvious he would treat the Berserkers, who were a sovereign clan, even better. On top of that, Shin Woojin was already greatly indebted to Choi Hyuk.

It was successfully colonizing his first territory which made him a sovereign. If it wasn't for the apt advice from Baek Seoin, whom Choi Hyuk sent, Shin Woojin would never have become a sovereign.

There were 39 people who made up the first sovereign group. They were all strong, becoming sovereigns after accomplishing amazing achievements. However, there were only 13 still alive today. 26 had died. Although there were some who died during outer space missions, or while expanding their territories, but 17 of them had died during their first colonization. They made up the majority of deaths. The first colonization was simply that difficult.

There were currently 41 sovereigns. Among them, 11 had accomplished new achievements and became sovereigns, and 17 leaders of various countries succeeded in colonizing a land and became sovereigns. Only 17... The Giant Orc Karik had granted the leaders of each country the status of 'preliminary sovereign'. There were hundreds of them. Since only 17 of them had succeeded in their first colonization, one could once again realize just how difficult the first colonization was.

In fact, even those from developed countries, like the prime minister of England and president of France, had died during their first colonization. Although, strangely, the Queen of England succeeded and had become a sovereign.

Anyways, the reason why Shin Woojin was able to succeed in such a difficult colonization was because of Baek Seoin's unsparing advice. The composition of soldiers. Quality and formation of soldiers as well as tactics. Shin Woojin had consulted Baek Seoin on all of these and was able to safely succeed in his first colonization.

Because of this precedent, the relationship between Choi Hyuk and Shin Woojin couldn't help but be amicable. In the very least, Choi Hyuk was still useful to Shin Woojin. It was the same for this 'Sovereign Mission'. Wasn't this a mission that he may eventually have to take? There was nothing bad in watching it beforehand.

Due to President Shin Woojin's wholehearted support, preparations for the Sovereign Mission, which would be held in the middle of Seoul, was going smoothly despite the

urgency.

Choi Hyuk had decided to release the Seongbuk District's dimensional isolation. Yes, Seongbuk. This was why he was feeling restless the night before the Sovereign Mission.

He left the dormitory and was walking alone. The dormitory of the Berserkers was simply called so, but it was, in fact, a luxurious apartment complex in Yeouido.

Choi Hyuk quietly walked along the well-tended garden and wide streets. Yeouido Xi apartments stood tall. Although it wasn't possible for all 20,000 Berserkers to live here, those who were considered elites all lived here. No living costs. Choi Hyuk took that burden for his followers.

Where did this money come from? He was a sovereign with colonized lands. Each passage to his colonized lands was taxed. Every business transaction within his territory was taxed. And Earth's economy was restructuring to become more reliant on resources from colonized lands. This... was a structure where even a three-year-old child could build a fortune, let alone Choi Hyuk.

“Money, power, how great...”

When he thought about how this vast apartment complex solely belonged to him, he felt odd. This wasn't a level of power that could be achieved simply through money.

Although he paid more than the market price, it wasn't like he was buying a house but an entire apartment complex, so there was no way things would go as he wished. People were bound to be unable to leave due to certain circumstances no matter how much money he paid. Also, because it was already an apartment complex the rich lived, it wasn't possible to solve everything with money...

But, the 'Yeouido Colonizer City Special Law' was created. It was a bizarre law that made it so that if a clan offered to buy a property above market price and if the property wasn't owned by a clan, then the owner would have no choice but to sell their property and leave. My god.

...It was times like these when dictatorship was good. As long as you were friends with the dictator, of course.

There were rumors about how Baek Seoin, who disliked unjust acts of power, went to

each of the original owners and gave them additional compensation and apologized with an awkward expression, but Choi Hyuk was happy. Since he was already overflowing with money, he gave Baek Seoin a bonus to make up for his loss.

Power to do almost anything you wished...

The more he appreciated it, the angrier he became. He wasn't someone who could use this power properly. He was someone who was more suited to destroying something than creating it.

Of course, when his mother was still alive, he wanted to become someone who created things. Although he liked the unmatched thrill of fighting, a peace that calmed his emotions wasn't bad either. Those days, he would normally read books about design and architecture. However, that was already a world he had separated from.

The buildings, pictures, and design products... he now had the power to buy all of them. However, he no longer needed them. Since it wasn't him who could achieve something with them, but his mother.

However, his mother was gone, and he was alone.

So he decided on Seongbuk District to be the location he would conduct the Sovereign Mission in. The place where his mother had died.

"That bastard known as the Flaming Devil... Would it still be there?"

The monster that killed his mother. The monster that was the same rank as the Wyvern of Destruction. Seongbuk District which was blocked by the opaque dimensional isolation wall.

Choi Hyuk sincerely wished to meet the Flaming Devil.

"Of course it'll be there. But you need to be careful. Because that bastard should only be a small fry now. The monsters in there aren't normal. They might even be able to see your mind."

He suddenly heard a familiar voice. Choi Hyuk couldn't help but be surprised. As if it was morning, it brightened up behind him. He turned around.

"Flame-Rain...?"

“Long time.”

Her face was still covered by a rippling flame veil.

“...You can come to Earth?”

“Of course. This place is also part of the Flame Wing Alliance. Although you haven’t officially joined.”

“...You call that a reply... Anyways, your motive?”

As expected, Flame-Rain didn’t give him a proper reply. From what Choi Hyuk knew, lowest ranked warriors didn’t have the qualifications to enter other warrior’s homelands. He had never even heard of this.

But Flame-Rain acted as if this was obvious.

In fact, there was one thing he was certain of. Flame-Rain was not a lowest ranked warrior.

‘There’s no way she is. Since she’s that strong.’

Even though Choi Hyuk had become stronger, he was still unable to estimate Flame-Rain’s abilities. All he knew was that she was undetectably strong.

Then what was she? He had once straightforwardly asked her, ‘What is your identity?’ However, because she replied with a ‘Let’s see. Guess?’ nonsense, he never asked questions like that again.

“How heartless. I just wanted to congratulate you. I heard rumors that after this Sovereign Mission, they will decide the advancement evaluation for earthlings. They were divided, some being for and against it, and they very narrowly passed it. I think they said something about deciding after seeing the results of your Sovereign Mission?”

Where did she hear these rumors from? The question, ‘What is your identity?’ once again crept up his throat, but he pushed it down.

“So?”

“What do you mean so? I’m saying that’s how it is. Hmm... Want me to give you a hint? They say that they are going to test your control and command in this Sovereign Mission... How about it, are you confident?”

“Control? Command? I don’t know but... Who knows... In the very least, I’m not afraid of opponents I don’t know.”

As if she was pleased with his reply, Flame-Rain giggled.

“Kik. Okay. If it’s you, you will do well. Still, don’t let your guard down. The stronger monsters aren’t simply powerful fools. How elaborately and wickedly they destroy intelligent beings... Remember that sometimes knocking everything down with your sword may not be everything.”

It was like a riddle. Choi Hyuk’s judgment became distorted.

“If you’re going to give me a hint, give a proper one or don’t distract me and leave.”

At his sharp reaction, Flame-Rain showed an exaggerated gesture as if saying ‘Wow! Fiery!’ and stepped back. Then she calmly changed the mood.

“Sorry, sorry. To be honest, I don’t know much either. I only brought this up as an excuse... I honestly wanted to come to your homeland once.”

She pushed her two palms out in apology.

Choi Hyuk was silent.

Unconcerned, Flame-Rain spread her arms momentarily as she looked up at the sky. Tall buildings, and the moon which rose between them. A few stars that had been covered by the city lights.

“Beautiful... As expected, your homeland is as well.”

She said with a faint voice, staring into the sky as if piercing into outer space.

Choi Hyuk stared at her before letting out a sigh.

“Haa... Okay. Still, since you’ve come a long way, have a cup of coffee before you go.”

Then he swiftly turned around and left the complex. Flame-Rain quickly followed behind him. Choi Hyuk was bothered by the flames trailing behind her and turned around.

“It’s bothersome, put it out.”

“Don’t worry. I look like a normal person to other people.”

“Why can’t you do that to me too? My eyes hurt.”

“Ah, but what’s coffee?”

Completely ignoring Choi Hyuk, she walked with hurried steps, looking somewhat excited.

CHAPTER 63

DEMON KING (4)

The day of the Sovereign Mission.

The whole world was focused on Marronnier Park. Facts about the Sovereign Mission had already been widely spread. Observing the park, outside the civilian restricted area set up by the military, were curious colonizers and scouts from each sovereign.

What would they do if Choi Hyuk succeeded his mission? Be wary of him? Ally with him? Ignore him? What kind of change would occur in their forces? Colonizers were alert with their sharp senses, keeping each other in check.

Amongst them, there was Richard who was known as the 'Sovereign of Balance'. Other colonizers would chatter amongst each other when they coincidentally sighted him.

"The Sovereign of Balance? The Sovereign of Balance personally came here?"

Everyone couldn't help but become surprised at Richard's, a distinguished sovereign's, appearance.

"It's a bit... embarrassing. Other places sent their followers here while our sovereign personally moved."

Richard's aide, Leah, mumbled. Richard, who was a clean, bearded middle-aged man, gave an easygoing smile.

"You already know. The reason why I'm like this."

"I know. He's an important figure. Someone who Richard personally needs to check."

"Right."

Richard leisurely smiled and turned to look at Choi Hyuk who stood at the head of the Berserkers.

"So what's the verdict?"

Leah's eyes shined, seemingly curious. She asked in a slightly lower voice,

"Do we kill him? Or let him live?"

However, Richard didn't look at Leah, only staring at Choi Hyuk.

"Amazing."

This was his reply after a long silence.



Giant letters appeared above the opaque dome which covered the entire Seongbuk District.

<Searching dimensions. Wait 10 minutes.>

These words that were updated in real-time were slowly counting down and soon, the mission was announced.

{Sovereign Mission}

Dimensional transmission in progress. Starting now, participants of the mission may enter the dimensionally isolated area. You will only obtain the code after annihilating the pursuing monsters. Once you activate the code, dimensional isolation will be released. If you fail, the dimension will explode.

Choi Hyuk, who had finished reading the mission briefing, nodded his head.

"So, basically, I just need to annihilate them?"

Then, there was no need to waste any more time.

"Enter! Wipe them out!"

At his command, 12,000 Berserkers leaped into the opaque wall at once.

The Berserkers moved in troops. Troops of a thousand Berserkers moved systematically as they alternated between infiltration, attack, and support. With cognitive abilities beyond that of humans', they comprehended the situation and

communicated with each other. Charging without the slightest hesitation was the base of the Berserkers' tactics. However-

“What the- Why are you stopping?”

The moment they passed through the dimensionally isolated wall and stepped into Seongbuk District, the Berserkers unknowingly stopped. Those who jumped in after and hit the person in front of them grumbled, but they stopped in their place as well.

The scene in front of them was simply shocking.

“...It's not Earth?”

This place wasn't Seongbuk District. No, it didn't seem like it was Earth at all.

Their first impression of the place was that it resembled more of a garbage landfill than a ruin. Countless broken machines were piled up into a mountain.

“Wh-what do we do?”

The Berserkers, who originated from Seongbuk District, were even more shocked. They vividly remembered escaping this place two years ago, yet, no matter how they looked at it, there were no similarities between Seongbuk District and this place.

Although they did feel it was strange that the opaque wall was called the 'dimensionally isolated wall'... They never thought that it was a completely different dimension. Then where did Seongbuk District go?

While a quiet confusion took hold of the Berserkers, Choi Hyuk silently clipped up the mountain of broken machines. He had already activated Mind's Eye to its greatest potential. His whole body was emitting a blue hue. He was calm. From the beginning, whether this place was Earth or not was outside his concerns. He was only interested in what kind of monsters were here.

The edges of his senses felt a savage power. He ran up to the summit and searched for the ones that were shaking his senses.

No, he didn't need to look for them. He could clearly see them.

At a glance, they looked like humans. One head and a pair of arms and legs. However,

their waists were long like ferrets, and they had long, sharp claws. They were approximately triple the size of a human. Their heads were long on both ends, and fangs filled their large, open mouths. White, long tissue, that looked to be either a bandage or their flesh, covered their eyes. The moment Choi Hyuk's eyes landed on them, the name 'eyeless observers' came to mind. He didn't know why, but it seemed that this was the name of these monsters he was seeing for the first time.

The eyeless observers surrounded a white building that looked to be a fortress, and crooks, mountain orcs, bladed starving ghosts, and other monsters he had seen plenty of in Kangdong District were surrounding them like clouds as if escorting them.

When Choi Hyuk spotted them, they too spotted him.

{Keeeeh!}

Amongst the eyeless observers, the largest one with the most savage karma roared in Choi Hyuk's direction. The air reverberated.

{Kueeeehhh!!}

As if stimulated by its roar, hundreds of thousands of monsters cried out at the same time. A few hundred thousand pairs of eyes all looked towards Choi Hyuk.

Rumble!

Hundreds of thousands of monsters ran on the ground. The vibrations even reached where Choi Hyuk was standing, and mountains of broken devices trembled as some rolled down.

The monsters dashed forward. And Choi Hyuk's eyes fixated on the 'Flaming Devil' instead of the 'eyeless observers' that were controlling the monsters. The monster that caused his mother to die, the Flaming Devil. It was a 'Wyvern of Destruction' level monster in Seongbuk District.

'Let's see.'

It had a horn and a tail. The Flaming Devil had flames akin to a lion's mane beginning from its horn. Whether looking at its appearance or spirit, it was the Flaming Devil. A fierce smile hung on Choi Hyuk's lips.

Screech! Clank!

Karma filled the Predator's Blade like a storm. The body of the Predator's Blade distorted intensely as it was unsheathed. An ear-piercing metallic sound resounded as the sheath and the blade, both filled with karma, slid against each other.

It was Choi Hyuk's unique battle cry that initiated combat. Strictly speaking, it wasn't a cry, but rather the grandiose sound of him unsheathing his sword... Either way, the Berserkers knew the meaning behind this sound better than anyone.

"Woahh!!"

The battle cry of the Berserkers followed behind Choi Hyuk's.

"Let's go."

There was no need for detailed tactical commands for the Berserkers. Each troop chose their target and judged where to evade, and if a larger scale cooperation was needed, they would follow the tactics of the captain-ranked troops. If an even greater strength was needed, they would follow the tactics of the director-ranked troops.

Because Berserkers used actions rather than words to command, the commanders always took the lead. Only those who won tens of these crazy battles were divided into the elites and top elites, and they could become captains and directors.

The Berserkers stepped on the broken machines and began their charge. Questions about where this place was or where Seongbuk District went had already been clearly wiped from their minds.

Only thoughts of fighting remained.

{Kiiiiieek!}

Crunch!

The moment the Berserkers dived between the monsters, black blood began to fall like heavy rain. It was the Berserker's one-sided slaughter. The results were obvious considering the Berserkers possessed 2, 3-star stats while the monsters normally had 1-star stats and mid-bosses had 2-star stats, same as before.

Choi Hyuk was forging a highway between the monsters. Only slashing sideways. Left to right, right to left, he didn't need any technique. He simply extended his Karma Blade and, like a car windshield wiper wiping away raindrops, he erased the monsters. Choi Hyuk's speed was too fast for the monsters to react.

He only thought of one thing as he ran.

'Flaming Devil... How should I kill it?'

In his heart, he wanted to first start by ripping it apart. However, if he ripped it apart, wouldn't it simply die like that? It was quite the dilemma.

Also, when the Flaming Devil saw Choi Hyuk running crazily towards him, it revealed its flaming fangs and-

Started to run away.

'Huh?'

Choi Hyuk was momentarily stunned to the point of forgetting to run. A monster fled? Monsters normally considered intelligent beings as being their absolute enemies and showed endless hostility towards them. A monster like that fled? Before fighting? He had never imagined something like this.

'A monster? Fled?'

That moment, the counterattack of the monsters began.

"Huh?"

A Berserker, who was charging vigorously, suddenly blankly turned around. This was unbelievable. No matter how outstanding their skills were, they couldn't drop their guard for even 0.1 seconds when fighting against monsters. But for him to blankly turn around during a battle?

Screech!

It was unsurprising for a crook's claw to rip his cheek. Fortunately, its opponent had an overwhelming Endurance stat and was able to avoid a fatal blow, although there was nothing that could be done about the bleeding from the wound on his cheek.

However, it seemed that he didn't care. He absentmindedly said,

"Yoonseo?"

It was his dead daughter's name.

These events were happening everywhere. Some foolishly stopped, while others went into a greater frenzy and jumped into the horde of monsters. The smallest team of Berserkers, the 'troops', were starting to collapse.

The unhesitant charge of the Berserkers slowed and instead, the spirited monsters intently pressed forward.

Even Choi Hyuk heard a very unpleasant sound.

{Aaaack!!}

His mother's screams.

"...So it's like that."

Choi Hyuk was able to instantly realize this was all a hallucination. His 'Mind's Eye' allowed him to look into the truth. His gaze turned towards the 'eyeless observers' that were spectating the fight. They possessed the ability to manipulate minds. From the start, he was able to know that they were called 'eyeless observers' because they had personally told him.

Their tactic was simple. Reading their opponents' minds as they pleased, and then showing them auditory or visual hallucinations that left the greatest emotional impact on them. They made their enemies waver while the monsters became more organized.

'Flame-Rain said it. That they were going to test my control and commanding abilities.'

Only now did he somewhat understand what those words meant. Weren't the Berserkers fighting a dogfight, having lost their charging formation?

'Well... They can fight their own battles.'

However, Choi Hyuk didn't care. Baek Seoin or Ryu Hyunsung would resolve these problems on their own.

It was always like this. Choi Hyuk paid no attention to the Berserkers' tactics. He simply fought at the very front. He only requested one thing from the Berserkers. The ability to survive any brutal battle. If they were Berserkers, they would survive.

As a sovereign, he promised them endless victories, not their survival. Choi Hyuk walked his own path. Those who could follow without being left behind were Berserkers.

Choi Hyuk once again concentrated on himself. He slowly turned his gaze and looked at the Flaming Devil. It fleeing was probably the eyeless observers' trap. They planned to draw Choi Hyuk, who looked the strongest, deeper so that they could finish him in an instant. As he speculated all of this, Choi Hyuk gazed at the Flaming Devil.

{Aack!}

His ears continued to ring with his mother's desperate screams, and the mouth of the Flaming Devil, the villain that killed his mother, distorted strangely as it looked at Choi Hyuk. It was definitely mocking him.

Choi Hyuk saw this and his firm mouth gave way.

Screech!

The Predator's Blade shook. It screeched as it scratched the ground.

Even though he knew the monsters' intentions, it changed nothing. A heat that seemed to burst his heart and melt his head surged from his body.

'You used my mom?'

Rage surged throughout his body. This was more provoking than his hearing being manipulated.

"Okay. Try to stop me."

Crack.

The sound of a sword being crushed sounded out from Choi Hyuk's hand.

Thud!

Choi Hyuk kicked off the ground. He shot forward in a straight line. Towards the Flaming Devil that was mocking him. That moment, Choi Hyuk decided how he would kill it.

'I'll first burn your face.'

When Choi Hyuk chased it further in, the monsters, as if waiting, jumped him at once.

Screech!

Choi Hyuk's Karma Heart pulsated like an engine. His Karma Blade, which was as dark as the depths of the ocean, extended a few meters and sliced the monsters.

Black rain fell.

{Aaahck!}

The more he advanced, the more his mother's screams stung his ears. Even though he knew it was a hallucination, his heart thumped crazily.

At a certain point, while the Flaming Devil was fleeing for its life, and monsters blocked his path, something flew and stabbed towards Choi Hyuk.

Bang!

Choi Hyuk's body was pushed back for the first time.

"What... are they?"

They were four-legged monsters with long, flexible bodies. When they opened their mouths, their spine would shoot out like a spear from within their bodies and strike Choi Hyuk's body.

Clang! Clash!

Like bees and their stingers, this was a technique they could only use once in their life. At some point, these monsters surrounded Choi Hyuk and were crazily shooting their spines at him.

Crash! Clash!

Their spines, filled with their life, were fast and strong so it was hard to block them with his Karma Blade. If he blocked two or three, the rest would fly and stab into his body. His Karma Barrier swayed as if it would break at any moment. The spines battered away, giving him no time to come to his senses.

{Kueek!}

{Keuuk!}

The sounds of them vomiting their spines covered his surroundings like a waterfall.

Danger? Yet, it wasn't to the point of being dangerous. It would take some time, but if he handled it calmly, he would be able to end it without overworking himself. However-

“Kurarah Keuk!”

Choi Hyuk saw the Flaming Devil that had stopped fleeing and was mocking him.

Choi Hyuk's lips opened. He definitely needed to burn it to death. Choi Hyuk activated the second strongest skill among the three most powerful skills he possessed. It was so difficult that he wasn't able to copy it now, even with his 4-star stats. It was one of the skills he had where he had no choice but to 'activate it automatically' while consuming a lot of karma.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

What was interesting was that these skills were all closely related to the 'Flame Wing Tribe's Karma Heart'. The instant he wished to activate the skill, his Karma Heart beat explosively. Its pressure was strong enough that, if he didn't train to make his Karma Heart stronger every day, it may have actually burst his Karma Heart. At a certain moment, after Choi Hyuk's karma had been forcefully drawn into his Karma Heart and compressed again and again,

Blaze!

Flames erupted upwards.

These flames, that were hotter and more intense than those who chose the 'Blaze' karma trait, scattered from Choi Hyuk's body like feathers.

“Flaming Wing Dance!”

The moment he said the skill name.

Blaze!

The whole world was covered in flames. Like flowers blooming, the feathers sprouted, and like wings spreading, the skin of the spine-throwing monsters surrounding him and the monsters that blocked his path all burst into flames.

The flames that sprouted everywhere returned Choi Hyuk again. The flames covered Choi Hyuk’s body and, along with his breathing, melted, fogging up his sword.

{Flaming Wing Dance}

The battle technique of the Flame Wing Tribe. Using the ‘Flame Wing Tribe’s Karma Heart’, you change the nature of your karma into an intense blaze. On activation, it creates a powerful flaming storm in your surroundings. It will improve your physical abilities for a limited time and will allow you to use techniques utilizing the blaze karma. Suitable for area attacks, and Stamina consumption is great.

It was originally a top-level skill only those at the 5-star level could use. Someone supplied a deteriorated version so that those at the lower levels could use it.

Choi Hyuk’s body disappeared instantly, only to appear in front of the Flaming Devil with a blaze.

The Flaming Devil seemed to be suffering from the heat surrounding it. Choi Hyuk grabbed its throat with his left hand. Sizzle. The sound of meat cooking was heard. The devil writhed its body in pain.

Choi Hyuk smiled. It was a pleasant moment.

“You’ve... never been burned before, have you?”

He smiled innocently as he sliced off its toes with the red-hot Predator’s Blade.

Blaze!

A transparent, clear flame sprouted from each of its sliced toes. It was different from

the thick, dark flames that covered the Flaming Devil. A high-level technique that even Choi Hyuk, with his 4-star stats, couldn't control himself. The flames of a 3-star rank monster were helpless against it. Fire swallowed fire.

{Kuaaah!}

The devil let out a desperate cry.

"I'm curious. Will there even be ashes left?"

As he said this, Choi Hyuk reached out and grabbed the Flaming Devil's face.

CHAPTER 64

DEMON KING (5)

From the outside, the dome that covered Seongbuk District was opaque, but from the inside, it was transparent. Of course, this place looked to be from outer space instead of Seongbuk District, but the sky they saw outside the dome was still the Earth's sky.

It was currently dusk.

Flames spread from Choi Hyuk's hand as though it would burn the whole world.

{Kiiiiiaahh!}

The cries of the devil, caught by Choi Hyuk, rang out continuously.

The pitiful devil used to be the nightmare of the Seongbuk District awakenees in the past. The Flaming Devil that melted cement and steel with its endless flames. The devil that was narrowly held back through Saintess Choi Miyeon's death.

However, the devil was currently crying. Its face, grasped by Choi Hyuk, had become distorted with burns.

Its cries were desperate, similar to the pleading of a person in tears. No human thought that a monster that was filled with killing intent could cry like this.

"Does it hurt? Does this hurt?"

Yet, Choi Hyuk felt its cries were insufficient. The monster that killed his mother, the monster that snickered as he heard his mother's cries, for a monster like that to cry after this much... Wasn't this boring to the point of being absurd?

"You can't be like this."

As Choi Hyuk let go, its face, where the eyes, nose, and mouth had melted together, was revealed. The devil tried to open its mouth to scream, but it wasn't able to let out a proper cry as its upper and lower lips had merged together. The sound of air escaping and its cry reverberating from its throat mixed together to sound like the

winds from hell.

Shrriieek, Guahhh!

<Flaming Wing Dance> was still activated. Other monsters didn't dare approach due to the flame-like feathers fluttering around his body.

"There's still a lot left."

Choi Hyuk grabbed the devil's leg with his left hand. Its leg burned.

{Krrrr!}

Unable to properly scream due to its burning mouth, the devil shrunk in fright. Choi Hyuk dragged it by its leg as if dragging a corpse.

Every step Choi Hyuk took would be engulfed in flames, and even the monsters that were wary from afar became enwrapped in the flames, rolling on the ground before turning to ash. In an area filled with broken machines, screams sporadically cut off and only the suppressed cries of the devil weakly continued. A strange stillness.

The sound of the devil being dragged could be heard clearly.

Thunk, thunk, thud!

The devil, which was being dragged while head-butting against piles of machines, had, at some point, become sprawled on the ground. The leg Choi Hyuk grabbed had burned and cut off. The devil was unable to endure the pain as its body flailed around on the ground.

"What the... it cut off?"

Choi Hyuk, with an unimpressed look, rubbed his hand that had turned black with ash and grabbed another leg. His steps were walking towards the 'eyeless observers'.

Choi Hyuk wanted to hear it. A collaborative song of the Flaming Devil and their screams.

"Now, now. I'll be gentle so endure for a bit longer."

To prevent the Flaming Devil from becoming dull to the pain, Choi Hyuk lowered the heat. Thunk, Thunk. The Flaming Devil, which was being dragged while striking into machines, felt a momentary coolness... and learned the unfamiliar emotions of despair and fear.



A purple color swelled up between the red sun like veins.

The Berserkers fell into a state of madness over the hallucinations and mental stimulation created by the 'eyeless observers'.

The Berserkers' characteristic boundary, which narrowly hovered between order and disorder, had disappeared, and only disorder remained. There were some who forgot themselves in the voices of their loved ones, while others jumped in after seeing hallucinations, yet, the result was the same. It was madness. The 'eyeless observers' made the Berserkers emotional, however, the emotions the majority of them possessed were only rage, despair and a madness mixed with spasmodic bursts of pleasure. The Berserkers, who were unable to resist the eyeless observers' mental attacks, simply fell into a state of madness.

However, the circumstances were the same for the Berserkers who had resisted the mental attacks. Even though they understood the monsters' tricks, they didn't care. They didn't attempt to stay calm. They didn't resist and left their bodies to fall into the madness guided by the monsters.

Why?

"Ha. Ha. Haha..."

Dispirited laughter erupted out.

The moment they lost the people dearest to them, the fear, cowardice, and longing from that day, all turned into hallucinations created by the monsters. Similar the darkness they felt the moment they were about to fall asleep and the confusion they felt when their eyes opened in the morning, the Berserkers suddenly realized. The dullness of their life that continued since that day. They who lived in a partly dream-like state after leaving everything that was beautiful behind. They who lived simply because they hadn't died. The feeling of futility in their chests that couldn't be sated after drinking rivers of blood and consuming mountains of flesh.

And the rage they felt towards the monster bastards that used these memories.

Enlightenment? Strategy, tactics?

At this moment, the majority of the Berserkers had the same thought.

“Fuck that!”

“Keaahhhhh!!”

{Keulalah!}

Monsters and Berserkers tangled together. Who was the monster, and who was the human? They were indistinguishable. Slicing with swords, ripping bones with their hands, tearing off veins and smashing heads... The Berserkers charged at the same time. Whether the monsters responded systematically or not, whether they died or not, until all the monsters were dead, until the Berserkers’ limbs were smashed apart and they died, they would restlessly press forward.

They thought,

‘Whether you die or I die, I just wish for everything to die.’

Of course, there were a few who maintained their senses.

Lee Jinhee and Bae Jinman were like that.

“Come to your senses!”

Unable to communicate. Lee Jinhee shouted as she looked at the Berserkers who scattered like tiger moths and died along with the monsters. Even if she stopped those who were running out, it would only be for an instant. Lee Jinhee felt a thorough helplessness. There was no way to stop them.

“If you continue like this, you’ll die! You crazy bastards!!!”

She shouted until her voice was hoarse, but it was useless.

Lee Jinhee looked around her. She looked for a commander who could calm this situation. Ryu Hyunsung and Baek Seoin. However, even they weren’t in their right

minds.

Ryu Hyunsung was a Berserker who ran out faster than anyone. The eyeless observers brought him panic and fear. Thus, he was unable to stop.

Although no one knew this, he had a vulnerable mind. He was weak to stress and had no hostility. He was like this since young. So, even though he possessed better sword skills than anyone else, he wasn't selected as an Olympic athlete. 'He's used for practice. He doesn't have the temperament of a victor.' That was what his coach would always say, and it was also something Ryu Hyunsung felt in his bones.

Whenever he stood in official competitions which were more bloodthirsty than hostile, he was unable to display even half of his abilities after succumbing under pressure.

That was how he lost all his chances to participate and returned to campus. Ryu Hyunsung spent his time lazily sleeping, flopped on his desk, during lectures. Though it was self-deprecating, perhaps it was because he was naturally meek, but a listless peace wasn't bad. However, when he woke up from his nap, what he saw were the blood and flesh of other students. Everything changed that day.

"Euaahhh!"

Ryu Hyunsung wanted to live. He wanted to survive. Because he did, he hid all his fear, astonishment and vulnerability deep into his heart. He jumped into terror and wielded his sword more viciously than anyone. Until that horrible feeling dulled.

Now, Ryu Hyunsung endured vicious fights better than anyone and possessed murderous intent. However, that didn't mean his true nature had completely disappeared. He still had nightmares every night. He couldn't sleep without his sword, and because he wielded his sword in his sleep, he couldn't sleep with anyone.

The 'eyeless observers' brought out the loathing that seeped out when he was asleep. As someone who possessed the 'Mind's Eye' trait, he was able to quickly resist it, but fear and astonishment couldn't be easily repressed once released. There only one solution. Like before. He would have to jump into that fear and endure. Until his sensitive senses dulled.

Ryu Hyunsung threw out his responsibilities as a commander and began to run amuck amongst the monsters. His unmatched precise and exquisite sword skills shone with

murderous ferocity.

Lee Jinhee sighed.

“Ryu hyung doesn’t look good... Baek hyung? What about Baek hyung?”

The only person she could believe in was Baek Seoin.

Baek Seoin possessed both ‘Intuition’ and ‘Mind’s Eye’. As expected, he wasn’t in a state of madness like the other Berserkers. However, he didn’t have the ability to control this situation.

He was in a state of listlessness.

“Baek hyung! Do something!”

Lee Jinhee shouted hurriedly, but Baek Seoin slowly shook his head.

“What can we do... We can’t stop this. We already remembered.”

Then, as if he suddenly remembered something, he placed his hands over his eyes and sighed.

“Haa... Fuck... Fuck this...”

The depression he usually felt when he was alone came up and wouldn’t die down.

“What do you mean there’s nothing we can do!”

Lee Jinhee became sick of this. How was it that all her supposed comrades weren’t of their right mind? Her head ached when she saw these mad Berserkers ripping into the monsters.

‘I hate this. I hate it.’

However, she couldn’t continue hating it forever.

“Haa... What do I do about Youngjin.”

It was because she knew his circumstances better than anyone else. Chu Youngjin was

literally shedding blood tears. She wasn't sure how he was using his karma, but the veins in his eyes had popped, and blood mixed with his tears. There was no doubt he was hearing the screams of Lee Hyejin, his lover.

When she knew the reason why he couldn't help but fall into a state of madness, she was distressed and heartbroken. Of course, Lee Jinhee also heard the voices she hated the most. However, she only felt disgusted, it wasn't to the point of driving her mad. Either way, she didn't lose anyone dear to her in this mess. Hadn't she left her friends and family behind to come to Seoul? Although it did seem that some of her parkour friends had died... she was only sad. It didn't drive her mad. Instead, she had actually gained good friends like Choi Hyuk, Chu Youngjin, and Baek Seoin after that day.

Lee Jinhee saw Alexei wielding his sword with sunken eyes.

“Lyosha! Lyosha! Come back! Hey! Can't you hear me?! Lyosha!”

If it was any other day, he would have come wagging his tail, but as if he couldn't hear her, he didn't even look back. He disappeared amongst the monsters.

Lee Jinhee, who was jumping up and down unable to do anything, spotted someone who still had his senses. It was Guardian Bae Jinman.

He tried his best to bring the Berserkers back to their senses. However, it was no use. Even when he granted a sense of security and solidarity with his 'Get up!', their eyes would momentarily return to normal before falling into a state of madness again. If he poured all his strength, he may be able to return one or two people to normal, but that would be useless. Also, it was difficult for Bae Jinman to approach fierce battles. Eventually, Bae Jinman was barely taking care of the Berserkers who had become mad and were injuring themselves.

Nonetheless, the madness was fierce. The Berserkers were wiping away the monsters with incredible vigor. However, unnecessary losses were just as large. Bae Jinman looked at the casualties in regret, but there was nothing he could do.

Lee Jinhee thought of something good when she saw him. She abruptly grabbed his hand.

“Guardian!”

“Yes?”

“I have a good plan! Follow me!”

The place Lee Jinhee dragged Bae Jinman to was in front of Baek Seoin. Baek Seoin was still depressed and listless.

“Baek hyung! I’m going to turn you back to normal. As long as you regain your senses, you can do something.”

Bae Jinman gazed at Baek Seoin. Baek Seoin was the one who actually led the Berserkers instead of Choi Hyuk, who wasn’t interested in politics. Baek Seoin, who was thoughtful, meticulous, and cheerful, was emitting a depression and listlessness he didn’t show normally in their entirety.

He had replied to Lee Jinhee before, but he had further weakened during this time. Even when Lee Jinhee and Bae Jinman came close, he didn’t take notice of them. Indeed, in a hellish battlefield where even normal people would become crazy, there was no way Baek Seoin, who suffered from depression, could endure.

Bae Jinmen felt pained. There was no one who didn’t harbor some sort of hell after that day. And that hell manifested here and now. It was regrettable. Because of this, he wasn’t confident.

“...I don’t know if I can succeed with my power. Director Baek is an expert of the Mind’s Eye trait... He had already resisted the eyeless observers’ tricks. The reason why he’s like this now is solely because of his depression...”

The only thing the eyeless observed did was pull the trigger. Everything else was done by himself. So Bae Jinman wasn’t confident in being able to cut the shackles of Baek Seoin’s depression.

Rather than pouring his strength into Baek Seoin, it was better to take care of the Berserkers who were injuring themselves. Since Baek Seoin was quiet.

However, Lee Jinhee refuted.

“No. There’s still a chance. Baek hyung isn’t mad like the others!”

“Now that I look at it...”

Fights erupted everywhere. Those Berserkers, who were affected, became mad and

fought the monsters or would injure themselves. However, Baek Seoin was simply standing absentmindedly.

Lee Jinhee said,

“His Intuition is activating right now. Even now, he still wants to live! There’s no doubt he’s standing still since it will be life-threatening if he wounds himself or if he jumps towards the monsters! So his survival instincts and his self-destructive instincts are fighting! If you help him a little, you can make it so that his survival instincts win!”

At those words, Bae Jinman resolved himself. He poured his karma, which was filled with life energy, directly into Baek Seoin. It seemed to be of no use for a while. Baek Seoin simply stood absentmindedly. However, when Bae Jinman increased his strength, there was an effect.

“Haa...”

Baek Seoin let out a big sigh. He raised his shoulders and then let them fall.

He shook his head and blinked his eyes. He slowly met Bae Jinman and Lee Jinhee’s gazes and rapped Lee Jinhee’s head.

He grumbled,

“Hey. What do you mean ‘Even now, he still wants to live?’... If you say it like that, it makes me look bad.”

Lee Jinhee rubbed the place she was hit and smiled brightly. Baek Seoin had returned to normal.

“So what!”

She shouted before giving him a tight hug. In this state, she asked,

“But what do we do now? If things stay like this, all the Berserkers will die.”

Baek Seoin patted her back as he looked at the situation. In his eyes, it didn’t look like they would all die. Since Berserkers were still strong. Still, it seemed around half would die.

‘It’ll be difficult if that happens.’

Baek Seoin said to Bae Jinman.

“It seems we’ll need your power.”

Bae Jinman expressed his disapproval.

“Maybe if there were one or two... If I use my power in a large area, it won’t work.”

Baek Seoin nodded. Then he raised his palm and flipped it over.

“That’s why we do the opposite.”

“Opposite?”

“Yes. I understand now that I’ve experienced it. This isn’t something we can stop. Instead, it is better if we blow it up even more. Make them madder. Detonate it so that they kill the other side before they die.”

“Haa?”

“Huu...”

Lee Jinhee and Bae Jinman’s jaws dropped at his extreme suggestion. Baek Seoin smiled brightly and said,

“Those who seek death will live~”^{1}

^{1} Baek Seoin was quoting Admiral Lee Sunshin. “Those who seek death shall live. Those who seek life shall die.”

CHAPTER 65

DEMON KING (6)

{T/N} Because Retribution is a stat rather than points, I switched Retribution Points into Retribution.

“But the guardian is a healer?”

Lee Jinhee raised a question. As a healer, Bae Jinman’s karma was fixed at the ‘Heal’ trait. Like how the karma trait shop didn’t sell the ‘Heal’ trait, Bae Jinman couldn’t change his karma trait as well. He would improve their state simply by using his trait. So how would Bae Jinman make the Berserkers even madder?

However, Baek Seoin only stared at Bae Jinman as if he couldn’t hear Lee Jinhee’s question. Bae Jinman rubbed his chin and pondered for a moment before replying.

“...I’ll try it.”

“What? You can do it?”

Lee Jinhee asked in surprise. However, this time Bae Jinman was in deep thought and didn’t reply. Instead, Baek Seoin replied for him.

“There’s only a paper-thin margin between medicine and poison. They both have similarities in their influence on the body. Depending on when or how you use it, poison can turn into medicine and medicine into poison... I thought that healing and buffs were the same.”

“Really?”

Lee Jinhee, who had only believed that the more medicine she ate, the healthier she would get, widened her eyes at this new information.

At this time, Bae Jinman finished conceiving a plan. He released his karma with a changed version of ‘Get Up’. Increase vitality, enhance the mind, and strengthen sympathy. Bae Jinman especially worked hard on ‘strengthen sympathy’.

Normally, it would be a useful buff, however, now it would add oil to the flames known as madness. Increase vitality would support the Stamina they had consumed due to madness, and enhance the mind would make those who had fallen into a state of futility and numbness become even more intensely enraged and sorrowful. Also, above all, 'strengthen sympathy' would make the Berserkers sympathize with each other's pain and rage. Simply put, it made all the Berserkers clearly sense each other's pain. Like how Jung Minji felt...

Berserkers, who were burdened with their own pain, were flooded with the indiscriminate pain of others.

The result was a more severe madness.

The sudden change came remarkably. Even Choi Hyuk, who was fighting by himself in the distance, could sense this change.

The noise of the battlefield. The rhythm had changed. A rain shower had turned into a hail storm. Tennis balls grew to baseballs. The formation of monsters, that would occasionally endure or occasionally get penetrated, started shatter like glass.

Choi Hyuk nodded his head. Due to the Berserkers, the pressure, from the countless number of monsters that blocked his way, lessened.

He now didn't need to be concerned with the battlefield and could fight the boss to his heart's content.

"Then, is it my turn now?"

With the monsters' commanders, the 'eyeless observers', in front of him, Choi Hyuk slowly stretched his shoulders. He threw the Flaming Devil in a corner. The Flaming Devil, whose other leg had burned off on the way here, was pitifully writhing on the ground.

There were only trails of flame, and the ashes of the monsters that had been burnt black, behind him.

He pretended to be composed, but he didn't find his current situation very lax. 'Flaming Wing Dance' was a skill that consumed a lot of Stamina, and Choi Hyuk's Stamina was only at 3-star with 366 (3★) points. It was very low compared to his Power, Speed, Control, and Retribution which were all over 4-star, meaning he couldn't

maintain Flaming Wing Dance for a long time.

“Hooo...”

He let out a big breath and drank down a special karma recovery potion in one shot.

“Keu... It’s not enough to send a message to my liver.”

This was a temporary method... And he obtained the strength to fight once more.

The moment he tossed the empty bottle behind him.

Blaze!

Flames violently erupted once again.

In front of him were around 100 eyeless observers. Each one was stronger than the Wyvern of Destruction. They were 4-star rank monsters. The real enemy of the mission this time wasn’t the hundreds of thousands of monsters but the hundred eyeless observers.

{Kyahh!}

Feeling threatened, the eyeless observers let out a cry.

“You’re too late.”

By the time they cried, Chio Hyuk’s sword had already sliced through the front most monster.

A geyser of flames.

The flames that sprouted from its wounded chest spread to its four limbs and its face. The eyeless observer twisted its body, and its long flesh that covered its eye brilliantly dispersed as it burned.

As expected of the Flaming Wing Dance that possessed power beyond that of 4-stars. It burned up an observer with a single strike. Yet, Choi Hyuk’s expression was serious.

‘As expected, wide area damage doesn’t work.’

Normal monsters would turn to ash once they came into contact with the flames he emitted. Without wielding his sword, the majority of monsters would burn to ash and disappear.

However, the eyeless observers were different.

Tssss...

{Kii.}

Although it looked like it was burnt, he wasn't able to completely burn it before the flames died out. The burn wounds quickly recovered. To properly burn them, he would have to cut each one with his sword, but he couldn't endure that with his Stamina.

It wasn't easy. When Choi Hyuk thought this, a smile hung on his lips.

"Yeah. It needs to be like this."

Pssft-

Choi Hyuk immediately gave up on the Flaming Wing Dance. The flames that had engulfed his body died down. The Flaming Wing Dance was an area attack; it wasn't very effective in this situation where he had to kill each one individually.

As the flames died down, the pitch-black sword that shined within, the Predator's Blade, was revealed.

{Tyrannical Predator's Blade}

Rank: B (Unique, Growth-type)

Sharp and sturdy. The more blood it absorbs of strong foes, the stronger it will get. It has almost reached the limit to its growth.

Blood Drain: Absorbs the blood of enemies to replenish its owner's karma and heal their wounds. Able to absorb 1L of blood per second.

*Second Blade: Sacrifice the Evolution stat to imbue karma into the blade. No extra karma consumption.

Durability: 98,573/100,000

Evolution: 11/1,000

The driving force behind how he was able to endure up until now with only 3-star Stamina was due to the Predator's Blade. He was able to recover small amounts of Stamina with its absorption ability and reduce his karma consumption with its outstanding cutting force.

The Predator's Blade had evolved once more during this time. Since it was a B rank weapon, if enough force was added, it was able to penetrate through 4-star Endurance. On top of that, if he reinforced its cutting force with the Second Blade, it was able to rip through most protective skills.

"Second Blade."

{Evolution reduced from "11" to "6"}

Choi Hyuk resolutely invested its Evolution stat to activate its Second Blade.

Swish.

A frightening sound of an enormous snake slithering. The Predator's Blade was imbued with black karma. It was a different color from Choi Hyuk's deep blue karma. It was a Karma Blade that the Predator's Blade created itself.

"Let's fight."

Choi Hyuk began to only utilize his karma inside his body. He used the 'karma pathways' that extended to all four limbs from his dantian, where the Karma Heart was located. The heart and the 'karma pathways' became new muscles and tendons for Choi Hyuk and moved his body faster and stronger.

This was how Choi Hyuk was able to minimize his Stamina consumption.

{Kuahh!}

The eyeless observers swung their hands at Choi Hyuk. Their hands were especially large. They were about three times as large as a person's head. Their skin was white like limestone, and they possessed tough claws.

Choi Hyuk walked naturally as he avoided their attacks and cut one.

“One.”

Choi Hyuk’s movements became more and more efficient and simple.

He looked at his opponent’s next step and their shoulders. He stepped forward before his opponent took another step and slashed out.

“Two.”

As their skin, which was as white as limestone, was cut, their sticky blood, which was as black as oil, burst out.

{Kekiehhh!!}

“Three.”

Choi Hyuk’s eyes tinged blue. Using his right foot as a pivot, he rotated his body to evade an attack from his blind spot. Using the momentum of his evasion, he slashed out again.

“Four... No, three-and-a-half.”

It was a bit shallow. It was difficult to kill them while maintaining his maneuverability. He couldn’t stab them or block their attacks. He used his ‘Mind’s Eye’ to find the shortest path for his Karma Blade to traverse between the monsters.

Swish! Swish! Slice! Slice!

As if he were a child who was hiking while swinging a wooden stick, Choi Hyuk simply walked as the eyeless observers were critically wounded and fell to the ground. Their black blood stained their white skin.

They were all 4-star monsters. However, they weren’t a match for him.

There were cases where martial artists with similar physical abilities would knock each other out with one blow. Precise strikes had that sort of power. Choi Hyuk had much higher karma stats than normal eyeless observers. They were in the early stage of 4-star while he was in the mid-late stage. If Choi Hyuk’s senses, which allowed him to hit precise strikes, were added on top of that, it was difficult for even 4-star monsters to endure a single sword. Since this wasn’t a game, if a sword pierced

through, and if it was a fatal area, no matter how strong the opponent was, it would end with a single sword.

Also, perhaps it was because they possessed a special mental attack ability, but the Endurance and Recovery stats of the eyeless observers were low. Being Choi Hyuk's opponents, this was a fatal weakness.

{Kiiyahhhh!}

As more than thirty observers fell at Choi Hyuk's hand, the largest monster at the back, the king of the observers, wailed. The mood abruptly changed.

"Hmm?"

Choi Hyuk, who was wielding his sword in a trance, halted.

All the observers followed their king and wailed.

{Keahhh!}

Following their king that seemed to have shouted a command, their long, tattered skin, which covered their eyes like torn fabric, molted. Single eyes, red as blood, were revealed.

Their sclerae were red, and their pupils were redder. Their eyes rolled and all stared at Choi Hyuk at the same time.

Kiiiiing!

Choi Hyuk felt dizzy.

'Would you look at that.'

Their ferocious karma shot out of their eyes, through the air, and into Choi Hyuk's head. Around 70 observers carried out this simultaneous mental attack.

Choi Hyuk smiled.

'You want to enter my mind?'

His whole body tinged blue. His karma trait went beyond 'Mind's Eye' and reached 'Identical Mind', which could engage with anything. It tightly wrapped around the observers' karma, preventing them from escaping.

'Although you can enter whenever you want, you can't leave.'

His mind boiled. The observers' ferocious karma ran amok inside his head. However-

'There is something worse inside.'

Choi Hyuk recalled.

The moment his mother died.

He recalled.

The {You have no choice. Get angry. Kill. Only then can you kill.} message from those bastards.

And... the delight he felt when he fought and killed his opponents.

Like a monitor screen that exploded with a blast, as if a pitch-darkness lurked inside, Choi Hyuk's vision was blown away. His insides, beginning with his stomach, boiled black. It surged. Madness filled his head and swallowed his brain. He felt an unbearable thirst. He didn't endure it.

There was no need to.

{Kiyaahhhh!}

As if they saw something, the observers screamed. Black blood flowed from their red eyes.

Kiiing!

Dark red blood dripped from Choi Hyuk's nose. However, the smile on his lips didn't fade.

He mumbled.

“Get angry...”

“Get angry...”

He mumbled as he stepped forward. While the observers were unable to move, crying bloody tears, Choi Hyuk slowly tottered forward.

“Kill.”

He raised his sword.

“Only then can you kill.”

His sword stabbed out.

{Kekk... kekk... }

One observer’s body trembled before collapsing.

“Get angry...”

Choi Hyuk moved towards his next target. His mind had already flown away. He couldn’t see properly. Since it wasn’t possible to block the mental attack of 70 observers. Choi Hyuk’s mind with greater rage instead of blocking their attack. With the despair he felt when his mother, who was his only sanctuary, died, and the rage he had towards the ones who created this game. With his cruel instinct he had avoided his whole life, his love of fighting.

The observers invaded his mind to destroy and control it, but the place they invaded was already hell. They weren’t able to escape due to Choi Hyuk’s karma, and they could only sorrowfully scream.

“Ah...”

Choi Hyuk, who was staggering forward, abruptly changed his direction and grabbed the Flaming Devil.

{Kuaahhh!!}

{Kiyahhh!!}

The screams of the devil and the observers mixed together terrifyingly.

Choi Hyuk dragged the devil by its throat as he stabbed each observer that was pleading due to pain.

“How good to hear... good to hear... hehe.”

Choi Hyuk, who had already lost his reasoning, simply enjoyed their screams. He dragged the Flaming Devil as he walked towards the observers, which were screaming sweetly, and stabbed them with his sword.

As if harvesting screaming reeds, he stabbed, cut, and then repeated. White corpses lay on the ground, flowing with black blood.

The large-bodied king of the observers was no exception. They may have had a chance if they had attacked him physically instead. Unfortunately, they had invaded Choi Hyuk’s mind, which was a hellhole, and futilely lost their lives, suffering in pain.

“Ah... Is it over?”

Only after he killed the king of the observers, and popped out and threw the Flaming Devil’s head did Choi Hyuk return to his senses.

{Obtained the Dimensional Isolation Release Code. Releasing the isolated dimension.}

The message was heard as if from a dream, and the dome that covered the sky faded away.

CHAPTER 66

DEMON KING'S LEADERSHIP

The transparent dome, that covered the sky, faded as if melting away. It was night.

The monsters, which made their minds act violently, had all died. The moment he realized they had all died, almost like a flip of a switch, Choi Hyuk came to his senses. Choi Hyuk, who had regained his senses, looked inwardly at the madness inside him.

His mind was blank after burning all the monsters that attacked him. Now his madness seemed to be fueled by itself.

'Kill.'

'Kill more.'

But Choi Hyuk shook his head.

'This much is enough.'

Choi Hyuk swallowed down his ferocious madness and buried it deep within his stomach. His madness, like a well-trained beast, returned to where it resided. It wasn't able to beat Choi Hyuk. 'Patience'. This was what Choi Hyuk lived his whole life with.

He was as confident in his talent for fighting as he was in his talent for patience.

...It was also the only inheritance his mother had left him.

{Dimensional isolation released. Successfully completed dimensional transmission. Obtained the inheritance of a ruined civilization. Inspecting... Discovered a B rank Artificial Intelligence. Nothing else is of value. Provided 10,000 Mission Points as a reward.}

The message appeared. It wasn't a message he was expecting.

"...Artificial Intelligence?"

He held his forehead.

‘Ah, whatever. I don’t care.’

He was too dizzy to think about it now, and his ears rung with the sounds of cicadas.

“What about the message that says I succeeded in the Sovereign Mission...?”

Whether it had come up, but he had yet to see it, or if it hadn’t ended... Now that he thought about it, it seemed like the king of observers said something before it died. ‘It’s not... the end...’ was it? Whatever. His memories weren’t clear.

No, from the start, when did monsters even talk?

Choi Hyuk shook his head and looked around.

It seemed the Berserkers’ fight had ended slightly earlier than his own. The field, which was filled with broken machines, was littered with ripped and sliced monster corpses. The Berserkers were scattered throughout.

The Berserkers succeeded in destroying the monsters before destroying themselves, but their Stamina had hit rock-bottom. Although there were still some remnants of the madness, because there wasn’t enough energy to fuel that madness, it was peaceful. They were even starting to get hungry. The Berserkers were spread out. Some were gathered in groups, chatting with each other, whilst others were sitting absentmindedly, or even chewing on something. Then, one by one, they looked up to watch the dimensional isolation wall melt away. They were currently in an alien area with no streetlights. The Earth’s sky they saw from here was very dark as countless stars shined.

And there were people spectating this from outside.

Later on, when people talked about this event, they usually started with this moment.

How unfamiliar the area they saw when the dimensional isolation wall faded away was. That place, which had no buildings, random hills, no dirt or asphalt, and looked like a planet piled with broken machines and monster corpses. How terrifying it was to see the Berserker scattered however they wanted on the dark ground. They always described this in great detail.

The Berserkers' appearance was like the Asgardian gods who had overcome collapse.

While they all captivated by this overwhelming scene, a change occurred.

A red fog spread from the dead observer corpses. At first, it was faint, almost indiscernible. The red fog crawled low on the ground as it spread. Then, when it met other monster corpses, it would 'devour them' and grow.

At some point, the red fog grew at a terrifying rate. By the time they thought, 'Huh? What's that?' the red fog had already devoured its surrounding. There were hundreds of thousands of monster corpses it could devour. As soon as it started to grow, the whole area had become engulfed in the red fog.

"What is this...?"

The ones, who thought it was poison and were taken back, tilted their heads when they didn't feel anything wrong. It was somehow frightening. Some sort of karma was melted into the fog. They felt both an ominous feeling and feeling of relief simultaneously.

Then, not long after.

"It's slowly disappearing!"

Someone shouted. It was as he said. No, to be exact, it wasn't disappearing but rather it was being absorbed through their mouths and noses. The process was so quick that the awakenees couldn't see it.

"...What was it?"

Like how it suddenly appeared, the red fog suddenly disappeared as well. It felt like a hallucination as no traces of it remained.

Of course, it wasn't as if everyone was simply tilting their heads.

"Haa... Damn. This is troublesome..."

Baek Seoin shook his head.

"We finally finished and now this..."

Baek Seoin had seen the identity of the red fog with his Mind's Eye and blocked it. It was a simple, yet powerful curse left by the observers. It was a curse which dumbed their patience and judgment, and instead, maximized their impulses.

“Did they wait for this opportunity?”

If there were only Berserkers present, it would have been fine. First of all, the Berserkers who possessed the Mind's Eye trait would have been able to resist it, and those who couldn't wouldn't have been a problem either. Berserkers had overcome countless life-or-death situations together. Because they subconsciously differentiated between friend or foe, they wouldn't fight their comrades simply because they were under a curse which increased their impulses.

The problem was that the first army division and the Super Soldier brigade were encircling them to restrict civilian access, and beyond them was crowded with thousands of colonizers who had come from various places. The sudden appearance of the curse, and a situation where the excitement of the battle had yet to calm. It was easy for there to be clashes between them and the Berserkers. Baek Seoin was uneasy as if he was looking at a bomb which was about to explode.

“Leader. I think it's best we quickly clean up and leave this place.”

He immediately requested Choi Hyuk. As Choi Hyuk was also aware of the situation, he understood what Baek Seoin was saying. However, his judgment was different. Because his eyes saw what Baek Seoin's didn't.

‘It's red.’

It was deep into the night, yet the world Choi Hyuk's eyes saw was as red as a sundown.

‘Were there this many people who wanted to kill me?’

Because their patience and judgment had become dull and their impulses were maximized, their inner intentions they had hidden deep within themselves had risen to the surface.

Choi Hyuk saw the killing intent pouring in from everywhere. From the Super Soldiers to the colonizers far away, red light shone. What was more... there was no small number of Berserkers emitting it too.

Choi Hyuk said,

“Too late.”

There were many who resisted it, but more than half were definitely under the curse. Since it was such a wide-scale curse, it was impossible to dispel it with the guardian’s power. You could only wait for time to pass and its effect to fade.

But, it seemed it would be difficult to leave without clashing with each other since the number of groups unreservedly emitting killing intent wasn’t small, and there were many groups who held hostility within the Berserkers. It was too late. He couldn’t stop them from clashing.

“Pardon? What’s that supposed to mean...”

Baek Seoin was taken aback by Choi Hyuk’s remark, where he gave up before even trying.

However, Choi Hyuk didn’t reply and turned around. His eyes landed on Lee Kijin in the distance. Lee Kijin. He was someone Choi Hyuk was very familiar with. He was a drifter who voluntarily joined him on his first colonization attempt. Like most of the people who joined at that time, he was someone who was looking for a place to die while fighting. Unfortunately, due to his naturally good fighting senses, he hadn’t died and had survived until now. He was an elite member who was selected as a captain-level troop leader.

Choi Hyuk saw his face. It wasn’t certain what illusions the observers had shown him, but both his cheeks were stained with dried tears.

“Is it you?”

Choi Hyuk remembered Lt. Col. Lee Kangjin’s warning. The traitors connected to Lao Ban. Although he thought it would be fun, now that he had confirmed the faces of the comrades he had fought together with, it didn’t feel good.

Lee Kijin met Choi Hyuk’s gaze. He instinctively knew that his betrayal had been figured out.

His original plan was different. He had planned on attacking the exhausted Choi Hyuk when the Berserkers had dispersed and were returning. Lee Kijin and a few other

Berserkers were to lure Choi Hyuk to a designated place and wound him with a sudden attack. Then the Super Soldiers and colonizers, who had agreed to cooperate, would attack altogether.

Unfortunately, their plan was now useless.

Lee Kijin smiled with his black eyes.

“It’s a good day to die, right, leader?”

Choi Hyuk could tell when he saw his face. The reason why Lee Kijin betrayed him. He could tell simply by looking.

“Come. I will let you on your way with no regrets.”

Choi Hyuk raised the tip of his sword, which had been on the ground.

Unable to follow the situation through their dialogue, Baek Seoin simply opened and closed his mouth.

“What is this...”

That moment, a commotion broke out with a shout. It wasn’t certain what was going on, but some of the Super Soldiers were fighting against the Berserkers. Due to the curse, everyone had lost their self-control, and once a fight broke out, it immediately intensified and spread. Even the colonizers, who were outside the civilian access line, became agitated. There were many groups bearing hostility towards the Berserkers amongst them.

‘We just fought a dogfight, and now this?’

Choi Hyuk said one thing to Baek Seoin, who was grabbing his head in annoyance,

“Baek hyung, take care of work.”

Then, perhaps it was because they were stimulated by the commotions nearby? Lee Kijin and Berserkers who followed him, whose lips were oddly distorted, rushed towards Choi Hyuk at once. Choi Hyuk didn’t evade their attack.

Bang!

Crash!

Clash!

He met each swinging sword. He precisely hit the tips of their swords to shake them.

Clang!

“Urk...”

Every time he clashed swords with Choi Hyuk, Lee Kijin felt a ripping pain in his hand. Yes. Pain. Sometimes pain was the best anesthetic. Lee Kijin wanted more pain.

Unconcerned if his hand burst or not, he gripped his sword to the point of shattering and swung. It was fine if he could never use his hand again. It would be of no use if he died anyways.

Choi Hyuk didn't attack. He stood in place as he deflected the attacks of the surrounding Berserkers swinging their swords at him.

The Berserkers used the skills they practiced with all their strength. However, none of their attacks could pierce through Choi Hyuk's defense. They couldn't make him retreat one step, let alone pierce his defense. As their Stamina had hit rock-bottom, they both couldn't use their Karma Blades. It was a battle of purely strength and skill. Although his breathing became slightly heavy, Choi Hyuk still overwhelmed them.

“Kik... As expected of our leader.”

When they no longer had the strength to attack, Lee Kijin and the Berserkers distanced themselves from Choi Hyuk. They hit him with all they had. It was now time to see the victor.

Kill or be killed.

The people sent by Lao Ban's followers arrived using the confusion.

Choi Hyuk slowly looked around. Baek Seoin, Lee Jinhee, Ryu Hyunsung, Bae Jinman, and others were busy trying to save as many Berserkers they could from within the crazy fight. Instead, using this opportunity, hundreds of unfamiliar colonizers surrounded him. Each one of them emitted killing intent.

They were experts from various parts of the world that Lao Ban's followers had sent to kill Choi Hyuk.

Although they were surprised by Choi Hyuk's lack of action, they were also able to see that he was exhausted at the same time. They exuded a confidence that they were able to kill him.

"You should have run wild moderately."

One said mockingly.

"Lao Ban contributed a lot more to the world than you imagined. He wasn't a figure you could kill with your childish sense of justice."

Another added in his own opinion.

Choi Hyuk acted as if they weren't there. He simply asked Lee Kijin,

"Is it refreshing?"

"Yeah. If this is the end... But can you do it? Maybe it's because I scared them, but they sent a ton of them."

He never thought they would send hundreds of people. Lee Kijin thought that perhaps he may be able to witness Choi Hyuk's dying figure.

'Quite the spectacle. But then, how do I die?'

Yet, Choi Hyuk was calm.

"You won't be lonely."

Choi Hyuk felt his Karma Heart, which had become tattered after squeezing his karma to its limit. He then whispered,

"Heart Injection."

Thump!

His tattered heart beat heavily once again. Like a phoenix which arose from the ashes,

his karma, which was as heavy as rocks, recovered all at once.

“That bastard’s acting really calm. Haa, how scary... What?”

These experts, who were dumbfounded by how Choi Hyuk was disregarding them, became surprised by the sudden burst of Choi Hyuk’s karma. His karma that should definitely have entered a cooldown stage...

“His karma recovered?”

They were surprised by the illogical event. And that was also their last will.

“Instant Void Annihilation.”

Choi Hyuk drew his sword sideways. He made a 360-degree rotation with his smoothly gliding sword.

{Instant Void Annihilation}

A powerful strike that slices through space.

Ignores defense. Applies the same destructive force within the skill range, independent of the number of enemies inside.

An incredible amount of Stamina is used depending on how many killed in this one strike.

It was originally a top-level skill only those at the 5-star level could use. Someone supplied a deteriorated version so that those at the lower levels could use it.

It was one of the three skills Choi Hyuk possessed besides his standard ones. Choi Hyuk’s single strike, which was able to make the Great Warrior of the El Tribe, Lantz, yield, poured out.

“...”

There wasn’t a single sound. Only space was disjointed.

Lao Ban’s experts, who were chattering only a moment ago, and Lee Kijin and his followers, they were all cut in two like straws and fell to the ground. That was the end. Death was fickle and silent.

“Huuu...”

Choi Hyuk slowly walked forward and left a word as he passed Lee Kijin.

“You worked hard.”

Choi Hyuk sincerely wished for Lee Kijin and the Berserkers who followed him to rest in peace.

Afterwards, Choi Hyuk watched the wild free-for-all, people fighting each other. It was gradually becoming uncontrollable. The exhausted Berserkers were at a disadvantage.

Maybe this was what Flame-Rain meant by testing his control and command, wondering if he had the leadership to control this situation.

Now that he thought about it, Flame-Rain also said this.

‘Remember that sometimes knocking everything down with a sword may not be everything.’

But was it really?

Choi Hyuk’s judgment was simple.

His eyes only saw his Berserkers dying. A scene which twisted his assessment.

“How dare...”

Was this incident simply instigated by the observers’ curse?

What did he care? This occurred because the Berserkers normally looked easy to push around. Control and command? Although Choi Hyuk had no talent in politics, he knew one sure method.

“From now on, people are going to piss their pants when they hear ‘Ber’”

Choi Hyuk took aim with his sword.

He charged. He cut apart anyone who was hostile towards the Berserkers, regardless of whether they were Super Soldiers or colonizers dispatched from abroad. If he killed

all those who didn't follow him, he would eventually gain command, and only those who could be controlled would live.

"Gack!"

A red path made of pieces of flesh was laid down wherever Choi Hyuk passed. Not long had passed when,

"Do it in moderation!"

Someone tried to stop Choi Hyuk.

Looking at his military uniform, he was from the Superpower Headquarters. Colonel rank. His voice sounded quite angry.

Yet, Choi Hyuk ignored him. The angry colonel eventually unsheathed his sword and rushed towards Choi Hyuk. His head fell.

"Colonel!!"

That was the start. The fight intensified. In an instant, even those who were sober were tangled in and started to fight. The fight grew larger. Even the normal military with firearms started to join.

Then...

"Wahahahaha!"

A laughter which vibrated through the battlefield could be heard. It was Choi Hyuk. Choi Hyuk, who had activated Flaming Wing Dance, was leading the Berserkers. When he took the lead, the Berserkers instinctively followed behind him. Like a snowball effect, the number of Berserkers gradually grew.

Experts from other parts of the world rushed in to block Choi Hyuk, and even modern weapons, such as tanks and helicopters, tried to stop him, but it was all for naught. Choi Hyuk's eyes could see their hostility and killing intent. The moment black or red light surged, that place would become a sea of flames.

The seething free-for-all had, at some point, turned into a one-sided slaughter. Whenever Choi Hyuk passed by, they would either be burned from the flames, or their

limbs would be sliced off. Fear overcame them. If they combined all their strength and resisted, Choi Hyuk wouldn't be able to endure. He was exhausted, and his enemies were plentiful. However, for them to do so... Choi Hyuk was too scary.

The curse of the observers?

The urge to fight changed to an urge to flee. The Berserkers chased after them. The rest fled. The chaos was starting to be controlled paradoxically.

“Oh my god... Is he... even human?”

Leah widened her mouth.

The Sovereign of Balance, Richard, and his aide, Leah, did not lose their reason in this chaos. They were completely overwhelmed by Choi Hyuk's figure.

The Berserk Sovereign, Choi Hyuk. He was strong. There were many rumors about him being strong, but no one thought he would be this strong.

In a free-for-all with various different forces, Choi Hyuk suppressed them solely with his overwhelming power. He started a mass slaughter by himself, and he may have erased additional casualties with his actions.

“...Amazing. Really.”

Even the Sovereign of Balance, Richard, was speechless.

The ruthlessness and power to strike fear into those who had lost their minds due to the curse.

His aide, Leah, suddenly mumbled.

“Demon King...”

That word became another nickname for Choi Hyuk after that day.



A message appeared.

{Sovereign Mission success! From this moment, all of Sovereign Lao Ban's authority is transferred to Sovereign Choi Hyuk.}

{First to succeed in an exchange between human colonized lands. (Invasion will be considered the same as exchange). Retribution increased by 10. Free karma points increased by 10.}

That moment, the Sovereign Mission ended, and two colonized lands became one.



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