THE FIRST HUNTER

BOOK 01

D-Dart

EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

The First Hunter

(최초의 헌터)

by

D-Dart

(디다트)

Synopsis

From hunter-gatherers to settled farmers. From sticks and stones to mechanization. A human's greatest strength is intelligence. Imagination. Curiosity. Determination. In today's day and age, technology has slowly transformed the human race into a herd of docile sheep. An overreliance on technology has led humanity into a sense of false security and complacency.

So what is humanity's response in the face of an otherworldly invasion? What is humanity's response in the face of the familiar turned unfamiliar? What can technology do for man in the face of overwhelming power that breaks all common sense?

A human's greatest strength is intelligence. Imagination. Curiosity. Determination. In today's day and age, man will fight. Man who rose from the dust to create towers that pierce the sky. Man who dared to believe that one day he may reach the stars. Man will fight. This is the tale of Kim Tae Hoon, a man who had long since shed the comforts and complacency of the modern day. In the face of an unknown terror, he turned towards an ancient path of man's ancestors: The Hunter.

Copyright

All rights reserved.

English Translation by Paul @ Wuxia Lovers

ePub conversion by Lisa Hayes @ Hasseno Blog

This is a free eBook. You are free to give it away (in unmodified form) to whomever you wish.

No part of this eBook may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the author.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Prologue

On December 31, 2016, monsters suddenly appeared all over the world.

On January 1, 2017, I am still alive.

Chapter 1 – On 31 December 2016, At A Supermarket (1)

Kim Tae-hoon, in his line of work, had seen many deaths.

He had killed many people, and had received many death threats, many at the same time.

But in the midst of such a horrifying life, Kim Tae-Hoon learned a few things.

A method to leave the victim with no dignity, and a method to leave the victim with a sense of worth, he definitely learned of the two.

Of course, Kim Tae-Hoon thought, there was no way could use what he learned in everyday life.

“Huu……!”

Until he saw a diminutive, green-skinned monster in the first floor of a supermarket in the car accessories corner of the store.

Until the short monster suddenly decided to attack him.

Until he killed the monster that had attacked him using the methods he had learned in his line of work.

‘That’s insane.’

This is how the story of the hunter Kim Tae-Hoon begins.

Kim Tae-Hoon.

This year, by 2016 standards, he would turn 29 after a day, and on the 31st of December, for no particular reason, he had visited the market located next to Bucheon City Hall.

‘Cleaner fluid…….’

It was to purchase cleaning fluid.

It really wasn’t much of a reason, in fact, that’s the reason why most people were there at the supermarket. Nobody goes to a supermarket to buy something awesome.

So naturally, Kim Tae-Hoon was looking here and there in the car accessories corner.

But all of a sudden, ‘Gge-eh-eh’! Someone let out a shriek, ‘Euhahk’! Someone screamed and ‘Kwa-gwa-gwang’! Loud booms went off one after another.

Reacting to the noises, Kim Tae-Hoon turned around, it greeted him.

‘Dwarf?’

With a height of about 140 centimeters, it was a short monster with green skin.

With skinny limbs and a protruding stomach, its appearance was reminiscent of a starving child from a third world country.

But that did nothing to bring it any sympathy.

Its teeth looked more savage than that of a dog’s, its eyes were like solid lumps of rotten blood, blazing with a red light, and no matter how you saw it, it was a monster.

Ggi-eh-eh!

Without a thought, the monster ran towards Kim Tae-Hoon while letting out a shriek.

To such a creature, Kim Tae-Hoon did not feel even the slightest sympathy.

Hwiik!

The monster who had thrown his body towards Kim Tae-Hoon was met with a spinning back kick.

The green monster fell onto the floor, and while it was screaming, Kim Tae-Hoon opened the cap of the cleaner fluid and shoved it into the monster's mouth.

Ggulung-Ggulung!

Stepping on the monster's chest to prevent it from struggling, the cleaner fluid streamed into the monster's stomach and lungs.

"Huu!"

'That's insane.'

And that's how it began.

Seeing the light in the monster's eyes fade, Kim Tae-Hoon took a look around at his surroundings.

Ku-Goong! Ku-Oong! Koong!

He heard the rumbling of shelves falling like dominoes.

Gyaak!

He also heard a woman scream.

Ggi-eh-eh! Ggii!

Judging by the shriek, he judged that it came from a green monster.

And accompanying the sounds, they entered his vision.

‘Good God .’

The sight of a dozen short statured green monsters hunting customers in the supermarket suddenly appeared.

“Ahk, save me!”

“It’s a monster! Monster!”

“Euheuh, help me, please help me…….”

Seeing this absurd scene before him, Kim Tae-Hoon couldn’t help but be taken aback.

He had seen humans hunt humans, but he had never seen monsters hunt humans.

“Fuck!”

Kim Tae-Hoon snapped out of his reverie. In the sports corner of the supermarket, a youth in a Yankees baseball cap and baseball jumper was fending off three green monsters with a baseball bat.

“Fuck off! Fuck off you assholes!”

The voice was rough, but to Kim Tae-Hoon, it was the sound of a fight.

‘This is not the time to be standing around.’

“Huu!”

Kim Tae-Hoon took a short breath, then searched his surroundings..

‘For now…… I’ll survive.’

Something entered Kim Tae-Hoon’s gaze, and without any hesitation, he headed straight towards what he heard. [TN: He saw something, grabbed it, and headed towards the swearing]

December 31, 2016 at 4:11 PM, this is how it all started on the last day of 2016.

“Damn it!”

Voom!

“Damn!”

Hoong!

“Fuck off! Fuck off you monster assholes!”

Voom!

Bang Hyun-Wook.

He had a height of 183 centimeters and weighed 90 kilograms.

Judging from his figure, you could tell that he had a strong physique, but with every swing, he let out a swear.

“Waah!”

Boh-oong!

It was not the wisest thing to do.

Bang Hyun-Wook knew that it was a bad habit that he had

developed, but with each swing curses flew out.

And because of that habit, he had tasted the swing of a coach, a former professional baseball player who had recorded 77 home runs during his career, with his ass.

When that happened in his second year of high school, that habit of his faded away.

“Hey you fucks, fuck off!”

Boong!

But now that habit had surfaced again.

The reason is very simple.

“Ahk, Damn it!”

Bang Hyun-Wook became flustered.

“Fuck, where the fuck did these fucking monsters crawl out from? No, what the fuck is this? Seriously, what the hell!”

He could only swallow his confusion, but it had still jumped out of his mouth when he talked to himself.

“Heoeok, Heoeok!”

With stifled breath, Bang Hyun-Wook felt as though the floodgates of his throat were about to burst.

Since every swing had his full strength behind it, him puking would be an inevitable outcome.

The reason is that Bang Hyun-Wook was the kind of guy who would run seven laps around a track but say that he ran ten. Furthermore, he had laid his hands on something an athlete never would: a cigarette.

“Fuck…….”

‘Should’ve been more disciplined about not smoking…….’

At this moment, Bang Hyun-Wook began to feel bitter regrets about how lazy he had been.

At that same time, although Bang Hyun-Wook was at an age where he could be considered to be wet behind the ears, he still had a hunch. [TN: He’s naive, but even he could tell that smoking and being lazy could may as well be the reason for his downfall]

Right now what he regretted was what most people commonly regretted before death.

‘Damn it, am I going to die here?’

There was no way he could survive against these monsters in front of him by himself.

Looking at this man in his early thirties who was screaming and biting at the necks of the monsters, one could not help but think that he was in a bad way.

“Hey, get your senses together!”

It wasn’t the cries of the monsters, but a cry without pity.

“Huh?”

Startled, Bang Hyun-Wook turned around and looked in the direction of that voice.

The same was true of the green dwarfish monsters.

Ggee?

Ggeeh?

GgeeGgee!

The three monsters turned their heads at the same time towards

the direction of the sound.

Among them, only two of them had line of sight of the hero who had yelled.

The reason for why one monster did not is simple. The bottom of a frying pan that was still in its packaging flew towards the face of one of the monsters.

Ggang!

The frying pan slammed into the monster’s face.

Ggeek!

Without having the chance to exclaim anything, the monster sported a pair of bleeding nostrils and fell backwards, teeth flying out of its face.

Koong!

The the man that just appeared did not stop there.

The man extended his left arm towards one of the monsters that saw him.

Chi-ee-ee-ee-eek!

Holding a spray in his left hand, the man sprayed the monster's eyes and its surroundings, blackening it.

Ggeeeeeeeh!

In response to the attack that fell outside of the monster's expectations, it began to swing its arm through the air.

Koong!

Then it fell down in exhaustion.

Two of the three monsters were left disabled, so naturally the last one felt nervous.

Gee-ee-ee-ee-ee!

The remaining monster, no longer holding the numerical advantage, put up its guard, letting out loud cries towards the man that had just arrived.

But only for a moment.

"Chyeuh!"

It was Bang Hyun-Wook, who had been dealing with the

monsters until now.

Hoong!

Bang Hyun-Wook moved as soon as he heard the other party's shout. The bat in Bang Hyun-Wook's hand once again flew through the air.

Bbak!

This time, the monster's temple was precisely smashed in.

The monster did not even scream after getting hit.

The body just crumpled, hitting the ground with a thump. On the floor, it only spasmed.

Dark green blobs flowed out of the monster's nostrils and eyes.

"Euh Ahhhhh!"

At the same, a strange sound came out of Bang Hyun-Wook's mouth.

He felt chills but also a sense of bliss. On the cusp of death, he was able to kill the monster that was threatening his life, so a sense of relief washed over him.

“This punk! Trying to kill me? Ha, fuck you, look who killed who!”

On the other hand, the man that had arrived did not act like Bang Hyun-Wook did.

Ggeee…….

He looked at two of the monsters that were sprawled on the floor– the very first one to have hit the floor and the one that had been hit by the pan that was starting to come to its senses. He grabbed the black spray paint in his left hand and sprayed the two monsters.

Chheeek!

The spray paint gathered on its face, creating a layer thick enough where it started dripping off its face.

Ggeeh, Ggeeeh!

The monster, faced with such an unfamiliar attack, screamed while struggling against it.

However, the now blind monsters’ flailing arms were no threat.

The man stomped on the monsters’ throats.

Bbujik!

The bones in their necks gave off a sickening crunch.

Bbagak!

He vigorously stomped a few more times.

Under the continuous stomping, the monsters soon ceased to make any more noise.

“There.”

The man beckoned to Bang Hyun-Wook and pointed to the only monster left with his finger.

“Yes?”

Bang Hyun-Wook was puzzled for moment.

But just for a moment

“Yes!”

Bang Hyun-Wook realized the other party’s intent, and began to

crazily hit the remaining monster.

Bbuuk!

As though he was hit with an axe, the remaining green monster screamed under the relentless assault before finally succumbing.

And like that, the three monsters were in a situation where they could not fight back.

“Your name is?”

That’s how their first conversation began.

“Bang Hyun-Wook. My name is Bang Hyun-Wook. My age is…….”

“I am Kim Tae-Hoon. If you want to follow me, you must unconditionally listen to my commands.”

At that moment, Bang Hyun-Wook felt troubled.

‘Unconditionally? Follow?’

Again, it was only for that moment.

Kuwoong, Gyaaak, Save me!

Hearing all kinds of wild noises reverberating in Bang Hyun-Wook eardrum, all of the worries in his eyes melted away.

“I’ll follow you.”

“Grab your baseball bat, gloves, and bags then follow me.”

Kyaaaa!

The fierce and monstrous cries that rang out did not allow for them anymore room.

Chapter 2 – On 31 December 2016, At A Supermarket (2)

Keu-euh-euh!

It was a real monster.

It had a giant, muscular body to compliment its immense 190 centimeter height. It was a true monster, its neck thicker than the waist of an adult woman.

[TN: 190 Centimeters is 6.2 feet for all you American readers.]

Its face, amongst other things, was the most monstrous.

Fangs longer than an adult's fingers protruded out of its ugly face, its thick lips shining with blood.

"Euuuuuh!"

Naturally, it was not an opponent that a 40-year-old boss, who occasionally played all-in-one screen golf, could hold a candle to.

[TN: Screen golf is basically virtual golfing. According to Business Insider, South Koreans are 'obsessed' with it.]

It was an opponent that could make your soul flee your body.

But, the reason why Park Jae-Un, a middle aged man, blocked

this terrible grayish brown-skinned monster was simple.

“Hu-husband!”

“Euaang, daddy! Daaaaaad!”

The two girls shouted.

His wife and daughter were terrified and taking refuge behind his back. His daughter was sniveling, her cries resounding with despair.

‘Shit, shit, shit……!’

In addition, the moment he runs away would be the moment that he would lose his beloved.

“D-don’t worry! I’ll block it! I will stop it!”

Park Jae-Un brandished a tennis racket he had recently purchased to fight the monster. He had purchased the tennis racket in preparation for a new year’s resolution where he would go on a diet and lose some weight.

There was a reason that would compel anyone to stay, and it was that reason why he chose not to flee.

Kaaaah!

Of course, the monster couldn't care less about Park Jae-Un or his family standing behind him.

However, Park Jae-un's determination did nothing to inspire any sort of provocation from the monster.

To the monster, everything before him was just food.

Keu-reu-reu!

As soon as the monster imagined the feeling of fresh blood dripping out of its mouth, it stopped holding back.

The monster stepped towards Park Jae-un.

Hweek! Hweek!

Park Jae-un wielded the tennis racket that he had never once swung before.

"Waaaaaaaaaah!"

Park Jae-un let out a war-cry while swinging the racket, but it sounded more like a scream than a war-cry.

Park Jae-un's frantic last-ditch effort did not even leave a scratch on the monster's body.

But that didn't mean that his actions didn't bear any fruit.

Because of the ruckus that Park Jae-un had made, he had not only attracted the monster's attention, but Bang Hyun-wook's as well. Thanks to that, Bang Hyun-Wook was able to reach the monster without it noticing his presence.

Bbak!

And with that, he smashed a baseball bat on top of the monster's head.

Bang Hyun-Wook's blow had a huge amount of power behind it.

"Euhwaak!"

Bang Hyun-wook's palm felt pain being transmitted from the bat.

If it was any ordinary person, being hit with that much strength would have resulted in their head would have been smashed open. At the very least, the person being struck would get staggered.

Kaaaah!

But this monster was not your everyday person. Thanks to his sturdy neck and thick skull, the monster's head was neither smashed open nor did his body stagger.

The blow only served to anger the monster.

Turning its body around, the monster opened wide its mouth towards Bang Hyun Wook who had attacked him, and roared.

Keuuuuuuuuuuuh!

It was more than just a simple roar, but the most intense threat it could yell forth from its body!

'Huk!'

Fear, it was fear.

It was at that moment that Bang Hyun Wook felt as though his fear was suffocating him.

'Wha, what…….'

He felt as though his body was bound by formless chains.

It was as though an invisible hand had tightly wrapped itself around Bang Hyun Wook's heart.

The eerie feeling stopped Bang Hyun Wook in his tracks. Seeing the state he was in, the monster did not rush over.

The monster looked over with red eyes. It observed the creature that had attacked him.

The monster's eyes were like those of a predator looking at its prey.

'Euh-euh…….'

However, Bang Hyun Wook wasn't just scared, he was also angry.

'This fucking monster punk!'

Terrifying.

Terrifying on one hand, but on the other, the fact that he was nothing more than prey to be hunted and consumed incited Bang Hyun Wook's anger beyond his fear.

And that anger stoked the anger that had been smoldering in Bang Hyun Wook's belly.

Twitch!

The twitching that started in his belly suddenly burst upwards like a fountain.

It started from his stomach and made its way to his chest, at which point the eerie grip around his heart was sloughed off, after which it explosively burst from his mouth past his uvula.

“AHHHHHHH!”

And out of Bang Hyun Wook’s mouth came a cry not unlike the one the monster had roared earlier.

Bang Hyun Wook felt the strength of an unprecedented power in his body, and his body felt similar to when he came out of a sauna.

At the same time, the light from Bang Hyun Wook’s eyes changed.

Around the light that was emanating from his eyes, there seemed to be a shimmering haze that rose up from within.

Kuh?

It was at that moment, the monster’s actions stopped.

Its eyes changed.

No longer did its gaze seem like a predator looking at its prey, but instead, it was as though it was just a beast staring down another beast.

And acting like a beast would do in front of another beast, it vigilantly focused on Bang Hyun Wook.

It was at that moment that Kim Tae Hoon made his move.

Seueuk!

Kim Tae Hoon approached the monster's back that had become stiff with caution.

Kim Tae Hoon's presence was nothing but a dim blur.

'Huh?'

Even Park Jae Un, whose line of sight could very well included Kim Tae Hoon's approach, did not notice Kim Tae Hoon's presence until after he had already wrapped the fishing line in his hands around the monster's neck three times.

Furthermore, Kim Tae Hoon's ability to use a fishing line to stealthily wrap it around the monster's neck was very good.

It wasn't something that he had only done once or twice. It was at a level where only an expert who had practiced hundreds of

thousands of times could show.

Soon after, Kim Tae Hoon, who had put on baseball gloves, burst with strength, causing the fishing line to go taut.

Ggeu-uh-uh!

The veins in the monster's neck began to squeeze.

The monster reflexively began to scratch at his neck.

Tuk, tuk!

However, the fishing line could not be so easily cut by the monster's short nails.

But above all, Kim Tae Hoon had no intention to give the monster even the slightest opportunity to break free.

While pulling on the fishing line, Kim Tae Hoon struck the back of the monster's right knee with his right foot, putting the monster under him.

Even the log like monster had no choice but to go down on his right knee, giving Kim Tae Hoon the chance to pull even harder on the fishing line.

Kuuhk!

While making guttural choking noises, the ceiling quickly entered the monster's field of view.

"Do it!"

Kim Tae Hoon let out a shout, and the burning gaze in Bang Hyun Wook's eyes slowly disappeared like the melting snow.

"YES!"

Bang Hyun Wook followed through with Kim Tae Hoon's command. He took something out of the bag that he was carrying on his back.

What he took out was engine oil.

Bang Hyun Wook swiftly opened the cap and shoved the mouth of the container into the monster's mouth.

At the same time, Kim Tae Hyun slightly weakened his pull on the fishing line.

Having been struggling for breath, the monster reflexively took in a huge breath.

Kuk!

The monster’s mouth filled up with engine oil.

Kuk, kuk, Kueuk!

The engine oil quickly entered the monster’s stomach and lungs.

Kuuhk!

It was at that moment that the monster felt it.

A spontaneous burst of disgust, a burning sensation in its chest, and an instinctual fear of something that could threaten its life.

Its instincts were absolutely certain:

SPIT IT OUT!

Kim Tae Hoon’s instincts also spoke out to him as well.

‘No matter what never let him go.’

Kim Tae Hoon once again tightened his hold on the fishing line in order to prevent the monster from spitting anything out.

And of course, Kim Tae Hoon faithfully followed his instincts. The fishing line tightened once again, the monster's body began to shake, and it seemed as though the power to resist had disappeared.

And like that time ticked on.

1 second became 10, and soon the minutes began to pile on.

The light in the monster's eyes disappeared, and nothing could be felt from the monster.

"It seems like it's dead now, no?"

Holding a baseball bat whilst carefully watching the monster, Bang Hyun Wook's strength began to fade away.

But even after saying that, the fishing line strangling the monster did not loosen.

"Uh, hyung-nim? Hyung-nim? I think it's dead now……."

Bang Hyun Wook approached Kim Tae Hoon, thinking that he hadn't heard him.

And of course, the distance between him and the monster was also covered.

Like that Bang Hyun Wook plopped down on the ground. The distance between him and the monster had been narrowed to the point where he could stretch out his arm and touch the monster.

Kuuuuh!

Shouting out its final death throes, the monster reached out and grabbed Bang Hyun Wook's neck.

"Euhuk!"

From Bang Hyun Wook's mouth was a sound similar to what the monster had made earlier.

Fortunately, that was the end of it.

The strength in the monster's arm quickly faded away, and from that moment on, the monster was no longer a threat to anyone.

After another thirty seconds, the taut fishing line around the monster's neck loosened.

No longer required to subdue the monster, Kim Tae Hoon talked to Bang Hyun Wook as he extricated himself from the monster.

"Whether something is dead or still alive, I'll be the one to judge."

“Yes sir, yep!”

Bang Hyun Wook replied on impulse while caressing the area where the monster had grabbed him.

However, Kim Tae Hoon’s gaze was not on Bang Hyun Wook.

While looking at Park Jae Un, who was trembling while sitting on the floor, Kim Tae Hoon spoke.

“From now on, your job is to be the cleaner. Cleaner, a scavenger that disposes of and handles whatever is on the floor. Until the day you die, your job is to kill anything that collapses onto the floor.”

Having finished speaking, Kim Tae Hoon got up from where he was sat.

At the place where Kim Tae Hoon was staring was an escalator that led to the second floor of the supermarket.

Chapter 3 – On 31 December 2016, At A Supermarket (3)

In the groceries section located in the second basement level of the supermarket.

”Euhaaaak!”

What had once greeted customers with towering walls of food had now become a battlefield full of lament, of screams and blood.

“Surround that goblin son of a bitch! Surround it!”

“Chang! Chang! “

Four young men rushed towards the three green skinned dwarfish goblins.

Whether it be clothing, age, or appearance, these four young men had nothing in common save for one thing– all four of them were wielding makeshift spears made from curtain rods, kitchen knives, and insulation tape.

Those four young men wielded their spears very well.

Taking advantage of the spear’s great range, they poked at the goblins’ greatest weakness– their genitals.

Keee!

The goblins screamed out in pain, and one of them slipped on the floor and fell unconscious.

At the moment the goblin slipped, a baseball bat came out of nowhere, and like an ax, struck the goblin's head.

Bbak!

The baseball bat crushed part of the goblin's head as though it were made of clay.

The goblin's eyes, nose, and mouth spewed out blood while laying on the floor, stunned.

"Euratcha!"

Shouting out cry overflowing with power, the owner of the baseball bat, Bang Hyun Wook, rushed towards the first goblin that he saw.

As soon as he closed the distance, huwuk! Bang Hyun Wook's bat cut through the air horizontally.

Puhwook!

And like that, the goblin's face shattered.

The baseball bat hit right on the bridge of the nose. But of course, the hit being in the vicinity of its eyes, the goblin's red eyes wouldn't be safe either. Like a bursting egg, its eyeballs popped.

But the goblin didn't scream out in pain.

It was killed on the spot.

The other goblins could do nothing but fall backwards, while the one on the floor twitched about.

'What strength.'

It was at that moment that Bang Hyun Wook knew.

'I can hit a homerun in the major leagues if I stay like this!'

Starting from his belly, he could feel something flowing all the way to his extremities.

And like that his courage soared.

''Draaaau! Draaaau!"

Bang Hyun Wook yelled loudly. It was as though he was inviting all the monsters in the groceries section on the second floor of the supermarket to fight him.

However, there were no monsters that came to him.

Kwang!

There was only one monster left on the second floor, who will be called an orc for convenience.

The last monster to die on the second floor of the supermarket, who will be called an orc for convenience, was a 190 centimeter tall, brown-skinned goblin.

In addition, the orc's cause of death was a traffic accident.

The fork on a forklift had impaled it through the chest and was stuck in the wall.

The driver of the forklift, Kim Tae Hoon, stepped down from the forklift. Meanwhile, he pulled out the smartphone he had left in his pocket.

At that moment, pajik!

With a strange sound, the lights on the second floor suddenly went out.

“Huh? What’s going on?”

“I can’t see anything!”

In the following confusion, the light coming from the smartphone’s LCD screen illuminated Kim Tae Hoon’s face.

In the darkness, Kim Tae Hoon had an unsightly expression on his face.

‘I can’t communicate. ‘

It was another factor that triggered warning lights in Kim Tae Hoon’s head.

The end of a battle is always silent.

There was no cheering.

Having realized that they had survived, the people in the area collapsed, relief sapping their strength. They had no power left to even make small talk.

Furthermore, the fatigue that they ignored during the heat of the moment came rushing all at once.

With the fatigue came pain as well.

There were 102 survivors who survived the conflict with monsters on the second floor of the supermarket.

Everyone sat down on the floor.

There were some sitting on the floor resting against shelves and some who had just collapsed onto the floor as though they were stunned.

Once the emergency generator came on, the gentle light emitted by the emergency lights lulled some people to sleep.

If it were pitch black, nobody would have been able to fall asleep, but because there was some visibility and the light was gentle, it gave people relief.

Furthermore, there was another factor of relief.

Fire shutters.

Fire retardant fire shutters had dropped down and blocked off all the entrances, giving the people a sense of security.

Except for one thing.

‘The monsters suddenly appeared.’

Kim Tae Hoon was not relieved.

In contrast to the others, Kim Tae Hoon felt much more nervous right now than he did when he first encountered the dwarf like goblin.

It was because the fight was over.

Once the battle starts, Kim Tae Hoon doesn’t let anything other than the battle enter his mind. Anything else he can do after the battle is over.

In other words, since the battle had ended, Kim Tae Hoon had been agonizing over the various other factors surrounding his current situation.

And while thinking, Kim Tae Hoon realized something.

‘The monsters suddenly appeared’

was not entirely correct. The monsters had suddenly appeared seemingly without any spatial constraints.

Therefore there would be no point in erecting a wall or a barrier.

However the worst case scenario in his head quickly came and went.

‘It looks like there are some evils that are greater than what I’ve known.’

Kim Tae Hoon felt a cold shiver down his spine as he imagined what could happen.

”Hyungnim .”

Bang Hyun Wook said as he interrupted Kim Tae Hoon’s train of thought.

Bang Hyun Wook, wearing a baseball cap and baseball jumper, looked quite different than Kim Tae Hoon.

Kim Tae Hoon was a head shorter and had a nearly shaved head.

He looked surprisingly naive. He had big eyes reminiscent of deer’s eyes.

But seeing him take off his jumper, you could see that he had a good figure. It didn’t feel like he maintained a needlessly muscular body, but rather taking appropriate care of his body.

“I brought the coffee you asked for. “

Bang Hyun Wook passed the canned coffee he held in his hand to Kim Tae Hoon. Grabbing the canned coffee, Kim Tae Hoon noticed that he hadn't taken off his bloody gloves.

Kim Tae Hoon placed the coffee he received onto the floor. He was going to drink the coffee after he had taken off his gloves.

Bang Hyun Wook sat in front of Kim Tae Hoon and said,

"Um, hyung nim, do you know what's going on?"

Having asked what he was most curious about, Kim Tae Hoon took off his left glove and said,

"If I knew what was going on, I wouldn't have a reason to be here now would I."

"Haha, that's true."

Bang Hyun Wook awkwardly laughed then sighed before once again asking,

"It looks like a lot of people died. Like a lot……."

There were 102 survivors.

If you considered the number of customers who go to a supermarket at the end of the year, the numbers are pretty dismal.

But of course not everyone died. A lot of people ran away from the store the moment the incident occurred.

Whether it was through the subway connected to the second floor, or the many doors on the first floor.

But still considering that, there were still many casualties and fatalities.

The number of broken corpses was at least just as much as the number of survivors.

More than 100 people died.

It was a huge figure. It's rare for a hundred people to die even in a serious accident.

"It's because they didn't fight.."

But Kim Tae Hoon entertained no doubts about that gory spectacle.

Regardless of the number of monsters, Kim Tae Hoon would fight until there's only a few left. So naturally this would be the result.

That’s just how it is.

If a hundred young men were to fight a lion with their hands and baseballs, regardless of how many die, you could say that they would be able to capture the lion, but if they all run, of course the lion will just go free.

But the goblins and orcs were not just simple beasts.

‘These monsters flock together and travel in groups.’

These monsters gathered together and cooperate with each other.

They were similar to wolves, hyenas, and even humans.

What more, the hunting efficiency of a herd is astounding. The proof is in the text, if anyone were to look back at human history, they would see that there is great power behind numbers and cooperation.

In the current circumstance, you could argue that it was due to Kim Tae Hoon that there were 102 survivors. If it wasn’t for Kim Tae Hoon’s timely arrival, it would have been impossible for the survivors on the second floor to have killed the three orcs.

“Is that so?”

Bang Hyun Wook said, not quite sure what he meant yet. But still, he did have an inkling of the intent behind his words.

The fact was that he had survived until now while fighting after all.

Also if Kim Tae Hoon wasn't there, then without a doubt the damage would have been far greater.

"What do you think will happen next? No, rather, should we continue to stay here? Well this is a groceries section, so if we want to stay here, I'm sure we'll hold out for a long while. That's why you led us down here, right? If we had gotten trapped in the first floor because of the fire shutters... that would have been terrible."

Bang Hyun Wook said to Kim Tae Hoon.

Instead of replying, Kim Tae Hoon took off his right glove.

At that moment Kim Tae Hoon saw it.

A black tattoo carved into the back of his right hand, a pattern reminiscent of the blazing sun.

'This?'

Kim Tae Hoon discovered the sign of his awakening.

Chapter 4 – Mark Of Awakening (1)

The basement second floor of the underground shopping mall, where a cacophonous storm of screaming and blood once resounded, had become calm.

The moment they felt their stress melt away, they were hit with a wave of fatigue, with the end result being that people fell asleep, of course.

There were those that fell asleep without knowing, but there were also those who filled the alcohol aisle, trying to drink to sleep because they couldn't fall asleep despite their drowsiness.

The scene was literally like how it was described.

Kim Tae Hoon was unlike those who were drinking coffee for the caffeine. He was nursing a lukewarm can of coffee in his hand, and while drinking a mouthful of coffee, he took in the scent of the coffee, enjoying its taste.

It was Kim Tae Hoon's only hobby.

Kim Tae Hoon always had coffee before and after a battle. While drinking coffee he would prepare for battle or clean up the aftermath while enjoying his coffee.

Even now nothing changed.

After making sure that the marking on his hand was real, he found eight others who also sported a patterned tattoo on their hands. Including the deceased, there were a total of eight people who had it.

With squinted eyes he stared at people's hands.

Including Kim Tae Hoon, there were nine people. Of the nine, five were males and four were females, with one elderly person but no children.

But with such a small sample size, there wasn't much he could get glean from them.

'The patterns aren't identical, but are similar. Bang Hyun Wook's pattern is similar to mine, but not the same.'

Obviously, the patterns have differences unique to the person, kind of like a fingerprint.

'If it's like fingerprints, then it would express different characteristics per human... but why did it only happen to some people but not all of them? Are there only specific people who get chosen? Or is it the opposite where the ones who are chosen is some sort of ominous sign? Is it some sort of disease?'

The one who helped solve Kim Tae Hoon's concerns was no other than Bang Hyun Wook.

Bang Hyun Wook, who still dressed in his baseball jumper, approached Kim Tae Hoon with a cautious attitude and tapped his right hand with his left finger.

‘‘Hyungnim I figured this out.”

”What?”

”This is an ability. Ability. “

Bang Hyun Wook fished out his phone, and showed Kim Tae Hoon a picture he had taken from his smart phone. The screen displayed a close-up of the pattern and his hand. What appeared were translucent letters that were not visible before.

[Basic Abilities]

– Strength : 16

– Stamina : 13

[Special Ability]

– Energy : D Rank

– Physical Defense : F Rank

[Acquired Ability]

– None

Kim Tae Hoon stood there silently while looking at the picture.

Click!

He quickly took a picture of his hand and immediately went to go look at his phone.

[Basic Abilities]

– Strength : 19

– Stamina : 21

[Special Abilities]

– Energy : F Rank

– Mana : F Rank

– Telekinesis : A Rank

– Physical Defense : F Rank

– Magic Resistance : F Rank

[Acquired Ability]

– None

Having looked at Kim Tae Hoon's abilities, Bang Hyun Wook was surprised.

"Hyungnim were you a psychic? Our ranks are different..... Is A rank the highest?"

However, Kim Tae Hoon didn't respond to Bang Hyun Wook's reaction. He simply enjoyed the fragrance of the coffee in his mouth.

'It's like a game mechanic.'

It wasn't very difficult to understand.

It was common ability and stats system that you could see in many games.

Stamina and health wasn't a very big concern.

What he needed to focus on were two of the abilities under 'Special Abilities': Energy and Telekinesis.

'Is energy like the qi you would read about in a martial arts novel?'

Looking at it, he strongly felt that it was very likely for it to be the same concept that's found in a martial arts novel.

Of course there wouldn't be anything different with mana. It'll probably be the resource needed to fuel magic.

Telekinesis was the easiest to understand. Novels, movies, comic books..... Telekinesis was a staple ability found in those media outlets and was an ability that even the common people would

know about.

‘Did it say that I had telekinesis?’

That ability had found its way to Kim Tae Hoon.

There was only one thing that he knew for sure though.

‘There’s no way I had this kind of ability. ‘

Telekinesis wasn’t an ability that Kim Tae Hoon had.

He had never received anything like this A Rank telekinesis.

He didn’t know what this ability entailed or the extent of its powers.

It wasn’t anything he had been in possession of before, so it was definitely something he had only just received.

‘The world has changed ….. and so I have I. ‘

When the monsters began to appear, the world changed and the humans did as well. The evidence lay with the humans since some humans developed abilities to fight against the monsters.

To summarize, those who had received the glyph on the back of

their hands are those who had successfully adapted to this new age of monsters.

‘Awakening ……. ‘

A symbol of one’s awakening.

A nonsense tale, an absurd string of words, but still that didn’t matter right now.

At this moment, the appearance of monsters was all the proof one needed to know that the previous common sense was nothing but old-fashioned malarkey.

For that reason, Kim Tae Hoon decided to disregard the previous world’s perception of reality. The enemy before him was real, not the values of before.

The important thing to determine was whether or not the abilities he had were real.

Furthermore.

“Bang Hyun Wook, have you used the ability called ‘energy’?”

If the ability is real, there has to be a way to use the ability.”

“Maybe …… no, I’ve definitely used it before.”

Bang Hyun Wook already knew how to activate and use this ability called energy.

“Please give me a moment.”

After disappearing off to somewhere, Bang Hyun Wook came back with two apples in his hand.

After tossing one to Kim Tae Hoon, he grasped the other one with both his hands when suddenly, bbak! It had split in two.

The grip strength wasn’t too bad.

After showing off his grip strength, Bang Hyun Wook tossed the halves onto the floor and looked at Kim Tae Hoon.

Kim Tae Hoon tossed away the apple he had received earlier.

Bang Hyun Wook grabbed an apple with his right hand like a baseball pitcher, and clenched it tightly.

Bbudeudeuk!

Bang Hyun Wook began crushing the apples like a machine.

The light in Kim Tae Hoon's eyes changed.

"At first, I thought I was seeing things, but then afterwards, when I saw the state of the baseball bat I was using, I knew it was real. My hand imprinted into the handle, and there were wood fragments in my palm. At that time, I had a gut feeling. I knew that it wasn't just an illusion, but that I had some sort of super power."

"But what kind of power is it?"

"I don't know for sure, but it feels like there's something wriggling around in my stomach."

After listening to Bang Hyun Wook, Kim Tae Hoon carefully focused on his stomach area.

'There, in my stomach…. there's definitely something there.'

There was truth to what Bang Hyun Wook had said.

"Does it feel almost like an eel?"

However, unlike Bang Hyun Wook's explanation, Kim Tae Hoon's strange feeling in his stomach felt more like a loach.

'It looks like it's because of a difference in rank.'

Bang Hyun Wook's energy was rank D while Kim Tae Hoon's was only rank F.

'Of course there must be a difference.'

At that moment, Kim Tae Hoon's gaze turned to a piece of the apple that Bang Hyun Wook had split in half earlier.

'Telekinesis.'

Many school students would try and do such a thing.

The fantasy of trying to move something with your mind while staring at it while asking yourself 'do I have telekinesis'?

And then later when you reflect back on this piece of dark history, you couldn't help but snort.

But now, while doing the same thing, Kim Tae Hoon felt ashamed because of his age. While looking at the apple, Kim Tae Hoon sent out evil thoughts.

He tried to move the apple and then tried to crush it.

Bbu-deuk!

The apple that had been split in half began to crumple like a

tissue. The apple quickly condensed into the size of a ping pong ball.

Kim Tae Hoon's eyes grew bigger. This was the most surprised Kim Tae Hoon had been in his life in the last decade.

"Huu"

It's not very surprising. His heart was pounding in this nonsense situation.

Could you just accidentally crush an apple that had been split in half into the size of a ping pong ball with just the power of your mind while only exerting the same amount of thought as just grasping it?

'This power.... it's dangerous.'

However, Kim Tae Hoon didn't get too drunk on excitement, Kim Tae Hoon had learned to keep calm through the experiences in his life. It was important to not let yourself get carried away by your own excitement, and to instead maintain your priorities and figure out a 'key'.

While agonizing over the prospect of trying to figure out the 'key', he finally thought of it.

'The important thing is to find a way to raise one's skill rank. '

That is the most important key right now.

‘This game…….’

Kim Tae Hoon interpreted all of these situations like a game.

What if this whole situation is just a game?

There were many theories running through Kim Tae Hoon’s mind.

He recalled a way he could test if his theories would work.

‘One of the biggest facets in a game is when you get items and experience after killing a monster.’

The broken bodies of dead monsters quickly entered his thoughts.

Kim Tae Hoon rose from his seat.

“Bang Hyun Wook.”

“Yes.”

“Grab a monster’s dead body and follow me.”

”Yes?”

Bang Hyun Wook looked at Kim Tae Hoon with large deer like eyes after hearing his orders.

Follow with a monster’s body? Why does he have to do such a gross, cumbersome, and bloody thing?

But Bang Hyun Wook’s embarrassment was short lived.

What did Bang Hyun Wook agree to when he first met Kim Tae Hoon? It was not his place to ask any questions.

At least in this place, he should follow out Kim Tae Hoon’s commands with sincerity.

“H, how should I carry this?”

When following Kim Tae Hoon’s orders, there was only one thing that he wanted to know: what are the difficulties associated with the orders he has to follow.

“Put it in the shopping cart. “

“Ah! Where should I take it?”

Before answering, Kim Tae Hoon turned his neck and looked around.

What he needed to do right now wasn't something he could do in front of a lot of people.

He would need specialized tools.

Fortunately, there was something Kim Tae Hoon needed that was located in the second floor of the mall.

Kim Tae Hoon's gaze stopped right there.

"Meat corner. "

"Yes?"

"Take it to the meat corner. "

"Monster corpses in the meat section.... heuk!"

After realizing Kim Tae Hoon's intent, Bang Hyun Wook's face turned white.

Chapter 5 – Mark Of Awakening (2)

At 4 pm, monsters appeared and a fierce battle for survival began.

The battle ended at 5 pm, and the fatigued bodies of the survivors were in sight.

Now it's 10 pm.

"Umm....."

Survivors began to wake up one after another.

Of course, they were not waking up after what you could consider a good rest.

For many of them, this was the first time they had to fight for their lives.

However, could the survivors wash away the fatigue they had accumulated with a mere three of four hours of restless sleep, especially after such a harrowing life and death struggle?

However, there was a limit to how much they could sleep, and could only wake up.

'Has a rescue team not come yet?'

‘Damn, my smart phone still doesn’t work? I pay so much every month for the phone service, but it still doesn’t work!’

‘How long do we have to stay here? What’s happened outside?’

The survivors couldn’t sleep anymore, their minds were filled with thoughts of what to do from here on and what would happen from now on.

“Excuse me, but what are you doing over there?”

“What?”

“Why are you trying to raise the fire shutter?”

The point of contention was in front of the fire shutter which had blocked the escalator up to the first floor.

There were four men in front of the fire shutter.

They were all of a similar age group and seemed to be friends, ranging from their late 20s to their early 30s. They stood vigilant while voicing their desire to open the fire shutter.

“What you’re doing is dangerous! What will you do if there are monsters?”

Park Jae Un reacted furiously.

To Park Jae Un, the first floor was a living hell.

It was only just a few hours ago that he had suffered the most traumatizing life and death struggle he had so far in his life.

In fact, Park Jae Un had woken from his sleep because he was concerned about the fire shutters. He was worried about what might happen should the barrier between the first and second floors.

Would the monsters appear again? Would the monsters somehow penetrate through the fire shutters and once again to put the lives of his wife and daughter in peril once more..... more worries and concerns.

But now, there were four idiots trying to raise the fire shutter.

Park Jae Un's shouting, telling them to stop, was filled with genuine sincerity and fear.

Naturally, his loud cries attracted the attention of a crowd of survivors in the vicinity.

"What's this? What's going on here?"

“R, rescue team, is the rescue team here?”

“I don’t think it’s the rescue team..... “

One after another, more people who had woken up or couldn’t sleep moved towards the fire shutter.

A chaotic mess began to permeate throughout the second floor.

“This , fuck.... really....”

One of the four young men who had figured out what was going on shamelessly let out a swear.

“What are you looking at? What are you all looking at!”

Another one of the four was eyeing the crowd with a nervous look in his eyes.

It wasn’t very difficult to see why.

“What?”

‘That’s ..... that’s a MacBook right?’

‘No, it’s an iPad?’

There were a bunch of Apple™ products still in their packaging in plastic bags sitting around the four young men.

In such a time as this, these four thieves were going to run off with the most expensive things they could find.

They were caught stealing, yet their response was to try and shamelessly turn the people away.

”Damn, do your eyes not turn?”

“Euh-ee!”

Eventually, of the four, the biggest and fattest one walked towards Park Jae Un.

Pik!

Then, without any warning, he pushed Park Jae Un’s shoulders.

”Ouch!”

Park Jae Un couldn’t withstand the force behind the push, and fell backwards.

”Dear!”

Park Jae Un's wife yelled loudly when she saw her husband falling backwards. Her daughter, who was asleep at her bosom, woke up, rubbing her eyes with her hands.

"Why are you……."

Park Jae Un promptly stood back up. He tried to negotiate with them again.

Puuk!

But as soon as he got back up, the big guy once again pushed him back down.

But this time, a bit harder than before. Because of the force behind the push, it might be more appropriate to say he was hit rather than pushed.

"Uheuk!"

Winded, Park Jae Un fell back down onto the floor.

'Huk!'

'It's a fight.'

The place that had previously been loud and chaotic quickly quieted down.

However, the atmosphere became one of desolation.

‘What do I do? Should I fight back?’

‘What if I just get beat up even more what would be the point.....‘

A feeling of loneliness welled up inside him.

In that dangerous atmosphere, the four young men menacingly eyed the crowd. In their eyes, their way of life was the only way to survive.

They were not bluffing.

It was because they had drawn blood before. It wasn’t just once or twice either.

They had stabbed monsters with knives, cut down monster flesh with axes, and had crushed monster heads with baseball bats.

Through their experiences they had learned how to survive.

“Is this some sort of show to you? This is not just a spectacle!”

“You guys feel fine just watching what’s going on?”

Of course, although they felt disgusted by what they were doing, they were not willing to stand up for him.

“Hey mister, what the fuck do you think you’re doing?”

The four thugs stared menacingly at Park Jae Un and his family.

Some of the bystanders became excited at the way the situation had developed.

‘‘S, sorry, I’m sorry..... ’’

“What are you apologizing for? Hmm? Hmm?”

“... . . . I’m sorry.”

“What? What did you say? Try to yell again like you did before.

C’mon, try it one more time!”

The four thugs felt that the bystanders were becoming less willing to interfere, and their momentum increased.

It was their intuition.

In this blocked off second basement level of the shopping mall, they were the rulers, they were the predators.

Around them, they saw nothing that could threaten them, but only things that they could step on.

“Hey , mister. I said get up. I said get up. ’’

He had no choice but to do so.

Puuk!

As Park Jae Un was getting up, a slim thug walked up behind him and kicked Park Jae Un like he would a soccer ball.

“Keuahk!”

Park Jae Un let out a yelp while trying to get up, and fell onto the floor.

“Daddy!”

Having finally overcome her drowsiness and opened her eyes, Park Jae Un’s daughter saw him falling onto floor, and screamed as loudly as her little throat would let her.

“Daddy daddy!”

One of the thugs made a smile after seeing Park Jae Un’s wife and daughter. In his hand was a kitchen knife that was giving off a threatening gleam.

“N, no! No no no.”

Seeing the knife, Park Jae Un ran towards the man that was approaching his wife and daughter.

Dupseuk!.

Running towards the thug, he grabbed onto the thug’s left leg.

“Huh? Huh?”

Seeing Park Jae Un clinging onto his leg, for some reason the thug felt scared.

Although Park Jae Un behavior showed that he was acting out of desperation, there was still something off about him.

”Get off of me! Get off! Die!”

In that situation, he felt a sense of danger welling up inside him.

They had already seen it before, how easily a human could die.

Of course, the other three thugs quickly set off after Park Jae Un in order to take care of him.

”Let go of him! If you don’t want to die, let go of him!”

“Just kill him!”

Puhubk, puk!

They kicked Park Jae Un off of the thug, and started to stomp on him.

“Huk, huk!”

The sound of Park Jae Un’s rough breathing was audible during his beating.

‘What do I do?’

‘I need to look for someone who can help.’

The onlookers only frowned in response while the thugs ruthlessly stomped on Park Jae Un with a grimace on their faces.

“Daaaad! Daddy!”

Meanwhile, Park Jae Un’s wife covered her crying daughter’s face.

She could only patiently wear down her daughter while she experienced a bout of hysteria.

The people on the second floor began to feel a horror distinct from the kind they felt when faced with the monsters. This was a kind of horror that only humans could bring about while raising their hands against others.

“Hey stop that right now you sons of bitches!”

Finally, a woman stepped forth.

Wearing a thick jumper, an untidy looking woman stepped out. She had freckles around the bridge of her nose, and with a loud and impressive voice, she shouted.

“Now that the hell is this?”

One of the thugs looked in the direction of the woman with a threatening gleam in his eyes.

Although she wasn’t scared of his shout, she couldn’t help but yelp when staring into his evil eyes.

“If you’re going to steal, just take the merchandise and quietly go away! Don’t hurt an innocent person!”

”Tssk!”

One of the thugs spat on the floor, and they began to walk towards the woman who had spoken out.

Before the thug could reach her, the woman pulled something out with her right hand. Her hand had a tattooed pattern on it, and in her hand was a kitchen knife.

“Huh? Shit!”

The thug faltered in his steps.

The other three stopped as well.

“K, knife. It’s a knife!”

“Crazy woman, kill that bitch! Kill her!”

The thugs already knew how dangerous a knife was, so they began to cooperate more.

There was a lot of evidence that pointed to the dangers of a knife.

There were blood stains and puddles of blood all throughout the store after the initial monster outbreak. This was evidence that cutlery should be feared.

If there was a monster's body nearby, it would have been even clearer.

Unfortunately, there weren't any bodies around that could prove the deadliness of a knife.

"Everyone stop. "

A young man had spat out those words.

"You four, you move, you die. "

The young man was wearing a plastic apron covered in blood and had taken care of disposing some bodies.

Kim Tae Hoon had finally arrived.

Chapter 6 – Mark Of Awakening (3)

“Move and you die.”

With that warning, Kim Tae Hoon slowly took off his vinyl apron.

Drip drip. The sound of green drops of blood rolling off the apron and hitting the floor was more frightening than ever.

“Hyungnim”

Bang Hyun Wook appeared after Kim Tae Hoon had already dropped his apron onto the floor.

When Bang Hyun Wook made his appearance, the disordered surroundings turned silent.

This kind of silence… it was different from the silence when the atmosphere of desolation had settled earlier.

It was a sense of oppression that couldn’t compare to anything before.

GgorGgak!

Like a promise of death, the sound of a throat swallowing saliva! The proof was the sound of somebody being beaten.

‘That punk is a downright monster……. ‘

Not even the four thugs were free from the pressure.

When Kim Tae Hoon arrived, they stuck closer together but at the same time, they remembered something.

‘What do I do?’

‘If it was anyone else but that guy we would have already beaten him….’

When everyone was struggling against the orc in the second basement level, Kim Tae Hoon had appeared with an axe and had struck down the orc.

His movements were very fast and accurate. During the fight against the orc, Kim Tae Hoon had split apart the orc’s head, then sprayed the orc on the eyes with black spray paint. While the orc was rubbing its eyes, Kim Tae Hoon then sprayed lighter fluid on the monster’s open head and lit it on fire.

There was one thing that the four of them knew for certain.

If they stood there as they were as time passed, nothing good could happen to them.

‘What do I do?’

‘Should I just ask for forgiveness?’

‘Shit, should I just beat him up?’

Like that, three of the thugs fell into confusion.

“Kill me? Try it! Try and kill me you son of a bitch!! “

Unlike the other weak-willed thugs, the one with a good build was the only one who bared his teeth at Kim Tae Hoon.

It was clear that not only was this guy strong, but he has the guts to go with his strength.

So, Kim Tae Hoon didn’t hesitate.

“Kuk, kuk kuk!”

Using telekinesis, Kim Tae Hoon grabbed onto the thug’s throat.

In that state, Kim Tae Hoon lifted the thug.

The values and concepts of the world and rational thought could not explain this.

“Uehuk !”

“Wh, what is this? What’s going on!”

“G, Ghost?”

The thug with the huge build became the scapegoat for the other three thugs, and it left them trembling and cowering in fear on the floor.

Kim Tae Hoon lifted the man 3 meters off the ground before dropping him.

Koong!

A loud rattling noise resounded as the body hit the floor.

Another sense of desolation filled the room. A sense of horror and fear spread, and repressed any previous feelings of hope.

Everyone looked at Kim Tae Hoon’s face, who had a thoughtful expression on his face, while Kim Tae Hoon looked at the three thugs and said,

“From now on, the four of you have no voice in any matter. If you have any complaints, say it right here.”

Keeping their mouths shut, the four of them simply nodded.

Kim Tae Hoon gave no more thought to the four thugs.

After making sure that Park Jae Un and his family were safe, he turned to look at the wrist watch on his left arm.

After confirming the time, he said in a low voice,

“It’s currently 22:33. Although it’s late, I’ll now begin to explain our current situation.”

“We are currently located in the second basement level of a shopping mall. Emergency generators are functioning properly, but communication via smart phone and radio is impossible. There has been no success in contacting rescue operations or other survivors.”

Having said what he needed to, Kim Tae Hoon took a sip out of a can of coffee.

He could never not appreciate coffee.

No one asked Kim Tae Hoon any questions, nor did they complained.

After enjoying his coffee, Kim Tae Hoon opened his mouth to say something, bringing the quiet ambiance to an end.

“From a personal point of view, our current situation is obviously not that good. This place is not as safe as you might be led to believe.”

Hearing what he said, there were some people who began to doubt.

‘It’s dangerous here?’

‘This place isn’t a safe place?’

It had been 7 hours since the monster attack.

The thrill of the battle had long since faded, and all that remained was nothing but the aftermath.

Of course, the survivors had no desire to do anything.

They simply wanted to wait until the army or some rescue team to arrive.

And according to common sense, the second basement level of the shopping mall was more secure than anywhere else.

For one, the fire shutters make it impossible for anyone to get in, and in addition, food was more than plenty here. There was enough food and water for the survivors to last for half a year.

Although there might be an issue regarding hygiene and human waste, in a world where running water is used everywhere, it wouldn't be too big of a problem.

However, this area that everyone was sure was safe, Kim Tae Hoon had just told them otherwise.

"Even though it has been more than six hours since the incident, not a single member from a rescue team has come."

Hearing this explanation, there were still some people who were left suspicious.

"In such a situation where social infrastructure collapses, we as survivors must first look for food. If the route here was safe and secure, somebody would have made their way here. It wouldn't even need to be a rescue crew. Whether it was for a pack of ramen or a new iPad, someone would have come.''

After listening to what Kim Tae Hoon had to say, the three thugs who had their mouths shut were trembling.

Kim Tae Hoon savored the taste of coffee in his mouth again.

Again, there was a small break in activity. The crowd began to agonize over what they were to do during the time.

‘That person is right. If there was a rescue team, they would have found a way to come get us by now.’

‘Yeah, that makes sense …… if the way here was safe, someone would have reached us by now. Well if nobody’s going to come, might as well chug down some alcohol.’

The people began to realize that Kim Tae Hoon wasn’t wrong.

Tension began to pervade throughout the room.

After looking at the tension in the room, Kim Tae Hoon swallowed the coffee in his mouth.

“Furthermore, this current situation we are dealing with is different from anything you have ever seen.’’

Kim Tae Hoon revealed his right hand to the crowd.

The crowd saw the blazing sun like pattern tattooed onto his hand.

“With the appearance of the monsters, some people will have received some sort of pattern on their right hand.”

Some people reflexively looked at their hands to confirm it.

A few people were surprised.

One of them opened their mouth for the first time.

“What is this?”

The first person to speak up was the freckled woman who stood up for Park Jae Un.

She was someone with a pattern tattooed on the back of her hand.

“I’ve been calling it the mark of awakening.”

“Awakening?”

“I don’t think any other term is appropriate for naming it. It’s quite obvious, but those who have the tattoo are given mysterious abilities.”

Kim Tae Hoon did not bother to show them his power again.

He simply didn’t need to.

His words were more than enough of an explanation. The others

around him could still see the slumped over body of the thug that Kim Tae Hoon had knocked out.

“To decipher what your tattoo means, you can take a picture of your tattoo with your phone. When you take a picture of your tattoo with your phone, translucent glyphs appear with your information deciphered. It’s like a game’s stats window.”

Kim Tae Hoon continued.

“There are three categories, and raising your abilities is quite simple. After you kill a monster, take out its heart and tear it open. Inside you’ll find a gem of sorts. After you take the gem, you’ll raise your abilities after eating the gem. ’’

Having said that, Kim Tae Hoon extended out his hand.

After waiting for a bit, Bang Hyun Wook took out a thumbnail sized red gem out of his pocket, and showcased it by holding it out onto the palm of his hand.

Kim Tae Hoon put the gem in his mouth.

Gulp!

He had unhesitatingly swallowed it.

Everyone stared at Kim Tae Hoon’s throat.

“Like that, I’ve upgraded my abilities.’’

The people watching on had blank looks on their faces after listening to what Kim Tae Hoon had said and done. It wasn’t a very realistic story.

However, Kim Tae Hoon didn’t care and simply continued with his explanation.

“For reference, you can also see the value of your gem by taking a picture of it with your smart phone.”

Kim Tae Hoon took out his phone and showed a picture of the gem that he had taken before.

A close-up picture of the red gem that Kim Tae Hoon had swallowed earlier showed up. On the photo were clearly visible letters that were previously not visible before.

[Orc’s Crystal]

— Slight increase in strength once ingested.

That was it.

“This is the only information that I’ve been able to gather up till now.”

Kim Tae Hoon had stored all of the monster corpses in the meat’s section of the store.

‘‘This is all the information we were able to get after dissecting the monsters’ bodies after battle.”

It wasn’t very easy to get that information.

It’s not easy to slaughter a lot of monsters and it was definitely not easy to dissect all of them.

If you gave an ordinary person one day to work on a monster’s corpse, they still wouldn’t be able to properly dissect it.

It was a very valuable information, information that only Kim Tae Hoon and Bang Hyun Wook had known.

But that valuable information, Kim Tae Hoon had just told everyone.

Although they were grateful that he had shared the information with those present, they were still somewhat sceptical of Kim Tae Hoon’s words.

“Why are you telling us this?”

On one hand, it was valuable information that they should be grateful for, but on the other hand, he had no incentive to tell them.

Did Kim Tae Hoon have such a spirit of self-sacrifice?

Although there isn't anybody here who has known Kim Tae Hoon for more than day, they could all tell that he was not a man full of sacrifice. Kim Tae Hoon just didn't seem like that kind of person.

In reality, they were right.

Kim Tae Hoon didn't intend to show his spirit of generosity by telling everyone the information.

"The world has changed. Monsters had somehow appeared in the world, and they are intended to fight against us. What happened today is just the first of many. "

Kim Tae Hoon had realized the crucial fact far before anyone else.

"In order to live through this strange change, we must be selfish, but not overwhelmingly so, but rather sensibly so."

Human beings should be fighting against the monsters.

In this situation, it's pointless to monopolize such basic information.

The more survivors there are, the more favorable it would be for Kim Tae Hoon.

Nowadays, many surviving males would have military experience. It wouldn't work so well if you gave them an axe or a kitchen knife, but if you gave them a gun, that'd be a different story.

[TN: South Korea has compulsory military service for males once they come of age]

"Besides, I've already received payment for the information. We've already eaten all the monster stones."

More than anything, Kim Tae Hoon had been holding onto this information for some time.

Kim Tae Hoon had split the monster stones from the monster hearts with Bang Hyun Wook. In their current situation, the value of a monster stone was priceless.

They had eaten them all, so besides that basic information, he was privy to more information regarding the stones themselves.

It was a kind of give and take.

“Does anyone have any complaints?”

Any exchanges were done under Kim Tae Hoon’s leadership.

“Then I’ll take your silence as a no.”

The group around him started to get a notion for what he meant when he said ‘sensibly selfish’.

“Also, lastly, although I haven’t been able to confirm yet, I think the monsters are able to appear without any space constraints. It’s as if they’re just falling from the sky. The reason why I came up with this hypothesis is because..... “

Kim Tae Hoon stopped talking.

His eyes changed.

Everyone stared at Kim Tae Hoon with eyes wide open, meanwhile, Kim Tae Hoon took a sip out of his canned coffee.

Ggur ggek ggur ggek !

After ingesting the caffeine, Kim Tae Hoon let out a loud shout.

“RUN ! “

Ggwang!

The fire shutters that had been blocking off the first floor from the second floor burst open like a bomb.

Kaaaaaaaa!

From beyond the fire shutter was a furious outburst of cries that came from nowhere.

The owners of the cries soon showed up.

“Oh dear God....”

What appeared was a massive 2 meter tall orc with black skin.

Chapter 7 – The First Hunter (1)

Kim Tae Hoon was able to glean a lot of information from the corpses of the monsters. He had informed the survivors of the information that he had gathered.

But of course he didn't tell them everything.There was something that he had withheld from the survivors.

He had tested his telekinesis against the dissected corpses of the monsters.

Kim Tae Hoon's power extended beyond merely lifting a big adult male's body. If he really wanted to, Kim Tae Hoon could have twisted his neck 180 degrees and killed him.

Kim Tae Hoon showcased his power through his actions and not just by his words.

Kwang!

Just as right as the black orc was on the verge of massacring through the survivors, it suddenly slammed into a wall.

Hududuk!

The black orc caused cracks to appear in the wall, pieces of the wall falling onto the floor in a heap.

“Waaak!”

A loud yell was heard from an unknown person.

Keureureu!

However, having borne the brunt of the attack, the orc was surprisingly not surprised.

Instead, it was eyeing the one that had attacked him. It watched Kim Tae Hoon and the group of survivors around him flee towards the first basement level.

Kim Tae Hoon clenched his teeth.

‘Its level is different.’

Kim Tae Hoon had painted a picture of the black orc being slammed against the wall with his hand as though he had crushed a mosquito on it. Then, Kim Tae Hoon conjured up a sharp image of him pushing further onto the orc.

As soon as the image that Kim Tae Hoon burned into his mind became blurry, the power would fade.

Keuuuuuuuuuh!

Meanwhile, the black orc that was embedded in the wall let out a loud shout.

The shout grew louder, and made the surrounding people freeze.

Koong!

“Euhahk ”

Some survivors who were running away collapsed on the spot at the sound of the scream.

“Kuhub!”

Some of the elderly survivors collapsed while holding onto their chests.

Not even Kim Tae Hoon could avoid the effects of the scream.

‘Damn it.’

Kim Tae Hoon’s head, stomach, and chest felt a freezing cold sensation.

He couldn’t move. The cold even made Kim Tae Hoon’s thoughts to stop.

Following that, the image that Kim Tae Hoon had made faded away.

Kaaaaah!

The black orc didn’t let that opportunity slip by. After confirming Kim Tae Hoon’s location, the black orc rushed towards him.

Koong, Koong, Koong!

The black orc faced no obstacles while he rushed towards Kim Tae Hoon.

Kwakjik!

The head of a man who had fallen unconscious on the floor was smashed open like a watermelon.

Kwang!

Shelves that were piled up with merchandise were completely destroyed in the wake of the beast.

The black orc’s speed didn’t decrease, but instead accelerated as he stepped closer towards Kim Tae Hoon.

If the orc slammed into Kim Tae Hoon's body, the only thing to see would be an explosion of guts and gore!

However, Kim Tae Hoon had made no attempts to avoid the incoming black orc.

"Huu"

The black orc was like a train, and Kim Tae Hoon was in its way. He tried to imagine an appropriate picture to help him in this situation.

He once again tried to paint a picture in his mind.

'If he can't break this, I'd have caught him.'

Four thick invisible chains created by his telekinesis wrapped around the black orc's arms and legs.

Koong!

As soon as he completed the picture in his head, the black orc began to slow down.

Koong!

Eventually, the black orc came to a halt.

The black orc didn’t suddenly come to a stop.

It was like trying to force the monster back with his own strength while simultaneously trying to stop his own body from spreading out.

Keureureu!

Trying to keep the monster restrained, Kim Tae Hoon let out a loud roar.

Bbadeudeuk!

From Kim Tae Hoon’s voice, one could hear his struggle to maintain a hold over the beast.

It was then that Bang Hyun Wook made his move.

Out of everyone standing behind Kim Tae Hoon, Bang Hyun Wook was the first one to regain his freedom from the black orc’s roar.

Giryuk!

It was thanks to the incredible power that resided in his stomach

area.

Bang Hyun Wook swiftly narrowed the distance between him and the orc with the intention of smashing the orc's head in.

"Euryacha!"

Cradling his baseball bat, Bang Hyun Wook smashed it vertically down on the black orc's head.

Kwajik!

The baseball bat fractured, then shattered.

'Huh?'

It was more than the bat could handle. The black orc's tough body and Bang Hyun Wook's overwhelming physical strength.

The problem was that Bang Hyun Wook didn't quite grasp the issue.

Keuugh!

His overwhelming strength was enough to attract the black orc's attention, and all of the rage that accompanied it.

Keuahah!

The black orc let out another fear-inducing cry. [TN: Should have mentioned this earlier, it's kind of like Diablo II's barbarian Howl.]

It was not towards Bang Hyun Wook.

"This!"

The cry was directed towards Kim Tae Hoon which caused a lapse in his focus.

"Run!"

The moment Kim Tae Hoon's telekinesis wore off, he immediately tried to warn Bang Hyun Wook.

Bbeyuk!

However, before Bang Hyun Wook could react to the warning, the black orc's fist had already collided with Bang Hyun Wook's chest.

'Huk!'

Winded, Bang Hyun Wook couldn't even let slip a single noise as he flew towards Kim Tae Hoon's direction.

Puuk!

While Bang Hyun Wook and Kim Tae Hoon were tangled together, the ground shook. It became harder to stand up.

In that short moment, Kim Tae Hoon felt regret.

‘ ….. This is my fault ’

A monster could appear at any time.

It was Kim Tae Hoon’s hypothesis that a monster could appear anywhere without any space constraints.

He had also expected that stronger monsters would appear. The abilities that he had received and the stats system was evidence to prove that point.

If the ‘awakened’ have abilities and stats that can get stronger, then of course that would mean that there would be monsters that could threaten the awakened.

‘Damn it.’

Therefore Kim Tae Hoon should have done something about it.

If anyone else other than Kim Tae Hoon had come to the same conclusion, then they would have prepared for the arrival of a strong monster and could have made some sort of plan to deal with it.

Keuahah!

Perhaps the only good thing to have emerge at the moment was the fact that the black orc believed that victory was already in its grasp.

The fact that the orc would have the opportunity to crush the man who had brought him so much pain with the orc's own fist made the orc ecstatic, and it gave out a shout of joy.

If Kim Tae Hoon were in the orc's position, he would have already killed his enemy.

Kim Tae Hoon would never miss that chance.

What more, Kim Tae Hoon would never commit the same mistake twice.

Keaaah …… hab!

'Shut up .'

First, he shut the black orc's mouth.

Ggwak!

This time, he imagined a thick chain pulling back the orc by the neck.

The orc's body shook as the chain tried to pull it back.

Keuheub, Heub!

But the orc did not move.

Exerting as much strength as it could, the black orc forced his legs, stomach, waist and neck to move forward.

The orc stared at Kim Tae Hoon with its orange eyes. It tried to open its tightly shut mouth.

Peub, peuheub!

The black orc's snout began to twitch without stop. [TN: In a lot of Asian countries, orcs are depicted to be pig-like unlike what you would see in Warcraft.]

Bbadeudeuk!

The shouts that Kim Tae Hoon had been suppressing began to

kick up.

Kim Tae Hoon wanted to shout.

<Somebody, anybody, grab a forklift and run the monster through!>

‘Damn it!’

However, Kim Tae Hoon couldn’t open his mouth.

As soon as he opens his mouth, he’ll lose grasp of the image which would cause his strength to fade, an opportunity that the black orc would not miss.

Because of that, there was only one thing that Kim Tae Hoon expected.

Dudeuk …… Dudeuk …….

The sound of Bang Hyun Wook’s still pumping heartbeat.

Chapter 8 – The First Hunter (2)

Bang Hyun Wook felt no pain when the black orc's fist made contact with his chest.

It was an after-effect of his heart stopping.

Then from the center of his stomach, that strange energy began to make its move, bringing life back to his heart.

The strange energy had sensed that its owner was in trouble, and without any hesitation it had swiftly traveled towards Bang Hyun Wook's heart.

There was a beat.

DuDeuk!

The strange energy made his heart beat again.

"Kuheuk!"

Though he breathed once more, Bang Hyun Wook could not explain why he was alive again, and in his mouth lingered the taste of death.

However the energy didn't just stop there.

Dugeun dugeun!

The energy kept pounding at his heart. It was trying to make his heart beat more and more crazily!

Dugeun Dugeun Dugeun!

Under the fluctuations of that energy, Bang Hyun Wook's heart began to pump and more blood.

'Euh!'

It felt as though someone were forcibly squeezing his heart to wring out all the blood.

Or it felt as though someone had replaced his heart with hot stones.

The hot blood pumping through his heart quickly circulated through his body.

His felt like it was going to burst, his fingernails and toenails felt like they would fly off like bullets, and his pupils had become dark.

"Euh..... "

What entered his vision was the bloody battle between Kim Tae Hoon and the black orc.

It was a sight that could make you lose your spirit.

Because the battle was reaching its end, the scene was calmer than you would expect from a desperate struggle.

A battle is a battle, but there really wasn't a better way for the two to express the stalemate they were at.

Kim Tae Hoon and the black orc were not moving.

The sounds they were making were strange and ominous.

From the mouth of the black orc was a sound of wind blowing instead of anger, and from Kim Tae Hoon's tightly closed lips were some muffled grunts. IT all sounded muffled.

If he didn't know what kind of person Kim Tae Hoon was, he would have thought that he was watching some sort of show.

If a gamer saw the scene, they would have thought that the screen was frozen or the game was lagging.

However, with everything he had experienced so far, Bang Hyun Wook knew that it was not some sort of show or lag in a video game.

‘It won’t last much longer.’ Bang Hyun Wook was aware of Kim Tae Hoon’s special ability.

Kim Tae Hoon’s telekinesis was very powerful.

But, there were some glaring weaknesses.

One of its biggest weaknesses was its inability to affect the insides of a living organism even though it could take some control over the outside of a living organism.

If he could, Kim Tae Hoon would have already crushed the black orc’s heart or brain.

But at the same time, telekinesis was something very hard to deal with.

As soon as the image inside the user’s head becomes blurry, the telekinesis is released and the user is put in danger.

It’s difficult to maintain the telekinesis without a certain level of concentration.

How is he going to kill the black orc if he can’t even subdue it?

It had been a little more than 3 minutes.

‘What should I do?’

It was in these last three minutes that Bang Hyun Wook would have the choice to worry about life or death.

Within that three minutes he had to choose.

‘Sh, should I run away?’

Should he fight for his life, or should he run away?

Every fiber of his body told him to run away. His instincts were telling him that a human should live.

‘Mom, dad …..’ Bang Hyun Wook’s instinct to survive even went so far as to paint the pictures of his parents in his mind so that he would run away.

He saw the visages of his parents who had endured all kinds of trouble with the dream of turning their child who had a good body into a talented baseball player.

‘Damn, but…….’ Of course, if it wasn’t for Kim Tae Hoon, he wouldn’t have this internal struggle.

As a result, he couldn’t come to a decision right away. No, it wasn’t possible.

“Hey keep your wits about you !”

The beautiful woman name Ahn Sun Mi with the freckles over the bridge of her nose appeared.

“You have to run away!”

Having regained her freedom from the black orc’s fear, she once more demonstrated her courage like she did before when Park Jae Un was being beaten by the four thieves.

Although everyone else had already tried to run away from the black orc, she had come back to save Bang Hyun Wook. With her right hand that had the mark of awakening engraved on it, she grabbed Bang Hyun Wook’s left wrist and tried to run away.

Unable to wake up from his reverie, Bang Hyun Wook was dragged along by the woman.

“H, hold on a minute!”

Bang Hyun Wook shook off Ahn Sun Mi’s hand, they had already arrived in front of the fire shutter that the black orc had smashed through.

It was a border.

Beyond the broken fire shutter was the escalator that led up to the first basement level, and from there, you could run away.

Once he escaped, there would be no return. Once he stepped foot on the first floor, he will never step back onto the second floor ever again.

And of course, Bang Hyun Wook will never see Kim Tae Hoon's face ever again.

Bang Hyun Wook knew it as well. He looked back at the desperate battle between Kim Tae Hoon and the black orc.

"We can't kill it! We have to run!"

Realizing Bang Hyun Wook's inner struggle, Ahn Sun Mi screamed at Bang Hyun Wook.

"Fuck!"

Bang Hyun Wook yelled.

It wasn't directed at Ahn Sun Mi, but at himself.

"FUCK ……." I want to live.

Did Bang Hyun Wook want to die?

No! He wanted to live, he wanted to survive and see his parents' faces again. He wanted to survive and protect his parents in this world that had changed.

If not that, the things he wanted to do in this world were piled up like a mountain.

He was training to become a professional baseball player during his high school days. He wanted to live a wonderful campus life in college while playing baseball then get recruited onto a team and to buy expensive sports cars.

However, it's not like they would have died if Kim Tae Hoon wasn't there.

Bang Hyun Wook's father had told him.

At the very least, don't live like a coward.

'Wh, what do I do?'

At that moment, the scene where Kim Tae Hoon had come to his assistance played in his head.

The way he blinded the monsters by spraying their face with black spray paint, the trick he used to silently take down a monster by choking it with a fishing line, and poisoning a monster with

engine oil. ‘Ah!’

At that moment, a light went off in Bang Hyun Wook’s head.

“Cooking oil, cooking oil!”

“What?”

“Cooking oil!”

Screaming the words ‘cooking oil’, there was no longer the thought of running away in Bang Hyun Wook’s gaze.

“We have to run!”

When Ahn Sun Mi had grabbed Bang Hyun Wook’s wrist and ran towards the escalator leading up towards the first floor, Kim Tae Hoon clenched his teeth a bit harder.

He felt as though the miracle he was relying on had disappeared as though it were nothing but a mirage.

However he didn’t grumble.

‘If you’re going to run, do it all the way. Don’t come back.’

Humans naturally desired survival above all else.

Bang Hyun Wook's decision was something anyone else would have made if it meant survival. It wasn't something that Kim Tae Hoon didn't understand. Afterall, Kim Tae Hoon had made some harrowing choices in order to survive as well.

'A chance, just need to make a chance to escape…….' Above all, Kim Tae Hoon knew better than anyone else that nobody would help him.

Help won't come just because you grumble against those who ran away.

The fight was starting to head in a bad direction.

'I have to come up with a solution before my power fades.' Kim Tae Hoon was feeling his strength starting to fade.

Especially now that his stamina, mental strength, and concentration were drained.

'If anything, maybe my body might burst.' Telekinesis required much more stamina and concentration than he had thought.

The usage of telekinesis was not free.

If the stream of telekinesis is too much, the source of power will

be destroyed, and his usage of telekinesis beyond his control will destroy Kim Tae Hoon's human level body.

That was the main source of Kim Tae Hoon's fatigue.

But because he is Kim Tae Hoon, he will endure.

He was someone who knew how to desperately struggle in the crossroads between life and death.

'I thought I would be able to drink some coffee before I died..... I don't suppose the monster would consider my last wishes.' But Kim Tae Hoon had already pictured his death in his mind.

And at that moment.

At that moment Kim Tae Hoon became spiritless. Keuuh…!

A small cry finally escaped from the lips of the black orc.

Koong!

The black orc's legs began to move.

It was a slow movement, like a step taken on the moon, but the black orc finally succeeded in taking a step.

‘Damn it.’

The black orc was starting to win against his telekinesis.

The gleam from the black orc’s orange eyes made it seem as though it were laughing. It was speaking from its eyes.

[I will eat you you starting from your head]

That was what Kim Tae Hoon’s intuition told him as he looked at its eyes.

’This guy….. no, these monsters, they are clever.’

The first wave of goblins and orcs were just savage brutes.

They were slaves to their instincts, and could only move to satiate their hunger.

That’s why the goblins who were smaller in stature compared to humans bared their teeth instead of hesitating to fight a larger enemy.

However, this black orc in front of him was different.

It wasn’t ignorant and it didn’t just adhere to the whims of its instincts, but rather it knew how to hunt and it knew what it

meant to struggle or what it meant to destroy.

This black orc was definitely not the only one of its kind.

'The world is now full of these kinds of monsters ……' This one is just the beginning.

There will be more monsters like the black orcs, and many of them will be stronger and more clever than it, all while boasting incredible abilities.

Of that Kim Tae Hoon was sure.

'We're going to need proper hunters to kill these monsters. And not just one either, but a group…..' In this age of monsters, if humankind is to survive, then they would need more than just simply weapons.

Hunters, the hunters would need to be equipped with the ability, knowledge, and experience to fight against the monsters.

However worrying about something like that was pointless unless he survived.

Kim Tae Hoon began to turn his train of thought.

What he needed to do now was think of the present, not the future.

‘Rather than push him away from me, I might be able to create an opportunity if I pull him towards me…….’ He had come up with a method that could allow him to survive.

At that moment.

Ggang!

From what was a silent struggle rang a sudden outburst of sound.

‘That ……?’

The sound came from a large can colliding with the black orc’s head.

‘Cooking oil?’

It was a yellow colored canister that held 18 liters of cooking oil.

“Hyungnim!”

Kim Tae Hoon heard Bang Hyun Wook’s voice behind the sound of the can of cooking oil hitting the back of the black orc’s head.

“You saw me do all that by myself, right?”

No further explanation was needed. Kim Tae Hoon immediately changed the image that he had drawn.

He shifted the chain 180 degrees so that it would push the monster away from him.

Instead, he pushed the monster towards Bang Hyun Wook.

Kim Tae Hoon connected himself to the telekinetic chain and tugged to the right.

Koong, Koong, Koong, Koong!

With an explosive start, the black orc suddenly rushed towards Kim Tae Hoon.

Hweek!

Kim Tae Hoon flew to the right as though he were hit by a car and spectacularly avoided the orc's charge.

Kaaaaah!

In the midst of its unstoppable charge the black orc with mouth wide open let loose a loud cry.

Its charge only stopped after it broke through five shelves.

Keureureu!

Immediately standing back up, the black orc followed Kim Tae Hoon with its eyes.

It saw Kim Tae Hoon run towards where Bang Hyun Wook and Ahn Sun Mi were standing.

There was no hesitation.

Kwang!

Letting loose another cry, the black orc once again charged towards them.

In the meantime, Kim Tae Hoon shouted at Ahn Sun Mi and Bang Hyun Wook.

“Go up!”

“Cooking oil! Be Careful of the cooking oil!” As Bang Hyun Wook’s warning ended, in a terrifying turn of events, Kim Tae Hoon slid on the floor that had become covered in a layer of cooking oil.

As Kim Tae Hoon slipped, he reached out towards the ceiling.

Just like how the super hero Spiderman from Marvel Comics shoots out spider webs from his wrists, Kim Tae Hoon used his telekinesis to create an invisible line that connected his arm and the ceiling.

Having stopped himself from slipping by utilizing his telekinetic line, Kim Tae Hoon turned towards Bang Hyun Wook and Ahn Sun Mi, who were both staring at him in amazement, and said,

“Go!”

”Holy, telekinesis is awesome…….” “GO!”

Kim Tae Hoon once again shouted at Bang Hyun Wook who had spoken in a daze.

“What? What about hyungnim?”

Instead of answering, Kim Tae Hoon turned back to look at the black orc that was running towards them.

While looking at the black orc, Kim Tae Hoon stretched out a hand.

While doing so, he painted an image.

It was an image of the black orc’s legs tied up.

Then he waited.

He was waiting for the black orc to step down onto the oil with its large foot.

Gwah Dang!!

When the black orc stepped down onto the oil, it slipped, at which point Kim Tae Hoon grabbed its legs and pulled it the other way.

Kwang, Gwang, Kwang!

The black orc went flying past Kim Tae Hoon and his party, crashing into a bunch of shelves beyond Kim Tae Hoon's line of sight.

Keuh? Keuh? Keuuh?

It was an unprecedented situation that the black orc had never experienced before in its entire life, and coming from its mouth were cries of embarrassment. Kim Tae Hoon, meanwhile, took one step onto the escalator, and ran.

Both Bang Hyun Wook and Ahn Sun Mi ran with him.

They quickly arrived at the first basement level of the mall, at

which point Bang Hyun Wook asked,

“Hyungnim, we’re just going to run right?”

It was more like him begging than an actual question.

He just wanted to beg him to run away.

Kaaaaah!

At the same time, the black orc’s resound roar shook the escalator.

In the wake of that roar, Bang Hyun Wook was like a deer that was raring to bolt off as he stared at Kim Tae Hoon with an expectant look in his eyes.

However, Kim Tae Hoon’s gaze turned towards Ahn Sun Mi, not Bang Hyun Wook.

“Do you have driver’s license?”

“What?”

It was a sudden and unexpected inquiry.

”Y, yes I have one.”

Regardless, Ahn Sun Mi gave an answer, at which point Kim Tae Hoon gave a command.

“We’re going to steal a car.”

Chapter 9 – The First Hunter (3)

31 December 2016, 23:53.

With 2017 just in sight, the nightlife of Bucheon City's downtown was alive with disaster.

In front of the Bucheon City shopping mall was a very wide, 10 lane roundabout full of crashed cars.

It looked as though dozens of centipedes made up of cars were strewn across the huge road.

There were also many bodies.

At least the bodies under the deflated airbags were in a better condition than others.

Walking through the tapestry of shattered glass amongst the numerous car collisions, it was impossible not to notice the broken bodies strewn across the floor.

But perhaps the worst ones were the bodies that were torn to pieces by the strange monsters.

It was definitely hell.

It was 13 degrees below 0, thanks to that, the New Year's cold was

stopping the bodies from decaying.

But one thing was clear. In all of South Korea's history, 31 December 2016 was the most depressing day.

Keureureu!

The icing on the cake on this horrible day was the appearance of a black orc who seemed to be watching the scene of carnage as though it was relishing in its accomplishments.

It was a scene where not even a single street light was working, there were only a few cars that still had functioning headlights sparsely scattered throughout the mess, making it impossible to find the black skinned orc with one's naked eye.

Nonetheless, even without visibility, people would still be able to feel its terrifying presence.

There was a vicious killing intent emanating from its orange eyes, making it impossible for others to turn a blind eye to it because it would not turn a blind eye in return.

While relentlessly giving off that atmosphere, he saw Kim Tae Hoon standing atop a relatively empty portion of the wide road surrounded by the rest of the carnage that had occurred.

The black orc only looked at Kim Tae Hoon.

It was proof of its discernment.

It had not forgotten that Kim Tae Hoon was not by himself.

It remembered that there were different kinds of people around Kim Tae Hoon.

Of course these others were not very big threats to the black orc, but they were nuisances and could eventually grow to threaten it.

Keureureu .....

The ending of the battle it had with Kim Tae Hoon earlier was proof of that.

Afterall, Kim Tae Hoon was the only one who really did anything substantial when fighting against the black orc. He had succeeded in stopping the black orc although he was not successful in killing it.

In other words, once Kim Tae Hoon is killed, everything will be over.

If Kim Tae Hoon wasn't there, the black orc would not have been hindered when trying to leave the second basement level and the black orc could have stopped the other survivors from leaving as well.

Imagining a scene where the black orc was drenched in warm blood out in this cold weather, the black orc couldn't help but shiver in excitement. As the fantasy came to an end, the black orc hesitated no longer.

It once more stepped towards Kim Tae Hoon.

Koong!

There was once more another disturbance on the abandoned road.

Koong!

Against such an opponent, Kim Tae Hoon had to use his telekinesis. He wanted to lift the black orc's moving body.

But ..... .

Koong!

The black orc stomped on the floor, and blew away Kim Tae Hoon's telekinesis that was wrapping its body.

The black orc had not grown more powerful.

So the reason why it had been able to shake off Kim Tae Hoon's telekinesis was obvious.

Kim Tae Hoon's telekinesis had weakened. His concentration, stamina, and spirit had all reached rock bottom.

More than anything, he could not properly draw the image.

He tried to draw an image where there was a pressure that pushed down on the black orc.

Keureu, keureu!

From the black orc came a cry that greatly resembled laughter, but not just laughter, ridicule.

It was a confident laugh.

It was confident that Kim Tae Hoon could no longer stop it, at best, Kim Tae Hoon could probably stop it for a mere few seconds.

As a result, the black orc didn't feel in danger when Kim Tae Hoon once again suppressed it and stopped it from moving, and in fact, it felt amused.

The black orc didn't let loose a loud cry like he had done before to cancel the effects of Kim Tae Hoon's telekinesis. Looking at its eyes, Kim Tae Hoon could tell that the black orc was ridiculing

him.

It looked at Kim Tae Hoon.

‘The clever ones are always so dirty.’

Ignoring the pleased look on the black orc’s face, Kim Tae Hoon looked at the black orc like a smart man would a weakling who was stirring up trouble.

Keureu?

It was at that moment that the black orc thought that there was something off about the way Kim Tae Hoon was looking at it.

Vroom!

From its left, the black orc heard a loud sound shatter the darkness.

Bwang!

With a loud sound a car suddenly appeared.

A black Mercedes S-Class car with a similar size to the black orc and boasting a 250 horsepower engine came crashing into the black orc.

The black orc could not dodge the car in time.

Kim Tae Hoon had froze the black orc for a few seconds.

Kwang!

Eventually, an eerie roar covered the expanse of the wide road as the car hit the black orc.

Keuaaaaah!

The black orc once again let loose a loud and eerie cry.

It wasn’t just a cry in response to the pain.

The black orc had let out a roar in order to brace itself with its immense strength in the face of the several hundred horsepower car.

Keuaaaaah!

With that goal in mind, the black orc began to lift the sedan.

The monster had herculean strength.

Of the four wheels that were furiously spinning on the asphalt road, two of them began to spin on air.

Kim Tae Hoon’s telekinesis no longer had any effect on the black orc.

But Kim Tae Hoon did not panic.

Rather it was the opposite.

He did not flee although he had ample opportunity to do so. Instead, he waited in the cold weather to see what the black orc would do. Kim Tae Hoon stood on the wide road and waited for the black orc all for the sake of the hunt.

When a hunter hunts a large prey, he never prepares only one trap.

Vroom!

At that moment, the sound of another engine coming to life from behind the black orc who was still wrestling with the Mercedes Benz penetrated through the darkness.

Keureu?

At that moment, the black orc turned its head in fear.

Kwaaang

A large bus slammed into the black orc.

”Huuu!”

Kim Tae Hoon let out a sigh for the first.

From Kim Tae Hoon’s mouth came out a white breath as though it were like a beacon.

‘We got him.’

1 January 2017, that’s how Kim Tae Hoon survived.

“It’s not as cold as you would think it would be. Don’t you agree?”

Ahn Sun Mi perked up at what Bang Hyun Wook said and frowned.

“Is that a joke?”

From her mouth came out some thorny words.

She thought that Bang Hyun Wook was being crass and poking fun at her, which she thought was natural to do so.

It was New Years 12 AM 2017, and the weather was in South Korea was unbelievably cold.

There was a faint wind blowing through the wide roads, not a single street lamp brightening up the way. The fact that there were no living creatures around made it all the more desolate.

Ahn Sun Mi felt that it was the coldest day of her life.

If it weren't for the fact that Kim Tae Hoon was fiddling around with an axe in order to get the black orc's heart crystal, Ahn Sun Mi wouldn't have bothered to stay out in the cold wind with just one hot pack to depend on.

But Bang Hyun Wook happened to be sincere in what he said.

"But it really isn't that cold....."

He really wasn't feeling that cold.

It was thanks to the energy that he had that the cold didn't really affect him.

Looking at Bang Hyun Wook, Ahn Sun Mi gave a curt reply.

“To not be able to feel the cold in cold weather is a bad sign.”

”What?”

“When a human’s body temperature falls, the body focuses the flow of blood around the heart and the brain in order to maintain their function. On the other hand, the limbs and other extremities that are far away from the heart and the brain turn cold as a result of the blood circulation in those areas being cut off. Then, to prevent the destruction of those limbs, the body will concentrate blood into those areas. From there, you run a fever. It’s enough to make you want to take off all your clothes, including your undergarments.”

After speaking, Ahn Sun Mi looked around her surroundings. There were nude corpses strewn about everywhere.

Although the human body is stronger than you would think, it is susceptible to instant destruction once the mind begins to break down.

In fact, dying of hypothermia while in the cold is the same for humans as it is for monsters.

“Once your clothes come off, the symptoms of hypothermia are exacerbated, and then the countdown starts.”

”Are you a doctor?”

Ahn Sun Mi laughed bitterly in response to Bang Hyun Wook's question.

"What doctor, that's just slavery."

That's what she thought.

A good doctor would stay in the emergency room at the end of the year in case of emergencies, not go to the nearest super mall to buy cigarettes, caffeine, and snacks.

"I'm just a slave that goes on errands to buy cigarettes at the end of the year."

However, she was grateful.

'Because I was at the mall I survived…….'

If she were still at the hospital, she probably would have died by now.

There were many knives and sharp tools in the hospital, but there definitely would not have been any weapons good enough to fight against a black orc, and there definitely would not have been anyone capable enough to fight a black orc.

But on the contrary, it was a source of comfort for her despite the serious situation she was in.

‘Can I still survive from here on out?’

Even before the year ended, the city was full of noise and had turned into hell.

But this was just the beginning.

If she wants to survive in the future, it would be necessary to have to experience the same tribulations she had experienced today.

“Excuse me, I’m just curious, but what’s the salary of a doctor?”

Like that, he asked Ahn Sun Mi a completely shameless and nonsense question considering the situation they were in.

Fortunately Ahn Sun Mi had no need to answer his question.

Kim Tae Hoon’s axe finally stopped.

The conversation between Ahn Sun Mi and Bang Hyun Wook stopped as well, and the two of them looked at Kim Tae hoon who had stopped.

After removing the heart from the black orc’s corpse, Kim Tae Hoon wrenched out an orange gem embedded in the heart.

It was a monster stone.

Kim Tae Hoon walked towards Ahn Sun Mi and Bang Hyun Wook who were waiting for him, and commanded Bang Hyun Wook,

“Take a picture.”

After quickly rummaging about, Bang Hyun Wook took out his smart phone.

“Ah!”

Bang Hyun Wook who had taken out his smartphone let out a sigh. The smartphone’s LCD screen had spider web cracks all over it.

”Shit, I just bought this last month!”

“Take the picture.”

Kim Tae Hoon ignored Bang Hyun Wook’s grumbling.

“Ah, right away!”

Bang Hyun Wook could only swallow a bitter smile as he turned

on the camera on his phone.

Then he aimed the camera at Kim Tae Hoon's face.

Kim Tae Hoon's slightly angry face was shown on the cracked LCD screen.

Ahn Sun Mi said to Bang Hyun Wook on Kim Tae Hoon's behalf,

"Take a picture of the monster stone..."

"Ah!"

Bang Hyun Wook swiftly aimed his camera at Kim Tae Hoon's palm.

Click!

With a flash, the camera took the picture.

[Black Orc's Crystal]

– Strength and stamina increase on consumption

– Rank of Energy increases on consumption.

– Rank of Physical Defense increases on consumption.

– Grants the chance to learn the Black Orc's [Black Skin]

ability on consumption.

The description for the Black Orc's Crystal was visible in translucent letters.

"Wow, doesn't that look like a rare item?"

An excited Bang Hyun Wook exclaimed.

However, as soon as Kim Tae Hoon checked the contents of the description, he decisively swallowed the Black Orc's Crystal.

Then, before Ahn Sun Mi and Bang Hyun Wook's surprised expressions could turn back to normal, Kim Tae Hoon snatched the smartphone from Bang Hyun Wook's hand and took a picture of the tattoo on his hand.

[Basic Abilities]

– Strength : 28

– Stamina: 23

[Special Abilities]

– Energy : F+ Rank

– Mana : F Rank

– Telekinesis : A Rank

– Physical Defense : F+ Rank

– Magic Defense: F Rank

[Acquired Ability]

– Black Skin (Grade 6) : Using the power of the Black Orc, physical defense increases by consuming energy.

Having confirmed that he can still grow and evolve himself and his abilities, Kim Tae Hoon laughed.

‘I have a rough idea of what to do next.’

It was at that moment that the first hunter was born.

Chapter 10 – Relic (1)

Kim Tae Hoon was in the middle of doing some shopping at the super mall. Chocolate, seasoned salt, almonds, jam, jerky…. .. .

Of course it wasn't unusual to shop for such items in the groceries section of the second basement level of the mall.

Except with the time swiftly approaching 2 o'clock and the shelves all toppled over like dominoes, he had to pick up the goods from off the floor and store them in a bag that still had its tags attached instead of a shopping cart.

Of course, he also had no intention of ringing the items up at the counter.

It was perhaps the most bizarre scene of a man shopping in the world.

"What do you plan to do now?"

While Kim Tae Hoon was wondering which of the five types of coffee beans in front of him he should choose, Ahn Sun Mi struck up a conversation.

Instead of answering Ahn Sun Mi's question, he took a coffee bean from one of the ripped packages on the floor, put it in his mouth, and finely chewed it up.

He opened his mouth only after enjoying the fragrance of the bean.

“I’m thinking of leaving this place as soon as possible. As for the other survivors, they’ll figure out what to do on their own.”

“You’re going to….. that’s something I figured out just by watching you Kim Tae Hoon-ssi.”

“Well if you already knew then that’s that.”

“I was hoping you would give me a more definite answer. Like what you’re planning, where you’re going to go, and what long-term goals you have…..”

Kim Tae Hoon turned to look at Ahn Sun Mi before she could finish her thought.

His cold gaze bore straight into Ahn Sun Mi’s eyes.

Ahn Sun Mi’s words trailed off.

His eyes were cold, cold to the extent where it would be impossible for a normal person to have such a gaze.

She had a special role, her job was to be a doctor. She was an official who constantly came into contact with the boundary between life and death. She knew better than anyone when not to

fight.

“It’s ok to be curious, but there’s no need for me to tell you anything.”

Ahn Sun Mi shut her mouth after having heard what Kim Tae Hoon said.

Kim Tae Hoon continued.

“What I require is absolute obedience, not a parasite that clings onto me thinking that I’ll keep it safe.”

“A parasite?”

Ahn Sun Mi reflexively opened her mouth, her face red.

“If there’s some give and take, then if it’s like the crocodile and the bird, then it should be ok. Of course you won’t actually find a symbiotic crocodile and bird relationship in real life.”

“You-.. .” .” .” .”

Kim Tae Hoon put out his right palm before Ahn Sun Mi could say anything. Ahn Sun Mi had a blank expression on her face.

Kim Tae Hoon flipped his hand. He revealed the pattern on his

right hand.

As Kim Tae Hoon brought his hand back, Ahn Sun Mi rummaged around her pants pocket before fishing out her smart phone. She unlocked the phone and navigated to a picture before handing it over to Kim Tae Hoon.

[Basic Abilities]

Strength : 11

Stamina : 14

[Special Abilities]

Mana : C+ Rank

Magic Resistance : C+ Rank

Physical Defense : F Rank

[Acquired Abilities]

None

It was a picture of the tattoo on her hand, and after looking through the information, he opened his mouth,

“Become a lone survivor, or become my subordinate. Make a clear choice.”

Ahn Sun Mi remembered something.

She remembered the silent showdown between Kim Tae Hoon and the black orc, and her trying to run away with Kim Tae Hoon's subordinate, Bang Hyun Wook.

That was the reason why.

It was because of what happened then that Kim Tae Hoon was so cold towards Ahn Sun Mi.

'Magic rank C+. Three years into her residency. Well regardless, she'll grow stronger if she joins me.'

He wasn't trying to get back at her for what she did.

Kim Tae Hoon was fully understanding of what was going through her head at the time.

She was not his subordinate at the time, just a survivor, but as a survivor, she still had the courage to go back and try to get Bang Hyun Wook to escape as well.

It was obvious that she would urge him to run away instead of fight, but it also became a great opportunity for Kim Tae Hoon to see inside Bang Hyun Wook's mind.

He could understand her wishes up to that point.

If she had done that while being his subordinate, he would have never forgiven her.

A friend who runs away from the battlefield is often times more dangerous than the actual enemy.

Anyways, the ball was in her court now.

Now the choice was hers.

If she chooses not to join him, they would just part ways.

If she does choose to join him, she'll have to obey him, but they'll move together.

"What are the conditions for me becoming your subordinate?"

"Absolute obedience."

Ahn Sun Mi slightly bit her lips.

"Fine, I'll even gladly take off my clothes if you tell me to."

"I don't want anything like that, I just need to know that you're determined. I need to know that you are resolved to leave your life in my hands."

With that, Kim Tae Hoon rose up from his seat. In the end, he did not pick a coffee.

“Do you not need coffee?”

“Although I really want it, I can’t eat this stuff.”

“Hyungnim!”

Bang Hyun Wook’s voice rang out. He was carrying a whopping three bags, two hanging from his front and back, and another in his left hand. In his right hand was a brand new baseball bat.

He had been away on an errand for Kim Tae Hoon, and had returned with everything he had told him to get from the first basement level.

Kim Tae Hoon walked towards the escalator without any hesitation. It was now time to leave.

Receiving a bag from Bang Hyun Wook, Ahn Sun Mi slung it over her shoulder and followed after Kim Tae Hoon.

“Hey, hyungnim. Can I ask a question?”

“Ask.”

” …… Are you going to do anything with the other survivors that are still here?”

The other survivors’ gazes perked up.

The survivors who had fled to the first basement level looked up at Bang Hyun Wook who was still picking things up off the floor on Kim Tae Hoon’s behalf.

Their gazes were despondent.

Their eyes gave off an air of desperation, but they did not know what to do.

Bang Hyun Wook could not bear the weight of their stares.

So it was Bang Hyun Wook’s intent to make Kim Tae Hoon a hero.

“They’ll just have to rely on themselves.”

“What?”

“If you want to take them under your wing, feel free to do so. But don’t expect any help from me.”

Kim Tae Hoon had no intention of becoming a hero.

No, even if Kim Tae Hoon really wanted to be a hero, he would have greater reason to abandon the survivors here.

A real hero would sacrifice the few to save the many.

Bang Hyun Wook was troubled over Kim Tae Hoon's words.

However, such controversy didn't last long.

If he didn't follow Kim Tae Hoon, then his fate would be no different from these survivors here.

"I'll follow you hyungnim."

"Thinking to use the cooking oil was a good idea."

Kim Tae Hoon briefly praised him.

"What? Ah!"

Bang Hyun Wook laughed a little at the fact that Kim Tae Hoon had praised him for the first time.

"It was, wasn't it? At first I thought it was a stupid thing to do. If I had used my head the last time during a scouting, I would have

been nominated by a pro..... no wait, I wouldn't have met you if that had happened ....."

"More than that, what do you plan to do from here?"

Knowing that Bang Hyun Wook would not stop talking, Ahn Sun Mi quickly cut in.

She couldn't bear to listen to Bang Hyun Wook ramble on when she still hadn't received the answer she wanted.

Unlike last time, Kim Tae Hoon answered her question.

"For now, our priority is to leave this place."

"And the reason for leaving?"

"Do you want the long answer or the short answer?"

"Um, I guess the detailed answer....."

"As soon as the sun rises, this place will become hell on Earth."

Hell.

That word made Bang Hyun Wook and Ahn Sun Mi's face stiffen.

” ……Are there going to be more monsters?”

“Even if no monsters appeared, it would still be hell.”

“But what……”

When they reached ground level, a man approached them.

“Ex, excuse me…….”

There was no vigilance.

The one to appear was none other than Park Jae Un.

Having somehow muddled through the turmoil, he had carefully approached Kim Tae Hoon.

“W, what should I do now?”

Behind him was his crying daughter and his embarrassed wife.

Kim Tae Hoon gave him a short bit of advice.

“You should stock up on five days worth of foodstuffs that are high in calories and easy to store, like chocolate. After, the safest

place to be is probably the city hall which isn't too far from here. Also, make sure that you keep a close watch on your body temperature. Don't move around in a vehicle, in fact, carry around tents instead. Lastly, it would be a good idea to secure some sort of harness you can use to carry your child just in case."

It was a surprisingly friendly advice.

However, to Park Jae Un who was listening, it sounded more like cold words coming from his mouth.

After all, it had to do with his survival.

"Ah……"

Park Jae Un's face was white.

It was in response to the fact that he had to somehow survive in this new world with his wife and daughter where monsters ran amuck, and society had collapsed.

Regardless, Park Jae Un turned his white face to Kim Tae Hoon.

"Thank you. Thank you for saving us."

He did not forget to return some common courtesy. If it weren't for his common decency, he would have already abandoned his family and left.

That was why Kim Tae Hoon had even bothered to give him even the smallest bit of advice.

At least the way Kim Tae Hoon saw it, Park Jae Un deserved to survive.

Park Jae Un looked at the outgoing Bang Hyun Wook and Ahn Sun Mi with a pitiful look on his face.

‘Yeah, I suppose hyungnim is right. This is the way to go.’

‘ …… The emergency room will be quiet, I can feel that it’ll be cold and lifeless’

Before yesterday, who would have even imagined this scene.

But what was more frightening was how unexpected it was, there was absolutely no way anyone could have imagined that this would have happened.

Kim Tae Hoon’s eyes were cold. He could calmly foresee the dangers that he might have to face.

“The population of Bucheon is about 800,000. When the atomic bombs fell on Hiroshima, the casualties were around 70,000. Even during that overwhelming disaster, the death toll was still less than 100,000. So, although this is a disaster beyond the scope of

anything that has happened throughout history, the number of survivors in Bucheon should exceed 700,000.”

Kim Tae Hoon explained while keeping a calm and steady posture.

“In other words, it means that there are 700,000 people cowering in fear in Bucheon without any electricity, communications, gas, police, firefighters, and other city provided services who are also waiting for sunrise.”

“Ah “

It sounded like there was a soul escaping from Ahn Sun Mi’s mouth.

There was an image drawn before her.

When the sun rises, what kind of scene will unfold in Bucheon?

“A lot of the monsters are currently just as confused as we are and are either hiding or stalking preys. At some point, an even stronger monster might appear as well.”

Obviously it would be a depiction of hell.

“Also, it’s highly likely that this catastrophe isn’t specific to just Bucheon, otherwise we would have received help from other cities

like Seoul or Incheon. The whole world might be like this as well.”

But the most important thing to take into consideration was the fact that this was only the beginning.

“Anyways, in order to survive in this situation, there are two things that you should know.”

Kim Tae Hoon had experienced many things in many places.

In a situation where the government doesn’t exist, how do you think humans would behave?

“Common sense loses value and leads the way to violence and force.”

And the most effective way to deal with it?

“I’ll tell you what we’ll do from now on. There’s a police station nearby. Once we arrive, grab a weapon. From there, we’ll head east.”

“Why east.....”

“We’ll get better weapons from the military base there.”

Chapter 11 – Relic (2)

Nobody clung onto Kim Tae Hoon's party when they left.

It wasn't that nobody had tried,

"If you guys are the only ones to leave, then what next? What about us?!"

"Please, save us……. "

"Please take me as well! If you don't take me, I won't just sit still!"

"You bastard, don't just leave by yourself! If you're a human, act like a human!"

There were some who were just plain pathetic, some who were just desperate, and some who just wanted to be a parasite living on Kim Tae Hoon's back.

To them, it was a natural reaction if it meant surviving.

But Kim Tae Hoon didin't acknowledge any of them.

"Be warned. You better not follow me. There won't be much of a difference in corpses regardless of whether or not you follow me."

In the face of Kim Tae Hoon's threats, all of the surrounding survivors were intimidated.

Kim Tae Hoon's threats did not stop just there.

"If anyone tails behind us, deal with them."

"Deal with them?"

"If you don't kill them, it's enough to make them feel as though their lives are in danger."

Kim Tae Hoon conveyed his intentions to Bang Hyun Wook and Ahn Sun Mi.

"What's the reason for us to do so?"

"You don't want to get caught up in a tussle because of a crazy survivor."

It was a fairly obvious reason.

Earlier, Kim Tae Hoon had made a huge ruckus while trying to kill the black orc. If an insurance agent saw the mess, he might as well have fainted after seeing all the destruction.

It was a huge disturbance that reached all the way to the grass. If there was a snake dwelling in the grass, it would not have been able to sleep.

Except the snakes in the city probably wouldn't be snakes anymore, but monsters.

'If another black orc appears, no one will be able to escape.'

In Kim Tae Hoon's case, since he had already expended most of his power and energy, another battle against a black orc would be incredibly burdensome.

That's why he wanted to go visit the police station.

Kim Tae Hoon himself was now more useful than a kitchen knife or a hatchet, and that's why he needed a stronger weapon.

Of course, it would take some time to get to the police station.

Quietly.

They moved slowly like a turtle so as not to disrupt the quiet surroundings.

When Kim Tae Hoon and his party arrived at the police station, they were greeted by cold, frozen bodies.

“How gruesome.”

Bang Hyun Wook gave voice to everyone else’s feelings.

Hearing Bang Hyun Wook’s voice, Kim Tae Hoon clicked his tongue.

‘It’s as bad as I expected in the worst case scenario.’

What Kim Tae Hoon saw in the police station was almost identical to the scene that

Kim Tae Hoon had envisioned.

” ….. There doesn’t seem to be any police officers.”

Ahn Sun Mi’s observation was also something that Kim Tae Hoon had expected.

“It would be strange if there were people screaming and running outside but the cops still stayed inside.”

“If the police didn’t go out, then the panic and turmoil would be even more uncontrollable.”

“Agreed.”

Quite frankly, it wasn't a very good outcome.

Especially since Kim Tae Hoon could really only imagine the worst outcome.

'If there's even just one survivor.... there definitely should be some sort of existing network that I can use.'

He didn't exactly expect the police station to have a working network.

He would rather there be a surviving police officer who wished to contact survivors.

'There would be contacts made with the military, but there wouldn't be much on the police side....'

In the event of a network collapse, people would still have to talk together, but since they can't they try to contact the police, which makes the police desperate to get their system up and running.

But on the contrary, the reality of the situation was obvious.

There's nothing great about an armed police man in South Korea.

How great is a police officer who rarely goes out on the field and instead only works in the station?

The firepower of the entirety of the Bucheon City police department probably wouldn't be greater than a group of five or six gun hobbyist in the United States.

There is no way they will use their guns properly.

How many cops would have done shooting practice that would prepare them for this situation?

'If they knew this day would come, then all countries would have long since legalized firearms like the United State.'

Kim Tae Hoon's thoughts weren't ridiculous, but rather very sensible.

" ..... the military base would be different, right?"

Ahn Sun Mi carefully asked.

Their next destination would be the military base.

"Who knows."

However, the chances of the military base being all that much better wouldn't actually be that high.

The armed status of the military would definitely be different from that of the police department.

The number of automatic rifles and ammunition would not only be much higher, but the variety of weapons beyond just your basic pistol would be higher as well.

However, the Republic of Korea's military would not have been trained to deal with these monsters.

In fact, many Korean troops would only have minimal training. Most of them are conscripts who think of military service as slavery.

For soldiers who spend most of their time in a base instead of on the field, it might honestly be more effective for them to fight the monsters with shovels than with guns.

"It depends who's in charge."

Ultimately, it would depend on the commander's capabilities.

An army's greatest strength comes from a clear line of command.

So if the commander is excellent, he can produce phenomenal results much more efficient than another group of similar size.

"Commander's ability? Good grief."

“Then it’s probably all over.”

Hearing Kim Tae Hoon’s explanation, Bang Hyun Wook and Ahn Sun Mi sighed, their expressions expressing their lack of hope.

Kim Tae Hoon frowned after looking at the two of their despondent expressions.

“Neither of you should have done military service, right?”

Bang Hyun Wook isn’t at the age where he would have to do military service, and Ahn

Sun Mi is not qualified to do so.

It’s strange that the two of them respond to the military with such a lack of confidence.

“Hyungnim, do we have to go there?”

“It’s obvious that the place with a higher chance of control is the place most subject to a high degree of corruption.”

Facing their arguments, Kim Tae Hoon couldn’t really argue back.

In a way, Kim Tae Hoon was one of the greatest symbol of the Korean military's corruption, unfairness, and irrationality.

The two of them were right.

If the Republic of Korea's military was rational and functioning well, Kim Tae Hoon wouldn't be here.

"But more than that, where have you learnt all of this hyungnim? Did you learn this from the military?"

"I am a solider, but what I've learned is not from the army."

Having knowledge of the military's movements, Kim Tae Hoon gave a signal to Bang Hyun Wook and Ahn Sun Mi as he replied to them.

It was a signal telling them to shut up and execute the command he had given them earlier.

Bang Hyun Wook nodded, and stood near the broken glass door of the police station, baseball bat and batting gloves in hand. Then he focused his senses towards the exterior of the police station.

Ahn Sun Mi began to look through the corpses in the police station. She looked through their pockets, eventually fishing out a smartphone, checking if there was a lock screen, and then finally checking its battery level. She was able to find some useful stuff, but unfortunately the battery was no good.

Kim Tae Hoon started to go through the armory in the police station.

‘What is this?’

Ahn Sun Mi suddenly stopped.

‘There was definitely something…….’

Staring at the dead body, she felt as though something brushed by her fingertips.

It felt like a thin spiderweb were touching her hand.

It didn’t quite feel like there was something important.

Most people would have the urge to just ignore it and move on after searching for awhile.

But Ahn Sun Mi was different.

‘There’s definitely something here.’

Her career required her to be deft with her hands and small tools in addition to her being in contact with those between life and death.

So as a doctor, she wouldn’t leave when something went bad or when something felt off.

Sometimes the key could be found between the moment of life and death in a patient.

Ahn Sun Mi was frozen on the spot.

She stopped doing what she was doing, and placed a hand on her chin, looking at the body.

One of her eyes widened as she spotted a worn out bag.

She opened it without any hesitation.

‘This…….’

There was a black plastic envelope in the bag. She swiftly ripped open the envelope, from which objects wrapped in newspapers fell out. When she took out one of the objects and took off the newspapers, she found out what the object was.

It was nothing but a bowl.

‘Antiques?’

It was an old, ancient looking bowl.

The bowl looked as though it were almost split in half.

Ahn Sun Mi looked at the bowl with a dazed expression on her face.

'I'm definitely going crazy.'

She had a strange feeling, a hunch, but in the end, it wasn't gold or money that caught her attention, but a bowl?

She sighed briefly before that strange sensation on her fingertips brushed by again.

'Ah!'

This time, it was more intense.

It felt like transparent yarn was connected to her fingertips.

Ahn Sun Mi's expression changed again.

"Before we go, I'll teach you how to properly use a gun."

Kim Tae Hoon emerged from the armory. He was going to teach Bang Hyun Wook and Ahn Sun Mi, the both of which had never

used a gun before.

”Excuse me.”

At Kim Tae Hoon’s behavior, Ahn Sun Mi’s stomach dropped.

“This right here is strange.”

Ahn Sun Mi handed over the bundle of newspapers while talking.

Kim Tae Hoon looked at Ahn Sun Mi. He had a not so good expression on his face.

Bang Hyun Wook who had lifted his neck and looked towards Ahn Sun Mi’s hand also had an expression similar to Kim Tae Hoon.

“Ah, because of that…….”

Ahn Sun Mi pulled out more newspapers, and hurriedly pulled out a white bowl and a wine cup hidden in it.

Of course, to the two of them, those items didn’t look very special either.

They were literally nothing more than simple antiques.

More than that, it didn't look like great antiques. More specifically, you wouldn't be able to sell it to a place like Insadong antique store.

Ahn Sun Mi was aware.

"These objects are strange. No, I'm saying that these things give me a very strange vibe……."

Instead of answering Ahn Sun Mi, Kim Tae Hoon took out his smartphone and pointed it at Ahn Sun Mi.

Click!

Then before she could even reply, he had already took the picture.

"W, wait, hold on."

After examining the photo, Kim Tae Hoon made a firm expression on his face before handing the smartphone to Ahn Sun Mi.

"Maybe humans aren't the only ones to have changed."

There were translucent letters over the cup in the smartphone.

[Goblet of Healing]

– Relic Grade : Grade 7

– Relic Rarity : Common

– Relic Effect : By consuming mana, the Goblet of Healing can produce a magical water that heals wounds.

The world has changed.

And not just the humans either, but everything.

Chapter 12 – Relic(3)

“Oh oh, It’s filling up! It’s filling up!”

Bang Hyun was absolutely amazed to see a magical liquid slowly filling up the empty dilapidated looking goblet.

On the other hand, Ahn Sun Mi’s face was the opposite.

There was no way it could look good.

‘I can’t even move.’

Ahn Sun Mi’s body was nothing more than a passage.

Some unknown power was flowing from Ahn Sun Mi’s body and gathering in the goblet as though the power were being filtered through her.

The moment Ahn Sun Mi moves her body, the moment her concentration is disturbed, the process of the power being distilled in her body stops.

But above all, the amount of concentration needed was beyond imagination.

Ahn Sun Mi was a doctor. If necessary, she would operate in the operating room for more than ten hours if it meant saving a

patient's life. If anything, there was no way that her concentration was less than that of other people.

If she was lacking in that aspect, then she wouldn't have been accepted into medical school with a near perfect score on her CSAT.

[TN: CSAT is a standardized test accepted by South Korean universities.]

However, she felt that surgery could not compare to the difficulty of maintaining her concentration for the goblet.

Eventually she gave up.

"Huk, Huk……"

From her mouth, some rough breathing came out.

It wasn't something that she could just quit on. The sweat that was beading up on her forehead was not good in this cold weather.

"Noonim, are you ok?"

"Okay, I'm okay, huuu."

Bang Hyun said to the exhausted Ahn Sun Mi. Kim Tae Hoon, on the other hand, was consolidating his observations and coming up with a hypothesis concerning the silent Ahn Sun Mi.

‘Mana…… it’s like a wizard.’

Ahn Sun Mi was very reminiscent of a wizard that you would see in media like a game, movie, or novel.

Wizards have to memorize spells in addition to having to concentrate when casting. Wouldn’t that mean that if their concentration was broken, their spells would be interrupted while casting?

There was more risk when compared to Bang Hyun Wook’s energy and Kim Tae Hoon’s telekinesis.

So Kim Tae Hoon had to know.

“It said that the effects were wound recovery?”

He needed to know if there were any risks to using the goblet.

Kim Tae Hoon scooped some of the syrupy clear liquid from the half filled goblet in Ahn Sun Mi’s hand, and rubbed it on a scratch on the back of his hand.

Bugeul, bugeul!

His wound began to bubble before it began to heal.

At that sight, Ahn Sun Mi let out a few rough breaths. With a look of unbelief in her eyes, Ahn Sun Mi stared at Kim Tae Hoon's hand.

"Oh my God, that's a miracle, a miracle!"

"Quiet down."

Kim Tae Hoon gave Ahn Sun Mi a cold warning. Ahn Sun Mi tightly shut her mouth.

Once again, the police station regained its air of silence.

However, Kim Tae Hoon wasn't so quick to lower his guard. He carefully navigated around the bodies and headed towards the door before expanding out his senses.

He carefully examined the adjacent surroundings.

Aside from a desolate feeling, there wasn't anything special.

Kim Tae Hoon made a gesture with his left hand that imitated a mouth opening, Bang Hyun Wook and Ahn Sun Mi let out the breaths they had been holding in.

Huuuu, the sound of a long breath being exhaled echoed throughout the interior of the police station.

It had been quite some time since the conversation had ended.

“Incredible. It’s a sort of item?”

Bang Hyun Wook was the first to open with another conversation, to which Kim Tae Hoon gave an order rather than a response.

“Take pictures of everything.”

“What?”

“Take a picture of all the relics you found and see how many items we get from them.”

“Ah!”

Bang Hyun Wook started to enthusiastically take pictures of all the antiques in the bag.

At the same time, Kim Tae Hoon interrogated Ahn Sun Mi.

“What did it feel like to use magic?”

“Magic?”

“It’s the term I used to describe what happened out of convenience, but if you want to call it something else, that’s fine too.”

“Magic is a fine term.”

”So, how did it feel?”

“My body felt like it was a filter. It felt like some of the power went through my heart then entered the cup..... but it’s hard to say exactly. It was like walking on a tightrope.”

Kim Tae Hoon nodded his head.

‘The risks are huge, but the rewards are amazing.’

He organized his thoughts on the antiques and magical powers.

These relics are items that help the user channel magic power to reveal a mysterious power.

Some of these relics may manifest themselves in ancient items like these antiques.

‘If you follow the logic of a video game, then an item made from a monster or dropped by a monster would also have properties that allow the user to use magic.’

In addition, compared to telekinesis or energy, mana has a lot more constraints and conditions in order to be used.

'If we want to get weapons, then the next best destination should be a museum.'

They definitely needed to collect as many relics as they could.

In the current world, there would be no Sotheby's Auction that Kim Tae Hoon could attend, and even if he could, the items probably wouldn't have been made available to him.

"Hyungnim, there aren't any more."

Having finished verifying the condition of the relics, Bang Hyun Wook reported his findings to Kim Tae Hoon while shaking his head.

Kim Tae Hoon ignored Bang Hyun Wook's report and instead passed him a revolver that he had retrieved from the armory.

He then also passed one off to Ahn Sun Mi.

"You open the chamber like this, insert the bullets, then close the chamber."

He taught them how to load the revolver.

“Identify your target, point the gun, then shoot. When you shoot, grasp the gun with two hands. Pull the trigger only once.”

It was a brief explanation on how to shoot the gun.

Bang Hyun Wook and Ahn Sun Mi began to clumsily load the chamber of their revolvers.

They followed the methods that Kim Tae Hoon had taught them.

“Never point your barrel at a friendly. I don’t want to hear you say you wanted to practice aiming while pointing your barrel at me.”

Having finished loading his gun, Bang Hyun Wook, who had been priming to point his gun at Kim Tae Hoon, stopped.

Kim Tae Hoon had a wry smile on his face while watching Bang Hyun Wook. He had already known that Bang Hyun Wook would do that.

Quite frankly, it wasn’t very difficult to predict.

It was a common mistake that beginners made when handling a gun for the first time. Trying out the sights while aiming the gun at someone they know.

‘These two aren’t bad, but I would prefer if there was someone

experienced moving with me.'

It was Kim Tae Hoon's decision to go with Bang Hyun Wook and Ahn Sun Mi.

They had no experience being a soldier.

Just because he wanted them to show the characteristics of a soldier wouldn't make them soldiers right away.

'I hope there'll be some awakened amongst the soldiers in the military.'

It would be easier to find an awakened in the army, that was the reason for why he wanted to go to the military base.

He needed an awakened soldier.

Of course, there's no guarantee that the burden on Kim Tae Hoon would be lessened if he came across an awakened soldier.

'I wish there was someone who understood me…'

It was so that there was someone who could help him if he ran into a small bit of trouble.

"We move out now. Replenish your energy with the chocolat.

Now that we're done arming ourselves, we can head to the next point……"

With the various worries about the military in his mind, he was about to give the command to head towards the base.

Kwooooooooo!

A loud cry rang out in Bucheon.

The most terrifying sound that the survivors of a bombing hear is the sound of a fighter jet flying overhead.

Not only can the sound freeze the mind, but it can also paralyze the heart.

On the battlefield, intact corpses can sometimes be found with their fingers blocking their ears.

Not even trained soldiers are impervious to fear.

No one is free from fear.

The moment you are exposed to the planes, the moment that the planes commence their bombing, you are doomed.

The fear that comes from an impending sense of doom cannot be overcome. You can only get used to it.

Bbadeudeuk!

Kim Tae Hoon was able to maintain his wits as an unknown monster flew over his head. It was purely because he was used to this kind of fear.

He did not overcome it, he was used to it. Kim Tae Hoon was lying on the floor while waiting for the fear to fade away.

When the fear finally faded away, Kim Tae Hoon rose from his spot.

The first thing he did was to check Bang Hyun Wook's and Ahn Sun Mi's condition. They were similar to the corpses on the floor.

He immediately checked their pulses.

Deugeun, dugeun.....

Their pulses were still there.

But both their eyes were floating about, there was no focus.

"Huk"

Bang Hyun Wook was the first to regain his wits. Once full of spirit and gusto, Bang Hyun Wook's eyes were now full of fear.

Kim Tae Hoon fished out a piece of chocolate that had broken off, and shoved it into Bang Hyun Wook's mouth.

"Let it melt in your mouth, don't swallow, just let it melt in your mouth."

Then Kim Tae Hoon approached Ahn Sun Mi. Ahn Sun Mi's condition was worse than Bang Hyun Wook's.

Her heart was still beating, but the focus in her eyes was swimming, she was perpetually stunned,

Kim Tae Hoon repeatedly slapped Ahn Sun Mi's cheeks.

"Hey keep it together. Ahn Sun Mi get up."

Ahn Sun Mi's red eyes began to regain their focus.

Kim Tae Hoon put the crumbled pieces of chocolate into her mouth.

"Let it slowly melt in your mouth."

Afterwards, Kim Tae Hoon told Bang Hyun Wook,

“Wait here. If anything happens, yell at the top of your lungs, I’ll hear it.”

Having melted the chocolate in his mouth, Bang Hyun Wook gulped the chocolate down.

“What? What about you hyungnim?”

“I’m going to try and find out what the monster that flew over our head is. Also, take out the portable pot that we brought and boil some water. It’s not wise to move out in this condition. Warm up your bodies and move around.”

Kim Tae Hoon walked out of the broken police station door.

Tuk!

With a curt sound, the lock on a car unfastened.

Blinking his eyes a couple times, Kim Tae Hoon opened the door of the car.

Durkuk!

Kim Tae Hoon entered the car.

“Huuuu. . . . .”

A white circle appeared from the foggy breath that came out of Kim Tae Hoon’s mouth in the cold car.

Kim Tae Hoon searched around before reaching for a black box installed in the car.

Dduk!

With deft hands, Kim Tae Hoon unfastened the black box, accessing its contents to view the most recent video footage it had recorded.

Of course, considering the broken streetlamps under the dark night sky, the footage was dim.

But despite that, it wasn’t particularly difficult to gauge the presence of the beast.

In the footage, there was a huge creature that passed by.

The body was about 300 meters long, large enough to cover a gymnasium. It’s wings were huge so as to give flight to its enormous torso.

Dragon.

Amongst the myriad of human languages and words, the only one to best describe this monster was dragon.

High up in the sky where the dragon could see the ocean, it was heading towards Incheon through Bucheon.

Kim Tae Hoon clenched his teeth.

‘The black orc….. the black orc was no more than a dog.’

A true monster had made its appearance in the world. Without the aid of an incredible armory, the dragon would be impossible to take down.

’My mind was ignorant of to what extent the world changed.’

There was no way that Kim Tae Hoon would have ever even dreamed that such a monstrous beast could have appeared.

But now, Kim Tae Hoon couldn’t help but imagine what would happen now that monsters of such caliber had appeared.

‘If the dragon decides to roost in Incheon city…… it will turn the city back to September of 1950.

How much firepower would be needed to take down such a monster with human devices?

How many human lives will be sacrificed? How much damage will be done to the geography and to the property?

How many of the survivors would be willing to suffer through it?

‘ …… I should look around.’

Chapter 13 – We Are Hunters! (1)

From the large super mall that Kim Tae Hoon was at, it was about 5 kilometers to the military base located in Ojeong-dong.

When he left the supermall, his goal was to reach the Ojeong-dong army base by 4 am.

Furthermore, Kim Tae Hoon was willing to mobilize all of his means to achieve his goal.

He knew better than anyone the importance of thoroughly accomplishing one's goals in a time of conflict like this.

But at this moment, Kim Tae Hoon was still sitting at the police station with the clock well beyond 3 am.

He even took the opportunity to boil some water in the portable pot and drink some coffee.

"Hyungnim, is it ok to be so leisurely?"

Looking at Kim Tae Hoon, Bang Hyun Wook expressed his doubt.

While enjoying the coffee's flavor, Kim Tae Hoon replied to Bang Hyun Wook in a quiet voice.

"It's too dangerous to move out while your bodies and minds are

in such an unsteady state. First of all, we have to make sure that whether it's your mind or your body, you guys are limber and ready to move out. So might as well just drink coffee. This is my first time trying this brand……."

Of course it's not that Kim Tae Hoon had given up.

Now that the three of them weren't in their optimal condition, there just wasn't much they could do.

A giant monster that no one could explain had spread terror all throughout Bucheon, and that fear had rooted itself in every corner of Kim Tae Hoon's body and mind.

Moving out in a situation like this without assessing the situation would be the same as moving while being poisoned.

"In addition, the situation is different now that the dragon has appeared. Things have changed."

Most importantly, this didn't apply to only Kim Tae Hoon.

That unidentified dragon had exuded its presence all throughout Bucheon, showering fear upon the city.

Therefore, every living thing residing in Bucheon was exposed to that fear.

After the pandemonium caused by monsters' initial raid started from 4 pm on December 31, the situation had now lulled to a stop.

The boat that had been floating silently by was overthrown by a huge wave.

"Insane..... most of the people who experienced the fear must have fainted or died. Especially with the temperature it is now..... we can't expect proper help from anyone and if we fall unconscious or get stunned we'll just freeze to death."

Ahn Sun Mi said, adding her opinion to Kim Tae Hoon's.

After having experienced the fear that came accompanied by the dragon, the words of the doctor were very persuasive.

Drip!

While filling up Ahn Sun Mi's empty coffee cup, he complimented her observation.

"It would be nice if everyone was like that, but the problem is that it won't be like that."

"What do you mean?"

"It's more likely to go crazy, not just faint."

The dragon fear is very intense. But not everything was affected by the dragon fear.

At the moment, both Bang Hyun Wook and Kim Tae Hoon were a little stiff, but not completely stunned. Amongst the survivors, there will be those who are awakened, and if they have a high Energy ranking, then they will survive.

“Whether it’s a human or a monster.”

Or monsters.

“It’s not like the monsters have disappeared.”

The monsters haven’t left Bucheon city.

The monster that are responsible for turning Bucheon into a ghost town weren’t even dead.

So where did the monsters go? Did they leave Bucheon and go to Seoul or Incheon?

Rather than leaving, it was far more likely that the monsters who had already attacked humans and had their fill would probably hole up in the buildings to rest for the night and escape the cold winter weather.

Aren’t places like subway stations frequently used as shelters for

humans?

“If I were a monster, I would search around for food, even if grudgingly.”

In such a situation where an apex predator makes its appearance, other monsters would either go crazy or attempt to fill up on food before finding some deep and secluded area to hide.

In other words, the monsters are currently out and about.

“The monsters who are out right now are those who were able to still keep their wits after having been exposed to the dragon.”

The monsters that are active now are at least stronger than the common goblins and the weaker orcs.

He needed to watch out for creatures like that black orc.

Kim Tae Hoon got them to quickly fill up their stomachs, then ushered them into a more secluded area to hide.

After listening to Kim Tae Hoon’s explanations, neither Bang Hyun Wook nor Ahn Sun Mi asked any more questions.

Kim Tae Hoon drank hot coffee to warm his frozen body, and ate chocolate to calm his mind.

In the silence, Kim Tae Hoon took a look at his right hand.

His right hand slowly became stained in black.

It was the ability he took from the black orc, Black Skin.

With the rank his Energy was at currently, Kim Tae Hoon could only turn the skin up to around his wrist black.

The skin that turned black made him feel as though he was wearing some sort of iron cloth.

It even felt as solid.

At least he wouldn't be harmed if hit with a coarse knife, or if he were to smash through a window, it would only leave tiny scratches.

'If you kill a monster, you get some sort of reward.'

Above all, this was proof.

It was proof that killing monsters gave benefits.

'I can't help but wonder what else I can get by killing monsters.'

Although his mind was still recovering from the dragon fear, the

evidence before him couldn’t help but motivate Kim Tae Hoon to come up with some method to kill more monsters.

Kim Tae Hoon took another sip of his coffee, a pale smile on his face.

Along the dark roads surrounded by buildings on either side and densely packed with cold cars housing the frozen corpses of many citizens inside...

There were two goblins that were dining.

Clinging on to frozen corpses, they were ripping off chunks of the body with their teeths like dogs.

Ggiiii, Ggiii!

It was hard to watch the scene.

Giiii!

The goblins had the strength to tear off chunks of human flesh with their sharp teeth, but that was based on the fact that the bodies had long since gone cold and limp.

The body of a frozen person in this weather was different.

They were tasteless.

It was difficult to even swallow a small bit of flesh. Whether it was chewing, swallowing, or just devouring, it was not pleasant.

It was a meal purely for the purposes of survival.

The goblins that had been stuffing themselves in order to survive suddenly grabbed at their own throats.

Ggik, Ggik!

While gasping for breath they began to struggle.

“Huuu”

In that short time, a youth with a baseball bat let out a breath and smashed the goblin’s head.

Bbak!

Having smashed the back of the goblin’s head, one of the goblin’s eyes dislodged halfway out of its socket.

Carrying through with his momentum, the youth smashed directly downwards onto another head.

Kiik!

The goblin that had been wanting to exhale suddenly had its mouth tightly closed. As a result, the goblin's tongue which had been hanging out was chomped off, and its teeth clashed together.

Juljuljul, the goblin spewed blood from its mouth like a fountain, covering the floor.

The youth that had appeared, Bang Hyun Wook, drew a circle with his hand.

Then Ahn Sun Mi revealed herself.

Ahn Sun Mi approached a dead goblin with a knife in her hand, and flipped its body around so that it faced the sky. Then, with a knife in hand, she stabbed the sharp blade into the lower part of the goblin's body, right below the solar plexus.

Then she shoved her hand into the deep wound.

Ssook!

Ahn Sun Mi's arm quickly entered the goblin's body until she was elbow deep. When she pulled her arm out, their was a red gem grasped in her fingertips.

She did the same thing on the other goblin's body. She made an incision below where their solar plexus would be, then she reached upwards and retrieved the gemstones from their hearts.

The next person to appear was Kim Tae Hoon.

Kim Tae Hoon was holding a plastic kerosene bottle in his right hand. He sprinkled the kerosene onto the goblins' bodies.

"I was wondering, but why are you spraying the kerosene on their bodies?"

"The only things that would eat these bodies are monsters, so if they're going to eat them, then I might as well poison them a little."

Kim Tae Hoon curtly explained.

Having wiped her hands of blood with a towel, she stretched out her palm towards Kim Tae Hoon. There were two monster gems sitting on her palm.

"Here."

After receiving them, he handed one to Bang Hyun Wook.

"Eat it."

Without any hesitation, Bang Hyun Wook listened to Kim Tae Hoon's orders and swallowed the monster stone that was still covered in blood.

Even with the thick stench of blood, he still swallowed it.

Before long, while stroking the area under his solar plexus, Bang Hyun Wook said, "I feel a bit full now."

As they started moving, the scenery before them was exactly as Kim Tae Hoon had predicted.

There were monsters that feasted on human bodies as though they were driven by something.

Kim Tae Hoon didn't ignore these monsters. He hunted them.

Bang Hyun Wook and Ah Sun Mi were on the frontlines.

"Bang Hyun Wook, be wary of your surroundings when you swing that bat. Never relax on the battlefield."

"Understood."

"And Ahn Sun Mi."

"Command me."

“Stab your knife into the eyes of these two dead ones.”

Following his orders, Ahn Sun Mi stabbed the red eyeballs of the goblins with the end of her knife without any hesitation.

Along with the unsettling sound of the eyeballs being popped, red liquid spilled out of the eyes.

It was like the tears of a dead soul.

Bang Hyun Wook, while watching that scene! Let out a short breath. It wasn’t a sight that he could easily get used to even after having seen it multiple times.

But that was the reason why Kim Tae Hoon ordered it.

‘It’s a relief that they’re getting used to it. Maybe it’s because she’s a doctor, but Ahn Sun Mi got used to it fairly quickly.’

Unlike Bang Hyun Wook and Ahn Sun Mi, Kim Tae Hoon was not an ordinary person.

Generally, a civilian was very reluctant to kill. Many people were even unable to feather a dead chicken let alone kill something.

They were unable to fight against a monster even if their lives were in danger.

And at that moment of hesitation between life and death, they die.

Kim Tae Hoon was trying to give Bang Hyun Wook and Ahn Sun Mi some experience.

Experience of slaughter.

It wasn't something that humans had to experience while going about their lives, but now, it was impossible not to.

From now on, one had to kill to survive.

"But, that's the destination, is it not?"

There weren't only monsters there.

"Let's rest our eyes a bit before we move any further."

"What? If we got a little further, we'll have reached the military base, no?"

"There are sentries that do not welcome anyone who approach at night. If I were in charge of that military base, I would send down an order to issue a warning to those who approach at night so that they would reply back within two seconds when warned."

There was no guarantee that the soldiers in the army base would welcome any survivors.

If the army is functioning the way it normally would, then there's no way that they wouldn't set a watch.

On top of that, the sentries will be very nervous. The punishment for not keeping proper watch during this time would not be the same as before. Any punishment doled out during this time would be very severe so as to make sure that the army was not caught unprepared.

"For now, let's just rest."

More than anything, Kim Tae Hoon and his party were extremely exhausted.

They needed time to rest.

Whether they were running or fighting, they needed energy.

"We'll approach the military base when the sun begins to rise."

Kim Tae Hoon began to look around for a spot they could hole up in to rest. However, there weren't any appropriate buildings that he could use.

Kim Tae Hoon eventually decided to take refuge in an SUV.

Dulkuk!

After opening the frozen door, everyone took residence in the car.

The inside of the car was cold, but it was still more comfortable than hunting in the cold streets.

This was the first rest they had in awhile.

However, they couldn’t rest for long.

Tang!

When dawn had just barely arrived, instead of the cry of a rooster’s crow, the loud sounds of gunshots woke them.

Chapter 14 – We Are Hunters! (2)

TuTuTuTu!

Under the bluish sky that accompanies the break of dawn, the gunshots fell onto their ears like a heavy rain.

TuTuTu!

The shots were intense enough to affect even those who were at a distance.

“Wow, that’s not a joke. It’s different from the movies. Damn, it’s completely different than the movies.”

As the distance between them and the gunshots narrowed, Bang Hyun Wook became chattier.

“Huu, huu, huu……”

Ahn Sun Mi repeatedly breathed in, then out.

The pressure that the gunshots gave off was that much.

It was realms apart from what was in the movies. As a result, since it was the first time that they heard such intense gunfire, their legs became stiff, and their reasoning started to drop.

In fact, neither Bang Hyun Wook nor Ahn Sun Mi thought that they would ever hear the sounds of real gunshots while living in South Korea.

The fact that they were still following Kim Tae Hoon's command and inching towards the gunshots was proof of their courage and their obedience to Kim Tae Hoon.

Of course Kim Tae Hoon wasn't too affected by the gunshots.

'The gunfire isn't stopping'

Instead, although the gunfire didn't seem all too important, Kim Tae Hoon was able to make deductions and paint an image of what was going on based on the gunfire.

'The location is also moving.'

Although he good draw a picture of what was going on, it wasn't a very clear one.

'They probably won't be in a very good state.'

A gun is a very powerful weapon.

Of course in the case of a rifle, its power greatly exceeded the expectations of the general public.

If you ever get shot with one, you would know how ridiculous it is to see a protagonist in a movie get shot by a rifle multiple times yet still be ok. But of course it wasn't exactly useful knowledge.

The bigger monsters, like orcs and goblins, that Kim Tae Hoon and his party had fought against were strong enough to overpower such weapons.

There was no reason to only fire against one monster.

'Having survived until this point, one would at least know that the opponent were monsters……'

The soldiers in the army should know that by now.

It would be nonsense to believe that this was the first time that the other party was fighting against monsters.

The gunfire began to ring out again.

There should be two cases.

It was either that the soldiers were dealing with a large wave of monsters, or they were dealing with one massive monster that couldn't be taken down with a few shots.

Neither of the cases were good.

The worst case scenario would be if it was both those at the same time.

If there was a strong monster like that black orc, then it would definitely be in charge of the horde.

‘There might be a monster that the guns can’t penetrate.’

It was definitely possible that there was a monster that was impervious to rifle shots.

It definitely broke all common sense, but at the current moment, common sense couldn’t be applied to planet Earth.

The dragon had taught him that.

Waaaak!

All of a sudden he heard a scream.

The shriek easily passed through the green soundproof walls that Kim Tae Hoon and his party were standing by.

Kim Tae Hoon stood in front of the wall. Bang Hyun Wook and Ahn Sun Mi also stopped pace with Kim Tae Hoon.

Kim Tae Hoon turned around and checked the two's complexions. Naturally, their complexion was not good.

'Huu, come on Bang Hyun Wook, calm down. You were able to leave that place alive. Relax, you're with hyungnim, stay calm. Energy, right I have Energy. As long as you have this bat, you can smash those monsters' skull.'

'It's ok, as long as you follow orders, it'll be ok Ahn Sun Mi. Don't think any thoughts that'll make your head spin. You have to survive. You came here so that you can survive.'

The two of them were steeling themselves. When they crossed the wall, they would have to witness a scene that couldn't possibly compare to the blood and gore in a horror movie.

Kim Tae Hoon told the both of them.

"We need a car."

"What?"

Facing Kim Tae Hoon's sudden remark, questions were floating around Bang Hyun Wook and Ahn Sun Mi's face.

"Car."

"Ah, perhaps a bus?"

Recalling the scene where they used a bus to kill the black orc, Ahn Sun Mi suggested a bus.

“A bus isn’t bad, but a truck would be better. Preferably a dump truck.”

“What?”

“If it’s a 15 ton vehicle……”

A wishful gleam appeared in Kim Tae Hoon’s eye. “……Good.”

A military base is usually always stark.

Regardless of whether or not trees are planted and give off a nice green shade, the dreariness would not disappear.

It was like a warning. A military base was not a symbol of beauty or affluent, but rather a warning that showed that it was designed for killing.

TuTu! TuTu! TuTuTuTu!

But now what was once a warning had become reality.

A group of soldiers, twenty-four to be exact, was armed with shoulder mounted rifles that they were firing while in a semicircular formation, one after another.

Kiiiiiii!

Kieeeeeeeh!

Brown skinned goblins, about 150 centimeters tall, were rushing the soldiers.

The number of brown goblins was incredible. The current amount of goblins visible to the eye easily exceeded half the amount.

“Ggii ah ahk!”

“Live, live, Se, Sergeant-nim, live……”

The goblins were tearing away and feasting on the bodies of the soldiers that had fallen on the floor with a ravenous fervor. The numbers of the brown goblins were astonishing.

It was a huge number.

But it wasn’t their numbers that caused difficulty for the soldiers.

“Damn it! Die! DIIIIIIIE!”

TuTuTuTu!

The soldiers had been firing for so long that their shoulders had long since become sore, but the brown skinned goblins were still rushing them

PukPuk, Pubuk!

Being riddled with bullet holes, the brown goblins’ red eyes had become even more red.

Like a candle before it went out.

The situation had become much more frightening now that the trail of brown goblins had lit up with a madness that exceeded their extinguishing lives, and as a result, their ability to jump became stronger.

“Euaaaaaaah!”

A brown goblin that was flying through the air like a frog swooped down on an unsuspecting soldier.

The moment the soldier fell, it was the end.

Ggiii! Ggiii!

Although the goblin that had swooped down on the soldier had been killed, the goblin's companions rushed towards the fallen soldier and ripped at the soldier's uniform and flesh with their sharp teeth.

"Ggii ah ahk!"

"Corporal Kang! Damn it Kang Il Hyun!"

Seeing the body being defiled by the goblins was a terrible sight to see.

What was worse was the fact that they couldn't shoot at the brown goblins since they were all over their colleague.

A gun could not distinguish between friend and foe.

Although he would shoot at a goblin, the bullet might hit his teammate instead.

Even if it was to put his teammate out of his misery, it still wasn't something easy to do.

No, rather, it was harder.

Pulling the trigger with the barrel pointed at his colleague was hardly comparable to doing the same while pointing a barrel at the goblins.

With calm judgement and a sense of true companionship, he had to pull the trigger.

TuTuTu!

“Kuk!”

Of the soldiers who had survived until now, of the remaining twenty-four soldiers, the only remaining leader was Kim Su Ji.

“All of you listen up! Do not panic! The enemy numbers are decreasing! If you stay calm and respond likewise, we can sweep right through them!”

Second lieutenant Kim Su Ji.

She could be called a beauty by some standards, but she had thick eyebrows that made it hard to say that she was a woman, and a sleek nose that gave off a savage feeling like that of a wild beast.

Her physique was also something to take note of.

With a height of 180 centimeters, one could easily spot her in the

crowd of soldiers.

TuTu!

Above all, her gunshots were steady.

Although she had backed up from the front lines, her muzzle suffered from very little shaking when fired.

She was trying to take care of the goblins with as few shots as possible.

“Retreat towards the church!”

There was no hesitation or shaking in her loud voice.

Her cries were the only beacon of light in this crazy nightmare.

The soldiers clung tightly onto it.

TuTuTu!

Triggers were pulled once more.

Towards the goblins that unceasingly rushed towards them, they pulled their triggers without restraint. ‘Until the church.’

‘Let’s do this, it’s only until the church. For now only until the church.’

They all had a clear goal now.

To reach the church that was 200 meters away. It didn’t seem impossible to get to the church. The confidence that they could do it was starting to sprout in their minds.

Keuuuyung!

But that cry caused that small budding hope in the soldier’s’ minds to wither.

“Ah!”

“Tha, that fucker. That monster shit

The soldiers’ minds were filled with such curses.

The new year, there were soldiers who were going to get discharged, but then these monsters had suddenly attacked.

Amidst a rain of bullets, a monster emerged from amongst the shadows of the goblins and smoothly grabbed a human body, biting off its head.

Even with its body riddled with bullets, it was still able to move through it, like a wave passing through white sand.

Keuuuuh!

The monster that all the soldiers didn't believe was real had appeared before their eyes.

It was a real monster.

It was a huge, a four-meter tall fat giant. This was what a super-heavy fat and obese giant would look like. It's face, nose, and cheeks were bursting like a clump of dough.

It's skin also resembled clay mud. It looked like the skin on its face was dribbling down.

"Euuh uh....."

"Ah, Ah, Ah....."

The soldiers gave off silent cries, their feet shackled by invisible chains.

The soldiers looked at the monster with a dismayed expression.

The once never ceasing rain of bullets stopped for the first time.

Giiii!

The smaller brown goblins took advantage of the lull in gunfire.

Kieeeeeeeh!

The brown goblins began to move again.

“Retreat!”

Despite it all, Kim Su Ji was the only one who was able to shout.

Tututu! Tututu!

With a cry, she pointed her rifle at the giant brown goblin’s head and pulled the trigger. “Retreat with everything you have!”

In between the sounds of restrained gunfire, she gave the order to retreat until her voice was sore.

“Re-establish power in the church! Retreat!”

At that moment.

Tuk, tuk!

Having been spitting fire all this time, her rifle suddenly made empty ticking sounds.

Kim Su Ji's facial expression stiffened.

'Ah!'

However, amidst the darkness, there was a sound that was like a beacon of light.

Focus once again appeared in the soldiers' dazed expressions.

Having stayed relatively calm this whole time, Kim Su Ji's body began to shake.

Bbaaang!

What woke them up was the sound of a giant dump truck swiftly approaching. Bbaaang!

"Wh, what's that?"

"Tr, truck, it's a truck!"

The ringing sound of constant beeps awakened the stiff soldiers.

Bbaaang!

The dump truck did not stop.

Without any hesitation, the truck decisively threw itself towards the giant monster.

The two huge beings collided.

Ggwaang!

An enormous sound like thunder pervaded the surroundings.

Shocked by such an unexpected occurrence, the eyes of the mad brown goblin changed.

Ggii? Gieh!

Fear blossomed in the brown goblin's eyes for the first time. As though having been released from a hypnotic spell,

"Stop shooting! They've come to help!"

She heard a man's voice break the silence in the wake of the dump truck's appearance, Kim Su Ji turned her neck.

Turning her neck, Kim Su Ji saw a man.

There were two men, one following the other, walking along the bloody path that the dump truck had made.

Kim Su Ji asked threw a question towards the man.

“Who are you?”

“Kim Tae Hoon.”

Kim Tae Hoon replied briefly.

“We are hunters! We are hunters and we hunt monsters!”

Bang Hyun Wook added, having followed Kim Tae Hoon towards the battlefield.

“Hunter?”

Kim Su Ji was rather suspicious of Bang Hyun Wook’s words.

Kim Tae Hoon frowned and replied.

“That’s right, we’re hunters.”

That was the extent of their conversation.

Keuuuuh!

The cries of a monster who had been slammed with a dump truck with its monstrous resilience didn’t allow for any more needless chatter.

Chapter 15 – Clan Establishment (1)

“We are hunters.”

At the moment when Kim Tae Hoon gave his response.

Keuuuuuuuh!

The mud troll’s agonizing cry shook the entire battlefield.

The soldiers as well as Kim Tae Hoon and Bang Hyun Wook turned to look at the mud troll’s body being run over by a dump truck.

That definitely should be a corpse.

Even after having turned the mud troll into a popped balloon, the dump truck could not be satisfied. As a result, it crushed the mud trolls body with its six wheels that were comparable in size to an adult male.

Having seen what had happened to the mud troll, was there any expression to describe the ‘body’ other than a muddy corpse?

There was no way that the body in front of them was a corpse, but at that moment, that corpse began to wriggle and its head began to reform. As soon as the snout began to reform, the weak cries of the monster could be heard.

It was like a nightmare.

“Euhaaaaah! Euaaaaahk!”

“W, we’re going to die. That thing is going to eat us!”

Those who had survived until now were those who had experienced nightmarish encounters several times, not just a mere one or two times.

The one called Kim Su Ji, she was the same.

‘What do I do now?’

Everything had been a nightmare from the start.

It was the end of the year, and it wasn’t even something on the front lines but in a metropolitan area. The monsters had attacked a military base in the city. There was no precedence, no manuals, nothing that the military could go off of in this time of crisis.

The damage at the start of the monsters’ raid was huge.

The brown goblins had immediately begun to attack the unarmed soldiers.

The worst part was that the mud troll had appeared and had attacked during an executive's only new year party.

Most of the commanders responsible for giving out commands had fallen prey to the mud troll during at the time.

If Second Lieutenant Kim Su Ji wasn't so strict with herself, she might have lost herself in the drinks during the party and ended up in the mud troll's stomach.

Ever since then, Second Lieutenant Kim Su Ji had to pay a price to survive.

She had to lead the remaining survivors in battle. To survive, she had to live through nightmare after nightmare. It was especially so whenever she met the mud troll in battle.

'Weapons don't work on the troll.'

They had already exhausted all manner of weapons against the mud troll.

However, the mud troll never made any sounds that indicated it was being hurt despite the various different powerful firearms.

The only thing that could stop the mud troll was its own satiety.

Kim Su Ji wasn't quite able to grasp a method to stop the mud

troll.

The inside of her mind turned white.

“Rank and name.”

Kim Tae Hoon directly said to her.

“What?”

“Name.”

“K, Kim Su Ji, I am Kim Su Ji.”

“Rank.’’

“Second Lieutenant..... Second Lieutenant Kim Su Ji, the current leader of the remainder of troop 1121 sir.”

Kim Su Ji’s eyes changed.

Her intuition was telling her something.

‘He’s a soldier.’

The man in front of her, Kim Tae Hoon, was a soldier who had

gone through rigorous training and difficult missions, or at least someone of a similar caliber.

There was something else that she felt.

‘He is definitely a soldier.’

She felt like she had seen Kim Tae Hoon before.

Regardless, as a soldier, Kim Tae Hoon’s voice was like a lifeline to her.

“I need information on that mud monster right now.”

In front of a commanding officer, a soldier had no need to worry.

“It is about 4 meters tall, strong enough to tear apart a human with its bare hands, and has the ability to quickly regenerate when wounded by bullets sir.”

“What firearms have you used against it?”

“Claymore mines are ineffective against it, but in the case of 81 mm mortars, there were visible signs of success, but the overall effectiveness of it was not very high.”

Keuuuuuh!

While Kim Tae Hoon and Kim Su Ji were discussing the monster, the mud troll began to regenerate more parts of its head and upper body.

The sounds of its cries became louder and clearer.

With that, the aura of fear that it exuded also became bigger and stronger.

The foot soldiers began to tremble. The soldiers were scared that they couldn't even scream.

"Wow, it sure as shit isn't a joke."

On the other hand, Bang Hyun Wook expressed his thoughts about the mud troll out loud in front of the soldiers.

At the same time, Kim Tae Hoon spoke to Bang Hyun Wook.

"Bang Hyun Wook."

"Yes, hyungnim."

"Clean up the surroundings."

"Ok!"

Without any hesitation, Bang Hyun Wook gripped his baseball bat. Bang Hyun Wook's bat began to absorb the Energy that was flowing in his body. 'Okay.'

Bang Hyun Wook knew now. If he wanted to survive against these monsters, he needed a more reliable strength.

So he strived towards strength. For the sake of survival, he strived to figure out different ways to utilize his body's strength more efficiently and more effectively.

During that process, he discovered a method he could use to utilize the Energy better.

'I know how to use the fellow in my belly now.'

Of course Energy could be use to strengthen his fleshly body, but although it was more difficult to do so, he could also wrap objects in his hand with Energy.

The result was that the power was enormous.

Bbaak!

The brown goblin's head was in the way of Bang Hyun Wook's swing, and its head was promptly smashed open like a rotten pumpkin.

Amidst the rain of flesh, blood, and spinal fluid, Bang Hyun Wook let out a shout.

“Bucheon High’s 5th batter Bang Hyun Wook has arrived! Come at me you motherfuckers!”

While spitting out those words, Bang Hyun Wook’s eyes changed.

If Bang Hyun Wook’s mind figured out how to utilize Energy, then his instincts learned how to dominate in a fight.

It was the law of the jungle, to kill a monster, you had to become a monster!

“Second Lieutenant Kim Su Ji, stop firing and be on guard.”

Turning his back towards Bang Hyun Wook, Kim Tae Hoon gave a command to Kim Su Ji.

‘Stop firing? Be on the lookout?’

It was a difficult command to understand.

The moment was crucial, the mud troll was in the process of regenerating while there were still around 20 brown goblins left in the vicinity, but he wanted her to stop shooting and be on the lookout?

“Everyone stand down! Get into a line formation and be on guard!”

But in the end, Kim Su Jin was a soldier, and like a soldier, she pushed down her doubts and gave the command.

Inevitably, there weren’t many soldiers who swiftly complied.

The infantry had still not overcome the mud trolls aura of fear, but they were still told to lower their weapons.

“P, put down our guns.”

“I, I will listen.”

At that moment, the only thing that got them to lower their guns was their military training and instincts that had been ingrained in them more than a hundred times.

The soldiers lowered their guns and pointed the barrels to the floor.

‘But still, it looks like none of the survivors are completely sane.’

That was the reason why he basically forced the soldiers to lower their weapons.

A mindless soldier on the battlefield was more dangerous than the enemy.

But still, Kim Tae Hoon was confident in himself. Even without the soldiers, he would at least be able to take care of the remaining brown goblins.

Kim Tae Hoon shifted his gaze away from the soldiers and towards the battlefield.

'The mud monster is still recovering. Looking at its current speed of recovery, it should take another 40 seconds.'

He had checked the mud troll's condition.

'There are still twenty-one brown skinned goblins left. But more than half of them are seriously injured. They're bigger and more aggressive than the green goblins from the super mall, but that's about it. Any risks during combat are pretty low.'

He carefully inspected the location, condition, and number of brown goblins.

"Come at me!"

He also made sure to take a look at Bang Hyun Wook as he doled out ruthless violence upon the brown goblins.

‘Ahn Sun Mi…… looks like she’s on her way.’

He had also noticed and taken into account an SUV approaching from the distance.

After confirming the situation, he pulled out a revolver from his belt.

At the same time, he turned towards a brown goblin that was about a stone throw’s away that was rushing towards him.

The moment his eyes landed on the brown goblin, its body stiffened.

Kim Tae Hoon had used a telekinetic chain to wrap around the brown goblin’s neck.

Kiig!

Suffocating, the brown goblin reached towards its throat. Meanwhile, Kim Tae Hoon calmly raised the barrel of the revolver and pointed it towards the goblin. Taang!

A crisp shot echoed out, a bullet hole appearing on the goblin’s skull.

An accurate shot!

It couldn’t be anything other than a perfect shot.

It was the Kim Tae Hoon who could make an accurate bullet hole appear in the head of a raging beast.

Although it was rather boring because the goblin’s movements had been restricted as a result of his Telekinesis, it was still the source of his confidence. Tang, tang!

Kim Tae Hoon’s effectiveness and efficiency with the revolver was so high, it almost made you feel pity for the brown goblins.

One shot one kill.

Instead of wasting multiple rounds on one goblin, Kim Tae Hoon only needed one shot to kill one brown goblin.

When six shots left the barrel, there were six bodies on the floor, a singular hole in each of their heads.

Chook!

Tilting the chamber out of the gun, Kim Tae Hoon swiftly reloaded the gun.

Meanwhile, Bang Hyun Wook was trying to compete with Kim Tae Hoon.

Bbak, Bbak!

“Oh yeah, a two-run home run!”

The two of them were like lawnmowers. A lawnmower that cut everything down indiscriminately.

Huirik!

Having finished reloading the gun, Kim Tae Hoon began shooting again.

It was a bit faster this time around.

Tang, Tang, Tang!

Kim Tae Hoon unceasingly pulled the trigger over and over again.

Before long, he had once again emptied the chamber. It was like he was performing in a quick-draw competition to see who could consume ammo the fastest. Tang, tang!

Of course, of the five shots that quickly whizzed by, none of them were wasted. The bullets penetrated through exactly five brown skinned goblins.

Like that, Kim Tae Hoon had taken care of 11 goblins.

Bbak!

“I got seven of them!”

Bang Hyun Wook as the sound of him killing the seventh one faded away.

There were only three left.

Ggiiii!

Gieeeeh!

“Hyungnim, I’ll take care of two of them!”

Two of them ran towards Bang Hyun Wook while the other rushed towards Kim Tae Hoon.

For the last goblin, Kim Tae Hoon pointed the gun down.

Although there was still one shot left, Kim Tae Hoon holstered the gun.

Clenching his now bare right hand, Energy began to flow through his right hand.

Kim Tae Hoon’s fist turned black.

Black Skin!

The Black Skin that made his skin impervious to even knives covering his fist, he smashed his fist towards the spot above the goblin’s nose bridge and right between the eyes. Bbeuk!

With one first, he smashed the goblin’s eyes and crushed its eyes, caving in the goblin’s face.

33 points in strength, this was the result of the Black Skin ability he got from the black orc.

“Hyungnim, I’m done!”

It had only been thirty seconds since the battle had begun, and all the goblins had been cleared.

Having witnessed the scene, Second Lieutenant Kim Su Ji and the other soldiers stiffened.

‘Wh, what is that?’

‘What’s going on here? Are we dreaming right now?’

They were not suffering from fear, but rather from a sense of outrage.

‘J, just like that?’

It felt like a dream to see the annoying and troublesome goblins be taken care of so wholesomely.

Even though it was like a dream, it wasn’t like a nightmare.

The blood flow in the white-faced soldiers started again.

However, the most pressing matter had yet to be taken care of.

Keuuh, keuuh!

The mud troll.

Having restored its upper body, it was regenerating its lower body while staring at the humans with its orange eyes.

Keureureuh!

It was showing off its disgusting face and its desire to devour the humans.

“Ahn Sun Mi.”

Next to him was the SUV that Ahn Sun Mi had driven over.

“Pop open the trunk.”

“It’s opened!”

Chulkuk!

The SUV’s trunk promptly opened, from which Kim Tae Hoon fished out a plastic bucket.

Removing the container’s blue lid, a very strong gasoline smell wafted out.

Kim Tae Hoon tossed the plastic container towards the mud troll that was some distance away.

If judged by common sense, it would seem crazy.

The full weight of the plastic container wasn’t very light. But to throw it?

It wouldn’t reach. The scene wasn’t something people would even think of.

“Wha? What!”

But the plastic container that Kim Tae Hoon tossed flew through the air while spraying gasoline on the floor.

“S, stopped?”

What was surprising was the plastic container that had landed upside down right on the mud troll’s head.

Kwal Kwal Kwal!

The gasoline started flowing from the container, covering the mud troll like a waterfall.

Keuh?

The mud troll let out a confused cry, not knowing what the liquid that covered its whole body was.

Kim Tae Hoon took his revolver out of his holster and pulled the trigger.

Taang!

The last bullet in the chamber punctured through the plastic

container.

Hareureureuk!

A fire blazed to life, swiftly spreading from the mud troll's head and covering its body.

Keuuuuuuh!

The mud troll started to scream. It's screams were full pain rather than fear.

At the same time, the mud troll's body began to harden like pottery.

Kim Su Ji and the rest of the soldiers silently observed the scene, a lost look on their faces.

And Kim Tae Hoon.....

Chalkak!

Having taken a picture of the smartphone, the information quickly came to light.

[Mud Troll's Flesh]

– A mud troll's flesh houses an incredible healing factor. When applied to a wound, the injury will have hastened recovery, and when consumed, the user's regeneration will greatly increase.

For the first time in all of history, this was the first moment that any human realized the value of a mud troll.

Chapter 16 – Clan Establishment (2)

It wasn't long before the flames on the mud troll's body died down.

After the flames completely died down, all that was left was a hardened clump of clay.

It was futile to try and understand what had happened.

Who would have thought that a monster that had devoured nearly a hundred soldiers was weak to flames and had ultimately died to gasoline fire.

But on top of that, it was also very frightening.

The mud troll was a sign. If you were ignorant of the age of monsters that the world had entered, you would die.

"Ahn Sun Mi, go and try using the Mud Troll's Flesh on the wounded soldiers."

Kim Tae Hoon was an early inductee of this new age.

So Kim Tae Hoon's response was to try and slough off the shackles of ignorance.

"But won't the gasoline residue cause problems?"

“Most of the gasoline would have went up with the fire.”

“But if problems occur…..”

“Look, it’s better to test the Mud Troll’s Flesh right now on those who are heavily, but not fatally, injured instead of waiting to try it on a mangled human who could succumb to a loss of blood or an infection within minutes. “

Afterall, he had read the information on the Mud Troll’s Flesh that said it could help heal injuries and improve one’s recovery.

So no questions needed to be asked when it came to validating the information.

As was said earlier, ignorance was akin to death. One needed to have knowledge in this new age.

So in that sense, Kim Tae Hoon’s instructions made sense.

Considering how reasonable his instructions were, Ahn Sun Mi didn’t question him anymore.

”Understood.”

“Second Lieutenant Kim Su Ji.”

Right as Ahn Sun Mi acknowledged his orders, Kim Tae Hoon called for Kim Su Ji who had been standing upright and out of sight.

”Sir!”

She stepped towards Kim Tae Hoon as though she had been waiting.

“Start treatment on the wounded and give Ahn Sun Mi three soldiers.. “

“Understood sir.”

Kim Su Ji immediately called out towards three good soldiers and gave them their orders.

Having heard about the treatment to be given to the wounded, the three soldiers were very compliant.

‘‘Yes ma’am?”

“I need that monster’s body. “

They were compliant up to the point where Ahn Sun Mi told them to retrieve pieces of the now hardened and crumbly flesh of the mud troll.

“Are you crazy? Suddenly telling us to retrieve that monster’s flesh? Why?”

“Is it even dead for sure? What if we got near it and it suddenly came to life again? “

” ….. Just do as you’re told. There’s probably something there.”

So as Ahn Sun Mi and the three soldiers went to take care of business, Kim Su Ji opened her mouth and spoke.

“Can I ask a question sir?”

“I’ll allow it for now.”

“Did you perhaps recognize me from headquarters five years ago?”

It was an unexpected question.

But still, Kim Tae Hoon thought about it.

“Are you Brigadier General Kim Jae Ryong’s granddaughter?”

“You were the person who accompanied Major General Jang Young Sung at the time. “

Kim Tae Hoon’s expression hardened.

There were two reasons.

“It seems like your memory is very good.”

One of the reasons was the name Jang Young Sung.

The other one was.

‘Brigadier General Kim Jae Ryong……. ‘

It was his history with Brigadier General Kim Jae Ryong.

‘He was the division commander of the 60th division of the Capital Defense Command.’

Division Commander of the 60th division under the Capital Defense Command.

It wasn’t a regular position.

He could have easily sent a detachment to Bucheon where his granddaughter was stationed in order to save her.

Although Kim Jae Ryong had retired three years ago, his influence was not so easily ignored.

‘A big shot’s granddaughter. ‘

Brigadier General Kim Jae Ryong wasn’t someone who would cross the line. The position of 60th division commander was one that did not allow for misconduct.

However, Kim Su Ji had survived on her own until now.

‘It seems Seoul was also hit. ‘

It meant that Seoul’s Capital Defense Command had failed.

‘The worst case scenario has become reality. ‘

It was as expected.

When he say that the dragon had come from Seoul’s direction and was heading over to Incheon through Bucheon, he no longer held any expectations that help would come from the capital.

However, it’s a different story when trying to predict what was happening when making inferences off of uncertain conclusions.

”This incident, do you perhaps know what happened to the

army?”

Unaware of Kim Tae Hoon’s mind, Kim Su Ji asked a question.

“If I knew what was going on, I wouldn’t have come here. If the army knew what was happening, wouldn’t Second Lieutenant Kim Su Ji’s grandfather have already made a call?”

Kim Su Ji shut her mouth.

She had also felt that that was the case.

Her grandfather’s halo wasn’t something she could escape.

”But then……. “

“Monsters have appeared all over the nation. If things have played out everywhere else like it has here, then Bucheon isn’t the only paralyzed city, but rather, Seoul and Incheon should be frozen as well. All of the various cities have probably done the same thing, and the military has probably ceased to function.”

“Oh my God.”

Kim Su Ji unknowingly let out a loud scream.

Survival had been her primary goal for a long time, and having

just accomplished the goal, the truth and the reality of the situation terrified her.

Kim Tae Hoon looked at her figure.

‘Quite frankly, I don’t know exactly what’s happened with the army.’

But there were certain things that he expected the army to do.

It was the expectation that the army would play a minimal role in this situation.

But it didn’t matter now.

In this situation, the army would be of no help.

To survive, they could only do so with their own hands.

Looking at his right hand, Kim Tae Hoon had a crazy idea. He looked at the mark of awakening.

He recalled something. A dragon, a monster that defies all logic.

‘I don’t need more soldiers right now, what I need is a monster that’ll hunt other monsters. The monster must choose to eat other monsters over us. ‘

It was at this time Kim Tae Hoon finalized organizing his head.

“Second Lieutenant Kim Su Hi.”

”Yes sir.”

“Collect all the corpses and arrange them in one spot, then bring all the soldiers and other survivors here. “

[Mud Troll Crystal]

– When ingested, Strength increases.

– When ingested, the rank of Physical Defense increases.

– When ingested, you may acquire the [Troll’s Vitality] ability.

Kim Tae Hoon looked at the photo of the orange gem that was on his smart phone, then the orange gem he held out on his palm.

“Everyone has arrived sir.”

In front of them stood Kim Su Ji as though she had always been standing there.

As she said, the twenty three survivors of the 1121 unit had gathered together.

Holding the orange gem in his hand, Kim Tae Hoon spoke to the crowd.

He told them about what had happened at the mall, about the mark of awakening, and about the Monster Stones and the dragon.

“This is the reality now. “

Everyone who heard his tale fell silent.

‘ …… Is he telling the truth? ‘Am I dreaming?’

‘Are my mother and father alright?’

‘Damn it, I was only a month away from being discharged! One month! But why did this have to happen to me ‘

The current situation did not even give them the chance to panic.

“I have given you all the information that I have. I will now give my tell my own personal story. ”

With that, Kim Tae Hoon did not give them the time to think.

”I am going to monopolize all of the monster stones from the monsters on this stage. “

All of the soldiers had a blank expression on their face.

‘What did he just say?’

‘If it’s monster stones, then is that item that can increase an Awakened’s abilities?’

Kim Tae Hoon had previously mentioned the importance of the monster stones.

He had even dissected a goblin’s body and extracted a monster stone from its heart, and then taken a photo of it with his smartphone and shown the crowd.

In future conflicts, the importance of monster stones will exceed that of gunpowder.

But Kim Tae Hoon had suddenly said that he would monopolize all of the monster stones from the goblins that the 1121th unit had been battling.

After telling them the importance of the gem, he was going to take all of it.

“W, wait a second…… !”

“S, surely the Monster Stones are incredibly valuable right?”

“Do you mean to eat all of them by monopolizing them? We’re the ones that killed all of them after all….. “

She had instictively retorted back.

”Payment for your lives. ”

With a few short words, Kim Tae Hoon silenced them all.

The crowd calmed down.

Keeping his gaze on the crowd, Kim Tae Hoon continued.

“In addition to the price of the information. If any of you have any thing more to say, raise your hand now.”

Nobody dared to raise their hands.

The value of information and one’s life would not be cheap. In fact, the price they paid could be considered cheap.

“Should I give you more time to raise your hands?”

More importantly, all of that was in Kim Tae Hoon's possession.

Kim Tae Hoon was like an umbrella.

If you disagreed with him, then you would have to leave from under him and go face the monsters yourself.

If you were to face a monster like the mud troll the moment you left, then you would surely perish.

"I see there are no objections to what I've said. "

More than anything, there were a grand total of two survivors amongst the soldiers who were Awakened, including Kim Su Ji.

For the remaining twenty two, it would be like a pearl necklace on a pig's next.

If a pig with a pearl necklace were caught outside in the real world, then those who covet the pearl necklace would slaughter the pig.

"Then with this all debts are resolved."

Having finalized what he wanted to say, he promptly swallowed the orange gem that had come out of the mud troll.

”Ah..... .. “

“The Monster Stone....”

It was a gesture indicating that the transaction was over.

He was now the owner of hundreds of Monster Stones. Whether it was eat or sell the Monster Stones, it was all up to Kim Tae Hoon’s discretion.

From now on, the surviving soldiers no longer owed Kim Tae Hoon anything.

“Now that that’s over, I have a new proposal. “

Regardless, the fact that they needed Kim Tae Hoon to act as an umbrella had not changed.

”I am going to create a clan. What I want are volunteers who will serve as my clan members, not as soldiers in the military. “

Everyone was surprised at the proposal.

‘What?’

‘You said it’s a clan? ‘

Second Lieutenant Kim Su Ji was the same.

‘Th, that, what! ‘

She thought that Kim Tae Hoon would take control as a commander of the military.

But Kim Tae Hoon chose to make a private organization just like that?

Second Lieutenant Kim Su Ji was shaking.

Five years ago when she had graduated from the military academy, she had visited headquarters and talked with her grandfather.

‘The person who had greeted me earlier was Director Jang Young Sung. If you decide to become a soldier after graduating, whether it’s in private or public, you must avoid getting tangled in his affairs no matter what. Nothing good can come of dealing with him.’

That was the first time that Brigadier General Kim Jae Ryong had ever warned her about anything having to do with being a soldier.

“Let me ask. What would a clan signify?”

“It would be a private organization that would move under my commands, not the military’s.”

“Then…… are you saying that you would use military resources for your own good?”

“You can see it as a frantic effort for the sake of our own personal survival. ”

Although she had survived, Kim Su Ji had to stay quiet.

Seeing that she had closed her mouth, nobody else dared to say anything.

They all fell silent, a troubled expression on their faces.

‘Leave the army and join a private organization? A private army that ignores the official army’s ordinances? How many crimes would I commit? Desertion? Rebellion?’

‘I can’t die like this. If I have to die, I would rather die with a gun or a grenade in my hand.’

‘But if I get caught……. ‘

Accepting Kim Tae Hoon’s proposal would be a criminal offense.

It was an egregious criminal offense that the courts would not judge lightly.

She couldn’t help but agonize over it.

However, Kim Tae Hoon following words stopped them from thinking more about the choice.

“For those of you who are dissatisfied with my proposal, feel free to leave and survive on your own.”

Hearing that, they were no longer worried about their choice.

And thus, the first Korean clan consisting of 26 people was created.

Chapter 17 – Clan Establishment (3)

Gulp!

Kim Tae Hoon swallowed a red gem that he placed in his mouth. After swallowing, Kim Tae Hoon let out a bloody breath.

Kim Tae Hoon put his hand through the red mist and placed another red gem in his mouth.

“Ugh……”

Bang Hyun Wook let out a long sigh from behind him.

“I can’t eat anymore…… I really can’t. “

Bang Hyun said to himself after sighing.

Although he had mumbled to himself, it was a bit loud.

He had mumbled with the hope that his neighbor nearby would hear him. He was hoping that Kim Tae Hoon would hear him.

Instead of replying to Bang Hyun Wook’s mumbling, Kim Tae Hoon swallowed another red gem.

He was like a machine.

Bang Hyun Wook was astonished at the scene.

‘Hyungnim is really amazing. I can barely eat thirty, but he’s already had over eighty.’

Bang Hyun Wook sunk into his memories.

After they had successfully hunted the mud troll, Kim Tae Hoon had declared that he was making a clan, and had received volunteers.

Of course, many of them were only given a choice in name and were mostly forced to join.

None of them wanted to be thrown out into a world where monsters roamed free.

Afterwards, they set up a temporary base in a nearby church and began collecting the monster corpses.

The amount of monster corpses was overflowing. It was difficult to try and get all the corpses within a short time period.

In addition, the small number of survivors within the unit limited the amount of corpses they could collect.

Nevertheless, they were able to collect more than 100 monster

stones.

So with that, Kim Tae Hoon had devoured a portion of the collected monster stones.

Truly a monopoly.

Kim Tae Hoon's greed seemed to have no limits, leaving one to believe that perhaps it was a bit much.

Kim Tae Hoon knew as well.

Gulp!

Having swallowed many monster stones, there was a thick stench of blood in Kim Tae Hoon's throat.

It was a result of not having thoroughly cleaned the monster stones on retrieval.

Kim Tae Hoon had tightly closed his mouth to endure the nauseating taste. While shutting his mouth closed, he looked around.

The soldiers were resting in the church....., no, they were now his subordinates.

When his gaze landed on them, they would try to avoid his gaze.

They would make eye contact for only a moment.

But it wasn't hard to read their eyes.

'They look at me as though I'm a greedy giant. '

He was sure that his new subordinates did not see him as a capable leader that they could believe in and respect.

He was sure of it.

To them, their new leader possessed great skill, but he was no more than a greedy poison.

But it was normal for them to think that.

Until now, all of Kim Tae Hoon's actions indicated that he was fueled by greed and self-righteousness.

'This will serve as a risk someday... . ... '

Kim Tae Hoon was acting greedily because he was the only one that was really watching the situation with a cool-head.

Gulp!

‘Can’t do anything about it now.’

Kim Tae Hoon swallowed the last of the gems in his possession, then took a picture of his hand with his smartphone.

[Basic Abilities]

Strength : 60

Stamina: 42

[Special Abilities]

Energy : E Rank

Mana : E Rank

Telekinesis: A Rank

Physical Defense : E Rank

Magic Resistance : E Rank

[Acquired Abilities]

– Black Skin (6th Grade)

– Troll’s Vitality (6th Grade) : The power of the mud troll consumes Energy to hasten recovery and regeneration.

The information on the displayed enter his gaze, showing that his Strength had reached 60 points and that he had acquired a new ability, [Troll’s Vitality].

Kim Tae Hoon clenched his fists.

‘Sure is amazing. ‘

He didn’t have to break anything to know. It was the fact that his strength had grown beyond human constraints.

At least now Kim Tae Hoon had the strength stand up against powerful beasts.

It was a clear result of his monopoly.

If Kim Tae Hoon had distributed the monster stones fairly or reasonably like someone else might have, he wouldn’t have reached such a result.

It’s not that it was completely unreasonable to distribute the stones.

Most people seek to be rational in their decisions.

In fact, most things needed to be approach with a rational mindset. If one isn’t reasonable, then eventually one’s accomplishments will degrade and collapse.

The issue comes from the fact that the circumstances surrounding Kim Tae Hoon cannot be rationalized.

‘It’s still not enough.’

The Awakened had appeared to combat humanity’s new enemy, the monsters.

Simply put, the only means of survival for humans is for the Awakened to kill the monsters.

It was only natural that the Awakened would dispose of them.

‘Dragon, with this level of power…….’

Dragon.

An incredibly powerful monster that could frighten all living things just by being there.

Had Kim Tae Hoon not encountered the dragon, he would have opted to fairly distribute the monster stones instead of monopolizing all of them.

If he had gathered the Awakened and tried to improve all of their stats and overall power, he could have created a powerful monster hunting group.

He would have distributed the monster stones under the premise of fair distribution.

But if he were to try and create such a group now, it would take more than ten years to build up everyone's stats to a level where they could take care of the dragon.

There was no guarantee that the dragon would remain still.

' ..... This level is not high enough.'

There's no guarantee that only one dragon exists or that there aren't any other insanely strong monsters.

As a result, it would be inefficient to make a team.

It was something extreme.

A hundred well made arrows, not thousands, and a sharp knife. Those were things they needed.

The clan that Kim Tae Hoon created was a tool to create such a sharp blade.

'This amount is lacking.'

Without a doubt, Kim Tae Hoon will take possession of most of the monster stones in the future.

However, if the military were still functioning, Kim Tae Hoon

wouldn’t need to worry about something like this and he wouldn’t even bother to do this.

‘I can’t expect any aid to come from the state.’

By this point, Kim Tae Hoon had abandoned any expectations he had placed on the military.

‘If the Capital Defense Command has fallen, then the majority of the rear units would have collapsed as well. Only the frontliners will survive fighting against the monsters, but it’s very likely that they are isolated. It’ll be hard to stay here without any supplies.’

We can’t expect anything from anyone, and have to assume the worst.

‘If the front line collapses during this situation…… .’

The worst of the worst.

‘ …… If the front lines collapse and the monsters from North Korea come down, we’ll really be pushed up against a cliff’s edge.’

Considering the worst case scenario, Kim Tae Hoon was once again looking at the mark of awakening on his right hand.

‘The only way to survive would be to climb the cliff face.’

It was enlightenment that he had achieved by fighting through numerous battlefields.

There was nothing more pointless than hoping to pull something out of your ass.

Same went for waiting for some sort of hero like a firefighter to appear. It was like endlessly waiting for a winning lottery ticket.

'If you want to live, then you have to personally pave a path for survival.'

Like that, Kim Tae Hoon woke up from his reverie.

"Attention. "

Those who had been trying to avoid Kim Tae Hoon's gaze suddenly focused on him.

"After 2 hours, I will go and sweep away the remaining monsters in the vicinity of the army base. Your primary objective is the armory. After you secure the armory, stock up on supplies. Your secondary objective is to help clear away the monsters in the base. Kill the monsters and retrieve the monster stones from the corpses. Afterwards we'll take a break."

Having finished his commands, Kim Tae Hoon looked towards Ahn Sun Mi.

‘‘Ahn Sun Mi, how are the wounded?”

Having taken care of the wounded, Ahn Sun Mi replied with an astonished expression.

”There are no problems with moving.”

She couldn’t believe what she was seeing even as she talked to him.

Those who were missing chunks of flesh and those with wounds that would leave permanent damage would have recovered after a few months, but were treated on the spot simply by rubbing the troll’s flesh on their wounds, astounding Ahn Sun Mi despite the years of her life she had dedicated to the medical field.

Regardless, Kim Tae Hoon did not take Ahn Sun Mi’s mind into consideration.

“Second Lieutenant, what about the keys to the armory? “

“I have secured it, sir.”

‘‘I’ll take any questions now.”

This was the first time that Kim Tae Hoon had offered to answer any questions.

Nobody raised their hands.

Because they were soldiers.

Soldiers don’t ask questions. There were only two things, commands and actions.

If a soldier raised their hands in this situation..... .

‘‘I have a question. What comes after securing the armory, clearing the base, and then resting, sir?”

“I have not decided yet.”

“What if we move to Bucheon Stadium, sir? “

The speaking party had already lost the meaning of being a soldier.

”And the reason being?”

“There is a museum there sir. If there are relics like the kind that boss talked about earlier, ah is it ok to call you boss? Well anyways, isn’t it likely that the relics that boss talked about would be there? Furthermore, it’s a bow museum.”

Kim Tae Hoon looked at the person who spoke.

He was a young man in his early twenties of short stature who was mouse-like in appearance. Rather than give off a sense of reliability, it made one want to be wary around him.

”Your name? “

“My name is Chang Sung Hoon. I’ve turned twenty-two years old since the new year passed.

His name was Chang Sung Hoon.

“What was your occupation before the army?”

“Ah, that’s..... I’ve done a few different odd jobs here and there, I didn’t have a specific career..... “

“Just tell me three of the things you’ve done. “

“I’ve forged art pieces, dealt in hot goods, and dabbled in smuggling.”

His profession was that of a criminal.

Chapter 18 – Item Production (1)

“How is it? Is it doable?”

“Yes sir, if it’s this much, it’s enough just to drive.”

“Okay.”

Hearing what the driver in the dump truck said, the soldier in the passenger’s seat yelled out the window.

“There’s no problem with driving!”

Kim Su Ji was where they had discussed earlier. She ordered the soldiers who were waiting.

“Organize the dump truck’s cargo compartment!”

The soldiers began to load cargo onto the dump truck.

“Pupillary reactions are normal. Do you feel dizzy or nauseous?”

“I feel fine.”

“What about your wounds?”

“They tickle a little. “

“Tickles..... is it unbearable? “

“Nope, it’s not that bad.”

In another area, Ahn Sun Mi was checking the conditions of the soldiers that were free.

‘Even if he were to have immediately undergone surgery he still would have been injured for a lifetime, it had only been an hour since his wounds were healed and the only side effects was tickling..... If it were just as useful on internal organs..... If the mud troll’s flesh and the liquid from the Goblet of Healing were used together, would the effects be even greater? I have to study this. I just need the right conditions to test it..... ‘

The conditions of the wounded was very good. The mud troll’s flesh was so effective that it made her feel a little helpless.

Puk, puk!

Meanwhile, Bang Hyun Wook was busy shoveling. He was shoveling away at the mud troll that had become nothing more than clay dirt.

It wasn’t easy. The mud troll’s flesh was much heavier than normal soil, and it was dense like compact mud. Of course, without a decent amount of force, he wouldn’t be able to dig through it. It

was to the point where the regular soldiers had slightly sprained their wrists as a result.

So the task fell onto Bang Hyun Wook.

Puk, Puk!

Aside from Kim Tae Hoon, Bang Hyun Wook had the next highest level of strength.

”God damn, look at that shit. “

“Yeah it’s pretty amazing. “

“Watching him move is scary. He’s gonna dig up a mountain at that pace.”

Bang Hyun Wook’s shoveling was amazing.

Amongst soldiers, even veterans wouldn’t be able to see his shoveling without batting an eye.

‘Shoveling away at this mound is such a waste time.’

However, Bang Hyun Wook didn’t feel to great.

It’s not that he didn’t know the importance of his shoveling. The

mud troll's flesh was literally an extra life, especially now when good health care was impossible to come access.

But it was a different story when comparing incentives for oneself and the needs of the whole.

So like that Bang Hyun Wook kept shoveling.

Death and despair had once pervaded the unit, but the nightmares had been done away with and vigor began to bloom.

Hololok.

Kim Tae Hoon was savoring the coffee he had made using a coffee dropper.

Standing in front of him was Jang Sung Hoon. He was also sipping coffee out of a paper cup.

"The fragrance seems really good. Is it Columbian?"

At the end of Chang Sung Hoon's blurb, Kim Tae Hoon turned his gaze towards him.

"Or maybe it's Ethiopian? You are skilled at making coffee. You would put all baristas to shame sir."

Kim Tae Hoon still had coffee in his mouth.

On the verge of speaking some more, Chang Sung Hoon chose to stay silent.

Gulp!

Kim Tae Hoon swallowed the coffee that was in his mouth. A coffee fragrance having saturated his mouth, Kim Tae Hoon opened his mouth.

“What do you want?”

Chang Sung Hoon had an awkward smile on his face.

“Ha ha….. you aren’t any normal Joe. “

Kim Tae Hoon sipped more coffee instead of replying.

It was a signal.

A signal to careful carry on with what he wanted to say while he himself had his mouth shut to enjoy the coffee.

It was a signal that warned him of what would happen if Kim Tae Hoon didn’t like what he heard.

Taking Kim Tae Hoon's mood into consideration, Chang Sung Hoon stopped with the brown nosing.

"I've already revealed my criminal career, what I have to say is in regards to that."

Chang Sung Hoon had given Kim Tae Hoon information. He had revealed the existence of a museum in the nearby Bucheon Stadium.

There were no issues up to this point.

Everything he had said up to that point was something that anyone could say. The information regarding the museum wasn't exactly a secret.

However, he had also revealed his criminal past.

From there, problems would arise.

No matter how badly society has crumbled, there still wasn't any merit to confess to any sort of crime.

What more, the probability of Chang Sung Hoon not having been caught for said crimes was huge.

He was only twenty two years old.

If he was able to forge art pieces like he said, smuggled, and sold stolen goods, then he would have gone to prison a few times already if he had been caught. If the amount of time he spent in prison was long, he wouldn't be in the army.

His colleagues were unaware of the fact that he was a criminal.

You could tell just by looking at the other soldiers' expressions when he revealed himself.

In other words, it was the first time he ever confessed to his crimes.

So then why did he do it?

Why did he reveal the fact that he was a criminal out loud?

"Regardless of whether or not I knew the location of the museum, there are many others who also know. Quite frankly, that information doesn't really help much. However, I have something to say. There aren't many people who know which wealthy patron smuggled art work, which pieces donated to museums are counterfeit, who is in possession of authentic pieces, and who has been paying bribes to take away certain pieces. There aren't many people who know where everything is stored or hidden."

It was a very simple reason.

He had information available to criminals, and credible information at that.

“I desire only two things. One, I want a lifeline. If I’m useful, then I know that boss will cover for me. For example, I have a lot of good information. “

Instead of replying back, Kim Tae Hoon let out the fragrance that was in his mouth out his nose. A strong coffee aroma pervaded the air.

“Two, I want a share in the loot. “

While enjoying the aroma of the coffee, Kim Tae Hoon simply gazed at Chang Sung Hoon while he continued to speak.

At that moment, Chang Sung Hoon’s eyes did not fit with his rat-like appearance. His eyes were burning like that of a savage beast.

“I don’t want to pointlessly hide. Now that the old society had collapsed, a new one will eventually rise. Even after the Korean War, society eventually improved beyond what it could have been before the war. A new order will be established. You called yourself a hunter? Perhaps it’ll be the hunters who establish a new world order.”

Tuk, tuk.

When he finished speaking, Chang Sung Hoon tapped his right

hand with his left index finger. The back of his right hand was blank.

"But despite it all, I can't become a hunter. And even if I could, I wouldn't be able to become a hunter as great as boss. Therefore I can only cling onto you. Isn't it possible to at least become a fox by sticking onto a tiger's back?"

Gulp!

The sound of Kim Tae Hoon swallowing coffee resounded in Chang Sung Hoon's ear.

"My goal is to survive. Therefore, it is my priority to consume enough monster stones to build up my strength to a level where none can compete with me. I don't intend to share."

Gulp!

Chang Sung Hoon swallowed his saliva.

'Damn it, does he actually want to save the world? Does he think he'll become a mighty warrior?'

He began to think that by exposing his selfish motives, he had sparked Kim Tae Hoon's anger.

This human by the name of Kim Tae Hoon, perhaps for the sake

of the world, perhaps for the sake of justice, he was working towards world peace.

“So if you want a share, then get it yourself. I’m not going to babysit you.”

Kim Tae Hoon gave a curt reply.

“Huuu……”

Chang Sung Hoon could only sigh.

At that moment, Kim Su Ji approached them.

“We’ve finished retrofitting the dump truck, sir. “

“Alright, operation starts in thirty minutes.”

Having said that, Kim Tae Hoon pulled out a bag that he was using to store the coffee, coffee dropper, and portable pots, from which he pulled something out.

“Rest until then. Divide these amongst yourselves.”

He had taken out nothing but cigarettes.

There were so many monsters in Unit 1121's barracks, that it wasn't wrong to call it a monster's lair.

Most of them were brown goblins.

They possessed a tough physique and an aggressive combative nature that green skinned goblins and general goblins could not compare with.

Unless they destroyed their head or their heart, the soldiers had to waste dozens of bullets just to take one of them down.

Aware of that reality, Kim Tae Hoon brought something along with him to help him.

Vroom, Vroom!

The dump truck, a tremendous beast.

The sole purpose of the dump truck wasn't just to take care of mud trolls.

Using the dump truck's space as a portable storage and shooting platform factor was a huge deciding factor for why Kim Tae Hoon decided to bring the dump truck.

The retrofitted dump truck had an absolute presence.

Ggiii!

[TN: Normal goblin cry]

Ggiiieh!

[TN: Canadian goblin cry]

It’s not that the goblins were any less aggressive when facing the dump truck, but the combat power of the soldiers was much greater with the dump truck.

TuTu!

The brown goblins collapsed at a rapid pace, the same madness that had overwhelmed the soldiers in the past was nowhere to be seen.

Tututu!

Furthermore, there was a great sense of security for the soldiers when they were shooting from atop the dump truck.

“Don’t lose your composure and shoot accurately! Conserve ammunition!”

”Yes sir!”

The high ground was an overwhelming advantage.

It gave the soldiers an incomparably higher psychological stability than before.

TuTu!

Ever since they had been brought under Kim Tae Hoon's command, the condition of the troop had improved. Facing these monsters, something inside them snapped, and their anger began to overflow.

"I'm going to kill all of you sons of bitches!"

"Kill their families!"

In the wake of the dump truck, there were piles of brown goblins littered all over the ground.

However, Kim Tae Hoon and Bang Hyun Wook were nowhere to be seen.

Tututu!

Kim Tae Hoon and Bang Hyun Wook had moved far away from the dump truck, the gunshots nothing more than vague murmurs

in the distance.

The images of their movements displayed full vigilance.

From what they could see, the brown goblins were running towards the dump truck.

‘It’s just as hyungnim said, they don’t move around aimlessly.’

It was clear that the brown goblins were moving in accordance to someone’s orders.

It was a completely different dynamic compared to the monster who simply attacked targets that entered their line of sight.

That was why Kim Tae Hoon and Bang Hyun Wook had separated from the dump truck.

‘Just like hyungnim said, there is definitely something behind them. Amazing. How does he know these things?’

Kim Tae Hoon had somewhat recognized that there was a commander the moment he had laid eyes on the battle between the soldiers and the goblins.

There was chief.

There was a pattern about the way they battled. It meant that there was something behind them commanding them.

So naturally, Kim Tae Hoon's first plan of action was to go look for the chief.

He was tracking the routes the goblins took towards the dump truck.

"Stop."

He was able to find it. There was a crowd of goblins outside the barracks.

"About 400 meters in front of us."

" ..... Yes, I see it."

The scene was a bit fuzzy.

However, it was enough to allow them to feel the bizarre nature of the scene.

Kal Shya Shyashnia!

A tall brown goblin, if you could even call it a goblin, with orange eyes and a height of 180 centimeters could barely be seen.

A horned goblin was chanting something in what presumably was some sort of goblin tongue. As it finished, a red snake-like breath came out of the horned goblin, and burrowed itself into the mouths of the surrounding goblins.

The surrounding brown goblins' red eyes turned fierce, after which the goblins ran after the dump truck.

'Well shit, now I've seen it all..... .. '

Looking at the scene before him, Bang Hyun Wook unknowingly gulped down his saliva.

'Even hyungnim wouldn't be able to kill that.'

Looking at that bizarre scene, it seemed like an impossible situation even for Kim Tae Hoon since there were so many enemies.

It seemed impossible to kill an enemy from a distance of 400 meters with an automatic rifle instead of a sniper rifle.

Even if he were able to successfully get a shot off, it would also reveal his location to everyone around him.

It seemed like a wise choice to retreat and meet up with the soldiers who were moving forward in the dump truck.

But Kim Tae Hoon thought differently.

Tang!

A sudden gunshot.

“Euhuk!”

Kim Tae Hoon turned and told Bang Hyun Wook who was worrying about the gunshots.

”Let’s go back.”

The horned goblin was no longer within Bang Hyun Wook’s vision. Only the flustered goblins were visible.

Chapter 19 – Item Production (2)

Kim Tae Hoon was looking at some photos on his smartphone.

[Hobgoblin's Crystal]

– Increases Mana rating when consumed.

– Increases Magic Resistance rating when consumed.

– The Hobgoblin ability [Hobgoblin's Intuition can be learned when consumed.

Kim Tae Hoon swiftly flicked his finger and turned the page on his phone.

[Hobgoblin's Horn]

– A Hobgoblin's horn houses a mysterious power. Some of the power may be exerted when consumed.

He flicked his finger again and went on to the next picture.

[Basic Abilities]

– Strength : 69

– Stamina : 45

[Special Abilities]

– Energy : E Rank

– Mana : E+ Rank

– Telekinesis: A Rank

– Physical Defense : E Rank

– Magic Resistance: E+ Rank

[Acquired Abilities]

– Black Skin (6th Grade)

– Troll's Vitality (6th Grade)

– Hobgoblin's Intuition (6th Grade) : Allows the user to more accurately sense the presence and strength of an enemy stronger than the user.

Kim Tae Hoon focused his gaze on the photo of his right hand.

Kim Tae Hoon lifted his head.

In a fairly large military training yard, there were monster corpses all throughout and the soldiers who were practicing dissecting the monsters to retrieve the monsters' hearts. He saw soldiers who had finished practicing dissecting walk out of the training grounds and smoke a cigarette with their blood covered hands.

He listened in on their conversation.

“Huu, I do not know how to dissect the monster. My hands are still shaking.”

“I am the same as well.”

“Fuck, but whether it’s because of this shitty task or not, the cigarettes taste even better.”

The soldiers who were exhaling smoke while taking had a tired expression on their faces.

“It was a really ridiculous day.”

“Was it really just a day? The time seems wrong.”

“I can’t believe it’s only January first. It feels like it’s been ten years.”

It had felt like this one day had been an eternity.

What more, the entirety of the day was full of Kim Tae Hoon’s face.

‘So a day has passed.’

Kim Tae Hoon looked up at the sun that signified the new year, and quite frankly, it was quite difficult for him to believe it.

Huu!

Kim Tae Hoon sighed. White mist from his breath plumed in front of his eyes.

He started to recall old memories from his past where he was forced to work without rest for over 24 hours.

Various people's faces flashed in front of his eyes. They had long since become faces he could only see in his memories.

Kim Tae Hoon's expression began to settle.

A woman approached Kim Tae Hoon.

"We've loaded up two dump trucks, two military trucks, and four SUVs with weapons sir."

It was Second Lieutenant Kim Su Ji.

"Good work."

Sitting on a crude wooden bench, he gave Kim Su Ji a short reply. He didn't turn to look at her.

However, instead of turning around, Kim Su Ji instead chose to

stand there and look at him. Looking at her, Kim Tae Hoon finally said something.

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

“What was your rank sir?”

“Major.”

“Ah.”

A little surprised, Kim Su Ji nodded at his words.

‘Major?’

She didn’t know how old Kim Tae Hoon was.

However, he didn’t seem that old. He looked like he was in his early 30’s.

That was why she was surprised.

In the Korean Armed Forces, logically speaking, anyone who could reach the rank of Major while being in their early 30’s was someone who completed the elite course in the shortest amount of time.

What more, it would have to have been the best elite course that promoted the soldier nonstop. Anyone who accessed such an elite course would have their name spread throughout the military.

If Kim Tae Hoon had only completed normal tasks as an officer, then there was no way he could have become a major.

In other words, Kim Tae Hoon had completed extraordinary tasks.

“Excuse me, but can you tell me where you were assigned sir?”

“I was under Major General Chang Young Sung, anything more than that won’t matter.”

“What do you mean it won’t matter?”

“There won’t be any official records in the archives. No matter what I say, there won’t be any evidence to what I say.”

“Evidence doesn’t matter now sir.”

Kim Tae Hoon raised her head at Kim Su Ji’s repeated questions. He saw the determination in her eyes.

‘Brigadier General Kim Jae Ryong wouldn’t have said anything positive about Major General Chang Young Sung…….’

Her grandfather, Kim Jae Ryong, was well aware of Brigadier General Chang Young Sung's role.

Because of that, he would have warned his grand daughter.

To not get involved with Chang Young Sung in any way.

However, her asking questions meant that she had made up her mind.

To Kim Tae Hoon, Kim Su Ji was an exemplary soldier. She was a soldier who felt guilt while constantly questioning her superior.

Because of that, Kim Tae Hoon answered her question.

"A secret black ops team created to assassinate and annihilate dangerous groups or factions that pose a threat to the nation."

A unit consisting of himself.

"It's a unit that doesn't have a name belongs solely to me."

It was a brief explanation, but it was enough. One could only guess what Kim Tae Hoon had done as a soldier.

Being a member of such a top secret and specialized unit, one could only guess how many successful missions he had embarked

on during active duty.

Because of that, Kim Su Ji began to understand her grandfather's warnings.

"Thank you for telling me sir."

Without answering, Kim Tae Hoon closed his eyes.

With his eyes closed, the face that he had recalled earlier once again appeared before him.

It began to speak to him.

You must survive, even if it's only you, captain, you must survive…….

Recalling those words, Kim Tae Hoon could only swallow a bitter smile.

'I did not become a soldier to survive, but ever since then, survival became my only purpose.'

Kim Tae Hoon opened his mouth.

"Do you have any more questions?"

Kim Su Ji thought that there was another opportunity to ask a question, so she asked.

“Why did you decide to organize a clan? Wouldn’t it have been more convenient to remain active in the army in name?”

“I joined the army and chose to hunt monsters in the name of the army because I cannot ignore the people or the country. Of course, if you had seen what the ROK army had done since the monsters appeared, anyone would see flaws, but they wouldn’t be too big.”

Kim Tae Hoon didn’t comment on what she said. It was unreasonable to adhere to a soldier’s mentality since you would have to break it for the sake of survival. Without saying anything, his meaning would be clear anyways.

An uninvited person suddenly appeared.

“Boss.”

Kim Su Ji looked at Chang Sung Hoon who just appeared with a sour expression on her face.

Furthermore, she wasn’t very approving of the title that the self-invited Chang Sung Hoon gave Kim Tae Hoon.

“Is it alright if I make a suggestion?”

Ignoring Kim Su Ji, he asked Kim Tae Hoon.

“Wouldn’t it be a good idea to use monster leather to make some sort of armor?”

Kim Tae Hoon had a surprised expression on his face.

“It wasn’t something that I thought of. It was something that came up while I was talking with the other soldiers. Since the world has turned into a sort of game, we can try making items from monsters.”

You can make items from monster parts in games, so would it work in real life?

It sounded ridiculous.

“No, just what kind of…….”

Kim Su Ji began to criticize the idea without even realizing it because of how ridiculous it sounded.

However, Kim Tae Hoon had an idea.

‘The black orc, its skin was extremely tough.’

The monsters that had appeared were far stronger and tougher

than the beasts that humanity had already encountered on Earth. The monster's' skin could stop bullets.

So it made sense.

All the evidence was in the history of humanity.

Weak humans reinforced their fragile body with the stronger parts of other beasts.

They used the poison from poisonous creatures, leather armor from beasts, and tools and weapons from the sharp teeth and claws of animals for the sake of survival.

It was not strange to turn monster parts into tools for survival, but rather natural.

"What about the tools?"

"To be honest, I don't even think we can make a good pair of shoes with what he have right now."

"Then……."

"But, the Oh Jung Dong Industrial Complex is right in front of the barracks. You can even make a nuclear bomb if you had the necessary materials. We can make it there in about 20 minutes if we go on foot."

It would house the necessary tools.

“What about technicians?”

So the only thing left were technicians or engineers who could use the machinery.

“There hand may not be covered in oil, but there wouldn’t only be soldiers born with a gold spoon in their mouths, right? In society, it was the army that appealed to those kids whose hands were caked in oil and worked hard. It would be strange if there wasn’t a factory worker amongst the soldiers. Besides, even if there weren’t any factory workers amongst the soldiers, there would certainly be some survivors in the factory. All we need to do is obtain their help.”

Kim Tae Hoon nodded his head as he stood up.

‘It’s different from when you’re just asleep.’

Making clothing from animal skin wasn’t something one could do in one day.

It took a considerable amount of skill and sophisticated tools to properly skin the bodies, but even after the skin is properly extracted, it would again take a considerable amount of time and

skill to dry and process the skin to turn it into leather.

So naturally, it would impossible to make any sort of gear with the monster leather in a short amount of time.

Furthermore, Kim Tae Hoon didn’t want to leave the barracks just yet.

If they were to move, they would have to do so as a whole, and the efficacy and necessity for goblin armor wasn’t proven yet, so it wasn’t exactly a necessity.

That was the key.

They had to gauge the benefits of the goblin armor first.

Puk! Puk!

“How is it?”

“Overlapping three pieces of the skin, we can’t pierce it with a knife.”

“If you stack at least three, the thickness is good. If it’s this much, will goblin teeth be able to pierce through it?”

“Also, if you overlap three, won’t it be too heavy and make it

difficult to move?”

“Well our main weapons are guns aren’t they? As long as you can aim it’s ok, right?”

“Honestly, it’s better than bulletproof vests. Besides, it’s not like the goblins are going to shoot us with guns.”

They were testing and discussing the strength and benefits of the roughly peeled goblin skin when used as armor.

Along with the soldiers, Kim Tae Hoon was experimenting.

Meanwhile, the first one to make an item was none other than Ahn Sun Mi.

“Using the hob goblins horn, the mud troll’s flesh, and the Goblet of Healing’s liquid, I made a healing pill.”

Ahn Sun Mi displayed a picture of a bottle cap sized pellet on her smartphone.

[Effect]

– Resistance to fear slightly increases.

– Recovery ability slightly increases.

– Focus during combat slightly improves.

– Slightly reduces pain.

– Rapidly consumes stamina.

Ahn Sun Mi, using the materials that Kim Tae Hoon and his subordinates had collected, had made an item.

What tremendous utility!

‘That’s more profit that I had expected.’

A gun was a very powerful weapon when dealing with monsters.

One armed platoon would be able to take care of a hundred goblins. That is if they received proper training and good commands.

Problems arose when monsters that possessed the power of Fear, like the black orc or the mud troll, appeared.

Even the awakened couldn’t help but stiffen when exposed to the Fear.

Additionally, the nature of the Fear was so that you couldn’t withstand it with your spirit. The rank of your Energy was important. A higher Energy rank you could recover, endure, or completely ignore it.

Even if you organized a large army, if your Energy rank was low or you simply didn't possess the Energy ability, then you would simply be incapacitated by the Fear, that was one of the biggest reasons why Kim Tae Hoon was so wary against the monsters.

In such a situation, Ahn Sun Mi's pill was the light and the salt.

So what if this medicine was able to grant both the awakened and the unawakened resistance or immunity to the Fear?

'It will be more effective for soldiers and weaker awakened, and with it, they can withstand the Fear and increase the effectiveness of various tactics and firepower.'

Of course, it would be necessary to kill stronger monsters to create more effective drugs, but of course, they would have to test whether or not the effects can improve based on dosage.

Ahn Sun Mi had rendered tremendous merits.

"Since you created a new drug, you should be the one to name it."

"What?"

"We'll be making more items in the future, so we should have names to classify them."

“That…… yes, understood. In the end, I am still a doctor.”

A different proposed an idea to Kim Tae Hoon’s words.

“Noonim should name it after yourself and call it Sun Mi Dan. Isn’t it intuitive and nice?”

“Do you want to die?”

Ahn Sun Mi looked at Bang Hyun Wook as though her were delusional.

Bang Hyun Wook turned to Kim Tae Hoon to avoid her gaze.

“Hyungnim, instead of this pill, shouldn’t we name our clan first?? Or have you already settled on a name?”

Kim Tae Hoon stroked the area around his mouth.

He hadn’t really thought about it. To Kim Tae Hoon, the name of the clan wasn’t important. He had made the clan so he could operate outside the army’s jurisdiction.

However, it was just like Bang Hyun Wook said and the clan could not be nameless forever.

The power behind a name was powerful.

“I have a good name sir. I learned a bit of hanja before. Lighted(光) Path(道), we can be a clan that serves as a guiding light! What do you think?”

“It sucks.”

Ahn Sun Mi immediately shot down the suggestion.

“Then does noonim have a better suggestion?”

“Just sticking a cigarette brand onto the clan name would be better than that trash name.”

“Marlboro clan then?”

Ahn Sun Mi turned her head away from Bang Hyun Wook, not wanting to deal with him anymore. They acted like siblings. Bickering, like brother and sister.

But of course, Kim Tae Hoon also ignored Bang Hyun Wook.

If there was one thing he could be sure of, it was that Bang Hyun Wook would be of no help when coming up with a name.

So, Kim Tae Hoon instead sought the opinion of the person with the most in-depth literary and archaeological knowledge in the clan.

“A name for the clan? I’ve forged fake ID’s many times, but this is the first time I was asked to come up with a clan name. If an art forger were to come up with a name, wouldn’t it carry a negative view?”

Chang Hyun Wook forced a smile at Kim Tae Hoon’s request.

“So what are you looking for in the name?”

“What do you think will be good?”

“Usually, battle groups like this will take on the name of a legendary figure. Three-legged crow, Hatch, Mek. It attracts a lot of gods and such, but they tend to work well. I personally like the vermillion bird. Vermillion bird!”

[TN: The Hatch, or the Haitai, is a unicorn lion often depicted in Chinese, Korean, and Japanese folklore. It is also known as the Xiezhi in Chinese and Kaichi in Japan. The Mek, also known as the Baku in Japan, is a creature that looks similar to the Malayan Tapir, and is known to be a dream/nightmare eater.]

“What about it?”

“It’s best if the name rolls off the tongue. In the end, the meaning will attach itself.”

After hearing that, Kim Tae Hoon chose a word that he felt wasn’t uncomfortable.

“Mek.”

The name I choose is none other than Mek.

“What are Mek’s characteristics?”

“It varies from region to region, but generally Mek is a divine that eats nightmares. Mek Clan, it’s not bad. So what’s the next destination for the Mek clan? Are we going to the factory……”

“We will go to Bucheon Stadium tomorrow morning.”

The next destination for the Mek Clan is the Bow Museum located in Bucheon Stadium.

Chapter 20 – The Second Relic (1)

1.

Deu deu deu!

A car that was making some noise and blocking the road was pushed off to the side.

Koong!

The front of the car smashed into ground with a loud crash.

If the owner saw the scene, they would have been frightened.

“How in the world such a tiny country could possess so many cars is beyond me. Aye, seriously!”

Instead of having a look of self-reflection on his face, the person who was loudly yelling had an obviously angry look on his face.

What was remarkable was the fact that it wasn’t only one or two cars that had been knocked off the road.

Hundreds of vehicles, whether it be front first or back first, were smashing into the furrows off the side of the road. As the cars smashed into each other, even their chassis were smashed and twisted.

Bang Hyun Wook turned his head to look at trail of destruction left in his wake, and wiped the sweat off his forehead.

Koong!

Seeing all the cars in the ditches off to the side of the road, Chang Sung Hoon said to Bang Hyun Wook.

“Hyun Wook’s strength is really good.”

“It’s all thanks to the Energy and Strength stats. You could probably hit a hundred home runs if you debuted in the pro league right now right?”

“Yeah, I really wish I could debut in the pro league. If the car owners come by in the future and see my face through the black box, they’ll file a damages claim and I’ll have to file for bankruptcy, so I’ll either have to join the major leagues or hit the jackpot.”

“I really wish I could win the lottery.”

“I agree.”

Chang Sung Hoon once again looked at the cars that were off to the side of the road.

‘This is mass destruction of private property, but it was for the sake of survival…… It’s basically no different from trash now.’

Chang Sung Hoon was looking at a car that he would have whistled at in the past.

That was then.

“Huh? Boss? Boss!”

Chang Sung Hoon shouted towards Kim Tae Hoon who was marking which cars to move out of the way.

“Boss, that’s a Cayenne, a Cayenne! Porsche Cayenne!”

Using a red marker, Kim Tae Hoon was about to mark a Porsche Cayenne SUV’s rear window with an X.

“That one costs more than 100 million Won!”

Note that a brand new stock Porsche Cayenne cost 100 million won.

With optional add ons, it could cost up to 200 million won!

It was a nice car that anyone would fall in love with, and the fact that it was a Porsche served as a man’s fantasy.

Of course, that's what it was to Chang Sung Hoon.

Ignoring Chang Sung Hoon's cries, Kim Tae Hoon marked the car and lightly pushed the back of it. Confirming that it would move, he looked at the back of the car.

Staring at it, he painted an image of it in his head.

It was an image of a huge wall pushing the car.

A wall that slowly moved towards the furrow.

Kim Tae Hoon's imagination became tangible. As it moved, it began to gradually descend the small valley walls of the furrow.

The pricey car smashed into the back of another car that had already gone headfirst into the ditch.

Kwang!

If the car was a human, it would have been hard to look at what had happened to it, and Chang Sung Hoon who had been eyeing the car let out a regretful sigh.

"If only I could ride that car around……."

“It’s ok, Tae Hoon hyungnim is the kind of person who would even drive a Mercedes Benz into the black orc. There’s no difference between that and this.”

“A Benz and a Porsche are different!”

“Different? Don’t they have similar price tags?”

“It’s not about the price, but the romance. The romance.”

Kim Tae Hoon shot a glance at the two of them.

‘Hup!’

‘This…….’

Chang Sung Hoon and Bang Hyun Wook turned into honey eating mutes. Kim Tae Hoon didn’t need to say anything, that gaze was enough.

[TN: It’s an idiom along the lines of ‘cat got your tongue’]

<Shut up and get back to work.>

Seeing that they quieted down, Kim Tae Hoon’s gaze passed over them.

On a road that had become a graveyard for cars, there was a

dump truck slowly moving on the road followed by a line of vehicles, like ducklings chasing after the mother duck.

There were also soldiers that surrounded the cars.

“Hey hey, be careful, careful!”

“Sorry sir.”

“Be careful when moving the bodies around. We might not be able to give them a proper funeral, but you gotta at least show the minimum amount of courtesy.”

“Yes sir.”

“If you look at it in a certain way, handling dead people is happy work. It’s another indicator that I’ve survived.”

Some of the soldiers who were moving the cadavers off to the side were using jumpers to cover their faces.

“Monster Stone extraction complete.”

“Quota of ten, complete. Permission to smoke a cigarette, sir?”

“Sure, I completed ten as well. Let’s smoke together.”

There were other soldiers who were searching for monster corpses and then retrieving monster stones from their chest.

And from time to time there would be a plume of cigarette smoke rising into the sky in between work shifts.

Kim Tae Hoon sighed while watching the scene.

‘It’s a relief that there isn’t as much of a commotion as I thought there would be.’

January 2.

After what seemed like an eternity, the new day started. Under the banner of the newly named Mek Clan, Kim Tae Hoon and his subordinates left the 1121st Unit’s barracks and headed towards Bucheon Stadium.

It wasn’t a very long distance.

Being about 5 kilometers away, it should have taken them an hour to reach it.

However, even though the Mek Clan had left at 7 in the morning, it wasn’t until 2 am near dawn when they arrived at Bucheon Stadium.

They had spent a lot of time clearing the roads so that the dump

truck that was carrying the weapons could pass safely, along with the other vehicles behind it.

‘There weren’t many monster attacks.’

It was a time consuming task.

Moving the owner bereft cars was an extremely time consuming task, and since the roads were clogged with traffic accidents, it wasn’t something the clan could clear without Kim Tae Hoon and Bang Hyun Wook’s help.

It was also a task that had to be completed.

‘In the end, we secured a path from the stadium to the military base.’

After all, the dump truck wasn’t just a truck. It was a weapon that gave the soldiers an incredible advantage against the monsters and it was a storage unit that was full of weapons.

Securing a path for the dump truck was a priority for the clan.

Clearing the path was similar to creating an emergency exit, providing another lifeline for the clan.

‘It’s dangerous to hole up in an apartment or similar buildings. In regards to residence, it’s much better to settle in the military base

or the stadium.'

It was also important to properly take care of the bodies there as well.

The place where you are buried becomes your grave, but the place where you die becomes your hell.

The difference between the two was huge.

Giving the bodies rest is one way to still keep some sort of order and civility in this new world.

"Huh? There, over there!"

"What is it? What's happened? Ah!"

"That's a lot of smoke. Doesn't it look like a fire broke out?"

"A fire doesn't give off that amount of smoke? It's an apartment complex is it not?"

At that moment, all eyes turned towards the beacon of smoke that rose between the apartment complexes in the distance.

Kim Tae Hoon also turned his attention towards the smoke.

‘It’s starting now.’

The smoke that everyone could see was another reason why they needed to maintain a trace of order.

The origin of the smoke.

There are no chimneys where the smoke can come out of, so if there was no fire, would there be smoke?

It is a fire.

The cause of the fire was also obvious.

“But what caused the fire?”

It was minus 10 degrees celsius outside, and not only was the temperature not rising, but the wind was blowing as well.

Isn’t gas and electricity provided during a winter like this?

In the end, they’ll have to resort to old-fashioned methods that humans had to use before the advent of sufficient technology.

“They must have lit a fire to warm their bodies. Without a fire, they’ll freeze to death.”

They definitely must have lit a fire.

Common sense would dictate that they should have come outside and looked for a metal barrel, and then filled it with a large quantity of firewood before lighting it on fire.

However, a lot of people would instead make fires in their homes using portable gas burners and cans of butane gas. But to be fair, this world was already one not within the bounds of common sense.

“Should we go help?”

There were no firefighters that could be dispatched at the moment.

“We’ll probably just have to wait until the fire puts itself out. Unless it starts to rain. But there’s no way it’ll rain in this weather. It would be pretty amazing if it does.”

“But if the fire spreads from the apartment complex sir?

“Well…….”

The society that humans had built is surprisingly fragile, and can easily be compared to a giant matchbox.

“I don’t know what’ll happen next, but regardless of what

happens, I doubt we'll be able to do much about it."

"I'm getting goosebumps sir."

Many things apply to disasters such as earthquakes, not things like monster attacks.

Many experts say. When a major disaster like an earthquake occurs, there are more deaths in the subsequent disasters, like a fire or a collapse of infrastructure.

'The real chaos is just beginning.'

In such a situation, the monsters would be like merciless gods.

'Hmmm.'

At that moment Kim Tae Hoon turned his head.

A desolate road full of trashed cars entered his sight.

However, Kim Tae Hoon's intuition told him that the silence was just a facade.

Intuition, the Hobgoblin's Intuition told him that there was a strong presence nearby.

“Prepare for battle!”

Kim Tae Hoon yelled out loud.

Awooooooooh!

As soon as Kim Tae Hoon spit out his words, an eerie howl rang in his ears, causing his legs to tremble.

Chapter 21 – The Second Relic (2)

2.

Awooooh!

Werewolf, a giant werewolf over 2 meters tall covered in gray hair howled towards the sky.

It was howling like a typhoon.

It wasn’t a simple sound.

Furthermore, it wasn’t the howl of a lonely wolf.

The wolf’s howl was a cry aimed at its people.

Awooh!

Awoooh!

Naturally, the howls of the first werewolf was followed by more howls.

Kuhung, Kuhung!

The other howls did not belong to more werewolves, but instead regular wolves.

They clearly weren't regular wild wolves.

Their bodies were 2 meters long even without including the tails.

Their fur was an ashen grey color.

Their heads were terrifyingly fierce. They had red eyes and two fangs like that of a saber-toothed tiger.

Saber-toothed wolf.

Kuhung! Kung kung!

The moment the werewolf's howls rang out, the saber-toothed wolves ran out onto the car-filled highway.

At the end of their path was the dump truck.

Of course the dump truck itself was not their goal.

They were after the Mek Clan soldiers who were peeking with their rifles on the dump truck.

The soldiers were also after the saber-toothed wolves as well.

“Fire!”

The battle began as Kim Su Ji gave the order to shoot.

Tututu!

The soldiers’ rifles began to light up.

The bullets from the rifles mercilessly ripped through the saber-toothed wolves.

Ggeng! Ggeng!

The saber-toothed wolves that were hit yelped in pain.

That was all.

The shots from the rifles didn’t hinder the wolves’ charge.

The bullets did not lack power.

“Damn it, damn, damn!”

‘Stop, hand please stop. Please stop!’

Deul deul deul!

The soldiers' trigger fingers were trembling like those of a restless patient.

Awoooh!

The cause of their trembling was the werewolf's howl.

The typhoon like howls were a source of power that was like giving the wolves wings, while also shackling the soldiers with terror.

If Ahn Sun Mi hadn't made the pills beforehand, and if the soldiers hadn't taken the pills beforehand, then they wouldn't have even been able to pull the trigger on their guns.

Ting ting, ting ting ting!

Ting ting, ting!

"Damn those fucking cars!"

"Seriously what the fuck!"

The cars that filled up the highway was also a source of bitterness for the soldiers.

With trembling hands, not even Kim Tae Hoon was able to accurately hit the wolves that were bobbing and weaving between the cars.

Kuhung!

Utilizing any means necessary, four wolves were able to reach the dump truck with plodding steps. They had no thoughts of stopping. With one last attempt, they tried to throw themselves onto the dump truck's loader.

It was Kim Su Ji's cries that stopped their attempts.

"An attack!"

"An attack!"

A short two-word cry.

Kwa-kwa-kwang!

Accompanying that noise, a claymore with hundreds of beads inside of it exploded.

Ggeng!

In front of the horrifying and inhumane weapon known as the claymore, the saber-toothed wolves could only whimper.

Those were just death throes. Riddled with holes, the wolves could only gasp a few times to breathe.

Awooooh!

Seeing what had happened, the werewolf howled again.

It was howling with more intensity and more anger.

Awoooh!

The other wolves began to resonate with the werewolf as they let out their own howls.

At that moment, a strange force began to twist around the battlefield. It wasn’t a vague feeling.

An incantation.

The incantation became a weapon.

Keureureu!

The strange power began to increase the intensity and savagery

in the wolves' eyes.

At that moment.

·····Ooooooohb!

The werewolf howls suddenly stopped.

Oohb! Oohb!

The werewolf tried to howl again, but its snout would not open.

It was as though someone had tied up the werewolf's snout!

Oohb! Oooohb!

In the werewolf's case, it was a rather embarrassing situation.

A water balloon was launched towards the werewolf. The water balloon flew in a parabolic shape before accurately landing on the werewolf's eye.

Cheul puk!

The balloon popped and spread a black liquid all over the werewolf's face.

Oohb!

Because of the liquid, the werewolf tightly shut its eyes and began to struggle against the pain.

It was a natural reaction.

The black liquid was a mixture of various toxic substances such as gasoline, pesticide, and insecticide. If a mixture of strong perfume and red pepper powder got into your nose and your eyes but you didn't struggle against it, that would be strange.

"Alright!"

Having accurately tossed what was essentially a chemical weapon, Bang Hyun Wook clenched his fist and shouted.

"This is Bucheon's 3rd draft pick starting pitcher Bang Hyun Wook! I'm the pitcher who gave the finisher from the National High School Baseball Phoenix Championship! The Phoenix Championship! 11 strikeouts! Bucheon's Kershaw!"

Hearing Bang Hyun Wook's excited shouts, the werewolf rubbed its eyes and turned towards Bang Hyun Wook.

At that moment, the power that kept the werewolf's snout closed disappeared. The werewolf's mouth opened with great force.

It let out all the rage that had been boiling inside it.

Keuuuuhng!

Kim Tae Hoon appeared by the werewolf alongside Bang Hyun Wook who held and irod rod in his hand like a baseball bat.

Tutu! Tututu! Tutu!

Kim Tae Hoon looked at Bang Hyun Wook and shot the werewolf in the back with his gun.

Puk puk, Pububuk!

The gun barrels were pressed up against the werewolf's body and head.

A sure hit.

Of the seven gunshots, none of them missed the werewolf.

Keeng!

However, the werewolf did not fall.

Even having been shot in the head, the werewolf did not even get down on its knee, but instead cried out in pain.

‘Tough.’

It was evident that the werewolf possessed tough skin, strong and thick bones, and an uncanny vitality.

‘Making leather from it will be very useful.’

But in the end, it was really only something Kim Tae Hoon would consider under such circumstances.

The scary part about a gun was that a countdown started the moment the shots landed.

Blood starts to pour, joints and muscles are damaged, and movements become dull.

The werewolf felt strange.

The chemical mixture that Kim Tae Hoon had concocted was more effective than using other materials.

Kim Tae Hoon calmly and accurately rammed a bullet into the werewolf’s body.

Keuhung!

He also messed with the werewolf's movements using his telekinesis.

In Kim Tae Hoon's eyes, the werewolf was no different from a scarecrow with its limbs tied up with huge invisible chains.

'Ah.'

At that moment, Kim Tae Hoon's intuition warned him.

Following his senses, Kim Tae Hoon turned his gaze towards his left to see a saber-toothed wolf launching into the air like a spring.

It looked like it would be impossible for Kim Tae Hoon to dodge the wolf's attack since it was basically already upon him.

So Kim Tae Hoon didn't dodge.

Instead, he shot out his right fist towards the snout. His clenched fist had turned black thanks to Black Skin.

Bbagak!

His fist broke through the saber-toothed wolf's saber tooth.

Puhwat!

Having punched through its teeth, he penetrated through the roof of the wolf's mouth and turned its brain to mush.

"Hyungnim be careful……."

Bang Hyun Wook's startled warning had come after the saber-toothed wolf had already become a corpse hanging off of Kim Tae Hoon's fist.

"……not to scratch yourself on the sharp bits of the wolf."

[TN: It's kind of awkward trying to translate this into English. It originally says something like "Hyungnim watch out….. is not something you need to do", except it makes sense in Korean. So I changed it to this so it flows.]

Bang Hyun Wook's cry ended in a slight mumble.

Of course, Kim Tae Hoon paid it no heed.

Kim Tae Hoon inspected his rifle, and carefully observed his surroundings to make sure there were no other wolves nearby. Since there were no red flags going off in his intuition, Kim Tae Hoon began to unload the rest of the magazine into the werewolf's body.

Tu tu, tu, cheulkuk!

When the last bullet left the chamber, Kim Tae Hoon began to reload while shouting.

“Commence battle! Destroy the enemy!”

Kim Tae Hoon’s shout was an invigorating energy that shook the battlefield.

3.

[Werewolf Crystal]

– Increases Strength when consumed.

– Increases Stamina when consumed.

– Increases the rating of Physical Defense when consumed.

– Increases the rating of Energy when consumed.

– Grants the werewolf ability [Howl] when consumed.

“Howl…… then that means before a fight, hyungnim will awoooooo! Will you shout it?”

Looking at the picture of the werewolf’s loot on the smartphone’s screen, he looked at Kim Tae Hoon’s while going awooooh. Imagining the scene where he would be howling, he giggled with a kik-kik.

However, he was the only one with a smile on his lips.

The Mek Clan soldiers, including Second Lieutenant Kim Su Ji, having had lit a bonfire in front of the dump truck, couldn't afford to laugh as they trembled in front of the fire while trying to warm themselves.

It was the werewolf's howl, the intensity of the 'Fear' it exuded was more intense than they had thought.

So being out in this weather where it would only get colder, the effect was doubled.

"Are you ok?"

Bang Hyun Wook worriedly asked Chang Sung Hoon who was a stone's throw away from him. Chang Sung Hook could only shake his head while trembling.

"Definitely not. Are you alright?"

"I feel that it's a bit hot."

"Hot?"

"Energy has a duration, once it heats up, it doesn't easily cool down. I can still feel it wriggling around in my gut."

“I also feel like there’s something crawling around in my gut. Damn it.”

The two of them saw Kim Tae Hoon approaching them.

It looked like he was coming back after making sure there weren’t any more monsters around the Bow Museum.

Everyone who was warming up by the fire stood up when they saw Kim Tae Hoon.

“Chang Sung Hoon and Ahn Sun Mi.”

Kim Tae Hoon called out towards the two of them. The both of them nodded their heads.

They had no reason to ask any questions. It was something they had agreed to in advance.

Although it would be easy to tell if an object was a relic simply by taking a picture of it with a smartphone, Kim Tae Hoon had no knowledge of where to look for any of the hidden pieces.

So he decided to bring along Chang Sung Hoon who had that knowledge, and Ahn Sun Mi who had already discovered a relic in the past.

“Second Lieutenant Kim Su Ji will temporarily be in charge. Furthermore, Bang Hyun Wook will be in charge of offense.”

Instead of replying, Bang Hyun Wook fumbled a salute.

Kim Tae Hoon’s gaze briefly rested on Bang Hyun Wook before he headed towards the museum with Ahn Sun Mi and Chang Sung Hoon.

4.

Bucheon Bow Museum.

Located beside Bucheon Stadium, the museum housed a variety of bows, arrows, and other items related to bows.

Flash, flash!

There were camera flashes all over the museum.

It was quite a spectacle for a museum curator to see.

Regardless, it was kind of a scary scene.

“Okay!”

Standing in the dark, a man broke a glass case with a hammer.

Jjeng!

The sound of glass shattering rang off the walls.

“It sounds just as awesome as those thief punks said. I can get addicted to this.”

Following that remark, a hand suddenly appeared amidst the broken glass. The hand grasped an arrow that was on display.

“What did you find?”

“What is that?”

A man and a woman crowded around the man who was holding the arrow, the arrow being baptized in camera flashes.

Instead of replying to them, he showed the two of them the screen on his phone.

[Sun Sin’s Arrow]

– Relic Grade: Grade 7

– Relic Rarity : Rare

– Relic Effect : An arrow containing the power of a great commander. The strength of the arrowhead’s penetration

increases in relation to the user's Energy.

Grade 4, rare…… the description was more amazing than was expected.

However, Kim Tae Hoon and Ahn Sun Mi's eyes did not even look at the relic's grade, rarity, or effect.

"Sun Sin's Arrow?"

"Hold on a second. Is it that Sun Sin……."

Sun Sin.

There is only one great commander by the name of Sun Sin in the history of Korea.

"Does it perhaps mean Admiral Yi Sun Sin?"

Kim tae Hoon did not answer Ahn Sun Mi's question.

'So it's Yi Sun Sin…….'

No, that's impossible. At this time, he couldn't give an answer.

"Why is such a noble artifact in this museum?"

The one to answer was of course Chang Sung Hoon.

Chang Sung Hoon spoke while looking at the arrow in his hand.

“It’s actually the opposite. It would have to be at the level of Admiral Yi Sun Sin’s arrow if it were to stay in the museum.”

Chang Sung Hoon continued to look at the arrow with the light from his phone.

“Who would dare to take an arrow shot by the greatest commander of the Joseon Dynasty Admiral Yi Sun Sin? If it’s an arrow that a great Admiral like Yi Sun Sin-nim shot, then no one would take it home and use it as a decoration or a talisman, but would instead leave it in the museum so that its condition could be preserved even after hundreds of years.”

“No not that, why is such a precious treasure in this small museum…….”

Hearing it be called a precious treasure, Chang Sung Hoon laughed.

“Arrows aren’t treasures. If it’s not an arrow crafted for the purposes of serving as a temple’s emblem, then it’s just a consumable. Even if it’s an arrow that Admiral Yi Sun Sin shot over 10,000 feet. Arrows can be recycled. No matter how you look at it, a single arrow doesn’t have a unique name, right? This is not

a treasure. A value of a treasure is determined by how much someone would be willing to pay for it, and how much of a supply exists. To be honest, it doesn't matter. Of course, the story is different now."

With those words, Chang Sung Hoon laughed.

"Please come take a look at this. The arrowhead flashes with a newly made light. Would arrowheads shot during the Japanese Invasion be so spotless like this? This could be a hint that an object has turned into a relic. Not only has its abilities changed, its appearance as well. If it's not made of gold, then relics will be in a perfect state like this……."

Chang Sung Hoon suddenly stopped talking.

The smile on his face disappeared.

Kim Tae Hoon and Ahn Sun Mi both looked at Chang Sung Hoon with a puzzled look on his face. The two of them waited for Chang Sung Hoon to keep talking.

"Hold on."

After a while, Chang Sung Hoon opened his mouth.

"There is a point of interest we need to go to right now sir. We, we have to go there right now."

“We have to go there for me to say what I need to say. Exactly where we have to go, and why we have to go.”

“There’s a European Porcelain museum. There’s a European Porcelain Museum in the Bucheon Stadium…… that’s why, that is there.”

“What is it?”

Ahn Sun Mi asked for an answer.

“Champagne glass.”

“Champagne glass?”

Ahn Sun Mi asked while Kim Tae Hoon furrowed his brow.

To dispel their reaction, Chang Sung Hoon swallowed his spit and then spewed out a long string of words that was spinning around in his head.

“The golden champagne cup that Emperor Napoleon used.”

Gulp!

Instead of words, Chang Sung Hoon heard the sound of gulping.

Chapter 22 – The Second Relic (3)

5.

Bucheon European Porcelain Museum.

There was a group of people who were very obviously not allowed in this room of expensive European masterpieces, flashes constantly going off.

“Oh, it’s a Meissen.”

Chang Sung Hoon, who could be considered to possess the most uninhibited and dangerous mouth, began to talk.

“Meissen? What is that?”

Ahn Sun Mi asked, unable to bear with the silence any longer.

“It’s the pinnacle of European luxury goods. Is it apt to say that if it were a car, it would be a Benz?”

“Is it expensive?”

“Yes. Even if it’s not an entire set, that teacup would go for 5 million won.”

“That little teacup can go for 5 million won?”

“That much is cheap. Some Meissen Vases can go for 8 thousand euros.”

Ahn Sun Mi’s jaw dropped at the price.

“……how ridiculously expensive.”

“Well, that’s why there are thieves, right?”

“I was wondering, can you really figure out what it is just by looking at it?”

Chang Sung Hoon laughed lightly hearing Ahn Sun Mi’s question.

“It’s because I can that I became a criminal at such a young age. Well, to be fair it’s also because I haven’t been caught yet.”

Chang Sung Hoon, he was still young.

He wasn’t even a young man, he was a chick who has yet to even receive a college diploma.

An art forger who needed great skill and insight, a fence who sold stolen good, someone who smuggles; he definitely had a discerning

eye and a degree of skill unbefitting of his age.

Could he forge undetectable works of art as an art forger, or safely sell authentic stolen good or smuggle goods without being caught if he didn't have a great insight or great skill?

"But is there an artifact like Napoleon's champagne cup here?"

"Of course. Would I all of a sudden ask to come here without any reason? A guy who wanted to steal gave a quote for it……."

He wouldn't have known of Napoleon's champagne cup if he wasn't a criminal with connections.

"……you can even find relevant articles on the internet. Ah, my smartphone isn't working right now."

"Why is such an amazing thing in this place……."

"It's not as amazing as you think it is. Most people aren't interested in Napoleon's champagne cup."

Having said that, Chang Sung Hoon turned his head after dispelling their doubts, ending the conversation.

They saw the serious expression in Ahn Sun Mi's eyes.

It looked like she felt something.

“This way.”

Following her, Kim Tae Hoon and Chang Sung Hoon saw it.

A golden champagne cup that gave off a subtle golden sheen was inside a glass case.

“……It’s a good thing we came here.”

Although it looked expensive, the crystal glass with gold decorations didn’t seem special on its own.

However, on one side of the cup was the letter ‘N’ studded in brass, giving off a special aura. It was a trace of Napoleon. Knowing that as a human he wouldn’t be able to survive the flow of time, he had left a semblance of his being so that he would not be lost to time.

A trace of Napoleon, a figure who had single-handedly altered human history, was right before them.

“It’s a really good thing that we came here.”

It was self-luminescent.

It had now become more than a simple trace, for it had gained an immeasurable value.

“This is my contribution. Please do not forget it.”

Instead of replying to Chang Sung Hoon, Kim Tae Hoon brought out his smartphone, brought up the camera app, and tapped the screen.

Click!

Kim Tae Hoon’s gaze focused towards his phone. Ahn Sun Mi and Chang Sung Hoon crowded around him, trying to push their heads in so they could see.

Like that, they saw it.

[Napoleon’s Golden Cup No.3]

– Relic Grade : Grade 3

– Relic Rarity : Unique

– Relic Effect : One of six golden cups favored by Napoleon. In times of crisis, the cup will produce a champagne that grants the ability to resolve the crisis.

A great tactician.

This is the secret of Napoleon the Great, who was able to read the flows of danger during an unpredictable age of war.

6.

Hwaleuleu

Mek Clan soldiers were huddling together in front of a fire to loosen their bodies.

It was a result of the Fear that the werewolf had driven into their bodies.

Even if they were not affected by the werewolf, the cold weather did not easily let them leave the auspices of the fire.

There was only one person who could bear to move away from the flames.

Swik!

In the distance, Bang Hyun Wook was grasping a metal stick in his hand and swinging it around like a baseball bat, sloughing off the shackles of the Fear and the cold.

Swik!

There was no surprise that his swings were so strong when combined with his Energy.

‘This is awesome.’

Swinging the stick around, Bang Hyun Wook was amazed at his change.

‘If I could have swung a bat this fast before the draft picks, I could have received a blank check from any major league scout…….’

Bang Hyun Wook couldn’t help but imagine.

What kind of attention and fame could he have gotten if he had this sort of power while in high school? Imagine that.

But in the end, his fantasy was more bitter than sweet.

Bang Hyun Wook blew out a long line of mist as he imagined it.

“Damn it.”

His long sigh was like a bitter dot at the end of his remark.

It was because of the anxieties and concerns that began to surface in his mind.

His parents' faces, then his friends' faces began to emerge in his mind. Even the face of a girl he had a crush on in high school, and in the distance, smoke rising from an apartment that was like a pile of firewood.

It was one of the reasons why Bang Hyun Wook was practicing his swing in this cold weather.

There weren't many ways for Bang Hyun Wook to spend time in this world where entertainment options like a TV or a smartphone games were not available or could not be wasted.

To him, the silence was a source of distress.

So he wanted to move his body and talk with someone.

"Ah, Second Lieutenant-nim! May I ask a question?"

In front of Bang Hyun Wook's fiery determination, Kim Su Ji was like his prey.

Now that her body had limbered up a bit, she was willing to answer his questions, and nodded her head.

"Second Lieutenant-nim and hyungnim are acquaintances right?"

Kim Su Ji silently nodded in response to his question. Bang Hyun Wook spoke while quickly moving his pinky finger up and down.

“Then, what exactly is your relationship?”

Kim Su Ji looked at Bang Hyun Wook’s pinky finger, not quite understanding what he meant.

Bang Hyun Wook was willing to give her a friendly explanation.

“Were you and hyungnim ever lovers?”

“What ridiculous noise!”

Her face having turned white, Kim Su Ji quickly tried to give an explanation.

“I only briefly saw him in the past.”

“In the past, then in the army?”

“I saw him at the army headquarters in the past. Very briefly. That’s the only connection I have with him.”

“Then, does that mean hyungnim is a former soldier? That’s a relief. I thought he was like a hitman or something. A hitman is cooler than a soldier, but it’s better that he’s a soldier. Then was he

from some sort of special forces unit?”

“That…….”

Facing Bang Hyun Wook’s rapid-fire questions, Kim Su Ji couldn’t really say anything.

‘It’s not an information I can reveal to him…….’

She did not have the privilege to answer his questions.

Kim Tae Hoon was the only one who had the clearance to reveal that he belonged to a secret black ops unit, not recorded in the history of South Korea.

Of course, Bang Hyun Wook didn’t intend to make things difficult for Kim Su Ji, but he was really curious.

He had already spent a lot of time letting some questions and concerns remain unanswered in his mind.

So Bang Hyun Wook’s lips kept flapping away with nobody able to stop him.

“Excuse me, but do you know where we can get tanks or rockets…….”

Bang Hyun Wook momentarily shut his mouth on his own.

He shut his mouth and looked at the road with a serious expression on his face. There was a rabble of people walking down the road that he and the Mek Clan members had spent no small amount of time to clear.

Kim Su Ji also turned to look.

“Alert”

Kim Su Ji let loose the loudest cry that she could muster.

“Alert”

She screamed again.

“Alert”

“This is an alert!”

Hearing the cry, the soldiers briskly rose from their positions and began to move in unison towards their guns.

Vroom!

The driver deftly landed in the driver’s seat and turned on the

engine.

“Get in!”

“Hurry up and get up here!”

The soldiers swiftly climbed into the dump truck’s loading box and pointed their rifles out of the box, their bodies filled with tension.

Kim Su Ji swiftly climbed into the dump truck.

Planting his two feet on the ground, Bang Hyun Wook was the only one who did not get into the truck.

“Huuu!”

The assault leader can’t charge if he’s in the truck.

‘Bang Hyun Wook, don’t hesitate. Don’t hesitate to be a man. If it’s something dangerous I have to deal with it. I have to go.’

He was no longer an average human who would hesitate to smash a monster’s head in.

“Huuu!”

So while prepping himself for a battle, Bang Hyun Wook was like a locomotive, constantly breathing out long lines of mist into the air.

It was evidence of his tension.

As time passed, the distance between the two parties narrowed, allowing both sides to identify each other.

‘Civilians, must be survivors.’

‘Damn, what do we do?’

Confirming that they were survivors and not monsters, the soldiers lightly bit their lips.

“S, soldiers!”

“You say they’re soldiers?”

“It’s soldiers!”

Realizing that those in the dump truck were soldiers, the faces in the crowd were overcome with joy.

“We’re saved! We’re saved!”

“Yes!”

“We’re finally saved! It’s a rescue team!”

Shouts of joy came from those who couldn’t believe it, and tears of happiness streamed down the faces of those who couldn’t stand their joy.

The crowd of survivors could not stop themselves from moving towards the dump truck as though they were compelled by something.

Like zombies from a film.

The soldiers were flustered.

‘What’s this? Why are they coming towards us? Why are they approaching us!’

‘Th, this, do we have to shoot them? Damn it, do we have to open fire on them? Should I say something?’

If it were monsters, they would have already taken aim at them before receiving the orders to fire.

But regardless of whether or not they’re armed, these were civilians were they not?

Their opponents were humans, and thus their hearts wavered as their guns were aimed towards them.

“This area is off-limits!”

It was the same with Kim Su Ji.

She would give out firing orders against monsters, but in this situation against civilians, she could assume that giving the order was the right way to go, but it might not be the right thing to do, and it definitely wasn’t something a level-headed person would do.

“This area is off-limits! If you come any closer, we will shoot!”

Kim Su Ji shouted again. She gave a warning.

However, the people approaching the dump truck did not think to stop.

“We’re survivors! We survived!”

“Please help us! S, Seoul, right now Seoul…….”

“What the heck!”

Kim Su Ji didn’t know what to do when faced with all these cries for help, praise for life, and tears of desperation that were being

constantly released.

Kim Su Ji's expression hardened.

'What should I do?'

Her head also turned stiff.

'The other party is just defenseless civilians.'

As soldiers, there are some things they are instructed to do about civilians.

Of which, it was emphasized that they were not to even sneeze on the civilians!

To Kim Su Ji and the other soldiers, there was nothing they could fall back on to deal with the situation.

Even Bang Hyun Wook, who wasn't a soldier, was flustered.

'What in the world, Joo Ha Yeon?'

A girl with a familiar face that Bang Hyun Wook would never forget was in the crowd.

'W, why is she here?'

The distance between the soldiers and the civilians narrowed even further, the soldiers unable to do anything in their uncertainty.

It wasn't a pretty scene.

It wouldn't be strange if something huge happened.

Awoooo!

The sounds of howling left a streak of an unsightly color on the scene.

It wasn't a simple sound.

Within it was an obvious strength and hostility.

"Huk!"

Hearing the howls, the feet shuffling towards the dump truck stopped.

Tutu, tutu!

The gunshots that arrived behind the advent of the howls made the civilians stop.

“This is a warning.”

It was time for a warning.

“Anyone who draws near will immediately be killed without warning. I’ll say it one more time. Anyone who approached the dump truck without permission will be fired upon without warning. Everyone lie flat on the ground.”

Everyone stopped what they were doing, and focused on the source of the warning, Kim Tae Hoon.

Chapter 23 – Napoleon's Golden Goblet (1)

1.

They were survivors.

"I've come from Guro district."

"We are from Yangcheon District……."

Survivors from Seoul.

Of course, Guro District and Yangcheon District were located far from the center of Seoul, but regardless, those areas were much closer to the heart of the Republic of Korea than Kim Tae Hoon and his party.

Their circumstances became clearer.

"Seoul is hell now. Gigantic monsters run amok……."

"A huge dragon with huge wings, it's hard to believe, but the dragon breathed fire and destroyed buildings and lit all the trees around on fire…… euuuh……."

"It's just something we heard, but fighter jets destroyed the Mapo and Yanghwa bridges with missiles."

The capital of the Republic of Korea, Seoul, was no longer the most populated city in all of South Korea, but, it had also become one of the most devastated area with the most casualties.

Those who heard the story had become white like plaster.

Kim Tae Hoon's expression also stiffened.

'The fact that there were fighter jets in the air means that one or more air bases did not fall…… if you look at the situation and the location, they must have flew from Sungnam Air Force Base. But to destroy the bridges…… was it to prevent them from spilling over into Gyeonggi Province? Or was it to prevent any more monsters from entering Seoul?'

Building hundreds of new hypotheses utilizing the new information that he had received, there was no room to consider anything else.

Kim Su Ji approached Kim Tae Hoon and said.

"Major, what will you do now sir?"

She asked, thinking that it would be awhile before Kim Tae Hoon would answer.

She also expected a sensible answer.

However, he easily responded.

“We’ll spend the rest of the day here, and then move on to the next destination after a briefing.”

“Then the survivors…….”

“I have no plans to accommodate the survivors.”

Kim Tae Hoon’s answer was completely unexpected and outside the bounds of what Kim Su Ji thought was rational.

“Kim Tae Hoon Major-nim?”

“I’ll say it again. We will not move with the survivors.”

“Your plan is to toss them aside and move on without them ?”

“I never accepted them, but I guess you can say we’re tossing them aside.”

“Major-nim!”

Survivors.

“They are civilian survivors!”

Not just survivors, but civilian survivors.

As a soldier, if you had any compassion, you would help the survivors.

Who in their right mind would consider such an idea to be reasonable?

Kim Tae Hoon didn’t explain any further in response to Kim Su Ji’s disgust.

Instead, he approached the survivors who were sitting on the floor while trying to light a fire.

Twenty-two.

The survivors ages, gender, and profession were all different. Their only commonality was a lack of life in their eyes.

Kim Tae Hoon spoke to them.

“We cannot afford to escort all of you to a safe place at this time. Furthermore, we have no knowledge of any safe places in this situation. You survivors must take care of yourselves.”

What came out of Kim Tae Hoon's mouth were blunt but polite words.

However, not a single person who could appreciate the politeness in his words.

Both Ahn Sun Mi and Bang Hyun Wook froze hearing his words.

They both knew what kind of person Kim Tae Hoon was.

At a large mall, Kim Tae Hoon spoke in front of the survivors.

Afterwards, Kim Tae Hoon left them.

For his own sake and the sake of his goal, he would not brazenly bite off more than he can chew and burden himself with more than he needs.

So it was a guarantee that Kim Tae Hoon's words were more than just threats, but warnings that he would carry through with.

"Hyungnim!"

Bang Hyun Wook immediately stepped forward.

"It's okay if they go the same way as us, right? No, rather, you said we'll stay here for today right? Then it's okay if they stay with

us, right?”

Watching Bang Hyun Wook’s face after having spoken his thoughts, Kim Tae Hoon could roughly gauge the thoughts in his heart.

There was nothing more to be said. He saw that Bang Hyun Wook had been talking to a woman of his age from amongst the survivors.

Kim Tae Hoon spoke the words that he had already prepared in his mind.

“I have no intention of stopping you if you want to be a hero, but if you choose to be one then you’ll be on your own.”

“What? Just what are you trying to say…….”

“If monsters are coming after me and entangle themselves within the civilian survivors, then I’ll pull the trigger regardless of their identities. That’s not exactly a heroic action.”

“B, but.”

“In addition, the survivors can become very dangerous obstacles to me in the future. There will not be any merits to outweigh the risks.”

Bang Hyun Wook shut his mouth.

There was no point in arguing who was in the right and was in the wrong.

In regards to survival, Kim Tae Hoon was unconditionally correct.

It was the same now.

“If you want to leave the Mek Clan for the sake of being a hero, I can send you off. But don’t think you can come back for free once you leave.”

Taking care of the survivors would be a burden in many ways.

More mouths to feed, less mobility, and more necessities to consume.

But the most pressing matter would be that there would be more people that needed to be protected.

The world had changed where it was difficult to ensure the safety of even one person. In this world, he couldn’t afford to to defend anyone else. Anyone who says they can is either delusional or bluffing.

The surrounding survivors were within earshot of the

conversation between the two.

They all knew what could be in store for them.

‘We’re going to be tossed aside?’

‘What the fuck did he just say? They say that they’re soldiers, then shouldn’t they protect us?’

The survivors’ gazes turned black and began to tremble. One of the survivors jumped from their seat and shouted.

“You! Are you going to abandon us now? You’re going to…….”

“Yes.”

Kim Tae Hoon immediately responded.

“You won’t even let me speak!”

“What kind of noise is that?”

The survivors started to get scared and got up out of there seats as they looked at Kim Tae Hoon.

Their eyes were filled with fear, their expressions filled with resentment.

They couldn’t accept it.

How were they supposed to accept the fact that a lifeline had grazed their palms, and yet they were now supposed to let it it go?

“You guys are soldiers right? Then you have to unconditionally protect us!”

“Damn it, if you’re just going to wolf down all of the taxes we pay then you have to protect us!”

“Hey you son of a bitch, what kind of human are you? You say the only one who should survive is you?”

Gradually, angry sounds began to come out of the survivors’ mouths.

Kim Tae Hoon gave a simple reply.

“Shut up.”

Kim Tae Hoon’s brief reply was thick with a killing intent.

Although the killing intent wasn’t visible to the eye, it held a strength that pressed down on the survivors.

He wasn’t a normal human.

Kim Tae Hoon had already consumed the strength of many monsters, and their strength had long since assimilated with his body.

On top of that, Kim Tae Hoon was already an awakened with the ability to exercise his thoughts upon the physical world with his A rank Telekinesis.

His killing intent was like a biting wind amidst the cold weather. His flesh was not lacking in scars and wounds.

In front of his killing intent, the survivors’ anger cooled down.

“Let me make things clear. We’re not soldiers. We are the Mek Clan, an organization for the purposes of hunting monsters. Our purpose is to hunt monsters, not to save survivors.”

Saliva in the mouths were cold and had frozen to the point where they couldn’t swallow, within such a cold atmosphere Kim Tae Hoon spoke.

“Additionally, we hunt monsters to survive. Their existence is a threat to our survival. We have no reason to stick out our necks for your survival.”

There were no questions.

“On the contrary. On your way here, how many did you save, how many did you help, and how many monsters did you kill?”

Not even the sound of breathing could be heard.

“I guarantee you that the reason that the lot of you were able to make it this far was thanks to ignoring the plight of many survivors, but you expect us to help you?”

It was a one-sided onslaught of questions.

“This is a warning. If any of you get in the way of our operations, I will deal with you one way or another. Afterwards, whether you report me to the police or call a lawyer, that’s up to you.”

When Kim Tae Hoon finished speaking, the quiet sounds of a shallow breathing and gulping could be heard.

All of them could see what was going on.

‘He’s serious…….’

‘That human is a human who might just shoot us with a gun if we annoy him.’

They could see the words he was rattling off were neither lies nor bluffs, but that he really would carry through with his words.

Because of that, there were no longer any survivors who were willing to struggle against him.

Kim Tae Hoon soon lost interest towards the survivors.

He ordered his followers who were watching him.

“We’ll spend one day here at Bucheon Stadium. Siphon the gas from nearby cars, charge your smartphone batteries with car batteries, and scavenge for food from nearby marts and vending machines.”

That was it

Kim Tae Hoon did not warn the survivors that they would be treated as intruders if they entered their territory.

There was no need for him to do so since the survivors already knew.

And like that, another day came to an end.

2.

After the creation of the Mek Clan, Kim Tae Hoon had taught the soldier turned clan members many things.

Of which, he taught them some survival skills, like charging a phone using a car battery, and how to dismantle monsters.

Plus, he instructed them every day.

"The saber-toothed wolf's skin is thinnest right between the ribs. If you make an incision with a knife in this spot and stick your hand in it, you can find the heart located somewhere in the middle of arm between your wrist and your elbow."

Today, Kim Tae Hoon was teaching the soldiers how to extract a monster stone from the corpse of a saber-toothed wolf.

Of course such instructions wouldn't make them into better soldiers, but rather better hunter.

"Hyungnim, I have something to say……."

Bang Hyun Wook approached Kim Tae Hoon after having stripped a saber-toothed wolf of its skin, bones, and flesh.

Kim Tae Hoon wiped his bloody hand with a towel and listened to Bang Hyun Wook's suggestion.

"What's on your mind?"

"Of the survivors, is there no way you can accept one, just one?"

“I cannot”

“Just one····· please this is my request. No matter what I’ll take responsibility for everything. I promise there won’t be any interruptions in our operations. I’ll even share my rations as well.”

Bang Hyun Wook had a serious expression, but seemed nervous.

“Why should I give you preferential treatment?”

On the other hand, Kim Tae Hoon was always calm and composed.

“Th, that·····.”

He was so calm that it unnerved Bang Hyun Wook.

In the end, Bang Hyun Wook managed to spit out the words he had prepared.

“I’ve been helping you until now, right hyungnim? And, I the rank of my Energy is the highest within the clan. If it’s just hyungnim, it’ll be very difficult would it not?”

He said so vehemently.

“Quite frankly, didn’t hyungnim eat a lot of monster stones from the monsters that I killed until now?”

The way he held his ground was surprisingly strong.

“Ah……. So what I’m trying to say…… I’m not saying that you’re wrong or anything, and I’m not complaining, but what I mean to say is that I worked very hard for you…….”

In the end, Bang Hyun Wook lost his momentum.

Kim Tae Hoon asked Bang Hyun Wook a question.

“I just have one question. What’s the relationship between you two that you would act like this?”

“We graduated from the same junior high school.”

“A friend?”

“No, not exactly…… I have a one-sided crush on her…….”

Having said that, Bang Hyun Wook felt embarrassed and a little ashamed.

He was willing to go against Kim Tae Hoon and raise a scene for the sake of someone who was neither a friend nor a lover but

rather a nobody who he had a one-sided crush on. If anyone were to see the scene, they would that he was foolish and ridiculous.

However, Kim Tae Hoon didn't think that Bang Hyun Wook was being too foolish,

"I can understand what you're feeling. But I still cannot accede to your request. I'm sorry."

As humans, there was no point in arguing who was morally correct or not.

There was one sure thing about Kim Tae Hoon's methods, and it was that it had the highest chance of survival.

Knowing that, Bang Hyun Wook's face creased.

It was hard for him to accept the fact that he was unable to persuade Kim Tae Hoon and that Kim Tae Hoon was unwilling to concede anything in the end.

It was Chang Sung Hoon that ended the conversation.

"Boss."

Carrying a bag, Chang Sung Hoon had approached with a serious look on his face. Kim Tae Hoon's gaze changed when he identified the bag. He knew what was inside.

Chang Sung Hoon fished out the object that Kim Tae Hoon was aware of from the bag.

“Please look at this.”

Napoleon’s Golden Goblet displayed a soft, golden sheen.

“A red liquid appeared in the goblet.”

Inside Napoleon’s Golden Goblet was a brilliant red liquid sloshing around inside.

“And…….”

Chang Sung Hoon turned the goblet upside down.

According to common sense, the liquid should have definitely fallen onto the floor following the laws of gravity.

However, the red liquid only sloshed around, not even a single drop hitting the floor.

Like magic.

“Wh, wh, what does it mean? What is this?”

This being the first time Bang Hyun Wook ever laid eyes on the goblet, he sported a gobsmacked look on his face.

‘Danger. Will this red champagne make us dream of the danger? What kind of danger is it trying to show us? Will the drink allow us to foresee the danger? Premonition? But why now? Is there a condition?’

Kim Tae Hoon had an anxious expression.

“Boss, the amount of liquid is gradually decreasing. If you don’t drink it soon it’ll disappear.”

Kim Tae Hoon couldn’t afford to be anxious.

Kim Tae Hoon reached for the golden goblet and drank the red champagne inside.

At that moment, an irresistible drunkenness swallowed him whole.

The last things that Kim Tae Hoon heard.

“Boss!”

“Hyungnim!”

It was the voices of the two who were yelling at him.

Chapter 24 – Napoleon's Golden Goblet (2)

3.

Kim Tae Hoon had a number of habits.

Of which, checking his left wrist as soon as he opened his eyes had become a prominent habit.

It was the same now.

'Ah.'

So when he opened his eyes, Kim Tae Hoon first checked his left wrist instead of verifying why he was sitting at the passenger seat of a car.

The watch that he always wore entered his line of sight, but he was surprised to see it.

'This, why?'

It was because it was a smart watch.

'Why would I…?'

Kim Tae Hoon didn't wear a smartwatch.

Although smartwatches possessed GPS capabilities, the battery would die within a mere three days, the body was barely water resistant, the durability was low, and it was prone to malfunctions and hacking. As such, Kim Tae Hoon did not use such garbage gadgets.

However, a smartwatch was currently latched onto his wrist.

It was hard to understand.

But what came next was even harder to understand.

‘My body…….’

Kim Tae Hoon’s body would not listen to him.

He tried to move his arms and touch the smart watch, but his body would not comply.

Rather, his body began to move on its own. Instead of moving his arms, he turned his head to look out the car window and saw a man approaching him.

“Boss.”

The man approaching Kim Tae Hoon handed him a paper cup while getting in the car.

“It’s coffee.”

There was some lukewarm coffee in the paper cup.

“There was only some coffee mix left in the water. I was able to remove some of the sugar.”

Instead of being a nice black color, it was a stale, brown color.

It was the kind of coffee that Kim Tae Hoon really disliked. For Kim Tae Hoon, whose only hobby was tasting coffee, mixed coffee was an insult.

However, the coffee mix did not enter his gaze.

Instead, he focused his gaze on the face of the man who handed him the coffee.

It was a man with a scarred face.

To be specific, there were three wounds gouged diagonally across his face, as though he had been clawed by a terrifying monster’s nails.

He was lucky to have not had his entire face ripped off.

However, Kim Tae Hoon was still able to recognize his face.

‘Chang Sung Hoon?’

The man before him was Chang Sung Hoon. It was Chang Sung Hoon, but older.

‘Chang Sung Hoon!’

Kim Tae Hoon tried to call out his name, but he was not allowed to.

‘Ah.’

Kim Tae Hoon was forced to view everything around his as though he were nothing but a spectator.

“You wished that you could have a cup of coffee before you died. Coffee mix is still coffee, right?”

The wounded Chang Sung Hoon said with a light smile on his face.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

A mighty wind that held the strength to shake the world bombarded the car that Kim Tae Hoon and Chang Sung Hoon were

in.

Chang Sung Hoon turned his head with a frightened expression on his face.

“Damn it, it’s already here.”

‘What’s he talking about?’

“Chang Sung Hoon.”

At that moment Kim Tae Hoon opened his mouth.

“You’ve done really well until now.”

“Boss.”

“Go to Gyeongju by yourself.”

“Boss!”

“Meet with Commander-In-Chief Lim Hyun Jun, and deliver my message.”

Thud!

The car door on Kim Tae Hoon's side opened.

The spectator Kim Tae Hoon organized everything he was seeing inside his head.

'Gyeongju? Alone? Commander-In-Chief Lim Hyun Jun, does he mean Colonel Lim Hyun Jun?'

Both Chang Sung Hoon and Kim Tae Hoon stepped out of the vehicle.

At the same time, the trunk opened. From the trunk, various different weapons flew out like living birds, orbiting around Kim Tae Hoon.

Spears, Swords, Bows…….

Kim Tae Hoon eyed each of the weapons revolving around him, then looked at Chang Sung Hoon.

"Tell him to abandon Korea if my hunt fails."

"Damn it, I can't accept those words. There's no need for you to die boss! I'm saying that there's no need for you to die boss! Plus you always told me boss! That we're fighting so that we may survive! All of this, just for those bastards……."

Ooooooooh!

An eerie cry incomparable to the cries of the original beasts of the world rang out.

“Kuk!”

At the sound of that cry, Chang Sung Hoon’s eyes lost focus.

Having collapsed like a broken doll, Kim Tae Hoon hoisted up his limp body into an upright position in the driver’s seat.

Tuk!

Immediately, the car doors shut and the engine came on on its own.

At the same time, an enormous shadow appeared over Kim Tae Hoon’s head. The wind from before also subsided.

An enormously powerful wind with the strength to rip the trees out of the ground raged around Kim Tae Hoon.

In the middle of the typhoon like winds, Kim Tae Hoon opened his eyes and looked at the owner of the shadow.

Kim Tae Hoon and the monster both looked at each other.

‘It’s the punk from before. That day, that night, the one who passed by that place.’

A giant dragon whose blue eyes shone with immense wrath.

4.

Ddal gak!

Ahn Sun Mi stood up from her spot after having finished inspecting Kim Tae Hoon’s pupils with a small flashlight she held in her hand.

Standing behind her were Bang Hyun Wook, Chang Sung Hoon, and Kim Su Ji. They were nervously waiting for Ahn Sun Mi’s verdict.

Ahn Sun Mi had a firm expression on her face.

“He is asleep.”

They were surprised to hear such a mild diagnosis considering the firm expression on her face.

“What?”

“It’s just as I said. Kim Tae Hoon-ssi is in a very deep sleep.”

“So then right now, Hyung nim is…… you’re saying that he’s just having some sweet dreams?”

Bang Hyun Wook’s expression looked as though he heard a load of nonsense. It wasn’t a situation where he would expect to hear such an innocent diagnosis.

“I guess it’s a relief to say the least. I thought that hyungnim was going to die.”

In the end, Bang Hyun Wook could only give off a short sigh in response to the word ‘sleeping’.

It was an apt reaction. The word ‘sleep’ didn’t hold any sort of negative connotation after all.

“Do you really think that it’s a relief that he would suddenly just fall asleep? Who knows when he’ll wake up.”

Ahn Sun Mi’s expression was firm as opposed to Bang Hyun Wook’s reaction.

She only gave a brief response to Bang Hyun Wook’s reaction, and spoke to the other two.

“For now, it’s hard to make any sort of accurate diagnosis. It may simply look like he’s sleeping on the surface, but who knows what

the real issue is. Especially since we can't look at any results from an MRI or a CT scan. We can rule out fatigue as a cause since it's more likely a result of him consuming an unknown object……."

A situation where someone would drink an unknown liquid then suddenly fall asleep was very serious to a doctor.

"Excuse me."

Chang Sung Hoon smoothly changed the topic.

"I know that this is sudden, but who is in charge now that boss has been incapacitated? Would it be Second Lieutenant Kim Su Ji?"

"That……."

Kim Su Ji was about to answer the question before looking at Bang Hyun Wook.

The soldiers would follow Kim Su Ji's commands, but Bang Hyun Wook was a different story. Bang Hyun Wook was not a soldier, and had no military training. As of now, Kim Su Ji had never issued any orders to Bang Hyun Wook.

Since Kim Tae Hoon's presence was absent, the situation in regards to commands was different.

Aside from Kim Tae Hoon, Bang Hyun Wook was the only who could effectively fight against monsters that used Fear.

So did Kim Su Ji have the authority to command Banh Hyun Wook? Or would Bang Hyun Wook act independently?

Neither of them had ever made any concessions in this regard in the past.

That was why Chang Sung Hoon had brought it up. Since they had never come to an agreement in regards to this, now was the time to do so. They definitely would not have the time to do so during a sudden monster attack.

'Hold on, if hyungnim is unavailable in this situation…….'

Bang Hyun Wook fully understood the current situation.

Without Kim Tae Hoon, Bang Hyun Wook would be the most important power. In that regards, that would mean that Bang Hyun Wook held the same position as Kim Tae Hoon.

'Do I take hyungnim's place?'

Bang Hyun Wook slightly turned his head and took a peek. At the end of his line of sight was the sight of flames rising into the sky.

It was the flames of the survivors within the Mek Clan's domain.

He was afraid of Kim Tae Hoon's warnings, but it was impossible to let go of his attachment.

Even if he was scared of Kim Tae Hoon, it was impossible to deny that the Mek Clan was the only beacon of light in the current situation.

If he were to deny them this beacon, wouldn't the only things awaiting them would be darkness and despair?

'If it's me in hyungnim's stead…….'

Looking at the crowd of survivors, Bang Hyun Wook once again recalled the conversation he had with Kim Tae Hoon.

He imagined himself and in Kim Tae Hoon's place, and began to form assumptions based on what Kim Tae Hoon might say.

"Wait a second."

Seeing that Bang Hyun Wook was looking at the survivors and was developing concerns for them, Ahn Sun Mi grabbed his wrist.

"I need to speak with him."

Grabbing onto his wrist, Ahn Sun Mi dragged Bang Hyun Wook off to somewhere else.

Ahn Sun Mi stopped only when they arrived in an area where nobody would be able to hear their conversation.

“Noonim, what is it that you want to talk about?”

Bang Hyun Wook stared at Ahn Sun Mi’s freckled face, waiting for her to say something.

“Get your shit together.”

“What?”

“I’m telling you this because things have gotten serious. Bang Hyun Wook, get a hold of yourself. Are you thinking of taking the survivors?”

“Well, that, of cou…….”

“I object.”

Object, at the sound of that word, Bang Hyun Wook’s jaw dropped.

However, Ahn Sun Mi did not stop.

“I don’t fully understand what was going on, but back when the

boss told you not to get near the survivors, do you know who was the most relieved?”

Things have changed.

If Kim Tae Hoon didn’t wake up, then the fate of the Mek Clan would be within Bang Hyun Wook’s hands.

Bang Hyun Wook was just that strong. After fighting and consuming monster stones with Kim Tae Hoon all this time and having a higher Energy rank than Kim Tae Hoon, it could be said that Bang Hyun Wook was more effective when fighting monsters than Kim Tae Hoon.

There was only one problem.

“It was the soldiers. Our soldiers were the most relieved after hearing those words.”

Bang Hyun Wook was a good fighter, but absolutely could not cover for the others.

“You want to take in the survivors? Then who would have to face the brunt of the dangers? Who would be burdened the most? To be blunt, neither you nor boss would be burdened in the slightest. Because in the end, neither of you would have to change the way you fought.”

It was obvious that Bang Hyun Wook had a lingering attachment

to the survivors.

"In the end, the responsibility of taking care of the survivors would fall onto the soldiers. The same is true regarding the risks. Whether it's boss who always fights the stronger monsters, the risk you face is always big. That I admit. However, the addition of the survivors would not increase that risk for you in any way. You wouldn't have the time or the luxury to concern yourself with the survivors when you fight against a monster like the black orc."

That was why Kim Tae Hoon had ruthlessly rejected the survivors.

He had even went so far as to threaten any fledgeling thoughts of even just being in the same vicinity as them.

"But it's different for the ordinary folk. They'll eventually give in and fight to protect the survivors. Then what if the soldiers die because of that? Will you regret that you made that choice at that time? Or are you confident that the day where you would regret making that choice will never come?"

Kim Tae Hoon hadn't made that choice just for himself. He had made that choice for the sake of the Mek Clan's survival as a whole.

Therefore, there was no point in trying to classify Kim Tae Hoon's choices as good or evil.

The important point is that Kim Tae Hoon's decision was for the benefit of the Mek Clan, and as a member of the Mek Clan, he needed to follow the best interests of the clan.

If you don't like it, then just like Kim Tae Hoon said, you could leave the clan.

In front of Ahn Sun Mi's questions, Bang Hyun Wook could only remain silent.

Of course, it didn't mean that he had suddenly changed his mind and agreed with Ahn Sun Mi.

'Damn it…….'

Bang Hyun Wook was at that age where he could succumb to his impulses very easily.

Ahn Sun Mi also understood what Bang Hyun Wook was going through.

He wasn't even twenty years old yet. He was essentially a newborn in regards to society and had not even experienced a single year in the real world.

That was why Ahn Sun Mi made an effort to advise him as a sunbae.

“We shouldn’t just open our hands to the survivors. Keep in mind. We don’t need any survivors who’ll only take advantage of our protection.”

Chang Sung Hoon’s shout interjected their conversation.

“Boss!”

Ahn Sun Mi and Bang Hyun Wook turned their heads at the same time in the middle of their conversation.

‘Ah!’

The both of them could see Kim Tae Hoon’s silhouette in the car.

“Hyungnim!”

The two of them hurried over to Kim Tae Hoon.

“Major, are you alright?”

“Boss are you okay?”

Being closer, Kim Su Ji and Chang Sung Hoon both asked about his situation first.

However, Kim Tae Hoon first checked the watch on his left wrist,

then let out a long sigh.

'It was just a dream.'

A white mist floating up towards the sky.

'No, it wasn't just a dream.'

It didn't last long.

'Danger…… it's a crisis that I'll have to deal with someday.'

He could not afford to sigh.

'So that's what it meant by allowing the user to dream of a crisis. It meant that it would reveal the scene of the day I died.'

"Boss! Boss! Boss get it together. Do you want me to hit your cheeks?"

Chang Sung Hoon repeatedly called out to Kim Tae Hoon.

Seeing his face, Kim Tae Hoon experienced many emotions in his mind.

It was strange, and felt like someone else's emotions were filling his heart.

However, those feelings swiftly faded as he recalled the dragon.

All the emotions disappeared, leaving behind only fear and despair.

Kim Tae Hoon was more desperate than ever.

“I have only one request. Everyone, whatever it is, I just want to drink a cup of coffee.”

A single cup of coffee.

Chapter 25 – Beefing Up (1)

1.

Kim Tae Hoon's lips were tightly sealed after drinking some coffee.

The coffee was hot. Rather than spitting it out, he would prefer to just swallow it.

However, Kim Tae Hoon opted to just persevere through the heat and instead chose to keep the hot coffee in his mouth to warm up his head.

The results were clear.

The fragrance of coffee helped Kim Tae Hoon loosen his stiffened head. Kim Tae Hoon had experienced a crisis.

'It was all in my head.'

At this moment, Kim Tae Hoon was sure of one thing.

'That dream was a vision of my death.'

What he saw wasn't some fantasy or some sort of mistake.

Coming to terms with that fact, he began to closely analyze the details of his vision.

‘Looking at Chang Sung Hoon’s face, it’s not a very distant future.’

Now was a very important period.

He could tell Chang Sung Hoon’s age by looking at his face.

The Chang Sung Hoon that he saw in his dreams was in his mid to late twenties.

Since Chang Sung Hoon was currently in his early twenties, it was not a distant future. But it wasn’t a very close future either.

‘It’ll be within 3 to 5 years.’

If it’s sooner than expected, then 3 years, if it’s later, then 5 years.

‘Commander in Chief Lim Hyun Joon.’

The most important lead right now was the name Lim Hyun Joon.

‘It was probably Colonel Lim Hyun Joon.’

Colonel Lim Hyun Joon.

Kim Tae Hoon was aware of the fact that he was a tactical and ambitious man.

He was also undergoing an Elite Course within the Ministry of National Defense. As an officer, not only was it a good result stemming from his hard work, but it was also a great political achievement as well.

He would be a big shot in the next generation. Even if it took 10 years, it would still be impossible for him to reach the rank of Commander-in-Chief.

'He was the Commander-in-Chief…….'

But of course the world had already gone beyond the realm of normalcy.

Besides, he could figure out the end result.

So he could only make a hypothesis based on the careful analysis he had made on what he already knew.

'It seems like the military will recover and operate normally to some extent in the future.'

The first reason, the existence of a commander-in-chief implies that the army was making movements. It meant that society hadn't completely fallen into anarchy.

'And if Lim Hyun Joon had managed to become the commander of that system…… then he must have survived and made significant contributions.'

Second, if Colonel Lim Hyun Joon had become the Commander-in-Chief, then that means that he must have played a decisive role in restoring the military.

He couldn't have made just simple contributions. In fact, it was likely that he played a critical role in restructuring the army.

'Right, I'm a part of the 8th division now.'

Furthermore, Colonel Lim Hyun Joon was a member of the 8th Mechanized Infantry.

Unlike regular Infantry platoons, it possessed very powerful weapons such as excellent mobile units and tanks.

'Then he probably saw the emergence of the monsters as an opportunity, not a crisis.'

Colonel Lim Hyun Joon had the authority to command all of the firepower and various troops under his influence to create a brilliant power.

‘Thinking about it, the 8th Division should be the best composed right now.’

Another thing, the 8th Division should have established themselves in Pocheon in Gyeonggi Province.

Definitely frontline. However, it would not have been in direct contact with the North Korean Army.

Therefore, it held an advantageous position.

Even if they were to face a monster, they wouldn’t be able to immediately lead the soldiers back. Who knows how the North Korean Army will move. Additionally, it would difficult to receive supplies.

On the other hand, the 8th Division can freely move towards or away from the frontline.

‘I have to go to Pocheon.’

In other words, even if not completely safe, since it’s where the 8th Division would be stationed, Pocheon would play a significant role.

It would still retain a semblance of order.

Furthermore, Kim Tae Hoon had a need to contact Colonel Lim Hyun Joon. Since he will become a very important figure later on, Kim Tae Hoon could not afford to ignore him.

His thoughts about Colonel Lim Hyun Joon were only up to there.

That was because there were more pressing matters at hand.

'Weapons.'

In his vision, Kim Tae Hoon had prepared various kinds of weapons in preparation for his battle against the dragon.

Regular objects wouldn't work.

He would have to make items from monster parts and find high grade relics.

Naturally, he would also have to carefully think about what type of weapons he would have to make. The shape of the weapons from his vision would play a decisive role in what he would make.

'I was able to freely manipulate the weapons with my Telekinesis.'

The sensation of handling the weapons with his Telekinesis would be very important as well.

Kim Tae Hoon's ability to utilize his Telekinesis was not very good.

That's why there wasn't much that Kim Tae Hoon could do even with an A-Rank Telekinesis.

Telekinesis was just that difficult to utilize.

Some aspects of it were incredibly easy, but then other parts were impossibly difficult.

Things wouldn't play out exactly the way he would imagine them to.

To be able to paint a picture in your mind required talent in real life drawing ability, and the skills necessary to realistically depict a scene on paper as well.

The point is that Kim Tae Hoon was able to fluidly control his powers in his vision.

He was able to make various kinds of inanimate weapons orbit around him like satellites.

'If I were able to also see my stats at the time, I would have a clearer goal.'

Regardless, it was imperative that Kim Tae Hoon achieve the same proficiency in Telekinesis as he saw in his vision.

That would be the minimum condition for him to survive until that time.

But of course, in the end, Kim Tae Hoon didn't survive.

'Those bastards.'

That's what Chang Sung Hoon had said in the vision. He had said that there was no reason for Kim Tae Hoon to die. But in the end, it was because of those bastards that he had died.

'There was some faction that wanted to remove me.'

He didn't know their names, their identities, or their numbers, but there was an organization or a faction that wanted him dead.

'My existence was in direct conflict with their interests.'

They wanted Kim Tae Hoon to perish since his actions were interfering with their plans.

It was simple really.

It was because Kim Tae Hoon wished to pursue the path of the

hunter in order to survive.

The other side did not want that. Either they wanted the monsters to stay in power, or they simply didn't want Kim Tae Hoon to keep killing the monsters.

Kim Tae Hoon had no doubts about that.

Even if the world were to end, there would always be people who seek to profit from it.

No matter what, those kinds of people will without a doubt come out of the woodworks.

No, rather, it would be those who seek to establish their own order upon the ruins of a toppled society.

Any new society they seek to create would be created in their image.

'It would be strange if those people didn't make their move.'

That's why he needed to be wary about those kinds of people.

The fact that Kim Tae Hoon was envisioned to die is the most pressing matter.

What more, it was something that surprised even Kim Tae Hoon himself.

‘Can’t believe I was that selfless in the face of death. To the point where I would save Chang Sung Hoon…… plus, Chang Sung Hoon was the only one by my side.’

It was the fact that the Kim Tae Hoon who sought only his own survival would sacrifice himself for another.

Gulp!

Thinking about that, Kim Tae Hoon swallowed the coffee that was in his mouth.

The eyes of those who heard him swallow the coffee changed. They waited for Kim Tae Hoon to open his mouth.

As expected, he opened his mouth.

“I don’t know who brought me this coffee, but it’s the worst coffee I’ve ever had in my entire life.”

2.

Kim Tae Hoon revealed that he had a vision. He told them everything that he remembered.

He also told them his thoughts. Pocheon could be considered a safe zone, and that they needed to make contact somehow.

He also told them without any hesitation that he would die to a dragon in a few years.

When they finished hearing his tale, everyone around him had a sterner look than when he was unconscious.

“Then does that mean I’m to die in the future as well?”

Bang Hyun Wook carefully asked with a stiff expression on his face.

It was kind of funny that it was coming from Bang Hyun Wook, but he was being serious.

Is it not difficult to throw an inquiry about one’s own destiny towards someone who has seen the future, especially since it looked like he might not even survive to the light of dawn the following day?

“I can’t say with certainty that you died since you weren’t present in my vision. You may have been completing a task elsewhere, or had a falling out with me, or may have even betrayed me.”

“Betrayal, I don’t even have the tiniest inkling of that type of though…….”

While saying those words, the conversation he had with Ahn Sun Mi began to play in his head.

What would Kim Tae Hoon say about Bang Hyun Wook's thoughts during the time that Kim Tae Hoon was unconscious?

Would he think it was result of his immaturity, a youngster's heroic spirit, or an act of rebellion against his orders?

'Hyungnim won't let it slide just because it was me.'

It was clear that no matter what Bang Hyun Wook thought, Kim Tae Hoon would not change his mind.

It was just like what Ahn Sun Mi said: Kim Tae Hoon would not accept survivors who simply wish to be protected.

There was no reason for Kim Tae Hoon to change his mind.

It wasn't Kim Tae Hoon who needed to change his mind, but the others around him.

"It looks like you stopped talking. Were you actually thinking of betraying me?"

"No, that's why…… It wasn't betrayal, but it wouldn't be wrong to say it's similar. If hyungnim were to sleep and not wake, then I

would have to lead in your stead, then in that case the survivors…….”

Bang Hyun Wook took in a deep breath while he was still speaking.

It was to give himself some strength for what he was going to say next.

“Hyungnim, can’t you at least accept applicants for the clan?”

Kim Tae Hoon looked at Bang Hyun Wook, who had finished speaking, while tasting the coffee in his mouth.

Bang Hyun Wook silently gulped while under Kim Tae Hoon’s gaze.

“To receive support from the survivors, is that what you wanted to say?”

Kim Tae Hoon spoke.

“Yes.”

“Why should the Mek Clan add more members?”

“Wouldn’t we be able to hunt more monsters like that? Plus it

would be safer and more stable. Plus, we need more than just combatants, right? We need people who can cook or maybe people who can act as porters…….”

“Can you provide concrete evidence and reasons why we need to recruit more people?”

“That…….”

Bang Hyun Wook shut his mouth.

He was hoping that Kim Tae Hoon would be willing to compromise, but it looked like Kim Tae Hoon was having none of that.

However, contrary to Bang Hyun Wook’s expectations, Kim Tae Hoon actually was seriously considering his proposal.

It wasn’t something worth considering, then Kim Tae Hoon wouldn’t have asked so many follow-up questions.

To quietly leave the clan or shut up comply, this was Kim Tae Hoon’s offering those choices.

‘It doesn’t look like you came up with that idea on your own, but instead were given a clue to work off of. What it is that I actually want.’

Bang Hyun Wook's idea was something that Kim Tae Hoon already had in mind.

Expanding the Mek Clan was a necessity, not a luxury.

In a world where social infrastructure has collapsed, manpower was an extremely precious resource.

Furthermore, it was impossible to fight on a battlefield on one's own.

The Mek Clan had a lot of work cut out for them. They needed to hunt monsters, properly butcher the corpses, then somehow create items out of monster parts.

It was the same for battles.

As they involve themselves in more battles, the number of corpses would pile up. If you leave that spot empty, then that place will become fatal.

Above all, Kim Tae Hoon was able to receive a sort of second chance thanks to Napoleon's Golden Goblet.

'If I keep going forward on this same path, only death would await me.'

For the sake of survival, the vision he received was an enormous

opportunity to change the future.

“We need rifles, sir.”

Kim Su Ji said.

“Many of the adult men among the survivors will have had some military training. If they were to be stationed on artillery or on an armored vehicle, they would be very helpful. We’ll also need drivers.”

Her words were in support of Bang Hyun Wook’s suggestion.

‘I can’t turn away the survivors just like this.’

It was a good reason to accept Bang Hyun Wook’s idea.

‘We can’t move forward with our meager forces.’

It was a great opportunity for the commander to recognize the limitations of his current troops.

Kim Tae Hoon rose from his seat in response to their opinions.

“Chang Sung Hoon, find and bring three cars. Bring ones with keys.”

“What type of cars?”

“SUV’s and trucks.”

Chang Sung Hoon nodded his head, and moved towards retrieving the necessary cars.

“Second Lieutenant Kim Su Ji, after the monster stone retrieval is completed, bring over ten untouched saber-toothed wolf carcasses along with the knives we usually use for dissection.”

“Yes sir.”

Answering while standing at attention, Second Lieutenant Kim Su Ji gave orders to the soldiers around her.

Kim Tae Hoon’s gaze turned towards Bang Hyun Wook.

“Bang Hyun Wook.”

“Yes, hyungnim.”

“Set your priorities in your head so that we can settle your affairs.”

That was the advice he gave him.

“Because there will never be a chance for us to talk like this when under duress.”

Bang Hyun Wook nodded silently.

“Then Bang Hyun Wook, let’s go to your crush. I’m going to start testing applicants for the Mek Clan.”

Chapter 26 – Beefing Up (2)

3.

"I've gathered them all here major."

Late at night.

The winter sun having long since descended beyond the horizon and slipped from view, an unorganized crowd of people were gathered amidst the cold winds of winter night.

'They're all here save one.'

The rabble that had gathered consisted of the survivors.

As soon as he was given permission from Kim Tae Hoon…… Bang Hyun Wook approached his crush, Joo Hayun.

He informed her that the Mek Clan was accepting applicants.

If you pass the Mek Clan's tests, then you can travel with them.

Without a single exception, twenty-two survivors expressed their desire to be initiated into the Mek Clan.

In the worst case scenario, the survivors' conditions wouldn't be

much different than their conditions right now.

“For now, let me make some things clear.”

Kim Tae Hoon said to those who had gathered.

“First, the name of our clan is Mek, the Mek Clan. Second, all of the monster stones and other miscellaneous items that clan members find through hunting monsters belong to me. Third, my orders must be followed without question.”

Kim Tae Hoon stopped talking for a moment.

He didn’t bother to tack on any sort of warning telling them not to spew bullshit later on.

This wasn’t some new company seeking to hire a large amount of new employees. If anyone decides to make things difficult for him, then they’ll simply be disposed of. There was no need to be considerate towards those who wanted to make a fuss.

Having stopped talking, Kim Tae Hoon’s gaze swept across the crowd.

He looked at their eyes.

Most of the survivors had lifeless eyes. Eyes that had witnessed countless deaths.

Of course, not everyone's eyes were like so. Even with everything they had gone through, there were still some who looked at Kim Tae Hoon with clear gazes.

The girl that Bang Hyun Wook had approached, Joo Hayun, was also amongst those who looked at Kim Tae Hoon with clear gazes.

'Looks like she's still full of spirit.'

Her hair was cut short, the style reminiscent of a cat, which, just by looking, you could tell was a popular style.

According to Bang Hyun Wook, she was aspiring to be an actress. She hadn't made any sort of huge debut yet, but she was training at an entertainment company.

Of course, Kim Tae Hoon had no real interest in her.

"Alright then, I'll begin organizing the lot of you now."

It was his job to separate the good seeds from the bad.

"Do any of you have a background in a field similar to manufacturing or agriculture?"

Four people looked around before timidly raising their hands.

Three males, one female. The girl looked like she was in her twenties, while the boys looked like to be in their thirties.

“Your jobs?”

“That…… I worked in a factory. I wasn’t specialized in anything, I just did some work here and there.”

“I, I was a construction worker. I have considerable work experience. I don’t have a certification or anything like that, but I have confidence in using the tools. I am very confident.”

“I’m a nurse. I haven’t been in the field for too long, but I have confidence in my abilities. Please…….”

Those who had spoken had no power in their voices.

They lacked confidence.

Despite everything they were saying, would they be offered salvation just by these words alone? They were skeptical.

However, amongst the four that had raised their hands, one person was different.

“I’m a lawyer.”

He introduced himself and his former job with a confident look on his face, as though he had been waiting for this question all along.

“For reference, I worked at the Haesung Law Firm.”

It was a strange scene to see a man so confident in himself to the point where he would add a little blurb about where he worked.

Overflowing confidence.

Although not the best law firm in Korea, Haesung Law Firm definitely ranked in the top.

Even if you were to sum up the year’s wages of the three others before him, they still wouldn’t be able to reach his income.

So of course he would be confident.

Therefore, he deserved to be treated with respect.

“With the exception of the lawyer, the rest of you are acceptable.”

Maybe if it was a week ago sure, but today? No.

“H, hold on! Are you saying I’m being ruled out? Those three get to pass?”

The lawyer seemed to have a hard time accepting what Kim Tae Hoon had said.

“I don’t know why you were so confident.”

“Well, that’s because the Haesung Law Firm…….”

“Just one reason, give me one reason why I should place a lawyer as a monster’s opponent.”

Trying to refute Kim Tae Hoon’s words, the lawyer closed his mouth.

The light in his eyes was quickly scattering.

So Kim Tae Hoon simply ignored the lawyer and continued speaking.

“Is there anyone who served in the military that was assigned to artillery or tanks?”

“I was assigned to artillery.”

“I also have experience operating artillery.”

Two men immediately raised their hands.

They seemed to be in their mid-twenties, and had quickly grasped what Kim Tae Hoon was looking for.

“Anyone with a Class 1 driver’s license?”

“Me, I have one. I also know how to operate forklifts and cranes.” [TN: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Driving_license_in_South_Korea%5I

As the number of questions increased, the number of people who raised their hands began to decrease until nobody was raising their hands.

“Ready the test.”

Kim Tae Hoon gave a signal.

The soldiers began to move about. They assembled a line of saber-toothed wolf corpses.

They weren’t just corpses.

The corpses had their hearts removed as a part of the monster stone extraction process, and the entirety of the bodies were completely butchered as a result of dissection practice. Basically,

the bodies were ruined.

'Oh my god.'

As soon as they saw the saber-toothed wolf corpses, the survivors' faces turned pale.

"Yuck!"

Some of the ones with weaker stomachs began to throw up.

"The test is simple."

Kim Tae Hoon once again spoke towards the crowd.

"All you need to do is cut off a saber-toothed wolf's leg. It doesn't matter which leg. Front, back, left, right, doesn't matter as long as you bring a leg to me. You have a time limit of 1 hour. The tool……."

Kim Tae Hoon fished out a kitchen knife, and threw it at the saber-toothed wolf's corpse that was beside him.

Puk!

The knife embedded itself deeply into the corpse to the point where only the handle was visible.

“A single kitchen knife. Well then, the test begins now.”

4.

“Ugh, shit!”

A man exclaimed while cutting away at a wolf’s hide and flesh with a kitchen knife.

“Shit, blegh! Shit!”

It didn’t take long for more resentful remarks to spill out of the man’s mouth.

Those around him who sympathized with the man began to express their discomfort as well.

Some bit their lips, some shed tears, and others cried out.

The Mek Clan soldiers looked at the scene with stern expressions.

Some of them thought inwardly,

‘What’s the purpose of a test like this?’

‘What exactly is he trying to gauge with this test?’

The scene before them was a terrible and gruesome sight.

Furthermore, the test of cutting off a wolf’s leg, although dreadful, didn’t seem to have any sort of connection or usefulness when fighting against monsters.

Kim Tae Hoon had no intention to deny that sentiment.

Cutting the leg off of a dead monster had no real meaning. It might be useful in regards to practicing stabbing bones or organs in the midst of battle.

Nevertheless, the reason why he was making them do this was simple.

‘If they’re not at a level where they can’t even prepare monsters for eating, then there’s no point in letting them join us.’

Can they do it or not? It wasn’t for the sake of whether or not they could cut the legs off.

Kim Tae Hoon didn’t expect much from the survivors in the first place. Whatever expectations he had for them were vague outlines more than anything.

So what was it that Kim Tae Hoon wanted to see? It was their

will.

If they lacked the willpower to leave a an unhindered cut on the body of a dead monster, then they would be nothing more than an empty shell of a person who merely breathed and ate.

He had no intention of sheltering such a person.

Fortunately, the survivors had a strong will to live.

No, rather, it was because they had some strength that they had been able stay alive before discovering Kim Tae Hoon and the Mek Clan.

There would definitely not be any shortage of survivors who would consider the path to where they are now as hell.

“Time’s up.”

In the end, all twenty-two of the survivors managed to make the cut.

“Pass.”

Having wrestled with wolf hide, muscle, flesh, and bone for an hour, the survivors’ faces were overcome with joy when Kim Tae Hoon declared their success.

“The bodies were cleaned.”

Kim Tae Hoon didn’t shake their hands or congratulate them.

The night had progressed for some time before the test had ended. It was time for them to take a break that had been scheduled beforehand.

Once the sun rises over the horizon, the Mek Clan will move out.

They had a long day ahead of them. They needed to hunt monsters, secure provisions, forge a path, and secure antiques.

And they had to do all of that over and over again. What they needed to prepare for is not today, but rather the bleak tomorrow.

‘It’s finally finished.’

On top of all that, Kim Tae Hoon had been envisioned to die. Within 3 to 5 years, he would die.

His life had a timer.

Nobody could afford to console him or spend the time to encourage him.

‘I need to find a solution.’

Kim Tae Hoon had no intention to let that timer expire.

‘No matter what.’

Like that, the night deepened.

5.

It was 5 AM, and Chang Sung Hoon was having trouble falling asleep.

The cold weather played a part, but it was mostly the visage of a golden goblet that occupied his mind.

‘To allow someone to have a vision of a moment of crisis…….’

Napoleon’s Golden Goblet.

It had shocked Chang Sung Hoon in many ways.

‘It’s a tool that can affect the future.’

Foreknowledge of danger naturally means that you can avoid the danger. It was like altering one’s demise.

I could change the world.

Relics with such power now existed in the world.

‘Are such items an abundant existence in the world?’

There was something that was even more shocking.

‘The world’s gonna go nuts. That kind of thing…… we can’t exactly allow those things to fall into greedy hands right?’

Chang Sung Hoon could be considered a hatchling by society’s standards if you looked at his age. Afterall, his age was similar to Bang Hyun Wook, who was still overflowing with childishness and immaturity in both how he acted and how he thought.

However, Chang Sung Hoon’s experiences were darker and grittier than those of others.

The world that he was a part of was defined and ruled by the word greed.

Chang Sung Hoon had witnessed many things in that world.

Artwork, the degree to which humans would allow their greed to control them for the sake of something that was functionally worthless.

How terrifying it was to witness people discard their humanity for the sake of obtaining the piece of art that they desired.

Greed wouldn't fit into a human's basic necessities, but greed of that degree could easily dwarf any of the three human necessities.

Much less in today's day and age where the power of a piece of art can change the world

'It feels like I'm an accomplice to crazy bastards with a missile launch button in their hands.'

What was even more frightening was the fact that most of the priceless pieces of art were already in the hands of the greedy.

The situation is the same now.

World-class artwork and historical artifacts would not be in the hands of the everyday person. Greed was in the hands of those who had the power to satisfy their greed.

Now that such pieces of art had an astronomical value, and could be used to effectively fight monsters, would they use that power to bring peace to the world?

At least, Chang Sung Hoon didn't want to leave his own fate in the hands of those kinds of people.

‘It’s a really fucked up world.’

Chang Sung Hoon eventually gave up on sleeping.

Even if he were to fall asleep, he would have to get up soon anyways. He would rather get up early so as to organize his thoughts.

Like that, Chang Sung Hoon opened the car door and stepped outside. The cold winds bombarded his body in that early dawn.

He turned his gaze towards a blazing fire. He then looked at the man that was beside the fire.

‘Boss?’

Kim Tae Hoon was standing in front of the fire.

He was controlling arrows that had no fletching in a way that made them float here and there.

All while sipping coffee from a mug in his right hand.

Chang Sung Hoon walked towards Kim Tae Hoon.

“Boss.”

The two struck up a conversation.

Chapter 27 – Beefing Up (3)

6.

“You woke up pretty early.”

Hearing Chang Sung Hoon talk to him, the arrow orbiting around Kim Tae Hoon came to a stop in front of him.

“I couldn’t sleep.”

“……Was it because of the vision?”

The arrow that had stopped moving fell onto the floor. His concentration had been interrupted.

“Ah, I’m sorry. I said something unnecessary…….”

Kim Tae Hoon was understanding of Chang Sung Hoon’s feelings when he apologized.

‘Boss is a human after all.’

He had foreseen his death in the days to come. It was basically a death sentence.

It was impossible for his heart to be calm.

As always, instead of replying immediately, Kim Tae Hoon took a sip of his coffee as he calmly eyed the arrow that had fallen onto the floor.

Seuuuu!

The arrow slowly began to rise into the air again.

The arrow began to orbit around Kim Tae Hoon like a satellite again.

Soo, soo…….

The arrow that cut through the air wasn't quite smooth. It would especially wobble and become rough once it left kim Tae Hoon's vision.

"Please don't dwell too heavily on it. Now that you know what will happen in the future, all that's left is to avoid it right?"

Chang Sung Hoon relayed his thoughts to Kim Tae Hoon.

Kim Tae Hoon snatched the arrow out of the air as he ingested his coffee.

"The problem is that I don't quite know what it is that I need to avoid."

“Hmm.”

Kim Tae Hoon’s voice was solemn.

Chang Sung Hoon swallowed the joke he was going to make in an effort to change the mood.

Looking at Kim Tae Hoon’s serious expression, Chang Sung Hoon took a seat near Kim Tae Hoon.

Jeujuk, Jeujuk!

Noticing a bundle of twisted branches on the floor, Chang Sung Hoon carefully opened his mouth.

“Was I really the only one? Were Hyun Wook, Second Lieutenant Su Ji, and Sun Mi-noonim not by your side?”

“I wouldn’t hide anything like that. Do you think I would lie?”

“No, it’s not like that…… I didn’t think that I would be so loyal towards boss.”

Kim Tae Hoon also nodded his head.

Chang Sung Hoon wasn’t the type of guy to give his loyalty to

anyone. He was the kind of guy who was quick to abandon loyalty in favor of his own interests.

That was also why he had decided to follow Kim Tae Hoon.

Kim Tae Hoon's demise was to be determined by the hands of others, so to follow someone who had no say in his own life, Chang Sung Hoon could find no opportunities to follow such a fated person.

"Well then there's one thing for sure."

After all, it was something that would happen in the future, and many things must have happened.

"If the two of us had gotten so close, then that means we must have gone through many hardships together. I feel like something big must have happened. I can't even imagine what kind of huge incident had occurred for me to change like that."

Kim Tae Hoon took another sip of his coffee while laughing.

"Oh, this is after all just my own personal imagination."

Like that, Kim Tae Hoon enjoyed his coffee while the conversation turned to silence.

"For now, the way I see it, boss will basically become a hunting

dog. Wait no, not like a real dog…… maybe your personality will become like one.”

Chang Sung Hoon spoke what he had been meaning to say.

“For now, when you fostered me like that, why did I leave boss for dead? There are times when even a hunting dog will kill. When the hunt is over, they can eat. But boss, you said that at the end, you were fighting a dragon? Then doesn’t that mean that there are still monsters?”

Kim Tae Hoon directed his gaze towards Chang Sung Hoon.

“Let me tell you something, on this Earth, there are many geniuses. There are many people who would rather make a counterfeit item even though they are more brilliant than the original creator. But do you know why there are people like that who would rather act in the shadows? Maybe their personality sucks, or they have to face some sort of problem. I can’t say that I’m a genius, but whatever side I’m on, once the enemy is defeated, I’ll just be thrown away. That’s the kind of place I lived in.”

Gulp.

Kim Tae Hoon swallowed more coffee and spoke in a low voice.

“So taking your analysis into consideration, the foremost reason why I’ll die is because my personality is shit, is that what you’re saying?”

“Ah, what…… if boss’s personality was better, then the chances of you dying would decrease.”

With an awkward smile on his face, Chang Sung Hoon took up a gesture of rubbing his hands.

There was one thing that Kim Tae Hoon could do for sure about that gesture.

‘Now I know why this punk stood by my side until the very end.’

The reason why Chang Sung Hoon had stayed by his side and Kim Tae Hoon had allowed him to, in the end, it was so that he could survive.

Chang Sung Hoon held that kind of worth.

Others had good vision, the ability to express themselves clearly, and held different perspectives.

Clever, competent.

Anyways, because of that, Kim Tae Hoon was clear of one thing.

‘If I don’t change my personality, I’ll just end up dying.’

With his personality, it was easy for Kim Tae Hoon to make enemies, but difficult to bring anyone over to his side.

To be fair though, his personality hadn't really made any problems for him until now.

Up until now, Kim Tae Hoon had been working for the military, where there was no real need for him to pick a side or form a faction. The military was a place where everyone wore the same uniform.

But it wasn't the same now.

Kim Tae Hoon had already left the military on his own.

'I was almost completely oblivious.'

What was terrifying was that he was not self-aware.

"Chang Sung Hoon, if you were me, what would you do?"

Like that Kim Tae Hoon asked that question right then and there.

"If I had boss's strength and boss's charisma, I would already be working towards becoming king of Bucheon City."

Chang Sung Hoon laughed while saying so.

“Of course I’m just joking. I don’t actually mean it.”

A laughter with some mischief mixed in.

“But seriously though, I think that if I had boss’s strength, I wouldn’t face many big problems. If you were to just gather up some strong people and make a gang, then in time, people who would want to hunt for you and treat you like a king would naturally flock to you, especially since you also have guns. But of course there’s no reason to do so. But I think most people would?”

However, his laughter wasn’t purely playful.

“Even if they might not measure up to boss, there will definitely be people like boss out there. You said that the awakened have different ability ranks when they first awaken? Plus, if you take into consideration the relics…….”

Humans are the incarnation of greed.

They have strength, they will awaken to supernatural powers, and since a stage where they can exhibit those powers had appeared, humans had no reason to act as they did before.

“Those with strength will rise to power, and they will rule over and preside over their own territories. Some will be wise, others will be tyrannical.”

In fact, the Republic of Korea has already collapsed.

The world where people would risk their lives to leave Seoul and go to Sejong city has come.

Hearing that, Kim Tae Hoon recalled Colonel Lim Hyun Joon in his mind.

Kim Tae Hoon's immediate goal was to go to Pocheon and make contact with Colonel Lim Hyun Joon.

But could you still consider Colonel Lim Hyun Joon to be a soldier?

'Colonel Lim Hyun Joon is ambitious.'

He was ambitious.

In such a situation, nobody could afford to be a loyal soldier and think of someone else. He was able to become the commander-in-chief because he was ambitious.

'If I were to meet him now, he would use me as a hunting dog.'

Kim Tae Hoon placed his mug on the floor.

"Do you like coffee?"

“Is there anyone in South Korea that doesn’t like coffee?”

Kim Tae Hoon began to make more coffee.

7.

Gguik! Ggueeeek!

The Mek Clan started their day with a nice battle with the local monsters.

“For even the pigs to turn into monsters, what in the world.”

“I’m telling you, this world has gone off its rocker. Damn it.”

The monster was reminiscent of a wild boar, but its size was too big to be considered one, Its head sported horns like those of a rhinoceros.

A horned pig.

Three of the fearsome pigs were heading towards the moving Mek Clan vehicles.

As soon as the horned pigs had appeared, the Mek Clan soldiers had entered a battle-ready state at an alarming pace.

The foremost two SUV's stopped and formed a wall to stop the horned pigs.

"Hurry up and get out!"

"Hold up!"

The drivers of the slowly moving SUV's that were facing the horned pigs got out of the cars.

"The drivers are out!"

"The left side as well!"

Standing on the loader of the dump truck, Kim Tae Hoon began to stare at the two SUV's as soon as he received the report that the cars had been cleared.

At that moment.

Vroom!

The two cars began to accelerate, as they ferociously rushed towards the horned pigs.

The results were obvious.

Kwaang!

Kwagwang!

The two unstoppable SUV's and the two unstoppable horned pigs slammed into each other on the narrow road.

Gguuuuek!

The sounds that the horned pigs were making from within the collision were enough to know what had happened.

"Take aim!"

Watching the scene, Second Lieutenant Kim Su Ji gave orders to the soldiers from the dump truck.

The soldiers who had their attention focused on the collision immediately focused their minds once more.

The soldiers looked down their sights as they pointed their guns at the stumbling pigs.

"Fire!"

Tututu!

As the command dropped, the sound of gunfire flared up.

Amidst the gunfire, Kim Tae Hoon threw an arrow into the sky.

The featherless arrow flew high up into the sky. Endless. Kim Tae Hoon sent the arrow into the sky as high as possible with his Telekinesis.

It wasn't very long before Kim Tae Hoon could no longer sense the arrow with his Telekinesis.

The arrow began to fall.

Swiiiiiii!

The sound of the falling arrow was hard to stomach.

It sounded like a falcon diving towards its prey so as to snatch its life.

The swiftly falling arrow began to change directions, piercing the forehead of a horned pig that was struggling under the gunfire.

Puuk!

Like magic, the arrow disappeared into the horned pig's body,

not a trace to be found.

Gguik!

The horned pig let out a short cry before trembling and collapsing onto the floor.

‘What was that?’

‘It suddenly fell onto the ground?’

The soldiers were unaware of the existence of the arrow, and were therefore surprised to see the sudden collapse of a horned pig.

However, Kim Tae Hoon frowned.

‘It’s a little lacking.’

Kim Tae Hoon once again focused so as to pull out the arrow from the pig’s body.

However, it would not come out.

Kim Tae Hoon struggled to picture a scene where the arrow was pulled out of the horned pig’s head.

It was one of the characteristics of Telekinesis.

Telekinesis wasn't just about imagination.

It seemed like first class artistic ability was necessary to depict scenes that he had seen.

It was similar to how a doctor who had been practicing for many years would be able to picture the insides of a patient's body based on symptoms without having to cut the patient open.

Telekinesis would not work with a weak imagination.

Only after being able to clearly depict a scene could you fully utilize the Telekinetic ability.

'This isn't nearly enough.'

Kim Tae Hoon's ability to utilize Telekinesis was limited and lacking.

Clicking his tongue, Kim Tae Hoon turned towards Second Lieutenant Kim Su Ji.

Kim Su Ji nodded.

"Cease fire!"

The gunfire that had once resounded suddenly ceased.

If the soldiers were muddle-headed, they wouldn't have been able to instantly ceasefire.

Seeing as how the soldiers were able to ceasefire, one could tell that they had become calm and restrained, but was also a proof that they had become used to it.

It was evident that they were no longer monster-fearing cowards that could not even keep track of the amount of bullets they shot out.

It was proof that they had become survivors tempered through the repeated slaughtering of monsters, becoming hunters that preyed on the monsters.

Of course, the command to ceasefire wasn't given to prove something like that.

'If it's this much, then there should be no problems.'

From the loader, Kim Tae Hoon landed lightly onto the ground. Bang Hyun Wook approached Kim Tae Hoon.

With a metal pipe in hand, he spoke towards Kim Tae Hoon.

"Hyungnim, which side will you go towards?"

“You pick first.”

“Me?”

“I’ll give you a chance to look good in front of your girl.”

“It looks like the one on the right is more agile, so I’ll go for that one.”

Once he finished speaking, Bang Hyun Wook pulled the Energy in his belly and spread it throughout his body.

Bang Hyun Wook’s whole body suddenly flushed red.

“Let’s go!”

With that sound, he rushed towards the horned pig that was riddled with bullet holes. However, he still focused and paid close attention since the horned pig still had the strength and will to fight..

Gguik!

One horned pig stared at Bang Hyun Wook, while the other rushed towards him.

Observing the scene, Kim Tae Hoon also began to utilize his Energy.

At the same time, Kim Tae Hoon clenched his fist. His fist turned black.

Like that, the battle started.

A battle of the awakened!

Chapter 28 – A City With No Laws (1)

1.

It was Chang Sung Hoon's idea.

"Even the newcomers are aware of what kind of personality you have boss. There's no reason for them not to know. Although it takes awhile for people to figure out if someone's personality is good, doesn't it only take a mere 10 seconds to determine if it's bad?"

He told Kim Tae Hoon that he needed to turn a new leaf towards the newcomers.

"Right now, the newcomers aren't too sure of what kind of person boss is. Even if they are awakened, they would only have a vague feeling of it. Even boss made a confused expression in regards to the awakened, right?"

Now is the time to not only fight monsters, but also to survive.

He needed to speak to them and find the Awakened in this era of monsters.

"That's why you must show them. Show them how monstrous you are boss."

There was a need for Kim Tae Hoon to show them the amazing powers of an awakened.

“As soon as they see what kind of person you are boss, the newcomers will stop thinking about it. They won’t bother to think about putting up with a monster with a shitty personality. At the very least, they won’t make things difficult for you.”

Kim Tae Hoon accepted Chang Sung Hoon’s idea, and with a blade in hand, he stood in front of a monster.

So he showed them.

He showed them what a fight between monsters looked like.

What kind of monstrous beast he was.

2.

As soon as Kim Tae Hoon and Bang Hyun Wook approached the monsters, the Mek Clan members watched in anticipation.

A colleague, a comrade, and their leader. Kim Tae Hoon was a monster willing to fight another monster!

On the other hand, the newcomers to the Mek Clan watched in terror.

‘Oh my god, just what kind of crazy act is that?’

‘Those monsters are still alive! So then why?’

In the eyes of the newcomers, Bang Hyun Wook and Kim Tae Hoon were basically committing suicide.

However, to Kim Tae Hoon and Bang Hyun Wook, the two horned pigs were nothing more than regular beasts.

‘It’s suddenly become a show.’

Having rushed towards the Mek Clan while plowing through cars and bullets alike, the pigs’ bodies had become a mess.

Because they were monsters, they still expressed their desire to fight.

However, they were basically already dead.

The monsters were overcome with monsters, but compared to their opponents who would not feel such a thing, the pigs’ opponents were quite perverse.

Above all, Kim Tae Hoon’s abilities were overwhelming.

[Basic Abilities]

– Strength : 76

– Stamina : 51

[Special Abilities]

– Energy : E+ Rank

– Mana : E+ Rank

– Telekinesis : A Rank

– Physical Defense : E Rank

– Magic Resistance : E+ Rank

Thanks to his monopoly over the monster stones, Kim Tae Hoon's Strength had already hit 76 points.

He had already exceeded human limits.

He had grown beyond an olympic medalist's class, in fact, it would be fair to say that he had grown beyond an olympic medalist's abilities when doping.

A literal superhuman.

Starting with [Black Skin], he had accumulated abilities like [Howling] and had now gathered four abilities.

It was obvious who the predator was.

Gguuuuek!

Therefore, Kim Tae Hoon did not spend much time against the screaming horned pig.

So while the pig tucked its chin in and rushed towards Kim Tae Hoon with its horn, Kim Tae Hoon also rushed towards the pig.

As the distance between the two narrowed, Kim Tae Hoon grabbed the horned pig's horn and rode atop the pig's body like he was at the rodeo.

Kim Tae Hoon, with the knife in his right hand, stabbed it towards the point that connected the horned pig's head to its body.

Puk!

The knife cut through the tough hide and thick fat that not even bullets had much effect on.

The kitchen knife was an effective weapon, but not because it was a relic.

The secret was Energy.

Kim Tae Hoon, just like Bang Hyun Wook, figured out ways to utilize Energy.

In addition to allowing the Energy course through your body, you could use it to strengthen a weapon.

Of course, since Kim Tae Hoon's Energy rank was low, the knife would only go in about pinky finger deep.

Gguik, gguik!

Although the knife had entered a fatal spot, it wasn't enough to bring the pig death.

So Kim Tae Hoon followed up on his actions.

He focused the black orc's ability into his right hand.

His right hand began to shine with a dark light. The amount of blackening had increased. Before, it had barely reached past his wrist, but now, it reached all the way to his elbow.

Kim Tae Hoon slammed his hand against the knife.

Puk!

It was like a hammer hitting a nail.

Puk!

The knife went in deeper with every hit.

Gguek!

The horned pigs cries had an eerie sound.

The horned pigs struggled. Like a bull in a rodea, the horned pig's bodies bucked wildly.

However, since Kim Tae Hoon had managed to seat himself on the pig and grab onto its horn, it was too late. Every time the pig struggled, Kim Tae Hoon struck it with his right fist.

Puk!

The blade went in deeper and deeper.

Puk!

Soon, the blade completely disappeared.

Puk!

Then the handle started to sink in.

Ggueeeeee!

Screams indicative of an imminent death were let loose from the pig’s mouth.

However, Kim Tae Hoon did not stop.

It wasn’t too long before Kim Tae Hoon was striking the flesh since the hilt could no longer be seen.

Puk!

The went in deeper.

At that moment.

Koong!

The mad horned pig collapsed onto the floor like a broken doll.

“Huk!”

“Hub!”

In addition, the spectators’ breathing could be heard.

“Alright! How do you like the taste of Bucheon’s Barry Bond’s metal baseball bat! This is the bat that struck two home runs in the high school weekend league!”

While ignoring the spectators, Bang Hyun Wook was spouting out nonsense whilst also smacking the dead horned pig’s body with his baseball bat.

Kim Tae Hoon entered his line of sight.

Kim Tae Hoon pulled out the knife that was embedded into the horned pig’s neck, causing it to spasm.

Puhwat!

Blood poured forth like a fountain. White steam also started to rise.

Despite the creepy atmosphere, Kim Tae Hoon brought his ear

closer to the dying horned pig's body.

Dugeun!

Hearing the sound of a heartbeat, Kim Tae Hoon stabbed the kitchen knife towards the sound of the heartbeat.

Seugeuguhk!

Cutting away at the hide and the flesh, Kim Tae Hoon inserted his blackened right hand into the wound.

When he finally pulled out his right hand, Kim Tae Hoon had retrieved a gleaming, red gem.

Kim Tae Hoon popped it into his mouth and swallowed.

Gulp!

Everyone who was watching heard the sound of Kim Tae Hoon swallowing the gem.

3.

Bucheon's Wonmi City Library.

"Move carefully, be careful! It's a grenade!"

“Yes sir.”

“Where should I move the drinking water?”

“The second floor! The drinking water will go on the second floor!”

Located between Wonmi mountain and Bucheon Stadium, a library whose life had been modest so far, was facing the most turbulent day it had ever experienced since its establishment.

“Everything’s been moved sir.”

“Then let’s go smoke a cigarette.”

“Yes sir.”

There were fifty people amidst the racket.

They were all moving various things from trucks and cars that were parked in front of the library.

Watching the scene, Kim Su Ji asked Kim Tae Hoon, who was drinking coffee, a question.

“Major, do you really intend to make this place your base?”

“Is there a problem in making this place a base?”

Kim Su Ji replied immediately.

“No sir.”

Kim Su Ji had no problems with making Bucheon Wonmi City Library their base.

Rather, she felt that the library was the best place to set up a base in such a situation.

The surroundings were enclosed by mountains, and there was quite a distance from the library to a residential area. There were many advantages. It wasn’t as much as the Ojang-dong’s industrial district, but there were a few factories in Wonmi-dong where they could find some useful tools. In fact, scavenging for objects to make items out of was also not very hard.

The library itself also held many advantages.

The books and the bookshelves that lined the insides of the library could be used as kindling and firewood during the cold winter. Furthermore, since the infrastructure of civilization had collapsed, the library was an important location in regards to the knowledge that humans had gathered.

For the sake of rebuilding society, you could argue that a library held more importance than a gun.

Ahn Sun Mi and Chang Sung Hoon had long since been searching about in the library in order to collect books that were helpful and essential for their future plans.

There was no real reason for Kim Su Ji to object to making the library their base.

It was just that Kim Su Ji was a little doubtful.

‘Why would the major suddenly want to secure a base? Wasn’t such a plan rejected until just yesterday?’

Kim Tae Hoon had not voiced any intention to make a homebase until last night.

If he had been thinking of doing so, he wouldn’t have waited at the Bucheon Stadium and instead sought to make the library his base sooner.

It wasn’t even training to endure the cold, so there was no need to spend the night trembling in the cold beside a car in a tent.

Kim Su Ji thought that Kim Tae Hoon would move to a different place after securing the artifacts he wanted in the Bow Museum.

In that situation, Kim Tae Hoon had suddenly proposed securing a base, so it wasn't surprising that Kim Su Ji had her doubts.

But Kim Su Ji did not ask any more questions.

She was a soldier to the bone.

"Second Lieutenant Kim Su Ji, after cleaning up, gather everyone in once place. Place the awakened in the front row."

Kim Tae Hoon gave her a new command.

"Yes sir."

Watching Kim Su Ji's feet carry out his order, Kim Tae Hoon went to go get more coffee.

The thick aroma of coffee filled his mouth.

Unfortunately, Kim Tae Hoon could not enjoy the coffee's aroma at the moment. He had a conversation with Chang Sung Hoon at dawn earlier today.

Chang Sung Hoon had given Kim Tae Hoon his opinions without exception.

"Boss, if you monopolize the monster stones, then sure, you'll

become strong, but the rest of the clan will only get weaker. If that's what you plan for, then it doesn't matter…… if you want to play big, I suppose you have to ignore the smaller things."

Kim Tae Hoon's actions would only strengthen himself while leaving the Mek Clan to wither.

"Also, I suppose it doesn't matter if the group is small, but as the group gets bigger, won't we need a hierarchy? Since boss was a soldier, I'm sure you know. Of course, I don't think that we should use military rank. In this world, the ranks would be put in your hands boss."

If they wanted to increase the size of their force, it was necessary to have a hierarchy of ranks.

In short, if Kim Tae Hoon wanted a greater military strength, he would need to make a warlord's framework early on.

In fact, that was something that Kim Tae Hoon knew better than anyone else.

When he was a soldier, he had secretly operated in third world countries where civil wars, revolts, warlords, and conflict were common.

He knew better than some terrorists how warlords were organized and how they operated.

In the end, Kim Tae Hoon's activities were as simple as ever.

He didn't intend on becoming a warlord.

It was also why he used the word 'clan'.

If it was his intention to become a warlord, he would have used a word that befit a larger group than the word 'clan'.

The word 'clan' wasn't something that was used in the military or used in modern societal expressions.

'Although it's not something I would do.'

Furthermore, it wasn't Kim Tae Hoon's style to lead a warlord's forces.

In fact, his goal was to snipe the chiefs of such forces.

The higher you went, the bigger a target you became.

But things had changed now.

'Knowing the outcome of my path, I have no choice but to give up and try a different route.'

Kim Tae Hoon knew that his method would not work.

He realized that living like a hunting dog would get him killed.

There was only one solution.

‘For now, we’ll be able to plan out the future after establishing a stronghold in this area…….’

He can’t diverge and become a hunting dog. He needed to make a clear distinction from a hunting dog and become a hunter.

‘I need to go into the city and collect the awakened so that they could be my hunting dogs.’

Kim Su Ji entered Kim Tae Hoon’s gaze. Kim Tae Hoon swallowed some coffee and rose from his seat.

The monster stones in Kim Tae Hoon’s inner pocket bumped against his chest.

Meanwhile, Kim Su Ji stood before Kim Tae Hoon and spoke.

“Major, I’ve gathered everyone.”

Nodding his head, Kim Tae Hoon confirmed the location of his monster stones.

‘Hunting dogs are best motivated by the prey’s meat.’

Confirming once more, Kim Tae Hoon’s eyes were devoid of hesitation.

Only one, the eyes of a hunter who was set on pursuing a new goal for the sake of his survival.

Chapter 29 – A City With No Laws (2)

4.

10 January 2017

It was 4 PM, around the time the sun would begin to set, a gathering of people and vehicles were silently there.

The snow had begun to accumulate since the day before, there were vast sheets of snow covering the ground with only the slightest semblances of life.

It seemed as though there was no life in the city.

A city of the dead.

“Boss…… Isn’t it too quiet?”

Chang Sung Hoon asked.

He felt like he would also join the dead if he didn’t say anything.

“All of the citizen in Bucheon City aren’t dead, are they?”

Instead of replying to Chang Sung Hoon’s worries, Kim Tae Hoon placed his gloved index finger up to his lips.

Chang Sung Hoon tightly closed his lips.

‘Tsk.’

Looking out at the silent world, Kim Tae Hoon could only express his disapproval in his mind.

‘Just what the hell happened?’

Meanwhile, Kim Tae Hoon went over the events that had happened in the last few days.

After establishing a home base in the library, Kim Tae Hoon had been spending his days trying to improve the constitutions of the members in the Mek Clan.

Not only did he had to use a carrot and stick method in order to motivate the awakened who would become future hunters, but he also had to fortify the library and its surroundings.

He didn’t have the time to go and explore Bucheon City.

The reason why Kim Tae Hoon decided to move out was because of the snow that hadn’t stopped falling since yesterday.

Monsters were similar to beasts. On top of that, animals did not easily move when it snowed.

In other words, the snow was a great opportunity for Kim Tae Hoon to come into contact with other survivors while avoiding the monsters, and so as soon as it began to snow, Kim Tae Hoon made his preparations.

The goal this time was to observe the situation, contact survivors, and salvage for important items.

For that, Chang Sung Hoon decided to tag along. He knew the location of a low-key mansion that a rich playboy used to store artwork.

‘Chang Sung Hoon is right, it’s too quiet.’

He had prepared himself to face some sort of crazy disturbance when he came to the city.

‘It’s unexpected.’

The situation was beyond Kim Tae Hoon’s expectations.

‘Common sense would dictate that there would be a group of survivors here.’

Kim Tae Hoon thought that the downtown district would be somewhat organized by now.

What made humans terrifying was their ability to quickly adapt to hardship through trial and error.

Even if monsters freely roamed the Earth and societal infrastructure had collapsed, humans would still be able to adapt.

There were no crazy disturbances that took Kim Tae Hoon by surprise.

For example, the dragon flying over the area would have caused a great deal of confusion, but that wasn't the case. There were no signs of monsters running about or causing mayhem.

Furthermore, Kim Tae Hoon and Chang Sung Hoon were slowly narrowing the distance between them and Sinjung-dong Station.

Bucheon's Sinjung-dong Station was located in an area with great commercial development. There was a supermarket, there were department stores, and there was even the incredibly large Bucheon Wonmi Police station.

'If there were any survivors, there would definitely be traces of them in this area.'

There are few places in Bucheon that were as suitable for survivors to take shelter in.

Kim Tae Hoon suddenly stopped in his tracks. At the same time, his hand went up. Seeing Kim Tae Hoon's hand, Chang Sung Hoon

halted his steps.

Hweeng!

Whilst standing before the cold wind, Kim Tae Hoon's gaze focused on a pile of snow sitting in the middle of the road that they were going to go down.

There was nothing special about it. They appeared to be piles of bags of manure covered in snow.

However, Kim Tae Hoon was sure that what lay under the snow were not bags of manure.

With focused eyes, Kim Tae Hoon stared at the pile of snow.

With that, he painted a picture.

A picture of a large hand dusting off the snow.

Tuk, Tuk!

Before long, the things under the pile of snow were revealed.

It was a corpse that had been frozen blue. And it wasn't just a corpse, but one that had been decapitated.

“Ugh!”

Barely able to suppress the vomit rising from his throat, Chang Sung Hoon spoke.

“Looks like there are monsters. Fuck…….”

At that moment, Chang Sung Hoon couldn’t help but recall the mud troll.

He recalled a scene where bullets would harmlessly strike a mud troll as it bit off people’s heads.

It was a traumatic experience that he would carry for the rest of his life. Recalling that traumatic scene, he shivered. The werewolf hide that he had been wearing fell onto the floor because he was trembling.

Kim Tae Hoon, however, had a different expression on his face. He did not recall the mud troll that consumed human heads. In fact, it had nothing to do with a mud troll.

“Monsters didn’t do this.”

Kim Tae Hoon was assured in what he said.

“It was a human.”

Monsters hadn’t done that to the body.

“What?”

Alarmed, Chang Sung Hoon vigilantly watched his surroundings.

‘Murder can arise in such a situation after all.’

It would be ridiculous to wish for murder to not happen in this situation.

Murder cases could spring up any number of times.

‘But decapitation is a different story.’

Murder is one thing, but decapitation is something else. Accidental murder or murder for the sake of survival wouldn’t result in such a grisly scene.

At that moment.

“Kkyaaaahk!”

They heard a scream.

Kim Tae Hoon got up from his seat.

“Chang Sung Hoon.”

“Yes.”

“From now on, we are a rare kind of human.”

Hearing that, Chang Sung Hoon had a resolute expression on his face.

The most important thing that Kim Tae Hoon had been teaching the Mek Clan in these past days was the resolution to kill if their lives were threatened, regardless of whether or not the opposition was a monster or a human.

5.

“Sa, save me, please. Please let me live.”

A snowy field.

There was a naked woman begging for her life, trembling in the harsh snowy field.

“Please, please.”

She was constantly rubbing her hands together, but it wouldn’t

be enough to save her from frostbite.

There were three men surrounding the woman.

The three of them were wearing thick vests, holding makeshift spears made of curtain rods and kitchen knives in their hands.

Although they were crudely made, they were still armed.

They were not ordinary people.

Holding onto their spears, the three men were not there to show this woman any mercy.

“Please, please let me live. There are others besides me.”

Hearing the woman’s incessant pleas, one man spoke up.

“Should we enjoy ourselves before we kill her? Hmm?”

They were words that made the woman’s face pale even more.

Instead of replying to the man’s craven words, the other two simply licked their lips. The woman had a look of despair on her face.

“Anyways, since she’s already naked, all we have to do is take off

our pants right? Isn't that right?"

The man spoke to his two colleagues again.

A dirty invitation.

Unexpectedly, the other two didn't quite seem to want to join in just yet.

"Damn it, come on, let's have some fun!"

"Please, please let me live. I'll do anything. Anything……."

The woman said as she resigned herself to her fate.

"See, look! She said she'll do anything right? She's gonna get eaten by monsters anyways right, so who cares, nobody will ever know, right? Isn't that right?"

The man said, this time a bit angry. The other two exchanged glances.

Puk!

One of the two males that had exchanged glances suddenly had an arrow stuck in his eye.

It was sudden. Without a sound. Without missing a beat, the arrow penetrated through his eye, passed through his brain, then left through the back of his head.

“Hmm?”

“What?”

Everyone, including the woman who had been begging for her life and rubbing her hands, were surprised.

Their minds went blank.

A white figure began to approach one of the two remaining men.

Like a leopard pouncing on its prey, a black fist, whose speed could not be considered to be human, suddenly appeared before one of the males.

Kwajik!

The man’s head shattered along with his helmet.

Fragments of his helmet and his skull spattered onto the snow.

Now the only one who remained was the man who had been trying to make predatory advances on the woman.

However, the man was still making an expression as though his soul had left him.

‘Huh? What?’

The opposition’s fist that had shattered another man’s helmet and skull was flying towards him.

Bbuk!

“Keuhuk!”

The man who was struck in the nose spit out a tooth while screaming.

However, the screams didn’t last long.

“Kuhk, kuhk!”

As soon as he tried to scream again, the opposition firmly grasped his head in a headlock.

‘Ca, can’t breathe.’

The man tried to untangle himself from the choker’s arm, but quite frankly, it didn’t feel like a person’s arm.

At the same time, the arrow that had already taken a man's life began to move on its own.

Hwiii!

The arrow moved like a snake, and zoomed towards the man's eye, giving off a slightly hazy aura as it got closer.

While trembling, the man wet his pants.

Kim Tae Hoon opened his mouth.

"If you speak nonsense you will die. If you hesitate to answer you will die. If you speak too loudly you will die. If you understand, nod your head."

Although he couldn't breathe, he hurriedly nodded.

Then Kim Tae Hoon released the strength in his arms.

"Keuhuk!"

The man let out a sound of gasping for breath.

"Heuk, heuk……."

Chang Sung Hoon approached the naked woman and covered her with werewolf hide.

Although the outer coat of the werewolf hide was coarse and reeked of blood, it was surprisingly warm.

“Shh. Stay quiet.”

However, Chang Sung Hoon gave the woman a stern warning instead of compassion.

This area could be considered to be an enemy territory. It was an area that gave no advantage to Kim Tae Hoon and Chang Sung Hoon.

Then the woman spoke.

“Whatever information that guy knows, I know as well. If you let me live, I’ll tell you. I am from the same place where that guy is from.”

An unexpected speech.

Hearing what that woman said, the man suddenly shouted while panting.

“Are you betraying me you bitch…….”

Betray.

Hearing those two syllables, Kim Tae Hoon willed the arrow that had been floating in front of the man's eye to move forward.

Kim Tae Hoon pulled the arrow out of the man after he collapsed onto floor, and while pointing the arrow in his hand at the woman wrapped in wolf leather, he spoke.

"If you speak nonsense you will die. If you hesitate to answer you will die. If you speak too loudly you will die. If you understand, nod your head."

The woman nodded.

Chapter 30 – A City With No Laws (3)

6.

Flurries of snow had begun to earnestly dye this tragic world with white color.

After Kim Tae Hoon and Chang Sung Hoon dealt with the corpses, they took the surviving Baek Jiyeon to a seafood restaurant.

The fish in the aquarium had spilled onto the floor as a result of the monster raid, and although they were frozen, a fishy scent still lingered in the air.

“I’ll stand guard.”

Chang Sung Hoon took out a rifle that he had brought and watched the perimeter, while Kim Tae Hoon took the shivering Baek Jiyeon, whose lips had turned blue in the cold and was wearing a jacket and a pair of pants that had been taken off the dead punks, into the kitchen.

Kim Tae Hoon handed Baek Jiyeon two hot packs he had found in the kitchen.

With glazed eyes, Baek Jiyeon pressed the hot packs to her body.

Since she was only wearing a jacket, her naked body was revealed as she tried to warm herself with the hot pack, but she couldn't afford to concern herself about revealing herself.

Her desire to melt her frozen body was as intense as her desire to survive.

Kim Tae Hoon stood before her and spoke.

"January 1st, what did you witness?"

"What?"

He didn't bother to say anything, and instead stared at her with a cold gaze.

Baek Jiyeon then recalled something. The three conditions that Kim Tae Hoon had given her.

"1, 1st, I don't know what happened on the first. By the time I woke up, it was already night."

If she hesitates, she dies.

That warning caused Baek Jiyeon's mouth to open on its own.

"Everyone was like that. On January 1st, there were very few

survivors that had their wits about them. The awakened! Right! There were a few awakened who were active on January 1st. It's not exactly accurate…….”

Of course, the words that spewed out of her mouth were mostly uncontrollably chatter.

Cold and fear, these two elements were very effective in paralyzing a human's logic.

Kim Tae Hoon's actions were not without reason.

The things that came out of Baek Jiyeon's mouth were true to her thoughts and had not been altered.

‘The dragon's aura was enormous.’

For now, it had become clear to Kim Tae Hoon that January 1st was more or less a blank page.

The point of origin was clear.

Dragon!

Such a terrifying monster had either killed or knocked unconscious other organisms simply by flying over.

Even if there were monsters or humans that could still move, they wouldn't have been able to function just the same as expected.

'Awakened.'

She had revealed a crucial term.

That term was an original term that Kim Tae Hoon had coined himself, it wasn't something that could be patented or trademarked.

However, the fact that it was a commonly used term was an indicator of Kim Tae Hoon's influence.

"Who came up with the term 'awakened'?"

"Survivors from a large shopping mall had spread the term. Rumors that the awakened can gain superhuman strength if they ate monster stones, also came from them. There are also rumors that the first hunter was able to kill a black orc……."

As expected, the term had spread because of the survivors from the big shopping mall.

"Then what happened on January 2nd? Tell me about any important events."

"The survivors from the big shopping mall gathered at the city

hall. From there they started forming groups. If you affiliated yourself with an awakened, you could fight against monsters, and if you collected more monster stones, you could hunt more monsters. So survivors began to gather there in droves."

"When did you join them?"

"I, I didn't join them. I was working at a department store in Sinjeong-dong. I didn't go to them, they came to me."

"They?"

"Messiah."

"Is Messiah the name of an organization?"

"Wait, what? Yes. It's the name of a group. No, because of that…… it wasn't a faction formed in the city hall. Wait no, they were gathered there so, so……."

It was at that point that she began to stutter.

She couldn't quite organize her thoughts and speak her mind.

Kim Tae Hoon stared at her, causing Baek Jiyeon to shiver before she spoke again.

“That, I’ll tell you soon. Please, my life…….”

“Answer my question. Who created Messiah?”

“Lee, it was a guy named Lee Jin Sung.”

“What does he look like?”

“That…… I’ve never seen him before. I don’t even know where to find him.”

Hearing her words, Kim Tae Hoon focused his gaze.

“Al, although it’s a rumor, it’s said that he uses a knife, as to what kind of knife…… it’s a special knife that could cut a monster in half. Ru, rumor, it’s just a rumor. I haven’t personally seen it.”

“On what day did Messiah come to the department store you were at?”

“That…… the 6th! I’m sure, it was the 6th.”

“What was their purpose?”

“To find a sacrifice…….”

“A sacrifice?”

“A sacrifice to appease the Yellow Demon in the subway.”

“The Yellow Demon in the subway?”

“It’s a huge snake. Its whole body is covered in black scales, but its eyes are yellow…… That’s why they call it a yellow demon.”

“What do you mean by sacrifice?”

“Ten sacrifices are offered every day to satiate the Yellow Demon’s hunger. Every day, they toss ten people into Sinjeong-dong Station. Ten people every day…… they cut their achilles’ tendons so that they wouldn’t run…….”

As her words trailed off, Baek Ji Yeon began to tremble as the sanity began to slip from her eyes.

“S, sorry. I’ll answer correctly, I’ll answer…….”

Thinking that there was no longer any meaning in asking her more questions, Kim Tae Hoon retrieved a chocolate bar and a can of coffee and tossed it to her.

Canned coffee and a chocolate bar, it wasn’t quite a good combination, but she accepted them with eyes wide open.

“Take a break. Organize your thoughts.”

“Th, thank you.”

She promptly began to peel away the wrapper, her fingers frozen stiff with cracked fingernails.

Barely succeeding in removing the wrapper, she began to eat the frozen chocolate bar.

Meanwhile, Kim Tae Hoon stepped out of the kitchen and approached Chang Sung Hoon who was standing guard.

“Boss, did you gain anything?”

“Even if it’s bad news, if you say you’ve gained, then you’ve gained.”

“Bad news? Was it really that bad?”

“There’s an awakened amongst the survivors that’s expanding his sphere of influence in the city. His force is called Messiah.”

“Messiah, quite a catchy name. I think it would have been better to have used an English name for our clan name. To be honest, now that I think about it, foreigners might look at our clan name and think of M_D_n_lds or an apple, I don’t think they’ll imagine a dream devouring deity. Also, I saw a M_D_n_lds near the department store, and I kind of want to eat a burger now.”

“Messiah’s way of dealing with a monster beyond their abilities to fight is to sacrifice innocent people to the monster.”

“I suppose there was a method like that.”

While nodding his head, Chang Sung Hoon’s face suddenly paled.

“Wait, what? Hu, human sacrifice? Hold on, I didn’t hear incorrectly did I? Did they already sacrifice people? To a monster?”

“She told me that there was a yellow demon snake in the subway, and that they sacrifice ten adults every day.”

“Ev, every day? Te, ten people? They’re crazy, right? No, they ARE crazy. Crazy bastards, to think they would offer living sacrifices.”

Perplexity filled Chang Sung Hoon’s eyes after having cursed those at Messiah.

“It’s cruelty more than crazy.”

Unlike Chang Sung Hoon, Kim Tae Hoon remained levelheaded.

The scenario wasn’t something that Kim Tae Hoon had expected, but he couldn’t help but acknowledge the fact that, objectively,

Messiah's actions were logical and effective.

"Regardless, since they couldn't fight the monster, it's somewhat reasonable for them to sacrifice humans instead."

"But that's just not right."

"If you were in Messiah, you wouldn't be able to so easily say those words."

"That……."

"A small number of daily sacrifices for the sake of the majority. Who knows if they even approached it democratically given the state of the world."

Chang Sung Hoon closed his mouth.

Standing before him, Kim Tae Hoon kept talking.

"Furthermore, there's a trend where survivors are flocking towards the awakened. It would be hard for people to object to sacrifices if the awakened are the ones that asked for it. Also, not only would the sacrificial system be essential for their survival, but it would also help the awakened maintain their power."

Chang Sung Hoon stared blankly at the snow, his face pale.

Kim Tae Hoon stopped talking.

He was mulling over the situation in his head.

‘Lee Jin Sung and Messiah.’

For now, he had two clues.

Messiah was a growing faction headed by someone named Lee Jin Sung.

‘Human sacrifice…….’

Messiah.

The name certainly gives off a good vibe. What was important was their actions.

‘Clever, cruel, and decisive.’

It makes sense that the awakened would gather together. The survivors would definitely opt to build their forces around them.

But sacrificing a living person was not something that would happen often.

It wouldn’t have been easy for someone to even consider it.

At that point, the only other option would have been to run from it instead.

If such a powerful monster emerged, it makes sense that they would run away or try to appease the monster by feeding it.

If a monster claimed a territory that ended up being an automatic buffet, would that monster ever find a reason to leave its territory?

It's not something that you would come up with just by frequently watching National Geographic.

'Lee Jin Sung.'

Being someone who was able to decisively make that conscious decision, Lee Jin Sung couldn't be a regular person.

'An awakened who had the ability to cut a monster in half with one stroke.'

It was just a story, but one that described his abilities with a sword.

It was something that not even Kim Tae Hoon could do.

'Either his Energy rank is really high, or his Magic rank is high and he possesses a relic that could effectively utilize his mana.'

His innate abilities would definitely be high.

‘The scary thing is that he intentionally formed Messiah.’

He didn’t recklessly use his strength.

According to the story, Messiah first started from within the group of survivors that was holed up in the city hall.

Lee Jin Sung had progressed step-by-step.

He would have first played the part of the hero by fighting against the monsters, then once he had formed Messiah, he would welcome the awakened and condition them into becoming his limbs, after which he would take off the mask that Messiah was wearing.

‘His goal was never humanitarian in nature.’

Messiah sacrificing living humans was definitely not of religious origins.

His goal was to kill monsters.

‘His purpose was to raise his strength while hunting the small fries.’

Speaking in terms of a game, it was like leaving a boss monster alone while leveling up by eating up the small fries.

Meanwhile, their area of activity will increase as well. The proof? There were groups of survivors in other areas that were being subjugated and treated as sacrifices.

They had decapitated someone just to scare and subdue their captives.

'If they continue like this, they'll eventually come across the 17th Division barracks beyond Songnae Station…….'

The moment these groups get their hands on firepower, they'll become powerful warlords.

The foundation had been laid. It was much bigger than the Mek Clan itself.

So Kim Tae Hoon had to choose.

'Do I touch them, or leave them be.'

There was no way to leave Messiah as they were.

He had to choose now whether or not they were to lay their hands on Messiah or not.

Kim Tae Hoon didn’t need to worry about it for too long.

‘I cannot withhold my hand.’

He could not leave Messiah alone, nor could he associate with them.

It wasn’t a sense of justice or disgust that he held towards Messiah and Lee Jin Sung that made him decide this.

‘I cannot just let a knife be left in the dark.’

There was something that Kim Tae Hoon could not do.

Quite frankly, Kim Tae Hoon would not compromise or cooperate with other powers in this lawless world.

He could only remove other powers.

If Kim Tae Hoon were to calmly evaluate Lee Jin Sung’s power, then there’s no reason why he wouldn’t be able to take care of him.

Lee Jin Sung was someone who would decapitate a human just to prove a point.

Such a man would never abandon his ambitions.

That was something he knew for certain.

A sharp knife that he can't control will only bring harm to himself.

There was only one option.

Kim Tae Hoon looked out by the restaurant's broken window. The snow had begun to fall with greater intensity.

'The weather is good.'

"Chang Sung Hoon, we're falling back."

"Yes sir. Then that girl……."

Before Kim Tae Hoon replied, he had already turned around to retrieve Baek Jiyeon, who was clutching the hot packs.

While staring at her, he spoke.

"You have two choices. You go about your way and live as an unaffiliated survivor, or you can come as our captive. I'll be clear. You have no value as a hostage for the other side. With us, don't expect treatment like you're a prisoner of war."

Hearing Kim Tae Hoon's words, her reply was obvious.

"Ca, captive, I'll go as a captive. I'll do whatever you say."

7.

The Mek Clan's headquarters, the library, did not look much different from before.

However, there were hidden traps prepared in case of intruders.

Whether it be monsters or humans, intruders would have to pay a huge price to enter.

In some ways, it was the safest place in all of Bucheon.

Kim Tae Hoon was preparing to leave such a place.

"I'm leaving by myself."

He was leaving without any companions.

Kim Su Ji was the first to react.

"Major, will you be able to complete your mission on your own sir?"

They had already heard his story.

They had already heard his plan.

Kim Tae Hoon was going to deal with Messiah.

Amongst those who had gathered, Kim Su Ji, Bang Hyun Wook, Ahn Sun Mi, and Chang Sung Hoon, none of them had doubts about getting rid of Messiah.

They needed to be punished for their crimes against humanity.

Furthermore, Messiah was also the Mek Clan's largest and closest obstacle at the moment.

Messiah needed to be brought down a notch, and their morale needed to be broken.

"If Messiah has no firearms, then it would be a simple task to just lead the soldiers sir."

What was important was the method.

Messiah could never be the Mek Clan's opponent if they had no guns.

Never!

As soon as a handful of people died, the rest would surrender amidst the terror and panic.

Whether or not they were awakened did not matter. There wouldn't be any awakened who could withstand a bullet.

However, Kim Tae Hoon chose not to go about things this way.

"Messiah does not directly deal with the monsters, but rather utilizes sacrifices and offerings. Their territory would essentially just be a monster's lair. Moving too loudly in such a place is too risky. I doubt you know if the monsters there will fall to gunfire."

The area where Messiah was located at couldn't be considered a safe zone at all, but rather, an area where Messiah was in a symbiotic relationship with a monster.

The monster right now is called the Yellow Demon.

Messiah's leader, Lee Jin Sung, was able to wound its body with a sword.

If they were to kill a man who could split a monster in two with one stroke of his sword, they would need to use guns.

In fact, they might have to use overwhelming firepower along

the vein of grenades and claymores.

And even that might not work. At that point, the Mek Clan would swoop in to obliterate.

“There’s no reason to make this a war of attrition.”

The Mek Clan would have the most to lose in a war of attrition.

That’s just how it would be.

The price both sides would pay would be huge if they were to use intense firepower.

So a larger group equipped to the teeth would not necessarily work better than a smaller group.

“Above all, this is my specialty.”

Kim Tae Hoon, such a damnably efficient existence had been born.

He had logged numerous hours operating fighter jets, battleships, and tanks. However, there were times where it was better to just send in a highly trained soldier to take care of a problem instead of consuming massive amounts of resources.

“It’s currently 19:22, 10th of January.”

It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that Kim Tae Hoon was most suited at removing a power in this lawless city.

“If I don’t come back by January 11 0500 hours, prepare for battle and rush their territory, Kim Su Ji will be in command.”

Everyone who had gathered around Kim Tae Hoon, including Kim Su Ji, was concerned.

“Good luck to you Major.”

“Hyungnim, good luck.”

“Boss, come back safely.”

“Ah, then I’ll be Worldcon.”

“I hope you can come back alive. I don’t want to leave my life in the hands of these two crazy punks.”

“Noonim, that’s too harsh.”

“That’s right noonim, you’ll have a hard time getting married if you’re like that.”

Kim Tae Hoon’s companions had just about finished sending him off.

Chapter 31 – Messiah (1)

1.

A large shopping mall in front of Sinjung-dong Station.

Every day and every weekend, it would usually be packed with people, but now it was nothing but a silent fortress.

All the windows were covered in newspaper, and at the entrance where guests would enter, there was a wall of shopping carts.

There were three men standing at the entrance, holding onto crudely made spears.

They stood by the front door outside of where they couldn't see the inside due to the newspapers. One of the males took an ID card from within his bosom, and inserted into the door crack.

Swik!

As the door opened, the card disappeared like that of a snake's tongue.

Behind the door were three more men watching the windows, standing at attention.

They relaxed only after confirming the other party's identity.

“How is it?”

“Didn’t see anything. The weather is going nuts.”

The two parties started stalking.

“What about the guys in Group B?”

“I couldn’t find them.”

“You couldn’t find them?”

“Couldn’t find any bodies.”

The conversation wasn’t heading in a good direction.

“What about footprints? Were there no footprints in the snow?”

“Look at this weather, why would you even ask? Look, even our footprints have already disappeared, right?”

“So you came back just like that?”

“Damn it, look at the situation, what the hell do you want me to do? Just let us in already! We’re going to freeze to death!”

As the conversation started heating up, the other guards moved to steer clear of the returners.

Three men with snow on their heads and shoulders entered the mart.

The three of them immediately took off their helmets, one of them, a chubby man with sparse facial hair opening his mouth to speak.

“He’s not even a fucking awakened, does he think he can talk to us like we’re fucking servants? Fucking bastard. He can’t even deal with a monster face to face.”

The man angrily complained, his facial expression also indicative of his rage.

The other two quickly left, not wanting to deal with the angry man’s complaints.

“Well regardless, it looks like it’ll be really cold tonight.”

“This is the perfect weather to embrace a woman at night. What do you say? You wanna pick one?”

The man who seemed to be in his mid twenties who was speaking to the chubby man, could only reply with a wry smile on his face.

“I’m good.”

“In this fucked up world, doing it in the ass is one of the best things left that you can do. You gotta go for it when you can.”

“……Besides that, what do you think happened to Group B?”

The man in his mid twenties tried to changed the topic again.

“If you ask me, they probably met with some sort of accident after trying to enjoy that bitch Baek Jiyeon.”

However, despite that, the chubby man tried to change the topic back to something that was vulgar.

“There’s a guy in that group named Ahn Tae Seok, and that guy is girl crazy. There’s no reason why he won’t take advantage of a naked woman lying in the snow right?”

It was at this point that the man in his mid-twenties gave up on the conversation.

‘You fat fuck, is humping a woman all you can think of in this situation?’

Fortunately, it wasn’t long before the chubby man stopped with his vulgar words.

“Damn, regardless, no one will be able to take a step outside…….”

“Keep those kinds of thoughts to yourself.”

A woman walked forth from the gloom. The woman was basically a walking skeleton that looked like she could collapse at any second.

The chubby man made an unsightly expression when he saw the woman.

However, as soon as he saw the mark on the back of her right hand, the unsightly expression disappeared, and his face turned pale.

“M, my apologies miss.”

“You disgust me, fuck off.”

“M, my apologies. My life, please spare my life…….”

“Fuck off.”

The three men swiftly nodded their heads and quickly climbed up an escalator to the second floor.

The woman returned to what was originally a pharmacy on the first floor.

Inside were two men.

One man was standing guard while the other was reclining on a couch, the latter tapping his head with a sheathed sword that you would find in a historical drama.

The woman spoke to the man who was sitting on the sofa.

“Anyways, it seems like a fuss was made.”

“A fuss?”

The man stopped tapping his head after hearing what the woman said.

“What kind of fuss?”

“The group that was sent out to execute that one woman as an example has disappeared.”

“Missing?”

“Yes.”

“Were they eaten by monsters, or did they run away?”

“An investigation team was sent out, but it looks like they weren’t able to find anything.”

“A failure? Why?”

“The blizzard outside…….”

The man started laughing as though he heard something ridiculous, and continued to tap his head.

“I should have named ourselves something other than Messiah. Looks like the people think that we’re some sort of angels guiding the lost to paradise. Looks like I have to throw out the investigation team as soon as the sun comes up tomorrow morning. After I’ve cut off their achilles tendons, that is. I hope the yellow-eyed demon like them.”

Having said those words, the corners of the man’s lips curved up in a light smile.

3.

There were no signs that the raging blizzard was going to stop anytime soon.

Kim Tae Hoon was looking down at a large supermarket from

another building across the street.

Although the blizzard made visibility zero, it caused no issues when drawing a picture in his head.

‘There’s no one on the roof, and although the front door is well guarded, they’re all crudely armed.’

Turning his eyes away, Kim Tae Hoon gazed through the darkness that the blizzard had wrought.

‘According to Baek Jiyeon, there are sixty sacrificial candidates inside, and thirty or so guards monitoring the candidates and generally guarding the supermarket. In addition, the sacrifices were split into two groups, one on the second floor, and the other on the third floor.’

A blizzard and the dark.

In front of these two elements, all beasts would do the same thing.

They would find some obscure corner where they can avoid the cold and try to hold out for the night.

Although humans had overcome such difficulties with the use of tools and technology, the humans inside the large market were in the same situation as the beasts.

Kim Tae Hoon turned around.

The hunt had begun.

4.

Kwanggwagwang!

The hunt had begun.

A huge truck sped towards the large market's entrance, smashing through the glass sliding doors and ramming straight through the entrance.

"Ahhhhh!"

The three who were assigned to guard the door were suddenly struck by the car, suffering terrible injuries.

"What's going on?"

"Ea, earthquake, is it an earthquake?"

The sudden rumbling caused by the incident at the entrance forced everyone who had been trying to sleep through the weather to wake up.

“A truck has smashed through the entrance!”

The chaos started to spread from the second floor to the third floor.

The prisoners were held in beauty parlors and dry cleaners that had been retrofitted into prisons. Listening to the chaos around them, the overseers looked at each other and spoke.

“What the hell is happening on the first floor?”

“Is it monsters?”

A gate that connected the fourth floor parking lot to the third floor clicked open.

Hwik!

A figure silently came out from behind the gate, the gate loudly closing behind the figure, who until this point, had entered very stealthily.

Ggwang!

Very loudly.

It was loud enough to be audible.

Loud enough for everyone on the third floor to hear.

“Euwahk! Wh, what was that noise?”

“Wh, what was that? It almost sounded like a door closing, right?”

“A door? Is there a door here? The parking lot has an escalator going down right?”

“Emergency exit, there’s an emergency exit! But aren’t all of the emergency exits locked?”

Gulp!

The sound of both the guards tensing up could be heard.

The prisoners, their arms and legs tied up, who had just become captives for a day began to tremble.

“Go check it out.”

“What?”

“I said go check it out. But what if it’s a monster?”

“Damn it.”

Eventually, one of them put on a helmet and headed towards the emergency exit with a spear in his hand.

‘Damn it, why did something like this happen?’

Filled with irritation and regret, the man stepped forward with heavy steps containing anxiety and fear.

What do I do if it’s a monster?

What do I do if something happens?

Is this where I die?

Will I just become a monster’s meal?

Worried about the gate, the man slowly drew closer to the emergency exit.

Swishing around, he investigated his surroundings.

‘Th, there’s nothing here?’

To his eyes, there was no sign of anything having come through. There was only the slightest trace of having been someone who opened and came through the gate.

However, since the man was hoping that there was nobody there, naturally, his eyes ignored the slight traces and chose to believe that nothing had happened.

“Phew!”

The man let out a sigh of relief.

The man who had sighed thinking that nothing had happened turned around and walked back with lighter steps than when he had approached the emergency exit.

Then he said.

“Hey it was nothing! There wasn’t anythi…….”

As he turned to the corner and arrived at where he was before, the sight of his colleagues collapsed on the floor entered his eyes. One had a hole in his head and the other’s neck was twisted 180 degrees.

“Huh?”

That was the last sound to come out of his mouth.

Bbudeuk!

That was the last thing he saw.

A man approached the confused man and broke his neck in one swoop.

Cheulpuhduhk!

With that, the man's body collapsed.

"Ggyaaaahk!"

One of the sacrificial prisoners screamed.

However, the man still moved and acted calmly despite the scream. He didn't bother to stop her from screaming.

Instead, he stripped one of the guards of his jacket and helmet, putting them on.

Then, he shouted at the people coming up from the second floor who had heard the scream.

"A situation's developed on the third floor! Hurry!"

“A problem?”

“Hurry up and come over! Quickly!”

“O, okay.”

The man spit out a hasty reply as he rushed over. Behind that man was a featherless arrow that flew after him like a bird.

5.

“Damn it, there’s nobody inside the truck!”

A man shouted after looking at the driver’s seat of the truck that had smashed through the entrance.

Then ten men who had gathered around the entrance all had the same look on their faces.

They were looking up and frowning.

“Are you saying that the truck moved on its own?”

“Does that even make sense?”

“Damn it, just who the hell is this? This monster didn’t suddenly become a monster did it?”

More chaos to add onto the chaos.

“Something’s happened on the third floor!”

A man screamed as he ran down the escalator connecting the first and second floors.

They didn’t consider that the person under the jacket and helmet was an outsider.

So nobody thought to stop the man from walking down the escalator.

Rather, those on the first floor were just surprised at what the man had said.

One of them asked a question.

“The third floor? What happened on the third floor?”

“What is this? Why is the first floor like this? Why did a truck smash through the entrance?”

“Fuck man, we don’t know either. The truck had suddenly smashed through the entrance on its own!”

“So what? So you all just decided to gather here? What about the wardens? What about the offerings?”

“Damn it, that’s not important right now! Tell the others to come down. It’s not like the prisoners can run amok right?”

“So everyone here are the ones who are left.”

At that moment, that man’s tone suddenly changed.

“Huh? Wa, wait. Who are y…….”

It was over in a flash.

Bbak!

The guard noticed the man who had come down the escalator too late, as the other party’s fist had already landed on his face like a hammer, shattering it.

The hard skull was like a puffy bread.

Puhk!

At the same time he punched the guard, the man pulled out the pin on a grenade he had fished out of his jacket, and threw it at the others who had gathered around the truck.

None of them were able to react in a timely manner.

Without an exception, all of them were within the blast radius.

Kwanggwagwang!

A grenade explosion, in front of such a monstrous blast, they could not resist in any way.

Even then, it wasn't the end.

"Ahhhhh!"

The moment a lucky survivor started to scream, a 'tutu' was heard from where he was. The sound of brief gunfire.

Confirmed kill.

With a calm expression on his face, the man took care of everyone who had gathered around the truck in the time it took someone to spit.

There were no survivors.

Having finished what he wanted, Kim Tae Hoon turned around and eyed the grocery store that was located across the entrance on

the first floor of the large shopping mall.

At that moment, Kim Tae Hoon's intuition went off thanks to his Hobgoblin's Intuition.

Hwik!

Kim Tae Hoon turned his head towards the left as he saw two fireballs the size of baseballs flying towards him.

As soon as one of the fireballs touched his jacket, it began to jump around and consume his jacket like a living creature, attempting to turn it into a giant fireball.

Kim Tae Hoon immediately took off his jacket, and pointed his gun at the other fireball and pulled the trigger as he jumped behind a counter.

At that moment, Kim Tae Hoon heard a voice in his ear.

"I didn't think that I would be fighting a proper awakened so soon, but this is fun."

It was the first time that he had heard this voice, but he was sure of one thing.

'Lee Jin Sung.'

He knew whose voice it was.

Messiah’s leader, he was here.

Chapter 32 – Messiah (2)

6.

Fitting in the narrow space behind the counter, Kim Tae Hoon began to analyze the situation.

He was not focused on the fireball.

Kim Tae Hoon was thinking of the moment when he pulled the trigger.

‘It hit.’

His aim was accurate.

He had hit the flame user awakened.

‘But the user didn’t collapse.’

However, he didn’t see the person who had been hit by the bullets fall.

‘Perhaps a bulletproof vest?’

Only with a bulletproof vest could you remain standing after being shot.

‘No, they wouldn’t be wearing one in this situation.’

But he disregarded the notion almost immediately.

A bulletproof vest was like an extra life when facing up against firearms, but not against monsters.

Though certainly it’s better to wear one than not, it would definitely be better to wear a more solid armor that would provide more defense against monsters than a bulletproof vest.

Maybe an armor made from the hid of some hideous monster.

‘Black Orc Leather.’

Kim Tae Hoon recalled something.

The monster that he had killed.

A fierce monster with black skin.

The monster that he had left behind.

The Black Orc!

The monster whose body he had left behind after taking its heart.

‘Tssk.’

If Lee Jin Sung and Messiah were not idiots, they would have tried any means necessary to try and make use of the body.

Furthermore, it had already been ten days since he had killed the Black Orc. Ten days was enough time to turn a black orc into a mink coat.

His conjecture was correct.

“A gun, are you a survivor from the military? Are you perhaps from the 17th Division? I’m sorry, but a gun won’t work on me. There’s quite a good thing here.”

Even Lee Jin Sung confirmed that Kim Tae Hoon’s speculation was right.

Of course Lee Jin Sung wasn’t trying to be friendly by doing so.

Even if the armor could block the shot, the strength behind the bullet was a different story altogether.

Even with a bullet proof vest, it would still be hard to withstand a bullet.

That's why when facing someone with a gun, you have to try and mess with their head.

Sure there's enough power behind a bullet when you shoot a bulletproof vest, but if you know that the other party is wearing one, you can just shoot them in the legs or the arms where the bulletproof vest wouldn't reach.

"For now, how about we just have a conversation? I'm not someone who just talk to anyone you know."

It was as though he were simply trying to grab Kim Tae Hoon's attention.

While Lee Jin Sung was trying blabbing on and on like a madman, the person that Kim Tae Hoon had shot was slowly making progress towards where Kim Tae Hoon was hiding behind the counter.

"Hey look at me!"

Lee Jin Sung's voice had naturally loudened.

It was to hide the other person's footsteps.

To keep Kim Tae Hoon's attention.

But in the end, they were simple children's tricks to Kim Tae

Hoon. Kim Tae Hoon pulled something out of his pocket, and hwik! He threw in the direction of Lee Jin Sung's voice.

"Damn it, dodge it!"

Hearing the urgency in Lee Jin Sung's voice, the man who was approaching Kim Tae Hoon dropped to the floor in panic.

Kim Tae Hoon calmly rose up, pulled out his gun, and pointed it at the head of the man that had approached him.

Tutututu!

Immediately shots were fired.

That was the only sound that could be heard. There were no explosions.

Kim Tae Hoon had thrown an object that looked similar to a grenade.

"Ahhhh!"

The man who had been shot was screaming at the top of his lungs.

"Fuck!"

It was Lee Jin Sung's voice.

Kim Tae Hoon threw an arrow in the direction of the voice.

Straight, fast.

"Eub!"

The arrow deeply embedded itself into the skin and bones woman that had blocked in front of Lee Jin Sung.

'Fuck, you were a telepath!'

With an unsightly expression on his face, Lee Jin Sung ran into the dark areas of the large mall. It wasn't long before Lee Jin Sung disappeared into the gloom inside the mall that had no electricity.

All you could hear were the sounds.

Kim Tae Hoon chased after the sound of Lee Jin Sung's footsteps, and found the man who was struggling against the pain of the impact of the bullets. He swiftly caught up to him, knocked him down, and placed his foot on his neck.

"Sp, spare……."

He promptly smashed down on the begging man’s neck.

Bba-deuk!

Accompanied by an uncanny sound, they man’s body fell limp.

Chwiiiiii!

At that time, white powder began to fill the inside of the dim market.

Kim Tae Hoon reflexively stepped away from the powder.

‘Fire extinguisher.’

It was the fire retardant powder that came out of fire extinguishers.

In one stroke, the interior was filled with clouds of powder, making it impossible to see or smell.

It was a perfect counter to telekinesis.

‘Retreat.’

Kim Tae Hoon decided to retreat.

Lee Jin Sung and Messiah had already made contingency plans to deal with other awakened.

It would be dangerous to fight against Lee Jin Sung and Messiah like this. It was likely that he wasn't alone, and if Kim Tae Hoon wasn't careful, another guard who was waiting elsewhere might sneak up on him.

The clouds of powder split as though Moses were splitting the Red Sea, revealing Lee Jin Sung at the other end.

His movements were surprisingly fast and agile.

By the time Kim Tae Hoon noticed him, Lee Jin Sung's knife had already just about reached Kim Tae Hoon's rifle.

Swik!

The gun was sliced just like that.

It didn't end there.

Something swelled up from inside his mouth, with Lee Jin Sung eventually spitting it out towards Kim Tae Hoon.

Puhuhuhu!

A huge flame engulfed Kim Tae Hoon. Covered in flames, Kim Tae Hoon rolled around on the floor.

Lee Jin Sung, with knife in hand, followed after Kim Tae Hoon who was rolling on the ground.

Tang, Tang!

Kim Tae Hoon pulled out his revolver from his waist holster, and shot at Lee Jin Sung.

The bullet successfully struck Lee Jin Sung, and his body wobbled like a blade of wheat.

But that was it.

Lee Jin Sung did not fall because of the bullet and neither was blood spilt.

After putting out the flames, Kim Tae Hoon got up from his spot and looked at Lee Jin Sung with a gun in his hand.

In front of Kim Tae Hoon stood Lee Jin Sung holding onto a sword with his arms covering his face. Like a boxer.

As long as it wasn’t his face, he could still survive a gunshot.

Kim Tae Hoon did not use any fancy moves in front of him. Instead, he eyed Lee Jin Sung.

Lee Jin Sung didn't make any moves either.

His opponent was also an awakened.

Furthermore, his entire body wasn't covered in the Black Orc Leather. His face was an exposed weakness. Not only that, but even if a bullet failed to penetrate his head, he would still very likely suffer from a fatal injury like a concussion or an eye rupture.

In the face of such an injury there was no point in him being impulsive.

'It's been awhile since the truck smashed into the entrance, it shouldn't be long before the men stationed in the vicinity arrive.'

Lee Jin Sung was expecting his men who had heard the disturbance to come.

Lee Jin Sung wasn't a fool, and he wouldn't be accompanied by only two people.

He had placed people in various places.

Of course, the reason why he had spread them out was to

monitor the area for monsters and to keep watch over the offerings.

He had to station awakened to watch over the wardens so as to instill fear.

In other words, time was on Lee Jin Sung's side.

"Are you perhaps the first hunter?"

Therefore, Lee Jin Sung opened his mouth again.

"Seeing such strong Telekinesis, you resemble the first hunter, I think his name was…… Kim Tae Hoon. Yes, it was Kim Tae Hoon. But I heard that you had teammates, so why did you come here alone?"

Kim Tae Hoon didn't bother to answer him. He stood there like a mannequin.

"I've heard many stories. Because of you, Bucheon's citizens were able to continue their lives. Let's be honest, there aren't many places in the world that would be as good as here. I had escaped from Cheongna District, and it wasn't until I reached Bucheon that I realized that I wasn't the only survivor."

Lee Jin Sung kept talking to Kim Tae Hoon.

“I recently came to realize that Bucheon was really lucky in regards to geography. Monsters can’t roam freely since they get trapped or lost amongst the buildings.”

Tempting words.

“It’s like a demilitarized zone. There are giant monsters in Incheon, Siheung, Gwangmyeong, and Gimpo. Humans have long since deposed as the rulers of this Earth.”

Valuable information.

Those who wanted to know the truth and gain information had no choice but to lend their ears to what he was saying.

It was what Lee Jin Sung was aiming for.

But why would your opponent listen and let you take the advantage?

But in the end, he was giving valuable information so he could only listen.

There was a smile on Lee Jin Sung’s face.

‘Only 1 minute.’

One minute.

Or less.

After 1 minute has passed, at least ten more awakened will converge on the scene.

They weren't average either.

They were elites.

Messiah had the power to justify their inhuman acts, it was a powerful organization.

"So why are you so suddenly attacking us? Do you not like the way we handle things? From what I've heard, you're not exactly the embodiment of justice either."

To stall for more time, Lee Jin Sung kept talking.

"Why don't we cooperate? It looks like you were able to procure weapons from a nearby military unit. Why don't you just form a monster hunting group here in Bucheon. We are very fortunate. We were able to base ourselves in Bucheon. Why don't we at least talk it out. How about we let down our weapons. Hmm?"

With Lee Jin Sung's speech ending, Kim Tae Hoon lowered the barrel of his gun.

There was a gleam in Lee Jin Sung's eyes.

'Retard!'

At that moment, Lee Jin Sung rushed towards Kim Tae Hoon, and cut him down.

Halved in one blow.

There was no doubt.

The sword in Lee Jin Sung's hand was such a great weapon that it was like a miracle from God.

Monsters with orange eyes and monsters with yellow eyes, he could the both of them down with ease!

'I thought that you would be a great obstacle!'

There was no hesitation.

Having heard the stories and rumors regarding Kim Tae Hoon, Lee Jin Sung was sure that Kim Tae Hoon would be a huge obstacle.

He refused to serve under another.

A subordinate was always expendable. That's what the world had turned into.

If you wanted to survive, you needed to be the one to consume.

Like that Lee Jin Sung moved.

Without any hesitation and with calm judgement.

Of course he would want to move.

"Euhk?"

However, his body wouldn't move.

AN invisible chain had stolen his freedom.

An obvious outcome.

If you move around swiftly in this fire extinguisher powder inside the dark market, would you be able to clearly make out your opponent? Couldn't your opponent hide and strike back after seeing the disturbance you make in the cloud? Plus, the sword was able to cut down monsters with a higher bodily strength than that of a human, so what kind of tactile feedback would you get by slashing at a human? Isn't it obvious who would lose?

But most of all, Kim Tae Hoon's Telekinesis was A rank.

It was powerful enough to even hold back the Black Orc's tremendous strength.

He didn't know how much strength Lee Jin Sung had, but it was only a matter of seconds before his limbs were frozen.

Plus, Lee Jin Sung had provided those seconds himself.

"Th, this bastard……."

Kim Tae Hoon calmly walked towards Lee Jin Sung, whose face was outraged, and pulled out the sword from Lee Jin Sung's hand.

"Ahhhk, fuck!"

Then, he pointed the sword at Lee Jin Sung.

Unable to tolerate the fact that he was to die under his own sword, Lee Jin Sung spoke out.

"Wa, wait…… a trade, let's trade! I'll give you everything! I'll give you everthi……."

Lee Jin Sung could only speak until there.

“I have no need.”

Chapter 33 – Messiah (3)

7.

Lee Jin Sung, he was a cruel man.

On top of that, he had a strong ability and a powerful relic that amplified his means for cruelty.

‘What’s going on with master.’

‘We’ll die if we’re late.’

Lee Jin Sung had awoken to strong abilities without knowing he would, so for those other awakened who only awakened to E rank abilities, they didn’t dare go against him.

But at the same time, he was a symbol of hope.

‘Fuck, if anything ever happens to master…….’

‘Without master, we’re done for.’

It was because Lee Jin Sun was their strongest force against monsters.

He was their best chance at killing the yellow-eyed snake demon

that they had been forced to offer sacrifices to.

In this world, sacrifices were a necessary evil, especially with the appearance of the yellow-eyed demon.

That was why Lee Jin Sung named his group Messiah. It would attract stragglers who didn't know the truth. Furthermore, since he had dominated the sacrifices with fear coupled together with this weather, none of the sacrifices would dare to escape and run out in the blizzard, and would instead choose to stay in the market.

"We've arrived!"

"Turn on the flashlights! Flashlights!"

Soon, the eleven people who had arrived at the large supermarket were shining their flashlights in front of them.

The first thing they saw when they turned on their flashlights were the bodies.

"Euk!"

"Damn it, what the hell……."

They were the corpses of the ordinary members who were in the grenade's blast radius.

As opposed to monster corpses, these bodies exuded a different kind of terror than the kinds that the awakened of Messiah had seen in the past.

‘G, guns, were they shot by guns?’

‘Were they hit with a bomb? But where would there be a bomb?’

The awakened stiffened.

Still stunned, a few courageous members stepped into the flashlights’ beams, making their way towards the mangled bodies.

“Huk!”

A head that would destroy a man’s courage.

It was Lee Jin Sung’s head, his body nowhere in sight.

The light from the flashlights reflected off the hairless head.

‘Im, impossible.’

They couldn’t even scream, they were speechless.

“Drop your flashlights and get on your knees with your hands up.”

A voice suddenly came out from the darkness.

“Wh, who is it?”

“Where did that voice come from?”

Even after what the voice said, nobody kneeled. Instead, everyone was turning their heads, trying to find out where the voice had come from.

Tang!

A gunshot quickly caught their attention.

“Euuahk!”

A man yelled out before falling, the light from his flashlight shining all over the place.

“M, my leg, my leg…….”

“Don’t make me repeat myself.”

The voice spoke again amidst the screaming and cursing of the man who was shot in the leg.

‘Crazy…….’

‘The flashlights are giving away our positions!’

The quick witted ones put their flashlights on the floor and raised their hands up, immediately getting on their knees.

Then, like dominoes, the eleven awakened who had entered the market got on the floor.

Kim Tae Hoon appeared before them.

He had completely hidden his body in the dark. Even his clothes consisted of a black jumper.

Because of that and the fact that the flashlights were on the floor, it was impossible for them to see him clearly.

It was more terrifying this way.

They could only use their imaginations to fill in what they couldn’t see.

In this situation, they couldn’t be imagining anything pleasant.

To the eleven awakened, Kim Tae Hoon was no different from a devil, a devil that began to speak once more.

“You have two choices. You can turn around and leave, or you can join me and become a hunting dog under my command.”

Hearing his proposal, all of them trembled.

‘A hunting dog?’

It had become clear to them that their opponent wasn’t a kindhearted hero of justice.

“I am aware of what kind of group Messiah is. So it would be better to disregard any notion of being treated like a human.”

The awakened trembled again.

He knew what kind of group Messiah was. He knew that they had been sacrificing a mountain of people to a monster.

They all knew what it meant to offer living sacrifices.

Even if the circumstances made it impossible to avoid, the moment you stopped treating your fellow man as human, then you needed to be prepared to be treated the same.

This entire time, their strength had overshadowed this fact, but now that they were the weaker party, they knew. [TN: We had eyes, but could not see Mt. Tai]

‘Damn it.’

Faced with that reality, they could only swallow any sighs or regret.

‘This is the end of the road.’

Some of them began to use their heads.

“C, can we really just leave, just like this?”

A man asked.

“If you don’t want to serve under me.”

Kim Tae Hoon answered immediately.

“I, I…… I will leave. I’ll live my live quietly.”

Having given his answer, the man rose from his spot.

The man who got up was named Chang Yeon Seok.

‘I at least need to get out of this place. If I stay under that man, he’ll just use me against the monsters like a consumable.’

He was in charge of the group in department store across the supermarket that kept watch over the people from the who were to be sacrificed.

Simply put, an executive.

As a result, he knew Messiah better than any of the others here.

‘I’ll just go back to the city hall and join the group there before thinking of what to do next. That should be my priority for now. If I stay here there’ll be neither porridge nor rice.’

Messiah had been in the process of spreading its influence around the Bucheon City Hall.

They secured food by occupying large markets, captured or swallowed up survivors that approached city hall, and had scouted out the territory of exceptionally strong monsters they could not kill at the moment, offering them sacrifices to keep them placated.

‘Anyways, there are twenty awakened who are making preparations there.’

It was only natural that the number of awakened that Messiah had been able to recruit was not small.

There were about eighty of them!

Many of them were on standby in the city hall. The city hall contained the most amount of sacrifices.

Additionally, there were many who were not awakened, but were still willing to fight for Messiah.

If they didn’t want to become the next sacrifice, they had to be on the same side.

So it was only natural for him to think that it was safer to join them than it was to be a hunting dog under an unknown figure.

“R, really? Is it ok to leave?”

Chang Yeon Seok asked again while hiding his schemes.

“If you don’t want to serve me.”

Kim Tae Hoon once again gave a clear answer.

“Th, thank you.”

With that, Chang Yeon Seok turned his back. He didn’t move right away, trying to sense something.

‘Is he really willing to just let me go?’

Although he asked himself that, he didn't feel like there was anything afoot.

Chang Yeon Seok walked towards the way he came.

Tang!

A bullet lodged itself in his back.

"Keuhuk!"

Letting out a short cry, Chang Yeon Seok collapsed onto the floor and began to convulse. Warm blood began to soak his clothes before pooling onto the floor.

The others could not see what had happened.

'I, is team leader Chang dead?'

'He's mad, he was never intending to let us go?'

They could only sense that a colleague had died or was dying behind them.

"Was it Messiah's method to kill enemies or traitors then cut off their heads?"

Kim Tae Hoon asked another question.

There was no answer.

There were no questions.

“Then the nine of you remaining will be my hunting dogs.”

The situation had been resolved.

8.

[Sword of the Commander]

– Relic Grade : Grade 2

– Relic Rarity : Special

– Relic Effect : A sword that can grow by consuming the blood of monsters. It was unknown who this sword had belonged to.

[Flame Wine Gourd]

– Relic Grade : Grade 5

– Relic Rarity : Rare

– Relic Effect : Converts magic into Flame Wine. If you drink

the Flame Wine you can spew out fire. The more powerful the drinker's Magic Power is, the more powerful the flames.

Kim Tae Hoon, who was inspecting the relics through his smart phone, closely observed the sword in his hand.

Sword of the Commander.

There was no way to tell who it had belonged to.

But regardless, it was good for Kim Tae Hoon. He didn't have knowledge about historical figures, and he didn't care.

'It looks like the sword from my dreams.'

Since the sword's appearance matched the one in his dream, what was important was the fact that the colors were different.

'The color of the sheath is different, but other than that, it looks just like the one from my dream.'

The dream he was referring to was the one induced by Napoleon's Golden Goblet of course.

In that dream, Kim Tae Hoon had utilized various weapons to fight against the dragon.

And now, a weapon similar to one of those was in his hand.

The sword sheath that he had now was red, but the sword sheath from his dream was blue. Aside from that, both swords gave off the same feeling.

If it actually was the sword from his dream, then it would be an amazing achievement.

It was a weapon that he could use against a dragon.

But Kim Tae Hoon wasn't pleased.

There was no way to know if it was something destined or not.

Afterall, all he had to go off of was a snippet of the future.

In the end, he may still be heading towards the same result but by a different route.

Furthermore, Lee Jin Sung had revealed some fairly interesting bits of information before his death. Although it was for the sake of stalling for more time, the information that he had revealed was tremendously valuable and frightening.

'He said that Bucheon was very lucky.'

Lee Jin Sung had said that Bucheon City was a lucky area.

‘The surrounding areas were filled with powerful monsters.’

The districts surrounding Bucheon like Incheon, Gimpo, and Siheung already belonged to the monsters.

Powerful monsters had claimed their own territories in the surrounding areas, and Bucheon just happened to be where all of their territories overlapped, resulting in a relative peace.

‘It’s not impossible.’

The authenticity of it was unknown, but the possibility was high.

The monsters wouldn’t be wantonly destroying everything. They would move according to their sense of survival.

In order to survive they need to eat the humans, but to get to the humans, they needed to destroy what got in their way.

‘The worst case scenario.’

If what Lee Jin Sung said wasn’t a lie, then the situation was beyond what Kim Tae Hoon had imagined.

‘The death toll would be one million.’

The death toll may exceed one million in the Republic of Korea, and perhaps even ten million.

‘No, since it happened without notice during the winter, it should be closer to ten million.’

It was currently winter, a harsh season that humanity would find difficult to survive through.

‘It’s probably much worse in China. The casualties there would be in the billions.’

The damage caused in Korea and the number of casualties in Korea could not be compared to those of China or India where their population exceeds 1 billion.

Kim Tae Hoon began to feel a little skeptical.

He was skeptical of the fact that humans who survived this terrible ordeal would die for their fellow man. There were many who would rather die for their own sake.

“H, hello…… I gathered all of them like you ordered. The sacrifices…… I mean, I brought all the survivors.”

One of the awakened from Messiah approached Kim Tae Hoon and told him in a frightened voice.

Hearing that, Kim Tae Hoon rose from his spot.

Kim Tae Hoon had a skeptical and cold expression on his face.

It was good to be cautious of the future.

No, he had to be wary. It would be important to always be wary of what was to come.

Messiah had yet to fall into Kim Tae Hoon's hands. Furthermore, the remnants would not be welcoming towards Kim Tae Hoon.

It was the same for the survivors. Not all of the survivors had been assigned to be sacrifices. Those who were designated to be offerings would be different than those who were considered as members, and even they would be different from those who were assigned to be wardens or overseers.

Of course, if they were left alone, they would merely act according to themselves.

That's why he needed to instill fear. Don't let them think of anything else. In this situation, compassion would be meaningless, and it was certainly not something Kim Tae Hoon would give. He didn't even want to know.

However, he still needed to give them a way out. They needed to

be given a lifeline they could stake their lives on. Something that these survivors in Bucheon cherish as much as their own lives.

Messiah's former leader, Lee Jin Sung, was also aware of these things.

His actions were far from human, but at the same time, this world no longer belonged to the humans.

'Thanks to Messiah, things should be smoother.'

In fact, Kim Tae Hoon was more familiar with these concepts than Lee Jin Sung.

Although they were not monsters, Kim Tae Hoon had fought and lived in the underbelly of society where humans were no better than these monsters.

But in the end, he survived.

9.

"Try wringing out the eel like thing in your stomach like it was mayonnaise. Try it like that."

Hearing what Bang Hyun Wook said, Kim Su Ji and three others began to concentrate and try to squeeze the Energy in their belly.

“Once you’ve squeezed it, try and direct it to your fingertips and toes. All the way! How is it? It’s easy right?”

While the other awakened were training their usage of Energy, Ahn Sun Mi was holding the Goblet of Healing while employing Chang Sung Hoon’s help.

As the Goblet of Healing began to fill up, Chang Sung Hoon opened his mouth.

“Okay. It’s done. Noonim, it’s completely filled.”

Ahn Sun Mi opened her eyes and poured the contents of the Goblet of Healing into a thermos for future use.

“You’ve suffered a lot.”

“Right, I’m the only one who is suffering.”

“It’s not like I don’t want to help, but you’re the only one who can use magic, right? Noonim, if you want, I could sing you a song?”

Instead of replying to Chang Sung Hoon, Ahn Sun Mi closed her eyes and began focusing on injecting her magic into the Goblet of Healing.

It was ready.

The awakened who could utilize Energy were training to be more skillful, while Ahn Sun Mi was trying to stock up on healing goods as much as possible when there was room and time to spare.

Because lives were on the line, nobody gave up.

It was time.

“Second Lieutenant-nim!”

Somebody had appeared. It was a soldier. The soldiers standing outside were were completely covered in snow.

Training ceased for awhile.

“The major has sent a messenger.”

All who had heard had a nervous expression on their faces.

“This is the letter sent by the major.”

The envelope was immediately handed to Kim Su Ji.

Kim Su Ji deftly fished out the letter from inside the envelope, and began to scan the paper before she spoke again.

“Is there anyone in the clan who has experience working at a sushi joint or cutting fish?”

“What?”

A strange question that made no sense.

“Did the major catch a tuna? Why do you suddenly need someone with experience regarding sashimi?”

Chang Sung Hoon asked, representing what everyone else wanted to ask. Without a single expression on her face, Kim Su Ji simply replied.

“Attention! From now on, the Mek Clan will prepare for battle. The Yellow-eyed Demon is our prey.”

Chapter 34 – Turf War (1)

1.

On the third floor of an office building, which had been the headquarter of some company up until a few days ago, was a den of monsters.

They were monkey monsters.

They weren't any ordinary monkeys.

Their teeth were like those of a dog's and were nothing like those of a monkey's. Their mouths were lined with sharp teeth like those of a saw blade.

It was like a dog's head on a monkey's body.

They ghastly beasts had red eyes, their whole bodies giving off a frightful aura.

Oohgeok oohgeok!

The four grotesque monsters were in the midst of a meal.

A human was on the menu.

It was a man in his mid-twenties, typically someone whose blood would be boiling for action, each monster clutching onto a part of the man's body, feasting.

There were four skulls rolling around near the monkeys. They were clean, even to the point of being glossy.

There was no way that the flesh on the skulls would have rotten clean in this cold winter.

It was clear that the monsters had licked the skulls clean until there wasn't a single trace of flesh left on them.

Keureureu!

The monkeys stopped their morbid feasting when a man walked into the office that was little more than 30 square meters.

Kuhung!

The monsters didn't take too kindly to being disturbed, baring their fangs at the intruder.

However, the man made the first move.

Swiiik!

Immediately, a featherless arrow shot out on its own, piercing through a monster's head.

The monster collapsed onto the floor, a hole in its head.

Talsseuk!

Another monster collapsed onto the floor like a broken doll. Blood sprayed out of the monster's temple like a fountain.

Kung? Kung!

The remaining two monsters, having gone crazy with anger, quickly cried out in fear.

Their cries were cut short.

Swiiik!

The arrow cut through the air once more, the two monsters collapsing onto the floor with holes in their heads.

The fierce arrow that had dealt with four monsters in the blink of an eye gently entered a holster on the man's waist.

The man, Kim Tae Hoon, swept his gaze across his surroundings one more time.

His expression was not very good. There was no satisfaction on his face despite what he had done.

“Hyungnim, the first, second, and third floors have all been taken care of.”

Bang Hyun Wook’s voice came from behind Kim Tae Hoon.

“Cleaning this place…… wow.”

Bang Hyun Wook whistled, looking at the carnage before him.

“Man, everytime I see this it’s scary. I’m glad that you’re not my enemy.”

In classic Kim Tae Hoon fashion, he ignored what the other party said and gave an order instead.

“Open a window and put out the flag after you’ve collected the monster stones.”

“Yes sir!”

Bang Hyun Wook gave a silent salute while answering. Kim Tae Hoon’s expression didn’t soften.

He couldn’t loosen his expression.

‘This isn’t enough.’

It was Kim Tae Hoon’s weakness and feelings of scarcity that made his face go stiff.

Saying it out loud, it sounds unbelievable. All you needed to do was look at Kim Tae Hoon’s right hand.

Kim Tae Hoon’s right hand was proof of that.

[Basic Abilities]

– Strength : 92

– Stamina : 77

[Special Abilities]

– Energy : E+ Rank

– Magic : E+ Rank

– Telekinesis : A Rank

– Magic Resistance : E+ Rank

– Physical Defense : E+ Rank

His basic and special abilities were already at a level where he couldn’t be compared with other awakened. After Kim Tae Hoon,

Bang Hyun Wook boasted the highest Strength stat.

He didn't have to use his Telekinesis against the weaker monsters, since he could deal with most of the small fry with just his strength alone.

The area was great for the purposes of hunting monsters. [TN: Often time, Koreans will use the term 'eat' to describe hunting or taking over. In TFH in particular, the term is often used to indicate hunting and consuming the benefits. Basically hunting and taking the drops or monster stones.]

Then were the others weak?

It was neither a funny or believable tale.

They were only weak if compared to Kim Tae Hoon.

'This isn't enough to go against the snake demon.'

Demon snake.

It was a giant snake with yellow eyes that claimed a subway station as its dwelling place. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that it was the ruler of Bucheon.

But now, it was Kim Tae Hoon's prey.

Kim Tae Hoon wouldn’t fight it if he didn’t need to.

If you look at the situation with common sense, then it’s only natural that nobody would be willing to fight with the demon snake.

But things had changed. Kim Tae Hoon was no longer a lone wolf.

Kim Tae Hoon walked out onto the streets and turned around, taking a look at the building he had been in mere moments before.

Jjaeng!

The sound of a window breaking was soon followed by the appearance of a white flag.

Kim Tae Hoon turned his head to look at the buildings off to the side.

Amongst the buildings was a large building whose windows were sporting white flags fluttering in the wind.

Looking at the flags, Kim Tae Hoon began to recall the events from the other day, it was the day after the blizzard had subsided and the sun had risen once more.

2.

“40%.”

At the end of what Chang Sung Hoon’s words, five people, three men and two women, gazed at Chang Sung Hoon with cold gazes.

Aggressive gazes.

They were not vague gazes. Their eyes were clearly hostile. Awakened, those with superhuman abilities who can grow and fight against the monsters on equal footing.

Chang Sung Hoon wasn’t bothered by their aggression. Because although there were five awakened before him, their boss that held no goodwill for Messiah was behind him.

“Let’s look at at it this way. Aren’t your fates intertwined with ours now?”

“None of us have declared our loyalties to you. We’re still members of Messiah.”

A middle aged man immediately replied.

He was a very muscular man. He didn’t get cold, so he was only wearing a thin, long-sleeved polo shirt even in this cold weather, but because of that, his muscular body was clearly seen.

In fact, it was a blatant brag.

His ability to withstand the cold and his muscular body were all indicators of the great power he possessed.

Of course, his voice also carried strength as well.

His unwillingness to back down was also clear.

“So do you intend to risk your life in a battle with boss? Because that’s what it sounds like to my ears. Would you like to have a go at it? Do you want to kaesagppang?”

[TN: kaesagppang is an abbreviation for 캐릭터 삭제 빵, which means character deletion after death. Kind of like a hardcore mode character in an ARPG game like Path of Exile or Diablo. When these characters die, they die for good, and you need to make a new character.]

“That…….”

However, the middle aged muscular man’s rebellious eyes sooned shrinked back after looking at Kim Tae Hoon.

Chang Sung Hoon looked at them and spoke.

“It looks like you nobles haven’t quite figured things out on your abacus yet, does it look like you’re in a position to recruit baseball players or something? Do you think you came here to sign a

contract?”

With those words, Chang Sung Hoon grasped his uniform.

“Does this look like a suit worn by an office worker?”

The five awakened that were around Kim Tae Hoon looked towards the soldiers who were holding onto their rifles.

The soldiers’ eyes were not those of simple gunmen.

Although they hadn’t been like this for long, they had the eyes of those who had survived through many monster raids in a short amount of time.

They were those who were ready to the pull trigger when needed to.

“Then, let me tell you again. It’s simple. You awakened are now hunting under the Mek Clan. If you don’t like the term ‘hunting dog’ you can go by ‘hunter’ instead. If that’s what’s important to you, than take care of it. You Mek Clan hound dogs will give 40% of all monster stones you find to the clan.”

Chang Sung Hoon concisely summarized what he wanted to say.

The five awakened avoided answering him. While avoiding, they also squinted their eyes and looked at Kim Tae Hoon.

‘How…….’

It was very sudden.

The blizzard had passed by the time the night ended, and as a white world unfolded before them, news was delivered to a Messiah remnant that was located in the Bucheon City Hall.

Messiah’s leader, Lee Jin Sung, had died, and the Mek Clan’s leader, Kim Tae Hoon, wanted to negotiate with the remaining leaders of Messiah.

The negotiation itself was easily arranged.

Quite frankly, none of them were loyal towards those who had died.

In addition, none of them wanted to make sacrifices in a war against the Mek Clan while not knowing who they were.

In fact, it was quite the opposite. There were many who welcomed the Mek Clan.

Proposing a negotiation implied that the burden of going to war with Messiah was too much to handle.

‘This isn’t a negotiation, it’s a threat.’

But the negotiation table turned out differently than the leaders of Messiah thought.

Mek Clan's representative, Chang Sung Hoon, demanded two things from Messiah.

One, the awakened from Messiah were to be the Mek Clan's hounds.

Two, all of the awakened from Messiah will fork over 40% of the monster stones that they find.

That was the proposal prepared by Chang Sung Hoon.

'Bucheon City is not a rural city, it was a very large and populated novel that had a population of over 800,000 people. If I have any hopes of controlling the hundreds of thousands of people who live here, then I need to come up with a system.'

When Kim Tae Hoon agreed to Chang Sung Hoon's proposal to establish a base in Bucheon and create a clan, he didn't think that Kim Tae Hoon would have a way to run the Mek Clan.

The current Mek Clan was a group that existed solely for Kim Tae Hoon.

A group that could not go against anything that Kim Tae Hoon

would say.

A group who could carry out Kim Tae Hoon's orders perfectly.

A group that could be controlled perfectly.

But it was only possible because of Mek Clan's size, since they consisted of fifty people.

But since they are stationed in Bucheon City, the story would changed once the survivors here fell under his control.

It was impossible to have complete control over the tens of thousands of people.

It was something that nobody had ever been and never will be able to do.

'It would be impossible for boss to monopolize everything.'

Especially the awakened. There needed to be special conditions to control the awakened.

It would be impossible to take all the monsters stone like Kim Tae Hoon had been doing until now.

"Seeing as how you're not answering it would seem as though

you're not understanding, but you only need to pay up 40% of any monster stones you acquire. I don't care what you do with the bodies. And if you kill a special monster, we can negotiate a price if you don't mind selling it to us. Whatever you reap is yours to keep. We just want you to notify us of whatever you keep. I didn't notice at first, but later I found out about the patterns that appear on an awakened's hand and the strange abilities that people acquire, so if left alone you'll run into problems."

That was why Chang Sung Hoon was trying to tie Kim Tae Hoon and the other surviving awakened with a simple relationship.

"Simply put, a give and take."

Give and take.

A simple concept that even a child could understand.

On the basis of that concept, Chang Sung Hoon tried to get the survivors to offer up 40% of their monster stones to the Mek Clan.

"40%…… what do we get by giving you 40%?"

Of course, listening to the proposal, it just sounded like they were being taken away for no reason.

That was why the five executives could not give a straight answer.

So Chang Sung Hoon explained it more.

“For now, we live your lives in your own hands. You don’t want to die now do you?”

“Just what…….”

“Is that a joke. What a joke. Hahaha, if you really wanted to kill us, why would you call us this place? Your only way would be to shoot those of us with tattoos on our hands with guns.”

“……Is that a threat?”

Threats.

The silent Kim Tae Hoon stepped forward and spoke before Chang Sung Hoon could.

Quite frankly, everyone tensed up.

It was five awakened against Kim Tae Hoon while Chang Sung Hoon hid behind Kim Tae Hoon’s back.

The atmosphere tensed up.

Kim Tae Hoon low voice cut through the tense atmosphere.

“It’s a 40% tax. A tax for hunting the monsters in my turf.”

Someone with great courage spoke up.

“This isn’t your turf now though is it? Even knowing that, you still have the gall to ask for 40%…….”

Kim Tae Hoon didn’t get angry. Instead, he stayed calm.

“Then to whom does this turf belong to?”

“That…….”

The awakened thought to themselves.

Who does Bucheon belong to right now?

The answer was obvious.

In this messed up world, the strong would be the master of all, so in the present time, the master would be the Yellow Eyed Demon who had settled in the subway station.

The area within a 12 dozen kilometer radius of Bucheon City Hall was the Yellow Eyed Demon’s territory.

But it wasn't something that people would be able to say easily.

They couldn't come to acknowledge the fact that the land no longer belonged to the humans, but to the monsters.

The people who had gathered definitely felt like their feet were hanging off a cliff, with nothing but despair before them.

Except one person.

"Right now? It would be the Yellow Eyed Demon's territory."

Kim Tae Hoon spoke without any hesitation.

"It's simple, who ever kills the Yellow Eyed Demon will be the new ruler of this land."

There was something that he wanted to give to the survivors.

It was hope.

He wanted to give the survivors at the bottom of the food chain hope that they would no longer have to live in fear of the Yellow-Eyed Demon.

"40%. If you think you can get away with skewing the numbers, then fine. As long as it goes unnoticed."

With that, there were no more questions.

Kim Tae Hoon stepped back as Chang Sung Hoon took the lead again, smiling at the stiff expressions of the five awakened.

“There will be no contract. This is a proposal based on mutual trust. I’ll trust everyone’s word. Doesn’t everyone desire to survive? Who would want to keep living in fear of someday being the next living sacrifice? None of you want to die, right?”

Chapter 35 – Turf War (2)

3.

‘Thanks to Chang Sung Hoon, I won’t have a headache over this.’

After recalling Chang Sung Hoon’s actions, Kim Tae Hoon began to organize the details in his head.

The awakened from Messiah had come under Kim Tae Hoon as his hound dogs.

From now on, the awakened would offer up 40% of their monster stones to Kim Tae Hoon.

In return, Kim Tae Hoon would provide for them a safe hunting zone.

‘Quite the smart guy.’

That wasn’t all.

Since Messiah’s awakened are going to be Kim Tae Hoon’s hound dogs, then that meant that the ordinary survivors would have no choice but to follow Kim Tae Hoon.

A gun was the only weapon that was effective against both monsters and awakened humans, but they were in the hands of

Kim Tae Hoon and the Mek Clan.

Well, it wasn't perfect.

'There are problems that even that clever guy won't be able to solve.'

Not everyone would be happy with this system.

On top of that, the system wouldn't be able to control everyone.

Even right now, there are sure to be people who are scheming against him, and amongst those people there are bound to be very clever individuals.

Obviously, issues would crop up in one form or another. Huge conflicts where the instigator and the victim both have to die will probably appear soon.

It was something that Chang Sung Hoon was well aware of.

That's why Chang Sung Hoon said it was necessary.

'As long as the snake demon is killed.'

Demon snake's body.

A powerful symbol, and a powerful shield.

All of the survivors would be indebted to Kim Tae Hoon should he succeed in killing the demon snake, which would result in their desire to protect Kim Tae Hoon since he would become a beacon of hope for them.

'As long as I kill it.'

In Kim Tae Hoon's mind, the reasoning was simple.

It wasn't a complicated issue.

The situation was clear.

"Boss, boss! I was finally able to take a picture! I was able to take a picture of the beast!"

It's just that it wouldn't be easy.

4.

The raging blizzard had turned the world white. That was all that could be seen. All traces of the catastrophe that had befallen the world had been covered by snow.

In other words, the places out of the snow's reach still held the

remains of the gruesome tragedy that had taken place.

This was Sinjung Dong station.

The rectangular walls and floor, and the impressively high ceiling, all of it was wrecked as though a bull had rampaged through.

Seureureu…….

A giant monster was passing by.

Snake.

The snake had scales darker than the gloom of the lightless station.

However, it was far too large to call it a snake. No other snakes could even compare to it.

It was a creature equipped with tremendous durability, that once again, could not be compared with other snakes.

Tuktuk, even when the snake would only lightly tap the station walls, tiles would cascade onto the floor like a waterfall.

The seemingly unstoppable snake stopped. There was a

mountain of corpses.

Chiureu! Chiureureu!

Although it flicked its tongue in front of the pile, the snake did not immediately start eating. Instead, it used its whip-like tongue to sample the taste of the corpses.

Seureureu!

The appearance of the snake backing up was identical to that of a child refusing to eat something because of its picky eating habits.

The snake ignored the pile of bodies and instead moved towards the station's exit. Its goal was to find a warm-blooded living creature to feast on instead of the cold pile of bodies.

As it began to ascend the stairs, it slowly was exposed to the sun.

It gradually exposed more of its head, eventually revealing the orange eyes embedded in its triangular head.

In the sunlight, it's eyes were not so much orange, but rather a beautiful gold, however, no sane person would ever dare consider its eyes to be anything but terrifying.

In the presence of its eyes, even the fiercest of beasts would be no better than a small mouse.

It basked in the sunlight, revealing an old wound located on top of its incredibly tough body.

Chiureu!

It did not intend to stop there. The rest of its body that had been steeped in darkness began to slowly expose itself.

Hwiing!

At that moment, a cold wind swept across the land.

Chiureureu!

The cold breeze made the snake stop moving. It began to turn its body as the winds swept up again.

The beast returned to the subway station, and resorted to swallowing the pile of bodies.

Like that, the beast and the pile soon disappeared, and from the spot where the snake had retreated from, a camera was silently snapping away.

5.

Everyone who had seen the pictures stiffened.

The picture itself wasn't very clear, and was in fact quite blurry. In addition, the lighting was very poor, but despite the overall poor quality of the photo, the existence depicted in the photo overwhelmed everyone who had seen it.

An existence far beyond their reach.

'Good God, we have to kill this thing? What nonsense. No matter how you look at it, it's on a completely different level than the monsters we've fought until now! The monsters on the level of the Black Orc cannot even touch this creature!'

"This is impossible. There's no way we can kill this beast."

The first person to say anything despite the situation was Bang Hyun Wook.

Bang Hyun Wook was shaking his head, his eyes as wide and round as the first time he had ever faced a monster.

Hearing Bang Hyun Wook's voice, Chang Sung Hoon came to his senses. Having come to, his expression stiffened.

'I miscalculated. To think that it would actually be this strong…… No matter how strong of a monster it was, I thought that our chances of victory would be considerably high if we used grenades, claymores, and other explosives in conjunction with

boss’ Telekinesis…….’

The one who was most insistent on killing the demon snake was none other than Chang Sung Hoon.

No, more than that, all of Chang Sung Hoon’s plans were built upon the assumption that Kim Tae Hoon would be able to successfully kill the snake.

He had felt that the odds were in their favor.

Because it was none other than Kim Tae Hoon. Because he had Telekinesis.

Telekinesis had great compatibility with guns, explosives, and other firearms.

You don’t need perfect marksmanship if you control a grenade’s flight with Telekinesis, especially now since the Mek Clan soldiers could be outfitted with rifles, SMGs, grenades, claymores, and other firearms that could allow them to display a much greater firepower than before.

It might not be enough to fight against a dragon, but wouldn’t it be more than enough to take care of a single large-bodied snake?

‘I was wrong. This beast isn’t something we can handle right now.’

But having witnessed a first-person account, that was not the case.

Kim Tae Hoon trying to hunt the snake was like a slightly larger than average mouse trying to hunt a cat.

If it was lucky it would be able to get a bite in, but it wouldn't change its role from prey to predator.

"Boss, let's leave it alone for now. If you look at its behavior, you can tell that it hates the cold, so if we just keep throwing in corpses……."

Because of that, Chang Sung Hoon opted to change his plans.

Listening to what Chang Sung Hoon said, Kim Tae Hoon did not reply. Instead, he began to recall the picture once more.

He kept replaying the photos that had been captured by the installed camera as the snake exposed itself to the sun.

He focused on the demon snake's body as it revealed itself.

'It's skin will be on a completely different level than that of the Black Orc.'

Its hide will be much tougher and much more durable than that

of the Black Orc's.

It wasn't some blind guess.

The ruined subway station would be very dangerous. It would be like walking through a thorny patch, completely naked.

Even if he doesn't receive any large wounds, he would accumulate scrapes and scratches.

But despite having lived in the station for a few days, the demon snake did not have any noticeable injuries. Its body was like a beautiful prized glass craft.

However, there was a distinct wound on that strong body.

'A sword wound.'

Sword of the Commander. A sword whose original owner could never be known. It was a sword that thirsted for blood, and had also inflicted a wound on the snake.

'This situation is actually much better than when I faced the Black Orc.' [TN: Wut.]

He had a varied arsenal to select a weapon to use against the demon snake.

The firepower of the Sword of the Commander or Yi Sun Sin's Arrow was high.

At least this time, Kim Tae Hoon would be able to set the battle stage this time.

As long as it's not a sudden battle and he had enough time to practice and prepare, then he could fight where he chose.

It was certain. The situation this time was incomparably better than when he fought the Black Orc.

There was only one thing left.

'As long as I can control my Telekinesis skillfully.'

It was whether Kim Tae Hoon could take advantage of his Telekinesis appropriately. As long as his abilities were up to standard, then there would be no reason for the demon snake hunt to fail.

"Chang Sung Hoon, how much time can we spare?"

"What?"

Chang Sung Hoon was frightened.

“Are you going to hunt it?”

That was because the ‘spare time’ that Kim Tae Hoon was talking about was the time it would take before the various Awakened that came under his command would start to act up and carry out their schemes.

“Boss, you can’t kill it. It’s impossible!”

Chang Sung Hoon tried to discourage Kim Tae Hoon again.

“How much time do we have left?”

“That…….”

However, Chang Sung Hoon kept saying the same thing.

“It’s not like I majored in psychology, but…… as you know, boss will start to receive the monster stone tributes once a week. From their perspective, they won’t make any trouble with the first shipment. No, rather, even if they don’t want to, they’ll do so in order not to arouse any suspicion. But if there are no results by the time the second shipment comes, they’ll start to doubt you.”

The world right now was unstable.

If all trust and hope in Kim Tae Hoon disappears, then in this situation, they will begin to act out in desperation.

And that would be a catalyst for collapse.

“The first payment will come in 3 days, and if you add a week to that, then I guess about ten days?”

“That should be the maximum limit. No, actually, not really. There might be problems, but if you explain…….”

Although it may not be a hard limit, in Chang Sung Hoon’s mind, there would only be dark days after the ten days.

‘The monster hates the cold. But if you look at it another way, if it gets warmer, it will ignore the pile of bodies. I’ll have no choice but to make living sacrifices…… then it’ll be over.’

In the end, the best way to control the demon snake was through sacrifices.

In order to stall for more time, he had to do what Lee Jin Sung had done, something that was the worst of the worst.

And, this was something that Kim Tae Hoon was more aware of than Chang Sung Hoon.

“What they want isn’t an explanation.”

The hound dogs’ patience was not important.

“Begin training to start the demon snake hunt.”

6.

“For now, stability is the most important. Don’t strain yourself too much.”

“Th, thank you. Thank you for saving me.”

Seeing the young man bow towards her, Ahn Sun Mi could only awkwardly smile.

‘To talk about stability, how ironic. Who in the world could be stable now?’

While Ahn Sun Mi was thinking to herself, a woman approached her.

“Seonsaengnim, a patient in need of urgent care has come. The patient was bitten by a monster. The patient says that they’re an awakened.”

The woman was a former nurse who had joined the Mek Clan with a group of survivors a few days ago.

She was now responsible for taking care of patients along with Ahn Sun Mi, and had opted to call Ahn Sun Mi by the honorific

title of Seonsaengnim.

[TN: Ok, so there are a few reasons as to why I decided not to translate ‘seonsaengnim’ into English. The direct translation means ‘teacher’, so like a math teacher or a science teacher. However, the word ‘seonsaengnim’ can also be used as an honorific when talking to or referring to a stranger, a doctor, an older male, or in other various contexts. So with that in mind, I decided to just leave it at ‘seonsaengnim’, but keep in mind that in this context, it means doctor.]

And, she wasn’t the only one.

Ahn Sun Mi was now working as the doctor.

“Where is the patient?”

For now, she was the only one that the patients wanted to see. It was because of her ability. She was the only one with the ability to save them.

She was also an integral member of the Mek Clan.

The world as it was currently, had no access to proper medical care. With no medicine in their hands, they would need to frequently risk their lives to scavenge for them. The absence of antibiotics or antipyretics could lead to death.

Given that situation, there being someplace you could visit in order to receive decent medical care was absolutely incredible.

“Euuuh…… p, please save me, please…….”

“What kind of monster bit you?”

“A dog…… no, I was bitten by a monkey-dog.”

“Did it only get your arm?”

Furthermore, it wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that a person’s ultimate goal in the current world was to simply maintain their own lives.

Insurance, life insurance– these things were worthless now. In this day and age, there was no reason to ever have to give up your life for anything.

Especially if someone was an awakened.

“What? Yes. It was only my arm.”

Ahn Sun Mi’s eyes promptly focused onto the patient’s right arm.

It was a serious wound. Without proper medical care or facilities, it would be better to just amputate the arm.

“Ready the tools.”

“Yes ma’am.”

However, after inspecting the wound, Ahn Sun Mi immediately started treatment.

“Brush and knife.”

Even her tools, Ahn Sun Mi held onto a brush and a knife instead of a scalpel or scissors.

They were actions that didn’t make sense.

But, she used the brush to apply her own homemade medicine, and used the knife to smear some of the Mud Troll’s flesh onto the wound.

The once serious wound began to heal at an alarming rate.

“That’ll be 8 monster stones.”

The treatment ended in the blink of an eye, and the reparations negotiation started immediately.

“I, I understand Here…….”

The patient’s comrade promptly fished out eight red colored

monster stones and handed it over.

Considering how the treatment was completed in such a short amount of time, the others who were waiting in line were surprised to see that the man's injuries were completely healed without even a scar.

Chang Sung Hoon approached from within the stillness.

"Noonim, how is business today?"

Hearing that, Ahn Sun Mi gave him a sour look.

Chang Sung Hoon reminded her of her little brother who had recently gone off to college. Of course no older sister would flash a smile at a little brother like Chang Sung Hoon.

"What do you want?"

"We've discovered another Mud Troll. Well to be exact, it's more like a Mud Troll's nest. Presently, we've only identified three of them. They turned a five hundred unit apartment into a grave of corpses. Unfortunately, the corpses have attracted large swathes of goblins and orcs, so it'll take some time to deal with."

"Did you come here just to tell me that?"

"Of course not. I came here to listen to what you have to say. So,

how’d it go?”

Ahn Sun Mi replied with a firm expression on her face.

“Whatever. There was nothing special about the body.”

They were talking about anatomy.

It was about details of a dissection.

The awakened grow stronger by eating more monster stones. But if that was the case, then was there a stone within the heart of an awakened?

Although everyone had their suspicions, there was nobody who was willing to confirm it.

But to be fair, they had never had access to the corpse of an awakened who had frequently ingested monster stones.

To put it another way, the bodies of Lee Jin Sung and his aides would help them solve this mystery.

So of course they would do a dissection.

Unfortunately, there were no results.

When a monster died, it would leave behind a monster stone, but when an awakened died, they would leave nothing behind.

“It looks like the human animal knows only how to consume, not to conserve. Even after the world has changed.”

Ahn Sun Mi tossed a shoulder bag with monster stones inside towards Chang Sung Hoon who had just finished being philosophical.

“Uh, why’d you give me this?”

“Give it to boss.”

“But isn’t this what noonim earned on your own?”

“It’ll only be a waste to be used on me.”

“Boss has suddenly become a pimp. The second lieutenant and noonim are both working hard and dedicating your earnings…… naturally a strong man would be eaten up in this world. But the competitors this time are a cut above the rest…… or are they? But considering how the world has changed, there isn’t really a reason to insist on monogamy now, is there?”

Ahn Sun Mi cut in to stop Chang Sung Hoon’s incessant chatter.

“So what’s boss’ situation right now? Can he really kill that

monster?”

Chang Sung Hoon laughed lightly before replying back.

“Our luck is seriously really good. Like really really good.”

Chapter 36 – Turf War (3)

7.

Under an overpass.

“Stab it! Stab!”

What was originally an area bustling with cars was now a battlefield soaked in blood.

Keuuuh!

It was a battle between three orcs and nine humans.

“Damn it, what kind of monster strength…….”

“Spear! Throw one of the spears!”

It was a primitive and brutal type of warfare. While fighting against the monsters, the humans were armed with simple sharpened pipes as spears and car doors as shields.

And it was a desperate battle.

“Spray! Hurry and use the spray can!”

The orcs' opponents were doing everything they could to fight back.

The humans were in a line like you would see in an American Football game, their car-door shields being struck by the orcs. Some of the humans who wore motorcycle helmets on their heads began to paint the orcs' eyes and mouths black with the bottles of spray paint in their hands.

"Euaaaah!"

One of the men stabbed an orc with all of his strength, driving his sharpened pipe forward.

In that desperate struggle, victory was quickly approaching the humans.

Keuuuh! Keuuuh!

The bloodthirsty orcs were like hedgehogs. There were spears sticking out of their bodies, causing them to cry out in pain.

"It's almost done!"

The faces of the humans began to bloom into smiles, confident in their chances of victory.

Keuheung!

Right up until an orc that was larger than any they had seen before appeared on the bridge.

“On the overpass! On the overpass!”

The oversized orc was clearly some sort of leader of the orcs, its appearance dashing their hopes.

It seized the opportunity to reverse the moral of both orcs and humans, swelling its chest and letting out a roar.

Keuaaaaah!

Its roar resounded throughout the area, sweeping through the area like a wildfire.

“Euuh…….”

Immediately, some of the humans’ legs began to tremble.

Keuuuh!

The momentum they had built up vanished like a used up candle.

The battlefield had changed.

“Keep your wits about you!”

“Hang on! They’re all on their dying breaths!”

Although there was a human trying to raise morale, the chief orc moved towards the overpass’ ledge, seemingly laughing at them.

It was going to throw its huge body into the fray.

“Hey!”

At that moment, something approached the chief orc from its left side at an alarming pace.

Keuuh?

When the chief orc turned its head, it saw the head of a hammer you would find in a factory.

Bbak!

The hammer smashed into the orc’s face, crushing its face and skull.

Puhwat!

The chief orc’s head was like the inside of a watermelon.

The man who had ended the orc's life in one blow, Bang Hyun Wook, had his leg hoisted on the overpass' ledge while yelling.

"I'll be taking this one then."

Bang Hyun Wook's words kindled their desire to fight instead of provoking their ire.

"Woooooooh!"

"Kill them! It'll be over once we kill these bitches!"

Compared to the humans, seeing that their leader had fallen, the orcs' courage began to falter.

Afterwards, the battle was completely one-sided.

The three orcs became nothing more than corpses, and those who had survived the battle let out long sighs.

Maybe it was because there was a shortage, but some of the men began to gently fish out cigarettes before carefully smoking them.

Watching the scene for a little bit, Bang Hyun Wook then turned his head. He saw Chang Sung Hoon observing the buildings in their surroundings, a map in his hands.

“Hyung.”

“What’s up?”

“The buildings in this area haven’t been cleared out yet, isn’t it dangerous here?”

Asking that, Bang Hyun Wook began to look around. There wasn’t a single white flag visible anywhere near those buildings.

“Well that’s why I dragged you along.”

“No, it’s more than that…… if I run into a problem I can just leave with hyung, but the people down there…….”

Hearing that, Chang Sung Hoon folded his map and looked down at the humans who were busily extracting the monster stones from the orcs.

“You would have to take risks if you want to save them.”

“And if I die?”

“It’s better than not doing anything then dying. Regardless, it’s not like you intend to die, right?”

Thinking of those who would do anything to survive, Chang Sung Hoon let out a sigh.

‘Looks like the parties are growing.’

Party.

Groups of survivors began to hunt within the Mek Clan’s domain.

‘It’s what I wanted.’

After Kim Tae Hoon had required a 40% tax, some of the survivors began to actively hunt for monsters. There was more activity compared to when Lee Jin Sung had been the leader.

There were many reasons.

‘If it’s that much, we have to at least express good will.’

For now, since Kim Tae Hoon could get monster stones through the Mek Clan, then he needed to reveal some tricks of the trade.

He revealed the reason behind why he used spray paints, the recipes to the toxic concoctions he made with pesticides, petroleum, and other various toxins, and the weaknesses of some of the monsters he had encountered.

The Mek Clan also began to move out. They started hunting the stronger orange-eyed monsters instead of the weaker red-eyed variants, and they also began hunting down the herd monsters.

Outside of wandering or fugitive solitary monsters, there were no large groups of monsters within the vicinity of any buildings where the Mek Clan had hoisted a white flag. Safe hunting was made possible thanks to the hound dogs who took care of the more dangerous creatures.

Of course, the biggest reason was the 40% tax.

'More than that, are those guys wearing orc leather armor? It's well made. There's a rumor floating around that an old cobbler is making leather equipment in exchange for monster stones…… I suppose I should greet him eventually.'

Aside from the 40%, the rest was up to the hound dogs.

Basically, it was up to the hound dogs to choose what to do with the remaining monster stones and monster bodies.

That didn't mean they could be careless with their resources though. If they ever thought they could be careless, they would never have embarked on the road to be a hunter.

They were hunting because there was something to get out of it.

They hunted so that they could have a steady supply of materials

to fuel their consumption.

‘Since an ecosystem has been settled, they would use their heads to develop easier methods for survival.’

There were definitely those who were trying to develop more efficient and effective ways to utilize monster parts.

The old cobbler, a craftsman who had turned to crafting leather armor out of monster skin; a construction worker was using construction materials to create various sharp weapons like spears or knives; and a worker from a car factory had even outfitted a tram for the purposes of smashing monsters.

‘At least now the area is somewhat appropriate to live in.’

Humans had adapted to the situation in order to survive.

Humans had become the top predator by demonstrating their creativity and by improving upon preexisting inventions and tools.

It was the same even in this era of monsters.

If humans wanted to survive in this era, then they had no choice but to adapt.

‘Once boss kills the demon snake, the number of parties will explode. The smarter ones will probably create their own force like

ours.’

But of course, should Kim Tae Hoon fail to kill the demon snake, then everything they had built up to this point would collapse.

“Rather than that, you’ve been looking at the map an awul lot hyun, what are you looking for?”

“Well, we have to check the monsters’ territories. There’s a pretty high chance that there are strong monsters dwelling in the the apartments and housing complexes.”

“Amazing. Honestly, who knows if hyungnim can even kill the snake, it might just be a pipe dream.”

If Kim Tae Hoon fails to kill the snake and ends up dying, then Bucheon would definitely have only dark days ahead.

There would be many scenes where humans would fight each other instead of the monsters.

The survivors in Bucheon would literally all perish.

However, Chang Sung Hoon didn’t think that Kim Tae Hoon would fail.

“We won’t figure out the answer just because we’re worrying about it.”

That was the reason why they had come out here.

“All we need to concern ourselves with is what comes after boss kills the snake.”

‘It’s definitely somewhere here. Baek Sung Taek’s secret warehouse where he stored all of his artwork is definitely here somewhere.’

It was Chang Sung Hoon’s responsibility to plan what came after Kim Tae Hoon killed the demon snake.

‘But still, I can’t actually see everything just because of a map. Are there any map-like relics that exist? M-maybe something like a maphack?!’

8.

Gulp!

After Kim Tae Hoon swallowed another monster stone, he took a picture of his right hand.

[Basic Abilities]

– Strength : 100

– Stamina : 89

His Strength had finally exceeded 100 points.

It was amazing.

‘Progress is just as fast as when I monopolized everything.’

What was even more amazing was the fact that Kim Tae Hoon hadn’t hunted a single monster for those stones.

But regardless, his rate of progression was just as fast as when he was fighting on the front lines.

‘Chang Sung Hoon was right.’

It was all thanks to Chang Sung Hoon.

His system had turned any and all survivors into hunters.

The hunters hunted more and more monsters, and as the number of monsters killed went up, the amount of monster stones at his disposal also went up.

Of course, it wasn’t all for free.

Kim Tae Hoon lifted his head.

Orbiting around Kim Tae Hoon like a satellite was the Sword of the Commander.

Its movements were very smooth. It was as though the sword had a life of its own.

It was thanks to the strenuous training that he had been going through.

‘It finally reached a decent level.’

Although Telekinesis had a set potential, it’s utility was unfathomable.

However, the user wouldn’t be able to cover the infinite number of ways to utilize it.

Just like how an F1 race car had no meaning when in the hands of an average person.

A child who held onto scalpels and surgical scissors didn’t automatically become a doctor.

The same was true for Kim Tae Hoon.

Telekinesis' value may be unfathomable, but Kim Tae Hoon's ability to utilize it was woefully low.

Of course, with enough training and practice, the ways Kim Tae Hoon could utilize it would become just as unfathomable.

Unfortunately, Kim Tae Hoon didn't exactly have the time to practice and learn the nuances of his ability, at least not right now.

Instead, he sought to simply be better than he was before.

To be faster than before, stronger than before, and more precise than before!

He was training his Telekinesis so that he could manipulate a sword to be faster and more precise.

'Cut.'

Moving according to his thoughts, the orbiting Sword of the Commander shot out.

Like an arrow.

The sword skimmed the top of an erect tire located behind Kim Tae Hoon, grazing right past it.

Swik!

Following the sound of the wind, a flap from the top of the tire fell off.

The most recent slice had landed on top of a pile of previously cut tire chunks.

The ones at the bottom of the pile were thicker than a finger, but as you went up, the slices became thinner and thinner.

The ones at the top of the pile were like thin sheets of paper.

Kim Tae Hoon let out a long breath.

He was like a steamboat that had already embarked.

9.

Demon snake, this beast had been feeling rather irate lately.

Recently, it had only been able to feast on cold bodies. Eating cold food in cold weather was a crime against eating itself.

But because the Demon Snake could not stand the cold, it had endured.

Seuseu! Seuseu!

However, the Demon Snake couldn’t stand it anymore.

Today was the day that the Demon Snake was going to fill its stomach with a nice warm meal. It didn’t even want to look at the usual pile of bodies.

By this point, the location where the bodies would usually be was like a dining table for the snake.

And as always, there was something there.

There was a single body all by itself.

Chiureureu!

Seeing that, the demon snake was angry. A mockery! One sacrifice wouldn’t be nearly enough to satisfy the snake!

Chiureu, chiureu!

Furthermore, there was a disgusting stench coming off the body.

Shiaaa!

The demon serpent immediately realized that this body was not a sacrifice, but a poison!

Kyaa, Kyaa!

The demon snake grew angrier and eventually, he harbored no intentions to endure his rage.

It felt that it needed to demonstrate its power and majesty once more.

The demon snake began to slither up the steps without hesitation.

The cold air did not dare to block the enraged demon snake's path.

The demon snake suddenly burst through the entrance of the subway.

Kyaa!

It began to once more revel in the sunlight.

Vroom!

At the same time, a large bus rushed towards the demon snake.

Kwagwagwang!

It wasn’t long before the bus slammed into the snake, turning into nothing more than a scrap.

On the other hand, the snake merely trembled and squirmed, but did not fall or move from its spot.

Seuu!

Instead, the demon snake’s yellow eyes gave off a murderous intent.

The demon snake slammed its tail against the bus that had slammed into its body.

Kwang!

It crushed the bus and split it in half, like chopsticks cutting through tofu.

As though that weren’t enough, the demon snake also began to smash the street around it with its tail.

There were terrible scars on the ground.

In fact, the whole world seemed to have frozen in fear. A stifling silence filled the surroundings.

Awooooh!

A loud howl cut through the silence.

That same howl shook the demon snake's body. The demon snake's eyes narrowed until they were like mere threads.

The shape of its pupils were indicative of its anger.

Some bastard werewolf had dared to trespass onto its territory and use its Howling on the snake, clearly challenging its authority.

The demon snake had no intention of letting it go.

Awooooooh!

The demon snake rushed towards the sound of the Howling.

The demon snake soon arrived at an empty lot that had been reserved for construction.

And on that plot of empty land was a lone man who had come out to greet it.

Chapter 37 – Turf War (4)

10.

It was an empty lot packed with dirt, ready for a building to be built.

Kim Tae Hoon was standing in center of the vacant lot, there were a number of Mek Clan soldiers and a decent amount of awakened hanging around the surrounding area carrying out a mission they were assigned, they were waiting for the right moment to fulfill their mission.

‘I just need to pull the trigger.’

‘All I have to do is act as I’ve been ordered. It’s not difficult.’

While they waited, they went over their commands over a hundred times.

All of that was up until the point the demon snake appeared after chasing after the Howl Kim Tae Hoon had given off, the moment when a giant, 20 meter long snake that could swallow a car whole appeared.

Ah!

They went stiff.

Fear, the demon snake had yet to utilize that terrifying ability.

Those who laid eyes on the beast would easily imagine their own deaths.

Like that, they stiffened.

Awoooo!

It was the Howling, Kim Tae Hoon had used it once again to help the soldiers come back to their senses.

Afterwards, the demon snake snapped its gaze towards Kim Tae Hoon, and the other soldiers began to move.

“Water!”

“Water!”

The first thing to move was a fire truck.

Kwa kwa kwa!

Two firetrucks shot out strong columns of water into the air, soaking the ground as though it were rain.

Kyaaa!

The demon snake that was watching Kim Tae Hoon eyed the water nervously.

The water falling like rain, especially in this cold weather, was much more irritating and troublesome than the bus had been when it crashed into it.

So naturally, the demon snake would try and smash the fire trucks that were spraying water.

Seuk!

A sword slash swept across the snake's skin, but it didn't leave a cut deeper than a finger.

The demon snake's eyes began to move around when it got injured

Swik!

It saw a sword flying through the air.

It defied all laws of physics, and even the birds could not compare to it.

Kya! Kya!

The demon snake was having trouble dealing with the flying sword.

The snake went upright and chased after the sword, but the sword evaded its attacks. The flying sword kept making small wounds on the snake's body.

But there were no deep wounds.

Most of the wounds were only as deep as a pinky.

The demon snake's giant body, considering its thick skin and flesh, the wounds were nothing but a drop of blood, they were nothing but mere scratches.

Because they weren't deep, they didn't stop.

'All according to plan so far.'

If the sword stabs deeply, then the would would be deep. But in the end, that's it.

That's why Kim Tae Hoon had practiced cutting and slicing lightly. There were no deep wounds, but only wounds that were just barely deep enough to draw blood.

Of course, it would be impossible to kill the snake with only that.

“The water cover is complete!”

“Get out! Get out of the firetruck!”

But that’s why he had prepared the firetrucks.

The purpose of the fire trucks was to spray the snake and irritate it.

“But will it eat the pesticide?”

“Although it’s a half water and half pesticide mix, it won’t have any effect if it doesn’t go in the body.”

They had poured pesticide into the fire trucks beforehand.

If it were to enter its body through the wounds, then the effects were show to show. The pesticide was a medicine for death.

It was also the reason why they chose a plot of land packed with dirt. The dirt will mix with the mixture and turn into mud, which would cover up the snake’s wounds, becoming a vector for the transmittance of the pesticide.

It would be the same if traces of mud entered the snake’s mouth

and entered its internal organs.

But above all, this was just the beginning.

Kyaaa!

‘The beast is focused solely on the sword.’

Seeing that the snake was chasing after the sword, he fished out an arrow from his belt.

Yi Sun Sin’s Arrow.

This arrow that lacked any fletching was different from other arrows. Its shaft was covered in a layer of ice.

And the ice, of course, was not ordinary either.

It was poisoned ice.

Furthermore, it was no different from tetrodotoxin.

[TN: Tetrodotoxin is a neurotoxin found in pufferfish and other toxic marine animals.]

Blowfish poison.

When Kim Tae Hoon had first heard of the demon snake, all thoughts of hunting it through strength were thrown out the window. Instead, he decided on a softer approach utilizing poison.

In fact, the place where he had heard the story, a sushi restaurant, had inspired him.

The idea to use blowfish poison.

Afterwards, Kim Tae Hoon had collected the toxins from the various blowfish found in sushi restaurants around Bucheon.

Its efficacy was also verified.

There wasn't much to be scavenged from the blowfish that were prepared for consumption, but he was still able to retrieve some toxins, which he tested by leaving poisoned birds on the floor for scavenging monsters to eat.

So he knew.

The amount of poison he was able to gather from the blowfish wasn't enough to deal a fatal blow to the snake.

So it wasn't really a big deal.

As long as the snake stumbled, wavered, or lost focus just a small bit, it was more than enough.

That’s all he wanted.

The arrow flew towards the snake that had pushed Kim Tae Hoon to the back of its mind, ceaselessly chasing after the sword.

Puk!

Then like small syringe, the tiny, needle-like arrow entered the giant demon snake’s body.

‘It’s done.’

Through his Telekinesis, Kim Tae Hoon felt the tactile feedback of the arrow piercing the snake.

At the same time, the arrow’s presence disappeared from Kim Tae Hoon’s senses.

‘It starts now.’

Everything until now was nothing but the prologue.

This wasn’t a simple battle. The interior of Bucheon City was the battleground between predator and prey, a battleground where the winner would occupy the center of the city and become the ruler.

All or nothing.

‘First is the mortar.’

It was only natural to prepare for all out war.

A mortar shot would signal the start of the war.

A mortar’s firepower far outstripped that of a rifle. But in return, it was difficult to operate. There was not a single case where a mortar had been succcessfully used against a monster until now.

There was not enough distance to take aim, and there was not enough room for it to be effective.

But, simply put, if a target were to enter the blast zone, then there was no weapon more effective than the mortar.

Especially now since the target was bigger than a tank. Even if they wanted to miss, it would be difficult to do so.

Even more, it wouldn’t be hard to find one or two artillery operators within a hundren Korean men.

Kim Tae Hoon lifted his head and looked at the snake that was still struggling against the sword.

The flying sword's movements were toying with the snake. The demon snake acted as though it were possessed by the agile flying sword, which would close in on the snake whenever there was a gap in its defenses, as though it were racing towards a finish line.

Kyaaa!

There was only the sword in the snake's eyes.

It saw only the sword and nothing but the sword.

Now, Kim Tae Hoon began to attract the demon snake. He guided the snake towards the center of the vacant lot by use of the sword and his Telekinesis.

'Now.'

All that remained was to give the signal.

As soon as the other side received his signal, a mortar shell would streak across the sky.

At that moment.

Shya!

The demon snake's eyes changed.

Its eyes which had been focusing only on the sword began to give off a golden light. It wasn't just a regular glow.

'Ah.'

Aura.

Something that couldn't be called anything other than an 'aura' spread out across the vacant lot.

Those who were exposed to it froze.

It was like they were buried.

It felt as though the demon snake were seeing through their entire bodies and was dissecting them.

Before long, the demon snake began to focus on the flying sword, after which it began to follow the source of the sword's power until it found the Telekinesis user.

Of course, it was Kim Tae Hoon.

Chiureub!

The Yellow Eyed Demon Snake stared at Kim Tae Hoon and

flicked its tongue.

11.

‘It caught me.’

As soon as the demon snake’s eyes changed, Kim Tae Hoon felt that the snake was no longer looking at the sword, but the power moving the sword.

So when the demon snake turned towards Kim Tae Hoon, he knew he was right.

‘I’m going to die.’

Kim Tae Hoon would be eaten and killed by the demon snake today.

It wasn’t some vague guess or a gut feeling.

He had already experienced death before. Thanks to Napoleon’s Golden Goblet, he had a clear feeling of what it meant to face certain death.

However, those various scenes and experiences didn’t flash before his eyes.

‘It’s going to kill me.’

There was never a moment up until this point where Kim Tae Hoon had wanted to die. He had done all he could to stay alive.

During all that, he had learned. He had learned what he needed to do in order to survive in the middle of a sea of death.

Tenacity, a stubborn attachment to life.

‘Then before I die, it will die first.’

To kill before being killed.

Kim Tae Hoon’s body began to move.

The Energy in his body responded to his will to live. It freed Kim Tae Hoon’s body from the shackles of the demon snake’s eyes.

However, the demon snake’s gaping maw had already cast a shadow over Kim Tae Hoon’s head.

Escape?

No, it was impossible.

His flesh and bones let him know. His seasoned body let him

know that the chance had already passed.

So Kim Tae Hoon didn't try to escape.

Instead, he did the opposite.

Kim Tae Hoon threw himself into the abyss that was the snake's mouth.

Like that, Kim Tae Hoon was sucked inside the snake's body.

Kag!

A sound resembling that of something being caught in the snake's throat rang out. As it was going to consume its prey, the morsel had suddenly thrown itself into its own throat.

But of course the demon snake didn't really mind.

As far as it was concerned, Kim Tae Hoon wasn't a creature that had poisons inside of it.

No, it wouldn't really have mattered if he was poisonous. The demon snake's eyes had seen all.

Kim Tae Hoon was the only one that could bare its teeth at the snake while the rest were nothing but prey to be hunted down at

its leisure.

Gulp!

So he swallowed Kim Tae Hoon whole.

The demon snake began to crush Kim Tae Hoon.

Buudeuk!

The body was being forcibly compressed– flesh was ripped off the bones while the bones themselves grinded against each other until they snapped.

That sound even reach Kim Tae Hoon’s ears.

Buudeuk!

It was the sound of death.

The loud sounds of his bones knocking against each other reached his eardrums from inside, but he didn’t focus on those sounds despite being near to death.

But Kim Tae Hoon ignored that sound.

‘Let’s hear it.’

What he was listening to wasn’t from himself but something else.

·····Dugeun!

It was the slow heartbeat of the demon snake’s heart.

Dugeun!

After waiting what seemed like an eternity to hear the next heartbeat, Kim Tae Hoon ordered the sword that was still linked to him through his Telekinesis.

The sword flew and stabbed towards the sound!

Chapter 38 – Eyes (1)

1.

When Kim Tae Hoon said that he would hunt the demon snake, the survivors reacted in one of two ways.

Some considered joining him, and some prayed for his success.

There was nobody who wished for Kim Tae Hoon's failure in killing the demon snake.

However, nobody thought that Kim Tae Hoon would be able to successfully kill the snake.

It wasn't because they couldn't imagine it.

Rather, it was because thinking about his failure would make their bodies tremble and their faces turn blue.

They couldn't even feel desperation.

That was why they didn't even bother to imagine it.

But at this moment.

'Ah!'

Kim Tae Hoon was eaten.

The snake, with its mouth open so wide that it could swallow a car, swooped down at Kim Tae Hoon.

Meanwhile, nobody in the area could move properly.

The demon snake's grandeur was like the petrification effect of Medusa's head.

So like that, the gigantic mouth swallowed their only hope.

The demon snake didn't stop there.

To make it easier to put Kim Tae Hoon into its stomach, the snake erected itself and stood tall like a tower so that Kim Tae Hoon who was at the opening of its throat would easily slide in.

The others witnessed all of it.

They couldn't look away.

Nobody dared to turn their heads and close their eyes.

It was basically torture. Everyone was forced to stare as their only hope became an abyss of black despair.

Puk!

Despite being ownerless, a sword that had been attacking the demon snake brought an end to their torture.

The sword dug through the demon snake's neck, causing the snake's upright body to fall over like the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

But unlike the Leaning Tower of Pisa, its body fell without stopping.

Eventually, its body collapsed onto the floor.

Ggwareung!

The ground trembled as though an earthquake had struck. The scene overwhelmed them that everyone in the vicinity did not dare run away, and simply fell to the floor.

That was all. Those who had fallen were simply lying down on the floor like mannequins.

They were still within the grasps of despair, there was nobody able to escape it on their own.

There was only one person who could solve this.

Kim Tae Hoon.

The collapsed demon snake's open mouth revealed Kim Tae Hoon.

2.

Gulp gulp!

Kim Tae Hoon audibly gulped, his neck tilted up, a thermos at his lips.

Ahn Sun Mi handed Kim Tae Hoon some more wine since he had been drinking from his thermos.

Kim Tae Hoon downed the contents of the wine goblet that was so full that the liquid inside threatened to spill over.

"How is your body?"

Finally, after consuming the medicinal pills that Ahn Sun Mi had made from mud trolls. Kim Tae Hoon opened his mouth, exuding an earthy smell.

"I just wish I could drink a cup of coffee."

“Ah, is that so?”

Hearing his blunt remark, Ahn Sun Mi could only sigh.

It was a sigh of relief.

If Kim Tae Hoon had the luxury to say something like that, then it must mean that his condition was alright.

“You can make it yourself.”

Speaking bluntly, Ahn Sun Mi stood up from her seat.

Kim Tae Hoon did not look at her. He closed his eyes instead.

He began ruminating.

‘That was the worst.’

The hunting of the demon snake, the entire process from beginning to end.

‘Everything about that was the worst.’

The absolute worst, there was no other way to describe what had happened.

‘From the preparation phase to the end of the fight.’

Even though he had said that he was ready, as soon as what was basically a prologue ended, he was immediately plunged into deadly crisis right at the start of the fight.

In the end, Kim Tae Hoon was devoured by the demon snake. He could hear his body crack while inside the snake’s throat.

An unforgettable experience, but unforgettable in the sense that it wouldn’t be surprising if it was a trauma he carried with him for his entire life.

‘I almost died before I even saw the dragon again.’

However, instead of trying to repress the memory, he was trying to remember the moment even more clearly.

He concentrated so that he would never forget.

‘That’s the only thing I got from this whole thing.’

Kim Tae Hoon had succeeded right at the moment when he was being crushed.

‘The sword responded to my Telekinesis.’

Kim Tae Hoon's will had reached out towards the sword.

The Sword of the Commander had stabbed into its heart.

It was the first time.

'Even though all I saw was darkness…….'

Kim Tae Hoon had relied on his vision in order to use his Telekinesis. No, rather, it was an absolute necessity for him to use Telekinesis.

Kim Tae Hoon did not have the ability to move things he could not see. It wasn't something that Kim Tae Hoon thought was possible.

His sword had disappeared from his vision and senses when he was in the snake's throat.

No, to be honest, it didn't occur to him to use his Telekinesis to control the sword.

He willed it. The sword responded to his will and flew in the direction of the demon snake's heartbeat.

He was trying to recall the moment so he could recreate the same action.

‘Chet.’

Of course, it wasn’t so easy to recreate it.

The feeling of desperately clinging onto life…… it was like a miracle created by Kim Tae Hoon’s life-long desire.

It wouldn’t be a miracle if it could be easily recreated.

‘Can’t do anything about it now.’

So of course it wouldn’t be easy to experience the same feeling again.

‘For now I just have to be content with the fact that it’s possible.’

However, one thing was clear. The possibilities for Telekinesis were endless.

Furthermore, there was a power that Kim Tae Hoon could acquire right away.

Kim Tae Hoon got up from his seat. The gigantic body of the demon snake that occupied the vacant lot entered Kim Tae Hoon’s gaze.

It was time to exercise the right of the victor.

3.

The dead snake still exuded a bloody air from within the vacant lot.

As a result, nobody dared to approach the open space.

Even the armed Mek Clan’s soldiers who were assigned to guard access to the corpse felt the same.

Their faces sported neutral expressions while they stood in front of the snake. They were like mannequins, and to be frank, the only difference between them and a mannequin was the fact that white foggy breaths would plume out of their mouths.

A man approached the lot that was strife with fear.

Some terrified spectators who couldn’t help but stare at the demon snake spotted Kim Tae Hoon.

Nobody immediately noticed that it was Kim Tae Hoon.

Although Kim Tae Hoon’s name had spread quite a bit, most people had never seen his face before.

Even if they had seen his face, most people wouldn't have good enough vision to recognize him from a distance.

However, there was no reason for anyone to have to explain that that man was Kim Tae Hoon.

The monsters that utilized Fear and inspired fear and despair in the survivors of Bucheon City were all dead now, so naturally, there was only one man with the victor's right to the body.

'That person?'

'It's that person!'

As Kim Tae Hoon got closer to the demon snake's corpse, the surrounding people began to recognize him.

In the end, when Kim Tae Hoon approached the demon snake, someone saw it.

"Oooowaaaaah!"

A shout.

A cry of victory, and the first one of many.

"Oooowaaaaah!"

It was a shout, a symbol of human hope, the hope that had been stolen from the humans on December 31st, the day when the monsters suddenly appeared and waged war against humanity.

In order to survive, everyone had been living on their last breaths. There hadn't been a real victory until now. There were some who had feigned death to survive– there was no way they could die so they had to live.

They could not bear to cheer or shout for joy for none of their battles had been real victories.

This was the first time.

The survivors who had their livelihood robbed and been forced to flee had their first real victory, and so they couldn't help but shout as much as they could.

Ooowaaah!

The sounds of their cheers rang out. Their zealous cheering melted the dismal atmosphere.

Furthermore, their cheers convicted their hearts.

Badum badum badum, all of their hearts began to work up a frenzy of beats in the heat of the moment.

In the center of all the cheering was Kim Tae Hoon, who was staring at the sword embedded in the snake's neck.

Only the hilt of his sword was visible. It was like it had been waiting for its owner.

Kim Tae Hoon grasped the hilt and pulled it out. It was like the legend of King Arthur who had retrieved the sword in the stone.

Swik!

Without any hesitation, the sword sliced the demon snake's body, revealing its silvery flesh.

The silvery surface reflected a similarly silver colored light onto its surroundings.

Ooowaaah!

Seeing the silver light, the spectators began to shout again.

Amidst all the shouting, Kim Tae Hoon immediately went to work on the snake's body.

He dismantled the beast's flesh, cutting off the snake's flesh until the demon snake's black heart was revealed. What was revealed was a yellow gem, like a pearl in an oyster, of which he took a

photo of with his smartphone.

[Black Snake's(黑蛇) Jewel]

– Strength and stamina are greatly increased when consumed.

– Energy Ranking is greatly enhanced when consumed.

– Mana Ranking is greatly enhanced when consumed.

– Physical Defense ranking is greatly enhanced when consumed.

– The Black Snake's ability [Black Snake's Evil Eye] is learned when consumed.

Kim Tae Hoon retrieved the yellow gem and immediately consumed it.

Gulp!

There was no hesitation.

It had immediately gone in his mouth and he had swallowed it without any hesitation.

Kim Tae Hoon's body accepted the Black Snake's Jewel and had assimilated its power into its flesh.

'Hmm.'

First, the Energy residing in his stomach began to change. The loach-like Energy began to frenziedly act up and grow bigger. It became a snake.

Power from the now large and snake-like Energy coursed through his body. It felt like it would burst his body if it couldn't be controlled.

At that moment, the power of the Energy coalesced in his eyes. The whites of Kim Tae Hoon's eyes disappeared until his eyes were pure black.

At the same time, the Energy in his stomach area was swiftly exhausted.

'Is this the Black Snake's Evil Eye?'

By feeding it Energy, the world before his eyes had changed.

The things he could see were sharper. It wouldn't be impossible to count the number of feathers on a bird.

Furthermore, he could see what had been invisible before.

Kim Tae Hoon looked at his right hand.

[Basic Abilities]

– Strength : 135

– Stamina : 122

[Special Abilities]

– Energy : D Rank

– Mana : D Rank

– Telekinesis : A Rank

– Physical Defense : D Rank

– Magic Resistance : D Rank

Kim Tae Hoon, he had obtained eyes.

4.

Chang Sung Hoon had not participated in the hunt.

He had no qualifications to participate in the hunt against such a terrifying creature.

Instead, he received a report after all had been said and done.

Kim Tae Hoon had been ingested by the demon snake, had then miraculously stabbed the snake's heart with his sword, then had

consumed its monster stone.

Hearing the report, Chang Sung Hoon felt dizzy.

‘That could have been the end of us.’

Attracting the beast had all gone according to plan.

Everything that happened after was a crapshoot.

It wouldn’t have been strange if Kim Tae Hoon had died. No, rather, by all means Kim Tae Hoon should have died.

However, he was the one to come out on top.

So of course he would take the spoils of war.

Chang Sung Hoon rose from his seat.

‘Well then, the old man who worked at the shoe factory was named Park Gabsu now was it?’

Chapter 39 – Eyes (2)

5.

It was nighttime, and the survivors' seemingly endless celebration had finally started to wind down.

The cold night prompted the survivors to once again move towards a warmer area for the sake of their survival.

Kim Tae Hoon was also preparing to brave the night.

Kim Tae Hoon's bed was the inside of a car. A Benz S500, Kim Tae Hoon who had taken up residence in the driver's seat of an over-expensive car, rolled down the window and looked out.

He could see the Black Snake's body.

Looking at the snake, Kim Tae Hoon held up a mug. His partner spoke, white steam rapidly rising out of his mouth. He did not want to spend the night sleeping.

"Boss."

"Hyungnim!"

Chang Sung Hoon and Bang Hyun Wook appeared.

“Would you like to drink some beer with us? We were thinking about it, and it should be very refreshing. We also brought some snacks.”

Before he could even answer, Chang Sung Hoon entered the passenger seat and Bang Hyun Wook entered the back seat.

Chang Sung Hoon put a hand in the black plastic bag that he was holding.

“Do you have a favorite brand?”

“I don’t need any of it.”

“Hyung, pass me a Miller. I want a Miller.”

Chang Sung Hoon handed Bang Hyun Wook some Miller beer cans.

“So a kid who just graduated high school knows how to choose beer brands? Huh?”

“Haha, didn’t you know that everyone’s like that nowadays?”

Bang Hyun Wook received the beer can, an awkward smile on his face.

Kim Tae Hoon took a sip from his coffee while watching the two. He started to enjoy the silence.

“You’ve really worked hard.”

Chang Sung Hoon said, seeking to fill in the silence.

“Ja, let me get to the point. Now is the time to make a clan.”

He didn’t add any unnecessary fluff at the start or the end.

“A clan? Hyung, are you talking about our clan? What clan are you saying we should make?”

“I mean that we should allow for the creation of another clan within our territory. We’ve become the head clan of all the other rabble that have gathered. For example, what if we take our clan a step farther, and become a guild with other clans under us? The clan would then be running several parties internally.”

It was a concept that anyone who had played an mmorpg could understand.

Therefore, Bang Hyun Wook immediately asked a question.

“That’s dangerous isn’t it? What if betrayal…….”

“If they kill boss, then only one of them could occupy the top seat. After that, they would be the ones responsible for killing all of the strong monsters, but would they be willing to?”

Grasping the situation, Bang Hyun Wook took a sip of his beer instead of replying.

Chang Sung Hoon took a look at Kim Tae Hoon.

“To be honest we’re not just a clan anymore, some of the hunting parties have a considerable amount of power. We’ll need a system to regulate as they get bigger and bigger. I think that it’s necessary to have a gun we could use in case of emergencies. A war is waged with many people after all. Of course, this isn’t an urgent thing right now. The immediate problem is with the public. We need a representative.”

Chang Sung Hoon took a sip then began to talk again.

“The most at risk, ready-to-explode bomb at the moment is exactly the public. The survivors now solely rely on the awakened. As a result, the public is not in a good position. Two or three out of every ten female patients who visits Ahn Sun Mi noonim are victims of sexual assault. There are also similar victims amongst men. And naturally, there is no one willing to confess to it.”

Chang Sung Hoon’s expression became more grim as he continued to speak.

This was the reality.

“Are you saying that you want an election for a public representative?”

The people do need a voice afterall.

It would be absolutely necessary if order and balance were to be maintained.

“No, an election is impossible. It would be impossible to hold an election considering the circumstances. Plus, it’s not necessary to do os. It wouldn’t be hard to just appoint one. Boss should just go and pick them. The question is who to choose. So with that in mind, could you possibly hand me that snake?”

Hearing those words, Kim Tae Hoon downed his coffee.

“There’s an old man by the name of Park Gabsu. He’s a man who has been making leather shoes for the past 40 years, but his skill is unquestionable. I want to let him make some items out of the snake parts. At the moment, various engineers and craftsmen have been itching to air their skills and wares at any given opportunity. We should make studios and workshops. If we want to bridge the relationships between ordinary people and the awakened, it would be necessary to form a mutually complementary relationship with these people.”

He didn’t intend for politicians with the backing of the public sentiment to come forth.

Complementary.

They needed people with skills to support the others who were hunting monsters with their life on the line. They needed laborers, engineers, planners, and others who had the relevant skillsets.

However, they also needed a symbol.

A symbol that anyone would be able to reference from the records in the future.

The corpse of the Black Snake would fit the role quite nicely.

“I plan to gift items made from the Black Snake’s skin to any newly formed clans.”

Listening to Chang Sung Hoon, Kim Tae Hoon held his coffee while silently looking at the Black Snake’s corpse.

Of course, Kim Tae Hoon didn’t want to oppose Chang Sung Hoon’s ideas. His silence was his own tacit consent.

“Of course, there is no such thing as a free lunch.”

Knowing that, Chang Sung Hoon pulled out a folded map with a smile on his face that softened the serious atmosphere.

It was a map of Bucheon City.

“Since I’ll be taking the prey you hunted, I’ll offer my own spoils.”

Chang Sung Hoon began to point out various places he had marked and written about on the map.

“There’s a high chance that Baek Sung Taek’s warehouse is here.”

“Who is that person exactly?”

“He’s Whale, just Whale.”

“Whale?”

“Whale.”

Listening to the Bang Hyun Wook and Chang Sung Hoon’s exchange, Kim Tae Hoon swallowed the coffee in his mouth and spoke.

“Who is he?”

“He’s a bottom feeder whose main focus was stolen artifacts and dealing in stolen goods. He goes by Whale since he takes everything. He can’t keep everything in his house, so he goes by common practice of storing things in a warehouse, and the warehouse is in Bucheon.”

“So is this star where he is?”

“It’s one of the possible areas.”

“You don’t know the exact location?”

“If the location were known, it would have been ransacked a long time ago.”

“But then how do you know it could be here?”

“That man is very faithful to feng shui. Would such a man have his warehouse located just anywhere? The problem is…….”

Tuk tuk.

Chang Sung Hoon tapped the areas around the star marker. He had pointed out various apartment complexes.

Seeing it from the back seat, Bang Hyun Wook frowned.

“Huh, why are there so many apartment complexes?”

Apartment complex.

Normally, it wouldn’t have meant anything, but now that monsters freely roamed the Earth, the circumstances have changed.

It was a hell, and for good reason.

“Looks like it’s a total monster’s den. And powerful monsters at that.”

There would be food everywhere.

Literally.

The population density within the apartment complexes would be higher than anywhere else. December 31st was when the monsters first appeared. It was a time where most people would be spending their time at home, waiting for the year to end.

So any place where food is abundant would be a place where predators could fill their stomachs.

That was the reason why Kim Tae Hoon and Messiah had not easily explored apartment complexes…… but the places that Chang

Sung Hoon had pointed out were exactly that.

“But I don’t think there’ll be many people going in, right?”

It was a place they would normally not have approached.

Even if there were people who wanted to enter, they would have to rely on the Mek Clan’s power.

“I’ll go first thing tomorrow morning.”

However, the situation is different now.

“Boss, wouldn’t it be difficult to set out first thing tomorrow morning? We have to clean the area first…….”

“I’ll be going alone.”

The Kim Tae Hoon of now was different than the Kim Tae Hoon of yesterday.

And the Kim Tae Hoon of tomorrow would be different than the Kim Tae Hoon of today.

6.

Keureureu!

Black furred werewolves were meandering about on a dilapidated road, their footsteps masked by the wind.

Seuuk!

After the winds subsided, the sound of werewolf feet crunching down on the snow could be heard.

Seuk, seuk!

There was more than one.

In fact, there were six!

The two meter tall werewolves and their gigantic physiques exercised calm steps that were unthinkable given their size.

Along with their footsteps were their pale, red eyes.

There were many things that their eyes told. The desire to kill the intruder that entered their domain, and a desire to drink the hot blood that flowed through their soon to be prey.

Their prey was walking along the road completely unaware.

Bbodeudeuk, Bbodeudeuk.

The prey did not make any attempts to hide its footsteps, its footprints, or its presence.

Kong!

Soon, the six werewolves revealed themselves to their prey.

The werewolves quickly went into formation, lifting their pointed snouts up to the sky.

Awooooh!

The sound of howls resounded all throughout.

The howls were short.

The black werewolves rushed their prey as soon as their howls ended, seemingly not even giving their prey time to feel fear.

Three of them ran on two legs, while the other two ran on four.

Puhbuk, puhbuk!

The sight of six werewolves swiftly approaching was terrifying. The sight of the werewolves pushing off the floor and crushing the earth was enough to stop the prey's breathing.

Awoooh!

Meanwhile, two of the werewolves used Howling. They were mocking their prey, performing a premature celebration before they even reached their prey.

However, the prey that was at the center of the werewolve's formation eyes began to turn black.

It was at that moment.

Ggeng!

The first werewolf to be affected by the black eyes let out a whimper that not even dogs would let out.

The man rolled his black eyes.

To be honest, nobody would know. The world before his blackened eyes was like a canvas, and in that world black strokes began to fly about.

The wolves would never be able to see it.

It was at that moment.

Hwik!

From the man's waist shot out an unadorned arrow. It moved like lightning, like a silent killer making only the slightest sound.

It would have looked like an irregular copper lightning bolt when look at from above.

However, there was a clear method to the arrow's trajectory.

Chulpuk!

The black werewolve's brains were impaled on it.

Chulpuk, chulpuk!

The black werewolves who had been hoping for a meal instead fell onto the floor, their momentum carrying their bodies forward before finally rolling to a stop.

The fallen werewolves did not get back tup.

The man, Kim Tae Hoon, took a look at the black werewolve's bodies. The world he saw through the Black Snake's Eyes was not too different from the normal world.

It's just that everything was clearer.

It was the same before.

When the black werewolves were running at him, it seemed as though they had stopped.

In that world, Kim Tae Hoon could paint even clearer pictures than before.

However, Kim Tae Hoon did feel any sort of special satisfaction.

On the contrary, it was the opposite.

‘It’s lacking.’

In the clear and crisp world, Kim Tae Hoon could perceive his own flaws even more clearly.

Keuhaaang!

At that moment, a huge black wolf appeared off to Kim Tae Hoon’s left.

The huge, orange-eyed wolf was large enough to even eat a bear.

It was enraged. It’s anger was directed to the being that had turned its kin into nothing more than lumps of flesh.

Kim Tae Hoon turned his head towards the source of the rage.

He looked at the Black Wolf with the Black Snake's Eyes.

Keureureu, kuk!

As soon as their gazes crossed, a choked whimper came out of the Black Wolf's mouth, and its body froze.

It was trying to fight against the immense invisible power that was pulling at its limbs.

Cheureung!

Under those circumstances, Kim Tae Hoon pulled out a sword from the sheath strapped to his back.

It flew on its own towards the Black Wolf's neck.

Suhguk!

It cut through without any impediments.

Seeing the scene, Kim Tae Hoon could once more perceive it clearly.

‘This feels wrong.’

That he was still lacking.

Chapter 40 – United (1)

1.

An open space meant for erecting a building.

“Get rid of this lump! It’s in the way!”

For a brief moment, this area was full of despair, but before long, the sounds of construction and manual labor began to ring out.

“I need two more here!”

“I need three more people here! Hurry!”

At the middle of all of them hubbub was the body of a giant snake.

A Black Snake.

The creature that had instilled fear and and despair in all was now paying the price.

There were people clinging onto the snake’s body like ants, chipping away at its flesh little by little.

Their methods were also varied.

“The power saw stopped! Oil! Get some oil over here!”

Some were using power saws that would be used in construction zones to cut its skin, while others were using pickaxes and shovels to dig away at its flesh.

“Careful, careful! Watch out for the crane!”

There were also cranes and forklifts being utilized to help move part of the body.

Of course it was difficult.

“Ugh, this is harder than physical labor.”

“I’d rather do deliveries. Just what kind of creature’s body…….”

On the contrary, they were overflowing with vitality.

“Well I think it’s fine that it’s difficult like this.”

“It’s been awhile since I sweat so much, it’s refreshing.”

Some of them were relishing in just working their hands and doing some labor.

“Break time, break time!”

It was like pouring oil on the flames of his enthusiasm and stoking the flames.

“Today’s menu is ramen, rice cake ramen!”

There was a huge cauldron that had been salvaged from a nearby restaurant, and inside was the boiling rice cake ramen, saliva dripping from everyone’s mouths.

“Let’s eat!”

Everyone stopped what they were doing and began to eat.

Eating the hot noodles in the cold and freezing weather, everyone let out refreshed sighs.

It was a warm sight just seeing it.

However, Chang Sung Hoon’s expression whilst looking at it wasn’t very good.

“Hyung, would you like a bowl?”

Bang Hyun Wook asked Chang Sung Hoon. But he did not answer. Chang Sung Hoon stared at the Black Snake’s corpse with

a firm expression on his face.

“Sung Hoon hyung!”

“Just eat on your own for now, I’m good.”

“Are you really not going to eat? If you ask for a bite to eat I won’t give you any.”

With those words trailing behind him, Bang Hyun Wook ran towards the line that had formed in front of the cauldron. Seeing that, Chang Sung Hoon’s slightly relaxed face stiffened again.

He once again took a look at the Black Snake’s corpse. At this moment, Chang Sung Hoon was concerned about one thing.

‘Where should I go?’

There was a lot to do in the future.

First he needed to make items out of the Black Snake’s skin while the Mek Clan was transitioning into the Mek Guild, which meant that he would need to create a clan consisting of subordinates even though the public representative still needed to be selected.

There were still many important things to have to do after that.

The immediate priority was to develop self-sufficiency. In other words, they needed to secure farmland. They needed more survivors to swell up the ranks of the laborers.

The entire winter would be very busy with just these.

The issues came afterwards.

If Messiah's previous leader, Lee Jin Sung, was correct, then there were monsters stronger than the Black Snake in Bucheon City's vicinity.

According to what they knew now, a monster's strength could be categorized by its eye color.

The lowest rating is red, the next after that is orange, and above that is yellow.

There was a high chance that their strength was categorized by the seven colors of the rainbow.

According to this categorization system, the Black Snake, which had locked the entire city in fear, was only the second strongest monster from the bottom.

'It was only the third form the bottom.'

The dragon, which had briefly appeared above Bucheon City and

had appeared before Kim Tae Hoon in the future, had blue-eyed pupils.

‘If we encounter a yellow-eyed one we won’t die, but if we step on a green mine, it’s game over.’

Currently, the only ones that Kim Tae Hoon can deal with are yellow grade.

Even if they encounter and successfully kill a green eyed monster, Kim Tae Hoon’s death would be inevitable.

‘Even if we do nothing, it’s game over.’

However, they couldn’t just sit still in Bucheon, they needed to move out.

If they stayed only in Bucheon City, then eventually, they’ll be struck by a monster who some day decides to visit Bucheon.

If they stay in Bucheon, it would be the same as being trapped in a cage for monsters to farm humans.

‘Anyways, we have to move.’

It was only a matter of time before they left.

If they wanted to live, they needed to keep on the move.

However, it was as he said, who knew where a threat could come from.

It was like walking through a minefield with no information.

“It’ll be a real fucking pile of shit.”

It was almost as though Chang Sung Hoon were obsessed with this prospect.

If it were a difficult problem, then he would be hard-pressed to find a solution and eventually come across a solution, but the problem he faced at the moment wasn’t difficult.

Even if he worried, an answer wouldn’t miraculously appear.

“Hyung!”

Bang Hyun Wook approached Chang Sung Hoon with a bowl in his hand.

“I said I wouldn’t eat.”

Chang Sung Hoon said in a mixed voice.

“Hyungnim is here.”

“What?”

Chang Sung Hoon couldn’t help but be surprised.

“Already?”

He was surprised to see that those who were eating the ramen noodles were all standing up and bowing their waists.

It was indeed like the return of a king.

Kim Tae Hoon appeared before Chang Sung Hoon’s gaze. He spoke very briefly.

“I’ll have a cup of coffee before I leave.”

2.

“Oh my God.”

“This is impossible. This, all by himself…….”

Two men, in a butcher’s vinyl apron and sporting rubber gloves along with butcher’s tools, looked upon the carnage.

What was spread before them was a road with corpses.

There were corpses strewn about on the road. Humans aren't like monsters. All humans had similar bodies whereas there are many kinds of monsters.

What was surprising was their condition.

"The corpses, their conditions……."

"Is this possible?"

Some had holes in their heads while others were scalped.

Some corpses had both. None of the bodies were devoid of either of them.

If this was the result of a rain of bullets or the work of powerful explosives, there we be no reason not to believe the scene the before them.

As a result, the men who had come to dismantle and handle the bodies were struck frozen with shock.

Amongst them was also Bang Hyun Wook.

Bang Hyun Wook was tasked to protect the men who had come to dismantle the corpses, but at the moment, he was silently observing the massacre carried about by Kim Tae Hoon.

“Chet.”

Shortly thereafter he clicked his tongue.

‘The right toe, and even the right arm.’

Bang Hyun Wook’s could only swallow any complaints or remarks, his gaze complicated.

His memory of what happened on December 31st came to mind.

He recalled the moment when he decided to follow after Kim Tae Hoon.

From that moment, he had thought that he was the only awakened who could help him.

He knew that he couldn’t replace him, but he thought that he could at least fill in the event that Kim Tae Hoon disappeared.

‘What have I been doing?’

But now he knew that all of those thoughts were worthless.

‘During that time…….’

Bang Hyun Wook looked at his right hand. Looking at his right hand, Bang Hyun Wook felt a variety of emotions.

And at that time.

“Oh my God.”

Next to Bang Hyun Wook was another man whose emotions were in turmoil.

3.

“Whale, just how much did this punk hoard away?”

A seemingly ordinary single-family house. A two-story single-family house with a garden.

The interior of the house was full of all kinds of artwork.

In Chang Sung Hoon’s eyes, it was a strange land.

“I had heard that Whale was collecting anything and everything, but I didn’t know that it would be like this. Seeing his collection, I think he was a kleptomaniac. He obviously had no real interest in

this stuff and was just stealing them for the sake of stealing. I've never seen anything like this."

Seeing everything around him, Chang Sung Hoon sported a bitter smile on his mouth.

"What I say is funny now, if there were people like that before the catastrophe, then it would be normal for people to be like that now."

That was the only complaint until then.

Chang Sung Hoon did not forget why he was here. He immediately took out his smartphone.

"It's too much to take a picture one at a time."

The only reason he had come was to look for artifacts that might help in the war against monsters in the future.

That's it.

Instead of answering, Kim Tae Hoon picked up a small bottle that was in his vicinity.

He then tossed it towards Chang Sung Hoon. Chang Sung Hoon reflexively reached out and caught it. He then looked up.

Why had Kim Tae Hoon suddenly handed this to him?

Kim Tae Hoon promptly answered his doubts.

“It’s a relic.”

“What?”

Kim Tae Hoon began to look around instead of replying to Chang Sung Hoon.

His eyes were glowing black.

He had activated the Black Snake’s Eyes.

The power of the Black Snake’s Eyes revealed a different world to him.

Kim Tae Hoon’s eyes revealed the relics. It was like wearing smart glasses– as soon as he saw a relic, he could see the artifact’s abilities.

The painting that Kim Tae Hoon saw was like that.

Before the naked eye, it was nothing but a beautiful figure drawn in the Joseon Dynasty. There was no descriptor about the work or the artist.

But to Kim Tae Hoon, it was different.

[Blessed Portrait of a Beauty]

– Relic Grade: Grade 5

– Relic Rarity : Rare

– Relic Effect : Consumes mana to bless a target with increased Strength.

The Black Snake's Eyes revealed the hidden description of the portrait of a beauty.

Meanwhile, Chang Sung Hoon was looking at a picture of the wine bottle that Kim Tae Hoon had tossed him.

"Do your eyes reveal the artifacts boss?"

Again, instead of replying, Kim Tae Hoon looked around and pointed out other pieces of artwork.

Chang Sung Hoon didn't ask anymore. He began to take pictures of the artwork that Kim Tae Hoon pointed out.

What should have taken a long time to find was quickly processed.

After taking a look at the artifact, it was Chang Sung Hoon's turn.

"There's nothing wrong with what I see. The really valuable stuff should be hidden all throughout the residence. For example, a classic hiding spot would be something like a wardrobe."

Like a ghost, Chang Sung Hoon started to sniff out Baek Sung Taek's, the original owner, stashes.

Starting from the wardrobes, he eventually took a look inside the thicker doors, and even dug through the flower pots on the veranda!

The wallpaper was the jackpot.

"It's an unspoken rule not to hide your most valuable possessions in an obvious location like a safe."

Chang Sung Hoon had torn through the house before finally ripping off the wallpaper.

What he saw behind the wallpaper was a painting, silently sitting there.

A boundless and unstoppable gale.

None would be able to stand before it.

The artist's signature and seal were stamped, still in tact, onto the painting.

"……dear God."

This was the most surprised expression that Chang Sung Hoon had made before Kim Tae Hoon.

"This is impossible. Is this genuine…… an unpublished work by Chusa……."

Chusa, Kim Jung Hee.

It was a weighty name, one which Chang Sung Hoon couldn't help but make a face.

On the other hand, Kim Tae Hoon was stone faced. Instead, he gave a warning.

"Grab the goods and backup."

"Why? Just what are you saying right now……."

The hand that was swiftly beckoning towards Chang Sung Hoon to back up was tinged black.

Black Skin.

Kim Tae Hoon, his ability having gone beyond his arms and reached his shoulders, aimed to unleash his power towards an unremarkable piece of wall.

Kwang!

His strengthened fist busted a hole right through the tough wall.

Hududuk!

Debris began to fall onto the floor, and in that process, what was hiding within the wall was revealed.

Chapter 41 – United (2)

4.

The destructive power behind Kim Tae Hoon's fist was incredible.

The wall crumbled like a cookie. Hududu, the debris from the wall fell like flakes.

'Ah!'

However, his power was no surprise to Kim Tae Hoon. Cradled inside the broken wall was a translucent plastic bag.

Tuktuk!

Retrieving the bag from within the wall, Kim Tae Hoon handed it to Chang Sung Hoon.

After gingerly accepting the parcel, Chang Sung Hoon immediately worked to open it.

Once the plastic wrappings were removed, a luxurious blue silk was revealed.

'Definitely not normal silk.'

The silk itself was very high end. The texture was the same. The moment Chang Sung Hoon touched it, he knew that it was of a different quality than the other relics.

However, the silk itself was nothing compared to what it was swaddling.

"……words can't even describe this."

There was a book within the silk.

An old book, to the public eye, it was nothing but an old book.

'How is this here?'

The ink inscription on the cover was enough to smear Chang Sung Hoon's mind in blackness.

大東輿地圖, Daedongyeojido, The Great Map of the East Land.

[TN: So this line was originally just the Chinese characters (Hanja). When translated, it is "The Great map of the East Land".]

"……It's The Great Map of the East Land."

The Great Map of the East Land.

What's there more to say?

Kim Jeong-ho, also known as Gosanja. This map was the result of a lifetime of work– his magnum opus– something that the later generations had come to praise.

"It's different from the Daedongyeojido that I know."

"This is a different edition. To be precise, Daedongyeojido was first printed on wood blocks. What most people see in books are the various blocks put together to form the whole map. Plus, this····· This is probably an unpublished version."

Chang Sung Hoon was trembling.

He was trembling at the fact that there was an unknown version of Daedongyeojido floating about in the world.

"I had heard rumors, but I thought they were fake·····."

To be honest, the first time he heard the rumors, he believed them to be groundless. There were many similar rumors about Daedongyeojido floating about, and on top of that, there were rumors about similar artifacts of the same magnitude of Daedongyeojido propagating as well. If they were real, then surely some big shots would have made their move.

But the rumor was true.

On top of that, Baek Sung Taek was the owner.

'That's why he hid this in the wall. If it's this, then it's definitely better to leave it in a wall. No need to trust a safe's efficacy when it comes to thieves.'

With Daedongyeojido in his hand, Chang Sung Hoon asked another question.

"How did you know that this was in the wall?"

Although with Black Snake's Evil Eyes Kim Tae Hoon could see an item's description, it did not grant him the ability to see through things.

In other words, he did not have the power to see inside the wall.

But despite that, Kim Tae Hoon had unhesitatingly punched towards the wall.

"The texture on that portion of the wall was different."

"The texture was different? You were able to see that with your eyes?"

Instead of replying, Kim Tae Hoon activated his eye ability again. Chang Sung Hoon looked at the Daedongyeojido that was in Chang

Sung Hoon’s hands.

[The Great Map of the East Land]

– Relic Grade : Grade 4

– Relic Rarity : Special.

– Relic Description : The locations of monsters are displayed on the map.

Chang Sung Hoon whipped out his phone to confirm the map’s ability.

Confirming its ability, Chang Sung Hoon gingerly perused through the book with widened eyes.

Chwareuk, chwareuk!

The rustling of pages accompanied Chang Sung Hoon’s inspection of the pages in the book.

At the same time, he began to piece together the various map fragments in his head.

It was one of the talents that Chang Sung Hoon was blessed with.

If he couldn't maintain an object's image, he couldn't create counterfeits. By committing to memory all of the details and nuances of a piece, he could create an identical counterfeit.

It wasn't very difficult for Chang Sung Hoon to memorize and integrate the map into his mind.

Chwareuk!

As soon as Chang Sung Hoon scanned the last page, the image was completed in his mind.

"This map is kind of like a maphack."

As expected of Chang Sung Hoon, he was able to grasp the functions of the map very quickly.

"Map hack?"

Kim Tae Hoon tilted his head. He was not very familiar with gaming terms.

Chang Sung Hoon began to explain the term to Kim Tae Hoon. Chang Sung Hoon used his finger to scan through the Daedongyeojido again.

He stopped flipping through the pages once he got to a specific spot, after which he showed the page to Kim Tae Hoon.

On that map fragment was a topographical depiction that was packed with red and orange lights.

“This area is what has become Bucheon today.”

“These light…….”

“It’s displaying the monsters’ locations.”

“Details.”

“It shows the locations of any monsters to the owner. It’s like a radar. Not only does it show the smaller and closer ones, but also the bigger more distant ones. A small blip is a small monster, a big blip is a big monster.”

Hearing his explanation, there was one question that came to Kim Tae Hoon’s mind.

“Of the monsters displayed, which are the strongest?”

“Both Mt. Halla and Mt. Baekdu on Jeju Island had indigo lights.”

Indigo.

In other words, monsters comparable to the dragon were on both ends of the Korean Peninsula.

There was nothing positive about it.

The world had changed in a much bigger way than he had first thought.

But now, it was a definite concern.

There was one orange light and one red light moving on the map.

It meant that the monsters migrated from place to place.

“Take only what’s important.”

“Yes sir.”

5.

The cleaners assigned to clean up the trail of bodies in Kim Tae Hoon’s wake were attacked by brown goblins.

These were monsters that Bang Hyun Wook and the Mek Clan soldiers were familiar with.

“Everyone on the truck!”

The brown goblins were weak on their own. A normal, armed adult man is enough to deal with one.

Ggieeeh!

The only problem is that the brown goblins moved in herds under the leadership of a hobgoblin.

Moreover, the hobgoblin’s unique magic made the brown goblins numb to pain and fear.

A monster bereft of fear and pain was terrifying beyond imagination.

That monster horde, facing the wave of more than a hundred creatures, the soldiers were at a loss and were unsure of what to do.

“Awoooo!”

Bang Hyun Wook activated the Howling ability he had learned after eating a Black Wolf’s monster stone that Kim Tae Hoon had given him.

While using the Howling ability, he ran towards the brown

goblins.

He needed to buy some time, but at the same time, it was an expression of confidence.

“Kill them all!”

While shouting, Bang Hyun Wook’s Energy began to move.

The Energy reinforced his body and made him stronger.

Bang Hyun Wook was the strongest Awakened with the highest Strength and Stamina stat in the Mek Clan, aside from Kim Tae Hoon.

His body was wrapped in a Black Orc Leather armor.

Although it wasn’t of Black Snake leather, the Black Orc’s leather’s strength wasn’t simple. It wasn’t something a brown goblin’s teeth or claws could leave marks on.

Thanks to that, Bang Hyun Wook could throw himself into the battlefield without hesitation– it was like free batting.

All he had to do was hit the ball that was on the stand, free batting.

The only difference was that a goblin's head was sitting on a goblin's shoulders instead of a ball on batting stand.

Bbak!

Like that, Bang Hyun Wook went crazy.

Meanwhile, Mek Clan soldiers who had boarded a truck began to shoot at the brown goblins.

Tutu!

Their gunfire was now tempered. Their shots were conservative, not wasting any bullets; their triggers were disciplined better, not pointing their guns at any friendlies.

None of them were frightened, indiscriminately firing towards the brown goblins.

Ggieeh!

The goblins at the forefront quickly began to fall.

Nonetheless, the group of brown goblins began to narrow the distance between them and the truck.

There was no pause. In fact, they seemed to gain speed as they

stepped over their dead comrades.

Ggieeeh!

It was the same with the wrath in their eyes. Their dead kin only served to fuel their anger.

However, their increased aggression did not do anything to turn the tides. An arrow without fletchling suddenly appeared out of nowhere.

Swik!

The arrow's movements were like that of an agile and swift knife.

The arrow moved through the goblins' heads like it was stringing them together.

Cheulpuduk!

The rushing goblins began to collapse like puppets with broken strings, with each fallen goblin contributing to a wall of flesh.

Ggieg!

The goblins that hadn't collapsed tripped on the corpses that lined the floor.

It was pandemonium.

Witnessing such a crazy scene, the soldiers simply stared with their mouths shut.

Despite that, they did not frown or grimace.

“Oowaaaah!”

There was no doubt as to who was behind this ridiculous scene.

“It’s master! Master’s come!”

The hero that had made his appearance was a savior who had arrived when they needed him most.

The real messiah.

There were none who were not grateful for the appearance of a savior.

“Master has arrived!”

“Kill them all!”

The soldiers’ eyes burnt with fervor.

The soldiers’ momentum reached the remaining brown goblins, even going so far as to affect the commanding hobgoblin.

Ggireureu ggireureu!

The madness that had affected the hobgoblin melted away from the soldiers’ momentum, causing it to tremble.

That was the last thing it did.

The trembling monster fell onto the floor, its throat sliced off.

A sword with a sharpened blade had slit the hobgoblin’s throat.

At the same time, the brown goblins’ fear and pain washed over them all at once.

Ggieh!

Ggii, Giii!

The brown goblins that had become frightened began to panic, fleeing in all directions.

Bang Hyun Wook looked at the fleeing goblins in silence.

Bang Hyun Wook watched Kim Tae Hoon who had finished things up, approach him.

6.

Chang Sung Hoon gently wrapped Chusa Kim Jeong-Hui's painting and Daedongyeojido in silk.

To be honest, there was no need.

As soon as these objects became relics, they underwent a fundamental change. There was no need to worry about it wearing out.

But still, Chang Sung Hoon didn't dare take any risks.

'This treasure is too precious.'

For someone who truly appreciated works of art, especially a national heritage like this, Chang Sung Hoon treated it with absolute care, especially since its function was priceless as well.

Chang Sung Hoon prepared a bag to store this precious treasure.

The bag also contained other valuables that Chang Sung Hoon was carrying around.

For example.

“Oh?”

A crystal cup studded with jewels that produced a red liquid.

Chapter 42 – United (2)

7.

All creatures strive to survive.

And so as all creatures strive towards survival, an ecosystem is born.

Monsters.

These monsters of unknown origins had developed their own ecosystem.

While the apex predators openly and actively sought other creatures to prey on, the smaller and weaker monsters that lacked the ability to do so could only scavenge around the debris looking for dead bodies or the remains of another predator's meal.

In that location, a large rock had fallen.

Black Snake.

A terrifying and tremendously strong serpent that had taken Bucheon City as its own territory had died.

It was the death of a hegemon.

To conceal such an event was an impossibility.

News of the death of the king had spread far and wide, and with that was came the backlash.

This was especially true for the most ambitious of monsters.

Rather than staying content with becoming the leader of a mere herd of monsters, those that wanted to take over the Black Snake's former territory began to make their move.

As the one who had trampled over the Black Snake and became the new hegemon, it was Kim Tae Hoon's role to take the spoils.

Kwajik!

His blackened right arm, like a giant hammer, smashed the skull of a Monkey Dog who was a head taller and whose body boasted a larger build than his.

Fragments of the Monkey Dog's skull and chunks of its brain splattered onto the floor as twelve other Monkey Dogs finally caught up to the sight of their chief's body falling onto the floor.

Puk!

Like a snake, Kim Tae Hoon weaved between the Monkey Dogs,

launching his fist towards their heads.

It was as though the world was frozen and Kim Tae Hoon was the only one moving.

It wasn't simply because Kim Tae Hoon's speed was fast.

It was accuracy.

Kim Tae Hoon's fist appeared out of nowhere like the wind, aiming towards a Monkey Dog's red eyes located behind its jutting snout.

It was superhuman.

No other words could describe the unsurpassed accuracy and speed that Kim Tae Hoon possessed as he obliterated a monster in nothing more than an instant.

'It's not enough.'

Kim Tae Hoon had swiftly adapted to the ability he had obtained from the Black Snake, and had made it his own.

That was the reason. That was the reason why he was able to throw himself towards the monsters that were attracted to the scent of the warm blood and engage in a melee.

“I have nothing to say.”

“Just who is the monster…….”

The survivors that had deemed Kim Tae Hoon as savior couldn’t help but admire him more and more.

Because they were unceasingly dismantling monster corpses, their increased familiarity with the sight of dead bodies left them more and more amazed, their admiration only increasing.

Although all of this had been wrought by Kim Tae Hoon’s hands, he was not satisfied with what had happened.

‘Two of them.’

He couldn’t be satisfied.

‘There are two monsters at the same level of the dragon on the Korean Peninsula.’

He could feel the wretchedness of the world with his own body. It would be impossible not to know how fucked up the world was at this point.

But now that the feeling was stronger than before, it had a greater effect on his mindset.

Although he had thought that there would be monsters second only to the dragon, he had found out that there were in fact two of them, with one residing on Mt. Paektu and another on Mt. Halla.

The monsters were basically gatekeepers at both ends of the Korean Peninsula.

Considering how large the Earth was, the Korean Peninsula itself was tiny.

If there were three on the Korean Peninsula, then how many more terrifyingly strong monsters would there be in the rest of the world?

That wasn't all.

'Although with good fortune I managed to defeat the Black Snake, there are still dozens of them in the surrounding area.'

Just as Chang Sung Hoon had explained, Daedongyeojido was like a radar.

Powerful monsters, like the dragon were shown even if they were far away, but not the weaker monsters unless the distance was not too far.

Despite that, Daedongyeojido revealed the existence of nine creatures under the monsters at the dragon's tier were denoted as blue dots.

Furthermore, there were so many yellow and green lights that they couldn't immediately count how many there were.

'Yi Jin Sung, that punk wasn't lying.'

The land that Bucheon sat atop was the only area situated between green and blue lights.

'Bucheon is lucky.'

It had survived only because it was wedged between greater powers.

'Definitely dodged a bullet.'

Of course, despite that, it wasn't actually good news.

A smaller country wedged between stronger countries might benefit a few times, but eventually, they'll be destroyed.

The truth came from history.

In fact, the large population of humans was what was supporting the various new ecosystems that had arisen. Because there were so many humans, monsters could easily capture and eat them.

But humans weren't like plankton. Neither did humans lay eggs like fish did.

Although humans were populous now, their numbers would inevitably sharply fall as monsters consumed more and more of them.

Since monsters have no hand in promoting human reproduction, they would eventually resort to seeking out an area with a high human density. Therefore, Bucheon would end up becoming something like a monster's promised land.

There was only one solution.

'We have to take the initiative before they attack us.'

Kill or be killed.

Before the monsters get stronger, they needed to take advantage of mankind's strength and stock up on food and technology whilst promoting the survivors' abilities and zeal.

At best, they could kill the orange and red eyed monsters in the area, but it wouldn't be nearly enough to satisfy Kim Tae Hoon.

He was starting to feel impatient.

'We can't continue just like this. At best, with our current

strength…… we won’t really be able to do anything.’

However, a prompt whisper from Chang Sung Hoon swiftly did away with Kim Tae Hoon’s impatience.

“Boss, the goblet has filled up.”

8.

Bucheon City Hall.

Located in the center of Bucheon City, it was repurposed to be used as the Mek Clan’s headquarters.

There were many things that indicated it as such.

Mek Clan’s soldiers patrolling the area while armed with firearms was a sufficient evidence pointing towards that fact. Another indicator was the returning awakened hunters.

“The sir has returned.”

“The sir?”

“Master, I’m talking about master.”

“Master? Who…….”

“The sir! Messiah!”

The survivors residing in the vicinity of Bucheon City Hall who frequently pinned their hopes on Kim Tae Hoon was also proof.

“I’ve heard that he was able to kill more than a hundred monsters this time, do you think it’s true? And all by himself, too. I heard he used only his bare hands as well.”

“A hundred monsters all by himself with nothing but his bare hands? How does that even make sense?”

“It really doesn’t make sense, but with all the bodies piled up, wouldn’t it probably be more than a hundred?”

“But bare handed…….”

“C’mon, we’re talking about the person who killed the Yellow Demon with one stroke, for someone like him, this would be child’s play.”

The world was still steeped in desperation.

Communications were down, there was still no sign of any news from the army, there were monsters freely roaming all over, there was an absence of other survivors bearing any sort of news, and the situation had deteriorated to the point where food had now

become difficult to find.

All of this was compounded by the cold, wintry weather. Those who suffered from hunger while suffering from the cold would begin to wish for the sweet release of death.

Nobody would dare think that they could turn the situation around.

They could only hope.

“Does he plan to exterminate an entire monster clan?”

“I hope he ends up killing all of them.”

If anyone was going to turn the situation around, it was Kim Tae Hoon. The only way they could allow their hopes to grow was by pinning their hopes on the first hunter, Kim Tae Hoon.

Kim Tae Hoon was sitting in a padded chair within the city hall, a golden goblet in his hand.

At first glance, he looked like an arrogant boss.

However, looking at the sloshing liquid, Kim Tae Hoon’s unsightly expression whilst looking at the unspillable liquid within the goblet detracted him from the appearance of an arrogant boss.

His expression was not good.

‘What alternatives can we even take?’

Napoleon’s Golden Goblet.

This mysterious and mystical golden goblet that incited unpleasant visions had only become more mysterious.

Without notice and without warning.

Of course he would be curious. He wanted to know what the golden goblet filled with wine would reveal.

On that contention, Chang Sung Hoon made the following conjectures.

“This is just my opinion, but I think that Napoleon’s Golden Goblet let’s you take a peep at your fate. But the goblet does not make it convenient to do so. The moment your fate is altered, there should be a sort of cooldown before you’re allowed to view it again. That’s why the goblet only just now filled up again. It takes time before you can see your altered fate.”

It was a pretty good guess.

If one’s future and fate were compared to a program, then you could say that it would take some time to hack into it in order to

read it.

It’s only possible that it would take some time.

‘The fate of the world had changed.’

If his conjecture was correct, then the red liquid once again appearing within Napoleon’s Golden Goblet was proof that Kim Tae Hoon’s future had changed.

It was also indication that Kim Tae Hoon’s death at the hands of the dragon was changed.

Of course this wasn’t just for fun.

Afterall, who knows if Kim Tae Hoon’s lease on life was further shortened in the altered future.

If that were to happen, then that would simply be an unfortunate event.

If everything he did for the sake of survival ultimately ended up shortening his life, then he wouldn’t even be able to swear.

‘Truly terrifying.’

Of course he would be scared.

Nevertheless, Kim Tae Hoon didn’t hesitate. He downed the goblet in one go.

At the same time, Kim Tae Hoon’s body collapsed.

9.

“Open your eyes! I said open your eyes!”

A woman’s crying and shouting pounded against his eardrums.

“Open your eyes! Kim Tae Hoon open your eyes!”

She was crying out repeatedly.

Although his eyes were still closed, Kim Tae Hoon recognized the speaker because of her voice.

‘Ahn Sun Mi.’

Soon after, a woman entered Kim Tae Hoon’s gaze.

There weren’t many differences between the Ahn Sun Mi here and the Ahn Sun Mi in real life. Her freckled face was still the same, and her body was mostly unmarred.

The only difference was her now long hair. The length of her hair was an indicator of how much time had passed.

‘What year is it now?’

But that alone wasn’t enough to differentiate between whether or not it’s been one year or five years.

Furthermore, that was all that Kim Tae Hoon could see at the moment. Kim Tae Hoon’s eyelids grew heavy again.

‘Ah.’

At this moment, Kim Tae Hoon knew.

‘I’m dying.’

He recognized that his nose was right before death’s gateway. He lacked even the strength to speak with someone, so he couldn’t solicit any clues from any conversations he could have.

‘To be in such a situation…….’

It was the worst.

Was he going to die without getting any information? Was this opportunity just going to be wasted after having waited for so

much time?

‘Damn it.’

What was he supposed to glean from this situation?

Kim Tae Hoon sighed. He could only recite his grievances in his head.

He once again heard her voice again.

“What I’m about to say, I say in hopes that the you in the past may listen through a vision. I don’t know when or if the day will come where you envision this moment but…… ready yourself, let me tell you your wish list.”

Chapter 43 – Seeking The Owners (1)

1.

“Boss.”

In the mayor’s office located in the Bucheon City Hall.

There were two men facing each other across a desk, a cup of steaming hot coffee sitting on the desk.

“Let’s organize some of this information first.”

One man swept back his chaotic hair with his right hand, his appearance resembling that of a tortured man.

“So was Sun Mi noonim able to tell you what your wishlist was before boss died?”

Hearing those words, another man simply nodded his head while caressing the mug of coffee in his hand and enjoying the coffee’s aroma.

Seeing his somewhat apathetic expression, Chang Sung Hoon forced a laugh.

“I don’t know who came up with it, but I have to give credit where it’s due. A wishlist…… Napoleon’s Golden Goblet would

definitely be the most reliable way to transmit the information.”

Chang Sung Hoon could only sigh as he spoke those words.

Quite frankly, it wasn’t an optimistic sigh.

“Even if the problem itself lies within the wishlist.”

In essence, he was just complaining.

Kim Tae Hoon simply observed Chang Sung Hoon with an unsightly expression as Chang Sung Hoon complained. Kim Tae Hoon’s expression wasn’t a result of the coffee he was drinking.

Silence pervaded the atmosphere, prompting Chang Sung Hoon to start trying to sort things out in his mind.

He started from when Kim Tae Hoon woke up from his dream. Kim Tae Hoon had called for Chang Sung Hoon, who was waiting outside the mayor’s office, and had relayed the details to him.

Hearing the words ‘wishlist’ Chang Sung Hoon had unknowingly balled up his hands.

A completely unimaginable and unforeseen opportunity had revealed itself, and Chang Sung Hoon did not want to let it go.

As soon as Kim Tae Hoon had mentioned the wishlist, Chang Sung Hoon felt as though the path forward had lit up.

"Firstly, the Gilt-bronze Incense Burner of Baekje and the Bell of King Seongdeok."

Kim Tae Hoon recalled six things from the wish list.

Although Ahn Sun Mi had let out a long string of words and had also described many things in great detail, the dying Kim Tae Hoon could only hear six items.

The Bell of King Seongdeok and the Gilt-bronze Incense Burner of Baekje were the first to be mentioned of the six.

"It's the same for the Gwanggaeto Stele and the Sword of Goujian."

He had also spoken of the Gwanggaeto Stele and the Sword of Goujian.

It was from that point that Chang Sung Hoon had sensed that something was off.

Obviously, the two artifacts were real, but the two of them were of a different concept than those of the Bell of King Seongdeok and the Gilt-bronze Incense Burner of Baekje that he had spoken of before.

“Even something like the Green Dragon Crescent Blade or Kusanagi-no-Tsurugi were on the list?”

Thinking of those artifacts, Chang Sung Hoon fell into deep thought.

Did Kim Tae Hoon perhaps go mental and play a prank on himself?

Or perhaps the shock incurred by experiencing his own death once more was enough to confuse what Kim Tae Hoon had heard?

What else could it be?

“Aren’t those just items that make frequent appearances in stories?”

They were actually just mythological weapons that one would read about in stories, they weren’t real.

Regardless, Kim Tae Hoon was serious.

Despite listening to what was said, Kim Tae Hoon was still sincere about the list of items he had heard.

“I’m going to need an analysis of the things on the wish list.”

There was no way he could take these things lightly.

This was valuable information about the future that Kim Tae Hoon had received as he died.

So if he wanted to continue to live, then he needed to change his fate once again by using the information he had gleaned.

“First off, of the six, four of them are real.”

Since Chang Sung Hoon was knowledgeable about that fact, he cut right to the chase.

“Where would they be?”

“First, the Gilt-bronze Incense Burner of Baekje is in the Buyeo National Museum, while the Bell of King Seongdeok…….”

“The Bell of King Seongdeok?”

“Ah, it’s the Emile bell. The Emile Bell. It’s located in the Gyeongju National Museum. The Gwanggaeto Stele is in China’s Jilin Province and the Sword of Goujian should be in China’s Hubei Province.”

“And the remaining two are simply myths?”

“They’re object only spoken about in the legends.”

Kim Tae Hoon took another gulp of his coffee. In a rare act of silence, Chang Sung Hoon opted not to disturb the quiet that had settled.

The two men shut their mouths and organized the information in their heads.

The conversation didn’t continue again until Kim Tae Hoon opened his mouth.

“It was probably me that made the wish list.”

“It would seem so.”

“Then I wouldn’t have listed items that were impossible to get.”

“Ah.”

Chang Sung Hoon finally realized.

He knew what kind of man that Kim Tae Hoon was.

We wouldn’t record something that was impossible to retrieve.

“I wouldn’t know how much I would be able to hear when standing on death’s doorstep.”

In short, this wishlist was a contingency set in place by Kim Tae Hoon for the sake of informing his past self shortly before his demise.

It meant that there was some sort of secret, perhaps a message, hidden within the contents of the list.

Kim Tae Hoon had purposefully created the list. So would he have not taken into consideration his own personality?

“Buyeo and Gyeongju. I suppose the items there are those that we can currently retrieve.”

“That’s right. It shouldn’t take more than half a day by car if we don’t encounter any monsters. It would probably take us three hours to get to Buyeo National Museum by Gyeongbu Express Highway, and maybe four or five hours to get to Gyeongju National Museum by Gyeongbu Express Highway. But who knows if it’ll take us up to a year of fighting while putting our lives on the line to get there.”

“Buyeon and Gyeongju are included, but Seoul is not.”

So the first mystery was why Seoul was left out of the picture.

It was obvious that Gyeongju and Buyeon were areas laden with

relics ripe for the picking.

However, Seoul was was a city that had served as the capital of various Korean kingdoms since time immemorial.

Even the National Museum was located in the Yongsan District of Seoul.

“That’s certainly a mystery. Even the original wood block prints of Daedongyeojido should be kept in the National Museum…….”

Although through good fortune Kim Tae Hoon and Chang Sung Hoon were able to find a secret edition of Daedongyeojido, the original print that it was based on was exhibited in none other than the National Museum of Korea.

“The golden crown of the Silla Dynasty is there…… that’s right. There are also armor, kimonos, and masks used by Japanese warriors. And although there aren’t many, there are also Chinese Buddhas and other statues.”

The National Museum of Korea was even home to some artifacts from China and Japan.

But Kim Tae Hoon’s wishlist didn’t refer to anything that could be found in the National Museum of Korea.

“What do you think is the reason?”

It was a mystery that required immediate attention.

“One of two things.”

But it wasn’t something that Kim Tae Hoon needed to meditate on.

“Either someone else has already stolen those items, or going there is much more dangerous than going to either Buyeo or Gyeongju.”

“Figures, if we were in Yongsang District instead of Bucheon City…… no, rather, if we discovered the usages of artifacts, then others in Yongsang must have as well, which means that the National Museum must have been picked clean.”

“Right to the north of the National Museum is the Ministry of Defense.”

“The Ministry of Defense? Ah, right, the War Memorial of Korea is behind it.”

The National Museum of Korea and the Ministry of Defense were not too far away from each other.

“The cadets would have flocked to their as soon as the catastrophe hit.”

In other words, the troops under the Ministry of Defense, the troops organized and led by the ministry for the sake of defending the capital, would have headed towards it.

So naturally, they would have already acquired the relics there.

Everything up till now was mere speculation, but now they were convinced of the veracity of the information gleaned from the dream

“In other words, both Buyeo and Gyeongju are ownerless mountains.”

So if they moved quickly, they would be able to acquire artifacts in both Gyeongju and Buyeo.

“Then what was the purpose of mentioning the Sword of Goujian and the Gwanggaeto Stele?”

“Perhaps the fall of North Korea and survivors migrating to China…… no, rather, it might be an indicator that there is an exchange of awakened or maybe even a war.”

He wouldn’t have mentioned the Sword of Goujian and the Gwanggaeto Stele simply because he wanted him to retrieve them, but instead, a means to transmit information about the situation.

“I know that the Gwanggaeto Stele is located in the Jilin Province. Since planes and boats are probably mostly all out of commission, then North Korea would only try to contact China if on the verge of collapse. Did you also say that the Sword of Goujian is in the Hubei Province?”

“Yes.”

“Hubei province is located in the middle of China. Then there’s a high chance that the Chinese awakened have secured it, and are therefore on their way or have already secured the Gwanggaeto Stele. In fact, they may have already pushed into the Korean Peninsula via North Korea.”

The collapse of North Korea and contact with China.

This was also a vital hint. It meant that the situation of the entire Korean Peninsula has changed as well.

“It makes enough sense for now. Then what’s the meaning behind the Green Dragon Crescent Blade and Kusanagi? No matter how I think about it, those things don’t exist.”

The Green Dragon Crescent Blade and Kusanagi had to be signals.

“There’s no way they are real.”

According to common sense, those legendary weapons wouldn’t exist.

“It’s probably a warning against constraining our thoughts to that kind of thinking.”

But, in today’s era, those weapons would definitely exist. It was a signal telling them.

Chang Sung Hoon had organized the contents of their conversation in his head.

‘That’s right, it would be better to avoid a large crowd gathering in Seoul and instead go for an unclaimed item that has escaped under the radar for the time being.’

At the same time, Chang Sung Hoon started to feel frustrated.

“The list definitely doesn’t end with just those six. If I had heard more I could have made a clearer plan.”

Although he had been able to extract various bits of information and hidden messages through the six items on the list, he could have drawn up a much better plan had he heard more.

Furthermore, Kim Tae Hoon began to regret that he had heard only a snippet.

‘If I only I heard more.’

Using Napoleon's Golden Goblet to transmit the wishlist was a fantastic idea.

But it was also true that they hadn't really gained all that much.

However, instead of pitying yourself, it was of course better to figure out a way to improve the method.

"Well it looks like everyone's going to need to learn to rap."

It was at that moment that Kim Tae Hoon came up with his answer.

"Rap…… what?"

"When faced with impending doom, the best way to transmit information would be through as many words within the shortest amount of time possible."

If Ahn Sun Mi were able to speak about twice as fast, then he would have been able to retain twice the information!

Listening to Kim Tae Hoon, Chang Sung Hoon expressed his displeasure.

"So while boss is throwing up blood and declining in spirit, you want me to rap to you even as your eyes lose focus? What about the locations of Dabotap, Seokguram, and the Tripitaka Koreana?"

“Why, is that strange?”

“Does such a scene not seem strange to you boss? Do you expect someone to quickly recite information about national treasures in front of a dying person from one to ten?”

Hololok.

Kim Tae Hoon drank some coffee instead of replying. It was the calm expression of a man who felt nothing was wrong.

Seeing as how Kim Tae Hoon was remaining more silent than usual, Chang Sung Hoon asked him a question.

“More importantly, what are our immediate plans? Whether it’s to capture Buyeo or Gyeongju, we wouldn’t be able to head out right away, right?”

“First things first, we should stabilize our position.”

“Our position…… of course, we have to establish a clan under our banner and choose a public representative.”

The plan was set.

Buyeo or Gyeongju.

From this moment on, Kim Tae Hoon had decided to work towards securing those areas.

The journey would be long and arduous. But before that, he needed to stabilize any internal strife.

So Kim Tae Hoon agreed.

“But before that, there is something we must do.”

Something needed to be done immediately.

“Is there something so urgent?”

“We need to figure out the owners of these nine relics we secured.”

The duo had managed to shake down Baek “Whale” Sung Taek’s hidden cache and secure nine relics. Kim Tae Hoon had proposed that the relics find owners before anything else.

“To find the owners…… do you intend to give these out?”

“They’d be worthless if not handled by an awakened.”

Chang Sung Hoon’s expression hardened at those words.

Kim Tae Hoon was not wrong.

These relics were the most powerful weapons at humanity's disposal in their war against the monsters.

So it would be pointless to give them to a human who couldn't even utilize them properly.

In this situation where everyone was striving to kill even just one more monster, the wisest course of action would be to seek out someone who could properly utilize the relic.

However, many of the artifacts that they found this time around were incredibly valuable.

"Is it really ok to hand these relics to the awakened who can use them?"

But it would be a pity to just freely hand them out.

Not all of the awakened under Kim Tae Hoon offered their heartfelt loyalty to him.

They follow Kim Tae Hoon simply because he had the power to kill monsters that they could not.

Kim Tae Hoon tilted his head in response to Chang Sung Hoon's

sorrow-soaked words.

"Why would I just give them out?"

"Huh?"

"I'm looking for the owners. Afterwards I'll charge a finder's fee. Isn't that common sense?"

Chang Sung Hoon vigorously nodded his head.

"That's right, that's what common sense would dictate."

Chapter 44 – Seeking The Owners (2)

3.

At a plaza in front of Bucheon City Hall.

It was an area that the city would often use to host special events or festivals. The area itself was large enough that it seemed as though it would never be able to fill up even if hundreds of people gathered.

But despite that, even though hundreds of people could fit, nobody dared to go in.

It was a result of the intense atmosphere brought about by the people in the plaza.

The patterns on the right hands of all those present at the plaza explained why.

The awakened.

The awakened who used their power to hunt the monsters.

‘Just how long am I supposed to wait here?’

‘Damn it, he said the appointed time was 3PM!’

The awakened who had gathered here were those who were a part of parties that operated in the Mek Clan domain and were taxed for their efforts.

If ranks were to be attached, then they would go from 1st to 7th.

They had long since grown accustomed to spilling monster blood. Their spirits were definitely high.

‘6PM.’

‘……he made us stand out here for three hours.’

‘The sun has already disappeared.’

They had been enduring the cold, knife-like winter wind for three hours now.

Beasts would never be able to match up to them. A beast had no need for this kind of patience.

Nevertheless, it was one of the reasons why they had endured the winds out in the plaza for three hours.

‘Well, nothing I can do. No choice but to endure for as long as I can.’

‘If I have to freeze to death here, I will. There’s no way I can leave.’

‘If we fall out of favor with him, we’ll die.’

Kim Tae Hoon.

The master of the Mek Clan and the lord of these people, he was the one who had called them here.

That was why they had been so patient.

Afterall, no dog would dare not to wait when the master calls.

“Looks like everyone has gathered.”

A person finally appeared before the crowd.

“Ah, it’s cold. It’s really cold today.”

However, it wasn’t the man they were waiting for.

The man who had appeared was Chang Sung Hoon, Kim Tae Hoon’s right hand man. To make matters worse, he was wearing a thick jumper that made them feel warm just by looking at it.

‘This guy again?’

‘Tsk.’

Seeing him, some of the awakened couldn’t help but grind their teeth.

Nobody was afraid of Chang Sung Hoon. There was no reason to be afraid. He was neither an awakened nor even a strong person amongst civilians. He didn’t even carry around a gun like the rest of the Mek Clan’s soldiers.

“Everyone is cold, right? Would all of you like to receive a hot pack? It’s used but, oh well.”

But despite that, nobody dared ignore him.

His words were the same as Kim Tae Hoon’s words.

“Anyways, it’s been awhile since we’ve all gathered like this. This is the first time we’ve all met like this since the negotiations after Lee Jin Sung’s death. Furthermore, there are familiar faces and new faces.”

Because of that, nobody risked complaining, and only stared at him.

‘They’re in a position where they can’t kill me.’

The light in their eyes told Chang Sung Hoon that if it wasn't for Kim Tae Hoon, they would have killed Chang Sung Hoon immediately.

Looking at their eyes, Chang Sung Hoon simply laughed.

'Their eyes are just the way I want them to be.'

That was the reason why Chang Sung Hoon had purposefully come three hours late.

'If their stomachs are full and their backs are warm, they'll expose weaknesses. Even if it's a little, this should reveal some of their true intentions.'

He was going to turn the Mek Clan into a guild today. At the same time, he was going to create a clan to function under the Mek Guild's banner.

They would even support the clan with guns, ammunition, and even relics.

It would be risky, of course.

The gun was a terrifyingly powerful weapon. But anyone who points their barrel at the Mek Clan would face tremendous damage.

You could never trust the black-haired creatures known as humans.

But, they had no choice but to arm at least some of the awakened.

‘This day was a long time coming.’

They could not stay as they were.

It would be foolish to tie the limbs of those who may be able to help you when the situation deteriorates just so that they wouldn’t be able to harm you.

Above all, the intimidation is overflowing.

‘Well, I would prefer someone with the balls to threaten the boss.’

It would be optimal to have someone who would threaten Kim Tae Hoon. There was a limit to what someone could do on their own.

“Well then, let me begin.”

Of course it would be stupid to give without end.

So he had deliberately exposed them to the cold wind for three hours. He wanted to know their inner thoughts, so he chose to listen to their hearts, not their words.

Even if it was a powerful awakened, it would be impossible for them to remain calm after having faced the brunt of the cold wind for so long.

“The Mek Clan is now the Mek Guild. We will also be recruiting a clan to actively work under us. Naturally, the guild will provide the clan with support.”

The cold glares directed at Chang Sung Hoon began to change.

“There are two main items we plan to provide to the clan. The first is firearms and ammunition.”

As soon as they heard that, their eyes began to blaze like a wildfire.

‘We can finally get guns.’

‘This day has finally come.’

The gathered awakened were strong.

Whether it was through consuming monster stones or by making items with monster materials, they all had grown stronger.

But their gathered strength still wasn't high enough.

Firearms were such weapons that could help them make up for that deficiency. Not only were they powerful, but they were easy to use and effective against many different kinds of enemies.

'If we can get our hands on some guns, then we could even take down an orange tier monster.'

All of a sudden, guns would give them the strength to take down even orange grade monsters.

It was also one of the reasons why the awakened had been obediently handing over their monster stones.

They were showing their loyalty and obeisance in hopes that this day would come.

As long as the Mek Clan wasn't stupid, they would never give firearms to anyone who didn't show a certain amount of sincerity.

"As for the second item..."

His speech didn't end there.

With a hand gesture, soldiers from the Mek Clan– no the Mek Guild– walked forward while holding onto some equipment.

Anyone who saw them could tell that they were holding onto a relic.

"The Mek Guild will provide an eligible awakened with a relic."

At that moment, all eyes focused on one thing.

'It doesn't seem like just any sort of regular thing?'

'If he's showcasing them here, they must be of considerable worth.'

Boundless Storm.

Chusa Kim Jung Hee's masterful painting caught everyone's eye. Some of them put their hands in their pockets and fiddled with their smart phones. They were itching to find out the Grade and Relic Effect with the cameras on their smart phones.

But Chang Sung Hoon had no intention to relieve their anxiety.

"These are what we'll support the clan with. Of course, there are some conditions. And a few of them at that. We've already drafted up a contract. It is seven pages long. It was a pain in the neck trying to print this from a printer…… in this day and age, paper and electricity are far more precious than a Rolex Watch."

Puleok puleok, Chang Sung Hoon shook the contract bundle.

“But before that, let me talk about the key points.”

At that moment, a man approached Chang Sung Hoon’s position.

Ggoolguk!

Everyone gulped as soon as that man made his appearance. Their gulping was an obvious indicator of who this man was.

Kim Tae Hoon.

Sporting a pair of plain cotton pants and a jumper that fell slightly beneath his waist, the aura Kim Tae Hoon exuded as he walked forward with the Sword of the Commander in his left hand was domineering.

It was more than that of a beast.

His presence was second only to that of the Yellow-Eyed Demon, the Black Snake.

“Firearms and a relic. Equipment that is dangerous in many ways. If I give you a gun, how can I guarantee that the barrels won’t turn to us?”

Before long, Kim Tae Hoon stood in front of Chang Sung Hoon, and Chang Sung Hoon stopped talking.

“I’ve taught you how to hunt, I provided a safe place to hunt, and now I’m giving you guns and a relic and how to find relics on top of that, are these not incredible boons?”

Cheuleung!

Kim Tae Hoon’s sword flew out of its scabbard and revealed itself at the end of his speech.

The sword lodged itself into the ground, so fast that nobody had been able to clearly make it out.

‘What was that?’

‘Did he move the sword with Telekinesis?’

‘What the, that’s too fast!’

It was like lightning had struck the ground.

Everyone simply stared at the sword, as everything had happened too fast.

“I can’t just give these things out for free.”

Kim Tae Hoon spoke aloud.

“The price for establishing a clan and receiving our aid is a finger. It doesn’t matter which one. Just one is enough.”

The Sword of the Command twinkled as though it were smiling.

Since it was a sword that grew as it drank blood, it seemed as though it became excited just merely thinking of drinking human blood.

Conversely, the gathered awakened all felt a tingle down their spine. All of their bodies froze, so much that they couldn’t feel the cold wind.

On the other hand, Chang Sung Hoon and Kim Tae Hoon were relaxed.

They weren’t playing some malicious and childish prank. In fact, this moment was very important.

As it was said earlier, the establishment and support of a clan under the Mek Guild was a double-edged sword. There was no guarantee that they would turn on the Mek Guild once they received guns and ammunition.

There was no reason to give anything out for free.

‘There’s no such thing as a free lunch. Even if there was, it wouldn’t work.’

There was always a price.

However, the currency of the old world, like gold, money, and bonds, could not be used. In the world today, a PET bottle half-filled with gasoline would hold more value than ten Rolex Watches.

It was the same in regards to red monster stones. There were only so many things of value that people could gather, and to be honest, the value of a red monster stone was nowhere near the value of a relic.

Nobody would want to sell relics or guns for such a cheap currency.

But if not those, then what?

If they were too hasty, calamity will befall them.

Therefore, they can collect later. Although they might not be able to pay for it now, they’ll be able to gather the necessary funds and pay later.

That’s the key.

Could they pay later, or did they have to pay now?

‘They need to be willing to at least give up their finger in exchange for our support.’

There’s no way that the Mek Guild would be willing to provide support for those who weren’t even willing to give up a finger for a chance at hunting more monsters and growing stronger.

“I’ll accept applicants now.”

Kim Tae Hoon had finished speaking.

Of course most of them hesitated. No, rather than being just hesitant, they were afraid.

Furthermore, they had been standing out in the cold for three hours without even knowing why. So at that moment, it would be very difficult for anyone to start scheming.

As intended by Chang Sung Hoon, the majority of them were too occupied with themselves to calculate any sort of scheme or plan.

‘Crazy bastard, he wants us to cut off a finger?’

‘He’s not even Yakuza or anything…….’

‘What nonsense. This is crazy. Nobody’s done anything wrong and he still wants us to cut off a finger?’

So it was only natural that nobody would be willing to volunteer right off the bat.

If cutting off a finger in exchange for guns and ammo weren’t crazy, then nothing in this world was crazy.

However, not everyone thought the same.

There were those with a strong will that didn’t hesitate when faced with the prospect of receiving powerful weapons and support.

“I’m willing to receive support.”

“I’ll take the support.”

Two people raised their hands.

They were the leaders of the two parties that had contributed the most amount of monster stones– Yang Jung Hwan in first, and Lee Su Young in second.

Those two had stepped forward without any hesitation.

The two competitors walked towards the Sword of the Commander embedded in the ground.

Swiik!

But as they reached within a stone's throw away from the sword, it suddenly extricated itself from the ground and entered its sheath again.

It was once again as though a bolt of lightning has struck.

"The founding of two clans is now allowed. Each of the two of you are allowed to choose a relic. Chang Sung Hoon."

"Yes."

"Finalize the contract."

"Yes sir."

Kim Tae Hoon promptly left, leaving Chang Sung Hoon to finalizing the contracts with Lee Su Young and Yang Jung Hwan.

Neither of the two bothered to read through the contract. The two of them immediately signed their names on the contract.

The entire process was wrapped up quickly. The others simply watched in silence.

When everything was finished, Chang Sung Hoon lightly waved his hand at the rest of the awakened,

“Well then, I’ll see you guys again soon. Before I leave, let me give you guys some advice. The boss isn’t looking for something like loyalty. Rather, are you worth investing into or not? If you possess a gun, how well can you kill a monster? That’s it.”

4.

“It’s a contract. Here’s a smartphone with all of the affiliated awakened’s awakened tattoos.”

Chang Sung Hoon handed over the smartphone.

Kim Tae Hoon didn’t look at it. Since all’s been said and done, it’s not like the information would change.

“What relics did they choose?”

“They said they wanted to test them first, so they have yet to choose one.”

“Looks like this group will be able to find a fitting relic”

“A pearl necklace on a pig’s neck will only increase the number of people who want to kill the pig.”

His initial plan was to find owners for the extra relics.

Finding an owner meant handing the relic over to someone who had the ability to use it.

But it seemed like it would be unnecessary now.

So Kim Tae Hoon just skipped ahead to the next thing on the agenda.

“Pass on a mission to the two clans. Tell them to hunt more than one orange tier monster within a week.”

“Should I pass it on now?”

“Is there a need to implement a probationary or acclimation period?”

“I’ll pass it on.”

Chang Sung Hoon nodded his head.

Kim Tae Hoon threw Chang Sung Hoon a question.

“How long until the Black Snake leather armor is done?”

“Park Gabsu said that the prototype should be done by tomorrow. If Boss gives the green light, then he can produce two sets a day.”

Black Snake Leather Armor.

It was a powerful item that could not be compared to any other protective gear that he had owned until now.

However, he would have to showcase ability and initiative worthy of bearing that armor.

“It’s time to find a new quarry.”

“I’ll come up with candidates through Daedongyeojido.”

Saying that, Chang Sung Hoon fished out the Daedongyeojido from his bag.

He immediately flipped to the page he remembered that Bucheon was on.

“Boss.”

It was at that moment that Chang Sung Hoon spoke with a stiff

expression on his face.

“The green dots around Bucheon City have moved.”

Chapter 45 – This Is MY Land (1)

1.

It had been a long time since the Bucheon City Council meeting hall located next to the Bucheon City Hall had been filled with people.

However, the atmosphere was different from what it would usually be.

The faces of the six men and women attending the meeting, and the man standing before a map of Bucheon City on a whiteboard were not like that of those who were planning a budget.

“According to Daedongyeojido as of now, a green rank monster located in Gwangmyeong City to the east of Bucheon has moved about two kilometers.”

The man in front of the map, Chang Sung Hoon, pointed a green laser pointer at Gwangmyeong City which was to the right of Bucheon.

The laser pointer was heading towards Bucheon City.

“Since we’ve never actually fought against a green ranked monster, we obviously can’t specifically gauge how strong it is. However, it’s pretty obvious that we can’t deal with such a monster at the moment.”

The group which consisted of Kim Su Ji, Ahn Sun Mi, Bang Hyun Wook, and the newly appointed clan masters of the now affiliated clans, Lee Su Young and Yang Jung Hwan, couldn't help but have stiff expressions.

It was a natural expression.

"Anyways, a green grade monster will be a superior predator that could easily get rid of a yellow grade monster like the Black Snake."

It hadn't been long since they had been terrorized by the Black Snake.

However, was a green level monster that was a grade higher than the Black Snake approaching Bucheon City?

"However, although it has moved, we don't know if it's approaching Bucheon City . The problem is that the other monsters have started to move, so the existing monsters are being pushed towards Bucheon. According to Daedongyeojido, the monsters in Gwangmyeong City are being pushed towards Bucheon."

Green ranked monsters were far more terrifying than the average monster.

The monsters would have no choice but to run away.

“There is another yellow ranked monster approaching Bucheon City. So as it moves, the orange ranked monsters would run away and head towards Bucheon. In addition, the number of monsters in Bucheon have dwindled as a result of the increase in hunters. The other monsters will view it as a paradise.”

The briefing explained everything.

Nobody asked any questions.

‘Just when I had thought things were quieting down, it turns out it was just the calm before the storm.’

In fact, the questions they had were overflowing, but nobody had the mind or the mental strength to ask any.

The only one who didn’t feel the pressure, Kim Tae Hoon, was simply swishing coffee in his mouth.

However Kim Tae Hoon wasn’t so lax that he was simply enjoying his coffee. For Kim Tae Hoon, coffee was a means to maintain his composure, not a means for him to relax.

Gulp.

Having swallowed his coffee, Kim Tae Hoon began to speak.

“What are our choices?”

“We can run away or fight. It’s one or the other.”

The Mek Guild only had two choices in this situation.

But for the sake of their survival, there was only one real answer.

“If it comes into our land, we have no choice but to fight.”

The robust looking man in his mid thirties, conscious of the reality of the situation, immediately picked an option without hesitation.

The man’s name was Yang Jung Hwan.

He was the clan master of the Starfish Clan under the Mek Guild.

“Defending would become a war of attrition. With our current supply of ammunition, it would be impossible to hold out for a long time. It’s imperative that we refill on ammo and guns.”

Hearing Yang Jung Hwan’s suggestion to just open the floodgates, Kim Su Ji interjected with her own opinion.

“If I were to speak from a medic’s point of view, if our soldiers incurred injuries that required surgical procedures, then nine out

of ten would die. With no electricity and no way to get blood transfusions, survival rate is nothing but empty words. We're also nearly out of Mud Troll's Flesh."

Ahn Sun Mi also gave her opinion.

"Then is there somewhere we can refill supplies from? How do we resupply on weapons?"

Lee Su Young, the other clan master, asked a question.

"There's a base down the south towards Siheung and Incheon where some subordinate units of the 17th Division were stationed where we can find some weapons."

The answer came out of Chang Sung Hoon's mouth.

At the same time, Chang Sung Hoon went over the situation again.

"Eventually, we'll need to fight and resupply simultaneously. That means that Boss can only fulfill one of the missions."

The group shut their mouths again.

Kim Tae Hoon also drank coffee again.

This was the key.

Kim Tae Hoon had been responsible for all the difficult parts up till now.

And he had easily resolved these problems.

That was why everyone couldn't help but put Kim Tae Hoon in a good light, regardless of their own personal feelings.

But things were different this time around.

Kim Tae Hoon could only do one of the two things. He could either leave Bucheon in search of supplies, or fight the incoming monsters. It was impossible to do both simultaneously.

In the end, someone was needed to take charge of the option that Kim Tae Hoon chose not to take.

"Although there is the 17th Division, there's also the 3rd Logistical Support Commands Center in Incheon's Bupyeong district."

The first choice for this situation would by Yang Jung Hwan.

"There's no way to guarantee that the 17th Division's Base would have supplies, but there's also no way that the command center's supply warehouse would be empty. Note that there are two former

soldiers of the Samma Unit in our clans, one of which was formerly stationed in Gyeyang District as part of an ammunitions company.”

[TN: Samma Unit is the colloquial name for the 3rd Logistical Support Command, which is a unit under the Third Republic of Korea Army.]

At that moment, Yang Jung Hwan fished out a card that he had hidden on his person.

It was an alias of the Samma Unit.

A Logistical Support Command unit was just like as its name stated, a unit that supported the military with supplies. It was responsible for daily necessities, ammunition, and explosive shells!

If you were a soldier from the Samma Unit, and were responsible for ammunition, then you would at least know the location of where the ammunition was stored.

Yang Jung Hwan had said it with his own mouth a little while ago. One of the former soldiers of the Samma Unit was from Gyeyang District and was part of an ammunitions company.

“If it’s Gyeyang District…….”

“It’s six kilometers away from here if we went in a straight line, but since we can’t fly, a round trip would end up being around 20 kilometers.”

Incheon City's Gyeyang District was located about 6 kilometers from Bucheon City.

They would have to walk.

So a distance of 6 kilometers was a thinly veiled lie.

Yang Jung Hwan's plan was to utilize the guns and ammunition he had received from the Mek Guild to advance towards Gyeyang District, where he would be able to resupply and transport supplies from the supply warehouses back to Bucheon.

He had no intention of rebelling against Kim Tae Hoon. Since ammunition could replace the usage of traditional currency, there was no need to harbor any sort of malintent.

In other words, the 3rd Logistical Support Command Center was a treasure trove that only Yang Jung Hwan had a map to.

But he had willingly revealed the information.

He had revealed his Starfish Clan's hidden card to none other than Kim Tae Hoon.

"As you may have guessed, I have been hiding things from you, but I don't mind revealing some things as the situation permits."

In other words, Yang Jung Hwan was very serious about the current situation.

“In the end, if I end up dying without saying anything, then there’ll be no point of keeping a hidden card. Although the 17th Divison’s base is tempting, Gyeyang District is much closer. In addition, the aforementioned ammunitions company was only a little over a year old. There’ll definitely be familiar faces there. If there are survivors, that is.”

“Then can we be the ones to clean out the 17th Division?”

Lee Su Young unhesitatingly accepted her role.

Although it would be exceedingly dangerous to try to clean out the 17th Division, she didn’t speak out against the situation.

If she were to hesitate at that prospect, then she would have never stepped forward when Kim Tae Hoon commanded any prospective clan masters to cut off their fingers.

Both clans volunteered to go for the supplies.

“The roles have roughly been assigned.”

The remaining tasks would be split amongst the Mek Guild members.

It was time for the Mek Guild to start preparing for the monster invasion.

Now was the time to prepare.

“Now let’s take a look at some items.”

2.

Since the advent of monsters, most people had lost themselves.

However, not everyone was like that.

Park Gabsu.

He was 70 years old by the time it become 2017, and he had been making leather shoes for 50 years.

A craftsman who had been mastering his craft for a half century.

But Park Gabsu had never been treated like a craftsman. He was constantly exploited since the start. He was forced to work menial jobs no different from that of a maintenance man under the pretense of learning about technology, but even though he never failed to complete his work, the days where he received his paycheck on time could be counted on one hand.

He was exploited every step of the way until the very end. The president of the shoe factory he worked at ran away after pushing back two years worth of wages.

He was tossed out into the world at the age of sixty-five without a penny to his name. On top of having been unable to properly save up money as a result of missing pay checks, he was denied severance pay, forcing him to live like a beggar.

A life where free food from volunteer organizations was no different from a dinner banquet.

Funnily enough, it was only after the appearance of monsters had devastated the world that he started receiving the proper treatment a craftsman was due.

“Shoe maker-nim! Those people have come.”

Park Gabsu looked at the thirty year old man who had called out to him.

Before the appearance of the monsters, that man had been a lawyer. A young lawyer who drove around in expensive foreign cars.

If it were in the past, he was someone who Park Gabsu would feel uncomfortable making eye contact with solely because of the age difference.

But now, he was one of Park Gabsu's apprentices.

He wasn't forced to.

It was the opposite. It was evidence of his shrewdness.

He had quickly come to the realization that someone with the ability to manipulate leather would survive and perhaps thrive as opposed to a lawyer.

There were many people who thought the same. In fact, when Park Gabsu, who had been assigned to a workshop under the Mek Guild, went to gather more people, flocks of survivors had arrived to take the test.

For Park Gabsu, someone who had never had a disciple to call his own, it was like the opening of the sea gates.

"Prepare the materials."

"Yes sir."

It took awhile for him to realize this was real.

However, as time passed, Park Gabsu began to come to terms with this new reality, and he finally began to take pride in his skills as a craftsman.

That was the reason why.

“Has everyone come?”

“Apologies for coming so suddenly.”

“No it’s ok. More than that, I’ve increased production like you’ve asked. There are now 20 sets of armor made from Black Snake’s leather.”

“That fast?”

It wouldn’t be unusual to leave the world at the age of seventy.

“Well isn’t that the only thing I do? There’s no reason that it’d be any slower.”

Chang Sung Hoon forced a smile after listening to what Park Gabsu said.

Meanwhile, Kim Tae Hoon, who was standing behind Chang Sung Hoon, bowed deeply towards Park Gabsu.

“My name is Kim Tae Hoon.”

“Ah!”

Hearing that, Park Gabsu looked at Kim Tae Hoon with a surprised look on his face.

“I should have sought you out earlier, my apologies.”

“I, it’s ok.”

Kim Tae Hoon wasn’t a simple existence to the survivors. He was the only lamp in this world of darkness.

As far as Park Gabsu was concerned, Kim Tae Hoon was the reason why Park Gabsu’s 50 years of shoemaking went from trash to amazing.

“Please allow me to be rude since time is short. May I take a look at the goods?”

“O-of course.”

An armor made of Black Snake leather was displayed to Kim Tae Hoon as soon as Park Gabsu gave the command.

The armor’s design was quite simple.

For now, there weren’t many parts of it.

It consisted of a vest, elbow and knee guards, and arm and leg

protectors.

But it wasn’t crude.

Although the leather itself had a very attractive, pitch-black sheen, the pitch-black sheen of the leather inside the tannery was condensing.

But of course it wasn’t amazing either.

Everyone who had followed Kim Tae Hoon took out their smart phones and began to take pictures of the armor.

The light in Kim Tae Hoon’s eyes changed as well. His eyes turned completely black.

[Black Snake’s Leather]

– Physical Defense : C Rank

– Magic Resistance : D Rank

– Increases the recovery speed of Energy.

– Strengthens Energy.

– When Energy is circulated through the leather, physical defense increases.

The Black Snake's Leather options were revealed.

They were quite amazing.

'Amazing.'

Having already been briefed on it, Kim Tae Hoon was still surprised.

As for Yang Jung Hwan and Lee Su Young who had not known anything beforehand, they were even more surprised.

'If it's this much…… then even if I get into a melee with an orange grade monster, I don't think I would be pushed into a corner.'

'Three sets. If I can get my hands on just three sets, I could formulate new tactics.'

Since many of their clan members fought in close combat, these sets of armor were more valuable than guns.

"We've already completed twenty sets. With the increased personnel, we can put out three sets a day. With the amount of

Black Snake leather on hand, I expect we can make ninety sets.”

But the surprise didn’t end there.

“I’ve also completed over the powder like you’ve asked.”

Park Gabsu fished out a plastic package. Inside the multi-layer plastic pack was yellow powder.

> [Black Snake’s Eyes]
>
> – Grants the ability to use the Black Snake’s ability [Black Snake’s Evil Eyes] upon consumption.

It was a powder made from the Black Snake’s eyeballs.

It had the effect of temporarily allowing the usage of the Black Snake’s Evil Eyes when consumed.

Of course it wasn’t as high in grade as the ability that Kim Tae Hoon possessed. It was a downgraded version.

But that alone was still a valuable ability to have access to.

If you handed a gun to those who consumed the powder, their

accuracy would dramatically increase.

The benefits didn't stop there.

The effects the powder gave during battle transcended imagination.

"And lastly……."

The final items were four blades.

The entire length was like the arm of an adult male.

However, the design was a bit unique. Instead of calling it a blade…….

"It's the Black Snake's fangs."

Fangs.

The appearance was very close to the original Black Snake's fangs.

[Black Snake's Fangs]

– Circulating Energy through the fangs will increase its

cutting ability.

They were the Black Snake's fangs.

The only four fangs you could extract from one snake.

"Now all that's left is to form the hilts. However, since the materials are so unique, I plan to craft the hilts out of the Black Snake leather and match the grips to the future owner. That way the user will be able to get used to it faster."

All it needed before it became a powerful weapon was a hilt.

At the end of Park Gab Su's statement, Kim Tae Hoon turned his head.

He looked at Yang Jung Hwan and Lee Su Young.

"As described in the contract, you'll be paid for the missions you do."

As Kim Tae Hoon finished speaking, the two of them swallowed their saliva.

"Usually, I would pay after the job gets done, but the situation is different now, so I'll pay you in advance. I'll give both of you one Black Snake's Fang and three sets of the Black Snake's Leather."

Gulp!

The two of them gulped.

But Kim Tae Hoon hadn't finished speaking.

"They're not for free. Although I'm paying in advance, if the number of monsters killed isn't to my satisfaction, I'm tearing up the contract."

Hearing that, the two silently nodded.

Chapter 46 – This Is MY Land (2)

3.

“Tomorrow is D-Day.”

Everything was conducted in a swift manner. Because the monsters had already started to move, everyone was committing their all.

“Don’t forget to stay secretive.”

But their concentration didn’t mean that they forgot to keep things under wraps.

“We absolutely cannot let the common survivors know that there are green grade monsters around the city, and that they might come to Bucheon.”

Just the Black Snake was enough to send the survivors into a panic.

If the public were to find out that a green grade monster that was even stronger than the Black Snake was on its way, then it’s obvious how the public would react.

And once the public fell into panic, then troublemakers and those who wished to take advantage of the panic would make their

appearance, adding oil to the flames.

The meeting came to an end with Chang Sung Hoon emphasizing secrecy.

“Bang Hyun Wook, follow me to the conference room.”

Kim Tae Hoon called Bang Hyun Wook.

4.

“Hyungnim, just what in the world…….”

Bang Hyun Wook, returning from the conference room, was itching to talk.

“Why didn’t you say anything during the meeting?”

Kim Tae Hoon replied with a question. Bang Hyun Wook laughed awkwardly in response.

“What could I even say? I just do whatever I’m told to do.”

“Do you feel like you’re falling behind?”

Those words. The awkward smile on Bang Hyun Wook’s face disappeared.

“Do you feel like Kim Tae Hoon’s right arm, Bang Hyun Wook, can no longer match up to even Kim Tae Hoon’s finger?”

Bang Hyun Wook began to think in his head.

‘Eh, what makes you say that? You’re saying some strange things.’ ……was what he wanted to say.

But instead of speaking his mind, his body stiffened. His expression looked like he had been stabbed with a knife in a deep place.

“Does it show?”

He ended up admitting to it in the end.

“It’s no different than a pro baseball player competing against high school athletes.”

The first thing that Kim Tae Hoon noticed were the changes in Bang Hyun Wook’s eyes.

His behavior had changed as well.

At first, Bang Hyun Wook was like a puppy awaiting orders. Although he had feared the monsters, he had also reveled in obtaining the power and strength to fight against and kill the

monsters.

He had always been proud of the fact that he was Kim Tae Hoon's teammate when fighting…… but eventually he also began to enjoy the treatment and looks that the others had started giving him.

But Bang Hyun Wook had stopped behaving in that way as of late.

He silently watched Kim Tae Hoon fight from the sidelines, a dead look in his eyes.

As a result, it became evident that his mindset had changed. His gallant spirit when opposing monsters had disappeared.

"I have no intention of tossing you a bone. My personality isn't like that, and I've never done so in the past."

"That's something that I know as well."

"I also don't intend to take in a cowering and whimpering dog."

That was why Kim Tae Hoon had specifically called out Bang Hyun Wook.

"That……."

Kim Tae Hoon needed Bang Hyun Wook's strength.

He needed the Bang Hyun Wook that would fly towards his enemies, the Bang Hyun Wook who would often times crack a joke during the midst of a battle, not the Bang Hyun Wook who hung his head and wallowed in self-pity and inferiority.

"Whether a mangy and cowardly dog or a hound, the choice is yours."

In response, Bang Hyun Wook grit his teeth and replied.

"I choose to be a hound."

A flame burst to life again in Bang Hyun Wook's eyes.

5.

"Looks like you really value Hyun Wook."

Chang Sung Hoon found Kim Tae Hoon alone in the room after Bang Hyun Wook had left.

"That's because he's not the kind of guy who would scheme against me or rip me to pieces."

"That's true. Hyun Wook isn't the type to do that. If he was, he

wouldn't have whined and begged in front of boss to take his first love with us. On that note, it looks like the progress between North Korea and China hasn't been slow. The way I see it, one poke is enough to get them to marry tomorrow."

Chang Sung Hoon briefly sighed.

"……are you thinking about whether or not you should have told the others about your second dream?"

Chang Sung Hoon was the only person that Kim Tae Hoon had revealed his second dream to.

He had great faith in Chang Sung Hoon, but it couldn't be said the same of the others…… but it wasn't because of the discrepancy in trust.

If anything, it was the difference in willingness.

To everyone here, Kim Tae Hoon was hope, he was their savior. Afterall, not many people would choose to follow a dead man.

"Even if I told them, nothing good will have come of it."

I don't need any more burdens, it's difficult to live from day to day as it is.

On top of that, the interpretation of the dream they had come to

was not clear.

"Chang Sung Hoon."

"Yes? If you ever have anything to ask of me, please do so without hesitation."

"Try and guess how I died."

Chang Sung Hoon spoke his thoughts without hesitation.

"My guess is that Boss was killed by an awakened."

Kim Tae Hoon nodded his head.

He shared the same sentiments.

Kim Tae Hoon didn't know why exactly he had died during the second dream.

But he had a clue.

"When Sun Mi noonim was by Boss' side and trying to heal boss, she was largely left untouched, something that wouldn't happen if facing a monster, since the chances of a monster leaving other humans alone and only targeting Boss are low. So doesn't it make sense that it was a conflict between humans?"

Kim Tae Hoon had seen Ahn Sun Mi before he died. Her hair was longer than it was currently, and she didn't seem to have incurred any wounds or battle fatigue.

It meant that she had been excluded from battle.

However, she would usually never be excluded from a battle against monsters. If she was excluded, then the chances of a battle having limited participants was high.

"If we were to simplify it, it looked like you died because you were weak."

The cause of death was simple and clear.

The law of the jungle.

The reason why he died was because he was weak. He wouldn't have died if he were strong.

Anyways, the difference between getting killed by an awakened and getting killed by a dragon was different.

It meant that there was an awakened even stronger than Kim Tae Hoon.

"You said the world is like a game?"

“Yes, that’s correct.”

“If you kill a monster, you gain experience and level up. It’s that kind of concept.”

“Yes. A classic RPG game.”

“Then what happens to the game once the number of monsters start to dwindle?”

Kim Tae Hoon had grasped the finer points of what that meant.

“That…….”

Chang Sung Hoon came up with a game in his head, and began to simulate what would happen if monsters stopped spawning.

“The first one to kill and level up would be the strongest.”

Then Chang Sung Hoon began to understand.

“It’s a zero-sum game.”

He began to realize what was the most important in order to survive in this world.

Securing weapons, finding relics, and creating items were all very important if humans wanted to survive.

But all those things were a means to kill stronger monsters.

It was the conclusion he had come to after having gone through his second dream.

“Our goal after the first dream was to become a local warlord.”

So they once again had to change their goals.

“I had put out the suggestion, and Boss had agreed.”

Kim Tae Hoon’s first goal was to fortify Bucheon and maintain it as his territory.

But now, things were different.

He couldn’t just stay in Bucheon.

“This time, we should go on the offensive instead of staying on defense.”

Kim Tae Hoon took a look at the map on the whiteboard as he spoke.

“If we kill the green ranked monster in Gwangmyeong City, then all of the other monsters in Gwangmyeong will be ours.”

“We have to strike before others eat it all.”

“Other people are the problem.”

“It seems so. No doubt, there are many competitors, including Colonel Lim Hyun Joon who had appeared in Boss’s first dream. Looks like the path ahead of us is going to be a pain the ass. Why not just become the commander-in-chief of the army, Boss? Boss is currently a major, correct? Why not take this chance and consider it? Give me a seat if you do though.”

Listening to Chang Sung Hoon trying to lighten up the mood, Kim Tae Hoon didn’t brush aside the meaning behind the Gwanggaeto Stele and the Sword of Goujian.

Because China had a strong and incredibly large military, they would inevitably become a rival, but Kim Tae Hoon couldn’t do anything about it now.

It was another matter for Kim Tae Hoon to brood over and grit his teeth.

“It’s better to focus on our own territory at the moment..”

“I’ll arrange a scouting party to identify the monster.”

“I’ll go and personally take a look.”

Before Chang Sung Hoon could say “It’s too dangerous”, Kim Tae Hoon’s eyes had already turned black.

Chang Sung Hoon immediately swallowed down the words he was going to speak.

“Is there anything you need?”

Instead, he asked a question.

“Place an order at the workshop. Frame the Black Snake’s skull.”

“The skull? Do you intend to make a museum?”

“Once it’s done, a yellow grade monster will be on its way to installation.”

“Install?”

“The others won’t listen to me simply if I say that this is my land.”

Chang Sung Hoon nodded his head.

“Anything else?”

“Boil some water.”

“No coffee?”

Hearing that, Kim Tae Hoon laughed.

“The coffee here is garbage.”

Chang Sung Hoon laughed and replied.

“I know how to brew and mix coffee.”

6.

Shiyen.

Located northwest of the Hubei Province, it was home to a large car factory, the Danjiangkou Reservoir, and previously to 3.5 million citizens.

But now, Shiyen was not like how a big city should be.

Although it had the hubbub of a big city, it was a hubbub caused by the screams of people trying to prevent themselves from being eaten by monsters.

There were some who watched the chaos from afar.

They were soldiers.

Soldiers, but soldiers who weren't wearing uniforms. There were some soldiers who were wearing their uniforms, but the most eye-catching soldiers were wearing an armor found in ancient China.

It was like historical Chinese figures lined up.

At the front were two women.

They were 170 cm tall, possessed model-like bodies, and were identical.

Twins.

One of the twins opened her mouth.

"I can't tell why we were bothered to come here. Couldn't we just drop a nuclear bomb and collect the monster stones afterwards? It would be better to just get it over with in one shot."

Bloody words came out of her mouth.

Her twin had nothing to say.

“Not likely.”

A man in uniform was the one who had spoken up.

“We’re here to defend China, not destroy it.”

The woman who had spoken bloodthirsty words simply shrugged in response.

“I’m just saying Major Chan Shan nim.”

Chan Shan.

The man with the position of major looked at the smiling woman with cold eyes, and then looked at her twin who had a stoic expression on her face before speaking.

“Get ready to play.”

As Major Chan Shan finished speaking, the twin with the stoic expression lifted a lute grasped in her hand. When the woman began to pluck a string on the lute which seemed to be made of old wood, a haze began to sway in the vicinity.

Dding!

As she continued to play, the haze began to spread out, congregating within the armored soldiers, instilling a golden aura into their eyes.

It was the same for the woman who had spoken up earlier.

“Good.”

The woman also pulled out a bronze sword that was at her waist. While taking aim at Shiyen with her sword, she shouted.

“Charge!”

In response to her cry, golden characters engraved into the bronze sword began to shine.

越王勾踐 自作用劍

The King of Yue Goujian’s Self-Forged Sword.

It was the sword that King Goujian of Yue had forged for himself, the Sword of Goujian.

Chapter 47 – This Is MY Land (3)

‘Damn it, damn it……’

“Damn it.”

A 5-story, desolate building.

A man was walking through a hallway steeped in darkness and devoid of any lighting.

The man was in dire straits.

Aside from the not knowing when was the last time he had washed himself, his exposed skin was torn by the cold winds, making his appearance look all the more ghastly.

“Seriously, what the fuck.”

His name was Kim Hyun Seouk.

Having turned twenty-six at the turn of the new year, he was a man who had taken great pride in his body and his good looks– at least up until a month ago.

In addition, he had been looking forward to exploring Europe and taking in the splendor of a new world soon to open up to him.

But everything changed on 31 December 2016. A new world war had begun.

‘Why is this happening?’

However, the new world that awaited Kim Hyun Seouk wasn’t what he had expected.

Monsters suddenly appeared in the world, turning the world into hell.

The monsters were quick to prey on humans, their palates changing and acquiring a taste for human flesh.

It was the same for the survivors. Looting, rape, arson ····· the humans had become monsters as well. Lunatics who ate flesh also began to make their appearances.

Hell couldn’t be worse than that.

However his thoughts were interrupted with the appearance of a furred crocodile.

‘It’s the end of the world.’

Huge crocodiles covered in fur– and not just one of them, not dozens of them, but hundreds of them, swept through everything

like a tsunami.

There was even a giant crocodile, bigger than two buses, stood at the center of the herd.

It was a yellow-eyed, fantastical creature that spit fire out of its mouth!

'Damn it·····'

Recalling the monsters, Kim Hyun Seouk trembled. He even recalled pissing his pants when he saw the monsters.

'It's over. It's all over.'

Kim Hyun Seouk was in despair. He kept mumbling to himself, desiring to escape from this hell.

'I would rather·····'

He was starting to wish for a silent, and quiet death in the building– to become just another unmarked grave.

Kim Hyun Seouk despaired at the choices before him.

'Huh?'

“Keung keung!”

However, his sensitive sense of smell as a result of days of starvation briefly distracted him from his anxiety. A slight scent tickled his nostrils.

‘Coffee?’

The scent was coffee.

It was a scent that had long since disappeared from his mouth, and a scent that had long since disappeared from his life after the advent of monsters.

‘Why coffee?’

Before he knew it, Kim Hyun Seouk had started heading towards an unknown location.

His feet led towards an office that had once served as a calligraphy institution before the age of monsters.Under a translucent window inside the office was a man, calmly enjoying a cup of coffee under the sunlight that streamed in.

He looked very peaceful.

The scene itself detracted from the rest of the environment. Kim Hyun Seouk had thought that peace was a

concept that had long since fled from this world.

Kim Hyun Seouk stood there like he had been struck by lightning. He could do nothing but stand still in front of such a nonsensical scene.

Ggoreureuk!

It was only when Kim Hyun Seouk's stomach began to grumble that he snapped out of his reverie.

Kim Hyun Seouk had been ingesting snow instead of eating for the past few days, so the smell of coffee whet his appetite.

"Huk"

Kim Hyun Seouk's only grumbling stomach startled himself.

On the contrary, the man under the window took a calm look at Kim Hyun Seok.

"Ex.. excuse me."

Only one word came to Kim Hyun Seouk's mind at this time.

"D-do you have something I could eat?"

He had no shame.

It had been a long time since he had a proper meal. In fact, the last meal he could recall was some kimbap he had eaten from a convenience store 5 days ago.

“Please something····· please, I beg of you.”

The man stared at Kim Hyun Seouk as he made his request.

The man’s cold eyes stared right into Kim Hyun Seouk’s own desperate gaze.

It was at that moment that Kim Hyun Seouk started to become suspicious.

‘I, is that a monster? Is it a monster that transformed into a human-like shape?’

He became suspicious of the man in front of him. He began to suspect that the ‘human’ in front of him was a monster just as terrifying as the ones he had faced up till now.

“Are you a survivor?”

“Huh?”

“Where are you from?”

“Ah, that……”

Startled by the sudden start of a conversation, Kim Hyun Seouk recalled the question he was asked.

“Gwangmyeong City! I lived in Gwangmyeong City, my name is Kim Hyun Seouk, and I’m twenty-five…… no, twenty-six years old.”

In response, the man fished out a chocolate bar from his bosom. Kim Hyun Seouk’s eyes widened.

“Information. Tell me everything you know about what happened to Gwangmyeong, if I’m satisfied with your answer, I’ll give you another one.”

8.

“The body is just over 3 meters. It looks like a crocodile, but its body sported wolf-like fur instead of its usual armor-like leather. They are herd animals, like wolves.”

Crocodile Wolf.

Kim Tae Hoon looked up at the group that had gathered after he

finished describing the new monsters he had encountered.

Kim Su Ji, Yang Jung Hwan, Lee Su Young, and Chang Sung Hoon.

The four of them looked at their smartphones with stiff expressions on their faces.

“And in the middle of the herd is this guy.”

Kim Tae Hoon took note of their stiff expressions.

They were looking at the photos that Kim Tae Hoon had sent them on their phones. The picture depicted a giant Crocodile Wolf that couldn’t be compared to a common Crocodile Wolf. There was even a picture of the monster spitting flames from its mouth.

The chief of the Crocodile Wolves, the Flame Spitting Crocodile.

“In addition, there is something like a midboss Crocodile Wolf. It’s weaker than the chief, but it’s stronger than the regular ones. Although it’s hard to differentiate it from the others, it does have orange eyes. When fighting the Crocodile Wolves, make sure to take note of their eyes. There’s quite a difference between the red ranked and orange ranked monsters.”

The presence of the other wolves were almost negligible in front of the Flame Spitting Crocodile.

“This herd of over four hundred monsters is currently heading towards Bucheon.

Having looked up from their phones, nobody present dared open their mouths.

‘It’s on a completely different level compared to the Black Snake……’

‘Over four hundred of them? I almost died just trying to look only at one Black Snake……’

‘If it arrives at Bucheon City, we’ll be forced to take losses.’

‘Even if each of the four hundred monsters were to consume only half a human a day, that would still mean two thousand humans at the end of ten days.

Bucheon was lucky. There shouldn’t be too many people left in Gwangmyeong City.’

Everyone knew that a yellow grade monster was heading towards Bucheon City. That was why Kim Tae Hoon was so quick to search for it.

However, he hadn’t expected that a large herd of monsters would be accompanying the yellow grade monster, completely unlike the

Black Snake.

The current predicament was completely different than the time when they faced the Black Death.

That was the reason why he couldn't really speak.

He had nothing to say that could solve the predicament before them.

"Any questions or comments?"

Kim Tae Hoon urged them to speak up.

The results were immediate. For those present, Kim Tae Hoon's words carried greater weight than that of anyone else's.

"We have no choice other than to utilize massive firepower to deal with this herd."

The first person to speak was Kim Su Ji.

"What is the state of our current firepower?"

"We have a company currently transporting ammunition to us at the moment. Thanks to that, our ammunition supply should be sufficient. The problem is that we lack firearms."

Kim Tae Hoon turned his attention to Lee Su Young.

It was her mission to retrieve firearms from the 17 Division.

“I’m currently mapping out a route.”

However, she still had yet to procure equipment from the 17th Division’s supply caches.

“As you know, the distance is fairly large, so the trip itself would take a long time, especially since we also need to cross a mountain.”

There were many reasons why.

For now, the largest reason was the large distance. The distance was quite sizable, and a mountain was also in the way.

Furthermore, they would be carrying firearms on the way back. If possible, she would have preferred to take a train or form a vehicle convoy, but the conditions of the road made it difficult to do so.

Therefore, she had been spending the past few days slowly advancing whilst securing the route. Essentially, they were clearing the road of cars and the surroundings of monsters. It was a time consuming task.

“Of course, I’m aware that these are all just excuses. If you give the command, I’ll take the risks and proceed swiftly.”

However, if need be, she was more than willing to charge on through with a large group.

The herd of Crocodile Wolves wasn’t something they could handle without taking any damage.

“One week.”

Kim Tae Hoon gave her one week.

“I can hold off the Crocodile Wolves for one week.”

“Boss!”

Hearing that, Chang Sung Hoon immediately asked a question.

“How do you plan to hold them off for a week? Looking at their speed, it’ll take at most two days for them to arrive at Bucheon City. They’ll arrive at Bucheon City Hall on the third day.”

It wouldn’t be easy to stop a group of fast-moving four hundred Crocodile Wolves. In addition, they would be consuming other monsters and humans– advancing forward like a bunch of bulldozers.

Anyone who could come up with a solution would be admired for coming up with a brilliant solution.

“I alone will be enough to stop them.”

“Huh?”

“What?”

“What in the world……”

Everyone couldn’t help but look at Kim Tae Hoon with blank expressions.

“By yourself, boss?”

There was no reason for Chang Sung Hoon to accept that now, was there? Kim Tae Hoon simply nodded his head.

The group frowned again.

“Major-nim, to fight against a yellow-ranked monster, let alone a herd of 400 monsters, even for you that would be……”

“The Second Lieutenant’s words are right. No matter, even for you boss, it would be impossible…….”

Both Kim Su Ji and Chang Sung Hoon spoke up to try and convince Kim Tae Hoon to not do something so foolish.

If this was a decision that Kim Tae Hoon had come to out of his own arrogance and conceit, then the results could only be disastrous.

Fortunately, Kim Tae Hoon's track record showed that he had never made any decisions based on pride.

"I plan to carry out guerrilla tactics with a small troop of soldiers."

Instead, his decisions were often times based on a level-headed and rational logic. He had no choice but to judge things coldly.

"That's my specialty."

This was what Kim Tae Hoon had done in the past.

"I have no reason to stay in town."

In the end, cities were created for the sake of humans and for the sake of easy living in the world.

In other words, this world was not for monsters.

“Are there any more questions or comments?”

In the face of Kim Tae Hoon’s confidence, no one could speak.

9.

Chiureub!

A crocodile tried to push its large head through a door.

The entire scene of the crocodile trying to fit its head was strange.

Its body was about three meters long.

Its entire appearance was just like that of a normal crocodile, but its whole body was covered in fur instead of the typical armor-like leather.

Its legs were longer than those of regular crocodiles as well, giving the ability to run faster than normal crocodiles.

It was the same this time as well.

The large Crocodile Wolf’s steps were so calm and steady, that it was as though the beast was without presence.

Chiureub!

In fact, the sound of its long anteater-like tongue, flicking in and out of its mouth was louder.

The monster’s red eyes began to glow as it licked up the blood on the floor.

The aroma of the blood was like a drug.

Since the blood was still in its liquid form in this cold weather, then that could only mean that the bleeding person in question had only recently come by.

Chiureub!

The Crocodile Wolf immediately set off on the trail of blood without hesitation.

Just like from the fairy tale Hansel and Gretel, the Crocodile Wolf followed the blood like a trail of breadcrumbs.

As the Crocodile Wolf approached the end of the trail, what it met at the end of the trail wasn’t an injured human it could call a prey, but rather a man holding a silver colored thermos dripping blood.

Swik, swik!

The Crocodile Wolf stared at the man and flicked its tongue. It was excited to see a live prey for the first time.

That was the last time it ever fought against anything.

Swik!

The Crocodile Wolf's head fell onto the ground with an eerie sound. It died with its tongue out.

Cheureung!

The blade that cut off the Crocodile Wolf's head returned to its sheath that was hung on the man's back.

Meanwhile, Kim Tae Hoon stooped down and collected the gurgling blood from the Crocodile Wolf's neck in his silver thermos.

As soon as his thermos filled up with the Crocodile Wolf's hot blood, he closed the cap of the thermos then ripped open the Crocodile Wolf's stomach, fished out the monster stone from within its heart and swallowed it.

'With this……'

He was adding onto his tally the amount of Crocodile Wolves he had killed today.

‘It should be eleven.’

Thinking of the amount of Crocodile Wolves he had killed, Kim Tae Hoon recalled a memory from two years ago.

Two years ago, Kim Tae Hoon was in Syria.

When the IS rose to power within Syria and the region was plunged into civil war, many countries dispatched special forces to monitor the situation.

It was the same for Kim Tae Hoon and his unit. They disguised themselves as mercenaries and carried out their orders in Syria.

Their directives were as followed:

Kill as many IS insurgents possible within a specific city.

Their intention was to strike fear into the IS by exposing them to the deaths of their colleagues so as to deter insurgents from leaving the city and thereby make time for operations to go forth elsewhere.

Kim Tae Hoon had carried out his orders splendidly.

In other words, he killed many people.

It was to the point where the countless number of IS agents started to call him a monster.

‘This is no different from that time.’

Kim Tae Hoon’s current course of action was no different from what he did two years ago.

Kim Tae Hoon was hunting down independent Crocodile Wolves who had separated from the pack in search of food.

Thus far, the method had worked out just fine.

It was a simple matter to avoid a large pack of monsters.

However, this pack of Crocodile Wolves was not a simple pack. A clear hierarchy and chain of command existed.

And on top of that, the reason why they were migrating was because of the trespassing of a green grade monster.

It was imperative for the pack of monsters to stay vigilant of the shifting surroundings.

In fact, because the number of Crocodile Wolves had dwindled as

a result of Kim Tae Hoon's search-and-destroy tactics, the monsters had slowed down their progress in order to spend more time on scouting out their surroundings.

It was proof of their increasing levels of alertness.

But it was nothing but a simple wake-up call.

They were not yet afraid.

It was imperative that Kim Tae Hoon strike fear into the monsters so as to entangle them. Just like how it was two years ago in Syria against the IS.

And at the end of the road, Kim Tae Hoon will stare down this pack of monsters and proclaim:

This is MY land.

Chapter 48 – Flame Spitting Crocodile (1)

At Sungkonghoe University's sports field, located in Seoul City's Guro District…

Keu reu reu…….

It had become the stage for a nightmare.

Hundreds of furred Crocodile Wolves filled up the sports field.

The Crocodile Wolves were in the midst of a meal.

The meal was nightmarish.

Euhguk euhguk!

The sound of tens of jaws snapping through bones and flesh was enough to send a shiver down your spine.

"Ggeuaahk!"

The screams of humans being ripped apart was the perfect background music to their meal.

"S, someone save me. Please, please…… "

The sounds didn’t last for long.

Three Crocodile Wolves bit down on a living human’s head, torso, and legs.

Pahsahk!

Like the sound of a cookie crumbling, the man who had briefly called out for a savior disappeared into the Crocodile Wolves’ stomachs.

Similar scenes were being played everywhere.

Screams rang out, bodies were crushed, and various other disturbing sounds could be heard.

The largest of the beasts stood in the center of the field.

Hwareureu……!

It was a yellow grade Crocodile Wolf that spit out sparks every time it breathed out.

It was the leader of these hundreds of Crocodile Wolves.

The monster was so fierce that the other Crocodile Wolves avoided its eyes.

However, it didn’t seem like that creature was in a very good mood.

There was no way it would be.

It had once ruled its own land. It was a land of riches, paradise if you will. There was no shortage of food, and the land was comfortable– it was a land where its kin could thrive.

As a result, it had spent countless amount of effort in order to keep that land. He destroyed any invaders, directly confronting any who dared to trespass upon his land, ripping them apart with his strong jaws and burning them to a crisp.

But in the end, all of that was lost in the span of one morning.

It was because of one reason– there was an enemy that it couldn’t reach.

Since he literally could not approach the enemy, he and his kin, like a group of beggars, had to move out in search of greener pastures.

What made him angrier was that the enemy had never once shown itself. When its kin goes out in search of food, the enemy would hunt them down.

It didn’t even hunt to fill its stomach, it hunted to give a warning.

This is my land.

Don’t you dare enter.

If you enter, all of you will die.

Just thinking about it made the Flame Spitting Crocodile tremble in rage. The Flame Spitting Crocodile could not accept such blatant provocation.

Because of that, the Flame Spitting Crocodile bided its time.

It would soon be time to find the bastard and bite him to shreds.

Kyaaaah!

A Crocodile Wolf approached the Flame Spitting Crocodile while showcasing its power.

Aside from the orange glow from within its eyes, it didn’t look any different than the other Crocodile Wolves. It trotted over and approached the Flame Spitting Crocodile while walking atop the bodies of the other Crocodile Wolves.

Then, it carefully placed a bone it had gripped in its mouth before the Flame Spitting Crocodile.

As soon as it laid eyes on the bone, the coiled up Flame Spitting Wolf relaxed.

It straightened out its gigantic body, stood up, and cried out towards the sky, a flame jetting out of its mouth.

Goooh!

2.

At the southern intersection of Yeokgok Station.

The calendar above the road had long since stopped since 31 December 2016.

The cars on the road had been abandoned by their owners, the accumulated snow having frozen the vehicles solid.

Gwaang!

The reason for why the station had stopped was a herd of 300 Crocodile Wolves, Gwang!

The herd of speeding Crocodile Wolves filled up the streets.

They received any obstacles with open arms and obliterated them as they made way through the street.

It was like a tidal wave of fur.

It seemed like nothing could stop these stampeding Crocodile Wolves.

Funnily enough, the thing to stop this seemingly unstoppable herd of Crocodile Wolves was a giant bone.

It was obviously a snake's skull, but the skull was too large and could not be considered as just a snake's skull.

The herd's tremendous momentum stopped before the skull, with some of the beasts even staggering in fear.

Although it was just a skull, the Crocodile Wolves felt it in their instincts.

They knew that this skull once belonged to a superior creature on the same level as their leader.

Of course, there was no real reason to fear what was just a bone. What was dead was dead, and no matter how terrifying and powerful something was, the law of the jungle would dictate that it would be useless once dead.

The terrifying thing was the existence of a creature that had the ability to kill the Black Snake.

The skull was a warning.

A warning stating that any trespassers would be rendered the same as this skull.

Fear began to spread amongst the Crocodile Wolves.

Koong!

The Flame Spitting Crocodile trampled through the rising fear.

Koong!

A crocodile at the end of the herd advanced forward with a loud roar.

Koong!

The Flame Spitting Crocodile was unwilling to stop.

It took one step forward, trying to force a foot forward.

The footstep shook the ground, shattering the fear that had encompassed the other Crocodile Wolves.

Koong!

The Flame Spitting Wolf rose up from its spot in front of the Black Snake's skull.

The standing crocodile had tightly shut its mouth. Its body began to massively swell up.

And at that moment it opened its mouth.

Gwaaaah!

A giant flame like fireworks burst from its mouth, burning the Black Snake's skull.

It was a declaration of war.

A proclamation that he would kill the owner of this land! A declaration that he would take over this land!

"FIRE!"

The master of the land was willing to accept the proclamation.

Peung!

The battle begins.

3.

Kim Tae Hoon had said. He was willing to give them a week.

However, Kim Tae Hoon did not exactly keep his promise. Instead of seven days, it had become ten– three, more than a week.

So it was more than enough.

“FIRE!”

It was more than enough time to secure weapons and ammunition.

“FIRE!”

He had even recruited members to retrieve supplies.

Kwagwakwang!

The recruited soldiers were forced to recall their training from the two years of compulsory service they had gone through.

By the end of ten days, all of the preparations had been set and the battlefield had been prepared.

So after all that, of course the Mek Guild wouldn't refuse the Flame Spitting Crocodile's declaration of war.

The Mek Guild's artillery units were waiting to strike the moment the Flame Spitting Crocodile decided to spit flames at the skull.

Shells began to bombard the Crocodile Wolves.

Kyaaaah!

The Crocodile Wolves' tough fur was useless before the artillery shells. The Crocodile wolves began to explode.

It was an attack that the Crocodile Wolves could never face up against.

On the other hand, this was the first time most of the soldiers themselves had ever participated in a counterattack. They were reduced to mechanically refilling 60mm shells.

"FIRE!"

"FIIIRE!"

They were numb, and could only respond to the commands that were given to them. The crews refilled mortar after mortar, firing on their commanding officer's order.

"Die you fucking monsters!"

The infantry who were wielding rifles, submachine guns, and other weapons cried out.

They were concerned at first.

Very few people would be willing to go to war, especially considering how dangerous it would be for unawakened humans to go to battle against monsters.

Kim Tae Hoon's expectations for applicants weren't high, and he certainly didn't expect there to be an overflowing amount of applicants.

But that concern disappeared once recruitment actually began. The number of applications flooded in.

Many of the volunteers were already on active duty, so they didn't feel as though they were obligated to join.

Suppressed anger.

Many were itching to take out their anger on these monsters that had suddenly appeared and destroyed their lives.

“Huu!”

‘Yes, my aim is perfect.’

‘I’ll be able to kill at least one more for sure.’

So they were all serious.

None of the active duty soldiers goofed off as all were striving to become as skillful as possible.

Regardless of age, all of the volunteers in the artillery units used their knowledge and skill to dish out as much evil as they could against the monsters.

It was their will to survive.

Kaaaah!

And so the Crocodile Wolves were subjected to volley after volley of bombardments.

The Crocodile Wolves had migrated here for the sake of their own survival. They were not going to lay down and simply accept

the outcome of this battle.

Above all, the chief of the Crocodile Wolves, the Flame Spitting Crocodile, stood tall amidst the bombardment.

Goooooooooh!

The Flame Spitting Crocodile let out a loud cry.

Its battle cry changed the direction of the battle.

Kaaaah!

When the Crocodile Wolves heard the cry, they ignored the shells and began to run again.

However, the unceasing bombardment… ceased.

Fear.

The Fear that the Flame Spitting Crocodile utilized was an attack that the general populace could not resist. The mechanical actions of the soldiers loading the artillery with mortar shells faltered and stopped, like a broken doll.

Tursseuk!

Some of the soldiers had collapsed onto the floor, foaming at the mouth.

“Retreat!”

“Fall back!”

The awakened began to store the equipments into the vehicles that they had prepared in advance. They had come up with a contingency plan to immediately evacuate those who had succumbed to the Fear.

But not everyone was prepared to escape.

Instead, some soldiers on the frontline swallowing Fear Resistance pills.

They were a Claymore Unit stationed in the most dangerous places in order to buy time for their comrades.

The pill helped, but they couldn’t stop trembling. However, they refused to take their eyes off the Flame Spitting Crocodile and the rest of the Crocodile Wolves.

“Explode!”

They waited, then they triggered the explosives.

Kwakwakwa!

A shower of metal beads smashed through the crocodiles as they mindlessly ran through the road.

Ggieeeeeh!

The firepower was terrifying.

The Crocodile Wolves running in the front quickly became a pile of corpses.

However, what was frightening was the layer of Crocodile Wolves that didn't stop and simply pushed through the corpses.

'You damn monsters!'

'Even though we made so many preparations, we still ended up having to retreat!'

The first wave of monsters had gone silent.

The battle was just as described.

The previous wave of monsters that had flooded through the street had now stepped aside to let the Flame Spitting Crocodile through.

It was ready to tear apart and burn to the ground the figures of the retreating enemies.

Swik!

Suddenly, a sword light opened up a long wound on the Flame Spitting Crocodile's skin. The hide that had been unscathed by the barrage of artillery was finally damaged.

Feeling a sharp pain, the Flame Spitting Crocodile swept its sparkling eyes around its surroundings.

Keuaaah!

However, the Flame Spitting Crocodile could not find the enemy that had injured it.

It was simply impossible for him to find the culprit.

How could it when Kim Tae Hoon was actually in the air above it?

'It's been awhile since I've shot this thing against a living creature. How long has it been, four years?'

Hoisted upon Kim Tae Hoon's shoulder was a Panzerfaust 3, an anti-tank rocket-propelled grenade launcher!

Chapter 49 – Flame Spitting Crocodile (2)

4.

December 31, 2016, was the first day that humanity faced off against monsters.

Humanity was lost.

Not only did the monsters turn out to be much stronger than they had expected, but were very clever as well.

It was the same with Kim Tae Hoon. He had paid a painful price to come to that realization whilst fighting the Black Snake.

He didn't know that the Black Snake would be so strong, he didn't know that the Black Snake would be so smart, and he definitely didn't know that fighting it with nothing but The Sword of the Commander and Telekinesis should have been, by all accounts, a death sentence.

And the result?

He had danced with death.

Apparently, Lady Luck had been smiling upon him, otherwise how is that he came out of that fight alive? The entire fight from beginning to end was a mess.

He had no intention of making the same mistake this time against the Flame Spitting Crocodile.

‘I need to make thorough preparations for this.’

And so he studied the beast. Since he couldn’t just go and dissect the Flame Spitting Crocodile, Kim Tae Hoon needed to thoroughly inspect its habitat, behavioral patterns, and its worm-like physical structure.

‘I need a new manual.’

At the same time…

He was in need of instructions on how to utilize better his Telekinesis.

Merely being able to control weapons with his Telekinesis was not enough.

He needed something more.

Kim Tae Hoon needed to make theory into reality. There were limitless ways he could utilize Telekinesis, and it had long since become time to explore his ability.

But time was limited, so he could only choose one or the other.

‘We have enough firepower. We just need to come up with ways to effectively utilize our equipment.’

The solution Kim Tae Hoon picked in the end…

‘If we could fly through the air, it would be no different from an attack helicopter. There would be no movement constraints.’

Levitation.

If Kim Tae Hoon were to fly around with the equipment retrieved from the ammunitions company and the 17th Division’s subdivision arms supply warehouse, he wouldn’t be too different from an attack helicopter.

It wouldn’t be an easy task.

If it was, he would have already attempted to do so with his Telekinesis at will.

‘I’ll figure it out somehow.’

There was no other choice.

If he can accomplish it, he’ll survive, but if not, then he’ll die.

But Kim Tae Hoon would manage to do it.

Pushyu!

With that, Kim Tae Hoon stepped onto the sky and pulled the trigger on his Panzerfaust 3.

5.

The purpose of an anti-tank rocket isn’t to decimate a tank.

It’s possible to mount a larger anti-tank rocket to a combat helicopter, but you wouldn’t expect something of that caliber to be carried around by the infantry.

Afterall, a tank isn’t just a moving lump of iron. It’s like a small fortress. If even the infantry could carry around a weapon with enough firepower to completely destroy a moving fortress, then no country would invest money into manufacturing a tank worth five million dollars.

Therefore, anti-tank rockets emphasized penetration over destruction.

When combating a tank, the priority lies within punching holes into its insanely thick armor plating.

The Panzerfaust 3 was like a swordfish’s bladed snout, whose

purpose was to punch through a tank's armor.

Pushyu!

The shells propelled through the air. A screeching of the wind was left behind in its wake.

The target, the Flame Spitting Crocodile!

Keuro?

It was only after the elongated, pointed end of the shell nearly reached the crocodile that it noticed the projectile flying towards him.

Gwagwagwang!

A loud explosion immediately rang out.

It wasn't just an explosion.

The force of the explosion was concentrated at the tip of the explosive. Like the point of impact on a water hydraulic cutter, it penetrated right through the Flame Spitting Crocodile's thick, leathery skin.

Kaaaah!

The crocodile's screams resounded throughout the area.

Watching the scene with bated breath, a small smile broke out on Kim Tae Hoon's face.

'I can't even laugh.'

It was obviously a serious injury.

Unfortunately, it wasn't enough to sentence it to death.

The scream it had let out for just mere moments before was proof enough. It was far from a death throe, and was nothing but a venting of its pain.

'Even after the rpg penetrated through its armor, it still survived…….'

Kim Tae Hoon, having handled modern weaponry in the past and had launched a Panzerfaust against other people before, he had a good understanding of the power behind the blast.

However, he couldn't stay bitter for long.

He was not disappointed.

Holding the Panzerfaust in his right hand, he retrieved a grenade from his belt and juggled it with his left hand.

Ting!

The safety clip launched off the grenade on its own before the pin soon followed suit.

With its mouth open and writhing in pain, Kim Tae Hoon chucked the grenade into the Flame Spitting Crocodile's mouth.

'I have to move as soon as I hear the explosion.'

Kim Tae Hoon said to himself. He was waiting for the signal, which, in this case, was the soon-to-be-heard crocodile's screams.

Kwang!

It was long before he heard the anticipated explosion.

6.

Bureureung!

The vehicles transporting the artillery that had been frozen as a result of exposure to Fear began to move once more along the cleanly maintained roads.

Koong koong koong koong!

The Crocodile Wolves began to mindlessly run after the retreating vehicles.

Kaaah! Ka!

Sensing something, some of the Crocodile Wolves broke off from the rest of the mob and turned towards a dilapidated building off to the side of the road.

The Crocodile Wolves had sensed the presence of the soldiers who had stayed behind and had set down claymores in a bid for time.

The first crocs to encounter them were the ones that first entered the building.

Poohoohoo!

An Awakened let loose a huge flame from his mouth.

Hwareureu!

The flaming ball of death sweepingly engulfed two Crocodile Wolves rushing through the door without notice.

Kyaaaa!

The two Crocodile Wolves screamed as the flames stuck to their flesh and threatened to consume them.

The pain didn’t just stop there.

“Throw it!”

At the same moment the Awakened who had spit flames from his mouth twisted his body and dodged out of the way, two water balloons flew towards him from a distance.

Cheulpik!

The flying water balloons struck the Crocodile Wolves’ bodies, the contents of the balloons showering the crocodiles.

Hwareeeeeuuuuu!

The sudden flaring of the flames was telling of the contents of the water balloon. It was clearly not water that was inside the balloons.

It was lighter fluid.

The lighter fluid in the water balloons made the flames on the crocodiles' bodies roar.

Kaaah!

While the two crocs panicked at the entrance, another crocodile appeared.

However, that crocodile died the most gruesome death of the three.

Kwajik!

Like a bolt of lightning, a hammer shattered its skull.

"Alright!"

The man who had destroyed the crocodile's head was none other than Bang Hyun Wook.

Aside from Kim Tae Hoon, Bang Hyun Wook held the highest rank in the Mek Guild, and was the first to free himself from the shackles of the Flame Spitting Crocodile's Fear.

In fact, by fighting against the Fear with his Energy, his entire body was at its peak.

It was as though he were drunk on medication.

But above all, there was no hesitation in Bang Hyun Wook's eyes.

"Draw! Draw! Let's leave our mark here in the new world! Draw!"

A complete absence of hesitation.

It wasn't just Bang Hyun Wook as well.

In that building by the side of the road were a number of Awakened, ready to wage war against the crocodiles.

Not a single speck of hesitation could be found in their eyes.

Of course, they had a reason.

"Fire! Don't worry about wasting, just fire!"

"Keep firing!"

For one, they had a powerful weapon known as the rifle.

"Whichever ones you kill are all yours to loot! Even if it's just one more, kill them!"

“There’s an orange-eyed one over here!”

They also had permission to claim whichever ones they killed.

But without a doubt, the biggest reason was something else.

“Oh my God!”

“What’s wrong?”

“I-it collapsed!”

It was the fact that Kim Tae Hoon was here.

The squads here had no choice but to win.

7.

The Panzerfaust had left a glaring wound on the Flame Spitting Crocodile’s back.

Kaaaah!

So it was only natural that the Flame Spitting Crocodile would scream.

A loud roar not for the purpose of inflicting Fear, but out of pure pain.

Before long, its roar started to turn to one of anger, then to one intended to inflict Fear.

Teubsuk!

A grenade suddenly appeared, flying towards the Flame Spitting Crocodile's snout, entering its mouth. There was an explosion.

Kwang!

The sound of the explosion was muffled. Which made the situation even creepier. The true intensity of the explosion was lost within the crocodile's body.

The explosion robbed the crocodile of its voice.

It also put the Flame Spitting Crocodile in a daze, making it unable to reason properly.

Its head was throbbing with an intense headache, its brain was in a daze, and all of its senses were overloaded by the intense sound and shock brought about by the grenade. In short, it fell into a panic. It was impossible to try and think clearly in such a situation.

At that moment, the Flame pitting Crocodile lowered its posture and crouched its body.

Like an armadillo.

It was the only thing it could do if it wanted to maximize its own survival.

That was the only reason why it did so.

‘As expected.’

That was also the reason why Kim Tae Hoon had injured its back.

If it was a human, you could say that he had aimed for the crocodile’s shoulder blades.

‘Even the Flame Spitting Crocodile would react the same way.’

He had confirmed against the Crocodile Wolves a few times now. What does the monster known as the Crocodile Wolf do when it finds itself in a life threatening situation? What kind of instinctive action does it take when taking on a serious injury.

He knew that when injured by a sneak attack, it would go as low as it can.

Therefore, he injured its back.

By lowering its posture, the injury on its back would stand out.

So as a result, he would be able to figure out where the beast's heart was located.

Beyond that open wound would be a beating heart.

It would be beating more and more violently, as a direct response to the situation it was in.

A sword, like a bolt of lightning, flew towards the beast in a bid to stop its heart.

8.

"The creature has fallen! The boss has done it!"

A soldier with a radio receiver in his hand said to Chang Sung Hoon with a smile on his face.

However, Chang Sung Hoon didn't smile after hearing the report.

Instead, he told the soldier.

“Work towards clearing the area and controlling the situation. Organize a few search parties to seek out any surviving pockets of monsters and count the number of casualties. Send whoever needs medical attention to the hospital.”

“Yes sir!”

In the midst of giving out his commands, he couldn’t help but recall the rank on his uniform.

Corporal.

That was his rank. A real soldier. And to be quite frank, there was almost no real difference between the other ranks.

However, the Mek Guild wasn’t an army.

Because even considering that, it was clear that Chang Sung Hoon was the one who was in command at the moment.

‘This is why powerless humans look forward to the onset of war. Those who’ve lived their lives like peasants before the war can suddenly become a general by the time the war ends.’

It wasn’t even funny how fast it could happen.

Chang Sung Hoon’s face hardened.

Any sort of rank was good. The important part, however, was that Chang Sung Hoon was now serving as a staff member.

Packaged in with his new role as a staff member was the responsibility of settling the aftermath of the battle, which left him no time to cheer for victory.

‘Looks like boss has become an unimaginable monster. He aimed and shot an anti-tank Panzerfaust 3 and then chucked a grenade all while levitating in the air..... apache helicopter, he’s literally just an apache helicopter.’

To be quite honest, he thought that this would be an extremely difficult battle.

Although he was equipped with firepower that was incomparable to when he had fought against the Black Snake, the fact that his opponent this time was leading hundreds of other monsters could not be ignored.

On top of that, a monster’s Fear ability was very intimidating.

Even if you were able to deploy powerful firepower, everything becomes useless the moment you are exposed to Fear.

A squad consisting of ordinary people was like a feeble candle in front of a monster’s Fear.

‘Well, it’s nice that it was resolved too easily.’

But in the end, the battle ended really easily.

Although the success could be attributed to the extensive amount of preparation, but ultimately, it was because of Kim Tae Hoon.

Kim Tae Hoon had absorbed the experience and lessons from when he fought the Black Snake.

‘As expected, he was amazing.’

He would only get stronger from today. He’ll consume the monster stone from the Flame Spitting Crocodile and gain new powers.

Furthermore, it was the route that Kim Tae Hoon had chosen to better survive.

As a result, it was easy for Chang Sung Hoon to guess what Kim Tae Hoon’s next course of action would be.

‘But other than that, did he say he was Kim Hyun Seouk?’

Kim Hyun Seouk.

Hearing about Kim Tae Hoon was like divine intervention– a heavenly sign indicating to him the path of survival. He had promptly dropped the cup ramen in his hand and left behind the

instant rice he had been preparing and left Gwangmyeong City.

And out of everything he had revealed, there was one crucial bit of information.

‘There’s a facility in Gwangmyeong City designed to make components for solar power generation.’

There was a fairly large factory that produced solar power components in Gwangmyeong City.

The general public was not privy to his information. An ordinary person wouldn’t be interested in such a thing.

So naturally, Kim Tae Hoon and Chang Sung Hoon didn’t know either. And none of the survivors knew either.

‘They’ll need to capture it no matter what.’

Therefore, it was an essential information. It was information that could change the fate of the Mek Guild and all of the survivors under it.

There was no way to advance society without electricity.

On top of that, quality of life and life expectancy would go up if they could maintain a sustainable source of electricity.

Therefore, Kim Tae Hoon's next objective would be to secure the solar power plant.

'We must secure the facility unconditionally..... but that guy will be a problem.'

The problem was the existence of a green ranked monster in Gwangmyeong City.

Quite frankly, if it were up to Chang Sung Hoon, he would choose not to go there.

To enter the lair of a monster whose exact power was unknown and whose strength was most likely incomparable to the other monsters they had faced thus far was tantamount to suicide.

But regardless of that, Kim Tae Hoon would go.

It's because he knew. He knew that he couldn't sit still with his eyes closed and wait for the danger to come to him.

'So this is what it feels like to have Superman as your boss.'

Chang Sung Hoon stretched his neck before fishing out Daedongyeojido and laying it out before him. He carefully observed the Gwangmyeong City area.

"Huh?"

Breaking out into a cold sweat, a frigid tingle ran down Chang Sung Hoon’s spine.

“Wh, where did it go?”

Chapter 50 – Gwangmyeong City (1)

The sudden appearance of monsters had destroyed modern day civilization in a matter of hours.

In light of such events, humans had no choice but to become the monsters and beasts themselves.

“P, please save me.”

The same was true for Gwangmyeong City.

All semblance of civility had collapsed with the sudden appearance of monsters. Electricity was cut off, communication was paralyzed, and the absence of gasoline and oil served as the fuel for the degeneration of humanity.

Those who had scraped by and survived the initial onslaught all ended up having to become like the monsters that had attacked them in order to survive.

“What’s this? A boy?”

“I thought it was a bitch, but turns out it’s a baby boy! Fuck, you made me exert myself for no reason.”

“Ah, this son of a bitch. If you’re gonna get caught, then be obedient! You think you can run away?”

Out in the cold within a forest of buildings stood four men surrounding another man.

“S, sorry, I’m sorry. Please, my life……”

It wasn’t difficult to understand what the situation was like.

As such, it would be difficult to be upset at the eventual outcome.

Puk!

Of the four, a man wearing boots kicked the collapsed victim’s head as though it were a soccer ball.

“Keuhuk!”

The man screamed as he retreated backwards. Although the man looked pitiful, the man who kicked him apathetically placed his foot on his chest.

Puk!

His intention was to break his ribs.

“Keuk!”

The man could do nothing but tremble, his breathing ragged. He was trembling out of fear and pain.

The four men began to talk to each other.

“Looks like a real bitch. Damn it, I ran like crazy because I wanted a taste.”

“What should we do? Should we just kill him right here?”

“Just kill him. It’s not like you can get a taste by taking him to the hideout, right? You can’t eat him either.”

“Well who knows. There might be someone who likes that sort of thing.”

“But it isn’t your taste?”

“What the fuck are you assholes looking at me for!”

“Shut up. A monster might hear you and come here. Then we’ll end up dead.”

One of the four who couldn’t stand the disgusting conversation was forced to speak out.

“S, spare me, s, spare me.”

However, it didn’t produce the outcome that he wanted.

One of the four frowned while listening to the poor man who had suddenly begun to beg for his life again.

“This bastard is so damn loud. What do you guys think of ripping his tongue out first?”

The man who was begging for his life quickly shut his mouth and clenched his teeth. The man felt a sense of desolation.

It was because of that.

The others were able to sense it as well.

“Huh?”

“W, who is it!”

A solitary man approached the group of men.

The man’s outfit was fairly unique. He was wearing a black, leather protective jacket and a vest over a blue outfit, making him look like a member of the police special forces.

But it was not a police commando.

Although he was wearing an outfit similar to that of a police commando, it was what he was carrying on his back that made it clear that he wasn't a commando. They couldn't help but notice a sword slung on his back.

If society hadn't collapsed, he would have been seen as a cosplayer, a drama actor, or an actor in a movie.

But on top of that, it was still strange to see a man like that in a lawless city where civilization had long since collapsed.

So they were nervous.

If it was before the collapse of civilization, the men would have merely looked upon the man with disdain, but things were different now. Seeing the strange outfit, they weren't sure of how to approach the situation.

"Hey, who the hell are you!"

One of the four men couldn't help but call out to the man in the strange outfit.

Instead of replying, the man that had suddenly appeared simply lifted up a black object he held in his hand. He stroked the object lightly with his left hand.

Cheulkeuk!

Instead of replying back, he simply held out a K5 Pistol.

“G, gun?”

“L, lunatic!”

They couldn’t quite tell what it was since they were quite at a distance, but when they heard the telltale sounds of a gun being loaded, the four men began to panic and retreat.

It didn’t take experience to tell that four unarmed men could do nothing in front of a pistol, especially when at a distance.

Only one of them dared to speak facing the muzzle.

“W, we’re members of Messiah! Messiah!”

A last ditch effort.

The intimidating man with a gun in his hand furrowed his brow. Anywhos, it looked like he knew what the name ‘Messiah’ meant.

So was that the reason why?

“Touch us, and our organization won’t sit still!”

“Yeah! If you touch us, you’re dead!”

They began to threaten the man as a last ditch effort.

It was like looking at a group of kindergarteners indiscriminately threatening others.

Despite that, the man put his gun down onto the floor.

‘D, did he understand?’

‘W, we’re saved!’

The four men simultaneously let out a sigh of relief.

‘Huh?’

One of the men noticed that the pupil’s of the man in the distance had turned black.

Piyut!

The sound of relieved sighs fell flat in the air.

Teulsuk!

A hole the size of a pinky finger appeared in one of the men's temple, a mixture of cerebrum and blood gushing out of his body.

"Huk!"

As soon as one of the guys realized what had happened, he began to panic, his breathing turning ragged and choked and his pants soaked in urine.

"Messiah..... it looks like the naming sense of surviving humans is similar everywhere."

While laughing and talking to himself, the gunman, Kim Tae Hoon, returned his pistol to the holster strapped onto his right thigh.

He approached one of the men who had lost all strength in his legs and had collapsed onto the floor.

"I want to ask you something."

The man merely whimpered in response.

"S, spare me please."

2.

Choi Gisun, he was there during the sudden outbreak of monsters, and he had survived.

There were two ways in which the initial survivors of the monster outbreak could survive.

You had to choose between killing monsters or killing humans.

Choi Gisun was the latter.

He had gathered other humans and had lived his life as a lawless figure.

Rape, robbery, and murder.

If South Korea's justice system were still intact, then his crimes would have been enough to revive the death sentence.

In fact, he had committed more crimes than the amount of meals he had eaten. Securing a meal was more difficult than anything else after the monster outbreak.

Those that had survived began to gather in one place.

That was how the group Messiah was formed.

But in the end, their group became not one to save others, but one that resorted to looting.

It was a group that ignored morals and sought any means necessary to survive.

“That’s all I know. Please, please spare me.”

Choi Gisun was just a bully that had the backing of a bigger group. So before the threat of death, he couldn’t help but capitulate.

“Please, if you spare me, I won’t forget your mercy. I swear, I’ll change my ways. I’ll reform and live like a saint.”

He even pledged to reform in a way a child in elementary school would.

While glaring at Choi Gisun, the events of the last three days flashed through Kim Tae Hoon’s mind.

His memories began when Kim Tae Hoon emerged victorious against the Flame Spitting Crocodile and swallowed the monster stone that had once resided within the crocodile.

“Boss, this is an emergency.”

Although everyone in the Mek Guild had started to cheer and

celebrate as Kim Tae Hoon ingested the monster stone, Chang Sung Hoon approached him with a stern expression.

“The green ranked monster has disappeared from the map.”

He only needed a few words along with his expression to convey what he wanted to say.

“The one in Gwangmyeong City.”

The taste of victory promptly disappeared from Kim Tae Hoon’s mind.

The two of them quickly headed into a nearby cafe where Kim Tae Hoon heard a more detailed story from Chang Sung Hoon.

The green light in Gwangmyeong City had suddenly disappeared.

It hadn’t been too long since he had taken his eyes off of Daedongyeojido.

“It either has an ability that lets it disappear from the map, or its speed is so fast that it flew outside of the boundaries of the map……”

Chang Sung Hoon promptly told Kim Tae Hoon the possibilities that he suspected.

“Or maybe someone else had already hunted it down. I would guess it would be one of these three scenarios.”

There were three scenarios.

There was only one thing Kim Tae Hoon could do in light of these new developments.

He would need to enter Gwangmyeong city and personally observe the situation.

It was a natural progression.

If the green ranked monster had the ability to disappear from the map, then you wouldn’t be able to deal with it with the aid of Daedongyeojido.

If not careful, the strong castle that the Mek Guild had built could become nothing more than a sandcastle overnight.

So of course, he had no choice but to investigate despite the risk.

He had to confirm if it had left to a far away land. There was a need to secure the facility for the manufacturing of photovoltaic batteries in Gwangmyeong City, but before that, their was a need to do a preliminary search before that.

And finally.

‘There’s nothing wrong with someone stronger than me. All of the Awakened have different starting lines in regards to their first abilities. And if you were to couple it with a strong artifact……’

He needed to confirm whether or not an Awakened had killed the green ranked monster.

‘Maybe he’s the one that kills me in the future.’

Any Awakened that can kill a green ranked monster in such a short amount of time is much, much more dangerous than a green ranked monster itself.

So soon after Kim Tae Hoon had made his preparations, he entered Gwangmyeong City.

That was three days ago.

During that time, Kim Tae Hoon had scoured Gwangmyeong City. He avoided engagement with monsters and contact with survivors.

It was only a short time ago that Kim Tae Hoon was convinced.

At present, Gwangmyeong City was not home to either a green ranked monster or an Awakened, powerful enough to kill the said green ranked monster.

That was why Kim Tae Hoon had finally showed himself.

“I’m telling the truth. If you let me live, I’ll completely change the way I live.”

Kim Tae Hoon snapped back to reality and stared at Choi Gisun, who had become nothing more than a sheep for the sake of saving his life.

Looking at him, Kim Tae Hoon lightly nodded.

It’s fine if he leaves.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that his gesture was a universal signal of approval throughout the world.

“T, thank you. Thank you, thank you very much.”

As soon as he freed himself from his own fear, he started to move away from Kim Tae Hoon, slowly shuffling away, still wary of Kim Tae Hoon.

As soon as he reached the streets and the buildings started to block Kim Tae Hoon, he began to run.

“Son of a bitch, you’re fucking dead.”

He mumbled his revenge as he ran away.

Kim Tae Hoon didn't take his threat too seriously.

"E, excuse me!"

A pitiful man lay off to the side, his ragged breathing pervading the silence and his busted lips evidence to the beating he had received from the other men.

He was a slim man, and very feminine– so much so that many would mistake him to be a woman from a distance.

"Th, that man, it was a mistake to let him go."

Even his voice was feminine. It wasn't unbelievable to see why four men had surrounded him whilst thinking he was a woman.

He continued to speak in a feeble voice.

"If you leave that person alive, he'll be sure to come back to exact revenge. He'll bring the Messiah organization and punish you in terrible way! Some of the Messiah members even have guns!"

After confirming the time on his watch, Kim Tae Hoon put his left wrist down and spoke in a loud voice.

“I know.”

Kim Tae Hoon felt no risk in the face of that threat.

In other words, the single most dangerous creature in all of Gwangmyeong City was Kim Tae Hoon.

So Kim Tae Hoon had no mind to restrain himself because of a simple threat.

“That’s why I let him go. I guess I should talk to you now. Tell me everything you know.”

Of course, Kim Tae Hoon also had no desire to extend an olive branch to this fragile looking man.

In this world where monsters roamed free and dominated the overworld, Kim Tae Hoon had no intention to die any time soon.

To let down his guard before this fragile looking man was simply the same as asking for death.

Chapter 51 – Gwangmyeong City (2)

3.

Gwangmyeong Technical High School.

Located next to Dodeoksan Mountain, it was now home to Messiah's headquarters.

So naturally, the conversations that took place there were disgusting and horrific. They were bragging about their raids on other survivors and were comparing the number of kills they made with each other.

It was like a lair of demons wearing human skin. That same lair was now full of tension.

"You said he was holding a gun?"

"Yes, he was definitely holding a pistol."

"It wasn't a revolver?"

"Tell me exactly what happened. Are you sure it was a real gun? Are you sure you didn't see it incorrectly?"

Things had started to become tense the moment Choi Gisun returned.

After escaping from Kim Tae Hoon, he had immediately escaped to the hideout and spit out everything that had happened to the person in charge.

But it was because he was able to return to Messiah so swiftly and explain what had happened that the upper echelons of Messiah were able to convene quickly at 6 o'clock in the evening.

"I'm sure. It was definitely a pistol."

"Looks like it'll be a real pain in the ass."

First off, their opponent wielded a pistol, not a revolver.

"Just where did that bastard even find a pistol? Wouldn't police arsenals usually have rifles but not pistols?"

Police officers were outfitted with revolvers by default.

There were many things to have to take into account. For one, the revolvers were always outfitted with blanks, forcing the officer to have to remove the blanks and then reload with live rounds in any case where the officer deemed it necessary to pull out their gun. The Korean Police very rarely resorted to using their guns after all.

There were really only two organizations that used non-revolver

pistols.

“Did he get them from the military?”

Either special forces in the police or special forces in the military.

Any pistols such like that is telling of a connection with special forces.

“But he didn’t fire his gun? Hey, Choi Gisun. Try explaining one more time. How did the other kids die?”

“That..... he put his gun on the floor, but all of a sudden there was a gust of wind and the others all collapsed with holes in their heads.”

“A gust of wind, why don’t you try giving me an explanation that isn’t so damn retarded.”

“I, it’s the truth, there was a gust of wind. Swik sook! That’s the sound it made.”

Moreover, he was able to instantly kill three people without a gun.

“Damn it, he’s probably a superhuman.”

That fact alone was more concerning than the fact that he had a gun.

There was no reason for them not to know. The existence of those with tattoos on their right hand who possessed incredible powers.

“Does he use Telekinesis like leader?”

Of those who had gathered, one was of course the leader of Messiah, Lee Jiseob.

“But could leader, with Telekinesis, in just one blow……”

“Ha Ilhyeon, do you want to see whether or not I have the ability to do so? Hm?”

“A, apologies.”

Lee Jiseob.

He was a young man, and was sitting in the fluffy principal’s chair in the office.

Even if you were to guess high, he didn’t look to be older than twenty-five. He could easily pass as a freshman in college.

On top of that, his appearance was that of a friendly sort.

“Has my silence in recent days given you the confidence to look down on me? Huh?”

“D, do you think I have a reason to?”

But he wasn’t a friendly human at all.

If he was, would he be the leader of the group Messiah, the one whose members indulged themselves in various atrocious activities?

Lee Jiseob was an incredibly brutal and merciless person.

It was basically the end of the world, so it was basically like a playground for those who harbored sadistic tendencies.

In Gwangmyeong Technical High School’s basement were dozens of corpses simply waiting to decay in the springs and summers to come.

But his rise to power wasn’t simply because of his sinister mind.

“Hey, Ha Ilhyeon. Do you want a hole in your head too?”

Lee Jiseob used his Telekinesis to direct a revolver in his pocket

to fly into the air and point itself at Ha Ilhyeon.

It was impossible to tell what Ha Ilhyeon's expression was like. The office was lit by two flashlights instead of conventional lights.

The only way to tell how he was feeling was by observing the trembling flashlight in his hand.

"S, sorry."

"All of you pay attention. How long do you plan to keep telling me the same thing? Is that why we all gathered here? What I want to know is how to find and kill this bastard!"

Saying that, Lee Jiseob grabbed the revolver that he was levitating with his Telekinesis.

His face looked as though he had chewed a pile of crap.

'Damn it.'

It wasn't an expression reserved for this specific situation.

'A bunch of crazy things have started to happen since a few days ago.'

Strange things had started to happen in Gwangmyeong City since

the last full moon.

The monsters hiding within the city had begun to crazily flee elsewhere.

So as a result, the survivors had become more active. That was why regular humans like Choi Gisun were able to hunt and raid other survivors.

But Lee Jiseob knew that this was not a good sign.

‘Ever since those special forces looking guys went into Gwangmyeong Sageori Station two weeks ago, things have started to become really weird.’

But above all, Lee Jiseob had seen it with his own eyes.

He had seen a special forces outfit appear around Sageori Station two weeks ago.

They didn’t look like they were a rescue team.

A rescue team would try to find survivors, but this squad had appeared in the dead of night when survivors would most likely be in hiding.

They had promptly entered the Gwangmyeong Sageori Station.

‘What were those guys up to?’

Afterwards, the monsters in the surrounding area had begun to behave in a crazed manner.

‘Should I have escaped then?’

Of course he wouldn’t have actually dared to do so. Considering the sheer amount of crimes he had committed, Lee Jiseob would be the first to be executed should he come into contact with any sort of law enforcement, whether it be the police or the military.

However, the number of monsters had decreased and had remained low since then.

Without the presence of strong monsters, the unspoken leader of Gwangmyeong naturally became him.

But then an unusual person had appeared.

‘Damn it.’

Lee Jiseoub was nervous and had no intention to participate in the conversation that was going on at the moment.

Deureureuk!

All of a sudden, the door to the office opened.

“Hm?”

“What’s that?”

Everyone in the room looked towards the door that had suddenly burst open.

But there was nothing there.

Instead.

Hwing!

A gust of wind blew through the open window. Surprised by the sudden gust of wind, they turned their heads.

Only two.

Only two of the six men who had gathered in the office were able to turn their heads towards the window where the gust of wind had blown in from.

Thump!

The other four fell onto the floor. There were holes in their heads

with rivulets of blood streaming down their heads.

“Ahhh, ahhhh!”

Of the two survivors, Choi Gisun screamed, staring at the man floating outside of the second floor window.

“He he, that guy he… … ”

On the other hand, Lee Jiseob, instead of screaming, pointed the revolver that he held in his hand towards the dark figure outside the window.

“Keuk!”

Except, he couldn’t. His arm pointed towards the ceiling instead of the window. It was as though an invisible string had tied itself around his wrist and pulled his entire arm upwards.

‘It’s him.’

Lee Jiseob was well aware that it was Telekinesis, and so thanks to that, he knew who it was that had come.

Kim Tae Hoon.

He had come.

4.

Kim Tae Hoon was well acquainted with the mindset of criminals like these guys.

They were like cockroaches.

When an individual is threatened, he will run back to his hideout and prompt the others to band together in order to fight against the threat.

Because of that, it wasn't very effective to immediately clear out the criminals that you see.

Kim Tae Hoon knew exactly what would work.

"Answer my questions."

He knew exactly what to do in order to get what he wanted from the criminals.

"What bull shit are you spewing. Just die you retarded piece of shit!"

Tweh!

With one arm pointed towards the sky, Lee Jiseob cursed the arrogant Kim Tae Hoon, spitting at him.

The spit landed on Kim Tae Hoon's cheek.

Kim Tae Hoon gently wiped the spit off of his face. Kim Tae Hoon clenched his teeth. Then he spit on Lee Jiseob.

Tweh!

However, Kim Tae Hoon's spit was different from Lee Jiseob's spit.

The color was different. It wasn't saliva, but rather, a small fireball.

Kim Tae Hoon's 'spit' quickly latched onto Lee Jiseob's cheeks.

"Ggaaaahk!"

It was a loud scream of sheer pain, the excruciating feeling of his skin melting off his face was unbearable to withstand.

The flames refused to die down. The fire slowly expanded, melting away more and more of his skin.

"Ggaaaah, Ggaaaah! Ggaaah!"

Lee Jiseob's bloody eyes glowed in pain in response to the otherworldly level of pain.

Pushyushyu!

It was the fire extinguisher that Kim Tae Hoon had retrieved from some corner of the office.

The fire retardant chemicals showered Lee Jiseob's face.

"Cough, cough, cough……"

Lee Jiseob coughed out the fire retarded powder that had entered his mouth.

Holding onto the fire extinguisher, Kim Tae Hoon simply stared at Lee Jiseoub.

"Forty seven. That's the number of men here. It's also the number of men that I've taken care of."

Hearing that, Lee Jiseob broke out in laughter.

"Cut the bullshit and just kill me. Unless you want me to spit on you again."

Tweh!

Kim Tae Hoon once again spit on Lee Jiseob. The saliva landed on the chemical covering Lee Jiseob's eyelids.

"Ggaaaah!"

Lee Jiseob who had been suffering already was suddenly forced to deal with the prospect of his own eyes burning up in flames.

But there was no pain. Kim Tae Hoon had spit normal saliva.

"Unless you want to be set on fire again, pay attention to what I'm saying. If I ask a question and don't receive an answer in three seconds, or you roll your eyes, or if the answer you give me is wrong, I'll spit on your eyeballs."

Hearing his conviction, Lee Jiseob didn't dare to express his spite any longer.

He was fairly bright and was clear on what was going to happen.

He knew that the man in front of him, Kim Tae Hoon, had no intention of letting him live.

Then he remembered.

Why did Kim Tae Hoon mention forty-seven men?

There were also men guarding the basement. They were the ones who kept the secret of the basement full of corpses.

It was certain that he would have seen the bodies.

“What happened in Gwangmyeong three days ago?”

“Nothing... ...

It was because of that that Lee Jiseob complied.

“Something definitely happened in Gwangmyeong three days ago.”

“There was seriously nothing of import that happened. It’s been quiet, that’s it. I’m telling you, I haven’t even seen monsters!”

“Then what happened about two weeks ago?”

“That……”

Lee Jiseob had a surprised expression on his face.

Kim Tae Hoon calmly started to count.

“One, two……”

“Special forces. S, special forces troops entered Gwangmyeong Sageori Station. That’s all I know.”

“When did they go in? Was it in the afternoon or in the evening?”

“It was at night, late night…..”

“How many?”

“I don’t know for sure, but at least ten…… .”

“What happened afterwards?”

“Monsters began to run away, and as a result, the monster population began to decrease like crazy……”

At that moment, the revolvers that belonged to the members of Messiah, whose heads were punctured began to float in the air.

Lee Jiseob used his Telekinesis to use the guns.

‘You’re dead.’

This was why he had been so cooperative until now.

Since Kim Tae Hoon wasn't going to let him live, he needed to kill him.

With the gun pointed towards Kim Tae Hoon, there was no hesitation as Lee Jiseob went to pull the trigger.

Tweh!

Unfortunately, Kim Tae Hoon's spit was able to hit Lee Jiseob's eyes before he could pull the trigger.

Hwareureu!

And this time, Kim Tae Hoon's saliva was full of color.

Flamespitter.

The Flame Spitting Crocodile's flames devoured Lee Jiseob's left eye.

"Gggaaah!"

Lee Jiseob screamed as though he was experiencing the worst pain in the world. The gun he was trying to fire with his Telekinesis fell lifelessly to the floor.

Kim Tae Hoon glared at Lee Jiseob, and spoke in a cold voice.

“I’m sure you noticed, but I had no intention of letting you live. Of course, I didn’t plan to let you die a painless death either. So as long as you answer my questions and cooperate, I’ll grant you a swift death. You’re a clever guy, I’m sure you don’t need me to explain what I mean.”

“Ggaaaaah!”

“Now then, let’s continue.”

As stated before, Kim Tae Hoon was very, very well acquainted with the criminal psyche.

5.

It was late night.

Kim Tae Hoon was observing Exit 4 of the Gwangmyeong Sageori Station.

‘The Special Forces entered the Gwangmyeong Sageori Station.’

The information he got from Lee Jiseob was pretty good.

‘So that was the reason. So this is why the green ranked monster suddenly left the area around Cheolsan Station and entered Gwangmyeong Sageori station.’

The information was very good.

‘When going to Gwangmyeong Sageori Station from Cheolsan Station, you’ll inevitably end up closer to Bucheon. In other words, monsters of rank yellow or lower had no choice but to flee to Bucheon.’

However, the information he had didn’t resolve all loose ends.

‘But I still don’t know what the special forces were here for. They weren’t here as a rescue team. If they were a rescue team, they wouldn’t have acted the way they did.’

Kim Tae Hoon could only guess.

‘They were here to hunt down a monster. Knowing that there was a green ranked monster, they went in without hesitation. It’s almost certain that they probably had a weapon capable of damaging the monster.’

A special forces group entered Gwangmyeong City and then immediately entered Gwangmyeong Sageori Station in order to catch a green ranked monster.

Furthermore, the green grade monster had disappeared from

Daedongyeojido three days ago.

‘It took them more than ten days.’

It was unlikely that a battle would go on for ten days within the subway system.

Common sense would dictate that they would have failed. However, the monster was alive until three days ago.

And seeing how it was a green ranked monster, they must have used more than one artifact.

There should have been around four or five members comparable to Kim Tae Hoon in strength. Even if they had a powerful weapon, it would be useless without a powerful user. A weapon could only be considered a threat if the user knew how to use it.

‘This is a hunt.’

This wasn’t just a battle anymore. This was the perfect opportunity for Kim Tae Hoon to focus on the hunt.

‘Even if the green ranked monster was able to wipe out the special forces squad, it would have sustained fatal, if not heavy, injuries.’

A battle is often times separated into the winning side and the

losing side, but in some rare cases, the differences between the two could be negligible.

'If it's already in fatal condition and gets worse……'

In this case, the hunters could have perished with the prey succumbing to its wounds soon afterwards.

Without a trace of hesitation, Kim Tae Hoon stepped into Gwangmyeong Sageori Station.

Chapter 52 – Gwangmyeong City (3)

6.

Ddalgak!

It was dark, like a raven. A light suddenly flared to life within the dark surroundings which had been devoid of light for quite some time.

Kim Tae Hoon pushed his arm outward, extending the area illuminated by the light in his hand.

It was just like described. The flashlight in Kim Tae Hoon's hand began to move by itself.

Having let go of his first flashlight, Kim Tae Hoon fished out for another one. Kim Tae Hoon walked down the dark subway track with his two flashlights.

The first thing Kim Tae Hoon saw was a body.

And just beyond that were multiple corpses strewn about.

There were five corpses before him.

It was a gruesome sight.

‘It looks like blunt force……’

At first glance, everything seemed to have suffered from a type of blunt damage, but the wounds themselves looked like they had been hit by bombs. It looked like the point of impact had exploded. One of the corpses’ head was smashed into pieces to the point where you couldn’t find any of the fragments anywhere, while another corpse had been struck in the stomach, its torso and lower body separated from each other.

‘Strength beyond common sense.’

They looked like they had been struck by lumps of metal flying at hundreds of kilometers an hour.

Aside from their injuries, the corpses shared other injuries as well.

‘Rather than that, these outfits……’

All of them were wearing sneakers.

‘Counter-terrorist outfits.’

It was an outfit that Kim Tae Hoon was familiar with.

Counter-terrorist outfit, it wasn’t an outfit that just any org

would supply to their units. It was a very meticulously designed uniform that a counter-terrorist unit would wear when on duty– of course, it was something that Kim Tae Hoon was familiar with.

So it was only natural that he knew what these clothes were for.

‘Monster hunt, and a stealth hunt at that.’

Black was a color reserved for secretive and stealthy operations. Ironically, wearing such clothes was basically announcing to the world that they were carrying out some sort of secret plan.

However, their outfit wasn’t exactly the best match when faced up against a monster.

It was a product made with fighting humans in mind.

But the ones in front of Kim Tae Hoon were different from the ones that Kim Tae Hoon knew of.

Teukteuk!

Kim Tae Hoon rapped his knuckles on the most intact outfit. There was a hard material inlaid within the fabric.

‘It’s not something they wore, it’s inside the clothes.’ They sewed it in.’

Sewed in.

That meant that they had improved upon preexisting clothes.

It was one step beyond simply using some sort of protector.

The next thing that came into view was a right hand.

As expected, he saw that there was an Awakened's tattoo when he took the glove off of a corpse.

Kim Tae Hoon's pupils turned black.

[Basic Abilities]

– Strength : 71

– Stamina : 49

[Special Abilities]

– Energy : D-Rank

– Mana : E Rank

– Physical Defense: D-Rank

– Magic Resistance : E Rank

[Acquired Abilities]

– Hobgoblin’s Fervor (6th Grade)

– Troll’s Vitality (6th Grade)

Pupil’s pitch black, Kim Tae Hoon frowned.

‘His stats are better than I thought.’

He immediately inspected another corpse’s right hand.

It was another Awakened, one whose stats were not much different from the body he had just inspected.

Both of them had acquired [Hobgoblin’s Fervor] and [Troll’s Vitality].

In fact, the third corpse he inspected was the same as well.

‘Systematically nurtured soldiers.’

They weren’t soldiers who fought and killed monsters on the battlefield, but rather soldiers who were fed specific monster stones and bred intentionally.

Kim Tae Hoon couldn’t help but frown.

“Huuu.”

‘That’s a wrap.’

He had suspected that it was possible, but he was surprised nonetheless to find that there was an organization capable of bringing up Awakened in this manner.

However, he still held some doubts.

‘However, this much still isn’t enough.’

They were definitely well-raised Awakened. The Mek Guild at present wouldn’t be able to boast such a high number of skilled Awakened like these.

‘It’s suicide to try and hunt a green grade monster with just this.’

But it wasn’t enough to hunt a green grade monster.

‘They wouldn’t even be able to withstand the monster’s Fear.’

They wouldn’t even have been able to stand up to a yellow grade monster or a yellow grade monster’s Fear.

Regardless, even if they didn’t know there was a green ranked monster present, it was hard to understand why they would have entered the subway station. The dark environment of the subway was a haven for monsters, and the lack of space to move around in made it a dangerous environment to explore.

One should never enter unless they were absolutely confident in themselves.

‘…… It looks like they had a really great artifact.’

Artifacts.

It was the most reliable source of power in the world at the moment.

Kim Tae Hoon began to rummage through the corpses. The first thing he found was a smartphone.

Smartphones with broken screens definitely didn’t work.

‘Hanji?’

The next thing he found was a piece of finely folded hanji.

[TN: Hanji is a traditional Korean paper parchment that is made from Mulberry trees]

Kim Tae Hoon unfolded the paper.

‘It’s a rubbing of some sort of stele.’

The hanji bore the markings of a rubbing of a monument.

It wasn’t very old. The hanji was still fairly stiff, and the ink had yet to fade.

More importantly, Kim Tae Hoon’s blackened eyes allowed him to see what it was.

[Rubbing of Bukhansan(Sunsubi) Monument]

– Relic Grade : Grade 5

– Relic Rarity: Normal

– Relic Effect : Contains a trace of King Jinheung’s dignity. It is possible to make weaker monsters tremble in fear.

A rubbing of Silla Dynasty's Great King Jinheung's Sunsubi.

'Looks like they came from Seoul.'

King Jingheung's Sunsubi was located in the National Museum of Korea. Possessing a rubbing of Sunsubi meant that they had come from Seoul.

As expected, there were already forces that had claimed the relics in the National Museum of Korea.

It was not very pleasant news.

"Jjeut."

Kim Tae Hoon lightly clicked his tongue.

'If just the rubbing is powerful enough to make monsters tremble in fear, then the real monument.....'

He could only imagine how powerful the real Sunsubi would be.

King Jinheung was one of the greatest conquerors of Silla. A monarch of conquest who fought in countless battles!

Then it would be without a doubt that the monument carved by King Jinheung would hold the dignity and spirit of King Jinheung himself.

It was more than enough to make monsters tremble in fear.

With a rubbing of this quality, the spirit of King Jinheung would be more than enough to serve as an invisible barrier against weaker monsters.

So it was without question that Kim Tae Hoon would take the rubbings. While doing so, he thought to himself.

‘I wonder what effects the Gwanggaeto Stele would have.’

Exactly what were the effects of the Gwanggaeto Stele that was on the future him’s wishlist?

Such thoughts flashed through his minds as soon as he laid hands on one of the weapons that used to belong to one of the corpses.

‘Panzerfaust.’

Panzerfaust 3, they had weapons that Kim Tae Hoon had been using.

But they weren’t exactly the same.

There was a bronze spear at the end of the unused shell instead of the expected rpg tip.

Kim Tae Hoon closely examined the bronze spear.

> [Warrior's Bronze Spear]
>
> – Relic Grade : Grade 4
>
> – Relic Rarity: Rare
>
> – Relic Effect : A bronze spear wielded by ancient warriors. A warrior's fighting spirit resides within.

It too, was also an artifact. It wasn't just a regular antique either, it was something right out of the bronze age that you would see in a textbook.

The relic was attached to the front of the projectile.

An absolutely crazy thing to do. The Panzerfaust launched anti-tank explosives. In this way, both the monster and the artifact would be destroyed together.

Looking at it, Kim Tae Hoon felt a spine tingling chill.

‘With both the power of the explosive shell and the power of the relic combined…….’

Combining modern day weaponry with relics in this manner was unexpected.

But it was still something anyone could have thought of.

However, relics weren’t common items that could be replaced. It just wasn’t practical to think of relics as mere consumables.

You would first need to verify that the effects of the relic are suitable. Otherwise you wouldn’t be able to draw out the power of the relic.

No, this weapon had already proved itself.

‘It was hit by these.’

Even a green ranked monster would succumb to these weapons if there were enough of them. The special forces must have fired their weapons into the green ranked monster’s mouth, inflicting fatal injuries and causing it to eventually succumb to its injuries three days ago.

‘A Panzerfaust is able to penetrate the hide of a yellow ranked monster. If you add the destructive power of relics on top of that……’

Of course, luck would be necessary as well.

‘It would be enough to inflict injuries. It was most definitely thanks to luck that they had been able to deal a fatal injury.’

However, luck isn’t just something anyone can seek out. Luck is blind and favors no one man.

The weak humans scored a lucky hit while the stronger green ranked monster was dealt a severe blow.

Kim Tae Hoon rose from his spot.

‘I have to investigate this more carefully.’

Now it was time to find the unlucky bastard.

Kim Tae Hoon had finally emerged from the station at the crack of dawn.

Kim Tae Hoon arrived at the Bucheon Mayor’s Office while everyone was still sleeping. The only one to greet him was a bleary-eyed Chang Sung Hoon.

“Was your venture fruitful?”

Instead of replying back to the drowsy Chang Sung Hoon, Kim Tae Hoon took out his smart phone, opened up an image file, and handed the phone to Chang Sung Hoon.

[Basic Abilities]

– Strength : 215

– Stamina : 198

[Special Abilities]

– Energy : C-Rank

– Mana : C-Rank

– Telekinesis : A Rank

– Physical Defense : C-Rank

– Magic Resistance : C-Rank

[Acquired Abilties】

– Flamespitter(5th Grade) : Converts Energy into a flame that can be spat. The strength is determined by the amount of Energy consumed. The properties of the flame are aligned to the properties of the Energy consumed.

– Rattle-tailed Mouse's Hearing(4th Grade) : The rattle-tailed mouse can hear even the slightest drop of water.

"Wow, you leveled up like crazy! Congratulations Boss. More importantly, what's this ability that you received this time?"

Despite the excitement in Chang Sung Hoon's voice, Kim Tae Hoon simply closed his eyes instead of replying.

Chang Sung Hoon couldn't help but be confused at Kim Tae Hoon's appearance.

"Ah."

Understanding the situation, Chang Sung Hoon lowered his voice.

"I'm sorry."

Grade 4 was the same grade as the Black Snake's eyes that Kim Tae Hoon had acquired. So its effects wouldn't be so simple as to

just end at simply being able to hear well.

He could clearly hear the sound of water dropping on the floor, so the sound of Chang Sung Hoon's excited yammering was like thunder right next to his ear.

"Although the ability is adjustable, I can't control it……"

"Just the fact that it's adjustable is a relief in itself sir."

Chang Sung Hoon lowered his voice as much as possible.

"But more importantly, if you look at the 4th grade ability, then the green grade monster…… "

There was no reason for him to stop talking.

But there was no other way to keep the silence.

Except if Kim Tae Hoon wanted to maintain the silence, he wouldn't have woken up the sleeping Chang Sung Hoon.

The explanation began.

Kim Tae Hoon began to talk about everything that had happened while he was in Gwangmyeong.

He talked about his run-in with Messiah and the green ranked Rattle-tailed Mouse who was found dead with a hole in its heart.

According to his story, Kim Tae Hoon made an absolute killing. He was able to come into possession of a green ranked monster's body and monster stone. None of it could be converted into money. It was an all expenses paid road trip.

However, Chang Sung Hoon didn't pay too much attention to Kim Tae Hoon's gains.

"It looks like you've run into a much bigger competitor than you thought you would. The army has the National Museum..... I don't think they're 8th Mechanized Infantry Division, then could they be Capital Defense Command?"

"I don't know. We shouldn't recklessly guess either."

A competitor.

It was the best word to describe the organization that had emerged this time around.

The reason why they were a competitor was simple.

The world had turned into a zero-sum game with a finite number of monsters to hunt and monster stones to scavenge.

“As Awakened, they should already be aware of the necessary risks required in order to gather as many monster stones as possible. Their Awakened should have already come to the realization that monster stones are more important than anything else.”

It was a fact that the group that had recently showed up knew.

That was why they had organized a special task force dedicated to hunting monsters.

“But there’s something that I don’t understand. Despite their level of preparation, it would have been impossible to kill a green ranked monster. Furthermore, the National Museum of Korea is obviously a treasure trove of goods. It should have photo negatives instead of simple wood-block prints as well……”

It was only natural for there to be some points that Chang Sung Hoon didn’t understand.

“This area shouldn’t be an area of high focus for their Awakened. There wouldn’t really be much they could do to raise their stats here……”

The National Museum of Korea also housed an edition of the Daedongyeojido. Although it wasn’t a full copy, they had photo negatives that acted as supplementary gap fillers.

If they have a copy of Daedongyeojido, then they should know of

the presence of the green ranked monster in Gwangmyeong. So why would they send such well-groomed awakened to their deaths?

"Could they not have secured Daedongyeojido?"

Kim Tae Hoon gave no response to Chang Sung Hoon's question. How would either of the two people present know the answer?

A guess could only be a guess.

So Kim Tae Hoon decided to discuss something else.

Kim Tae Hoon took out a notebook. Kim Tae Hoon flipped to the fourth page and showed it to Chang Sung Hoon.

[March 3 Gimpo Airport Rendezvous]

Chang Sung Hoon's eyes focused on that short phrase.

It wasn't very difficult to understand what that meant.

"So it wasn't just one unit, sir. There were multiple units that went hunting for monsters outside of Seoul before meeting back again at one place at a designated time..... if they're meeting at Gimpo International Airport, then are they going to try and launch

a plane?”

“It’s probably a safer place than you would think since it would be free of people and is an open space.”

Kim Tae Hoon had found a means to contact these forces.

All that was left to do was choose.

“Are you going to negotiate with them on that day then?”

They had two choices.

One of the choices was to go and negotiate with this unknown party with both sides having no knowledge of the other.

The second choice was to make contact and get to know each other a little bit before undergoing negotiations.

“What do you think?”

“Immediately undergoing negotiations would be the same as going in blindfolded and playing peek-a-boo. Regardless, isn’t Gimpo Airport just north of Bucheon? No, rather, they had already arrived at Gwangmyeong. Contact with them is inevitable.”

Realistically speaking, there was really only one option.

“Boss, no matter how you look at it, the other side is much larger. So it might be good to negotiate with them and work under them. They would have no reason to be hostile towards such a large group of survivors consisting of strong awakened like Boss and the others in the Mek Guild. This is my opinion.”

Contact would be inevitable.

It would be better to be proactive with the negotiations instead of pretending not to notice them before face planting right into them.

No, it would be much much better.

‘Negotiations would lead to survival.’

Even if the two sides ended up competing, it would be better to compete under a circumstance where the two sides had already agreed to hold hands and walk together rather than engage in a competition of life or death.

Above all, there was bound to be more than one competitor.

There are already several groups in South Korea and even stronger foes in Japan, North Korea, and China.

Globally, there would be competitors in Europe, Russia, and the United States.

Looking at it that way, even if all of the survivors in South Korea banded together, they would still be lacking compared to the rest of the world.

'As a soldier, I'm well aware of the potential of other countries, so the other party should be aware as well. That would make negotiations much easier.'

The organization based in Seoul is made up of mostly soldiers.

Soldiers exist to fight against an enemy. All soldiers of South Korea should be well aware of the enemies around South Korea.

There's only one problem.

"It looks like there is no choice but to negotiate. The problem is……"

"If the negotiations fall through, they would make problems for Boss."

There was no guarantee that good conditions would be achieved through the negotiations.

It wouldn't be unlikely for Kim Tae Hoon to run into problems right then and there.

“Sunmi noonim’s hair is still short so I don’t think you’ll be in immediate danger. Don’t worry too much.”

Chang Sung Hoon said in an effort to relieve Kim Tae Hoon. Hearing what Chang Sung Hoon said, Kim Tae Hoon tried to keep his laughter contained in his mouth.

The smile on his lips instantly disappeared.

He couldn’t forget.

‘I had sent a signal to myself, telling me to set my sights on Buyeo and Gyeongju.’

Kim Tae Hoon had made a wishlist for his past self in the second dream. In the dream, Kim Tae Hoon had made a wishlist for himself.

And using that wish list, he had encoded a secret message.

He would prefer to set his sights on Gyeongju or Buyeon instead of Seoul.

It didn’t mean that Seoul was an unconditionally dangerous place. But it would be smarter and safer to head towards an area that might be ownerless.

‘It’s very likely that those who had settled in Seoul are very

dangerous.’

But on the other hand, who knew if it was just a warning or not.

‘It’s also fairly dangerous to try and meet them at the Gimpo Airport on that day as well.’

Going down that path might end up quickening his death.

Kim Tae Hoon closed his eyes for a moment.

‘I really can’t adapt to this situation.’

It was the fact that either decision could result to his death, but he had no choice but to choose.

“I should prepare for the worst outcome.”

However, Kim Tae Hoon didn’t just give up.

He just needed to prepare for the outcome of his choice.

If a problem arises, then all he has to do is prepare for it.

Even as the dead rot and decompose, the living must still carry on.

“For now, gather all the technicians.”

“I’ve already gathered those on the list. All you have to do is assign them a job.”

“For now, have them extract the data from the smartphone in my bag. We don’t know what else might be on the phone after all.”

“Yes sir.”

“Also, put up a mission notice for the clans. Tell them to bring any usable solar power generators from Gwangmyeong to Bucheon.”

“The condition of the roads aren’t that great..... It wouldn’t be easy.”

“Have them move along the subway tracks.”

“Are the tracks fine?”

“With the exception of some monster corpses, yes. I couldn’t stand the loud heartbeats of the monsters so I cleaned them out.”

Chang Sung Hoon couldn’t help but admire Kim Tae Hoon.

Would anyone clean up the subway lines on their way back for future usage? Even if someone decided to do so, could just anyone have the strength to do so?

"Amazing. Then all the way from Bucheon City Hall Station to Cheolsan Station..... still, we could avoid the streets."

"It's something that we would have had to do eventually."

"That's true."

"Also, gather up some trustworthy people to go and retrieve the body of the Rattle-Tailed Mouse. Send them off first. That's our priority at the moment."

"Yes sir."

Watching ceaselessly coming up with plans, Chang Sung Hoon formed a wry smile on his face.

The conversation continued until after the sun had come up.

That's how the day started.

8.

'Ah.'

Kim Tae Hoon couldn't feel anything in his right arm.

"Was my arm cut off? Was it cut off from the shoulder?'

It seemed like his arm had been cut off.

But he could neither confirm nor deny that fact.

His gaze was currently affixed towards the front.

There were two women in front of him.

'Twins.'

The two looked identical with one holding onto a sword and the other holding onto a mandolin.

"Worthy of being a dragon hunter. To have held out against the two of us for this long. It's truly amazing, isn't it?"

'They're Chinese.'

The sword-wielding twin spoke in a long string of Chinese words.

"It's to the point where I just want to rip you apart."

A very murderous string of Chinese words.

It goes without saying, Kim Tae Hoon had no idea what they were saying.

‘All I can do is try and memorize what they’re saying.’

He tried to focus his mind in order to try and memorize what the girl had said just mere moments before.

It was at that moment.

“If you have something to say before you die, say it now. Considering your accomplishments, I figure I should at least let you leave a will or testament or something.”

Kim Tae Hoon heard a voice behind him.

Feeling the point of a sword up against his back, Kim Tae Hoon knew that there was a man behind him ready to stab his heart.

“Cough!”

Regardless, he wouldn’t even give Kim Tae Hoon much time to say anything anyways.

‘So he stabbed my heart. The blood is flooding my throat. I can’t say much.’

Therefore, Kim Tae Hoon perked up his ears and listened intently.

“The ones here, they are the Six Snakes…….’

These were the words that the future Kim Tae Hoon was leaving his past self.

“The name of the traitor is Oh Saebum. Remember his voice. And, make good use of him…… “

At that moment, the surrounding atmosphere changed.

“FUCK, QUICK, KILL HIM!

“RIP HIS FUCKING THROAT OUT!”

The dream ended there.

Chapter 53 – Gimpo International Airport (1)

1.

December 31st was the start of a nightmare that had lasted through January, February, and now March.

The weather hadn't changed in quite some time. It had been and still was absolutely freezing.

But there had been a change amongst the survivors who had come to Bucheon. A sense of liveliness that couldn't be found anywhere was suddenly everywhere.

"Okay, it's installed!"

It was thanks to hope.

It was still a terrible world, but things were improving.

"I can see the sun shining in the sky, but I still suffered in this cold."

"I used to not care in the past but now..... man these solar panels are beautiful, absolutely beautiful."

There was a light that illuminated a sense of hope.

Solar power.

As long as they can maintain the solar panels, then they would have a semi-permanent source of energy.

Of course, their greatest source of hope was something else.

“The Mek Guild has finished hunting and has returned!”

“Mek Guild?”

There was a newly repaired truck sitting atop the road.

Some black objects were loaded up on the ten ton, white truck. There was a man atop the contents of the truck.

“He killed it!”

“Bang Hyun Wook killed the Black Orc!”

Bang Hyun Wook, he had killed the Black Orc.

“I killed it by myself! I killed it!”

He had won it with his own strength!

“Did you hunt it by yourself?”

“That’s crazy, you killed it all on your own?”

It was an amazing feat, and it was something that everyone hoped to do.

Those who went to hunt monsters were the greatest hope for the world.

Bang Hyun Wook’s appearance naturally turned into a parade. People cheered on Bang Hyun Wook and he in turn acknowledged them in return.

The parade ended at the front of Bucheon City Hall.

Bang Hyun Wook went straight to the City Hall.

“Sung Hoon hyung!”

The first thing he saw as he arrived was Chang Sung Hoon, who had stepped out to see what the fuss was about. Hyped up by the thrill of the hunt, Bang Hyun Wook approached Chang Sung Hoon.

He had spoken up in an excited manner.

“I killed a Black Orc all on my own! I killed it, 1 on 1! I did it without any guns! Ah, well I did have this..... “

There was a weapon hanging from Bang Hyun Wook’s waist.

It was an item made from the tail of the Rattle-tailed mouse.

At first glance, it looked like a crude and somewhat worthless item, but once the user injected Energy into it, it would exercise an incredible amount of destructive power. It’s power was powerful beyond imagination.

It wouldn’t take much time to convert a car into a pile of scrap.

It was powerful enough to wreck the tough body of the Black Orc.

Bang Hyun Wook wouldn’t have been able to fight the Black Orc without it.

However, wielding the weapon didn’t automatically impart you with the power to kill the Black Orc either.

That was why Bang Hyun Wook was excited.

“Uhhh, where’s hyung nim?”

It was proof.

It was proof that he would never become Kim Tae Hoon's stumbling block and that he had become strong enough to help.

Chang Sung Hoon smiled at Bang Hyun Wook's appearance. He looked like a kid excited to show his older brother that he could help.

"Wow, so scary. I can't believe you did it by yourself.

I did say that it was dangerous more than a few times……"

"Hey, I should at least be able to do this much by myself!"

"Sure sure, you won this time. Go and get some rest. I'll go tell Boss. It shouldn't take too long, so grab something to eat in the meantime."

"Okay!"

Chang Sung Hoon turned his back on Bang Hyun Wook in a straightforward way.

The smile that was on Chang Sung Hoon's face just moments before was no longer there. There was only a stiff expression on his face.

That was all he could do.

‘The Golden Chalice refilled three days before D-Day.’

Kim Tae Hoon was currently undergoing his third vision.

2.

The first thing that Kim Tae Hoon did when he woke up was to rub his throat.

His neck was still attached.

But he still felt like his head had detached from his body.

He wouldn’t easily take his hand off his throat. He tightly gripped his own neck.

‘It can’t be avoided.’

This was the third time that he had envisioned his own death. He had dreamt of death.

Moreover, this one was the worst one yet.

His arm was sliced off, his heart was speared, and his throat was ripped apart. It was also incredibly eerie as well. So of course, the

aftereffects were more prominent than before.

Huuu.

Kim Tae Hoon heard many sounds behind him as he breathed heavily in order to withstand the aftermath.

Footsteps, the sound of breathing, and heart beats.

Ddok!

Finally, the sound of knocking.

Even though it was through a door, all of the sounds were incredibly clear.

“Chang Sung Hoon.”

He already knew who it was that was knocking on the door.

“No matter how much I’ve gotten used to it, the ability to hear things so clearly gives me goosebumps.”

As expected, Chang Sung Hoon opened the door.

“Do different people really have different breathing and heartbeats? How does one even tell the difference just based on

those……”

Kim Tae Hoon closed his eyes and rubbed his temples.

“Ah, my bad.”

Kim Tae Hoon’s newly acquired Rattle-Tailed Mouse’s Hearing was sensitive enough to measure someone’s heart beat, footsteps, and breathing. He could even control the ability now.

But it wasn’t perfect.

If you are fatigued, if your concentration wavers, or if you are under psychological duress, the ability will act out and do its own thing.

In other words, Kim Tae Hoon’s experience with death just moments before meant that the ability was acting up like crazy.

“More importantly, how was your vision?”

Chang Sung Hoon whispered.

“They had cut off my arm. The traitor stabbed me in the back with a blade, while of the two Chinese twins in front of me, the one with the sword cut off my head.”

“Wow.”

Chang Sung Hoon let out a short whistle.

“I don’t have the luxury of ignoring something like that, but it was quite a spectacular death. So then who is this traitor?”

It was a horrifying death, it was the most valuable vision he had seen so far.

At the very least, he had seen the faces of his enemies. This was a huge benefit.

“The Six Snakes and Oh Saebum.”

“The Six Snakes must be some sort of organization while Oh Saebum…… Is that a name you are familiar with?”

“Nope.”

“Any other clues?”

Kim Tae Hoon responded to Chang Sung Hoon in recited Chinese. It hardly resembled Chinese.

But the intent was clearly communicated.

“It’s what the twin who beheaded me said to me, can you make any sense of it?”

Hearing that, Chang Sung Hoon’s face stiffened.

“Uh, ummm… … “

“Is it hard to interpret?”

“It’s not that. I understand most of it.”

“The contents then?”

“She called Boss a Dragon Hunter.

She said it was amazing that you had been able to fight them for so long…… and that she also wanted to rip Boss apart.”

Kim Tae Hoon listened to Chang Sung Hoon.

“Are you sure they called me a Dragon hunter?”

”She definitely wasn’t in the mood to be messing around.”

“Looks like I ended up killing the dragon. Although we can’t confirm if it’s the dragon that we know of.”

There was cold light in Kim Tae Hoon's eyes.

Chang Sung Hoon was the same.

Things didn't look good.

'I'll die even if I kill the dragon.'

'Then what the fuck are we supposed to do?'

Killing the dragon was a priority for their survival. And the future Kim Tae Hoon had successfully done just that.

But even with that, he'll just die?

It was bullshit.

It was like watching the movie Final Destination. It felt like death was inevitable no matter what he did.

Therefore, Kim Tae Hoon opted not to dig too deeply into it. If whatever he does results in death, then there's nothing he could do.

'Traitor.'

Kim Tae Hoon focused on the word traitor.

‘The presence of a traitor must mean there was someone I worked with and trusted.’

The implications between an enemy and a traitor were different.

But despite that, a traitor was still an enemy while an enemy was, well, an enemy.

In a world where Kim Tae Hoon’s death is brought about by a traitor, he would never lost sight that word.

‘The traitor, Oh Saebum is most likely near me. The one who stabbed my heart.’

In addition, Kim Tae Hoon had more clues.

“I saw one of the blades……”

Everything he saw was a clue.

The twin that had called Kim Tae Hoon a dragon hunter had a very important clue in her hand– the sword.

“What did it look like?”

Kim Tae Hoon drew a sketch of the sword on a piece of notebook paper with the pen on his desk.

It was terrible. It was impossible to guess what he was drawing.

Chang Sung Hoon was the same. At first glance, it looked like some sort of a sword.

But as soon as Kim Tae Hoon finished drawing in diamond-shaped patterns and eight worm-like characters on the sword, Chang Sung Hoon's expression changed.

Chang Sung Soon immediately reached out his hand.

"Pen please."

Kim Tae Hoon pointed the pen towards Chang Sung Hoon. Sung Hoon immediately took the pen and drew a sword on a different page.

"This. Was it this?"

It was the sword that the twin was wielding in his dream.

"It's the Sword of King Goujian."

It was also a sword that the future Kim Tae Hoon had put on his

wishlist in the second vision.

When about to die for the second time, Kim Tae Hoon had revealed the existence of the wish list.

They were like commands. He was commanded to get his hands on the items on the wishlist with any means necessary. Even if that meant killing the previous owners.

“Huu”

Kim Tae Hoon let out a long sigh.

Loud footsteps entered Kim Tae Hoon’s ears. The characteristics of the footsteps revealed that it was Bang Hyun Wook.

‘Looks like it’s impossible to catch a break.’

Kim Tae Hoon sighed and recalled the date.

February 28.

Today was the last day of February.

3.

Gimpo International Airport.

What used to be one of the most hectic places in Korea was now one of the most silent places in the country.

The planes lay in the airfield as though they were corpses. White snow blanketed the area, the absence of footsteps indicative of the absence of life.

The most recent remnants of life came from the dilapidated walls of the airport buildings. There were signs of panic– shards of glass on the floor, the windows all smashed, and signs of ransacking.

It was on the 3rd of March that the feeling of desolation in the airport that had permeated since December 31st was finally broken.

A group of black-outfitted people gathered in the deserted airport building.

The gathered people expressed their joy by hugging each other and shaking hands.

“It’s been awhile.”

“It’s a relief that you survived.”

This amicable atmosphere that had spread like wildfire was quickly frozen over by the appearance of one man.

“Attention.”

As soon as a man in a beret appeared, the atmosphere quickly disappeared and a sense of solemness appeared.

The man who had made his appearance seemed to be in his mid-40s. He had a memorable angled face with a beard around his mouth.

The man looked at everyone in front of him with tiger-like eyes.

“Major Oh Saebum and his team are missing.”

The atmosphere become even more tense with just that statement.

Everyone here had kept the appointment.

They were to gather at a specific place at a specific date and time. That is, if you survived that long.

‘Did Major Oh Saebum’s team fail?’

In other words, their absence today meant they had died.

Everyone here was resolute. They were ready to die, unafraid of

anything they might face.

Nevertheless, there was one reason why everyone here was nervous.

‘It doesn’t make sense. Just what kind of monster did they run across?’

‘Did they encounter a blue ranked or higher?’

It was because Major Oh Saebum and his team shouldn’t have encountered a beast that they were incapable of fighting.

He was an incredibly intelligent and strong leader.

The middle-aged man wearing a beret was Colonel Yoo Dae Hyun, and he was someone who was well aware of Oh Saebum’s abilities.

‘If Major Oh Saebum is dead…… then this operation will run into problems.’

Major Oh Saebum was someone with the ideals and ability to become a national Korean hero.

There’s no way he could have died.

No, rather, he couldn’t die.

‘As expected, losing Daedongyeojido was a huge blow. If we didn’t lose Daedongyeojido, we wouldn’t have to face so much danger.’

Recalling something that had happened in the past, Colonel Yoo Daehyun grit his teeth.

Naturally, the crowd went silent. He bowed in silence in honor of those who died.

Tang!

A sudden gunshot from across the airport runway shattered the silence.

Everyone’s gazes changed.

They had the eyes of soldiers who were ready to fight at a moment’s notice.

Colonel Yoo Daehyun, on the other hand, had no need to do so. From the moment he had appeared, he was constantly on high alert. He was like a string that had been pulled taut. From deep within his bones, he was a soldier– a soldier who was ready for action at any moment.

“Go check it out.”

Colonel Yoo Daehyun pointed towards a team and gave his command. The team spared no words and immediately moved out towards the direction of the gunshots.

It wasn’t too long before a man returned to give his report.

“There’s a man with a white flag standing on the runway.” He said he was the head of the Mek Guild.”

It was difficult to explain.

The gunshots from the runway, a lone man standing atop that same runway, the lone man waving a white flag, and the existence of this so-called Mek Guild and its leader.

It was something that could really only be understood with a detailed explanation.

However, he did not express any of his concerns to Colonel Yoo Daehyun.

It’s because he saw a lot.

The system that made the world go round in this post-apocalyptic state and the nonsensical things people would do in order to survive.

So he wasn’t surprised. There was no change in his expression.

“What’s his name?”

“He said it was Kim Tae Hoon.”

“Kim Tae Hoon?”

However, hearing that name made Colonel Yoo Daehyun’s expression change.

“Are you sure it was Kim Tae Hoon?”

And it was a surprised expression at that.

Chapter 54 – Gimpo International Airport (2)

4.

It was the middle of nowhere.

Kim Tae Hoon stood in the middle of a snowy field, his arms raised up high. In his left hand was a glistening white flag. A thin cloth flapped in the wind.

A man approached Kim Tae Hoon.

The beret wearing middle-aged man kept his hand on his head so as to prevent the beret flying away and walked towards Kim Tae Hoon, stopping two meters in front of him.

“Major Kim Tae Hoon.”

Identifying the face of the man before him, he continued to walk. Step by step, the man stopped when they were just a bit more than a meter apart, at which point both parties extended their hands.

“You survived. No, if it’s you, then there’s no way you wouldn’t have survived.”

“You’ve been doing well Colonel Yoo Daehyun.”

Colonel Yoo Daehyun.

From what Kim Tae Hoon could remember, the colonel was from Capital Defense Command.

‘Battalion commander of the special forces.’

The 35th battalion responsible for keeping Seoul safe.

He was their commander.

‘It’s a relief that I don’t need to reveal my identity, but this is quite the awkward confrontation.’

Kim Tae Hoon was a man with a complicated identity. Human? I guess you could say that. Kim Tae Hoon was a human weapon knowledgeable of all state secrets.

He was a powerful man. He was powerful partly because of the fact that the special forces were the defacto, corrupt hegemony of Seoul.

It wasn’t a position that a powerless party could take.

“I don’t know what your situation’s been like, but it’s good to see you.”

With that, Colonel Yoo Daehyun extended his hand.

However, Kim Tae Hoon did not return the handshake. He was still holding the white flag up towards the sky.

That was because he wasn't here to exchange pleasantries.

"I've come to negotiate."

Kim Tae Hoon had come to negotiate with the party that had arrived from Seoul, which in this case, meant Colonel Yoo Daehyun and his men.

If it was necessary, then they were even willing to spill blood.

'As difficult to deal with as always. Major General Chang Young Sung has created quite the monster.'

Analyzing Kim Tae Hoon, Colonel Yoo Daehyun retracted his extended hand. The distance between the two of them was still about one meter.

"A negotiation you say……'

"Currently, Bucheon City and its surrounding areas are managed by the Mek Guild. And I am the head of the Mek Guild."

“A guild…… it’s a funny name.”

“My goal is to establish a peaceful alliance with the people currently in control of Seoul.”

A peaceful alliance.

Hearing those words, Colonel Yoo Daehyun was not surprised.

‘Humans are social creatures, so the collapse of society would naturally motivate humans to seek out others. It’s to the extent that even Major Kim Tae Hoon would reveal himself like this.’

He had already experienced similar encounters before.

Even if civilization collapses, every survivor would strive to survive. In the process of surviving, Kim Tae Hoon had realized that he couldn’t survive on his own, so he struck out to make a group. In such a group, a definite hierarchy would form and replace any sense of pure equality.

Of course, those who had power beforehand would do what they could to hold onto that power.

Such people were everywhere, and Colonel Yoo Daehyun had had many dealings with them thus far.

Those people had said something similar to Colonel Yoo Daehyun and his men.

They wanted to resolve things peacefully.

They wanted to negotiate.

They would gladly cooperate if he would acknowledge their interests.

“It’s not something that I can decide on my own.”

Colonel Yoo Daehyun didn’t even give them the briefest of moments to negotiate.

“I do not have the authority to negotiate with an anti-government group.”

It was his role to deal with the various groups that committed great crimes.

‘As expected.’

Kim Tae Hoon was not very surprised at Colonel Yoo Daehyun’s response or the underlying threat.

‘Looks like he’s taken control of the system to a certain extent.’

It was a reasonable response from the colonel, and it was the correct response as well.

The existence of the Capital Defense Command was evidence that some government structures of the Republic of Korea hadn't been destroyed yet.

So it was without a doubt that they would work towards defending their country.

Their duties included hunting monsters along with suppressing the anti-government forces that ran rampant.

Kim Tae Hoon and the Mek Guild fell under that same category.

There could be no negotiations. The only option was eradication.

'Eventually things would turn out like this.'

That was why Kim Tae Hoon came here.

"I want to talk with the person who has the right to decide."

"The reason?"

"Because a war of attrition should be avoided."

“A war of attrition…… I don’t know how much power you have, but I doubt you have enough strength to contest the Capital Defense Command.”

“If you lead an armored unit to Bucheon right now, you would probably be able to kill everyone in Bucheon City.”

In case negotiation fell through, a threat would need to be issued.

“But if I survive, then you better prepare for an exhausting guerilla warfare.”

“What are you……”

Kim Tae Hoon lowered both of his raised hands. He immediately took off the glove on his right hand. He revealed his tattoo of the Awakened.

Colonel Yoo Daehyun’s face stiffened.

In the meantime, Kim Tae Hoon stared at a person coming towards him from the distance.

‘Somebody is coming.’

He heard a man approaching from the distance.

Kim Tae Hoon didn't show interest towards the other party. Of course, Colonel Yoo Daehyun hadn't noticed yet.

"Sorry I'm late Lieutenant Colonel sir!"

It wasn't long before a voice flitted in between Kim Tae Hoon and Colonel Yoo Daehyun.

The two of them turned their heads towards the source of the voice in a surprised manner.

"It looks like I overslept a little. I'm really sorry."

A young man had appeared near them.

'It's him.'

It was the voice of the young man from his vision.

5.

Oh Saebum.

He was a good-looking young man about twenty-five years old that anyone who laid eyes on him would admire him.

He was even attractively tall. Even though fully clothed, anyone could see his chiseled body.

He had a very handsome hairstyle, and the appearance of the cigarette and smoke coming out of his mouth was like a scene straight out of a movie.

“So he wants us to cooperate with him so that he can keep playing king in Bucheon? What a funny aristocrat.”

Whatmore, he was also one of the most remarkable athletes amongst the survivors in Seoul. He was also one of the most promising Awakened under the command of the Capital Defense Command.

So the nickname they had given him was Roadmaker.

He was the man who had paved the road for humans to live in Seoul.

“Looking at your response colonel, it doesn’t look like you’re bullshitting.”

That was the reason.

That was the reason why the charismatic Colonel Yoo Daehyun allowed the man to speak so bluntly in front of him while smoking a cigarette.

“Who is this sir?”

“Major Kim Tae Hoon.”

“Major? He looks young, does he have an affiliation?”

“He does, but his unit has no name. Under the command of Major General Chang Young Sung, he was called a ghost.”

“Ah, so a secret unit then. That’s fantastic. So how amazing is he? He wears the same uniform, but there’s no way he would be on the same level as me.”

“If I were allowed to hire only one person in order to get rid of a problem, I would hire him without hesitation.”

“Aiyah, he’s really amazing.”

Hearing what the colonel said, Oh Sae Bum let out the smoke in his mouth alongside with his praises. He spit out the cigarette in his mouth and stamped it out with his foot.

“Then what do you need me to do?”

“A test.”

“You need me to fight with someone who was deemed to be a human weapon even before he became an Awakened? What if there’s a death?”

Although surprised, Oh Saebum’s eyes were laughing.

His eyes were clearly telling of his intentions.

He wasn’t worried about Kim Tae Hoon killing him, he was concerned about killing Kim Tae Hoon.

“It’s just a simple test. There’s no need for someone to die.”

Yoo Daehyun gave him a brief warning. He had the same thoughts as Oh Saebum.

‘It’s impossible for Kim Tae Hoon to win over Major Oh Saebum.’

He had already killed a yellow grade monster and had even succeeded in hunting a green ranked monster as well.

In the case of the green ranked monster, it was thanks to the powerful relics obtained from the National Museum of Korea that he had come out on top. It was safe to say that was enough to serve as a hope for Korea.

So no matter how amazing Kim Tae Hoon was, he still wouldn’t be able to do anything.

Regardless, the world had changed.

‘However, he shouldn’t be at a weak level.’

The scariest part about Kim Tae Hoon wasn’t his strength.

The fact that he had survived up until now was proof of that.

Kim Tae Hoon had achieved victory in many battlefields against opponents he couldn’t win against with mere power.

If people were to be told of Kim Tae Hoon’s Hollywood-like exploits, none would believe it.

‘If he’s an Awakened, then he should be really strong.’

The fact that Kim Tae Hoon is an Awakened is already tough to deal with.

The Awakened consumed monster stones in order to absorb the power within and the chance to acquire new abilities.

That alone was enough reason to proceed with caution.

‘He’s not someone who craves power though.’

There was something that didn’t quite make sense.

He called himself the head of the Mek Guild which ruled over Bucheon.

But he was now baring his teeth at an opponent much stronger than him.

Well it could be that. It could be that he was willing to risk his life for the power he had gathered thus far.

However, Colonel Yoo Daehyun knew what kind of man Kim Tae Hoon was. He knew that Kim Tae Hoon was not someone who would strive for power in order to become a king in this ruined world.

‘Regardless, if he becomes an enemy, it would be a real headache.’

In addition, Kim Tae Hoon didn’t receive the rank of Major simply because he partook in dangerous missions.

He was given the rank Major so he could lead a unit.

‘I should test his skills for now.’

Regardless, the most important thing right now was to gauge how strong Kim Tae Hoon is.

If he was strong, then they would have to consider negotiations.

As a matter of fact, the amount of troops belonging to those in charge of Seoul was not enough to keep Seoul safe.

Even if they were to receive Bucheon, they simply didn't have the capacity to manage it.

There's no oil coming from Bucheon and there aren't any important munitions plants. Is there some sort of important developmental factory in Bucheon?

By collecting all of the survivors and getting rid of the monsters, the denizens of Bucheon would naturally give Kim Tae Hoon their support.

Of course, there was no need to reveal his intentions so easily.

"More importantly, what kind of test? The use of guns and swords will probably be forbidden."

"Use your fists."

"Wouldn't it be better to use guns? Do you know? What kind of fist my fists are?"

"Keep in mind. You're comparing skills. You're not killing your

opponent.”

“Yes sir, I’ll keep that in mind.”

Of course, considering Oh Saebum’s string of successes until now, there was no way that Oh Saebum was going to lose.

6.

‘So it turned out like this.’

While walking from Bucheon to Gimpo International Airport, Kim Tae Hoon thought of many things.

But something like a test was outside of his expectations.

If the negotiations went through, then all that would be required would be some simple give and take. If the negotiations fell through, then all they would have to do is flex their power a little to show how much of a threat they are.

There wasn’t even the slightest expectation that something like a test might occur.

‘Oh Saebum.’

But Oh Saebum’s appearance had dashed any all scenarios Kim

Tae Hoon had in mind without hesitation.

‘I suppose it’s not a different person with the same name.’

It was the person from his vision.

He was certain.

‘Traitor.’

Although he could have been talking to nobody, the future Kim Tae Hoon from the vision had assured the present Kim Tae Hoon of the identity and existence of the traitor.

It was at that time that he had warned his past self.

‘I didn’t say to kill him on sight.’

Use him.

The person who knew Kim Tae Hoon the best was, well, Kim Tae Hoon.

So the advice he received was trustworthy.

There was a reason why of all the words to use, Kim Tae Hoon had used the word ‘Use’.

‘There’s something worth getting out of a relationship with him, so I might as well use him.’

Additionally, it seemed like Oh Saebum was the Capital Defense Command’s ace.

It was something rather obvious.

– More importantly, what kind of test.....

– Use your fists.....

It was an easy feat for Kim Tae Hoon to listen in on the conversation between Oh Saebum and Colonel Yoo Daehyun despite the distance between the two parties in Gimpo International Airport.

He was able to sharply hear Oh Saebum take a long draw of his cigarette while standing before Colonel Yoo Daehyun.

‘Looking at Colonel Yoo Daehyun, he looks like he’s taking the stance of nothing-can-be-done.’

The Colonel Yoo Daehyun that Kim Tae Hoon knew was a determined man.

The Republic of Korea’s 35th Special Assault Team of the Capital

Defense Command was a prestigious unit. It was a place where only the best of the best gathered, and it wasn't a place you could just eat and sleep as a simple career soldier.

In other words, it wasn't place where a superior officer would allow for a subordinate to so casually smoke a cigarette right in front of him.

'He's a major.'

The fact that he had received the rank of major despite only being in his mid-twenties meant that he had the skills and merits worthy of his high position.

In this world, there was only one merit that was enough to bring him up to major.

Killing monsters.

'For now, I should test his skill.'

This was how Kim Tae Hoon was going to respond to the test.

It was at the same time that Kim Tae Hoon made a reference point.

'And in the case I deem him to be a threat..... I'll remove him.'

7.

“Hello, I’m Oh Saebum. My rank is the same as yours, major. Ah, well, you’re not a soldier at the moment.”

While speaking, Oh Saebum threw a light punch in Kim Tae Hoon’s direction.

Swik!

A light jab.

Paat!

But the sound of the wind was unfathomable. It didn’t feel like a fist at all, but rather, a bullet.

The level of a transcendent human.

“Let’s do a light, 5 minute warmup for the first round. We’re just exchanging pointers, so there’s no need to overdo it. Nothing good would come of either of us getting hurt, right? We can’t get health insurance coverage or a pension if we get injured.”

Getting hit with that kind of hit wouldn’t simply end with a bruise or light injury.

No matter how you looked at it, this was why they had proposed a bare-handed fight.

‘It looks like they want to see what abilities I possess.’

They hadn’t expressed any restrictions on abilities gained from monsters.

That was the key.

The thing that Colonel Yoo Daehyun wanted to see was Kim Tae Hoon’s cards.

And that was exactly what Kim Tae Hoon wanted to see as well. He needed to know what cards Oh Saebum was holding.

“Ja, we’ll begin when you’re ready.”

Neither Kim Tae Hoon nor Oh Saebum indulged in useless banter.

“Bang!”

Making a bell noise with his mouth, Oh Saebum narrowed the distance between Kim Tae Hoon and himself whilst throwing a left-handed jab.

Swik!

The fist flying towards Kim Tae Hoon was unfathomable.

Instead of dodging, Kim Tae Hoon put up both of his arms to block.

Puheok!

The defending Kim Tae Hoon's body didn't even stagger.

'Looks like this aristocrat has been eating some proper monsters.'

The two of them were able to glean some information from this first exchange.

Both of their Strength and Stamina were at a similar level.

At that moment, Oh Saebum drew upon the Energy that lay dormant in his belly.

The Energy spread through Oh Saebum's body with a momentum so large it seemed as though Oh Saebum's body were going to burst. Oh Saebum's momentum changed like wildfire.

With both arms up to defend, Kim Tae Hoon felt a chill down his spine as he looked at Oh Saebum.

‘His Energy rank…… it’s higher than B Rank.’

Kim Tae Hoon’s thoughts were cut short as Oh Saebum’s fist flew towards his nose.

It was a speed incomparable to that of the previous punch.

It was impossible to dodge by relying only on his basic stats.

So at the moment before impact, Kim Tae Hoon used his Telekinesis to move his body off to the side.

Paat!

Oh Saebum’s straight punch sliced through the air, launching the compressed air in front of it.

The snow where Kim Tae Hoon had been standing just mere moments before bore the marks of the wind pressure.

‘So his real intention was to kill me.’

Kim Tae Hoon had every reason to dodge. Kim Tae Hoon was nervous.

‘Using Telekinesis to force your body to dodge? This?’

However, Oh Saebum was nervous as well.

Oh Saebum had felt it necessary to kill Kim Tae Hoon and had kept that in mind as he had thrown that punch.

However, Kim Tae Hoon had easily dodged his attack and had opened up the distance between the two.

'His Telekinesis Rank and proficiency isn't a joke.'

Kim Tae Hoon had used Telekinesis for sure.

Otherwise, it would have been impossible to dodge.

'I don't know what'll happen if the distance widens..'

It was never a good idea to widen the distance when fighting against someone with Telekinesis.

It was natural that both of their gazes changed.

Kim Tae Hoon's eyes turned black while the playfulness in Oh Saebum's eyes disappeared.

Oh Saebum aggressively ran towards Kim Tae Hoon, closing the distance between the two again.

There was no chance for Kim Tae Hoon to rob Oh Saebum of his Energy reinforced physical abilities.

Even with the activation of the Black Snake's Evil Eye, it would be impossible for Kim Tae Hoon to dodge Oh Saebum's flurry of punches with just his basic stats.

So of course he used Telekinesis.

'I'll catch him.'

He was going to start with catching Oh Saebum's body with his Telekinesis.

Using his Telekinesis, Kim Tae Hoon pulled apart his arms with chains.

Bbadeuk!

A grinding noise came out of Oh Saebum's mouth as he tried to free himself from the Telekinetic chains that bound him.

Afterall, it was impossible to completely stop Oh Saebum's movements with the chains. Oh Saebum repeatedly try to free his two arms.

However, he wasn't able to extricate himself before Kim Tae

Hoon made his move.

‘Alright!’

Oh Saebum broke free from the chains in one go, shattering the Telekinetic power Kim Tae Hoon had over him.

He gathered strength in his right hand and executed a straight with enough power to shatter Kim Tae Hoon’s skull.

Oh Saebum’s punch suddenly stopped.

It was the moment Kim Tae Hoon was waiting for. What awaited Oh Saebum was a huge ball of fire.

Puhuhu!

The flame obscured Oh Saebum’s vision and engulfed his body.

‘Damn it!’

The flame stuck to his body like sticky glue.

Since leaving the flames alone would result in burns, Oh Saebum directed his Energy to burst out of his body.

Paat!

The flames that were stuck to Oh Saebum's body were thrown into the air and his surroundings.

'I'm going to kill him!'

Having dispersed the flames off his body, Oh Saebum looked around, searching for Kim Tae Hoon.

The notion of a test had already disappeared from his mind.

Instead what filled his mind was a desire to kill Kim Tae Hoon.

'Where did he go?'

However, he couldn't find Kim Tae Hoon.

Oh Saebum reflexively looked towards the ground. It was to look for his footsteps.

'What's going on?'

However, he couldn't find Kim Tae Hoon's footsteps anywhere.

Oh Saebum suddenly turned around, as though he had sensed something. Kim Tae Hoon's right fist smashed into his face.

That’s all that Oh Saebum remembered.

Chapter 55 – Gimpo International Airport (3)

8.

Before the appearance of monsters, the average human was rather restrained in their violence.

However, after the appearance of monsters, violence became humanity's number one means to survival.

The hope of those who had survived the initial onslaught in Seoul was pinned on a young man by the name of Oh Saebum.

He was a hero from the start.

As soon as the monsters had appeared, he had battled against them bare-handed.

He had received a lot in return.

The army had designated him, a first year in the reserves, the rank of major, and had allowed him the freedom to smoke before the commander of the 35th Special Assault Team– the same commander who held the highest seat of power in Seoul.

"Impossible!"

“Did Major Oh Saebum lose consciousness?”

“Just how?”

He was laying down on the floor in the shape of the 大 character on top of the snow. His nose crushed, streams of blood were streaming out of both his nostrils, his eyes rolled up and his tongue sticking out of his mouth.

‘How could this……’

The normally quiet and stoic Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun couldn’t help but question what had happened.

There was another person who couldn’t believe what had happened.

‘This isn’t the end.’

Kim Tae Hoon was also unbelieving of what happened.

‘I shouldn’t have been able to knock out a guy like this.’

Oh Saebum was incredibly strong.

He didn’t know about the monsters, but the previously thought

to be unrivaled awakened, Kim Tae Hoon, was faced against another awakened whose strength was enough to rival Kim Tae Hoon.

If the two were to use their relics instead of just their bare fists, then Kim Tae Hoon wouldn't have dared to face off against Oh Saebum.

But that was it.

'He's not the type that can plot a conspiracy and betrayal.'

He was strong but couldn't look at the big picture or plan for the future.

At least, that's what he was able to determine from Oh Saebum's actions today.

Him being able to act so casually around Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun and stand before him was a different problem.

If Kim Tae Hoon was in Oh Saebum's position, he would never act so frivolously before him. It was because Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun wasn't such a laughable person. He was the type of garbage that would make enemies while doing what he wanted.

Even when facing against Kim Tae Hoon, Oh Saebum expressed his feelings however way he wanted to.

Kim Tae Hoon's provocations was enough to reveal Oh Saebum's murderous intent.

It was in this way that Kim Tae Hoon could reveal Oh Saebum's true feelings.

He was either a punk kid or a madman.

'So that's why I said to use him.'

In other words, Oh Saebum was someone who could fight against Kim Tae Hoo, threaten Kim Tae Hoon, and eventually kill him– but he wasn't someone who could scheme it.

'The head is somewhere else.'

It was obvious he had a backer.

Oh Saebum was a powerful chess piece that could be bring about great changes for a master baduk player.

'That head is the true danger.'

Kim Tae Hoon's thoughts ended there.

Kim Tae Hoon's current opponent wasn't the mind behind Oh

Saebum.

Kim Tae Hoon raised the fainted Oh Saebum off the ground with his Telekinesis.

He shouted towards the surprised spectators, of which, Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun was in the center of.

“Let’s start the negotiations.”

Kim Tae Hoon had a new card to negotiate with.

A hostage card.

9.

“Currently, the Capital Defense Command is seated in Gangbuk. My job is to make contact with any survivors outside of Seoul.”

“What’s the situation like in Seoul?”

“Of the 31 bridges on the Hangang River, only the Gimpo Bridge and the Banpo Bridge are safe. Since it’s you, you should understand what this means simply based on what I’ve said so far.”

“Did you intentionally blow up the other bridges?”

“Some intentionally by the military, some by the monsters.”

Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun began negotiations with Kim Tae Hoon.

Having seen Kim Tae Hoon’s strength coupled together with the fact that Major Oh Saebum was taken hostage, Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun had no choice but to cut to the chase.

If it was Kim Tae Hoon, he would follow through with what he says.

If necessary, he was someone who would cut off Oh Saebum’s limbs to make a point.

In fact, Kim Tae Hoon hadn’t loosened his grip on Oh Saebum since the talk had begun.

While the negotiations were being carried out on the cold runway, Oh Saebum was still knocked out and stood up like a mannequin.

If he were to bluff in front of Kim Tae Hoon, then the price would be Oh Saebum’s fingernails or fingers.

Kim Tae Hoon had shown his skills in a decisive manner. He had demonstrated just how dangerous he could be.

If Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun continues to show hostilities towards Kim Tae Hoon, then he wouldn't leave Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun and his men alone.

"How many survivors are there?"

"It's not a positive number. Of course, there are still a lot of survivors. But that's because it's a place where there used to be over ten million people living there."

That was the reason why Lieutenant Yoo Daehyun, someone who never bowed his head, changed his attitude and agreed to negotiate and possibly cooperate.

Hearing his story, Kim Tae Hoon could see that the situation in Seoul was worse than he thought.

'A lot of people survived..... But that's not a good thing.'

The fact that there were many survivors at this point was very bad in some ways.

A lot of survivors would mean that monsters would have a lot of prey to hunt.

It's just how things are. A bountiful amount of prey would lead to an increase in the amount of predators.

And there would be no guarantee that the survivors would cooperate either. Humans had the potential to become more monster-like than actual monsters.

‘There’s even a subway.’

There were two fatal weaknesses in Seoul.

One is the large amount of buildings above the ground, and the other is the web of subway tunnels.

Both were places that monsters could hide.

It was a place that imposed a lot of restrictions on the military.

The subway system was the worst. It would be impossible to have a tank or a fighter jet enter to kill monsters.

The same went for skyscrapers. If a building collapses because of a monster, then the consequences would be disastrous. It was at this point in time that taller buildings were like land mines.

‘Since they couldn’t find a solution in Seoul, they went outside.’

Such was the reason why Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun had led his special forces out of Seoul.

They couldn’t find a solution to their problem in Seoul.

“More importantly, what about the president and the prime minister? Are they alright?”

At that moment, Kim Tae Hoon asked a pointed question towards Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun.

“The two of them are safe and sound in our custody.”

After a moment of silence, Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun replied. His expression while answering looked troubled.

“Is that so?”

However, Kim Tae Hoon was able to clearly hear the Lieutenant Colonel’s heartbeat.

‘They failed to secure the two.’

It was the voice of someone who was lying through his teeth.

‘What a pain in the neck.’

It was sure.

The troops in Seoul had failed to secure the upper echelons of command like the president and prime minister.

In other words, it was the same for other units and military men like Kim Tae Hoon.

There was no way to say it easily.

But there wasn't a way to prove themselves as the forces representative of Korea.

It was like the three kingdom's quibble over the national seal.

They couldn't do anything on their own. The monsters wouldn't avoid the president and neither would the president be able to kill a strong monster.

The important point was that the forces that lay outside of the president's faction would be stigmatized as rebel or anti-government forces.

However, the absence of the president or the prime minister would mean that the concept of anti-government forces would fall apart.

'It's the perfect opportunity to further one's ambitions.'

For those with military power, it was a chance to rewrite

everything.

Of course, if this were made known to the public, the Republic of Korea would no longer be the Republic of Korea.

The history of the peninsula would simply repeat. Multiple military regimes would rise to power and the peninsula would eventually be engulfed by war.

It wasn't something civilians would carry out, but those who had survived could no longer be called civilians.

"I'm relieved to hear that they are safe."

Kim Tae Hoon chose not to focus too much on that point.

"Then please tell it to me straight. You want the Mek Guild to take care of the monsters in the surrounding areas around Bucheon and also secure any survivors."

Because now was the time to stipulate what he wanted.

"As long as you support us, then we'll even go hunt for monsters in main cities like Incheon."

Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun had a feeling that the negotiations were soon to end.

It was with this that Kim Tae Hoon revealed all of his conditions.

His conditions were very simple.

If you want to utilize the Bucheon based Mek Guild, then you must pay a price.

The only thing that the force in Seoul could use to pay was Relics.

“I understand. I’ll try and get some good results for you.”

Hearing that, Kim Tae Hoon revealed something with the intention of ending the negotiations.

He fished out a bundle of objects that gleamed like jewels. But they were not jewels.

They were dogtags.

They were the dogtags of the special forces team that had been wiped out by the Rattle-tailed mouse in the Gwangmyeong City Sageori station.

“Their funerals were simple.”

“…… Thank you.”

More than anything, Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun's voice was dismal.

"In one fortnight, let's meet here again on the 18th of March."

The negotiations had come to an end.

10.

"Major Oh Saebum will be fine. He was just knocked out because of the force of impact. Although his nose was broken, I can fix it."

Listening to his subordinate's report, Lieutenant Yoo Daehyun stopped worrying about Oh Saebum.

At that moment, he called on two of the subordinates he had brought along with him.

One male and one female. The both of them looked to be in their mid-twenties and were both wearing berets like the Lieutenant Colonel.

They were Awakened in the 35th Special Assault Team under Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun's command.

They were both reliable in regards to skill and trust.

“Find out everything you can about Kim Tae Hoon.

Close relationships, anything that could be a possible weakness.”

Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun gave his commands to the both of them.

Instead of replying, the both of them gave a salute before disappearing from the Lieutenant Colonel’s eyes.

They would follow Kim Tae Hoon and lurk around in Bucheon for fortnight.

All in order to find his weakness.

‘If it’s like this, he can be dragged down.’

The existence of Kim Tae Hoon and his Mek Guild was unacceptable. It was no different from bringing a knife to the neck of the opposition in Bucheon in a bid to protect Seoul by any means necessary.

Even if it was Yoo Daehyun who had the last call, he would also deem Kim Tae Hoon’s proposal as unacceptable.

It was something that Kim Tae Hoon was aware of as well. He had come to Gimpo International Airport while knowing this and had put on a show.

And he had given the other side a choice.

They could either pit themselves against another dangerous enemy, or allow the other side a blank check and give them something they could use.

‘He was aiming for a relic.’

From the start, the only winner would be Kim Tae Hoon.

‘We need to grab ahold of a weakness.’

In other words, the only way to avoid eating a loss was to find Kim Tae Hoon’s weakness.

If it’s the two subordinates he had sent just moments before, then even if they gave up their lives, they would fulfill the mission.

Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun felt the dogtags in his pocket.

He firmly grit his teeth.

11.

A forest of buildings.

In this cold and desolate place, a man and a woman were secretly moving about.

The two of them were like ghosts.

Their movements were traceless, and their expressions were cold like that of a ghost's.

They didn't even talk. The only conversation between the two was carried out by their eyes and silent cues.

Suddenly, the man sent a signal.

The man pointed towards a set of footsteps cutting across the forest of buildings.

The woman, looking at the footprints, shifted her gaze towards the building right next to the footprints.

Soon after, they entered the building.

The moment they entered the building, they made some noises for the first time.

"Huk!"

It was the sound of inhaling.

At the same time, his incredibly stoic face was painted over in surprise.

It was none other than the fact that the moment they entered the building, they came face to face with Kim Tae Hoon.

The quarry that they had been stalking, the man who should be on his way to Bucheon City was right in front of them.

The two soldiers' minds went into overdrive before recalling the manual that instructed the two on how to deal with this situation.

The woman would dash towards Kim Tae Hoon in order to grab his attention while the man would attempt to flee in order to tell Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun that the operation had failed. That was what the manual had instructed.

There were no signals that needed to be exchanged.

They just had to act according to the manual.

"Huk!"

But they couldn't execute the operation stated in the manual. They felt it as soon as they tried to move their bodies.

'My body won't move.'

The feeling that a giant hand had grasped their bodies.

Kim Tae Hoon spoke to them in a calm manner.

“I have no intention of killing the two of you and creating enmity between the lieutenant colonel and me. On the other hand, I also want to avoid attracting any nearby monsters because of you two prowling around.”

“…… What do you want?”

“I want the two of you to always stay within my sight during this fortnight.”

“That……”

“Or you can stay tied up during the entirety of the fortnight and report back nothing of value to Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun. If you choose to be arrested, then you better be prepared to spend your time here wearing a diaper. I have no intention to give even the slightest leeway to the Awakened of the 35th Battalion Special Assault Team.”

The Telekinesis grabbing the two disappeared.

“3 seconds.”

After exchanging a glance, the two opened their mouths.

“I am Sergeant First Class Kim Yuri.”

“I am Sergeant First Class Kim Joohyuk.”

Chapter 56 – National Treasure

1.

Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk.

The two soldiers from the 35th Battalion Special Assault Team had the same nickname.

Ace.

Even within the 35th Battalion Special Assault Team where only the best of the best were recruited, the both of them had stood out.

Their inherent talent was superior, their goals were placed higher, and their determination to strive towards their goals was also outstanding.

They had it all.

Pride, self-esteem, and self-confidence!

All of these things gave them conviction. They were confident that despite whatever happened, be it accidents or unplanned circumstances, they would be able to accomplish the task assigned to them.

But everything they had broke into pieces on December 31st.

In the battles following the appearance of the monsters, they found themselves unable to do anything.

They couldn’t kill the monsters they needed to kill, they couldn’t get to where they needed to, they couldn’t keep what they needed to keep, and they couldn’t save those that they needed to save.

It was a series of terrible failures across the span of a few terrible days.

And at the end of all of that was despair.

Battle after battle, one day they looked around in the middle of a battle and realized that the Korea that they remembered no longer existed.

Skyscrapers were collapsed onto the floor entangled with each other, there were broken and mangled bodies strewn about with some even having been eaten partway through, and as the clock kept ticking, screams resounded from every corner of the city.

The future given to those who had survived was merely a culmination of despair.

There weren’t many people who were crazy about having to face more despair despite the fact that they survived.

Both Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk had thought that the world would only amount to that.

In fact, they were right.

Wherever they went, inside or outside of Seoul, despair was overflowing with no hope to be seen.

But this place was different.

Bucheon City.

Kim Joohyuk and Kim Yuri had only seen the city on a map, but now they realized that this energetic city could not be on the map.

There was construction work being done in a park for the purposes of installing solar panels, other public spaces were reserved for monster dismantling, and survivors were found to be clearing out ruins and roads.

They could even see workers on break, smoking and laughing while some were eating chocolate bars or ramen noodles.

‘How can they laugh?’

Those weren’t working at the moment were laughing and casually talking.

It was a scene that would never been seen in Seoul. The survivors in Seoul carried out similar jobs, but in their case, it was essentially forced labor. The only way to receive rations was to carry out hard labor while under the barrel of a gun.

‘It’s like a different world here.’

The most surprising thing was the people who noticed that Kim Tae Hoon had appeared.

It wasn’t enough to simply describe with words such as respect, faith, or love.

It was more than that.

There were no words to describe what they were expressing.

It was something else.

In Seoul, the Awakened and the soldiers were looked upon with fear and trepidation, not respect and admiration.

It was shocking in many ways.

Both Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk were so shocked that they couldn’t attempt to escape while following after Kim Tae Hoon.

The two of them eventually arrived at the Bucheon City Hall without having formulated any plans.

The first to greet them was Bang Hyun Wook.

“Hyungnim!”

His entire body was exuding appreciation towards Kim Tae Hoon. Bang Hyun Wook then noticed Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk behind Kim Tae Hoon.

“Huh? Who are these two guests?”

Kim Tae Hoon rarely ever brought along people with him, and both Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk gave Bang Hyun Wook the same feeling that Kim Tae Hoon had given him when they had first met.

“They’re observers.”

Kim Tae Hoon gave a simple description.

“What?”

“If they start acting out of line, kill them.”

“Yes?”

Bang Hyun Wook had a confused expression on his face.

The same was true for Kim Joohyuk and Kim Yuri. In the face of Kim Tae Hoon's sudden and groundless command, Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk were not sure if they should retort or just keep their mouths closed.

The two of them stared blankly like two robots whose programming had broken down.

Meanwhile, another person made their appearance.

As soon as she appeared, Junior Lieutenant Kim Soo Ji saluted Kim Tae Hoon.

"You've arrived, Major Kim Tae Hoon?"

She immediately turned to look at the two behind Kim Tae Hoon.

'Are they soldiers from the special forces.'

She had grown up in a soldier's household. A mere moment was all she required to see what kind of people they were.

'A soldier?'

'Is the Mek Guild a force built upon soldiers?'

It was the same for both Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk.

Both their gazes changed as soon as they laid eyes on Junior Lieutenant Kim Soo Ji.

“Sergeant First Class Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk. Monitor these two so that they don’t leave the city hall.”

“Yes sir.”

“What about Chang Sung Hoon?”

“He’s on his way sir.”

“Boss!”

Speaking of the devil, as soon as he asked, Chang Sung Hoon arrived. The moment he arrived, Chang Sung Hoon looked at the two soldiers behind Kim Tae Hoon and spoke.

“Two new faces I see. I’m getting a familiar feeling from you two…… A couple? Lovers? Husband and wife?”

Tuk, as soon as Chang Sung Hoon’s words landed on their ears, both Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk shook their heads with embarrassed expressions.

“Th, that’s wrong.”

“It’s not that kind of relationship.”

“But it looks like the man is happy about something and the woman looks like she’s determined……”

At the end of Chang Sung Hoon’s little blurb, Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk turned their heads towards each other. Kim Joohyuk cleared his throat while Kim Yuri’s expression got colder.

Chang Sung Hoon exchanged a glance with Kim Tae Hoon. Kim Tae Hoon rolled his eyes upwards.

It was a sign to talk in the mayor’s office.

In other words, they needed to separate themselves from Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk for a little while.

”Well, welcome. Since you are guests, please accept our hospitality. Hyun Wook, escort our guests to the waiting room by the mayor’s office. Junior Lieutenant Kim Soo Jim why don’t you accompany him?”

Chang Sung Hoon was naturally prepared for this situation.

2.

“So what happened?”

Sitting across from each other, Chang Sung Hoon asked Kim Tae Hoon with a serious expression on his face.

Kim Tae Hoon explained how things transpired at Gimpo International Airport.

Having heard the story, Chang Sung Hoon let out a long sigh.

“So even the president and the prime minister are gone? Wait, then who is making the decisions if the two of them are gone?”

“In this circumstance, it would normally be either of the deputy prime ministers, but in actuality, only the prime minister would actually matter.”

“Does neither the Speaker of the National Assembly or the Chief Justice have any power in this situation?”

“Well the surviving forces are mostly forces of the military. As a result, only the president or prime minister would have any real influence over them. Anyways, it’s a justification to fight.”

“Did they really die? Could they be hiding?”

“There’s no way to know for sure, but if we had to choose, the

former would be better for our situation. In the latter case..... there would be forces that would be willing to use the prime minister and president as weapons."

Chang Sung Hoon tapped on the desk with his fingers.

"For now, if we were to summarize the situation, then it boils down to the Capital Defense Command having occupied Seoul. And the Six Snakes that Boss had spoken of could be growing in power in the capital."

Kim Tae Hoon nodded his head.

"The best course of action is to nip the problem at the bud..... even if you were to kill Oh Saebum, it wouldn't guarantee that this problem would be resolved. Rather, killing him would make things worse. No, even if you wanted to kill him, it's not like you could go to Seoul. What a pain in the neck."

The problem was that no matter what they chose to do, there were many restrictions placed on them.

There were many things to have to consider simply just going to Seoul from Bucheon, and on top of that, the city of Seoul in their memories was no longer the same city. It was a labyrinth of hell.

"Plus we can't just leave the Sixth Snake to his own devices and let him slowly gain in power."

The bigger problem was that it was impossible to treat this problem like people in other countries have.

The current destiny was fixed. Kim Tae Hoon was living to destroy that fixed destiny.

“The zero-sum game will eventually have a winner.”

Kim Tae Hoon’s answer in this situation was simple.

“That’s right. Even though everyone is supposed to eat from the same pie, the one who grabs the biggest portion will eventually grab the whole pie.”

“Relics and monster stones. The side that eats the most will be the eventual winner.”

Chang Sung Hoon was able to express the answer that Kim Tae Hoon had set his mind on.

“In exchange for doing the government’s work and handling their needs, you plan to take their relics?”

The plate was set.

Mek Guild would don the government’s mantle and go hunt monsters on behalf of the Capital Defense Command in Seoul.

They would do the work that the government is responsible for.

So of course they would demand a price.

They would kill monsters and receive relics in exchange.

“But would the punks in the capital easily hand over their goods?”

The Capital Defense Command would certainly be aware of what was going on. Therefore, they would not easily acquiesce.

Regardless, an exchange of words will come to pass eventually.

“We’re not just going to ask them, we’re going to make them give it to us.”

“Is that possible?”

“If the other party has something you want but refuses to give it to you, what would you do?”

Kim Tae Hoon suddenly asked Chang Sung Hoon a question.

“I would ask if they have any intention of selling it to me.”

“And if they say no?”

“If I really needed it I would threaten them or snatch…….”

Chang Sung Hoon stared at Kim Tae Hoon with a surprised expression on his face. He had finally understood Kim Tae Hoon’s intentions.

Kim Tae Hoon wasn’t looking to be rewarded. It was a one-sided robbery.

If they won’t give it, then I’ll take it.

“Organize a list of national treasures that they may have secured.”

Hearing Kim Tae Hoon’s command, Chang Sung Hoon’s eyes changed.

The anxiety in his eyes ceased to exist and was replaced with a small gleam of anticipation.

“Finally, the day that I get to lay my hands on a national treasure will soon arrive. Yes, we should do things with a bang. If we’re going to steal something, might as well snatch away a few national treasures. By all means! Please leave it to me!”

Seeing Chang Sung Hoon’s enthusiastic reply, Kim Tae Hoon did not smile.

‘Artifacts can be obtained.’

It was possible to get their hands on the relics. It was possible to snatch them away.

However, it was the same for this unknown enemy known as the Six Snakes. They would currently be eating right off the Capital Defense Command’s table without them even knowing.

There would be no competition between the one who eats the flesh of the fruit and the one who eats the peels.

‘I need to insert my own people.’

Above all, the military is not a simple organization that is moved by profit.

The military wouldn’t exist if it was solely motivated by profit. There was no organization that consumed more and produced less than the military.

The soldiers were the same.

To be frank, no soldier joined the army for monetary or material gain.

What these soldiers wanted to do was to leave their names in the

annals of history.

The history of mankind was a history of war. War was a great opportunity for soldiers to leave behind their names.

‘Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun is also ambitious.’

Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun was one of those ambitious soldiers.

In the first place, the 35th Battalion Special Assault Team was bound to be on close terms with the authorities.

If Kim Tae Hoon was a man of power, the first person he would have sought out during the moment of crisis was Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun.

However, that same person’s expression right now was not good.

‘However, his situation right now is terrible.’

For one, he himself was not an Awakened, A huge penalty. The situation in the military was one where there was no choice but to let the Awakened fill positions of power. The individual power of an Awakened could potentially become higher than that of an army, and a normal human commander would become impotent when exposed to Fear.

The proof was that he was currently running around outside.

Those with power were never at the frontlines.

At the moment of the commander's death, chaos will ensue, resulting in tremendous damage and ensuring their defeat.

'He's being discarded.'

In other words, the Capital Defense Command would suffer no loss if Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun were to die.

Plus there was nothing he could do about it.

You could tell based on how Oh Saebum treated Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun.

If Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun had proper authority, the arrogant Oh Saebum would have never smoked so arrogantly right in front of his face.

'Although his situation isn't very good and he's been forced to run around, I suppose he probably doesn't have any intention of bending his knees.'

Nonetheless, the reason he was taking such a big risk and actively running around was because his ambitions had not lessened.

It was the hallmark of ambition. It wasn't something you could just turn off because you wanted to.

Kim Tae Hoon closed his eyes. Sounds that his ears couldn't detect before began to become clearer.

He heard two voices talking to Kim Soo Ji in the reception room by the mayor's office.

Kim Tae Hoon opened his eyes.

"Are there any yellow ranked monsters nearby?"

"Yes, there's one in Incheon."

"I'll hunt it."

"What do you want the soldiers to do?"

"I'll be on my own. I'll also be taking those two."

Kim Tae Hoon decided.

'I'll use Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun to eat from inside the Capital Defense Command.'

Chapter 57 – National Treasure (2)

3.

Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk stared at the bungeoppang in front of them.

[TN: Bungeoppang is a fish shaped red bean jam bun.]

It was without a doubt some of the best snacks you could eat on a cold wintry day, but the two of them stared at the bungeoppang like it was from another world.

‘Just how in the world did they make bunggeoppang of all things?’ ‘Do they have the materials? No, wait…… these aren’t the usual ingredients that go into bunggeoppang?’

To be frank, bunggeoppang didn’t require any special ingredients or a great amount of effort.

All you needed was a mold placed over a flame, dough to pour into the mold, the red beans to go into the dough, and finally some time for the dough to cook.

‘It isn’t really anything special……’

But it wasn’t something that could currently be found in Seoul.

There were rations being handed out to the survivors in Seoul,

but the distribution was one-sided and mechanical. The amount they handed out gave just enough energy to survive.

So when the moist bunggeoppang entered their mouths, they felt an explosion of warm sweetness fill their mouths.

‘Damn it……’

Between Seoul and Bucheon, everyone would make the same choice.

“In a short amount of time, Boss will go out to hunt.”

Chang Sung Hoon said towards Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk, both of which were enjoying the texture of the incredulous bunggeoppang in their possession.

“At that time, the two of you will go and observe.”

‘Observe?’

When such unexpected words came out of Chang Sung Hoon’s mouth, their eyes changed.

‘He’s just going to show us?’

‘What’s his purpose?’

They couldn’t understand why they were being allowed to observe.

“It’s just as I’ve said. After you’ve observed Boss hunting, you can go and report it your superior. Of course it goes without saying, but I hope you don’t hinder the Boss or cause trouble.”

However, with Chang Sung Hoon’s explanation, the two were able to grasp the situation.

‘Chance.’

It was something they had wanted to see.

Although they had seen Kim Tae Hoon clinch an easy victory when facing off against Oh Saebum, that was, in the end, just a test. Although they had seen some of his cards, they hadn’t quite seen the ways he utilized them.

The fight was too bland. It was Kim Tae Hoon’s one-sided victory. The information that could be obtained from such a battle would be fragmentary at best.

Above all, fighting against monsters and fighting against humans were totally different. What Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun wanted to know was Kim Tae Hoon’s ability to kill monsters.

This was a chance for the two to witness it.

‘What should we do?’

It was a golden opportunity.

‘We do have to see it……’

But on the other hand, the entire proposition was fairly sketchy.

‘Just what is going on?’

‘Could he have other intentions?’

If 50,000 won suddenly landed at your feet, you would carefully look around as opposed to picking it up right away.

To Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk, their current situation was similar.

“Ah, this isn’t a request for cooperation or anything like that.”

Chang Sung Hoon’s words helped lift some of their burden.

“No matter, you must attend. If you refuse, we’ll be forced to drag you there, even if that means beating you senseless. Boss said that if you refuse, he’ll tie up your limbs, strap on a diaper, and

forcibly carry you around like a luggage. If it were me, I would definitely not want to experience wearing a diaper again in my adult life.”

4.

“Load it! Faster, hurry up and load it on!”

“Alright, you’re good to go!”

Men in black raincoats were swiftly and skillfully loading monster bodies onto a truck before quickly leaving.

The bodies loaded onto the truck immediately underwent dismantling. They split open the monsters’ chests and retrieved the monster stones from within.

All of these actions were carried out swiftly.

‘Everything is happening in real time.’

‘It’s like watching clockwork.’

Kim Yuri’s and Kim Joohyuk’s watching eyes rolled incessantly.

They had suffered through all sorts of hardships.

But despite that, everything they saw was alarming.

‘They are not Awakened but rather regular civilians, yet they’re able to carry out these tasks so swiftly?’

From the very start, everything was alarming.

Kim Tae Hoon said that he would go hunting alone and had only taken a support team to handle the dismantling.

He had decided to recruit the members of the team by accepting applicants, a position that was heavily competed after.

‘When he was recruiting, people gladly turned in their applications with a smile on their faces.’

On top of that, all of the applicants were regular people. They were members of the general public that would normally piss their pants at the slightest monster roar.

It was a sight that Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk had never imagined was possible. There eyes kept moving.

Their eyes only stopped roving around once they noticed Kim Tae Hoon descending from the sky.

‘Ah……’

Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk looked at Kim Tae Hoon as though they had just seen a ghost. Kim Tae Hoon had just in mere moments before, stopped a charging herd of mini bears on his own.

Mini bear.

Its rank is red, but its body is like that of a bear's, just smaller and similar in size to that of a wolf.

But its strength and daring far exceeded that of a regular bear. It was such that a group of them wouldn't be afraid of provoking an orange ranked monster.

Seeing someone block that crazy rush of mini bears was insane.

Even those in mechanized infantry riding tanks would have their hair turn white with fright, so what further explanation was needed.

However, facing the mini bears' charge, Kim Tae Hoon had simply glanced at the twenty or so strong herd and turned them into corpses with a single hole in each of them.

After hunting down the monsters, a featherless arrow made its way into Kim Tae Hoon's waist. Eyeing the arrow, Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk had come to the realization that it was Kim Tae Hoon's weapon.

‘Monster.’

It was a weapon way stronger, faster, more unpredictable, and stealthier than modern day guns. The two shivered after having witnessed its usage.

‘If he had fought with a relic in hand…… then Major Oh Saebum wouldn’t have been able to even struggle.’

At the same time, they had come to the realization that Kim Tae Hoon’s ability to hunt down monsters was at a level that Oh Saebum couldn’t compare to.

Assuredly, Oh Saebum was also incredibly strong.

With his B+ Rank Energy he had hunted down and killed an orange grade monster with his bare hands, but after being armed with the relics from the National Museum, he ended being able to deal with yellow grade monsters as well.

When the Capital Defense Command went on a campaign to hunt down a green ranked monster, Oh Saebum was the one who jumped out of an attack helicopter and clung onto the giant, 10-legged, green ranked monster.

That was why Oh Saebum was a spark of hope.

He showed that monsters were not to be feared and were enemies that humans could stand up to and that humans were very well

capable of fighting and defeating them.

‘Different levels.’

Kim Tae Hoon was different.

Resisting, struggling…… Kim Tae Hoon exhibited none of that.

One-sided massacre.

Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk tried to stifle their emotions.

‘Red ranked monsters can easily be killed with guns.’

‘Although the mini bears are strong, one platoon armed with firearms is enough to deal with them.’

If they were to acknowledge and admit to Kim Tae Hoon’s strength right here, then all their hard work thus far would seem like garbage.

So they attempted to cut down the imposing figure of Kim Tae Hoon imprinted in their minds and bring him down to a level they felt they could cope with.

“Be wary of Fear.”

Kim Tae Hoon briefly warned the two.

“What?”

“What do you mean?”

Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk were surprised at his warning, but Kim Tae Hoon did not reply.

Keuuuuh!

Instead, a giant bear, as opposed to the mini bears, let out a loud roar.

It was a Chameleon Bear, one whose hide would change colors according to its surroundings.

‘Yello Rank!’

‘Oh my God!’

Exposed to the monster’s Fear, Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk’s bodies froze.

Even Kim Tae Hoon didn’t move.

The only thing that moved was the Sword of the Commander on

Kim Tae Hoon's back.

5.

March 18.

Although the weather had started to warm up, Gimpo International Airport's bleak atmosphere still remained.

Rather, as the snow melted away, the sense of desolation grew stronger.

Within that desert of bleakness was a group of people.

They were like a pack of wolves. The atmosphere was full of tension and caution.

Only one man located in the center of the crowd exuded an aura different from that of a wolf.

He had a hooked nose and full cheeks– an appearance that could never resemble that of a wolf's.

"Are you sure today is the agreed date?

So why isn't he coming?"

The man’s name was Lee Dongseok.

He was neither a soldier nor an Awakened and had a folksy air about him. He was a former staff member of the National Museum and was brought along as a specialist in regards to the negotiations with Kim Tae Hoon.

“He’s here.”

It was the same with Kim Tae Hoon. Off in the distance at the other end of the runway were Kim Tae Hoon and Chang Sung Hoon.

Confirming the presence of the two, Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun’s mouth twisted.

It wasn’t because Kim Tae Hoon disgusted him or anything.

‘Identifying the location of the sniper.’

The problem was that Kim Tae Hoon was approaching from the direction of the sniper’s location.

It was a message.

[Since I know where the sniper is, cut the shit and forget about any funny business.]

‘He’s become even more of a monster.’

It was hard to come to terms with. Even though Kim Tae Hoon could be considered to be the world’s foremost specialist in that field of work, it wouldn’t have been possible to identify the location of a sniper placed a day in advance.

In other words, it was obvious. It was proof that this world had long since been unbound by the chains of common sense.

Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun sent a signal to his men.

Having received the signal, his men began to wave a white flag. If it were the same as before, he would have simply sent a message through a walkie-talkie, but as it were, it was currently impossible.

It wasn’t long before Kim Tae Hoon and Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun were face to face again.

“What are the results?”

“Your conditions will be accepted.”

There were no greetings.

Neither of them were the kind to waste time with needless greetings.

“I’ll give you a task. If your work isn’t satisfactory, you won’t be paid. The compensation will definitely be paid in relics.”

“I have a wishlist. I will only accept the goods on that list.”

The two spoke what they wanted to say.

Having said what they wanted to say, the two looked at each other.

Of the two expressionless faces, the Lieutenant Colonel was the first to make an expression by wrinkling his face.

With a frown on his face, he gestured to Lee Dongseok.

Fixing his round glasses, Lee Dongseok walked over to Kim Tae Hoon.

“For now, I would like to know what you want.”

“Ah, this.”

Standing behind Kim Tae Hoon, Chang Sung Hoon made his move. Chang Sung Hoon pulled out a box.

It didn’t look like a box you’d store papers in. Quite frankly, it looked like a box you’d put walnut cookies in. In addition, a long

nose belonging to an animal, like that of an elephant's, was painted on the cover with a brush.

Lee Dongseok tilted his neck upwards.

"This is a gift. These are walnuts cookies that the Mek Guild had produced. The animals depicted are meks. It's our guild's mascot. Of course, it's not just a simple walnut cookie. Included are some monster materials as ingredients. It's delicious. I guarantee that it'll become a world-class hit product once we can start mass production."

Lee Dongseok had an expression as though he didn't understand what was going on while Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun furrowed his brow.

'Walnut crackers……'

He had received them as gifts before in the past.

But to receive such a confection in today's day and age?

Even those made of monster ingredients?

It was something he couldn't expect.

He had no leisure to even think about something like that.

‘I guess I should listen to what you have to say. I want to know just exactly what is happening in Bucheon right now.’

Because of that, the walnut snack presented by Chang Sung Hoon was like a surprise punch.

A punch that renders you momentarily senseless.

But an even stronger punch followed soon after.

“This is a wish list.”

Chang Sung Hoon handed Lee Dongseok a folded bundle of paper. There was a lot written on the three sheets of A4 paper. Reading the list, he was instantly shocked at the contents and exclaimed out loud.

“Aren’t these all national treasures?”

“Not really?”

“What are you saying? The Golden Crown from the Tomb of the Golden Crown! The Royal Girdle of Korea! Clay Horseback Rider Figurine! Geumsansa Stone Statue of Maitreya! Even the Bell of King Seongdeok! These are all national treasures!”

“Aren’t Kim Hong-do’s Danwon Pungsokdo Cheop treasures as well?”

“T, that is……”

“Ah, I forgot to mention King Muryeong’s set from the Tomb of King Muryeong. That includes everything from the foot rests to the pillows.”

“You’re crazy!”

Lee Dongseok exclaimed in indignation after looking at the ridiculous wishlist. His tone became unpleasant.

“Why don’t you just ask for the entire National Museum of Korea!”

“Hm? Is that ok?”

“What nonsense are you saying! All of these are exhibited as national treasures at the National Museum in Korea!”

“Hunminjeongeum, the Bronze Gilded Buddha Trio Statue, and the Cranes and Cloud Celadon Vase are all things located in Gansong Art Museum? Since when were those in the National Museum of Korea? Also now that I think about it, I must have forgotten to put those. I also seem to have forgotten to mention Geumgangsan. Can you give the wish list back to me? I have a few more things to write down.”

Lee Dongseok could no longer stand Chang Sung Hoon, and so he turned around and faced Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun.

Then he whispered something towards the lieutenant colonel.

These bastards are crazy!

Hearing that Lieutenant Colonel stopped frowning. He gave Kim Tae Hoon a smug look.

“You were the one who proposed a negotiation, but you don’t seem to be willing to negotiate.”

National treasures weren’t designated as such for no reason. They were treasures designated as such by the Republic of Korea in order to preserve the nation’s identity, culture, and history.

On the list were items that weren’t quite national treasures but were not too different from them.

Those that turned into relics had done so with amazing options attached, but even those without any options and those that hadn’t been turned into relics couldn’t casually handed over to just anyone.

They were not objects that could be the subject of a transaction.

Basically, Kim Tae Hoon was willing to give an intangible

product but was unwilling to negotiate terms.

“In this world where there aren’t just one or two monsters, tens of thousands of humans have put their lives on the line to survive, so I think that receiving a national treasure is fair compensation.”

But Kim Tae Hoon was serious.

“That sounds ridiculous.”

“If it sounds ridiculous, then I’ll just go and negotiate with someone else.”

Kim Tae Hoon countered with a serious look on his face.

Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun stiffened.

He directed a murderous gaze towards Kim Tae Hoon. He looked like a beast that had been stabbed in the chest.

Kim Tae Hoon did nothing to dodge his murderous gaze. Rather, he stared back with an even stronger gaze.

“We’ll only accept the items on the list. Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Dae Hyun, all you’re doing is bringing me proper compensation for my work.”

“…… Major Kim Tae Hoon has changed a lot.”

Kim Tae Hoon did not answer. That was because what he wanted to hear wasn’t the details of that.

Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun did not immediately speak. After struggling for a bit, he opened his mouth.

“There are important figures currently in Incheon. If you’re able to rescue them, then one treasure will be proper compensation.”

“The price will unconditionally be at least one treasure. I’ll accept it somehow after finishing the mission.”

Negotiations began.

Chapter 58 – National Treasure (3)

6.

Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun stood silently on the runway.

In front of him stood a man and a woman standing at attention.

The silence lasted for a long time.

“Unbelievable.”

It was Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun’s sigh and exclamation that broke the silence.

Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk both flinched when he began to talk. While eyeing the two of them, he began to speak.

“I had thought that my faith in the two of you wouldn’t change, but what you’re telling me right now is hard for me to believe.”

“Forgive us sir.”

The two of them immediately asked for forgiveness.

However, Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun looked at the two of them and spoke.

“I still have faith in you, don’t get me wrong. It’s just that the story you have told me about Kim Tae Hoon is impossible for me to believe.”

“We have not lied!”

“That’s right. We’ve not lied!”

Seeing that Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun was unbelieving of their report, the two of them spoke up to emphasize that what they were saying was true.

Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun closed his eyes. The lieutenant colonel started thinking about their nonsensical story.

‘He killed a yellow ranked monster without laying a hand.’

He was aware that Kim Tae Hoon’s abilities were incredible. His fight with Oh Saebum was enough to confirm that.

Also, Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun’s personality required that he maximize his own skills and options so as to prepare for the unknown.

As the commander of the 35th Battalion, he had to.

He was the head of a group responsible for handling terrorist

groups targeting the Republic of Korea. He wasn't a soldier that would ever look down on an enemy or rule out the fact that a civilian might be an enemy, and so as a result, he would always picture the enemy's figure in his head to the point of overworking himself.

However, Kim Tae Hoon's abilities according to Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk's report was much more than he had expected.

No, rather, nobody would have expected Kim Tae Hoon to be so strong.

'It's not that it's beyond expectations, but common sense.'

Literally beyond common sense……

And in the face of that realization, Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun's heart began to beat faster.

'Opportunity in crisis.'

The only person in contact with Kim Tae Hoon currently was Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun.

If Kim Tae Hoon's influence grows, then Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun's influence, being in contact with Kim Tae Hoon, would have to grow as well.

‘If I carry this out alone, then my position will improve on its own.’

If Kim Tae Hoon successfully fulfills this mission, then the achievement would of course go to Yoo Daehyun.

‘Everything turned out moving according to Kim Tae Hoon’s scenario.’

At that moment, Lieutenant Colonel made the decision to walk with Kim Tae Hoon.

“The two of you will remain in Bucheon and observe Kim Tae Hoon. No, I suppose you won’t be able to.”

Kim Yuri and Kim Joohyuk had distorted expressions on their faces when given that direct order. They had initially gone to spy over Kim Tae Hoon, but since he had discovered them, it wouldn’t be a good idea to try and do so again.

“Well actually, it’s rather good now.”

However, Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun was rather pleased with how things had turned out.

“If Kim Tae Hoon is able to successfully save her in Incheon, we can attach her to him.”

In fact, he could attach people to Kim Tae Hoon.

Kim Joohyuk couldn't help but ask a question in the face of the lieutenant colonel's command.

"If by 'her' you mean……"

"Kate Kennedy. Kim Tae Hoon's mission this time is to rescue her from Incheon."

7.

"Who is Kate Kennedy?"

While walking back to Bucheon, Chang Sung Hoon asked Kim Tae Hoon a question shortly after hitting the road.

"Why is the Capital Defense Command willing to give you a national treasure in exchange for saving her from Incheon. She seems to be an American?"

Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun's demands were simple.

To rescue the woman named Kate Kennedy in Incheon.

The moment her name came up, Kim Tae Hoon did not ask a single question as though he already knew her identity. So of

course Chang Sung Hoon would ask.

“She’s the daughter of someone named Douglas Kennedy.”

“Who is that?”

Kim Tae Hoon didn’t bother to hide her identity.

“The US Ambassador to Korea.”

He told him the identity of the woman without any hesitation.

“What?”

The problem was something that Chang Sung Hoon couldn’t imagine.

Chang Sung Hoon stopped walking and stood still. After a bit of silence, he exclaimed with wide eyes.

“Th,the US Ambassador to Korea?”

It was something he did not expect.

But on the contrary, it was a name that Kim Tae Hoon was familiar with. It was a name that he had to be familiar with. Since if anything happened to the ambassador or any of his family

members, the consequences for the Republic of Korea wasn't something to laugh at.

"But why the ambassador's daughter……"

"To make sure to bring the ambassador over to their side."

Hearing that, Chang Sung Hoon put on a sour expression.

"So because of that, they're willing to give you a national treasure if you save an American instead of a Korean? No, I know that he's not just an average American, but even then, we're not even going to save him but instead going to save his daughter in exchange for a national treasure…… the behavior of the Korean top brass is so……"

[TN: Let me be clear, Chang Sung Hoon isn't expressing disgust towards Americans. He's expressing disgust towards the Korean politicians who are placing more importance on a foreign dignitary than on their own native people of power, ie. president, prime minister, etc. Basically, he's disgusted with their greed and lack of interest in national security. They're willing to exchange a national heirloom for their own benefit.]

From how Chang Sung Hoon saw it, a national treasure wasn't something you could so easily approach. They were meant to be admired from a distance.

"Regardless, once you rescue his daughter, that ambassador ought to be very grateful towards you. I'm hoping he doesn't know how to distinguish between personal and private matters. Only

then would we get any benefits from saving her."

There would be no good feelings about the exchanging of a national heirloom for another country's person.

In other words, Kim Tae Hoon wasn't too pleased with the current situation.

"He'd probably be happy. In this hellish world, to rescue his family which may as well be the only precious thing left to him would mean a lot."

"Yes, other people out there can't even check in on their family let alone meet them."

"Some threats would yield good results for them."

"That is correct. Threats..... what do you mean?"

"If I were to point a gun to the ambassador's head, he probably won't yield; however, if I point a gun at his daughter's head, then the story would be different."

Hearing what Kim Tae Hoon said, Chang Sung Hoon became speechless. He simply stood there and looked at Kim Tae Hoon.

What Kim Tae Hoon had said was simply that terrifying.

Having spoken those scary words, Kim Tae Hoon drew up a picture of the current situation of Seoul in his head.

'The US Ambassador to Seoul is a good key. However, putting up a national treasure just so that they have someone to hold hostage is a bit of an excessive investment.'

He understood why they wanted the daughter of the ambassador. It wasn't a bad card to keep on hand.

However, offering a national treasure in exchange for intimidating a US Ambassador seemed like a steep price.

However, Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun had stated that they were willing to pay at least that much.

It meant that the situation was not simple.

'Of course, if by doing this they're able to influence the US Armed Forces in Korea, then it would be worth it.'

If there are any problems in the USFK allowing for the ambassador to step in and take command, then let alone one national treasure, it would be worth it to hand over several.

'If they were to frame the situation like a war..... then even without the president or the prime minister, as long as they have the USFK, it would be more than enough to justify what they plan to do.'

The power and prestige of the USFK was just that great.

Looking at the big picture, if after some time the United States is able to get back up on its feet and moves its forces in Korea, then any force in opposition to the USFK is done for.

'If they're able to successfully recruit her..... then even if they lose a national treasure, they won't lose anything.'

Even if he didn't gain a national treasure, simply being in guardianship of the US Ambassador's daughter would be good enough.

Having listened intently to Kim Tae Hoon's story, Chang Sung Hoon snapped back to reality.

"Does he want us to go save the daughter with the actual intention of threatening the ambassador?"

"If it's not that, then it would make no sense for them to pay us a national treasure. One national treasure at this point in time is enough to rival a whole group of fighters."

"So they're buying a hostage off of us and paying us in national treasures."

Hearing Chang Sung Hoon sum up the situation, Kim Tae Hoon

paused.

Having heard what Chang Sung Hoon said, Kim Tae Hoon couldn't help but recall something that Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun had said.

'You've changed a lot.'

He had said that Kim Tae Hoon had changed a lot.

However, Kim Tae Hoon didn't feel appreciative.

'I'll have to change more.'

He knew better than anyone that he needed to change in order to survive.

'I'll have to get as much as I can.'

8.

"Huk, huk, huk!"

The man running on the road was like a large car. He was running in a crazed manner like a train on a track, steam coming off of him like steam being expelled from from a train.

The only difference was that trailing behind him were terrifying things.

Keuuuh!

Those who were chasing him were unidentified monsters.

Starting from their appearance, they were strange looking creatures. They looked like monkeys, but because they were covered in mop-like hair, it might have been more apt to call it a bundle of hair. The only visible part of their body was their club-like noses that protrudes from within the mess of hair.

Large Nosed Orangutans.

There was one kind of monster that had claimed this jungle of collapsed buildings and broken cars known as Incheon as its territory.

Its race was a race of cruel and evil monsters.

‘Damn it, damn it!’

They would capture humans and play around with them.

It was literally as said.

They didn't just eat the humans they captured, they would toy with them first. They would crush the limbs of their captives so that they couldn't escape, afterwards proceeding to throw their feces at them, inflict pain upon them but not let them die, and even sometimes rape both men and women alike.

As a result, those who get captured by the Large Nosed Orangutans would eventually become nothing but gory messes.

'I can't get caught! It'd be better to just die!'

The man who was currently running, Bae Sungjoon, had seen it happen many times. That was why he was so desperate.

"Fuck!"

At that moment, the visage of a ruined building appeared before Bae Sungjoon. It was a dead end that completely blocked the road.

'Why is the road here blocked? The deafening roar from yesterday?'

Bae Sungjoon turned his neck to the side.

Kueh!

At that moment, one of the Large Nosed Orangutan chasing after Bae Sungjoon threw a stone at him.

Peuk!

That stone struck him right in the shoulderbone.

“Ggeuahk!”

Bae Sungjoon fell to the floor while screaming. While falling, his hair turned white.

‘Euhah!’

The now white-haired Bae Sungjoon began to think of all the things he wanted to do in the future.

“N, no……”

It was his desire for life that made Bae Sungjoon snap back to his senses. Bae Sungjoon forced himself to raise his body. He slowly turned around and looked behind him. He stared at the Large Nosed Orangutans approaching him.

Then he shouted at the top of his voice.

“F, fuck off! I said fuck off!”

Hearing his spirited cry, the orangutans began to giggle under

their breaths.

One of the orangutans got up from its seat and threw a stone at Bae Sungjoon.

Bbak!

The stone struck Bae Sungjoon right in the chest. Bae Sung Joon's face crumpled as he once again fell to the floor.

A few more Large Nosed Orangutans approached Bae Sungjoon whilst picking up rocks from the side of the road.

They began to play.

'These fuckers……!'

Realizing the orangutans' intentions, Bae Sungjoon began to overflow with both anger and dread.

Bae Sungjoon knew what he would have to face in the not-too-distant future.

The orangutans kept throwing stones at Bae Sungjoon in order to incite fear so that he would piss his pants. Additionally, they'll smash Bae Sungjoon's limbs whenever they feel like it and drag him back to their nest. Once he's there, he'll undergo far more excruciating horrors.

“Ggeuah! Euhaaaaaah!”

In the end, all Bae Sungjoon could do was let out a desperate cry towards the heavens.

“Please, please save me! Please! I’ll do whatever you say!”

There are no gods.

Having denied the existence of gods despite what he gone through since December 31st, Bae Sungjoon reached out towards them.

But there were no gods.

Swiik!

Instead, there were only monsters.

“Please! Ple..... huh?”

It happened in an instant.

Accompanying the sound of the wind, the five orangutans reaching out towards Bae Sungjoon suddenly stopped in their tracks.

Shortly after coming to a stop, they collapsed onto the floor. The thud of something hitting the ground rang out five times in quick succession.

The Large Nosed Orangutans leaked out a mixture of cerebral fluid and blood.

Bae Sungjoon froze at such an incredulous sight.

A shadow came over his head. Bae Sungjoon turned his head.

The monster that had saved Bae Sungjoon from the orangutans spoke.

“I have something I want to ask.”

Kim Tae Hoon had finally made his appearance in Incheon City.

Chapter 59 – Incheon Landing Operation

1.

Amidst the forest of buildings, a woman was carving away at a mangled monster's chest with her knife.

Pook!

The woman shoved her hand through the monster's chest without batting an eye, retrieving a red jewel from within. She wiped her hands and the red jewel with a handkerchief and then walked towards a man who was calmly sipping coffee from a thermos.

"Are you perhaps doing that intentionally?"

Kim Yuri asked while also handing Kim Tae Hoon the monster stone.

Gulp!

Ingesting the monster stone as soon as he received it, Kim Tae Hoon raised his eyebrow. He was gesturing for her to explain more clearly.

"Whenever a survivor is about to die at the hands of a monster, you would rescue them when it's most dire..... are you doing that

intentionally?”

Hearing that, Kim Tae Hoon nodded his head.

“Why?”

“It’ll make me look like a savior.”

“Huh?”

“Instead of a random passerby, they would be more cooperative with their savior.”

Kim Tae Hoon tightened the lid on his thermos and walked towards Bae Sung Joon who was currently eating the chocolate bar that Kim Tae Hoon had given him. He was ready to get some answers. As Kim Tae Hoon approached, Bae Sung Joon stood up from his seat.

“Th,thank you. Lee Eunhye……”

“Have you seen this woman?”

Kim Tae Hoon cut off Bae Sung Joon and pulled out a sketch of a woman. It was a well-drawn portrait of a white woman with a cold expression in her mid-twenties.

“Her name is Kate Kennedy.”

Bae Sung Joon stared at the sketch before shaking his head. Hearing that, Kim Tae Hoon didn’t express any sort of disappointment. If it was so easy to find her, Kim Tae Hoon wouldn’t have personally come to Incheon.

‘Will I eventually have to go to Yeongjongdo?’

According to the information that Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun had given him, Kate Kennedy’s last known location was on Yeongjong Island where Incheon International Airport was located. It was possible that she could still be there. He was asking on the off chance that Kate had left Yeongjong Island with her guards.

So Kim Tae Hoon went straight to the next question.

“Is there a force created by the survivors in Incheon?”

“Yes, yes there is.”

This time he replied back.

“How many survivors?”

“I think it’s just over a thousand..... I don’t know the exact number.”

Over a thousand people.

Listening in on the conversation from behind Kim Tae Hoon, Kim Yuri made a terrible expression.

‘Incheon’s population is close to 3 million……’

Incheon’s population was 2.92 million people. Incheon was pretty big, so it’s population density was lower than that of Bucheon’s. But even taking that into consideration, the fact that the remaining group of survivors was floating around a thousand people was dismal.

Kim Tae Hoon thought the same.

‘The damage is astounding.’

Thinking of the thousand survivors, the words of Messiah’s Leader, Lee Jin Sung, came to mind.

Bucheon’s luck is really good…… Incheon’s already become hell…… heed my words.

Everything he said was true. The damage inflicted upon Incheon was so great that Bucheon could not even begin to compare. The enormity of the tragedy wasn’t lost on Kim Tae Hoon.

“Location?”

“Ganseogogeori, the survivors are gathered in Ganseogogeori Station.”

“What is the name of the survivor group?”

“Huh?”

This was the first time Bae Sungjun hesitated to answer. Kim Tae Hoon’s eyes narrowed.

He did not volunteer to be a hero like someone from Marvel Comics. He had put his life on the line to come here. It wasn’t just Kim Tae Hoon’s life either. The lives of those who live under the umbrella known as Kim Tae Hoon are at stake as well.

A complete stranger, if it weren’t for the fact that he had saved his life, Bae Sungjun would have never even bothered telling this stranger anything at all.

“What is the name of the survivor group?”

“Right, so that’s because that……”

Kim Tae Hoon’s gaze changed.

His eyes read ‘if you don’t answer right away, if you further hesitate to answer, then I’m willing to go to any lengths necessary to get an answer’.

“You have three seconds.”

Bae Sungjun stuttered, scared of Kim Tae Hoon.

“Th, that’s not it, they don’t have a name. The survivors are just survivors! They don’t have a name. I’m telling the truth, they don’t have one. In..instead, there is another group of kids calling themselves the Looters. They’re kids who commit crimes……”

Hearing that, a murderous aura came off of Kim Tae Hoon. Because of the information he heard, Kim Tae Hoon was able to more properly draw out the situation in Incheon in his head.

‘It seems like the survivors in Incheon have almost no contact with the outside world.’

If they had contact with outsiders, then they would have named themselves something to distinguish their group from outsiders. The lack of a name meant that they felt there was no need to differentiate themselves.

‘Is it because of Bucheon?’

Looking at the current situation in Incheon, then it was understandable enough. Bucheon was the only city where

survivors could work about in areas near Incheon. However, nobody in Bucheon would have wanted to go to Incheon. It was the same vice versa. Bucheon blocked access to Incheon, turning it into a sort of isolated state.

'But while gathering survivors, what happened that two groups would form..... looks like there might be a proper leader in Incheon.'

Another possibility is that there might be a leader in Incheon. No one would ever follow a bad leader in a life-threatening situation.

'Looters.....'

But that didn't mean that everyone would be of one mind. There were people in Incheon who looted and attacked other humans like monsters would.

'The survivors known as the Looters, simple.'

Regardless, the situation was clear.

"What's the situation with weapons for both the survivors and the Looters?"

Kim Tae Hoon continued his questioning in order to get more information. However, a different creature replied instead of Bae Sungjun.

Keuuuuh!

A loud shriek rang out in the distance from where they had come from. It was the cries of other Large Nosed Orangutans that had arrived at the bloody corpses of their fellow orangutans. Amongst them were some larger, orange-eyed ones as well.

Keuuuuh!

“Ooh aahk!”

Seeing the Orange-eyed monster, Bae Sungjun fell to the floor. Bae Sungjun was no longer in any condition to answer Kim Tae Hoon’s question. Seeing as how his questioning was interrupted, Kim Tae Hoon frowned. Kim Tae Hoon’s pupils went black.

Swiik!

The arrow in Kim Tae Hoon’s waist moved out in an instant. The arrow sliced through the air, aiming right for the noses of the monsters that had so egregiously ruined the master’s mood. It only took a moment for six Large Nosed Orangutans to cease their breathing.

Keuh?

Identifying the arrow, the leader of the Large Nosed Orangutans

swiftly dodged to the side to avoid the arrow piercing towards his head, but was still unable to dodge again as the arrow pierced through its throat.

Keuh, Keuhuh, keuhuk!

As the orangutan gasped for breath, the arrow appeared before it, pointing towards its head like a snake.

Paat!

The arrow pierced through the orangutan. The world was once more wrapped in silence.

Staring at the collapsed Bae Sungjun, Kim Tae Hoon asked a question with a calmer tone of voice.

“What weapons do the survivors and the Looters have?”

2.

Ganseogogeori.

As stated in its name, ‘Ogeori’, Ganseogogeori was an area where 5 roads met. At the center of the five roads was the Ganseok High Rise Bridge.

It was a literal high rise bridge.

A road hoisted above a road, a road so high up that it could be called a cloud bridge. Observers would merely be able to look at drivers whizzing by.

That overpass was now serving as a watchtower. There were men wearing uniforms up on the overpass, surveying the land with the scopes on their rifles. It was a scene that you wouldn't have seen in the past. The current scene was completely different from what Ganseogogeori was before. Atop the five roads, vehicles were arranged in such a way as to barricade off monsters. Some places bore the marks of battle, as there were gaps and damages in the line of vehicles. The biggest change was two of the five streets being completely blocked by collapsed buildings.

On top of an empty building, Kim Yuri, who was observing the now Ganseoksamgeori through a pair of binoculars, clicked her tongue.

[TN: Ganseoksamgeori means Ganseok three-way intersection, whereas Ganseogogeori means Ganseok five-way intersection.]

"Their defenses are tighter than I thought."

As a matter of fact, the survivors successfully settling down in Ganseogogeori was very remarkable. It was amazing for anyone to have survived in the hell known as Incheon for three months.

"Seems dangerous just making contact with them sir."

Approaching these survivors was no different than approaching a wounded beast. Kim Yuri's judgement was reasonable. However, Kim Tae Hoon's behavior spoke otherwise.

"Stay here."

"What?"

"I'll go meet with their leader by myself."

Kim Yuri looked at Kim Tae Hoon with an incredulous expression on her face. She couldn't help but think back to what she had just said.

It's dangerous to even contact them!

But Kim Tae Hoon paid no heed to her warning.

"There are children."

What caught Kim Tae Hoon's attention was the existence of kids running about in Ganseogogeori.

"Just what……"

Kim Yuri didn't quite understand Kim Tae Hoon's intention.

‘What does that have to do with it?’

Kim Yuri didn’t understand why he had placed so much worth on the fact that there were kids.

“There are two main reasons why an armed group independent of the government would allow for children.”

Kim Tae Hoon was willing to explain to her his thought process.

“One would be where a group of terrorists plans to brainwash children and scare them into carrying out nefarious acts such as shootings and suicide bombings.”

“…… and the other reason?”

“The second would be where some kind-hearted fool risks his life to protect the children and provide for them a safe living space.”

Kim Yuri’s expression stiffened after listening in on his explanation.

If Kim Tae Hoon’s explanation was correct, then this armed group could be either that of the devil or that of an angel.

“How can we distinguish between the two cases?”

It was certain that Kim Tae Hoon had the necessary knowledge to differentiate between the two.

“Terrorists would usually keep children around the age of 10. With kids over the age of 13, there’s the risk that they might become too independent and use clever means to rebel, while kids under the age of 7 might not be able to listen to commands.”

Kim Yuri didn’t say anything after listening to Kim Tae Hoon’s explanation. Kim Yuri had to keep her mouth shut in order not to exclaim the creeping feeling in her mind.

‘Just what kind of life……’

Her imagination was enough. Even when not speaking, Kim Tae Hoon exuded the scary experiences he had gone through in his life. Kim Tae Hoon did not pay her any more attention. He turned his head and looked at Ganseogogeori. Kim Yuri also turned her head, but nothing stood out.

“What’s going on sir?”

However, Kim Tae Hoon could clearly hear it.

“It’s the Looters.”

It was the sound of weapons and other arms approaching

Sanseokogeori at a fast pace.

“They have a tank”

“What?”

“It’s a K1A1. There are two of them. .”

And the distinctive sounds of a tank. Hearing what he said, Kim Yuri’s face stiffened.

‘Two tanks…… damn it.’

The existence of two tanks meant that those with mere firearms might as well be without weapons.

It would be a nightmare for the survivors of Ganseogogeori. However, it was what Kim Tae Hoon was planning to do that made Kim Yuri worry more. Kim Tae Hoon had said earlier, he deliberately waits and only shows up when the victim is at their direst moments to save them. If that was the case, then it was likely that Kim Tae Hoon would sit on the sidelines while the tanks made a mess of Ganseogogeori. The Kim Tae Hoon that she knew was someone who would stick to their gun, standing on the sidelines while others were in danger.

“Sergeant First Class Kim Yuri.”

“Yes sir.”

“Let the survivors know that the Looters are coming.”

But this time, things were different.

“Then what is Major……”

Kim Tae Hoon did not answer Kim Yuri’s question. In lieu of replying back, Kim Tae Hoon threw himself off the top of the roof.

Chapter 60 – Incheon Landing Operation (2)

3.

Ggiriri!

A strange sound came from a quiet, still road.

Ggiririg!

There was a large, heavy vehicle that could easily cause the ground to tremor, the sound coming from the caterpillar tracks holding the vehicle up.

‘I’m getting goosebumps.’

‘Did tanks originally sound so scary?’

It was an eerie sound.

It wasn’t simply an uncomfortable sound.

In a battlefield, the tank was an impeccable weapon used to reach an end, and as such, it was a weapon with few options left in terms of improvements.

In other words, it was a weapon whose sound could easily drown

a human in fear.

If by hearing that sound you didn't feel a chill down your spine, then you would be a monster, not a human.

Ggirig!

The tank came to a stop, the road regained its calm.

But it wouldn't be long before this tranquility comes to an end. As a contingent of riot police surrounded the tank, the riflemen surrounding the tank gulped, the tank making them nervous.

Gwagwang!

At that moment, the tank's barrel rang thunderously.

4.

Coming down from the building, Kim Yuri ran towards Ganseogogeori.

The road she was running on wasn't someplace she could sprint.

The road was chock-full of cars and other obstacles.

"Huu!"

However, that didn’t stop Kim Yuri running without hesitation. Her movements were incredible.

Hwik!

She would jump over smaller cars in one go.

Kwang!

As for vans, she would step and stride over them.

As for trucks, she would slide under them instead of going over.

“Wh, what’s that?”

“There’s something coming!”

Black Panther, it was the only thing that the watchguards could describe her as.

They were so surprised, they forgot what their jobs were for a moment.

“Alert! Alert!”

“Raise the flags! Raise the red flag!”

Snapping back to reality, the guards started to raise the flag they needed to.

They were using a 2002, red demon T-Shirt as their red flag.

“Flag?”

The guards atop the high bridge over Ganseogogeori noticed the flag fluttering in the air.

“Red Alert!”

The complexion of the guards on the bridge paled.

One of them immediately picked up a loudspeaker and began to shout.

– Evacuate! Evacuate!

There were others also shouting with just their voices.

“Enter here! Everyone enter the station through here!”

Their facial expressions getting worse, they kept shouting as the situation became more hectic.

The situation degenerated.

“The kids, get the kids!”

“Escape into the buildings!”

It was worse for those near the kids.

There were people carrying kids that had started to cry, running to wherever they could find shelter.

Children that couldn’t find their caretakers or anyone else that could take them to safety ran around before falling to the floor and crying.

It was chaos.

This was what Kim Yuri was aiming for.

The situation was much too urgent for Kim Yuri to try and explain one by one, so she intentionally scared the guards into raising the alarm so that the survivors in Gangseogogeori would evacuate.

There was only one thing that she needed to yell with her voice.

“Tanks are coming! Watch out for the shells!”

She shouted at the top of her lungs so that everyone on the bridge would hear.

As a soldier, she knew well. She knew what the main target of a tank driver would be if the driver had the intention of destroying the survivors’ base in mind.

“Get down from the bridge!”

Gwagwang!

At that moment, a thundering noise passed over the bridge.

Nobody could react to the sound as it passed by in an instant.

Gwaang!

They only reacted after the shell flew over their heads and smashed into the building behind them.

“Ahhhh!”

“Sh,shells!”

Yells started to pervade spring forth from numerous places.

Gwakwakwa!

At the same time, the building that was struck by the shell began to spit out rubble and debris as though it were vomiting up blood.

Kwagwang!

The tanks loaded up and shot another shell.

Gwaang!

Even before the panic could spread, the second bombardment struck another building.

“Uehaaaaa!”

None of the survivors of Ganseogogeori could make a clear and rational judgement.

‘Damn it!’

It was the opposite for Kim Yuri, who in this situation could maintain her cool.

She had gone through a lot and had accumulated a decent amount of battle experience.

Thanks to her time in Seoul, she knew what would happen after the tank fired a round from within the forest of buildings.

So it was only natural that she would know what decision the survivors would make.

It was in moments like this that humans would decide to place themselves over everyone else in the name of survival.

And the first thing to die because of that selfishness…….

“Waaaaaah!”

“Mommy! mommy!”

….would be the kids.

That was one of the reasons why it was so hard to find kids in areas where the monsters had swept through.

Even worse was the fact that the dead bodies of the children would often times be hard to even retrieve. The bodies of younger children were always the first to be consumed.

Kim Yuri bit her lips.

‘I have to choose.’

The situation at hand was urgent.

The tank began to spew out shell after shell, the survivors ducking into buildings for cover as the other buildings that were struck with the shells began to collapse.

Of course, it wouldn’t be so easy to secure one’s own life.

It was for this reason that she prioritized herself over the survivors.

She didn’t want to get too involved.

Her life existed for the sake of the mission, not for the sake of rescuing some kids, and so as a result, she would not so easily risk her life.

Her orders weren’t suggestions, they were commands.

Now that she was here, her orders were no different from her life.

But to be fair, any sane person would do the same.

However, it was in this moment that she was worried.

Seeing Kim Tae Hoon move to save the children, Kim Yuri was conflicted.

But her concerns disappeared faster than expected.

‘He’s doing the right thing.’

From what she had seen, everything that Kim Tae Hoon did generally tended to produce good results, but whenever she herself did things strictly based on what her directives outlined, she would find herself in a rut.

The results proved whose actions were correct.

Thinking that, all hesitations disappeared from Kim Yuri’s mind.

Kim Yuri once more turned into what a streak of light like a black panther and dashed towards the crying children.

Gwagwang!

Kwagwang!

The third and fourth shots rang out at that moment.

Ggeuaaahk!

At the same time, screams began to reverberate from where the shells landed.

5.

Surrounding the K1A1 tanks were a contingent of Looters riflemen escorting the vehicles.

It wasn't a strange sight.

Tanks were incredible weapons, but they weren't well-suited for every scenario. Afterall, there were weapons that could trump tanks.

For example, an anti-tank rocket could penetrate the side panels of a tank and pose as a big threat.

As such, it wasn't surprising that riflemen were escorting the tanks.

Ggwallim!

So as such, it wasn't unexpected to find that the riflemen's ears would ring whenever the tank fired.

"Fuck, why are we only just now using such an awesome thing..... if we had used these earlier, then would we have had to

bother with the skirmishes that we got into with those punks? Am I right?”

It was inevitable that an assassin would use that opportunity created by the loud roaring of the cannon.

“Huh?”

Up in a building somewhere, the guard that was talking turned his head to get an answer from his colleague.

At that moment, he laid eyes on a collapsed body with a twisted neck and a black fist flying towards his face.

Bbagak!

The black fist smashed a freaking crater into the man’s face.

“Keuk!”

That short grunt was the man’s last will and testament.

Having instantly overpowered the two, Kim Tae Hoon used his telekinesis to wrench the rifles out of their hands.

Catching the rifles, Kim Tae Hoon fired them into the sky.

The shots rang out over the tanks.

“It’s gunfire!”

“It’s from over there! It’s over there!”

The Looters began to swarm towards the gunshots. Kim Tae Hoon simply waited for them.

And right when they emerged…

Tutu! Tutu! Tutu!

He shot them one at a time.

It was neither difficult nor time consuming.

It was much easier for Kim Tae Hoon to simply pull the trigger on a gun as the Looters walked in one by one. Compared to making an arrow or a sword fly through the air with Telekinesis, shooting a gun was definitely much easier.

“Ggeuk!”

The Looters who entered Kim Tae Hoon’s line of sight were lucky enough to see a short-lived display of Kim Tae Hoon’s skill.

Kim Tae Hoon could taste a bitter feeling in his mouth.

It was a bitterness far exceeding that of coffee's.

'The worst kind of sin.'

None of the enemies he had faced since the emergence of monsters were good-natured, but ever since then, there was no enemy worse than this one.

The reason..... it was of course because of the kids.

Kim Tae Hoon had no intention of becoming a hero. Nobody would ever doubt that Kim Tae Hoon was a murderer. It wasn't just Kim Tae Hoon either. Those who led similar lives to that of Kim Tae Hoon were all murderers. But even for people like them, they all had lines. Lines that they wouldn't cross.

Children was one of those lines.

Despite all of the battlefields that Kim Tae Hoon had braved through, he still wasn't a monster that would target children.

Ggwallim!

So for all these people related to the tank, he would show no mercy.

Kim Tae Hoon unsheathed the sword on his back.

6.

One at a time, the tanks that had been firing their cannons stopped.

“Ggeuaahk!”

Screams rang out from where the gunshots had rang from.

Two men were sticking out of their tank, staring into the distance towards the direction where the screams came from.

“What is going on?”

They could audibly hear screaming from the place that the gunshots had rang from and where their comrades had flocked to.

“Hey! Hey! What’s going on!”

One of the tank operators couldn’t help but vent his frustration.

He just wanted to plop right back into the tank, shut the hatch, and start operating the tank again.

But of course, he wasn’t given the order to. There needed to be

people keeping an eye on the surroundings.

It made the situation even more unbearable.

‘I’m going to go crazy.’

The tank that had once been a bastion of safety was now like their prison.

It was only natural that the tank operators’ head started to become saturated with fear.

Amidst the chaos, something fell from the sky.

Kaang!

Something fell in front of the tank located at the back.

Koong!

It was the sound of the tank’s barrel smashing into the floor.

‘Huh?’

‘What?’

Looking at such an unexpected scene, both tank operators drew up a blank expression.

So while the two were still dumbfounded, the man that had cut off the barrel in one stroke landed on the ground, immediately running up to the tank before jumping like a spring.

Before landing on the tank, the man swung his sword in a horizontal slash.

Swiik!

The two drivers with their upper bodies sticking out of the hatch were unfortunately in the line of fire, the sword cleanly slicing through their necks.

The man grabbed one of the bodies of the now deceased tank operators, dragging it out of the open tank hatch and tossing it off to the side.

“What the?”

Confused about what was going on, the man inside the tank couldn’t help but leak a question.

But no worries, the man with the sword, Kim Tae Hoon, swiftly replied.

Puhuhu!

Kim Tae Hoon spit out a massive fireball into the tank.

“Ggeuuuaaaaaah!”

A bone chilling scream reverberated from inside the fiery tank interior.

“The rear! The rear!”

Hearing the screams, the tank in the front swiveled its gun around.

“Turn the barrel around!”

The long barrel rotated towards the rear.

However, once the barrel had turned around, Kim Tae Hoon had disappeared.

Koong!

Like jumping from rock to rock in a river, Kim Tae Hoon lightly leaped off the tank and landed on the one whose barrel had turned around.

Swiik!

Just like the previous time, Kim Tae Hoon cut down the two men whose bodies were exposed through the tank hatch.

Then he waited.

Kim Tae Hoon waited near the entrance of the tank with his sword floating in the air thanks to his Telekinesis.

“Wh-what’s goi……”

It wasn’t long before a man poked his head out like a mole, at which point Kim Tae Hoon promptly pulled him out by the neck.

The man’s pelvis and legs smashed into the lip of the hatch in the process. It was enough to cause bruising.

“Ggeuahk!”

So of course the man would open his mouth and scream in pain.

However, as soon as Kim Tae Hoon crushed the man’s left flank where his ribs were, the screaming died down.

“Ggeuh……”

He couldn’t breathe or scream– he had a mouth but could not.

Kim Tae Hoon tossed the man out of the tank. The man was squirming on the ground like an earthworm.

Afterwards, Kim Tae Hoon turned towards the sole remainder– the driver.

“Get out.”

7.

There were four shells.

Just four.

Worst of all, the tanks did not fulfill what they had set out to do.

The shells aimed at the Ganseog Elevated Bridge soared right over it and hit the buildings across the street.

However, the tanks that had set out to turn Ganseogogeori into hell didn’t exactly fail.

“S, save……”

“There are people trapped under the rubble!”

“Waah, mommmmy… … !”

“Cough, cough!”

There were people calling for help whilst pinned under rubbles, children lost and frightened in soiled clothing crying out for their parents, and incessant coughing inside the thick cloud of dust could be heard.

In the midst of all that chaos, Kim Yuri was the only one moving about with a level head.

She moved the children to a safer area and immediately began to help the survivors.

“Put your hands up!”

What stopped her was the sound of a gun locked and loaded pointed towards her.

Kim Yuri complied. She raised both arms high into the air. She slightly bit her lips.

‘Such a stupid thing to do……’

If she had ignored the children, her own safety wouldn’t be in question as it were.

But she didn’t. She had responded to the crisis. It was clear that she did something stupid.

However, her conscience was clear.

“Father! Father!”

The man pointing the rifle towards Kim Yuri suddenly called out for a father in a loud voice.

A young man dressed in a black priest outfit made his appearance. The young man looked at Kim Yuri and asked her some questions.

“What is your name miss?”

“Answer him!”

Under his threat, Kim Yuri complied and told them of her identity.

“My name is Kim Yuri. Sergeant First Class of the 35th Battalion Special Forces under the command of Capital Defense Command.”

Those present were surprised to hear what she said.

On the other hand, the young man in the priest's outfit continued to question her.

"The 35th Battalion Special Force..... then have you come to save your colleagues?"

This time, Kim Yuri was the one to be surprised.

'By colleagues does he mean.....'

However, the conversation between the two stopped.

"F-father th-there's a person floating in the sky!"

A man ran to the side of the father while shouting.

"What?"

"A p-person is walking on air and heading towards our direction!"

"Just what kind of....."

"Th-there!"

"Huh? A p-person?"

Kim Tae Hoon had made his appearance in the sky.

Everybody looked up towards Kim Tae Hoon.

‘Ah.’

Kim Yuri could feel what Kim Tae Hoon was trying to convey with his approach.

‘This is how you create an effect.’

Kim Tae Hoon, the bastard really looked like a savior now.

Chapter 61 – Incheon Landing Operation (3)

8.

On a day of terror and despair, a day of weeping and gnashing of teeth, a man appeared in the sky like a messenger of God.

It was an unforgettable scene.

“Who is the leader?”

Coming in with such an entrance, Kim Tae Hoon was met with no resistance.

“I-I’m the leader.”

It was the same for the man in the priestly garb.

He stood before Kim Tae Hoon with a blank expression on his face, completely devoid of any resistance.

Eyeing the priest, Kim Tae Hoon’s left eyebrow raised.

‘Priest?’

The priest before him was far weaker than the leader figure he had envisioned in his head. It seemed like even the big silver cross

around his neck was too heavy for him to lift.

Kim Tae Hoon didn't ruminate on that point for too long. The identity of the leader wasn't something that Kim Tae Hoon placed much importance on.

"I am Kim Tae Hoon, the leader of the Mek Guild that currently oversees Bucheon."

"I am..... I am a priest leading these survivors. My name is Baek Jungjoon."

"Before I continue, I want to go over one thing."

With his mouth open, Kim Tae Hoon spoke loudly to the crowd.

They stared at Kim Tae Hoon with blank expressions. It was hard to believe that these gazes were filled with fear and despair just moments ago.

He looked at the faces in the crowd one by one, and after confirming Kim Yuri's safety, he opened his mouth.

"All of the Looters that were targeting this area have been dealt with."

The news that came out of his mouth was something that everyone wanted to hear.

“They died by my hands.”

Now all that was left was for the gathered people to shout for joy.

But Kim Tae Hoon did not let that joy spread too far.

“However, all your lives are indebted to me now.”

With that, Kim Tae Hoon’s eyes took on a savage glow. No, rather, Kim Tae Hoon’s eyes were like that from the beginning.

It’s just that everyone was blinded by the fantastical aspect of the Looters having been dealt with, but now, it was time for them to wake up.

Having woken up from their fantasy, they had come to realize that their saviors were neither angels nor the messengers of God.

“Does anyone have any complaints?”

It was time for them to realize that the man before them was not a charity worker.

9.

Whilst sitting on top of a building, Kim Tae Hoon was calmly

drinking some coffee out of a thermos and looking down towards Ganseogogeori.

Survivors briskly moved around, cleaning up the mess caused by the tank shells.

It was like watching a bunch of ants.

He wasn't looking at them with contempt.

It was quite the opposite. Seeing them move in such an organized and desperate manner like how ants would move in order to ensure survival was admirable not contemptible. Him drawing a comparison between the survivors and the ants was his expression of admiration.

'Lee Jin Sung was right.'

It was a miracle that even some of these people had survived here.

'Incheon city is..... it's basically done for.'

The first question that he asked the leader of the survivors, Baek Jungjoon, was what they had been doing so far in Incheon.

The story that Baek Jungjoon told was so horrific, that everything that Kim Tae Hoon had gone through in Bucheon

seemed tame in comparison.

‘A monster with two heads.’

In the background was a terrifying, green ranked monster.

It was an incredibly large monster that was 10 meters tall. The survivors in Incheon called it the Twin Headed Ogre. Aside from the dragon, it would be the strongest monster that Kim Tae Hoon would ever face up against.

Just listening to the description was enough to cause goosebumps to cover one’s entire body.

‘It’s also an orc tribe chief.’

What was even more alarming was the orc tribe that followed the ogre.

And it wasn’t just a regular run-of-the-mill tribe either.

It was a large tribe with a countless number of orcs, of which were Black Orcs and the like as well.

There were perhaps thousands of them like some sort of a nightmare.

‘If it weren’t for a divine intervention by a god, the humans would have been annihilated.’

It was thanks to a relic that Baek Jungjoon had that the survivors were able to last for so long in Ganseogogeori.

Putting down his coffee, Kim Tae Hoon pulled out his phone to take a look at a picture.

The picture came up immediately.

[Saint’s Cross]

– Relic Grade : Grade 3

– Relic Rarity: Special

– Relic Effect : A cross left behind by one of the 103 martyrs canonized as a saint. It possesses a strong ability to repel monsters.

Saint’s Cross.

It was a piece of history– a cross that had been carried around by one of the 103 martyrs and had been passed down to Baek Jungjoon through a bishop that he used to serve under.

The cross made it possible for the survivors to withstand the monsters in Ganseogogeori.

It was indeed a divine intervention.

‘King Jinheung’s Sunsubi monument is the same as well.’

Kim Tae Hoon was surprised at the fact that there were numerous relics that could deter monsters.

‘No, more than, to think that one Saint’s Cross could cover all of Ganseogogeori by itself..... is the Vatican a calm area right now?’

He was nervous.

The Saint’s Cross wasn’t an everyday object. The Vatican has only ever canonized a very small number of saints.

However, the Vatican would also be in possession of many relics, especially crosses that had once belonged to saints.

Furthermore, the city of the Vatican itself was very likely to become as a relic as well.

It was almost guaranteed that the vatican would become a safety zone for survivors, resulting in it turning into a base of sorts.

Regardless, things would be good up to that point. The problem was what came after.

'Italy..... it would be a war zone.'

That Vatican would inevitably become the backbone of an Italian Empire, setting the Vatican as a base to move out from. Will they choose to save the world? Or could they be wanting to aim for being the only order in this collapsed world?

'After the Chinese, it would be the Italians.....'

The fact that the Vatican had leaned towards the latter in the annals of history was a clear indicator.

'If there is a god, I want him to see how I die.'

Kim Tae Hoon made a bitter smile on his face.

At that time, a woman appeared on the roof of the same building that Kim Tae Hoon was on. It was Kim Yuri.

Seeing her appear, Kim Tae Hoon closed the thermos lid. With a silent, yet resolute expression on her face, Kim Yuri swallowed her saliva.

Kim Tae Hoon looked at her and spoke.

“Have you listened to everything that Staff Sergeant Park Ilsun had to say?”

Staff Sergeant Park Ilsun.

He was a soldier under the protection of Baek Jungjoon in the current Ganseogogeori.

He belonged to the 35th Battalion.

“Yes sir.”

In addition, he was an Awakened with the pattern on his right hand.

“Then it seems like it’s time for me to have a chat with him. Was he a member of a rescue team meant to rescue Kate Kennedy?”

He was a member of a rescue team, but had only just barely made it out alive by sacrificing his two legs and his right arm.

“That’s correct sir.”

A member of a rescue team assembled to rescue the daughter of the US ambassador to Korea.

“To be more specific, it wasn’t just to rescue Kate Kennedy, but to confirm the life and death of all foreign VIP personnel leaving through Incheon International Airport and if possible, recruiting them to their side.”

It was a part of Park Ilsun’s responsibilities to search through Incheon National Airport and the surrounding hotels for VIP personnel who were leaving South Korea for the end of the year and then bringing them over.

It wasn’t a strange scenario.

In a world where wireless communication was down, it would have been highly likely that important officials, such as foreign ambassadors, would have asked the powers in the ROK to look for and confirm whether or not their family members were still alive– these requests could not possibly have been rejected by the ROK.

Ignoring their requests would result in a diplomatic issue. At the time, it was something they couldn’t help but worry about.

“When was the operation start date?”

“…… It was on January 22nd sir.”

The problem was that things did not work out the way they had planned.

Considering how all important infrastructure had collapsed, it

was impossible to move tanks and a large amount of troops from Seoul to Incheon.

"How many personnel did the rescue team consist of?"

"There were 21 soldiers."

So in the end, the rescue could only consist of a small number of elites.

"How many Awakened?"

"They were all Awakened."

In addition, they were all super powered humans known as the Awakened.

But in the end, they were still lacking. There was one more thing that they needed to do in order to increase their mission success rate.

"How many relics were they given?"

There's no denying that guns are powerful. But without ammunition, a gun becomes an obsolete chunk of metal. All other weapons were the same. The modern-day army has been trained in violent methods, but it's their ruthlessness that is their weakness, as most of their methods rely on the supply of other things.

In other words, bullets and guns were unreliable weapons.

“That……”

It was obvious that the Capital Defense Command would issue powerful relics and other weapons that would make the usage of firearms unnecessary.

“How many national treasures?”

And amongst those were national treasures.

They had no other choice.

The chance of rescue would decrease exponentially as time went by, so they needed to succeed on their first attempt.

Success was almost completely dependent on this first attempt. If the usage of a national treasure was necessary, then they would definitely have been willing to allow them usage of at least one national treasure.

That was the reason why.

“There were two national treasures.”

Rescuing Kate Kennedy was for no other reason than to obtain national treasures.

Certainly, rescuing and recruiting Kate Kennedy would be worth as much as one national treasure.

But there was no reason for the Capital Defense Command to pay a fair price.

It was the same as it has always been.

A strong man need not weigh a weak man the same as he.

It was the same for the National Defense Command. They simply could not accept Kim Tae Hoon and the Mek Guild as their equals. They were an overwhelmingly strong force, and the Mek Guild was an overwhelmingly weak entity.

“So I’ll be taking a different form of compensation for this mission in the form of a national treasure.”

Even if the price for rescuing her was a national treasure, that fact would exist only as words as they would have no reason to actually pay.

If they actually did end up paying him a national treasure, then that would only mean that her worth was much more than that of one treasure.

Since the original rescue team had failed to rescue Kate Kennedy, then their national treasures must have been left in Incheon.

“What about the names of the national treasures?”

“National Treasure number 91, Earthenware Warrior on Horseback, and number 87, Gold Crown of Silla,”

It was only natural that this mission would then have far more value than before.

“Where are the two relics now?”

“It’s impossible to figure out the location of the Gold Crown of Silla, but, the location of no. 91, Earthenware Warrior on Horseback is…… Staff Sergeant Park Ilsun knows.”

As Kim Yuri finished speaking, Kim Tae Hoon opened the lid on his thermos.

After a brief sip of coffee, he spoke.

“Let’s see what he wants then.”

Negotiation began once more.

10.

[Earthenware Warrior on Horseback]

– Relic Grade : Grade 2

– Relic Rarity: Special

– Relic Effect : By injecting mana into the figurine, the user is able to manipulate it like a doll. The amount of mana injected determines the amount of time you can use the figurine.

Earthenware Warrior On Horseback.

It was a very familiar national heirloom to Koreans. This figure would show up at least one in any textbook depicting the Three Kingdoms period.

This relic which should be safely contained behind a glass case in the National Museum of Korea was now in the hands of Kim Tae Hoon.

Kim Tae Hoon was staring at the relic with blackened eyes. Standing next to him was Kim Yuri.

Kim Yuri was currently gritting her teeth.

‘I can’t turn back now.’

This was more than just disobeying commands, it was rebellion.

There were two aspects to her original mission.

One was to observe Kim Tae Hoon.

The second was to go to Incheon City with Kim Tae Hoon and recover the relics left behind by those who had failed the mission.

In other words, she was not to disclose any clues about the relics to Kim Tae Hoon even if she were tortured.

“How strong is this relic?”

“It’s strong enough to buy enough time against a green ranked monster.”

“Explain in more detail.”

“If someone with Rank B Magic were to inject mana into the relic, it’s enough to battle for 11 minutes. The relic was able to buy 11 minutes against the green ranked monster Ten-Legged Spider. During that time, Major Oh Saebum jumped on top of the monster and was able to kill the green ranked monster.”

But rather than concealing these facts, she revealed them to Kim Tae Hoon.

“……he managed to secure it.”

“Staff Sergeant Park Ilsun risked his life to secure it.

It was because of what Sergeant Park Ilsun had said.

He had said before.

There was a traitor amongst them.

It was because of the traitor that the mission had failed and the group was nearly wiped out.

The traitor targeted a relic that had been given to them.

In such a situation, he was barely able to stow away the Earthenware Warrior on Horseback and escape, but it wasn’t long before he was attacked by a monster, making it out alone only after having lost his legs and his left arm.

After he heard that story, Kim Yuri had lost faith in the Capital Defense Command.

There was only one person she could trust.

“Rather than that, do you think what he said is true major sir?”

It was Kim Tae Hoon!

So Kim Yuri made a deal with Kim Tae Hoon. She wanted Kim Tae Hoon to find the traitor.

“It’s very possible that the traitor is still in Incheon. It’s likely that the traitor is the figure behind the Looters.”

Kim Tae Hoon was surprisingly not surprised when Kim Yuri told him about the traitor.

Rather, he was able to almost immediately identify the traitor.

‘He’s probably the influencing force behind Oh Saebum.’

Only the Six Snakes would covet the national treasures and various relics owned by the Capital Defense Command.

Furthermore, he was now sure that the Six Snakes had some sort of intrinsic relationship with Incheon.

The Looters having tanks was enough evidence to point towards that point.

“It’s common sense, if the Looters knew how to use the tank, then they would have used it sooner. The Saint’s Cross in Baek Jungjoon’s possession is only effective against monsters, not humans.”

The Looters had been unable to raid the survivors because they did not possess firepower superior to that of the survivors.

However, the Looters had suddenly come into possession of a couple of tanks.

“It’s unlikely that they would obtain the knowledge of how to operate tanks. Someone had slowly taught the Looters how to operate a tank.”

A tank wasn’t a simple vehicle you could drive around like a car. Operating a tank requires a certain amount of training and knowledge in order to not only drive, but to utilize the various other functions and weapons.

“Just who……”

That meant that there was at least one person who provided the necessary training and operation manuals for the Looters to learn how to operate the tank.

As a result, Kim Tae Hoon modified his plan.

He had to postpone rescuing Kate Kennedy for the time being. She had received a report that Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun was in Yeongjeongdo, but it was likely that information itself was false information spread by the traitor.

The first thing they had to do was attack the Looters' base and identify who it was that had taught and trained the Looters how to operate a tank.

"We can ask the person in question face to face."

With that reply, Kim Tae Hoon started to infuse his mana into the Earthenware Warrior on Horseback.

Chapter 62 – Incheon Landing Operation (4)

11 .

“What kind of nonsense is that?”

A man in his mid 30s crushed a can of beer in his hand before chucking it at the other man in front of him.

Peok!

The half crushed can of beer struck the man’s head.

“Ahhk!”

The man screamed as the can hit him.

Puhwat!

The can of beer fell onto the floor along with the man who screamed out in pain, the beer spilling out and drenching the fallen man’s body.

“Destroyed?! Wiped out, what the hell were you doing?”

The scent of beer floated up near the man in his mid 30s as though it were a haze..... he was the leader of the group known as

the Looters.

“Fuck, are you playing around? You sons of bitches!”

As though unsatisfied with just one beer can, he began to indiscriminately throw unopened cans of beer and bottles of wine towards those around him.

He was angry beyond reason.

“They were fucking tanks! Fucking tanks!”

But nobody there believed that his rage was uncalled for.

“I sent a motherfucking tank and it’s gone! Does that make any fucking sense to you? It’s a fucking tank you sons of bitches, how the fuck does that make sense?!”

Tank.

Even the side that was using it thought it was an incredibly terrifying piece of equipment. Of course nobody expected defeat. Just imagining the sheer amount of destruction that the tank could dish out was enough to send shivers down one’s spine.

But everyone who went with the tanks were annihilated.

Plus, it was impossible to completely verify that they had been annihilated.

“FUUUCK!”

There were no survivors and everyone sent to survey the situation hadn’t come back.

All of these factors combined only served to add fuel to the raging fire that was Yang Seok Choon’s anger.

There was also an additional reason why Yang Seok Choon felt such an uncontrollable rage.

‘Damn it, my life’s on the line here!’

The operation this time wasn’t just about raiding the survivors.

It all began when an unknown party first approached Yang Seok Choon.

They had told Yang Seok Choon. They told him that some government forces would soon enter Incheon City.

‘If we just let it end like this, the government will wipe us out!’

It wasn’t something that Yang Seok Choon could just look over.

Under the banner of the Looters, Yang Seok Choon and his men had committed a countless number of terrible crimes.

Along with the typical robbery, murder, rape, and arson, he and his men also took part in recreational kidnappings, child abductions, hostage ransoms, and stealing food away from other survivors.

The amount of people in Ganseogogeori who had fallen victim to the Looters' crimes were overflowing.

If the government were present, Yang Seok Choon and his men would have been sentenced to death many times over.

'Damn it, damn it, damn it!'

However, the government wasn't in the best of condition, so as soon as any government forces entered Incheon and happened across the Looters, they would forego the niceties of court hearings and just simply execute them on the spot with a firing squad.

'I have to escape. I have to leave Incheon as soon as possible!'

They couldn't even stand up against the government troops.

So hearing what had happened, one of the first things to run through Yang Seok Choon's mind was to run away.

‘I need that.’

The issue was that there wasn’t really anywhere to run to in the current world.

The world belonged to the monsters. The only way to escape a dragon’s lair was to enter a tiger’s den.

So it was necessary.

‘I need the cross that that damn priest is carrying around.’

The Saint’s Cross that Baek Jungjoon used to protect the survivors.

If the surrounding monsters are all repelled, then he wouldn’t need to worry about the monster threat.

The unknown man who had informed Yang Seok Choon of these things also helped him plan the attack on the survivors.

He said that he too was a fugitive and was in need of the Saint’s Cross. He had assured Yang Seok Choon that he would help him retrieve the cross.

The help he received was in the form of tanks. The man was knowledgeable in both driving and shooting tanks.

It wasn't long before the Looters knew how to operate the tanks at a decent level and were sent out to attack the survivors.

The story should have just ended there. It was supposed to.....

"Even if it's some sort of bullshit reason, just find out what happened! Figure out what caused the annihilation!"

It didn't end there.

A report that would make him go even crazier came.

"B-boss! Boss!"

At that time, a man quickly ran into the factory that was serving as their base. With an expression like he saw a ghost, the man approached the still angry Yang Seok Choon.

"What?"

Yang Seok Choon picked up a bottle near him as he asked. If the guy in front of him spouted out some nonsense, he was going to smash his head in with the bottle.

However, he never got the chance to do so.

“A k-knight, a dirt Knight is going crazy!”

“What? A knight?”

It was because something even crazier was about to go down.

12.

Koong!

A horse stood atop a a wreckage of metal that used to be a car.

It was a bizarre sight. For one, the horse itself wasn’t actually alive.

It was an earthen horse.

On top of that, it wasn’t just a normal horse either. Unlike a normal horse, there was a pointed spear-like object strapped to the chest of horse sticking outward.

Pooreung!

Atop the horse was a knight whose lower body was clad in armor.

A warrior who rode into battle on a horse, a warrior who had fought through many battles and had forged his own path with

blood.

The knight and the sword gripped in his hand were also both made of earth.

However, neither the horse nor the knight nor the sword in his hand, though made of clay and dirt, felt clumsy or crude.

It was actually the opposite.

“What are you doing, fight it! I said to fight it!”

The horse’s movements as it leapt towards a Looter was far sleeker and more intense than that of a normal horse.

Swiik!

The distance between the horse and the Looter narrowed, a flash of light was all that could be seen of the knight’s sword as the earthen blade sliced cleanly through the Looter’s body.

As was said earlier, there was nothing crude or unwieldy aspects anywhere.

“O-oh my God!”

“Where the hell did this monster… … ”

There were many aspects about it that couldn’t be explained with common sense.

Tututu!

Someone pulled the trigger on a gun pointed at the being.

But there was no effect.

Puk, pukpuk!

The bullets made their way into the horse and the warrior’s body, but that was it.

A horse and a knight made of earthen clay sheds neither blood nor tears.

Purureong!

The gunshots merely served as the horse’s motivator.

Kwang kwang!

The horse jumped from car to car like stepping stones, maneuvering around the streets before arriving at the fool that had fired towards it, allowing the knight to cut him down.

Pureong!

The earthen horse didn’t stop there. The horse ran even faster to the next enemy.

‘We’re finished.’

The Looters lost all will to resist in the face of such a logic defying creature.

Then something defying all common sense happened once more.

The knight on horseback that hadn’t staggered once in the face of a wall of bullets suddenly began to shrink.

‘Huh?’

It kept on shrinking until it turned into nothing more than a little figurine.

“Wh-where did it go?”

The few remaining Looters stared at the knight’s last known location with incredulous expressions.

Piit!

Suddenly, a featherless arrow seeked them out.

“What?”

This silent assassin, a name that couldn’t be more fitting for this arrow, noiselessly struck down the remaining Looters.

‘Amazing.’

Observing everything from the skies above, Kim Tae Hoon looked at his right hand with blackened eyes.

[Basic Abilities]

– Strength : 265

– Stamina : 237

[Special Abilities]

– Energy : C Rank

– Mana : C Rank

– Telekinesis : A Rank

– Physical Defense : C Rank

– Magic Resistance : C-Rank

‘The only weakness is that I can only operate it for 5 minutes with C Rank Mana.’

Earthenware Warrior on Horseback.

The power of this relic that didn’t stop as long as it was being fed mana was at an exceedingly impressive level.

‘But it’s fighting power…….’

For now, the Horse showed an impressive amount of mobility. Not only was its top speed enough to compete with top line sports cars, but it could also exercise unpredictable movements that would be impossible for a race car.

The warrior’s ability to fight on horseback was overwhelming. Its sword was ruthless, accurate, and swift. The moment it would chase an enemy, it would close the gap almost immediately.

And finally, the sharpness and power behind the knight’s horse may not match up to the Sword of the Commander on Kim Tae

Hoon's back, but it was comparable.

'If it were a one on one melee, I don't know if I'll be able to guarantee my life.'

The knight's stats were extremely fearsome, so much so that just thinking about a one on one melee sent a cold tingle down his spine.

Kim Tae Hoon was satisfied.

'It's the best partner.'

The horseman's combat power was strong, but what was more satisfactory was their synergy.

The Earthenware Warrior on Horseback was a partner that could hold its own against a green ranked monster and buy him some time.

So while the Earthenware Warrior on Horseback grabs the monster's attention and buys time, the options left to the flying Kim Tae Hoon might as well be limitless.

There would be no other perfect synergy.

'There's no reason to be hesitant before fighting a green ranked monster.'

– Boss! Escape togeth……

– Tang!

– He collapsed after ranting and raving.

A fuss entered Kim Tae Hoon’s ears.

Kim Tae Hoon lifted his eyes off the back of his hand.

He had confirmed the Earthenware Warrior on Horseback’s power. So he figured he ought to carry on with the original mission.

Kim Tae Hoon dropped to the floor.

13.

A man walked through the shattered remains of what used to be a glass wall and into a coffee shop.

With a sword strapped to his back, it was Kim Tae Hoon.

The first thing that he laid eyes on was the shelf by the cash register.

What used to be a glass display case filled with cakes now only held shattered glass, debris, and traces of blood. On the floor beneath the cash register were the remains of a tiramisu cake that someone had hurriedly taken a few bites of.

There were traces of blood and chaos everywhere.

Everything had been stripped bare. The chairs and tables were ripped apart for firewood, the cash register was busted open, and the expensive machinery like the espresso machines were all missing.

Only the coffee beans lining the shelves were left intact.

It was for no other reason than the fact that coffee couldn’t fill one’s stomach and it couldn’t be easily prepared either. Nobody had any motive to be a coffee thief.

It was something that Kim Tae Hoon was thankful for.

Perusing through the variety of beans on the shelf, Kim Tae Hoon settled on Colombian.

After finding a stainless steel kettle and some solid fuel, Kim Tae Hoon filled the kettle with water. After unwrapping the solid fuel, Kim Tae Hoon gently spit onto the fuel.

As soon as his spit touched the fuel, it began to burn. Kim Tae Hoon placed the kettle on top of a tripod set above the solid fuel.

The next step was to crush the beans.

After peeling away the sealing, Kim Tae Hoon took in the scent of the beans before taking them out.

With a blackened right hand, Kim Tae Hoon smashed the beans. The tough beans quickly turned into powder under Kim Tae Hoon's hand.

As Kim Tae Hoon poured boiling water onto the coffee paper, it only took a few minutes for the aroma of coffee to spread throughout the coffee shop that had been devoid of the scent for three months.

Having made the coffee, Kim Tae Hoon couldn't help but think back to what had happened.

The first thing he recalled was the conversation he had with Yang Seok Choon, the leader of the Looters.

The guy had said a lot of things.

How egregious his crimes were, how badly he deserved to die.....

'He's in his mid 30s. His hair was in a sports style. He had an angled face with a husky voice. He also had a big mole under his

left eye.'

Who it was behind him.

The information that Kim Tae Hoon got from Yang Seok Choon lended some confidence to Kim Tae Hoon's hypothesis.

'The Woodblock Print of Daedongyeojido from the National Museum of Korea is in the hands of the Six Snakes.'

Prints of Daedongyeojido.

It was by far one of the most precious relics anyone could have right now.

And there were multiple copies of it in Seoul. In the case of the one in the National Museum of Seoul, it was in the form of woodblock prints.

So there was no reason for the Capital Defense Command to not have one.

But from what Kim Tae Hoon had seen, there was a high chance that the Capital Defense Command didn't actually have one.

There was a unit of soldiers that had died in a battle against the green ranked Rattle-tailed Mouse in Gwangmyeong City! His conjecture was also based on the fact that Lieutenant Colonel Yoo

Dae Hyun hadn’t sent his troops directly to Incheon.

If they had Daedongyeojido, then this entire sequence of action would have been unnecessary.

‘The Six Snakes stole Daedongyeojido.’

So now, there copy of Daedongyeojido was in the hands of the Six Snakes.

‘If it weren’t for that, there would have been no need to rely on a third party.’

That was an evidence for the movement of the Six Snakes.

‘Their purpose was to steal the relics.’

The Six Snakes’ objective was to bleed the Capital Defense Command dry of their remaining resources.

Compared to when they had Daedongyeojido, the current Capital Defense Command couldn’t engage in outside operation since they no longer had it.

However, that didn’t mean that they were completely out of the game.

They ultimately could not limit themselves to Seoul, so a few, small elite cells would take part in high-profile missions in exchange for relics.

But what about when a mission failed?

And what if you died during a mission?

Then those relics that were paid to the team would become ownerless objects.

‘Stolen as soon as it was earned.’

Turning relics into loot.

‘There’s no need to worry about whether or not we can get the relics as long as their is Oh Saebum.’

No matter how you look at it, the Six Snakes were an Awakened group based in the Capital Defense Command who were behind Oh Saebum.

They can see where the monsters are, and they have the strongest resources available to the Capital Defense Command, so they oftentimes didn’t need to take big risks.

But of course, they had to take a big risk right now.

The risk known as Kim Tae Hoon.

And that risk was now aware of the Six Snakes.

‘The Six Snakes contacted Yang Seok Choon the day after I knocked out Oh Saebum.’

The Six Snakes had approached Yang Seok Choon and taught him how to operate tanks in order to impeded Kim Tae Hoon and prevent him from catching onto their plans.

The Looters would wipe out the survivors, take the Saint’s Cross from Baek Jungjoon, and then immediately leave Incheon City so as to leave nothing behind for Kim Tae Hoon to follow up on.

It was a plan that had yet to be completed.

‘So this is it, you’ve bared your teeth towards me.’

They had failed to destroy the evidence that they had sought out to get rid of by mobilizing the Looters, so if Kim Tae Hoon left things as they were, they would try to do something again.

Of course, Kim Tae Hoon wasn’t just going to sit still and let them do as they wish.

‘I’ll make Incheon my land so that they won’t have a single foothold to work from.’

Mek Guild’s Incheon Landing Operation began.

14.

After the monsters made their way into the world, the days of suffering that Baek Jungjoon had weathered through were different from those of most others.

His cross kept the monsters away from him.

However, it wasn’t just an unconditional blessing. The cross had subjected Baek Jungjoon to a test.

In lieu of monsters, humans actively sought him out in order to take his cross away from him, despite the charity and mercy he had displayed.

It was because of this that Baek Jungjoon and the survivors that had appointed him leader were forced to point their muzzles at the group of survivors known as the Looters.

Baek Jungjoon prayed every day while under persecution.

‘Please send us deliverance, may you bless us and repel those who seek to harm us, may you send us a savior that may deliver us.’

And at this moment, a group of hundreds of armed people

armored with an unknown monster's skin was approaching Ganseogogeori where Baek Jungjoon and his people were.

'Ah.'

Dugu dugu dugu!

Seeing such a large crowd, Baek Jungjoon's heart began to pound.

But it was not out of fear.

'God's blessing.'

On the contrary, a never before experienced warmth began to spread throughout his body. As the group approached, Baek Jungjoon, the priest standing atop the bridge, couldn't stop his beating heart from beating even faster.

Of course, they weren't looking for Father Baek Jungjoon. The reason why they had come was because of the man next to them, a man with a sword strapped to his back, Kim Tae Hoon.

They stopped before the high-rise bridge.

Standing in front of the bridge, the woman at the forefront of the group saluted as she gazed at the bridge.

“Report. All 700 Mek Guild personnel have arrived— 134 hunters, 466 soldiers, and 100 others.”

Hearing Second Lieutenant Kim Soo Ji’s report, Kim Tae Hoon neither saluted nor indulged in needless banter.

While looking down he spoke.

“There’s only one thing left to do here, and that’s to wipe out the remaining monsters and their kin.”

As soon as he heard that, Baek Jungjoon knew for sure.

“Don’t hold back and don’t limit yourselves when getting rid of the monsters.”

That the heavens have not abandoned man.

“Afterwards, we begin Incheon landing operations.”

Chapter 63 – A Show Of Arms (1)

1.

What is important in a war?

There are many answers to this question. Some would say powerful weapons while others might say trained soldiers.

There isn't a clear answer.

The important thing is the scenario. There are times when powerful weapons are needed, and times when trained soldiers are needed. So in order to come to the correct answer, you must first change the question. Wouldn't discerning the situation be more important considering the fact that they were currently at a war with unknown monsters?

The Mek Guild came up with its own solution.

"There's a goblin community in Incheon Jaeilgo Highschool."

"I suppose you could smoke them out with smoke bombs and kill the ones that run out. What about the goblins' population count?"

"We estimate it to be at around fifty."

"It should be enough with six hunters and ten soldiers."

Manual.

“We’ve confirmed that there are three mud trolls holed up in some of the apartments in Ganseok-dong.”

“After luring them to a road, you can just burn them up with a flamethrower. If you just follow the Manual……”

“Three hunters and two flamethrowers to one Mud Troll. The number of soldiers is dependent on the number of bodies it has discarded after biting off the heads.”

“11 Hunters and 30 soldiers. Take some claymores as well.”

A manual dictating how much manpower and firepower to designate when fighting against certain monsters.

“There are also Sabretooth Wolves and Werewolves in Incheon Terminal.”

“We’ll need to lure them out after establishing a position at the terminal intersection and mow them down there.”

The Mek Guild’s solution was the Manual. The Mek Guild created the Manual. By undergoing numerous hunts whilst under the banner of Kim Tae Hoon, the Mek Guild was able to compile a comprehensive database of information regarding the habits and

physical characteristics of specific monsters, allowing them to determine which tactics would be most effective, how many troops to take, and what kind of weapons would be the most useful.

Furthermore, they now had the manpower and firepower to follow the guidelines stipulated in the Manual. As such, the hunters and soldiers of the Mek Guild did not look at Incheon as a city of monsters gripped by the vices of fear and despair.

"Alright, let's kick some monsters' ass today as well!"

"We're only being taxed 20% of the stones we earn. If you don't get any today, then it'll be on you. We have to get as many as possible."

It was like the California Gold Rush that had happened in the 19th century. The Gold Rush had begun. But it wasn't without its problems.

"A monster that seems to be the leader of the Large Nosed Orangutans seems to have appeared in Gwanggyo Lake Park. It's eyes……they seem to be yellow."

"The leader of the Large Nosed Orangutans, it should be the first time seeing something like that, right?"

What should people do when confronted with a monster that couldn't be dealt with just by following the guidelines in the Manual? The solution that the Mek Guild had put forth was

simple.

"It should be fine as long as master goes." [ED: lol]

Kim Tae Hoon, the most surest of solutions.

2.

It was the start of April, 2017.

The cruel winter that had seemed as though it would never end disappeared like it was nothing but a mirage, allowing some warmth to finally seep in.

However, the current situation in Korea where the warmth had melted the snow was even worse than when all the land was buried under a blanket of snow.

It had only been three months, but the degree of destruction and the disappearance of humans within that three months was astounding.

The city looked as though humans had disappeared for decades.

In the past, the members of the 35th Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Dae Hyun included, were shown images of the barren Chernobyl and Fukushima during a training session in the case of a future radiation leak– the current status of the city was not too

different from those pictures.

However, looking at the state of Incheon now, the city that he had assessed to have suffered the most damage based on the reports he had received two months ago was completely different.

It felt vigorous.

And stepping into Ganseokogeori, Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Dae Hyun heard something that he hadn't heard in a very long time.

"Wait for me! Wait for me!"

"Ball! Ball! Get the ball!"

It was the cheerful chatter of children playing.

It was the laughter of children genuinely having fun.

At first, Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Dae Hyun had thought that it was a hallucination.

"So you've arrived lieutenant colonel."

However, as he walked into the coffee shop and saw Kim Yuri's resolute expression, he realized that it wasn't an illusion.

And listening to Kim Yuri's report, he couldn't help but feel a bitter taste in his mouth.

"A traitor……"

There is a traitor within the Capital Defense Command.

On top of that, the traitor's goal was to relieve the Capital Defense Command of its relics.

Valuable soldiers had died because of them.

The traitors were even willing to massacre civilians to get what they wanted.

It was a story that riled him up simply by listening.

"That's right, there was always that possibility."

However, the most frightening aspect about Kim Yuri's report wasn't the fact that it was unlikely, but rather that not even Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun could stop himself from thinking that this scenario was very much possible.

To be frank, there had already been signs pointing to that reality.

'The moment Daedongyeojido was lost, there had already been

an enemy within.'

After realizing what relics were, Capital Defense Command had immediately assembled personnels to scour through museums and libraries to retrieve relics. In the process, they had been able to secure a copy of Daedongyeojido.

At that time, all of Capital Defense Command's operations were centered around Daedongyeojido.

'The rescue team was sent to Incheon because of Daedongyeojido.'

The rescue team was sent to Incheon because it was an honor for Daedongyeojido to be bequeathed to them.

Even though they had discovered that there were green ranked monsters in Incheon thanks to Daedongyeojido, they had eventually determined that it would be a simple matter to avoid them as long as they had Daedongyeojido.

If that weren't the case, they wouldn't have given them a national treasure.

However, the rescue team failed and Daedongyeojido was lost without a trace.

The worst part was that nobody knew what happened.

‘I should have done it then. I should have organized it somehow without even bothering to hide it.’

It was literally that.

It’s not that he couldn’t, but rather he didn’t.

There were few who knew the existence of Daedongyeojido when it was first discovered, and of the few were the heavyweights of Capital Defense Command.

If the loss of Daedongyeojido were to be publicized, then one of the heavyweights would have had to bear the blame, but the current Korean Ministry of Defense did not house anyone with such a sacrificial spirit.

That was the reason why the commander of the 35th Battalion Special Forces, Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun, had opted to move their operations outside of Seoul.

Regardless, his previous experiences with Daedongyeojido were still applicable.

In order to verify the information he had, he had to go outside.

But for Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Dae Hyun, outside operations were no different from a minefield.

‘Damn it.’

Would there be an even more hellish area than that?

‘Incheon was an ant lion’s pit. Information from Incheon..... an attempt to devour another rescue team.’

Incheon became an ant lion’s pit because of the traitors.

It was because the Capital Defense Command had no choice but to send someone, after paying them with a national treasure, in order to save an important VIP.

And the information kept on coming.

There was a lot of information that pointed to the fact that Kate Kennedy was still alive on Yeongjongdo. She had been able to come into contact with one of the rescue teams and had reported her safety.

Since Kim Tae Hoon had no knowledge of that, there was no need for Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Dae Hyun to tell him to go to Yeongjeongdo.

But, there was a chance that the information itself was nonsense.

No, rather, it must have been the work of a traitor.

‘Could Major General Lee Gisu be the traitor?’

Major General Lee Gisu.

He was one of the current leaders of Capital Defense Command. He was an Awakened that awoke to a C Rank Energy ability and was the Investigative General Manager of the Ministry of National Defense.

He was the best of the best, an elite soldier who was the head of the Military Police Corps under the Capital Defense Command.

‘Then that means Colonel Chang Soguk in that bureau is a traitor as well.’

In addition, Colonel Chang Soguk was Lee Gisu’s right hand man.

Faced with that possibility, Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Dae Hyun was terrified.

‘Then surely……’

One of the responsibilities of that Military Police took care of was the president’s expenses.

And on top of that, the president’s schedule for the 31st of December and the 1st of January.

The only ones who would know the president's every move would have been the military police.

But what if Colonel Chang Soguk, the Chief Executive of the military police, was a traitor?

'What a pain in the ass.'

The most troubling thing was that the two of them were both Yoo Daehyun's superiors.

"Rather than that, what about Kim Tae Hoon?"

"He went out on a hunt sir."

"A hunt?"

"Yes sir. He went out to hunt monsters."

Hearing that, Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun shut his mouth.

At this moment, Lieutenant Colonel felt that having a conversation with Kim Tae Hoon was more necessary than ever.

The existence of the traitor meant that he couldn't deal with the internal problems on his own.

He needed the help of an outside force to excise this cancer.

But most importantly, Kim Tae Hoon had taken over Incheon.

‘Monster hunt…… he’s steadily increasing his influence over Incheon.’

Incheon would soon become a land belonging to the Mek Guild.

‘Will Incheon also become the Mek Guild’s territory as well?’

Additionally, Incheon was a major city that Bucheon could not compare to.

Incheon International Airport and Incheon Harbor was the closest way for Seoul to come into contact with foreign countries.

The port was especially important.

Although Gimpo International Airport was located fairly close to Seoul, it would be impossible to go overseas by plane. In the present era, Incheon Harbor was absolutely essential since Korea could only use boats to interact with foreign countries at the moment.

There was also another thing.

‘Incheon’s Songdo has an LNG production district.’

[TLN: LNG stands for Liquefied Natural Gas]

There was a basis for the production of Liquefied Natural gas in Incheon City’s Songdo.

‘There’ll be quite a stockpile.’

It would be impossible to generate more gas since such resources were very rare in Korea, but an LNG production base would have a large stockpile.

And since there weren’t many survivors now, the stockpile of LNG left behind would be enough for the survivors to use for months on end instead of a few days.

Furthermore, as the situation improves, it wouldn’t be impossible to eventually take part in overseas trade, at that point the production bases for LNG would become all the more important.

Even if gas were to be imported, it would be pointless without a base that could refine and produce it in a consumable form.

So what about when the Mek Guild takes over?

At that time, the Mek Guild wouldn’t be a simple group of

survivors.

‘They’ll be a threat.’

They would be a weapon sharp enough to threaten Capital Defense Command.

Above all, Kim Tae Hoon wasn’t one to leave the results be.

‘The Mek Guild’s movements are dangerous to the Capital Defense Command.’

It was a hope though.

And the hope would root itself in the ground and grow. And Kim Tae Hoon’s influence would grow, it might even grow on a global scale like a tree’s branches covering the sky.

And in the end, the South Korean government would have no method to cut it down.

It was the reality of the situation.

Let alone communication, because distance could mostly only be traversed by foot in this day and age, the small country of South Korea was anything but that, it had become a large land.

‘It’s the sharpest sword, but needs a handle to be used.’

It was then.

Ooaaaaah!

Ganseokogeori suddenly exploded with noise. It wasn’t very difficult to identify what was causing the ruckus.

‘He’s arrived.’

Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun rose from his seat.

As he rose from his seat and readied himself to leave the coffee shop, the men that he had brought along also began to stir.

Among them was, of course, Kim Yuri.

As they stepped out, they saw a truck heading towards Ganseokogeori.

The truck was heading towards Ganseokogeori by means of the road that had recently been clear out. A large, spear-like horn and a nose second to only the horn’s size were both protruding out the top of the truck.

‘A Horned Orangutan?’

After the Twin Headed Ogre left for Yeongjeongdo, the monster that came to take its spot was the leader of the Large Nosed Orangutan: the Horned Orangutan.

‘He killed it?’

It was a strong beast.

On top of that, it was a clever and merciless creature.

There would always be hundreds of subordinates around it, and in the case it was caught in a disadvantageous situation, it would use its underlings as baits while it fled even deeper into the group of Large Nosed Orangutans.

‘Did he do it alone?’

Furthermore, its body wasn’t that big, so it had a knack for hiding in small places.

‘Wouldn’t it be extremely difficult to chase it?’

It was for these reasons that it was not an easy creature to catch.

It was a cruel, cruel creature.

After killing the Horned Orangutan, Kim Tae Hoon had found more than five hundred survivors in its lair.

The survivors were in an absolutely morbid state, a state where they wished for death but could not receive it. It was only natural that there be those who had gone insane.

But no matter how cruel or clever it was, it was now nothing more than a corpse, its beautiful silver hair dyed in its own blood.

Furthermore…….

“Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun-nim, it’s been awhile.”

KiM Tae Hoon had made his appearance alongside the monster.

Without a single wound.

Seeing Kim Yuri standing behind Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun, Kim Tae Hoon opened his mouth to speak.

“I’m sure you’ve heard everything you need to know from Sergeant First Class Kim Yuri, so let’s get to the main point right away.

We should leave the traitors alone for now.”

“What kind of nonsense……”

“If I told you to ferret them out, could you?”

While speaking, Kim Tae Hoon entered the coffee shop that Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun had been in just moments before.

After inspecting the things that he had prepared for Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun, Kim Tae Hoon put the kettle on the portable gas burner and lit a flame.

Taktak!

Hearing the sounds of the gas burner, Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun looked towards the sound before momentarily stepping back inside. After looking at what Kim Tae Hoon was doing, Yoo Daehyun’s wrinkled his face.

With a crumpled look on his face, Yoo Daehyun spoke.

“Is this a joke?”

“What do you mean?”

“Are you ignoring me?”

“Your side is the one that hid the true details of the mission.”

Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun's eyes popped open. Kim Tae Hoon made no attempt to avoid his gaze.

There was no reason to do so.

Kim Tae Hoon's rank in the military was that of a major.

The rank of a major wasn't just a run-of-the-mill rank.

But it was still a rank that Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun could treat lightly.

But if he were to remove his ranking, then it would be a different story.

Kim Tae Hoon was a monster that could nonchalantly kill a yellow ranked beast on his own, while Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun was a regular person who would succumb even to an orange grade monster's Fear.

"There are currently two options."

As a result, the two were not on the same level.

"Continue to ally myself with Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun-nim and go to Seoul to apprehend to traitors."

A predator and a prey interaction.

The two of them couldn't avoid such a relationship.

"Major Kim Tae Hoon..."

"Also, I am still a soldier. I don't necessarily need you to be a bridge."

It was at that moment that Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyuin understood with both his body and mind.

'The sword..... it's me.'

He realized that Kim Tae Hoon and the Mek Guild is not a sword that could be wielded by him, but rather that he was the sword to be wielded by Kim Tae Hoon.

"You've changed a lot."

Kim Tae Hoon did not reply.

"Let me say it again. Leave the traitors in Capital Defense Command headquarters alone, let them do what they want."

"I'll explain why."

“The fact that Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun does not know who the traitors are, must mean that they are of an even higher echelon than you are in.”

“So you mean to just leave them alone and observe for the time being?”

“Throughout all of the history, has there ever been a successful whistleblower in the Ministry of Defense? Or have you ever seen a corrupt star hit rock bottom?”

Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun shut his mouth.

They were facts that could not be denied.

“Regardless, their goal is simple. To induce mission failures in order to steal the relics from Korean history.”

“It’s fairly simple.”

Yoo Daehyun’s mood began to sour.

“Even if they take away what belongs to you, you wouldn’t be able to complain.”

“……do you plan on eating them?”

By the time Kim Tae Hoon had finished talking, Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun had forgotten how twisted his mood had become.

“Isn’t it better than just letting the traitors eat their fill?”

“But if you eat their fill, what will fall into my stomach?”

Their current discussion was not one where they could easily let their feelings steer the direction off.

“Instead of me telling you to do this or that, aren’t you more than capable of figuring what to eat on your own?”

Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun tightly shut his mouth. It was to contain the sigh that was threatening to leak out of his mouth.

The kettle atop the gas burner started to boil, as though it were conveying the lieutenant colonel’s heart.

“…… you’re just betting on my life.”

It wasn’t long before Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun realized what was going on.

Kim Tae Hoon had no intention of being used by Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun.

On the other hand, Kim Tae Hoon made his intentions clear. He made it clear that he would be using Yoo Daehyun.

“If that’s the case, give me something to be confident about.”

Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun only had one choice in this situation.

No, he was being forced to make a choice.

There were currently traitors inside Capital Defense Command that was eating away at its resources.

Lieutenant Colonel had no means to interfere with their activities or defeat them.

Capital Defense Command had no means of stopping them either.

In the end, there was really only one thing he could do.

If this wasn’t coercion, then what was?

Kim Tae Hoon was willing to show Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun.

“I will hunt the green ranked monster in Yeongjeong Island.”

He was going to show him how incredible he was.

“We’ll bet after that.”

With that, Kim Tae Hoon turned towards the screeching kettle. Kim Tae Hoon fell silent, his focus was on the kettle.

Chapter 64 – A Show Of Arms (2)

3.

Kim Tae Hoon stayed inside the coffee shop even after Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun had left along with his men.

Kim Tae Hoon blocked off his ears amidst the silence. It has been a long time since he was able to enjoy silence.

Being able to drink coffee amidst the silence, the various tangled thoughts in Kim Tae Hoon's mind began to unravel.

'There's definitely no need to go to Seoul.'

The first thing to unravel were the events from his second death.

There was nothing for him to get in Seoul. Seoul was like a warehouse full of holes.

On top of that, Capital Defense Command had long since settled in Seoul.

'Whoever is able to dominate the relics from Buyeo and Gyeongju will be the one who dominates the Korean Peninsula.'

In the end, Buyeo and Gyeongju, which are saturated with national treasures, will be the key.

His thoughts were the same up to this point.

‘After that is China.’

What was different was his interpretation of the third hint.

‘They’re eating every relic and monster in China and in Asia in general.’

Gwanggaeto Stele and Sword of Goujian were both on the wish list.

Kim Tae Hoon had come to the conclusion that China was to be an enemy.

But the moment he noticed the Saint’s Cross, he changed his mind.

It won’t end with China.

‘China needs to be eaten if I’m to stand a chance against the world.’

Rather, China was just the beginning.

Only by eating up China could he stand a chance against Europe

and the United States.

‘Damn it.’

However, even though he was simply imagining, it was still some ways away.

Kim Tae Hoon knew.

The sheer amount of violence that the various countries in Europe had participated in, the unprecedented great wars one after the other, these countries were built upon blood.

Furthermore, the amount of violence that made up the history of the United States was unprecedented in human history.

But such violence was condoned and questioned as the motives and justice that they pursued were in line with the majority of the world.

However, what the world had considered to be justice had changed.

‘I can imagine defeating a dragon, but not the US.’

Having witnessed the US military operate in various conflicts in the past, Kim Tae Hoon knew what they were capable of.

He gulped down the coffee instead of his saliva.

Taking another swig of coffee, Kim Tae Hoon started a new thought.

‘Twin Headed Ogre.’

The appearance of monsters resulted in the creation of a new rule.

Humans and monsters cannot coexist, and if humans want to take back the land, they must snatch it back from the monsters.

It was the same for Incheon.

Incheon will never go back into the hands of the humans unless the Twin Headed Ogre in Yeongjongdo is eliminated.

Only after killing him would Kim Tae Hoon and the Mek Guild have a firm grasp of Incheon.

In other words, they needed to kill it in order to proceed.

‘Catch him, capture Incheon.’

Kim Tae Hoon downed a third of the coffee in his cup.

Then a third thought came to mind.

‘Afterwards is Buyeon.’

It became silent again.

‘I have to call over Chang Sung Hoon.’

4.

Ggaaaek!

A monkey let out a scream before collapsing on the floor.

Staring at the Monkey Dog bleeding all over its body, the man who had shot the creature slung his rifle over his shoulder, the barrel facing towards the ground.

“Huuuu……”

He let out a long sigh.

After a short silence, the man swallowed the sigh that he was about to let out.

Then he shouted.

“Clear!”

It was the man letting his colleagues know that the area was clear.

Clear! That sound was repeated in quick succession.

When the echoes stopped resounding, the man shouted again.

“All of the monsters in Incheon City Hall have been cleared!

The Incheon City Hall has become the Mek Guild’s!”

Another echo rang out as he yelled.

However, the echo was different this time around.

Ooaaaah!

He did it! He finally did it!

They were completely different words from what he had yelled.

However, they carried the same feeling as the original.

Fervor!

Having entered Incheon, the Mek Guild captured the city hall.

Although they hadn't fully extended themselves into Incheon yet, it was still a monumental occasion.

"That's right, I did it! We did it!

Monsters, we'll start with these fuckers!"

It was the first time that the survivors of Incheon had been able to look upon a symbol of resistance as significant as the Incheon City Hall since the monsters first appeared.

The same feelings of joy that the soldiers must have felt during the 1950s Incheon Landing Operation, were felt by the survivors and Hunters of the Mek Guild.

The news spread all throughout Incheon by word of mouth.

"Incheon City Hall?"

"Isn't that a monster's den?"

The people were thrilled.

“Finally..... Finally.....”

In particular, the citizens of Incheon felt an even larger amount of joy than others.

There were even some who laughed and others who cried.

”No need to shower cold water on their parade.”

But not everyone was thrilled.

“We just need to stick a flag here and it’ll be good.”

Chang Sung Hoon placed a finger on the Daedongyeojido that was placed on a table.

Gulp!

So while Chang Sung Hoon was speaking, Kim Tae Hoon swallowed a monster stone.

Sitting next to Kim Tae Hoon was a mountain of monster stones. It was an enormous amount. It was enough where consuming the whole amount would make one’s stomach bloat.

Gulp!

However, Kim Tae Hoon kept on consuming them.

“Boss has become a monster-like human in the few days that I haven’t seen you.”

While looking at Kim Tae Hoon’s actions, Chang Sung Hoon clicked his tongue.

“What, if I don’t then things will become even more difficult.”

Tuk tuk.

Chang Sung Hoon tapped his finger in the same spot that he had tapped just moments before.

“As you know, Yeongjong Island is the result of four smaller islands that were combined through reclamation projects to create one big island. It is for that reason that the complete situation of Yeongjong Island is unknown. If there are monsters on the land that was created through the reclamation projects, they won’t show up on Daedongyeojido.”

The area he was tapping on was the location of current Day Yeongjeongdo.

In that area was a lone, twinkling green light. Then the green light disappeared.

“The bastard this time around doesn’t like to sit still.”

While shaking his head, Chang Sung Hoon pointed at a bridge connecting Yeongjong Island and Incheon City.

“On top of that, the Yeongjong Bridge has already collapsed.”

His finger immediately moved towards where the Incheon Bridge should be.

“The only thing left should be the Incheon Grand Bridge, but the Incheon Grand Bridge couldn’t have been drawn on Daedongyeojido, so it would be impossible to tell if there are monsters on it. In other words, the 7th longest cable-stayed bridge in the world and the largest bridge in Korea with a length of 21 km, on that very same bridge, we would have no way to tell what monsters are on it.”

With that, Chang Sung placed his finger on the map again.

“Boss, why don’t we just collapse the Incheon Grand Bridge?”

Kim Tae Hoon swallowed another monster stone in lieu of replying.

“There is a green ranked monster. There are too many variables. Honestly, I would prefer that we just leave the creature on Yeongjong Island. Even if it’s an incredibly strong monster, the distance between Yeongjong Island and Incheon is no joke. Even if

it somehow ends up crossing such a large distance, the orc tribe would definitely not be able to.”

In this moment after Kim Tae Hoon had called over Chang Sung Hoon, Chang Sung Hoon remembered something as he gave his take on the current situation.

And it was also the operation that Kim Tae Hoon was about to embark on.

“Isn’t Boss eventually going to just go on your own?”

If Chang Sung Hoon knew anything, then it would be the fact that Kim Tae Hoon would most likely go to Yeongjong Island on his own.

“It’ll be dangerous.”

There was a huge risk.

No matter how strong Kim Tae Hoon had gotten and no matter how many cards he had acquired, there was no telling when or how he would die in front of a green ranked monster.

“It’s extremely dangerous.”

Most importantly, Kim Tae Hoon was an extremely important person who absolutely could not die.

If he were to die, then the hope that had risen due to his work would instantly become pure despair.

Despite Chang Sung Hoon's concerns, Kim Tae Hoon simply took a look at his right hand with blackened eyes.

[Basic Abilities]

– Strength: 300

– Stamina : 277

[Special Abilities]

– Energy : C+ Rank

– Mana: C+ Rank

– Telekinesis: A Rank

– Physical Defense : C+ Rank

– Magic Resistance : C+ Rank.

[Acquired Abilities]

– Horned Orangutan's Stealth (Grade 5) : The power of the Horned Orangutan that allows the user to hide their presence.

Having inspected his abilities, Kim Tae Hoon turned to look at Chang Sung Hoon, his eyes still under the effect of the Black Snake's Evil Eye.

"Well compared to the US or Europe, it's a rather safe mission."

"Huh?"

Not knowing what Kim Tae Hoon meant, Chang Sung Hoon could only look on with confusion.

Kim Tae Hoon didn't bother to explain anything to Chang Sung Hoon.

"Prepare a boat."

"……yes sir."

Kim Tae Hoon gave a command instead of giving Chang Sung

Hoon an explanation.

5.

Namsan Tower.

What had once been a simple tourist attraction had become one of the Capital Defense Command's most fortified locations.

The reason why Namsan Tower had turned into a fortified base was simple.

In a world where tall towers and skyscrapers were no more, Namsan Tower boasted the highest view in the present day Gangbuk.

Especially considering how telecommunications and radio communications had broken down, such an eye-catching tower was beyond important.

It was a completely different place than before. Perhaps one of the biggest changes was the addition of a new monument at the entrance of Namsan Tower.

Height: 1.54 meters, Width: 0.6 meters, Thickness: 0.16 meters.

The tower was riddled with bullet holes and cracks, but on the lower left corner of the monument was the signature of Chusa,

Kim Jeong-hui.

..... South Korea's National Treasure No.3, King Jinheung's Sunsubi monument.

King Jinheung's Sunsubi Monument, a treasure which should be located in the National Museum of Korea, was currently standing guard beside Namsan Tower.

A red glow was coming off of Sunsubi.

The light's intensity was like that of a fire.

Although it was a bit blurry, even those at the top of the Namsan Tower could see the light.

It was the same now.

The top of the Namsan Tower used to house a restaurant, but it was currently being occupied by those who were stationed at the Namsan Tower by the Capital Defense Command.

There were two people talking about the red glow.

"There should be even worse problems in Incheon."

One of the two was a man in his late 50s who was in a rigid

posture with his chin jutting out.

“Was there a big incident? I guess that was where they were headed after all. Even if they were special forces, they’re nothing more than just a couple of kids playing around. What can a man with no experience leading an army do?”

The other was a decent looking man wearing glasses in his mid-40s.

Major General Lee Gisu and Colonel Chang Soguk, the two of them were heavyweights even amongst heavyweights.

“That’s not it. What I’m saying the problem is……”

“Yes, it seems like we’ll have to withdraw from Incheon.”

“Tsk.”

They were also traitors.

The traitors who were going to eat Capital Defense Command from the inside and allow it to rot from it.

“So what do you think?”

“There’s nothing to do but to let the Mek Guild take Incheon. If

anything, we could always lure the monsters on Yeongjong Island to Incheon and let them loose there.”

“How likely is it for Kim Tae Hoon to kill a green rank monster?”

“Not at all. He would have to go to Yeongjong Island to deal with it, it’s impossible to take regular vehicles there, let alone tanks. I assure you that he would have to take a B2 Bomber and make a bomb of all Yeongjong Island in order to do so. But if you’re really that concerned…… just give the command and I’ll send some of the kids.”

Major General Lee Gisu let out a short sigh as Colonel Chang Soguk stopped talking.

“If you have the luxury to send them to Incheon, might as well send them to Pocheon instead.”

Pocheon.

Hearing that, the smile on Colonel Chang Soguk disappeared.

“What is the current situation with the 8 divisions?”

“At this point, we’re basically throwing the troops into the forefront. It’s to get a foothold in Gangwon.”

“Colonel Lim Hyunjoon…… I think things will be easier once we

join hands with him.”

“It wouldn’t be easy sir. I know we should try to..... but who knows what conditions he’ll attach.”

At that time, a man appeared in the distance.

He looked like someone that anyone would admit to being a good looking man. It was Oh Saebum.

When the man approached, both Major General Lee Gisu and Colonel Chang Soguk stopped what they were doing as Oh Saebum saluted before handing something over.

“Here is Mr. Mao’s letter.”

Chapter 65 – A Show Of Arms (3)

6.

The sky's stained by the light of dawn, on the shore of Incheon.

Teul teul teul…….

A fishing boat slowly made its way across the sea, drawing closer to its destination.

Both the fishing boat and the ocean were silent.

Teul teul tuk, tuk!

Amidst that silence, a sound emerged from the silent fishing boat.

The boat came to a stop and a man appeared in the cockpit of the boat.

A man with a sword strapped to his back.

'Yeongjongdo, it's been awhile.'

Kim Tae Hoon briefly reminisced while looking at the golf course near where the boat had stopped.

His memories had nothing to do with golf. He was instead thinking of the gigantic Incheon International Airport which was located behind the golf course.

‘Incheon International Airport.’

There weren’t many times where Kim Tae Hoon had went abroad through Incheon International Airport.

But above all, it was when he had come back home after a mission overseas and had entered civilian life in Incheon International Airport. Like that, Kim Tae Hoon washed away his traces.

To him, Incheon International Airport was a place where he distanced himself from his military life.

It was also the place where he realized that he was alive.

‘There are no bad memories.’

It was the last place of comfort before Kim Tae Hoon went to hunt the green ranked monster.

“Hu!”

There was no mist that came out of Kim Tae Hoon’s mouth when

he sighed. It was a sign that the harsh winter had finally passed.

His sentimentality ended there.

Kim Tae Hoon moved to the back of the boat and stood in front of a pile of boxes.

There was a bag inside one of the boxes he opened. The bag looked like an instrument carrying case, but taking out what was inside, it was obviously not an instrument.

It was a gun with a long barrel unlike that of a normal gun.

‘It’s been awhile.’

It was a PSG-1 Sniper Rifle, a sniper rifle loved by many enthusiasts all over the world. It was also the weapon that Kim Tae Hoon was the most familiar with.

It was the partner that Kim Tae Hoon had gone through both thick and thin with.

Even now not much had changed.

Kim Tae Hoon now had the firepower and means to deal with any problems that came his way.

It was a given that Kim Tae Hoon had no intention to fight the enemy head on.

It was what Kim Tae Hoon did best.

‘Time to show what a show of arms is like.’

7.

A show of arms wasn’t a simple display of violence.

A show of arms was a psychological technique used to pressure the enemies by displaying one’s overwhelming strength.

So what was needed in order to pressure the enemy?

The answer is simple.

Fear.

Even among dogs, the most effective motivator was fear.

However, even given that fact, instilling a simple fear of death was not enough.

What was more effective was instilling the fear of sudden and unforeseen death, a fear of a death that could come at any moment

without any rhyme or reason.

‘Huuu.’

Atop an apartment complex within the city limits of Yeongjongdo, Kim Tae Hoon had his sights aimed on a brown skinned orc with the intent to instill that exact fear.

Tooong!

A bullet flew out of the barrel accompanied by a dull sound.

The bullet reached the end of its trajectory and pierced through the orc’s forehead.

Tulsseuk!

The orc collapsed onto the floor, a hole having appeared on its head.

The other orcs quickly gathered around the fallen orc.

Anger welled up in the orcs, resulting in them yelling at the top of their lungs.

But being 1 kilometer away, Kim Tae Hoon did not hear any of it.

Toong!

Looking through his scope, Kim Tae Hoon pulled the trigger again.

The orcs that had gathered around the corpse of the first orc also soon become corpses.

One by one, the bodies of the orcs simply piled up to the point where no other orcs dared to approach.

Kim Tae Hoon looked down his sights once more.

Five.

It was the number of orcs that he had just hunted down.

‘Barely a hundred over the past four days.’

It was an inefficient hunt.

If Kim Tae Hoon were to show himself to the orcs, dozens of them would flock to him in mere moments.

It would only take about a breath’s time to take care of them.

On the other hand, Kim Tae Hoon couldn’t even get rid of ten

orcs in an hour by using the sniper rifle.

Nevertheless, it was still a distance of one kilometer.

‘The study period is over.’

It was a distance that would take even one of the fastest creatures on the planet, the cheetah, at least a minute to reach– a distance that would trivialize death.

‘It won’t be long before a gap appears.’

The choice that these monsters would make upon experiencing an unprecedented fear was simple.

To hide.

There was no other choice. The orcs would hide anywhere they could to hide from the sudden reaper’s scythe.

‘I just need to wait for the ogre’s patience to hit the floor.’

It was their leader that would be a challenge.

Twin Headed Ogre.

The longer the orcs hide, the longer they’ll starve.

Furthermore, the Twin Headed Ogre itself was a heavy eater. Not only was its body huge, but it also needed to feed two heads. It needed to eat many human corpses a day.

How long could such a beast endure its hunger?

No, rather, does that unbelievable beast even have the patience to wait it out?

Keuuuuuh!

Keuuuuuuh!

At that moment, two monstrous roars rang throughout Yeongjongdo from Baegunsan Mountain.

[TLN: In the name Baegunsan, ‘san’ is actually mountain, so it should be Baegun Mountain]

The two roars made Kim Tae Hoon’s body feel as though winter had come again.

‘As expected.’

Kim Tae Hoon grit his teeth.

The Twin Headed Ogre’s Fear directed at Kim Tae Hoon was at a

level that he had never felt before.

The power was overwhelming.

‘It’s really not a joke.’

This was the reason for Kim Tae Hoon’s show of arms.

‘As expected, to go against this Fear…… a direct confrontation is out of the question.’

It would be impossible to fight head to head with the monster while under the pressure of this Fear.

When exposed to this Fear, the Energy residing in Kim Tae Hoon’s dantian goes crazy, his head goes blank, and his heart starts to beat uncontrollably.

Furthermore, that was all he could do when faced with that Fear. He couldn’t do anything with his Telekinesis, his sword, his Energy, nor his arrow.

So the moment he entered a battle with the Twin Headed Ogre, he would be severely disadvantaged considering his limited options.

So his only option was to somehow create an opportunity, a gap that he could exploit.

So Kim Tae Hoon didn't overdo things.

'It shouldn't be long before it throws caution to the wind, watching neither his front nor back and charging in like an enraged bull. That's the only chance I'll have.'

Kim Tae Hoon skillfully dismantled his rifle, returned it to his carrying case, and prepared to jump to another apartment complex's rooftop.

Paat!

He skillfully landed on the roof of the apartment building next door.

The large leap that Kim Tae Hoon made was something that not even olympic jumpers could compare to.

Paat!

The figure of Kim Tae Hoon jumping from roof to roof eventually became smaller and smaller until he disappeared.

8.

Keuaaah!

Keuaaah!

Height, ten meters.

Its body was like that of a building, the Twin Headed Ogre grabbed two orcs with both hands.

Keureu, Keureu!

Keureeeeu!

The two orcs trapped in its grasp struggled to get out.

But as soon as the Twin Headed Ogre exerted just a bit of strength, Bbudeudeuk!

The orcs' bones snapped like cookies, their eyes popped, and blood streamed out of their ears and eye sockets.

The Twin Headed Ogre shoved the corpses into its mouth.

Bbagak!

Bbagak!

It played with the bodies as it devoured the two orcs.

Euhgeuk!

Euhgyuk!

A frightening sound rang out.

The gathered orcs, although terrified, did not dare to flee and could only stand still and tremble.

Amongst the orcs, the black skinned orcs pushed a number of the trembling orcs towards the feasting Twin Headed Ogre.

Keuh!

The two orcs that had been pushed forward were consumed by fear as they watched the Twin Headed Ogre that had consumed two orcs in one go approach them.

Ggwak!

Instead of grabbing the orcs like he had done before, the Twin Headed Ogre lifted its hands and smashed downwards towards the orcs.

Ggwareung!

The ground shook as its fists smashed into the ground, blood and guts splashing all over the ground.

The orcs' bodies were in a gruesome state. Like humans smashing a mosquito, the orcs' bodies had become two dimensional smears.

Koong, koong!

The Twin Headed Ogre lifted its fists and smashed down onto the smears that had once been orcs in rage.

Now even the orange eyes of the Black Skinned Orcs began to tremble in fear.

Every single orc knew the source of its rage.

Hunger.

Many of the orcs had recently been unable to tribute enough food to fill the Twin Headed Ogre's stomach.

It was because of their decision to hide out of fear.

Even with a show of violence and the Black Skinned Orcs coercing them, nothing had changed.

The orcs were afraid of death, but death caused by the unknown was even more terrifying.

Keuah, Keuah!

It was the reason why the Twin Headed Ogre's wrath had gotten so out of hand.

The Twin Headed Ogre could not tolerate the fact that they feared something else other than himself.

It was for this reason that he could not tolerate this hunger.

It was even more so for a two-headed beast. The two heads looked at each other and roared out their frustration and anger. The flesh between their teeth splattered out as they roared.

Both of the Twin Headed Ogre's faces became covered in blood and flecks of flesh.

The fierce and gruesome faces became even more terrifying.

Keuh?

Keuh?

While looking at each other, the two ogre heads felt a strange

power.

The first to feel the strange, fog-like strength after the ogres were the orcs.

Ggeureu, ggeeeeu

Ggeeuu.....

The orcs recoiled in fear, like a rat before a snake.

Keuah!

That power was something that the Twin Headed Ogre knew.

How could he not know. That power was so annoying that it had left Incheon and crossed a long bridge in order to get to Yeongjongdo.

It couldn’t be anything but one thing.

Although that power was strong, it wasn’t something that the Twin Headed Ogre could not resist.

And now, it no longer had the patience to simply avoid that strange power.

It did not have the patience to send some underlings to check it out.

It did not have the patience to let out a warning cry .

The Twin Headed Ogre stood upright.

Keuah!

The two heads screamed at the same time.

9.

Koong, koong, koong!

Incheon International Airport runway.

A huge monster that overshadowed even airplanes began to run.

The unstoppable beast left large footprints in the flat runway.

No one in their right mind would even dare think of blocking it.

However, the Earthenware Warrior on Horseback was different.

Pureung!

The giant monster ran, the ground trembling beneath its feet; the warrior on horseback unsheathing its sword as it readied itself to confront the creature.

On the warrior's neck was a shining cross.

Ddadak, ddadak!

The horse began to run.

The two creatures ran at each other before instantly passing each other.

Swiik!

The warrior landed a slash on the Twin Headed Ogre's right thigh and left a cut.

The Twin Headed Ogre tried to come to a sudden stop.

Gwakwakwa!

The asphalt road began to collapse as though it were nothing but pudding.

Koong!

Having suddenly come to a stop, the Twin Headed Ogre immediately turned and leapt.

A body that weighed not one kilogram but a ton suddenly leapt 10 meters into the air.

It was literally like a miracle that its body could jump so high, but such a miracle was more like a disaster as it began to fall, casting a shadow over the horse and the warrior's head.

The Twin Headed Ogre's body eventually dropped onto the runway.

Ggwareung!

The Earth shook.

The warrior was somehow able to dodge the Twin Headed Ogre's descent. It was thanks to the horse's amazing backstep.

Keuuuuuh!

Keuuuuuuh!

Both of the Twin Headed Ogre's heads roared in an effort to terrorize the warrior on horseback.

Hiiing!

The horse also let out its own whinny in order to fight against the monster's roar.

The warrior raised his sword and pointed it at the ogre before tapping the horse's stomach with its feet.

The horse that had backstepped once more charged forward.

ddageudak, ddageudak!

The Twin Headed Ogre began to spin. The horse's running speed was surprisingly swift.

But it was not difficult for the Twin Headed Ogre to keep up with it.

Its two heads were able to cover 180 degrees of space and could watch the horse.

The Twin Headed Ogre observed for only a moment.

Keuh!

Keuah!

The Twin Headed Ogre stopped observing, its anger having long since reached the peak and its patience having long since disappeared.

The Twin Headed Ogre once more ran towards its target.

The Warrior on Horseback ran forward to meet the attack. It was like Don Quixote running towards the windmill.

This battle was like a spectacle at a rodeo.

The Twin Headed Ogre ran towards the warrior over and over again, and every time the warrior left an injury on the ogre, it would run towards the warrior with renewed vigor and glowing eyes.

The ogre was now completely focused on the earthenware figurine.

At that moment, it was a second Don Quixote.

Swiiiiii!

From up above in the sky, a sword began to fall towards the ogre’s back.

The sword was like a hawk, no, a bolt of lightning that aimed for

the Twin Headed Ogre's heart.

The strike was accurate.

There was no other choice but to be accurate.

'I can hear it.'

Kim Tae Hoon had waited above the Incheon International Airport for this exact moment.

He had waited for the moment where he could clearly hear its heart and find its location despite having been exposed to Fear and putting himself in a life threatening situation.

Dugeun, dugeun, dugeun!

'I can hear its heartbeat.'

He had made the beast constantly run in order to work up its heart.

And in order to create this opportunity where the ogre didn't realize the existence of Kim Tae Hoon who was only a stone's throw away, he had distracted it with the warrior and had angered it until it lost all semblance of common sense with his show of arms.

‘Fall!’

Puk!

The sword drew a lightning like line as it reached its destination and stuck itself into the ogre’s back.

It was deep.

Even though a bullet shot from a sniper rifle could break through the tough skin and thick flesh and tough muscles of a monster as though it were ripping through a child’s heart, something like that was not enough this time around.

It was not enough to reach the ogre’s heart.

At that moment, the third Don Quixote appeared.

Kim Tae Hoon, whose body had turned black from his arm to his neck and chest was the third Don Quixote.

The Twin Headed Ogre noticed the presence of the third Don Quixote.

No, rather, he was forced to stop because of the presence of a sharp sword approaching his heart.

He tried to come to a sudden stop again.

Kwakwakwa!

It once again crushed the runway as though it were nothing but tofu.

As it turned, the Twin Headed Ogre's eyes were not focused on the runway, but on Kim Tae Hoon who was floating in the air above his shoulders.

Keuuh??

The scene that entered the monster's four eyes was not something it could comprehend.

On the other hand, the only thing that entered Kim Tae Hoon's eyes was one thing, the Sword of the Commander that had inserted itself into the Twin Headed Ogre's body.

10.

Incheon City Hall, mayor's office.

The city hall having come into the possession of a new owner, there was a man pacing back and forth in the mayor's office.

‘I’m going to go crazy.’

The man was Chang Sung Hoon.

And in that room where Chang Sung Hoon was pacing was a desk, and on top of that desk was the Daedongyeojido.

Chang Sung Hoon’s eyes were focused on the green light displayed on Daedongyeojido.

‘Damn it, just disappear already. Please, just disappear.’

Chang Sung Hoon earnestly begged the light, but instead of disappearing, it continued to shine like a star.

As though he were weaving a magic spell, Chang Sung Hoon pointed at the green light and chanted.

“Please just fuck off!”

At that moment, the green light disappeared.

What he had desired had come to be.

However, Chang Sung Hoon was confused. He brought his finger up to his face and stared at it.

Then, with a dead serious look on his face, he pointed his finger at a flashing blue light located in Sejong Special Self-Governing City.

"Fuck off!"

Of course nothing happened.

"Damn it."

He had tried it again but nothing had happened.

No, something did happen. Because Chang Sung Hoon's face started to turn bright red.

"Damn it, I'm actually going crazy……"

The perfectly sane Chang Sung Hoon looked around the room before sighing and throwing his hands up into the air.

He kept his hand up in the air for a few minutes.

He took up a victory pose.

'Ah! Now's not the time for this.'

Getting rid of the post, Chang Sung Hoon remembered

something he had to do.

Kim Tae Hoon had told Chang Sung Hoon.

Once the Twin Headed Ogre is taken care of, push the troops on the Incheon Grand Bridge and head towards Yeongjongdo.

He was to let this event be witnessed by many people and bring this landing operation to a close.

Chang Sung Hoon was also going to witness it as well.

‘Hurry, we gotta go quick.’

Chang Sung Hoon quickly packed up Daedongyeojido and placed it in a bag that he treasured more than his life.

‘Ah.’

When he looked inside the bag, Chang Sung Hoon’s expression stiffened.

What entered Chang Sung Hoon’s line of sight was a golden goblet filled with a shiny red liquid.

Chapter 66 – Bucket List (1)

1.

The sky was cloudy.

The dreary sky seemed to herald an ominous event. The color of the sky was like the color of the end of the world. It truly felt like the world was going to end.

“Kooleuk, Kooleuk…… “

Kim Tae Hoon was coughing in this dreary weather.

It wasn’t just a simple cough.

Every time he coughed, he felt a sharp pain in his nose and at the back of his throat. His spine would be racked with pain.

Whenever he stopped coughing, his mouth would feel numb.

A stream of blood would pour out of his mouth and passes through his fingers every time he coughed.

‘What’s going on?’

It was the sign of death.

Seeing his future self in a vision, Kim Tae Hoon couldn't help but be surprised at his future self's condition.

'My senses……'

Kim Tae Hoon's five senses were out of commission.

He couldn't hear very well, there was no sensation in his fingers, and he couldn't smell nor taste the blood in his mouth even though it was streaming out of his mouth.

Even his vision was dim.

'Just what did I do……'

For Kim Tae Hoon who had superhuman vision and hearing thanks to the Black Snake's Evil Eye and the Rattle-Tailed Mouse's Hearing, it was an impossible situation.

'Say something.'

Kim Tae Hoon desperately urged himself to say something.

'SAY SOMETHING!'

Say something to yourself who will soon die, give him a clue so

he can avoid this death!

But his dying self could not hear his urgent cries. That was why Kim Tae Hoon didn't say anything.

On top of that, there wasn't anybody around that could explain what was going on.

Chang Sung Hoon wasn't present to talk to Kim Tae Hoon, Ahn Sunmi wasn't there to reveal the contents of a wishlist, and there weren't any enemies around to explain why he was dying.

There were no words.

Kim Tae Hoon wordlessly looked at his left palm.

– 170712 Colonel Lim Hyunjoon is killed, prevent.

– 180203 Cho Sungyeon dies, make president.

– 180504 Kori Nuclear meltdown, prevent.

'Ah.'

Kim Tae Hoon's left palm contained a message for his past self in the case of near death.

In addition, it wasn't just a normal message.

'Bucket list.'

A bucket list, a list of activities that he should complete before dying.

It was also a means to send a message without having to speak.

Napoleon's Golden Goblet allowed the user to peer into the future. Words spoken within his vision would just be words within a dream.

His death was inevitable, and he would see this message from start to finish.

In other words, Kim Tae Hoon was waiting for death. He was waiting so that this death may be avoided, not challenged.

'Just what happened to me?'

Kwakwakwakwakwa!

A sudden sound came from the distance.

Kim Tae Hoon lifted his head from looking at his palm and looked towards where the roar had come from.

Through dim eyes he saw something that looked like an angel. An angel made of gray smoke.

‘That……’

But of course it wasn’t an angel.

‘Flare?’

AC-130 Gunship had earned the nickname ‘Angel of Death’, and it was a plane that Kim Tae Hoon was familiar with.

It shot a flare, but the scene didn’t last long.

Even as the harbinger of death approached Kim Tae Hoon, he simply looked at his palm instead of concerning himself with it.

He focused all of his senses on his palm.

The vision ended there.

2.

Incheon International Airport.

The enormous size of the airport and the various VIP lounges of the various airlines would often times astound first time visitors.

Inside one of the VIP lounges sitting on comfy couches were two men staring at each other.

The expressions of the two people were not good.

One of them had his eyes closed while massaging his temples while the other was simply frowning.

The frowning man opened his mouth.

“Boss, can I ask you something?”

Kim Tae Hoon didn’t reply to Chang Sung Hoon’s question.

“Whenever you have a vision, your situation should improve, but it seems like the more visions you get, the worse your situation becomes. Is it just me?”

Again, Kim Tae Hoon did not answer.

There was no need to give an answer, since the answer was in the question.

“Damn it.”

Already knowing the answer, Chang Sung Hoon answered the question himself.

“Meltdown…… “

It was Kim Tae Hoon’s fourth dream.

In that dream, Kim Tae Hoon wrote a bucket list for himself on the palm of his hand.

It was just like that. Bucket list, he had left behind what he needed to do before he died.

It was a wise decision.

They weren’t just clues, but clearly things that he needed to do. It was by far the cleanest death he had experienced yet.

“I’m going to go crazy, first it was killing the dragon, now a nuclear disaster? What’s next, stopping a meteorite? Do we have to create a space ship, go out into space and land on the meteor, and then blow it up with a nuclear bomb? I swear there was a movie like this…… I think a movie starring Bruce Willis……”

But the contents, as always, was not kind.

No, it wasn’t to the point of being unkind.

“Then I guess we need to go save Colonel Lim Hyunjoon.”

There were three things on the bucket list.

To save Colonel Lim Hyunjoon who is soon to die.

“Cho Sungyeon, just who is he that boss wants to make him the president?”

Cho Sungyeon, someone that Kim Tae Hoon has to save and make as the president.

“And Kori Nuclear Power Plant..... aish, what the fuck.”

Lastly, to prevent the Kori Nuclear Power Plant meltdown.

Mentioning the last thing on the bucket list, Chang Sung Hoon covered his face with both hands.

His hands, wrapped around his face, were trembling.

“It certainly isn’t something that you should ignore. If you don’t do it, then everyone will die.”

The Kori Nuclear Plant meltdown was that shocking.

“The land around the meltdown would become hell. It would be a disaster like Chernobyl or Fukushima and there won’t be any available personnel to go handle it.”

Even someone like Chang Sung Hoon who wasn’t an expert on nuclear power plants was shocked and terrified at the prospect of what the future would be like should the power plant have a meltdown.

“No, rather, there are some good sides to it. The monsters won’t be safe from the radiation either.”

Chang Sung Hoon couldn’t help but amend his pessimistic statement with a desperate hope that monsters wouldn’t be safe either.

“Do you think that regular humans could perhaps become Awakened if exposed to radiation? Should we test it? Do you perhaps know? Could I become like Doctor Manhattan from Watchmen?”

He was referring to the DC character from Watchmen, Doctor Manhattan. He was a scientist that gained supernatural powers due to a nuclear incident. But seeing as how Chang Sung Hoon was talking about superheroes for no reason, who knew if he was going crazy or not.

Kim Tae hoon stopped rubbing his temples after listening to what Chang Sung Hoon said.

Kim Tae Hoon opened his closed eyes.

“A nuclear meltdown happens when the core isn’t cooled properly. There are three major stages when it comes to a core melting. A nuclear fuel element exceeds its melting point and melts through the fuel cladding, at which point the nuclear fuel rods and further layers of containment are breached. In the end, the molten metals of the containers and the nuclear plant along with the melted fuel rods will be released into the atmosphere and onto the ground.”

Listening to Kim Tae Hoon, Chang Sung Hoon looked at Kim Tae Hoon with a grave expression on his face.

“You are very knowledgeable.”

“It’s because one of the things that special forces units learn about are nuclear power plants.”

“Is that so?”

“One of the most effective targets that terrorists can aim at are nuclear power plants. Instigating a nuclear meltdown at a power plant incites more fear in the populace than hijacking an airplane or blowing a building.”

Kim Tae Hoon’s explanation went on for quite a bit.

It made the person who was listening feel anxious and more

tense.

Kim Tae Hoon opened his mouth again amidst the tension.

“If it was a melt through or a melt out, I would have said so.”

“It’s not the worst situation?”

“If left alone it would be, but at the very least, it should be ok for now.”

“I’m slightly relieved to hear that.”

“The most important thing right now is the first vision.”

“What?”

“Do you remember what I said to you in the first vision?”

Faced with an unexpected question, Chang Sung Hoon recalled something.

Chang Sung Hoon wouldn’t have remembered it if it was an average story, but this was a story that was as unbelievable as Kim Tae Hoon, and it was a story that Kim Tae Hoon had told him one night in front of the Wonmi Library.

“You’ve worked hard, go to Gyeongju by yourself, find Commander-in-Chief Lim Hyunjoon and pass on my message……”

Chang Sung Hoon’s face stiffened.

“Gyeongju! The Kori Nuclear Power Plant didn’t have a meltdown during the first dream.”

The Kori Nuclear Power Plant was located in Busan’s Gijang County.

The distance to Gyeongju was approximately 60km if traveled in a straight line.

If the reactor does meltdown, then Gyeongju could never become a stronghold.

In the circumstances of the first death, the Kori Nuclear Power Plant had not suffered from a meltdown. “In that first dream, the Kori Nuclear Power Plant never ran into any problems.”

“Then just why……”

“Someone must have caused the problem.”

“What? No, just what kind of a crazy bastard would do such a thing? The person who causes the problem would also die!”

“It must be someone with no affection, interest, or concern for the country known as the Republic of Korea.”

Kim Tae Hoon closed his eyes again.

‘Six Snakes.’

It was clear that all these things were the work of the Six Snakes.

The Six Snakes should be lacking in firepower right now.

Having learned many things through the three deaths, Kim Tae Hoon could not let the Six Snakes to grow.

‘That must be the reason why.’

In other words, the Six Snakes abandoned Korea, ignored Kim Tae Hoon, and instead opted to open a Pandora’s Box in Korea in order to destroy it.

‘Beating the grass to surprise the snake?’

It was a damnable task.

‘Rather, it was an AC-130.’

However, it wasn’t the meltdown that put Kim Tae Hoon in a bad

mood.

Kim Tae Hoon saw the lighted path of the projectile that the AC-130 had fired before he died.

Angel of Death.

The AC-130 Gunship, though it had an eerie nickname, did not fire lethal flares. Flares were initially designed to disrupt the infrared sensors of a guided missile. It was unlikely that Kim Tae Hoon was killed in that attack.

The important thing was the owner of the Angel of Death.

‘America.’

It was obvious that the United States of America would show hostility towards Kim Tae Hoon.

‘It was an attack by the United States.’

The evidence was the Kori Nuclear Power Plant meltdown.

‘After the dragon is the United States.’

To be honest, there wasn’t a clear solution to winning the war. It just simply wasn’t imaginable.

In other words, it was all that was left.

There was no way to win the war so he had made a bucket list so as to prevent the war itself.

It was the only light amidst all the confusion and fear.

That's why Kim Tae Hoon made it clear.

'Prevent the assassination of Colonel Lim Hyunjoon.'

The first thing Kim Tae Hoon should do is to save Colonel Lim Hyunjoon as the bucket list stated.

There was nothing else to worry about at the moment.

'The tasks I have to do are simple. So I should think simple.'

He took a moment to arrange the information in his head.

But such peace didn't last long.

"E, excuse me……."

A soldier wearing the uniform of the Mek Guild suddenly entered

the VIP Lounge.

"What's wrong?"

Chang Sung Hoon took the initiative to speak instead of Kim Tae Hoon.

The soldier looked at Chang Sung Hoon and spoke after a bit of hesitation.

"We've found a survivor."

"A survivor?"

Chang Sung Hoon had an incredulous expression on his face.

Incheon International Airport was a place that hadn't seen the vestiges of life for the longest time, so how could there be a survivor?

Furthermore, why would the soldier approach Chang Sung Hoon and Kim Tae Hoon about a single survivor?

Kim Tae Hoon was the head of the Mek Guild, and more.

For those living under the banner of the Mek Guild, he was like a god.

A single survivor was not a big enough issue to personally bring to his attention.

“Just who is this survivor? Is it the daughter of the president of the United States?”

In other words, it was likely that the survivor was not an average person.

“That..... she said she was Kate Kennedy, the daughter of the United States Ambassador to Korea.”

Hearing that, Kim Tae Hoon started rubbing his temples again.

Chapter 67 – Bucket List (2)

3.

The soldiers and hunters of the Mek Guild walked across the Incheon Grand Bridge, arriving at Incheon International Airport by way of Yeongjongdo. The first thing to greet them was a corpse.

Twin Headed Ogre.

It was a monster that exceeded common sense, and despite being a corpse, its presence was overwhelming.

Its dead body had a strange expression on its face.

“Ooek!”

“Ugh……”

“Hey, keep it together! Keep it together!”

Even though it was dead, the dead Twin Headed Ogre’s Fear overwhelmed the regular soldiers who could not utilize any Energy. The regular soldiers crumpled, throwing up the food they had eaten earlier that day.

“Soldiers fall back!”

“Only hunters should move!”

Only Awakened with an E Rank Energy or higher could safely approach the body.

“It’s huge.”

Those who approached were given a number of commands.

The first thing they had to check for was the toughness of the Twin Headed Ogre’s skin.

The process was simple.

Either point the barrel of a rifle towards the Twin Headed Ogre’s head and fire off a shot…

“Eurahtcha!”

Use a huge axe that you would use to cut down a tree and try to cut up the skin…

“Explosion!”

“Explosion!”

Install claymores a stone's throw away from the body to try and blow it up...

Carrying out each task one by one was frightening, but what was even more frightening was the fact that despite all of the damage, the Twin Headed Ogre's body only just barely spilt blood.

Like a mosquito biting a human.

Furthermore, looking at the enormous size of the Twin Headed Ogre, it may actually be more appropriate to compare it to a building who was struck with a nail.

"I'm speechless."

"How did he catch a monster like this?"

The Mek Guild hunters had no choice but to have solemn looks on their faces.

Like that, they went onto their next mission.

"It's our job to protect this body from now on."

Their mission was to protect the body of this Twin Headed Ogre, something that was far more valuable than gold.

It was literally just that.

Their mission was to prevent others from robbing them of the Twin Headed Ogre.

It was a funny mission.

“Security detail…… just who the hell would come to steal this?”

“I know right.”

“If anything, I’d rather a survivor come over than an actual thief.”

It would be impossible for anyone to try and steal the corpse of a monster heavier than that of an elephant.

“Hmm?”

“Huh?”

But their common sense was easily shattered.

“E-excuse me!”

A rabble of people entered the Mek Guild hunters’ line of sight.

Their faces paled like they had just seen a ghost.

There was no way for them to fish out their Manual to figure out what to do.

“T-this area is forbidden”

“P-put your hands up! Put your hands up!”

All they could do is say whatever was on their minds.

But what came next were words that made the heads of the Mek Guild hunters go blank.

“Please don’t shoot me!”

[TLN: This line was in English]

4.

“So you’re telling me that the lot of you decided to forego the Manual because the other party spoke English? You guys are great, absolutely great.”

Hearing Chang Sung Hoon’s thorny words, the five hunters tucked their heads.

‘For these hunters who were able to withstand a monster’s Fear but then crumple under some words in English..... they should have been taught English for twelve years, yet they can’t use it in practice.’

Chang Sung Hoon laughed while grasping his head.

‘Damn it.’

Chang Sung Hoon quickly grasped the situation.

There were survivors from Incheon International Airport that had emerged from hiding. It was an unexpected occurrence, and it was only natural that the hunters would panic. The deciding factor for them was the English that came out of one of the survivor’s mouth.

‘Will we need to make learning English a compulsory subject for the soldiers?’

Eventually, the hunters broke rank and one of them ran towards Kim Tae Hoon and Chang Sung Hoon who were resting in the VIP Lounge.

It was absurd.

If the survivors had malicious intentions, then a huge accident could have happened.

Chang Sung Hoon's expression crumpled.

'But more importantly, is this good or bad?'

But the more frustrating thing was the fact that the survivor in question was Kate Kennedy, the daughter of the US Ambassador to Korea, the very same person that the survivors were currently looking for.

But to be honest, Chang Sung Hoon had no intention of actually trying to weigh the situation.

'Would it be ok to just hand her over to Capital Defense Command and take the relic?'

The Mek Guild's deal with the Capital Defense Command to rescue Kate Kennedy in exchange for a national treasure hadn't been nulled.

However, the deal itself was plagued with political manipulation and conspiracies.

No matter what, it would never be a simple exchange.

Regardless, leaving Kate Kennedy as is wouldn't be a very intelligent or safe decision. In the end, Capital Defense Command was looking for her.

Her intentions were important as well.

‘What should we do if she causes problems?’

There would be problems if she wanted to go to Seoul for her own purposes and willfully refused to listen to orders from the Mek Guild.

How would they deal with her if she were to act out like that? Would they need to bloody her face and keep her silent so that nobody would be able to recognize her? The daughter of the US Ambassador to Korea?

Of all the people that Kim Tae Hoon had met thus far, she was the only one with such political weight.

There was no precedent, so making a decision was not easy.

‘What would Boss decide to do?’

If it were Kim Tae Hoon, he would have already weighed the choices and come to a conclusion.

‘No, rather than that, is this alright?’

It was like torture.

‘If he was like me, then he would have torn out his hair by now……’

This fourth death was the most miserable death that Kim Tae Hoon ever experienced thus far.

If the third death was a physically painful death, then the fourth death was a mentally painful death.

All of his deaths until now had given rise to new answers, but this fourth death gave rise to more regret than answers.

The bucket list was basically just a collection of tags that told the story of Kim Tae Hoon’s life.

In the case of such desperate experiences, it was essential to make judgements about these new problems and take responsibility for those judgements.

‘There definitely needs someone to make choices on behalf of Boss.’

Chang Sung Hoon felt that there needed to be a person in a similar position to Kim Tae Hoon and make choices on his behalf.

Meanwhile, he was able to understand one of the three listings on the bucket list left behind by the future Kim Tae Hoon.

‘Cho Sungyeon, it said to make him president, right?’

5.

“There is a secret bunker at Incheon International Airport. The other survivors and I have been living there until now.”

Kate Kennedy was a typical white skinned, blonde haired beauty.

She had large blue eyes, long eyelashes, dazzling blonde hair, and a figure like that of a model’s.

But to the current Kim Tae Hoon, she was not just a beautiful person.

‘So there was a secret bunker here.’

He had realized that there was some reason why the survivors, including Kate Kennedy, survived in Incheon International Airport.

Incheon International Airport had a secret bunker.

‘It would have been strange if there wasn’t one.’

It wasn’t unusual.

Incheon International Airport was one of the most frequented airports in South Korea.

Any member of the parliament or any other high ranking figure would always use the Incheon International Airport to go abroad.

Considering such factors, it wouldn't have been strange to make a secret bunker.

On top of that, those people who would most likely use that bunker didn't pay a single penny out of their pockets. It was from a country tax.

In fact, it wasn't very strange for even a foreigner like the daughter of the US Ambassador to Korea to know of its location as well.

And then afterwards, she and the survivors approached Kim Tae Hoon of their own accord.

'For now, we've the cards in our hands.'

Anyways, from this moment on, they were in their palms.

Kim Tae Hoon had no intentions of ignoring that fact, and at the same time, he had no intentions of showing mercy to those cards that had been placed atop the palm of his hand.

‘We need to find a way to make the most of this situation.’

They needed to draw the maximum profit possible from these cards.

Kim Tae Hoon blatantly looked at the card that was Kate Kennedy.

Kate Kennedy couldn’t help but feel uncomfortable from head to toe.

‘Hm?’

Kim Tae Hoon grabbed Kate Kennedy’s right wrist. Kim Tae Hoon used the Black Snake’s Evil Eye at the same time.

“Ggyak!”

Kate Kennedy screamed as she tried to free her hand from Kim Tae Hoon’s grip.

Even though Kim Tae Hoon’s strength had been bolstered by consuming the Twin Headed Ogre’s monster stone, Kate Kennedy was able to successfully shake off Kim Tae Hoon’s hand.

It was true that Kim Tae Hoon had restrained his strength because he had regarded Kate Kennedy as a normal woman and

was worried about breaking her wrist, but his grip wasn't something that a normal person could just shake off.

That was proof.

"W-what are you doing! Are you crazy?"

It was proof that she was an Awakened.

'Energy rank..... A Rank?'

It was proof that she was an incredible Awakened.

6.

Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun.

Although you couldn't say that it was good, the road was still at least in an improved condition so that they could drive on it without too much concern.

Driving.

It was an action that had come about after humans invented the car, and it was something that had become an aspect of everyday life for humans. Despite that, Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun driving for dozens of minutes without rest was still something

unusual.

It was a wonder that he had been able to press down on the acceleration pedal for such a long time.

The world was just like that.

It was a world where there were no clear roads to drive on and no space to drive off road.

A world where the ground no longer belonged to man.

‘They did it through any means necessary.’

In other words, this drive was the results of a struggle.

The fact that humans had reclaimed this land once more.

But of course, he wasn’t talking about humanity as a whole.

‘The Mek Guild has eaten Incheon.’

In that struggle, the Mek Guild had won, so naturally, the Mek Guild had the rights to claim that land.

That was only the beginning of the problem.

‘Capital Defense Command wouldn’t be so keen on admitting that.’

The Capital Defense Command considered all of South Korea as their land. And of course, Incheon was still a part of Korea.

As such, they wouldn’t easily recognize the Mek Guild’s sovereignty over Incheon.

‘This is my mission.’

It was Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun’s job to receive this recognition.

Since the Mek Guild had a grasp of Incheon, the voice and power of Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun would increase given his close relationship with the Mek Guild.

‘It would be difficult, but it would also be worth it.’

At the time of the negotiations, it would be likely that Capital Defense Command would acquiesce to the Mek Guild’s possession of Incheon.

‘There’s no reason for it not to work.’

In the current day, Capital Defense Command’s power was

focused on the north.

It wouldn't be easy for their forces to quickly go to Gangnam. It was because the majority of the bridges over the Hangang River connecting Gangbuk and Gangnam together had already collapsed.

In their current situation, it would be impossible for Capital Defense Command to dispatch troops to take control of Incheon.

If it were possible, the Mek Guild would have never even had the chance to occupy Incheon in the first place.

On top of that, Capital Defense Command simply didn't have the time to worry about Incheon.

'At least once they're informed of the fact that the armored infantry is fighting on the frontlines, even if it's a little, they'll place their attention there.'

Frontlines.

It was where the majority of the South Korean army was located and also where the 8th Division's remaining power was being absorbed by the Korean Army's power.

'Colonel Lim Hyunjoon had eaten and cleared out the 8th Division?'

He wasn’t even the 8th division commander. He had heard that Colonel Lim Hyunjoon had accomplished it.

In the case of the Capital Defense Command, there was only one card they could use to reverse the situation: claiming legitimacy with the president or prime minister; but they had no such card.

Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun tried to organize the confusing information in his mind.

‘Afterall, the rise of a new government and military are inevitable.’

In fact, the current government and military were already on the decline.

It would have been strange to even wish for the status quo to be maintained when both the president and prime minister were missing with nobody available to play the role of either positions.

Eventually, a new order will be established, and the new order will be put into the hands of those who had obtained the best results.

“We’ve arrived.”

At the end of the soldier’s report, Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun got off the military truck and raised his head to look at the scene before him.

Songdo LNG production plant.

A source of renewable energy, something far more valuable than gold.

Looking at the scene before him, Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun stepped forward.

‘Major Kim Tae Hoon…… he was someone I thought would be forgotten in the annals of history, but his path down the history is still long.’

To meet someone who would lead the new order.

7.

“We have secured Kate Kennedy.”

The conversation was one-sided.

“But I will not report it to Capital Defense Command. I wish to hide that fact.”

Kim Tae Hoon and Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun engaged in a conversation of great political impact right then and there.

No, rather, it was a one-sided notification more than a conversation.

“From now on, Kate Kennedy will be nothing more than a hunter of the Mek Guild.”

There was proof that Kim Tae Hoon was someone looking at the situation with a level head.

He had caught the Twin Headed Ogre.

And it was all done alone at that.

Kim Tae Hoon had accomplished something that Capital Defense Command could only accomplish with a few helicopters, fire arms, and their ace Oh Saebum.

It was proof.

Proof of the fact that one would pay a major price should they underestimate the enemy.

Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun was a sword that Kim Tae Hoon would wield against Capital Defense Command.

The master of a sword does not speak to his sword. All he needs to do is swing the sword.

“Please arrange a meeting with Colonel Lim Hyunjoon of the armored infantry unit.”

But if the owner were to recklessly swing the sword, then problems would arise.

“That..... “

“There is no greater threat than one that sits outside your door.”

Hearing what Kim Tae Hoon said, Lieutenant Colonel Yoon Daehyun wanted to ask how the hell did he knew that.

But, that question would have been pointless.

No matter how Kim Tae Hoon answered that question, there would be no way for Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun to verify the veracity of his answer.

“.....amazing.”

Because of that, Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun only asked the questions with relevant answers.

“Then what’ll be your next destination?”

“I’m going to head towards Buyeo.”

“Buyeo? For what reason?”

The moment Lieutenant Colonel Yoo Daehyun asked, the words ‘Buyeo National Museum’ came to mind.

“Ah.”

He sighed and gave a light warning.

“It would be dangerous. I’ve sent several men on multiple occasions for the purposes of scavenging, but not even one has ever returned.”

Hearing his warning, Kim Tae Hoon took a look at his left hand.

[Basic Abilities]

– Strength : 501

– Stamina : 299

[Special Abilities]

– Energy : B-Rank

– Mana : C+ Rank

– Telekinesis : A Rank

– Physical Defense : B-Rank

– Magic Resistance : C+ Rank

[Acquired Abilities]

– Twin Headed Ogre's Herculean Strength(4th Grade) : Grants the user the ability to exert the tremendous strength that the Twin Headed Ogre possessed.

Kim Tae Hoon replied whilst looking at his hand.

"That is why I will be going. It shouldn't take too long. So if you may, please arrange an appointment with Colonel Lim Hyunjoon for me in June please.

The appointment date absolutely must not exceed July."

By the time their conversation ended, a distant truck slowly approached them.

There was no driver.

Hoisted on the truck was the enormous, boundlessly ugly head of a monster.

“It’s one of the heads of the Twin Headed Ogre. It’s my gift to Capital Defense Command. The remaining head will be kept in my possession to be turned into a monumental souvenir.”

Chapter 68 – To Buyeo (1)

The monsters have taken away many things from mankind. They took away the lives of thousands of people, they took away food and shelter, and they took away people's livelihoods.

And light, they took away light.

The nights had become pitch black ever since the advent of monsters.

If the progress of civilization were to be measured by the brightness of the night, then mankind had regressed into the distant past.

However, even in such a world, there was a place where a fire burned bright, like a lone firefly in the darkness of the night.

"Euh, well let's start then."

"Let's hurry up and finish, the nights are still pretty chilly."

"Come on, let's finish and have some soju over ramen or something."

"I applied for the night shift just for that. I have to work until dawn, but then I get to have soju and ramen, and I get to wake up in the afternoon with relaxed eyes, I'm telling you this is like

paradise.”

“Paradise eh……”

Bucheon.

The nights were not dark there.

There were makeshift street lights brightening up the streets, giving the night time an air of hope, not solitude and silence.

The citizens had the opportunity to see the night sky.

“Ah, there are so many stars.”

“You’re right. This is the first time I’ve learned there were so many stars above Bucheon.”

“Of course there were originally many stars. It’s just, I’ve never been able to see them like this.”

The pollution created by factories and cars that blocked off the skies had dispersed and revealed the sky.

Such a beautiful sky detracted from the doom and gloom of the end of the world.

The starry sky filled those who looked up with a sense of excitement.

Kim Tae Hoon and Chang Sung Hoon had returned to Bucheon on a good night where the starlight was clear.

Quietly, calmly.

Like that, only Ahn Sunmi and Bang Hyun Wook came out to meet the two in the dead of the night.

The two of them were ecstatic to meet them.

“Welcome..... huk!”

The two of them suddenly noticed the blonde haired, blue eyed, and fair skinned beauty blinking her eyes behind Kim Tae Hoon and Chang Sung Hoon.

“W-who is she?”

“Who is that person?”

The answer came from the mouth of Chang Sung Hoon, not Kim Tae Hoon.

“Oh, this person is the Boss’ first wife. A wife. She’ll be sister-in-

law to Hyun Wook and madam to Sunmin noonim. “

The two of them were surprised at Chang Sung Hoon’s answer, but Kim Tae Hoon lightly smacked the back of Chang Sung Hoon’s head with his Telekinesis.

Kim Tae Hoon then made a formal introduction.

“Her name is Kate Kennedy, and she’ll be our hostage for now.”

Hearing Kim Tae Hoon’s explanation, Bang Hyun Wook and Ahn Sunmi’s expressions showed that they were confused. Scratching his head, Chang Sung Hoon spoke up.

“Boss didn’t I tell you? Wife is better than hostage.”

Kim Tae Hoon then began to relay the conversation he had with Kate Kennedy.

2.

Kim Tae Hoon explained to Kate Kennedy what had happened to the world during the time she spent in the secret bunker.

The world became a giant monster’s lair and the survivors were forced into a life and death struggle with the monsters in order to survive.

Hearing that, Kate Kennedy asked a question about her dad.

“Do you know where my father is?”

“Although I haven’t seen the US Director to South Korea, I’ve been told that he’s under the protection of Capital Defense Command which is located in Seoul.”

“Then I’ll head there. Please, guide me there.”

It was a natural thing for Kate Kennedy to say.

In addition to her wanting to see her family, she was also the ambassador’s daughter.

“Impossible.”

However, Kim Tae hoon rejected her request.

“Why? Is the path there dangerous?”

“You are now a card we need to take advantage of in order to get a better position during negotiations.”

“What kind of……”

“Simply put, you’re like a hostage.”

In addition, Kim Tae Hoon hadn't made a friendly expression or given a friendly explanation.

Kate Kennedy had the impression that Kim Tae Hoon was joking, but looking into his eyes, she could tell that he was being serious.

He was being serious.

Kate was just that important to Kim Tae Hoon.

Having her meant that they could sit at a negotiations table with the US ambassador.

On top of that, she was an unexpendable human resource far more precious than gold as she possessed an Energy rank of A.

'A Rank is something you can't reach simply by hunting monsters and eating monster stones.'

Kim Tae Hoon had personally eaten many monster stones until now.

Despite that, Kim Tae Hoon's Telekinesis had not budged from A rank.

The existence of an A Rank ability was proof that it wasn't something that could simply be obtained by eating monsters.

There was a chance that A Rank was limited only to an artifact's rank.

Coming into possession of monster stones, relics, and A Rank Awakened would allow a power to defeat all foes in the upcoming war for the future.

'Additionally, for an A rank Energy..... it means that she could handle a blue ranked monster's Fear.'

Additionally, Kim Tae Hoon was in sore need of another A Ranked Awakened.

Energy was definitely a counter against a monster's Fear.

It was definitely in high demand.

However, it seemed like a higher level of Energy would be needed to face off against stronger monsters.

Kim Tae Hoon needed Kate Kennedy.

If need be, he would restrain her.

'Handing her over to Capital Defense Command would only be helping my enemies.'

It was the same for Capital Defense Command.

The more precious Kate Kennedy was to the US Ambassador, the more valuable her worth was.

The US Ambassador was not a fool, in fact it was quite the opposite. Even if the armed forces were in possession of powerful weapons and relics, he would become well aware of their limitations when fighting against stronger monsters.

It was the same for Kim Tae Hoon.

If he had the ability to oppose the monster's Fear, then he wouldn't have spent so much time picking off wandering orcs and displaying such a troublesome thing as a show of arms before fighting against the Twin Headed Ogre.

He had no choice but to exercise a show of arms.

Kim Tae Hoon went through multiple scenarios in his head regarding how the USFK would handle things in South Korea. He considered the USFK getting on good terms with at least a B-Rank Ranker in order to deal with green rank monsters.

'The USFK would be able, and willing to, set up a new government in South Korea if necessary.'

Among the numerous scenarios, there was one where a new regime would rise to replace the pre-existing one.

The longer it takes, the greater the influence the US would have on the entirety of South Korea and the USFK.

Above all, Kim Tae Hoon saw.

The Angel of Death, an AC-130 Gunship, one of the symbols of demise owned by the US Army, had launched a flare towards Kim Tae Hoon.

‘Even if they didn’t have relics, the United States is the United States.’

It was definitely difficult to see the United States as a place with many relics.

Places such as Europe where many civilizations sprang up from; places where worldwide religions began like Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism; and other places with roots from the start of the world would outclass others when it came to relics.

Despite that, it wasn’t like the United States couldn’t be considered to be strong.

Those who desire to begin a new regime while securing relics and recruiting Awakened would be the first to ally themselves with the United States.

If there is only one bride yet multiple bridegrooms, then the only result would be war.

It would be foolish to only look at the USFK in Korea.

‘It would be a different story if the US forces in Japan move into Korea.’

It was essential to look at the USFK’s movements alongside the US armed forces in Japan.

No, rather, who knows if Korea was the biggest point of contention at the moment.

Throughout the history of the Korean Peninsula, wasn’t the power that showed a mad obsession with taking over the peninsula none other than Japan?

Should Japan come out on top against the monsters, then a slight increase in power would be all they need to go attack Korea.

On top of that, the United States Forces Japan (USFJ) possessed firepower that the USFK couldn’t compare to.

The reasons why Kim Tae Hoon should keep Kate Kennedy as a hostage were overflowing.

“When you say hostage, what do you mean.”

Kate was oblivious about the crucial role she played in this intricate web of politics.

On top of that, Kim Tae Hoon didn’t explain to her what her position was like either.

“I have no choice if I want to survive.”

Hearing what Kim Tae Hoon said, Kate’s eyes widened and her face paled.

She looked like she was about to cry. Her big blue eyes began to well up with tears.

“If it’s to survive, then I’ll do anything I can.”

However, Kim Tae Hoon didn’t fall for her act.

Kim Tae Hoon knew that she wasn’t someone who would act like this given the situation.

The position of US Ambassador to South Korea wasn’t a simple seat that could be given to just anyone who knew a bit about politics.

It was a position responsible for responding to North Korea whose funding was provided for by China and Russia.

It was of course a dangerous place.

The ambassador was constantly under the threat of terrorist attack, kidnapping, and assassination.

“So stop with the act. A blonde haired beauty asking for help while sobbing isn’t going to work,”

If she really didn’t know what the word hostage meant, then she wasn’t qualified to be here in the first place.

Hearing that, Kate Kennedy’s countenance made a drastic change.

She let out a long sigh and mussed up her beautiful hair.

“The world really turned into a hell.”

She complained to Kim Tae Hoon.

“Fine, I’ll cooperate with you, but in exchange, guarantee my safety.”

Kim Tae Hoon replied.

“I can’t guarantee your safety, but I will try my best to keep you safe.”

“That’s an oath I was hoping to hear from my husband. So then, what do you plan to do now?”

“Move to Bucheon and pick up some items, then we’ll head to Buyeo.”

“Buyeo?”

“Yes, the two of us.”

“Huh?”

Their conversation ended there.

That was all they shared between the two of them.

3.

Namsan Tower.

A crowd of people that the Namsan Tower hadn’t seen in a long time had begun to gather.

“Careful! Be careful!”

“Stop! Stop!”

A modified forklift was lifting a giant monster’s head from inside a truck as soldiers in military outfits helped out.

There were others looking at the scene from a distance away.

They were all wearing military uniforms, the stars on their shoulders twinkling in the light.

“Its eyes are green.”

They were the heavyweights of the current Capital Defense Command.

“Its name?”

The one to speak up was Lieutenant General of the Capital Defense Command, Lee Hyeok.

“Green ranked monster, Twin Headed Ogre sir.”

The next to speak was Brigadier General Yoon Seokyoung.

“What if we were to compare it to the monster we killed last

time?”

“There isn’t too big of a difference.”

Even Major General Lee Gisu was present.

It was a literal meeting of the stars.

“There isn’t a big difference. Is that the truth?”

There was a man who possessed less stars than everyone else, but possessed a brighter appearance than everyone else.

“Major Oh Saebum, what are your thoughts?”

Major Oh Saebum.

Oh Saebum replied to Lieutenant General Lee Hyeok with a serious expression on his face. Lieutenant General Lee Hyeok was the current commander of the Capital Defense Command and was, in fact, the absolute commander of the survivors in the capital of South Korea, Seoul.

“Yes, I believe so. There isn’t a large difference between the two.”

“It would have been simple to have just sent you, but because

they gave a strange guy a chance, the situation has become much more complicated.”

Everyone kept their mouths closed as Lieutenant General Lee Hyeok finished saying his piece.

None of them wanted the responsibility to be tacked onto them.

The one to speak up at that moment was Major General Lee Gisu.

“Regardless, he’s nothing but a hunting hound. The issue is throwing him away after we’ve used him. It’s not an urgent matter, what’s more important is the Armored Infantry Unit.”

Lieutenant General Lee Hyeok nodded his head as he leave from his spot.

The other stars followed after him.

A man who had been near Oh Saebum approached the spot where the stars had left.

He was Colonel Chang Sogook of the military police.

Seeing him, Major Oh Saebum made a heavy expression.

“Colonel-nim, when are you going to take care of that punk?”

Hearing his pointed question, Colonel Chang Sogook did not respond kindly.

“Now’s not the time to worry about Kim Tae Hoon.

If we don’t deal with the Armored Infantry division, Seoul will be in great danger. The road from Gangnam to Gangbuk is blocked, but the road from the frontlines to Gangbuk is overflowing. The troops at the frontlines are a given, but the power of just the 8th Mechanized Division is more than enough to completely take over Seoul.”

“Ah, yes sir.”

In response to Colonel Chang Sogook, Major Oh Saebum spit out some angry words.

He was whining.

It didn’t suit a soldier to do so.

But despite that, Colonel Chang Sogook did not admonish Major Oh Saebum’s foolish actions.

He didn’t act like a soldier in the first place.

“Of course, it’s not something that you need to concern yourself

with in the first place.

According to Mr. Mao's letter, he should be supporting us with relics soon."

"What kind of relics?"

"Should be grade 2 relics."

"What is its name?"

"He called it the Jade Dragon Ancient Wine Vessel. He said he would be willing to give us other artifacts. The bird should arrive back soon. You'll be the one to receive it when it comes."

"That's to be expected. Then what should we do with it then?"

"You can do whatever you want."

Major Oh Saebum's unsightly expression finally loosened up after he heard what the colonel said.

"Yes sir."

Lisa's Notes:

As noted by another translation group, the next chapter is 70. So there's no chapter 69, per se.

(the story continues at 70 though, so you miss nothing)

Chapter 70 – To Bueyo (2)

While Kim Tae-Hoon was active in Incheon-si and brought about many changes to the city, there were also many changes in Bucheon-si.

The most notable change was none other than the start of the cultivation of farmlands.

The results from the cultivated land, connecting the Han River and Goolpocheon over the winter, began to show little by little as spring arrived

“It has finally begun.”

“The first year of farming has begun.”

The harvest will not immediately provide self-sufficient quantity to the survivors, but securing farmlands and starting the cultivation will minimally provide a faint hope for the future.

“Now, let’s go to Incheon!”

“Let’s depart!”

Also, the manufacturing for additional solar panels, using the left over materials from the Kwangmyung-si Solar Panel production factory, has begun, and the tanker trucks, drivers, and the needed

technicians to move the stored LNG, from the Songdo LNG storage center, began to operate as the occupation of Incheon-si has completed.

“We’re headed for the Siheung-si! Let us capture some monsters!”

Seven clans were already active in and around the Guild of Mek, and going beyond Kwangmyung-si and Incheon-si, they began to expand their territories in to the cities of Kimpo and Siheung.

Also, medical systems began to align quite quickly.

The temporary hospital, which An Sun-mi was running, was being transformed into a mature operation, as it began to use university facilities, helped by many doctors and nurses, and consistent production of electricity.

From being an errand person just a few months ago, An Sun-mi has become the new owner of the university hospital.

Through facility expansion and power supply, more professional and systematic workshops were being produced.

Flood of Items began to be manufactured by altering the Items of the dead monsters and acquired relics.

All final products were verified by the quantity of the Monster stones that are held by the Guild of Mek.

“Does all of that have to be eaten for real?”

Or it was possible to verify by the quantity of the stones that Kim Tae-Hoon had to eat.

“Of course.”

40 percent.

Contracts that Kim Tae-Hoon signed, with other hunters under the Guild of Mek, were still valid.

The 40 percent of the collected Monster stones during Kim-Tae-Hoon’s absence from Bucheon-si, by the hunters belonging to various parties and clans under the guise of the Guild of Mek, automatically belonged to Kim Tae-Hoon.

That was not a small amount.

Enough to fill up a back-pack with 30 liter capacity!

“This world really feels like Hell.”

Definitely for Kim Tae-Hoon, who was eating, but Kate was also feeling equally troubled, just from watching him.

“It will get even more hellish going forward.”

The thing that troubled Kate the most was the fact that she had to travel to Buyeo with Kim Tae-Hoon.

Kim Tae-Hoon’s reason for bringing Kate to Buyeo was simple.

Kate holds the A-ranked energy. Although her strength and stamina levels are low, not that many will be able to confront her, when and if, she is in a rampage.

This means, in order to put a surveillance on her, we need someone with the comparable level of mind controlling capability as that of Bang Hyun-Wook’s, but he also has a lot on his plate. During the absence of Kim Tae-Hoon, Bang Hyun-Wook is the spiritual leader of the Guild of Mek.

Furthermore, Bang Hyun-Wook is good at protecting someone, but he has never done any surveillance work before.

“It would have been much easier for you if you had just left me in Bucheon-si—-.”

Ultimately, it was better for Kim Tae-Hoon to bring her along, for her safety as well as for the purpose of surveillance.

Another reason was that Kate is not simply a hostage, but a very important human resource for Kim Tae-Hoon.

“East direction, approximately 300 meters, it’s an Ork.”

There were obvious reasons for Kim Tae-Hoon to groom Kate as a hunter.

A very competent hunter, that is.

“A single sword is the only weapon.”

Kim Tae-Hoon threw a sword as he spoke. It was not a special sword.

“Aren’t you asking for too much by asking me to capture it using a kitchen knife?”

A kitchen Knife.

It was an ordinary kitchen knife that you will easily find in stores.

“You should give me a gun or something at least to face a Monster

In fact, he gave a gun initially.

It was a known knowledge for everyone that using a gun

effectively than a knife is much more helpful when it comes to reinforcing combat power.

However, when Kate quietly recited “is this M5949?” immediately after inspecting the aim and the magazine upon handing a K5 automatic pistol, made him rethink about presenting her with a gun again.

It was obvious to him.

She was a person, who had fully enjoyed the given ownership rights of firearms in America, where gun ownership rights are protected, and that she has had experience of firing guns more than once or twice.

Since then, Kim Tae-Hoon taught her how to handle a sword rather than a gun.

“If you don’t like it, hire a law firm to sue me, or find a gun to use yourself.”

“You are too witty.”

“Thanks to the person that I hang around with.”

“Very good English. Your ability must have been much better than I had thought?”

“200 meters.”

Kim Tae-Hoon alerted to the location rather than giving a reply, and Kate peevishly spoke.

“I prefer to be informed in yards than in meters.”

“190 meters.”

She let out a long sigh as she looked on to the Suwon Kwangmyung Highway that has become a cemetery for vehicles.

‘I shall adapt for now.’

She was not a dummy.

At this moment in time, she knew very well that playing a pretty dumb blind with Kim Tae-Hoon will not work, imposing the fact she is the US Ambassador’s daughter will not even mildly change anything, or attempting to sway him with her peevishly charming ways will not change anything.

At the same time, she realized that it was also an opportunity.

At any rate, Kim Tae-Hoon was teaching her the knowledge of how to hunt Monsters and how to survive in this world.

He was giving her the education at no charge that could never be purchased with all the money in the world.

In many ways, it was the best strategy to go along with Kim Tae-Hoon, rather than trying to play a useless ruse in this situation.

Of all the things, she had potential.

‘Gut power.’

A potential that was incomparable to others’.

She trusted that potential.

‘I can always make a chance with this power.’

And with that potential as the basis for a project, she conceived a game.

‘No formal training, I see.’

Kim Tae-Hoon closed his blackened eyes.

Kim Tae-Hoon imagined Kate, catching her breath as she put her foot on top of the Ork’s carcass.

‘She learned to fight as a hobby.’

She was rather a good fighter.

Jujitsu, boxing..... to put it in short terms, her experience included often going to a MMF gym.

In other words, that was all there was.

It did not appear that she had any formal training in the military.

It was as if she had learned, from her veteran father, the minimal, necessary skills needed to protect her-self

'Perhaps that's better.'

From Kim Tae-Hoon's perspective, that was preferable.

If she had acquired professional, expert level skills, it was more than likely that she would need to go through a process of unlearning those practices.

What humanity has created over time, in terms of fighting techniques, has limited effectiveness against the Monsters.

For instance, jujitsu or boxing wouldn't be effective against monsters like a double headed Ogre.

Having the will and the skill level to counter against incoming attacks and be able to protect oneself are sufficient.

‘Energy is beyond imagination.’

On the other hand, the power of Kate’s A-rank energy was simply incredible.

‘Strength level is at most 15, however, fighting ability comes as close to that of second lieutenant Kim Soo-Ji’s.

Energy reinforces the physical ability. Higher the basic ability, strength, and stamina, higher the effectiveness of the energy is.

To put it in another way, if strength and stamina levels are low, the level of reinforcement of physical ability is also low.

Kate’s current combined strength and stamina level is at 25, which is expected as she had never eaten a Monster stone.

Despite all this, Kate’s energy has demonstrated that the strength of her ability is already way over 100, reaching close proximity to Kim Soo-Ji’s energy rank of D+ as well.

Compared to the growth of Lieut. Kim Soo-Ji’s ability, which she has attained through continuous training and combat, it was an unbelievable potential.

If her strength and stamina levels were to rise, her combat ability will reach beyond one's imagination.

'Her sense of controlling the energy is well above that of Bang Hyun-Wook's.

On top of this, there is a good harmony between her energy and the relics.

The force of the Grand General's sword and Soon-Sin's flesh will rise higher immediately if the user's energy rank is higher.

'Also like the fact that she is cunning.'

At the same time, she is intelligent.

'Her spinning her head and the fact that I can see it is her blemish though.'

She studies her surroundings and searches for landmarks that she can reference in order to return in the future, all the while she is cooperative with Kim Tae-Hoon, are the proofs.

Kim Tae-Hoon recognized those signs. Although Kate is accommodative for now, she will be always ready to bolt when given an opportunity.

'That's better than a foolish doll.'

It was better from Kim Tae-Hoon's perspective.

There is not a complete manual for a war against the Monsters, nor precedence. Ad hoc decisions will determine the outcome of life or death situations.

Kim Tae-Hoon opened his eyes as he finished his thoughts.

A road sign came into Kim Tae-Hoon's vision. The sign informed him of the short, remaining distance to Soowon-si.

'Soowon.'

Presently, Soowon-si was being occupied by yellow grade monster, Three-Heads and green grade monster, Hanjari.

There was nothing to be concerned about those monsters.

At this moment, yellow grade monsters are no match for Kim Tae-Hoon and he can easily determine his chances of defeating green grade monsters, depending on the situations.

The problem lied beyond that.

'We should reach Saejong-si in 3 days if we move fast.'

Once we reach Cheonan-si via Kyungboo Express Way, we will travel on Nonsan-Cheonan Express Way.

Then we'll naturally pass thru Saejong-si.

'Blue grade.'

That was the area where the blue grade monsters, which he has never encountered, are being coiled in.

That's what Kim Tae-Hoon was concerned about.

Bang!

A mere sound of a gun fire at this juncture did not alarm Kim Tae-Hoon at this, such a moment.

Chapter 71 – To Buyeo (3)

"Is it over?"

Kate was glad to see Kim Tae-Hoon, returning from his lengthy absence.

Then she immediately inquired.

"Wow, how is it possible that you are able to fly?"

She appeared to be more amazed than anything to have witnessed Kim Tae-Hoon's ability to fly. Putting aside any chances of making dashing attempts to escape, she couldn't even fathom the thought of escaping from Kim Tae-Hoon, only because she may want to learn the skill.

To inquiring Kate, Kim Tae-Hoon responded tersely.

"Well."

"Do laser beams come out of your eyes by any chance?"

He did not even acknowledge any subsequent questions from her.

Instead, Kim Tae-Hoon focused his energy onto the Gandol Sword that he had brought back.

Rrrr!

Then immediately, there appeared a beaming yellowish blade from the Gandol Sword.

“Wow! Jedi!”

Before Kate who was in awe, Kim Tae-Hoon swung the Gandol Sword down at a midsized vehicle that was close by.

Shook!

The sharp blade instantly cut the vehicle in half, starting from the top of the roof.

Seeing such a powerful visual, Kate failed to be even bewildered by it. Rather, her pupils began to weakly shake about as if she was astonished by the forceful, frightening scene.

The power had such a frightening affect.

Kim Tae-Hoon stared at the Gandol Sword that he held in his hand.

‘The power is great.’

Kim Tae-Hoon's present energy rank is level-B. It is certainly not a low level.

At Kim Tae-Hoon's present energy and strength levels, it was possible to bend and reshape a vehicle, as if it was a piece of paper, with his bare hands.

However, to instantly cut a vehicle cleanly in half is all together a different story.

More than anything, this is not the only Gandol Sword around.

As far as Kim Tae-Hoon knows, Buyeo National Museum currently holds several tens of Gandol Swords.

'Should a gang of hunters arm themselves with such Gandol Swords....'

Furthermore, according to Jang Sung-Hoon, Buyeo National Museum is holding Half-moon Swords as well as bronze swords.

If they have all become relics, the power would be well beyond anyone's imagination.

That's where Kim Tae-Hoon ceased his thoughts.

"Hey!"

His first priority, at this moment, was to shush up this limpid, blue-eyed and very curious adolescent girl.

“Please tell me what happened! What the heck is that? Laser beam sort of sword?”

Kim Tae-Hoon threw a few words at Kate, who was demanding answers.

“We are going to tear up the Monster now.”

“What?”

“I will if you don’t want to. Then the Monster stone is mine.”

“Wait, please.”

Only then did Kate stop talking and change her demeanor. She stared sharply at Kim Tae-Hoon with much resentment.

Of course that was only for a brief moment.

Crunching some numbers briefly in her head, Kate turned around and walked towards the Ork that she had captured.

Hmm!

While Kate was wrestling the Ork with a butcher knife, Kim Tae-Hoon continued his thoughts.

‘Gilt Incense Burner, with which the Monsters are made.’

The very first thing that had filled his thoughts was what the guy had mentioned about the Gilt Incense-Burner, just before he died.

There aren’t that many things in this world, where the expression of gilt incense-burner was fitting.

Let alone, to be using the expression of the gilt incense-burner by a man, holding a Gandol Sword, would be very unique in Korea.

‘Is it the Gilt-Bronze Incense Burner of Baekjae?’

National Treasure Number 287, Gilt-Bronze Incense Burner of Baekjae.

It is a great artwork.

From a far, it looks like an ordinary incense burner, but up close, one can realize that it is not a simple incense burner.

A one-headed dragon is holding the peak of a lotus leaf by its teeth, and a phoenix stood rising aloft at the peak of the lotus leaf.

The lotus leaf was a representation of the Three Gods Mountain, where perennial Taoist hermits live, and ingrained with variety of fortunes and animals along with five performers playing five musical instruments.

‘Make Monsters?’

Nonetheless, the dead guy had indicated that the Monsters are made with the Gilt Incense-Burner.

It wasn’t certain whether it actually makes monsters or turn people into monsters.

Anything could be possible.

‘Dragon and Phoenix.’

And if the incense-burner is used for summoning Monsters then it would be a cause for much headache.

Kim Tae-Hoon ceased his imagination about the Baekjae’s Gilt-Bronze Incense Burner at that point.

The fact that the item has been taken by the Messiah clan was more important to him at the moment.

Kim Tae-Hoon frowned as he thought about that fact.

‘The Messiah Clan, again.’

It was also Messiah this time around.

It was irritable as this was the third time.

As any repetitious event does not signal coincidence, the use of the name Messiah, by itself, was telling about the clan’s characteristics.

In reality, any normal group will not call itself a messiah.

An abnormal group is more likely to call itself a messiah in order to normalize its existence and actions.

Any bastard that uses messiah as the group title will not be a good person.

It would not be different either this time.

If the Buyeo’s Messiah Clan stood for justice and peace as the name may suggest, no human, holding the invaluable relic such as the Gandol Sword, wouldn’t need to put his life on the line and travel to Seoul.

Furthermore, the last words, which the dying man had said out of his last breath, wouldn’t be ‘please help save my family’.

What's for certain at last....

'What's certain is that he had the potential energy to survive in this hellish world.'

Having established, Buyeo's Messiah Clan had the power, the license to survive within this Monster infested world,

"It's done."

That's when soaked in blood, Kate appeared before Kim Tae-Hoon. She held a butcher's knife in her left hand as blood dripped down, a jewel in her right hand, and had blood splattered all over her face.

Kim Tae-Hoon stoically stared at Kate.

Kate frowned in response to him, looking at her.

"I did what you told me to do, isn't that good?"

"I said nothing."

"Ah, that's...."

While Kate hesitated, Kim Tae-Hoon removed his back pack that he was carrying on his back and removed a thick, half transparent

vinyl rap. The rap was full of crimson jewel like a candy bag.

It was hard to even guess the number of jewels.

Kate swallowed as she looked upon them.

Her mouth had watered.

Not because Monster stones taste delicious.

Finally, she learned what it would be like to gain strength through Monster stones.

That's what made her mouth water.

"There are 255 Monster stones right now."

Kim Tae-Hoon let Kate know the exact number of the Monster stones.

"Are you teasing me now?"

She took Kim Tae-Hoon's words as if he was toying with her. Her countenance has changed to frowning.

"I'll give them all to you."

“What?”

Chapter 72 – Messiah VS Messiah

The evening was rather warm.

It was now warm enough to even spend the evenings outside in the verdant field.

That evening, Kim Tae-Hoon went on an intel mission.

“Out of that big, big incense-burner, began rising golden smoke and the smoke formed in to a Monster.”

Covered up only in a shirt…a man that was sitting on his knees without slacks and undergarments was Kim Tae-Hoon’s first prey.

Rather than a prey, he was more like something that was ripe to be picked.

Hunting, for Kim Tae-Hoon, requires self determination as sometimes it requires him to put his life on the line.

As such, implying that ruthlessly killing a woman to avoid any consequences of forcibly raping her was hunting, was an insult to what he knew as what hunting was supposed to be.

“No, a beast rather than a monster was more appropriate. Tigers, wild boars… elephants! Yes, there were even elephants!”

Therefore, Kim Tae-Hoon had no intention of being the gracious winner, or showing the hunter's mercy to the man before his eyes.

"So, what is the location of Baekjae's Grand Gilt-Bronze Incense Burner?"

"Yes?"

"Where is this Messiah that you serve right now?"

"That, that...."

"I will spare your life if you answer me, I did clearly give my word."

What Kim Tae-Hoon wanted to make good on was the deal that he had made with the man.

"Let me repeat. Where are they?"

"I, I really don't know. He and the guardians are always on the move. When the guardians with stigmata regularly collect their grafts... that's the only times that they come here!"

"Where are they?"

"I, I told you everything. Everything I know! I kept my word,

please spare me my life....”

If you answer, your life will be spared.

To put it in another way.

“After all, I assume that the woman that was raped and murdered was obliging to you, bastard, until you killed her.”

“You, you, son of a bitch!”

If no answer, no life will be spared.

“There was never any intention of sparing...uk! Uk-uk! Uk....”

What Kim Tae-Hoon wanted to keep was only that.

Swishing!

The sound of a neck twisting has passed the stillness of the mountainside.

It was a very weak sound.

Unless you were near the source of the sound, it was too faint to be heard.

“Really….”

To put it in another way, the fact that Kate had heard the sound has placed her near the source.

“Do you really have to kill with such indifference?”

As the night fell, Kim Tae-Hoon began gathering intel.

After abducting the remnants of the Messiah Clan, in Buyeo, who call themselves the agents of Messiah, he squeezed out information from them.

Then he killed them.

Kate had no choice, but to witness these events first hand.

Kim Tae-Hoon didn’t do this to torment her. Kate was a hostage and Kim Tae-Hoon just needed to ensure that she did not cook up anything.

Anyhow, it was not a pleasant sight by any measure.

“You didn’t have to kill them so mercilessly?”

The situation has caused Kate to finally burst and protest with

complaints.

“I didn’t need to kill them, but there were enough reasons for them to be killed. Pillaging, rape, murder, robbery. Based on the US laws, there were more than sufficient causes to send them to the electric chair.”

“Nevertheless, isn’t it the right thing to do to offer them the chance to repent?”

Kim Tae-Hoon’s actions were viewed as being too extreme from Kate’s point of view.

“You are not passing judgments on them.”

Kate was not a virtuous person. She did not seek to be a good human.

However, she did have that small goodness in her. She had her own view of righteousness.

Her view of righteousness comes from a coin.

On one side of the coin was repentance while the other a written judgment. That is, offer a second chance to those who truly repent, but judge those who do not.

“Let me make one thing clear before we go any further.”

Kim Tae-Hoon responded to Kate.

“I have no intention of judging them. I destroy them because they become potential threats.”

“Potential threats?”

“Hostage requires a guard. A hostage without a guard is not a hostage, but a variable like a landmine that may explode at any time. It is better to become a killer than offer mercy and show the human side to those landmines before I, my colleagues, and subordinates become casualties.

“What do you…”

As he was explaining, Kim Tae-Hoon truly felt a bit humorous, seeing Kate’s responses.

“Potential threats are pre-eliminated using any methods available, isn’t that the American way? Isn’t it the same argument that the NSA, CIA, and FBI agents deploy $200M Global Hawk and take photographs of their own agents, acting as the locals in phony mustaches, halfway around the world in Afghanistan?”

The country that moves to eliminate any potential threats with the utmost passion, discipline, and callousness for their own country in the world is none other than the USA.

“That’s….”

Kate knew that fact, very well, as the daughter of the US ambassador.

At last, Kate kept silent.

As long as she kept the identity of US citizenship and being the US ambassador’s daughter, she could not counter against Kim Tae-Hoon’s argument.

Seeing her demeanor, Kim Tae-Hoon did not explain any further.

It did not matter or was important to Kim Tae-Hoon as to what Kate’s value system was.

What was important now was to organize the acquired intels.

Then Kim Tae-Hoon took out a thermos bottle from his bag. He then took a sip and savored the coffee that he had brewed before the night fell.

Kate plopped down on to the ground with a big sigh, accepting his intention of no longer wanting to engage in the argument.

Then she pulled her pretty blond hair as if to pull them out.

In the mean time, Kim Tae-Hoon began to put together a puzzle from the short intel.

‘The newly encountered Messiah Clan was powerful beyond one’s thoughts.’

According to the intel, this Messiah Clan was the most organized and calculating, of all the clans that Kim Tae-Hoon had encountered up to this point.

‘Exploiting religious characteristics.’

In large part, there were four Classes in the Messiah organization.

At the top was the Messiah, or god, to put it simply.

Below that were those who had stigmata, the Guardians, who guard god.

The next was the Followers that believe and worship the Messiah as god.

The bottom of the totem pole was the slaves. Not being considered and treated as humans, they are simply the labor to be used.

Of course, it doesn’t appear to be any different than other

ordinary organizations that were class based.

‘Well exploited the mystique.’

Chapter 73 – Messiah vs. Messiah (2)

Buyeo County Office.

Just a few days ago, this place was like a different part of Hell.

That is because the followers of Messiah chose Buyeo County Office as the prison to lock up the slaves. In another words Concentration camp, thousands of slaves were spending night after night like boxes at the buildings in the basement of Buyeo County Office.

“Over there! Block the street! Block that road!”

“Construct a stronghold there in that building. Follow me! We have a lot to do!”

Indeed, an alternative hell, they must risk death in sleep. Does it need more description?

But around the area of Buyeo County Office, there was a power, vitality, that does not seem to be a part of Hell, was surging about.

“Do it right! This isn’t reserve forces training!”

The source of vitality was Messiah’s slaves who were barely alive just a few days ago.

“Take all the bullets! Treat them like they’re more valuable than your life!”

Moreover, what they were doing while showing vitality was preparing for a war.

That was not an easy task.

To prepare a war, in other words, is to dig one’s grave.

Preparing for war was not something that slaves who were exploited thus far could do.

Unbelievably extreme transformation.

Of course, there was a reason.

“Fortification project is almost done. If we can endure the bombardment, we can beat them in ground fight.”

A savior appeared in front of the hopeless crew.

The savior performed a miracle by suppressing the power of Messiah’s followers who persecuted and exploited them and announced that they should stand up against those who praise Messiah and that they should not become slaves but Warriors! Then that person will become their Messiah!

Everyone was surprise by that.

Because…

“We are ready to fight. Now you just have to give us the order.”

The savior was a blond lady with clear white skin who uses English.

‘I’m crazy.’

Kate Kennedy, she had become a savior.

More accurately, she got to play a savior.

‘I’m seriously crazy.’

The beginning of this story starts on a particularly warm night.

Warm night, Tae-Hoon told Kate,

“Now we use Messiah to catch Messiah.”

“Unless you spoke wrong in English, I did not understand it well. Or it is some kind of a saying.”

“We create a Savior group that denies Messiah in this place. In other words, a cult. I will use the cult bait to lure the Messiah group.”

“Will that work?”

“Cult works best on those who use religion as a weapon.”

“I don’t really understand……”

“Remember IS. Those who destroyed the thousands of years old relics because they were the remains of a heretic.”

“Oh.”

“It’s not just justice. To show people what will happen, they will show their true POWER.”

Kate could understand Tae-Hoon’s such Project.

It was just that.

“Well, if it’s you I don’t think being a Messiah is a problem. Just like a Jedi, if one comes down from the sky like Superman and swing around a lightsaber at least one or two out of ten will treat you like a Savior at the spot.”

Kate thought she had no room in Tae-Hoon's Project.

She did not necessarily want to get involved in the Project, anyway.

"No, it's you who will become the Messiah."

But Tae-Hoon forced her to be a part of his Project.

"What?"

"The person who becomes the Messiah is you, Kate Kennedy."

"What?"

Kate needed some time to understand this nonsense.

"Are you cra……!"

And the moment she understood, she tried to express her surprised feeling with the loudest sound she can produce.

But she could not.

"Mm! Opmm!"

Because Tae-Hoon closed her mouth with his psychokinesis.

“Be quiet.”

After that short warning Tae-Hoon relieved her of the psychokinesis and Kate said in a rather soft voice,

“Are you out of your mind? You want me to be a Messiah? To these people?”

“Why not?”

“I’m not like you! I cannot fly! I mean I’m an American for one thing! I am not Korean!”

“It doesn’t matter. Whether you are God or Messiah, it doesn’t matter who you are. It matters how you plan things and how you manage things.”

“How……”

When Kate’s voice was starting to get high again Tae-Hoon tapped his lips with his index finger.

Kate said in a soft voice again,

“Why do you need to do that? Wouldn’t it be better if you did it?”

“This plan is a lure plan. Bait does baiting and fisher has to fish. If the fisher gets baited, he cannot fish.”

“I don’t care about fishing. I do not want to be involved. Like you said, I am a hostage. Have you seen a hostage act like a Messiah?”

Kate obviously did not want to Test her acting Talent at a place like this.

“If the work ends I will remit your debt.”

“Do you think I will do such thing because of mere de..... what?”

“If you act like a Messiah and everything goes well, I will remit all the debt for Monster Stone.”

But Tae-Hoon was serious enough to suggest a deal with a person like her.

Monster Stone is a snell. It has more value than its apparent value.”

“Is this work that important?”

“If we let Messiah go this time, the followers will go over Chungcheong and arrive at Jeolla.”

When Tae-Hoon first heard about the Messiah group, frankly he did not think much of them.

Tae-Hoon thought they were just like trash groups who justify their actions using the word Messiah in this world that has become a mess after the appearance of the Monster.

But the Messiah group in Chungcheong was different from the former groups.

They made the religion into a group and are using the mystery factor well.

“If that happens we cannot deal with them entirely.”

Ultimately, there was too powerful of a relic among them.

Normally, the Messiah group that is basically a miracle will spread like a wildfire and will make the field black.

“Monster is already a headache. I cannot tolerate guys like IS running around outside my area. Moreover, this is the only chance. If they have not settled their base yet this is the only chance to take them out.”

Tae-Hoon did not want to watch the burnt field. Tae-Hoon had enough of the horrible scene after the Napoleon’s golden glass.

Kate did not want to say no anymore to Tae-Hoon after that.

Instead she agonized over what she can do and get.

“……So what do I exactly have to do?”

“Act like a Messiah, do your best to keep the people in Buyeo safe.”

“And?”

“Just that. I can handle the enemy.”

“If I do this right, how many will you remit?”

Tae-Hoon answered her question with a question.

“How many do you want?”

“A work like this…… at least 50 red ones, no 100 red ones.”

Tae-Hoon replied with a smirk to Kate’s generous suggestion.

“I’ll make it 100.”

Kate gave out a long sigh after reminiscing.

‘I’m crazy.’

She made the deal with Tae-Hoon and became the Messiah.

When she took the deal, she did not think it would be difficult.

All she had to do was to act like a Messiah on the stage that Tae-Hoon prepared.

‘I underestimated the difficulty of being the savior.’

But it did not take long to prove herself wrong.

The moment she started, the moment she saw those who thanked her like crying babies, after seeing those who will succumb to Death if it is her order, she realized it is not an act any more.

It was true even now.

Soon Messiah’s soldiers will start bombarding near Buyeo.

A horrible war is starting.

Chapter 74 - Messiah vs. Messiah (3)

When messiah Park In-Young wanted to create the organization ‘Messiah,’ the first thing she looked for was the ability to punish those who challenge the Messiah’s belief system.

She gathered the awakened people with stigmata and armed them with relics.

At the same time, she prepared trained soldiers and formed an army.

It was not too difficult to find soldiers,

because in <Area> Chungcheong, there was the Second Warrior Command under the 32nd division and the famous army training center, a.k.a. Nonsan Training Center, which is the largest in Korea.

The messiah called in talented soldiers from there and organized an army.

Indeed, the god’s army.

Even after the harsh selection process, the soldiers were trained further and became the elite.

That was it.

“Get it! Get that Monster!”

To Kim Tae-Hoon, that was their only feature; just trained soldiers, no more no less.

They did not have real battle EXP.

Even if they did, it was nothing compared to that of Tae-Hoon.

The difference was as big as the difference between a tiger and a rat.

At a large field, the rats will run around and the tiger will have a hard time catching them.

But if the tiger was in a narrow well with the rats, it will take neither much time or effort to destroy those rats.

That was the reason.

‘Must finish fast.’

The reason why Tae-Hoon formed the group that opposed Messiah and lured them to Buyeo with little to no effort.

The dispassionate, or even cruel reason he used the Survivors in

Buyeo, Kate's life, and thousands of lives as bait.

The reason he hid until they were all gathered in one place.

Indeed, Tae-Hoon was going to do the role he's given on that stage as well.

His role, of course massacre.

Poof!

The central role here was the horseback sand warrior, the beginning of massacre.

Before Tae-Hoon tossed the flashbang, the mana-imbued minion went on a rampage among the Guardians and soldiers gathered in Buyeo crossroad.

Ratatat! Ratatatatatat!

The soldiers of Messiah and the Guardians bombarded the horseback sand warrior but it did not have any effect.

The horseback sand warrior who was called a plunderer in In-Cheon and proved that guns do not work there, it was unlikely that anyone was aware of that fact.

“Damn, guns don’t work!”

“Use the relic!”

“Guardians!”

Of course, unlike in In-Cheon, Messiah’s army had powerful relics.

Nnnn!

Stone Sword and Bronze Sword.

The relic, which as soon as holding the energy in started glowing the blade, made those who grabbed the blade shine as well.

“Capture! Capture first!”

“Just think of it as capturing a Monster! It’s not hard!”

Moreover, the sparkling courage encouraged dispassionate reasoning.

The enemy is one, whereas the number of Guardians was over 80 and if soldiers included, near 400.

Stone Sword and Bronze Sword, among Guardians, there are less

than 30 Guardians who can wield such Weapons!

“Do not afraid to die!”

There was no reason to be afraid of a Monster with only One-Head.

Realizing that fact, they captured the horseback sand warrior that was on a rampage and narrowed down the circle of capture.

Tutututu!

The bullet barrage grabbed the warrior’s attention and did some physical damage.

“I’ll buy some time!”

Some of the Guardians gave it their all and willingly charged towards the horseback sand warrior.

That was almost like seeing tiger moths, no more no less.

Poof!

The horseback sand warrior was a Monster that went toe-to-toe against the twin head Ogre; it wasn’t something Guardians of mere C~D rank and 3 Rank relic, barely 100 Points of Strength and

Stamina if combined could buy time against.

"Ahhh!"

Of course, the moment Guardian of Messiah attacked with the sword like a spear, it avoided by spinning 180 degrees and at the same time the Warrior's sword severed the head of that Guardian.

Swoosh!

Cleanly severed Guardian's head fell on the ground.

Previously stated, it was like watching insects. Meaningless Death. Fearful Death. But those who watched this scene was engulfed in enragement instead of fearing.

"DAMN bastard!"

A friend of the Guardian courageously died.

In fact, if they were Humans that gave up so easily, they would not take pride in being Guardians.

Doing evil requires courage, too.

"Kill!"

“Shoot everything we have! Just shoot!”

Of course, they were mad and naturally the rage blinded them.

Schhwaff!

An arrow went through the blind’s temple.

The warrior that followed the will of a warrior in the past now followed the will of Kim Tae-Hoon.

Puf, Puf, Puf!

Like sewing, the arrows went through the heads of blind Guardians.

Moreover, unlike the Guardians Tae-Hoon’s eyes were not blind. His eyes that turned black were scanning the entire roof.

“Quickly!”

Those eyes installed a Claymore and found soldiers backing up for fire.

“Fire!”

“But there are Guardians?”

“Just fire!”

Tae-Hoon made a simple gesture towards the Claymore.

That did not have any particular meaning.

It was more like a switch. A switch that made something clear.

The Claymore spun 180 degrees on the same spot.

“Just shoot!”

“Fire!”

The Claymore did its job.

As soon as the soldier pressed the switch, it spewed countless Marbles toward the front.

Crash!

Even in that circumstance, there were some that approached Tae-Hoon after feeling his presence.

With the Stone Sword in his hand.

‘I have to kill that-bloke.’

It wished to become an assassin more than a Guardian in that moment.

Of course, this was a useless act.

To Tae-Hoon who has a hearing of an animal, his footsteps were like thunders.

Tae-Hoon turned his head around the moment he approached within five meters of him. He who turned around had a swollen mouth.

Ptssss!

In that mouth, a huge fireball came out.

“Ahhhh!”

Like a wave, that flame engulfed the Guardian.

“Ahh!? Huh?”

But it did not reach the assassin.

Almost like an invisible barrier, the flame hovered around the assassin.

‘Huh? What is this?’

Nobody expected this.

The person that acted first in this confusing situation was none other than Tae-Hoon.

As soon as he lifted his hand, the assassin’s body was hanging in the air.

“Kyyak!”

An invisible rope sentenced him to death.

Tae-Hoon approached the struggling assassin and took something out.

It was a statue of Buddha. Tae-Hoon opened his blackened eyes.

[Golden Buddha Statue]

Relic Grade : 3Gradde

Relic value: Rare

Relic effect: Protects the owner from harmful effects.

It was 330th treasure Golden Buddha Statue.

‘They really stole everything in that Buyeo National Museum.’

It is not a national treasure but definitely a valuable one.

Tae-Hoon threw it out to the Buyeo crossroad. He also took the Stone Sword by force and threw it out.

The thrown-out relics decorated the field.

Of course, Baekje Incense Burner was in his possession.

“Who are you!?”

In that moment, somebody yelled behind Tae-Hoon.

Park In-Young.

She, who was affected by flashbang right in front of it, was standing right in front of Tae-Hoon which almost made that fact Colorless.

‘So intact.’

Flashbang, by nature, has less killing power than Grenade, but the power against humans is much more than that of Grenade.

But Park In-Young in front of him was too unscathed.

In her hand was a statue that was a little bit bigger than the statue Tae-Hoon threw out.

It was exceedingly more valuable than the other one.

Tae-Hoon’s blackened eyes knew what it was instantly.

[Golden Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva Buddha Statue]

Relic Grade: 2Grade

Relic value: Rare

Relic effect: It heals everything the owner possesses.

293th National treasure, Golden Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva Buddha Statue.

That was how In-Young appeared in front of him without taking any damage.

“Who are you!!”

And the reason for anger towards Tae-Hoon.

She had numerous relics in her hands to perform miracles, the Messiah.

The relics are power; there was no reason for her to lower her voice with such powerful relics she obtained at the museum.

Tae-Hoon understood that as well.

That kind of logic as better.

Psshhew!

A sword was drawn from behind his back and flew towards In-Young.

9.

Tututu! Tutututu!

Countless gunshots roared all over the buildings and roads.

“Ahh!”

And a shriek always followed.

‘Damn.’

Kate, who was waiting for a counterattack with those who regarded her as the savior listened to the screams.

‘How many died, I wonder?’

After hours of screams, with Messiah’s soldiers came Guardians into the Buyeo County Office.

Of course, a war has begun.

And the war was very one-sided.

Even if they took some Firearms, even if they have a lot of bullets, those who barely stayed alive for months as slaves could not be great soldiers.

What’s more is that they lacked EXP.

In addition, the enemy was select elites.

Physicality, mentality, stamina, EXP..... Nothing was in favor of

the Survivors.

Originally, everything should have ended after the barrage.

There was no reason, will, or hope to fight for Buyeo's Survivors.

"We will buy some time."

"The savior shall run."

Despite that the only reason the Survivors did not give up was Kate.

They believed the hope Kate showed them was real hope and because of the hope they had a reason and will to fight.

That was a proof that Kate's acting was brilliant, too.

If her acting was terrible, even if they were desperate, they would not have shown such loyalty and trust.

'I am not your savior!'

That fact pierced Kate's heart.

'I'm……'

The fact that she used their hope after giving them much needed hope was so painful.

‘I’m not your savior. I cannot save you.’

Kate regretted two things at that moment.

She regretted that she acted to repay a debt without really knowing how the world works, and that she does not possess the power to actually be the savior they need.

“Here it is.”

In that moment, three men came into the building where Kate and Buyeo’s Survivors were.

They were the Guardians of Messiah.

At that moment Survivors froze. They were like Monsters to Guardians.

“Huh?”

“What is this?”

At the same time the Guardians were surprised as well.

“Stone Sword?”

“Foreigner?”

They did not expect a Stone Sword in Kate’s hands.

In that moment, only Kate made a move instead of fearing them.

She imbued mana into the Stone Sword and ran towards a Guardian.

And she diagonally swung the sword.

Swoosh!

The sword so easily cut the Guardian into two.

Her attack did not stop there.

“Haap!”

She held the sword high towards one of the two Guardians.

‘Shit……!’

The Guardian who will face the sword imbued his energy into the Stone Sword on his-belt as well and held high.

The two Stone Sword clashed.

Ptsss!

But it was a cutting sound this time as well, and the Guardian's body was cut into two pieces again.

Energy rank A.

The overwhelming power of Kate made the sword more powerful than any Weapon.

"Fuck!"

After watching two of his friends go down instantly, instead of grabbing the Bronze Sword in his-belt, he drew out a revolver.

Bam, bam

A gunshot rang out.

'Huh?'

But the bullet could not penetrate the Armor, made of Ogre's

skin, Kate was wearing.

“That’s crazy!”

The Guardian could not accept this.

But Kate already narrowed the distance between the two and sliced him up.

In one moment three Guardians were lying down on the floor.

“Haah, Wooh!”

Kate was panting heavily.

That was her first murder.

‘I……’

That was a shocker.

She could feel the murder in her hands distinctly.

The fact that she killed was barely sinking in.

But she did not panic.

“Waaaaaa!”

She could not panic when there were people rejoicing maniacally after watching her brilliant battle

No, she did not even have the right to panic.

Wasn’t it herself that pushed these people into the battle against Guardians?

She did not even have the right.

There was only one thing she could do.

‘It’s been 10 minutes! Come!’

To pray for a real savior.

“The sky! Somebody’s coming down from the sky!”

That prayer was heard.

“Ah.”

She finally told the truth.

“Now it’s over.”

The war was over.

“Today’s bribery.”

Master of Starfish Clan, Yang Jung-Hwan left the room after placing a black plastic bag on a seat where Jang Sung-Hoon was sitting.

Jang Sung-Hoon gazed at that bag silently.

Sung-Hoon opened his mouth finally.

“Fuck, I wish I was awakened……”

The plastic bags were definitely a part of the stones of Monsters that McGuild Mountain Clans hunted.

Because there are so many McGuild Mountain hunters, there are a lot of bribery.

To the awakened ones, it was an incomparable treasure.

‘Ah, my stomach.’

Whereas it was nothing more than a rock to Sung-Hoon.

Of course, he did not read too much into it.

He knew.

He knew what needs to be sacrificed to be awakened and what they have to face.

Further, he knew what they had to encounter as they got stronger.

Sung-Hoon was actually thankful for his situation.

‘I wonder if the BOSS is well.’

Especially, the path Tae-Hoon showed him made him even humble.

‘Well, he’s probably fine. Unless he’s fighting a blue Grade Monster in Sae-Jong, who can hurt BOSS?’

His worry was short.

After some time he got up and opened a bag next to him.

He first checked Napoleon’s Golden Glass.

‘Did not sleep yet.’

Then he checked Daedong Yuhjido. Sung-Hoon opened Daedong Yuhjido and checked BuCheon first.

‘Bucheon’s Monsters are almost gone now.’

Then he checked <Area> Bucheon and Seoul.

‘Seoul still has a lot of yellow Grade Monster. BOSS was right. There is no Daedong Yuhji near capital defense command. If there was, why won’t he hunt Monster with that POWER?’

He checked Saejong last.

The moment he checked Saejong his face turned white.

His hands moved fast.

Then he checked the page where Cheonan was.

‘No.’

Then Pyungtaek.

‘No.’

Then he opened Osan page. He finally found it.

One blue light.

One blue light that was quickly moving toward Soowon.

Sung-Hoon accidentally let go of Daedong Yuhji map.

He dropped the great treasure on the floor.

But he could not react to that because he was trembling. And that was all he was doing.

“Damn, damn!”

He could not resist trembling and cursed and ended up slapping himself.

Taaap!

With that sound he started moving.

“Wake up Jung Sung-Hoon, millions rely on your goddamn head! Think, think!”

He finally grabbed the map and checked the light again.

‘It’s them.’

At that moment only one scenario crossed his mind.

‘Six snakes, they are luring blue Grade Monsters here to crush us. If not that, there is no reason for them to come to Bucheon.’

It was big.

Confronting this desperate situation, Sung-Hoon finally came up with an answer.

But he could not think of a scenario to stop it.

“Damn……”

Because the actor that will make the plan feasible did not exist.