

Blackfield 121

Chapter 121.1: I'm Sick of This! (2)

The National Intelligence Service agents arrived while the medics were taking care of the wounded.

“Mr. Kang Chan! Are you really going to the Bang Ji Hospital?” Kim Hyung-Jung asked.

“Yes, Mr. Manager, so please rest easy and leave first. Anyway, should we really call agents to this covert operation?”

“We have enough reason to because the Japanese agents are here.”

Since Kim Hyung-Jung said it was okay, Kang Chan thought it should be fine.

“Thank you for granting the section chief's wish,” Kim Hyung-Jung said with difficulty. He had just asked the medical team, who was going to help him, to wait for a bit. “The operation in Mongolia destroyed the morale of the special forces members, so he probably did this to breathe life into them again. He wanted to show that we also have the ability to complete operations that are as difficult as the one that France's Foreign Legion had done. Please just consider this as our defiance against defeat, even if only in spirit.”

“I was already aware of how everyone felt before the battle started. That's why I chose to fight with you all. Now, please get treated.”

Kim Hyung-Jung collapsed to the stretcher the medical team had prepared, unable to endure any longer.

Two new agents then approached Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho. They stood behind them, guarding their perimeter.

Yoo Hun-Woo ran over while Kang Chan was wondering if they should've just gone to the same hospital as the others.

“Mr. Kang Chan!”

Yoo Hun-Woo looked surprised when he saw the yard. However, he quickly controlled his expression as he approached Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho.

After Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho lay down in the ambulance with the help of the agents and two paramedics, the ambulance immediately left.

“I wasn't aware something this horrifying was happening...” Yoo Hun-Woo muttered to himself as they quickly drove to the hospital.

Yoo Hye-Sook was lying in bed, looking gaunt.

“Let's get you to the hospital already. Your complexion looks terrible,” Kang Dae-Kyung said.

“I’m okay, honey. I was just startled. It’s really bearable now.” Yoo Hye-Sook said, then stared at Kang Dae-Kyung. “You already knew Channy is involved with the National Intelligence Service, didn’t you?”

Hesitant to answer, Kang Dae-Kyung wordlessly held Yoo Hye-Sook’s hand.

“I never thought the female employees could fight like that. Did you also know about that?”

Kang Dae-Kyung shook his head. “Let’s just think that we can’t understand everything because our son is too remarkable. Look! He was the youngest attendee in the presentation hall for the Eurasian Rail, and he made people like the President and Prime minister seek us out.”

“Honey, I feel so sorry for not knowing that side of Channy. I was so scared that I trembled when I saw our son.” Yoo Hye-Sook burst into tears while pursing her lips. “It breaks my heart so much that I was the reason Channy looked so sad, honey. He did what he had to do to save me, yet all I did in return was make him upset. What should I do? I feel so guilty!”

“Don’t cry.” Kang Dae-Kyung reached out and wiped Yoo Hye-Sook’s tears away. “Channy really cares about you. He gave me a heads-up that you’ll be worried no matter what he does or where he goes. He even immediately got worried about you when you hit your chest because you might have indigestion. I’m sure he’ll understand. It’s not like your love for our Channy has changed, right?”

“It would never change!”

“Then everything will be okay. You just have to give him a big hug when he comes home, then we’ll just act like nothing happened. like now. Okay?”

“Our Channy isn’t doing anything dangerous, is he?”

“My goodness, madam. Channy’s heart will break if he sees you like this. Please be up and about quickly.”

“Yeah. I’m going to do that. I’ll recover and protect our Channy.”

Kang Dae-Kyung nodded with a faint smile. “Yeah, let’s do that. Let’s become parents that can hug him whenever he’s having a hard time. Okay?”

“Alright. It still breaks my heart that Channy might be out there feeling upset.”

Yoo Hye-Sook burst into tears again. Kang Dae-Kyung gently stroked her head.

“I can’t believe you gave such an order, Director.”

“Mr. President, this matter concerns the agents. You understand why the chief officer of security made that decision, don’t you?”

Hwang Ki-Hyun, the Director of the National Intelligence Service, didn’t budge an inch even though he was talking to Moon Jae-Hyun.

“This isn’t something that can be explained by something like loyalty or spirit. The head of a chaebol family was murdered in broad daylight in a law-governed country. I am well aware of the crimes that the chaebol committed, but proving someone guilty before punishing them according to the law is the country’s biggest duty and the reason why I’m in this position as the President.” Seemingly frustrated, Moon Jae-Hyun took out a cigarette. “That’s not even all. South Korea’s Chief Officer of Presidential Security joined the knife fight and, as a result, is now in critical condition. Does it make sense to you that I, the actual President, wasn’t aware of this happening and that I’m now receiving your letter of resignation?”

Moon Jae-Hyun sighed. As he lit up his cigarette, Hwang Ki-Hyun took out a white envelope and put it down in front of Moon Jae-Hyun.

“I’ll resign and take responsibility for this matter. I’m truly happy and thankful that I was able to serve and work under you. I don’t know how this matter will be settled, but please accept my letter of resignation, Mr. President. That way, I’ll be able to end things and fix any problems that could arise,” Hwang Ki-Hyun said.

Moon Jae-Hyun inhaled loudly, then slowly exhaled.

“Mr. President, please allow me one last piece of advice.” Hwang Ki-Hyun looked at Moon Jae-Hyun with stern eyes. “Appoint Kang Chan as the South Korean representative for the Eurasian Rail.”

“Phew, he’s still a high schooler.”

“Mr. President, it will take three years for the Eurasian Rail to become operational. Please think about how much Kang Chan would have grown by then and what he can accomplish by the time he’s thirty. This is a golden opportunity for South Korea to get someone like Lanok.”

“Everyone knows that, but people will bite at us and chew us out like a pack of dogs for appointing a young student to such an important position. Who would interfere and protect Kang Chan?”

“Even so, you still have to do it. We haven’t been able to properly teach anyone, even if they were talented, because of their age, school ties, and regionalism. If the Eurasian Rail proceeds as planned and Kang Chan keeps growing at this rate, South Korea’s conviction will be well received by the entire world in ten years,” Hwang Ki-Hyun argued.

Moon Jae-Hyun bent the cigarette in the ashtray as he softly exhaled. “How’s the section chief?”

“I heard that today or tomorrow is the critical moment, and then we’ll know if he will survive.”

“Hmm.”

“Jeon Dae-Geuk blamed me a lot when our juniors’ morale plummeted due to the operation in Mongolia. He even called me just to hurl an enormous amount of complaints and ask why we couldn’t give the same support that France did.”

Moon Jae-Hyun smiled dejectedly and nodded. “That’s definitely the section chief I know. How long will it take for him to make a full recovery?”

“Even if he survives, he won’t be able to move for three months.”

Moon Jae-Hyun picked up two envelopes that had ‘Letter of Resignation’ written on them. “I can’t believe the Chief Officer of Security will be going on a paid vacation for three months on this momentous occasion. I can’t just forgive him for that.”

“Mr. President?”

“Furthermore, while we’re planning to support Kang Chan, the Director of the National Intelligence Service is thinking of running away instead of being extra alert. What will you do if Kang Chan finds out about this?”

Hwang Ki-Hyun couldn’t say anything.

“Let’s protect him. Let’s give it a try, at least. I’ll do everything I can, so you and the section chief should do your best as well. We’ll create a talented person that’s powerful enough to give a warning to the United States, Russia, and China with just a phone call,” Moon Kae-Hyun said.

Moon Jae-Hyun looked at the letters of resignation, then at Hwang Ki-Hyun.

Rip. Rip.

“From now on, don’t ever think about writing a letter of resignation until I fire you,” Moon Jae-Hyun continued.

“Understood, Mr. President.”

“Moreover, you are to report covert operations to me at all times.”

Hwang Ki-Hyun didn’t answer.

“Alright. The Director of the National Intelligence Service should have that much determination and tenacity. Right! I heard that Kang Chan’s parents got attacked too?”

“That’s correct, Mr. President.”

“Please ask them if we can have a meal together at the safe house. If we’re going to appoint a minor, then we need the parents’ consent.”

“I’ll have it arranged.”

Finally looking relaxed, Moon Jae-Hyun took out another cigarette. “Will we really be able to create the South Korea that we dream of?”

“We’ll do whatever it takes to turn it into reality.”

“Yes, we will. You’re right. We’ll make it happen.”

After nodding in agreement, Moon Jae-Hyun dropped the cigarette on the floor.

Chapter 121.2: I’m Sick of This! (2)

Upon reaching the hospital, Kang Chan had his wounds stitched up before being moved to a patient room. Much to his surprise, Lanok and Louis were already inside, waiting for him.

The nurses stopped pushing the hospital bed, and Kang Chan raised himself up.

“Mr. Ambassador, have you been waiting for me?”

“I arrived a little while ago.” Lanok pursed his lips while examining Kang Chan’s body. “From what I heard about the situation, I didn’t think that something like this would ever happen. Why did you do all of this?”

Kang Chan couldn’t explain it either.

The nurse helped Kang Chan transfer to the patient bed, propped up the head of the bed, then left the room.

“Are you feeling better?” Kang Chan asked Louis.

Louis nodded solemnly.

“Then make us a cup of coffee.”

Lanok laughed. Louis suppressed his.

“Did the matters with the American embassy put you in a difficult position?” Kang Chan asked.

“I’m in a predicament,” Lanok admitted. “In the information warfare between the United Kingdom and the United States, even Russia is involved. The international situation is like a loose cannon right now... or a crazy woman dancing.”

Kang Chan listened to the unexpected news.

“Now that we’ve started this, we might as well give it a proper end. It would be best to take down National Assembly Chairman Huh Ha-Soo and Assemblyman Huh Sang-Soo as well. Those two will definitely look for opportunities to kill you,” Lanok added.

Kang Chan decided to use this timely opportunity to ask for advice. Lanok was, after all, more informed about South Korea's situation than Kang Chan.

"Mr. Ambassador, is there a way to stop Japan's underwater tunnel project?"

Louis brought over coffee in paper cups, stopping their conversation for a moment.

"They'll hesitate for quite a while since the bodies and guns of Japanese agents were discovered in Yang Jin-Woo's house. The National Assembly and the opposition party will most likely just assert those as a political maneuver, but the South Korean government hasn't approved the underwater tunnel yet, so there's still time. If we can reveal that Huh Sang-Soo sold state secrets, then things will become easier," Lanok explained.

"So the best course of action is to catch those two?"

"That's correct."

Lanok only took a sip of his coffee, making it seem as if he only put his mouth on the paper cup.

"It's going to be a difficult fight."

"You're probably right."

Lanok put the paper cup down beside him.

"Louis? Do you have cigarettes?" Kang Chan asked, suddenly getting the urge to smoke.

Lanok and Louis looked surprised.

"It's okay. I have permission to smoke in this hospital, which is why I did everything I could to get confined here."

"So that's why there are several air purifiers installed in this patient room," Lanok commented as Louis placed cigarettes and a lighter in front of Kang Chan.

"Mr. Ambassador." Kang Chan offered a cigarette to Lanok, thinking he probably didn't bring a cigar. Lanok accepted it. The cigarette looked short between his long, slender fingers.

Chk chk.

"Mr. Kang Chan," Lanok called after they had lit up their cigarettes.

"Yes?"

Lanok, who was looking at his cigarette as he exhaled smoke, looked up. "You should get naturalized in France."

Lanok had recommended the same thing before. This matter wasn't urgent enough to be brought up this seriously in a patient room, though, so Kang Chan only stared at him in response.

There had to be a good reason why this sly and wily fox opened the topic now.

“The South Korean government might not be able to protect you. I’m not saying that they will abandon you, but South Korea is still inferior when it comes to information warfare, and the situation is becoming more and more complicated,” Lanok added, ignoring the cigarette smoke from the lit cigarette in his hand. “My country’s Intelligence Bureau and the DGSE would likely have to put lives at risk to cling onto this. Hence, no matter how much I assert my influence, it will be difficult for me to mobilize everything in my country for you. You should get French nationality for now. That would allow me to publicly say that I’m your supporter.”

He was definitely hiding something.

“Mr. Ambassador, I think it would be best for you to tell me what this is about instead,” Kang Chan said.

“I can’t say for sure yet since the information we received is so ridiculous and absurd that we’re still processing and confirming if it’s false information. Even so, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Russia have been making unusual moves. In information warfare, there’s a lot of times when it’s a fight that’ll end when people die after rising up against false rumors, so we need a little more time.”

Lanok changed the subject, which made Kang Chan assume this issue was simply that sensitive.

“You should focus on recovery for now. I’ll update you once I’ve gotten more accurate and reliable information. That aside, the agents that Louis is leading will be guarding the hospital’s perimeter for now. They naturally won’t cause any conflicts with the South Korean agents, so don’t worry,” Lanok added.

Cocking his head, Kang Chan dropped the cigarette butt into the paper cup. No matter how curious he became, Lanok wouldn’t tell him any more than what he had already revealed. Hence, moving on for now would be for the best.

However, Kang Chan was certain that something was up—something important enough for Lanok to appoint guards to him and even mobilize French agents.

“I’ll be in touch, Mr. Kang Chan,” Lanok said.

Lanok stood up and left the patient room. Soon after, Kang Chan sighed while looking out the window.

It felt like things were getting messier.

Kang Chan just wanted to live a normal, comfortable life, but the world kept preventing it.

Would he finally be able to achieve his dream once he had taken care of every fucker that he had to kill?

Rattle.

The door to his room soon opened. Seok Kang-Ho entered not long after.

“Was it Lanok who visited you?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“How did you know?”

“Two Frenchmen are outside your room right now, guarding the door.”

Kang Chan nodded, then told Seok Kang-Ho exactly what Lanok had told him.

“If he was going to tell you, then he should’ve confessed everything. Lanok has a petty side to him,” Seok Kang-Ho commented afterward.

This fucker definitely wouldn’t fit in the information field.

The two shared a cigarette.

Seok Kang-Ho and Kang Chan had the majority of their entire upper body wrapped in bandages. Kang Chan’s left hand was bandaged especially thick, making it look large enough to be a boxing glove.

“What do you plan on telling your family?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“I’m not sure. I’ve thought about it every now and then, but I still don’t know what to tell them.”

Kang Chan remembered Yoo Hye-Sook becoming pale with fright.

“What about you?” Kang Chan asked.

“I’ll just tell them I got hurt doing something that Yoo Bi-Corp asked me to do. I’m thinking of taking out about fifty million won from my bank account as well. I’ll give it to them and tell them I got a bonus.”

“That’s not a bad idea.”

“Anyway, someone has to bring over the phone that I left in the van...”

Rattle.

Before Seok Kang-Ho could finish what he was saying, someone opened the door.

Four men, all of them clearly agents, stood along the room’s wall. Afterward, a man with sharp eyes came inside.

Seemingly around his late fifties, the man was slightly overweight and looked quite nice, but that was perhaps why his gaze felt fierce.

“Mr. Kang Chan?” The man asked.

“Yes?”

“If that’s the case, then you must be Mr. Seok Kang-Ho.”

“That’s correct.” Seok Kang-Ho looked at the man with suspicion as he answered.

“I’m Hwang Ki-Hyun, the Director of the National Intelligence Service. I should’ve introduced myself to you two ways earlier, but I’m cautious about making public appearances,” Hwang Ki-Hyun politely greeted them. Afterward, an agent placed a chair behind him.

“I brought some coffee. Would the two of you like some?” Hwang Ki-Hyun asked.

Another agent brought forward three disposable cups that were clearly bought from a specialty coffee shop.

They had certainly brought something unusual for a patient visit.

“Please have some coffee. Feel free to smoke as well. I don’t mind,” Hwang Ki-Hyun continued.

“I already did a little while ago,” Kang Chan responded.

Hwang Ki-Hyun nodded, then drank coffee. “I heard that tomorrow is the critical moment for the section chief. I’m sure he’ll survive. I went over and told him things that would wind him up, after all.”

His expression and the way he talked made him seem friendly.

“What did you tell him?” Kang Chan asked.

“That I’ll disband the special forces if he dies. If he does survive, I told him I’d establish a new specialized team in the National Intelligence Service.”

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho burst into laughter when the image of Jeon Dae-Geuk suddenly waking up popped into their heads.

“Many more weapons were discovered in the basement of Yang Jin-Woo’s building. We’re thinking of closing this matter by having the joint investigation headquarters make an announcement about it tonight.” Hwang Ki-Hyun observed Kang Chan’s mood, then continued, “Mr. Kang Chan, we’re thinking of appointing you as the South Korean Representative of the Eurasian Rail. The President has already approved of it, so there shouldn’t be any problems unless something comes up. The position is new, so we don’t even need the National Assembly’s consent for this.”

The people visiting him kept bringing up unexpected news. He didn’t even want to take any position.

“We would need the National Assembly’s consent to give you better treatment than what a vice minister receives, so we’ll just give you the same level of treatment on the surface. However, we’ll also give you the authority to issue

orders,” Hwang Ki-Hyun added when he saw Kang Chan pursing his lips, seemingly already prepared for Kang Chan’s disapproval. “Only those ranked equal or higher than the Assistant Director of the National Intelligence Service have that authority. You don’t have to report to me since you’ll be doing special missions, and you’ll get a yearly budget of a hundred billion won, an unlimited amount of reserve funds, and an unlimited number of employees that you can mobilize.”

“One moment, Mr. Director. I don’t want to take on that position,” Kang Chan said.

Hwang Ki-Hyun nodded. “Manager Kim told me you’re definitely going to refuse. There’s still time, so I hope you at least give some more thought to it before deciding.”

Kang Chan frowned. Hwang Ki-Hyun wasn’t the type to easily back down.

Nevertheless, he wasn’t that happy about Hwang Ki-Hyun’s suggestion. Even though it was worth joining the information warfare since his identity would be kept undercover, he simply didn’t want to butt into it.

Chapter 122: What Should We Do? (1)

After saying what he had wanted to say, Hwang Ki-Hyun ordered an agent to hand over the phones Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho left. He seemed to have forgotten about it, but he clearly just didn’t want anything to disturb their conversation. Nevertheless, his sly acting looked very natural.

Kang Chan thought South Korea had its own sly and wily fox after all.

“Mr. Kang Chan, please think about it slowly while you’re recovering,.”

“Yes, Mr. Director.”

Hwang Ki-Hyun patted Kang Chan’s shoulder and left the room.

“Hmm, he seems approachable, but he has an oddly fierce atmosphere around him,” Seok Kang-Ho commented.

“Right? Ah, shoot!”

Kang Chan quickly called Smithen, who would still be stuck at home.

- Hello? Captain!

“Yeah, it’s me! How’s everything on your side?”

- The agent-looking men disappeared when the security guards arrived.

“Everything should be alright for now. Be careful, and never ever go out to the suburbs by yourself.”

- Alright.

After hearing Smithen’s awkward answer, he checked who had called him while he didn’t have his phone.

Kang Dae-Kyung had called him three times, and Michelle and Oh Gwang-Taek had called him once.

Kang Chan called Oh Gwang-Taek first.

- Kang Chan, we got revenge.

Kang Chan heard Oh Gwang-Taek's delighted voice as soon as the latter picked up the call.

- Those sons of bitches had all sorts of weapons. I even took five of their pistols. What should we do?

“Did you guys clean up afterward?”

- We took care of them in our own way. Even with all of them combined, there weren't even twenty of them.

What a scary fucker.

At any rate, the pistols Oh Gwang-Taek had would cause a lot of problems.

“Return the pistols. Where did you guys leave the bodies? It'll be a pain if people talk about it later, but if we know where the bodies are, we should be able to cover the matter up even if they're discovered.”

- They can't be discovered. They need to have parts intact for that.

“What are you saying?”

- We mixed them with the molten metal at the factory I own. Some of their parts will still be around when the molten metal is poured on a cast, but that much impurity won't even be a problem since we mainly make iron gates there.

Kang Chan was appalled. How could Oh Gwang-Taek say something horrible so straightforwardly?

‘I should be aware of the name of the company that this fucker owns?’

Regardless, it seemed this matter was coming to an end.

“Okay. Anyway, I'll send someone over. Hand over the pistols to them discreetly. That would allow me to protect you.”

- Copy. Where are you? Let's have a drink tonight.

“I'm at the hospital. Let's just meet up after I get discharged.”

- Where are you? Are you at the Bang Ji Hospital?

“Hey! A woman will be coming. Don't ruin the mood and just meet up with me once I get out of here.”

- Okay, okay. Make sure you contact me. One last thing...

Oh Gwang-Taek hesitated for a moment. He was clearly about to thank Kang Chan.

“Be quiet. I'm hanging up.”

After hanging up, Kang Chan told Seok Kang-Ho about the call.

“Is he just like any other gangster after all? I feel like we’re never going to live a normal life.” Seok Kang-Ho commented afterward.

“Tell me about it. Things are increasingly getting out of hand.”

While Kang Chan was drinking the coffee that Hwang Ki-Hyun gave them before he left, Seok Kang-Ho took out a cigarette and handed it to him.

“Captain, you looked tired while we were fighting a moment ago. You also looked enraged.” Seok Kang-Ho exhaled smoke through his mouth and nose as he spoke. “We’ve been participating in this kind of fight nonstop since we reincarnated. We should take a break. Even back in Africa, we used to go on vacations after battles like this, didn’t we? Let’s take at least half of the month off after we get discharged. The beach or even abroad would be great. If those don’t work, we should at least go to Jeju-do.”

Kang Chan nodded as he exhaled and groaned at the same time.

In all honesty, Kang Chan had so much trouble letting go of the knife and the gun that he even wondered if they reincarnated specifically to fight.

“Would that fucking National Assembly Chairman leave us alone?” Kang Chan asked.

“Pff! That fucker won’t be able to do anything because he’ll be busy observing people’s moods for quite some time, so let’s at least think that we’re going to rest for now.”

“Okay, sure.”

What Seok Kang-Ho had said wasn’t wrong. After nodding in agreement, Kang Chan called Michelle.

- Channy! Are you okay?

“Yeah. I’m sorry for making you worry for no reason. I must’ve become a bit sensitive.”

- It’s fine. You were just looking out for me. I called you because I was worried, but I decided to just wait since I was afraid I would disturb you. Thank you, Channy.”

Her voice sounded seductive. However, before Kang Chan could hang up...

- Where are you right now?

Kang Chan’s expectation was spot on.

“I’m with other people. Why do you ask?”

- Our drama is premiering today at 8:30 pm! We’re all at the company right now. It would’ve been great if you were also here.

“Alright. I’ll also watch it if I can.”

- Take care of yourself, Channy. If you get hurt, then Eun So-Yeon, Kim Mi-Young and I will be crying together.

“Hey!”

Kang Chan flinched. Shouting made his wounds sting. He heard Michelle laughing as if she found it funny.

- I’ll hang up. J’taime, Channy.

The complicated phone call ended.

“The drama being produced by D.I. is apparently airing today,” Kang Chan told Seok Kang-Ho.

“What time?”

“She said 8:30 pm.”

“We should watch it together after having dinner. Why haven’t you called your family, though?”

Kang Chan sighed, then explained what had happened at the Foundation’s office.

“Phuhu, I guess you’re weak when it comes to things like this. Don’t think. Just call her. Didn’t you say that she hugged you after? She probably can’t even eat dinner right now because she’s so bothered that she showed that kind of expression to you. I’ll be back after calling my family as well, so give her a call already,” Seok Kang-Ho commented afterward.

Even though Seok Kang-Ho was frowning, he left the room still somehow looking as if he found the situation funny.

Would that fucker really know much about things like this?

“Whew.”

Kang Dae-Kyung popped into Kang Chan’s mind. He looked as if he was trying hard to accept Kang Chan and had put in quite a lot of effort to pretend that nothing was wrong.

Yeah. Even though I don’t know what they have to say to me, calling them right now is the right thing to do.

With a heavy heart, Kang Chan pressed the call button.

The call rang twice before it was picked up.

- Channy!

That one word conveyed all of her happiness, worry, sympathy, and pity to Kang Chan.

“Mother? What happened to your voice?”

Kang Chan unexpectedly felt troubled.

- I probably sound off because I feel bad for how I reacted and because I was afraid that I broke your heart with the weird expression I showed you earlier today. Where are you? Have you had dinner? Are you okay? You're not hurt, are you?

Kang Chan laughed. He was initially annoyed because Yoo Hye-Sook was so worried about him, but he now felt happy.

"I'm completely fine. Have you had dinner?"

- Not yet.

"Why not? Please eat dinner already. I heard that the drama that D.I. is producing will air at 8:30 pm, so please watch it."

- Okay, we will. Are you coming home today?

"No. It'll probably take a few days for me to come home since I still have things to do here, but let's go on a vacation for a few days once I get back, Mother."

Kang Chan heard Yoo Hye-Sook sob and burst into tears. He also heard Kang Dae-Kyung ask, "What's wrong with you?"

- Hello? Is that you, Channy?

"Yes, Father. What's with Mother?"

- I should be the one asking you that. What did you tell her that made her cry?

"I told her we should go on a vacation for a few days once I get back home."

- That's something worth crying for your mom. She's been lying down all day because she was afraid that you were upset. Ow!

Based on what Kang Chan heard, Yoo Hye-Sook seemed to have hit Kang Dae-Kyung. They laughed soon after.

- Are you alright?

"Yes, Father."

- Do you also understand that your mom acted that way earlier because she was surprised?

"I'm sorry."

Kang Chan heard Kang Dae-Kyung breathing softly, he heard Yoo Hye-Sook saying, "Give me the phone, honey."

- Your mom is asking me to put her on the phone.

Kang Chan heard her sniffing.

- Thanks, Channy. I love you.

How could he hate a mom like this?

"I love you, Mom."

Yoo Hye-Sook burst into tears for the second time.

- I love you. I love you Channy.

In the background, Kang Dae-Kyung said, "If someone else saw you like this, they'd think Channy lives in a foreign country. How are you going to send him to France? Ow! Alright, alright."

"Mother, please don't worry too much and make sure to have dinner, okay? If you look sick when I get home, I'm really going to be upset."

Kang Chan glanced at the door. He didn't think of it when he said 'I love you' earlier, but he was now bothered that Seok Kang-Ho would hear him.

- Okay. I'll put your dad on the phone.

Yoo Hye-Sook now sounded calm, making Kang Chan feel relieved. It was as if a heavy burden was lifted off his shoulders.

- Chan, you know that both of us are on your side forever, right?

"Of course."

- If you're struggling, come home whenever. No matter what you did, we'll be happy to have you back. You don't have to tell us anything if you don't want to. We just wish you'd come home to us.

"I will."

Kang Chan was sincerely thankful for having parents like them.

- When are you coming home?

"I don't know how many days this will take to finish."

- Alright. Call your mom at least once a day.

"Okay."

Kang Chan heard Yoo Hye-Sook saying, "Honey, wait a second," in the background after he had finished his conversation with Kang Dae-Kyung, but the call had already dropped. Kang Chan thought that Kang Dae-Kyung probably pretended not to hear her and just pressed the end button because he was worried that it would prolong the call too much.

Kang Chan felt refreshed and as if he was on top of the world. He also felt hungry not long after.

Rattle.

Yoo Hun-Woo opened the door and came inside with a nurse.

"How are you feeling?" Yoo Hun-Woo asked.

"I don't know if I feel particularly different than usual?"

Perhaps it was because bandages were wrapped around Kang Chan earlier in the day, but Yoo Hun-Woo just examined if blood had seeped out from the bandages, then stood up straight.

"You should be really careful when using your left hand. If things go wrong, you could lose your strength on it permanently. The pain will be quite severe as well

since your bones held the knife in place and got ground when you were stabbed,” Yoo Hun-Woo said.

“Alright.”

While the nurse was injecting medication into the IV, Yoo Hun-Woo stared at Kang Chan.

The nurse put medicine on top of the table, then left the room first.

“People from the National Intelligence Service dropped by. They said that if the hospital needs any medicine in the future, I can charge them as I please. They also told me not to worry because they’ll take action for that to happen,” Yoo Hun-Woo said.

“That went well.”

“I have a favor to ask, Mr. Kang Chan.”

“What is it? Is there someone you hate?”

Yoo Hun-Woo smiled, his expression seemingly saying, “No way.” He then said, “It’s fine even if the hospital doesn’t get support from any institutions. I just hope I can continue treating gangsters like I do now.”

Kang Chan looked at Yoo Hun-Woo as if he didn’t understand, so the latter elaborated, “I’m saying this out of unnecessary concern, but I’m afraid that I won’t be able to treat the people who really need to be treated because some institution came here to investigate or became interested.”

“I’ll do my best and help you with your concern, then. If, by any chance, someone stops you, then please call me immediately.”

“Thank you.”

After talking about a few more things, Yoo Hun-Woo left. Around ten minutes later, Seok Kang-Ho entered the room, frowning due to the pain he was enduring.

“Have you called your parents?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“Yeah. They liked it.”

“See? That’s how a parent feels.”

Kang Chan had nothing to say to things like this.

“Let’s order meat for dinner. Considering we also lost a lot of blood, we should have jokbal and Jaengbanguksu!^[1] What do you think?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“Sure.”

While Seok Kang-Ho was ordering their food, Kang Chan leaned back against the bed.

‘I should think about things later.’

Kang Chan decided to rest for now.

Becoming naturalized in France? Becoming the South Korean representative for the Eurasian Rail? He could take his time thinking about those after eating jokbal and watching the drama on TV.

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho ate a filling meal, then turned on the TV and relaxed.

They were full, had made a cup of coffee, and had cigarettes beside them. They couldn't wish for more.

However, watching the news made their comfort completely vanish.

With the Japanese agents' bodies lined up in the background, the TV showed a news report about Yang Jin-Woo for forty minutes.

The news started with why Yang Jin-Woo committed all his atrocities, then continued on to why he tried to install the underwater tunnel. The news also stated they were still figuring out the identities of the dead agents. All of that seemed fairly convincing.

The news called it the worst rebellion incident since the establishment of South Korea. It also included interviews with citizens and pictures of Yang Jin-Woo, some of which showed him shaking hands with others. The news seemed to be saying Yang Jin-Woo was a chaebol who had dreamed of being the perfect traitor.

By the end of the news, the reporter said that the ones who solved this incident were the National Intelligence Service's nameless agents, then closed it off with, "we pray for the bliss of the nameless agents who sacrificed themselves to put a stop to this rebellion."

The news report made Kang Chan smoke.

"People will probably move on from this one way or another with that kind of news report?" Seok Kang-Ho asked.

"You think so?"

There were a significant number of parts that were different from what actually happened, but Kang Chan wasn't going to talk about it.

They talked while watching the news. Soon after, the drama started.

The title was *Jinsook is Pretty*.

Damn. What an awful title!

Kang Chan watched the drama while being slightly suspicious of Michelle's tastes.

He cringed whenever he saw someone he knew appear on TV and act like they were someone else. Contrary to his expectations, however, Seok Kang-Ho kept saying, "This is fun. It's well made."

Kang Chan didn't know about anything else, but he at least agreed that Eun So-Yeon looked pretty. The way she tried to lead her poor family in the drama seemed to make her look pretty.

When the drama ended, Seok Kang-Ho pursed his lips and nodded. "Ha! This is going to be a hit."

“You think so? I’m not sure how I feel about it.”

“My wife and daughter have been making me watch dramas with them, so I’m confident in my skills to judge a good drama. If the drama keeps going at this quality, it’s definitely going to be a hit.”

Kang Chan didn’t feel the need to correct Seok Kang-Ho about the drama becoming a hit.

“I’m going to sleep here,” Seok Kang-Ho said.

“Why?”

“Is there a reason why we have to insist on sleeping in separate rooms? Staying in the same room means we get to talk to each other any time we want. We can just sleep in the beds across from each other.”

“Hey! I already told you that you snore.”

“So?! My wife said that she couldn’t sleep because she couldn’t hear me snoring. Just be understanding for now. It’s only for a few days.”

Jeez, this boring fucker.

Kang Chan just gave up because it wasn’t like Seok Kang-Ho would listen to him even if he said anything.

“Do you think that fucker Gérard has fully recovered by now?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“His shoulder was completely pierced. No matter how fast he heals, it’ll take at least three months.”

“Didn’t he say he’ll go to South Korea sometime?”

“What will he do if he comes here? He should just keep living peacefully. Do you really think either of us would remain still if we learn that that fucker died or has gotten himself captured in an operation somewhere? We’d get so furious that we’d run wild and head straight to his rescue. Phew! Just thinking about it makes me feel crazy,” Kang Chan said.

“Phuhu, that fucker! I can’t help but laugh whenever I remember how he tried to look cool just because he had become a half-grown chick.” Seok Kang-Ho wiped his nose with the hospital gown’s sleeve. Snot seemed to have gotten out of his nose while he was laughing.

“Anyway, Captain, if you’re going to become the South Korean representative of the Eurasian Rail, please make a position for me as well. I’ll quit working at the school.”

What’s he saying?

Kang Chan looked at Seok Kang-Ho as the latter pursed his lips.

“We have been fighting nonstop since we reincarnated. Considering things have been gradually getting out of hand, there’s definitely something going on,” Seok Kang-Ho continued. He looked excited. “Instead of constantly being forced to fight, we should prepare in advance as well. We should create our own organization and handpick the agents that we need. Aren’t they going to create an office for you?”

“What are you doing? Pull yourself together.”

“In any case, won’t we feel comfortable after we knock down the Huh brothers? It’s also not right to keep asking for help every time we fight, so we should create a proper organization instead and take the initiative.”

Kang Chan stared at Seok Kang-Ho.

“Captain, I mean it.”

He actually did look serious.

“While we were fighting Yang Jin-Woo, I realized there is a ton of nasty fuckers in the world. Since we’ve already started taking them down, we might as well eliminate them all,” Seok Kang-Ho continued.

When Kang Chan burst into laughter, Seok Kang-Ho smirked.

“Daye.”

“Yes?”

Wanting to get something straight, Kang Chan asked, “Do you want to continue participating in fights like the one that occurred today?”

“Even if we try, it doesn’t seem like we’ll be able to avoid fighting.”

“What about your family? We were lucky today, but one day they might get a death notice.”

“About that...” Seok Kang-Ho stopped mid-sentence.

“You were the lonely Dayeru in Africa, but aren’t you the head of your family here? What about the people you’ll leave behind?”

Seok Kang-Ho hung his head for a moment, then looked straight at Kang Chan.

“What else can I do? I only feel like I’m alive when I’m fighting with you. When we went to Mongolia and when we stood before our enemies today, I thought that even if I were to die, I’d die happy. Having a home to return to is good and all, but if I keep working at that school, I’ll lose my will to live.”

Seok Kang-Ho sighed deeply.

“If I didn’t remember anything from my past life, I would’ve gotten accustomed to this way of life and just lived as Seok Kang-Ho. But after fighting together with you twice, I started missing our suspenseful lives. If I was just your age, I would’ve gone back to Africa already.”

Seok Kang-Ho dropped his head.

‘Ha! Tsk.’

What should I do with this fucker?

Kang Chan looked at Seok Kang-Ho with a profound expression.

Chapter 123.1: What Should We Do? (2)

The next five days peacefully passed by like a dream. Spending most of his time just eating and playing Kang Chan’s injuries healed so perfectly that it was as if they were never there. Seok Kang-Ho’s recovery, however, was a different story.

Although the hole in Kang Chan’s palm had been stitched up and wrapped in thick bandages, his grip strength still hadn’t completely returned.

Every passing day, he had a conversation on the phone with Yoo Hye-Sook and Kim Hyung-Jung. He also received good news about Jeon Dae-Geuk regaining consciousness. They still lost two agents during the battle, however.

Was it worth sacrificing the lives of those two men to restore the specialized team’s fighting spirit and bravado? It seemed like a simple question, but the answer lay in a gray area.

Jeon Dae-Geuk had been in combat before and even fought at the front of the fray, so Kang Chan didn’t blame or criticize him. However, as a former captain who valued the lives of his squad members above all else, he couldn’t help but have deep thoughts about the matter.

Saturday morning, Kang Chan had already enjoyed a satisfying breakfast. He sat alone, lost in his thoughts until Seok Kang-Ho’s “Phuhu” laughter brought him back to reality. The way Seok Kang-Ho doubled over laughing while watching TV made him seem like a friendly old man around the block.

His sharp features, prominent eyebrows, and sturdy build obviously marked him as someone to avoid picking a fight with, but that didn’t apply to Kang Chan.

Buzz. Buzz. Buzz.

Seok Kang-Ho turned his head toward the sudden ringing. Kang Chan raised his phone to his ear. It was Cecile.

“Hello?”

-Channy, are you available to talk right now?

Why did she sound as if she was preparing him for bad news? Had there been significant losses to his portfolio?

“Yeah. Go ahead.”

-A sell order came in yesterday, so I sold all your owned stocks and closed out your futures positions. Combining the value of the sold stocks and futures contracts, your earnings total to about two hundred and thirty billion won. You'll be able to withdraw the balance on Tuesday.

Damn. It seemed that there were shrewd people out there making money in ways like this.

“Yeah?”

-Channy, aren't you surprised by the amount?

“It just hasn't sunk in yet,” Kang Chan replied, realizing that she didn't sound calm. Rather, she was so stunned that she felt numb.

-If you ever need the money, just let me know anytime. You're one of the most important VIPs at our brokerage firm, so the branch manager personally manages your account. Also...

Did she want to ask him for a favor or something?

-I got a bonus of over 300 million with this. Channy, is it really okay for me to have all this to myself?

“You said it yourself. It's your bonus.”

-I mean, I know the kind of person you are, but in cases like these, I usually give about 40% back to the account owner. People generally purchase cars with this money. If you want, I can get you a car for your parents.

“Why are you suggesting that?”

-So you won't transfer your account to another brokerage firm.

Kang Chan laughed so hard that he almost snorted.

“I have to discuss this with the person who told me to do this, but I'll do my best not to transfer my portfolio somewhere else. There's nothing I can do about the withdrawal, but I'll keep my account open while the transactions are still being processed, so don't worry about it too much.

-Channy, if you do that, I'll get a promotion.

“That's great.”

-Let me buy you dinner sometime. Thank you, Channy. Thank you so much.

Her voice was slowly returning to normal, so Kang Chan wrapped up the call and hung up.

Two hundred thirty billion? It was preposterous.

Since Lanok earned that money for him, Kang Chan decided to discuss with him about what to do with it. He had no desire for it. He had only ever spent the money in his bank account on taxi fares, coffee, and some clothes. What was he supposed to do about 230 billion won?

How many pork cutlets could that buy? Was there a way to deliver pork cutlets to hungry children in Africa?

“What was that all about?”

“Lanok told me to put the money he sent me into a brokerage account, so I did, but the stocks and futures I invested in made it grow to two hundred and thirty billion won.”

“You’re a rich man!” exclaimed Seok Kang-Ho.

“Yeah, but it’s not really mine, is it? I’m going to call Lanok and send it to him.”

“Ah! That has to be such a bother.”

Seok Kang-Ho turned back to the TV.

“Phuhu.”

“Huh? What’s with that laughter?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“Hey! You can’t grasp how much all that money is either, can you?”

Seok Kang-Ho grinned.

“I still have the seven hundred million that President Kim Tae-Jin gave me. It’s just collecting dust in my bank account. The stocks are untouched too. Those already make me uncomfortable, and now you’re saying you now have two hundred and thirty billion won? Whew! My head hurts just thinking about it.”

Kang Chan was now certain that he should call Lanok and sort things out. It would be best to call him now or else he could forget about this, so he immediately looked for Lanok’s number in his phone and pressed the call button.

-Mr. Kang Chan.

“How have you been, Ambassador Lanok?”

-I’ve just been a little busy thanks to you.

Kang Chan could hear the smile in Lanok’s voice as he cracked a joke.

“I received a call from the brokerage firm. They said I currently have about two hundred and thirty billion won. Please give me your bank account information so I can send the money over immediately.”

-Mr. Kang Chan! That money is rightfully yours. I have no reason to take it. Your assets would’ve become worth at least four hundred billion if you held on to them for a week longer, but I sold them earlier as you wanted me to. So please, use it as you see fit, Mr. Kang Chan.

-You’ll need that money soon. Information warfare can give you immense profits, but it also brings tremendous expenses. It’s merely my way of expressing gratitude for saving me and my friends during the announcement of the Eurasian Rail. Rather than feeling burdened by it, you should use it for anything you need, Mr. Kang Chan.

Kang Chan sighed, then frowned.

Seok Kang-Ho glanced over at him as he headed off to boil some coffee.

-You should learn how to graciously accept gifts that are given to you out of sincerity.

There was nothing he could say to that.

-Well, would you like to have dinner next week?

Kang Chan felt like he could understand the emotions hidden in Lanok's dry tone a little bit now. The dinner invitation just now actually meant that there was something he wanted to discuss.

“Sure. I'll call you once I'm discharged from the hospital.”

-I'll be waiting.

When Kang Chan hung up, Seok Kang-Ho handed him a steaming cup of coffee.

On the television screen, a large man was being overpowered by two smaller men. The audience erupted in noisy laughter.

Seok Kang-Ho reached over and switched off the television, then extended a cigarette to Kang Chan. The two lit their cigarettes up and smoked.

“He said he won't even take a penny because it's his way of expressing gratitude for saving him during the Eurasian Rail event. It all sounds like nonsense to me, though.”

“It's not like the money is going to rot. Can't you just leave it in there?” Seok Kang-Ho suggested.

“Well, that's true. Do you need any money?”

“No! I said I still have seven hundred million plus the money Ambassador Lanok gave me!”

Seok Kang-Ho firmly shook his head, declining the offer.

“Captain. Let's use the money to buy a big building.”

Seok Kang-Ho kept talking about buying a building as if he was just buying a toy.

“All right. Let's put some more thought into this,” Kang Chan agreed reluctantly.

“Sure. We have to recover first anyway, so there's no rush.”

“Land and building prices have gone through the roof, haven't they?”

“Well, I'm sure they haven't jumped in price as much as your money has skyrocketed. We're not buying a building to profit off of it. We just want to keep it, so it should be enough. If it comes down to it, you can make D.I. and the Yoo Bi-Corp move into the building.”

“That's actually a pretty good idea!”

Seok-Kang Ho seemed to be steadily getting smarter. It was strange, but Kang Chan's mood always improved whenever he had a conversation with this punk.

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho had become more relaxed by the time the door slid open and Yoo Hun-Woo entered the room.

Why was he here? He had already made his morning rounds.

"Mr. Kang Chan," Yoo Hun-Woo greeted.

"What's the matter?"

Yoo Hun-Woo nodded at Seok Kang-Ho with a serious expression, then walked over to Kang Chan.

Feeling apologetic, Kang Chan quickly put out his cigarette.

"Haah, I'm really sorry, but you'll have to donate some blood for me."

"Blood?" Kang Chan questioned.

Yoo Hun-Woo nodded gravely.

"We have a patient who attempted suicide by jumping off a building. The patient's just a young high school student, but he's in such a critical condition that there doesn't seem to be anything else we can do. I'm really sorry, Mr. Kang Chan, but I can't just turn a blind eye to this. Please don't feel disrespected and —"

"Go."

"Pardon?"

"You said he's in a critical condition, didn't you? Let's hurry and go, then. You just need my blood, right?" Kang Chan asked.

"Mr. Kang Chan...!"

"I said let's hurry and go!"

"Okay, okay."

Kang Chan got up, and Yoo Hun-Woo turned to leave. Seok Kang-Hoo promptly followed after them.

As they exited the ward, the two National Intelligence Service agents standing by escorted the group.

Yoo Hun-Woo led them to an examination room on the second floor.

"Don't we have to do a blood test?"

"You're type O, so there's no need for one, Mr. Kang Chan," replied Yoo Hun-Woo.

Kang Chan used to be type B in his past life.

He lay on the bed inside the room as Yoo Hun-Woo instructed. A nurse then brought out a needle and pricked him with it slightly.

Chapter 123.2: What Should We Do? (2)

Kang Chan couldn't help but wonder who jumped off a building this time.

No, it doesn't matter. Just survive. Wake up with your own memories intact.

The empty blood bag soon filled up to the top.

As Yoo Hun-Woo prepared to remove the needle, Kang Chan voiced his thoughts, "Is that really enough?"

"Any more, and it may wear you out."

"I'm fine, so let's do it one more time. It's not like donating more blood will kill me," Kang Chan asserted.

"You could still experience shock. It hasn't been too long since your injury."

Despite his warning, Yoo Hun-Woo hesitated to remove the needle due to Kang Chan's insistence.

"There's no difference between shedding blood due to a stab wound and donating blood. Let's do it again."

"Thank you, Mr. Kang Chan."

An anxious agent tried to intervene, but Seok Kang-Ho waved him off, restraining him. The nurse swiftly took the plastic blood bag filled with Kang Chan's blood and left the room. Shortly afterward, the second bag was filled.

"Doctor! The patient shows no abnormal symptoms from the blood," the nurse reported, rushing over to Yoo Hun-Woo.

Yoo Hun-Woo handed her the freshly drawn blood and instructed, "Transfuse as well quickly."

"Let's lie down a little longer, okay?" Yoo Hun-Woo suggested, pressing a cotton ball to Kang Chan's forearm and preventing him from getting up. Kang Chan couldn't help but let out a faint laugh at the feeling of being babied.

After about three minutes, Kang Chan finally rose from the bed.

Yoo Hun-Woo thanked him several times, then took the elevator to go straight up to the upper floors.

"Do you think it's because you recover quickly?" Seok Kang-Ho asked.

"Yeah. Since my body is unique in some ways, Director Yoo once said that a transfusion with my blood could be helpful to patients in dire conditions."

"Well, if that turns out to be true, it's not necessarily something to be entirely pleased about. Families of severely ill patients might swarm to you if word gets out,"

Kang Chan hadn't considered that perspective. Seok Kang-Ho's point seemed valid.

“I'm sure Director Yoo will handle it well. Anyway, I'm curious about the person who jumped. I wonder if they'll be reborn in a strange body like we were.”

“Phuhu.”

Kang Chan opened the door to their ward and settled down. He didn't notice any issues with his body.

“Perfect, this means we need to have to eat meat for lunch again,” Seok Kang-Ho half-joked.

“Ugh. I'm starting to get a bit tired of meat.”

“Tsk tsk! You need to eat properly whenever you have the chance.”

Although he was no longer a teenager in the middle of a growth spurt, Seok Kang-Ho remained adamant about indulging in meat at least once a day. He excitedly hummed to himself as he scanned the menu.

“By the way, I'm going to get discharged on Monday,” Kang Chan announced.

“Let's do that. I can just stay at home then,” Seok Kang-Ho replied.

“Don't you have to stay here a little longer?”

“All they do is change my bandages once a day and give me shots. I can just visit the hospital for that. I don't want to be stuck alone in a hospital ward.”

That was understandable. He was probably bored out of his mind for having to stay in a hospital room for over a week. Moreover, as he said, it would be better for him to stay at home with his family. What would he do alone in a hospital ward?

“I choose you! This one looks good. Let's fill our stomachs to the brim with braised short ribs.”

“Order some for the agents outside too.”

“They said they're not allowed to eat when they're on duty. They couldn't have any of the kimchi wraps with pork that I got them last time.”

“That's bullshit.”

“Yeah, I know,” Seok Kang-Ho agreed.

After eating lunch, the two leisurely lounged around.

Kang Chan felt as if he was putting on pounds after doing nothing but lying down and indulging in food for about a week.

They spent the entire afternoon watching TV.

While Seok Kang-Ho dozed off, snoring loudly, Kang Chan watched the news broadcasts and the occasional kdrama.

To be honest, it was boring. However, thinking of the hardworking actors and crew at D.I., he compelled himself to watch and ended up finding a few dramas that were interesting. He probably wouldn't take time out of his own schedule to watch them, though.

"Ahhhh!" Seok Kang-Ho stretched his arms and let out a hoarse grunt. He got up from his bed and dragged his drip stand over to sit next to Kang Chan.

"Urgh! I'm sleepy even if I do nothing but sleep."

"It's probably because your body is trying to recover."

"You're right. Good Lord, life is just a never-ending cycle of pain. I get sleepy after a meal, and then I wake up hungry again. What should I have for dinner today?" Seok Kang-Ho asked loudly.

It was ridiculous. Kang Chan glanced incredulously at the guy who, immediately after waking up from a lengthy nap, was now meticulously scrutinizing the menu.

Just as Seok Kang-Ho glared at the menu like a hunter sizing up his prey, the door slid open. Yoo Hun-Woo entered the room accompanied by a nurse.

"How are you feeling, Mr. Kang Chan?"

"Fine."

Yoo Hun-Woo carefully observed Kang Chan's complexion, eventually looking relieved. He then turned his attention to Seok Kang-Ho.

"Let's change your bandages, Mr. Seok."

"Right now, doc?"

"Yes. Your condition is different from Mr. Kang Chan's. Your wounds are still in the process of healing, so we have to change your bandages regularly. Please put that down and prepare accordingly."

Seok Kang-Ho's treatment took approximately twenty minutes. Judging by his tired expression, it was evident that he would insist on having a hearty meal of meat to replenish his energy after enduring such horrible discomfort.

"What is the current condition of the patient you told us about earlier?" Kang Chan asked.

"The patient is still in critical condition, but it's nothing short of a miracle that the student is still alive. We are all holding onto hope for the patient's recovery," Yoo Hun-Woo replied, removing his latex gloves and massaging the back of his neck wearily.

At that moment, Seok Kang-Ho looked up from the menu and asked, "Director, I'm curious. Why do you personally care for every single patient in the hospital?"

"I don't personally care for every single patient, but the student has been a frequent visitor to our hospital, so I felt a special empathy towards them."

"Didn't you say the kid jumped off a building?" Kang Chan interjected.

“Well, I shouldn't discuss personal details about our patients, but since you have assisted us and possibly played a role in saving the patient's life, I suppose I can share this information. This student has endured injuries and immense stress since the beginning of last year due to bullying at school. Since he dropped out of school, the patient has been receiving therapy sessions at our hospital. And, well, you know the rest.”

Damn all those school bullies!

Kang Chan's eyes immediately blazed with anger.

“Mr. Kang Chan, when you first arrived at our hospital, you mentioned that you had to be discharged because you had to attend to students who were being bullied. Do you recall?”

Of course, Kang Chan remembered.

He nodded, then replied, “Yes.”

“One of the reasons why I couldn't bring myself to make you stay was because of this particular patient. Both of the student's parents are genuinely good people, but...gosh. It's truly unfortunate.”

“Hm? Director, is the student you're talking about right now a girl? It was a Shim something...oh! Shim Su-Jin!” Seok Kang-Ho exclaimed, and Director Yoo Hun-Woo's startled expression confirmed he was correct.

Kang Chan was even more surprised, though. How did this punk remember something that happened last year? He and Seok Kang-Ho were reborn at the same time, so how did Seok Kang-Ho know that?

“That's weird. Su-Jin's parents informed us back then that she would be transferring to another school,” mused Seok Kang-Ho.

“She couldn't adjust at the new school either. She had to find a way to overcome the mental trauma on her own, but it seems she was unable to.”

“Haah!” Seok Kang-Ho sighed noisily while Kang Chan sat in front of him, completely bewildered.

Tsk!

Still confused, Kang Chan suddenly felt a burst of annoyance. “Which son of a bitch harassed her so much that they pushed her to this point? Since it happened last year, they're still attending the same school, aren't they?”

“Well...”

“Who is it?!”

“Heo Eun-Sil and Lee Ho-Jun. They were in the same class as Shim Su-Jin last year.”

Motherfucker!

Kang Chan gritted his teeth.

“Are you a teacher at Su-Jin’s former school, Mr. Seok?”

Yoo Hun-Woo leaned closer to Seok Kang-Ho, seemingly wanting to verify the truth himself, but he quickly adjusted his posture when they made eye contact.

“Director Yun, do you think it would be of any help if the perpetrators come forward and sincerely apologize to her?” Kang Chan asked.

“I’m not sure. It may not provide immediate relief, given her current unconscious state,” Director Yun thoughtfully replied.

“Well, please do let me know when she regains consciousness. I’d like to visit her myself.”

“You, Mr. Kang Chan?”

“As you already know, I have my own experience with jumping off a building. Even while unconscious, in the darkness, I could hear the voices of those around me. It would be unjust for her to leave this world feeling wronged. I hope she can have some closure and have some peace of mind before it’s too late.”

“Getting closure is considered an effective form of therapy by psychiatrists, but how will she get closure by simply receiving an apology?”

Kang Chan grinned at Yoo Hun-Wo.

“I beat some sense into Lee Ho-Jun and Heo Eun-Sil, just enough so they wouldn’t die. Wouldn’t she feel less wronged if she faces her end after hearing their outcome?”

Yoo Hun-Woo looked astounded.

“Those little shits have truly reflected on their behavior and are earnestly striving to turn over into new leaves. If I tell them to come and apologize, they’ll apologize genuinely,” Seok Kang-Ho added, supporting Kang Chan’s suggestion.

Yoo Hun-Woo nodded with a contemplative expression, weighing the options.

“Hmm. I will discuss this matter with her parents first. While there is a possibility of positive results, Su-Jin’s condition remains critical, and I cannot make any guarantees.”

The three all sighed simultaneously.

Chapter 124.1: Something I Never Would've Done (1)

When Yoo Hun-Woo left the room, Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho both took out a cigarette.

“Hey! How do you remember the name of a kid who stopped going to our school last year and that Lee Ho-Jun and Heo Eun-Sil bullied her?” Kang Chan asked.

“Huh?” Startled, Seok Kang-Ho looked at Kang Chan.

“You didn’t think about that?”

“Not really. It just came across my mind as if it was something I’ve always known. I have even forgotten that I reincarnated this year because the feeling and the situation of that moment in my memories was so natural.”

“Hmm.”

This was completely different from Kang Chan’s case.

Kang Chan exhaled deeply about three or four times. He shouldn’t say anything about Seok Kang-Ho remembering things.

“I remember Su-Jin as a very tender-hearted kid, yet this still happened to her. Whoa!” Seok Kang-Ho exhaled cigarette smoke with a sigh, then pursed his lips with a dissatisfied expression.

Seok Kang-Ho looked like a bandit worrying about a bullied student. It made it so hard for Kang Chan to relate to what he was saying that he thought about getting Seok Kang-Ho a razor or something so he could shave.

“What did the bullies do to her to make her commit suicide? And considering they bullied Su-Jin so much that they pushed her to cross that line, the school should have expelled Lee Ho-Jun and that bitch Eun-Sil already. Why did the school let her keep suffering so much?” Kang Chan asked.

“Pfft, people don’t hit others so openly anymore, you know? The bullies subtly harass their victims instead, just like what they did to Cha So-Yeon and Moon Ki-Jean. They don’t take the kids’ money immediately either. Rather, they would start by handing over a hundred won and ordering the kids to buy food for them or stuff like that. Meanwhile, the girls would surround other female students and take pictures of their chests. As I said, it’s difficult to get evidence.”

“Jeez!” Kang Chan extinguished his cigarette by pressing it on the coffee cup.

Frowning, Seok Kang-Ho guzzled water.

“Fortunately, you saved those kids when you started attending school. Right now, our school is getting a flood of transfer inquiries from kids in Seoul because they find it difficult to keep studying because they’re being bullied,” Seok Kang-Ho said, then discretely looked over Kang Chan’s mood.

“What?” Kang Chan asked.

“Captain, Lee Ho-Jun and Heo Eun-Sil are also victims.”

What's he saying?

Seeing Kang Chan's expression, Seok Kang-Ho quickly continued, “I'm not saying that what they did was good but that they ended up doing those things because the school couldn't create a proper school environment for them. Now, the bullies are stepping up and getting rid of bullying themselves. They're even stopping people from making other students run errands for them. Except for Heo Eun-Sil beating up three girls, our school's environment has seriously improved.”

Feeling strangely annoyed and angry at the same time, Kang Chan couldn't get rid of his frown.

Seok Kang-Ho promptly made coffee. “Things like this can't be fixed in a day or two, so drink a cup of delicious coffee and loosen up—ah! H-hot!”

Dropping the coffee cup to the floor, Seok Kang-Ho grabbed his chest as he frowned. His wound seemed to have stung when he moved frantically.

“Are you okay? Get over there,” Kang Chan said. After making Seok Kang-Ho sit, he wiped the floor and made two cups of instant coffee.

“Here.” Kang Chan put one of them in front of Seok Kang-Ho, who had a coffee stain on his hospital gown. The latter gladly accepted the drink.

“Let's have a quick dinner after drinking coffee. People often get annoyed if they're hungry,” Seok Kang-Ho commented.

Would this fucker understand that people can also get annoyed if they eat too much?

“Hey! You should get tested,” Kang Chan suggested.

Seok Kang-Ho looked at Kang Chan while taking a sip of his coffee.

“I've been thinking of buying and making you take anthelmintics for quite some time now. Your eating habits just don't seem normal at all. It's hard to eat as much as you do while hospitalized, you know.”

“Hey! I lost a lot of blood!” Seok Kang-Ho exclaimed.

“Didn't you say that you eat three pastries before you sleep at home?”

“That's true.”

“See? When was the last time you've had anthelmintics?” Kang Chan asked.

“I took one after reincarnating. My wife gave it to me.”

Seok Kang-Ho cocked his head, then immediately glared at the menu.

Kang Chan couldn't stop Seok Kang-Ho right now, though, since he wanted to eat.

“Captain, let's order spicy nakji-bokkeum[1] and rice.”

“Sure! That’s better than meat,” Kang Chan responded.

“Phuhu, it also has red sauce!”

Kang Chan couldn’t help but smirk while looking at Seok Kang-Ho, who excitedly picked up the phone.

If this fucker didn’t exist, Kang Chan would’ve been living quite a boring life.

Kang Chan thought about buying a building and living with Seok Kang-Ho. It wasn’t exactly because he liked being alone with him. Rather, he just wanted to create situations that Seok Kang-Ho would find really interesting. Kang Chan could ask Yoo Bi-Corp to have its employees act as security guards, which was hectic, or get Seok Kang-Ho to go on operations with Kim Hyung-Jung.

As for himself... He hadn’t made a decision yet.

Honestly, just as Seok Kang-Ho said, living an ordinary life could be boring. He knew that.

However, Kang Chan didn’t want to go through the pain of losing a member in an operation again. They lost two in their most recent operation alone. If Seok Kang-Ho, Kim Hyung-Jung, or even Kim Tae-Jin were among the casualties?

Kang Chan shook his head.

It was during times like this that Kang Chan wanted to see Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook.

They were probably aware by now that their new employees were agents. How many people could say, ‘She’s just tenacious,’ after seeing a female employee persistently fighting back against a trained combatant after being hit in the face?

What would they be doing right now?

If nothing was up, then for tonight’s dinner they were likely eating chicken while watching a movie on TV.

Despite being frustrated because of the fucking bullies, Kang Chan easily calmed down.

Both wearing a suit, Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook were sitting at a circular table with a white tablecloth draped over it. They looked as if they couldn’t shake off their nervousness.

Before them, sitting at the same table, were President Moon Jae-Hyun, Prime Minister Go Gun-Woo, and National Intelligence Service Director Hwang Ki-Hyun.

Their meal wasn’t served yet.

“Despite having to take responsibility for the country, the three of us here clung onto your son instead due to our lack of ability. As a result, we made you two go through a difficult time,” Moon Jae-Hyun said.

“I see,” Yoo Hye-Sook answered.

As Kang Dae-Kyung discreetly examined everyone’s mood, the three people before them smiled at the same time.

“As a matter of fact, South Korea initially wasn’t a part of the Eurasian Rail,” Hwang Ki-Hyun began upon receiving a glance from Moon Jae-Hyun. As if he was giving a briefing, he proceeded to tell Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook that Kang Chan was the one who connected South Korea to the Eurasian Rail through Lanok and made it so that it would be announced in South Korea.

“As the President, I am infinitely grateful to Kang Chan. However, when I tried actually to reward him, I became cautious of the world and how they will think. That’s why I have invited the two of you to dine with us today and express my gratitude,” Moon Jae-Hyun added.

Perhaps it was because they just told a story about Kang Chan’s heroic deeds, but Yoo Hye-Sook became much more relaxed.

“Next week, a special admission certificate to Seoul National University will arrive at the school. France seems to be doing whatever it takes to take our Kang Chan, but we’ll stop at nothing to protect him. As his mother, please help us prevent a foreign country from taking away someone as talented as Kang Chan,” Moon Jae-Hyun continued.

Kang Dae-Kyung softly held Yoo Hye-Sook’s trembling hand.

“If you need something or if there’s anything that makes the two of you uncomfortable, then please don’t hesitate to call the number that we’ll be giving you after the meal. We will have an employee on standby around the clock, waiting to answer your call. No matter what it is, the National Intelligence Service Director and I, as the Prime Minister, will take responsibility and take care of it. If it’s something that is so important that it would require a higher-ranking person to decide, then the President himself will help us,” Go Gun-Woo softly told Kang Chan’s parents.

“The two of you have truly raised an amazing son. As the President of South Korea, I sincerely thank the both of you.” Tilting his head and looking at Yoo Hye-Sook, Moon Jae-Hyun then asked, “Seems like you, unlike Mr. Kang Chan, can cry a bit?”

The four men, excluding Yoo Hye-Sook, burst into laughter at the same time.

The food was served when Go Gun-Woo gave the employees a glance.

Just as a French course should, appetizers were served first.

“Please indulge yourselves—we can talk while eating,” Moon Jae-Hyun said, then picked up the fork and began to eat in comfort. He clearly over-exaggerated his movements to make Yoo Hye-Sook comfortable.

“I actually like Korean food, but gulbi or galbi-jjim[2] is difficult to eat since it requires being held with both hands to eat it. The Prime Minister has even

nagged me quite a lot of times now because of how I eat it. It's quite comfortable to eat with Africans, though. The two of us really ate to our heart's content when we were with them."

Yoo Hye-Sook looked at him, seemingly feeling a little less nervous now.

"We ate around six servings of the galbi that day, didn't we? Ah! You were also there, weren't you, Mr. Prime Minister?" Moon Jae-Hyun asked.

"Mr. President, the two of you ate eight servings of ribs back then."

Bursting into laughter, Kang Dae-Kyung quickly held up the napkin to hide it. It made him seem as if he was sobbing.

"The galbi-jjim from this restaurant is really good," Moon Jae-Hyun added.

Yoo Hye-Sook's gaze at Moon Jae-Hyun turned cautious.

"We had Western food prepared because we were afraid that the two of you wouldn't be able to eat since you have to keep up appearances. Moreover, what would Kang Chan think of me if the two of you go home and speak ill of me, saying that I, the President, gobbled down food while smearing it all over my hands and face?"

Moon Jae-Hyun's efforts to make Kang Chan's parents comfortable certainly changed the atmosphere. "If you have spare time for me next month, then I'll treat you to really good ribs."

"Thank you." Kang Dae-Kyung answered.

Chapter 124.2: Something I Never Would've Done (1)

As Kang Chan and his parents started eating in earnest with the President of South Korea, their conversations revolved mainly around their kids and how they were making them worried. Hwang Ki-Hyun even asked Moon Jae-Hyun to use his influence to turn his damned son into a member of the special forces because his wife was so worried about him.

"We should never abuse our powers," Moon Jae-Hyun responded.

"Mr. President! This is for the country. You just have to put him in the special forces."

Despite his pleas, Moon Jae-Hyun firmly rejected the notion.

Could the National Intelligence Service Director really not take care of that one thing by himself?

It was childish, but Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook became a lot less nervous because of it. By the time the main dish was served, even Yoo Hye-Sook was joining in the conversation from time to time.

"Meeting Kang Chan made me disappointed in my own son so. I even thought about asking Kang Chan to take care of him for about a year," Hwang Ki-Hyun said.

“Saying that will get you in trouble!” Moon Jae-Hyun replied, startled.

“If that doesn’t work, then maybe we can at least get my son to lodge with Kang Chan’s parents,” Hwang Ki-Hyun continued, making everyone in the room laugh.

After eating dinner until they were full, Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho leaned back against the bed...

The door opened, and Yoo Hun-Woo came inside.

“Does it hurt anywhere in particular?” Yoo Hun-Woo asked Seok Kang-Ho with a cautious expression after examining him.

Afterward, Yoo Hun-Woo said, “Mr. Kang Chan, Su-Jin’s parents hope that you’ll do what you just said if it’s perfectly okay with you. They want to help Su-Jin relieve her deep sorrows, even if just a little bit before she passes.”

“How is she doing right now?” Kang Chan asked.

“She likely won’t survive past this evening.”

Kang Chan sighed softly. “Can I go there right now?”

“For as long as you’re okay with it, it doesn’t matter what time you go. However, you will have to change your hospital gown due to the smell of cigarettes. You will also have to disinfect yourself since she’s in the ICU.”

“Let’s do that.”

“Sure.”

“I should go as well,” Seok Kang-Ho said, only to frown as he stood up.

“You stay here. It will be difficult to explain why you’re here if the parents see you as well. I’ll go there alone for now. You should visit her after we see how things go,” Kang Chan reasoned.

Seok Kang-Ho looked at Yoo Hun-Woo, but the latter didn’t side with him.

“Alright,” Seok Kang-Ho answered.

Kang Chan left the patient room with Yoo Hun-Woo. It wasn’t like Seok Kang-Ho was going to go with them just because his lips twisted with dissatisfaction.

Kang Chan got changed in the nurses’ office, washed his face, and sprayed disinfectant all over him.

“I told Su-Jin’s parents that you intervened and helped out during the blood transfusion due to the urgent situation and because our hospital was lacking blood. We’re both going to be in a real predicament if the patient’s condition improves and word about it gets out,” Yoo Hun-Woo explained.

“Let’s just not talk about that.”

“I didn’t want to hide the fact that you helped out.”

They got on the elevator and went up to the ninth floor. From the entrance alone, the ICU was definitely different from a regular patient room.

To its left was an area full of guardians. It had ‘waiting room’ written on the plaque attached to it. Yoo Hun-Woo gave two of the people inside a glance, then went into the office across the waiting room.

“This is Kang Chan, the student that I told the two of you about,” Yoo Hun-Woo told Su-Jin’s parents.

“Hello?” As soon as Kang Chan greeted them, Sim Su-Jin’s mother immediately covered her mouth and started to cry.

“We heard that you gave our daughter a blood transfusion. Thank you.” Sim Su-Jin’s father told Kang Chan after exhaling softly. He looked haggard.

“I only gave a small amount of blood. Anyway, please speak comfortably to me,” Kang Chan couldn’t even sit yet.

“I heard that you’ll relieve our Su-Jin’s deep sorrows... I’m sorry, I know this is shameless, but please do,” Still sobbing, Su-Jin’s mother barely managed to get the words out.

“We disinfected ourselves before coming up here, so we should see the patient first. Let’s talk afterward,” Yoo Hun-Woo said. The parents stepped aside to one side of the room.

Grief filled the eyes of Su-Jin’s mother.

While some people committed suicide, leaving their parents behind and brokenhearted, those who did them wrong dreamed of living a new life after saying they felt remorse for what they had done.

Damn it! Where and what in the world went wrong?

Yoo Hun-Woo opened the automatic door of the ICU by using the intercom. When they entered, they were met with another set of doors.

“This way, Mr. Kang Chan.” Yoo Hun-Woo pointed to their right, where he took out green clothes so thin and light that it was as if they were made out of hanji.
[1]

“Put this on your head,” Yoo Hun-Woo put on the same thing.

Yoo Hun-Woo pressed a button, and they were showered with disinfectant. Afterward, he opened the automatic door.

On both sides of the room were big beds, each one having an enormous number of machines and devices connected to it.

With mechanical beeps in the background, the doctors and nurses busily moved as if they were on a battlefield.

Yoo Hun-Woo took Kang Chan to the bed on the left side of the room.

With Su-Jin's entire body basically wrapped in bandages, only her eyes, nose, hands, and feet were visible.

Be-ep. Be-ep. Be-ep. Be-ep.

The machine that Kang Chan had only ever seen on TV drew vertical lines, telling him that Sim Su-Jin was still alive.

When Yoo Hun-Woo glanced at Kang Chan, the latter approached Sim Su-Jin.

What am I supposed to say?

Now that he was actually facing her, he didn't know what to say.

What could Kang Chan tell a girl—who was in so much pain that she decided to commit suicide—that could make her want to live tirelessly?

Kang Chan looked at Shim Su-Jin's eyes, which were slightly visible through a crevice in the bandages. She had a thick tube inserted under her neck, leaving her nose exposed.

“Shim Su-Jin,” Kang Chan called, then carefully put his hand on top of hers. She was cold to the touch, almost as if her hand had been left in a refrigerator. “I believe you're listening. I jumped off the roof before the summer break as well. It was fucking painful. Fortunately, I faintly heard someone talking.”

Yoo Hun-Woo watched them from a good distance away from the foot of the bed. Another doctor and a nurse in scrubs were standing behind him.

“They transfused my blood into you because we were wondering if my blood could pass on the energy that revived me. Anyway, there's one more thing that I have to tell you. I jumped off the roof because I was bullied as well. However, I survived and developed guts. After that, I fought like a crazy person. I even fought Lee Ho-Jun and Heo Eun-Sil.”

He wondered what he was doing, but he couldn't stop.

“I'm Kang Chan, a senior at Shinmuk High School. You might have heard of me because, until the start of my senior year, people told me that I used to hand over my money and act as others' errand boy. Despite doing all of those, I'm still alive.”

To a girl that was dying, Kang Chan was saying things that Seok Kang-Ho would likely say. “It's unfair, isn't it? You were angry and felt mistreated because you didn't receive any help even though you were really desperate. You can't die because you received my blood, though, so shake this off and get better soon. When you have recovered, let's go to school together. I'll beat up everyone who bothers you until you no longer feel angry.”

Kang Chan stroked Shim Su-Jin's hand. "Cheer up, kid. I beat up and got rid of every bully out there, including those in Shimdeok High School, the weird university kids that are apparently the bullies' higher-ups, and even Park Ki-Bum and his parking lot gang that controlled those university kids. Mr. Seok Kang-Ho, one of our P.E. teachers, is also waiting downstairs. If you want me to prove what I said, he'll help me do just that."

Kang Chan then talked about her parents, whom he met outside the ICU, and about him seeing a side of Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook that he didn't know about.

This was something that Kang Chan had never done before—something that he would've never done in the past.

However, having felt Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook's love, and after seeing kids like Cha So-Yeon and Moon Ki-Jean, he now wanted to help Shim Su-Jin using any means.

Since he had started talking about his life already, Kang Chan decided to tell her about Cha So-Yeon and Moon Ki-Jean, what had happened in the school cafeteria, and Heo Eun-Sil and Lee Ho-Jun almost getting beaten to death at Tron Square.

As Kang Chan talked to Shim Su-Jin for a little less than an hour, Yoo Hun-Woo, the other doctor, and the nurse stood beside them, watching. Rather than protecting Kang Chan, it felt as if they were waiting because they didn't know when Shim Su-Jin would stop breathing.

"I'm going. Remember my name. The hospital will contact me. If they tell me you have woken up, I'll run over immediately. My blood is in your veins now, so I don't mind doing that. Endure it. Endure it and survive, and I'll take care of everything for you after that. Okay?" Kang Chan ended.

Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep.

Just as Kang Chan finished talking, the rhythm of the machine's sounds changed.

Whoosh.

Yoo Hun-Woo, the doctor, and the nurse urgently ran toward Shim Su-Jin. Yoo Hun-Woo gave an order that Kang Chan didn't understand, and the doctor and the nurse immediately carried it out.

Medication was injected into the IV, and a moment later, Shim Su-Jin's parents urgently ran over.

Yoo Hun-Woo looked at Kang Chan, then briefly shook his head.

Damn it!

Kang Chan was angry, but for now, he had to move out of the way for her parents.

Shim Su-Jin's mother shed a shower of tears as she reached out her hand toward Su-Jin' from the other side of Kang Chan. Her mother carefully stroked the bandages wrapped around Su-Jin's face as if it was her bare skin.

Kang Chan stood up as Shim Su-Jin's father approached her as well.

Seeing a middle-aged man with graying hair tearing up and crying was extremely painful.

At that moment...

Shim Soo-Jin stirred.

Kang Chan quickly raised his head and looked at Yoo Hun-Woo.

Be-ep. Be-ep. Be-ep. Be-ep.

With surprise in his eyes, Yoo Hun-Woo's gaze alternated between the machine and Kang Chan.

Not long after, Su-Jin stirred again!

Her hand clearly moved.

“Mom...”

“Su-Jin! Su-Jin!”

“Mom...”

“Su-Jin! Su-Jin!!”

Her mother called Sim Su-Jin as if she had gone insane.

Chapter 125.1: Something I Never Would've Done (2)

Kang Chan stepped out of the way for Shim Su-Jin's father.

Shim Su-Jin's voice cracked. She seemed to be having difficulties talking, but they definitely heard her calling her mother from under the bandages. After that, the ICU began reminding Kang Chan of a battlefield.

“Please go to the back!” Yoo Hun-Woo firmly yelled. Shim Su-Jin's parents stood beside Kang Chan, breathlessly watching their daughter.

Ten minutes flew by in an instant.

“Whoa!” Yoo Hun-Woo sighed as he stepped away from the bed. Approaching the onlookers, he shook his head, but it was difficult to know what that meant.

“Doctor Yoo Hun-Woo!” one of Su-Jin's parents yelled.

“Her pulse and breathing have stabilized for now. We have to monitor how she does tonight,” Yoo Hun-Woo said.

“She called for me! You heard that!” Shim Su-Jin's mother exclaimed.

“Honey!” Su-Jin's father held her shoulder, but they looked as if they had used up all of their energies.

“Let's head to the office first,” Yoo Hun-Woo said.

As Shim Su-Jin's parents followed Yoo Hun-Woo, their gaze remained on the bed until the last moment. It was as if they found it hard to walk away.

“Please have a seat,” Yoo Hun-Woo told everyone.

Su-Jin's parents sat on the sofa, and Kang Chan sat across from them.

Rattle.

Yoo Hun-Woo brought over an office chair in the middle of the office.

Kang Chan fully understood why he looked tired.

“This would be difficult for the parents to hear, but we will probably only be certain whether she just recovered a little bit of energy prior to her death or that was a sign that she’s recovering at the end of the night,” Yoo Hun-Woo said.

“Urgh!” Su-Jin’s mother began sobbing.

“I’ll do my best.” Yoo Hun-Woo tried to reassure them.

“Thank you,” Su-Jin’s father said with a sigh, then turned his head toward Kang Chan and expressed his gratitude again.

Kang Chan remained silent.

“Mr. Kang Chan, let’s head downstairs,” Yoo Hun-Woo said.

When Yoo Hun-Woo and Kang Chan stood up, Su-Jin’s parents did as well.

“I’m sorry that I couldn’t be of help,” Kang Chan apologized to Su-Jin’s parents.

“Isn’t it enough that we got to hear her voice again? Since we don’t have much time, we’ll talk to you again after tonight.”

“Please don’t worry about it.”

Yoo Hun-Woo walked away after Kang Chan finished talking to them. Kang Chan followed behind him. After entering the elevator and waiting for its doors to close, Yoo Hun-Woo glanced at Kang Chan. Their eyes met.

“Why are you looking at me?” Kang Chan asked.

“I’m just thankful.”

Kang Chan simply smirked in response.

“A lot of doctors start their own medical business because they can’t stand their patients dying on them. They avoid working for university hospitals even though they are more than capable to do so and they would get great treatment there. Watching patients die every day, we often feel skeptical about this job,” Yoo Hun-Woo added.

“Didn’t you also save me?”

The elevator opened.

Kang Chan stepped out of the elevator and headed to his room. Yoo Hun-Woo was the one following him now.

Rattle.

Seok Kang-Ho stood up while holding his chest. “What happened?”

“We’ll know whether she will survive or not tonight,” Kang Chan answered.

“Mr. Director, have you had dinner?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“I haven't eaten yet.”

“That’s too bad! Should I order a jjajangmyeon for you?”

“Sounds good!” Yoo Hun-Woo replied, then went to go lay down on the empty bed across from Seok Kang-Ho and Kang Chan’s beds.

As Yoo Hun-Woo laid down, Kang Chan made coffee, and Seok Kang-Ho ordered jjajangmyeon.

A moment later, Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho heard Yoo Hun-Woo snoring lightly.

“What the? That gentleman is the director of this hospital, yet he just fell asleep in someone else’s patient room?” Seok Kang-Ho commented. Despite speaking crudely, he walked over and put a blanket over Yoo Hun-Woo. “He must’ve been having a hard time.”

Seok Kang-Ho then approached Kang Chan and held up a cigarette. However, he put it back down after looking at Yoo Hun-Woo.

“It’s strange, but you attract people,” Seok Kang-Ho commented.

“What?”

Seok Kang-Ho took a sip of coffee, then looked at Yoo Hun-Woo again with a smirk. “I find myself depending on you whenever you’re around. No matter how difficult the situation I’m in or even when I start thinking, ‘How am I going to get out of this?’ I just know that we’ll find a way somehow for as long as you’re there. Something like that.”

“Hey! I was shot in the neck and died as well.”

Yoo Hun-Woo’s snores were like the sounds a cat made whenever they were in a good mood.

“You still don’t get it even after looking at that gentleman? He probably would’ve wanted to depend on someone right now as well. He’s probably like that fucker Gérard right now,” Seok Kang-Ho added.

“Phew, forget about it.”

Being able to console people was great and all, but not being able to smoke cigarettes was bullshit.

“Go get changed out of those weird clothes. You look like you just got back from a semiconductor factory,” Seok Kang-Ho said.

Kang Chan took off the clothes that he had put on when he went into the ICU.

The jjajangmyeon arrived some time after Kang Chan told Seok Kang-Ho what happened upstairs. It didn’t feel right to wake up someone sleeping soundly, so Seok Kang-Ho ate Yoo Hun-Woo’s jjajangmyeon while complaining instead. He ate every last bite, cleaning his plate completely.

Yoo Hun-Woo woke up about thirty minutes later. He left the patient room feeling upset because they didn't wake him up when the jjajangmyeon arrived.

Damn it. He can tell a nurse to order another one.

Saturday ended not long after.

Doing his morning rounds, Yoo Hun-Woo entered Kang Chan's room with a bright expression.

"What happened?" Kang Chan asked.

"She's responding well. We think she's becoming stable, so we're watching her with hope," Yoo Hun-Woo answered while unwrapping the bandages around Kang Chan's left hand, then asked Kang Chan if moving it was painful.

"I'll wrap a thin layer of bandages around your left hand. If your hand trembles when you clench it, that means it's in a dangerous condition and you have to come back and get it checked immediately," Yoo Hun-Woo warned.

"Alright, I'll do that."

After treating Kang Chan, Yoo Hun-Woo cut Seok Kang-Ho's bandages.

Several pieces of skin were taken off with the bandages, the sight making Kang Chan groan. Fortunately, Yoo Hun-Woo said that wasn't a bad sign.

Yoo Hun-Woo disinfected Seok Kang-Ho's wounds, applied medication, then wrapped them in bandages again.

"Thank you, Mr. Kang Chan," Yoo Hun-Woo thanked him out of nowhere.

The best thing to do during moments like this was to just smile in response.

After Yoo Hun-Woo left, Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho comfortably relaxed. They felt as if they had gone on a vacation for about a week.

"What are you going to do starting tomorrow?" Seok Kang-Ho asked.

"I'm not sure. Considering everyone is hospitalized right now, including manager Kim, I think I've become a bit free... What about you?"

"I asked the school to hire a new teacher for a couple of months."

When Kang Chan looked at Seok Kang-Ho, he elaborated, "Just think of it as a substitute teacher. Since running and jumping is difficult for me right now, I'm thinking of taking time off for about a year. There's still that National Assembly member who's trying to sell off military secrets, too. Taking that into consideration, wouldn't it be better for you if I have a bit more time?"

Thinking the idea didn't seem that bad, Kang Chan nodded. Seeing how Seok Kang-Ho's knife wounds weren't healing as fast as Kang Chan's, he definitely had to rest for a bit. Since Seok Kang-

Ho also had spare money in his bank account and received a salary from the National Intelligence Service anyway, he didn't have to worry about his livelihood.

Sitting on his bed, Kang Chan looked outside the window. It bothered him that he didn't get a single text message from Kim Mi-Young.

'I should leave her be. She's a senior in high school.'

He was like a kid whose younger sister recently grew up dramatically. However, no matter how much Kim Mi-Young would change in college, Kang Chan thought of accepting her.

All that was left for him to do was spend the rest of the day resting properly.

As he leaned back against the bed...

Buzz— Buzz—Buzz—. Buzz— Buzz—Buzz—. Buzz— Buzz—Buzz—.

Kang Chan's phone rang as if to ask, 'Why are you trying to rest?'

It was Lanok.

Lanok said he'll wait for me to get discharged before contacting me. Is this for something urgent?

"Hello?"

- Mr. Kang Chan, how are you feeling?

"I'm thinking of getting discharged tomorrow."

- I'm sorry for calling you on your day off, but Vasili contacted me. However, this isn't something we can talk about over the phone, so I was hoping we could meet up. Is it okay for me to visit you at the hospital?

Vasili was Russia's representative for the Eurasian Rail. That fucker looked mean.

"Sure. How long will it take you to get here?"

- I'll be there in ten minutes.

"Alright, Mr. Ambassador."

After hanging up, Kang Chan told Seok Kang-Ho about the phone call, then asked him to stay in the room next door for a bit.

Seok Kang-Ho threw several paper cups in the trash can, then left the room. Lanok arrived not long after.

Chapter 125.2: Something I Never Would've Done (2)

After a brief greeting, Kang Chan and Lanok sat facing each other at the table in front of the bed.

"It's impressive that you really have recovered enough to get discharged," Lanok commented.

"I was told that my body constitution is unique. I got a biopsy done because of it in the past, and it was sent to a research institute in the United States."

Lanok nodded, then crossed his legs.

Louis prepared a cigar for Lanok, and Kang Chan bit on a cigarette. They both started smoking.

“Vasili has requested for an arbitration,” Lanok started while turning the lit cigar with his fingers. “He offered to give us the bodies of the South Korean agents who joined the most recent operation in Mongolia in exchange for the bodies of the Japanese agents found in Yang Jin-Woo’s house.”

Kang Chan cocked his head while tapping his cigarette on the paper cup, shaking the ashes off. Even though he knew about the operation in Mongolia, Vasili had been pretending as if he didn’t know anything because it was executed in absolute secrecy. Even so, he now blatantly wanted to exchange bodies.

“Vasili has intervened. With Russia mediating, we no longer have to discuss or question things like purpose, result, and nationality. However, that’s not what’s important.” Lanok looked around the patient room, then softly continued, “Vasili isn’t the type to arbitrate things like this, and even if he did want this, he definitely isn’t the type to intervene in the frontline. Vasili likely had to do this to create an excuse to come to South Korea.”

“Can’t he just come to South Korea? People like Vasili can make any kind of excuse, can’t they?”

“Russia and Vasili do have the capabilities to do that. Taking that into consideration, why would he have to make such a lousy excuse to come here? There is a possibility that Vasili was the one who suggested exchanging bodies.”

If even the sly and wily Lanok didn’t know and was unsure about it, then there was no chance Kang Chan would know it.

Extinguishing his cigarette, Kang Chan waited for Lanok to continue.

“Vasili is probably coming here to meet you. No matter how hard I think about it, there is nothing for Vasili or Russia to gain from the South Korean government right now. Considering he’s also bringing over the South Korean agents’ bodies, which were in China’s possession, he has already negotiated with Japan as well,” Lanok said.

“Why do you think Vasili is coming to meet me?”

“Most likely because of the two things that he has requested from me. One was to mediate the body exchange with the South Korean government, and the second was for me to accompany him in meeting you.”

“Vasili said that?”

“A lot of countries currently see you as something similar to my successor.” Lanok looked behind him and nodded at Louis, who then brought them tea in a paper cup.

“Vasili wants an answer by Wednesday. If the South Korean government agrees to this, then he has said that he’ll fly to South Korea using a private plane on Friday. He wants to exchange bodies immediately at the airport,” Lanok added.

“What do you think about this?”

Lanok looked down at the cup for a moment, then looked up. His slim face and fierce eyes, which were distinctive of French people, made him appear extremely tenacious during times like this.

“I’ll go with whatever you decide to do. Since this exchange of bodies is just some kind of excuse that Vasili has made to meet you, this most likely won’t happen if South Korea says that they only want to exchange bodies.”

“Mr. Ambassador,” Kang Chan called.

“Yes, Mr. Kang Chan.”

“You’re skeptical about this, aren’t you?” Kang Chan asked as he picked up a cigarette, certain that Lanok was still hiding something. He couldn’t understand Lanok’s small reactions in the past, but he could now decipher what they meant. This happened much more often since the day he noticed Lanok’s pinky finger trembling.

“I do have my guesses, but I can’t confirm any of them yet. That’s why I personally want to meet Vasili. I want to know why in the world someone so prideful is trying to come to South Korea just to meet you,” Lanok responded.

“Should I tell the South Korean government about this?”

“That’s probably a good idea.”

Lanok’s smile told Kang Chan there was a different scheme behind that answer as well.

Phew! They live such tiring lives.

“Please give me an answer by Wednesday noon. As soon as you do, I’ll plan our schedule with Vasil,” Lanok said, then took a sip of the tea in the paper cup.

“Will the South Korean government even accept the offer?”

“They will be extremely thankful for it.”

“I see.”

Lanok was a cut above Kang Chan in analyzing and predicting the results of information warfare. Hence, he obediently accepted Lanok’s answer.

“Mr. Kang Chan, if Russia intervenes, the South Korean government truly won’t be able to protect you. Since this requires risking the lives of the DGSE and my country’s Intelligence Bureau, this will give Russia, China, the United States, and

the United Kingdom the opportunity to stand together as one and look for opportunities to kill you. Moreover, if things go wrong, Japan and North Korea will certainly side with them.”

‘Why would Russia, China, the United States, and the United Kingdom try to kill me?’

Lanok softly exhaled when he saw Kang Chan’s expression. “Let’s meet Vasili. We should discuss this afterward.”

“Mr. Ambassador, are you in a dangerous situation as well because of me?”

Lanok sharply looked at Kang Chan. “There’s a lesson passed down like an ironclad rule in the Intelligence Bureau: if there ever comes a time when you’re drawn to a person, then drop everything and quit.”

“What happens if they don’t?”

“Please give me a response after contacting the South Korean government. I’ll take care of the rest. You have until Wednesday noon.”

Kang Chan knew that Lanok was avoiding his question, but there was no way to force him to answer.

“Alright, Mr. Ambassador.”

Lanok stood up from his seat and left.

Kang Chan looked at the clock. Lanok spent a total of twenty minutes with him.

Kang Chan looked for Seok Kang-Ho’s number and was about to call him when Seok Kang-Ho opened the door and entered.

“What’s going on?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“Have a seat.”

Kang Chan didn’t have anything to hide from him, so he told him everything about his conversation with Lanok.

“Ah, those fuckers. Why are they making this so complicated? How good would it be if they just straightforwardly said, ‘This is where we draw the line,’ and, ‘This will happen if we do this, so why don’t we do this instead?’” Seok Kang-Ho commented afterward.

It did sound straightforward, but Kang Chan doubted those in charge of information warfare would ever do that.

“What are you going to do?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“I’ll call manager Kim and ask him for an answer first. Lanok told me they won’t refuse.”

“As a matter of fact...” Seok Kang-Ho nodded.

These were the bodies of the agents who sacrificed their lives for the country. Refusing this offer was undesirable, especially for Kang Chan.

Kang Chan called Kim Hyung-Jung and explained the situation.

- I'll report this to the Director and give you an answer as soon as possible.

"The deadline is until Wednesday noon. The exchange will happen in the airport, and the last condition is that Vasili will come into Seoul."

- Understood. Thank you, Mr. Kang Chan.

This would allow them to retrieve the agents who went to Mongolia with them.

Hearing the grief in Kim Hyung-Jung's soft voice, Kang Chan quietly hung up.

"It's strange, though," Seok Kang-Ho commented again.

"What is?"

"I mean, what's in it for Russia to seek you out? You also said that the big countries are all looking for an opportunity to kill you, and France keeps telling you to naturalize to their country to protect you, but they're not telling you the details. What on earth is going on?"

"Tsk!"

At any rate, they would get some answers if Kang Chan met Vasili.

It had been a while since he had rested without worry, so Kang Chan had thought to enjoy it a bit, but he was already heavy-hearted even though it was still early in the day.

At times like this, I should eat something delicious.

Kang Chan sharply glared at Seok Kang-Ho.

Having been conditioned to eat all week, Kang Chan thought of eating something as soon as his mood turned foul.

They ordered lunch and enjoyed coffee and cigarettes. Afterward, they relaxed on the bed.

Kang Chan called Yoo Hye-Sook and told her that he would be going home tomorrow. He then called Michelle, who told him that the feedback about the drama were better than they had expected.

- If it wasn't for the Chairman Yang incident, the drama would've done much better.

That son of a bitch had continued to cause trouble even as he died.

He had just finished making calls and had put his phone down on one side of the bed when Yoo Hun-Woo entered.

"Mr. Kang Chan."

Considering there were no rounds during lunchtime, Yoo Hun-Woo most likely came here to tell them about Shim Su-Jun's condition.

"Su-Jin has woken up," Yoo Hun-Woo said.

"Really?"

Startled, Seok Kang-Ho sat up as Yoo Hun-Woo nodded. The latter had a satisfied look on his face.

"She's been complaining about the pain, but her heartbeat and body temperature, among other things, have all gone back to normal. Thank you, Mr. Kang Chan."

"That's good."

"Of course. As a doctor, moments like this feels really rewarding."

Yoo Hun-Woo's expression turned apologetic as he looked at Kang Chan. "However, it seems like she doesn't remember anything about you. She hasn't talked about you at all, and it also doesn't feel right to ask about it, so I pretended not to know."

"That's actually better. Getting involved with random strangers is uncomfortable. All I want is for her to recover quickly until she's healthy enough to get discharged."

"Her bones were so finely broken that she will be in that state for a year. Moreover, she will be in extreme pain during treatment. Still, you have no idea how pretty she looks whenever she smiles because she survived. Anyway, Su-Jin's parents will try to thank you once the afternoon visits end, so please spare them some of your time."

Kang Chan shook his head. Letting it end on this note would be for the best.

"Please tell them that they don't have to. I just want to relax here and get discharged tomorrow."

"Alright. Let's talk about this later during the evening rounds."

After sharing the good news, Yoo Hun-Woo left the room.

Deep down, Kang Chan felt better.

Chapter 126.1: What Do I Want to Do? (1)

Kang Chan had already declined to meet up with Yoo Hun-Woo twice before dinner, yet he still ended up following him to the director's office to meet with Shim Su-Jin's parents. Not only was he worried about how Su-Jin's parents felt, but it was also difficult for him to keep ignoring Yoo Hun-Woo when he had already visited him three times.

As Kang Chan followed Yoo Hun-Woo into the director's office on the eleventh floor, Shim Su-Jin's parents quickly stood up from the sofa. They still seemed tired, but they now looked lively.

"Kang Chan!"

Shim Su-Jin's mother walked over to Kang Chan and grabbed his hand. He had a feeling that Yoo Hye-Sook had the same expression as Su-Jin's mother back when he was confined in the ICU.

Kang Chan was really happy that things had worked out for them.

"Please have a seat." Yoo Hun-Woo sat in an armchair as he gestured at the sofa for them.

"I hope you're not upset by Su-Jin not remembering you," Su-Jin's mother said.

Kang Chan smiled lightly and told them that it was okay.

"Here you go. I guess you can call me a university professor." Su-Jin's father handed over a business card to Kang Chan, which said 'Shim Min-Deok, Go Jeong University's Department of Political Science and International Relations.'

"As my wife just said, don't be too upset.'

"I'm actually glad that she doesn't remember."

"Thank you," Su-Jin's mother quickly answered, still looking apologetic.

By the time Yoo Hun-Woo's secretary brought over tea, they had already gone through everything there was to say.

"Drop by the university anytime. In life, when people meet like this, they become support systems for each other," Su-Jin's father said, then thanked him.

"I'll be sure to do that." Kang Chan felt just as grateful toward them.

"We're also thinking of going home, which we hadn't done in a long time. Thanks to you, we'll finally be able to get a good night's sleep for the first time in so long. I heard that you're getting discharged tomorrow?"

"Yes."

"Thank you. Thank you so much."

Yoo Hun-Woo quickly butted into the conversation when he saw Kang Chan smiling awkwardly.

"Right, I think enough thanks have gone around. The two of you should head home and get some rest. Don't worry about anything today and just have a good night's sleep. Come back during visiting hours tomorrow. Her parents looking well-rested and happy will make things a lot better for Su-Jin as well."

Su-Jin's parents stood up and thanked Kang Chan a few more times before leaving the Director's office.

"Are you satisfied now?" Kang Chan asked.

"Thank you for your hard work," Yoo Hun-Woo answered with a pleased smile.

"I'm getting discharged tomorrow, but I don't have any clothes to wear," Kang Chan said.

“Again?”

“Why ask that when you already know why?”

“Fine. I’ll be happy to prepare clothes for you tomorrow,” Yoo Hun-Woo responded.

“Please prepare clothes for Mr. Seok Kang-Ho as well.”

“Of course!”

When Kang Chan stood up to leave, Yoo Hun-Woo got up and left with him.

“Don’t you have a family?” Kang Chan asked.

“I have a wife beautiful enough to make me speechless, and I also have three gym rats for sons. Why do you ask?”

“Don’t they complain about you working on a Sunday?”

“I made sure my family understands that priests and doctors can’t complain about working on holidays, especially when I started treating people in secret.”

Yoo Hun-Woo talked as if he had been firm with his family, but from what Kang Chan saw, it was more likely that he had slyly persuaded them.

The next morning, Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho changed into the clothes Yoo Hun-Woo had bought for them, then dropped by the specialty coffee shop at the intersection.

“The weather is amazing,” Seok Kang-Ho commented.

“Is it because it’s already autumn? The landscape is definitely picturesque. Get a table on the terrace. I’ll buy coffee.”

Kang Chan bought two cups of coffee and headed back outside.

“Do you have all of the previous Seok Kang-Ho’s memories?” Kang Chan asked, then took a sip of his coffee. He suddenly wanted to look properly into what he could remember.

“Apparently so. You also think it’s strange, don’t you? Don’t you think it makes no sense that I understand and speak Korean? It’s been this way since I reincarnated, though, so I’ve gotten used to it.”

Actually, everything, including Dayeru being able to speak Korean, didn’t make any sense.

“I also inherited the emotions of this body’s previous owner. Since I know his past, my wife and daughter are less suspicious of me. Remember when I had a housewarming party? I knew all my relatives and even all my colleagues who visited our house,” Seok Kang-Ho continued.

Kang Chan glanced at Seok Kang-Ho.

That seemed to be the reason why Seok Kang-Ho sometimes looked deep in thought.

“It’s already worrisome that Vasili is paying us a visit, but that fucker named Xavier could still be in South Korea as well. The United Kingdom and the United States are also getting involved, which is unusual, so be extra careful for the time being,” Kang Chan said.

“I don’t even want to go out, but let’s at least visit Misari once a day. I feel like I’d die from frustration and lack of activity if I do nothing but lie around at home.”

“Alright.”

They stood up and left after smoking cigarettes and drinking coffee for a bit.

Kang Chan didn’t notice it when they were in the hospital, but Seok Kang-Ho seemed uncomfortable whenever he moved. It was especially noticeable when he was getting in the taxi.

After they parted ways in front of the apartment, Kang Chan immediately went up to his apartment. As soon as he unlocked the door and headed inside...

“Channy!” Yoo Hye-Sook delightedly greeted Kang Chan.

“You didn’t go to work?” Kang Chan asked.

“You said you were coming home today, so I didn’t! I wanted to see you before I head out. What’s wrong with your hand?”

“Just a small wound. The doctor said it should be fully healed by the end of this week.”

“You should be more careful. Does it hurt a lot?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

This was their first time seeing each other since Yoo Hye-Sook got attacked, which was perhaps why she still looked and sounded awkward.

Kang Chan walked toward her and embraced her. Whenever they hugged like this, Kang Chan could tuck her head under his chin.

“Are you okay?” Kang Chan asked again.

“Of course. You’re protecting me.”

Kang Chan smiled a bit as Yoo Hye-Sook stroked his back.

What more had to be said? When they were upset or couldn’t properly convey their feelings, hugging was the best.

“I made you upset, didn’t I?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“It’s okay—you were very startled.”

“I was.”

Kang Chan put down his arms.

“Channy, do you want some fruit?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked again.

“Yes, I’d like some.”

Noticing that Yoo Hye-Sook wanted to say something, Kang Chan sat down at the table. Yoo Hye-Sook took out a melon from the fridge, sliced them to make them easier to eat, then peeled them.

“The employees told me that they couldn’t have protected me and that one or two of them could have been injured if it weren’t for you. Here you go!” Yoo Hye-Sook took a slice of melon using a fork and handed it to Kang Chan. “I also heard that because of the Eurasian Rail, some countries are trying to stop you by sending people to assassinate me and your dad. And I’ve also been told that you’ve done your best to prevent them from doing so. Eat up, Channy.”

“Please eat with me.”

“I’ll eat after I peel this.”

Kang Chan couldn’t do anything else but start eating when he saw Yoo Hye-Sook’s expression.

“Your dad and I will also become stronger. We decided to keep our chin up so that we won’t be a distraction to you while you’re working hard for the country,” Yoo Hye-Sook continued.

Is she hiding something?

Kang Chan noticed Yoo Hye-Sook looked proud. He was curious, but he had trouble asking her about it.

“All of our employees decided to stay in the company. They said that South Korea will become very well-off when the Eurasian Rail gets connected... Why are you looking at me like that?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked when she noticed his smile.

“Mother, you met someone, didn’t you?”

“No, I didn’t.”

“Phuhu, you do know it’s obvious when you lie, right? You and Father are really bad at lying.”

“Is it really that obvious?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“Yes.”

Kang Chan took a fork to get another slice of the melon, then handed it to Yoo Hye-Sook.

“Pretend you didn’t notice anything. Your dad and I have decided to keep it a secret,” Yoo Hye-Sook said.

“Alright. Please eat up.”

Yoo Hye-Sook accepted the fork and ate the slice of melon.

“If it brings you too much trouble, I can quit working for the country now,” Kang Chan said.

“Mrmph!” Yoo Hye-Sook’s answer came out weird because of the fruit in her mouth. She quickly swallowed the fruit, then said, “Do whatever makes you happy, not what your dad and I want. There are a lot of things we don’t know much about because we’ve been living normal lives. That’s why it’s taking us some time to get used to this, but all I really want and hope for is that you’re not doing anything dangerous.”

Yoo Hye-Sook then looked at Kang Chan’s left hand. She was clearly hiding the fact that she felt bad for him and was trying to overcome it.

Similar to how Yoo Hun-Woo had persuaded Kang Chan not to switch hospitals, someone had really persuaded Yoo Hye-Sook.

They shouldn’t make a decision right now, so Kang Chan just said, “Alright.”

“Don’t you have to go to work?” Kang Chan asked.

“I do. I actually have a car I can use to go to and from work now.”

What’s she talking about?

“Your dad bought it for me so I can visit places with the two female employees.”

“That’s amazing.” Kang Chan meant what he said. Their security guards didn’t have to keep up a disguise anymore, and above all else, Yoo Hye-Sook would be in much less danger once she had accepted them.

“I’ll go to work after lunch,” Yoo Hye-Sook said.

Since it was about 11 am, Kang Chan agreed that it was a good idea.

After eating enough fruits, Kang Chan headed to the bathroom to take a shower.

Kang Chan took off his clothes and noticed that some of his new wounds were still red. Every part of his body had been either wounded or scarred in a knife fight. Although he doubted Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sooj would go to a swimming pool any time soon, he thought he wouldn’t be able to join them.

Kang Chan felt as if he was on top of the world after his shower. It had been a while since he had been able to take one.

Chapter 126.2: What Do I Want to Do? (1)

For lunch, Kang Chan and Yoo Hye-Sook had doenjang-guk, kimchi, seasoned bean sprouts, and seasoned cucumbers. It had also been a while since he had eaten a home-cooked meal. Kang Chan ate until he was so full he wondered if his appetite had grown while he was with Seok Kang-Ho.

After doing the dishes, Yoo Hye-Sook called a female employee, talked, then walked to the front door.

“Have a good day at work,” Kang Chan said.

“Thank you, Channy.”

What’s she thankful for?

Kang Chan thought he should be the one feeling thankful for having her as a mom.

Once Yoo Hye-Sook left, Kang Chan went into his room, then called Kim Hyung-Jung to ask him for a favor.

In the middle of the afternoon, Seok Kang-Ho told Kang Chan that the special admission letter from Seoul National University had arrived and that Kang Chan had to go to the school on Wednesday and pick it up. When he started talking about awards, Kang Chan flatly refused and told him that he would never do things like that ever again.

Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook both got home at around 6:30 pm. They all had dinner together for the first time in quite a long while.

“I’m so full. Want to go for a walk?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked Kang Chan after dinner.

Kang Dae-Kyung looked as if he had something to say, so Kang Chan agreed without complaint.

Once they were out of the house, Kang Dae-Kyung asked, “Is your hand really okay?”

“Yes.”

Someone from the floor below them got in the elevator, preventing Kang Dae-Kyung from saying anything else until they had left the building.

“Let’s sit over there,” Kang Dae-Kyung said, pointing at an empty bench by the pavilion.

Upon reaching it and sitting down, they both got comfortable.

“Your mom and I ate with the President, the Prime Minister, and the Director of the National Intelligence Service,” Kang Dae-Kyung opened up.

So that’s what happened.

Kang Chan smiled faintly.

“It was really difficult at first, but after a while, even your mom started feeling comfortable around them. They treated us really well.”

“Is that why Mother has changed?”

“She does look like she has changed, doesn’t she?”

“Yes.”

Kang Dae-Kyung inhaled loudly, then exhaled slowly. “They told us that they want to appoint you as the South Korean representative of the Eurasian Rail.”

“They want to appoint me?”

Kang Dae-Kyung nodded while pursing his lips. “They’re thinking of using the excuse about our government having trouble refusing because Ambassador Lanok, the Eurasian Rail founder, recommended you. If you take on such an important role, they said the other countries that want to distract you will use any means to do so, which is why they hope we’ll do our best to help you.”

“What do you think about it?” Kang Chan asked.

“Why would you ask that? What’s really important is what you think.”

What Kang Dae-Kyung had said was obvious, but it seemed new again.

“I don’t want you doing something that you don’t like for our sake. We already told you this before, but you don’t even have to go to college if you don’t want to. I promised you that I would your mom if she makes a fuss, didn’t I?” Kang Dae-Kyun added.

They laughed quietly.

“I made a promise with your mom that we would not try to mold you into something that you’re not and that we wouldn’t stop you from becoming an influential person just because we’re scared and worried for you. However, there’s something that we’re honestly scared of. You know what that is, don’t you?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked.

There was no way that Kang Chan wouldn’t know that they were scared of someone attacking them and him getting hurt.

“It’s difficult for us to understand and accept what you have shown us, but we think you have an innate ability in that field, unlike us. The Director of the National Intelligence Service has said that if you keep growing at this rate, you would be an important figure by the time you’re thirty and that no country in the world will ever be able to trample you.”

Will I even still be alive by then?

“Personally, I would be happier if you’re living happily than if you became an important figure. Your mom feels the same way. But if that kind of life makes you happy, then I want you to know that you don’t have to hide the fact that you’re working for the country for my sake and your mom’s.”

“Alright,” Kang Chan answered.

“You’re bound to get hurt in this line of work, aren’t you?” Kang Dae-Kyung smiled awkwardly while looking at Kang Chan. “Give your mom the special admission letter to Seoul National University no matter what.”

“You knew about that?”

“They told us during the meal that they will send the letter to the school today. Your mom is eagerly waiting for it.”

Kang Chan no longer had any choice but to go to school on Wednesday.

“Kang Chan,” Kang Dae-Kyung called.

“Yes?”

“Your mom is working extremely hard to make up for the fact that she looked upset in front of you and is also trying really hard to accept what you do. I hope you’ll be more understanding toward her.”

“Of course I will.”

“Oh dear, when did you grow up so fast?” Kang Dae-Kyung reached out and tousled Kang Chan’s hair. “It feels like just yesterday, you were still the kid who cried and screamed because you couldn’t get on the escalator by yourself.”

“I did that?” Kang Chan asked.

“Are you going to pretend that you don’t remember?”

Kang Chan actually didn’t.

“Fine. Men should have pride, after all,” Kang Dae-Kyung added, then stood up. “Phew!”

“Let’s go home. Your mom is probably getting worried,” Kang Dae-Kyung said afterward.

That was how Kang Chan’s Monday ended.

The next day, Kang Chan headed to Samseong-dong once Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook had left for work. He didn’t know why Kim Hyung-Jung had unexpectedly called and asked to meet at the office, but he went anyway.

Click.

When Kang Chan arrived at the fifth floor, an employee he had never met before opened the door and greeted him.

“The manager is waiting for you,” the employee said. He tapped a keycard on the scanner and opened the door to Kim Hyung-Jung’s office.

“Mr. Kang Chan!” Kim Hyung-Jung exclaimed.

Kang Chan burst out laughing as he entered the room. Below the window in front of him was Kim Hyung-Jung, lying on a hospital bed.

More than two-thirds of Kim Hyung-Jung’s body was wrapped in bandages.

“Do you have to do things like this?” Kang Chan asked.

“The National Police Hospital doesn’t allow smoking. Phew! This is actually better.”

For some reason, the people around Kang Chan were becoming weirder and weirder.

“Kim Tae-Jin is being discharged tomorrow,” Kim Hyung-Jung added.

“Already?”

“He isn’t the type to play tricks to get discharged earlier, but I was told that he was getting discharged. Want to smoke?”

Kang Chan walked past the table. Just as he was about to sit down beside the hospital bed, someone opened the door with a click.

An employee brought over coffee and an ashtray.

Kang Chan didn’t know about anything else, but he thought that the employees probably hated doing things like this.

Kang Chan put a cigarette in Kim Hyung-Jung’s mouth and lit it up for him. He then lit another for himself.

“The National Intelligence Service has decided to ask you to take over the role of being responsible for the dead agents and entrust you with full authority to issue commands. They’re also thinking of approving any request you may have, Kim Hyung-Jung said.

Kang Chan was going to do it either way, but this made him feel light-hearted.

“The transmitter you requested is on top of my desk,” Kim Hyung-Jung continued.

Kang Chan turned his head, finding a small box on top of the desk.

“The box has a tie pin, buttons, a belt, and three thumbtacks. Place the thumbtacks on the heel of your shoe. Once you install it, you’ll be able to use it for three months.”

“What about the receiver?” Kang Chan asked.

“I’ll send you an app that will allow you to check on it from your phone.”

“Sounds good.”

Kim Hyung-Jung reached out his arm, which was tightly wrapped in bandages, and stiffly held up a cup. It looked risky, but he managed to drink coffee without spilling any of it.

“I feel much better now because it feels like I relieved at least some of our dead members’ deep sorrows,” Kim Hyung-Jung said. Kang Chan hadn’t asked about it yet, but Kim Hyung-Jung already talked about it. He did look like he was in a much better mood, though.

“If Vasili comes into South Korea on Friday, the Intelligence Bureau is going to issue a first-class alert. If he gets murdered in our country, the aftermath won’t be easy to handle,” Kim Hyung-Jung added.

“He doesn’t look like a person who can be killed so easily, though.”

“That’s also a problem. Vasili will use whatever methods are available to him for his own benefit. In a word, he’s... extreme.”

When Kim Hyung-Jung saw Kang Chan smirking, he swallowed dryly with difficulty. “In truth, if Vasili knows you, then he won’t act hastily.”

“Are you really going to stay here?”

“As I said, this is better than being in a hospital.”

In truth, Kim Hyung-Jung was staying at the office not because it was better than a hospital but because he wanted to provide support to the event on Friday. If it meant finding the agents that Kang Chan had left behind, he would have done the same.

Chapter 127.1: What Do I Want to Do? (2)

Kang Chan adamantly turned down Kim Hyung-Jung’s invitation to have dinner together before he left. The offer of delicious jjamppong was definitely tempting, but Kim Hyung-Jung’s current condition didn’t bode well for them lightheartedly enjoying a meal together.

Kang Chan suddenly felt as if his appetite had increased after living with a greedy and gluttonous foodie for a week.

Thinking of the foodie in question, he pulled out his phone.

-Where are you?

“I just made a quick stop by Samseong-Dong,” Kang Chan replied.

-Wait, really? Does that mean Mr. Kim already got discharged?

“Yeah, but he’s not in the best state right now. Anyway, have you had lunch yet?”

-It’s only eleven, sheesh. Hurry on over. I’ll be waiting in the underground parking garage, so let’s take a little trip to Suwon.

“Suwon?”

-Suwon’s traditionally cut galbi ribs are to die for.

Kang Chan snorted and got in a taxi right away. He estimated that he would arrive at their apartment complex in a couple of minutes since it wasn't very far.

On the way over, he opened the box that he had just received and saw the various portable handheld transmitters that Kim Hyung-Jung mentioned meticulously organized within the box's sponge layer.

'This should do it for now.'

There had to be a reason why Vasili was coming to see him.

The upcoming battle wouldn't involve shooting at each other. It was a war of information so the transmitters were more fitting than a gun. Since Kang Chan had made up his mind to fight in this contest, he would prepare everything he would need for the battle.

The moment he got off the taxi, he saw Seok Kang-Ho waiting on the road in front of the apartment complex with his car.

"You should've just waited for me inside the parking garage!" Kang Chan admonished.

"I took it slow and steady, and this much isn't too hard for me to drive," replied Seok Kang-Ho.

When Kang Chan sat behind the wheel, he noticed Seok Kang-Ho had already input their destination's address in the car's navigation system.

Fine, if you're that desperate to eat, let's eat!

Since the still-recovering Seok Kang-Ho insisted on having meat, Kang Chan decided to be generous and go along with it.

Kang Chan drove away, following the course the navigation system suggested.

"Is your face bloated or what?"

"Nah, I gained weight," Seok Kang-Ho answered nonchalantly.

Kang Chan didn't have anything to say to that.

On the way to Suwon, Kang Chan told Seok Kang-Ho about his conversation with Kim Hyung-Jung, then ordered him to take two of the handheld transmitters.

"The receiving transmitter set will be programmed into our phones, so tell your wife and daughter to always carry their transmitters around. Let's not get stupidly taken by surprise like last time."

"Does that mean you've officially decided to join the operation?" Seok Kang-Ho asked.

"Well, there's not exactly any other way out, is there? It doesn't feel right to turn down taking over for our deceased team members either. I don't know what it is

that Vasili wants, but we should take small steps to prepare for whatever lies ahead.”

Kang Chan then glanced at Seok Kang-Ho. “Didn’t you say you want to continue doing this type of work too?”

“Phuhu, you’re the best, Captain. I knew you’d look after me,” Seok Kang-Ho responded and let out his trademark laughter, expressing his satisfaction.

“Carefully think it over, all right? A single mistake or moment of hesitation can end you. Information warfare is a different type of battle than what we’re used to, so make sure you always keep your guard up,” Kang Chan warned.

“Got it, Cap. Let’s have a nice, hearty meal so we’ll have the strength to fight.”

The place that Seok Kang-Ho chose was located in front of a traditional folk village’s entrance road. The restaurant was massive, yet it was still filled to the brim with customers.

All the food items that Seok Kang-Ho recommended were absolutely tasty. Kang Chan thought he should come here with Kang Dae-Hyung and Yoo Hye-Sook sometime.

“Cap, are you going to school tomorrow?”

“Yes. I have no other choice because my parents know now,” Kang Chan replied as he scratched the edge of his eyebrow with his index finger.

Kang Chan felt as if he smelled like galbi after eating the meat that was slowly cooked over a charcoal grill.

“Let’s get something to drink before we head back.”

“Sure.”

There wasn’t any reason to say no.

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho enjoyed some coffee together before driving back to Seoul.

On Tuesday evening, Kang Chan gave Lanok his answer. Their call didn’t last that long since they made arrangements for him to stop by the embassy after school on Wednesday. They would finish their conversation there.

Damn it!

He would have to wear his school uniform since he was going to school, so unless he wanted to lug a whole suit to class, he would have to stop by his house to change before heading to the embassy.

Kang Chan arrived at school at about ten in the morning. The school gates were closed, but the small door next to the security guard’s office was open. First-year students were playing with a ball out on the field.

The moment Kang Chan stepped in, the students who recognized him bowed in his direction even though he didn’t ask them to. Their faces were a mix of envy, respect, and a little trace of horror. Pretending not to see them, he made his way to the clubroom.

The door clunked open, and he was greeted by the distinct smell of sweat.

It was a relief that the students had at least cleaned up after themselves, or else Kang Chan would have thrown out all the sports equipment right that instant.

After briefly scanning the room, he headed to the teacher's office.

The office was already quiet, but when Kang Chan entered, an even heavier silence descended on the room briefly before the room exploded with noise.

Teachers approached him to shake his hand and even take pictures with him.

Fine! You can take a few pictures as long as you don't make announcements over the intercom.

While Kang Chan was politely greeting his fans, the teacher who had been in charge of the school year's opening ceremony quickly hurried over.

"Well, if it isn't Kang Chan."

"Hello, sir," Kang Chan replied.

"The principal is waiting for you. Let's get going."

Kang Chan obediently followed him to the principal's office.

As Kang Chan and the principal drank tea together, the latter encouraged him for a whole ten minutes to continue doing good things for the advancement of the school. Kang Chan managed to persuade him not to make an announcement on the intercom, but he had to take about five celebratory pictures with him.

Twenty minutes later, Kang Chan received his certificate of special admission from the principal's office. Fortunately, it ended a lot faster than he had expected.

Now, he had some time to kill.

Should he wait until break and then stop by his classroom?

Kang Chan shook his head. He didn't want to disrupt his classmates from their studies.

Ha.

He laughed at himself.

If he was being honest, the only reason he wanted to go to the classroom was because he wanted to see Kim Mi-Young.

'That's enough acting like an idiot, Kang Chan. Don't be a coward and just go.'

Kang Chan got up from his seat in their clubroom. Unless there were extenuating circumstances, there wouldn't be a reason for him to return to the school until graduation day once he left.

A lot had taken place in such a short amount of time.

Just then, the door clicked open, and Lee Ho-Jun entered wearing his tracksuit. He paused when he saw Kang Chan.

“You’re here?” Kang Chan greeted. He forced a relaxed expression. “What are you doing here? Why aren’t you in class?”

“I spoke to the school about wanting to be a sports major, so they allowed me to spend my class time exercising in the athletic club. That’s also what Heo Eun-Sil is doing.”

There was no reason not to believe Lee Ho-Jun. Kang Chan didn’t have to supervise them or pick at their words to confirm whether they were telling the truth.

He just wanted to go home quickly.

Just as he was about to stand up, the door opened again. This time, Heo Eun-Sil came in. Her face was bare of any makeup.

“When did you get to school?” Heo Eun-Sil asked.

“Just now,” Kang Chan answered.

“Great. I’ve actually been meaning to contact you.”

That had to be a sign that another problem was in the works. Nothing had happened after the clothes incident, and there was still the tab to be paid. Perhaps that was it this time.

“What are you thinking of doing for the school festival?” Heo Eun-Sil asked.

Kang Chan let out a heavy sigh as he watched Heo Eun-Sil hang a towel around her neck.

The victim was painfully lying in a hospital bed because all her bones were crushed, but the assailant’s greatest concern was what to do for a school festival.

“Heo Eun-Sil.”

Heo Eun-Sil quickly looked at him when his voice dropped multiple tones.

“You and Lee Ho-Jun know Shim Su-Jin, don’t you?” Kang Chan asked in a low voice.

They glanced at each other before turning back to Kang Chan.

“She recently attempted to commit suicide by jumping off a building. She barely survived. I heard you two harassed her horribly. Even though she transferred to another school, she couldn’t adjust and had to receive therapy. Even then, she still jumped.”

The two seemed to remember who Shim Su-Jin was.

“You two stay out of the school festival. As I said before, don’t seek forgiveness from me or the school. We’re not in the place to be handing that out. It’s the bullied students who have the right to forgive you.”

“How long do we have to do this for?”

“Until everyone forgives you,” Kang Chan replied.

“We can’t even find all of them.”

“Just continue living your life, and then when you come across news of your victims like now, go and apologize. Got it?”

Heo Eun-Sil looked down at the ground.

Chapter 127.2: What Do I Want to Do? (2)

Kang Chan had never seen Heo Eun-Sil drop her gaze before today.

“I’ll stay out of preparing for the festival,” Heo Eun-Sil accepted.

The moment he heard her response, he felt like he had made a mistake; after all, he didn’t have any authority over the festival or over her, to begin with.

Kang Chan always felt drained after meeting these two.

“Sure, whatever,” he replied.

Kang Chan walked away.

“Where’s the hospital?”

However, Heo Eun-Sil stopped him again.

Kang Chan doubted that Heo Eun-Sil was asking so she could go and throw a fit in Shim Su-Jin’s room, not unless she didn’t fear for her life anymore. He figured an apology from Heo Eun-Sil couldn’t hurt Shim Su-Jin’s recovery.

“Bang Ji Hospital.”

Listening to Heo Eun-Sil’s uneven breathing, he hoped for the first time that things would work out for this rude girl.

Go and beg for forgiveness. Ask for forgiveness every time you come across someone you hurt.

Kang Chan hoped she would have at least that much courage to face her past.

“I’ll tie up loose ends with Su-Jin first. If Su-Jin accepts my apology, promise me you’ll help out with the festival,” Heo Eun-Sil requested.

Why was she so intent on their club’s participation in the school festival? It wasn’t like she was getting paid for it.

Kang Chan smirked. As he did, the bell rang, marking the end of class.

He left the clubroom and walked over to where the senior classrooms were.

It was probably the break between the second and third periods now, but students were still dashing for the student store. A few students spotted Kang Chan and flinched before stopping in their tracks.

Those same students had avoided his gaze like the plague not too long ago. Now, however, they seemed to be wanting to start up a conversation with him as they stole glances at him. As they peeked at him, they couldn’t help but stare at the bandages on his left hand.

How adorable those little kids are.

Kang Chan moved past them and climbed up the stairs. The commotion instantly died down, and a wide path was made in front of him like before, but the atmosphere wasn't as stiff as it used to be.

"It's Kang Chan!" one female student even whispered.

Having finally reached his classroom, he found the back door open because it was currently break time.

Kang Chan poked his head inside and looked for Kim Mi-Young. Students crowded around him and gazed up at him with fascinated eyes.

However, although the noise in the classroom suddenly quieted down, Kim Mi-Young didn't look up from the textbook she was studying.

"Hey, Snow White!"

Kim Mi-Young jumped in surprise before looking back. As she did, Kang Chan's heart sank. She had lost so much weight that her cheeks were half the size they used to be.

She floundered up from her desk and ran over to Kang Chan.

"Why did you lose so much weight?"

"Did you come to pick up your admission certificate?" Kim Mi-Young asked.

"Don't try to change the subject. Are you not feeling well?" he chided.

Kim Mi-Young grinned. Seeing her smile made him miss her light "hehehe" laughter.

"I'm going to apply early to the Seoul National University. I'll attend school with you no matter what," Kim Mi-Young said firmly.

"Do you still practice French?" Kang Chan asked.

"Yup!" she replied eagerly.

"You hopeless girl!" Kang Chan ruffled her hair. A few female students around them covered their mouths and shrieked.

Kim Mi-Young had grown up so fast. She had completely lost her baby fat and seemed like a real young lady now.

"I said I don't like girls who are too thin, remember?"

"Then buy me a lot of yummy things once finals are over, okay?"

Kang Chan thought about having Kim Mi-Young take a break from her studies soon. It was a shame they were at school. He would've patted her on the back if they were elsewhere.

Ding, ding.

The bell rang, signaling that classes were resuming.

Kim Mi-Young could neither let go of Kang Chan's hand nor look away from his face. That was how much she liked him. Even so, she had delved into her studies without contacting him because she was determined to go to the same school as him.

"I'll get going now. Text me when you have time, okay?"

"Okay!" Kim Mi-Young replied energetically.

Kang Chan felt more at ease after hearing her voice. He nodded and turned to leave the classroom as classes resumed.

Upon returning to their apartment, Kang Chan left his special admission certificate to the Seoul National University on the dining table. He then made some scrambled eggs for himself and changed out of his school uniform.

This was where things would really begin.

He picked up the breastpin and thumbtack-shaped transmitter before leaving the complex.

Kang Chan took a taxi and headed straight for the embassy. When he arrived, an agent was already waiting for him to guide him inside.

"Mr. Kang Chan!" Lanok greeted.

Lanok was the same as ever. However, Kang Chan thought he could catch the small differences in his facial expressions now.

As always, they sat across from each other at the table, and tea was served.

"He's scheduled to arrive at six in the evening on Friday. They requested for the exchange to happen at the airport so Vasili's plane can fly straight to Japan afterward."

"I'll inform my colleagues about it," Kang Chan replied, finding no reason to say no to that request.

"Vasili said he wants to have dinner together. I'm not looking forward to dinner with that guy, but we have to listen to what he has to say, so I hope you take that into consideration as well."

"That's fine," Kang Chan replied, then pulled out the breastpin and thumbtack-shaped transmitter from his inner pocket and laid them on the table.

"They're transmitters, I see," Lanok mused.

Damn it.

He hadn't expected Lanok to be stumped by what they were, but he felt the enthusiasm in him being drained when Lanok guessed what they were so effortlessly.

"Ambassador Lanok, if you keep one of these two transmitters on you, I'll be able to know where you are on my phone," Kang Chan said.

Lanok watched Kang Chan with a careful gaze.

“I don’t know exactly what being friends with you means, Mr. Ambassador, but I also don’t know what I might do if I fail to protect you. I won’t be able to do anything if I’m not certain I can protect the people who are special to me,” Kang Chan added.

A smile slowly drew on Lanok’s lips.

“There is nothing more dangerous than revealing my location in real-time to intelligence agents.”

I suppose so.

Kang Chan thought that made sense.

“Are you getting bad feelings as you did last time?” Lanok inquired.

“Not to that extent yet. However, I want to prepare as much as I can before anything happens.”

Lanok took a sip of his tea as if he was trying to mask his contemplative eyes.

He put his teacup back onto the saucer with a click, then looked back at Kang Chan as he rubbed his index finger and thumb together.

“I’ll connect a transmitter used by the DGSE to your phone, Mr. Kang Chan. However, I can block the transmissions whenever I want to. Moreover, should I find myself in a predicament that would require your assistance, I can use it to contact you immediately.”

It was a better transmitter than what Kang Chan had prepared for him. Kang Chan had no reason to refuse.

“Thank you, Ambassador Lanok.”

“I should be the one thanking you. That aside, I’m certain there’s a reason why Vaisili insists on meeting you during his trip.”

“Based on what you said, it seems like you already have a guess about what that could be, Mr. Ambassador,” Kang Chan conjectured.

Lanok made a curt nod at him.

“There are all kinds of messy intel going around right now. The problem is that your name keeps getting mentioned at the core of it all. The United States managed to find you with the results of the biopsy, the French government is attempting to naturalize you as one of our citizens, and Vasili himself wants to meet you. However, the reason behind all that hasn’t been exactly revealed yet.”

Kang Chan let out a deep sigh.

“Among the information that we’re constantly picking up, some are extremely absurd. That’s why I’m eager to see what Vasili would bring with his arrival,” Lanok added.

“Is Xavier still in South Korea?” Kang Chan asked.

“Yes, he is. His original mission was to receive military intelligence from Huh Sang-Soo, but I’m assuming his aim now is to keep an eye on what you do, Mr. Kang Chan.”

“That’s a little ridiculous,” Kang Chan scoffed.

“Well, that’s information warfare for you. The moment the parties learn what it is that each other really wants, countless lives will be sacrificed. And the greater the profits that come with the intelligence, the more lives will be lost,” Lanok explained.

That wasn’t just the case for information warfare.

The many mercenary lives that were sacrificed from participating in Africa’s civil wars were all a result of who could profit more as well.

“There are now two days left before Vasili arrives. We’ll learn the reason behind all this then,” Lanok declared.

“I see.”

“Will you be coming directly to the airport on Friday?”

“I’ll let you know about that tomorrow morning,” Kang Chan replied.

Lanok smiled, wrapping up their talks of Vasili.

“Mr. Kang Chan, don’t turn down the offer if you’re designated as South Korea’s representative for the Eurasian Rail.”

“I heard you would be recommending my appointment for the position. Is that correct?”

“I received a request from the Korean government’s National Intelligence Service.”

Lanok lifted the teapot and poured them some more tea.

“Of course, naturally, I said I would,” Lanok said.

It was time to come to a decision now. Kang Chan looked Lanok directly in the eye.

“Ambassador Lanok, do you think I can do a good job as South Korea’s representative?”

“I know you’re the best suited for that position, Mr. Kang Chan.”

“But if I accept, I can say goodbye to being naturalized as a citizen of France.”

Lanok chuckled, amused, at what Kang Chan said.

“At least you won’t become an enemy of France,” Lanok said with a smile, but for some reason, Kang Chan didn’t get the feeling that the ambassador was joking.

Chapter 128: The Brown Bear’s Visit (1)

At four in the afternoon that Friday, Kang Chan arrived at Incheon International Airport and immediately headed to the National Intelligence Service Airport Office on the second floor.

He pressed the intercom button, and a female employee with an identification card pinned to her chest came out and escorted Kang Chan inside. The National Intelligence Service’s office interior had narrow corridors between completely sealed spaces, making it difficult for outsiders to eavesdrop on what was happening inside each room. The doors didn’t even have the typical nameplates hanging on them to describe their purpose.

The female employee knocked on the door of the innermost room. Soon after, a man in his mid-40s welcomed Kang Chan inside.

“Please come in,” he said.

The sharp-looking man pointed to the sofa.

“I’m Heo Chang-Seon, the one I’m in charge of the National Intelligence Service’s office here at Incheon Airport.”

“I’m Kang Chan.”

Standing on opposite sides of the center table, they exchanged greetings and took a seat on the sofa. The female staff member who had guided Kang Chan inside brought two cups of coffee and half-filled paper cups of water.

“Director Kim instructed me to make sure you have an ashtray,” Heo Chang-Seon stated.

“Are you not a smoker?” Kang Chan asked.

“You’ll be the first to smoke in this office.”

Heo Chang-Seon took out a cigarette from his pocket and offered it, his sharp expression still intact. When Kang Chan accepted the cigarette, Heo Chang-Seon lit it for him.

“We have finished all preparations. As soon as Ambassador Lanok arrives later at 4:40 pm, we will head directly to the VIP lounge. I confirmed the ambassador’s expected time of arrival at the airport just before you arrived.”

The conversation felt more like Heo Chang-Seon was giving Kang Chan a report. While Heo Chang-Seon exhibited pride in overseeing a section of the airport, Kang Chan didn’t feel any sense of friendliness from him.

An awkward silence hung between them.

Kang Chan put his half-smoked cigarette into the paper cup filled with water.

“Can I take a look around the site of arrival?” Kang Chan asked.

“You’re wondering if you can do that right now?” Heo Chang-Seon inquired in disbelief.

“Yes,” Kang Chan replied.

Some things could be understood without having to be said. This was one of those.

It was only natural that Kang Chan would want to inspect the site. He wanted to quickly leave and get out of this office due to Heo Chang-Seon’s grumpy attitude.

“It’s quite a distance,” Heo Chang-Seon warned.

Kang Chan raised his gaze just enough to look Heo Chang-Seon in the eye.

“Division Chief Heo,” Kang Chan said.

“Go ahead, Mr. Kang Chan,” Heo Chang-Seon responded.

“I said I want to see the site,” Kang Chan repeated.

What was wrong with this man?

Heo Chang-Seon’s expression made it clear he was ruffled by Kang Chan’s request. Did this self-important guy, who took pride in having some responsibility over the airport, feel frustrated because he had to deal with a high school student who had only probably gotten in through connections?

Kang Chan didn’t want the Korean agents to have any tension in a meeting where top-level officials from France and Russia would be participating. To that end, it would be best for him to leave this office quickly before his temper erupted.

Heo Chang-Seon stood up and handed Kang Chan an access card that had been laid on the desk.

The card was completely black and only had the number zero written on it.

“Hang this on your chest,” Heo Chang-Seon ordered.

Kang Chan used the clip to attach the identification card to his left breast.

‘Idiot.’

Kang Chan inwardly shook his head as he followed Heo Chang-Seon out of the office.

Men like Heo Chang-Seon were everywhere. While there were humble individuals like Kim Hyung-Jung who risked their lives to carry out missions for their motherland, there would always be arrogant bastards intoxicated by the authority in their hands.

Damned bastards like him could never do missions where their lives could be lost in vain, like the Mongolian operation. However, they would always be left with a bitter taste in their mouths because they couldn’t understand nor embrace the agents’ honorable sacrifice.

Did he want to be in the spotlight when important people like Vasili and Lanok arrived?

It was a laughable idea. If Vasili and Lanok hadn't arranged to meet with Kang Chan quietly to avoid causing a fuss, high-ranking officials from the National Intelligence Service, far superior to Heo Chang-Seon, would have eagerly come running at the drop of a hat.

Heo Chang-Seon led Kang Chan toward customs and into an elevator. They then headed straight out to the runway. Employees saluted Heo Chang-Seon as he walked by them, and even in the way the idiot nodded, Kang Chan could feel a sense of arrogance.

Maybe it was only because of his first impression of Heo Chang-Seon that Kang Chan felt that way, but who knew?

As the two stepped onto the runway, the noise from airplanes and various equipment rushed past their ears.

"Get in!" Heo Chang-Seon shouted over the noise.

Heo Chang-Seon gestured to the open-roofed industrial jeep waiting for them, then climbed into the passenger seat.

What was the point of Kang Chan saying anything about that? In situations like these, it was best to just quietly take a seat.

The jeep followed the line drawn on the runway, then turned right, facing the airport. Moving away from where travelers could see them, they reached an area blocked from view with modular walls around all sides. A unit of about thirty-five soldiers strong was standing guard around it.

The jeep stopped approximately ten meters away from the site.

"We're here!" Heo Chang-Seon announced.

Kang Chan stood up and got off the jeep. He took two steps toward the passenger seat, Heo Chang-Seon was right in front of him.

"I'll stay here on site, so please escort Ambassador Lanok to this place when he arrives," Kang Chan asserted.

"Excuse me?" Heo Chang-Seon asked confusedly, doubting his ears.

"I'm not going to the VIP lounge. Please escort the ambassador over here when he arrives," Kang Chan reiterated.

Heo Chang-Seon glowered at Kang Chan. He looked annoyed because Kang Chan dared disrupt his plans.

Kang Chan turned around, took out a cigarette, and put it in his mouth.

"Smoking is forbidden on the runway," Heo Chang-Seon nagged.

"Whew," Kang Chan breathed out.

Kang Chan wasn't here today to introduce Ambassador Lanok to this stupid bastard or sit still and obediently take orders from him.

He walked toward the modular walls.

The 35-member unit wasn't a small force, but it was obvious what kind of soldiers would be chosen for a special operation like this.

They seemed to recognize Kang Chan. A senior soldier who appeared to be their leader gave him a short salute.

Kang Chan nodded and stood by the senior soldier's side.

Vroom.

Not long after, the jeep carrying Heo Chang-Seon stopped in front of him.

"Mr. Kang Chan, I'm aware of your friendly relationship with Ambassador Lanok. However, there is a certain etiquette that must be followed in certain places," Heo Chang-Seon arrogantly declared.

Nothing about this moronic punk struck Kang Chan the right way.

Pft.

Seeing Kang Chan's smirk, Heo Chang-Seon gritted his teeth.

For quite some time, Kang Chan had forgotten people like Heo Chang-Seon existed because, lately, he had only ever met people who put their lives on the line to make South Korea a better place like Kim Tae-Jin, Kim Hyung-Jung, and more recently, Go Gun-Woo, Choi Jong-Il, and Jeon Dae-Geuk.

It had completely slipped Kang Chan's mind that there were people like Heo Chang-Seon too. The very reason he didn't want to continue in this line of work was that he hated deranged idiots who got off on power and appearances.

Those people were also in the military.

For every commander who fought and bled out on the battlefield, there were over a hundred dumb punks decorated in fancy uniforms loftily pointing at random places on a map with extravagant batons to seem impressive.

Kang Chan breathed in deeply.

It would be truly embarrassing if he caused an incident at the airport over something like this.

Lanok, who was as sly as a snake, and the viper-like Vasili would surely notice something was amiss in this uncomfortable atmosphere. For the sake of the agents who had waited for a long time to return home, Kang Chan was willing to clench his teeth to hold in his temper.

However, if he let Heo Chang-Seon's crap continue, Kang Chan would certainly be horribly disgraced in front of Lanok and Vasili. This idiot would clearly try to act up because of his self-importance as the National Intelligence Service's Airport Division Chief.

Kang Chan pulled out his phone.

It was already 4:30 pm. Lanok would be arriving soon.

Kang Chan pressed the call button and put the phone to his ear. Heo Chang-Seon watched him with a scowl on his face.

-Mr. Kang Chan, what's the matter?

Kim Hyung-Jung frantically answered the phone in an anxious tone.

“Mr. Kim Hyung-Jung, I’m calling because I have a favor to ask,” Kang Chan began.

The commander of the 35-member brigade was watching Kang Chan as well.

“I’m having trouble with the airport’s division chief. If you don’t take action, I’ll step out of the task of retrieving our soldiers’ bodies and head straight to the dinner instead.”

Heo Chang-Seon’s expression seemed to show he was angrily grumbling, “What the hell!” inside his head.

-You’re in complete command of the site today, Mr. Kang Chan. I’ll take care of it asap.

“Also, since I’m out on the runway right now, please contact the airport’s office and have them guide Lanok here as soon as he arrives.”

-Got it. Is the division chief next to you, by any chance?

Kang Chan heard Kim Hyung-Jung exhaling lowly as if he was forcing himself to be patient.

“He is. Please don’t ask me to switch the phone over to him,” Kang Chan replied.

-I didn’t know the situation was so bad that you of all people would say that. Understood. I will contact the office first.

As soon as Kang Chan hung up, his phone immediately rang again.

“Ambassador Lanok,” he greeted.

-Mr. Kang Chan, I’ll be there in five minutes.

“I’m currently out on the runway. I asked them to bring you here as soon as you arrive. This is the perfect place for a smoke.”

When Kang Chan started speaking in French, Heo Chang-Seon carefully observed Kang Chan’s expression in an attempt to read his reaction.

-I expected nothing less from you. I understand. I’ll see you soon.

After wrapping up the call, Kang Chan took out another cigarette, bit on it, and lit it up.

Whether Kang Chan was out working or running an operation, if he didn’t do things his way, he would start feeling unwell. Was it because he had a crappy temper? That could be a part of the reason.

However, in Africa, failing a mission translated directly to death.

And what were the consequences now? The negotiations for the Eurasian Rail could fall apart completely for South Korea.

The fallen soldiers arriving today, the agents who had been injured at the conference hall, and the agents who died in the fight to stop Yang Jin-Woo—they sacrificed themselves for this day to come

to fruition. Yet a man like Heo Chang-Seon was still prioritizing having his pride and authority acknowledged in this situation? Bullshit.

Kang Chan would rather get the stupid man out of his sight as soon as possible than show this embarrassing scene to Vasili.

“Yes, it’s me, Director!” Heo Chang-Seon said.

Kang Chan looked away from the runway and turned toward Heo Chang-Seon, who had urgency in his tone.

“No, sir! It’s not like that...” Heo Chang-Seon pathetically pleaded.

The person on the other side was shouting so loud that even Kang Chan could hear the words “son of a...” through the noise from where he was standing.

“I’ll go to you immediately, sir.”

After the call, Heo Chang-Seon gave the driver some instructions, then looked back at Kang Chan.

Heo Chang-Seon was fucking lucky to be leaving unharmed after prioritizing his pride and authority when they were supposed to be welcoming fallen soldiers home.

Vroom.

The lucky bastard soon disappeared from Kang Chan’s sight.

Kang Chan saw the commander of the unit smiling. Some things just weren’t worth trying to fix and were better to let them go.

Kang Chan was still frowning when six black sedans and military buses rushed onto the runway. Although they were on a runway, few could just drive across the asphalt without a care in the world. It was interesting how there were yellow, blue, and white lines painted onto the cement, and there were even traffic lights in the middle of the runway.

Lanok and some agents got out of the sedans, and honor guards stepped out of the buses.

Kang Chan approached the sedans and greeted Lanok.

“Vasili will arrive in about five minutes. Why don’t we have some refreshments while waiting?” Lanok suggested.

“Here, right now?” Kang Chan asked in disbelief.

Lanok gestured with his eyes, and Louis appeared with a thermos and some large paper cups.

“To the French, wine and tea are needed just as much as we need air,” Lanok joked. He put the paper cups on the sedan's trunk and filled it with tea.

Kang Chan took out a lighter and lit his cigarette when he saw Lanok bite on a cigar.

“Once today’s event is over, the DGSE will send the reception program of the transmitters to your phone. I should warn you about something, though. Every time you check my location, your location will also be reported to the DGSE.”

“I see.”

The scent of black tea on the airport’s runway actually wasn’t all that bad.

“Ambassador Lanok, how capable is South Korea’s intelligence agency?” Kang Chan randomly asked. He had always been curious about it.

“The DGSE’s human resources have always been recognized as competent. The agents’ passion, determination, and perseverance are top-notch. Unfortunately, the system has always been a weakness for the agency,” Lanok replied as if he had been expecting Kang Chan to ask.

As Kang Chan took a sip of his tea and glanced up, Lanok continued, “To demonstrate how great your strength is in information warfare, you have to invest quite a bit of time. You have to stabilize your agents and manage them so that they won’t betray you, and you have to keep purchasing cutting-edge equipment. I apologize for being so direct, but repeated acts of corruption and misconduct have continued to crush the passion and perseverance of the agents in South Korea.”

Lanok shouldn’t be the one apologizing for that.

“Until now, South Korea has trained their agents to be loyal to the governments rather than placing emphasis on their ability. They also sold satellites that the National Intelligence Service intended to use for a cheap price so they could get bribes to fill their own pockets.”

Kang Chan slightly regretted asking the question.

“The agency barely scraped by thanks to the sacrifices and perseverance of its agents. The current capability of South Korea’s intelligence agency would likely rank around 40th in the world,” Lanok finished.

“So in other words, it’s not that impressive,” Kang Chan noted.

Lanok tilted his head in amusement as if to say that it was up to Kang Chan to judge that. Kang Chan smiled wryly.

On one side of the modular walls, the honor guards had assumed a formation. Aircraft marshals and vehicles that transported cargo arrived one after another.

It was too noisy to have a conversation.

Kang Chan followed Lanok’s gaze, finding a Boeing 737 aircraft approaching from behind a tow car. It was marked with a Chinese airline’s logo.

“Well, that must mean the negotiations with China are now over,” Lanok remarked.

“Help from China was required to get the fallen soldiers anyway, right?” Kang Chan questioned.

“Vasili brought a plane from Russia. However, the Chinese intelligence agency must have provided him with a Chinese civilian aircraft as well,” Lanok explained.

This was the first time that Kang Chan saw Lanok smirk.

“I wonder why China is extending this favor of goodwill to you, Mr. Kang Chan,” Lanok pondered.

As the tow car passed through the barrier, the aircraft was guided by a marshal who carried signs in his hands.

As the roar of the engines was blocked by the barrier, the aircraft marshal crossed his arms above his head, and the plane jerked and came to a halt.

The rigging moved forward, and the stairs were connected to the ground.

“Now then, shall we go greet him?” Lanok asked.

Kang Chan and Lanok headed for the bottom of the stairs.

The doors opened, and Vasili, dressed in a black suit from top to bottom, immediately descended the stairs.

Kang Chan supposed he was meeting a bucket load of sharp-eyed men today. It wasn't just Vasili. The three agents behind him also had looks so dirty it was as if they had taken time to practice beforehand.

“Lanok!” Vasili greeted.

Vasili embraced Lanok with exaggerated expressions and kissed him on the cheeks.

It was uncomfortable, but Kang Chan had no choice but to accept these kinds of greetings.

“Mr. Kang Chan!” Vasili addressed next.

Kang Chan lightly embraced Vasili and kissed him near the cheek, only making the sound without actually touching him.

Vasili seemed to have his guard up, but that was probably only natural given the time and place.

After exchanging greetings, Vasili turned to Lanok. However, he was stopped by Kang Chan.

“Let's wait for the fallen soldiers to get off the plane before we get going. I want to show what respect I can toward them first,” Kang Chan asserted.

As the highest commander, it was probably more appropriate to let others handle the soldiers' remains and just focus on escorting Vasili first.

However, Kang Chan didn't want to leave yet. Perhaps it was because of his experience in Africa, but that wasn't important.

Kang Chan couldn't take the soldiers' return lightly. After all, they died far away from their motherland. Fortunately, their tombstones had already been prepared in the military cemetery in Daejeon.

These soldiers could have bullet wounds, so they would be taken to the military hospital for identification by the end of the day. They would only be returned to their families' arms after they had been cremated.

The first coffin was brought down from the aircraft.

Four ceremonial guards waiting on both sides of the plane respectfully spread the national flag of South Korea over the coffin. The officer standing guard in the front then placed a badge version of the flag on the head of the coffin and struck it with the edge of his hand. The badge was just the size of a palm.

Thud.

These deaths protected South Korea. The living fought, clashed, got beaten up, and beat up each other to protect this nation, allowing it to stand safely.

The members of the brigade watching the coffin also had solemn expressions.

The grave and sad sound of trumpets rang out from somewhere.

Soon after, the second coffin began to descend through the rail of the aircraft.

Swoosh!

The South Korean national flag was spread over the coffin, and with the sound of another thud, a badge the size of a palm was embedded onto the top of the coffin.

The only way Kang Chan could show respect was to watch and observe. Nevertheless, he at least wanted to make sure he did this.

As Kang Chan stood without budging, Vasili looked at him with curious eyes.

“My, what an interesting fellow,” Vasili commented with interest.

“If it's all right with you, let's go have some tea together over there, Vasili,” Lanok offered.

Vasili nodded at an odd angle. The two headed for the black sedan.

Chapter 129.1: The Brown Bear's Visit (2)

All the coffins that were wrapped in the South Korean national flag were loaded onto the buses.

While the coffins of the Japanese agents were being carried onto the plane, the commander of the 35th Brigade and the staff officer of the honor guard saluted Kang Chan.

Kang Chan met each of their gazes and gave a brief nod before turning back around.

Walking out of the barrier of modular walls, he saw Lanok and Vasili drinking tea from paper cups on the trunk of a black sedan.

“Are you finished with your business?” Lanok asked gently.

“Yes, Mr. Ambassador,” Kang Chan replied.

“Then let's go have dinner. I made a reservation,” Lanok suggested.

From about ten meters away, the agents from the National Intelligence Service were waiting for them to move.

“I’ll head to the restaurant with Vasili,” Lanok said.

“Understood. I’ll be right behind you two,” Kang Chan responded, then headed for the sedan that the National Intelligence Service agents had brought.

Kang Chan provided the Russian and French agents accompanying Vasili and Lanok with separate sedans. He himself rode with the National Intelligence Service agents.

Kang Chan had never met these agents before, so he was debating whether he should introduce himself. While he was contemplating that, Lanok’s sedan stopped at a restaurant that was only twenty minutes away from the airport. The sedan Kang Chan was riding in followed closely behind.

It was a restaurant that specialized in Hanwoo, which was beef from native Korean cattle.

Considering how a French agent was already standing by at the entrance and that Lanok’s aide was waiting for them in the parking lot, Lanok seemed to have reserved the entire place.

When Kang Chan stepped out of the car, Lanok immediately guided them inside the restaurant. Three tables had been set up individually in the vast, spacious interior. Just a glance was enough to determine that the agents from France, Russia, and Korea were meant to occupy the tables so they could have their own meals while, a separate place was prepared further inside the restaurant for Lanok, Kang Chan, and Vasili.

“Korean barbecue is absolutely delicious,” Lanok remarked.

It was funny. A French was introducing a Korean restaurant to a Russian and a Korean who followed along.

Soon, they entered a room where there was a depressed section of flooring. Seats with backrests were placed in a triangle around the table. Kang Chan unintentionally ended up sitting in the middle.

While they waited for the thick sirloin to be served, the charcoal fire meant to cook the meat emitted waves of heat toward them. They had soju and beer for drinks.

“Mr. Kang Chan, I heard there’s a dangerous drink here in Korea. Do you know how to make it?” Vasili jokingly asked.

“I suppose you’re talking about bomb shots[1]?” Kang Chan asked back.

Based on the way Vasili smirked, it seemed he already knew what the cocktail was and had tried it.

Kang Chan had no reason to refuse to make it. He had been feeling melancholic due to the agents who had finally returned home anyway.

He eagerly mixed some soju and beer together, then poured a glass for each of them.

Exchanging any words at this point was unnecessary.

After clinking their glasses together, they downed the drink in one gulp.

An employee entered the room to cook the meat for them as they had four more of the bomb shot cocktails.

The young employee carefully sliced the meat into edible portions, and the three began their meal.

“It truly does taste fantastic,” Vasili exclaimed in awe.

Even though the meal lasted for about 40 minutes, there was little conversation aside from the occasional expressions of admiration regarding the food.

The same went for the three French agents, three Russian agents, and three Korean agents eating in the larger hall. As a result, a peculiar sense of tension enveloped the restaurant.

Once they set down their chopsticks, waiters brought out coffee and ashtrays.

With no one to nag or object, Kang Chan and Vasili took out their own cigarettes while Lanok received a cigar and lit it up.

“I believe it is about time you explain why you want to meet Kang Chan, Vasili,” Lanok declared.

Lanok and Vasili were evidently fierce rivals who weren’t all that comfortable with each other.

“Lanok, the British intelligence agency discovered one of the two missing energy sources that disappeared from Blackhead in South Korea,” Vasili stated solemnly.

Vasili blew out a long puff of smoke and looked at Kang Chan.

“Interestingly enough, it was around the same time the United States discovered the source through the Sampleton Research Institute. The British detected a signal from the source while inspecting the Eurasian Rail conference hall with their satellite surveillance network,” Vasili continued in a wry tone.

What in the hell was this crap about? Energy sources that had gone missing from Blackhead? Sampleton Research Institute?

Kang Chan had heard about them before since that was where Yoo Yun-Woo sent Kang Chan’s biopsy, and the diamond that Sharlan had sold off was called Blackhead.

But what was this about two missing energy sources? Kang Chan had never stolen anything like that if that was what Vasili was accusing him of.

Kang Chan pressed his cigarette against the ashtray, putting it out.

“Vasili, explain how you’re involved in this first,” Lanok said.

“That’s what you and Kang Chan should be explaining to me!” Vasili shouted.

Although they had happily eaten sirloin and drank shots just moments before, the atmosphere changed in an instant.

Vasili glowered sharply, but Lanok stood his ground with a hard expression that was perfectly devoid of any emotion.

“Why did the British intelligence agency purchase cetinium and denadite? What was the cause of the two earthquakes that occurred in the deep sea recently? Why did the United States finish preparing to launch nuclear missiles? And lastly...” Vasili paused, glaring at Kang Chan as if he were going to kill him. “Why does Kang Chan have one of the missing energy sources from Blackhead? You and Kang Chan should be explaining all of those to me, not the other way around.”

Lanok remained silent.

“If I don’t receive any proper explanation, then both my country and China will start preparing to launch nuclear missiles as well, Lanok. I’m here today to deliver a final warning,” Vasili continued. “If all the intelligence that is currently circulating around the international community is misinterpreted, it will mark the start of a nuclear war. Russia and China are genuinely warning you about what could happen.”

Things had been escalating quickly recently, but how could a nuclear war be suddenly put on the table?

Kang Chan inwardly shook his head from side to side.

“Mr. Kang Chan,” Vasili called. The Russian man had only called Kang Chan’s name, but it strangely sounded as if he was sneering at him. He pulled out a small business from his pocket and handed it over. “If there’s anything you find difficult to ask of or discuss with Lanok, you can call the number on this card. Doesn’t matter when you call. I’ll be sure to answer it.”

With Kang Chan’s gaze on him, Vasili turned to Lanok.

“I’m well aware that intelligence isn’t something one should get on their knees to beg for. However, consider yourself warned that if France makes the wrong move this time, a war that no one will be able to stop will break out. I don’t know how or why Mr. Kang Chan possesses the energy from Blackhead, but the time has come to cooperate with the international community on this matter. China is of the same mind on this, Lanok,” Vasili warned, then got up.

What a presumptuous and selfish guy.

“Well then, I will be heading straight to the airport from here. I’m sure this snake of a man here reserved a restaurant so close to the airport because he was anticipating that’s what I would do,” Vasili said loftily.

When he stood up and walked out into the parking lot, the three Russian agents stood up and followed him out. They immediately set off for the airport with a few National Intelligence Service agents.

After the chaotic afternoon, they were met with an evening that was beyond tumultuous.

Did Vasili really come all the way to South Korea with the bodies of the soldiers just to say those few words of warning?

“That exchange surely gave me quite a bit to ponder over. Why don’t we leisurely drink tea together?” Lanok suggested.

“That sounds good, Mr. Ambassador,” Kang Chan accepted.

When Kang Chan gestured with his eyes, two National Intelligence Service agents stood up and carried a table and chairs outside the restaurant.

Perhaps because this barbecue restaurant often had occasions like this, the owner readily brought out a square can that was filled with charcoal and firewood to work as a heater.

The vibe and scene were picturesque.

The reddish hue across the sky during sunrise or sunset was even redder near the sea. The heat emanating from the firewood pushed far the chilly air lingering in their surroundings.

As an agent brought out some coffee for them, Kang Chan glanced around. Before he knew it, agents dressed in formal suits had gotten in formation around the restaurant.

The smell of coffee, the flames rising from the firewood, the heat, and the red sky.

Kang Chan took a sip of coffee and leisurely leaned back in his chair to gaze up at the evening sky.

A nuclear war? The idea felt more unreal to him than 230 billion won.

Everyone had their own assigned tasks.

Rifleman, sniper, heavy weapon operator, and radio operator—if one person could do all those jobs, what need would there be for squads, platoons, and battalions?

In all honesty, President Moon Jae-Hyun couldn’t handle everything by himself, and even powerful nations couldn’t solve all the problems in the world alone.

Hence, while the great world powers clashed against each other, all South Korea had to do was diligently focus on its own development.

Nuclear missiles? Kang Chan didn’t have to worry about something that he didn’t even possess.

Chapter 129.2: The Brown Bear’s Visit (2)

“Mr. Kang Chan, I think the UK is using the energy contained in Blackhead to create earthquakes,” Lanok said, his expressions no longer hidden behind a poker face.

Kang Chan couldn’t help but burst into laughter.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Ambassador, but that’s simply too hard for me to believe at all,” Kang Chan said.

“I fully understand where you’re coming from. Even the DGSE wasn’t certain of this. However, observing Vasili’s actions today answered my question.”

“Does such a machine really exist?” Kang Chan doubtfully asked.

“Our country refers to it as a subterranean shock device. The Blackhead used to contain nine unique energy sources, but two of them were taken by the UK through Sharlan. We suspect that one of them is with you, Mr. Kang Chan,” Lanok answered.

“Do you think that’s the reason why I resurrected?”

“We can’t know for sure. However, considering the energy was discovered in the UK’s satellite and in the biopsy you sent to the United States for examination, its source is clearly somewhere inside your body,” Lanok further explained.

In that case, the other missing energy source was probably Seok Kang-Ho.

Lanok probably thought the same thing, but he didn’t delve into it any further.

“We had intelligence that the earthquakes caused by the UK in the Atlantic and the Pacific Ocean were a part of that experiment. As time goes on, the attention of intelligence agencies from various countries will be focused on you.”

“I thought the UK succeeded in their experiment,” Kang Chan said inquisitively.

“Well, who knows?”

Lanok shook his head.

“If their experiment was indeed successful, they wouldn’t be interested in the lost energy, and the United States wouldn’t act this way either. There is clearly something going on behind all this. We have to find and uncover that to match the puzzle pieces that Vasili is so curious about.”

Why did they have to make things so complicated?

Kang Chan gazed at the flames rising from the firewood, then glanced back up.

“Was that why you told me to become a French citizen?” Kang Chan asked.

“That’s one of the main reasons,” Lanok replied, not fully answering the question.

People with hot tempers should never engage in conversation with Lanok because they would probably die from frustration.

“Don’t worry too much, but you keep an eye on your surroundings,” Lanok advised.

“Yes, I will, Mr. Ambassador.”

They didn’t talk about anything special in particular after that. About ten minutes later, Lanok left the restaurant.

Kang Chan took the sedan provided by the National Intelligence Service to head home. It was Friday, so the roads were quite congested.

Kang Chan called Kim Hyung-Jung.

-Mr. Kang Chan!

“I assume you have received a report from the airport by now?”

-I just met with the soldiers from the unit. Thank you, Mr. Kang Chan.

Kim Hyung-Jung’s voice was low, making it seem as if he was trying to suppress his anger.

“Vasili returned to the airport a while back, and I just parted ways with Ambassador Lanok. I’m going to take it easy today, but I’ll call you again tomorrow,” Kang Chan said.

It was difficult to meet up with Kim Hyung-Jung since he was at the military hospital.

After ending the call, Kang Chan rang up Seok Kang-Ho.

-Is it over?

“Yeah. Have you had dinner yet?”

-Of course. Where are you right now?

“I’m actually on my way back. If you’re up to driving, let’s go to Misari and have some tea.”

-Got it. Should I head out now?

“I’ll call you once I’m in front of the apartment. The traffic’s a bit heavy.”

-Okay, I’ll be waiting.

By the time Kang Chan was about to reach the apartment and call Seok Kang-Ho, Seok Kang-Ho was already waiting in front of the building.

Kang Chan immediately hopped into Seok Kang-Ho’s car.

“Good work today,” Seok Kang-Ho greeted.

They drove away from the complex.

“Apparently, there’s some unique energy inside Blackhead,” Kang Chan began to tell Seok Kang-Ho about everything that happened today.

“So you’re saying we both resurrected because of the energy from Blackhead?” Seok Kang-Ho asked afterward.

“Yup.”

They arrived at the cafe in Misari as they continued to talk.

It was Friday night, so there were quite a few customers. Other guests had taken the seats that Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho usually sat in, so they sat under the parasol out back instead.

After ordering coffee and lighting a cigarette, Kang Chan finally felt as if he had returned to his everyday life.

“What do you plan to do?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“I have no idea. I feel numb,” Kang Chan replied.

“True. It’s not like we have any nuclear missiles to shoot, so what can we do?”

Kang Chan glanced at Seok Kang-Ho, who had pulled out a cigarette and was holding it in his hand.

“They haven’t discovered me yet, have they?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“Don’t you think Lanok would have his suspicions, though?” Kang Chan pondered.

“Yeah, but that Vasili guy probably met with you today so he can scare me into coming out.”

Was that really the case? Kang Chan looked at Seok Kang-Ho with awe.

This punk is improving day by day.

“Those motherfuckers. Nuclear weapons are already awful enough, but they’re even making earthquakes now? What if all of Earth sinks because of them?” Seok Kang-Ho snapped.

“I doubt they’d do anything that would kill themselves.”

“I know, but it’s not like Earth will move according to their will. It’s not something they can quickly glue back together once it cracks.”

“You’re right.”

“Ugh. Let’s just stick our heads in the dirt for now,” Seok Kang-Ho wisecracked.

Kang Chan chuckled.

Kang Chan got home at around 11 o’clock. Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook were still in the living room.

“You haven’t gone to sleep yet?” Kang Chan asked.

Kang Chan thought it could be because they saw his admission certificate for Seoul National University.

“Have you had dinner? Want me to cut you up some fruits?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“Sounds good. I’ll come back out after changing,” Kang Chan responded.

When he walked out to the living room in comfortable clothes, Yoo Hye-Sook put some grapes down in front of him.

“How was your day? Was it tough?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“It was fine,” Kang Chan nonchalantly replied.

Kang Chan obviously couldn't tell her that he had met Vasili and Lanok as the commander in charge of receiving deceased soldiers' bodies.

Seeing the concern on Yoo Hye-Sook's face, Kang Chan forced a bright expression.

“Have you seen the admission certificate?” Kang Chan asked.

“I have, but I can't say I'm entirely happy. I'm worried you're putting too much on yourself.”

“The kids who study hard to get into college don't have it any easier either.”

“You're completely right, son!” Yoo Hye-Sook replied as if they were having a light chat.

“Just think of it that way,” Kang Chan suggested.

“I'm so proud of you.”

Kang Chan picked up a grape after putting Yoo Hye-Sook at ease.

“The drama is really entertaining. I've been catching up on all the episodes with your dad. I saw all the actors who came to the hospital, which is pretty interesting.”

“You're watching it too, Father?” Kang Chan asked in surprise.

“It's a show produced by the company that my son is the director of. Of course I'm watching it,” Kang Dae-Kyung answered.

If Kang Dae-Kyung said the drama was interesting to watch, Kang Chan would have felt like he didn't have to be as worried about the production anymore.

“Anyhow, I'm thinking of selling the car company,” Kang Dae-Kyung spoke again.

“Really? Why?”

Kang Chan carefully observed Kang Dae-Kyung's expression because it didn't seem as if he broached this subject lightly.

“After you made an appearance on TV, some of the customers started ordering cars with some other purpose in mind. If you end up being assigned an important role related to the Eurasian Rail, I feel like I'll get offered multiple bribes in return for favors. I'm already getting those kinds of requests right now.”

That wasn't an issue that could be solved in the immediate future.

Kang Chan wanted to take his hands off of the jobs he was involved in if he could. He wanted to live normally, or at least pretend to live normally, but it would be a while before that could happen.

Should I just move to France after all?

Kang Chan shook his head.

If Kang Chan left by himself to a different country, Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook would be treated like the parents of someone who betrayed his motherland, and if all three of them moved together, his parents would be too lonely in the foreign nation.

"I'm sorry you have to go through that. It must be tough," Kang Chan sympathized.

"To be frank, I should be grateful to have these kinds of problems. Nobody my age is being troubled with these issues because of how great their sons are. However, when I see people reaching out to me to buy cars after decades of no contact, I can't help but be worried. It's not like I've already accepted any favors, though."

Kang Chan couldn't do anything but smile comfortingly. There was really nothing that could be done about these situations.

"I'll figure out how to handle it, so don't worry about it too much," Kang Dae-Kyung assured his son.

"Got it," Kang Chan replied.

After their conversation, Kang Chan returned to his room.

He was dead tired, so he headed straight to bed.

He was physically fine, but he felt as if he had been injured and was bleeding mentally... as if he had just spent the day experiencing the type of war that Lanok fought.

That was how exhausted he currently was.

'Two energy sources disappeared from Blackhead?'

The timing was just spectacularly perfect for him too. Unfortunately, sending his biopsy to the research institute in the middle of this mess further worsened the situation.

Kang Chan smiled dryly.

When it came down to it, information warfare wasn't all that fancy as he made it out to be. Kang Chan had unwittingly ended up at the center of this whole ordeal, but much to his frustrations, he was unfamiliar with his surroundings.

Pft.

Kang Chan shook his head and tried to fall asleep.

Even if he was facing great perils that put the whole world at stake, he had to get some sleep whenever he could.

Chapter 130.1: What is it? (1)

On Saturday, Kang Chan woke up at the crack of dawn and slowly began to warm up in front of the park at the apartment complex.

He still had faint traces of his previous injuries. They made him feel so heavy that it was as if they were trying to convince him to take a break. He had taken off the bandages on his left hand yesterday, however, making him feel at least a bit lighter.

He properly stretched his muscles, then started jogging outside the apartment complex, following his usual routine and path.

The clear autumn sky and cold air refreshed Kang Chan's mind.

He had decided to do his best with what was within his control. Rather than letting incomprehensible events that were out of his control ruin his focus, he thought it would be far wiser to just maintain his best condition and keep his balance. No events should faze him.

“Haah. Haah.”

With each intensifying breath, the stagnant weight in his chest seemed to be dissipating little by little.

That damned Blackhead. Kang Chan died because of that diamond, but it was its very energy that brought him back to life.

He couldn't help but wonder what could have happened if he remained in Africa. Considering his volatile temperament, getting promoted would've been a challenge.

He had already rested for a few days, but he still found it difficult to catch his breath.

Kang Chan recalled the newbie who had gone to Mongolia with them—the one who took a bandana and a beret.

Gérard had been left out of the operation due to his injury. However, based on the look in his eyes as he brought over their coffee, he had probably practiced and trained relentlessly since he returned to Africa.

“Whew. Hoo, hoo.”

It was ridiculous, but a few new recruits imitated Kang Chan's attitude while training. Having remembered how he aimed his gun at some tiny noise in the mountains, they often proceeded to create rustling sounds with their mouths during training, aiming their own guns with a click.

There were other similar cases where they copied him.

Some of the recruits would practice smirking all day, and others would practice aiming their rifles as they ran. While it could look easy, quite a few soldiers fell and got hurt because they tried to steady their aim while running.

Stay alive. Cover yourself in your beret and bandana, and copy how I hold my bayonet in reverse if that's what it would take for you to survive.

“I did a good job, didn't I?”

Don't die like that idiot. Live.

Just like Gérard, who would copy me every chance he got.

Kang Chan could already see the apartment complex coming into view. He had run faster than normal thinking of Africa.

His back hurt so much that it felt as if it was going to snap, but it had never snapped before. He knew he would be perfectly fine.

Kang Chan focused on his breathing.

Run forward! If I stop here, I can't prevent the deaths of the members I lead.

“Haa! Haa! Haa! Haa!”

He ran into the complex, bent over in front of a bench with his hands on his knees, and let out loud puffs of air. It had been a while since he had gone on a run, so he had run as if his life was at stake.

Just then, Kang Chan sharply raised his gaze at an approaching presence.

“Would you like some water?”

Kang Chan's gaze traveled up the hand holding out a water bottle. He soon burst into laughter.

“You already got discharged?” Kang Chan asked.

Choi Jong-Il had a long bandage on his right cheek.

“If it's alright with you, can I join in on your run from now on?” Choi Jong-Il requested.

“Whew, that's refreshing! Why suddenly join me, though?” Kang Chan asked curiously.

“I figured out what I'm lacking,” Choi Jong-Il responded seriously.

“Phuhuhu,” Kang Chan laughed, looking at Choi Jong-Il.

If Kang Chan ended up getting close to Choi Jong-Il like this, he would have yet another person to take care of, and he would have to make an effort again so this punk wouldn't die. Although Kang Chan couldn't express it, he couldn't guarantee that he would forget Choi Jong-Il if the latter died.

‘Damn it.’

So why would you give me a water bottle? It's a bit small though.

“Feel free to tag along anytime,” Kang Chan said.

“Thank you.”

Choi Jong-Il seemed to have a change in attitude.

Kang Chan finished drinking the rest of the water and glanced back at him when Choi Jong-Il opened a different topic.

“One of my comrades from the 35th Brigade asked me to deliver a message to you.”

What was Choi Jong-Il talking about?

“I heard you watched until all our fallen soldiers descended from the plane. You even made France’s ambassador and the director of Russia’s intelligence agency wait until you were done, so my friend wanted me to pass on his sincere gratitude to you. Now that he knows there’s someone who treats the special forces so well, he can now die confidently in an operation knowing he’s in good hands...”

“Son of a bitch!” Kang Chan exclaimed.

The warmhearted sense of awe in Choi Jong-Il’s words was instantly shattered.

“If he has time to spout such useless nonsense, tell him he should train like a madman and be determined to come back alive no matter what it takes.”

When Kang Chan twisted the cap back on the empty water bottle, Choi Jong-Il held out his hand again.

“I have no need for men who die heroic deaths. Rather, they should focus on staying alive. I prefer soldiers who aggressively survive and stand before me with blazing eyes during the next operation,” Kang Chan declared.

“Understood.”

“What about Doo-Hee and Hee-Seung?” Kang Chan asked.

“They’re waiting for me in the car,” Choi Jong-Il replied.

Kang Chan glanced around the entrance of the complex.

“Why don’t we grab lunch together?”

“Do you have time?”

The two grinned at each other.

Yoo Hye-Sook greeted Kang Chan when he returned to their residence.

“Have you just finished working out?” she asked.

“Yes. Oh, I smell something good,” Kang Chan commented.

“I made some kimchi stew,” Yoo Hye-Sook explained.

“I’ll come back out after washing up.”

Kang Chan was more than grateful he was born again so he could experience the small joys of everyday life like these.

The three sat down at the dining table once Kang Chan came out of the shower.

“Are you going to work today, Father?” Kang Chan asked.

“I’m off today. Why do you ask?” Kang Dae-Kyung inquired, looking quite curious. He took a sip of a spoonful of the soup.

“I was thinking we could all go have lunch with the agents who protect you both.”

“Would that be alright?”

“You already know there are guards on you. It’s not something to hide, anyway, so it’s perfectly fine.”

Kang Dae-Kyung looked at Yoo Hye-Sook, but she didn’t seem to have any qualms about the idea either.

After breakfast, Kang Chan took a tie pin and a tack-shaped transmitter from his room.

“Father, if you go around wearing this, I’ll be able to track your location immediately regardless of where you are. This one’s yours, Mother. You can stick it to your bag. But if you pull it out, it will deactivate, so please put it in a bag you always carry around.”

Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook’s expressions were a mix of both fascination and concern.

“I know it could be uncomfortable, but I’ll make sure nothing about your private lives is leaked. I’ll keep my lips sealed.”

“You punk!” Kang Dae-Kyung replied exaggeratedly with a joking smile. “Alright. Nothing I can’t do for my son who’s trying to protect me. Do I have to turn a switch on or anything?”

“Yes, Father,” Kang Chan replied.

Kang Dae-Kyung turned the pin around in his hand as he examined it with interest. Afterward, he stuck it to the shirt he was wearing.

“I’ll keep it pinned to my wallet. I end up switching the bag I carry pretty often. Is that okay?” Yoo Hye-Sook confirmed.

“Sure. I’m sorry for asking this from you, Mother.”

“I know you’re just doing this to protect us.”

Kang Chan expressed his gratitude upon seeing the worry on Yoo Hye-Sook’s face.

He then called Choi Jong-Il and asked the agent to invite all the employees who were available. It was to Kang Chan's surprise that Choi Jong-Il said everyone would be attending.

"What? No one's going on dates with their significant other? It's Saturday."

-From what happened at the Eurasian Rail conference hall, the incident with Yang Jin-Woo, and your recent retrieval of the fallen soldiers... The God of Blackfield has become quite popular among the agents and members of the National Intelligence Service's special team. Everyone takes pride in the work they're doing, so who would turn down an invitation from you?

It wasn't a bad feeling at all.

"Alright, then. Should we do meat? Or hoe, the raw fish?"

-Meat sounds good.

"Then make a reservation somewhere that's not too shabby, and tell everyone to dress comfortably. Today's a weekend, after all. I'm sure you already know what people will think if we all get together and the agents are wearing their black suits. The look in their eyes is already scary enough."

-Understood.

They made arrangements to meet at one in the afternoon, and Kang Chan relayed the time to Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook.

"What should I do? Kang Chan. What should I wear?" Yoo Hye-Sook asked worriedly.

Kang Chan chuckled.

"It's the weekend. I told everyone to come wearing comfortable clothes. If you dress to the nines, the guards might feel uncomfortable."

"You think so?"

Yoo Hye-Sook headed inside the bedroom.

The TV was currently broadcasting news.

"Have you come to a decision?" Kang Dae-Kyung suddenly inquired.

"About what?" Kang Chan asked.

"Doing work for the country," Kang Dae-Kyung replied.

"I don't know. I'm still not sure yet," Kang Chan began to confess. "I had to give you and Mother transmitters, you're guarded 24/7, and you might even have to give up your business because of me... What do you think I should do, Father?"

It was unlike him, but Kang Chan hoped Kang Dae-Kyung could give him an answer. It was the first time in his life Kang Chan thought it would be okay to leave such a critical decision to someone else.

Chapter 130.2: What is it? (1)

“What do you think I should do about my business?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked in response to Kang Chan’s question about what he should do.

Kang Chan silently looked back at his father. The first answer that came to mind was, “Whatever you want,” since he genuinely hoped Kang Dae-Kyung would do what he really wanted and not be stressed worrying about this and that.

Was this how Kang Dae-Kyung wanted to reply to Kang Chan’s question?

Kang Dae-Kyung smiled, and a look flashed across his face as if he suddenly remembered something.

“Oh! There’s something I’ve been meaning to ask. Is it okay for you to speak down to the employees? They seem to be older than you from what I saw,” he said.

“Ah! That!”

Kang Chan could never tell the truth about that.

“It’s intentional. We’ve been practicing talking this way to each other because I’m higher ranked than them. We’re trying to get used to it since I often meet the French ambassador and other countries’ agents.”

“I suppose that seems necessary,” Kang Dae-Kyung agreed, nodding at the sorry excuse Kang Chan gave. “But still, make sure you’re not rude to adults, okay?”

“Yes, Father,” Kang Chan replied, actually taking to his father’s advice to heart.

Buzz. Buzz. Buzz.

Not long after, the phone began to ring. Kang Chan went inside his room to pick it up.

“Hello?”

-Channy! Where are you?

“Home.”

-Do you want to grab lunch together? I can be at your house in a few.

“I’m taking my mother and father to lunch with the guards.”

-I want to come too.

Did this woman never get shy?

“I’ll ask my parents first. If they say yes, then maybe. Don’t you think the guards will feel uncomfortable, though?”

-The food will taste better if there’s a pretty girl at the table with them.

“Well, let’s hang up for a minute. I’ll call you back after asking them.”

-If it's too uncomfortable, let's just have some tea together after you have lunch.

The drama had already started airing, and Kang Chan saw no reason to refuse. He hung up first so he could go and ask.

Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook seemed pleased they would get to see Michelle again—a lot more than Kang Chan had expected.

After asking Choi Jong-Il as well, Kang Chan told Michelle about their decision.

The restaurant staff had curtained off a huge space. About twenty members had gathered for the lunch invitation.

“Mr. Kang! Mrs. Yoo!”

“Michelle, hi! Nice to see you!”

Michelle dashed forward, seeming more excited to see Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook than Kang Chan. Thankfully, that eased some of the awkwardness that was evident in Yoo Hye-Sook from being in front of the guards.

Kang Chan first introduced Michelle to the employees, then introduced Choi Jong-Il, Woo Hee-Seung, and Lee Doo-Hee to Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook.

Kang Chan intended for this to be a light and casual lunch together, but this gathering had a stiff atmosphere instead, making it seem more like a company dinner.

Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook sat in the middle. Kang Chan and Michelle were across from them, and Choi Jong-Il and the other guards sat around them.

Someone had to break the silence or they would continue like this.

“Thank you, everyone. Please continue to keep my father and mother as safe as you always have,” Kang Chan bravely attempted.

Kang Chan scanned the employees sitting around him.

The female agent who had taken a hit directly to the face still had some thinly folded gauze stuck on her nose bridge.

“Are you feeling better?” Kang Chan asked.

“I'm all okay now,” she answered.

Kang Chan nodded and asked the employees what they wanted to eat.

“Before that, I have a request.”

The female agent with the gauze on her nose spoke again, raising her hand. It was still an awkward atmosphere, so everyone's gazes immediately shot at her.

“After that day, Mr. Kang and Ms. Yoo have been acting uneasy around us. I ask that you both treat us all more comfortably.”

Kang Chan turned his gaze to his parents with a smile, and everyone looked at Yoo Hye-Sook.

“W-well, I was feeling apologetic that you all have to work hard because of us. It’s not like we’re important people who have to be guarded so carefully,” Yoo Hye-Sook stuttered as if she was making an excuse. She seemed flustered.

These kinds of things were difficult to mediate, and it wasn’t exactly Kang Chan’s place to help either.

“Cha Min-Jeong!”

Just then, Choi Jong-Il called the female agent’s name in a firm tone. It seemed the employee with an injured nose was named Cha Min-Jeong.

“You’re from unit 606, aren’t you?”

“Yes, sir.”

“What is 606’s chant!”

“The motherland summoned me here!” powerfully shouted the female agent.

“Hwang Seok-Gi!”

“Yes, sir!” loudly replied the male agent who had guarded Kang Chan’s parents by acting as one of the salespeople.

“You’re from the special forces, correct?”

“Yes, sir.”

“What’s our chant!”

“If I can protect the country with my blood, I am happy!”

Was it necessary to go that far, considering they were about to eat? However, knowing Choi Jong-Il, Kang Chan just decided to watch silently.

“As you can see, this is why we’re gathered,” Choi Jong-Il said with the bandage on his right cheek, directing his words at Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook.

“Thanks to your son, we’re able to live according to our chants. Our jobs are closest to the heart of connecting South Korea and the Eurasian Rail.”

Choi Jong-Il looked left and right before continuing again.

“Allowing your son to focus on the Eurasian Rail without having to worry about the safety of his parents... it is a truly honorable task for us. We don’t have to be praised or have our names go down in history. Even when you just tell us to buy a piece of green onion or a mere pack of ramyeon, we take pride in what you have entrusted us to do.”

Kang Chan looked away because he was cringing so hard he got goosebumps. Soon after, he sighed. He understood why the agents were sitting with their faces filled with pride, but why was Michelle moved to the point of getting teary?

“Please, treat us as your family, a little sister or brother, or even a niece or nephew. Use us as you wish. Allow us to fill any holes in your security that way. The reason why Cha Min-Jeong asked you to treat us more comfortably is so we can also request things from you both with more ease as well.”

Choi Jong-Il’s words were definitely effective.

Seeing Kang Dae-Kyung’s cheek twitch and Yoo Hye-Sook’s eyes tear up, Kang Chan knew Choi Jong-Il’s strategy had gone to plan.

“I hear what you all are saying. My personality won’t allow me to suddenly treat everyone comfortably, but I’ll make an attempt to do so going forward,” said Yoo Hye-Sook.

Someone started clapping, and the other agents joined in, causing a loud ripple of applause to break out.

“I’m hungry. What does everyone want to eat?” asked Kang Chan.

“We’ll have galbi.”

“Then let’s order galbi first. Feel free to order anything you want after, okay?”

“Can we really eat to our heart’s content?”

“Let’s put down our ranks when we’re eating. Show me how much you can eat,” Kang Chan ordered.

“Understood,” Choi Jong-Il replied.

Someone stepped out to order for all of them, and soon, a mountain of meat was brought inside.

They only had a few bottles of beer because they didn’t want to let their guard down even in the slightest, so Kang Chan couldn’t bring himself to offer them more. The amount was just enough for everyone to have a single glass.

Kang Dae-Kyung poured Kang Chan’s glass himself, looking at his son proudly.

There was a lot of competition for Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook’s glasses. They had a round of rock, paper, and scissors while the meat was being cooked, which resulted in one of the salespeople filling Kang Dae-Kyung’s glass, while Michelle claimed Yoo Hye-Sook’s. Of course, Michelle could only do this because another salesperson who had emerged victorious gave her the opportunity.

“We’re in your hands. Please take good care of us,” Kang Dae-Kyung said as he held out his glass.

“Thank you for the meal,” the employees replied.

Kang Chan and Michelle turned to the side and downed half of their glasses. The meal officially began.

No idiot acted uncomfortable after Kang Chan said they should put down their ranks, so everyone was enjoying themselves.

“Here, Mr. Kang,” Michelle said, wrapping a well-cooked piece of meat in some lettuce before giving it to Kang Dae-Kyung.

Kang Chan felt a sense of danger. It was so natural he wondered if Michelle had visited their home when he was gone. Kang Dae-Kyung’s face was filled with satisfaction.

“Mrs. Yoo.”

“Mm! It tastes even better since you’re the one making me this wrap, Michelle,” Yoo Hye-Sook said.

Michelle was definitely adept on occasions like these. She cooked the meat perfectly, cut it into nice pieces, and even ate it deliciously. She had tied her hair back at some point. Now, on Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook’s plates, she was skillfully putting the side dishes of fermented crab that she had cooked over the grill.

“Michelle, the drama’s so good,” Yoo Hye-Sook exclaimed.

“Oh, your friend’s daughter is making an appearance next week, Mrs. Yoo.”

Michelle was using fluent Korean. However, Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook didn’t seem to question the speed at which Michelle’s Korean had improved and just went with it.

The ambiance was great, and the meat was mouthwatering.

However, Kang Chan peeked at his phone. Why did he feel like something was off?

“So what happens to the girl?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“Unfortunately, that’s a secret, Mrs. Yoo,” Michelle tactfully replied with a smile.

“Even from me?” Yoo Hye-Sook mischievously asked back.

Kang Chan felt as if he was pushed a step away from the clamorous mood. The noise was crumpled up in a ball and slowly moving away from him.

What is it? Is there a bomb at the restaurant or something?

Kang Chan slowly examined his surroundings. His senses were standing sharp.

The meat in someone’s chopsticks, smoke rising from the grills, laughter, whispers, someone calling for another, and fingers holding a cup of water... Kang Chan could see and hear it all.

“Kang Chan? What is it?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

Suddenly, everything rushed back at him.

“I’m full. I’ll be back to eat more after getting some air,” Kang Chan replied.

Kang Chan turned to Choi Jong-Il, who understood just by the look in his eyes. There were just some things one would immediately know after overcoming death together.

“Whew! I must have eaten too much as well. I’ll head outside for a moment. I’ll be back,” Choi Jong-Il said.

Kang Chan carried his phone outside the curtained area.

It was Saturday afternoon, which meant there were quite a few customers in the restaurant. After a brief scan of the area, Kang Chan walked outside. When he reached the restaurant’s front entrance, Choi Jong-Il spoke up.

“What is it?” Choi Jong-Il asked. He had also been sharply examining their surroundings even since he saw Kang Chan’s expression.