

Blackfield 131

Chapter 131: What is it? (2)

“I’m getting a shitty feeling right now,” Kang Chan said.

Kang Chan glanced around his surroundings before turning back to Choi Jong-II.

“Do you have a gun on you?” he asked.

“All the guards have been given permission to keep weapons with them at all times since the attack a while back,” Choi Jong-II replied.

Kang Chan checked his phone. He had two applications meant for tracking locations, which meant all he had to do was press a button to check the location he wanted.

“Geez, what is it?”

Kang Chan had secured the transmitters because he thought calling the people he was worried about would just make them more anxious. However, the problem was that he was concerned about too many people. He couldn’t account for all of them.

Buzz. Buzz. Buzz.

Choi Jong-II’s gaze shot to Kang Chan’s phone as quickly as Kang Chan moved.

“Yeah, it’s me. Cut straight to the point,” Kang Chan briskly asserted.

-Kang Chan.

A different, undesired voice came from Smithen’s side of the call.

-So you already knew something was amiss, hm?

“Don’t pull antics and just say what you want.”

-Good, as you wish.

Choi Jong-II rapidly scanned the interior of the restaurant.

-The view from this guy’s house is absolutely brilliant. Come alone. Understood? Don’t try anything stupid. I’m prepared to die with this guy, and that would be the end of your chance. After him, another will—

“Motherfucker, do you not know what cutting to the point means? So you want me to come alone, is that it?” Kang Chan spoke coldly.

It felt as if the person on the other side of the line flinched at Kang Chan’s words.

“Traffic is heavy on Saturday, so it will take me at least two hours even if I rush over to that place.”

-Fine.

The other person seemed to be swallowing the words that they wanted to say.

“Damn it!” Kang Chan raged.

Choi Jong-Il glanced around their surroundings again.

“It’s the Korean branch manager for Gong Te automobile. You know Smithen, right?”

“Yes, I do.”

“That punk seems to have been taken captive. They want me to come alone.”

“We should wrap up the lunch first since it’s not safe.”

“It’s fine. The meal was almost over anyway. I’ll contact Ambassador Lanok and Seok Kang-Ho, so you get Director Kim Tae-Jin and Manager Kim Hyung-Jung.”

“Understood.”

The two pressed their phones against their ears and made the appropriate calls.

Louis answered in Ambassador Lanok’s stead, but he relayed the information to the ambassador right after. Seok Kang-Ho answered his phone right away.

“Smithen was captured.”

Kang Chan heard Seok Kang-Ho’s rough intake of breath over the call.

-Where are you? I’ll head over right away.

“I’m at lunch with my parents and the guards. It’ll be done in less than thirty minutes. You should be waiting in front of the apartment already when I call you again. How are you feeling?”

-I’ll be waiting with my dressings off.

“Got it.”

As Kang Chan finished making all the necessary calls, he noticed Choi Jong-Il was also done making his own rounds.

“I hear the both of them are safe. They said they want you to contact them so they can prepare special agents to standby as backup,” Choi Jong-Il relayed.

“Let’s go back inside for now.”

Kang Chan stressfully rubbed his eyelids with his fingers. When he entered the curtained area with Choi Jong-Il again, they found the table was full of fruits that were served as dessert.

An agent retorted something, causing laughter to ripple throughout the room.

“Are you feeling any better?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked with a smile on his face.

“Yes. I feel like I can finally breathe now.”

“Channy, are you okay?” Michelle asked this time.

“Yeah. Did you get to eat a lot?”

“Of course I did.”

Michelle patted her stomach in satisfaction.

“Well, are you both ready to leave?” Kang Chan asked Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook.

It appeared the agents read the look in Kang Chan and Choi Jong-Il’s eyes. They immediately got up while expressing their gratitude for the meal.

Kang Chan paid for the meal outside.

The agents who weren’t on duty left the restaurant first.

“Channy, do you have time to get some tea with me?” Michelle asked in front of Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-sook, who were waiting for him.

“I have to go home and change clothes before heading somewhere. Sorry, Michelle. Let’s have tea together next time,” Kang Chan replied.

“Okay, Channy.”

Michelle instantly realized Kang Chan’s eyes and expression were different than normal. She didn’t grab onto him any longer.

“Why not? You should go and drink some tea before leaving.”

“Some stuff came up, so there’s someplace I have to be,” Kang Chan explained.

“That’s a shame.”

Yoo Hye-Sook seemed most upset about the fact that Kang Chan wouldn’t be drinking tea with Michelle.

“Why don’t we drink together then, Mrs. Yoo?” Michelle asked.

“That sounds wonderful. Honey, let’s have a cup of tea first before heading back home.”

Kang Dae-Kyung seemed to welcome the idea as well.

Kang Chan felt better knowing the guards would protect them.

“Then I’ll go home first, Father, Mother. I apologize for cutting things short even though it’s been a while since we last ate outside together.”

“Don’t worry about it. Go take care of whatever it is that needs you,” Kang Dae-Kyung voiced.

“See you later, son,” Yoo Hye-Sook added.

“Channy, let’s call soon,” Michelle finished.

Parting ways from the three, Kang Chan climbed into the car Lee Doo-Hee brought and hurried home.

“Mr. Kang Chan, Manager Kim asked me to tell you to give him a call.”

Kang Chan felt more urgent now that they were on the move. He pulled out his phone to check the time. It was 3 p.m. He pressed the call button next.

-Mr. Kang Chan, we've deployed agents from the special team around Mr. Smithen's home. We've been monitoring suspicious individuals, but no one has come up yet. There were no suspicious traces in Mr. Smithen's call records either.

“I'm heading home to change, then I'll be going straight to Smithen's home with Seok Kang-Ho. They'll be able to see us from the entrance, so what should we do? The caller threatened me saying I had to come alone, and he seemed prepared to take his own life with Smithen's if he discovered anything suspicious.”

-That's strange. With Yang Jin-Woo taken care of, there should be a shortage of available channels for illegal entry. Their motive could be to eliminate you, Mr. Kang Chan.

“Please check if there is a way to get inside aside from the front door. The caller probably won't be alone, so they could be watching us from the rooftop. Please have our snipers positioned in the vicinity.”

-Understood.

Getting off in front of the entrance of the apartment complex, Kang Chan immediately headed up and changed out of his clothes to a formal suit.

As he left his house and dashed down the stairs, he made another call.

-I'm in front of the complex. Choi Jong-Il is with me.

“Got it.”

The moment he ran out of the apartment building, he was greeted by Seok Kang-Ho.

“I'm going in that car, so follow behind. You know where Smithen's house is, right?”

“I do, sir,” Choi Jong-Il replied.

“Oh, right. Call Manager Kim and ask for two pistols and two bayonets.”

“They're already in the car,” Choi Jong-Il assured.

Kang Chan nodded gratefully to Choi Jong-Il and signaled with his eyes for Seok Kang-Ho to get in the Chiffre with him.

Vroom.

“Don't you think the kidnapers are giving you too much time?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“You also think so?”

Kang Chan had been wondering about it. Sure enough, Seok Kang-Ho considered it strange as well.

“The reason they’re holding Smithen hostage is because of you, Captain.”

“The caller was blabbering about how he would make himself explode immediately if he saw I wasn’t alone at the entrance.”

“Doesn’t that mean he could still detonate the bomb even if you go inside?”

Kang Chan pursed his lips and focused ahead.

“Do you have a cigarette?”

Seok Kang-Ho wrinkled his face as he reached out into his pants pocket to take out a cigarette and lighter. It seemed as if his injury throbbed.

Buzz. Buzz. Buzz.

Having put the cigarette in his mouth, Kang Chan made eye contact with Seok Kang-Ho. The caller was Smithen.

Kang Chan placed the phone in front of the rearview mirror and pressed the speaker button.

“Hello?”

-Tell me your estimated time of arrival.

Seok Kang-Ho raised his index finger to show Kang Chan.

“I’ll arrive within an hour. What are your demands?”

-For you to come in alone.

“Switch the phone to Smithen.”

Kang Chan’s eyes flashed because there was no answer. However, not long after, Smithen exhaustedly spoke into the phone.

-Captain.

Like an idiot, Smithen clearly sounded terrified.

“Smithen, I’m on my way. Just stay alive, alright?”

Kang Chan heard Smithen gulp.

“Don’t forget who I am. Endure it. Got it?”

-Yes, Mr. Captain.

As Kang Chan smirked, the call abruptly ended. He lit two cigarettes and handed one to Seok Kang-Ho.

“How long do you think it will take?”

“Since it’s Saturday, it’ll take 30 minutes at most.”

Kang Chan felt himself calm down a bit after smoking with the window rolled down.

“Captain, let’s not head inside.”

Kang Chan puffed out a breath of smoke out the window, then glanced at Seok Kang-Ho.

“What if they planted a bomb?” Seok Kang-Ho asked worriedly.

“Smithen, that punk, seemed pretty scared, huh?”

Kang Chan opened the cup of coffee in between the driver and passenger seats and tapped the cigarette ash into it.

“That bastard lost an eye after getting beat up by me, and he can’t move properly either. You know he lost his bravado ever since,” Kang Chan said.

“Let’s go in together.”

“He sounded serious when he said he would set off a bomb immediately if I didn’t come alone.”

There was no other solution they could immediately come up with.

“Son of a bitch! I knew I was worried for a good reason!” Seok Kang-Ho grumbled.

Listening to Seok Kang-Ho’s complaints, Kang Chan extinguished the cigarette and closed the coffee lid.

Buzz.

He received another call.

“Manager Kim, we’ll arrive in another ten minutes.”

-Mr. Kang Chan, we’ve parked a black van near the place where we ate last time across the Hannam Bridge. We’re currently waiting on standby, but one of their people is standing on guard on the rooftop, so it’s hard to deploy our snipers.

“I’ll stop by the black van first.”

After hanging up, Kang Chan told Seok Kang-Ho what Kim Hyung-Jung told him.

Fortunately, the stop light turned green as soon as they crossed the Hannam Bridge, so they weren’t late.

There were two sedans parked in front and behind the black van.

After parking the car, Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho approached the van, and the doors slid open.

“You come in too,” Kang Chan told Choi Jong-II before climbing in.

Kim Hyung-Jung was wearing a large shirt, but his upper body was still bandaged. Kang Chan felt apologetic for involving an injured person in the situation, but he had little time to get Smithen to safety to say anything.

“We have no idea what the kidnapper looks like.”

An agent next to Kim Hyung-Jung handed them coffee and cigarettes from a specialty shop that they had prepared in advance.

“There is one person on the rooftop who appears to be an enemy lookout. There are no places for snipers to infiltrate behind the building, and we couldn’t find any spots to hide at the front entrance. Mr. Smithen’s villa is the tallest building in the area as well, so it isn’t easy to deploy our agents.”

“Tsk!”

Kang Chan tilted his head. He didn’t even meet Smithen that often. Even if the enemies had done background checks, it wouldn’t have been easy for them to create a plan to kidnap Smithen.

“Mr. Kang Chan, do you have communication with the kidnapper?”

“Yes, I think so.”

“Then give him a call and say you want to secure Smithen’s safety. Deal with him firmly.”

Kim Hyung-Jung gestured with his eyes, and an agent handed Kang Chan a cord.

“Please plug it into your phone.”

It looked just like a phone charger, so it wasn’t difficult to plug in.

When Kang Chan pressed the call button, the dials sounded throughout the van.

Kim Hyung-Jung swirled his finger.

Click.

The call was answered, but the other party remained silent.

“It’s Kang Chan. I’m nearby.”

-Come in.

“How will my safety be insured?”

-How disappointing. I gave you enough time. If you don’t show up at the entrance within the next 10 minutes, know that you’ll never see Smithen again.

The call was disconnected.

“How long will it take to get to Smithen’s house?”

“Five minutes should be enough.”

Kang Chan let out a low breath.

“Alright. Let’s head over there for now.”

Kim Hyung-Jung ordered the driver of the van to start for the road, and the van immediately departed.

“Here, take this.”

Kim Hyung-Jung didn't think Kang Chan could be convinced not to go in, so he pulled out and gave Kang Chan pistols and bayonets.

However, when Kang Chan lifted the gun, Kim Hyung-Jung eventually shook his head.

“Mr. Kang Chan, you can't go inside like this.”

It would all be over if a bomb went off as soon as Kang Chan opened the door.

I know. I know, but if I don't, Smithen dies.

Kim Hyung-Jung sighed and proceeded to speak through gritted teeth.

“We can use a signal disruptor. It will prevent the use of any remote controls and wireless phones among other items within a 500-meter radius.”

There were truly a lot of interesting contraptions in this world.

“When you give us the signal, we will instantly cut off power. Afterward, we will begin the operation,” Kim Hyung-Jung said.

“We've arrived.”

At the end of Kim Hyung-Jung's words, the van came to a stop ahead.

“This is the house opposite Mr. Smithen's. The moment you give us the signal, we will cut off power and immediately eliminate the enemy on the rooftop. After that, we will deploy our agents to the balcony.”

Kim Hyung-Jung handed Kang Chan a watch with a black strap.

“We will listen in to your conversation through this watch. If the situation seems to be heading in the wrong direction, we will use the signal disruptor, but that means we won't be able to hear what's happening inside anymore.”

“How do I give the signal?”

“Give us a code word before you go in.”

Nothing immediately came to mind.

“Let's go with 'unconditionally.'”

Kang Chan nodded at Seok Kang-Ho's abrupt remark. When Kang Chan turned his gaze to Seok Kang-Ho, he saw Seok Kang-Ho's eyes glinting.

“Daye, if I die, shoot all those bastards for me.”

“Don't worry. I'll not only kill those motherfuckers, but also their parents, children, and acquaintances. I'm going to kill anyone connected to those sons of bitches.”

“I'm off then.”

“Captain.”

Kang Chan glanced at Seok Kang-Ho from where he was holding the van door handle.

“Don't turn me into a killer.”

“Got it.”

Kang Chan met eyes with Kim Hyung-Jung and Choi Jong-Il one last time before getting out of the van and heading straight for Smithen's house.

As he entered the alley, he recognized the buildings from when he had come here before.

Kang Chan remembered thinking the balcony was pretty nice, but it was actually getting in the way now.

The alley was short.

When he sharply looked up, he found it hard to see inside because of the curtains. He entered the front door and went up the stairs.

Although he was carrying a gun at his waist, it would definitely be taken from him the moment he entered.

Finally, Kang Chan stood in front of the main door.

He kept his gun as it was, but he subtly removed the bayonet holstered to his leg and placed it between the door and the wall.

Ding.

When he pressed the bell, he heard the sound of the door being unlatched. The front door opened with a click.

Inside, a man wearing a bandana on his head nodded at Kang Chan.

Kang Chan saw a gun in the man's hand. When Kang Chan stepped in further, he saw two more enemies.

Smithen was tied to a chair at the dining table. It looked as if he had taken a beating in the struggle because his eyes, mouth, and white shirt were covered in blood.

The enemy who examined Kang Chan pulled out the gun at his waist, then pointed at the chair in front of the balcony.

Kang Chan walked over with his shoes still on and sat down.

One enemy approached him and held a gun behind Kang Chan's right ear.

“Can I have a smoke?”

Nobody answered, but Kang Chan slowly pulled out a cigarette from his pocket and put it in his mouth anyway.

There was an enemy in front of the door, another next to Smithen, and another holding a gun to Kang Chan's ear.

Kang Chan lit up his cigarette with a click of his lighter.

It didn't seem like anything inside would change immediately even if these bastards lost power.

“Let me give Smithen a cigarette too.”

Why aren't they answering? Did these guys really just come to blow themselves up?

Kang Chan pretended to observe the living room as his eyes met Smithen's. Just then, the guy next to Smithen opened his jacket.

“Haah!”

Kang Chan sighed as if he was exhaling the smoke.

The enemy had a palm-sized C-4 hanging on his upper body. If that exploded, no one in this living room would get out alive.

“What is it you want?”

Click.

The sound of a trigger being pulled echoed behind Kang Chan's ear.

Chapter 132.1: The Hidden Things (1)

Kang Chan's eyes flashed the moment he heard the sound of the breechblock being pulled. Time seemed to have slowed down.

Haah. Haah.

Even the sound of his breathing felt elongated.

The man standing near the entrance tilted his head as the man with the C-4 hanging from his body lowered his jacket to its original position. The barrel of the gun touching the back of Kang Chan's ear slightly recoiled, then touched him again.

Did these punks think he was an easy target just because he obediently sat down when they instructed him to? How dared they pull the breechblock behind him? Were they agents or members of the special forces or something?

Could these bastards take him on in a fight?

Using his thumb and middle finger, Kang Chan held in place the cigarette in his mouth. He then bent his elbow as if he was flicking off a spark.

Idiot! If you pull the breechblock, it will fire two hundred milliseconds faster when you click the trigger!

KC watched the cigarette go by from the corner of his right eye as he threw it backward.

Kang Chan reached behind, swiftly gripped the barrel of the gun behind his ear, and pushed it up.

Bang!

As an ear-splitting sound almost tore his eardrums apart, he felt scorching heat near his right eye. The bullet flew by, the acrid smell of gunpowder heightening his senses.

Kang Chan adjusted the gun barrel and pushed his thumb, which he had placed onto the gun's trigger.

Bang!

Another bullet was fired.

The enemy with the C-4 hanging on his body clutched his chest as he fell to the floor with a thud.

Kang Chan kept pulling the trigger, firing bullets in merciless succession.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

People were quickly approaching him.

Still seated, Kang Chan twisted his body and threw a left punch into the right gut of the enemy standing behind him. In return, he sustained a blow between his right jaw and neck.

Thump!

The two crashed to the floor, their right hands still holding onto the gun tightly.

Wrapping his left hand around his right hand, Kang Chan forcefully rotated to the right.

The enemy's right arm cracked. Broken at the joints, it was twisted at an odd angle.

Pow! Pow! Pow! Pow!

Kang Chan jabbed the enemy's neck with his right elbow four times, causing the enemy's broken arm to jolt each time.

At the same time, the sounds of glass shattering from the balcony noisily rang out, announcing the entrance of masked agents.

“Shoot the bastard next to the table! Now!” Kang Chan gritted out.

As ordered, two agents quickly dashed forward.

Barely managing to get up, Kang Chan frowned when he saw his thumb stuck in the barrel of the gun. He didn't realize it during the fight, but his thumb had almost gotten twisted. He couldn't even pull it out now because of how swollen it was.

Kang Chan removed the magazine and the bullets inside the chamber with repetitive clicks, then pulled the trigger all the way to make space for his thumb to come out.

Bam!

Seok Kang-Ho and Choi Jong-Il frantically rushed in through the front door as soon as the masked agents unlocked it for them.

“Daye! That punk has a C-4 around his body. Tell them to keep the jamming device running and get the bomb disposal team to hurry in.”

Kang Chan smacked his head with his right palm. His ear was still ringing from the gunshot, and he couldn't see properly because his right eye was throbbing.

Choi Jong-Il quickly ran back out. An agent untied Smithen's binds.

“Captain!” Smithen shouted.

“Smithen, head outside! Quick!” Kang Chan ordered.

Two agents supported Smithen outside.

“Come on, let’s get you up, Cap.” Seok Kang-Ho frowned as he helped Kang Chan stand up. Seeing the blood staining his shirt, it seemed his injury had split open again most likely because he rushed inside so quickly earlier.

The agents tightly tied up and gagged the enemy whom Kang Chan had punched.

The area was hectic. Over ten agents busily ran around inside Smithen’s house.

“What about the guy on the rooftop?” Kang Chan asked.

“We shot him the moment we heard gunshots. Let’s get out of here,” Seok Kang-Ho urged, looking at the enemy who had fallen near the dining table.

Not long after, Choi Jong-Il came running over.

“The jamming device is now operational,” he said as he helped pull Kang Chan up to his feet.

“We should get out of here first,” Choi Jong-Il continued.

Kang Chan lightly shook his head. His senses were still disoriented, preventing him from measuring the distance of objects surrounding him. As a result, his steps were unsteady.

Choi Jong-Il tightly held onto Kang Chan’s upper body and quickly led him outside Smithen’s house.

Ambulances, police cars, and black vans had been parked on the road to block off any civilians from coming close to the scene, but they none of them blared sirens.

Once he had gone outside, Kang Chan did his best to collect even just some of his bearings.

“Get me to Bang Ji Hospital,” Kang Chan said. He and Seok Kang-Ho hopped into the back of an ambulance, which had a bed waiting for them.

The doors closed shut, and they heard Choi Jong-Il give curt orders to drive to Bang Ji Hospital from the front.

Kang Chan lightly tapped his head with his hand again.

“What is it?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“Everything feels so numb it seems as if I’m drunk. I think it’s because the gun was shot right next to my ear. ”

“It’s still a relief, though. At least that’s all the damage we sustained,” Seok Kang-Ho replied. Soon after, he headed toward the front of the ambulance and asked, “What about Smithen?”

“He’s already on the way to the Bang Ji Hospital!” Choi Jong-Il shouted through the barrier.

It hadn't even been a week since Kang Chan was discharged, but he was already going back to the hospital again.

When they arrived at the hospital, Kang Chan's senses finally returned, eliminating his numbness.

Kang Chan's neck was throbbing where it had been punched, and he could still hear monotonous ringing in his ears. However, the tipsy, drunk-like feeling had at least mostly disappeared.

His thumb was fixed straight with a cast, then he got an MRI scan of his head. Fortunately, they found no noticeable abnormalities, which meant there was no reason for Kang Chan to be hospitalized.

Meanwhile, Seok Kang-Ho had his wound disinfected and got new bandages wrapped around it.

After getting themselves treated, Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho headed for the hospital room where Smithen was hospitalized.

Kang Chan felt some of his worry ease when he saw four agents guarding the door to Smithen's room.

"Captain," Smithen greeted as he sat up from the bed.

"Do you want some coffee?" Kang Chan asked.

"Yes, please," Smithen replied in his feminine Korean.

Kang Chan told Seok Kang-Ho to sit down while he prepared coffee for the three of them. He also opened the windows.

Smoking and drinking a cup of coffee made Kang Chan feel a lot better.

"So, what happened?" Kang Chan asked.

"They knew the password to my house, sir," Smithen replied.

Kang Chan let out a low sigh.

"Did you bring girls into your home again?" he asked admonishingly.

Smithen's gaze dropped to the floor.

"Damn it, you son of a bitch! You still haven't come to your senses after the last incident?" Seok Kang-Ho swore at Smithen.

Smithen couldn't bring himself to retort back at him.

"Smithen."

"Yes, sir."

"If something like this happens again, I'm turning a blind eye to you," Kang Chan declared.

"I sincerely apologize," Smithen apologized in his feminine Korean again.

Kang Chan left it at that and pulled out another cigarette. What exactly was going on?

“Did the bastards not say anything else?”

“Not at all, sir.”

Kang Chan couldn't learn what the enemies were going to demand because they had been killed so quickly.

“We have agents standing by outside your room, so have some peace of mind, okay?” Kang Chan sympathetically said.

“Agents?” Smithen repeated, unsure what the word meant.

Kang Chan quickly gave an explanation in French.

“Oh! I see now. Agents.”

“Once you get discharged and go home after this, start being more careful in the future. Got it?”

“Yes, sir,” Smithen replied.

Kang Chan glanced at Smithen one more time before leaving the hospital room.

Smithen had the sturdy and buff build that was characteristic of Caucasian men and still had strong-looking shoulders and forearms. However, he could no longer properly use his strength. Smithen's pride had probably been quite hurt in this incident, likely making him feel even more pathetic about himself.

“Manager Kim is waiting for you inside,” an agent informed Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho as soon as they headed outside the hospital.

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho stepped into the van in the parking lot. They immediately drove off.

“Let's go to the office in Samseong-Dong,” Kim Hyung-Jung suggested.

“You look like you need to be hospitalized again too, Mr. Kim. If it's because hospitals are too stuffy, why don't you get hospitalized at the Bang Ji Hospital as well?” Kang Chan asked.

“Things are not looking so good right now. It's better that we speak in the office,” Kim Hyung-Jung replied.

Kang Chan took off the watch and handed it to Kim Hyung-Jung before he could forget to give it back.

“We have defused the bomb. It seems like the enemy had no chance to set it off because the button-shaped detonator was kept at his waist. They weren't expecting to get shot like that either, and the bomb was most likely just used for intimidation than to actually cause damage,” Kim Hyung-Jung briefed them.

The enemy wasn't holding the button in his hand, so Kim Hyung-Jung was probably right that the purpose of the bomb was merely to intimidate.

“The enemy who had the bomb was killed on site, and the one with the gunshot wound died a few moments ago. We captured the man whom you fought and took measures to prevent him from killing himself, but haven’t done anything else to him yet.”

As Kim Hyung-Jung spoke, the van arrived in Samseong-Dong and drove down to the underground parking area. When they entered the garage, an agent rolled over a wheelchair and assisted Kim Hyung-Jung into it.

When they ascended to the office on the fifth floor, a doctor came inside to examine Kim Hyung-Jung’s injuries, administer a shot, and connect him to an IV.

It made Kang Chan feel as if he was back at the hospital again.

“You haven’t had dinner yet, have you?” Kim Hyung-Jung asked.

To be frank, Kang Chan wasn’t that hungry, but he couldn’t bring himself to turn Kim Hyung-Jung down, so they ordered hot stone bibimbap to be delivered to the office.

Chapter 132.2: The Hidden Things (1)

By the time the food arrived and Kang Chan, Seok Kang-Ho, and Kim Hyung-Jung finished eating, it was already past seven in the evening.

Throughout the course of their meal, they received no report that they had to pay special attention to.

“Well, we’ll be on our way now. Give me a call if there are any updates,” Kang Chan said.

“I will,” Kim Hyung-Jung replied.

After parting ways with Kim Hyung-Jung, Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho headed to the coffee shop at the intersection.

Kang Chan had to plan countermeasures. He couldn’t just let people he knew take turns falling in danger one by one like what happened today. He knew wouldn’t be able to take action every time this happened.

The enemies would only become more cruel and vicious as these incidents went on.

“I should’ve killed them as soon as I learned what those motherfuckers wanted,” Kang Chan said frustratedly.

“Enough with that crap. It’s already a relief that no one got hurt any more than they have right now,” Seok Kang-Ho chided.

It had been a while since they had lemon tea together. Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho sat across from each other.

“I have to find a solution. This isn’t right. I don’t know who will be attacked at what time, and it’s not like I can guard everyone I know,” Kang Chan mused.

“That is also true,” Seok Kang-Ho agreed.

“Tsk! That means we’ll have to drop everything and run to save even Heo Eun-Sil or Lee Ho-Jun if they get kidnapped!”

Seok Kang-Ho nodded, then lifted his gaze.

“How do you think those bastards targeted Smithen, though? The bugging device back then was one thing, but this is a bit strange, isn’t it?” Seok Kang-Ho questioned.

“I also find that suspicious. No matter how much I rack my brain, I can’t think of anyone who knows Smithen.”

The two contemplated an answer for about thirty minutes, but they couldn’t come up with a plausible explanation of how Smithen got kidnapped.

Taking into consideration Seok Kang-Ho’s condition, Kang Chan thought it was probably best for them to return home now.

“Let’s head back,” Kang Chan said.

“Are you sure you can go home with those injuries?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“You have it way worse than I do. Go home and rest, and be wary of your surroundings.”

“Got it.”

Seok Kang-Ho and Kang Chan split ways in front of the complex, but Kang Chan sat on a bench for a while instead of heading straight into his apartment.

Kang Chan’s entire right hand was wrapped in a cast to keep his thumb stationary inside. He had just gotten the cast off his left hand, but now it was his right hand’s turn. He couldn’t go home to his parents like this.

Kang Chan slowly took the cast off. He would be fine as long as he was careful with his thumb. When he was in Africa, he never got a cast for small injuries like these.

He removed the cast with his left hand and placed it next to him on the bench. Just then, he saw Kim Mi-Young heading inside through the apartment complex entrance.

“Kim Mi-Young!” Kang Chan called.

Kim Mi-Young jumped in surprise. She then ran over with her trademark bouncy steps.

“What are you doing here?” Kim Mi-Young asked.

“Have you just finished cram school?” Kang Chan asked back.

“Yup!”

Kim Mi-Young’s face was still as thin as when he had seen her back at school.

“What’s the cast for?” Kim Mi-Young asked.

“I sprained my finger, but I decided to take it off because it doesn’t really hurt. Have you had dinner yet?”

“I did!”

Kim Mi-Young sat down on the bench next to Kang Chan.

Kids these days really grew up fast. Kang Chan felt a sense of unfamiliarity at the way she suddenly seemed to have grown up into an adult.

“What is it?” Kang Chan asked.

“Nothing. It’s been a while since I last saw you, so I’m just happy to be with you again,” Kim Mi-Young replied with a broad smile.

“How are your studies? Are you having trouble?” Kang Chan asked.

“It’s definitely hard,” Kim Mi-Young replied.

Kim Mi-Young extended her arms in front of her, seemingly stretching after a long night.

“But the hardest part is not being able to see you.”

“Are you sure you miss me?” Kang Chan asked abruptly before he knew it.

Kim Mi-Young slowly turned her head and looked at him.

“Do you remember when you appeared on TV?” Kim Mi-Young asked.

“When? At the conference hall?” Kang Chan inquired.

“Yes. I was at school then, but while I was watching, I suddenly felt scared,” Kim Mi-Young said.

“But I’m not hurt. I’m sitting here just fine, as you can see,” Kang Chan responded.

“Not because of that,” Kim Mi-Young clarified.

She was already pretty, but she would be even prettier if she changed her bangs a little bit.

“You’re already shaking hands with the president at important events, Kang Chan, but I’m still just a normal, plain high school senior. I want to do whatever it takes to be admitted into the political science department at Seoul National University,” Kim Mi-Young said.

“You’re smart enough for that,” Kang Chan reassured.

“No. I’m going to be at the top of the class. My dad said people from wealthy families, the chaebols, won’t leave someone as incredible as you alone.”

“Your dad said that?”

“I heard him speaking with my mom,” Kim Mi-Young responded.

Kang Chan smiled faintly. He already had enough of chaebols because of his experience with Yang Jin-Woo, and he hadn't even thought about what Kim Mi-Young was worried about.

“Kang Chan, buy me some coffee,” Kim Mi-Young demanded.

“Do you have time?” Kang Chan asked.

“Yes!”

Kang Chan didn't feel like going home right away anyway.

“Give me your bag,” he said.

Kang Chan and Kim Mi-Young left the apartment complex together.

‘Should I go back to school?’

Walking side by side with Kim Mi-Young, he realized how easygoing those days were.

“So, about So-Yeon unnie,” Kim Mi-Young suddenly opened.

Kang Chan initially had no idea who she was talking about.

“She's super pretty in the drama,” Kim Mi-Young continued.

“Oh! Are you talking about Eun So-Yeon? You have time to watch TV?” Kang Chan asked.

“I just watched for a few minutes. Some girls showed the drama to me on their phones after cram school. It has been really popular these days, and it has a super cool soundtrack too.”

They walked across the street to the coffee shop.

Kim Mi-Young ordered an Americano with less coffee, and Kang Chan just got a bottle of water. They found a table and sat down.

Kim Mi-Young continued to chatter. She was the same as ever. She spoke endlessly about her after-school lessons and events that took place at school. Through it all, she sounded as if she was working extremely hard to keep the promise she made to him.

“Dad said he would pay for me to study abroad in France if I wanted.”

Kang Chan just smiled back at her.

“And he said I shouldn't bother you because the work you're doing is super important. He said you would be annoyed if I got in your way instead of being diligent in my own studies,” Kim Mi-Young said.

“He said that about me?” Kang Chan asked.

“Yeah.”

Now that they were together, Kang Chan recalled the loneliness that had been hidden deep within her eyes.

“I’m really okay with it, so if you’re going through a tough time or if you think of me after cram school, text me. I’ll come out to see you for a little bit if I’m home,” Kang Chan told her.

Kim Mi-Young shook her head.

“The applications for early admittance are due soon. After that, I’ll contact you.”

Kim Mi-Young was probably so successful in her studies because she was this stubborn.

“For the first time, I’m having fun studying. I’ve just been going along with what my mom made me do in the past, but I enjoy it whenever I solve problems,” she said.

“Alright. But you should take it easy with studying French. You have to take care of yourself too,” Kang Chan chastised.

“I will,” Kim Mi-Young replied.

Kim Mi-Young wrapped both hands around her coffee cup and looked at Kang Chan.

She was only wearing a simple T-shirt and jeans. Although her outfit was plain, and she wasn’t dressed up at all, her sparkling eyes were beautiful.

If Kang Chan’s emotions could be compared to cluttered and messy pieces inside a bottle, he felt like they had now neatly and calmly sunk to the bottom after someone had given it a shake.

Strangely, whenever he was with Kim Mi-Young, he didn’t feel so high-strung and could be at ease.

“What is it?” Kim Mi-Young asked.

“I’m just happy to be with you,” Kang Chan replied.

“Hehehehe. Thanks.”

Kang Chan adored her unique laughter now.

“Oh, right! I heard Ho-Jun and Eun-Sil frequently visit a hospital these days.”

Did those two get beaten up?

Receiving a curious look from Kang Chan, Kim Mi-Young continued, “There’s a girl named Shim Su-Jin that they used to bully in the past. They apparently go to the hospital to apologize, since that’s where she is. They go together after school ends. Sometimes, other students go with them too,” she explained.

“Do they cause trouble or anything like that at school?” Kang Chan asked.

“No, they’re always on their best behavior! No one gets bullied at our school anymore. If someone tries to be mean, the teachers immediately look for Ho-Jun and Eun-Sil.”

When Kang Chan smirked, Kim Mi-Young looked upset, thinking he was smirking at her.

This was nice.

His emotions, which had been restless due to the recent incidents, seemed to be serenely settling down, and the brimming tension inside him from the event this morning was alleviated.

Kang Chan suddenly wanted to hug Kim Mi-Young. Once he did, the exhaustion in him would also be melted away.

“What?” he asked.

“I’m just happy I get to look at you. It’s been too long,” Kim Mi-Young said with a bright smile.

“It’s getting late, though. You should head inside now,” Kang Chan urged.

“Can’t you stay a little longer?” Kim Mi-Young asked pleadingly.

“Is that really okay with you?” Kang Chan asked.

“Yes, it’s fine,” Kim Mi-Young replied.

Kang Chan nodded. He was in a tranquil state.

Strangely, however, he still couldn’t get rid of the anxiety that had taken place in the back of his mind.

Chapter 133.1: The Hidden Things (2)

Kang Chan received a call from Lanok around nine o’clock on Sunday morning to make plans to have lunch together. Kang Chan ended up leaving the apartment a little early, though. Having arrived at Namsan Hotel first, he asked to see Joo Chul-Bum.

If Kang Chan was going to run into Joo Chul-Bum at some point anyway, he would rather get the dreaded meeting over with when he was expecting it. He waited for Joo Chul-Bum in the hotel’s lounge.

“You’re here, sir?” Joo Chul-Bum greeted extremely politely as he approached Kang Chan.

“Come sit down. What do you want to drink?” Kang Chan asked.

“I’ll go with coffee, hyung-nim,” Joo Chul-Bum replied.

Kang Chan ordered two cups of coffee.

“Do-Seok hyung-nim has woken up,” Joo Chul-Bum said when Kang Chan finished ordering.

“Really?” Kang Chan exclaimed.

Suh Do-Seok having finally regained consciousness after months in the hospital was certainly welcome news.

“He can’t speak properly yet, but he can at least clearly express what he likes or dislikes now. Gwang-Taek hyung-nim and the others are currently in the hospital with him,” Joo Chul-Bum stated.

“That’s a relief. I’ll contact you, so let’s go visit him together someday,” Kang Chan suggested.

Their conversation paused for a moment when their coffee was served. The two chatted for a little longer until Kang Chan’s phone rang. When it did, Kang Chan immediately headed up to the room.

“Mr. Kang Chan!” Lanok greeted as he held out his hand.

Goddammit, that hurts!

Kang Chan’s thumb throbbed at the unexpected handshake, but he didn’t show it on his face. He wasn’t expecting to be in this much pain since he was taking the injury lightly. Tears sprang to his eyes because of the pain.

When Kang Chan sat down, Lanok’s secretary carried out some tea and cigarettes.

“How are you? Did you get hurt anywhere?” Lanok asked.

“How did you know, Mr. Ambassador?” Kang Chan asked in surprise.

“South Korea does not have the tendency to take care of business with subtlety,” Lanok replied.

Kang Chan had intended to tell Lanok about the incident anyway, so it didn’t matter. As Kang Chan explained yesterday’s events in detail, Lanok lit up his cigar and carefully listened.

“Mr. Ambassador, is information warfare supposed to involve putting the people around you in danger?”

Lanok briefly shook his head.

“No. And you would reach the same answer if you observe the agents of Korea’s National Intelligence Service. Your case is highly atypical, Mr. Kang Chan. You drew many people’s attention in a short span of time, and even more so because this is a vital matter for some countries, such as Britain.”

Lanok lifted a large paper file that was on the table and handed it to Kang Chan.

Kang Chan glanced at him, but Lanok remained silent as if indicating to him to look at what it was. When Kang Chan opened the envelope, three passports and three large pictures fell out, each one with personal information clipped to it.

“These are the three men who attacked you,” Lanok announced.

Just how far did this sly snake’s ability reach?

Kang Chan looked at Lanok for a moment before scanning the pictures and the information.

“They’re ex-SAS from the UK. Their abilities can match the special forces of the Foreign Legion. Since you handled those three all by yourself, you’ll find yourself faced with stronger enemies next time.”

The unfortunate explanation made Kang Chan sigh.

“Currently, your nationality is a weakness. South Korea has never fought in any retaliatory battles so far,” Lanok added.

When Kang Chan lifted his gaze, Lanok had a sharp glint in his eyes.

“In a case like this, France would retaliate until it has worn out its opponent. France will set a target and won’t hesitate to carry out assassinations. That threatens others not to touch the valuable assets of our homeland. I’m sure you’re well aware of how the DGSE conducts business as well,” Lanok stated.

Kang Chan picked up a cigarette, and Lanok lit it up for him.

“The previous incident in Mongolia is known to be a French operation. Thankfully, that is the reason why I was able to avoid conflict with China, but you still remain an easy target, Mr. Kang Chan,” Lanok said.

“Then I should get back at the UK,” Kang Chan replied.

Lanok shrugged his shoulders in an “if that’s what you want” attitude.

“Information warfare is like a fight between children who possess weapons. It’s why national power is necessary. Do you think South Korea can handle the UK in a full-scale war?” Lanok questioned.

“Will there be a full-scale war?” Kang Chan asked curiously.

“You may think that it’s immature of them, but don’t think Britain will just take it lying down. They may exert their influence in the international community and impose economic sanctions or even engage in military demonstrations. If you fail any operation and leave evidence, you will have committed a grave mistake in the international community,” Lanok explained.

“Sounds like adults intervening in kids’ fights,” Kang Chan scoffed.

“Indeed, that’s exactly it. In any case, national interest will take precedence above all else. Because it’s so important, it’s that much more difficult for a country with weak national power to confront and fight a stronger country. This is precisely the reason Vasili acted so rudely during our last meeting.”

“Then if it’s as you say, I shouldn’t attack the UK,” Kang Chan said, expecting confirmation.

“Not if you attack them perfectly where it hurts,” Lanok corrected.

Kang Chan smirked.

“Eliminate your chosen target perfectly without leaving any evidence. If such incidents are repeated once or twice, the UK won’t be able to attack you so recklessly anymore,” Lanok furthered.

“You speak as if I should assassinate someone like it was done to the director of the French DGSE.”

“That’s correct.”

Kang Chan had been half-joking, but Lanok replied in a serious tone. Lanok shook the ash off his cigar and leaned back on the sofa again.

“Assassinating the head of the UK’s intelligence agency would be the most effective, I’m sure,” Lanok declared.

“Are you being serious right now, Mr. Ambassador?” Kang Chan exclaimed.

“I don’t joke about such matters,” Lanok responded.

Why was Lanok suggesting he take such extreme lengths?

Seeing Kang Chan’s expression, Lanok continued, “Regardless of whether you like it or not, information about you has been spread in the world of intelligence. I’m sorry to say this, but South Korea is still weak when it comes to international strength, and the National Intelligence Service’s capabilities are mediocre. To survive in this precarious situation, you have to show your opponents that they have to be prepared to put their lives at stake if they plan on targeting you, Mr. Kang Chan.”

The statement was so blunt that it sounded as if it should be used to describe wars between tribes in Africa. However, listening to Lanok’s explanation made Kang Chan realize how brutal and cruel the fight he had gotten himself involved in was.

“It will be difficult for you to target the head of the British intelligence service immediately, so it would be better to eliminate the person who facilitated the entrance of these three men to South Korea instead. After all, it’s only a matter of time before the people involved find out who killed whom and why.”

Kang Chan slowly inhaled, then let out a deep breath. He was genuinely grateful Lanok was a friend of his, not a foe.

“The Speaker of the National Assembly, Huh Ha-Soo, assisted in their entrance to South Korea. The Chinese intelligence agency provided them with their passports, and they entered through Hong Kong. I’m sure the Korean intelligence agency must have gathered this information by now as well.”

“But China gave Vasili a plane and even returned the fallen soldiers,” Kang Chan countered.

“Mr. Kang Chan, from China's point of view, if another country attempts to eliminate you, they have no reason to oppose it. Don't forget, in information warfare, you will always regret it if you make decisions by looking at only a single side,” Lanok kindly explained as if he was a teacher educating a student. “The same goes for you and me. We can meet up to coordinate if the interests of France and South Korea happen to be in disagreement. However, if the interests of the two countries clash too severely, the DGSE may proceed and act without informing me. That is the nature of information warfare.”

“I really hate it,” Kang Chan remarked. He took a sip of tea from his cup and picked his cigarette back up.

“The Igla that was discovered at the conference hall was sold by the Russian government. The Serpents Venimeux purchased it and handed it over to Yang Jin-Woo.”

“Is Vasili aware of this fact?” Kang Chan asked with a sigh.

“If Vasili wasn't aware of the smuggling of weapons in his own country, he wouldn't have been able to climb as high as his current position,” Lanok snorted.

That son of a bitch!

“Mr. Kang Chan, I understand how angry you may be. However, you have to forget about Vasili for the time being. If you provoke him, South Korea will have to pay a heavy price. Russia will begin to provide North Korea with unlimited weapons and financial support, which means that even if the United States comes to South Korea's aid, it will likely be after the country is already in ruins.”

Tsk!

It was difficult to kill the bastards who really had to be killed.

“You should begin by taking measures to keep your family safe and sound. Since Huh Ha-Soo and Huh Sang-Soo are targeting you, I know you won't feel comfortable if you don't.”

“I suppose I'll have to start there,” Kang Chan surmised.

“Now then, shall we finish the rest of our conversation over a meal?” Lanok asked in a tone that made it seem as if they were speaking about a pleasant subject. Kang Chan thought that this moment could be a break from Lanok's daily life, at least in the sense that Lanok was having a lunch appointment with a friend and talking about a topic that wasn't too serious based on his standards.

Lunch was served as a French feast. The large meal was a little heavy for the morning, but it didn't matter. Kang Chan continued to ask things he was curious about, and Lanok took time to generously answer each question.

Kang Chan felt as if he was currently in the middle of a one-on-one tutoring session. Meanwhile, Lanok seemed to be very pleased that Kang Chan was taking an interest in international affairs and the nature of intelligence agencies.

Chapter 133.2: The Hidden Things (2)

The meal ended when Kang Chan and Lanok lowered their forks and knives with a click, and a lightly frozen ice cream was brought out as dessert.

“The greatest advantage you have in information warfare is your animalistic instinct,” Lanok complimented, scooping the ice cream with his spoon as if he was carving it. “While your lack of experience in this type of fight and South Korea’s lack of national power may be a weakness, your decisions and actions could change the outcome.”

“So you’re saying I need to demonstrate my abilities?” Kang Chan questioned.

“It will not be easy, but it’s the best course of action for now,” Lanok replied.

Kang Chan pushed his ice cream aside and pulled the coffee in front of him.

“Is there still a chance I can remove myself from the information war?” Kang Chan asked with some hope.

Lanok tilted his head as if Kang Chan had given the wrong answer.

“As long as South Korea requires a person to covertly carry out business until the Eurasian Rail is built, the country will not stop relying on you and will continue to request your service. If you decide not to be involved with the information war, I won’t force anything on you. However, please don’t recommend someone else to me to replace you in your position,” Lanok declared.

Kang Chan nodded.

“Haah! Well, Mr. Ambassador,” said Kang Chan, letting out a loud sigh, which Lanok observed with a questioning smile. “Can I ask you for a favor? Will you assist me by recruiting French mercenaries?”

“You’re my friend, Mr. Kang Chan. And I have never refused a friend’s request for something that is within my ability,” Lanok said surely.

So I really will be doing this, then. I’ll take any help I can get.

Since Kang Chan was going to fight this war anyway, he didn’t want to give up and step back, especially since succeeding meant he could protect those special to him.

Seeing Kang Chan’s expression, Lanok gave him a mysterious smile.

“Does this mean you’ve made up your mind?” Lanok inquired.

“To some extent, yes,” Kang Chan responded.

Lanok extended his wine glass toward Kang Chan. Although it made him uncomfortable, Kang Chan couldn't refuse this one considering the meaning behind it.

The sound of glasses clinking echoed in the room.

"I will show you my abilities at their finest," Lanok announced.

"Should I be scared?" Kang Chan asked jokingly.

"Of course not," Lanok replied with a twinkle in his eyes, clearly amused.

"Intelligence agencies across the world are nervously awaiting your formal debut. The greater your name becomes known, the higher my reputation will climb in turn. So, perhaps I should give you a gift instead."

Lanok slightly raised his index finger and signaled at his secretary.

His secretary, who had brought out the cigars, cigarettes, and the large paper file previously, cleared everything away from the table with the exception of the coffee cups.

"The brothers Huh Ha-Soo and Huh Sang-Soo are currently in China. They will return to South Korea in a week, and the Korean National Intelligence Service should be able to get the exact date of their arrival. There are already rumors that the brothers have cooperated with the British intelligence agency and sold Korean military secrets to the United States. This should be enough to make a fancy debut, Mr. Kang Chan."

Lanok prepared all of this in advance? What would he have done if our conversation never headed in this direction and I never mentioned it?

Lanok studied Kang Chan's expression as if asking what the matter was.

"You truly are a scary person, Mr. Ambassador," Kang Chan said exhaustedly.

"Hahaha," Lanok laughed out loud as he wiped his mouth with a napkin.

Lanok's secretary quickly glanced over as if he was seeing a miraculous spectacle.

"I can't believe the very man who made Vasili bring the corpses of the soldiers is saying that to me! Mr. Kang Chan, at your age, I traveled around the world to make myself familiar with the people at the grassroots level of various intelligence agencies," Lanok said as he stopped laughing, looking Kang Chan straight in the eye. "Don't underestimate your power. If you were to ask Vasili right now, the Russian would probably even hand over a nuclear warhead to you."

What? Why would Vasili go so far as to give him a nuclear warhead?

"Before a world that revolves around you arrives, people will want to do either one of two things. They can become friends with you..." Lanok trailed off,

glancing at his cigar before looking back at Kang Chan. "Or they can get rid of you."

Pft.

Lanok seemed to be satisfied by Kang Chan's smirk.

"Mr. Kang Chan, am I really your friend?" Lanok suddenly asked.

It was a horrifyingly cringy and goosebump-inducing question, but Lanok looked serious.

"You're like a mentor to me, Mr. Ambassador."

Therefore, Kang Chan genuinely replied with an embarrassed answer.

Lanok just stared at Kang Chan without budging. Not longer after, however, he suddenly took a deep breath and slowly began to speak with a determined expression.

"Mr. Kang Chan. In this case, like you did Anne, I hope you can help France," Lanok stated firmly.

"Mr. Ambassador?" Kang Chan asked, not quite sure what Lanok meant.

"Until the day comes when you have established yourself and gained your footing, I will put everything I have on the line. To be honest, I had already made up my mind to do so since the Mongolian operation ended, but I'm only telling you this now. Starting now, you'll be on the path to building a solid career among intelligence agencies. If something happens to me in the meantime, please protect Anne and the country of France."

Kang Chan felt as if the conversation was moving too fast and too far out of his grasp.

"And just as I helped you, please find and mentor a talented individual in France. If you can promise me that, I believe I'll be able to go to sleep peacefully starting today," Lanok finished with a smile.

Lanok's sparkling eyes were awaiting Kang Chan's answer. Not only Lanok but also his secretary and Louis were watching him with anxious expression.

"I promise, Mr. Ambassador. However, as long as I'm alive, you won't have to worry about being killed. You already know how my instinct is exceptionally sensitive and sharp," Kang Chan asserted.

"Hahaha! I see! That instinct of yours momentarily slipped my mind!" Lanok chuckled goodnaturedly.

This was a first. Lanok had laughed out loud in front of Kang Chan a few times before, but this was the first time he was laughing so wholeheartedly.

Kang Chan stayed for about an hour longer before saying goodbye, so their lunch appointment lasted a whopping three hours.

Lanok got up from his seat and extended his arms to Kang Chan from next to the door. However, he didn't say anything.

Seriously, is something going on with him?

Kang Chan was bothered to see Lanok acting differently from how he usually did.

"Mr. Ambassador," he said, stopping Lanok in his tracks as Louis opened the door. "I'm a very simple-minded person and can't control my emotions very well. Promise me that you will come to me first if you are ever in danger."

Kang Chan's expression hardened when he saw Lanok's pupils clearly shaking from his statement. Lanok was definitely not the type to betray such a wavering gaze.

"I promise," Lanok replied.

"Please don't turn me into a killer," Kang Chan firmly asserted.

Kang Chan finally realized why Seok Kang-Ho had used that expression, but that wasn't what was important right now.

Kang Chan glanced at the secretary and Louis, gesturing that they should quickly call him if something were to happen to the ambassador.

"Au revoir, à demain."

With that French goodbye uttered impressively, Lanok left the room.

Is it okay to let him go like this? Should I have grabbed him and forced him to swear on Anne's name to call me if he finds himself in danger?

It occurred to Kang Chan that the strange bit of anxiety that had suffocatingly followed him around since yesterday could have been caused by Lanok.

Kang Chan shook his head.

However, even if Kang Chan were to implore and plead that of Lanok, Lanok would never change his decision if he had already made his mind up.

Since it was too late now, the wisest choice Kang Chan could take was to quickly make his name known among intelligence agencies. No matter who or which country it was, anyone who touched his people would forever have to suffer the consequences and beg him to stop.

God of Blackfield.

The name his enemies had given him would naturally have to be accepted across all intelligence agencies. This was the fastest and wisest way to protect those around him, including Lanok.

When Kang Chan arrived at the first floor of the hotel, it was already four in the afternoon. He was striding into the lobby with two folders in hand when he stopped and smiled.

Oh Gwang-Taek was staring back at him from the hotel lounge. Joo Chul-Bum was standing at his side.

“Hey, dog! Kang Chan!” Oh Gwang-Taek shouted.

That dumb gangster bastard!

The hotel was busier than normal and was filled with people because it was Sunday, but Oh Gwang-Taek just had to bellow Kang Chan’s name as if he was a long-lost family member.

It was nice to see him. Kang Chan suppressed the laugh that threatened to escape and walked toward the lounge.

“Hey! Punk!” Oh Gwang-Taek greeted. He grabbed Kang Chan’s hand tightly.

Kang Chan didn’t know he would receive this kind of passionate welcome. As a matter of fact, Kang Chan’s thumb was twisted so enthusiastically that he almost threw a punch at the idiot.

After the dreadful handshake, they sat down in the lounge.

“You already had lunch, right? Then have dinner with me,” Oh Gwang-Taek insisted.

“Hmm. All right,” Kang Chan agreed.

“Right, man! Do-Seok is back up.”

“I heard earlier. I’m planning on visiting soon too.”

“He said something weird, though,” Oh Gwang-Taek mused.

“What is it?” Kang Chan asked.

Although Kang Chan never ordered anything, the server brought out some coffee for them.

“The fight that day. We thought it was the parking lot gang that was behind it. But apparently, it was some foreign guys,” Oh Gwang-Taek said.

“What?” Kang Chan asked in surprise.

“You beat some French guy back then, right? Do-Seok said that seemed to be why they were attacked.”

“Really?” Kang Chan asked disbelievingly.

“Yeah, punk!”

What was going on? Were the gangsters including Do-Seok attacked after Kang Chan took care of Sharlan?

Either way, Suh Do-Seok shouldn’t have been swept up in that incident.

Chapter 134.1: We Should Go (1)

After having dinner at a gukbap[1] restaurant, Kang Chan tried to kill some time before going home. While he didn’t drink a lot of bomb shots, he still smelled like alcohol, so he didn’t want to go back immediately.

Kang Chan held up his phone and made a call.

- This is Choi Jong-Il.

“Are you guys free? Let’s go have a cup of coffee.”

Kang Chan thought he heard someone snort, it seemed like someone had failed to hold in their laughter, but there was nothing wrong with that so Kang Chan ignored it.

He didn’t have to wait even a minute before he saw Lee Doo-Hee driving a car and parking by the hotel entrance.

“Did you guys have dinner?” Kang Chan asked.

“We had bibimbap.”

“Then let’s head over to the specialty coffee shop at the intersection.”

As if to signal that they should go, Choi Jong-Il glanced at Lee Doo-Hee. They left immediately.

Kang Chan looked outside the window.

He didn’t have a problem debuting as an agent internationally by picking a fight with Britain. However, he couldn’t help but have trouble deciding whether he actually should debut when he thought about the sacrifices that would come with fights like this.

Unlike in Africa, where he just had to follow orders, the fight that Kang Chan was about to start required him to make decisions and give orders himself. Was it really okay for him to sacrifice others to fulfill his personal desire of properly protecting those around him?

“Whoa!” Just as Kang Chan got the urge to smoke, the car stopped.

“Do you want me to get you a coffee?” Choi Jong-Il asked Kang Chan.

“Yeah, a light roast one. What are you all waiting for? Let’s get out of the car.”

Everyone headed to the terrace, including Lee Do-Hee, who had closed the door of the driver’s seat. After Woo Hee-Seung brought over their coffee, the four made themselves comfortable and bit on cigarettes.

“Choi Jong-Il,” Kang Chan called after lighting a cigarette. The three looked at him at the same time. “I’m thinking of finally fighting properly, but now that I’ve thought about it, this will be almost like guerilla warfare.”

“Are you thinking of infiltrating an enemy country?”

Kang Chan nodded in response.

Although it could be seen as childish, Kang Chan didn’t want to lie in front of these kinds of men.

“Is that possible?” Choi Jong-Il asked again.

“France will support me. They will provide planes, weapons, entry into the enemy country, and even the troops and information I’ll need for the operation.

The operation won't have South Korea's approval, so if we die, our deaths won't cause any damage."

Choi Jong-Il grinned like Seok Kang-Ho. "Ever since we fought Yang Jin-Woo, the three of us have been imagining us going out on operations like the powerful nations' Intelligence Bureaus do. Rather than dying to get just one piece of information, we have always wanted to punish people for messing with our agents. Even if that gets us killed by being torn to shreds, we'll die happy. We won't resent you either if our bodies don't make it back home."

"Isn't that too grandiose?"

"If we can show South Korea's—" Choi Jong-Il exclaimed but abruptly paused, perhaps thinking his voice was too loud. "If it means getting to show the National Intelligence Service's power to the world and stopping other countries from looking at South Korea as a pushover, then we'll do anything."

Kang Chan turned his head to look at the others. Woo Hee-Seung and Lee Doo-Hee didn't avoid his gaze.

Kang Chan laughed.

Men like them died young in this fucked up world. They would return to the airport in body bags after doing all kinds of unpleasant work.

Fuckers like Huh Sang-Soo or Yang Jin-Woo seized that honor and acted cocky.

"You all received special training, right?" Kang Chan asked.

"We have gone through every training you can think of, even the UDT[2]."

"Alright," Kang Chan replied.

Seemingly excited, Choi Jong-Il drank coffee.

"Let's schedule a training session to test you all. If you fail, then you just aren't capable enough. We can't do anything about that," Kang Chan said.

Choi Jong-Il smiled as if he found Kang Chan funny.

"I want you to split into infiltration and defense teams for the training. Who can I contact that can get this done quickly?" Kang Chan asked.

"The Section Chief is your best bet," Choi Jong-Il said, sounding as if they should run over to Jeon Dae-Geuk right now.

"Yeah? I give him a call, then," Kang Chan took out his phone and called Jeon Dae-Geuk.

The call rang thrice before it was picked up.

- Hello?

Kang Chan heard Jeon Dae-Geuk's husky voice.

"Section Chief, it's Kang Chan."

- Huh? Kang Chan? Hey! How could you not visit me in the hospital when I'm dying?

Kang Chan burst out with laughter. Jeon Dae-Geuk did as well.

- Are you okay?

"Yes."

There was an emotion that was difficult to explain in the question that Jeon Dae-Geuk asked, that was what made Kang Chan think this gentleman was born as a soldier by nature..

- Come over.

"Right now?"

- Why are you asking that? Can't you?

"Alright."

Kang Chan laughed after hanging up. "He wants us to come over right now."

"What are you going to do?" Choi Jong-Il asked.

"I should go."

Choi Jong-Il stood up before anyone else.

Jeon Dae-Geuk was staying in a VIP room, but it wasn't anything special.

When they opened the door and went inside, a heavily bandaged Jeon Dae-Geuk grinned at them. He was leaning against the headboard of his bed.

Kang Chan almost gave him a salute. To him, Jeon Dae-Geuk was a true soldier.

"Have you had dinner?" Jeon Dae-Geuk asked Kang Chan.

"Yes."

When Kang Chan sat in front of the bed, Choi Jong-Il and the other two people stood behind him.

Jeon Dae-Geuk glanced at the trio. "Are you guys trying to intimidate me by standing behind Kang Chan? From the looks of it, you guys seem to be completely enamored with him now."

"We're betting our lives on him," Choi Jong-Il answered.

Jeon Dae-Geuk smirked, then looked at Kang Chan. "What did you do to make them act like that?"

Having come this far, Kang Chan had no reason to deny anything or avoid the topic. Hence, he firmly made up his mind. "I'm thinking of retaliating against the countries that have been provoking South Korea."

Jeon Dae-Geuk inhaled loudly. "Have you thought about what would happen if you guys fail?"

“Yes, but we can’t properly connect the Eurasian Rail if we keep getting beat up like this. I also keep watching anymore as we sacrifice agents and our members just so we can barely stop our enemies.”

Jeon Dae-Geuk tightly gritted his teeth. “South Korea won’t be able to properly support you.”

“France will be supporting me in the form of transportation, information, weapons, and even troops if required.”

Jeon Dae-Geuk swallowed dryly, he looked at Kang Chan and the three people that were standing behind him. “What can I do to help?”

“I want to train people to form infiltration and defense teams.”

“There’s a facility that you guys can use at the First and Third Airborne Forces. I’ll mobilize the special forces soldiers of the DMZ.”

“Thank you.”

Kang Chan didn’t know why, but the skin around Jeon Dae-Geuk’s eyes was red.

“Was it the God of Blackfield that commanded the operation in Mongolia?” Jeon Dae-Geuk asked when their eyes met.

“Yes,” Kang Chan answered with a nod.

“Kang Chan.” Jeon Dae-Geuk reached out and grabbed his hand. “I prepared for an operation to Mongolia about five times or so but eventually gave up. The United States interfered and put pressure on us, and we had to keep observing China’s reaction. Even in Europe, more than ten of our National Intelligence Service’s agents are sacrificed every year.”

Jeon Dae-Geuk nodded while smiling awkwardly. “You don’t know how long I’ve been waiting for someone like you to show up—someone who can exert their influence in France’s DGSE, someone that even the head of Russia’s Intelligence Bureau visit has to visit in person, and more than anything...”

Jeon Dae-Geuk seemed to be getting very emotional.

“... someone who can bring back the bodies of those who sacrificed themselves in an operation! Today is the second happiest day of my life.”

“When’s your happiest day?” Kang Chan asked.

“The day I became a South Korean soldier.”

Kang Chan and Jeon Dae-Geuk laughed out loud at the same time.

“Damn it! I should have a drink on a day like this. Hey! Go buy five bottles of soju,” Jeon Dae-Geuk ordered.

Choi Jong-Il didn’t budge an inch, as if he didn’t hear anything.

“Hey, you fucker! Don’t ruin this touching moment and just go quickly.”

“You have to suppress the urge to drink today, sir,” Choi Jong-II responded.

“No! I feel like my chest is going to explode. I have to calm it down.”

“Please don’t drink. Focus on getting better quickly and command the operation instead. We’ll be able to fight without worry if someone we trust will be commanding everyone within the country,” Kang Chan said.

“You think so?”

People like Jeon Dae-Geuk were made to be in the field.

“When do you want to start training?” Jeon Dae-Geuk asked.

“I’ll start gathering the personnel tomorrow. We can probably start on Wednesday.”

“Alright. I’ll think of a decent place with the First and Third Airborne Forces and mobilize the DMZ’s specialized team. That aside...” Jeon Dae-Geuk looked around his surroundings, then lowered his voice. “Which country is our first target?”

“Either China or the United Kingdom.”

“Hahaha—ow!” Jeon Dae-Geuk burst out with laughter but soon frowned and pressed his hand against the bandages wrapped around his side. “Those sons of bitches! They always look down on us!”

“Are you okay?” Kang Chan asked.

“This is nothing.” Jeon Dae-Geuk nodded. “Kang Chan.”

“Yes?”

“Thanks.”

“I started this to protect the people around me. It’s actually embarrassing because you’re thanking me too much.”

“That’s not something to be embarrassed about. We’ve been careful and wary of others too many times now. Even though we couldn’t protect them, many agents died without resentment for the sake of their missions—all of them were valuable and kind-hearted. I have watched those fuckers step forward and say they’ll happily die for the country too many times now! Phew!”

Jeon Dae-Geuk’s emotions suddenly seemed all over the place, but Kang Chan wasn’t worried about what would happen once they had gone on the operation. After all, Jeon Dae-Geuk remained level-headed during the incident at the presentation hall.

Jeon Dae-Geuk's emotions seemed all over the place, but Kang Chan wasn't worried since he had seen how level-headed Dae-Geuk could be.

"If they entrust you with the position of the Founder of the Eurasian Rail, just pretend that you can't win against them and take on the role," Jeon Dae-Geuk said.

See? Jeon Dae-Geuk already seemed to have come to his senses.

"Take on a position. Having someone that represents South Korea will become something extremely important later on. It's something that you have to do if you want to properly reward those that follow you as well," Jeon Dae-Geuk continued.

"I'll think about it."

"Please soar higher than I or the President has done. You have to make sure that people will remember you first before anyone else when someone from South Korea runs into danger on foreign soil. Please make sure the agents can smile as they're dying because they know you're there for them. I'll also try my best."

Jeon Dae-Geuk was going too far, but it was difficult to say anything else here.

Jeon Dae-Geuk had burst out with laughter like a crazy person and applied pressure to his wounds twice before they left the room.

It was already close to 11 pm.

On his way home, Kang Chan watched the scenery unfolding outside the window.

Everything was now starting.

I'll make the Intelligence Bureaus all around the world acknowledge the 'God of Blackfield.' If someone messes with those around me, then the god who brings death is bound to appear.

Was it childish? Kang Chan wondered if people could still say that in death.

Kang Chan started his Monday morning with a phone call from Jeon Dae-Geuk.

He told Kang Chan that he had arranged a first-class training area near Jeungpyeong[1], and that he would prepare the special forces soldiers of the DMZ, the Third Airborne Forces, and the members of the 606 at the date that Kang Chan chose.

Things were progressing amazingly.

But the problem was Seok Kang-Ho's condition.

Kang Chan called Seok Kang-Ho and headed to a cafe in Misari.

"How are you feeling?" Kang Chan asked.

"Strangely, my wound keeps opening up." Seok Kang-Ho looked annoyed.

“Remember when I met Lanok yesterday?” Kang Chan explained what had happened yesterday, then told Seok Kang-Ho his plans for the future as well.

“Phuhu, so you’re saying that we’re going to an operation?” Seok Kang-Ho asked afterward. He had laughed with an expression that was completely different from a moment ago.

“I’m going to test them. Those who fail won’t be able to join.”

“Isn’t that only natural?”

“Since we’re going to make the teams by units, each team will have a maximum of twelve people. We also have to get a good sniper. You should take two snipers in this training session,” Kang Chan said, then frowned while looking at the river in the distance.

“What’s wrong?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“I don’t know. I feel uncomfortable, but I can’t pinpoint what’s causing it.”

Whenever Kang Chan said something like this, Seok Kang-Ho took it seriously. “Are you not concerned about your parents?”

“I told Choi Jong-Il to frequently check on them.”

“Who else? Won’t they kidnap Smithen again?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“I heard that he’s in the hospital. I told the agents to keep Smithen there. Even if he gets discharged, the agents guarding him right now will keep taking care of him.”

“What about Ambassador Lanok?” Seok Kang-Ho asked again.

“He wasn’t in a very good mood when we parted ways, which bothered me. The look in his eyes was a bit weird as well. It felt like something was wrong, but he was hiding it.”

“That’s a major concern. What about Mi-Young or that lady Michelle? Won’t they target those two as well?”

“I don’t know. At any rate, the people around me will be watched over starting today. They even said that last time, the agents will start protecting Mi-Young. Argh! I feel like I’m going to suffocate. We have to know what’s going on before we can run over or something!”

Seok Kang-Ho nodded in agreement. He had been closest to Kang Chan at times like this, so he could understand Kang Chan much better than anyone else.

“I’m thinking of starting the training on Wednesday. We’ll both make our own teams, but we should get our members from the 606 and the special forces soldiers of the DMZ. Let’s choose the defense soldiers from the Third Airborne Forces,” Kang Chan said.

“Alright.”

Seok Kang-Ho understood him whenever he was giving orders about the operation, which was really nice.

“You don’t regret getting involved in this, do you?” Kang Chan asked.

“Why are you asking that? I have the will to live now because of this. I’m happy, Captain. Phuhuhu.”

Kang Chan couldn’t help but laugh out loud.

There was something pitiful about a guy grinning and talking about happiness despite their eyes being filled with bloodthirst.

But still, Kang Chan having a colleague like this was incredible.

After having lunch at Misari, Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho headed to Kim Hyung-Jung’s office in Samseong-dong.

They didn’t have to tell Kim Hyung-Jung since Jeon Dae-Geuk had already briefed him on what they were planning.

Kim Hyung-Jung found it very unfair that his wounds still hadn’t properly healed.

Kang Chan would lead Team 1, which would consist of eleven personnel, and Team 2 would have twelve members, including Seok Kang-Ho.

With the list of applicants in their hands, Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho each chose their team members. Kang Chan included Choi Jong-Il, Woo Hee-Seung, and Lee Doo-Hee in his team.

“Mr. Kang Chan, the Director wants me to tell you something,” Kim Hyung-Jung said.

After preparing everything, Kim Hyung-Jung, who was sitting at the table with an IV in his arm, looked at Kang Chan. “If by any chance there’s an emergency, the Director said that you should use him as an excuse and that you should take care of the issue as something that he has personally ordered you to do.”

Kang Chan thought that South Korea got connected to the Eurasian Rail thanks to people like them.

“Alright,” Kang Chan answered. He and Kim Hyung-Jung were both thinking that an emergency where he would have to act like that was not going to happen.

Kang Chan had a busy day, but it wasn’t even 6 pm yet when he returned home because it was around that time that Monday-to-Tuesday dramas aired.

He still had this uncomfortable feeling, which bothered him, but there wasn't really anything that he could do about it.

Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook hadn't arrived home from work yet.

Kang Chan quickly washed up and got changed. Just as he was walking out of his room, the front door opened, and his parents entered the apartment.

"Welcome home," Kang Chan greeted.

"You're home early," Kang Dae-Kyung said.

"Yes. You two must be tired."

"Not anymore since I've seen you," Yoo Hye-Sook replied. She actually looked happy that he was at home.

After Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook got changed, the three of them prepared dinner, which consisted of soup, refrigerated side dishes, and dried seaweed.

"Starting this Wednesday, I might stay at Jeungpyeong for a few days," Kang Chan told his parents.

"Jeungpyeong? Why are you going to Jeungpyeong?" Kang Dae-Kyung asked.

"I heard they're holding something like a workshop for government employees there. I'll be meeting people that I will probably be working with, and I'll also check out the tasks I'll be doing."

"Have you decided to work there?"

"Yes. Since it's something that I have to do anyway, I've decided to give it my all instead of constantly trying to avoid it."

"That's not bad." Kang Dae-Kyung nodded.

They ate dinner while consoling Yoo Hye-Sook, who was worried. Kang Dae-Kyung did the dishes, and Kang Chan prepared tea.

"The drama is airing today, right?" Kang Dae-Kyung asked. He went to the living room while drying his hands on the kitchen towel.

It was strange seeing Kang Dae-Kyung acting like this—not only did Kang Chan not watch TV that often, but he had also never seen men taking an interest in dramas before.

When the drama started, the three of them sat down and conversed for a few more moments.

Eun So-Yeon filled her role quite well. Kang Chan immediately liked how steadfast she looked while overcoming her hardships.

"Oh my! She's really in the drama!" Yoo Hye-Sook exclaimed. In the middle of the drama, the daughter of Yoo Hye-Sook's friend appeared.

Even Kang Chan thought she wasn't suited to play a lead role, but her scene at least swiftly passed by without any awkwardness.

Yoo Hye-Sook's phone rang before the end of the drama.

"I saw her. She looked really pretty. Why are you thanking me? Okay, sweetie."

Yoo Hye-Sook received phone calls from a few more people. She looked happy.

The drama ended while Kang Chan was thinking that he would protect their happiness.

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

Kang Chan's phone, which was on top of his desk, started ringing. He quickly went into his room.

- Channy, did you watch the drama?

"Yeah. I watched it with my parents at home."

- If it's okay with you, then let's go out for a beer.

"Sure, let's have a drink."

Promising to meet Michelle, Kang Chan headed out to the living room. He parted ways with her last Saturday quite awkwardly.

"I'll be meeting up with Michelle for a bit," Kang Chan told his parents.

"It seems she wants to meet you because the drama has ended. Have fun."

After talking to Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook, Kang Chan got changed, then told them, "I'll be back."

Michelle had said that she would pick him up at his house.

Kang Chan headed outside, then called and checked on the security. They reported nothing unusual.

Chapter 135.1: We Should Go (2)

Kang Chan met Michelle at 9 pm.

He was already waiting in front of his apartment when she arrived. Once he had gotten inside her car, they headed to the wine bar in Apgujeong-dong[1].

Michelle definitely knew the best places to go.

Going into the 'Jazz in The Clouds,' which was located on the second floor, they found an overweight middle-aged woman singing along to the accompaniment being performed by a four-person band.

The two sat at a corner table, and Michelle ordered for them since she was more familiar with places like this.

They gave the performers a round of applause when the song called 'Summer Time' ended. Around the same time, Kang Chan and Michelle were served cheese, as a side dish, and wine.

“You can smoke in here,” Michelle said. She was wearing a black suit and a white shirt, making it seem as if she coordinated with Kang Chan to wear matching clothes.

Kang Chan poured them wine and took a sip, then lit up a cigarette.

“Michelle,” Kang Chan called.

Michelle looked at Kang Chan with her blue eyes.

“I’m thinking of working for the government starting this Wednesday. You probably won’t be able to contact me.”

Michelle blinked. White women were born with really long eyelashes.

“My presence in your life will probably put you in danger, so here.” Kang Chan placed a thumb-tack-shaped transmitter on top of the table. “My mother attached it to her wallet, but you can attach it to anything that you always carry with you. That way, I’ll be able to track your location.”

Michelle opened her purse, took out a wallet, and attached the transmitter to it.

“Like this?” Michelle asked.

“Yeah.” Kang Chan sighed softly.

“Channy,” Michelle called as she extinguished her cigarette on the ashtray. “For as long as you’re doing this because you want to, and for as long as it gives you that look in your eyes, then I’ll be okay with it even if it’s dangerous. I’d like to be someone who can provide you with rest whenever you’re having a difficult time... After your parents, of course.”

“I’m sorry.”

“I know, but I’m doing this because I’m happy to. I don’t want to be a burden to you, so don’t worry about me and just focus on your work. All I ask in return is that you don’t forget to meet up with me at least twice a month,” Michelle said with a mischievous look. Kang Chan just smirked.

“If you skip even a month, then I’m going to ask for something bigger the next month. I don’t like that you’re growing up more and more into an amazing man, but that’s probably the real reason why I fell for you,” Michelle added.

“You’re cringey.”

“You’re a player!”

“I’m a player?”

“Not only do you have a pretty female student, but you also have me, Eun So-Yeon, and Kim Mi-Young!”

Saying that he had something going on with Heo Eun-Sil was out of the question, and he didn't even know if Eun So-Yeon liked him. It was unfair, but it was also difficult for him to make excuses.

Smiling, Michelle brought her face closer to him.

Doing things like this as they were talking was just everyday life for French people. When Kang Chan lightly kissed her, Michelle sat up straight with a broad smile.

Although a lot of people were dressed up around them, the gazes were still all on Michelle, just like in any other bars they had gone to.

"If something dangerous happens, I'll probably check on your location. Try not to go out alone if possible or be alone with someone you don't know in secluded places. It doesn't matter if it's for work," Kang Chan said.

"Channy, my birthday is next month."

Damn it! I'm doing my best to tell you that things will get dangerous!

Nevertheless, Michelle still said something irrelevant. The look in her eyes showed that she was really looking forward to it.

"You know what I want as my birthday present, right?" Michelle asked.

"What?" Kang Chan really didn't know.

"Let's spend a night together—just that day in the entire year. Don't refuse that."

Phew!

Kang Chan exhaled deeply.

At times like this, changing the subject would be best.

"Michelle, I'm thinking of buying a building. Look into that for me," Kang Chan said.

"A building?"

Kang Chan told her that Seok Kang-Ho had been scammed not long ago.

"What's the budget?" Michelle asked afterward.

"I'm not sure. I think it won't hurt to spend up to a hundred billion won."

Michelle exhaled with a shocked expression.

"I'll need about two floors. Aside from that, it'd be great if it can accommodate Kang Yoo Motors, my mother's foundation, and D.I. as well," Kang Chan continued.

"What about facilities?"

"A private elevator that goes down to the basement, a private basement parking lot that I can use, a gym, and showers."

“A bedroom!” Michelle quickly added. “We’ll probably have to renovate the building’s interior, then.”

“You think so?” Kang Chan cocked his head.

Michelle shook her head. “Channy, there’s barely any pre-existing buildings that are built like that. It’ll be better to just buy land and build a new building instead.”

“Wouldn’t that take too much time?”

“Alright. I’ll look into it. You have the money ready, right?” Michelle asked.

“The money is with Cecile.”

“Phew!” Michelle sighed. “I fell in love with a man who’s far too great for me.”

New singers and accompanists climbed up the stage and prepared to play.

Michelle pointed to the seat next to her, implying that they should watch the performance.

Kang Chan sat next to Michelle, and she leaned toward him and hugged him.

The accompanists sweetly played ‘Fly Me to the Moon’[2]. At that moment, Kang Chan realized for the first time that jazz was good.

“Channy, don’t do anything dangerous.” Michelle held Kang Chan tightly in her arms. “When I was having tea with your father and mother, I realized they’re both proud of you but are also anxious about what you do. I feel the same way. If you find yourself in a really dangerous situation, then think of your parents. Think of me as well. Okay?”

“Sure.” Kang Chan raised his right arm and stroked Michelle’s head.

“How did you know that my head is my erogenous zone?” Michelle asked.

When Kang Chan was startled, Michelle smiled mischievously. “Stupid! I already told you that my only request is the present I want for my birthday next month.”

Phew! I’m definitely no match for Michelle when it comes to things like this.

As performers began the second song, the host explained that the song was for people who enjoyed dancing. Hence, three or four couples went out to the area in front of the stage.

“Let’s go and dance,” Michelle said.

“I’m shit at dancing.”

“Leave it to me.”

Michelle stood up and pulled Kang Chan by the hand. The people around them immediately looked at them.

This was crazy.

As soon as they got to the dance floor, Michelle reached out and placed her arms inside Kang Chan's jacket, embracing him. Wrapping his arms around her back, she felt hot. He felt not only Michelle's chest but her lower body as well.

In front of people who were looking at him with envy and jealousy, Michelle snuggled up to Kang Chan, hugging him tightly. He couldn't help but feel uncomfortable.

At that moment, it felt as if Michelle was consoling herself while loving and longing for Kang Chan.

Kang Chan lowered his head on top of Michelle's, then hugged her softly.

"Kiss me," Michelle said.

"There are too many people."

"Then promise me that you'll be with me on my birthday."

Kang Chan sighed softly. He felt as if the music had been going on forever.

"Alright," Kang Chan answered. When he did, the music ended.

Michelle looked disappointed, and the guys around them sighed. They all had the same expression.

When they went back to their seat, Michelle had a coquettish look in her eyes. "I'm happy."

Kang Chan didn't know what to reply to things like that.

"Channy, if you ever have time, then at least go to Jeju-do with your parents on the weekend," Michelle said.

"Jeju-do?"

"Yeah. It's not like you don't have the money, so go to Jeju-do. Give your parents good memories. They probably can't say that to you."

"Isn't that just because they're busy?"

"See? You really don't know anything when it comes to this. Your parents can't ask that from you because they're afraid that they'll burden you. At times like this, you should ask them to spare you some time and surprise them with a trip during the weekend. I'll book the trip."

Kang Chan stared at her blankly, and Michelle just laughed as if she found him funny.

Jeju-do?

That wasn't a bad idea. He could find some time on the weekend for his parents once they had finished training.

Michelle was still happy when Kang Chan sent her home. He then took a taxi home, arriving around a little after midnight.

For some reason, Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook were still in the living room.

“You’re still awake?” Kang Chan asked.

“Yes, but we should head to bed now.”

Were they worried that I would sleep with Michelle, by any chance?

Kang Chan couldn’t help but laugh up his sleeve.

“Right, are you free this weekend? There’s this place I want to take you both to,” Kang Chan asked his parents.

“This weekend? Is it on Saturday or Sunday?”

“We can probably leave Saturday morning and be back on Sunday.”

Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook looked at each other.

“I’m free on the weekend. What about you?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked Yoo Hye-Sook.

“I’m not busy, honey. Where are we going, Channy?”

“That’s a secret.”

“But we have to prepare clothes and other things... Are we going to go to a pension house?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“No. It’s a secret. So you’re both free, then?”

“Yes. Are you really free, honey?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked, to which Kang Dae-Kyung responded with a nod.

Kang Chan thought this was probably the first time he had ever seen Yoo Hye-Sook look so excited. Meanwhile, Kang Dae-Kyung looked as if he wanted a hint.

Michelle was definitely a cut above Kang Chan for things like this.

Kang Chan washed up and headed to bed.

On Tuesday, Kang Chan met up and headed to Misari with Seok Kang-Ho.

“I met Michelle last night. I told her to find a building that we can buy,” Kang Chan said.

“That’s a good idea.”

Due to the current season, red leaves could now be seen along the faraway riverbank.

As an employee brought over their coffee, Kang Chan took out a cigarette.

“Anyway, how are you feeling?” Kang Chan asked.

“My wounds are about healed up.”

“Already? it's only been a day.”

“I went to the hospital yesterday after we parted ways and asked them to tightly tie up my wounds. Don't even think about using my wounds as an excuse to exclude me from this.”

“I got it, so don't overdo it. Don't give us a headache by coming with us all tightly bandaged just to lie down in pain.”

“Captain,” Seok Kang-Ho called Kang Chan with a serious tone.

This fucker is acting like this to change the mood, isn't he?

Seok Kang-Ho remained firm even though Kang Chan looked at him suspiciously.

“I got a call from the school today.”

“A call from the school? Why?” Kang Chan asked. He couldn't help but feel worried, thinking they were trying to get him back to school again.

“A teacher I'm close with called me to ask how I'm doing. I was told that a lot of kids have been visiting Su-Jin at the hospital, so her and her parents' anger has melted away. Can you ask the administration to let Su-Jin go to school again?”

“Can't they just tell the school that Su-Jin will be attending again?”

“It's not that easy. She didn't take time off from school; she dropped out. I think she can go back to school if the school board or something exerts its influence.”

“Hey, didn't Mr. Yoo Hun-Woo say that she has to be hospitalized for more than a year?” Kang Chan argued.

“It looks like there's a way for as long as the administration or the school board gives their approval. Su-Jin's father is a professor, so he's looking deep into this, but it seems he can't make this work by himself.”

Kang Chan cocked his head. “Let's look into it.”

“It's fascinating, isn't it? I thought Ho-Jun and Eun-Sil could never become decent human beings. I heard that even those discharged from the hospital have been obediently going to school. Phuhu, Ho-Jun apparently has complete control over them and really pressures them to stop them from ever bullying other kids again.”

“Do you think they've really got their act together?” Kang Chan asked.

“Isn't it only proper for us to correct them whenever they do something wrong and praise them whenever they do something right?”

Is that right?

“Let's think about this after the training tomorrow,” Kang Chan said.

“Alright. I just thought I should mention it.”

Kang Chan glared at Seok Kang-Ho, feeling as if he lost.

“What’s wrong?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“No matter how badly you want to go, you can’t go with us if you don’t get better.”

“Hey! Won’t we see how I’m doing tomorrow?” Looking shameless, Seok Kang-Ho tried to take a sip of his coffee but spilled some of it on him. “Ow! Hot!”

Chapter 135.2: We Should Go (2)

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho had lunch together, then headed to Kim Hyung-Jung’s office in Samseong-dong.

Kim Hyung-Jung actually looked heartbroken.

“What’s wrong?” Kang Chan asked.

“I find it unfair that I can’t go with you two.”

“You don’t have to feel that way—we’ll keep doing this in the future.”

Kim Hyung-Jung looked very heartbroken, but Kang Chan couldn’t tell him to overexert himself because of his condition.

“We have prepared everything. The Third Airborne Forces’ brigade commander is under the direct command of the Section Chief, and he’s my and Kim Tae-Jin’s junior by a year. He contacted me not long ago.” Kim Hyung-Jung looked at the document in disappointment. “The look in your eyes behind your bandanas and the way Mr. Seok Kang-Ho looked in Mongolia are still vivid to me. You had backed off while pointing the rifle. Phew! I want to join the two of you so bad that I’m feeling frustrated.”

If they were going out to have fun, Kang Chan would have quickly grabbed him and left.

“I’ll do whatever it takes to get better before the operation starts,” Kim Hyung-Jung said. He then looked up, his eyes glinting.

“I look forward to it,” Kang Chan said.

“Thank you. In my entire life, I never thought that South Korea’s National Intelligence Service would one day retaliate against other countries.”

“I heard from the Section Chief that he tried to do that about five times or so but eventually gave up. Well, we haven’t left yet, so we don’t know yet if it’ll actually happen, do we?”

“Now that France’s DGSE has intervened, this operation has already partly succeeded for as long as Vasili remains silent. When the Section Chief was

preparing an operation, we couldn't even train without worry because we had to keep an eye on other people's moods." Kim Hyung-Jung exhaled loudly. "Thank you. Thank you so much, Mr. Kang Chan."

"Get better soon. I'd like you to be with us if possible."

"I'll get better," Kim Hyung-Jung answered with a brief nod. "Be careful."

"We will."

Kang Chan gave Kim Hyung-Jung a firm handshake. It felt as if Kim Hyung-Jung's wishes were being directly passed on to him through their hands.

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho left the office and headed to the hospital for Seok Kang-Ho's treatment.

Arriving at around 3 pm, they didn't have to wait to go into the examination room. They found Yoo Hun-Woo inside.

"Huh? Mr. Kang Chan, you already removed the bandages on your right hand?" Yoo Hun-Woo asked.

"This? It's all healed up now, so I removed it. Look, I can move it without problems."

Now that he thought about it, Kang Chan didn't even feel any pain when he shook hands with Kim Hyung-Jung.

Yoo Hun-Woo unraveled Seok Kang-Ho's bandages while shaking his head. "You've been moving too much. At this rate, your wound will take a long time to heal. You're lucky it's no longer summer. Otherwise, I would have told you to be confined again."

Kang Chan glared at Seok Kang-Ho, who had lied just so he could go on the operation.

"Mr. Yoo Hun-Woo, it doesn't hurt at all," Seok Kang-Ho said shamelessly.

In response, Yoo Hun-Woo firmly pressed on Seok Kang-Ho's wound.

"Ow!"

"See? It's swollen, which means you haven't been resting for the past few days. You can get an infection," Yoo Hun-Woo didn't back off. Using a tweezer, he picked up a cotton ball soaked in disinfectant and disinfected Seok Kang-Ho's wound. Whenever he did, Seok Kang-Ho winced in pain.

"How about we put some of my blood into Seok Kang-Ho?" Kang Chan asked.

"Pardon?" Yoo Hun-Woo sounded surprised, and Seok Kang-Ho quickly turned his head to look at Kang Chan.

"There's somewhere that we have to go to no matter what, so I was wondering if Seok Kang-Ho would heal a bit more quickly if I give him my blood right now and

he gets a good night's sleep later. Now that I have thought about it, I also became a lot better after sleeping," Kang Chan continued.

"Hmm." Yoo Hun-Woo cocked his head.

"Let's try it. That's the only way he'll be able to join me anyway, right?" Kang Chan added.

"I want to try it, but only if you're okay with it, Mr. Kang Chan. What do you think, Mr. Seok Kang-Ho?" Yoo Hun-Woo asked.

"I see no reason for me to oppose it."

"Then let's try it. When are the two of you leaving?" Yoo Hun-Woo asked.

"Tomorrow."

Yoo Hun-Woo shook his head and frowned. "I'll prescribe you strong antibiotics. But if your condition gets worse, you have to come to the hospital immediately. Otherwise, your condition can become really dangerous."

"Alright."

Yoo Hun-Woo disinfected and applied medication to Seok Kang-Ho's wound. After wrapping bandages around Seok Kang-Ho, he then transfused Kang Chan's blood into Seok Kang Ho.

The entire operation lasted forty minutes. Afterward, Yoo Hun-Woo asked if they could have tea together, so they all sat down together.

"Students from the school kept coming to the hospital," Yoo Hun-Woo said.

So I've heard."

"It's unexpected, but Su-Jin is also quickly getting better. Honestly, she's recovering so fast that it can only be explained by your blood. To top it all off, she's now mentally stable."

"That's good."

"I'm not qualified to be a doctor."

Perplexed, Kang Chan looked up from the teacup in his hand and looked at Yoo Hun-Woo.

"She did get better, but I still gave her a blood transfusion without knowing anything about possible side effects. To make things worse, I did the same thing today even though Mr. Seok Kang-Ho's life isn't even in danger," Yoo Hun-Woo explained.

I guess some doctors think like this.

Kang Chan felt as if he was learning new things.

“Thank you. Qualified as a doctor or not, I’m sincerely grateful to you for helping me save a student when there was no other way to save her,” Yoo Hun-Woo added.

This sly and wily fox also had a bothersome way of thanking him.

“I heard that the students talked about you. They also knelt in front of the ICU for more than two hours for a few days before leaving. Seeing that melted away the anger of Su-Jin’s parents. At that moment, I couldn’t help but feel as if treating you was truly worthwhile.”

“You didn’t feel that treating me was worthwhile before that?” Kang Chan laughed. Yoo Hun-Woo laughed with him.

“Thank you.” Yoo Hun-Woo looked relieved now that he had said what he wanted to say.

After happily drinking tea, Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho left the hospital.

“Huh? I feel tired for some reason,” Seok Kang-Ho said.

“He probably gave you a high dose of the medication. Let’s head home quickly—I’ll drive.”

In all honesty, Seok Kang-Ho looked exhausted.

Kang Chan drove Seok Kang-Ho’s car to his apartment’s parking lot, then walked home.

He had dinner at home, watched the D.I. drama with his parents, then fell asleep.

Wednesday morning.

After Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook told Kang Chan to be safe and headed to work, Kang Chan met up with Seok Kang-Ho in front of the apartment.

Choi Jong-Il was waiting for them at the back, so they couldn’t waste time.

They bought coffee at the specialty coffee shop across the street for them and the others, then left for Jeungpyeong.

“Captain, it’s seriously amazing,” Seok Kang-Ho commented.

“What is?”

“After having dinner, I slept nonstop after the blood transfusion. When I woke up this morning, all my wounds have closed up.”

“Are you serious?” Kang Chan looked at him suspiciously.

Seemingly finding it unfair that Kang Chan didn’t believe him, Seok Kang-Ho said, “See for yourself later. As I said, my wounds have completely healed.”

It wasn't really too surprising since Kang Chan that was what always happened every time he got wounded.

"I couldn't understand how you could remove your bandages after just a good night's sleep, but I definitely do now that I have gone through it myself."

"Hey! Selling my blood will make me rich," Kang Chan said.

"Ugh! You'll be in trouble if word gets out about this."

"Nothing will happen if you just keep quiet."

The highway was quite empty, perhaps because it was a weekday.

In a little less than two hours, they arrived at where their GPS led them to. However, soldiers were blocking the unpaved road that went into the mountain.

"What's your purpose?" one of the soldiers asked.

The soldier checked Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho's IDs, then opened the barricade.

Heading inside, they found four military trucks and two Jeeps in an area that seemed to be the parking lot. There were also two concrete barracks.

As Kang Chan, Seok Kang-Ho, and Choi Jong-Il and his party exited the car, the officers inside the barracks came outside.

Choi Jong-Il greeted the officers first, but they already seemed acquainted with each other.

"Mr. Kang Chan?" one of the officers asked.

"That would be me." Kang Chan corrected when the officers greeted Seok Kang-Ho.

"I'm Choi Seong-Geon, the brigadier general of the Third Airborne forces."

After shaking hands, Choi Seong-Geon corrected his greeting toward Seok Kang-Ho, then guided the two into the barrack that he had come out of not long ago.

"You guys should also come in," Choi Seong-Geon told Choi Jong-Il.

"We'll stay here."

"Okay! Would you like me to send over some coffee?"

"We already had coffee on our way here."

With that, Choi Seong-Geon headed inside.

The barrack had a simple interior. It didn't even have a sofa, which most places had. It was certainly a perfect suit for the field.

The first lieutenant quickly made instant coffee and put it on the table.

“I heard from the Section Chief and Kim sunbae about what you want to do. The soldiers you selected are waiting in the adjoining room,” Choi Seong-Geon told Kang Chan.

“Thank you.”

“Have some coffee.” Choi Seong-Geon looked up and examined Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho with his sunburnt face.

Instant coffee had its own special taste, but it was even more delicious than usual, perhaps because it was chilly. After all, they were deep in the mountains.

When they put down the paper cups, Choi Seong-Geon stood up from his seat. “We have military uniforms and equipment prepared in the adjoining room.”

In the field, soldiers were all the same. They were straightforward with everything, no matter what it was about.

Choi Seong-Geon guided Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho into the barrack next door. As soon as they entered, the soldiers stood up from their seats.

They were all wearing black military uniforms and black berets. The South Korean flag was embroidered on their uniform’s left forearm sleeve.

“Everyone, meet Mr. Kang Chan and Mr. Seok Kang-Ho,” Choi Seong-Geon introduced.

The people looked at them with caution and slight curiosity.

“Please come out after changing into your uniforms,” Choi Seong-Gon said before leaving.

Two military uniforms were hung up in front of the locker on the left.

Since only men were in the barracks and they didn’t have anything to hide, Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho immediately went up to the locker and changed into their uniforms.

Kang Chan was covered in scars, and Seok Kang-Ho still had bandages wrapped around him.

After changing and putting their berets on their shoulder, they put on their boots.

“Team one?” Kang Chan called.

No one replied.

“Team one?”

Still no answer.

It was as if they were saying that they were special force soldiers, so Kang Chan should respect them and at the very least follow etiquette if he wanted to order them around.

Kang Chan smirked, then shook his head.

By the time Seok Kang-Ho discreetly looked over Kang Chan’s mood, Kang Chan had already given up.

It seemed Kang Chan had expected too much from them because Jeon Dae-Geuk and Kim Hyung-Jung had talked about their sense of duty so much.

“Daye, get our clothes. We’re leaving.”

Now wearing military boots, Seok Kang-Ho went on top of the bed. When he came down with their clothes, Kang Chan immediately went out of the barrack.

Wearing military uniforms, Choi Jong-Il, Woo Hee-Seung, and Lee Doo-Hee were waiting for them in front of the barracks.

“Choi Jong-Il,” Kang Chan called.

“Yes?”

Choi Jong-Il’s answer was a bit stronger than usual, perhaps because he was in uniform.

“We’re heading back,” Kang Chan continued.

“Pardon?”

“I said we’re heading back. From now on, my team will only consist of you three and Seok Kang-Ho. I’ll find new members myself, so make do with what we have for now,” Kang Chan said.

As Choi Jong-Il looked over their moods, Seok Kang-Ho got in the driver’s seat without complaining. Choi Jong-Il only turned his head to look at them when Kang Chan walked to the passenger seat.

“Choi Jong-Il,” Kang Chan called again.

“Yes?”

“If you’re also thinking of only following my orders once I’ve explained things like the fuckers inside, then you better quit right here!”

Seok Kang-Ho immediately drove away as soon as Kang Chan went into the passenger seat.

They saw Choi Seong-Geon urgently coming out of the barracks and Choi Jong-Il, Woo Hee-Seung, and Lee Doo-Hee quickly getting in the car.

Was Kang Chan crossing the line?

That was bullshit.

Even French mercenaries answered if people called them.

Even if it was distasteful, dirty, and cheap, all soldiers answered when given orders.

It didn’t matter if they had completed all kinds of special training in South Korea. Kang Chan didn’t want to go out to an operation with people that couldn’t even answer.

They want me to show my capabilities first? Why? Why should I go through all of that and still take them on an operation?

Kang Chan’s phone rang, but he didn’t even take it out.

Chapter 136.1: What are you all doing here? (1)

Choi Seong-Geon sat at his office desk as he spoke on the phone.

“I’m not sure about this, but I believe what happened is that the young man acted arrogant and eventually decided to leave because he couldn’t handle the soldiers.”

-Choi Seong-Geon, did you order Code A?

“Sir, even without me having to order Code A, isn’t it only natural in this field to prove your worthiness first if you want to lead a special forces team?”

A long sigh came from the other side of the phone.

-Brigadier General Choi Seong-Geon.

“Yes, sir?”

-I didn’t expect you would become so big-headed just because you earned a star that you would dare offer me advice. This matter is highly classified, so I can’t say more on the matter, but if it meant making Kang Chan return and train the soldiers, Kim Tae-Jin, Kim Hyung-Jung, and I would gladly get on our knees.

Choi Seong-Geon looked at his aide with a curious and surprised expression.

-From this moment on, I will no longer consider you as my junior. You are a soldier of South Korea, a general who is supposed to serve his motherland willingly. I can’t believe you of all people would ruin such a significant event because of your pathetic pride. I’m embarrassed to have proudly recommended you as my junior.

“Sir! The men on standby right now are all strong enough to hold their own against any enemy.”

-You idiot. If Kang Chan wanted to, all the men there would have been dead by now. Let me tell you one thing. Even if Kim Tae-Jin, Kim Hyung-Jung, and I were to attack that man all at once, we wouldn’t be able to defeat him. Don’t think it’s because of our age because even Choi Jong-Il willingly submitted to Kang Chan. Can you confidently say any of the men there are more outstanding than Choi Jong-Il?

“That can’t be possible.”

A resigned sigh came from the other line, making it seem as if the caller was trying to control his temper. The call dropped right after.

In disbelief, Choi Seong-Geon pressed a button on his phone to confirm if he had really been talking to Jeon Dae-Geuk.

“What in the world is going on?”

Choi Seong-Geon scrolled through his contacts and called another number. When the call connected, he heard another suppressed sigh.

“Mr. Kim, this is Choi Seong-Geon. Is that Kang Chan guy that important? Why is Mr. Jeon acting so furious? Mr. Kim, the abilities of my men here are—”

-Choi Seong-Geon.

“Yes, sir!”

-I can't say much on this matter because this is a classified government secret. However, just know that a single call from Mr. Kang Chan will have France sending their Foreign Legion and Russia dispatching their Spetsnaz's elite team. That incredible person offered his services for South Korea, but you turned him away because of your stupid pride.

“But he's still a young child.”

-It seems you now think that I and Mr. Jeon have low standards just because you have gained a star. Brigadier General Choi Seong-Geon, if it ever becomes known that you let Code A happen, it will be the gravest mistake you'll ever make in your entire life.

“You should have told me something that important in advance, sir!”

-You've truly become the definition of a corrupt soldier. The Choi Seong-Geon I knew trusted and put his life at stake with a single command from Mr. Jeon. Where did that man go? Do you think the entire world is now at your mercy just because you have a star and the Third Airborne Forces under you?

Another low sigh echoed across the call before it dropped.

“Just who that bast—that guy for him to be a classified government secret?!” Choi Seong-Geon shouted as he glared at his aide.

“We couldn't find any other information about him other than that he was with the founder of the railway project at the Eurasian Rail conference event,” the aide replied.

“Well, Mr. Jeon and Mr. Kim aren't the kind to act like that just so they can try and kiss up to the president. Haah, what the hell is going on?”

Choi Seong-Geon clenched his teeth and stepped over to the window.

‘Damn it!’

It was only at that moment that he realized the look that Kang Chan had in his eyes.

“We can't even stop by a bathroom because of this outfit,” Seok Kang-Ho grumbled.

Kang Chan chuckled.

It wasn't an exaggeration. They were currently wearing black military wear, military boots, and a South Korean flag on their left sleeve.

“You should’ve at least picked up the phone,” Seok Kang-Ho said.

“Whatever. I think this is for the best. We’re heading into a mission where people could die, so I don’t want to choose men who can’t put their hearts into it. Our team in the past used to be composed of men looking to die, and even with them, things still proved difficult. I won’t be able to take it if I drag men who don’t give two shits about the operation only for their lives to be sacrificed.”

“They just behaved that way because they have no idea who you are. They’ll act differently once they do.”

Kang Chan smirked and looked at his military wear.

“Over half of the soldiers in that barrack have never killed anyone. What could I do with those people?”

“Honestly, when none of them replied, I thought a few of those men’s arms would be broken soon.”

“For what? It didn’t look like anything would change even if I did that.”

Seok Kang-Ho glanced at Kang Chan.

“Even with big heads and bigger egos, those people wouldn’t even be able to do half as much as rookies of the Foreign Legion. When they go into the battlefield, they’ll rely solely on their abilities, and they’ll cause a huge mess before dying. Not backing down and submitting to others doesn’t mean you have a strong will. All that matters is whether or not you follow commands.”

Seok Kang-Ho shook his head. He was reminded of the time Kang Chan beat up an arrogant recruit a long time ago. It was quite obvious how much that incident devastated the recruit.

“What about me? Why did you beat me into shape and take care of me?”

Kang Chan smirked and glanced at Seok Kang-Ho.

“Because you were just as lonely as I was.”

“Well, I suppose if you didn’t drag me along, I would already be dead in some alley by now.”

As they continued talking, Kang Chan’s phone kept ringing.

“Park the car. Let’s get out of these clothes,” Kang Chan said.

“Alright.”

They reached a resting area about five minutes later. Seok Kang-Ho parked the car, and Choi Jong-Il’s car stopped right behind them.

“Let’s change into something else and have some boiled chicken on the way back before going home.”

Choi Jong-Il was about to say something but quickly went to his car and pulled out a new outfit. Using the wide-open car doors of the sedan as a curtain, they quickly changed into new clothes.

Since they had already stopped, they thought it wouldn’t hurt to have a smoke as well.

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho bit on a cigarette each as Choi Jong-Il approached them.

“Mr. Jeon wants you to answer his calls, sir.”

“I will probably just get angry if I speak on the phone now. Give him a call once we hit the road again. Tell him I’ll calm myself down and head back for today, then I’ll go see him tomorrow.”

“Yes, sir.”

Kang Chan likely felt even more disappointed because he thought the special forces he saw today would be like Jeon Dae-Geuk, Kim Hyung-Jung, and Choi Jong-Il. However, he did consider the fact that the soldiers probably didn’t take to himself and Seok Kang-Ho all too well because they were chosen to train without knowing anything about the operation.

Those men lived on pride, so Kang Chan understood why they would refuse to take orders from a high school student and a P.E. teacher. However, that was the very issue: they wouldn’t listen to his orders.

Mercenaries were an extremely defiant bunch. They would never submit to anyone unless they had learned that their commander was exceptionally stronger. Nevertheless, they at least knew how to respond when they were spoken to.

That difference in attitude mattered. Would they still follow orders even though doing so would make them feel like shit or would they act up right from the beginning?

If the former type of person requested Kang Chan to demonstrate his capabilities, Kang Chan would have been more than willing to. However, Kang Chan thought there was no reason for him to show his abilities to insubordinate people who would say, “This is how strong I am, so you better listen up,” from the beginning. That was just bullshit.

Kang Chan smirked.

“If you’re fine with it, want to have some maeun-tang[1] for lunch?” Choi Jong-Il asked Kang Chan, approaching him just as he was about to step back into the car.

“Maeun-tang?”

“There is a great maeun-tang place on the way back. It’s near a reservoir in Anseong. Why don’t we have lunch there?”

That sounded like a good idea.

Seok Kang-Ho put the address in the car’s navigation system and immediately drove off.

“Cap, seriously, this is amazing,” Seok Kang-Ho said as he accelerated, leisurely moving the handle. “My injuries... They’re just itchy now. I’m already curious about what Director Yoo will have to say.”

It was definitely a relief, but if Seok Kang-Ho’s recovery was really as quick as he claimed, Kang Chan couldn’t help but be concerned about word getting out and the possible side effects of this.

They left the expressway after driving on the interstate for about an hour and entered a quiet country road.

“Whoa! What a fantastic view!”

Mountains lined up to their left, a reservoir could be seen to the right.

The occasional fishing rods and parasols set up by fishers made for a picturesque scene.

“Now that I think about it, we’ve never gone fishing,” Seok Kang-Ho remarked.

Kang Chan smiled faintly and rolled down the windows. He stretched out his arm as a refreshing breeze blew inside the car.

Fishing, his ass. Kang Chan's life was anything but idle, and he barely had time to even buy himself some pork cutlets in the past.

“Why don’t we stay the night here before going back?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“Mr. Jeon Dae-Geuk and Mr. Kim Hyung-Jung will have a breakdown from all the anxiety,” Kang Chan replied jokingly.

“Phuhuhu. Why not just give them a call then? You can do it after we have lunch.”

“Fine, I will.”

The navigation system announced they were about 100 meters from their destination.

Chapter 136.2: What are you all doing here? (1)

“Huh? Isn’t that man over there Mr. Jeon Dae Geuk?”

Kang Chan was largely taken aback when he turned the corner and was greeted by Jeon Dae-Geuk, who was sitting on the Korean-style wooden bench in front of the diner.

As the door opened with a click, Kang Chan suddenly felt apologetic toward Jeon Dae-Geuk.

“Section Chief Jeon! What are you doing here?”

“Well, why weren’t you answering my calls?”

What in the world? Kang Chan had never met someone like Jeon Dae-Geuk—a man with a spirit so fiery that he would drag his injured body all the way here while sweating from all the pain.

“I’m sorry.”

“If you really are, treat me to some expensive maeun-tang!”

“I will. Please, let’s head inside.”

Kang Chan couldn’t do anything but surrender to this man.

With the help of Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho, Jeon Dae-Geuk walked into the diner.

“Choi Jong-Il, tell all the employees standing outside to come in,” Jeon Dae-Geuk ordered.

“Yes, Mr. Jeon!” Choi Jong-Il replied.

Two people who seemed to have assisted Jeon Dae-Geuk to this place soon entered the establishment.

“I’m a regular at this place,” Jeon Dae-Geuk said.

“So you made Jong-Il recommend this restaurant to me?” Kang Chan was astounded.

“I would’ve had to chase you around if I didn’t!” Jeon Dae-Geuk replied defensively.

The floor was warm and cozy.

The elderly couple that ran the diner pulled over a blanket on top of Jeon Dae-Geuk, who was leaning on a wall. They even gave him a pillow for his back. They tended to him with care.

“Why would you move around in this condition, sir?” the owner asked.

“That young man over there made me worried sick,” Jeon Dae-Geuk replied with a smile. “I might as well eat heartily now that I’ve come all the way here. Extra spicy, please. And enough for the guys outside too.”

“Got it. It’ll take some time.”

The elderly couple glanced at Kang Chan and left after wrapping Jeon Dae-Geuk in the blanket like a cocoon. Not too long after, the elderly man brought over three cups of instant coffee and put them on the table.

“You must have been coming to this place for a long time now,” Kang Chan noted.

“Back when I used to do field operations, I did. Whenever I was feeling down, I would come here and sleep a night before heading back,” Jeon Dae-Geuk responded.

“You feel down too, Mr. Jeon?” Kang Chan asked surprisedly.

“What? You think I’m heartless and devoid of any emotions?” Jeon Dae-Geuk scoffed.

Kang Chan scratched the back of his head, feeling as if he made a mistake. If he had someone like Jeon Dae-Geuk in high school, he never would have left for Africa. If only a teacher like Seok Kang-Ho, or mentors like Kim Hyung-Jung and Kim Tae-Jin had been there for him back then...

Kang Chan abashedly looked down at his plastic cup.

Just then, he heard someone utter a greeting from outside the diner, which was then followed by a familiar voice.

The door slid open with a creak.

This is getting ridiculous.

Kim Tae-Jin was helping Kim Hyung-Jung inside.

The surprised owner quickly hurried into the side room.

“What are all of you doing here?” Kang Chan asked, flabbergasted.

“Why did you come here when you’re not feeling well?” Jeon Dae-Geuk followed up.

“I was craving some maeun-tang,” Kim Hyung-Jung replied.

Kang Chan rushed forward and had Kim Hyung-Jung lean on the wall so quickly that he didn’t get to properly exchange greetings with Kim Tae-Jin. The owner brought out another blanket and pillow and had Kim Hyung-Jung rest on the pillow before wrapping the blanket around him.

A moment later, two more coffee cups were carried inside.

“Please give us an ashtray,” Kim Hyung-Jung requested from the owner.

Hearing Kim Hyung-Jung from outside, Choi Jong-Il quickly brought an ashtray for him.

“See? This is what happens when you leave me out and do things yourselves,” Kim Tae-Jin said.

“Aren’t you the businessman?” Jeon Dae-Geuk asked.

“Are you really in the position to say that?” Kim Tae-Jin asked Jeon Dae-Geuk, pretending to be upset, then glared at Kim Hyung-Jung.

“Hey, you said the nagging on the way here was gonna be the end of it,” Kim Hyung-Jung complained.

“Well, I’m still upset!” Kim Tae-Jin yelled.

Now, Kang Chan really felt as if he had committed a great sin.

“Take a smoke,” Jeon Dae-Geuk commanded.

“I’m fine,” Kang Chan responded.

“I’m putting down the ranks right now. Should we have a drink?” Jeon Dae-Geuk asked.

At Jeon Dae-Geuk’s words, Kim Hyung-Jung pulled out his hand from the blanket and took a cigarette into his mouth, attempting to make Kang Chan comfortable. Kang Chan signaled with his eyes to open the door and picked up a cigarette himself.

Seok Kang-Ho held the lighter and lit up Kim Hyung-Jung and Kang Chan’s cigarettes first before lighting up his own.

“We have this thing called Code A,” Jeon Dae-Geuk began. “It’s a tradition to disregard the orders of a new commander or a commander the soldiers dislike. Those in the special forces probably think it’s a way to protect their pride since they won’t be properly rewarded for things they do. I couldn’t get rid of it during my time.”

Jeon Dae-Geuk then looked at Kim Hyung-Jung for assistance.

“I couldn’t inform the soldiers of your experience, Mr. Kang Chan. The misunderstanding most likely sprang up because of that. I will change the training to the First Airborne Forces and switch out all the soldiers as well,” Kim Hyung-Jung attempted, hoping to appease Kang Chan.

Kang Chan faced Kim Hyung-Jung directly.

“Manager Kim Hyung-Jung, Section Chief Jeon Dae-Geuk. I think I was in the wrong to turn around without saying anything, and for not answering my phone. I even made the two of you and Director Kim Tae-Jin head all the way here.”

Kang Chan extinguished his cigarette in the ashtray and looked at Jeon Dae-Geuk.

“I left the training ground without a word for two reasons. First, all the soldiers present were unaware the operation could lead to death, and more than half of the men have never even shot anyone.”

Jeon Dae-Geuk let out a low sigh.

“I don’t know what Code A is. However, insubordinate soldiers and inexperienced soldiers will only get in the way and cause accidents, regardless of how capable they are. If I want to be acknowledged as their commander, I’ll likely have to break some soldier’s arm to display my abilities, but that means the operation will already be held back at that point. What will be the point in me continuing to train the soldiers then?” Kang Chan added.

“Hmm,” Jeon Dae-Geuk sighed deeply again. “Mr. Kang Chan, you come to that judgment in that short amount of time?”

“To be honest, half of my judgment was based on instinct. However, the other half was based on my thought process,” Kang Chan replied.

Kim Hyung-Jung glanced at Kim Tae-Jin.

“There’s no answer to something like this. Spec Ops are already hard enough even with the commander and soldiers having each other’s backs. No matter how much we explain to the soldiers, they won’t be able to accept Mr. Kang Chan until they witness his abilities,” Kim Tae-Jin said.

It was a harsh judgment, but Kang Chan thought Kim Tae-Jin was right.

They could spend days explaining the situation to the soldiers, but without any visible proof, Kang Chan would only seem like a high school student to them.

It would have been a different story if they were in this together for the long run. While they were training and coordinating with each other, the soldiers would naturally learn to obey Kang Chan. However, the operation was set to begin next week, so if there was any distrust between Kang Chan and the soldiers, all he would be doing was forcing them to march toward their deaths.

“Let’s not talk about this subject anymore,” Jeon Dae-Geuk said in good nature when the atmosphere grew uneasy. “Forget about it for now and just have some tasty maeun-tang. Then, when we get back, we can think about this again.”

“Understood,” Kang Chan agreed.

Kang Chan wasn’t one to hold grudges or become fixated on an issue, so that conversation ended there.

“Anyway, have you already recovered, Mr. Seok?” Jeon Dae-Geuk asked.

“Yes, I actually have. I healed up faster than I thought,” Seok Kang-Ho replied.

“And you’re not even bandaged anymore?” Jeon Dae-Geuk asked Kang Chan.

“You know my body’s unique,” Kang Chan said.

Kim Tae-Jin shook his head in disbelief.

As they made small talk and discussed various topics, a portable gas burner and a wide pot were carried in. The wide pot was filled to the brim with three different types of half-cooked fish.

The red soup bubbled deliciously when it was heated up. When no one took the ladle to get maeun-tang, Seok Kang-Ho took the initiative and poured some of the soup into his bowl.

“Mr. Seok, would you like to try how we eat maeun-tang?” Kim Tae-Jin asked with a smile.

“Sure!” Seok Kang-Ho agreed and watched the pot.

They chatted for around ten more minutes.

Kim Tae-Jin lifted his spoon and smushed the fish, then split the fish from head to tail, making it unrecognizable. As a result, the soup quickly thickened.

“After this, we’ll wait for it to boil again. I learned this from my old bosses, who started this. This way, no one will have to feel apologetic about taking more fish for themselves in front of their superiors or subordinates. Everyone can easily get some of the soup without having to worry about offending anyone,” Kim Tae-Jin said as he sifted the maeun-tang with the ladle. As he said, the soup had become so thick that it was almost like porridge. “Now, let’s dig in.”

Kim Tae-Jin served Jeon Dae-Geuk a bowl first before serving the others.

“Mm!” Seok Kang-Ho exclaimed.

Kang Chan scooped up some of the soup with his spoon. It was so good that he found himself smiling in surprise.

The door slid open a tiny bit, and the owner brought five bowls of rice and three types of kimchi for them.

No other words had to be said to describe how tasty it was. The bones of the fish were a little bothersome, but that small hindrance couldn’t get anyone to give up on this miraculous dish.

“It’s really delicious.”

There was more than enough to go around too. They all had two bowls before they got to the bottom of the pot.

Kang Chan put his cutlery down after eating to his heart’s content. If someone asked him to choose between a French feast and this maeun-tang, he would’ve picked maeun-tang in a heartbeat.

The table was moved aside after they were done eating, and they were served more coffee.

“I’m going to get some shut-eye,” Jeon Dae-Geuk declared as he brazenly lay down on his side and moved the pillow from his back to under his head.

“I’ll come back after getting some air,” Choi Jong-Il said.

“Sure, whatever you want,” Kim Hyung-Jung replied with a smile. With an eye gesture, Kim Tae-Jin helped him up so the remaining four could head out to the Korean-style bench in front of the diner.

Chapter 137.1: What are you all doing here? (2)

The reservoir’s scenery, which stretched out across the other side of the street, was quite easy on the eyes. Kang Chan was taking in the sight with admiration when a voice broke the peaceful silence.

“Please,” Kim Tae-Jin started out of nowhere. “I know the soldiers aren’t up to your standards and that their attitude disappointed you. But Section Chief Jeon, this guy here, and I poured our heart and souls into shaping those soldiers.”

Kim Tae-Jin glanced at Kim Hyung-Jung, then continued, “We have never properly launched an attack against an enemy nation until now. Even when I used to work on the field with Hyung-Jung at the DMZ, all we did was make our way around North Korea’s guard posts.”

Kang Chan wasn't aware of what the Mongolian operation had exactly been, but Kim Tae-Jin's words killed some of his expectations for it.

"A team of soldiers who have experience going to enemy territory... Please make that kind of team for us. We know you're capable enough to do that. On the way here, I heard from Hyung-Jung that you have the power to call over the special French and Russian mercenaries whenever you'd like. I don't even have to mention all the great things you've done that I have witnessed with my own eyes. Please, forget about the strings attached and don't worry about them. Would you do me, Mr. Jeon, and Hyung-Jung this favor and help us out just this once?" Kim Tae-Jin solemnly requested.

When Kang Chan turned around and made eye contact with Kim Hyung-Jung, he immediately realized that he wouldn't be able to say no to this request. How could he pretend not to notice their pleading and grave eyes?

It wasn't like they were asking him for something petty like babysitting their kids or lending them money. Their request was far nobler than that—they wanted him to train with the soldiers of South Korea and take them on a field operation.

Kang Chan let out a low sigh.

"All right," Kang Chan finally agreed.

"Really? You'll do it?" Kim Tae-Jin asked, looking a lot brighter.

"Do you think you would be able to say no if anyone asks you that request so seriously, Director Kim?" Kang Chan asked in disbelief.

Kim Tae-Jin drew a broad smile on his lips.

"Well, now that we're done with that delicious lunch, I'll be heading back," Kang Chan said.

"Right now? Already?" Kim Tae-Jin asked in surprise.

"Section Chief Jeon will stay here if I don't go back, won't he?" Kang Chan asked resignedly.

"What made you think that?" Kim Tae-Jin sarcastically admonished.

"Just hurry and escort him to a hospital, sir. I'll make my trip back to the training grounds the way we came here," Kang Chan stated.

"I'll come with you," Kim Tae-Jin said.

"Trust me, I really will go back," Kang Chan assured him.

"That's not it. I just want to take a look around myself, so let's head over there together. We can just take one car on the way there. Sang-Hyun is in Cheonan

right now, so I'll tell him to come here so I can head back to Seoul with him later."

Kim Tae-Jin had already been discharged from the hospital and was already back to work anyway, so Kang Chan saw no reason to say no.

Having made a decision, there was no need for them to drag things out. Everyone got up and immediately headed for the room where Jeon Dae-Guk was lying down.

"Mr. Jeon, please get up and hurry to the hospital. I'll be heading back to Jeungpyeong now," Kang Chan informed Jeon Dae-Geuk.

"What?" Jeon Dae-Geuk asked in disbelief. He sprang up, but he soon frowned due to the pain brought by the sudden movement.

"I'll be going with him, Section Chief. I'll tell Sang-Hyun to come over as well," Kim Tae-Jin added.

"Are you sure you can go?" Jeon Dae-Geuk asked.

"I want to take a look around with Kang Chan while I'm here," Kim Tae-Jin replied.

"All right. Do what you want, then. Make sure things don't go badly. Kang Chan, if anyone starts acting up again, just kill them on the spot, got it?" Jeon Dae-Geuk said, only half-joking.

Kang Chan chuckled, clearly amused.

"I don't know about killing them, but I'll break their arms if that's what it takes to get them in proper shape," Kang Chan assured him.

"Thank you," Jeon Dae-Geuk gratefully said.

"However, in return, you have to go to a hospital immediately, okay?" Kang Chan urged.

Jeon Dae-Geuk nodded and quickly turned his gaze.

"Give Choi Seong-Geon a nice little phone call, won't you?" he ordered Kim Hyung-Jung.

"Yes, sir," Kim Hyung-Jung replied, immediately picking up his phone.

Seok Kang-Ho drove. Kang Chan sat in the passenger seat, and Kim Tae-Jin sat behind Kang Chan.

Choi Jong-Il, Woo Hee-Seung, and Lee Doo-Hee were in another car, and Suh Sang-Hyun said in a phone call with Kim Tae-Jin that he would immediately head over to Jeungpyeong straight from where he was.

Kang Chan counted how many people they would have.

“Director Kim, are you sure you have completely recovered?” he asked.

“Yes. I’ve already told you this before,” Kim Tae-Jin replied.

“Then let’s form a team together,” Kang Chan suggested, making Kim Tae-Jin seem confused. However, he soon understood what Kang Chan was saying.

“Are you sure about that? It’ll be one hell of an embarrassment if we lose,” Kim Tae-Jin warned.

“Let’s do it anyway. It’s a whole lot better than getting annoyed over team members whose hearts aren’t in it, isn’t it?” Kang Chan rebutted.

Kim Tae-Jin, whose face was peering out forward from between the driver’s seat and the passenger seat, made a knowing smile. His blood was boiling up for the upcoming fight.

After about another hour on the road, Kang Chan reached the training grounds again. They rode past the barricades at the entrance and stopped in the parking lot. Nothing had changed since he was last here a couple of hours ago.

Choi Seong-Geon headed outside to greet them once again. Seeing Kim Tae-Jin, he greeted him with a lax military salute.

“Why don’t we head inside first before we begin anything?” Choi Seong-Geon offered.

He wasn’t able to hide his displeasure, but none of that mattered. It didn’t change the fact that their first impressions had gotten off to a bad start anyway. It was understandable that Choi Seong-Geon was mad because Kang Chan left without so much as a word.

“Well, I’ll get changed first,” Kang Chan said.

“General Choi. I’m sure you can lend me and Sang-Hyun some military uniforms and equipment as well?” Kim Tae-Jin asked.

“You’ll be running the grounds yourself, sir?” Choi Seong-Geon asked in disbelief.

“I want to see what kids these days are like with my own eyes,” Kim Tae-Jin replied.

Choi Seong-Geon gritted his teeth and let out a quiet sigh. Seeing Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho change into military wear, Choi Jong-Il followed suit and pulled out his own outfit.

“What do you plan on doing?” Choi Seong-Geon asked Kang Chan.

The question made Kim Tae-Jin turn his gaze to Kang Chan.

“Director Kim, Mr. Suh, Seok Kang-Ho, Choi Jong-Il’s group of three, and I will be forming a team,” Kang Chan stated.

“Seven members? And? What then?” Choi Seong-Geon asked, acting miffed as if he had just been looked down on.

“We will be the infiltrating team,” Kang Chan said.

“Hm! How many soldiers should we put on defense then?” Choi Seong-Geon asked stiffly.

“Where will the training take place?” Kang Chan asked in turn.

Choi Seong-Geon looked up and pointed at a mountain on the other side.

“High-ground training battles take place on the mountain up front, and we have a separate building prepared for urban operations if you go around back this way.”

Kang Chan considered the terrain in China and the UK, which was where the operation would take place. With those countries in mind, he determined that the urban training grounds would be more appropriate to use.

“Let’s go with the urban training grounds then. Excluding our team members, how many personnel do we have available?” Kang Chan asked.

As he was speaking, a car quickly drove to the area where they were standing. The conversation then briefly paused as they exchanged greetings with Suh Sang-Hyun.

“We have twenty-two soldiers who are still waiting on standby to create a team. We also have thirty soldiers from the Third Airborne Forces on standby.”

“What’s the size of the building?”

“It’s five stories high.”

Great. Then there was no need to debate any further. It was the perfect training condition.

“We’re going to do assassination target training. Mark the assassination targets and use the remaining soldiers to guard them,” Kang Chan declared.

“Mmm,” Choi Seong-Geon exhaled, seemingly sighing deeply. He then looked directly at Kang Chan. “I’ll take care of the target on our side. Since I also have to be wearing the appropriate attire, please do wait a moment. Mr. Kim, the military uniforms should be inside. You come in too, Suh Sang-Hyun.”

Suh Sang-Hyun was bewildered, not having any idea what was going on. However, he followed Kim Tae-Jin inside anyway.

Kang Chan beckoned over Choi Jong-Il and the other two with a wave of his hand.

“We need a sniper,” Kang Chan stated.

Choi Jong-Il turned his gaze toward Lee Doo-Hee.

“I’ll do it,” Lee Doo-Hee said, stepping forward.

As Kang Chan finished giving a few orders to his men, Choi Seong-Geon, Kim Tae-Jin, and Suh Seong-Hyun came out of the barracks wearing military wear.

It was already about 3 o’clock in the afternoon.

“Tell the men to come out with the equipment,” Choi Seong-Geon commanded the officers as he put his hands at his waist. He was oozing with determination to show Kang Chan his and his men’s abilities.

Not long after, soldiers came out of the barracks where Kang Chan had gotten changed earlier. Choi Seong-Geon’s aide handed them radios, and they all stared at the radios sharply.

It’s not like the radio will break just because they glare at it.

But the glint in their eyes was something Kang Chan could work with.

Chapter 137.2: What are you all doing here? (2)

Rifles, grenades, and flamethrowers were put in front of them. Among them were three types of modified K-1 rifles. They were equipped with day/night system rifle scopes and had small rangefinders attached to the side.

Click. Click.

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho picked up the Daewoo Telecom K7s and suppressed submachine guns. Kim Tae-Jin, Seok Kang-Ho, and Choi Jong-Il’s party took K-1 rifles.

Next up were pistols.

They loaded Glock pistols on their right waist and left legs, having mentally calculated the number of rounds that they would need for this training session.

Kang Chan didn’t expect that he would be using a bayonet today. He picked up the bladed weapon and drew it from its sheath.

The blade wasn’t sharp, which was to be expected. However, Kang Chan still had to arm himself with it. Hence, he hung the bayonet on his right leg.

After attaching six rifle magazines and three pistol magazines to his body, an officer walked over to approach him.

The officer used a machine that looked like an inspection device to confirm the weapons that Kang Chan was armed with. Afterward, he handed Kang Chan a card the size of a business card, which the machine had produced.

“Please insert it into the device in your left pocket,” the officer said.

Kang Chan didn’t know that his garment included the device the officer was talking about. When he looked inside the left pocket of his upper attire, he found a device which he could insert the card into. When he did, the device let out

a click, and all the equipment that he was wearing let out mechanical beeping sounds.

Meanwhile, the officer checked everyone's weapons with the tool and handed them cards. The entire process took about twenty minutes.

"The guns produce sound and recoils that are nearly the same as real guns. If someone is killed by a gun, grenade, or bayonet, it will be recorded on the main computer. Moreover, the beeping sound that you heard when the cards were inserted into your devices will begin to ring again. Whenever a grenade explodes, the devices of any nearby soldiers will detect it and notify them of injuries and deaths," the officer explained.

Technology had truly made remarkable advancements.

Kang Chan nodded.

"Now, then. We'll be heading to the training area," added the officer.

While Kang Chan's party was divided up among the jeeps, the soldiers got into the backs of the trucks.

One could easily tell another person's ability based on their posture and attitude when they handle weapons. Consequently, the soldiers had quite a curious look in their eyes as they looked at Kang Chan and climbed into the vehicles.

They traveled around back for about a hundred meters on the rough mountain terrain, eventually reaching a plain surrounded by mountains. Surprisingly, there were buildings throughout the area.

When Kang Chan dropped off the jeep, he felt as if he had just gotten off a bus in the middle of a city.

"It was modeled exactly after a certain district in Seoul. I will be on the fifth floor of the stock firm building up ahead. Just like the real thing, the interior of the building is composed of elevators, stairs, and offices," Choi Seong-Geon explained with a proud expression and tone. "Since it is currently fifteen hundred and fifty hours, we will begin when the signal sounds at sixteen hundred and ten hours. Keep in mind that a preemptive attack can be launched from our side as well."

Afterward, Choi Seong-Geon saluted Kim Tae-Jin and immediately headed toward the stock firm building.

The operation would begin in twenty minutes. Choi Seong-Geon intentionally did not give Kang Chan a map of the city. Kang Chan debated whether or not he should ask him for one, but he decided against it.

Of course, that didn't mean that he shouldn't make an effort to survey their surrounding buildings. Kang Chan looked at a nearby three-story building.

"Let's go up there for now," he said.

Everyone with him understood the intent behind his strategy, so they all followed Kang Chan up to the rooftop of the three-story building that he had set as his initial target location.

The miniature city was a lot larger in scale than Kang Chan had expected. The buildings were densely packed within a hundred-meter radius centered around the five-story stock firm building, giving the feeling of being on a movie set.

“Seok Kang-Ho, Choi Jong-II. You two will be in Team Two,” Kang Chan announced.

Seok Kang-Ho and Choi Jong-II nodded in response.

“Director Kim, please take charge of Lee Doo-Hee and the sniper team,” Kang Chan spoke again.

“Understood,” Kim Tae-Jin replied.

“Mr. Suh Sang-Hyung and Woo Hee-Seung will be in Team Three.”

The two men also acknowledged Kang Chan’s orders with a nod.

“When you want to speak to me over the radio, refer to me as Team One.”

“What’s the plan?” Kim Tae-Jin asked as he glanced around their surroundings. He then turned his gaze back to Kang Chan.

“It’s simple, really. Imagine the situation is switched around and that we are the defending side. They will most definitely come out to capture us as soon as the signal sounds,” Kang Chan said.

“Hmm,” Kim Tae-Jin sighed contemplatively, then nodded.

“You will be our side’s target, Mr. Kim.” Kang Chan said, then turned to Lee Doo-Hee and called him.

“Yes, sir,” Lee Doo-Hee replied.

“The defending side will no doubt position snipers on the rooftop of the five-story building over there. If you spot a window of opportunity and it seems doable, take them out. This is where the victors of the first round will be decided. Even if it’s hard to shoot them, try to attract their attention as much as you can.”

“Understood,” Lee Doo-Hee said.

“Mr. Suh Sang Hyun and Woo Hee-Seung, block the entrance of the building as best as you can to protect our target,” Kang Chan gave orders again.

“Then my role is to stay in here?” Kim Tae-Jin asked.

“Yes, sir. Please draw the attention of the enemies from here,” Kang Chan replied.

“Got it,” Kim Tae-Jin said with a nod.

Kang Chan turned to Seok Kang-Ho.

“Guerrilla warfare, remember?” Kang Chan asked.

“Got it, Cap,” Seok Kang-Ho replied.

“Cover me as I infiltrate the building,” Kang Chan ordered Seok Kang-Ho.

“Are you planning to go in immediately?” Kim Tae-Jin questioned incredulously.

Kang Chan’s only response was a mischievous smile.

“Cha Dong-Gyun!” Choi Seong-Geon shouted.

“Yes, General,” Cha Dong-Gyun replied sharply.

“You lead the squad and go out. Make sure you show that rude little kid the power of the Third Airborne Forces,” Choi Seong-Geon ordered.

“Understood, sir.”

“Kwak Cheol-Ho,” Choi Seong-Geon called next.

“Yes, sir!” Kwak Cheol-Ho replied robustly.

“You will be in charge of Unit 606 and the special team. Position snipers on the rooftop and move separately from Cha Dong-Gyun. Once you’re outside, eliminate as many enemies as quickly as you can,” Choi Seong-Geon ordered again.

“Understood, sir,” Kwak Cheol-Ho responded.

“The rest of you, stand guard on each floor,” Choi Seong-Geon gave his final command.

“Yes, sir,” the soldiers replied.

Choi Seong-Geon sat on the couch in the stock firm and looked outside the window.

“Ha! How fucking ridiculous!” Choi Seong-Geon exclaimed, feeling a mixture of astonishment and frustration. “A high school kid and a physical education teacher? And they’re even classified government secrets? Hahaha!”

Choi Seong-Geon shook his head and gritted his teeth. Just then, his aide put a laptop next to the table for him. In it were columns with card numbers and names. The columns were divided into categories of alive, dead, and injured. At the very bottom marked down the total number of soldiers.

So far, all of the soldiers had a green light under the alive section.

“Is this the button?” Choi Seong-Geon asked.

“Yes, sir,” his aide replied.

Choi Seong-Geon pressed the button that was marked with a single “S.” As soon as he did, the siren bells in the vicinity began to blare three consecutive times.

“Ridiculous. I just don’t believe it,” Choi Seong-Geon said cynically.

After pressing the button, he let out a dubious laugh, seemingly finding the situation absurd.

Sirens rang throughout the entire miniature city. Lee Doo-Hee positioned himself behind the entrance of the rooftop in a way that allowed him to stay out of sight while still having his rifle aimed at the five-story stock firm building. Behind him, Kim Tae-Jin, Suh Sang-Hyung, and Woo Hee-Seung pressed against the wall of the rooftop in a triangle formation.

“Is it really going to be okay for us to stay like this?” Suh Sang-Hyun asked worriedly.

Kim Tae-Jin gave Suh Sang-Hyun a look as if asking what he meant.

“The enemy has fifty-two defending soldiers,” Suh Sang-Hyun said.

“Who is our commander?” Kim Tae-Jin asked firmly.

“Well, that’s...” Suh Sang-Hyun trailed off.

“Do you really not know why Kang Chan included you and me here?” Kim Tae-Jin asked.

“Honestly, I’m not sure,” Suh Sang-Hyun replied with uncertainty. He genuinely didn’t seem to have a clue.

“Quite a ruckus went down today,” Kim Tae-Jin said.

Kim Tae-Jin quickly scanned the surrounding buildings, then briefly glanced at Suh Sang-Hyun.

“Apparently, Section Chief and Hyung-Jung gave Choi Seong-Geon a harsh scolding,” he added.

“They did? Why would they do that?” Suh Sang-Hyun asked in surprise.

“Kang Chan included us in this fight against fifty-two soldiers out of sheer consideration for Mr. Jeon and Kim Hyung-Jung. He probably wanted to prove to everyone that their judgment wasn’t wrong,” Kim Tae-Jin mused.

Suh Sang-Hyun turned his head as far as he could to check on their allies, then turned back to Kim Tae-Jin.

“Did Kang Chan actually say that?” Suh Sang-Hyun asked doubtfully.

“Do you really think Kang Chan would go around saying such mushy things?” Kim Tae-Jin said cynically as if he couldn’t believe that Suh Sang-Hyun would even ask such a thing.

Just then, two rounds from what sounded like they were from Daewoo Telecom K7s rang out consecutively.

Kim Tae-Jin and Suh Sang-Hyun quickly looked around, but nothing came into view.

Beep. Beep.

“Huh? What’s going on?” Choi Seong-Geon asked, confused.

Choi Seong-Geon leaned forward so much that it seemed as if he was sticking his face into the laptop. Red lights appeared under the dead column. The total number of soldiers that were still alive decreased to fifty.

Choi Seong-Geon numbly stared at the laptop monitor. It didn’t take long for three more beeping sounds to echo out. The number of soldiers marked dead with the red light increased.

For the first time today, Choi Seong-Geon looked shocked. His eyes widened as he looked outside the window. However...

Beep. Beep.

More deaths appeared on the monitor.

“Did they all line up so the enemy can shoot them all down with ease? Radio Cha Dong-Gyun right now!” Choi Seong-Geon bellowed as he turned to his aide.

Beep.

“Hey! I told you to get in contact with Cha Dong-Gyun!” Choi Seong-Geon shouted again.

“General Choi, First Lieutenant Cha Dong-Gyun is already dead,” the aide replied. The aide's stunned expression showed that even he had gone blank due to the shock.

Chapter 138.1: In a whole different league (1)

Choi Jong-Il couldn’t fire a single round of the K7 in his hands. He simply didn’t get the chance to.

‘Eleven soldiers.’

Choi Jong-Il knew the soldiers of the South Korean special forces and their training like the back of his hand. Moreover, based on what Choi Jong-Il knew of Kang Chan's melee combat abilities, he already expected his men to have difficulties defeating Kang Chan. However, he didn’t expect their battle would be so one-sided.

Bang! Bang!

‘That’s thirteen now!’

This was on another level. Kang Chan made no sounds as he moved.

Crawling forward on one's belly, moving by twisting one's body from side to side, opening fire while running, rolling on the ground and immediately assuming a firing position... Choi Jong-Il had learned all of that too. However, he never would have imagined doing it the way Kang Chan did.

This wasn't just a man with a rifle. Choi Jong-Il felt as if he was watching a monster with three arms, one of which was a gun.

Kang Chan leaned on the corner of a building and lowered his stance before pointing with his index and middle fingers at the building right in front of him.

Seok Kang-Ho had a very sturdy build. However, that same burly and stocky man was currently creeping forward in a hunched position as silently as a cat.

Choi Jong-Il initially couldn't understand what they were doing, but he realized for the first time in his life that if he aimed his rifle's scope toward the glass window of the building from a short distance away, they could see through the reflection.

Seok Kang-Ho pointed four of his fingers.

One, two...!

Kang Chan had a habit of always being half a beat early.

By the time he had extended his right leg outward as smoothly as a spider would, his body was already out and turning the corner.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Kang Chan fired precisely four bullets. He didn't have to fire in rapid succession to take down his targets.

Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep.

Kang Chan returned to his original position and gave a slight nod to Seok Kang-Ho.

With Choi Jong-Il covering his back, Seok Kang-Ho advanced onward and occupied the area where the special forces soldiers had been assassinated just moments before.

'Seventeen!'

Choi Jong-Il stood next to Seok Kang-Ho and glanced at the faces of the soldiers whom Kang Chan had swiftly killed. They seemed to be in disbelief at first for having been taken out of the battle so easily, but they soon despaired and, finally, seethed in anger over how powerless they were.

They never stood a chance. How could they even "fight back" when they were completely unmatched? If this was a real operation, this would rightfully have been called a massacre, not a battle.

Kang Chan's eyes glinted. He spun his index finger in the air and gestured toward the building to their one o'clock.

Choi Jong-Il had no idea why their enemies were lying in wait there, and he also couldn't figure out how Kang Chan had caught on to their plan.

However, Choi Jong-Il was certain about one thing. There would most definitely be soldiers on their one o'clock, and they would soon get assassinated!

This day was filled with new realizations for Choi Jong-Il. On that note, he came to the realization today that he could move without making a single sound even if he was wearing combat boots for as long as he touched the ground using the outer edges of his feet first.

Naturally, however, knowing how to do it and actually putting it into action were two different things.

Choi Jong-Il wobbled so badly that he was having a hard time keeping up.

Meanwhile, Kang Chan pointed at his eyes with his index and middle fingers, then signaled that there were two soldiers to their left and three to their right.

One, two!

Bang! Baang! Baang! Bang!

Seok Kang-Ho smirked—or at least the man that Choi Jong-Il formerly knew as Seok Kang-Ho did.

It was almost as if Seok Kang-Ho had split personalities, much to Choi Jong-Il's amazement. Seok Kang-Ho's gaze, actions, and even facial expression made him seem like an entirely different person.

Choi Jong-Il was soon brought back to reality with a wave from Seok Kang-Ho.

'Get a grip, Choi Jong-Il! There are five soldiers here, that's twenty-two cleared in total!'

There were only thirty men left now.

Kang Chan had eliminated twenty-two soldiers in merely twenty minutes, which was equivalent to about one person per minute.

With this training operation, Choi Jong-Il learned something important.

Fighting Kang Chan in a one-on-one knife battle meant getting severely injured before death. However, fighting him in a gunfight just meant instant death. To put it more accurately, Kang Chan only required a single shot to take his opponent down.

Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep.

"Ha. Hahahaha!" Choi Seong-Geon burst out laughing incredulously as he looked at the entrance with a dazed expression.

Choi Seong-Geon didn't even have to contemplate that long to imagine what would happen if Kang Chan were let loose in the DMZ. If they had an enemy like Kang Chan wreaking havoc in the DMZ... Choi Seong-Geon didn't even want to finish the thought.

“Ahem,” Choi Seong-Geon coughed embarrassedly. He now understood why Jeon Dae-Geuk and Kim Hyung-Jung furiously scolded him and told him that they would no longer treat him as their junior.

They had suffered twenty-two deaths in twenty-one minutes and twenty-six seconds.

That means he took down one man every single minute...

Beep. Beep. Beep.

“Huhuhuhu.”

No, he was wrong. The results were far more incredible than what he could hope to imagine.

“He still hasn’t used the radios once until now, has he?” Choi Seong-Geon asked.

“No, sir,” his subordinate replied.

“Ha!” Choi Seong-Geon exclaimed as he glared at the button marked with the single letter “S.”

Once he pressed the button again, the training operation would be over immediately.

His soldiers’ pride had probably already been hurt enough. How much damage would it do if all fifty-two of them were defeated and the subject that they had to protect was assassinated? All of that against a team of only seven men, at that...

Rumors would inevitably spread among the other soldiers. However, that wasn’t the issue right now. Choi Seong-Geon had to somehow think of a way to restore the devastated pride of his men.

Could there be anything more important than keeping the pride of South Korea’s representative, their country’s most elite special forces team, intact?

Choi Seong-Geon anxiously gulped as he moved his finger above the button marked “S.”

Weeoo! Weeoo! Weeoo!

The moment Kang Chan’s team discovered their next targets and began approaching them, the siren that rang when the training began started ringing again.

It was only a little over half past four, so the sun was still high up in the sky.

[Training is over! All personnel, gather in front of the stock firm building!]

The voice of Choi Seong-Geon’s aide echoed clearly through the miniature city, making it seem as if it was broadcast over the intercom by a mayor in a rural village.

Kang Chan straightened up and turned to Choi Jong-Il with a curious look.

“It seems the training is over, Mr. Kang Chan,” Choi Jong-Il said.

Kang Chan was completely aware of that. He heard the announcements as well. He shot a glance toward Choi Jong-Il not because he didn't understand the announcement but because he wanted to know why the training was suddenly rushed to an end.

The soldiers who had been numbly sitting down on the ground got to their feet. As they walked toward the stock firm building, some looked at Kang Chan with sharp gazes while others shot him glances filled with disbelief.

“Kang Chan!” Kim Tae-Jin shouted in greeting.

Kim Tae-Jin, Suh Sang-Hyun, Woo Hee-Seung, and Lee Doo-Hee walked over to him with their rifles pointed toward the ground.

“What happened?” Kim Tae-Jin asked in confusion.

“I'm not really sure,” Kang Chan replied.

“I kept hearing gunshots. What were those?” Kim Tae-Jin asked again.

“Mr. Kang Chan assassinated twenty-five soldiers, sir,” Choi Jong-Il chimed in, answering the question.

“What? How many?” Kim Tae-Jin asked, doubting his ears.

“Twenty-five in total, sir,” Choi Jong-Il repeated.

Kim Tae-Jin nodded in understanding, seemingly having realized why the training had ended so abruptly.

Kang Chan didn't understand what the fuss was about. After all, the number meant nothing to him.

“Let's go and see,” Kim Tae-Jin said.

As the party reached the stock firm building, Choi Seong-Geon and his aide walked out to greet them. They then politely saluted Kim Tae-Jin.

“I would like to stop the training here,” Choi Seong-Geon said.

“Well, it doesn't matter to me. Whatever the commander says goes, and you're in charge, General Choi,” Kim Tae-Jin responded.

“Can I invite you all to dinner?” Choi Seong-Geon asked.

Kim Tae-Jin turned to Kang Chan.

“Sure, why not.”

“Great. Let's head back down, then,” Choi Seong-Geon said.

Following Choi Seong-Geon's long strides, the group left the miniature city the same way they came.

Not too long after, they arrived at the parking lot in front of the barracks.

“You can turn in your weapons to the officer,” Choi Seong-Geon stated.

That was fantastic. There was certainly no need to lug these heavy things around.

Kang Chan took off the radio and the weapons he was carrying and set them down.

“Why don’t you head inside for a moment, everyone? Just go and check if the food has been prepared as planned for now,” Choi Seong-Geon ordered his aide.

“Yes, sir,” the officer replied.

Upon hearing his aide’s affirmation, Choi Seong-Geon opened the door to his barrack. Kim Tae-Jin, Kang Chan, and Seok Kang-Ho followed him inside.

Choi Seong-Geon gestured for them to take a seat at the table and brought them cups of instant coffee.

“Do you smoke?” Choi Seong-Geon asked Kang Chan.

“Yes, I do,” Kang Chan replied.

“Sir, it’s okay if we smoke, right?” Choi Seong-Geon asked Kim Tae-Jin.

Kim Tae-Jin replied by holding out his hand to ask for a cigarette as well.

Kang Chan hadn’t seen the type of ashtray in front of them in a while. It was a massive glass tray that seemed like it would require smoking ten packs of cigarettes to fill it.

Choi Seong-Geon offered Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho a Korean-made cigarette before taking one out for himself, and Seok Kang-Ho pulled out a lighter to light up their smokes.

“Haan. Sir, what is the real purpose of this training?” Choi Seong-Geon asked Kim Tae-Jin. His eyes flashed sharply, and his tone was dead serious. “I know it’s a classified government secret. I also admit that it was my fault for not keeping the soldiers in check this morning. However, at the very least, I would like to know why I’m making my men go through such training before I force them to do it.”

Oh, so they didn’t tell Choi Seong-Geon either.

Kang Chan finally realized why the atmosphere was so heavy.

“That’s a question that only Mr. Jeon can answer. Why don’t you give him a call right now instead?” Kim Tae-Jin suggested.

“I see,” Choi Seong-Geon mused.

Choi Seong-Geon peeked at Kang Chan, then pulled out his phone and pressed a few buttons to dial Jeon Dae-Geuk.

Chapter 138.2: In a whole different league (1)

It was only a few seconds when the call connected and Jeon Dae-Guek answered.

“Mr. Jeon, this is Choi Seong-Geon. Yes, sir. The training just ended. No, sir. Everything went well. Mr. Jeon, what exactly is the mission of this training?”

Choi Seong-Geon pressed the cigarette he was smoking in the ashtray to extinguish it and continued speaking into the phone.

“I’m well aware it’s a classified government secret. However, I will swear on the honor of the Field Army that I will keep quiet. Why do my men have to do this training? What lies at the end of this training? And what is the true identity of this man in front of me named Kang Chan?”

Choi Seong-Geon stared at Kang Chan as he spoke, making it seem as if he was arguing with Kang Chan. He then removed his gaze and turned to the window.

“Yes, sir. Please wait a moment.”

Choi Seong-Geon suddenly held out the phone to Kang Chan.

“Hello?” Kang Chan answered.

-Just what in the world did you do for Choi Seong-Geon to become so heated?

Jeon Dae-Geuk’s question made Kang Chan peek at Choi Seong-Geon.

-Go ahead and tell him your plan. Choi Seong-Geon is full of pride. He’s a soldier through and through. He won’t ever disclose secrets even if a dagger is held against his throat.

“I don’t know where to start. It seems like he has no idea who I am,” Kang Chan countered.

-I’ll explain that to him, so don’t worry about that. Please tell him.

“Alright, I understand,” Kang Chan replied.

Kang Chan gave the phone back to Choi Seong-Geon.

“Yes, sir. Yes. I do know. Yes. What?”

Choi Seong-Geon shot Kang Chan a completely different look from before.

“Is that really true? Of course, I saw. You should’ve told me that earlier, sir! Understood. Yes, yes. I will give a report to you tomorrow,” Choi Seong-Geon said.

After hanging up the phone, Choi Seong-Geon took a deep breath, then enticingly smiled.

“Are you the person called God of Blackfield, Mr. Kang Chan?” he asked.

Kang Chan was a little embarrassed by the nickname, so he just smiled awkwardly and replied, “Yes.”

“That ‘God of Blackfield’ who went on the Mongolian rescue operation?” Choi Seong-Geon reiterated.

“That’s correct. Seok Kang-Ho and I went on the operation together,” Kang Chan responded.

“You were a part of that? When?” Kim Tae-Jin jumped in, taken aback because it was his first time hearing of this as well.

“You didn’t know, sir? The code name of the Korean agent who brought back Mr. Kim Hyung-Jung is God of Blackfield! He’s a role model to all of our soldiers, and they desperately want to meet him!” Choi Seong-Geon shouted in excitement.

“What? So back then, when Hyung-Jung was injured and you said you had to leave for someplace far away for some time... That was when you left for Mongolia?” Kim Tae-Jin asked, clearly astounded.

“I’m sorry I couldn’t tell you,” Kang Chan said.

“I can’t believe this! Kang Chan, how could you! You as well, Mr. Seok! How can you do this to me?” Kim Tae-Jin asked with a betrayed expression.

Meanwhile, Choi Seong-Geon now behaved completely differently from how he did a few moments ago.

“The agents who went with Mr. Kim on the operation back then were part of the 606 and the special forces of the DMZ. Those men have not recovered enough yet to train, which is why they’re not here. They’ve been keeping their lips sealed about that mission, but I still heard about the greatness of the God of Blackfield. Haha! You should have told me earlier!” Choi Seong-Geon exclaimed as he enthusiastically held out his hand. “I’ve always wanted to meet you in person, Mr. Kang Chan. Mr. Seok, you must be the one who accompanied him on the operation!”

After shaking Kang Chan’s hand, Choi Seong-Geon held out his hand to Seok Kang-Ho. Choi Seong-Geon gripped Seok Kang-Ho’s hand so hard that Kang Chan couldn’t help but grimace in pain just by watching the scene.

“Mr. Kim and Mr. Kang Chan. For dinner today, I’ve prepared a feast with a whole pig to cheer up my men. Why don’t you all join us for dinner?”

“Sure, why not?” Kim Tae-Jin accepted.

“Sounds good to me too,” Kang Chan agreed.

Choi Seong-Geon grinned widely with a satisfied expression.

“Wonderful! Now, all that’s left is why my men are doing this training. Let’s go out and head to dinner after finishing this conversation,” he said with a genuinely curious face.

Jeon Dae-Geuk had already expressed his approval over the phone, and Kim Tae-Jin was informed of the situation as well, so Kang Chan had no reason to keep the operation a secret anymore.

“I am going to take revenge on the countries that committed acts of terror in our country,” Kang Chan declared.

Choi Seong-Geon’s grin instantly vanished.

“I believe our first target will be China. I divided the men into multiple teams today to observe them and select twelve people to form a unit,” Kang Chan added.

“Did you just say China?” Choi Seong-Geon asked in shock.

“That’s right. China is correct,” Kang Chan replied.

Choi Seong-Geon seemed to be having a difficult time believing Kang Chan’s words.

“France will provide us with the airplanes for our transportation, the weapons, and any other additional intelligence we may require,” Kang Chan explained.

“Is that how you flew to Mongolia during the previous operation?” Choi Seong-Geon asked.

“That’s right,” Kang Chan responded.

Choi Seong-Geon clenched his teeth at the scale of the mission.

“We won’t have the South Korean government’s approval for this operation,” Choi Seong-Geon said.

“That’s why I couldn’t tell you about this mission in advance. This will be an individual operation. The governments won’t know about my departures or arrivals into their countries,” Kang Chan stated.

“I don’t know what to say,” Choi Seong-Geon said curtly.

Fitting of a soldier who had formerly spent all his days on the battlefield, Choi Seong-Geon’s eyes were glinting sharply.

Amid their conversation, someone knocked on the door three times.

“What is it?” Choi Seong-Geon asked toward the door.

“The meal is ready, sir,” his aide replied.

“All right. We’ll be out soon,” Choi Seong-Geon announced.

The sun was still up in the sky, but it was already late in the evening. The shadows cast by the mountain blanketed half of the windows of the barrack.

“Sir, you should spend the night here today,” Choi Seong-Geon offered.

“Sure. What about you, Kang Chan?” Kim Tae-Jin asked.

“I don’t know,” Kang Chan replied with uncertainty.

To be frank, Kang Chan hadn't made up his mind yet. Based on what he observed at the training today, he would essentially be taking a bunch of rookies out to the battlefield like the newbies that Gérard had brought.

It would pretty much be a suicide mission if they went now.

"Mr. Kang Chan, it's a long way back, and you already came all the way here anyway. Please be our guest for today," Choi Seong-Geon said. He was speaking in a gravelly, old man-like tone that reminded Kang Chan of Jeon Dae-Geuk.

Well, I suppose spending a day here can't hurt.

"Alright, then. I'll do that."

"Fantastic. Then let's have dinner first and talk again after," Choi Seong-Geon said as he stood up. Everyone followed suit and left the barracks after him.

The parking lot was also half-covered by the shadows of the mountains, making the chilly atmosphere seem as if it had descended onto the ground.

Ten vertically cut drum barrels had been turned into long fire pits, and large rubber barrels stacked up with pork meat.

"Attention!" Choi Seong-Geon shouted, causing all eyes to turn toward them.

The soldiers had expressions that had a mix of embarrassment, frustration, incredulity, and surprise.

"Let me introduce the men who have worked hard to do the training with us today. This man here is the living legend of the DMZ, my senior, Kim Tae-Jin."

The men clapped, and Choi Seong-Geon continued.

"Over there is Suh Sang-Hyeon, who fought at the DMZ with Mr. Kim Tae-Jin, and this is Choi Jong-II, Woo Hee-Seung, and Lee Doo-Hee. They all went through the 606 and the DMZ special forces team. They are all your seniors."

Applause rippled every time a name was mentioned.

Firewood had to have been placed in the pits instead of charcoal because the flames blazed vigorously.

"And this is Mr. Kang Chan."

Choi Seong-Geon's statement was followed by polite but stiff applause.

"Since you probably aren't familiar with his name, I'll tell you his code name instead. Mr. Kang Chan is the God of Blackfield, the very soldier all of you were so eager to meet."

Their surroundings suddenly turned so quiet that one could hear even a pin drop. The fire pits made popping noises from the wood burning, and a few birds chirped as they went by.

“I can’t tell you everything because it’s classified, but the God of Blackfield is planning on proceeding with an operation similar to the one they executed in Mongolia. He wants to select members from South Korea’s special forces instead of working with a foreign country’s soldiers,” Choi Seong-Geon explained.

The soldiers' expressions and looks changed in an instant.

“Then the man next to him is the Seok...?”

“My name is Seok Kang-Ho,” Seok Kang-Ho introduced himself.

“Mr. Seok Kang-Ho is the man who carried out the mission in Mongolia with the God of Blackfield.”

This time, a booming round of applause began.

“First, let’s have some dinner. That’s all I have to say. At ease.”

“General Choi!” the soldier in the middle shouted as he shot his hand up in the air.

“What is it?” Choi Seong-Geon asked.

“We would like to express our gratitude toward them for saving our fellow comrades.”

Choi Seong-Geon glanced at Kang Chan, then nodded.

“Attention!”

Military boots clicked and thudded together as one.

“Salute the God of Blackfield!”

The men, who were scattered throughout the front of the barracks, all neatly saluted together.

Kang Chan couldn’t ignore them even if he wanted to. He saluted back at them.

“At ease!”

The soldiers moved as one. It was a solemn but somewhat uncomfortable atmosphere. The soldiers looked as if they had mixed feelings.

“Now eat!”

“Thank you for the meal!”

As the soldiers were staring at Kang Chan, Kim Tae-Jin looked around with a smirk.

Kang Chan felt uncomfortable.

Chapter 139.1: In a whole different league (2)

Thick and juicy pork was put on the grill above the stacks of firewood, and flames instantly engulfed it. The soldiers were so adept at cutting the meat into edible portions that this obviously wasn't their first time doing a barbecue.

Kim Tae-Jin helped ease the awkwardness the most. The soldiers could feel comfortable around him because he was a senior to Choi Seong-Geon but was no longer an active soldier. Moreover, his relaxed, soft charisma naturally drew the men to him.

Suh Sang-Hyun occasionally chimed in as well, further lightening up the stiff atmosphere.

Kang Chan, Seok Kang-Ho, and Choi Jong-Il's group took to one side of the grill.

Fwoosh!

The flames blazed mercilessly, but Woo Hee-Seung and Lee Doo-Hee still expertly cut the meat, seemingly unaffected by the heat. The cooked ribs that they cut right off the fire were especially delicious.

As Kang Chan ate a piece of meat with his chopsticks, someone came up to him.

"My name is Cha Dong-Gyun," said the sharp-eyed soldier who approached Kang Chan. "I was at the conference for the Eurasian Rail too. Back then, I heard your orders over the radio, but I had no idea you were the God of Blackfield, Mr. Kang Chan. Before the training began, all we knew about you was that you were a high school student."

Cha Dong-Gyun's voice was low and husky. When he turned older, he would definitely take after Jeon Dae-Geuk's rugged and coarse voice.

"We had a lot of debate among ourselves about whether it made sense that the God of Blackfield was both the man at the conference and the man who went to Mongolia. Well, that's in the past now. Please accept a drink from me, sir," Cha Dong-Gyun said.

Cha Dong-Gyun poured a beverage from a plastic bottle into a paper cup, then handed it to Kang Chan.

"There's something I'm curious about, Mr. Kang Chan," Cha Dong-Gyun continued.

Choi Jong-Il watched Cha Dong-Gyun with a bemused expression.

"I would like to know why we got defeated before we could even launch a single counterattack," Cha Dong-Gyun requested.

The soldiers around them had been pretending to continue their meal as they listened to their conversation. However, the moment Cha Dong-Gyun asked that question, not a single person moved their chopsticks.

Fwoosh! Whoosh!

Woo Hee-Seung moved the meat over to the side of the grill that the fire couldn't reach so the food wouldn't get burnt as they spoke.

“It’s probably the difference between someone who believes they can kill and someone who actually has killed,” Kang Chan answered.

Cha Dong-Gyun gave a tense smile, but it didn’t seem to be because Kang Chan spoke down to him. Rather, he seemed to disagree with what Kang Chan said.

“All the men here have experience participating in missions and operations before. Although they have never been in a situation where they had to kill, none of the soldiers here is scared or distressed over the idea of killing an enemy,” Choi Seong-Geon said.

Kang Chan nodded.

Everyone was near the grill, so they could all hear the conversation between Cha Dong-Gyun and Kang Chan. Even Choi Seong-Geon had turned to face Kang Chan.

“Just because you’ve gotten your driver’s license doesn’t mean you can immediately start driving like a pro. If you have the guts, you can certainly have a go with your car, but that will most likely get you in an accident, won’t it? Using that same logic, what do you think will probably happen if you go on an operation?” Kang Chan rebutted.

“So we’re like newborn chicks in your eyes,” Cha Dong-Gyun said.

“You aren’t like newborn chicks. You are newborn chicks,” Kang Chan corrected.

The tension made the atmosphere frost over. Meanwhile, Seok Kang-Ho squirmed because the piece of meat he put in his mouth was too hot.

Kang Chan had already made up his mind to give these soldiers a chance anyway. He intended to try getting them into shape at least for Jeon Dae-Geuk and Kim Hyung-Jun, who anxiously rushed all the way over to Anseong to persuade him, and Kim Tae-Jin, who willingly agreed to spend the night here.

“Refresh my memory. What were the results of the Mongolian operation again?” Kang Chan asked.

Cha Dong-Gyun’s cheek twitched.

“There were three Iglas at the conference hall, weren’t there? One of which was successfully launched. What do you plan to do if something like that happens during an operation in an enemy country? Are you just going to return to your motherland in a bodybag because you were prepared to die anyway?” Kang Chan relentlessly asked.

No one dared breathe by the time Kang Chan finished. They all stayed frozen—except for Seok Kang-Ho.

“He’s jabbing them where it hurts, for sure,” Choi Seong-Geon whispered to Kim Tae-Jin.

“Kang Chan isn’t the type to do that without any reason,” Kim Tae-Jin replied under his breath.

The tension ran so high that it felt as if a fight would break out at any moment.

“Why do you carry around a pistol?” Kang Chan asked, looking Cha Dong-Gyun in the eye. “What about your rifle? Or your bayonet? I’m looking for soldiers who can actually survive situations like the one today, not someone who will protect a conference hall and shoot human-shaped dummy dolls.”

“Please don’t speak as if we have never participated in missions that took place in other countries. All the soldiers here have experience training with famous teams from foreign nations, and they received high praise as well. On top of that, they are all veterans who have gone on operations in the Middle East too,” Cha Dong-Gyun defended.

Kang Chan nodded.

“Do you think you can really show me what you’re made of?” Kang Chan asked.

“How should we do that?” Cha Dong-Gyun eagerly asked with glinting eyes.

Kang Chan turned his gaze to Choi Seong-Geon.

“Can I be in charge of the soldiers’ training tomorrow, General?” Kang Chan asked.

“Of course,” Choi Seong-Geon replied after shortly glancing at Kim Tae-Jin for approval.

“Show me what you’re capable of during training tomorrow, then,” Kang Chan said.

“Understood, sir,” Cha Dong-Gyun responded. His admiration was tinted with a bit of hostility, causing the other soldiers’ eyes to betray the mixed emotions they felt.

When Cha Dong-Gyun returned to his seat, Seok Kang-Ho handed Kang Chan a pair of chopsticks.

“It’s so good that it’s to die for. Hurry up. Dig in,” Seok Kang-Ho urged.

Everyone went back to their meal, but the mood had been fully thrown in the dumps.

After eating their fill, Kim Tae-Jin, Kang Chan, Seok Kang-Ho, and Suh Sang-Hyun entered the barrack where Choi Seong-Geon had previously guided them. When they opened the door next to Choi Seong-Geon’s office, they found a few cots that had already been set up.

Choi Seong-Geon and his aide had erected the temporary beds because he wanted his guests to rest comfortably.

“You’re really serious about doing this, huh?” Kim Tae-Jin asked.

“Yes. I keep wanting to go easy on them whenever I see the looks in their eyes,” Kang Chan replied.

“Why did you provoke them so much earlier, then?” Kim Tae-Jin wondered curiously.

“Because I’m going to give them the beating of their lives tomorrow,” Kang Chan mischievously answered.

Suh Sang-Hyun stood in place with a numb expression, and Seok Kang-Ho just shook his head in disgust and horror.

“What do you think? Do they have any potential?” Kim Tae-Jin prodded.

“They have the skills, but they lack way too much experience. I’m not confident I can provide them with that experience by taking them around either,” Kang Chan pondered.

“Hmm, I’m honestly not surprised that you came to that conclusion. We have always found that to be a shame too. It can’t be helped, though, since they have never gone to other countries and initiated attacks first. The senior soldiers at the DMZ can at least pass on their experience, so we do get some capable soldiers out of that, but none of the soldiers ever got the chance to gain experience in strategies like these,” Kim Tae-Jin mused.

“Sir, with my abilities, I can still pull my weight wherever I go,” Suh Sang-Hyun countered with frustration, jumping into the conversation. It seemed as if he had sympathized with the soldiers’ feelings earlier.

Suh Sang-Hyun is right, but he’s also wrong.

“The difference between practice and real-life experience is simple. When you hear the sound of some rustling, will you shoot immediately or wait on standby? Those brief moments are what determine life and death,” Kang Chan stated.

“These men can shoot at the drop of the hat when it comes to it,” Suh Sang-Hyun argued, seemingly upset by Kang Chan’s response.

“Let’s say they have already snuck into an enemy country. What if they pull the trigger and it was just a wild animal? What happens after that? What if the object they thought was a beast was actually an enemy instead? Instantaneous but correct judgments can only be made with enough experience.”

“The soldiers have already received that kind of training,” Suh Sang-Hyun insisted.

“I suppose we’ll see tomorrow,” Kang Chan replied.

Suh Sang-Hyun didn’t have anything to say to that.

The moonlight traveled in through the window and illuminated the room.

“My, time flies fast. It feels like just yesterday when I was roaming around the DMZ...” Kim Tae-Jin muttered to himself. Just then, the sound of Seok Kang-Ho’s snoring echoed throughout the room.

“You should hurry and get some sleep. You might not be able to fall asleep after a little while,” Kang Chan advised.

“Is his snoring that bad?” Kim Tae-Jin asked.

“It will be hard for you to ignore it,” Kang Chan said.

“Then I really should hurry and sleep,” Kim Tae-Jin remarked.

Kim Tae-Jin pulled the covers over himself and turned over on his side.

They woke up at six, washed themselves up, and ate breakfast.

It was so good that it wasn’t an exaggeration to say the food was the best part of their special treatment. Even Kim Tae-Jin was satisfied.

After they finished their meal, they relaxed with some tea and refreshments for about 30 minutes.

“What’s your plan for the training?” Kim Tae-Jin asked.

“Just some basic running, mountain warfare, and urban warfare,” Kang Chan replied.

“Then I guess I should sit out of this one,” Kim Tae-Jin said as he shook his head with a smile.

When Kang Chan walked outside, the soldiers were already standing in line.

Chapter 139.2: In a whole different league (2)

“Today, we’ll be training together. First, running. We’ll head to the makeshift city and run along the exterior of the city. Everyone warm yourselves up,” Kang Chan ordered. At his words, the soldiers began to stretch their muscles, using professional movements.

Seok Kang-Ho, Choi Jong-Il’s group, and Suh Sang-Hyun stood with the soldiers.

“Let’s go if you’re done,” Kang Chan declared.

“Soldiers, turn left! Begin running!” Cha Dong-Gyun shouted, and the soldiers began to run.

Pat. Pat. Pat. Pat.

The rhythmic sound of military boots crunching on the ground could be heard as the soldiers moved along. After about a hundred meters, the makeshift city came into view. A road spanned along the outskirts of the city, making it easier to run.

Kang Chan ran with them on the left, matching their pace. As he ran with them, he learned that their skills weren't inferior at all.

Even though it was just a running exercise, through their speed, breathing, and the inexplicable energy that they exuded, he learned that they were certainly capable.

If these soldiers rigorously trained like the Foreign Legion and accumulated intense combat experience, they would truly become an exceptional unit.

However, the real-life combat experience obtained from just one battle or operation wouldn't be enough. They would have to accumulate and have experience passed down to them during a period where more than half their current members and the new recruits that would replace them would likely die.

Kang Chan understood why Jeon Dae-Geuk, Kim Hyung-Jung, and Kim Tae-Jin had been feeling as if the special forces team wasn't being raised to their full potential. Despite having the determination and endlessly repeating their training, they had never had the opportunity to go into a real battle.

It was an unfortunate tragedy. The special forces team was confident in their expected success in any operation, but they couldn't make any progress because they feared the consequences that would follow. This was comparable to a talented child not being able to advance properly because their father's abilities to guide the child to their fullest potential were insufficient. Jeon Dae-Geuk, Kim Hyung-Jung, and Kim Tae-Jin probably felt how the father in the metaphor would feel.

Kang Chan continued to think to himself as they ran 10 kilometers in no time.

Kang Chan gradually felt his blood heating up. The determination and passion emanating from the soldiers' bodies were relayed directly to him.

"Let's pick up the pace!" Kang Chan commanded as he started to run faster.

Thud. Thud. Thud. Thud.

The soldiers' upper bodies moved in rhythm from side to side with each step they took forward. Their running formation was still intact although they had run over 10 kilometers and were picking up speed.

Kang Chan could see they had trained to no end. They had pushed themselves to the extreme because they couldn't gain real combat experience.

Kang Chan turned his gaze to observe the soldiers. They all looked tired, but they kept moving forward. They were running with the thought that stopping could cause their comrades to die.

'These punks.'

It would make Kang Chan uncomfortable to develop a fondness for these men. If any one of them died, he would face an extremely hard time enduring their loss.

However, Kang Chan's heart was already being moved just by witnessing the soldiers' determination and passion as they ran.

Now, they had already run 20 kilometers. Every single soldier was already wheezing for breath, but none of them showed signs of giving up.

"Let's return to the barracks!" Kang Chan shouted upon seeing the path in the mountains that led inside the makeshift city.

The running formation veered off the outer road of the small city and entered the mountain path.

"Haah! Haah!"

In front of the barracks, Kim Tae-Jin, Choi Seong-Geon, and his aide watched the soldiers return. Kang Chan and the soldiers were completely drenched in sweat.

"Do you have helmets and bulletproof vests?" Kang Chan asked Choi Seong-Geon.

"We have it all," Choi Seong-Geon replied.

"Please prepare those. Rifles as well," Kang Chan requested.

When Choi Seong-Geon gave the order to prepare what Kang Chan asked for, his aide quickly went to work.

By the time the soldiers' breaths had calmed down a little, the officer had finished putting down helmets, bulletproof vests, and rifles in front of them.

"Please give us some live ammunition," Kang Chan stated.

Choi Seong-Geon whipped around to turn to Kang Chan, and the soldiers all looked at Kang Chan in shock.

"Did you just say live ammo?" Choi Seong-Geon asked, doubting his ears.

"Yes. We will conduct today's training with live ammo," Kang Chan reiterated.

Choi Seong-Geon was at a loss for words, and even Kim Tae-Jin couldn't hide his surprise.

"Please explain how you will proceed with the training, Mr. Kang Chan," Choi Seong-Geon requested with a stiff glare.

Kang Chan walked up onto the steps in front of the barracks.

"I plan to launch a preemptive attack on our enemy countries soon. I need twelve people from the soldiers here. If you wish to volunteer, take a step forward," Kang Chan commanded.

The soldiers all took a step forward as one with a thud. It was as if they had rehearsed it in advance. Seok Kang-Ho and Suh Sang-Hyun stepped forward as well.

“Today, we will train with live ammunition. You will be split into two teams, but you may only shoot each other on the helmets or on the bulletproof vests. Any soldier who gets injured by gunfire or shoots a member of the opposing team will be eliminated from the candidates. If you are displeased with these conditions, you may step back,” Kang Chan announced.

Choi Seong-Geon glanced at Kim Tae-Jin with a look of protest. Just then, Seok Kang-Ho came forward and took a helmet, bulletproof vest, and submachine gun for himself. Choi Jong-Il, Woo Hee-Seung, and Lee Doo-Hee followed suit.

They put their helmets on despite their faces still drenched in sweat. They also wore their bulletproof vests, tightening the front.

“Damn it!” grumbled Suh Sang-Hyun. Everyone heard what he said. However, even he came forward and picked up a helmet and vest.

“This should be fun,” Kim Tae-Jin jokingly said as he also stepped up and picked up a helmet and vest too, surprising everyone in the area.

“Sir, how will this kind of training be effective?” Cha Dong-Gyun loudly and boldly asked, breaking the silence.

“Should we just do real combat instead?” Kang Chan sarcastically asked.

“You know that’s not what I meant, sir!” Cha Dong-Gyun replied.

“You told me all of you had trained and prepared!” Kang Chan shouted back with force.

It came as a shock. The always calm and composed Kang Chan never raised his voice, but he just did.

Kim Tae-Jin looked down, pretending to examine his bulletproof vest so he could hide his surprised expression.

“What will you do if something unexpected happens while you’re out on a mission? Are you going to make excuses like you are now? Because it’s not what you’re used to, because information was leaked, because you’ve never fought against moving enemies with live ammo?”

Kang Chan turned his sharp glare to the rest of the soldiers.

“Never ever forget what it means to have no combat experience! You will go on missions where more than half of you won’t return alive! After that, more new recruits will be sent, and you will go on missions again where even more will die! Those who survive will become veterans, and their experience will trickle down to the new men. Cha Dong-Gyun! How long do you think it will take until then?”

Cha Dong-Gyun couldn’t find anything to say.

“Navy SEALs! Spetsnaz! The elite team of the Foreign Legion! All year long, they all engage in numerous big and small operations and battles. What about you? You should’ve gone out on a new mission after the Mongolian operation was over. Can any of you tell me if you’ve been on new missions since then?”

Kang Chan glared at the soldiers.

“It’s madness. I know. But there isn’t a single person in this world who can give you combat experience other than yourself. Simulated battles? Bullshit. How do you think you would feel if the soldiers who were shot yesterday were actually killed, but you have to go on the same kind of operation again today anyway?”

It had been so long since Kang Chan felt his blood boil to this extent.

“There’s no need for you to train if you don’t want to. However...”

Kang Chan looked directly into Cha Dong-Gyun’s eyes.

“I need soldiers who will return from operations alive, no matter what it takes—even if information was leaked, even if they are completely surrounded by enemies. I need agents who can survive until the very end! None of you understand how it feels to see your comrades fall dead to the ground, covered in blood! So if you’re going to spout bullshit, leave!”

Seok Kang-Ho peeked at Kim Tae-Jin. Neither of them had ever seen Kang Chan so enraged, so they were quite taken aback.

Kang Chan and Cha Dong-Gyun’s eyes remained unflinching on each other. It was as if they were having a staring contest.

This was it. This was as far as Kang Chan could go. He was moved and touched by the passion of the soldiers and the sincerity of Jeon Dae-Geuk, Kim Hyung-Jung, and Kim Tae-Jin.

His blood boiled because of all of that, but he couldn’t force the soldiers to do anything they didn’t want to.

The operation required the soldiers to be prepared to die. Kang Chan could inform them and advise them, but he wouldn’t or couldn’t drag them along.

Cha Dong-Gyun’s cheek twitched. He took two steps forward.

“Lieutenant Cha Dong-Gyun, volunteering for live ammo training!” he shouted through clenched teeth, gripping a helmet and a vest.

“Sergeant Yoo Kwang-Yeol, volunteering for live ammo training!”

“Staff Sergeant Park Dae-Gi, volunteering for live ammo training!”

“Second Lieutenant Yoon Sung-Gi, volunteering for live ammo training!”

The soldiers declared their intentions with strong resolve as if they were making a pact. They stepped forward one by one, grabbed their helmet and vest, and put them on.

“You punks!” Choi Seong-Geon bellowed stiffly as he watched the soldiers with gritted teeth.

Kim Tae-Jin looked up at the sky to hide his red eyes.

“Officer! After you provide live ammo, call all the medical officers who are available and have them report here!” Choi Seong-Geon shouted.

“Yes, sir!” his aide replied.

Even as Choi Seong-Geon gave the order, the determined soldiers continued picking up their helmets and vests with clenched teeth.

Kang Chan descended down to the barracks and picked up his own equipment.

“God of Blackfield!”

Just then, Cha Dong-Gyun called for Kang Chan, his voice strong and resolute.

“If South Korea’s special forces will be able to launch preemptive attacks as a result of this training, I will gladly give my life!”

When Kang Chan turned to him, Cha Dong-Gyun neatly turned half a circle and faced the soldiers.

“What is our motto?!” he shouted.

“If I can protect my motherland with my blood, I am happy!”

Their shout, fierce and intense, echoed proudly throughout the mountains as their blood boiled further.

Chapter 140.1: Even If It Means Death (1)

After the soldiers wore their helmets and bulletproof vests and strapped on their radios, the officer came out with a stiff, unreadable expression. He had magazines in his hands.

Thunk. Thunk.

The sound of the magazines being set down on the ground weighed down Kang Chan’s heart.

Click.

Kang Chan detached the magazine from his rifle and loaded it with 9mm bullets, the tip of each one looking sharper than a bayonet. After inserting the magazine back with a clank, he pointed his gun’s muzzle at the ground and started to load bullets into his spare magazine.

When Seok Kang-Ho began to load his own rifle, the other soldiers rushed to fill their magazines as well.

An icy, anxious tension as cold as the winter wind hung over the barracks.

“Please give us pistol rounds as well,” Kang Chan requested. Choi Seong-Geon nodded.

Although Choi Seong-Geon didn't say anything, his complex emotions could be clearly seen in his eyes.

His aide returned with pistol magazines.

Clank! Clank!

Kang Chan pulled the breechblock and inserted bullets in. The tension in the atmosphere was so thick and taut that it felt as if the soldiers would snap with a single touch.

Vroom!

Military ambulances marked with white crosses arrived one after another. Army surgeons, medics, and nursing officers rushed off the vehicles with bewildered expressions.

An army surgeon quickly ran forward and saluted Choi Seong-Geon.

"We'll be doing live ammo training. Stay on standby. There may be casualties," Choi Seong-Geon directed.

"Pardon, sir?" the army surgeon asked, doubting his ears.

"Hurry and prepare medical facilities inside the barracks!" Choi Seong-Geon shouted with a piercing gaze, which he had developed during his time on the battlefield. At the sight, the intimidated army surgeon sprang into action.

With all the preparations made, Kang Chan walked up the stairs in front of the barracks.

"No automatic or repeated fire. Use single shots or don't fire at all. If anyone gets injured, the one responsible for the injury will help the injured back to the barracks, understood? Team One, step forward!" Kang Chan shouted.

Eight of the men quickly came forward with Cha Dong-Gyun at the forefront.

"Team Two!"

This time, eleven soldiers swiftly took a step forward.

"I will command Team One, and Seok Kang-Ho will command Team Two," Kang Chan announced.

The members of Team Two swiftly glanced at Seok Kang-Ho to confirm their team leader.

"The remaining soldiers will be the occupying force. You will be commanded by President Kim Tae-Jin and Director Suh Sang-Hyun! Now, as for the objectives of Team One and Team Two..."

Kang Chan looked at the soldiers one by one before continuing, "You will be responsible for the complete annihilation of the occupying force."

Kim Tae-Jin let out a low sigh.

"The occupying forces will depart first, and Team One and Team Two will depart twenty minutes after. Does anyone have any questions?" Kang Chan asked.

“Can we hide inside the buildings?” Kim Tae-Jin immediately spoke up.

“Of course,” Kang Chan answered.

“The training could last for a long time, then,” Kim Tae-Jin warned with concern.

“This is a training simulation to assess the abilities of the soldiers. We will continue until there are only twelve men standing. Any soldier who fails to fire even a single shot during this training will be disqualified,” Kang Chan announced.

“This is madness,” Choi Seong-Geon muttered to himself and quickly glanced around.

“Occupying forces, you may now leave,” Kang Chan ordered.

It was currently around eight in the morning.

Kim Tae-Jin and his team checked their radio frequencies and set off in trucks and jeeps.

Choi Seong-Seon, his aide, and the army surgeons looked more nervous than the soldiers were.

“Who is the most senior soldier here?” Kim Tae-Jin asked.

“I am, sir. I’m First Lieutenant Kwak Cheol-Ho.”

“You’re now the commanding officer, Lieutenant,”

“Will that be all right?” Kwak Cheol-Ho sounded uncertain.

“This is a real mission, and someone could actually die. I’ve lost my touch, while you’re currently on active duty. It’s only right that you’re in charge. Now that we’ve proceeded with this mission, we might as well win.”

Kwak Cheol-Ho looked at Kim Tae-Jin with a puzzled expression. He clearly couldn’t understand why the DMZ legend, someone who had retired long ago, was going this far.

“Lieutenant Kwak,” Kim Tae-Jin said.

“Yes, sir,” Kwak Cheol-Ho immediately replied.

“I’d be willing to die if it means I can help you all gain combat experience.”

“I understand, sir,” Kwak Cheol-Ho responded as he gritted his teeth. He then turned around. “Did all of you hear what he said?”

“Yes, sir!” the soldiers replied.

“Let’s put our lives on the line and do this properly! We will show the abilities of South Korea’s special forces team to the God of Blackfield and our very own DMZ legend! What is our motto?!” Kwak Cheol-Ho rallied.

“If I can protect my motherland with my blood, I am happy!”

“Good! You will be divided into three teams. Jang Gwang-Jik!”

“Yes, sir!” the second lieutenant replied.

“You will take over the three-story building. Annihilate our enemies!” Kwak Cheol-Ho commanded.

Jang Gwang-Jik turned around and called ten of the soldiers before dashing off together.

“Ha Jung-Kook!” Kwak Cheol-Ho called.

“Yes, sir,” the staff sergeant responded.

“Occupy the rear building and provide them with cover!” Kwak Cheol-Ho ordered.

“Yes, sir!”

Ha Jung-Kook also took ten men and hurried up the two-story building that was in front of them.

After giving commands, Kwak Cheol-Ho turned to Kim Tae-Jin.

“Sir! I intend on using that building over there as our base,” Kwak Cheol-Ho said.

“I said you’re in charge! Don’t report to me,” Kim Tae-Jin insisted.

“Thank you, sir. Then as for the two of you, please watch over the rooftop of this building with two other soldiers,” Kwak Cheol-Ho requested.

“Got it. Let’s go!” Kim Tae-Jin shouted.

Kim Tae-Jin and Suh Sang-Hyun left with two men.

“Are you really going to do this, sir?” Suh Sang-Hyun asked as they ran up the flights.

“You do know why Lieutenant Kwak assigned us separately on the rooftop, don’t you?” Kim Tae-Jin asked.

“He was nicely telling us to stay out of action, wasn’t he?” Suh Sang-Hyun snorted.

Bam!

Kim Tae-Jin slammed open the rooftop door, which was protruding from the roof like a rooftop apartment. He leaned on a wall where he could see the entrance and slid to the floor.

“I can’t remember the last time I was this nervous,” Kim Tae-Jin remarked.

“This is absurd,” Suh Sang-Hyun agreed.

Kim Tae-Jin chuckled lightly as if he was thinking the same thing.

“I never imagined Kang Chan would have us train using live ammo,” Kim Tae-Jin said in disbelief.

“Like I said, it’s absurd. If they get shot in the wrong part of their arms or legs, they’ll have to retire. A single mistake can leave them with a hole in their head,” Suh Sang-Hyun griped with concern.

Kim Tae-Jin turned his gaze toward Suh Sang-Hyun. “Did you see the soldiers’ faces earlier?”

“They looked like they were going to a real war zone.”

“Exactly. That’s probably what Kang Chan is aiming for. Even Kang Chan will die if he’s hit in the head with a bullet. Do you think he would conduct this kind of training without knowing that? I’m so grateful I could cry,” Kim Tae-Jin said.

“You already cried earlier,” Suh Sang-Hyun flatly replied.

Kim Tae-Jin laughed abashedly. Not long after, three siren bells that signaled the start of the training echoed throughout the makeshift city.

“This is ridiculous!” Suh Sang-Hyun yelled.

“Whew, pull yourself together,” Kim Tae-Jin told himself as he smacked his own helmet.

-What? Training with live ammo?

“Yes, sir. We have army surgeons waiting on standby since there could be accidents,” Choi Seong-Geon.

Choi Seong-Geon was standing in front of the barracks with his left hand on his waist.

“If a problem arises because of this training, I will take full responsibility and resign. However, if any of the men are injured or something worse happens, please assist them in making sure they receive help from the government,” Choi Seong-Geon requested.

-Understood. I will speak with the head of the National Intelligence Service to make sure that happens.

“Thank you, sir,” Choi Seong-Geon said.

-How’s the training progressing?

“The men just left,” Choi Seong-Geon replied.

-How’s the atmosphere?

“It’s reminiscent of a real-life operation. I couldn’t bring myself to convince the soldiers otherwise when I saw the look in their eyes.”

-We taught those men what they know. Let's put our faith in them.

"I wouldn't know what else to do if we still couldn't launch a preemptive attack after going through all this," Choi Seong-Geon said darkly.

-I understand.

With that response, Jeon Dae-Geuk ended the call.

Choi Seong-Geon roughly palmed his face with his left hand.

It took about five minutes to walk to their destination, an area that was a hundred meters away. From there, one could travel on a mountain path and get a view of the makeshift city.

"Cha Dong-Gyun, how long will it take to get through the mountains and reach the stock firm building?" Kang Chan asked.

Cha Dong-Gyun looked at Kang Chan with a surprised expression but still replied, "It should only take twenty minutes since there's already a path to it for our training course."

Kang Chan turned to Seok Kang-Ho.

"I'll head around back. Stay on standby here and initiate the operation when it's time to enter the city," Kang Chan ordered.

"Got it."

Kang Chan nodded, and Cha Dong-Gyun started for the mountains.

"Post two guards. The rest can rest," Seok Kang-Ho commanded. Kang Chan also headed into the mountains after listening to Seok Kang-Ho give his orders.

To the left was an uphill path, and to the right, they could occasionally see one of the city's buildings.

The soldiers standing on guard were excellent. Just as Kang Chan had noticed when he was running with them, they had clearly developed well-practiced stances through extensive training.

"Stop," Kang Chan ordered.

Cha Dong-Gyun quickly glanced back.

Kang Chan quickly scanned his surroundings and pressed a finger against his mouth. He then pointed each soldier to their spots.

In response, the soldiers quickly and silently took their positions.

Kang Chan sharply observed the entrance path. Something didn't feel right. An ambush was likely waiting for them. He observed the corner where they would enter, then waved Cha Dong-Gyun over.

"There's a high probability of an ambush ahead. Let's descend from the mountain this way."

"Understood, sir," Cha Dong-Gyun whispered.

Relying on the trees for support, Kang Chan began to step down the mountains. Due to the rustling of the grass and leaves, it was impossible to completely eliminate any sound.

They were now about twenty meters away.

Having infiltrated the outer road of the city, Kang Chan raised his index finger and signaled to his front. The rest of the members cautiously descended one by one.

Chapter 140.2: Even If It Means Death (1)

“They’re taking too long,” a soldier said.

“Keep waiting on standby!” Kwak Cheol-Ho commanded through clenched teeth. His palms were drenched in sweat.

‘Is this what the God of Blackfield is aiming for?’

Anxiety and nervousness were apparent on the soldiers’ faces. It was as if they were in a real fight.

Kwak Cheol-Ho glared at the entrance path. At that moment...

Bang! Bang!

“Agh!”

The two gunshots were immediately followed by shouts.

Kwak Cheol-Ho’s head instinctively whipped around. Which bastard had actually shot live ammo?

Seeing the soldiers’ surprised faces, Kwak Cheol-Ho gritted his teeth further.

“It sounds like it has started!” Suh Sang-Hyun whispered frantically to Kim Tae-Jin, who had turned around from his leaning position against the wall so he could scan his surroundings.

At that moment...

Bang! Bang!

Holes were bored on the wall of the rooftop he was resting on.

Kim Tae-Jin urgently got down on the ground.

“Argh! This is driving me insane!” Suh Sang-Hyun agitatedly complained, speaking the words in Kim Tae-Jin’s mind.

Cha Dong-Gyun was dumbfounded. It wasn’t just him. The other soldiers and even Choi Jong-Il, who already had experience with Kang Chan from the day before, looked astounded.

The moment Kang Chan found two of the enemy soldiers, he rushed toward them while shooting at them.

The soldiers were wearing bulletproof vests, but the two sentries still fell back as if someone had pulled them by the napes.

What if he shoots them in the neck, chest, or inner thighs by accident?

Kang Chan was not only shooting at his enemies. He was running while doing so. Was he that confident in his skills?

Cha Dong-Gyun quickly glanced at Choi Dong-Il.

Was this what live ammo training truly was? For the first time, Cha Dong-Gyun's fingers began to tremble. His fingers wouldn't have trembled to this extent if Kang Chan was an enemy.

Seok Kang-Ho glared fiercely at the soldiers.

"You and you, head back!" he growled at the soldier who hadn't provided cover fire and the soldier who was supposed to rush forward.

"Please give me one more chance!" the soldier pleaded.

"Head back, you motherfuckers! Everyone could've died because of you bastards!" Seok Kang-Ho shouted.

"I won't run away from the fight again! Please give me a chance!"

Seok Kang-Ho gritted his teeth and glared at the soldier.

"Think about why Captain is doing this! Anyone will die if they get shot in the head, but he's still risking his life for this training. Do you think doing this stimulation will benefit Captain or me in any way? From now on, I will mercilessly send away anyone who doesn't listen to my orders."

The soldiers clenched their teeth.

"Get a visual on the base!"

The soldier who begged for another opportunity turned to look at their target.

"Cover me!" Seok Kang-Ho shouted as he suddenly leaned forward and aimed his gun at the opposite building's rooftop.

Pew! Pew! Pew! Pew!

The rooftop spewed out cement dust.

"Hahahaha!" Suh Sang-Hyun laughed bitterly.

Kim Tae-Jin glanced at their other two team members.

"Return fire."

Seeing the tense expressions on the soldiers' faces, Kim Tae-Jin realized why Kang Chan had chosen to conduct this kind of training.

Pew! Pew! Pew!

He quickly fired his gun and hid behind the wall with a thud

. He had no particular target and just shot in the direction of the mountain.

However, he had to do this if he wanted to bring the team members to reality. Their foreheads could be pierced by bullets, and their necks could be blown up too.

‘Have courage. I’m sorry. It’s our fault that you are all like this.’

Swoosh! Pew! Pew!

When he got up and fired two shots, a few bullets from the opposite side hit the wall.

“Haah! Haah!”

Kim Tae-Jin gasped for breath. However, there was a faint smile on his lips. He had seen the determination on the faces of the two soldiers.

‘Thank you. Take advantage of this opportunity to grow.’

Suddenly, Kang Chan’s face flashed in his mind. Kim Tae-Jin thought the long-cherished wish he held his whole life could actually come true.

Pew!

“Aah!”

Seeing Kang Chan wave him over, Choi Jong-Il rushed to his side.

His mouth was dry. The soldier who had flown back earlier like his nape was dragged was still down. Even so, Kang Chan led their team members forward with hand gestures.

Aside from Kang Chan, no one had fired their guns yet.

There won’t be any point to the training then!

Choi Jong-Il suddenly got an ominous feeling. Soldiers who couldn’t fire a single shot would be eliminated without exception. Choi Jong-Il had witnessed Kim Hyung-Jung, Kim Tae-Jin, and Jeon Dae-Geuk’s frustration more closely than anyone else. They had despaired multiple times after having to give up on missions despite trying to prepare for them.

‘I’m not going to let that happen this time! I’m going on this mission!’

Choi Jong-Il knew where Kang Chan’s target was.

Click!

Seeing something move, Choi Jong-Il quickly aimed his rifle.

Pew! Pow!

“Ugh!”

Thud.

“Haah! Haah!”

However, Kang Chan fired and landed a bullet first.

Choi Jong-Il couldn't even pull the trigger because he was scared.

Kang Chan smirked as he looked at Choi Jong-Il.

‘Was my skill only at this pathetic level?’

Choi Jong-Il's pride was severely hurt.

“Please let me go,” Choi Jong-Il pleaded.

Kang Chan had ordered them not to speak, but Choi Jong-Il couldn't bear it.

It was true that he was more scared of pulling the trigger on his fellow soldiers than getting shot himself. However, even if he couldn't be as daring as Kang Chan, at the very least, he had to aim for the enemy soldiers' bulletproof vests.

Kang Chan nodded and pointed to a location with his finger. He then raised his fingers and began to count.

One, two...!

Pew! Pew! Swoosh! Pow!

While Choi Jong-Il ran to his target, his team members covered his back. The enemy soldiers returned fire. Someone had finally pulled the trigger from the other side.

It gave Choi Jong-Il peace of mind. He didn't have to be scared of shooting anymore. It looked as if Cha Dong-Gyun was requesting Kang Chan to send him too.

“Hahahaha,” Choi Jong-Il let out a strange laugh.

Pew! Pow!

“Aaaahh!”

One member from Team Two, the team that Seok Kang-Ho was leading, fell to the ground, clutching his thigh. The dirt around him was quickly stained red with blood.

Crackle.

“The soldier who just fired has to hurry and help the injured member back!” Seok Kang-Ho shouted into the radio.

Crackle!

“Got it. I'm heading down,” Kim Tae-Jin replied to Seok Kang-Ho's radio transmission. All the soldiers could listen to this channel.

“Argh, damn it!”

Choi Seong-Geon swallowed the curses at the tip of his tongue and slammed his desk after listening to the radio. He was smoking so many cigarettes that his glass ashtray was already half full.

“Where’s the ambulance?” Choi Seong-Geon asked.

“The army surgeon is waiting on standby at the entrance,” his aide informed him.

There was no knowing where the injured soldier was shot or how much he was hurt.

“Motherfucker!” Choi Seong-Geon swore.

Choi Seong-Geon had devoted all of this time to raising these soldiers to the point that he almost didn’t have time to take care of his own children.

You are the strength that supports this country! You are as strong as any elite team in the world!

That was what he genuinely believed, and he habitually repeated those words to the soldiers too.

Unable to contain his frustration, Choi Seong-Geon stepped out of the barracks to cool down.

‘Endure and get through this! You will be the soldiers rewriting the history of South Korea’s special forces.’

Rough engine sounds began to approach the barracks, and dust rose from the mountain road.

“Just how much did he get hurt?!” Choi Seong-Geon growled as he cursed at the vehicle with a white cross that was coming toward him from afar.

Pew! Pew! Pew!

The members of Team Two acted as if they were beside themselves. Although the one who shot their team member was their colleague, they were aggressively firing back at the other side as if he had fallen from the bullet of an enemy.

Whoosh!

Their muscles had been stiff from nervousness, but they were all ready to go now.

A team member dashed forward and dove toward the ground as he aimed his rifle.

Seok Kang-Ho watched him with a satisfied smirk.

The occupying forces were inside the building. It was difficult to know how many were waiting inside, but Team One had completely blocked the entrance of the building to prevent anyone from getting out.

Kang Chan pointed at his position with his finger, and the rest of the team members immediately understood his plan to also block off the other side.

Pew! Pew! Swoosh! Pow!

This was the dictionary definition of urban warfare. The walls that concealed the soldiers crumbled, leaving cement dust rising as they did.

Everyone was aware of what happened over the radio.

Not long after, shadows appeared at the entrance of the building.

Pew! Clang!

The head of the soldier standing at the entrance jerked back, and he fell to the ground.

‘This man can’t be real.’

Cha Dong-Gyun was filled with disbelief and shocked beyond words.

The interior of the entrance was dark, and it was difficult to make out any shapes. However, Kang Chan still managed to land a bullet on the soldier’s helmet from twenty meters away.

If this was one of their common training situations and he was given the time, Cha Dong-Gyun was confident he could accurately hit his target as well. However, Kang Chan just suddenly sprang up from where he was giving them directions and made the shot.

The soldiers of the occupying forces were shooting furiously in their direction from inside the building.

What are you gonna do now?

That seemed to be what Kang Chan’s eyes were asking them, taunting them.

‘I’ll do it, and I’ll do it properly. Mark my words.’

Cha Dong-Gyun didn’t want to give up and run away here.

If all of them could fight as well as Kang Chan in actual combat situations... if Kang Chan’s dexterity came from extreme and grim operations that resulted in the deaths of half the team members, Cha Dong-Gyun would willingly put his life on the line to learn Kang Chan’s combat style and experience.

Kang Chan smirked. This was the first time he had smiled during the operation.

With a determined look, Cha Dong-Gyun glowered at the location Kang Chan pointed to.