

Blackfield 141

Chapter 141.1: Even if it means death (2)

A buzz came from the radio.

“He was hit in the arm. The soldier who shot him needs to take him to the medics, now!”

Crackle.

“A soldier by the entrance was hit in the thigh! Whoever shot him better hurry and evacuate him!”

Crackle.

“A soldier just fainted! Get him out of here now!”

A series of radio transmissions were heard from inside the barracks. The army surgeon quickly glanced at Choi Seong-Geon and rushed outside.

Four of the medics already had their hands and arms drenched in blood. Meanwhile, a soldier lying on an improvised cot barely managed to regain consciousness.

A nursing officer looked at Choi Seong-Geon while switching the soldier’s blood bag. The soldier’s ruptured blood vessels had been sealed off, but that was only a temporary solution. If they wasted any more time, they would have to amputate his arm.

“What the hell are they doing?! Why are they late?!” Choi Seong-Geon shouted in frustration. Unable to control his temper, he exhaled heavily.

After some time, ambulance sirens echoed from a distance, followed by the blade slaps of a helicopter.

“They’re here! Prepare the soldiers for medevac!”

Vroom! Creaaak!

The soldiers who had already taken out soldiers from the enemy team all dashed outside.

The soldiers who required medical attention had different wounds. One had an arm covered in blood, while another was shot in the thigh. There was also the unconscious soldier who had been carried inside the barracks on a stretcher.

“The bullet went through him! Prepare to stop the bleeding!” urgently shouted a medical officer. His uniform was drenched in so much blood it was almost black. It evidenced just how chaotic the scene was.

Chuf, chuf, chuf, chuf, chuf.

Helicopter chops continued to echo in the background.

“Get all the patients to a hospital! You go along with them, and report the situation while you’re there!”

“Yes, sir!” the medical officer replied. A strong gust of dust blew through the windows of the barracks, which were shaking so hard it seemed as if they would crack at any moment.

The soldiers rushed forward to transport the patients on stretchers. Meanwhile, the army surgeon pushed aside the medical officer and gave the unconscious soldier chest compressions.

“This is madness! They’re all out of their minds!”

“Gasp! Huff, huff!”

“Haah, haah!”

When the soldier finally began to breathe again, the army surgeon slumped heavily into a nearby chair, both relieved and worn out.

Helicopter noises, blood-soaked soldiers, and shocked medical officers... This was no different from a warzone.

Ring. Ring. Ring.

“The line is secure! This is Training Site Thirty-Seven! Yes, sir! Yes! Understood, sir!” Choi Seong-Geon’s aide nervously replied.

Choi Seong-Geon turned when his aide answered a call. His aide handed him the phone with a bewildered expression.

The exact location of this training site had been kept a secret, and none of the soldiers here had disclosed their ranks or positions to anyone. Since they had gone to such lengths to keep the area secured, it was extremely rare for them to have to answer any phone calls.

Did something urgent happen that required the skills of the special forces team?

“Who is it?” Choi Seong-Geon asked.

“It’s from the Blue House, sir,” his aide replied.

“What?” Choi Seong-Geon asked in surprise, quickly taking the phone. “This is Choi Seong-Geon.”

-General Choi, this is Moon Jae-Hyun.

“Sir! This is Brigadier General Choi Seong-Geon, sir!” Choi Seong-Geon robustly shouted.

The army surgeon, nursing officer, and medical officers curiously looked over, wondering who he was speaking so politely to.

In the meantime, the helicopter took off to take the injured soldiers to a hospital, and the soldiers who had carried the stretchers were returning back inside the barracks.

-I heard you’re conducting a special kind of training, General. I apologize. It’s because I’m not capable enough as the president that our country’s soldiers have to train in ways others do not. I

am not supposed to know why the soldiers are receiving this training. That's the only way I can keep our nation safe. However, General Choi, no matter what happens, I will take full responsibility. I swear on my title to protect you and the rest of the soldiers.

Choi Seong-Geon clenched his teeth and turned his gaze out the window, feeling an overwhelming surge of sentimentality.

-Thank you, General. I sincerely apologize to the soldiers. Please deliver my gratitude to them as the president and a man who loves South Korea from the bottom of his heart.

“Yes, sir,” Choi Seong-Geon said, throat choking with emotion. The fact that someone recognized the soldiers’ efforts in going through this hellish training and understood why they had to do this made his heart swell.

-If there is anything you should need, you can reach me through Section Chief Jeon. I'm sure that's the easiest way to establish communication with me.

“We are already receiving everything we need, sir.”

Crackle.

“There’s a new patient! Hurry and transport him!”

Crackle.

“Got it!”

The army surgeon, a medical officer, and the soldiers swiftly ran outside as if they were dodging bullets.

-I leave this in your capable hands, General Choi.

Moon Jae-Hyun attempted to finish up the call quickly, likely having heard the radio transmission over the phone.

“Mr. President,” Choi Seong-Geon began.

-Yes, go ahead, General.

“If I can protect my country with my blood, I am happy,” he said firmly.

-I believe that is the motto of our special forces, isn't it? I didn't know you possessed the talent to make people tear up, General. Then... I will contact you again at another time.

The line was disconnected.

Choi Seong-Geon wasn’t certain if proceeding with this training was the right thing to do, but the moment he shouted the special forces’ motto, something inside him began to blaze.

When he handed the phone to his aide, a patient entered the barracks. The army surgeon applied pressure on the shin of the soldier, who was lying on a stretcher.

Choi Seong-Geon furrowed his brows and looked at the soldier.

“Haah!” he exclaimed. He gritted his teeth and walked out of the barracks.

The two soldiers sitting at the entrance sprang to their feet. Choi Seong-Geon pulled out some cigarettes from his pocket and offered them to the soldiers.

“We’re all right, sir.”

“Just take it, punks,” Choi Seong-Geon stated.

“Thank you, sir.”

Choi Seong-Geon was the only one who had a lighter with him, so the soldiers politely held their cigarettes to him to light them up. They turned their heads to the side as they breathed out puffs of smoke.

“Haaah.”

Choi Seong-Geon saw a few soldiers approaching the barracks through the smoke he exalted. They were most likely the soldiers who had gotten shot but on their bulletproof vests.

Some of the soldiers who were shot in the solar plexus were carried in on stretchers because they had lost consciousness. The shock of the bullet’s impact had rendered a few of them unable to breathe.

“General Choi!” they greeted as they saluted him.

“Take a smoke, men,” Choi Seong-Geon responded.

The soldiers tried to politely refuse but when they saw the look in his eyes, they quickly accepted the cigarettes. Again, Choi Seong-Geon didn’t hand them the lighter but instead lit their cigarettes for them instead.

It had already been three hours since the training started at eight in the morning.

Cha Dong-Gyun’s eyes glinted as sharply as Choi Jong-Il’s piercing gaze.

He could see them. The moving shapes in front of him were way clearer than when they had first begun training.

Pew! Pew! Pew!

The occupying forces were also shooting back at them with the firm intent to hit them. Hence, neither side could make any hasty movements.

‘So this is the purpose of this training!’

His comrades were carried out in stretchers, bloodied in the blink of an eye.

His senses had become so heightened it was as if he could feel every hair on his body. The moment he made a single mistake, bullets would come flying at his bulletproof vest or helmet. Worse, if he was unlucky, he’d end up with a hole in his arms and legs.

This was incomparable to the mock battles they had. That kind of training couldn’t even come close to this.

Pew! Pew!

The moment Woo Hee-Seung leaned forward to take a look, bullets immediately came shooting in his direction. At this rate, this wouldn't end even if night came. They had already used every drop of energy they had and were now just hanging on through pure resolve.

He never imagined he would experience this in a mock battle.

Bang! Bang! Pew! Pew! Pew!

Cha Dong-Gyun fired three consecutive shots from his position to cover Woo Hee-Seung, who ran out.

Just then, the radios began to crackle.

“This is the God of Blackfield. The morning training is over. I repeat. The morning training is over. Everyone, gather at the entrance,” commanded Kang Chan.

“Haaaaaaah,” Suh Sang-Hyun sighed as he leaned his head against the wall.

Creak.

Even though they had been informed that the training was over, Suh Sang-Hyun still reflexively raised his gun, and Kim Tae-Jin aimed his rifle with a click.

It was Team Two. They had reached the entrance of the rooftop.

Seeing Seok Kang-Ho's smirk as he stepped on the rooftop, Suh Sang-Hyun scowled.

“Are you all right? Let's head back down,” Seok Kang-Ho said.

Did this man not get nervous?

Click. Click.

Suh Sang-Hyun whipped his gaze around every time he heard the sound of a gun. It had become instinctive to him now.

“Good work, everyone!”

Team One, which Kang Chan led, and the occupying forces that were led by Kwak Cheol-Ho arrived at the entrance with their guns pointed at the ground.

Kim Tae-Jin was running on fumes at this point, but he cast Kang Chan a curious look, wondering why he stopped the training.

“The agents are too tired. If we go any further with the training, some of the soldiers will actually die,” Kang Chan explained.

Kim Tae-Jin nodded in understanding. He was aware that even his own focus had waned. He had a little less than half left to go in him.

They all left the makeshift city and walked down the mountain path. They were so tired that a hundred meters seemed like a kilometer.

“Is the training done for today, then?” Kim Tae-Jin asked.

“I’m planning on picking back up with it after lunch,” Kang Chan answered.

“I see,” Kim Tae-Jin responded.

MatchaMaker's Thoughts

I heard you're conducting a special kind of training, General. I apologize. It's because I'm not capable enough as the president that our country's soldiers have to train in ways others do not. I am not supposed to know why the soldiers are receiving this training. That's the only way I can keep our nation safe. However, General Choi, no matter what happens, I will take full responsibility. I swear on my title to protect you and the rest of the soldiers.

Invictum: Not sure if it's because it's 4:30am and I haven't gotten any sleep yet but I DID NOT EXPECT THIS NOVEL TO MAKE ME TEAR UP A BIT WOW. MOON HYE-JIN FOR PRESIDENT(AGAIN)

Chapter 141.2: Even if it means death (2)

“Sirs!”

Choi Seong-Geon, who was in front of the barracks with the soldiers who were shot, greeted Kang Chan and the rest of his party from where he was standing.

“We will proceed with afternoon training after lunch,” Kang Chan said.

“Got it.”

Choi Seong-Geon replied with a nod instead of speaking, but it wasn't out of ill intent.

Kang Chan stepped up the stairs in front of the barracks.

“After your meal, you will have two hours to rest. Get an hour of sleep. Doesn't matter if you can't fall asleep. You have no choice. You never know when mountain warfare will end up lasting into nighttime,” Kang Chan stated.

“You plan to keep this up at night too?” Choi Seong-Geon suddenly chimed.

It was already this hellish in the morning. If they trained at night, the soldiers could actually die. Even so, Choi Seong-Geon had no choice but to accept it. After all, the soldiers' eyes were blazing more furiously than ever before.

“Enjoy your lunch, sir.”

Every soldier who passed by Kang Chan greeted him, holding their trays of food. There was no exception to this.

“Ha,” Suh Sang-Hyun scoffed as he ate a big spoonful of rice.

Red, spicy pork, white rice, and five different kinds of side dishes were prepared for the men. If the soldiers wanted, they could choose to have hamburgers instead. There were also three types of fruit stacked up next to one side of the serving table. They had three soup options as well: spicy beef soup, short rib soup, and soybean paste soup.

“What do you think of the men now that you’ve trained with them?” Kim Tae-Jin asked as he raised a spoonful of short rib soup. He only asked the question out of curiosity, but all the soldiers eagerly waited for Kang Chan’s answer.

“I think I’ll have to apologize,” Kang Chan said.

“For what?” Kim Tae-Jin asked.

“They were trained to a higher standard than I initially thought. More than anything, their determination and sense of duty are definitely worthy of praise,” Kang Chan replied.

Kim Tae-Jin abruptly stopped eating and looked at Kang Chan, the spoon in his hand hanging halfway toward his mouth.

“Are you sure you’re not just saying that to make me feel good?” Kim Tae-Jin asked suspiciously.

“To get the hang of live ammo training this fast...” Kang Chan trailed off musingly. “The Foreign Legion would probably have to repeat this training at least ten to fifteen times to get used to it. The special forces soldiers are skilled in that regard. We haven’t suffered any deaths yet, either.”

Kim Tae-Jin grinned until Kang Chan continued.

“Of course, none of the soldiers have managed to shoot at their opponents’ helmets yet.”

In response, Kim Tae-Jin quickly filled his mouth with rice. Before slightly bending over to drink some of the soup, he asked, “You all heard what he said, didn’t you?”

Kang Chan scanned the faces of the soldiers inside the cafeteria.

“I’ll have to admit, I judged you men too harshly in the beginning. I apologize for that. Let’s wrap up our afternoon training with gusto. After the training, let’s get some fresh air in a few days,” Kang Chan said.

“Are you referring to the preemptive attack, sir?” a soldier asked.

Kang Chan smirked in reply instead of answering the question.

Kang Chan’s party leisurely finished their meal and sat in front of the barracks, enjoying some bagged coffee and cigarettes.

“Sang-Hyun and I will skip out on the afternoon training,” Kim Tae-Jin said.

“Got it. I don’t think you have to worry about the soldiers any more, given their abilities,” Kang Chan assured him.

Kim Tae-Jin looked at Kang Chan as the latter drank his coffee from a paper cup.

At the mess hall, Kim Tae-Jin had seen the soldiers willingly following Kang Chan. They observed Kang Chan’s every word, gaze, and even the movements of his hands.

If this kind of commander leads an operation, and his team actually gets to infiltrate another country...

Kang Chan gazed at Kim Tae-Jin as if to ask why he was giving him that look.

“I’m just looking at you because I like you!” Kim Tae-Jin jokingly said, then grinned. He felt happiness so pure he felt like a child again. “Ahem!”

He was feeling sleepy and cozy, probably because he had eaten lunch, and the tension he felt had disappeared.

“Why don’t you get some sleep, sir?” Kang Chan suggested.

“Sounds like a good idea,” Kim Tae-Jin said. Soon after, he headed back inside the barracks.

The soldiers also returned to the barracks one by one. It seemed like they were doing it to follow Kang Chan’s instructions, not because they were drowsy. They had taken Kang Chan’s commands to sleep as part of their training.

Kang Chan took out his phone and checked if there were any missed calls.

“These kids aren’t to be taken lightly, Cap. They’re pretty strong,” Seok Kang-Ho said as he bit on a new cigarette. “But they still lack experience. They were only slightly better than the recruits from the operation in Mongolia, really. Are you really planning to go with just these soldiers?”

“What else can I do? They’re all determined to put their lives on the line just so they can come.”

“Argh! This won’t be easy, huh?” Seok Kang-Ho sighed.

“Do you want to rest for the upcoming training session?” Kang Chan asked.

“What are you talking about? I was just saying that this is not going to be easy, not that I’m going to stop,” Seok Kang-Ho asserted. He looked a little shocked by Kang Chan’s offer.

“Are you really feeling okay? Your wounds aren’t acting up?” Kang Chan asked, concerned.

“About that... I’m pretty much all healed now. There’s seriously no reason anymore for me to still have bandages wrapped around me.”

Seok Kang-Ho's recovery speed was now nearly on par with Kang Chan's. Was it because he had received the energy of the Blackhead diamond?

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho also got about an hour of sleep. By the time they had washed their faces and headed out of the barracks, Kim Tae-Jin and Suh Sang-Hyun were already there.

The soldiers bustled around as they washed up, preparing for what was to come this afternoon.

They had only finished morning training, but their faces were already so gaunt it was as if they had trained for a full day.

Buzz. Buzz. Buzz.

Kang Chan's phone began to ring. He had kept it on him since they still had some break time left.

"Mr. Ambassador? This is Kang Chan," he answered.

-Mr. Kang Chan, where are you right now?

"I'm in the Jeungpyeong area right now. Why did you call?"

Kang Chan couldn't put his finger on it, but Lanok sounded different.

-The UK is preparing a surprise attack. We're thinking of launching an attack first, so I was wondering if you could command the special forces team of the Foreign Legion.

Kang Chan stared at Cha Dong-Hyun for a moment. The soldiers had gathered in preparation for the afternoon training, and they were now peeking at Kang Chan because he suddenly started to speak fluent French.

"When do I have to leave?" Kang Chan asked.

-You'll have to depart at dawn the day after tomorrow. This isn't just urgent because this will be your debut. France will suffer great damage if we can't stop the attack. We need a perfect victory like in Mongolia. I'm asking you for a personal favor right now, Mr. Kang Chan.

"I understand, Mr. Ambassador. However, I will take the South Korean special forces with me as backup," Kang Chan declared.

-This is a fight for France.

"We received help in Mongolia, so it's only fair that we repay the favor. I am actually coordinating with their soldiers right now, so it will be more comfortable to take another team with me."

-All right. What do you need me to prepare?

"I only need means of transportation and information regarding the operation. I'll head back to Seoul after this call, so let's discuss the rest when I get there."

-Thank you, Mr. Kang Chan.

By the time Kang Chan had hung up, the soldiers were already standing around him while still giving him some space.

Kang Chan stood up from where he was sitting on the steps. Kim Tae-Jin and Suh Sang-Hyun were naturally waiting for him to begin, while Choi Seong-Geon was looking at Kang Chan with a worried expression. Choi Seong-Geon seemed anxious to know how the afternoon training would be conducted.

Kang Chan strode over to Choi Seong-Geon and gestured to Kim Tae-Jin.

“What is it?” Kim Tae-Jin asked.

“Mr. Kim, I’ve just received a request from France to lead the Foreign Legion’s special forces on a preemptive attack operation on the UK. France will take care of the transportation and information and tie up any loose ends. I will choose eight members from these soldiers to join the operation as the Foreign Legion’s backup. You can’t get any better combat experience than this.”

Choi Seong-Geon quickly turned to Kim Tae-Jin. The rest of the soldiers glanced over at the three, wondering what was going on.

“Sir, do you think we can get permission for this?” Choi Seong-Geon asked Kim Tae-Jin.

“It might be hard to give official permission, but they’ll turn a blind eye if Kang Chan requests it. I heard you received help from France during the Mongolian operation,” Kim Tae-Jin replied.

Choi Seong-Geon looked at Kang Chan with his lips pressed together.

“We will have to depart at dawn the day after tomorrow. I will take eight soldiers. Please make arrangements and say they’re using their vacation days instead,” Kang Chan requested.

Choi Seong-Geon nodded with his lips protruding thickly in a pout. He then asked, “How will you select the soldiers?”

“I want to leave that to Cha Dong-Gyun.”

“All right. I take it you will be commanding this operation yourself?”

“That’s right.”

Hearing Kang Chan’s response, Choi Seong-Geon took in a deep breath and nodded. As he did, Kang Chan turned toward the soldiers and approached them.

“Today’s afternoon training is canceled,” he announced, surprising the nervous soldiers. Disappointment flashed across their faces.

“Cha Dong-Gyun,” Kang Chan began.

“Yes, sir,” Cha Dong-Gyun replied.

“I need eight soldiers to go with me on vacation at dawn the day after tomorrow. Two of those should be snipers. Create a list and request for the days off from General Choi,” Kang Chan ordered.

Cha Dong-Gyun’s expression made it difficult to tell if he was smiling or crying.

“Can you make the list?” Kang Chan asked.

“Please leave it to me, sir!” Cha Dong-Gyun replied. His sharp, pointed eyes glinted.

“We will be going as support this time. Consider it as combat training, got it?”

“Thank you, sir!”

Kang Chan laughed at the silly response.

Chapter 142.1: Just Who Is This Man? (1)

Seok Kang-Ho and Kang Chan had already left for Seoul.

Kim Tae-Jin, Suh Sang-Hyun, and Choi Seong-Geon sat in front of the barracks, drinking tea together.

“I can’t believe their participation in the French operation was decided with a single phone call. Just who is this man?” Choi Seong-Geon asked incredulously.

“You don’t have to dwell on the answer to that question. Just take what you see and feel at face value,” Kim Tae-Jin said.

Choi Seong-Geon nodded. “All this time, I thought Section Chief Jeon and you were the only scary people in this world. I didn’t know I was just a small fish in a pond.”

“I was scary? I realized that I had definitely aged when I saw you, though,” Kim Tae-Jin remarked.

“You definitely were, sir. I still clearly remember the look in your eyes when we went to and returned from the DMZ. Back then, everyone became nervous whenever you entered the barracks. From what I saw earlier, that’s how the soldiers react to Mr. Kang Chan now,” Choi Seong-Geon said.

Kim Tae-Jin nodded.

“Let’s consider ourselves lucky to have someone skilled enough to send soldiers on a real field operation so quickly. Some of the soldiers will have to make sacrifices. However, to improve and move forward, the special forces are fated to suffer such pain,” Kim Tae-Jin firmly stated.

“You’re right. We had no choice but to swallow our frustration and anger because we couldn’t obtain opportunities like this until now. The look in the soldiers’ eyes has changed. I’m both grateful and proud to have men

desperately competing against each other to go somewhere they could die,” Choi Seong-Geon said with a melancholic smile.

After some time, someone knocked on the door three times.

“What is it?” Choi Seong-Geon asked.

“It’s the list of the men who are requesting their off days, General Choi,” Cha Dong-Gyun replied as he entered.

Choi Seong-Geon accepted the paper from Cha Dong-Gyun, taken aback by how quickly it had been prepared.

“Cha Dong-Gyun, you punk! Even if I can understand Kwak Cheol-Ho being on this list, Yoo Kwang-Yeol is a newbie who has just passed his hundredth day here!” Choi Seong-Geon protested.

“Please talk to them directly, General. I can’t convince them otherwise.”

“You bastards!” Choi Seong-Geon exclaimed as he shook his head and glared at Cha Dong-Gyun.

“On a separate note, sir, I’d respectfully like to ask for you to have face-to-face talks with all the soldiers.”

“Why? Is there a problem?”

“The men who were disqualified are greatly disappointed in themselves, sir.”

Choi Seong-Geon let out a loud sigh, not knowing what to do with his men.

“I don’t understand why the UK is suddenly attacking France. It doesn’t make sense,” Seok Kang-Ho wondered.

“Did the things we did ever make any sense?” Kang Chan countered.

“Ha, that’s true,” Seok Kang-Ho agreed with a wide grin. He seemed extremely excited at the prospect of leaving on another operation. “I should probably take my wife out tomorrow, then. It’s been a while.”

“Oh, right! What day is it today?”

“It’s Thursday. Why?”

Kang Chan, who had been leaning against the window, abruptly sat up.

“That means we’ll be leaving on Saturday, doesn’t it?” Kang Chan asked, half-hoping Seok Kang-Ho would say no.

“Since we’re supposed to depart at dawn the day after tomorrow... that would be the dawn of Saturday, Cap.”

“Damn it!”

Seok Kang-Ho glanced at Kang Chan, then looked ahead again.

“I told them to make time on Saturday so we can go on a surprise trip. What should I do?” Kang Chan asked despairingly.

“You told who?” Seok Kang-Ho asked, not understanding.

“My mother and father. Damn it! They’ll be disappointed. I don’t know about my dad, but my mother seemed to be looking forward to it a lot. Tsk! What should I do?” Kang Chan wondered out loud.

Seok Kang-Ho didn’t have an answer to questions like these. Kang Chan scowled, unable to come up with a solution.

“You should discuss it with your father. That might be the best option,” Seok Kang-Ho suggested.

“I guess. I’ll talk to him after meeting Ambassador Lanok.” Kang Chan sighed again. Unfortunately, he couldn’t come up with anything right off the bat. In the car on the way to Seoul, he called Lanok and made arrangements to meet.

As Kang Chan expected, they were meeting at the embassy. Given the current circumstances, it would be unwise to meet anywhere that could leave them exposed to external forces.

Seok Kang-Ho dropped Kang Chan off at the embassy around five-thirty in the afternoon.

“You can head home without me since this can take a while if the ambassador invites me to dinner. You should stop by a hospital on your way back,” Kang Chan urged.

“You’re still saying that after seeing me in the shower stalls earlier today?” Seok Kang-Ho jokingly asked.

“Don’t take your condition lightly. Make sure you stop by a hospital before you go home,” Kang Chan rebuked.

“All right, I will. Call me if you need me. I’ll be home for the rest of the day,” Seok Kang-Ho said.

“I will,” Kang Chan responded.

Kang Chan said goodbye to Seok Kang-Ho and thumped the hood of the car before entering the embassy.

The agent standing at the entrance immediately led Kang Chan to the office once he saw him. The hallways were packed with agents today, which was unusual.

The office door opened with a click.

“Mr. Kang Chan!” Lanok greeted as he walked over and hugged Kang Chan.

The last time they met, Lanok had greeted him with a handshake instead. Kang Chan now understood how urgent and anxious Lanok was feeling, which were things he wouldn't even have any idea about in the past.

“Let's sit down, shall we?” Lanok gestured at the table.

The chairs in Lanok's office were fancy, classic, pleasing to the eyes, and comfortable. It was as if he had brought them from France's medieval times. They were a lot better than the couch.

Kang Chan suddenly wanted to gift Yoo Hye-Sook these kinds of chairs too.

Lanok poured him some tea and offered him a cigarette before lighting his own cigar.

“Let me begin by telling you about the Hadron Collider.”

With the cigar in his mouth, Lanok handed Kang Chan a few documents that he had prepared in advance. They contained the location and scale of the object and other complicated information that he couldn't understand.

“Under my country's leadership, nearly the entirety of Europe participated in creating it. Some parts of Russia even joined in. It was installed in the border area between France and Switzerland, but most of it is in France.”

Kang Chan briefly scanned the documents and put them down, focusing on Lanok's words.

“As Britain was developing their subterranean shock device, they seemed to have judged that France's Hadron Collider serves the same purpose, which is likely why they are attempting to destroy it. They have already dispatched agents to the mountainous region of Martigny Combe in Switzerland.”

“Are we up against the SAS?” Kang Chan asked.

“SBS,” Lanok replied curtly.

Kang Chan let out a low sigh. The elite among the SAS, which was remarkable in its own right already, were handpicked and trained to form the SBS, a unit that had successfully carried out undisclosed special operations not only in Europe but also in Africa and even during the Gulf War.

“We should never leave any loose ends in any operation, but it's especially important that we don't leave anything behind that can cause conflict with this specific operation. If the UK manages to find any of our traces, they will try to exploit the situation in any way they possibly can.”

Kang Chan nodded before speaking up again.

“Mr. Ambassador, the uh... Hadron Collider, was it? Can that thing actually cause earthquakes?”

“There are many misconceptions about it. Simply put, yes, it can. However, it is impossible for France to independently modify it for such a purpose, considering more than twenty thousand people collaborated to create it.”

It was difficult to discern this snake’s true intention from his words alone. Unless Britain was a fool, they would obviously know about what Lanok said as well. Perhaps they were aware but decided to attack anyway to find a reason to pick a fight with France.

For now, Kang Chan decided to trust Lanok.

“If the SBS is already there, aren’t we late already?” Kang Chan asked.

“The mobilization of the special forces of the Foreign Legion was delayed by a day. There’s only one spot for the title of ‘best team,’ after all. However, GIGN and the Unified Special Operations Command both judged that we would be at a disadvantage in this operation because it’s located in the mountains,” Lanok replied.

Since the teams were both responsible for different roles and used different equipment, what Lanok was saying was completely reasonable. Still, in operations like this, time was everything.

Only then did Kang Chan sympathize with the urgency in Lanok’s eyes.

“It will take approximately twelve hours to get to Switzerland,” Kang Chan stated, sounding concerned.

“Thirteen hours, to be specific. You will also have to travel from the Sion Base by helicopter and on foot through the mountainous area. Taking those into calculation, it will take twenty hours without breaks.”

“What if the SBS makes their move before we arrive?” Kang Chan mused.

Lanok couldn’t answer. His expression grew stiff.

“Would it be difficult to reinforce the collider’s security or strike them directly from Switzerland?” Kang Chan asked, recalling Ludwig and Vant being good friends with Lanok.

“If we inform Switzerland about this and request their assistance, we will essentially be revealing the secrets related to the subterranean shock device and the Blackhead diamond to the European intelligence agencies. Although the truth will be revealed at some point anyway, it is wiser to give up the Hadron Collider for now.”

Kang Chan nodded and lifted his cigarette.

If Cha Dong-Gyun’s team had practical combat experience—if there were just five members with skills like Dayeru, Kang Chan would have said he would depart immediately.

It wasn’t just out of his personal gratitude to Lanok. The more he gained insight into the field of intelligence, the better these kinds of operations seemed to be for establishing the reputation of

South Korea's special forces. Moreover, the subterranean shock device was created to prevent the Eurasian Rail from being built, which was all the more reason why this was significant.

Seemingly understanding Kang Chan's silence, Lanok kept quiet and just enjoyed his cigar and tea.

Chapter 142.2: Just Who is This Man? (1)

There were only two things left for Kang Chan to confirm.

"How many personnel are the Foreign Legion's special forces mobilizing?" Kang Chan questioned.

"Two units for a total of twenty-four men," Lanok replied.

Rumors were bound to get out regarding operations this large. To make things worse, just a single error could cause this whole situation to explode into a full-scale war.

"Mr. Ambassador, if I told you I wanted to depart now, could you have a flight prepared for me immediately?" Kang Chan asked.

"It's already waiting for you in Osan," Lanok responded with ease, seemingly anticipating the question. He then changed the topic, "Mr. Kang Chan, what would you like to have for dinner?"

Kang Chan genuinely wanted to help him and not miss out on this opportunity. However, the soldiers' lack of experience was holding him back right now. In a way, that was a more important factor than their abilities.

"Mr. Ambassador, I think it's best that I take my leave early. I have to confirm a few things. Can I call you again at a later time?" Kang Chan requested.

"I'll always be waiting for your calls, Mr. Kang Chan, especially those related to this particular operation," Lanok replied.

"Understood, sir. If that's all we have to talk about, I'll get going now," Kang Chan said.

As Kang Chan got up, Lanok stood up as well.

"Mr. Kang Chan, I'm well aware that asking for your assistance with this operation is a difficult request to accomplish, so I hope you don't strain yourself any further than you're already doing. One lost battle won't mean we lose everything in Europe, but if we lose you, there's no way to get you back," Lanok implored.

Kang Chan had never seen Lanok look this concerned before. Lanok could have chosen to put on a mask to hide his emotions, but it seemed he had decided against doing that in front of Kang Chan.

As Kang Chan walked out of the embassy, he took out his phone and checked the time. It was six-thirty in the evening.

Afterward, he immediately searched for Kang Dae-Kyung's number and called it, but he had more in mind than just postponing their trip.

-Hello? Kang Chan?

“Yes, Father. Where are you?” Kang Chan asked.

-I’m at the office, but I’m just about to leave. Are you back in Seoul now?

“Yes. Do you have time to have dinner with me?”

-What about your mother?

“I was hoping to have dinner with just us today. There’s something I want to discuss with you.”

Kang Dae-Kyung briefly remained silent likely because he was taking a moment to process the situation.

-Where are you? I’ll be done in about ten minutes.

“I’ll go to where you are. It’ll probably take about an hour since it’s rush hour.”

-All right. I’ll be waiting at my office, then. I’ll tell your mother that I have a dinner appointment.

“Got it,” Kang Chan replied.

After hanging up, Kang Chan called Choi Jong-Il. Almost immediately, Lee Doo-Hee drove up to the back alley of the embassy.

“Let’s go to my father’s workplace.” Kang Chan asked for their help getting to his father because getting a taxi during rush hour would be difficult.

Going on this operation with just the South Korean team... If someone told Kang Chan he was being greedy, he wouldn’t have any rebuttal.

However, this was far better than a few minor combat experiences. After all, this made sure their abilities would improve. Seeing the soldiers’ abilities during the live ammo training had a great impact on Kang Chan’s decision as well.

Kang Chan looked out the window in silence as they drove along, creating an awkward atmosphere.

Choi Jong-Il subtly peeked at Kang Chan. He seemed worried that France had rejected the South Korean team’s assistance or that their authorization to participate had been denied at the final stage, which was what happened to countless operations in the past.

There wasn’t anything Kang Chan could say to them right now, however. Amid the continued silence, they soon arrived at Kang Dae-Kyung’s company.

“I’m going to have dinner with my father. He’ll have his guards on him, so you all have dinner in peace without worrying about us. Let’s try to eat whenever we can, got it?”

“Understood, sir.”

Kang Chan stepped out of the car and called his father. Kang Dae-Kyung came down not long after.

“Father!” Kang Chan greeted, to which Kang Dae-Kyung reciprocated with a smile.

“What do you want to eat?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked.

“Since we’re eating without Mother, let’s just have something simple,” Kang Chan responded.

“Are you sure? I was going to treat you to something nice,” Kang Dae-Kyung said, patting Kang Chan’s back as they entered the street next to his office’s building. “Why don’t we have a light meal with ox bone soup?”

“Sounds good,” Kang Chan replied. He followed Kang Dae-Kyung into the ox bone soup restaurant behind the building.

Kang Chan was extremely grateful to have a father he could rely on and confide in whenever he had a difficult decision to make. He obviously couldn’t tell his father everything, and even if he could make up his mind now, the South Korean government would likely disapprove of the mission. Still, his father was a source of comfort.

“This place is actually pretty famous,” Kang Dae-Kyung explained.

The restaurant did seem popular because it was bustling with a lot of people. It hadn’t even been three minutes since they ordered, but they were already served their ox bone soup.

“So, what is it?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked without looking up from the rice and soup he was mixing together. He was obviously attempting to create a casual mood intentionally so Kang Chan could easily tell him what was on his mind.

“I was planning on taking you and Mother to Jeju this weekend, Father,” Kang Chan started.

Kang Dae-Kyung lifted his gaze to look at Kang Chan.

“But something came up, so I don’t think I’ll be able to go. Mother seems to be looking forward to it quite a bit. What should I do?” Kang Chan contemplated.

“Is it something that will take a few days again?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked.

“Yes,” Kang Chan replied.

Kang Dae-Kyung raised his spoon and began to eat.

“Eat up. Let’s think about it while eating,” he said, eating a spoonful of soup, rice, and diced radish kimchi. “Hmm. Let’s just think of this as you sending me and your mother on a trip as a present, okay? That way, the two of us can relax together. Your mother will still be upset, though, so let’s take a day trip somewhere nearby next week.”

“I’m sorry,” Kang Chan apologized.

“I’m more excited since it’ll just be the two of us,” Kang Dae-Kyung said with a smile, showing Kang Chan that he didn’t have to worry.

“Father,” Kang Chan hesitantly called.

“There’s more?” Kang Dae-Kyung joked.

Kang Chan grinned.

“There’s this thing I really want to do, but it’ll be difficult. I don’t have time to do it multiple times, and there won’t be a better opportunity than this. But it’s something I won’t be doing alone, and if I fail, the people joining me will have to sacrifice something great. I don’t know what to do.”

“What did the others say about this?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked.

Kang Chan recalled Cha Dong-Gyun and the other soldiers’ fierce expressions.

“I think they want to do it,” Kang Chan replied.

“Hmmm, then I take it this is something you’ll be taking responsibility for?” Kang Dae-Kyung confirmed.

“Yes, sir.”

Deep in thought, Kang Dae-Kyung slowly swallowed the food in his mouth.

“The person responsible will always find themselves in the toughest spot since he’ll have to accept the outcome of his choices. Remember how hard it was for me when our contract with Chiffre ended? No matter the situation, unexpected variables are bound to arise. If you’re confident and determined to face those unknown odds, then you should push through with it. Otherwise, it would be pointless.”

Kang Chan ate a spoonful of food as he listened to Kang Dae-Kyung.

“How does succeeding in this benefit you?” Kang Dae-Kyung questioned.

“Sorry?”

“Were you planning on doing something that won’t benefit you at all?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked with a grin.

The advantages? The greatest advantage was that he’d be repaying his favor to Lanok. Apart from that, although they would have to put their lives on the line, the South Korean team would obtain valuable experience from this. Moreover, defeating the SBS would proudly display the might of the South Korean special forces to the rest of the world.

After their conversation, they finished the rest of their meal.

“I’m going to go straight home from here,” Kang Dae-Kyung declared.

“By yourself?” Kang Chan asked in surprise.

“It’s written all over your face that you’re busy. Don’t worry about us and come home once you’ve taken care of your business. I’ll pretend not to know anything about the trip to Jeju until the weekend,” Kang Dae-Kyung said.

“Got it.”

They left the restaurant and walked over to where Kang Dae-Kyung’s car was parked.

“Well, see you at home,” Kang Dae-Kyung said.

“Thank you, Father.”

“It’s nothing, son,” Kang Dae-Kyung said as he thumped Kang Chan’s shoulder.

Once Kang Dae-Kyung had driven off, Kang Chan called Kim Hyung-Jung.

-Mr. Kang Chan!

“How are you feeling?” Kang Chan asked.

-I’m a lot better now. To what do I owe the pleasure?

Kim Hyung-Jung seemed to have noticed that Kang Chan sounded different from normal.

“Have you heard that a unit will be going out on an operation as backup?”

-Yes, I’m aware of it.

“Mr. Kim, I want to take two teams.”

-Pardon?

“I’m asking this of you so we can leave immediately. If we leave the day after tomorrow, we might have to cut the mission short and come back without getting to do anything. The flights are already prepared.”

A loud intake of air could be heard over the line.

“We will be going against the SBS. Half of the soldiers we start with won’t be coming back.”

-The SBS? Britain’s SBS?

“Yes, sir.”

It was silent. Kim Hyung-Jung had gone speechless.

“These are the best conditions to gain experience. If things go successfully, the soldiers will be able to obtain ten small operations’ worth of experience with this single mission.”

-Will you be in command?

“Yes, I will.”

-I assume you'll leave as soon as it's decided?

“Yes. I informed them to select eight members, so I'll need twelve more. Each team will need to have two snipers too.”

No one would probably be able to imagine this kind of conversation was taking place in the middle of a street.

-I understand. I will talk this over with the director and call you again. However, I should tell you these types of operations have never been approved in the final stage. Moreover, this operation is for France, so it won't be easy.

After hanging up, Kang Chan looked around his surroundings.

He had made up his mind, but other people would be making the important decision. It felt strange.

Chapter 143.1: Just Who Is This Man? (2)

Kang Chan ordered coffee at a nearby specialty coffee shop. After receiving his order, he sat on the terrace and called Michelle to change his reservation to Jeju-do for his parents. He then talked about the building he was planning to buy.

“I'll pay for the trip upfront. Just text me the bank account number.”

- Will do, Channy. As for the building, I still think the most efficient way we can tackle this is to change the interior of a building that's still under construction. You'll be able to move into the building in two months, and since it hasn't even been subdivided yet, you'll be able to use everything, including the office and the showroom on the first floor.

“Look into it a bit more. Let's check out the building together once you've reached a decision. I don't have time to go there this week because of a sudden business trip.”

After his conversation with Michelle, Kang Chan smoked a cigarette.

He felt frustrated and uncomfortable. It was as if he had unfinished business that he was forgetting.

Seok Kang-Ho would run over if Kang Chan just gave him a call, and even Choi Jong-Il was on standby. However, Kang Chan didn't want to disturb Seok Kang-Ho while he was spending time with his family, and he had trouble making silly jokes with Choi Jong-Il.

‘What would Lanok do at times like this?’

Going home could be the wise thing to do, but Kang Chan would rather stay outside instead of going home and feeling suffocated.

Exhaling softly, he looked at the people passing by.

Michelle definitely would've made some time for him if he had said that they should meet up, but he doubted meeting her would make his frustration disappear.

Kang Chan took out his phone and looked for Kim Mi-Young's phone number. She was the only person that he wanted to see right now.

Can she get rid of my frustration the same way she did when she held my hand at the school cafeteria?

She clearly wouldn't be able to pick up because she was at her hagwon, but Kang Chan called her nonetheless.

The call rang about four times.

- Hi!

Kim Mi-Young's peculiar answer made Kang Chan involuntarily smile.

"Where are you?"

- I'm in front of my hagwon. Why do you ask?

"Nothing. I was just thinking about you," Kang Chan answered, still smiling. He didn't know he was capable of saying something so cringe.

- Where are you right now?

"Samseong-dong."

- I'm at my hagwon at Daechi-dong. Can we meet up?

"But you have to go to class."

- For French lessons. You can just teach me instead, right? Right?

Much to Kang Chan's fascination, just talking to her made his frustration subside a little.

"I'll come to you. Where should I go?"

- Come to the intersection at Daechi-dong. I'll wait at the ice cream shop there.

The ice cream shop wasn't that far from where Kang Chan was.

"Alright."

Kang Chan immediately left the specialty coffee shop and got in a taxi. As soon as he got out at the intersection at Daechi-dong, the brightly lit ice cream shop caught his attention.

He opened the door and headed inside. As he did, Kim Mi-Young stood up from her seat.

She seemed to have grown up some more since the last time he saw her.

No, she had actually become mature now.

Her body had been mature for quite some time now. However, her face now looked paler and slender. Even her eyes seemed bigger. She looked like a young lady—or she would have if not for her bangs that were cut right to her eyebrows.

"Have you had dinner?" Kang Chan asked.

"I did. Before class."

“Do you want ice cream?”

“Yes!”

Smiling brightly, Kim Mi-Young followed Kang Chan to the display stand.

They ordered four different ice cream flavors in a cup, then returned to their table.

“Didn’t you say you weren’t going to take French classes yet?” Kang Chan asked.

“I’m just doing it because it’s fun. Let’s talk in French if we go somewhere crowded later. Other people won’t be able to understand what we’re saying, right? Huhuhuhu.” Kim Mi-Young smiled as she ate a spoonful of ice cream.

Kang Chan felt his frustration being swept away as he listened to Kim Mi-Young.

However, as she talked and ate ice cream, Kang Chan could see in her eyes that she longed for him.

She missed him, and she wanted to keep spending time with him like this, but she seemed to have been suppressing her emotions.

“I have a favor to ask you,” Kim Mi-Young said.

“What is it?”

Kim Mi-Young pouted. “The Athletics Club members said that our school’s festival will become the best if you help out. I’ve seen them myself, so I know they regret what they have done. Moreover, when word got out, more students began to wish you’d help out. Even So-Yeon and Ki-Jean want to ask for your help, but they said they can’t bring themselves to call you since they find it hard to ask you for a favor. They also said that you’ll definitely help out if I ask you to…” Kim Mi-Young trailed off toward the end.

“So you’re asking me to help with the festival?” Kang Chan asked.

“Yes.”

“Why are you so nervous about it?”

“I was worried that you would find it difficult.”

Seeing Kang Chan smile, Kim Mi-Young sheepishly waited for his reply.

“Alright,” Kang Chan said.

“You’re going to help?”

“How can I not help out when you’re the one who asked me to?”

“Really? You’re not joking, are you?”

“I am!”

Kim Mi-Young scooped up the ice cream while laughing. “Huhuhuhu.”

“Anything else you want me to do?”

“Nope. That’s all.”

Is Kim Mi-Young my younger sister or the woman I love?

One thing was clear—Kang Chan felt better.

“Were you planning not to ask me for help if I didn’t contact you?” Kang Chan asked.

Kim Mi-Young pouted. She looked as if she was in a predicament.

“Jeez! Don’t ever do that again,” Kang Chan said.

“Alright. I won’t.”

“And don’t study excessively once you’re home just because you didn’t go to French class today.”

“The teacher said that I’m really good. I was told that the teacher was new to our hagwon, but the kids in our hagwon and even the unnies at the front desk fell in love with him. He looks like an actor.”

“What about you?”

“I think of you whenever I see that teacher,” Kim Mi-Young responded while looking straight into Kang Chan’s eyes.

Kang Chan’s heart thumped.

‘Untainted’ was the perfect word to describe Kim Mi-Young’s clear eyes.

“Mr. President, this is a golden opportunity to solidify Lanok’s position. Considering the influence that he has as the Founder and first operation committee member of the Eurasian Rail, then we should be the ones asking him for a favor with this operation,” someone argued.

“After analyzing the profits and losses from the trade with the United Kingdom, we expect a maximum of twenty billion dollars in losses. We also have to consider the safety of the Koreans and the international students residing in the United Kingdom,” another person said.

Moon Jae-Hyun sat in the middle of the meeting room. To his left was National Intelligence Service Director Hwang Ki-Hyun. Jeon Dae-Geuk, who was tightly wrapped in bandages, and the third and fourth deputy directors of the National Intelligence Service were present as well.

“What’s the operation’s success rate?” Moon Jae-Hyun asked.

“In Mr. Kang Chan’s words, they’ll lose more than half of the members due to lack of experience.”

Moon Jae-Hyun exhaled softly while pursing his lips.

“Mr. President! When he took command of the operation in Mongolia, he achieved the best result we’ve ever gotten since the establishment of the Foreign Legion’s special forces team. Kang Chan made it clear that our special forces teams need this operation to gain experience,” Jeon Dae-Geuk quickly added.

“This isn’t as simple as it sounds, Section Chief Jeon. Each and every one of those soldiers is the head of a household, a son, and a father. That’s an important matter to consider when discussing whether South Korea needs this operation or not,” Moon Jae-Hyun responded.

“Mr. President.” Jeon Dae-Geuk showed no signs of backing off. “Sacrifice is the fate of soldiers, especially those who belong to the special forces. Have you thought about the special forces teams that can’t do anything but train because they can’t participate in operations? Their pride isn’t shown when they’re training. It shows only when they execute operations.”

Moon Jae-Hyun exhaled softly.

“But the consequences we’d have to bear would be too much if the operation fails. Worst-case scenario, we might even accidentally leave behind evidence that proves our men executed the operation. ”

“Fourth deputy director, that’ll still be a problem even if we go as a backup.”

“But in that situation, we’ll at least have France to depend on. It can’t even be compared to our team failing a solo operation.”

“Now! Let’s make a decision,” Moon Jae-Hyun interjected. “Section Chief Jeon desires to dispatch our special forces soldiers.”

Jeon Dae-Geuk briefly nodded in response.

“The third deputy director wants to dispatch our special forces soldiers to a solo operation as well, while the fourth deputy director is against dispatching them entirely. What about you, Director Hwang?” Moon Jae-Hyun asked.

“Mr. President, this might seem bothersome, but I think it’s best we take the thoughts of the people on the scene into consideration.”

Everyone quickly looked at Hwang Ki-Hyun.

“Brigadier General Choi Seong-Geon is waiting,” Hwang Ki-Hyun explained.

“You want us to talk to him?”

“Yes.”

Moon Jae-Hyun stared at Hwang Ki-Hyun for a moment, then nodded.

Chapter 143.2: Just Who Is This Man? (2)

Hwang Ki-Hyun pressed a button, and a call soon connected in the meeting room.

- Hello. Brigadier General Choi Seong-Geon speaking.

“Brigadier General Choi, I’m Hwang Ki-Hyun, the Director of the National Intelligence Service. We are currently in the middle of a meeting with the President. We apologize for bothering you, but we would like to ask you a few questions.”

- Please go ahead.

Choi Seong-Geon sounded so husky that a lot of people likely wondered if they were listening to a young Jeon Dae-Geuk talk.

“Brigadier General Choi, we have currently reached an impasse. Our debate on whether or not we should send our troops to execute the operation, which Mr. Kang Chan has been advocating for, as a solo operation instead has us torn. The pros and cons that come with it are as clear as day. However, the President is naturally concerned not only about the members who will be laying down their lives in this impractical operation but also their friends and relatives. Is there anything you want to say about this?” Hwang Ki-Hyun asked.

- Mr. President! I have privately spoken with the soldiers who were not selected to be a part of the backup team. It is hard to put into words the despair they are currently feeling, sir.

“Brigadier General Choi, I was just an army sergeant when I was discharged from the military, so I’m not sure how true this is, but I heard that more than half of our men will likely meet their end in this operation. Is there any chance that they are acting like that because they got carried away by the atmosphere?” After speaking into the mic, Moon Jae-Hyun looked around him.

- Mr. President, the true worth of the special forces isn't shown when during training, no matter how intense. Their true worth shows only when they go out on operations. In the past few decades, we have only ever executed a total of three operations, only one of which was a solo operation conducted by our soldiers. If it means getting to participate in this operation, and if it means becoming physically capable to join my men again, I would be more than happy to be demoted to the rank of sergeant.

Moon Jae-Hyun exhaled heavily, which sounded more like a groan. “Both sides have good points and neither side seems willing to concede. Is there anything you want to say before we decide?”

- Mr. President! Allow me to tell you our motto just one more time. This is the best I can think of to express our determination.

Moon Jae-Hyun stared at the mic as if he could see Choi Seong-Geon.

- If I can protect the country with my blood, I am happy!

Choi Seong-Geon yelled out their motto with all of his might, his resolute voice reverberating throughout the meeting room. It was as if he had gone to becoming a recruit who had just enlisted.

Just as Jeon Dae-Geuk tightly gritted his teeth, Moon Jae-Hyun smiled. He seemed to be crying. He then slowly looked at those in attendance in this meeting.

After a moment of silence...

“General Choi.”

- Please go ahead, Mr. President!

“We will do as Mr. Kang Chan wants. Please choose the soldiers who will be joining the team on the solo operation.”

- Thank you, Mr. President!

“ I should be the one thanking you, general. I give Mr. Kang Chan full authority and full command of this mission. Can you tell the members that I wish them good luck?”

- I’ll be sure to tell them!

When Moon Jae-Hyun looked up, Hwang Ki-Hyun pressed the button to end the call.

“Now that this has been settled, it’s time for us to work together to create and prepare contingency measures for any possible dangers and situations. Have the National Intelligence make follow-up measures and prepare for the worst-case scenario,” Moon Jae-Hyun said.

“Yes, sir. We’ll do that,” Hwang Ki-Hyun responded.

“I hope the decision I have made did not upset you, fourth deputy director,” Moon Jae-Hyun said.

“How could I be upset after hearing the determination of General Choi and the soldiers? I also have experience receiving commissioned education from the 606, Mr. President.”

Moon Jae-Hyun looked around, then replied, “I cannot help but think of this as an opportunity for South Korea to be reborn. If we fail, then I will take full responsibility. However, if we succeed, it will serve as a strong warning to our neighboring countries that have rashly exercised their military strength against us. As a member of the Eurasian Rail, we have to make sure that the voice of South Korea is heard through this operation. For that reason, I hope everyone spares no effort.”

“Yes, sir!” Looking grim yet determined, everyone stood up to leave.

“Ah! Mr. Director,” Moon Jae-Hyun called Hwang Ki-Hyun, who had stood from his seat, to stop him from leaving.

“You’re worried about something, aren’t you?” Kim Mi-Young asked Kang Chan.

“Huh?”

Kim Mi-Young was staring at Kang Chan.

I was enjoying spending time with her... but was I still too obvious?

“If we do get to study abroad, I’m going to study hard enough to get a scholarship for my tuition. But don’t worry, I’ll still tell people later on that I became a diplomat thanks to my husband,” Kim Mi-Young added.

Kang Chan laughed joyfully.

Kim Mi-Young took the napkin and the plastic spoon on the tray. “I have to go to class.”

She looked as if she was trying hard not to be a burden to Kang Chan.

“Did anyone pressure you to go to hagwon?”

Kim Mi-Young, who had been looking at her bag, turned toward Kang Chan. Her eyes seemed completely filled with disappointment.

Which would be better for Kim Mi-Young—parting ways like this or staying together for about an hour more?

It was disappointing, but parting ways here was the right thing to do.

Kang Chan left the ice cream shop with Kim Mi-Young.

“Mi-Young?” Kang Chan called.

Kim Mi-Young looked into Kang Chan’s eyes.

“Can you make time for me—just about a day—if I ask you for it next week?”

“I most certainly can,” Kim Mi-Young delightedly answered with a bright smile.

“I’ll call you.”

Kang Chan wanted to wrap his arms around Kim Mi-Young, but he just smiled.

“Bye~ I’m heading to class now!” Kim Mi-Young waved at him and disappeared among the crowd.

Kang Chan thought it was about time to head back home. He was strangely disappointed, but no matter how he felt, he couldn’t bring himself to cling to Kim Mi-Young.

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

“Hello?”

- Mr. Kang Chan, the solo operation has been authorized. Just give us the location and departure time, and we’ll send the men over. We will need at least two hours to get to Seoul.

“Understood. I’ll contact you as soon as I get more information.”

Although they parted ways after only seeing each other for a brief moment, Kang Chan still felt glad that he met up with Kim Mi-Young.

“You asked to see me, sir?”

“Cha Dong-Gyun! The operation has been changed to a solo operation. We’re going to select twelve more people. One of them has to be a sniper.” Choi Seong-Geon looked up from his desk and at Cha Dong-Gyun, who was standing in front of him. “What’s wrong?”

“It’s nothing. I’m so glad to hear that.”

Choi Seong-Geon stood up from the desk and walked toward Cha Dong-Gyun. “Bring over the list of the twelve other soldiers who will be joining the operation. We’re leaving right away.”

“Thank you, General.”

Choi Seong-Geon gave him a broad grin. “Hey.”

“Yes, sir?”

Neither Choi Seong-Geon, who had called Cha Dong-Gyun, nor Cha Dong-Gyun, who had answered, could say anything else. Hence, they just looked at each other in silence.

“Get me that list quickly,” Choi Seong-Geon said.

“Yes, sir.” Cha Dong-Gyun swiftly turned to leave.

Kang Chan had to focus on the operation now.

Before doing anything else, he called Lanok and explained the situation.

- Thank you, Mr. Kang Chan! It would be best for you to leave the Osan Airfield by four in the morning. By three o’clock, I’ll have a van standing by on where you were picked up last time for the operation in Mongolia.

As soon as the call dropped, Kang Chan explained the situation to Kim Hyung-Jung, then dialed Seok Kang-Ho’s number.

- Where are you?

“I’m at Daechi-dong.”

- I’ll see you at the specialty coffee shop at two-thirty in the morning.

“Alright.”

Kang Chan called Choi Jong-Il after.

Choi Jong-Il answered as soon as Kang Chan called him. Not long after the call dropped, a car stopped at the intersection.

“Take me home. At two-thirty, I’ll be meeting Seok Kang-Ho in the specialty coffee shop on the third exit of the Nonhyeon Station[1],” Kang Chan said.

Choi Jong-Il only listened.

“We got approval to execute the operation with just our team, so make sure to drop by your house.”

“Are you serious?” Choi Jong-Il asked, looking shocked. He made eye contact with Woo Hee-Seung.

“First Lieutenant Cha Dong-Gyun would have likely made a new team by now. It’s unfortunate that we don’t have much time to prepare, but since it’s still currently around nine-fifty, you should go see the people that you want to see,” Kang Chan added.

“Alright.”

Choi Jong-Il’s response was reassuring.

Kang Chan inputted the password into the lock system of their apartment. As soon as he stepped inside, he saw Yoo Hye-Sook leaning her head back to see the front door.

“Mother!”

“Channy!”

Kang Chan hugged Yoo Hye-Sook in front of Kang Dae-Kyung, who was smiling.

“Have you had dinner yet?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“I have, Unfortunately, I can’t stay long. I’ll have to leave in a few minutes.”

“Again?”

“Yes. I think this trip will take a few days.”

“Will you be back by the weekend?”

Shoot!

Kang Chan couldn’t think of an acceptable answer even though he had talked to Kang Dae-Kyung about this.

“Channy said that it’s a secret. It’s going to get boring if you keep asking him about it,” Kang Dae-Kyung said.

“You know what we’re going to do on the weekend, don’t you?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked Kang Dae-Kyung.

“How should I know? He said that it’s a secret. I’m just taking his word.”

Yoo Hye-Sook looked at Kang Dae-Kyung as if she would grill him as soon as Kang Chan headed out again. Like magic, however, Yoo Hye-Sook already had a calm expression by the time she looked at Kang Chan.

“What time will you be leaving?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“I’ll have to be on the road by midnight.”

Midnight was a bit early, but he thought it was still for the best. He didn’t want Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook to lose decent sleep because of him.

Kang Chan washed up, then headed to the living room.

“Channy, I’m a little hungry. Should we order chicken?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“Yes, I would like some.”

Their order soon arrived.

While eating, they talked about car sales and the Foundation.

Spending time with his parents, Kang Chan listened to what Yoo Hye-Sook was telling him.

When the clock struck twelve, Kang Chan brushed his teeth and stood at the entrance.

Yoo Hye-Sook looked extremely upset.

“I’ll be back,” Kang Chan said.

“Okay. Be careful.”

Kang Chan hugged Yoo Hye-Sook.

Afterward, Kang Dae-Kyung patted his back, but Kang Chan reached out and hugged Kang Dae-Kyung as well.

“Be careful,” Kang Dae-Kyung said as if he was whispering.

When Kang Dae-Kyung loosened his hug, he put his hands on Kang Chan’s shoulder. He seemed to be saying that he hadn’t told Yoo Hye-Sook anything.

Kang Chan’s parents were so kind-hearted that he wished he could go on a trip with them.

Chapter 144.1: What Happened? (1)

Kang Chan arrived at the specialty coffee shop thirty minutes past midnight. Since he had arranged to meet with Seok Kang-Ho at 2:30 am, he had to wait for two hours.

‘Two hours is nothing.’

From Kang Chan’s perspective, waiting for two hours was better than killing time at home until the arranged time. If he was at home, Yoo Hye-Sook wouldn’t have gone to sleep until he left.

While eyeing an empty seat on the terrace because he wanted to smoke a cigarette, he couldn’t help but laugh out loud. Choi Jong-Il, Woo Hee-Seung, and Lee Doo-Hee stood up when they saw him arrive.

“Do you want coffee?” one of them asked Kang Chan.

“Yes. I’d like a light roast.”

Lee Doo-Hee quickly went to the counter to order.

Considering there were already a lot of cigarette butts in the ashtray on the table, they seemed to have arrived much earlier than him.

“You guys didn’t go home?” Kang Chan asked.

“We did. My child wakes up if I rustle around the house late at night, so after seeing their faces and telling them that I’m going on a business trip, I immediately made my way here.”

Lee Doo-Hee brought over a cup of coffee and uncovered the lid.

Kang Chan took a sip from it, washing down the oiliness of the deep-fried chicken he had eaten earlier.

Chk chk.

He then lit up a cigarette. Deeply exhaling the smoke, he looked at the trio. Among the three, he didn’t even have the slightest clue about who would die and who would survive. When the thought crossed his mind, he finally felt how heavy this operation was.

Even when compared to any special forces team in the world, the SBS’ capabilities and accumulated experience didn’t fall behind anyone.

Kang Chan leaned against the back of the chair, momentarily calculating and thinking about who he could depend on to do their part and fight with all their might. Dayeru immediately came to mind.

The fucker definitely had the capabilities to fight the SBS.

Dayeru’s aim and reaction speed were good enough for even Kang Chan to acknowledge. Moreover, Dayeru had abundant experience and tenacity that overwhelmed his nervousness. No matter where he was deployed, Dayeru would survive and deliver.

Next were Choi Jong-Il, Cha Dong-Gyun, and Kwak Cheol-Ho.

Kang Chan knew they had great skills, but he wasn’t sure how well they would perform in actual combat situations due to their lack of experience.

I can’t tell whether this is operation a good or a bad idea.

However, he was certain of one thing—going on operations like this was a hundred times more helpful in improving their skills than being dragged to operations that wouldn’t really help them grow.

Of course, gaining experience and whatnot only mattered if they returned alive.

That was also why the 13th regiment’s special forces team was still famous even after all the members of the 6th regiment’s special forces team from the Foreign Legion—which had been called the world’s best—bravely died in Algeria.

“Whoo,

” Kang Chan sighed, then put the cigarette that he had been smoking into the used coffee grounds.

“Are you worried?” Choi Jong-Il asked.

Kang Chan nodded. “Your capabilities aren’t the only thing I’m worried about. I have to think about the enemy’s skills and experiences as well. Honestly, this operation is too much for us. I’m so worried that I even talked about it with my father while we were having dinner.”

Choi Jong-Il, Woo Hee-Seung, and Lee Doo-Hee focused on Kang Chan’s expression and what he was saying.

“It was easy to calculate the risks that came with practicing with live ammo. Being shot in the limbs on the training grounds is far better than going out on an operation to die.”

Kang Chan looked at Choi Jong-Il, then moved his gaze to the other two.

“I can still hear the sounds of the Korean flag badges being put on the coffins of those who died in the operation in Mongolia... You say that you’re not afraid of death? That that’s just the way it is with the special forces? That you can just die?”

Kang Chan turned his head toward the road and looked at the cars passing by for a moment.

“I still think of the men who died. They still weigh on my heart. I keep wondering if I had just run a bit more, if I had just been a bit wiser, and if I had just trained them a bit more relentlessly...” Kang Chan sighed softly, then took a sip of the coffee.

“The look in your eyes changed.”

Kang Chan smirked in response to Choi Jong-Il’s comment.

He felt his senses becoming sharper as he thought about the battles that he had experienced in Africa and as it finally hit him that he was going out on an operation again. His uneasiness, which wouldn’t go away, most likely also played a role in his senses becoming sharper.

Just as Kang Chan picked up his cigarette again, Choi Jong-Il tilted his head to the side and stood up from his seat.

When Kang Chan turned his head, he saw Seok Kang-Ho closing the taxi door.

“You’re here already?” Seok Kang-Ho asked Kang Chan.

“Why’d you come so early?”

Lee Doo-Hee walked to the counter to get Seok Kang-Ho coffee. Meanwhile, Seok Kang-Ho brought over a chair from the next table and sat near Kang Chan.

“I couldn’t get some sleep due to the awkward timing, so I decided to have a cup of coffee instead. Well, no wonder I wanted to leave quickly. Seems like I was meant to meet you here,” Seok Kang-Ho explained.

When Lee Doo-Hee put the coffee on the table, Seok Kang-Ho thanked him and opened the lid on his cup.

The look in Seok Kang-Ho's eyes and his expression had changed a little.

It seemed even Choi Jong-Il noticed it, seeing as how his gaze alternated between Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho.

“Did something happen?” Kang Chan asked.

Seok Kang-Ho looked at him and finished lighting up his cigarette before replying, “Phew, for some reason, my wife clung to me and told me not to go this time. Even when I hugged her, she kept burrowing into my arms. Haaa... Seems like I've become too strong of a temptation now that I make a lot of money and I'm physically fit.”

Even though Seok Kang-Ho was acting cheeky, he didn't look comfortable.

Should I tell him to sit this one out?

No—If Kang Chan did that, Dayeru would definitely talk shit and kick up a fuss to prevent Kang Chan from going on the operation as well. Stubbornly leaving without Dayeru anyway would make him feel uncomfortable, making the operation even more difficult for him.

“Don't even think about leaving me out of this,” Seok Kang-Ho said.

Kang Chan quickly grabbed his cigarette.

Seok Kang-Ho had not only become smarter. Rather, it seemed he was getting better at guessing what Kang Chan was thinking as well.

“How do you feel about this operation?” Seok Kang-Ho asked Kang Chan.

“I don't have a good feeling about it. The uneasiness won't going away.”

“Let's get rid of that feeling, then,” Seok Kang-Ho said as if it wasn't a big deal, then drank coffee. “Are the men going straight to the airport?”

“Yeah.”

The conversation didn't flow well. They were just saying things bluntly. As time passed by, Seok Kang-Ho's eyes grew fiercer and fiercer. It was as if his eyes were feeding off the tension.

The difference between knowing and not knowing how scary the SBS' capabilities could be seen in Seok Kang-Ho and Choi Jong-Il's expressions.

“Phew! Is there something to eat here?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“They have different kinds of pastries.”

“Stay here,” he told Lee Doo-Hee, “I like choosing what to eat. What do you guys want?”

Even though everyone looked as if they didn’t really want to eat anything, Seok Kang-Ho still bought three pastries with a lot of cream on top of it.

“Let’s eat. You have to eat and sleep whenever you can.”

Just as Seok Kang-Ho picked up the pastry with his fork, Kang Chan suddenly remembered something. “Hey! I’m going to the convenience store.”

“I’ll go. I know what you’re going to buy,” Seok Kang-Ho said as he stood up with cream all over his lips.

“Keep eating your pastries—I’m bored anyway.”

“I can go,” Lee Doo-Hee offered.

“Come with me, then,” Kang Chan said. Lee Doo-Hee followed him to the convenience store.

Perhaps it was because it was small, but the convenience store didn’t have a lot of items inside.

Kang Chan put in the basket nearly all of the instant coffee, cup ramen, and packed ramen that were in the convenience store.

“Do you have any more coffee and ramen?” Kang Chan asked.

“There’s more inside. Should I bring it out for you?” A female student who was clearly a part-timer looked at Kang Chan and Lee Doo-Hee suspiciously.

What’s she suspicious about?

“Please bring out five boxes of coffee and five boxes of cup ramen,” Kang Chan said. If they could buy that many instant coffee and ramen in boxes, they wouldn’t have to buy the coffee and rame in the basket.

Kang Chan waited just in case. Not long after, the female student brought over three boxes of coffee and two boxes of cup ramen. “This is all we have right now.”

“I’ll buy those and the ones in this basket.” Kang Chan paid with his card and took the plastic bag. Lee Doo-Hee carried the boxes under his arms.

“Will we even find a place where we can eat these?” Lee Doo-Hee asked.

“You’re going to cry later because you’re thankful that I bought all of these.”

“I didn’t expect you’d be buying these.”

Upon returning to the specialty coffee shop, Choi Jong-Il and Woo Hee-Seung examined the boxes with an expression that said, ‘Why did they buy ramen?’

By the time Seok Kang-Ho had persistently finished all the pastries and enjoyed coffee and cigarettes, it was already time for them to go.

Chapter 144.2: What Happened? (1)

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

Kang Chan held up his phone, checked the caller ID, then answered the call.

“Mr. Ambassador, it’s Kang Chan.”

- Mr. Kang Chan, I think it would be best for you and the team to head to France instead of Switzerland. According to the DGSE’s calculations, it would be best to track down the SBS in France if they ever make a move instead of chasing them down. A guide with a map of the area of operation will be on the plane with you and your team.

“Can I decide after seeing the map?”

- You’re the commander of this operation. The Intelligence Bureau and the DGSE will only pass on information; judgments and decisions are completely up to you.

“I’ll make a decision on the plane, then.”

- Mr. Kang Chan.

Lanok didn’t seem to be speaking as a diplomat now, considering his voice deepened with emotion.

“Mr. Ambassador, you’ll get sick if you don’t get enough sleep. Let’s go golfing with Anne when I get back.”

Kang Chan heard Lanok laughing from the other end of the line. However, his laughter ended with a sigh.

“Thank you for trusting the Korean team.”

- Mr. Kang Chan, it’s you that I’m trusting.

The call ended with Lanok laughing again.

Except for Seok Kang-Ho, who had been looking at the street, those around Kang Chan had been watching him in fascination since he began speaking fluent French.

“The car’s here,” Seok Kang-Ho said as a black van stopped in front of the store.

At that moment, Kang Chan unconsciously inhaled and approached the van. As they got closer, someone opened the door and quickly looked around their surroundings.

They arrived at Osan at exactly 3 am.

As Lanok had already told Kang Chan on the phone, they saw a parked tour bus and van when they passed the intersection in front of the airfield.

The van that Kang Chan was in stopped in front of the bus, and the bus door opened. Choi Seong-Geon and Cha Dong-Gyun got out.

When Kang Chan approached them, Choi Seong-Geon suddenly held out his hand. Kang Chan shook it in a moment of confusion.

‘Please do a good job.’

Kang Chan understood what Choi Seong-Geon’s eyes were telling him.

“I’ll do my best, general.”

Choi Seong-Geon pursed his lips as he nodded.

Not long after, a French agent approached them and told Kang Chan that they could go inside.

“I and the others will be taking the bus, so wait for me at the entrance,” Kang Chan said.

“Understood, Monsieur Kang,” the agent politely answered and got in the van.

“Can you spare me some time?” Choi Seong-Geon asked.

“We have about an hour to spare before our departure time.”

Choi Seong-Geon got on the bus and shook hands with the soldiers. Kang Chan also occasionally saw him patting their shoulders through the front window.

“That gentleman seems to really value them,” Seok Kang-Ho commented, stating how he felt regarding the sight.

Kang Chan lit up a cigarette and started smoking.

Chk chk.

“Whoo.”

The pity in Choi Seong-Geon’s eyes seemed to tell them about the difficulty of this operation.

How many of them would be able to return alive?

Would they be able to endure the sadness that came with putting the dead soldiers in their hearts?

As Kang Chan heavily exhaled the cigarette smoke, three deep-blue vans drove toward the bus.

‘It’s way too early. What’s going on at this hour?’

Kang Chan glared sharply at the approaching vehicles. One of the vans stopped in front of Kang Chan, parking just beside the driver’s seat of the bus. It basically blocked the first lane.

Seok Kang-Ho and Choi Jong-Il also began to look more and more cautious. Meanwhile, after saying his goodbyes to the soldiers, Choi Seong-Geon quickly came down from the bus.

Rattle.

Damn it!

Kang Chan quickly threw the cigarette on the floor and stepped on it.

It was Moon Jae-Hyun. Behind him were Hwang Ki-Hyun and the security guards.

“Mr. Kang Chan.”

Moon Jae-Hyun shook hands with Kang Chan, then held out his hand to Choi Seong-Geon.

“Mr. President, we can’t address people by their official rank and name here.”

“I’m aware of that. Are our members inside the bus?”

“Yes.”

Choi Seong-Geon understood what Moon Jae-Hyun meant, so he quickly headed toward the bus.

Kang Chan could only see the outline of those inside the bus.

As the members stood up from their seats one by one, Moon Jae-Hyun embraced them.

It took around ten minutes before Moon Jae-Hyun and Choi Seong-Geon got off the bus again.

Moon Jae-Hyun’s eyes had turned red and were brimming with tears. “Mr. Kang Chan, please do your best. Everyone’s safety is now in your hands.”

“I will, Mr. President.”

Kang Chan thought that they were just going to shake hands, but Moon Jae-Hyun took a step toward him and hugged him instead.

This kind of man existed as well.

Moon Jae-Hyun then hugged Seok Kang-Ho, Choi Jong-Il, Woo Hee-Seung, and Lee Doo-Hee as well. Afterward, he turned his head and looked back at the bus as if he was engraving it on his mind, then got on the van.

“Mr. Kang Chan, please take care of them,” Choi Seong-Geon said.

Choi Seong-Geon isn’t going to hug me as well, is he?

Exactly as Kang Chan had wondered, Choi Seong-Geon hugged him. Kang Chan couldn’t help but stare at him with blank eyes.

He then stood in attention and saluted Kang Chan.

Kang Chan quickly raised his hand and saluted back.

‘Please take care of my men.’

‘I’ll do my best.’

Whoosh!

Choi Seong-Geon lowered his hand and immediately headed to the car.

“Whoo.”

The time had come for Kang Chan and his team to leave.

Not only did Moon Jae-Hyun run over to see them, but Choi Seong-Geon even acted like that for the first time since Kang Chan had met him. They probably behaved in such a way due to the enemies that they would have to face soon enough. Their opponents were extremely powerful.

Wasting not a single second more, Kang Chan’s party boarded the bus.

As soon as Kang Chan sat down in the front seat—which was left empty specifically for him—the bus left.

The bus was brimming with everyone’s sense of duty and determination. It even made Kang Chan think that they could win even against the SBS if they fought them right now.

Kang Chan was still smirking when the bus reached at the entrance. With a gesture from the French agent, the gate immediately opened.

The van put on its emergency lights, drove right past the tour bus, and guided them to the front of a C295 cargo aircraft.

The sound of the cargo aircraft’s engine sounded as if it was urging them to hurry.

The soldiers stood up. Since they still had to take out the cloth jump bags from the overhead compartment, Kang Chan got out of the bus first.

Woo Hee-Seung and Lee Doo-Hee took the plastic bag and boxes of coffee and ramen, which they had left inside the van they had ridden earlier, from a French agent.

The operation had now begun.

As Kang Chan watched the soldiers, the soldiers all got on the cargo aircraft that was in front of him.

“Good luck,” the French agent finished saying his goodbyes. As soon as the agent got back in the van, Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho boarded the cargo aircraft as well.

Brrr.

The door closed.

As Kang Chan expected, there were beds attached to the wall. The soldiers perched on the lowest bed beside each other.

Ding. Ding. Ding.

Du-du-du-du-du!

The aircraft, which had been waiting for them, began to drive up the runaway. That made it difficult for Kang Chan to say something right now.

The cargo aircraft perfectly followed the curves of the runway before rising to the skies.

“We’ll be flying for at least twelve hours!” Kang Chan yelled, making all of his subordinates simultaneously look at him.

“Get some sleep if you can. You’ll find boxes of instant coffee and cup ramen up front. Those who want to eat, feel free to take them. Any questions?” Kang Chan asked.

“Can we smoke here?” someone asked.

“It doesn’t matter for as long as you don’t cause a fire!” Kang Chan answered with a smirk. No other questions followed.

“Phuhuhu, I’m excited!” Seok Kang-Ho exclaimed.

When Kang Chan perched on the bed, Seok Kang-Ho offered him a cigarette.

Not long after, Kang Chan’s eyes glinted. He remembered Lanok saying that someone who would be guiding them would be aboard this aircraft with them.

While smoking the cigarette Seok Kang-Ho had handed to him, Kang Chan gazed at the cockpit. After pushing aside the curtains, someone stepped into view.

“Huh?” Seok Kang-Ho gasped, surprise all over his face.

The man approached Kang Chan without paying attention to the soldiers who were looking at him.

It was Gérard.

“Surprised, aren’t you?” Gérard asked Kang Chan.

“What happened?”

Appearing to be satisfied with how Kang Chan reacted, Gérard explained, “I volunteered. I can’t join the operation due to the hole in my shoulder, but I do have experience in the area of this operation. France has always been my home ground as well, so I’m perfectly capable of guiding people around it.”

“What about your shoulder?”

“I was told that they’ll tell me whether or not I’ll be deployed into another operation after we observe how it heals for two more months.”

“What’s that fucker saying?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

Kang Chan quickly translated what Gérard said.

“He’s much better than having someone we don’t know for a guide, at least,” Seok Kang-Ho commented.

“What’s Dayeru saying?” Gérard asked this time.

These two fuckers had just met again, yet they were already tiring Kang Chan out.

“He’s saying that you’re better than a complete stranger,” Kang Chan said.

As soon as he told Gérard what Seok Kang-Ho said, the two grinned at each other.

“I bought a bunch of instant coffee. They’re up front.”

“Would you like some?”

“Yeah, I could use some coffee and some cigarettes.”

Gérard went to the front and made coffee. When he returned, they all bit on cigarettes.

The members also gathered in groups and had instant coffees and smoked cigarettes. They didn't have to worry about the smoke because it was being sucked out through the crevice in between the aircraft's door and the cargo compartment.

"You remember the maknae, right?" Gérard asked Kang Chan.

"Why do you ask?"

Did he die?

Gérard smirked when Kang Chan looked at him. "I heard that fucker is going around imitating you. People are saying that he can already carry his own weight, but I feel nervous for him. He still looks like a baby chick imitating a half-grown chick, so I'm afraid he'd get into trouble."

Kang Chan smirked.

"Captain, it feels weird saying this to you, but strangely enough, I don't have a good feeling about this operation. How do you feel about this?" Gérard asked.

When Gérard was looking up while throwing the cigarette into the paper cup...

Chapter 145.1: What Happened (2)

Du-du-du-du-du! Bannng!

As they felt the cargo plane slowly descend, they heard the engine making noises.

"Ugh!" Seok Kang-Ho shook the coffee that he spilled off his hand, then quickly wiped his hand on his clothes. Thanks to his little accident, Kang Chan no longer had to reply to Gérard's question about how he felt about this operation.

"Stop talking nonsense and get the map," Kang Chan told Gérard.

"Copy that. I'll bring it over."

Gérard went through the curtains. After a short moment, he came back with four map pages. Since the map was as wide as a desk, it was big enough for all of the soldiers in the plane to see when he placed it down on the floor.

"This is our target location, the Col des Corbeaux[1] in Switzerland. We have been informed that the SBS will be in this area," Gérard explained.

"I was told that we would be crossing from the French side."

"That's right. It'll be much more advantageous for us to fight them head-on, so this plane will land at the military base in Col du Genévrier[2]. That's where we will take a helicopter to our destination."

"There's really only one path that people can take on this rough mountain. The SBS aren't stupid, though, so I doubt they'll actually use that path."

Gérard nodded in response to Kang Chan's explanation. He then said, "Take a look at this."

He spread out the newspaper-sized map, which had been folded in half, in front of Kang Chan.

"There's only one road that connects the two places. However, this five-kilometer section starting

from here to here might become a problem—this spot is flat enough for the enemy to lay in wait and ambush us. Moreover, in case of emergencies, they can just easily retreat into the mountain.”

“How long has it been since the SBS arrived?”

“Today’s their third day in the area.”

Kang Chan looked at the map with a frown. “It’ll probably be difficult to just drop down.”

“Their snipers will be more than glad to shoot us down.”

If they parachuted to where the SBS were lying in ambush, then they would sooner or later find out that Gérard was right.

“Gérard,” Kang Chan called.

Gérard looked up.

“About the Hadron Collider—if the SBS is going there to destroy it, wouldn’t it be better to strengthen its security?” Kang Chan asked.

“I heard that they have already done that. They dispatched the GIGN[3] to guard it.”

“I see. What’s with the other map?”

“This map has a more detailed outline of the surrounding area. It’s all mountains, though, so there isn’t really anything in particular that we have to take a closer look at. To go over this side of the mountain, people have to be an expert in mountain climbing. Even then, they won’t be able to move quickly. At that height, oxygen is quite thin.”

“What weapons are they equipped with?” Kang Chan asked again.

“The MP5SD[4].”

Kang Chan nodded. The special forces preferred that weapon the most.

Not only were its noises extremely suppressed, but it also had great accuracy and high magazine capacity.

“Captain, is it really okay for the Korean team to take part in this operation alone?”

Why is this fucker being so serious?

When Kang Chan smirked at Gérard, the latter pointed to a spot on the map. “I think this is the best place to stand guard and ambush our enemies from. This is the very reason we planned for you to head over to Switzerland from France. The helicopter will go right in front of this area to get... to this place here.”

Gérard was pointing to a one-way access road that people had to stop over to go into France. It was an excellent enough location for everyone to choose no matter who they asked.

“How far will you accompany us?” Kang Chan asked.

Gérard looked at Kang Chan with a dissatisfied look in his eyes.

“I can’t afford to look after someone with a hole in his shoulder. I know how you feel, but we have to make rational judgments.”

“I’m supposed to return with the helicopter,” Gérard admitted with a deep sigh. He knew how burdensome it was to have a wounded person butt into an operation. He wanted to come with them, but he couldn’t argue further.

“Gérard, listen carefully. From now on, we will call this area right here Alpha. This is Beta.” Kang Chan leaned his head closer to Gérard as he spoke, and Gérard quickly checked where Kang Chan had pointed to.

“If we run into a problem, plan a rescue operation with one of these two areas as the starting point once you get back. How do I contact you?” Kang Chan asked.

“We will be using a satellite phone like last time.”

Kang Chan shook his head. “Our locations will be exposed too easily if we do that. Every day, I’m going to turn on the phone at eight in the morning and eight in the evening. I’ll turn it off after ten minutes. If you have to contact me, then do it within those time frames. However, unlike us, you have to be on standby at all times in case we have to contact you.”

“Understood.” Gérard anxiously looked at Kang Chan.

“Honestly, I don’t have a good feeling about this. I have been feeling uneasy for the past few days already. It’s such a relief that you’re the guide,” Kang Chan explained.

“How bad is it?”

Kang Chan quickly looked around their surroundings. “I don’t know yet. I’m sure you’re already aware of this, but I only feel things right before the situation arises. If by any chance the operation goes south, then you have to do what it takes to launch another operation. If you have no choice but to pass on incorrect information to us, then make sure to include Dayeru in a sentence. I will take that as a code that you’re being threatened. The moment you use it, I’ll come get you alone.”

“Is it that bad?”

“The only reason we can do this is because we already know each other. If we had someone else as our guide, I couldn’t have told them something like this. Anyway, think of what I just said as a backup plan.”

Gérard nodded after pursing his lips.

“Still, it’s such a relief that you’re here—at least I won’t have to be suspicious about your intentions.”

Gérard simply smirked in response.

“We can’t be flying nonstop straight to Switzerland, so where’s the layover?” Kang Chan asked.

“We will be refueling at the United States’ military base in Qatar.”

They still had plenty of time.

“What weapons do we have?” Kang Chan asked again.

“Let me get them. Can someone help me out?” Gérard asked.

Seok Kang-Ho stood up when Kang Chan glanced at him. They had experienced this before.

Drrrrr. Clank. Clank. Drrrrr.

They moved a big box and opened its lid, revealing military uniforms and weapons.

“We brought our own military uniforms,” Cha Dong-Gyun said.

“Your own military uniforms? Let me see them.”

Cha Dong-Gyun quickly opened his jump bag and showed Kang Chan the light gray military uniform that they had brought. When turned inside out, it could offer adequate camouflage on green fields.

It was late fall in France, but since they were going to be in the mountains, it wouldn’t be wrong to assume that it would be as cold as the beginning of winter.

The uniform was light gray, so it offered decent camouflage in such areas.

“Put that on,” Kang Chan said.

“We brought a few more uniforms. We’re hoping everyone would find one that fits them.” At Cha Dong-Gyun’s command, a soldier brought over clothes, bandanas, and helmets.

Everyone changed into their uniforms and military boots, put on a bandana and a helmet, and attached a walkie-talkie to themselves.

Next up were weapons.

“We don’t know how long this will take, so bring as much ammo as you can. Make sure to have a sleeping bag and other necessary tools and equipment in your bags as well,” Kang Chan ordered.

Like what he did in his previous operations, Kang Chan attached six rifle magazines, two pistols, four pistol magazines, and a bowie knife to him.

He also stashed away another magazine in his bag along with a sleeping bag, a field ax, a shovel, a rope, and other equipment he thought could come in handy.

After finishing up his preparations, Kang Chan felt more reassured.

“The teams will be the same as last time. I will be commanding one, and Seok Kang-Ho will be commanding team two. Team one!” Kang Chan yelled.

Twelve soldiers raised their hands. One of them was Choi Jong-Il.

“Team two!” Seok Kang-Ho called. He then looked at the soldiers who raised their hands.

With basic preparations out of the way, Kang Chan sat down in his seat. Not long after, Cha Dong-Gyun handed him and Seok Kang-Ho a watch that had black leather straps.

There was no harm in wearing a watch, so Kang Chan just put it on and smoked a cigarette.

“It’s about time we get some sleep, isn’t it?” Kang Chan asked Gérard.

“There’s a bed inside. It’s more comfortable than the ones here.”

“It’s fine, I’ll sleep here. Why would I sleep on a bed that’s meant for patients? I’ll see you when it’s time to eat.”

“Alright.”

As Kang Chan looked at the beds, Gérard stood up.

More than half of the members were already laying down.

“Are you going to sleep?” Seok Kang-Ho asked Kang Chan.

“Yeah. You should sleep as well.”

“Don’t worry. I will.”

After Seok Kang-Ho climbed up to the top bunk, Kang Chan lay down. The sound of the engine and the strange vibration that they felt from the bottom of the aircraft sounded like a lullaby.

Chapter 145.2: What Happened (2)

Kang Chan woke up due to his body clock. Fortunately, he had slept deeply enough to feel as if he had only been asleep for a second.

He sat up on the bed. There was still some time before breakfast.

Kang Chan went to the back of the aircraft, took out a bottle of water, and drank it. He then sat back down on the bed.

After some time, the other soldiers began to wake up and sit up as well. Thirty minutes later, Seok Kang-Ho woke up.

“Hnnghh!” Seok Kang-Ho noisily stretched, then came down from the bed and perched next to Kang Chan. “What’s with that look?”

“What do you mean?”

“Your gaze looks a little sharp. Is that how bad you feel about this operation?”

“I’m not sure.” Kang Chan couldn’t fully believe his intuition yet. However, his nerves had been on edge since he had woken up.

While Seok Kang-Ho was drinking bottled water, Gérard came up to them. “It’s time to eat.”

He didn’t say anything else when he saw the look in Kang Chan’s eyes.

Drrrrr. Clank.

Gérard dragged over a rectangular box to the middle of the aircraft. He then locked its wheels and opened both of its sides, revealing a bunch of c-rations inside.

Gérard took three of them and handed two over to Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho. He then sat across from them.

The soldiers also began to take c-rations for themselves.

This wasn’t something that they should refuse.

They ate everything inside the box, drank coffee, then smoked cigarettes.

After eating breakfast and sleeping for about another hour, they reached the United States’ military base in Qatar.

As Gerard had discussed with them before, they really only stopped to refuel. They left as soon as they were done. After some time, they had cup ramen and c-rations one more time.

Kang Chan felt better after eating spicy food.

Kang Chan noticed the look in the members’ eyes and their expressions were changing as time went on. However, it wasn’t something that he should comment on.

Woo Hee-Seung received a satellite phone and put it in his bag. Nothing else happened afterward except for two of the soldiers checking the medical supplies.

The cargo plane landed at the military base in Col du Génévrier military base at 9:16 am Central European Time.

They set their watches according to the timezone, then immediately got on the chinook.

Since they hadn’t been given any additional information before they took off, they assumed they already had all the intel they needed.

Du-du-du-du-du-du.

The chinook’s noises, which continuously buffeted them from all four directions, were loud enough to make their ears ring.

Upon boarding the chinook, Gérard began to look nervous. The area of operation was just an hour away from where they were.

Kang Chan began to hear the men’s breathing becoming heavier.

They weren’t in a tense situation. Rather, they were just about to start the operation.

They were still an hour away from the target location. Considering they were in a mountainous area, their enemies would have to travel for over half a day to get to where they were heading.

Gritting his teeth, Kang Chan stared outside. In the distance, he could see a bleak mountain.

‘What is wrong with me?!’

Kang Chan was so full of hostility that he was starting to annoy himself.

Unable to even talk to Kang Chan, all Seok Kang-Ho and Gérard could do was keep an eye on his mood.

“Whoo.”

This isn't right.

Kang Chan looked at Gérard. “Give me the map!”

Gérard quickly handed over the map that he had prepared.

“We are currently around this area, right?” Kang Chan asked.

“That’s correct!”

“This location is Alpha, and this one is Beta!”

“I’m aware of that!”

“Gérard! We will rappel down from here, so tell the pilot to stop the helicopter for a moment.”

“Captain! If you do that, it will take you all too much time to reach the best spot to set up an ambush! It can even take you an entire day on foot.”

“I know, but I can’t let us keep going like this!”

Meeting Kang Chan’s gaze, Gérard briefly nodded.

“You are to return to base immediately as soon as we all reach the ground! If things go wrong, then you’re the only one we can trust!” Kang Chan continued.

“Alright!”

Gérard wore a headset and explained the situation to the pilot.

Chk.

“Be prepared to rappel down!” Kang Chan yelled on the walkie-talkie. The soldiers did as instructed.

“Daye! I don’t have a good feeling about this! Go down with Cha Dong-Gyun first and secure the perimeter!” Kang Chan yelled again.

“Alright!”

Du-du-du-du-du-du!

The chinook turned around as it descended.

The trees bent away from the helicopter as if a violent wind was pushing them.

Clank! Clank!

They connected a rope and threw it down to the ground. Two of the soldiers stood near the door and kept an eye out for hostiles.

When Kang Chan pointed to the doorway with his index and middle finger, Seok Kang-Ho and Cha Dong-Gyun immediately descended with the rappel wrapped around their waists.

Upon receiving a signal from Seok Kang-Ho, one of the soldiers nodded at Kang Chan.

“Go go go!”

They descended two at a time.

Du-du-du-du-du-du!

With everyone now on the ground, including the lookouts beside the door, Kang Chan wrapped the rope around his waist.

“Gérard! I’m going!”

“Please be careful!”

Kang Chan dropped down as Gérard gave him a brief salute.

Du-du-du-du-du-du!

The helicopter immediately headed back.

Kang Chan walked toward the area that he had seen earlier. Seok Kang-Ho took up the front, and Cha Dong-Gyun, Gwak Cheol-Ho, and Kang Chan took the middle. Choi Jong-Il covered their rear.

In this situation, spending half of the day to the entire day traveling could be considered crazy, especially when taking their food and stamina into consideration.

After walking for about thirty minutes, they saw a small flatland.

“Stop. Gather round,” Kang Chan ordered. He stood in the middle of the soldiers, who had formed a circle, then unfolded the map in his hands. “This is where we are right now, and this is the location we were supposed to fly to through the Chinook.”

Kang Chan thought they were probably curious about why they got off the helicopter before they could even reach their destination, but nobody asked him any questions.

“Pay close attention. From now on, We will be calling this location Alpha, and we’ll call this one Beta. In case we find ourselves in an emergency, I’ll yell things like ‘Alpha Rima’ or ‘Alpha Echo.’ If I do that, immediately make your way to Alpha. The same goes for when I yell out Beta,” Kang Chan explained.

The soldiers only nodded in response.

“Forget everything that you have heard about the operation. Considering our current situation, it would be more appropriate to think that we have just fallen

into enemy territory. If we're quick enough, it'll only take us half a day to reach our target location. However, if we take too long, we won't be able to predict how our situation will change. After all, this is a four-day expedition, and we just got out of the helicopter early." Kang Chan looked at his subordinates one by one. "From now on, always be prepared for combat. If you think we're in a perilous situation, you are free to open fire. However, no one should cover fire. Cha Dong-Gyun."

"Yes?"

"Deploy two people to the front and two to the back."

One soldier sniffled, perhaps because of the cooler temperature.

"Alright." Cha Dong-Gyun gestured at four of their members, assigning them to their positions.

"Our current priority is to reach the original target location." Kang Chan folded the map and put it back in his bag. Afterward, they began their journey.

With their rifles in hand, Kang Chan and his subordinates walked with their fingers on the trigger.

Kang Chan had felt it before, but they were trained extremely well. The members of his team showed firm postures as they walked up the mountain path.

Since there were sentries at the front, the main group could afford to relax.

To a certain extent, walking calmed down the suffocating nervousness that Kang Chan had felt inside the helicopter.

Yesterday, Kang Chan was just talking about the school festival with Kim Mi-Young over ice cream. Today, he was walking at the border area of France and Switzerland.

The sunlight was blinding, and the air was indescribably fresh. The cold winds reminded him of the onset of winter.

Before them was a mountain so beautiful it looked as if it came out of a painting.

Kang Chan wanted to see this scenery with someone he liked.

The cold feeling of the rifle in his hand and the hostility filling up his eyes seemed to be telling him to focus on the operation.

We can just keep going at this pace.

If they could preoccupy the access road, their chance of winning would increase.

They continued to march in silence.

The military gear on their backs was approximately twenty kilograms. Considering they ate two to three c-ration meals a day, their baggage was at least bound to gradually become lighter.

However, they had to keep walking until they had to stop.

Flying to their target location could've made things easier, but Kang Chan couldn't keep going while overcoming the uneasiness that he had been feeling since a little while ago.

What would've happened if I didn't have this intuition?

Kang Chan would've received a big promotion, or he would've died already.

Honestly, Kang Chan thought he was more likely to receive a promotion because he had been confident that he would survive all the battles that he had fought before Sharlan's trap.

Examining their surroundings, Kang Chan smiled bitterly—issuing a seemingly nonsensical command instead of watching his subordinates die had seemingly become a part of his nature.

Now that he had thought about it, he probably knew the reason commanders couldn't abandon their team but also weren't willing to cancel the operation.

When Kang Chan inhaled, his mind cleared up. It was as if the cold air he had breathed in immediately went up to his brain.

“Stop!” Kang Chan quietly ordered.

His subordinates immediately stopped walking.

While sharply observing their surroundings, Kang Chan gestured to each soldier, then pointed them to their position.

Chk.

“Sentries,” Kang Chan called.

Chk.

“Please go ahead.”

Chk.

“Join us quietly and quickly. Don't lower your guard.”

Chk.

“Alright.”

Kang Chan slowly looked around their surroundings.

They were on their way up to the middle of the mountain and were leaning forward. Since they were surrounded by rocks and trees, they doubted those outside the mountain could detect them.

The two sentries stationed at the back soon regrouped with them.

Where are the sentries up front?

Kang Chan looked at Dayeru, then quickly looked up ahead.

Chapter 146: The Objective of This Operation (1)

Kang Chan quickly dashed forward, and, on his signal, Seok Kang-Ho followed after him. They shouldn't come into contact with the enemy here, but in combat and operations, death always came to people when they least expected it.

Kang Chan went around the left of the rock obscuring their view, and Seok Kang-Ho rushed along the right. Behind it, they found the two sentries sticking close with their rifles aimed and ready to be fired.

Soldiers tense enough could accidentally commit friendly fire when approached without warning. Hence, Kang Chan intentionally let his steps be heard, which made one of the sentries turn around.

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho swiftly darted next to the soldier, who then gestured to his eyes with his index and middle finger, then pointed beyond the grass.

Kang Chan didn't spot anything out of the ordinary, but in cases like these, it was best to trust the judgment of his subordinates. They were surrounded by rocks and cold winds in this mountainous terrain. Trees like evergreens, which could only grow tall in certain places, were also all around them.

The soldier had pointed to a location twenty meters ahead. They couldn't talk since it could be heard from this distance.

Kang Chan gave Dayeru a knowing look. With his rifle aimed and ready, Kang Chan crouched down and began advancing toward the location. Seok Kang-Ho assumed the same stance and followed after him.

Every time the wind brushed past their cheeks and the sunlight shone through the trees, they felt a tingling sensation that made their hair stand on end.

Haah. Haah.

There was no doubt about it. It was someone's breathing.

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho were currently standing on a downhill slope. If they came any closer, the enemies could spot Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho's heads.

They descended carefully as a team. Half a step ahead, Kang Chan took charge of guarding their front, and Seok Kang-Ho covered their flanks from behind.

Kang Chan was slowly turning the barrel of his gun from side to side when a cold shiver suddenly ran down his spine.

Thump. Thump.

Kang Chan rammed into Seok Kang-Ho.

Crash! Pew! Pew!

A bullet bounced on the dirt behind where Seok Kang-Ho had just been standing and rebounded somewhere in their surroundings.

A sniper had just shot at them. Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho crawled on the ground before getting up and running under the cover of rocks and trees.

Pew! Bang! Pow!

The dirt flew into the air, and chunks of trees shattered around them. With a whoosh, they leaped to where the other soldiers, who were lying on the ground.

Huff. Huff.

Just now, they had come extremely close to death. They weren't simply being shot at, either. The sniper had let loose a barrage of bullets on purpose.

Kang Chan examined the mountain opposite them. There was a sniper somewhere on it, ready to shoot them from approximately two kilometers away.

If the wind hadn't blown or if Kang Chan was a second late in pushing Seok Kang-Ho to safety, one of them would definitely be dead by now. The sentries could have been killed as well if he didn't call for a regroup.

Crackle.

"Choi Jong-II, keep an eye on all the areas where snipers could be lying in wait. Cha Dong-Gyun, we have an enemy about twenty meters ahead. We are likely already surrounded, so reposition the soldiers accordingly," Kang Chan commanded.

Crackle.

"Understood, sir."

Huff. Huff.

The sniper aside, one of their enemies was currently just twenty meters away from them. They were likely assigning a sniper to the narrow path to gain control of it when they spotted Kang-Chan's sentries.

Should we head back the way we came?

Kang Chan shook his head.

Crackle.

"Lee Doo-Hee, can your bullets reach the mountain in front of us from where I was?" Kang Chan asked.

Crackle.

"Yes, sir," Lee Doo-Hee replied.

Kang Chan quickly scanned his flanks.

Crackle.

"Choi Jong-II, there may be a sniper above the area or enemies around us. Check your surroundings," Kang Chan instructed.

Crackle.

"Understood, sir," Choi Jong-II replied.

Seok Kang-Ho glanced at Kang Chan.

'Do you think we're surrounded, Cap?'

Kang Chan gave a brief nod.

The radio crackled again.

“I can shoot that far, but I can only reach about one and a half kilometers if the target is uphill. I’ll only be half as accurate as well,” Lee Doo-Hee reported back.

Kang Chan gritted his teeth. If they lingered and wasted time here for too long, they could be completely surrounded and have all their escape routes cut off.

Crackle.

“Cha Dong-Gyun, once you hear gunshots, take five men with you to secure higher grounds. Make sure no bullets come flying over our heads no matter what happens,” Kang Chan directed.

Crackle.

“Leave it to me, sir,” Cha Dong-Gyun responded.

Damn it!

Crackle.

“Kwak Cheol-Ho, once Cha Dong-Gyun secures a better position, take five men with you to cover the rear. Move only when Cha Dong-Gyun is ready,” Kang Chan commanded.

Crackle.

“Yes, sir,” Kwak Cheol-Ho replied.

Crackle.

“Choi Jong-II, Seok Kang-Ho, and I will be advancing. If something happens, head to point Alpha and inform everyone about it.”

Crackle.

“Yes, sir,” Choi Jong-II replied.

Kang Chan then turned back to the two soldiers standing guard. “If the sniper starts shooting at us again, provide cover fire.”

The soldiers quickly nodded. Kang Chan tapped the soldiers’ helmets twice.

Crackle.

“Lee Doo-Hee, there will be bullets coming from a sniper upfront. Try to pinpoint or at least get an idea of their location, then begin firing back. Don’t let the sniper just shoot at us in comfort, got it?”

Kang Chan thought that if Cha Dong-Gyun haphazardly went to secure a more uphill position without any backup, he would be an easy target for the sniper.

Kang Chan glanced at Seok Kang-Ho. They would proceed forward and divert the sniper's attention so Cha Dong-Gyun wouldn't be compromised.

One, two...! Whoosh!

They were already aware of the enemies' presence now, so it wouldn't be a surprise anymore. Kang Chan kept himself as concealed as possible from the opposite mountain as he bolted behind the trees.

Pew! Pew! Pow! Bang! Bang!

Bullets furiously raced at them from the other mountain. At the same time, retaliatory fire erupted from their side.

The sentries he had assigned to their front earlier had mentioned enemies up ahead.

Sticking to the trees as closely as he could, Kang Chan aimed down the slope.

Pew! Pew! Bang!

Bullets came flying at him from below. The trees above his head exploded, scattering so much dust in the air that he was almost blinded.

Huff. Huff. Huff. Huff.

Pow! Pow! Pow!

Seok Kang-Ho had hunched over to keep as close to the ground as he could. They were exposed to the sniper above and the enemies below.

Pew! Bam!

The moment the trees behind them cracked, Kang Chan noticed two sparks from where the gunshots were coming from. Those soldiers had most likely been assigned to protect their sniper.

If this situation kept up, Seok Kang-Ho would die.

“Daye!” Kang Chan shouted as he threw himself toward the downhill slope.

With his legs spread like a frog, he braced himself as much as he could and straightened his back. However, leaves began to give the moment he aimed where he saw the sparks, causing his body to slide downward.

“Fuck!” Seok Kang-Ho stiffly exclaimed.

Pew! Pew! Pew! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Gunshots consecutively echoed throughout the mountain.

Kang Chan had hoped it was a plain downhill slope. However, after his quick ten-meter descent, he came across a small cliff with a two-meter drop.

At this rate, he would be nothing more than easy target practice.

Kang Chan decided to release the strength from his legs, which he had been using to brace himself. As a result, his speed increased as he rustled down the slope. He was soon launched into the air and over the cliff.

Pew! Pew! Pew! Pew! Crash!

He fired four bullets before crashing heavily onto the ground with a splat. The wind was knocked out of him at the moment of impact, but he couldn't waste any time. He crawled on the ground like a madman and made his way to the opposite hill.

Pew! Pew! Pew! Pew!

Seok Kang-Ho had stood upright to return fire, providing Kang Chan some cover.

Pew! Pew! Pew!

The sniper's shot bounced off of the ground.

Pow!

The tree that Seok Kang-Ho had been relying on exploded.

"Haaa!" Kang Chan could finally breathe again. Gritting his teeth, he climbed up to where the sparks were coming from earlier.

Seeing Kang Chan move, Seok Kang-Ho quickly got back down to hide.

It was a smokescreen.

The two enemies who had covered themselves in mesh and hid under dirt and leaves were now lying dead with holes in their foreheads.

Crackle.

"We're in position," Cha Dong-Gyun said over the radio.

Kang Chan picked up the pace. Unlike where Seok Kang-Ho was, it was difficult to shoot from Kang Chan's position.

Crackle.

"Lee Doo-Hee, give me the sniper's approximate location," Kang Chan requested.

Crackle.

"The sniper is thirty degrees up and sixty meters away from me," Lee Doo-Hee replied.

Crackle.

"Seok Kang-Ho, take charge of the slope," Kang Chan commanded.

Crackle.

"Got it, Cap," Seok Kang-Ho replied.

No other enemies showed themselves despite this level of engagement, which could only mean that this location wasn't their main target. They were simply unlucky enough to come across Kang

Chan's team while they were preparing for an ambush. However, since they were most likely carrying radios, Kang Chan had to take down the sniper before their main forces arrived.

Kang Chan looked down at his knee. He was undoubtedly bleeding, but his military uniform wasn't torn. When he began checking the path up, the radio crackled again.

"This is Kwak Cheol-Ho, sir. We have spotted enemies approaching from behind," Kwak Cheol-Ho said grimly.

Crackle.

"Cha Dong-Gyun, do you have eyes on the enemy?" Kang Chan asked.

Crackle.

"I will be exposed to the sniper if I check the rear, sir," Cha Dong-Gyun said.

Damn it!

Kang Chan once again glanced at where the sniper would likely be.

Crackle.

"Choi Jong-II, send more men to the rear. Kwak Cheol-Ho, hold the enemy back for ten minutes," Kang Chan commanded.

Crackle.

"Yes, sir," Choi Jong-II and Kwak Cheol-Ho responded at the same time.

Kang Chan slung his rifle over his right shoulder and climbed up the mountain. It wasn't hard to go back up because the rocks and trees hid him from view. However, considering most sniper teams consisted of two people, there was no predicting when more bullets would come flying at him again.

Crackle.

"The enemy is approaching from the left as well," Cha Dong-Gyun spoke over the radio just as Kang Chan held onto a rock and pulled himself up. It was difficult to use the radio in his current position.

Daye! Come through for me!

Crackle.

"This is Seok Kang-Ho. Assess the situation and return fire accordingly," Seok Kang-Ho ordered when Kang Chan didn't reply.

Kang Chan continued to climb as he surveyed the area above.

They were surrounded. How did this happen? Where did things go wrong?

Despite his growing curiosity, he had to focus on eliminating the enemy sniper and plant their own snipers in their position.

“Hegh,hegh,hegh,hegh.”

Because he was trying not to make any noise, his breathing unintentionally sounded like an excited pervert’s.

Rustle.

At the sound of falling gravel, Kang Chan pressed his body tightly against the rock. There was something up above.

Pew! Pew! P-Pew! Pew! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Gunshots came from where the soldiers were. Kang Chan leaned his head forward a little to look up.

Crackle.

“Cap, there’s an enemy soldier above you. Turn to the right,” Seok Kang-Ho radioed.

Kang Chan twisted to the right and continued climbing up. The gunshots made it easier to hide his footsteps and breathing.

Crackle.

“About ten meters higher from where you are,” Seok Kang-Ho said.

It would be nice if Kang Chan could provide assistance now, but he still had some ways to go. Moreover, he was in a far different situation now.

The sound of gunfire made him feel hurried, but he kept calm, steadily aimed his rifle, and slowly climbed the mountain.

Huff. Huff.

Not long after, he saw a small path between the rocks and the mountain. The sniper was probably targeting the soldiers because he could hear consecutive rounds being shot.

One, two...!

Kang Chan leaped toward the narrow path, finding a team of two snipers, as he had expected.

The enemy sentry whipped around in surprise, but Kang Chan had already opened fire.

Pew! Thud! Pew! Thud!

The enemy fell to his back with a bullet in his forehead. Meanwhile, the sniper fell forward with a bullet in his neck. It was as if he just fell asleep.

Crackle.

“The snipers have been eliminated. Choi Jong-II, send a sniper and two soldiers here,” Kang Chan ordered.

Crackle.

“Cancel the two soldiers. I’ll send a couple of my men over,” Seok Kang-Ho said.

Crackle.

“Got it,” Kang Chan replied.

Kang Chan scanned his surroundings from above. The rear was safe now.

Seeing the face of the dead enemy, Kang Chan tilted his head.

Even though it was only natural for special forces to recruit talented individuals from around the world, it was still strange to find a Russian in the SBS.

Sparks continued to fly around him, which made it easy for Kang Chan to locate where the friendly fire was coming from.

With no other gunfire coming from where Kang Chan was, a sniper and two soldiers from their side could safely run up the slope with their rifles slung behind them. When they arrived, Kang Chan realized the two soldiers guarding the sniper were also the ones who served as sentries earlier and discovered the enemies first.

“You stand guard on this side, and you keep your eye below. Don’t miss anything that comes up from down there. If we lose this position, we’re all going to die,” Kang Chan warned.

The soldiers nodded in response. Wasting not a single second longer in the area, Kang Chan left them behind and quickly descended the mountain. Gunshots came from all around him.

Kang Chan seamlessly slid down the mountain and looked again at the face of the enemy whose camouflage had been exposed.

He was starting to get another strange feeling.

It was difficult to climb back up from the direction he fell, so he went around five meters to the right to head up the cliff.

“Are you okay?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“Yeah, let’s go,” Kang Chan replied.

Together, they regrouped with the soldiers warily guarding their surroundings. Choi Jong-Il was at the center of their formation.

Kang Chan moved back. There was currently no immediate threat.

“The enemy isn’t moving from behind that sharp rock over there,” Kwak Cheol-Ho said, pointing to the rock he mentioned.

Why isn’t he moving?

Kang Chan nodded and stepped away, pulling out a map.

This is where Lee Doo-Hee is.

Kang Chan looked back up to glance at the location where Lee Doo-Hee should be.

Cha Dong-Gyun was higher up, and Choi Jong-Il was below him. Meanwhile, the direction that Kang Chan and Kwak Cheol-Ho were covering was...

Damn it!

Kang Chan gritted his teeth and looked behind him. Was the enemy targeting the hill he fell from earlier? Kang Chan stuffed the map back and palmed his forehead. Should they hold out or try to break through?

Seok Kang-Ho, who was next to Kang Chan, grinned widely as his eyes glinted like a deranged person. He was feeling nervous, having guessed the situation with Kang Chan's expression.

If they endured and held it out here, how long would it take for the Foreign Legion's special forces team to arrive? They could attempt to break through, but Kang Chan didn't know how many they were up against.

Crackle.

"This is Lee Doo-Hee. Enemy spotted seven kilometers from our location."

Crackle.

"This is Cha Dong-Gyun. Enemy spotted approximately seven kilometers away from our left as well."

Kang Chan glanced and smirked at Seok Kang-Ho. Seok Kang-Ho grinned back. The water had already been spilled, so there was no turning back now. Kang Chan pressed the button on his helmet.

Crackle.

"This is Kang Chan," he began. The heavy silence was pierced as wind whooshed past them. "The enemy we are facing appears to be the Russian Spetsnaz. As the world's most formidable special forces team, they require no other introduction."

Kang Chan noticed the soldiers stiffened like statues.

Crackle.

"Seok Kang-Ho and Cha Dong-Gyun. From now on, your teams will be acting as one. Choi Jong-Il and Kwak Cheol-Ho, your teams will be merging as well. I will be moving alone," Kang Chan said.

A soldier peeked at Kang Chan, then turned his head toward his assigned position. He still couldn't seem to understand what Kang Chan meant.

"The South Korean special forces will now start hunting down the Spetsnaz. This is no different from live ammo training. The soldiers going down the mountain are the assassination squad, and the soldiers who'll be staying behind will be the occupying forces. If the occupying forces fail to keep this area safe, we will all die," Kang Chan declared.

Kwak Cheol-Ho awkwardly smiled at Kang Chan. He tried to relax, but he couldn't completely get rid of his nerves.

“You must kill and protect. From now on, our operation’s objective...”

The soldiers turned to focus on Kang Chan.

“... is the elimination of all enemy forces.”

The soldier who had peeked at Kang Chan earlier now looked at him with a dazed expression.

Chapter 147: The Objective of This Operation (2)

Seok Kang-Ho and Cha Dong-Gyun were put in charge of hunting the enemy approaching from the left of their current position, while Choi Jong-Il and Kwak Cheol-Ho were put in charge of hunting the enemy approaching from the right.

Kang Chan went two meters down the hill.

In operations like this, putting unconditional trust in their commander was absolutely important. During the live ammo training, Kang Chan shot them in the chest and the head. Fortunately, they were wearing bulletproof vests and helmets back then. Was that the reason they could work with each other so well it was almost natural?

The forest grew silent as they advanced by five meters.

Ten meters ahead of them was another rocky area of the mountain. Even their enemies would find it difficult to recklessly climb it.

Taking that into consideration, their enemies were probably waiting for nightfall.

If Kang Chan and his team let the Spetsnaz have their way instead of bringing the fight to them now, his team would be surrounded and forced to wait for the Foreign Legion. If the SBS joined the battle in that situation, then Kang Chan and his team were as good as dead.

Not wanting to let that happen, Kang Chan insisted on hunting the Spetsnaz now. He looked at Seok Kang-Ho, who was behind him. Seemingly understanding what his gaze meant, Seok Kang-Ho quickly advanced.

The moment Seok Kang-Ho got into position, Choi Jong-Il headed toward where Kang Chan was looking.

Cha Dong-Gyun followed Seok Kang-Ho, and Kwak Cheol-Ho followed Choi Jong-Il.

“Haah. Haah.”

Not only did they have the three people that had the best abilities in the special forces team, but they also had Seok Kang-Ho, who understood Kang Chan’s intentions better than anyone else.

Kwak Cheol-Ho sharply glared behind him—which was where Choi Jong-Il was positioned— then checked their flanks as well.

Sunlight coursed past leaves whenever the wind blew, making the shadows of the forest dance.

In the middle of their sway, Kwak Cheol-Ho felt as if he saw a black helmet.

Did I see that correctly or is my brain playing tricks on me?

He wasn’t sure either.

Click!

Just as Kwak Cheol-Ho was about to react...

Whoosh!

Thud!

He saw blood splatter and spread like red fog.

While they were still pondering if they saw a helmet, the enemy was shot in the head.

Kwak Cheol-Ho looked at Kang Chan in shock quick enough to witness Kang Chan aiming his gun back to their front.

Kwak Cheol-Ho felt like a wolf hunting with a lion. He held down a laugh.

Who can defeat a lion?

They had already seen enough of Kang Chan's capabilities during the live ammunition training.

Right now, they were up against the Spetsnaz, a special forces team renowned even among the world's special forces. Nevertheless, one of their members had just been killed with a headshot simply because he leaned his head forward a little.

A thrill went down Kwak Cheol-Ho's spine and spread throughout his body like goosebumps.

He decided to shoot anyone he saw, having gained confidence that he didn't have anything to worry about. After all, even if Kwak Cheol-Ho couldn't hit his target, Kang Chan would simply send a bullet right between their eyes.

The Spetsnaz? You little dickheads! We have the God of Blackfield on our side!

Meanwhile, Cha Dong-Gyun gritted his teeth.

By the time Kwak Cheol-Ho had pointed his gun, Kang Chan had already pulled the trigger.

He was surprised not only by Kang Chan but by Seok Kang-Ho as well.

Seok Kang-Ho aimed opposite where Kang Chan was aiming. Cha Dong-Gyun felt as if he was learning new things about what he should do in a team.

Seok Kang-Ho's actions let Kang Chan focus on one side.

This was it.

It didn't matter if they were up against the Spetsnaz or any other bullshit. As soon as their enemies revealed themselves, even if it was just their head or a leg, Kang Chan would kill them.

The others just had to protect Kang Chan during that brief moment.

Even though the gunshot and the body falling to the ground rang loud and clear, none of the enemies showed up.

They probably didn't expect this to happen. How could they have known that one of the soldiers they had sent over to secure a foothold would be shot in the head?

Sons of bitches!

The Korean team just had to act as they had been trained.

Kang Chan would take care of the rest.

The bitterness and extreme sorrow that had accumulated in the soldiers' hearts seemed to be dissipating.

They just had to cover their left and defend Kang Chan even if it meant throwing themselves in the line of fire.

Cha Dong-Gyun examined their surroundings even more fiercely.

It was subtle, but Kang Chan's movements changed. He no longer made any sounds—like a lion prowling after finding prey.

'An enemy is near!'

Cha Dong-Gyun and Kwak Cheol-Ho only instinctively felt that an enemy was close by, so they couldn't understand how Kang Chan knew where the enemies were.

Cha Dong-Gyun and Kwak Cheol-Ho gulped.

Where are they?

Are they near Cha Dong-Gyun? In front of Seok Kang-Ho? Or near Kwak Cheol-Ho again?

Their senses heightened so much they were starting to become dizzy.

Swoosh.

During the brief period that the wind swept past, something moved in front of them.

Cha Dong-Gyun felt as if all of his blood ran cold.

Click!

Whoosh!

Thud!

Cha Dong-Gyun couldn't pull the trigger.

'This was what Cheol-Ho had experienced!'

Cha Dong-Gyun couldn't shoot because he wasn't certain if he had spotted an enemy, then he began to worry if things would become dangerous if they failed to kill the Spetsnaz in one shot.

Cha Dong-Gyun locked eyes with Kang Chan, who then looked up ahead.

He was the God of Blackfield! To their enemies, he was the god of death.

Cha Dong-Gyun vowed to let nothing stop him from shooting them next time.

It didn't matter if he hit or missed the target. He would pull the trigger no matter what.

No matter the outcome, the God of Blackfield was there to take care of it anyway. He would display yet another thin spray of the enemies' blood—like what he was doing now.

Twenty minutes had passed, but none of them could still stand straight. However, Cha Dong-Gyun and Kwak Cheol-Ho weren't tired.

Kang Chan controlled his pacing.

Right now, he was moving faster.

How does he know? How can he figure out where the enemy is? We're up against the Spetsnaz here!

Cha Dong-Gyun had discovered that enemy first, yet Kang Chan had shot them in the forehead way faster than he could pull the trigger. It was almost instantaneous.

Kang Chan lowered himself a little more. When he did, Seok Kang-Ho and Choi Jong-Il looked from side to side to figure out why.

Eventually, they realized an enemy was nearby.

See? Kang Chan slowed down.

His walking speed slowed down enough for them to sense it.

Deciding he would stop at nothing to fire at the enemy this time, Cha Dong-Gyun sharply aimed at and observed the area that he was in charge of.

He would shoot anything that moved.

I have to trust myself! Even if I miss, the God of Death is right in front of me.

Not longer after, he saw something moving.

Whoosh!

Cha Dong-Gyun pulled the trigger.

He felt as if the world had stopped. His hairs were standing on end.

Thud!

With the sound of something falling to the ground, the speed of the world around him quickly returned to normal.

Cha Dong-Gyun unknowingly looked at Seok Kang-Ho.

Seok Kang-Ho grinned in response. Although his eyes were glinting so hard it seemed as if he would beat up Cha Dong-Gyun at any moment, Cha Dong-Gyun realized Seok Kang-Ho was actually praising him.

I killed a Spetsnaz!

Sons of bitches!

During the joint training, those fuckers acted all cocky and didn't even let the Korean team near them.

Motherfuckers! Come at us!

When Cha Dong-Gyun looked at his team again...

'Get your act together!'

Kang Chan glared at him, then looked away.

Cha Dong-Gyun returned to his senses. If Kang Chan wasn't here, he would've exposed himself due to his excitement, and he would have become the next one to be shot in the head.

Lanok sat up from the desk, then looked at the aide with an unusually fearsome gaze.

"The Intelligence Bureau has just detected a Russian submarine in the Celtic Sea. How am I supposed to comprehend this?" Lanok asked.

"We believe that Vasili sent a special forces team on the submarine—"

"That can't be."

Having been interrupted, the aide waited for Lanok to continue.

"You're saying that the Intelligence Bureau, which has five satellites and enough budget to abundantly feed the starving kids in Africa for ten years, didn't know that Russia's nuclear-powered submarine was right around the corner? Does that make any sense to you?" Lanok asked.

"We have received a report that said the DGSE will investigate this matter."

With a deep sigh, Lanok shook his head. "Raphael."

"Yes, Mr. Ambassador."

"If you took out a gun in front of me, then..."

"Mr. Ambassador!"

Raphael looked flustered, but Lanok simply continued as if that didn't matter. "Louis can just easily shoot you in response. However, what would it mean if Louis didn't even bother to take out a gun after you shot me?"

Raphael couldn't answer.

"You wouldn't say that he was looking somewhere else, would you?" Lanok asked again.

"That's correct, Mr. Ambassador."

"Even if people don't like how I treat Monsieur Kang, we shouldn't put France in danger just for our personal reasons. If we just leave this at that and move on, then there's bound to be someone who'll see this behavior and learn from it in the future."

Raphael quickly nodded.

"Contact the DGSE and tell them that by today, I should hear news about the deaths of two of the Intelligence Bureaus' deputy directors. I also want to create a team to assassinate Vasili. Increase the embassy's security to class one, and order an emergency decree to the entire Foreign Legion," Lanok added.

Raphael loudly inhaled.

“The Foreign Legion’s special forces team is to head immediately to where Monsieur Kang is. Inform me when they’re ready. Can we contact Monsieur Kang?”

“We heard we can contact him at eight o’clock this evening.”

Lanok nodded while pursing his lips. He gave Raphael a look that made the latter urgently leave the room.

“Vasili,” Lanok muttered to himself, then fiercely glared at the phone on his desk as if it was Vasili.

“So you want to double-cross me and the United Kingdom?” Lanok muttered to himself with a sigh, then glanced at the clock. “You’re making me bet everything I have on Monsieur Kang.”

Whoosh!

Thud!

‘Twenty-three!’

Choi Jong-Il had been counting the number of Spetsnaz members that they had killed.

Each Spetsnaz special forces team had nine members. Taking that into consideration, almost three of their teams had been wiped out before they could even pull the trigger.

Would the Spetsnaz dispatch more than three of their units in a single operation?

Choi Jong-Il shook his head.

Can it be this easy?

Although Kang Chan took down nineteen of those twenty-three soldiers, this situation was still too absurd.

The sun above them was slowly going down past the horizon.

Whrrr! Peep! Cheep!

Unlike Choi Jong-Il, who flinched whenever they heard the strange sounds from the birds, Kang Chan didn’t react at all.

The enemies who had been so determined to pounce on them had now hidden themselves.

How will they act? How long will we keep succeeding?

Kang Chan paused, making Choi Jong-Il examine him while pulling his rifle close to him.

Kang Chan stopped for the first time since they started this operation.

What’s going on?

Choi Jong-Il, Kwak Cheol-Ho, Seok Kang-Ho, and Cha Dong-Gyun examined their surroundings thoroughly enough for their eyes to feel dry.

Badum badum. Badum badum.

Their hearts raced the same way they did right before they got out of the helicopter.

Kang Chan examined their surroundings.

While the enemy was still likely fully aware of Kang Chan and his team's movements, they could no longer see the enemy.

Kang Chan moved his head back toward Seok Kang-Ho.

They were going to retreat.

Seok Kang-Ho quickly went past Cha Dong-Gyun, reversing their position.

Seok Kang-Ho was now at the very front, and to their right were Cha Dong-Gyun and Kang Chan.

This was their best option right now.

Their hearts calmed down upon retreating for about twenty meters.

Tsk!

Kang Chan clicked his tongue, seemingly displeased.

When everyone looked at him, he assigned them to their positions. Once they had assumed a pentagon-shaped formation, he softly exhaled.

Their enemies hadn't attacked their troops yet. If nightfall wasn't what they were waiting for, then they had to be trying to think of other means to win.

The sun had gone down to some degree. Based on his experience, he thought that the members had to eat and rest now. Otherwise, they could fail to keep their nervousness under control.

Making up his mind, he made his way to the forefront.

There was no forest in the middle of where the snipers and other team members were located.

They could be exposed if they stayed there, but the area made it just as difficult for their opponents to hide as well, especially considering the tension in the air.

Before leaving the forest, Kang Chan pressed a button.

Crackle.

"It's Kang Chan. We're heading back. Snipers, check the perimeter."

Crackle.

"Nothing out of the ordinary."

Kang Chan slowly led them out of the forest upon hearing that answer.

Lanok let his phone ring about five times before answering the call.

“Ello?”

- Lanok, are you planning on starting a war?

“Vasili, you can't just talk to me about what you want right after pushing a gun to my head. I hope you know that Russia isn't the only country that has nuclear weapons.”

- This is all a misunderstanding, Lanok.

Lanok quickly looked at the clock.

The viper that had backstabbed him suddenly wanted to reconcile. Why would he do that? Why would Vasili, the man who had sent the Spetsnaz to Kang Chan, bow down to him now?

Monsieur Kang!

Unable to contain his happiness, Lanok tightly clenched his right hand, which was on the desk.

“You shouldn't underestimate Monsieur Kang's capabilities. I have said this before, but I'm not in a position to force anything on him, Vasili.”

- Lanok, I fell for the United Kingdom's tricks. Only the United Kingdom will benefit from war starting between us.

“Discuss that with Monsieur Kang.”

- Wouldn't this be easier if you arbitrate? I would appreciate it if you do me that favor. It's the only way I would get to apologize to Monsieur Kang. Of course, I'll be sending proper compensation for our rash decision to head into France as well.

“Vasili, you probably know this already, but our Intelligence Bureau lost two deputy directors because of this matter. Moreover, considering Monsieur Kang's personality, laying down such a hasty condition could result in me losing credibility as well, just like what happened to you for losing your beloved Spetsnaz,” Lanok said, then glared at the clock.

This was a gamble.

Lanok couldn't contact Kang Chan, but if he didn't gamble this much right now, the situation could become even harder at any moment.

- Can you tell Monsieur Kang that I'm willing to even tell you the exact location of the SBS? How do you even contact him?

“It would be in your best interest to not look down on France, Vasili.”

- I will contact the DGSE, so check with them.

Lanok hung up, then sighed loudly.

Monsieur Kang Chan had done it. He had defeated the Spetsnaz.

Lanok shook his head.

The sun was around forty-five degrees above their heads by the time Kang Chan's team had regrouped with the rest.

Thud.

“Phew.”

As if on cue, all five straightened their legs and leaned against a rock.

Looking extremely curious, the others checked how the five were doing.

‘Twenty-three,’ Choi Jong-II mouthed to Woo Hee-Seung when their eyes met.

“Pardon?”

“We killed twenty-three Spetsnaz soldiers,” Choi Jong-II repeated.

Looking like they couldn't believe what they just heard, they turned toward Kang Chan.

Kang Chan smirked.

He's telling the truth!

The soldiers looked strangely proud of themselves. In the middle of that standoff, they emerged victorious.

Through this experience, they became battle-hardened enough to no longer feel dispirited, and even if they did, it ensured that they would still be able to properly use the abilities that they had learned during training.

“Cha Dong-Gyun, have the members eat on shifts. Order the sniper team to eat one at a time. Make sure they never let their guard down.”

“Understood,” Cha Dong-Gyun answered.

“What do you think those fuckers did?” Seok Kang-Ho asked Kang Chan.

“They either planted claymores in the area or have withdrawn.”

“Phew! I'm fucking dying for a smoke.”

“Aren't you hungry?”

“Why do you ask? As a matter of fact, I'm starving,” Seok Kang-Ho grumbled. Not long after, one of their team members brought him a C-ration.

“Eat, then get some sleep,” Kang Chan said.

“Will we keep moving tonight as well?” Seok Kang-Ho asked. He placed his finger on the lid of the c-ration, then glanced at Kang Chan.

“If they have planted claymores around us, then even just two people would find it difficult to get anywhere. We should prepare in case things go awry instead.”

“Alright.” Seok Kang-Ho tore off the plastic of the c-ration with his teeth, then ate the bread.

Kang Chan ate a biscuit.

What would Kim Mi-Young be doing right now? He wanted to see her again.

They were in a sunken part of the mountain, so they were enclosed on all sides.

So that fucker Vasili stabbed us in the back, huh?

Kang Chan assumed they wouldn't get betrayed since Lanok was on their side.

He picked up a pastry.

Son of a bitch.

He decided to let the matter go for now since he had essentially killed most of the Spetsnaz soldiers anyway. However, he already planned to think about how to retaliate after this operation.

He had no intention of just leaving this at that and moving on.

Chapter 148.1: May Luck Be On Your Side (1)

Stars showed up in the night sky as the sun went past the horizon. They were so close that they seemed like they would get caught on the tips of the mountains. The sight would remain in one's memory for a lifetime, but the South Korean special forces team was in a situation far too tense and nervewracking to bask in their beauty.

After eating dinner, they took turns sleeping for two hours each. It was now seven-forty in the evening.

The Spetsnaz could use the cover of the dark to attack them. In the worst-case scenario, they could even come rushing in with the SBS by their side.

Clank! Clank!

Sounds of weapons being checked occasionally rang out in the silence.

The agents had been imitating the behavior that Kang Chan had been showing. Matching his tempo, they would tense up and relax as he did. Currently, however, they were extremely nervous. No one had ordered them to, but they sharply observed their surroundings.

Clank!

“Are we heading down?” Seok Kang-Ho quietly asked Kang Chan after checking his magazine.

“Let's contact the base with the satellite phone at twenty hundred hours before deciding. The bad feeling I was getting this morning concerns me. There's something out there. We just don't know what it is. It doesn't matter if it's claymores or men lying in ambush—it's still dangerous out there,” Kang Chan firmly replied.

Seok Kang-Ho glanced around and then turned back to Kang Chan.

“Captain, is everything alright?” Seok Kang-Ho hesitantly asked.

Kang Chan looked back at Seok Kang-Ho.

“I know how strong you are, but today, you’re different from any other time I’ve seen you—especially the look in your eyes. I don’t know how to describe it, but you seem more on edge and more keen than in the past. It’s like your senses are overloading and you’re running on overdrive.”

Kang Chan tilted his head.

“Like you’ve advanced a step, maybe,” Seok Kang-Ho explained further.

“What does that mean?” Kang Chan asked.

“Well, you’re more refined than you were in the Mongolian operation. You have already surprised everyone during that operation, yet you have still become a completely different person now. Honestly, be it during the Mongolian operation, the live ammo training, and now, you seem to be turning more and more into a monstrous beast every time you lift your gun,” Seok Kang-Ho said.

Kang Chan hadn’t realized. Had he not always been like this in the past?

“The soldiers we fought in Africa are nothing compared to the Spetsnaz. The Spetsnaz are a lot stronger, yet you took them down more easily than back in Africa. Your eyes are also completely different from how they usually are. They’re hard, vicious, and show no sign of loosening up,” Seok Kang-Ho explained.

“Haven’t I always struggled to cool down after a fight?” Kang Chan refuted.

Seok Kang-Ho tilted his head, then shook it twice.

“It’s different now. You’re acting as if you have already lost three or four rookies. Well, as long as you’re okay, it doesn’t matter. I just thought you should know that you are more sensitive than usual,” Seok Kang-Ho informed him.

Kang Chan nodded in understanding. An unnecessarily sensitive commander could quickly tire their soldiers out.

“Whew,” Kang Chan sighed as knelt down one knee and leaned against a rock.

The cold, hard feeling of the rifle hanging by his shoulder once again reminded him of where he was. Every time he exhaled, he could see his breath vanish in the air in front of him.

Kang Chan chuckled faintly. He suddenly missed Kim Mi-Young.

She was still just a little chick who had a long way to go before growing up to be an adult. She had to know that there were a lot better guys than him in college.

She planned to attend the Seoul National University, after all. It was filled and led by men who stood out in their fields like Kim Mi-Young, not men who had the most kills on the battlefield. What kind of person would Kang Chan be in such a place?

But none of that mattered. He just wanted to see her right now. Her signature laugh, her adoring eyes at him... he felt as if the vicious look in his eyes would relax once he saw her.

Kang Chan looked up at the stars in the sky. As he did, someone spoke to him.

“It’s twenty hundred hours,” Woo Hee-Seung said as he approached, bringing over the satellite phone.

They could certainly call the base first, but they had to do it far from the location where they had unexpectedly ran into the Spetsnaz. It would otherwise be dangerous to let the base know of the situation.

The same went for the call at twenty hundred hours. Kang Chan would wait, but if Gérard didn’t call, it would be far wiser for them to head straight to Switzerland before contacting Korea. Although they still had more than enough ammo left, they only had two days’ worth of c-rations left.

Beep.

The satellite phone turned on as soon as Kang Chan pressed a button. A shooting star fell slowly into the horizon, seemingly displeased by the artificial light that the phone was emitting.

Two minutes passed by. The soldiers were pretending to be unaffected, but in truth, they were all sharply tuned in to the phone.

‘Are they telling us to break through to Switzerland first?’

As Kang Chan recalled the directions on the map for that plan, the phone rang awake.

Beep. Beep. Beep.

Kang Chan answered the call, causing the phone to let out a mechanical sound as he lifted it to his ear.

-This is the base.

“This is the God of Blackfield,” Kang Chan answered.

-The visitors from this morning have all left. The gentlemen are on standby at the Lima, Alpha, and Delta points. You have the discretion on how to proceed.

“What about the zoo?”

-Deers and bears.

Deers meant two, and bears meant seven. There were twenty-seven enemies lying in wait.

“What are our chances?” Kang Chan asked.

-Half and half. However, it has been confirmed that the visitors from this morning have all left. Napoleon has also been mobilized today.

“Repeat what you just said,” Kang Chan said in surprise.

-Napoleon has been mobilized today.

Kang Chan looked up at the sky in thought. That phrase was code that an emergency decree had been ordered on the entire Foreign Legion. Kang Chan was now finally starting to see the outline of the puzzle.

Lanok had taken a firm stance, and Vasili had stepped back.

“Base,” Kang Chan began.

-Yes.

“I will take care of the gentlemen,” Kang Chan said determinedly.

-May luck be on your side.

Seok Kang-Ho, Choi Jong-Il, Cha Dong-Gyun, and the others looked stiffly at Kang Chan, who let out a low sigh. Kang Chan had no other choice but to put his faith in that punk Gérard more so since he had now heard that Lanok had ordered an emergency decree to all of the Foreign Legion.

Kang Chan raised his hand to his helmet.

Crackle.

“This is the God of Blackfield,” Kang Chan said.

His surroundings seemed to turn a little quieter when he spoke into the radio.

“We have received information that the Spetsnatz has left,” Kang Chan declared.

The emotions on Cha Dong-Gyun and Kwak Cheol-Ho’s faces changed to relief and curiosity.

“We’ve received other information as well,” Kang Chan continued.

The soldiers' gazes were all focused on the smoke-like tendrils of air that left Kang Chan’s mouth.

“There are twenty-seven SBS members at point Alpha. We can take care of them or head back,” Kang Chan informed them.

Seok Kang-Ho grinned widely at Kang Chan, knowing what he already planned to do.

“It will take about four hours to reach point Alpha from here. We will move under nightfall. Upon arrival, we will wait right before daybreak before proceeding with the operation,” Kang Chan announced.

The soldiers all glanced at each other upon hearing Kang Chan’s plan.

“They far outnumber us, and they are on an entirely different level. However, you have all shown great performance, and I believe in all of you. The mission of this operation is to eliminate all the SBS members and return home safely together.

To that end, we will divide into four teams and rush in at once,” Kang Chan stated firmly.

Cha Dong-Gyun twisted his expression in an attempt to hold back his tears.

Crackle.

“Get some food in you and rest at your positions until twenty-three hundred hours. Remember to always stay sharp. You will find a hole in your head the moment you let your guard down, and your comrade will drop dead the second you look away, so keep our live ammo training in mind, and don’t lose sight of the South Korean special forces that I remember. Succeeding in this operation will make the world acknowledge the South Korean special forces as a team equal to the Spetsnaz and the SBS,” Kang Chan declared.

Seok Kang-Ho looked at Kang Chan in surprise. In Africa, or in any other operation after that, Kang Chan had never spoken in this way to the soldiers.

“I want all of us to shout it at the same time, but I don’t want to reveal our location to the enemies,” Kang Chan said with a smile. The sound of Kang Chan chuckling a little could clearly be heard at the end of his words.

Crackle.

“Instead, please state our motto for us, Cha Dong-Gyun. Cha Dong-Gyun! Begin,” Kang Chan commanded.

A moment later, all the soldiers connected to their frequency heard Cha Dong-Gyun’s teary voice.

Crackle.

“If I can protect my country with my blood...!”

The South Korean special forces no longer felt sorrow.

Just a few days ago, they could not even dream of going up against the Spetsnaz and the SBS because South Korea lacked immense national power. However, at that moment, they were about to begin an operation that could lead to the total elimination of their opponents’ soldiers.

As proven by Cha Dong-Gyun’s tearful voice, the sorrow and regret that their superiors had been passing down from generation to generation were finally being cut off and healed.

Crackle.

“... I am happy!”

“Phuhuhu,” Seok Kang-Ho laughed in disbelief, his voice traveling into the night sky before fading away.

Chapter 148.2: May Luck Be On Your Side (1)

“Aaaaahhh! Aah! Aaahh!” Jeon Dae-Geuk shouted like a madman, shaking his two clenched fists in the air. “Haah! Haah!”

He hung his head low to catch his breath for a little while, but he shot it back up soon after.

“So, how many of our men...?” Jeon Dae-Geuk asked, trailing off.

“We haven’t been able to confirm that information yet,” Kim Hyung-Jung reassuringly replied.

“The intelligence you gave them was certain, correct?” Jeon Dae-Geuk prodded on.

“An emergency decree was ordered on all of France’s Foreign Legion, but it was canceled just moments ago. The president of Russia has also expressed his desire to pay a covert visit to South Korea,” Kim Hyung-Jung answered with confidence.

“Those bastards! They did it! They managed to do it!” Jeon Dae-Geuk shouted gleefully.

“We received intelligence that although the Spetsnaz tried to ambush the team, they managed to push them back and defeat them without any casualties. According to a detailed report that the DGSE surprisingly gave to us of their own volition, only four members of the Spetsnaz managed to survive,” Kim Hyung-Jung said.

Jeon Dae-Geuk vehemently shook his head. He looked as if he couldn’t believe the news.

“What about their return?” he asked earnestly.

“We haven’t received any information regarding that. However, we did hear that they are going on another operation first,” Kim Hyung-Jung stated.

A tear soon dripped down Jeon Dae-Geuk’s cheek.

“I no longer have any regrets in my life. I have never felt so proud and rewarded to have been a member of the South Korean special forces,” Jeon Dae-Geuk declared through tears.

Kim Hyung-Jung nodded with his lips pressed together.

“Is that true?!” Choi Seong-Geon exclaimed.

-General Choi, don’t speak of this to your men yet.

“Mmmh. Mmmh! Mmmh!”

-It’s okay! You can cry. The section chief and I cried as well.

“An active member of the special forces cannot cry, sir!” Choi Seong-Geon replied.

-I see. I understand. I will contact you again when I receive more information.

Choi Seong-Geon put down the phone and left his barracks with a face so red it seemed as if he would soon explode.

It was currently four in the morning.

Vroom!

Choi Seong-Geon got in a jeep and drove it all the way to the entrance of the makeshift city.

“Hey! You bastards! Stay alive! You better return home alive, punks!” Choi Seong-Geon shouted to the void.

Choi Seong-Geon’s voice echoed loudly in the city.

“You did a good job! So none of you better die! You are all to come back alive!” he burst out.

A thick tear dripped down Choi Seong-Geon’s tanned cheek.

“Thank you!” he muttered to himself as he stared at the dark morning sky. “From the bottom of my heart, thank you, Mr. Kang Chan!”

The teams were divided into four. Kang Chan, Seok Kang-Ho, Cha Dong-Gyun, and Choi Jong-Il each led a group. Before leaving, they carefully reviewed the area the operation would take place and the path each team would take to infiltrate the area.

Kang Chan would take the front, and Seok Kang-Ho would handle the rear.

They began the trip at 2330.

About twenty minutes in, Kang Chan paused and raised his hand. During the morning of the previous operation, he had turned away from this area with Seok Kang-Ho.

The soldiers all sharply scanned their assigned territories. Kang Chan gestured with his hand for two soldiers to take about three steps back.

Kang Chan turned his head again and gave Kwak Cheol-Ho a knowing look, making the latter carefully advance. Kang Chan pointed his index finger at the long line that was lying on the ground.

Kwak Cheol-Ho nodded.

‘Can you do it?’

‘I know I can, sir.’

Kang Chan nodded back at him.

Based on what Kang Chan’s instinct was telling him, it didn’t seem like any of their enemies were nearby. Nevertheless, it wouldn’t hurt to stay alert, especially considering letting their guard down could get them killed.

Kang Chan pointed his left index finger backward at one soldier and put his right index and middle fingers next to it, signaling the soldier to cover Kwak Cheol-Ho.

Immediately after, he had the rest of the soldiers retreat about twenty meters back.

A heavy, palpable tension hung over the forest, making it hard to breathe.

Around fifteen minutes later, Kwak Cheol-Ho returned with the soldier who had covered him. In Kwak Cheol-Ho's hand was a claymore and its triggering mechanism. If the team had taken a single misstep with those in place... Kang Chan didn't even want to imagine what could have happened.

'Good work.'

'It's nothing, sir.'

When Kang Chan nodded at Kwak Cheol-Ho, the latter an admiring gaze at him for having discovered a claymore in pitch-black darkness. What made it even more amazing was that he even found the thin line that was tied to the trigger mechanism.

They could do this. This operation was possible.

As Kwak Cheol-Ho brimmed with confidence, Kang Chan began to push forward again.

Rustle.

After about thirty minutes, they found a path easier to walk on. Although it allowed them to pick up the pace, they still couldn't put their guard down.

Birds were starting to chirp.

'How can he keep doing that?' Kwak Cheol-Ho wondered in amazement as he followed after Kang Chan.

Leading squads from the very front were so exhausting that it made one feel as if they would be worn out to death. However, Kang Chan never lost focus—not even for a moment. Rather, he just kept advancing while keeping track of their pacing.

Wolves standing behind a lion... Kwak Cheol-Ho couldn't agree more with the metaphor that the soldiers had made at dinner.

They walked for about an hour longer when Kang Chan suddenly stopped, scanned their surroundings, and turned back to the men.

Kang Chan spread his left hand apart and pointed his right index finger toward his open palm. That was the signal for the soldiers to rest but keep their guards up.

Kwak Cheol-Ho headed over to the position he had been assigned to guard without having to receive any command. He was determined to do his task to stand watch perfectly so the other soldiers could catch a break, no matter how short, and so Kang Chan could relax even just a little.

The South Korean special forces reached their target location at around 0410. Kang Chan had the soldiers guard their vicinity, then summoned the squad leaders to issue them commands.

"If a problem arises here, you are to take your men and gather at point Beta," Kang Chan ordered them.

The three men nodded curtly in response.

“The enemy will be taking extreme precautions. The moment you think the SBS is easy to deal with is the moment our men start dropping like flies. They will be more than aware of the fact that the Spetsnaz retreated, so I’m sure they are on very high alert. Keep calm and collected, and we’ll steadily surround them from the outside,” Kang Chan stated. The resolve in his eyes was clearly visible to the three men.

“Once your snipers have reached their positions, give me a signal with Morse code. I will give send a signal to begin the attack, but if necessary, you are free to open fire. Remember, if I can only do one thing right in this operation, it would undoubtedly be the safe return of all the men. If you’re in danger, make sure to request help through the radio. Any questions?” Kang Chan finished.

All of the men stayed silent.

Kang Chan patted Cha Dong-Gyun and Choi Jong-Il on their helmets, one time each.

“Daye,” Kang Chan said.

“Yes, sir,” Dayeru replied.

“Don’t run wild and move with caution. Stay calm,” Kang Chan reminded him, half-joking.

“Got it, Cap,” Seok Kang-Ho answered.

After Kang Chan tapped Seok Kang-Ho’s helmet, Seok Kang-Ho began to head toward his position.

The operation was officially coming to a start. Point Alpha was in a basin-like area that was stuck between two mountains, one lower than the other. They could only ever be aware of the presence of any nearby enemy, and even then, it would be difficult to know exactly where the enemy was located.

Considering the sun would rise at about 0530, the team only had a little over an hour left to go.

From his position, Kang Chan searched for areas that would be advantageous to assign the team’s snipers to. After all, areas that were favorable to them were also favorable to the enemy. Hence, if the SBS was nearby, their snipers could be in those places. That was why each of the special forces team had to have at least one sniper with them.

Leading the soldiers, Kang Chan slowly began to proceed forward.

The branches that were hidden under dry, fallen leaves were some of the scariest things they could step on. After all, stepping on them the wrong way could break them with a loud snap. Hence, the soldiers had to tread forward with care. There could also be more claymores in their vicinity, so they could never let their guard down.

In special operations, putting up claymores in a foreign territory was practically suicide.

Considering soldiers were bound to die if they weren’t careful, the team had to always stay alert.

The next path was uphill. They would have to walk for five minutes and scan their surroundings for thirty seconds. In that short span of time, they had to locate any hostile movements and let the soldiers catch their breaths if necessary.

Even after putting their snipers in position, they would still have to keep examining the thirty-meter vicinity around them.

Their current pacing was so exhausting that it was quickly draining them. They were using up far more of their stamina since they were going slow, which meant they were basking far longer in this tense and nervous atmosphere. At this rate, their guard could suddenly ease up without them meaning to.

While on the way up, Kang Chan suddenly paused and pointed behind a rock to Kwak Cheol-Ho. It meant that from this moment on, Kwak Cheol-Ho would be responsible for the most basic method of covering the team.

The place that Kang Chan pointed to for the next soldier was about six steps ahead of where Kwak Cheol-Ho was going to be positioned.

Rustle. Rustle.

No matter how slowly the soldiers tried to walk, the dry leaves still made noise.

The soldier exhaled visibly in the cold air, still not having reached his position.

Huff. Huff.

The sharper Kang Chan's senses, the slower time seemed to flow. From the leaves that the soldier was stepping on, a star that suddenly twinkled, to a bird's cries that randomly came from the thick darkness—Kang Chan noticed it all.

With his rifle aimed, Kang Chan sharply looked from side to side.

Just as the soldier arrived at his position...

Whoosh.

A gunshot echoed from quite a distance away. When Kang Chan turned his head to look, he found sparks endlessly lighting up the dark from across the other side of the basin.

Chapter 149: May luck be on your side (2)

Kang Chan quickly looked at Kwak Cheol-Ho.

'Please go!'

The look in Kwak Cheol-Ho's eyes answered for him.

However if they failed to properly position a sniper here, they would all be in danger. That was why Kang Chan took it upon himself to take charge of this area in the first place.

Whoosh! Swoosh! Pew! Pew! Swoosh!

Sparks ignited like fireworks as tracer bullets darted back and forth between them and the enemies.

They had discovered where the enemies were—and there were a lot of them.

Considering the gunfight started without Kang Chan's signal, it was likely caused by a unit from the South Korean special forces passing in front of the enemy's camp.

Kang Chan nodded, then immediately moved.

He was sixty meters away from the battle.

Kang Chan couldn't run because it was still dark and he didn't know where the enemies were, but that didn't mean he could keep dawdling. Hence, he immediately made his way toward the fight as fast as he could without making any noise.

The closer he was, the louder the gunshots became.

With his rifle at the ready, he closed in further.

'I just have to find one!'

Taking down one of the enemies would be enough to distract them.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

Seeing a red line flying toward the enemy from the top of the mountain, Kang Chan assumed that the sniper in Cha Dong-Gyun's designated area had reached their position and began to open fire.

Kang Chan gradually picked up his pace.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Pew! Pew! Pew!

Battles like this would never stop halfway through. In a situation like this, it was most likely that the enemies would decide to take the detour route so it was clear which way Kang Chan should be moving.

Kang Chan was prepared to pull the trigger as soon as he found a target, no matter who it was.

It was hard to avoid casualties now that they were the ones compromised first.

"Huff. Huff."

Kang Chan felt the world slowing down again. His intuition had kicked in, which meant an enemy was nearby!

Pew!

Enemy soldiers rained down bullets on Kang Chan's troops, each one leaving a red trail in the air.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

Naturally, Kang Chan's troops fired back.

He was now only around twenty meters away from the enemy's military headquarters.

Nineteen, eighteen, seventeen, sixteen, fifteen meters...

Kang Chan saw a round shape between a tree and a rock. Two tiny parts of it were luminous, like an animal's eyes.

Clank!

Soon, he heard the sound of the enemy's gun turning to the side.

Whoosh! Bam!

As the enemy looked behind him, the world quickly returned to its original speed.

Pew! Pew!

By the time two bullets flew toward Kang Chan, he was already on his stomach.

Targeting where the sparks came from, he quickly pushed himself back to his feet with his left hand, then quickly turned to the right.

Pew! Pew! Pew! Pew!

He was now in the enemy's camp.

Bullets flew toward Kang Chan, determined to kill him at all costs.

Pow! Pow! Pow!

Trees and rocks exploded all around him. As they shattered, the noises they made sounded as if they were screaming for being unjustly shot at.

It seemed the South Korean special forces were advancing as well, considering the sparks coming from both sides kept getting closer and closer.

Someone had to cover Kang Chan.

Now matter how talented he was or how hard he tried, he couldn't stand up without knowing the exact location of their enemies.

Pew! Pow! Pew! Pew! Pow!

Three soldiers approached his location and kept him under fire.

Damn it!

His best option in this situation was to escape, but the SBS wouldn't miss it if he recklessly exposed his back.

Kang Chan gritted his teeth.

Considering their numbers, one of them had to be covering fire. If that soldier was anywhere near Seok Kang-Ho's level, then Kang Chan would be shot in the forehead or neck if he tried to fire back twice.

One...!

Pew! Pew!

However, before Kang Chan could count to two, a bullet flew toward where Kwak Cheol-Ho used to be.

Pew! Bam!

Kang Chan immediately stood up straight as soon as he heard someone getting shot.

Pew! Pew!

Thud!

Kang Chan killed one of the three soldiers zoning in on him. Just a bit later and he would have had to face his opponents head-on like in Western movies.

Crackle.

“The snipers have been deployed,” Kwak Cheol-Ho radioed in. As he did, bullets flew from above the mountain.

With the South Korean special forces’ snipers and soldiers delivering concentrated fire, the enemy’s aggression evidently subsided.

However, Kang Chan couldn’t advance any further either. Even if his men kept their opponents under fire, their opponents could still shoot back.

After some time, a faint light started to spread from the horizon.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Every now and then, Kang Chan heard gunshots from the snipers.

Now that the sun was rising, Kang Chan and his team basically won half of this battle.

SWOOSH!

Considering Kang Chan also heard sniper shots from the area Choi Jong-Il was in charge of, Seok Kang-Ho’s team also had to be in the middle of a fight.

‘Everything’s going to be okay, right?’

Kang Chan now had difficulty even imagining a life without Seok Kang-Ho.

Kang Chan suddenly felt tired of fighting.

Why am I doing all this bullshit? For what? What if I lose Seok Kang-Ho in the middle of all this?

As the sky brightened...

Crackle.

“Two of my men are seriously injured. Cha Dong-Gyun, cover them.”

Kang Chan heard Seok Kang-Ho grumbling on the radio.

Crackle.

“Fuck! Get down here! Snipers, keep covering them!”

Hearing the fucker swear on the walkie-talkie again made Kang Chan happy.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

The snipers faithfully carried out Seok Kang-Ho’s orders.

Five minutes passed.

Crackle.

“The enemies are waving the white flag. What should we do?” Choi Jong-II radioed in.

Kang Chan was in a predicament. He wasn't confident in his English, but he couldn't just pretend as if he didn't notice them.

Crackle.

“Everyone on standby but keep your guard up. Snipers, prepare to cover me,” Kang Chan ordered, then slowly walked forward.

The SBS waving the white flag was a little suspicious, but Kang Chan doubted they would attack him after surrendering. A special forces team's honor could sometimes be more important than death.

Clank!

The enemy that Kang Chan met had his rifle's muzzle aimed toward the sky.

“We want to speak with the God of Blackfield[1].”

They were speaking French. Although their pronunciation was bad, Kang Chan clearly understood what they meant.

“I'm the God of Blackfield[2],” Kang Chan said.

Their enemy looked at Kang Chan suspiciously, then slowly raised his left hand and radioed someone.

It was difficult for Kang Chan to understand what they were saying because they were speaking fast English. However, considering he heard ‘God of Blackfield’ twice in the middle of the sentence, it sounded as if they were saying that the God of Blackfield had appeared.

Rustle.

Clank! Clank!

Seok Kang-Ho and two other soldiers squeezed their way through the forest and approached Kang Chan.

“What are those sons of bitches saying?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“They said they're looking for me.”

As Seok Kang-Ho glared at their enemy, seemingly about to shoot them at any moment, two men from the enemy's side revealed themselves.

“Are you the God of Blackfield?” one of them asked Kang Chan in French. His pronunciation was poorer than Kim Mi-Young's.

“Tell me what you want,” Kang Chan said.

“Can you speak a bit slower?”

“I said, ‘tell me what you want.’”

The man looked to be around his mid-thirties and had a physique so firm it was like a gorilla's.

“Russia deceived us. We have already received an evacuation order from our country before this battle started. If it's okay with you, we would like to withdraw now.”

What kind of bullshit is he talking about?

Kang Chan cocked his head while fiercely glaring at them.

“We have already asked for France's understanding through the DGSE. You have killed thirteen of our members and injured four of them. Our government has told us to tell you that they will visit you if the God of Blackfield chooses to be considerate of our situation.”

Kang Chan exhaled softly.

Since they were fighting special forces who had trespassed into France's territory, the DGSE allowing them to retreat meant that Lanok had agreed to it.

They didn't have to insist on fighting each other anymore.

The gorilla frowned, seemingly perplexed.

“Is it true that you went to Switzerland to destroy the Hadron Collider?” Kang Chan asked.

The gorilla's cheek moved, seemingly gritting his teeth. “God of Blackfield, as soldiers, we only act as commanded. Even if we become captives, I'm sure you're already aware that we still won't disclose our identities or any information about our orders. Hence, capturing us will only give France, the United Kingdom, and South Korea's Intelligence Bureau a problem to deal with.”

The gorilla didn't avoid Kang Chan's eyes even a little.

“Alright. Let's end the fight here, then. However, you must leave your helmets,” Kang Chan said.

Showcasing the helmets of those who had surrendered was an old custom of the special forces team. This humiliated the surrenderees, but wasn't it only natural for the victor to take home a trophy for winning a battle that put their lives at risk? risking their lives? The helmets would be a gift for Jeon Dae-Geuk, Kim Hyung-Jung, Choi Seong-Geon, and all the soldiers who fought here.

The gorilla glared at Kang Chan as if he was going to kill him. He glared for so long that his eyes turned bloodshot, but unfortunately for him, Kang Chan wasn't the type to back down from such a look.

After about a minute, the gorilla nodded once, took off his helmet, and threw it in front of Kang Chan.

Bam!

That sound marked the end of their long battle.

Bam! Bam!

The enemies nearby also threw their helmets.

After the SBS' surrender, Kang Chan told Gérard their location through the satellite phone. They were about three hundred meters away from the basin.

One of their members was shot in the thigh, and another was shot in the groin. The one that was shot just left of his groin was in especially bad shape. Hence, Kang Chan also told Gérard to bring a medical team. Afterward, they injected morphine into the injured and waited for at least an hour before the medical team could reach them.

Kang Chan positioned sentries and snipers all around them just in case.

“Can we smoke here?” Seok Kang-Ho asked, and the members looked at Kang Chan with twinkling eyes.

“If you have any extra, give me one.”

Most of the soldiers took out cigarettes.

Chk chk! Chk chk! Chk chk!

When a lighter lit up, around four men rushed toward it to light their cigarettes. Seok Kang-Ho lit up two and gave both to Kang Chan.

“Whoo!”

Smoking made Kang Chan less nervous.

The sunlight was blinding. In this beautiful scenery, they were forced to fight a battle to the death.

Kang Chan felt tired of fights like this.

After smoking, the five soldiers and two snipers sat against rocks and trees along with everyone except for those who had gone off to switch shifts.

Kang Chan missed instant coffee, ramen, kimchi soup, and the hot rice that he ate at home. He also missed Kang Dae-Kyung, Yoo Hye-Sook, and Kim Mi-Young.

He wanted to see the people who made all his battles worth it, the people he didn't have a business or political dealings with, and the people who valued Kang Chan as much as he valued them.

“Let's go on a trip when we get back to South Korea,” Kang Chan said.

Seok Kang-Ho, who was biting on his second cigarette to light it, looked at Kang Chan with an expression that said, ‘What's he saying?’

“Whoo! Let's go. With you, I'm willing to even go to hell,” Seok Kang-Ho said soon after.

Smirking, Kang Chan bit on another cigarette. “How many people have we killed so far?”

What's wrong with this gentleman?

Seok Kang-Ho looked at Kang Chan suspiciously.

“I’m probably having absurd thoughts because of how scenic this mountain is,” Kang Chan continued.

“I think that’s because you had to lead everyone throughout the entire operation. As I said, you seemed unusually sharper than ever. You’re bound to feel the fatigue as soon as that sensation goes away. Let’s rest when we get back to Seoul, then visit great places and eat good food.”

Kang Chan nodded.

Kang Chan got on the helicopter and approached Gérard, but they couldn’t leave immediately because their injured had to get treated first.

“You guys are going to get surgery here. I’ll take care of everything, including how you guys return home, so don’t worry too much,” Kang Chan told them.

“Thank you.” The two looked as if they were trying hard to maintain a firm expression.

After saying goodbye to the injured, who had to stay behind, the South Korean special forces team got on the cargo aircraft.

They had cup ramen, c-rations, and instant coffee for breakfast.

“Gérard, I’m going to get some sleep,” Kang Chan said.

“Go ahead.”

When Kang Chan lay down on the hospital bed, Seok Kang-Ho and the others lay down on their respective beds as well.

Kang Chan quickly fell asleep, waking up only when the aircraft began its landing at the United States’ military base in Qatar.

“Phew!”

Kang Chan felt as if he had just woken up from an extremely long dream. Seeing the soldiers sitting in front of him made his senses return to reality.

Kang Chan couldn’t help but smirk.

They all look proud.

Cha Dong-Gyun went to the back and brought over bottled water. He opened the lid and poured it into Kang Chan’s hand so that he could wash his face twice. Kang Chan then took the bottle and had a few sips.

“Would you like some coffee?” Cha Dong-Gyun asked Kang Chan.

“Why would the senior ask something like that?”

“Don’t worry. I like doing it and I’m about to get a cup myself anyway.” Cha Dong-Gyun’s sharp eyes showed how happy he was.

As Kang Chan nodded to Cha Dong-Gyun's offer, Seok Kang-Ho woke up noisily. "Ugh! Ugh! Why is my throat so dry?"

Kang Chan poured water into Seok Kang-Ho's hands, and Seok Kang-Ho used it to wash his face. He then took the bottle and downed the water.

"Did I snore a lot?" Seok Kang-Ho asked.

"I don't know. I also slept soundly."

The others turned away and smiled, a clear indication that Seok Kang-Ho's snores were loud.

As Cha Dong-Gyun brought over coffee, Gérard also approached Kang Chan from the front of the plane. When Cha Dong-Gyun saw Seok Kang-Ho and Gérard, he quickly headed to the back again.

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho began drinking their cups of coffee.

"I heard the surgery went well. Their lives are not in danger anymore. The soldier who was shot in the groin won't have trouble making children either," Gérard told Kang Chan.

Cha Dong-Gyun brought over two cups of coffee and handed one to Gérard.

"Gérard said that the surgeries of our injured went well and that they won't have trouble making children," Kang Chan informed his team.

The members were so happy that they clapped.

"I have a favor to ask you," Gérard asked Kang Chan.

"What is it?"

Gérard handed over a cigarette to Kang Chan, then glanced at Cha Dong-Gyun while taking out a lighter.

"Can I have one of the SBS' helmets?"

Kang Chan lit up his cigarette, then stared at Gérard.

"I'm going to consider it as a souvenir from you. Aren't people supposed to give a helmet to each member of the team that participated in the operation?"

Kang Chan looked at Gérard while cocking his head.

He was right.

If a team was joined by another in an operation, they were supposed to share the spoils of war with the team that acted as their backup.

Word about this operation would definitely spread, which made Kang Chan concerned. Was it okay to spread rumors so publicly? Would Gérard talk about Kang Chan to his team after getting a helmet?

Kang Chan discretely turned his head to Cha Dong-Gyun, who was off to the side. "Gérard says that the Foreign Legion's special forces team wants a helmet. What should we do?"

“Well, what are we supposed to do in this situation?”

“We normally share the helmets with all the teams that went on the operation.”

“Alright.”

Cha Dong-Gyun sent a soldier a glance, who then opened a military crate and handed over a helmet.

Cha Dong-Gyun brought it over, and Gérard accepted it.

The two half-grown chicks shook hands while looking at each other.

At that moment, the South Korean special forces team grew. They had just earned fame that couldn't be ignored.

However, that came with the cost of more people looking forward to fighting them. Still, at the very least, they would no longer get pushed aside during joint training sessions just because of their name value.

Gérard gave Cha Dong-Gyun a thumbs up, then did the same to all of the soldiers.

Getting injured seemed to have only made him better in showmanship.

On the other hand, it could be some form of bond that those who liked Kang Chan shared.

Ding. Ding. Ding.

Lights flickered as the aircraft began to take off.

“Would you like to have some ramen?” Kwak Cheol-Ho asked.

Don't these fuckers ever get sick and tired of ramen and coffee?

“We will have to buy instant coffee and ramen if we get to go on our next operation,” Choi Jong-Il joked.

“I'm good, so you guys eat if you want,” Kang Chan said.

The happiness that came from suffering no casualties was the best thing about returning home alive. However, if they kept lingering near muddy grounds, they were bound to be splattered with mud sooner or later. They could even fall in.

For the special forces team, that could mean their death.

Should I make them the best team in the world?

‘Don't think about that.’

Kang Chan shook his head. He wanted to spend some time away from fights like this.

1. This was written as 누우블롱 빠뤼 (Nous voulons parler) which is a transliteration of ‘we want to speak’ in French 🇫🇷

2. This was written as ‘Je suis’, which means ‘I am’ in French 🇫🇷

MatchaMaker's Thoughts

One of their members was shot in the thigh, and another was shot in the groin.

Yojj: Poor guy.

Invictum: SBS had the last laugh with this.

He also missed Kang Dae-Kyung, Yoo Hye-Sook, and Kim Mi-Young.

MatchaMaker: Poor Michelle....

“I heard the surgery went well. Their lives are not in danger anymore. The soldier who was shot in the groin won’t have trouble making children either,” Gérard told Kang Chan.

Invictum: The one question everyone wanted answered. This hero needs to be named.

Chapter 150.1: I Missed You (1)

It was three-thirty on Sunday morning in Korean time. They were still thirty minutes away from landing at the airfield in Osan, but not a single soldier was asleep.

“Should I take a short break in South Korea for a few days?” Gérard asked jokingly.

“Is that even allowed?” Kang Chan said doubtfully.

“No. I would be staying in the country illegally,” Gérard replied shamelessly, to which Kang Chan just smirked. “Captain, can I stay in Korea after I get discharged?”

What was up with this punk? Was he being serious?

“I still have about a year left. I’m debating whether to request extending my service or get discharged. But to be honest, a battlefield without you, Cap, is just plain boring.”

“Who in the world fights battles and puts their lives on the line just for fun?” Kang Chan asked in disbelief.

“I do.” Gérard sounded serious. “I’ve been lonely my whole life. However, after meeting, fighting beside, and lounging around in the barracks with you, I noticed I wasn’t lonely anymore. I was having fun.”

Gérard sighed loudly.

“Unlike you, Cap, I couldn’t even properly save the little newborn chicks. Every time I lost one, I wondered what my reason was for living. However, seeing the looks on the faces of the South Korean special forces made me realize that I want to complete an operation as proudly as they did,” he said as he glanced at the soldiers.

The soldiers looked between Gérard and Kang Chan curiously, unable to understand them since they were speaking in French.

“At least half of the famous Foreign Legion’s special forces team would have died if the Spetsnaz launched a surprise attack on us. The SBS was there too... Even so, not a single one of you died. When I return to our barracks, I’ll find myself among little chicks with bandanas and berets on their heads again. They’ll be attempting to mimic you by practicing their smirks and suddenly aiming their rifles as they walk. It’s a sight for sore eyes! Argh!” Gérard grumbled in disgust as he shook his head. “I’m not confident that I can rescue those punks.”

Kang Chan understood a bit of what Gérard was feeling. The little punk was overburdened by the responsibility on his shoulders. If he could successfully get through this alive, he would become a force to be reckoned with. If not, then he would become a corpse.

“Come over to Korea if you ever feel lonely.” Kang Chan grinned.

Gérard, who was looking down at the ground, raised his head up.

“I and Dayeru... We all joined the Foreign Legion because we were lonely. So if the day ever comes when you feel like you’re alone, hop on a plane to Korea. Heck, you can even join the South Korean special forces,” Kang Chan said in an easygoing tone.

“Will you be there too, Cap?”

“Maybe I will, maybe I won’t.”

“Well, I’m still coming!”

“That’s what I’m saying.”

Kang Chan smirked. Gérard smiled happily.

“What are you two talking about?” Seok Kang-Ho suddenly jumped in, curiosity getting the best of him.

Kang Chan explained their conversation to him. Kang Chan thought Seok Kang-Ho would complain about the proposition, but much to his surprise, Seok Kang-Ho nodded and patted Gérard on the shoulders.

“Come on over anytime. This big brother of yours will teach you the proper ways of life,” Seok Kang-Ho said.

His tone was warm, but the meaning behind his words seemed strange.

“What’s this guy saying?” Gérard asked with a hint of displeasure.

Sigh. It’s never easy when these two are put together. And with Smithen added to the mix...

Kang Chan suddenly felt as if he had just made a big, big mistake.

A series of three short sounds echoed throughout the plane, signaling the men that they had arrived at Osan. The moment they were signaled that they would be landing soon, the soldiers began to feel excited.

Whoosh!

The plane's engines preparing for landing sounded as if home was calling out to them.

R-R-Rumble.

However, the landing was horribly rough!

It was currently ten past four in the morning.

The doors of the plane opened, revealing a landing strip shrouded in darkness. The soldiers all got up and began to collect their things.

Just then, Gérard saluted Kang Chan from the entrance, and Kang Chan turned around and reciprocated it. However, Gérard wasn't finished. With the helmet of the SBS held to his side, he saluted the soldiers who were stepping off the plane, sending respect from one special force soldier to another.

Cha Dong-Gyun, Choi Jong-Il, and Kwak Cheol-Ho got off the plane and saluted back in return.

"Those punks could be trouble in the future," Seok Kang-Ho said as he saw the prideful look in the three men's eyes.

"Let them be. They should know what it's like to relish in their victories too," Kang Chan replied.

Seok Kang-Ho nodded in agreement.

A tourist bus with all of its lights turned off approached the plane on the landing strip.

Kang Chan realized that they were all still wearing military uniforms when he saw the last soldier descend from the plane holding his and Seok Kang-Ho's clothes.

Kang Chan was the last to step on the landing strip. With the soldiers climbing onto the bus, he glanced back at the plane. It would most likely refuel and fly straight to France from here.

He felt sorry for Gérard. The chick would feel bored the entire trip back, but the time had come for everyone to return to their respective positions. There was nothing Kang Chan could do for him.

'Have a safe flight.'

Kang Chan nodded in Gérard's direction to bid him farewell, then climbed on the bus himself. He sat in the front seat.

The bus only turned its lights back on once it had gone past the barricades at the exit. They passed by a small intersection, took a left turn, and drove past a large intersection with traffic signals. They now just had to turn left at the next intersection, and the path they were on would eventually merge with roads that civilians drove on as well.

However, the bus unexpectedly took a right and stopped instead. On the road were two sedans and two vans. They seemed to have been waiting for the bus.

The doors to the van opened under the illumination of the streetlight, and three people stepped out.

Swoosh.

Kang Chan immediately got off the bus.

“Kang Chan!”

It was Jeon Dae-Geuk. The old man seemed to have taken up a bad habit of getting around to places with bandages still wrapped around him. Kim Hyung-Jung, who was right behind him, wasn't any better.

Kim Tae-Jin, the healthiest and most intact of the three, stood furthest at the back.

A French agent also stepped out of the van. He held his hands together in front of him as he waited for Kang Chan.

“Thank you.” Jeon Dae-Geuk put a hand on Kang Chan's shoulders with mixed emotions in his eyes.

“Mr. Seok!” he addressed next, holding out his hand.

Turning his head, Kang Chan saw Choi Jong-Il, Woo Hee-Seung, and Lee Doo-Hee had also gotten off the bus.

“Why don't we all have breakfast together, just us?” Jeon Dae-Geuk asked.

“Sounds fine. We should send the van off first, though,” Kang Chan replied.

“Understood. You should go say goodbye to the soldiers too,” Jeon Dae-Geuk suggested.

Kang Chan nodded.

“Let's do it together,” Kang Chan said to the others.

They had just stepped off the bus, but it was only right to bid the soldiers farewell. Leading Seok Kang-Ho, Choi Jong-Il, and the others, Kang Chan returned to the bus.

“We'll be parting ways here,” Kang Chan declared.

The soldiers all pressed their lips together as they looked back at him. The looks in their eyes were definitely different from before this operation.

“Good work, all of you. I'm glad you all came back alive. Whatever mission you go on next, always keep this operation in your heads.”

“Attention!” Cha Dong-Gyun shouted firmly, and the soldiers all shuffled in position. “Salute!”

Thud.

Kang Chan looked at all the soldiers inside the bus, then saluted back.

It was a great relief that they had all come back alive.

When Kang Chan dropped his hand, Cha Dong-Gyun shouted, "At ease!"

The floor of the bus rumbled once more.

Lee Doo-Hee received their clothes, and the bus left immediately after.

Kang Chan turned to the French agent who was waiting in front of the van.

"I'll travel with these men, so you can leave first," Kang Chan informed him.

"The ambassador is awaiting your call," the agent stated.

"Right now?" Kang Chan asked in surprise. It was already four-thirty in the morning.

Kang Chan took the phone that the agent handed him.

"Mr. Ambassador!" he greeted.

-Mr. Kang Chan, that was a brilliant operation.

The snake kept slyly using his emotions to move Kang Chan's heart.

"Some people waited for me today, so I need to have breakfast with them. I'll give you another call when I'm back in Seoul," Kang Chan told him.

-Ah! What a shame. I only have time for breakfast today.

Lanok's regretful tone was delivered over the phone.

-Top officials from two African countries are visiting South Korea, so I cannot miss it. I will call you once I'm finished with my business.

"Got it. If it's okay with you, I'll meet with you even if it's late at night," Kang Chan said.

-Mr. Kang Chan.

Kang Chan sensed that Lanok was about to thank him, so he quickly spoke first.

"Mr. Ambassador. This accomplishment was only possible because you were standing guard behind my back. Let's continue this conversation when we meet in person, sir," Kang Chan respectfully stated.

The call ended with Lanok's laughter.

After sending the French agent off with the van, Kang Chan returned to the group and left immediately.

Kim Tae-Jin and Choi Jong-Il's party took one car, and Jeon Dae-Geuk, Kang Chan, and Seok Kang-Ho got in the car that Kim Hyung-Jung drove.

Kang Chan sat behind the passenger seat. Jeon Dae-Geuk, who was next to him, used his left hand to softly shake Kang Chan's right hand.

It made Kang Chan feel shy, but it also clearly conveyed to him Jeon Dae-Geuk's emotions. Since it warmed a part of his heart, he didn't say anything about it

Chapter 150.2: I Missed You (1)

Kim Hyung-Jung took them to a two-story western-style house somewhere in Hannam-Dong. The car entered through the side door that was built on the wall next to the main entrance.

"This is one of the safe houses of the NIS. The director specially gave orders to prepare your breakfast here, Mr. Kang Chan. I've never been here myself either," Kim Hyung-Jung informed them. He then stepped off the car.

The front yard had parking space for about four sedans, but the house itself wasn't that fancy or large in scale. Aside from the two men who appeared to be agents standing outside, the entrance and living room were no different from any other family house.

Once they had settled in the sofas, an agent brought out ashtrays and coffees for them.

"You can get some sleep in the room if you're tired as well," the agent offered.

"Thank you, but we slept soundly on the plane," Kang Chan responded politely.

Jeon Dae-Geuk offered Kang Chan a cigarette.

"Go ahead and take it! I hate the smell of smoke, but I hate it even more when people leave to just to smoke when I'm around," Jeon Dae-Geuk grumbled.

Kang Chan let out a light chuckle because Jeon Dae-Geuk's eyes were blazing with the desire to listen to what happened during the operation.

"Please wait for just a moment. I'll come back after a short smoke with Manager Kim," Kang Chan said, not intending to smoke in front of Jeon Dae-Geuk.

When Kim Tae-Jin agreed and Kim Hyung-Jung got up as well, Jeon Dae-Geuk openly showed a dissatisfied but resigned expression.

"Hey! Are all the preparations done?" Choi Seong-Geon shouted a little anxiously.

His aide couldn't suppress his grin.

"General, you have already checked if breakfast is ready ten times," the aide said with a smile.

Choi Seong-Geon scowled at his aide, then picked up a cigarette. He had been standing in front of the barracks since five, but he felt as if time was taking forever to flow.

"Then what about—!"

“Three kinds of soups, ten kinds of side dishes. We have also prepared fried pork, beef bulgogi, and rice in servings of more than half of usual,” his aide swiftly replied, cutting him off because he already knew what Choi Seong-Geon was going to ask.

“Okay, okay,” Choi Seong-Geon grouched as he glanced at the entrance out of habit. “Whew!”

He let out a long sigh as he looked up at the dark night sky.

The punks had all managed to survive. Two of them had had to undergo surgeries, but he had been assured that they were far from death’s doors.

They did not just come back from any mission. They were up against the Spetsnaz and the SBS, yet they managed to not only survive but return home with victory in tow.

Just the mere thought of it sent shivers down his spine.

He had muttered to himself at least a hundred times that he had done well to stay in the field. Choi Seong-Geon had already given up the opportunity to be promoted twice. Every time he did, his colleagues murmured that he had probably already gone mad, and his wife argued with him asking if he was intentionally staying in the field because he didn’t want to see her.

However, they were all wrong.

The reason behind his decision was solely because he could not bring himself to leave his cherished subordinates. They were so special to him that he treated them as if they were of his own blood.

From winter training, summer training, and joint exercises with foreign teams... they had put all those time into harsh training in hopes that the day would come when the men would be able to spread their wings. Choi Seong-Geon had been determined to make that happen.

Throughout those times of hardships, Cha Dong-Gyun became first lieutenant, and Kwak Cheol-Ho became second lieutenant. Other soldiers were also promoted, but they were all at a standstill because they could not go on operations.

‘The bus didn’t crash on the way here, did it?’

Choi Seong-Geon shook his head. Why was he becoming so timid and nervous?

Swoosh!

Choi Seong-Geon suddenly whipped his head around to look at the entrance, finding a light traveling through the mountains.

‘Are they here? Have they finally arrived?’ he wondered to himself as the bus began to drive into view. Choi Seong-Geon felt the tension in his body immediately ease up. The bus stopped in front of the barracks with a light jerk.

Whoosh.

The doors slid open. Cha Dong-Gyun was the first to step off the vehicle. The look in his eyes was truly a sight to see. Choi Seong-Geon had always dreamed of seeing the special forces team have such a prideful look in their eyes.

Cha Dong-Gyun and the rest of the soldiers now had the same gaze as the ones that famous special forces teams from other countries had.

“Attention!” Cha Dong-Gyun shouted.

Swoosh!

“Salute!” Cha Dong-Gyun commanded again.

Fwoosh!

Choi Seong-Geon gritted his teeth as he looked at the soldiers. He then lifted his hand to his brows, returning the salute. When he put his hand down, Cha Dong-Gyun gave the order to stand at ease.

These wonderful little punks!

As Choi Seong-Geon took in a deep breath to calm himself down, one of the soldiers quickly handed Cha Dong-Gyun a helmet, which Cha Dong-Gyun then gave to the confused-looking Choi Seong-Geon.

“It’s a helmet from the SBS, sir!” Cha Dong-Gyun confidently announced.

Choi Seong-Geon’s jaw dropped open as his eyes widened.

“We obtained a total of five helmets. We gave one to the Foreign Legion’s special forces, who came to back us up, but we have returned with the remaining four helmets!” Cha Dong-Gyun explained proudly.

Choi Seong-Geon lifted his gaze from the helmet to look at Cha Dong-Gyun.

“The SBS truly did surrender, sir. Of their twenty-seven members, we killed thirteen and critically injured four others. Additionally, we also heard that the Spetsnaz returned with only four of their members alive!”

Choi Seong-Geon intentionally looked away from him and turned to the faraway sky. The symbol of the unbelievable achievement and the work he had dedicated his entire life to was in his hands. However, he was a general who was in charge of the special forces. It was part of his duty not to reveal his emotions in front of his soldiers.

Choi Seong-Geon gritted his teeth and controlled his facial expressions. Once he was confident he could pretend that he was fine, he turned back to Cha Dong-Gyun.

“Soldiers, at ease,” Choi Seong-Geon commanded.

Cha Dong-Gyun spun around and repeated the same order, then leisurely turned back.

“Have a smoke. Afterward, let’s have breakfast,” Choi Seong-Geon said.

“Yes, sir,” Cha Dong-Gyun responded in a more relaxed tone than he did earlier.

Choi Seong-Geon's aide was about to carry the helmet for Choi Seong-Geon but paused in his steps when he saw Choi Seong-Geon tightly holding the helmet to his side.

Choi Seong-Geon looked like he was crying.

Although they had already finished breakfast, it was still six-thirty in the morning.

Kang Chan wasn't the type to chat about and revisit what happened in operations, but since Choi Jong-Il had no other choice but to report to his superior officers even if they were retired, Kang Chan was left with no other option as well.

Did they call us here so we could have breakfast together or did they just want to hear stories?

Jeon Dae-Geuk's eyes and ears were focused solely on Choi Jong-Il. It made him seem like an old countryman listening to the Romance of the Three Kingdoms for the first time. He became so excited when the story reached the part where they took the helmets from the SBS that he ended up spilling his the water in his cup. Nevertheless, the atmosphere remained buzzed.

After breakfast and drinking tea, they had fruit for dessert after.

"What is your schedule like today?" Kim Hyung-Jung asked.

"My parents are in Jeju Island, so I was thinking of heading there and heading back to Seoul with them in the evening," Kang Chan replied.

"You still have it in you to get on another plane?" Kim Hyung-Jung asked in shock.

Seok Kang-Ho also looked surprised, but Kang Chan wasn't that tired. Moreover, he strangely missed Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook.

"Do you know where they are?"

"Of course. The agents are always within their vicinity, so we can even contact them now. Given the time, they are most likely at their hotel right now."

Noticing Kang Chan's expression, Kim Hyung-Jung quickly picked up his phone.

Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook began to pack their belongings as soon as they woke up.

"This has been a really nice trip. I'm really thankful to our son," Kang Dae-Kyung remarked.

"Really? I feel like I don't have any strength because he's not here, honey. I feel a little bad for him too," Yoo Hye-Sook said.

"This was a present from Channy. If we're happy, I'm sure Channy will be happy too. Since we all promised to travel together next time anyway, let's just think of this as a nice experience instead."

“Okay, I will. But the room is too big for just the two of us, don’t you think? This was probably expensive.”

“There you go again,” Kang Dae-Kyung jokingly said. Yoo Hye-Sook sat down and stopped putting her things in her luggage, and Kang Dae-Kyung patted her on the shoulders from behind. “Let’s have breakfast. We can eat, have some tea, and head straight to the airport afterward to catch our flight on time.”

Yoo Hye-Sook sighed and closed her suitcase. Just then, the sound of a helicopter chopping loudly began to make the windows of their room shake.

“Honey! Do helicopters come to hotels too?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked in surprise.

“I suppose top hotels usually have landing strips for helicopters, but this is my first time seeing a helicopter actually fly over,” Kang Dae-Kyung answered in amazement.

As Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook watched from the window, they could see hotel staff members standing outside as they waited for the helicopter to land. It was so far away that they could only see faint shapes.

“It must be an important person!” Yoo Hye-Sook exclaimed.

“It could also just be someone busy.”

People who were out on walks were all watching the fascinating sight.

When a man stepped off the helicopter, the hotel staff members greeted him.

“Honey, I don’t know if it’s because I miss our son, but he resembles Channy,” Yoo Hye-Sook said yearningly.

“Goodness, dear. You’ll be able to see him when we fly back in the evening, madam,” Kang Dae-Kyung replied with amusement.

He embraced Yoo Hye-Sook around the shoulders as she laughed, knowing it was a stretch.

“It’s nine. We should have breakfast now,” Kang Dae-Kyung said.

Yoo Hye-Sook nodded.

When the man who had gotten off of the helicopter entered the building, the helicopter lifted off again and flew over the sea.