

Blackfield 161

Chapter 161.1: You Dare Try to Avoid It? (2)

Kang Chan called Lanok as soon as he got out of the Samseong-Dong office.

-Mr. Kang Chan.

Lanok's voice sounded heavy and solemn.

"Mr. Ambassador, do you have time to meet today?" Kang Chan asked.

-Unfortunately, today is a bit difficult for me. I am not in the office, and I do not know when I'll be done with my schedule. If you're in a hurry, we can speak over the phone right now.

"It's not that urgent. If you have time tomorrow, then please call me," Kang Chan requested.

-I will.

Everyone around him was so busy.

"Are you meeting the ambassador now, then?" Seok Kang-Ho asked as he looked at the traffic signal ahead, not knowing what Kang Chan just said over the phone since he was speaking in French. He looked as if he was getting ready to whip the car around the instant Kang Chan said yes.

"He said he would call me again tomorrow. He seemed too busy to meet with me at the moment," Kang Chan replied.

"What are you going to do about dinner?" Seok Kang-Ho asked.

"Let's head home early today," Kang Chan suggested.

He didn't want to eat barbecue again, and he was getting a bit tired of eating out. Kang Chan wanted to head straight home.

"Seems like I'll be having a barbeque party with my wife for the first time in a long while," Seok Kang-Ho mused in excitement.

Kang Chan chuckled disbelievingly at the statement. But since meat didn't make one sick or gave them unhealthy weight gain, he didn't make any comment about it.

They arrived at the apartment complex at around five in the afternoon. Kang Chan leisurely walked inside his home and changed into something more comfortable.

The past week passed by in a frenzy. He led an operation in France, rescued Lanok from Chinese captivity, and now joined the ongoing task of bringing Huh Ha-Soo to his downfall.

Buzz.

Kang Chan glanced at his phone screen when it vibrated.

[Thanks for helping us out with the school festival.]

It was a text message from Kim Mi-Young. A smile unknowingly stretched on Kang Chan's lips.

Should I give her a call right now?

Buzz. Buzz. Buzz.

However, his phone began to go off again immediately after. Thinking it was Kim Mi-Young, Kang Chan picked it up and pressed the call button with a confused tilt of his head.

“Hello?” Kang Chan answered.

-Mr. Kang Chan, are you available to speak over the phone now?

“Yes, sure. What is it?” Kang Chan responded.

What business could Yoo Hun-Woo have that made him call Kang Chan first? Surely it wasn't to ask Kang Chan for more of his blood, right?

-I just got the results of your test. It showed that there are no abnormalities with you.

“Really? That's weird,” Kang Chan remarked.

It was really strange. This matter was so peculiar that even Lanok had asked if Kang Chan had requested a biopsy. How could there be nothing out of the ordinary with him?

-Anyway, I called because I thought you might be worried. You should stop by when you get the chance, Mr. Kang Chan. I suppose it's a good thing that you're not getting hurt, but I'm sad that our hospital's profits have fallen so dramatically in your absence.

Damn, this man was also a snake who couldn't be beaten with words.

After hanging up, Kang Chan thought that the United States' intelligence agency had probably meddled with his biopsy results somehow. The world was a scary place where every country had certain people that could change biopsy results and even death records if they made up their minds to.

Either way, the moment all the issues related to Huh Ha-Soo were solved, Kang Chan's immediate problems would go away. Huh Ha-Soo was the Chairperson of the National Assembly, so Kang Chan needed proof that the bastard had worked with China to steal South Korean military secrets. The job didn't seem too daunting, though, since he had Yang Bum and Xavier on his side too.

‘Son of a bitch. I bet he's living the life right now, unaware of everything that's actually going on.’

Kang Chan leaned back in his seat.

In a safe house in Hannam-Dong, Hwang Ki-Hyun sat down across from Huh Ha-Soo.

“Please switch out the prime minister tomorrow,” Huh Ha-Soo briskly requested.

“I will make sure to inform the president,” Hwang Ki-Hyun replied.

“If Prime Minister Go Gun-Woo is still in office and hasn’t resigned by tomorrow, let me make it clear right now that China will certainly take action,” Huh Ha-Soo added.

“I understand.”

Huh Ha-Soo scrunched his lips together, showing Hwang Ki-Hyun a displeased frown.

“I heard he never did apologize. There’s really nothing to be gained from that aside from buying some time. The prime minister will be switched out regardless, after all. It would be in your best interest to bring that student to the Chinese embassy and make him sincerely apologize.”

“I will make sure to discuss it with him,” Hwang Ki-Hyun responded.

“Good to hear. Now then, I have other matters to attend to, so I’ll have to take my leave first,” Huh Ha-Soo said coldly.

“I’ll leave with you.”

Huh Ha-Soo stood first, but he didn’t extend a hand toward Hwang Ki-Hyun even as they parted ways.

It had been a while since Kang Chan had dinner at home. Knowing Kang Chan would be joining them today, Yoo Hye-Sook bought some pork belly on the way home and had a feast of meat for dinner.

“Make sure you eat a lot, Channy. I haven’t been able to feed you meat these days,” Yoo Hye-Sook said with concern.

“Don’t worry, I make sure to eat properly outside,” Kang Chan replied reassuringly.

“Are you sure? Your face has become so gaunt, honey,” Yoo Hye-Sook chided.

“Listen to your mom, kiddo. Don’t just eat kimbap and other simple foods when you’re outside. Have meat every other day when you can,” Kang Dae-Kyung urged him.

“Got it. I’ll be sure to keep that in mind,” Kang Chan replied.

It didn’t seem like the right occasion to tell them that thanks to Seok Kang-Ho, he was having meat every day and was starting to get sick of it. The table was filled with pork belly straight off the grill, lettuce, perilla leaves, kimchi, and seasoned bean sprouts that Yoo Hye-Sook frequently served as a side dish. This kind of homemade food was unquestionably superior to eating out.

After everyone had their fill, Kang Chan prepared some tea while Yoo Hye-Sook washed the dishes.

“Channy, guess what? I don’t have to go to the office anymore starting next week,” Yoo Hye-Sook said with a pleased expression as she walked out of the kitchen while drying her hands.

“How come?” Kang Chan asked curiously.

“The revenue and expenses are now even, so I only have to go to the office and run things once or twice a month,” Yoo Hye-Sook replied happily.

“Won’t you be bored if you just stay at home?”

“No, not at all,” Yoo Hye-Sook responded lightly with a smile as she glanced around the living room. “I haven’t been as attentive to cleaning or laundry recently as much as I’d like to be. And there’s no need for me to go all the way to the office when I don’t have anything to do anyway. The other employees will take care of things just fine by themselves.”

Yoo Hye-Sook was the boss of her foundation anyway, so if that was what she decided, then there was nothing wrong with it. Kang Chan just nodded supportively.

“How are things going with school, Channy?” Yoo Hye-Sook suddenly asked.

“School?” Kang Chan repeated.

Yoo Hye-Sook looked at Kang Chan with expectant eyes.

“I was just curious about how the special admission process is going. I’m worried that maybe there was a deadline for your application that you might have missed,” Yoo Hye-Sook said contemplatively.

“Oh, that didn’t occur to me. I’ll look into it tomorrow,” Kang Chan replied. To be honest, his education hadn’t crossed his mind one bit. Kang Chan decided to spare some time for it.

After chatting with his parents about random topics for a while, Kang Chan headed to his room. For the first time in so long, he sat down at his desk and turned his computer on. He wanted to see how the reviews of the drama were.

Buzz. Buzz. Buzz.

Before his home screen even loaded, his phone began to ring.

‘Who could it be?’

It was a number he didn’t recognize.

“Hello?” Kang Chan answered.

-Mr. Kang Chan. This is Yang Bum.

Yang Bum had urgency in his tone.

“Yes, hello. Is there something you want to talk about?” Kang Chan asked.

-The situation has been completely overturned in my country, and Huh Ha-Soo is likely aware of what’s happening now as well. I have to get to safety for now. I’m calling you because I couldn’t get in touch with Ambassador Lanok.

What in the world was Yang Bum talking about?

-The North Korean special forces team could invade us at any moment, Mr. Kang Chan. I will contact you again later.

The call abruptly ended.

The monitor of his screen was now displaying the wallpaper, waiting for Kang Chan, who was now frozen with his hand on the mouse.

Kang Chan hadn’t gotten any bad feelings while he had been eating a tasty meal of pork belly and worrying about going to college.

Yet for some reason, the North Korean special forces were now about to launch an attack? The hell?

The clock at the corner of his screen showed that it was already twenty-six minutes past nine.

Huh Ha-Soo sat across from Huh Sang-Soo and Heo Chang-Seon in the living room of his house in Samcheong-Dong.

“Measures will be taken right away tomorrow if the prime minister hasn’t been replaced. Based on the way they were treating me, it seemed they were not aware of the changes that are taking place in China,” Huh Ha-Soo mused.

“We’ve been concealing the information to the best of our ability,” Heo Chang-Seon replied smartly.

“If we can replace the head of the National Intelligence Service as well, this battle will be a victory for us. What about our guests? When will they arrive?” Huh Ha-Soo asked.

“Their estimated time of arrival is tomorrow morning, sir,” Heo Chang-Seon replied.

“We’ll already be halfway to success even if we can only take the prime minister seat. Leave the country tomorrow and make sure they’re well aware of where we stand,” Huh Ha-Soo commanded his brother.

“Understood,” Huh Sang-Soo replied with a bow as if he was speaking to a superior and not his own family.

“We aren’t acting out of personal greed. This is for the country. The United States is too far, so it’s time for us to turn to China,” Huh Ha-Soo declared.

“I will keep that in mind, sir,” Huh Sang-Soo responded.

“But that doesn’t mean you should pay less attention to them and ruffle their feathers. Always be careful,” Huh Ha-Soo added.

Chapter 161.2: You Dare Try to Avoid It? (2)

“Well, well, well, I wonder what significant event has brought you all the way here?” Vasili asked, dressed in formal attire as he guided Lanok to the center sofa inside his barracks. “Would you like some Vodka?”

“Why not?” Lanok accepted.

They were currently in a Russian air force base in Vladivostok. Lanok crossed his long legs and sat back on the sofa.

“Here, your cigar! And the ever important...” Vasili trailed off as he pushed a box of cigars toward Lanok and poured some vodka into a wine glass. Lanok stretched his hand out for the cigar first.

Click.

“Haah!” he exhaled the smoke in the air.

“I’m sure you didn’t come here despite the long trip just because Suo Ke died. And I’m certain it isn’t because you missed me, either,” Vasili said through his thin lips as he awaited Lanok’s response with amusement.

“I hope you can hurry along with all the compensation that has to be made, Vasili. Everyone is too intricately knotted up right now. And there is something suspicious about China,” Lanok said grimly.

The friendly look in Vasili’s eyes changed in an instant.

“Don’t overdo it, Lanok. It’s already tricky enough to handle China as they are right now. You shouldn’t stimulate them any further,” Vasili warned.

“Huh Ha-Soo will try to replace the South Korean prime minister. His next goal will obviously be to assassinate the president,” Lanok said.

Vasili let out a low sigh.

“Everyone knows that China has been wanting to take over South Korea for a long time now. If it wasn’t for the current president getting in the way, China would’ve already legally purchased half of South Korea’s land,” Vasili stated, perfectly expressing his displeasure through the corners of his eyes. “Cut to the chase. What do you want?”

“Nuclear weapons,” Lanok responded.

“Stop joking around and tell me what it is you actually want,” Vasili ordered firmly.

“Russia’s oil field development rights for South Korea,” Lanok answered truthfully this time.

Vasili sank the glass of vodka in front of him in one gulp.

“Hmph. I genuinely wish China would assassinate you,” Vasili grumbled.

Lanok smirked in a way that was similar to Kang Chan’s.

“I see you have been picking up annoying things that tick me off,” Vasili muttered irritably again.

“Maybe it’s because we’re on the same side, but it didn’t seem all that bad to me,” Lanok said lightheartedly.

Vasili stared straight into Lanok’s eyes with a scowl.

“Leave,” he demanded.

“I will, indeed,” Lanok said as he pressed his cigar into the ashtray and stood up.

- Mr. Kang Chan, is what you said just now all really true?

“Yes, sir,” Kang Chan replied with certainty even though the question was a pointless one.

- We didn’t receive any news from China. Are you sure?

“Manager Kim. I’m telling you exactly as I heard it,” Kang Chan stated firmly.

-All right. I will report this matter to the higher-ups first. I’ll contact you as soon as I receive any updates.”

Kim Hyung-Jung quickly hung up.

Just what in the world was going on? China aside, why the hell were the North Korean special forces crossing the border?

There was only one reason that Kang Chan could think of, and it was probably the same reason the president and the prime minister were both targeted at the event hall. If the prime minister was switched out and Moon Jae-Hyun disappeared too, everything would be at Huh Ha-Soo’s feet.

But even so, could Huh Ha-Soo really try to eliminate the president that way? There was no announcement for Unicorn that he could take advantage of anymore, and it wasn’t like he could just barge into the president’s office.

Kang Chan looked down in deliberation for a moment, then picked his phone up again and dialed a number.

-Hello? Why are you calling me so late at night?

The man’s voice was as gruff and low as ever.

“Mr. Jeon. Can you talk right now?” Kang Chan asked.

-Sure, it's fine. What's going on?

“Can the president be assassinated if the North Korean special forces team crosses the border?”

-Come again? What did you just say? The North Korean special forces team?

“Yes, sir. If they come to South Korea with the resolve to attack as they did with the surface-to-air missile, how likely is it that they'll succeed in the assassination?”

-Why are you asking me that? Did you hear something?

“Well, not yet. I just called you because I was going to all sorts of places with my train of thought. I should make it a habit of calling you, anyway, if you want me to call occasionally to ask how you're doing.”

-Hmm.

A long sigh came over the phone. Jeon Dae-Geuk then began to speak.

-It depends on the location, but if the assassination is attempted at an unofficial public event, you're looking at about a thirty percent chance of success.

“Can the National Intelligence Service get their hands on the president's schedule?”

-That depends on what event it is. It's possible if it's an occasion that was planned days before, but only the president's security detail will know about all other functions. The ones that are determined in advance are much safer because the president's guards are able to prepare countermeasures for them.

Jeon Dae-Geuk's answer made Kang Chan wonder if the target was someone else, not Moon Jae-Hyun. Just then, he came to a sudden realization.

“Mr. Jeon, is there any employee with the surname Huh among the president's guards?” Kang Chan asked with a hint of urgency.

-The last name Huh? There are fifty close-range guards on the president, but no Huh among them.

That wasn't it either. Kang Chan supposed that was for the better.

-You're really not asking because something's going on?

“It's just my guess. Nothing's been confirmed yet, though,” Kang Chan replied.

-So you did hear something!

It couldn't hurt to be overly careful with these matters. Kang Chan decided to tell Jeon Dae-Geuk a part of the truth.

“Yes, sir. Actually, I did hear that the North Korean special forces team might enter South Korea. This information hasn't been confirmed yet, though, and

Manager Kim was also completely unaware of it. I just called you while I was pondering about it.”

-Who was it? Who told you that?

“He’s someone whose identity hasn’t been verified by the National Intelligence Service yet, and I can’t even get in contact with him right now,” Kang Chan answered.

-But you’re certain that’s what this person said?

“Yes, sir.”

Another sigh and a gulp came over the phone.

-I see. I’ll strengthen the security perimeter and call you again.

“Got it,” Kang Chan replied.

After hanging up, Kang Chan felt a little more at peace. In cases like this, the best solution would be to order an emergency decree on their own special forces team and plan an assassination of North Korea’s most significant figures, but...

Calm down.

Kang Chan shook his head. He would be pushing the soldiers to their deaths if he carried out that mission.

Buzz, buzz.

[Are you up?]

Just then, as if she could feel his struggles, a message from Kim Mi-Young arrived. It occurred to him that she might be upset because he didn’t reply to the text she sent in the afternoon.

Kang Chan pressed the call button.

-Hey, Channy.

“Are you done with your hagwon lessons?”

-Yeah. I’m heading home now.

Haah! What should I do? Something serious could happen soon. Is it okay for me to go meet Kim Mi-Young right now?

-Did you see the text I sent you this morning?

“Yeah. I wasn’t able to reply because I was a little busy. Can I see you right now?”

-You sure you’re not busy right now?

“No, I’m at home. I’ll be waiting for you outside, so let’s meet up for a bit.”

-Okay. I’ll hurry home.

Kang Chan swung on a cardigan and walked out of his room. It seemed like Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook were already asleep, so he tried to leave the apartment as quietly as possible.

Once outside, he sat on a bench and felt the cold breeze on his face. While looking at the entrance of the complex, Kang Chan tilted his head. Kim Mi-Young. She was finally here.

However, although it had only been a few days since he last saw her, she already seemed so different. Was it because it was dark and she was far away?

Noticing Kang Chan, Kim Mi-Young quickly came running over.

“You must be exhausted,” Kang Chan said.

“It’s okay. It’s really almost over now,” Kim Mi-Young responded. Even while she caught her breath, her doe eyes were still sparkling up at Kang Chan. Her nose seemed a little sharper, and the frame of her chin and cheeks had become more definite as well.

“You’re not hungry?” Kang Chan asked.

“I’ll have a sandwich when I go home,” Kim Mi-Young replied.

“Do you want to sit with me for a bit?”

“I was sitting this whole time. Can we walk instead?” Kim Mi-Young suggested.

“Sure. Let me hold your bag,” Kang Chan offered. He slung Kim Mi-Young’s bag over his shoulder, and they walked out the entrance.

“Thanks for helping with the festival.”

Kang Chan smiled faintly at her.

“Can you come to school sometimes just to have lunch?” Kim Mi-Young asked.

“Lunch?”

“Yup! I want to have a meal with you, and I miss you too. If you’re alone during the day, it would be nice if you can come to school and eat with me.”

Would that work out?

He would be put in a difficult position if he put on a school uniform to go to school but something happened afterward. And it was a bit ridiculous to go to school just to eat and leave right after.

“Do you go to the French cultural center every day?” Kim Mi-Young asked.

Did I not tell her what I do?

“No, not every day,” Kang Chan responded.

“Ooh, what do you wear when you go there?”

“Well, just whatever’s comfortable, I guess.”

“Then have lunch with me at our school while you’re in a suit like you did when you came out on TV, okay?” Kim Mi-Young asked, looking at Kang Chan with eyes full of hope.

Should we just study abroad in France together? Will that allow us to live happily and away from all the complicated matters here?

She looked at him with wide eyes, as if asking him what was the matter. Seeing the light reflected in her eyes, the emotions Kang Chan felt during the operation in France began to bloom again.

Chapter 162.1: The first steps (1)

Time flew by too fast. Kang Chan felt a slight pang of regret when he returned to the apartment complex’s entrance with Kim Mi-Young.

People and their emotions were quite peculiar. Without actually having to speak, one could express their thoughts or understand another just by looking into their eyes.

“Mi-Young, isn’t it tough to study so hard?” Kang Chan asked, breaking the silence.

“Well, studying has always just been a part of my life, and it’s actually fun now that I have a goal in mind. This is the first time ever that I’ve had so much fun studying,” Kim Mi-Young replied lightly.

Were things more fun when there were set goals to achieve? Was he happy when he managed to successfully protect his team members in the past? He couldn’t be sure.

Kang Chan and Kim Mi-Young had already stepped inside the apartment complex. They couldn’t go any further, so that marked the end of their walk.

“All right. Get home safe,” Kang Chan said.

“Will do! Don’t feel too pressured about coming to school for lunch, okay? I’ll catch you later!” Kim Mi-Young said with a grin.

After Kang Chan nodded in response, Kim Mi-Young turned around to go home.

It occurred to him that he still hadn’t received any phone call yet even though it was already a little past eleven. It made him feel a little worried and anxious.

I’m sure Kim Hyung-Jung will take care of it just fine.

When he entered his room, he waited for a little while in case a call came through, but eventually fell asleep.

After his morning workout, Kang Chan came back home to take a shower and have breakfast. Through it all, he didn’t receive a call or get any particular feeling in his gut. However, while he was waiting for Yoo Hye-Sook to finish changing into a new outfit, a news broadcast on the television that read “breaking news” captured his gaze. The announcer began to deliver the news with a stiff expression.

[We have breaking news. China has designated all South Korean export items within its territory as prohibited items. This will take effect at eight o'clock this morning in Korean Standard Time. The country has also initiated an investigation into the status of South Korean companies in China. We will now connect with our correspondent Han Gyu-Seok in Beijing for more details.]

The shot on the screen changed, and the correspondent began to explain the situation in a somewhat frantic tone.

“How did something so ridiculous like this end up happening?” Kang Dae-Kyung muttered to himself as he focused on the TV.

The correspondent reported that investigations into South Korean companies within China were being conducted comprehensively and intensively, focusing on labor conditions, tax evasion, and other aspects. As a result, their factories currently could not operate.

“It sounds like they’re practically declaring war on us,” Kang Dae-Kyung worriedly remarked.

“Is it that bad?” Kang Chan asked.

“Well, the stock market will be in chaos as soon as the clock strikes eight. Our country heavily depends on exports to China, so the severity of this situation can’t even be put into words,” Kang Dae-Kyung replied. He looked as if he had a hard time believing the report despite watching the news himself.

[We will now also examine the responses of other countries to China’s extreme measures.]

Kang Chan recalled what Yang Bum had told him. The original plan was for Kang Chan to cooperate with China to eliminate a traitor and his political enemies in one go. However, the way the opposing side counterattacked left South Korea with no other choice but to replace their current prime minister and National Intelligence Service director. If so, Moon Jae-Hyun’s assassination would likely follow that, resulting in all the protection Kang Chan had vanishing into thin air.

Frankly, Kang Chan could care less about not being guarded.

“What’s going on, Honey?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

However, without the protection, Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook, who had just walked out of the master bedroom with absolutely no idea about what was happening, could get into truly dangerous situations.

“I guess China is pretty mad about something,” Kang Dae-Kyung responded.

“Well, let’s not worry about that right now. We’re going to be late at this rate, dear,” Yoo Hye-Sook urged him.

“All right. Let’s head to work,” Kang Dae-Kyung said.

After seeing his parents off, Kang Chan sat on the sofa and continued to watch the news.

He was aware that he shouldn't believe everything that was being reported, but watching this broadcast was the fastest way to get caught up on what was currently going on.

This was no doubt a major defeat since he didn't see it coming at all, allowing it to take him completely by surprise. To make matters worse, the North Korean special forces team could be lying in wait anywhere, ready for action.

[We have just received more breaking news.]

The angle of the camera changed again as the announcer looked between the script and the camera.

[Prime Minister Go Gun-Woo has apologized to the people for not preventing this Chinese incident from taking place, and he has submitted a letter of resignation to the president.]

The announcer gave way for the reporter to speak again, requesting an update on the situation.

After that, it was just talk that was to be expected. There were analyses about how the prime minister's resignation was an inevitable decision and informed speculation that the government could have known about this incident beforehand.

[What's surprising is the response from National Assembly Chairman Huh Ha-Soo. In light of this incident, Chairman Huh Ha-Soo quickly rushed to China, departing from the country an hour before the announcement was made. His reaction stands in stark contrast to the current state of confusion within the government.]

Beep.

Kang Chan turned the TV off. The report had been going well before suddenly going off on an absurd tangent.

In stark contrast to the government, they say?

Well, Kang Chan couldn't argue with that. After all, one side was trying to protect the country while the other was trying to sell it off.

Kang Chan wondered if he should call Kim Hyung-Jung but figured that the man was probably too busy right now. If Kim Hyung-Jung was curious about something or wanted to ask for Kang Chan's help, he definitely would have already called by now. At the moment, Kim Hyung-Jung was likely stressfully occupied trying to prevent the impeachment of the president and the replacement of the NIS director, given that China and Huh Ha-Soo had apparently banded together.

I'll give it some time before calling him.

What was Lanok doing right now, though? There was no way that snake didn't foresee this from happening. However, Kang Chan remembered how grim Lanok sounded earlier when he answered the phone.

Unfortunately, Kang Chan couldn't do anything in this situation, especially with regard to its political aspects. He looked outside the veranda with all kinds of frustrating thoughts running through his mind.

For now, he deliberated between two choices—whether he should wait or take matters into his own hands.

He didn't know about Go Gun-Woo, but Hwang Ki-Hyun was a different matter. If Hwang Ki-Hyun were to step down as the director of the NIS, a dagger would immediately be held against Kang Chan's neck next. What could he possibly do in this situation? Things were becoming tricky now.

If Kang Chan killed Huh Ha-Soo, China would proceed to screw them over worse than what they were doing right now. Moreover, he didn't even know where the North Korean special forces team was currently at.

A flash of intense irritation simmered inside him when the phone suddenly began to ring.

Buzz. Buzz. Buzz.

Kang Chan hurried back to his room and picked up his phone.

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

- I apologize, Mr. Kang Chan. I was held up by a few affairs. Do you have time to meet today?

"Yes, I can head to where you are as soon as we finish this call. Where do you want me to go?"

- Brilliant. The embassy would be best.

"Got it. I'm on my way," Kang Chan replied.

Kang Chan soon left his apartment, strangely feeling more reassured.

While heading toward the embassy in a taxi, Seok Kang-Ho gave him a call. Seok Kang-Ho had a mix of both surprise and curiosity in his voice.

"I'm on my way to see the ambassador right now. I'll call you when I'm done," Kang Chan informed him.

"Got it," Seok Kang-Ho replied. He was probably feeling uneasy too.

As soon as Kang Chan arrived at the embassy, an agent escorted him up to Lanok's office.

"Welcome, Mr. Kang Chan," Lanok greeted him with an attitude that was no different from usual. Cigars, tea, and ashtrays were already prepared for Kang Chan. "Why did you want to speak to me?"

"Yang Bum called me yesterday, Mr. Ambassador," Kang Chan replied. There was no way this snake wasn't aware of the political situation in China. Nevertheless, Kang Chan began to calmly explain what took place yesterday, starting from Yang Bum's call to the morning news broadcast. "... so if it's all right with you, I would like to take down Huh Ha-Soo using Xavier."

"Xavier is no longer able to tell tales," Lanok replied.

He killed Xavier?

Lanok delivered the news to him so nonchalantly as he pieced and ate a biscuit next to the black tea.

"He appeared to be aware of the situation, having listened in to everything. If we sent him back, the United States' intelligence agency would learn about the

discussions that you, Ludwig, Vasili, and I had, along with your contact with the Chinese embassy.” Lanok explained to Kang Chan why Xavier had to die in the same composed tone that he normally used.

So this is what information warfare is like.

“Moreover, even if we kept Xavier alive, he would never have been any help to us. He would have pretended to cooperate with us, then changed his mind the moment he found the best opportunity to make things problematic. Once the United States successfully managed to pressure us into giving him back, you would have been the one in a difficult position,” Lanok added.

What kind of twisted tutoring session is this?

Kang Chan felt as if he was being taught right now.

Chapter 162.2: The first steps (1)

Lanok lifted the teapot and poured Kang Chan and himself some tea, the beverage audibly dribbling into the cups.

“It would be in your best interest to decide exactly what it is that you want first, Mr. Kang Chan.”

What I want?

“I want to eliminate Huh Ha-Soo, Huh Sang-Soo, and all the bastards who are working for them. I also want to protect the current president,” Kang Chan stated with firm determination.

Lanok set the teapot back down with a light click.

“That won’t be an easy battle,” Lanok replied. “Mr. Kang Chan, already-established structures of vested interests can’t be easily toppled down. The fight against Yang Jin-Woo was only possible because nobody tried to protect him, and you took him on when he was alone and abandoned. However, fights against men with vested interests will not be so easy. They will never yield. Rather, they will present a united front and attack you all at once.”

Just how many men were under Huh Ha-Soo for Lanok to give him this warning?

“If you look at it another way, you will essentially be fighting against all the influences in South Korea. These people have the foundation to replace the president, and just as how you seek me, they have connections to the United States, Britain, Japan, China, and various other countries. Initiating the fight may be simple, but it will have a devastating process and results,” Lanok continued.

Kang Chan drank a sip of his tea to organize his thoughts. Lanok was basically telling Kang Chan that he shouldn’t underestimate the difficulty of his decision and that he should just turn a blind eye

instead if he wasn't willing to go all the way through with it. As he picked up a cigarette and lit it, he wondered about which path he really wanted to take.

"Mr. Ambassador. Is this a fight I can win?" Kang Chan asked solemnly.

"All this time, you have never fought a winning battle, Mr. Kang Chan. That is precisely why the outcomes were all the more astonishing. You turned those impossible operations into your perfect victories," Lanok complimented him.

Kang Chan thought to himself that getting praised by a sly snake didn't feel all too bad.

A fight against men in power...

"Can you help me?" Kang Chan carefully asked.

Lanok gazed back at him with a look that seemed to ask why Kang Chan even bothered asking the question.

'Are you really going to try?'

'Yes. I can't just sit still and watch things fall apart.'

There definitely were times when one could understand another without having to speak.

"Then you'll have to find a way to stop Huh Ha-Soo first," Lanok said so casually that Kang Chan chuckled faintly. "The correct way to take care of these types of fights is to win first, and then look back on the battle. The process and methods taken will all be forgotten and buried beneath the results anyway. Now, shall we begin?"

Lanok looked to the side and checked the clock on the table. Kang Chan thought it was just for decoration, but apparently, it told the correct time too.

"This is a technique that Huh Ha-Soo enjoyed using in the past. I'm sure it will be quite effective, and it happens to be the appropriate time for it as well," Lanok declared.

It was currently twenty past ten in the morning.

Lanok walked over to his desk and picked up the phone.

"Raphael, please bring in the guest," he ordered.

A guest?

While Kang Chan looked on in confusion, Lanok sat back down at the table. The door soon opened.

What the hell?

The "guest" who followed Raphael into the office was none other than Yang Bum.

"Mr. Kang Chan," Yang Bum greeted as he shook hands with Kang Chan. He then sat down. "I would like North Korea to launch a missile, and I require the

soldiers at the Yellow Sea and the DMZ to be provoked. The bigger in scale, the better, of course.”

Launch a what to where? And he needs what?

“It’s going to be quite costly, Mr. Ambassador,” Yang Bum told Lanok.

“Mr. Kang Chan will take care of that,” Lanok replied.

What the hell are they talking about?

“Understood. I will make the call now, then,” Yang Bum informed them.

Yang Bum pulled out his phone and pressed a few buttons, then began to speak over the line in Chinese.

Kang Chan laughed in disbelief.

What would’ve happened if Lanok was his enemy? Kang Chan would probably have had to bide his time waiting for the perfect time to kill him if he wanted to defeat the ambassador. The moment he missed his window of opportunity, he definitely wouldn’t get a second chance.

“Mr. Kang Chan, Russia is preparing an announcement to declare their collaboration with South Korea for the development of their oil field. To make it advantageous to us, the explanation given for it should be that Prime Minister Go Gun-Woo was secretly working on this assignment under the orders of President Moon Jae-Hyun. At the same time, Russia will express their concern and regret regarding Prime Minister Go Gun-Woo’s resignation,” Lanok announced.

Is there anything this man can’t do?

Kang Chan took another sip of his tea while listening to Lanok.

“They said they would contact me again once they have decided on a time, Mr. Ambassador,” Yang Bum chimed in as he finished his phone call.

“How is this cooperation with North Korea possible when their special forces team is infiltrating South Korea right now?” Kang Chan asked, unable to keep his curiosity to himself.

“North Korea has no choice but to rely on China, and that is why Huh Ha-Soo is so trusting of them. However, at the right price, North Korea will be more than willing to launch a few old missiles and conduct field maneuvers at the DMZ,” Yang Bum replied for him.

Kang Chan felt as if he just entered a whole new world.

“What about their special forces team that’s entering the country to assassinate the president?” Kang Chan asked this time.

“Weimin Guo is on the move for that. We have already begun to track him, so we should get his location soon,” Yang Bum responded.

Right after, Lanok put down his teacup. “Mr. Kang Chan. Regardless of the outcome of this battle, a storm of bloodshed is bound to rain down on China as well. This is a fight that has to be won.”

Their words connected smoothly. It was as if they rehearsed this beforehand.

“What you need to do is prepare a reliable special forces team, Mr. Kang Chan. The special forces team that Weimin Guo put together is skilled in assassinations and demolition works. Weimin Guo also harbors personal hostility against you, so he most likely wants to be successful with this mission no matter the cost,” Lanok said.

Kang Chan had no idea who the man in question was. Was it because of the men who died during the Mongolian operation?

“I don’t know who he is, though,” Kang Chan said with a tilt of his head.

“Weimin Guo’s Korean name is Wui Min-Gook, Mr. Kang Chan,” Lanok replied.

Wui Min-Gook? The Neck Ghost?

Yang Bum nodded when Kang Chan turned to him for confirmation.

“He is a former North Korean special forces soldier who managed to climb to the highest position in the Chinese intelligence agency. He was famous for personally running operations on the field, but he was defeated for the first time because of you. Since then, he hasn’t been able to perform at his best. He likely holds a grudge against you.”

“Has he entered the country yet?” Kang Chan asked.

“We have not obtained that information yet. It is difficult to receive confirmation because Weimin Guo is independently handling this operation.”

What in the hell is going on?

He felt as if he was getting scammed from right under his nose.

“All right! This is everything that I’ve prepared for you on my own. Now, it’s your turn to take action with what I’ve drawn together. From the prime minister, the director of the NIS, a special forces team, and the president—it’s up to you to meet and persuade all these people for the plan,” Lanok stated calmly.

Kang Chan had already made up his mind to fight a long time ago.

The oil development rights from Russia and North Korea’s provocation... Things he never saw coming consecutively unfolded before him in the blink of an eye.

“Mr. Kang Chan.”

“Yes, Ambassador Lanok,” Kang Chan replied.

Lanok called for Kang Chan in a different tone than the one he had been using so far.

“This is your fight. I look forward to seeing the daring man who rescued me. Use all the resources at your disposal, and request for others’ cooperation. If necessary, you can contact Ludwig, Vant, and Vasili yourself. You will have to think, judge, and decide on your own,” Lanok said solemnly.

“I understand, Mr. Ambassador,” Kang Chan said.

“I’m certain Huh Ha-Soo will be taken by surprise.”

“Then I definitely shouldn’t miss this chance.”

“Brilliant judgment,” Lanok said with a grin.

There was no use in further extending this conversation. The time had come for him to begin.

Kang Chan stood up from the table.

“I will get going, then,” Kang Chan said.

After shaking Lanok and Yang Bum’s hands, Kang Chan left the office.

“Mr. Ambassador, using North Korea could lead to significant consequences,” Yang Bum said worriedly.

“That could indeed be the case,” Lanok agreed.

“There are too many variables. The political situation in China, the changes within North Korea... the list goes on. Mr. Kang Chan still seems unfamiliar with this world. Will he be okay?”

“I suppose we will get the answer to that question once this battle is over. Whether he's merely someone who can shine on the battlefield, or...” Lanok trailed off and pressed his lips together. Yang Bum glanced at the door.

After leaving the embassy, Kang Chan immediately pulled out his phone and called Choi Jong-Il. He didn’t think he would be able to speak comfortably inside the taxi.

About a minute later, a car driven by Lee Doo-Hee arrived.

“To Samsung-dong first,” Kang Chan commanded, then immediately called Kim Hyung-Jung.

- Mr. Kang Chan.

“Manager Kim, I just left the French embassy. I’d like to head over to where you are right now. Is that okay?”

- Yes. See you soon.

As Kim Hyung-Jung spoke, Kang Chan heard the sound of another incoming call. Things were probably extremely hectic for him.

Next, Kang Chan called Seok Kang-Ho.

- It's me.

"Our meeting just ended. I'm heading to Samsung-dong now," Kang Chan informed him.

- Got it.

Seok Kang-Ho answered swiftly since he was curious and frustrated about what was happening.

A fight against Huh Ha-Soo and the rest of the people in power? He couldn't gauge how difficult it would be or what kind of fight it would be.

Therefore, Kang Chan decided to keep it simple. The task at hand was simply to create an opportunity that would allow him to twist their necks.

Chapter 163.1: The first steps (2)

As soon as Kang Chan arrived at Samseong-dong with Choi Jong-Il, he immediately headed to Kim Hyung-Jung's office. When he got in, Seok Kang-Ho was already sitting in front of the table.

"Hey," Seok Kang-Ho greeted.

"Mr. Kang Chan, do you want anything to drink?" Kim Hyung-Jung asked.

"I'd like coffee," Kang Chan quickly answered just in case Seok Kang-Ho was planning to give him the beverage that he was drinking.

"Mr. Manager, I'd also like a cup of coffee," Seok Kang-Ho said.

"Alright."

Kim Hyung-Jung asked for a drink and coffee through the intercom, then sat down. If this was a commercial on energy drinks or vitamins, then Kim Hyung-Jung current look would be perfect for how a person looks before drinking that energy drink or taking the vitamin.

"Everything seemed to have turned into a battlefield," Kim Hyung-Jung said. He looked extremely fatigued.

Click!

As they were talking, an employee brought over drinks and coffee, then left right after.

"Please help yourselves," Kim Hyung-Jun offered, then asked Kang Chan, "Did Ambassador Lanok say anything else?"

"He did say a few things, but nothing conclusive. I heard that the Prime Minister has announced his resignation. Can you tell me more about that?"

Kim Hyung-Jung looked at the door behind him. Upon confirming that it had been tightly closed, he responded, "That was the only thing we could do to at least buy us some time. Chairperson Huh Ha-Soo is insisting that ultimately, he's going to submit the impeachment motion if the Director of

the National Intelligence Service isn't replaced, and if you don't apologize to him or the Chinese embassy."

"Dickhead!" Seok Kang-Ho expressed Huh Ha-Soo in a single word.

"What are you going to do now?" Kang Chan asked.

"Hmm." Pursing his lips, Kim Hyung-Jung stared at the glass in his hand. After a while, he gazed up at Kang Chan without moving his head. "The team that I'm in charge of is supposed to support you until we connect the Eurasian Rail anyway, so I'll be honest. Telling you this probably isn't against the rules."

Seeing the fatigue in Kim Hyung-Jung's eyes, Kang Chan felt the need to make Kim Hyung-Jung take a handful of vitamins.

"I'm starting to suspect that the National Intelligence Service's internal affairs are being reported to Chairman Huh Ha-Soo in real-time. I've gotten to the point where I can't help but wonder if a portion of the information we're supposed to receive reaches him first before us," Kim Hyung-Jung continued.

"You mean we have a traitor among us?"

"Yes, and taking all factors into consideration, we think the traitor is in a fairly high-ranking position. Even so, we can't have all the employees report directly to the director. If the director gets replaced right now, then we will probably find ourselves in a very difficult situation."

"What about the countermeasures?" Kang Chan asked.

"Due to the National Intelligence Service's nature, we can't even properly identify the other teams we have on the field, much less determine what they're up to. That's why we're putting all our focus on figuring out how information is being leaked to Chairman Huh Ha-Soo."

"Are we seriously thinking of replacing the Prime Minister in this situation?" Kang Chan asked.

"Honestly, I haven't been told what the higher-ups are planning to do." Kim Hyung-Jung had a bitter look on his face.

"There's nothing we can do, then," Kang Chan commented.

"I'm not sure about that." Kim Hyung-Jung cocked his head, then continued, "The moment we started suspecting that intel is being leaked to Chairman Huh Ha-Soo, we immediately made efforts to restrict the flow of outgoing information as much as possible."

The situation was becoming worse.

If this situation resulted in Russia's plan or North Korea's provocation being leaked to Huh Ha-Soo, then their own plan could have become their weakness.

Damn it! I can't believe I'm starting to feel uncomfortable about the organization that I trust the most!

"Do you own stocks?" Seok Kang-Ho asked abruptly, making Kang Chan look up at him.

"The market is a mess right now. If you have stocks, then you should sell them quickly," Seok Kang-Ho continued.

"I sold all of my stocks a while ago. I already told you that Cecile contacted me about the stocks, haven't I?"

"Ah, right."

Seok Kang-Ho seemed uninterested when Kang Chan told him about it back then, which was probably why he completely forgot about it.

Ah, right. Seok Kang-Ho also had some stocks.

Jeez! Now was not the time to worry about things like that.

"Manager Kim, is this room safe from wiretapping?" Kang Chan asked.

The question came out of the blue, but Kim Hyung-Jung looked around the room anyway.

"My office has all the basic facilities that would protect it from wiretapping, but I can't say it's perfectly safe," he then responded.

"Then we should head out for a bit."

Kim Hyung-Jung quickly looked at Seok Kang-Ho, then nodded.

Kang Chan called Kim Tae-Jin as they were leaving the building. Kim Tae-Jin would know what to do during times like this.

- Hello?

Kim Tae-Jin sounded quite frustrated about something.

"Mr. President, where are you right now?"

- I'm at my office. Do you need me to go somewhere?

I knew it. He is frustrated.

"I would like to borrow the employees who inspected us for wiretapping a while ago, and there's something that I want to discuss with you."

- Is that so? Where are you right now?

“I’m at manager Kim’s office in Samseong-dong. We just left, though, and we’re about to head over to the specialty coffee shop in front of Yoo Bi-Corp.”

- Hmm, okay. I’ll leave right away.

Kim Tae-Jin immediately deduced that Kang Chan wasn’t planning on going up to his office.

Kang Chan and Kim Hyung-Jung got in Seok Kang-Ho’s car. Choi Jong-Il’s party followed behind them.

As soon as they arrived and entered their destination, they immediately noticed two employees waiting for them. They inspected the trio from head to toe, starting from their shoes and phones.

“We didn’t find any signals,” one of the employees said.

“Thank you for your hard work. You can go home for today. I’ll make sure to inform Mr. Kim Tae-Jin about it,” Kang Chan said.

“Understood.”

After sending the two employees away, Kang Chan sat on the terrace and looked around his surroundings. Customers had occupied two other tables on the terrace.

“What’s wrong?” Kim Tae-Jin followed Kang Chan’s gaze and examined the table next to them. Afterward, he looked at Kang Chan.

“Let’s go somewhere else—I have something to tell the two of you,” Kang Chan said.

Kim Hyung-Jung and Kim Tae-Jin looked as if they perfectly understood what Kang Chan meant.

Leaving behind their drinks, which they barely touched, the four left the specialty coffee shop and got into Seok Kang-Ho’s car.

Kang Chan thought of going to the Namsan Hotel. No one asked Kang Chan what was happening, or why he was acting like this.

They simply trusted that there was a good reason behind Kang Chan’s current behavior, and that trust was clearly evident on all of their faces.

Kang Chan didn’t even reserve a room. From now on, he was going to act the same way he did when he was rescuing Lanok. However, he would also be extra careful.

As soon as they arrived at the hotel, Kang Chan was dropped off by the entrance. The others then took the car to the parking lot as he headed to the front desk.

As Kang Chan expected, Joo Chul-Bum quickly approached and greeted him.

“Welcome, hyung-nim,” Joo Chul-Bum greeted.

“Hey. Give me a large room—one that isn’t normally used. Don’t ask or say anything. I need it for something confidential.”

“Please wait for a moment, hyung-nim.”

About five minutes later, Joo Chul-Bum brought over a key card. By then, Seok Kang-Ho and the others were already in the hotel as well. Hence, Kang Chan's group immediately headed to the elevator and went up to room 1804.

The entrance of the bedroom was blocked by a divider, making them feel as if they just entered a luxurious office or a living room.

"There are drinks in the fridge, Seok Kang-Ho," Kang Chan commented.

"Alright."

Seok Kang-Ho went over to open the fridge while Kim Hyung-Jung brought over cups.

the group took off their jackets, revealing the shirts they were wearing underneath, except for Seok Kang-Ho, who was only wearing a cotton t-shirt.

Seok Kang-Ho pushed over a sofa and the chairs from the table and then sat down.

"I apologize for my weird behavior. It's related to what I have to tell you all," Kang Chan began.

Chk.

While opening canned drinks, Seok Kang-Ho glanced at Kang Chan.

"I can only discuss this with people that I know I can trust."

Meanwhile, Seok Kang-Ho prepared four cups of drinks.

"Please don't mention what you hear in this room to anyone, no matter the reason. If by any chance you're uncomfortable with that, then feel free to leave now," Kang Chan added.

Seok Kang-Ho and Kim Tae-Jin looked at Kim Hyung-Jung as if they rehearsed it beforehand. However, it was only natural, considering Kim Hyung-Jung was working for the National Intelligence Service.

"Hmm." Kim Hyung-Jung couldn't immediately answer.

"It's okay, Manager Kim, so don't feel pressured. However, I will have to ask you to keep the fact that you came to the hotel to meet with us today a secret," Kang Chan said. He didn't want to force Kim Hyung-Jung.

"Alright. I won't tell anyone," Kim Hyung-Jung responded with a grim expression. He looked as if he had solidified his decision, but it was difficult to discern which matter he had decided on exactly.

Chapter 163.2: The first steps (2)

With everyone in agreement with Kang Chan's condition, Kang Chan began to explain what happened again, starting with his business with Huh Geuk and Yang Bum, so that Kim Tae-Jin could properly understand. Afterward, he told them about his meeting with Yang Bum and Lanok at the embassy, then about Xavier's death.

Kim Tae-Jin just listened intently.

“I have two cards up my sleeve—one of them is an announcement that Russia will make about having decided to collaborate with South Korea for the development of their oil fields. I was told that they will be announcing it along the lines of, ‘it’s a shame that the Prime Minister has decided to resign, considering he has been collaborating with us in the development of our oil fields,’” Kang Chan said.

“Can we really have that announced whenever just because we asked Russia to?” Kim Hyung-Jung asked, his eyes sparkling. “I can report this directly to the director. If you’re uncomfortable with that, then I’ll report it to the Prime Minister instead.”

“Listen to the rest of what I have to say first, Manager Kim,” Kang Chan responded. He felt as if he had just made a mistake, but even if he really did, he couldn’t tell Kim Hyung-Jung to leave now.

“The second card that I have is to make North Korea launch missiles at the Yellow Sea to provoke the special forces team over there and the DMZ,” Kang Chan continued.

Kim Tae-Jin, who was leaning forward as he listened to Kang Chan, slowly sat up straight. He seemed quite shocked.

“We have also received intel that Wui Min-Gook is coming to South Korea with North Korea’s special forces team. Their goal is the President,” Kang Chan added.

“Wui Min-Gook? The Neck Ghost?” Kim Tae-Jin asked.

“Yes. I also heard that he’s waiting for a chance to kill me.”

“Hmm, that’s certainly something that man would do.”

“Mr. Kang Chan, a potential assassination attempt on the President isn’t something that we should be discussing among ourselves!” Kim Hyung-Jung exclaimed.

“Mr. Manager,” Kang Chan decided to calm Kim Hyung-Jung down first. “Everything will be ruined if we act carelessly right now. If even a single word of what I just said reaches Huh Ha-Soo, there will be dire consequences. I’m sure you’re already well aware of that, though.”

“Mr. Kang Chan, we also have Section Chief Jeon. Moreover, like I told you a moment ago, I can also directly report to the Director.”

“Can you tell me with utmost confidence that the director isn’t the one leaking our intel to Huh Ha-Soo?”

“Pardon?”

Kang Chan just blurted out the question. He knew how deep Kim Hyung-Jung’s sense of duty was, but he had to say it anyway to emphasize that now was not the time to act like this.

However, when he noticed Kim Hyung-Jung’s astonishment, Kang Chan couldn’t help but wonder if the director was actually doing that.

“Now, now! Let’s not go that far. Let’s discuss this after we listen to everything Kang Chan has to say. So, what are you thinking?” Kim Tae-Jin asked Kang Chan, finally making him feel as if time was passing again.

“With this opportunity, I want to get rid of Huh Ha-Soo, Huh Sang-Soo, and everyone working for them.”

Kim Tae-Jin sighed deeply, and Kim Hyung-Jung shook his head.

“How are you going to do that?” Kim Tae-Jin asked.

“That’s what I’m planning for right now.”

“And that plan includes using Russia’s announcement and North Korea’s provocation?”

“Yes. However, I wanted to decide after discussing it among ourselves. Once Russia makes the announcement or North Korea starts its provocation, you have to tell anyone who asks that you didn’t receive any information about it. That includes you, Manager Kim. That way, we can catch Huh Ha-Soo off guard,” Kang Chan continued.

“What about the Neck Ghost and the North Korean special forces team[1]?” Kim Tae-Jin asked again.

“We have Section Chief Jeon in the Presidential Security Service. If our special forces team is needed, then we can also meet General Choi Seong-Geon to ask for help.”

Kim Tae-Jin draped his left hand over his head. “Hmm, if that’s the case, then I think we should talk to Section Chief Jeon about this. General Choi Seong-Geon is a soldier—he takes action only when commanded, no matter how good the intentions are.”

Shoot! I can’t believe I actually thought that man would deploy their soldiers without first being commanded to.

Kang Chan had no choice but to agree with Kim Tae-Jin.

“Mr. Kang Chan, at least tell the director about this,” Kim Hyung-Jung said.

“No—that can’t happen yet.”

“What? Why? How come Section Chief Jeon is allowed to know about this but not the director?”

“I’m not sure about that man.”

Kim Hyung-Jung looked at Kim Tae-Jin as if he was asking for help, but Kim Tae-Jin unexpectedly said something irrelevant instead. “I want to hear your plan for now.”

“I don’t have anything else planned yet, but I’m going to tell North Korea to provoke the soldiers over at the DMZ as soon as possible.”

“Today’s Friday, so if you do that, we’ll at least have the weekend. And then?”

“I’ll have Russia make the announcement about the oil field development.”

“That will probably be enough to temporarily dodge the bullet. What do you think?” Kim Tae-Jin asked Kim Hyung-Jung.

“I don’t know what kind of variable the weekend can bring, but since the President hasn’t accepted the prime minister’s resignation yet, you might just be right,” Kim Hyung-Jung replied, then immediately turned to Kang Chan.

“However, this is nothing more than a stopgap measure. China still won’t lift their economic sanctions on us.”

“We can think of something better during the weekend.”

Kim Hyung-Jung expressed his frustrations with a sigh.

“Mr. Manager, why are you clinging so hard to China?” Kang Chan asked.

Kim Hyung-Jung looked as if he didn’t understand what Kang Chan meant.

“Whenever we get attacked, you always wait for our assailant to forgive us. You don’t even consider retaliating. I don’t know how much losses South Korea will suffer if we stop trading with China, but can’t we just make up for it with another country?”

“Mr. Kang Chan, Our exports to China have already earned us over ninety billion dollars this year. Our trades with Shanghai alone have brought us more profits than the trades we’ve made with any one country. Simple calculations tell us that we have to trade with more than twenty countries to match the earnings we get from trading with China. We can’t sell the products that were tailored for China to other countries either.”

The only thing that Kang Chan understood about everything that Kim Hyung-Jung said was ninety billion dollars.

Damn it. That’s an insane amount of money.

“If we stop trading with China, business after business will swiftly go bankrupt, which will ultimately result in a rise in unemployment,” Kim Hyung-Jung added.

Kang Chan smacked his lips. He never thought that he would be fighting this kind of battle.

It wasn't like they could just approach some other country and borrow a hundred billion dollars every year from then. Even if they could do that, they wouldn't have any means to pay them back.

Kang Chan only didn't have money to buy pork cutlets in his previous life. Now, he was having trouble because he didn't have a hundred billion dollars. All of this happened in a year.

“Manager Kim, please answer my next question under the assumption that I'm simply curious. What would happen if I killed Huh Ha-Soo?” Kang Chan asked.

Kim Hyung-Jung stiffened.

“If there's no evidence, and if I'm not caught, what will happen in the aftermath?”

“China will just put someone else in his seat,” Kim Hyung-Jung responded.

“What if I kill that person as well?”

“China will have lots of volunteers regardless. A lot of people want the country to pick them, after all. As of right now, anyone who sides with China or Japan will at least be well off in South Korea. Considering they believe that it would be an opportunity to enjoy generational wealth and power, China will have an endless number of people to choose from,” Kim Hyung-Jung explained.

“They're like fucking cockroaches,” Kang Chan commented as he leaned back against his chair and relaxed. He had a drink in his hand, but he still felt frustrated.

“Open the window, Seok Kang-Ho. Do you mind if we smoke here, Mr. President?” Kang Chan asked.

“Not at all. Don't worry about me and smoke.”

Excluding Kim Tae-Jin, the group bit on the cigarettes that Seok Kang-Ho took out and handed over.

“Whoo!” Kang Chan felt much better.

Kim Hyung-Jung looked as if he also felt the same way.

“Can't we borrow money with the development rights to oil reserves?” Kang Chan asked lowly, making it seem as if he was just muttering to himself.

“Pardon?” Kim Hyung-Jung replied.

“You said that the inflation will drop by thirty percent the moment we start collaborating with Russia on the development of their oil fields. Combined with our contract with Russia, wouldn't that be enough for us to borrow money from some another country?” Kang Chan wondered.

“Let’s say we do manage to get ourselves a loan. What do you plan to do then?”

“We’ll use it to support the companies that will be going through difficulties. We can also use it to make sure we endure, of course. Anyway, after I kill Huh Ha-Soo, we will provide support to our people so that we can seize the powers in China. Wouldn’t that lead to China’s eventual surrender?”

Kim Hyung-Jung looked at Kang Chan with a confused expression.

Be-be-beep. Be-be-beep. Be-be-beep.

As he did, a sharp ringtone rang from his inner chest pocket.

“It’s Kim Hyung-Jung. Yes, yes. I’m with him right now.” Kim Hyung-Jung glanced at Kang Chan, then focused on the call again.

“Ahem.” Kim Hyung-Jung showed his talent for changing a groan into a sigh.

“Alright. I’ll tell him about this. I’ll contact you afterward.” After hanging up, he inhaled loudly.

“What’s wrong? If that call is related to Kang Chan, then it’s only proper that you quickly tell him what it was about,” Kim Tae-Jin insisted.

Only then did Kim Hyung-Jung turn his head to look at Kang Chan. “I was told that Chairman Huh Ha-Soo has expressed his desire to meet you. He specifically requested that we bring you, regardless of whether you’re planning to apologize or not.”

“Phuhu.” Seok Kang-Ho laughed as if he found it funny. Kim Tae-Jin looked dumbfounded.

“It seems that fucker really wants to die. Alright—why is he looking for me?” Kang Chan asked.

“They didn’t tell me anything about that.”

“That motherfucking traitor is kicking up a fucking fuss!” Seok Kang-Ho yelled.

Kang Chan laughed out loud. “What’s going to happen if I don’t go?”

“I only heard that they were asking for cooperation. They didn’t say anything else.”

“Hmm! He probably threatened people with the motion to impeach the President again or told everyone that he’ll impose new economic sanctions,” Kim Tae-Jin commented.

Silence enveloped the room.

When Kang Chan picked up a cigarette...

Be-be-beep. Be-be-beep. Be-be-beep.

“Yes, it’s Kim Hyung-Jung. No, I haven’t heard an answer yet, but Mr. Kang Chan probably isn’t going.”

Kim Hyung-Jung listened to what the person on the other end was saying for a little while, then answered, “Yes. I understand.”

After putting down the phone, Kim Hyung-Jung sighed loudly.

“Will South Korea really be able to rise up properly?” he muttered to himself.

Chapter 164.1: We don’t have much time (1)

“Manager Kim, why would Huh Ha-Soo want to see me?” Kang Chan asked.

Kim Hyung-Jung shook his head, his gaze unmoving from the table.

“I have no idea. I’m sure it’s not just because he wants to put up an immature show of strength, but I also doubt he would ask you to go to the embassy to make you apologize,” Kim Hyung-Jung replied.

“Let’s do it, then,” Kang Chan stated.

“I beg your pardon?” Kim Hyung-Jung asked in surprise.

“I don’t see why I shouldn’t meet him. He has no reason to request my presence, so the fact that he’s asking for me has to mean that they want something. In return for accepting his demand, tell him to postpone processing the prime minister’s resignation letter to Monday,” Kang Chan suggested.

Kim Hyung-Jung looked like he had a hard time believing that was going to happen.

“Why don’t you make the call? The worst they can do is say no,” Kang Chan reassured him.

“Understood.” Kim Hyung-Jung immediately picked up the phone to explain the situation. “Mr. Kang Chan has requested to postpone the processing of the Prime Minister’s resignation letter until Monday. Yes, sir. Yes, I will wait on standby.”

After hanging up the phone, Kim Hyung-Jung turned back to Kang Chan.

“They said they would call back when they’ve reached an answer. Ah, also, Mr. Kang Chan...” Kim Hyung-Jung trailed off. He looked as if he had a difficult favor to ask.

“Please trust the director,” he insisted even though Kang Chan already said no to this request.

“To be completely frank, the president will not agree to any plan that isn’t legal and fair. However, if we want to outmatch people in power like Chairperson Huh Ha-Soo, we’re going to need a separate organization, like the one France’s DGSE has,” Kim Hyung-Jung said firmly, his eyes filled with a sense of duty. “We

will buy time using North Korea's provocation and Russia's announcement. If that isn't enough, I will assassinate Huh Ha-Soo myself."

"You can't be serious!" Kim Tae-Jin exclaimed in shock, but Kim Hyung-Jung remained steadfast.

"However, at the very least, I must have the director's commands. All we have to do is make the composition of the Eurasian Special Forces more independent. I will handle the creation of subsequent reports."

Be-be-beep. Be-be-beep. Be-be-beep.

Kim Hyung-Jung immediately answered the phone.

"Yes, sir. Yes. That is more than enough time. We will get to the Hannam-Dong safe house by five," Kim Hyung-Jung replied.

The call ended soon after. Kang Chan now knew where Huh Ha-Soo wanted to meet.

"Chairperson Huh Ha-Soo was willing to delay the prime minister's resignation to Monday in exchange for meeting you, Mr. Kang Chan. I didn't think it would work," Kim Hyung-Jung mused.

They had managed to buy at least three days. However, this also meant that Huh Ha-Soo could easily afford a holdup of that much time in his schemes.

"Mr. Kang Chan, this is all the more reason I suggest you work with the director. I went so far as to write a resignation letter to connect the Eurasian Rail to South Korea, and I joined the Mongolian operation too. If becoming a murderer means our nation can stand tall, that's what I'll do," Kim Hyung-Jung asserted.

Anyone witnessing the solemn resolve in Kim Hyung-Jung's eyes would not have been able to tell him no. Even Kim Tae-Jin and Seok Kang-Ho looked at him with stiff expressions.

"I understand. Then please handle the negotiation with the National Intelligence Service to establish a new organization, Manager Kim. And Director Kim, please persuade Section Chief Jeon to give us command over General Choi Seong-Geon," Kang Chan said.

Kim Tae-Jin only became more worried.

"I have no doubts about trusting you, but once organizations like this begin to act out of personal greed, they will be swept up in an unescapable raging whirlpool. Are you sure about this?" Kim Tae-Jin asked.

Kang Chan only confidently smiled in response, making Kim Tae-Jin appear apologetic.

"Now, let's have lunch!" Seok Kang-Ho chimed.

“Good call, Mr. Seok. I have been feeling hungry from a small breakfast, but who could suggest eating in this atmosphere? We can order to the room, right?” Kim Tae-Jin asked with a grin.

Seok Kang-Ho found a menu that was under the room phone and ordered some bibimbap. After they ate and had coffee, they reviewed the situation again one by one from the beginning.

“We can use this room until tomorrow, right?” Kim Tae-Jin confirmed.

“Yes, sir. Should we regroup here after meeting Huh Ha-Soo?” Kang Chan asked.

“Let’s decide on that when we get more information later. I was just asking because this seems like a good place to meet up late without attracting any unwanted attention,” Kim Tae-Jin said.

As the time to meet Huh Ha-Soo approached, Kim Tae-Jin left to see Jeon Dae-Geuk, and Kang Chan and Kim Hyung-Jung rode in Seok Kang-Ho’s car. It took about ten minutes to reach the safe house. Agents greeted Kang Chan’s party when they arrived.

“Mr. Seok, please come with me,” Kim Hyung-Jung guided Seok Kang-Ho to the left side of the building. Kang Chan thought there was probably a waiting room or something of the sort there.

“Please wait here,” an agent said after politely escorting Kang Chan to the living room. He then left him alone.

This was where Kang Chan had eaten breakfast after leading the operation in France. He supposed the same location could feel vastly different depending on who one was meeting.

The middle-aged woman in the kitchen prepared him some tea.

‘Is she also an agent?’

She certainly didn’t move like an ordinary citizen. He couldn’t tell if she was a good cook who received training to become an agent or if she was an agent selected for this task due to her cooking skills.

As he let his train of thought run free, bustling noises suddenly came from outside. The front doors opened soon after, and a man with a bald scalp entered following an agent.

It had to be Huh Ha-Soo.

Kang Chan stood up to observe the man.

For one, he was tall. He had brushed the hair on the left part of his head over the top, empty section to cover it up, and his face was shining with oil. He had small, beady eyes and a flat nose save for the tip, which was turned up.

“Mr. Kang Chan, the high schooler?” Huh Ha-Soo greeted as he offered a hand. “I’ve heard many things about you. Why don’t we sit?”

He acted so at ease that it was as if he just walked into his own home. When he sat down, he was ordered tea to be brought out from the kitchen.

“Give us some space, will you?” Huh Ha-Soo pressed. At his request, the agent waiting at the back exited through the front door. The middle-aged woman went back to the kitchen as well.

“I heard you’re quite the scary student, but you’re quite handsome. Have some tea,” Huh Ha-Soo said as he gestured to a cup with a hand covered in age spots.

‘What does he have to say that he’s making so much small talk?’

Kang Chan was willing to listen, though, so he silently drank his tea.

“We don’t have much time, so let me get straight to the point,” Huh Ha-Soo stated, raising his left arm to look at his watch. “I know you connected South Korea to the Eurasian Rail and are close friends with the French ambassador. Although our perspectives differ, I suggested that we meet because the desire for the country to progress is something I believe we have in common.”

Huh Ha-Soo lifted his gaze as if to seek agreement, and then continued with a mock-pouting expression.

“You shouldn’t fall for clumsy ploys and ruin things for the greater good, boy. The people around you will compliment you so they can take advantage of you and trick you into doing tasks under the guise that it’s for the country. However, when you look closer, they’re just shallow schemes that would allow those people to take power for themselves,” Huh Ha-Soo said as if to counsel Kang Chan.

“What is it that you want to say?” Kang Chan formally asked.

Huh Ha-Soo looked at Kang Chan with a dissatisfied expression. “Don’t act like you’re on top of the world just because of the Eurasian Rail. Experience isn’t something that can be easily gained. The reason I requested to meet you today is because I want to give you, someone of talent, my generosity by presenting to you an opportunity.”

Kang Chan only tilted his head in response.

“I intend to connect the Eurasian Rail to Japan’s underwater tunnel. I hope you can set up a meeting for me with the founder.”

Is this old man out of his mind?

Kang Chan could never have imagined he would be getting this type of offer inside the safe house of the National Intelligence Service.

“We are a nation that cannot survive without the assistance of China and Japan. Connecting the railway to Japan and accepting their advanced technologies will

be of greater help to our country in the long run, a hundred years or two from now. What you require right now is the foresight to see far into the future,” Huh Ha-Soo admonished.

Kang Chan forced his smirk down.

“The victim always has a reason for getting beat up. Whether it’s because he did something worth getting hit or because he was weak in the first place, there will always be a valid reason for it. If Japan didn’t colonize us, we would still be wearing traditional black skirts and white jeogori garments, stupidly living in poverty, wouldn’t we?” Huh Ha-Soo attempted to reason.

Kang Chan looked directly into Huh Ha-Soo’s eyes. Much to his surprise, Huh Ha-Soo seemed as if he sincerely believed what he said.

Was this bastard mentally wrong in the head?

“For our country, the Eurasian Rail is like casting pearls before swine. Owning it just means China and Japan will eventually take it from us. In that case, it is a hundred times wiser to build it with them instead.”

Kang Chan let out a quiet sigh, which Huh Ha-Soo seemed to have misinterpreted.

“Once the current government’s significant positions are replaced, I plan to privatize the railway, among other developments. If you do what I say, I’ll make sure you get a substantial stake in the operation of Incheon Airport and the underwater tunnel. Those alone should be more than enough for you, your parents, and even your future children to live on for generations to come,” Huh Ha-Soo said proudly.

Kang Chan couldn’t help but burst out laughing. His reaction appeared to have displeased Huh Ha-Soo.

“Mr. Huh, why don’t we stand against China and Japan using the Eurasian Rail instead?” Kang Chan asked, flabbergasted. He found Huh Ha-Soo’s stance so ridiculous that he could not help but want to know what went on in Huh Ha-Soo’s brain.

“We shouldn’t let there be a power struggle between the people. If that happens, the country will split into two, then three, and so on,” Huh Ha-Soo explained impatiently.

A power struggle?

Kang Chan didn’t understand.

Chapter 164.2: We don’t have much time (1)

Kang Chan didn’t understand what Huh Ha-Soo meant by a power struggle.

“The current president is shamelessly trying to divide the nation and its people so he can maintain power. Since before the Eurasian Rail, he intercepted the efforts of those who have worked for the country, using the excuse that they’re descendants of pro-Japanese collaborators, and he even attempted to confiscate their properties,” Huh Ha-Soo said.

“Isn’t it wrong for the descendants of traitors to live off the fat of the land too?” Kang Chan countered.

Huh Ha-Soo looked at Kang Chan sharply.

“Don’t be swayed by irrelevant talk. Who didn’t ally themselves with Japan back then? And so what? After killing them all, who would step up to maintain public order, and who would stimulate the economy?” Huh Ha-Soo’s eyes sparked angrily like firecrackers.

“Ahem.” He let out a sigh after a short moment of silence, stroking his hair back. “Don’t be swayed by the men who say they’re working for the good of the country. Do you know anyone who claimed to have worked for the country and got a happy ending? To put it bluntly, our failure to achieve independence wasn’t because we couldn’t. It was because of the nuclear bombs that the United States dropped that we achieved it. Nevertheless, those bastards talk as if it’s all thanks to them that we are an independent country today.”

Huh Ha-Soo stood up, finished with what he had to say.

“This is the last chance I’m giving you. If you don’t do as I say, our country will have to give up the Eurasian Rail,” Huh Ha-Soo stated.

Pft.

Seeing Kang Chan’s smirk, the corners of Huh Ha-Soo’s eyes twitched.

“Urgh,” he grunted.

Kang Chan also followed Huh Ha-Soo up.

“Thank you, sir,” Kang Chan said.

Huh Ha-Soo narrowed his eyes at Kang Chan, unable to understand what he meant.

“I was able to make up my mind thanks to you,” Kang Chan continued.

Huh Ha-Soo’s beady eyes looked straight at Kang Chan.

You’re going to die.

Kang Chan had found a new resolve.

Huh Ha-Soo turned around and left the living room.

Kang Chan would have chased after him and twist his neck if he could. A moment later, he also walked outside.

Kang Chan returned to the hotel and relayed his conversation with Huh Ha-Soo to the rest of the men. Seok Kang-Ho had shouted “that fucking traitor!” multiple times by the time he had finished.

“What about the prime minister’s resignation?” Kim Hyung-Jung asked.

“It seems he won’t do anything about it for the weekend. He didn’t say it explicitly, but that was the attitude he showed,” Kang Chan replied.

“Have you contacted the director yet?” Kim Hyung-Jung asked again.

“Not yet. His direct line was disconnected,” Kang Chan informed him.

It was Friday night. If they failed to come up with a solution by Saturday or Sunday, they would be done for.

They needed a breakthrough.

Buzz. Buzz. Buzz.

Kang Chan’s phone began to ring. He couldn’t have been happier to pick up the phone from this caller.

“Mr. Ambassador, this is Kang Chan,” Kang Chan answered.

- Mr. Kang Chan, do you have time for a cup of tea?

“Yes, I do. Where should I go?”

- I’ll see you at Namsan Hotel in about an hour.

“Got it. See you then, Mr. Ambassador.”

Lanok seemed to know that Kang Chan was at Namsan Hotel, but he didn’t say anything about it.

“Ambassador Lanok and I made arrangements to meet here in an hour,” Kang Chan told the group, who then all rested comfortably in their positions. They didn’t have any sharp solution anyway, so there was no use in talking. They needed some time to think.

“Thank you for your service, sir,” Heo Chang-Seon greeted with a deep bow as Huh Ha-Soo walked into the reception room of a place in Samcheong-Dong.

“You can sit. Would you like to have dinner?” Huh Ha-Soo asked.

“I ate before coming here,” Heo Chang-Seon replied.

Huh Ha-Soo sat at the head of the table, and Heo Chang-Seong sat in front of him.

“How was it?” Heo Chang-Seon asked.

“The young punk was full of himself. I can’t believe the men who sent him to stall for time are the ones who want to run the country. Absurd,” Huh Ha-Soo scoffed with dissatisfaction and then turned his gaze. “You have to hurry and find out why the French ambassador is so protective of him.”

“The special force in Samseong-Dong is in charge of that, and I don’t have clearance from my position.”

“The director is probably managing that boy himself. Anyhow, it’ll all be over in two days. The moment we take additional measures on Monday, they won’t even be able to think about holding out.”

“They would never imagine what’s coming to them.”

Huh Ha-Soo nodded, feeling pleased.

An hour after Kang Chan received a call from Lanok, he headed to the 19th floor and was guided to a room by an agent who had been waiting for him.

Lanok greeted Kang Chan the moment he walked in.

“You must be having quite the hard time,” Lanok remarked.

“Do I make it that obvious?” Kang Chan asked with a sigh.

Lanok extended his arm toward the sofa. However, his face also seemed a little stiff as well.

“A fight against those in power isn’t easy, is it?” Lanok asked as he offered some tea. He put a cigar in his mouth and lit it up. “I’ve never seen you look so down.”

“To be honest, I can now see my limits. I didn’t even know how to use the oil field developments rights and provocation from North Korea, which you helped me get,” Kang Chan smiled bitterly. It was almost ridiculous how lost he felt.

“That’s because you don’t know what Huh Ha-Soo is really after,” Lanok said.

Kang Chan didn’t have anything to say to that.

“On Monday, Japan will take the same measures that China did,” Lanok added grimly.

“What?” Kang Chan asked in disbelief.

China was already giving them so much trouble, but they now had to deal with Japan too?

“They only have one request,” Lanok said.

“The Eurasian Rail, of course,” Kang Chan stated wryly.

“That’s correct,” Lanok confirmed.

I should destroy that damn underwater tunnel!

“South Korea will have no choice but to surrender if Japan’s economic measures are implemented on Monday. That’s where the prime minister comes in. The first document that acknowledges the underwater tunnel and the connection of the Eurasian Railway has to be signed by the prime minister,” Lanok explained.

Kang Chan sighed quietly.

He knew who the enemy was, but he didn’t know how to kill them. It was as if he had jumped onto a battlefield blindfolded.

“Huh Ha-Soo requested the replacement of the prime minister by today, but he actually was going to leave the prime minister untouched until Monday,” Lanok informed him.

Kang Chan couldn’t even laugh in disbelief anymore. If this fight was compared to a battle with guns, it would be like getting shot in the forehead before he could even get his hand on the trigger.

“China’s economic sanctions, Japan’s greed for the Eurasian Rail, and Huh Ha-Soo. You have to solve all three of these matters, Mr. Kang Chan. Before Monday arrives, no less,” Lanok stated.

“I don’t know what to do,” Kang Chan confessed.

Lanok twirled his cigar before speaking again.

“Yang Fan requested help from China,” he said.

“Did he return to China?” Kang Chan asked.

“He re-entered the country after parting ways with you. The situation is intense for both sides, but the opposition party still holds significant power, so Yang Fan doesn’t have any forces he can mobilize. As you already know, France is too far and will take too long to be of any help,” Lanok told him.

“What do I have to do?” Kang Chan asked.

“There’s a disguised intelligence agency building in downtown Beijing. The task is to eliminate Rishiquan, who is located there,” Lanok replied.

Kang Chan let out a sigh. However, a part of him felt relieved.

He had never been to Beijing. The chances of success were slim, and success would not guarantee an easy return.

“Even with Yang Fan’s help, it won’t be easy to handle the aftermath of failure or being captured,” Lanok warned.

Larnock pointed out the worst-case scenario. Of course, that went without saying.

“Rishiquan is the mastermind. He is the one behind Korea’s economic measures and the plot to assassinate the President. He’s also the one who ordered my

kidnapping. If he becomes the head of the intelligence agency, Asia will plunge into great chaos,” Lanok declared.

“How will succeeding in this benefit us?” Kang Chan asked.

“If Yang Fan takes control of the intelligence agency, it will lead to the economic measures being lifted and the location of North Korean special forces that entered South Korea being revealed. It will also result in the arrest of Huh Sang-Soo in China,” Lanok replied.

Kang Chan felt as if a rush of fresh air just entered his suffocated lungs.

“When do I leave?” Kang Chan asked this time.

“Beijing is an hour behind South Korea. Your transportation will be disguised as a cargo plane. Your best window of opportunity is tonight at eleven,” Lanok answered.

Only three hours for Kang Chan to come to a decision and depart?

This was probably why Lanok came all the way to the hotel—to save time.

But there was no other opportunity like this.

“Then Mr. Ambassador, I'll gather information immediately. Should I contact you by phone?”

“That's fine. You will depart from Osan.”

“Understood,” Kang Chan responded.

After exchanging a brief farewell, Kang Chan left Lanok's room.

When he returned to the room where his group was waiting for him, he Kim Tae-Jin and Jeon Dae-Geuk inside.

The atmosphere was as dark as expected.

“You're here, sir?” Kang Chan greeted Jeon Dae-Geuk.

“It's tough, isn't it?” Jeon Dae-Geuk sympathized. His husky voice sounded as if he was soothing Kang Chan.

They were extremely short on time right now.

“Section Chief Jeon,” Kang Chan called, then relayed his conversation with Lanok.

“Whew!” The mighty Jeon Dae-Geuk shook his head as he stepped back.

Kang Chan understood how he felt. The conditions were just that harsh.

“There isn't enough time. It'll take at least an hour to get approval from the president even if I rush over there now, and it isn't like you can mobilize soldiers without permission either. Most importantly, the chances of success are too low,” Jeon Dae-Geuk said with concern.

“Well, there isn’t any other way, is there? It’s not like we can assassinate Huh Ha-Soo with the current state of the nation,” Kang Chan uttered.

Kim Hyung-Jung looked to the ground.

“All right. I’ll get to the president first. Manager Kim, where is the director right now?” Jeon Dae-Geuk asked Kim Hyung-Jung.

“His direct line has been disconnected for a while now,” Kim Hyung-Jung responded.

“Got it. I’ll call him while I’m on the way to Choi Seong-Geon then. Oh, right. How many do you need?” Jeon Dae-Geuk asked, turning to Kang Chan.

“Including me and Seok Kang-Ho, a total of twelve people,” Kang Chan replied.

Jeon Dae-Geuk was already halfway out the door.

They were all feeling similar emotions—the grief of the citizens of a powerless nation.

But Kang Chan was more comfortable doing things this way.

He glanced over at Seok Kang-Ho, feeling at ease when he saw him grinning from ear-to-ear.

“Argh! This is so frustrating. Let’s go out and get some food, We can just come back later,” Seok Kang-Ho urged.

“We shouldn’t leave the hotel. Why don’t we eat on the first floor?” Kang Chan suggested, and the four headed toward the restaurant.

Chapter 165: We don’t have much time (2)

While walking on a trail, Moon Jae-Hyun turned his head toward Jeon Dae-Geuk. “Isn’t it too risky?”

“Once Japan imposes economic sanctions as well, we will be left with no other choice. Didn’t you say that you’ll approve preemptive strikes anyway?”

“I’m simply worried about the risks the soldiers will have to take. This operation is so dangerous that it would be difficult for them to return even if they accomplish their objectives. Even if someone will be helping them in China, they will still be in downtown Beijing, and once that man achieves his goal, they can easily disregard our soldiers.”

“I need you to trust Ambassador Lanok about that matter. He’s connected with Mr. Kang Chan, and he was the one who suggested this operation in the first place.”

“Even if so, we should still consider the fact that this operation has a low chance of succeeding.”

“Mr. President.”

Moon Jae-Hyun glanced at Jeon Dae-Geuk.

“China has directly sent their troops to our golf course and our Presentation hall. Please allow us to launch the preemptive strike,” Jeon Dae-Geuk said.

“I’m not afraid of launching the preemptive strike. I’m afraid that I could be agreeing to our people sacrificing their precious lives just because I want to hold onto the Presidency longer. Will Kang Chan be commanding this operation as well?”

“Yes, Mr. President.”

“He met with Chairperson Huh Ha-Soo, gave us information about Japan’s plan to impose economic sanctions, and is now planning to command the Chinese intelligence agency’s operation. We’re depending on Kang Chan for everything.”

“Mr. President, if Japan places economic sanctions as well this coming Monday, then you’re definitely going to be impeached.”

That was rude, but Moon Jae-Hyun was still calm.

“Even if they succeed with the operation, the result would still be the same—your impeachment. However, if they fail, then we can’t guarantee your safety,” Jeon Dae-Geuk added.

“I know. China and Japan won’t let a South Korean leader who resisted them live. As you said, if our soldiers fail and I get impeached, then I’m definitely going to die.”

“Mr. President, please risk your life for South Korea.”

Moon Jae-Hyun glanced at Jeon Dae-Geuk.

Choi Seong-Geon’s soft sigh dispersed inside the barracks. At the same time, Cha Dong-Gyun glanced at the clock that was hung on the wall, then dropped his gaze.

They experienced this kind of despair at least once a year.

They flew to France and fought against Russia and the United Kingdom’s special forces, distinguishing themselves on the battlefield.

This time, however, they were fighting in South Korea’s battle against China.

South Korea issued emergency decrees whenever China and Japan carried out a terrorist attack in South Korea and whenever South Korea’s agents were unfairly murdered, but the soldiers were never actually mobilized.

They said that it would take three hours, and an hour had already flown by.

This was the actual battle.

What Kang Chan yelled before their training became the members’ creed.

“Never forget what it means to have no combat experience! You will go on missions where more than half of you won’t return alive! After that, more recruits will be sent, and you will go on missions again where even more will die! Those who survive will become veterans, and their experience will trickle down to the new men.”

Which one of them would volunteer to be in the special forces just because they wanted to die?

They wanted to live. They wanted to live and become veterans, and they wanted to pass on their experiences to their juniors.

But to do that, they needed a sunbae who would go out with them to awful missions first.

A sunbae who could protect their juniors using their experience, overwhelm their enemies with their capabilities, and take away their opponents’ helmets in the end.

A sunbae like Kang Chan.

“Phew.” Cha Dong-Gyun sighed, then quickly observed Choi Seong-Geon’s mood.

At that moment...

Ring. Ring. Ring.

The hotline on the table rang loudly.

Click.

“It’s Cho Seong-Geon,” Choi Seong-Geon answered. Not long after, he sat up straight and then stood up from his seat.

Right in front of him was Cha Dong-Gyun, who was staring at him with eyes that were becoming red.

“Thank you!”

Could it be? Can we really go on an operation that is targeting China?

“Understood! Thank you, Mr. President!”

Click.

Choi Seong-Geon blinked after he put down the receiver. “We got permission to proceed with the operation.”

“Really, General?”

“You’ll get the detailed schedule on your way there. Leave. Now.”

“Thank you!”

“Live! Return alive this time as well so you can teach your successors. That is all I ask,” Choi Seong-Geon added.

Cha Dong-Gyun saluted him, and Choi Seong-Geon returned it.

He wanted to give Cha Dong-Gyun more time, even if it was just a second.

- Kang Chan, it's Moon Jae-Hyun.

“Yes, Mr. President.”

This phone call was unexpected.

The three people in the room exchanged glances and examined each other's moods when they heard Kang Chan's response.

- I called to express my gratitude, shame, and apology. Instead of developing talented people, I keep pushing you into dangerous matters because of my shortcomings.

This person was always so sincere no matter what he was saying.

- Please deal with this situation and return with everyone again. It's shameless of me, but I really hope that you can make that happen.

“Understood, Mr. President. I'll do my best.”

- Please look after South Korea. The whole world has concluded that South Korea will never rise back up again, but our country accomplished the Miracle on the Han River[1]. We are that remarkable and powerful. Please remember that South Korea needs you.

“Yes. I'll keep that in mind.”

- Thank you. Please wait for a moment.

Instead of the call ending, Kang Chan heard Jeon Dae-Geuk's voice next.

- The soldiers we deployed will be joining you at the road where you saw them last. They already left, so be there on time. I'll see you when you get back.

“Thank you, section chief.”

- I'm the one who should be thanking you. Let's have maeun-tang together once this is over.

Kang Chan hung up while smiling.

“Are we leaving?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

Kang Chan nodded, and Seok Kang-Ho smiled with satisfaction.

“That son of a bitch! Let's see what kind of face he'll make when we return from China,” Seok Kang-Ho commented. His eyes were already glinting.

Kim Tae-Jin gave Kang Chan an apologetic look. “We put a heavy burden on your shoulders again.

“On the contrary, I actually feel relieved,” Kang Chan said.

“Thank you.”

“Don't mention it. I'll call the ambassador now.” Kang Chan immediately called Lanok and explained the situation as simply as he could.

- Mr. Kang Chan, I'll send over a car. By tomorrow, you'll be telling me about what happened over a cup of tea.

Lanok told Kang Chan to return no matter what in a complicated way.

Next, Kang Chan called Choi Jong-Il.

“The operation has been approved—I'm going to contact you when the car arrives, so be at the lobby.”

- Thank you.

Choi Jong-Il sounded relieved. Kang Chan could hear the underlying emotion—it was something understood between men.

Lastly, Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho called their families.

Kang Chan went inside the bedroom so he could have some privacy, but it was also because he found it a bit embarrassing.

- Hello? Channy?

“Yes, it's me, Mother. Have you had dinner?”

- Of course. What about you?

“I had something delicious. Anyway, I don't think I'll be able to go home today.”

- Again? Why not? Are you doing something hard?

“I'm preparing for something. I can't go home because I can't just leave while everyone is planning to stay.”

- Okay. You must be tired. Is there anything we can do?

“I'm really fine. I'll call you tomorrow.”

- Alright, Channy. If you're tired, then you better get enough sleep, okay?

“Okay, I'll do that.”

Kang Chan hung up. He had made all the preparations now.

Kang Chan opened the bedroom door and headed back out to the living room, Kim Tae-Jin putting down his phone.

“I just got off the phone with General Choi,” Kim Tae-Jin said.

“Why do you have that look on your face, though?”

“I've always been like this whenever I'm about to send my juniors to the DMZ by themselves. I pretend to be firm on the surface, but I can't help but be worried, you know? I can really feel my age now—I can't even properly control my expression.”

They talked about awkward things for about twenty minutes.

Kang Chan wanted to talk about the worries they had for each other and discuss what they should do if the operation failed, but the result of doing all of that was very obvious.

What could they even say at this point?

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

Everyone immediately turned to Kang Chan when his phone rang.

“Hello?”

- Monsieur Kang, we're waiting in the basement parking lot.

“I'll be right there.”

Kang Chan hung up, then stood up.

“I'll be back.”

“Alright. Do a good job for us,” Kim Tae-Jin said.

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho shook hands with Kim Tae-Jin, then Kim Hyung-Jung.

“Mr. Seok Kang-Ho, let's have a drink when you get back,” Kim Tae-Jin said.

“Sounds good.”

After saying their goodbyes, Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho went down to the basement.

As soon as Kang Chan, Seok Kang-Ho, and Choi Jong-Il's party got in the van, it immediately drove out of the hotel and onto the highway.

“Monsieur Kang, the ambassador said that you should look at this data first.”
The French agent sitting in the passenger seat passed over an envelope to Kang Chan.

Inside was a front picture of a man with sharp eyes. It also contained five other pictures of him doing other things, such as shaking hands and waiting for something with his hands clasped behind his back.

This was the man who urged Huh Ha-Soo to replace the prime minister. He was also the one who ordered the North Korean special forces to assassinate the President and made China put economic sanctions on South Korea.

Kang Chan took out the photos one at a time and examined them, then handed them over to Seok Kang-Ho, who then passed them to Choi Jong-Il's party after checking them out.

Kang Chan put the photos back in the envelope, then put it in his inner chest pocket. He was thinking of showing them to the rest of the team later.

The van quickly drove on the highway, eventually stopping in front of a bus parked by the entrance of the Osan airfield.

“We’ll be transferring to that bus, so you guys can head back now. Thanks for bringing us all the way here,” Kang Chan told the French agents.

“Good luck.”

Kang Chan nodded, then immediately got out of the car.

Chkk.

The door of the bus opened. When Kang Chan boarded it, he found most of the soldiers sitting in the middle of the bus. Everyone saluted him, starting with Cha Dong-Gyun.

“Let’s not do things like that,” Kang Chan jokingly said as he sat in the front seat.

The bus went past the barricade and stopped in front of a plane.

They had experienced this before. Hence, they got on the plane—a French public cargo aircraft known as an aigle—in silence. They didn’t have to say anything in this situation anymore.

However, cargo planes didn’t have seats.

Going up the portable ramp, they found a man waiting for them in between the air cargo containers.

“Nice to meet you,” the man spoke Korean. He was Asian and had a Chinese accent.

Once the entire team boarded, the ramp was retracted, and the door was closed.

Clank! Clank!

The Chinese man turned on a rechargeable lamp.

“We’re leaving for Beijing Capital International Airport,” the man said.

Ding. Ding. Ding.

A warning sound went off as the aircraft rattled and drove down the runway.

Du-du-du-du-du.

The noisy vibration changed to a familiar sensation as the aircraft took off.

Meanwhile, the Chinese man took out a map and put it on the floor.

“You guys will be moving inside a container. We’re going to stop the trailer at this point. This is our target building.”

The man pinpointed two locations with his finger. The buildings were on the left and right sides of an intersection.

“How many people will be guarding those buildings?” Kang Chan asked.

“About that...”

When Kang Chan sharply looked at him, the man replied, “Usually around twenty people.”

“What about now?”

“I haven’t been able to check yet.” The man’s Chinese accent got a bit stronger, perhaps because he was nervous.

“What about Yang Bum?” Kang Chan asked again.

“Pardon?”

“I meant Yang Pan. Where are we meeting him?”

“He will be waiting nearby. You can meet him as soon as you succeed with the operation.”

What a cunning fucker.

It sounded as if he was saying that Yang Bum would pretend that he didn’t know them if they failed.

“What’s our escape plan if we don’t get to meet Yang Bum?” Kang Chan asked.

“We will have a truck waiting for all of you at the same place you’ll be getting off the aircraft.”

They wanted Kang Chan and his team to gather right beside the target building if they failed?

Kang Chan tightly gritted his teeth, but this was the only way right now.

“How long will it take for us to get there?” Kang Chan asked again.

“Two and a half hours.”

“What about getting to the target location from the airport?”

“At least forty minutes, but it will probably take longer since we have to get the container down first.”

The man’s response was quite poor even though he was supposed to be their guide.

“I’m sorry to ask this, but are there things like hot water or coffee in here?” Kang Chan asked.

“It’s at the back.”

Kang Chan stared at the man. Only then did the latter head to the back.

They were running out of time, and they were going to an unfamiliar downtown area. Kang Chan pointed to a building diagonal to the target building with his index finger. The soldiers looked at him.

‘This is Point Alpha!’ Kang Chan mouthed.

Cha Dong-Gyun quickly nodded.

Before Kang Chan could choose point Beta, the guide had already gone back with a cup of water.

“Do you have coffee?” Kang Chan asked.

“We haven’t been able to prepare that.”

The DGSE probably prepared this aircraft. If so, then that also meant they could trust their guide.

Am I being too sensitive?

Either way, it wouldn’t hurt to be careful. Little by little, he could pass his experience on to his subordinates this way.

“Let’s get ready,” Kang Chan said, and the soldiers immediately opened the bag that they had brought with them. Two of the soldiers took a plain black military uniform from it and handed it over to Kang Chan, who then accepted and put it on.

Afterward, he put on military boots and applied a cream that was similar to shoe polish on his face. He also put on a headset and a helmet that night vision goggles attached to it.

Click. Clank.

Cha Dong-Gyun handed Kang Chan a pistol and a rifle.

Meanwhile, the others attached pistols to their waists and ankles the same way as Kang Chan did as if they were following rules. Afterward, they attached a bayonet to their right ankle.

Why are they copying me? They can just do things like this as they see fit...

With magazines attached behind their waist and on their forearms, they had completed all preparations.

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

“You brought some?”

“Yes—it’s one of the things we learned during the last operation.”

Kang Chan only smiled in response.

Two of the soldiers made instant coffee, filling the plane with its familiar scent.

“Thank you,” the guide said when a soldier handed him a cup.

They took one sip after another. This would’ve been a lot better if the water was a bit hotter, though.

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

The container shook with the vibrations of the aircraft.

They had already started this operation. No matter what happened now, only their team could take care of it.

Kang Chan put the paper cup down beside him, then searched his pocket and took out a cigarette.

“You can’t smoke here,” the guide said, startled. “There’s a high chance that people will think it’s weird if they smell cigarettes in the cargo.”

Damn it!

They had to face this kind of inconvenience just because they weren’t on a military plane.

Seok Kang-Ho and the others looked just as upset as Kang Chan.

Kang Chan instead took out the photos in his inner chest pocket and handed them over to Cha Dong-Gyun, who was sitting blankly while leaning back against the wall.

Whoosh.

The aircraft was fucking fast. Kang Chan even felt it take a sharp turn.

Clank! Clank!

The guide opened the door of the container up front.

Kang Chan glanced at the soldiers, making them all get in the container.

This was a very stupid way to get into China—if they were stabbed in the back now, the container would serve as their coffin.

Kang Chan trusted Lanok, though.

If they were to be betrayed, Lanok would brutally punish those responsible for it.

However, by that time, they would have already been riddled with holes and died inside it.

Clank! Clank!

When the guide opened the second container, Choi Jong-Il went inside, and Seok Kang-Ho got in after him.

“Do the rest of the containers really have cargo in them?” Kang Chan asked the guide.

“No.”

“Then close them.”

The guide looked at Kang Chan in confusion.

“I said close them. I’ll be hanging on the bottom of the trailer.”

“That isn’t part of the plan.”

“You guys are transporting the containers knowing full well that they’re fake cargo anyway. I’ll go to China under the trailer.”

The guide reluctantly closed the door of the container after he saw the look in Kang Chan’s eyes.

Ding. Ding. Ding.

Whoosh! Whoosh. Du-du-du-du-du!

Not long after, the plane descended and began to drive through the runway, its engine making noise again.

Chapter 166.1: Something more precious than life (1)

Vroom!

The plane's loud engines boomed as they revved up, and Kang Chan shook up and down at the jerky vibrations of the plane landing on the airstrip.

Du du du du du.

Kang Chan hung his gun on his right shoulder and locked its breechblock with a click. Now, all he had to do was pull the trigger to get the ammunition going.

The plane rolled to a complete stop, rumbling on the runway.

Even at that moment, Kang Chan still didn't take his eyes off the guide for even a single second. Just as the plane began to turn its huge fuselage around, Kang Chan's heart began to race increasingly faster. He was already expecting this to happen, though. For quite some time now, his guts had been telling him that some unforeseen danger would be lying in wait for them.

Seok Kang-Ho, Choi Jong-Il, and the other agents were just sitting ducks right now, waiting for their bodies to be riddled with bullet holes.

He thought about what he would do if his suspicions proved to be a mistake. Either way, however, he couldn't just let them die inside the container because of the chance that he could be wrong, could he?

The guide began to turn around, feeling Kang Chan's sharp gaze on him.

"Open the doors," Kang Chan firmly commanded.

"I beg your pardon?" the guide asked, flustered.

"I said open the doors now," Kang Chan repeated with conviction.

Whoosh.

The plane stopped to a halt.

Son of a bitch!

Clunk!

Right before Kang Chan was about to pull the trigger, the guide opened the container doors for him.

Click. Click.

Seok Kang-Ho and Choi Jong-Il came dashing out ready for combat, their guns already aimed and at the ready.

"This seems like a trap!" Kang Chan shouted at them.

Seok Kang-Ho pressed himself close to the doors as Choi Jong-Il opened the doors to the other container with a clunk.

Kang Chan glanced at the guide, who was now lifting his left arm, seemingly about to wipe his sweat off.

Whoosh!

Kang Chan grabbed the guide and tightly covered his mouth. He then stabbed him in the neck with a dagger.

“Agh!”

Swish!

The moment Kang Chan twisted the knife, the man jerked and slumped over. Kang Chan had to confirm his suspicions.

He slid his dagger down the man’s left shoulder with a shing, finding a line that was connected to a radio.

The agents all knew what it was.

Was this bastard communicating with the enemy? It doesn’t seem like he has yet, at least. Damn it!

Unlike military aircraft, normal planes only had enough gas to reach their destination, not make a round trip. That meant Kang Chan and the rest of the team could no longer turn around using the same aircraft now that they had landed.

“Daye!” Kang Chan shouted.

Seok Kang-Ho looked at Kang Chan with glinting eyes. This man normally ate nervousness for breakfast, but right now, his anxiety was evident on his face.

“The moment the doors open, you and Cha Dong-Gyun are to kill everyone on sight,” Kang Chan commanded, the tension evident in his voice.

The doors were beginning to slide open.

“Men, put your masks on! Lee Doo-Hee! Can you drive a semi-truck?” Kang Chan asked.

“Yes, I can, sir!” Lee Doo-Hee replied.

The doors were now about halfway open, revealing the dark sky.

“You take the driver’s seat then! The rest of you, stay in your positions.”

Rumble.

They could now see the upper part of the semi-truck’s side rails that were intended to carry cargo out of the aircraft.

“Eliminate the enemies as fast as possible. Recover their bodies,” Kang Chan ordered.

Clunk. Clunk.

Kang Chan’s highest priority for now was to safely leave the airport. He had no idea how many enemies would be waiting for them or whether or not they were armed.

Swoosh.

However, he would find out as soon as the doors fully opened.

Pew! Pew! Thud! Pew! Pew!

There were six enemies in total.

If there was a silver lining, it was that the doors opened to the opposite side of the airport building.

What about the guard posts?

Unless Yang Bum had already made arrangements for that as well, Kang Chan could only leave it to luck.

The rails were about a meter away from the door.

Rattle.

Kang Chan quickly made his way down the side and got off the plane.

Rattle. Rattle. Rattle.

Seok Kang-Ho and the others quickly followed after him.

As they were about to lift the bodies on the ground, sirens began to ring and lights flashed about seven hundred meters away.

Weeoo! Weeoo! Weeoo! Weeoo!

A military jeep and three more trucks followed them.

Seok Kang-Ho, who had hunched over to pick up a body, turned to Kang Chan.

“Daye! Make sure to kill them all!” Kang Chan commanded.

“Got it!” Seok Kang-Ho shouted back.

“Dong-Gyun! Head to the semi-truck!” Kang Chan quickly ordered afterward.

Tatatatataa!

“Woo Hee-Seung! Aim for the one manning the machine gun on the jeep!”

The vehicles had already covered over three hundred meters.

Click!

Kang Chan leaned on the semi-truck and cocked his head.

“Woo Hee-Seung!” Kang Chan shouted.

Pew!

The moment sparks flew from Woo Hee-Seung’s gun, Kang Chan made two consecutive shots as well.

Pew! Pew!

The driver of the jeep was shot in the forehead nearly at the same time as the one stationed on the machine gun fell out of the vehicle.

Creak! Crash.

The jeep collided with a truck, then skidded on the ground like a jetski cutting through water.

They had effectively taken out the M60 machine gun.

Pew! Pew! Pew!

Seok Kang-Ho wasn't an idiot—he knew what he had to do as well. When Kang Chan opened fire, Seok Kang-Ho made his own consecutive shots, targeting the driver of the truck.

Pow! Creak!

The tire on one of the trucks blew up, and the vehicle began to tilt to one side.

These motherfuckers are in for a treat if they think they can take me down with three trucks!

“Cover me!” Kang Chan commanded as he rushed forward with his gun aimed in front of him.

Pew! Pew! Thud! Thud!

The two sedans blindingly flashing their lights quickly turned direction and speeded down the runway.

Pew! Pew! Pew! Pew!

The bullets that flew underneath the dark sky looked as if they were emitting streaks of neon or red lights. Although beautiful, anyone could get killed if they came into contact with them.

Kang Chan gritted his teeth and tenaciously ran toward the jeep.

Pew! Pew! Pew!

Based on the enemy's pathetic shooting skills, they couldn't be part of the special forces. They were probably just airport security at best.

Two minutes had already flown by. They had about five minutes before they absolutely had to leave, and it would take another five minutes for them to get to their destination.

In three minutes, the enemy's task force would be mobilized, and they would only take five minutes to reach this landing strip. The moment they arrived, it would be the end for Kang Chan and his team.

Pew!

The strength suddenly left Kang Chan's right shin. As it did, an image of Yoo Hye-Sook crying flashed through his mind.

Damn it! This is why I shouldn't love or get close to anyone! That's why I keep making so many excuses even though I already have a girl I really like!

Pew! Pew! Pew!

Dayeru, the unhinged bastard, suddenly ran toward Kang Chan from where he had been covering him. He probably saw Kang Chan lurch to the side.

Clunk!

Kang Chan locked the breechblock of the M60.

Du du du du du du du du! Thud, thud, thud, thud, thud, thud, thud!

Streaks of light shot toward the trucks.

Parts of the vehicles flew in the air as the enemies Kang Chan hit got covered in blood and holes.

You motherfuckers aren't the only ones who can attack someone in their own territory! You think we can't do what you did with our conference hall? You're going to be embarrassed as hell with this Beijing Airport incident!

Boom!

The gas tank of a truck exploded, causing fiery sparks to soar high up in the sky.

Du du du du du du du du!

“Daye!” Kang Chan shouted through clenched teeth.

Seok Kang-Ho took hold of the machine gun and mercilessly rained down bullets on the remaining truck.

Crackle.

“The hangar to the left of the semi-truck!” Kang Chan commanded.

Vroom, vroom! Clunk! Vroooooom!

The semi-truck began to move as it let out heavy noises. They only had about five minutes now.

“Daye!”

Seok Kang-Ho lifted the machine gun as if he was picking up a large dog, then headed for the semi-truck.

Kang Chan ran in front of the semi-truck even though his right shin was throbbing in so much pain that he felt as if someone was stabbing him with a skewer with each step he took.

Pew! Pew! Pew! Pew!

Right now, he still couldn't trust any of his subordinates to open fire while running, not even Choi Jong-Il.

If people saw him right now, some would probably wonder why he didn't just ride the semi-truck. That's because people didn't know how high a semi-truck was if it didn't have any containers.

Vroooooom! Vrooom! Vroom!

Son of a bitch! Why did he have to land the plane so far away?

Pew! Pew! Creak.

The semi-truck came to a stop.

“Choi Jong-Il, Woo Hee-Seung, Cha Dong-Gyun, Kwak Cheol-Ho,” Kang Chan called. “Change into their clothes!”

Kang Chan pointed at the dead security guards on the ground, then lifted both his arms in the air to direct the semi-truck.

Vroom! Vroom! Vroooooom! Creak!

The semi-truck stopped again, and the machine gun was safely put inside it.

There! At least we won't be killed like fish in a barrel with this.

Kang Chan gathered the soldiers inside.

“The tanker is over there, so the aviation fuel tanks are probably kept underground here. We're blocking this area off, so get yourselves into position,” Kang Chan instructed.

Kang Chan motioned with his arm, drawing a large circle on the floor of the hangar.

If this area exploded, half of the airport would be blown away. That should make the enemies think twice before using heavy weaponry against them now.

“We got neatly stabbed in the back this time. It'll be sad if we just die in vain, so let's take revenge for what they did at the conference hall before we go down,” Kang Chan said with a grin.

Seok Kang-Ho chuckled, his head bobbing up and down with laughter. At that moment, the four men ordered to change into the security guards' clothes walked over to Kang Chan, having completed his command.

Kang Chan pulled out a map from his pocket for them.

“The moment we engage in combat again, bring your guns and head to this location immediately. Make sure you kill our target. There is a chance that the bastard won't be in this location, but I have a feeling that he will be. Considering he set this trap, he'll probably waiting there to get updates on the situation,” Kang Chan directed.

They could now hear heavy engines rumbling outside. It was likely the task force arriving now. As Kang Chan estimated, they took around ten minutes to get here.

Those motherfuckers were in for a big surprise.

Chapter 166.2: Something more precious than life (1)

“Daye, you lead the assassination squad,” Kang Chan ordered.

Seok Kang-Ho looked at Kang Chan with a glinting glare that was as sharp as a knife.

“Get it together, fucker! If it wasn't for the bullet I took to the leg, I would've left you behind and gone myself. I'm not going to die here, you hear me? So go and kill that bastard using any means necessary. If Yang Bum takes control of the administration, we might just be able to get out of this alive!”

Another loud rumble of the engines came outside. It sounded like a monster's growl.

Those assholes have got to be deranged.

Kang Chan could never have imagined that they would bring armored vehicles to the airport.

“Daye!”

“Got it, Cap!” Seok Kang-Ho replied.

“Change out of those clothes,” Kang Chan ordered him.

Seok Kang-Ho gritted his teeth as he looked back at Kang Chan.

“I’m going to get out alive,” Kang Chan repeated.

“I’ll make sure to return with him dead,” Seok Kang-Ho furiously said, then spat as if he had just consumed poison. His emotions had become too intense.

“Hurry and get going! I can only get you one chance,” Kang Chan rushed him.

“Alright, alright! I got it,” Seok Kang-Ho responded. He had no idea how Kang Chan was going to give them an opening to get out of this place. All he could do was believe in his orders.

“Wait here! You better be waiting here! And tie off that injury on your leg,” Seok Kang-Ho grumbled as he turned around to steal someone’s clothes.

[The Beijing Capital International Airport in China is currently under terrorist attack. While a considerable number of casualties have been reported due to the engagement, the terrorist group responsible for the attack has not yet been identified, Once again, a terrorist attack has been launched on China's Beijing Capital International Airport, and at the time of this report, the situation is still ongoing. A significant number of casualties have been reported, and the responsible terrorist group has not been determined.]

Choi Seong-Geon buried his forehead in his palms from where they had been resting on his desk after listening to what the reporter hurriedly said

Active officers never cried. This was South Korea’s proud special forces team. Even if they failed, those soldiers would go down in history as legendary men.

“Argh!” Choi Seong-Geon grunted.

I should’ve hugged them at least once! They were like my sons... I can’t believe I didn’t just because it was awkward since they’re men!

He sent them away far too easily.

“Hah! Haah!” Choi Seong-Geon groaned frustratedly.

If he cried now, he would be sinning to those punks.

“Heuuuh. Heuuuh,” he grunted in an attempt not to cry.

Those punks! I hope they’re not lonely. I hope they’re not scared.

Kim Hyung-Jung and Kim Tae-Jin weren’t any different from Choi Seong-Geon.

“Hooo,” Kim Tae-Jin exhaled, before raising his gaze.

[The most prevailing theory is that it is an action of the military, fueled by grievances from a purge of a certain political force. Currently, all runways at the airport have been closed, and a helicopter attempting to approach for coverage has come under threat of gunfire. To summarize, the situation is reminiscent of a battlefield,] the field reporter said, a shot of the airport from far away in the background.

Du du du du du du.

There were at least twenty helicopters in the air now, all of which were military.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

The armored vehicles let out smoke as if they were threatening to come closer.

Swish. Swish.

Searchlights Focused on the hangar that Kang Chan was in, illuminating the area enough to make the night seem like day. Task forces, the Chinese special forces team, also known as the White Wolves, and other agents wearing uniforms of apparent significance had formed an encirclement around the hangar.

The soldiers swallowed nervously.

Crackle.

“Two snipers have been designated to each person. Don’t lift your head,” Kang Chan calmly ordered, much to their surprise.

Crackle.

“We’re going to survive this. It doesn’t matter if it’s just one or two of us. We will get out of this alive. Keep your heads intact, and protect the guy lucky enough to stay alive.”

The soldiers exchanged glances, only moving their eyes. How could Kang Chan say that and remain so composed despite the horrifying siege in front of them?

Crackle.

“Assassination squad, wait on standby,” Kang Chan directed.

Kang Chan was really going to have them leave the airport? How? By giving them wings? By flying through the dam helicopters like Superman?

They weren’t even in front of the semi-truck right now. The soldiers were stuck in the innermost section of the hangar right now.

Cha Dong-Gyun, who was looking around, frowned at the wretched smell of the aviation fuel—fuel that was more explosive than ordinary fuel![1]

“Phuhuhuhu,” Seok Kang-Ho chuckled. His laughter seemed twisted because of the situation.

Kang Chan was holding the valve of the refueling hose, which was nothing like the ones used to fuel cars. This was a thick, rubber hose that was so massive it had to be carried with both arms. At the end of it was a lever similar to the one used to open the hatch of a submarine.

What would happen if that section was ignited?

Cha Dong-Gyun felt an electrifying buzz that sent shivers down his spine and all over his body.

Their Chinese opponents had no idea that they were facing this kind of man. They would never be able to imagine he would pour out aviation fuel even with a fuel tank below them.

This is the kind of man who's commanding us! If we can just kill the man from the picture, we might just survive this! I'm going to kill him! I'll do whatever it takes to kill him and save our brothers!

Crackle.

“Defense team, await command to cover fire,” Kang Chan said.

Although they had masks on, it was still hard to breathe because of the gas. The moment Kang Chan lit up the end of the hose, this hangar would turn into an ocean of fire.

Kang Chan could see the enemies' surprised looks. They had discovered the aviation fuel flowing toward them and smelled the gas.

Creak. Creak. Creak.

Kang Chan shut the lever of the oil pipe.

Crackle.

“When I light it up, keep your noses on the ground and count to five. The gas will only burn from above. Sorry to ask you of this, but the assassination squad will have to run after just counting to four,” Kang Chan instructed.

“Phuhuhu

,” Seok Kang-Ho laughed. He had been laughing like a madman since a few moments ago.

Crackle.

“Kwak Cheol-Ho, what is our motto?” Kang Chan asked.

Kwak Cheol-Ho paused briefly.

Crackle.

“If I can protect—”

Pew! Pew! Pew! Fwoosh! Fwoosh! Bang!

Without warning, Kang Chan shot the searchlights, causing them to explode.

Sparks suddenly began to fly all over as if the whole world was on fire.

Whoosh!

A scorching heat swept past the hangar—an aftershock of the explosion.

“Let’s go,” Seok Kang-Ho declared. The heat made him sound like a monster.

Pew! Pew! Pew! Pew! Pew! Pew! Pew! Pew!

Enemies who caught fire fell to the ground, dead, and the bullets of the ones who survived bounced off the ground and the semi-truck.

Pew! Pew! Pew! Pew!

[A massive explosion has just occurred at the airport. Given the relatively subdued noise, it likely isn’t dynamite but aviation fuel or other combustible substances. Sporadic gunshots were heard following the explosion, suggesting the beginning of combat. As of the moment, the Chinese government has refrained from making an official statement.]

The reporter flinched every time sparks shot up into the sky.

“Those fuckers!” Choi Seong-Geon exclaimed with clenched teeth, then inhaled deeply.

The soldiers were stubbornly holding out.

That’s what a special forces team is supposed to be like! They don’t give up! They come up with the best solution possible in the worst situations!

The South Korean special forces were finally showcasing their capacities and rising from the shadows.

Moon Jae-Hyun had a stiff expression.

“Section Chief Jeon,” he said.

“Yes, Mr. President,” Jeon Dae-Geuk replied.

“There haven’t been any other updates, have there?” Moon Jae-Hyun asked tensely.

“I apologize,” Jeon Dae-Geuk responded with difficulty. He hadn’t heard anything from the National Intelligence Service either.

“The operation has gone astray. At this rate, China will use any method to impeach me,” Moon Jae-Hyun stated.

Jeon Dae-Geuk stayed silent, unable to bring himself to speak.

“Please connect me to the chairman of the National Assembly,” Moon Jae-Hyun requested.

“It’s too late at night, sir,” Jeon Dae-Geuk said with concern.

“I’m sure he isn’t sleeping right now. Call him and tell him I will resign without him having to impeach me if he sends those soldiers back safely. Chairperson Huh will certainly accept the proposition,” Moon Jae-Hyun concluded.

“Mr. President!” Jeon Dae-Geuk exclaimed.

“The soldiers who are fighting in there, in those flames, knowing they’re going to die... They are my people, my sons, and the children of the citizens of South Korea that I love. If I can save them by stepping down, then I’m going to rescue them!” Moon Jae-Hyun said, raising his voice.

“Please don’t step on the pride of the special forces team, Mr. President!” Jeon Dae-Geuk pleaded with clenched teeth. “Why do you think the soldiers are going so far? They are protecting South Korea, which is more precious to them than their lives! They refuse to let our nation and our president surrender to China, Japan, or any powerful country! They are fighting so you will not utter defeat to anyone! That’s why, Mr. President, even if your heart is so frustrated to the point of exploding, please continue to watch them until the end, and don’t you ever give up! That is what those children sincerely wish for from the bottom of their hearts.”

[We have just received another update on the situation. A second explosion has occurred, and gunshots continue to echo through the night sky. The severity of the situation is underscored by the fact that a helicopter has made an emergency landing amid the intense combat.]

When Moon Jae-Hyun turned to look at the TV, he witnessed one helicopter precariously swinging in the air.

Chapter 167: Something More Precious Than Life (2)

Kang Chan closed the valve of the gas tank cover, then glared at the helicopter that was flying at a lower altitude. It had secured itself in one spot, which he took as evidence that snipers were aboard it.

Aiming at the gas tank of the semi-truck, Kang Chan opened fire.

Whoosh! Bang!

Swish!

Flames soared for the second time as he covered his nose and dropped down to his stomach.

Heat engulfed his back, but what he found truly scary during times like this was the vapors that filled one’s lungs through breathing.

That was the cause of death for many of the children that Kang Chan and his team saved from the wars between tribes back in Africa.

Those truly merciless even poured gasoline directly on their faces. Gas vapors would go straight through their nose and mouths, filling their lungs and throats.

A child going through that would eventually die from burnt lungs and throat if a fire was thrown at them. Sometimes, they even struggled in pain for fifteen days before succumbing to death.

As the heat swept past him, Kang Chan raised his gun and held his breath.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

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

The helicopter swayed and circled in the same spot a couple of times, then flew outside the airport.

These sons of bitches dare play an obvious trick?

Thud!

Kang Chan sat up with his back leaning against the passenger seat of the semi-truck. His right leg was throbbing.

They had to endure this battle for as long as they could and keep the attention of their enemies on them at least until Seok Kang-Ho—who was escaping through an air vent—could take down their enemy.

Should I have gone there myself?

Kang Chan shook his head. They had to prolong the fight here to win.

“Haa. Haa.”

Yoon Sang-Ki[[ref](#)]Previously Yoon Sung-Ki[[ref](#)] put his head right against the semi-truck. He was breathing heavily, but he still looked beyond the semi-truck instead of taking a break because he might miss something.

There had been two jet fuel explosions so far.

“You did good, Yoon Sang-Ki. You’ve done really well.” Yoon Sang-Ki muttered to himself like a crazy person. He didn’t know that a helicopter was approaching them to shoot them, much less notice that it was slowly lowering its altitude as it steadily hovered in one area.

They had poured out jet fuel and had been getting ready to shoot when Kang Chan targeted the helicopter pilot as soon as an explosion occurred.

Yoon Sang-Ki was proud to be in the team of such a commander.

Right now, in Beijing, they were warning China and the entire world not to look down on South Korea.

“Phuhuhu.” Yoon Sang-Ki now slightly understood why Seok Kang-Ho laughed like that.

Five out of their team’s twelve members had already detached and left for another mission.

Now, they only had seven men to hold their ground against twenty helicopters, the White Wolves—China’s special forces team—a task force, and an armored car.

Yoon Sang-Ki thought of his wife. He remembered her crying as she ran into his arms and hugged him when he was promoted to second lieutenant. She told him that she was proud of him, that he did a good job, and that she was thankful that he was working so hard.

He also wanted to see Choi Seong-Geon, who clicked his tongue during the first birthday party of Yoon Sang-Ki's daughter, saying that it was a pity that she looked like her father.

When his father bowed to Choi Seong-Geon, voicing his gratitude that a General came to his granddaughter's birthday party, Choi Seong-Geon bowed even deeper in return.

What Yoon Sang-Ki was scared of the most was that he would look like a coward to those kinds of people in his last moments.

Right now, all he wanted was to show how strong and relentless South Korea's special forces were to their enemies. He wanted to make sure people wouldn't look down on South Korea ever again before he died.

"Honey, I'm going to do a good job." Yoon Sang-Ki strengthened his resolve.

He would die a cool death—as a member of South Korea's special forces team, a son, a husband, and a father.

Yoon Sang-Ki strangely got goosebumps when he looked at Kang Chan.

How is he going to win this time?

It was impossible to survive this, but they weren't going to lose.

Vroom. Vroom.

The armored vehicle roared to life and retreated, which was ridiculous. The others followed suit.

Kang Chan quickly examined the sky and his surroundings.

Damn it!

Their behavior could only mean that they planned to blow up this place.

Being prepared to die and being unable to do anything despite their inevitable deaths were completely different things.

Screech. Screech. Screech.

Kang Chan opened the valve of the gas tank cover.

Chk.

"It doesn't matter now if the enemies shoot us from the helicopter or the armored car. They're going to blow up this place either way," Kang Chan said.

The soldiers felt strangely tense.

Chk.

"Lee Doo-Hee. The moment I open fire, I need you to move the semi-truck up front," Kang Chan continued.

After a moment of hesitation...

Chk.

“Understood.”

Chk.

“Yoon Sang-Ki, shoot the tank with the machine gun,” Kang Chan added.

Chk.

“Understood.”

Chk.

“I am the God of Blackfield, the god who brings death to my enemies. Do not give up,” Kang Chan finished.

Click!

Kang Chan checked his magazine as he leaned against the steps of the semi-truck’s passenger seat. There was a helicopter in the sky and an armored car on the ground.

Clank!

Kang Chan pulled the breechblock, then glanced at the sky.

He remembered the promise that he made some time ago about smiling even if he was torn to death for as long as the issue with Gong Te Automobile was taken care of.

Words weren’t enough to express how grateful he was to Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook for teaching him about what motherly and fatherly love felt like and what it truly meant to be part of a family.

At the same time, he felt apologetic to Seok Kang-Ho.

He also wanted to see someone...

Kang Chan smirked.

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

The sound of the helicopter changed based on how it moved, the direction it was taking, and its altitude.

It wasn’t time yet. Those fuckers were clearly also contemplating when they should launch their final attack.

Stupid motherfuckers. Do you really think you can burn us all to death by blowing this place up?

Lanok, who was sitting behind his desk, fiercely glared at the TV mounted on the wall.

[After the second explosion, we seem to have entered a state of momentary lull. The experts are judging that the Chinese government will soon make a decision. Considering China normally makes sacrifices for great causes, we’re expecting them to blow up the hangar that the terrorists are occupying right now even though that means having to destroy terminal one.]

Ring. Ring.

Lanok quickly picked up the receiver.

“This is Lanok.”

Lanok, who had been silent, smiled. “Mobilize all satellites.”

After another brief silence, Lanok continued, “I’ll finalize the operation.”

Click.

Lanok put down the receiver, then glared at the clock and held up his phone.

[It’s not being shown on the screen right now, but we just received news that China has moved its forces to the end of the runway. This is in line with our prediction that they will carry out an attack that will require giving up terminal one. Considering how significant this issue is and the fact that the world has its eyes on this situation, it seems it’s taking longer for them to reach a decision.]

[Will China really do such a thing?]

[As you can see, they’re sending even the reporters two kilometers away from the airport. However, if they sacrifice the airport in this situation, the Chinese army will lose a lot of prestige. That seems to be one of the things the Chinese government is contemplating about. Either way, all we can say is that this situation will have devastating results.]

Kim Hyung-Jung picked up a cigarette.

“I’d like one as well,” Kim Tae-Jin said.

Kim Hyung-Jung stopped for a moment before offering his cigarette pack to Kim Tae-Jin, who took a cigarette from it.

Chk chk. Chk chk.

Kim Tae-Jin took a puff of his cigarette as he watched TV. After a while, he awkwardly exhaled the smoke out.

Be-be-beep. Be-be-beep. Be-be-beep.

Kim Hyung-Jung’s phone rang sharply.

“It’s Kim Hyung-Jung. That’s right! Pardon? Yes! We have seven agents standing by right now.”

Kim Tae-Jin looked at Kim Hyung-Jung, finding him looking both surprised and nervous.

“I’m on my way.”

Kim Hyung-Jung hung up, quickly went to his desk, and took out a pistol.

“I can’t talk about it right now because it’s a closely guarded secret,” Kim Hyung-Jung explained.

“Don’t worry about it and go.”

Kim Hyung-Jung attached the pistol to his waist, then grabbed his jacket and left the room.

A car made its way between the buildings and entered the parking lot at the back.

Screech.

As soon as it stopped, Yang Bum, Seok Kang-Ho, and Cha Dong-Gyun opened the doors and got out of the car almost at the same time.

Rattle.

They then opened the trunk, which was full of silenced submachine guns and balaclavas.

“Please use this,” Yang Bum said.

Putting the balaclavas on made them look like bank thieves, but that was not important.

“Got any other intel for us?” Seok Kang-Ho asked Yang Bum.

“They just keep saying that they’re at a standoff. Please hurry—over ten intelligence satellites are monitoring the area around the airport.”

Click! Click!

Seok Kang-Ho looked at Choi Jong-Il while pulling the breechblock.

Their target was the square run-down building across from them.

They were only wearing an Artemisia green military uniform and balaclava, not even having a helmet or a bulletproof vest.

“Our brothers at the airport are enduring as much as they can. We should hurry,” Seok Kang-Ho said.

“Understood.”

“Everyone ready?”

“Yes.”

Seok Kang-Ho quickly went out between the buildings and examined the road.

He didn’t see any cars, perhaps because of the incident at the airport. They wouldn’t have been able to come here if it wasn’t for Yang Bum.

“Let’s go!” Seok Kang-Ho yelled, then quickly ran forward.

Bang!

Who had time to open doors gently?

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Thud! Thud! Crash!

The sound of their footsteps rang throughout the building.

They took the stairs to the second floor and saw a head beside the handrail at the top.

Whoosh! Bam!

Seok Kang-Ho ran, Choi Jong-Il and Cha Dong-Gyun covered him, and Woo Hee-Seung and Kwak Cheol-Ho covered their backs.

They didn't even plan to do that—they were just acting the same way they did in France.

After a while, they heard people shouting.

Bang! Whoosh! Bam! Whoosh! Bam!

When the door opened, they immediately shot the two men inside in the head.

Kwak Cheol-Ho ran as he brought up the rear. Meanwhile, Woo Hee-Seung kept an eye on the enemy leaning their head out at the top of the stairs.

They arrived at the stairs leading to the third floor.

Whoosh! Pow-pow! Bam! Whoosh! Bam! Whoosh!

Two enemies jumped out from the floor below them, but Woo Hee-Seung quickly eliminated them.

They were now on the third floor.

Woo Hee-Seung and Kwak Cheol-Ho stood against the wall next to the stairs that went up to the fourth floor. While aiming at the floor below them...

Bang!

Tang! Whoosh! Whoosh! Ta-da-dang! Ta-da-da-dang! Whoosh!

When the door opened, they opened fire. Choi Jong-Il was pushed against the railing as he shot the forehead of the enemies in sight. They slammed into the wall and sank to the floor.

Click! Click! Click!

Before heading further into the fourth floor, Seok Kang-Ho changed magazines.

Choi Jong-Il leaned against the railing, blood seeping out from his mouth.

“Please...” Despite his mouth filling up with blood, he still seemed to be telling them to hurry.

‘Fuck!’

They ran through the hallway as fast as they could.

Rishiquan was on this floor.

If Seok Kang-Ho was Kang Chan, he already would have known where their enemy was.

Seok Kang-Ho nodded at Cha Dong-Gyun to tell him to take charge.

One, two!

Swoosh!

Whoosh! Ta-da-dang! Whoosh! Ta-da-da-dang! Bam! Pow-pow-pow!

Thud.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Thud!

As Seok Kang-Ho shot the enemy to their left, Cha Dong-Gyun, who brought up their rear, collapsed to the ground.

There was only one door left down the hallway.

Their mission wasn't over yet, though.

"Kwak Cheol-Ho," Seok Kang-Ho called.

Kwak Cheol-Ho walked to the front. The two stood close to both sides of the door.

Rishiquan had to be inside this room.

Seok Kang-Ho had to hurry.

Even if Kang Chan was commanding the operation, they were still stuck at the airport. Seven people couldn't possibly hold their ground against their enemies for long.

Seok Kang-Ho looked at Kwak Cheol-Ho.

"Haah. Haah."

Seok Kang-Ho turned the doorknob a little...

One, two!

... then kicked the door open.

Crash!

Whoosh! Whoosh! Ta-da-da-dang! Ta-da-dang! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Their enemies' foreheads looked as big as a full moon to them.

Click!

With his gun at the ready, Seok Kang-Ho went toward the man sitting with his hands raised in the air.

Rishiquan!

Seok Kang-Ho clearly remembered the face he saw in the photos.

The man spoke Chinese.

They didn't have time. Kang Chan could be dying.

Whoosh!

Bam!

This son of a bitch keeps talking! We can't even understand him!

Kwak Cheol-Ho urgently went to the window when Seok Kang-Ho nodded to him.

Clash!

Kwak Cheol-Ho broke the window and then waved his hand.

‘Endure it for just a little longer! It really won’t take long!’

Woo Hee-Seung came into the room with Cha Dong-Gyun, whom he was helping walk.

Kwak Cheol-Ho then ran out and dragged Choi Jong-Il inside.

“Huff. Huff.” After a while, Yang Bum also entered while breathing heavily.

“Is it this fucker?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

Yang Bum approached them, then quickly nodded.

“What are we supposed to do now?” Seok Kang-Ho asked again.

“I have to make a call! I can give orders with the intelligence bureau’s phone!”

Yang Bum immediately held up his phone when he saw Seok Kang-Ho’s glinting eyes.

The runway that was soaked in the gushing jet fuel glimmered as if light was hitting it on a rainy day.

“Haah. Haah.”

Kang Chan could hear his own breathing, which meant his senses were on edge. Based on his past experiences, that also meant that the enemy was about to launch an attack.

The only heavy weapon they had was the machine gun that they had taken from the jeep.

Kang Chan looked at his team.

It was time. The moment they pulled the trigger, they would start a fight where all that mattered was how many people they could kill and take with them to their grave.

The members did a good job. They did better than Kang Chan expected.

But they still had more things to do.

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

The helicopter noises changed.

‘Come at me!’

Click!

Just as Kang Chan aimed his gun toward the helicopter...

Vroom. Vroom. Vroom.

An armored car drove into the runway.

Fuck! What’s that?

Kang Chan turned his gaze, then smirked.

Sons of bitches! Sure enough, their battles reflect their mentality—they call themselves a continent and fight just as large.

Surprised, Yoon Sang-Ki instinctively looked at Kang Chan, immediately noticing his peculiar smile. He felt as if he was looking at a tiger that was surrounded by wolves on top of a mountain.

A terrifying and thrilling shiver ran down his spine.

Chk.

“Don’t lose our target!” Kang Chan yelled.

The armored car closed in on Kang Chan, who tightly gritted his teeth.

Bzzz! Bzzz!

As it did, its 30mm Vulcan automatic cannon aimed at the helicopter in the sky.

What’s happening?

Whoosh! Whoosh!

Not long after, the armored car unleashed a terrifying amount of bullets.

That wasn’t all. The enemies Kang Chan’s team had been fighting, including the armored car, were all under fire as well.

Seok Kang-Ho, you son of a bitch! You should’ve told me!

Kang Chan yelled at the members, “Run!”

Hwang Ki-Hyun came into the room that Moon Jae-Hyun was in. He was clearly tired, but his eyes were still sharp—befitting the head of the National Intelligence Service.

Moon Jae-Hyun and Jeon Dae-Geuk greeted Hwang Ki-Hyun without saying anything.

“We arrested all five of the traitors inside the National Intelligence Service, including the vice director,” Hwang Ki-Hyun said.

“Did anyone get hurt?”

“Two agents were killed, and five agents were seriously injured.”

Moon Jae-Hyun sighed softly.

“Mr. President, we’ll arrest the Chairman of the National Assembly,” Hwang Ki-Hyun continued.

“Do we have enough evidence to prove the allegations?”

“We have confirmed that assemblyman Huh Sang-Soo went to China with the circuit design of the semiconductor and the floor plan of the Incheon International Airport.”

“Nonetheless, we can’t prove the chairman’s crimes, can we?”

Hwang Ki-Hyun couldn't answer.

The room grew silent for a moment.

[We have breaking news. The Chinese government has officially announced that they have killed all the terrorists in the Beijing Capital International Airport.]

Moon Jae-Hyun and Jeon Dae-Geuk looked like they had just been stabbed with a knife.

[They also claim to have suppressed the situation. Moreover, it has been confirmed that a part of Terminal One of the Beijing Capital International Airport has been destroyed. Here is the Chinese government's announcement.]

The screen showed a Chinese man reading a script in front of cameras. His eyes alternated between the camera and the script.

[We'll bring you the Chinese spokesperson's words through simultaneous interpretation.]

The news screen transitioned to an upper body shot of the spokesperson.

[The Chinese forces that are against the reform conspired with military authorities to launch a terrorist attack at the airport. For that reason, we have killed Rishiquan, the main culprit, and all of the criminals on the scene.]

Moon Jae-Hyun suddenly raised his head. Jeon Dae-Geuk sat up as well.

[The Chinese government will also do whatever it takes to find the people involved in this terrorist attack. They dared ruin the country's public order, so we are planning to punish them accordingly. We will also do our best to repair the airport as fast as possible. That will be all for now.]

The screen now showed the spokesperson, who had been subjected to a flurry of camera flashes, folding the script that they had been reading.

Chapter 168.1: What It Means to Live (1)

It was an incredible achievement, but none of the soldiers looked happy. Choi Jong-Il had been shot twice in the chest, and Cha Dong-Gyun had been shot thrice in his stomach and chest.

Following the conclusion of the standoff, they immediately rushed straight to the hospital still wearing their camouflage face paint and military uniforms.

Kang Chan remained steadfast next to their beds. He forced the Chinese doctors, who didn't understand what he was doing, to give the two men a whole bag of his blood.

Having taken full control of China's intelligence bureau, Yang Bum's influence became so great that the team was given the entire eleventh floor to themselves even though they were in a large hospital in the center of downtown Beijing. The air force even closed off the entrance of the hospital and the eleventh floor with a sign that read, "People's Liberation Army Air Force Airborne Corps."

Yang Bum entered the room with a creak of the sliding doors, breaking the heavy silence. It had been about ten minutes since they had reached the hospital room.

"Huh Sang-Soo has been arrested without a warrant. It has also been confirmed that Wui Min-Gook has infiltrated South Korea," Yang Bum informed Kang Chan.

Kang Chan just listened.

“Wui Min-Gook is probably aware of the situation on our end now, considering he has gone off the grid,” Yang Bum added.

“Please deliver this information to Manager Kim Hyung-Jung of the National Intelligence Service,” Kang Chan stated.

“I have already relayed the news,” Yang Bum replied.

“What about the plane for our transportation?” Kang Chan asked.

“I’ve prepared an aircraft for you. It’s standing by at the Beijing Military Airfield,” Yang Bum said.

All they had to do now was go back home.

“You should hurry back, Mr. Kang Chan. The opposing party has not completely died down yet, and I can only keep the traffic under control before five,” Yang Bum warned him.

“We’ll get going now, then,” Kang Chan told him.

Kang Chan turned around to look at Choi Jong-Il and Cha Dong-Gyun.

Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep.

“Heard that? We have to leave now. Make sure you wake up soon and to call when you do,” Kang Chan declared, then left the hospital room with Yang Bum. The other soldiers saluted Choi Jong-Il and Cha Dong-Gyun before following Kang Chan out. They took the elevator to head straight to the underground lot, and Yang Bum guided them along.

Kang Chan was walking with a limp now. Maybe it was because the adrenaline was gone, but the pain felt as if his skin was being ripped apart.

A minibus curtained on the inside was waiting for them. They were all still in their combat gear, so they made clunking noises throughout the trip, including when they walked, climbed into the bus, and the bus started its engine.

After speeding down the roads for about thirty minutes, the bus arrived at the airport and stopped in front of the airfield. Yang Bum got out first.

Kang Chan stepped off and shook hands with Yang Bum as Seok Kang-Ho and the other soldiers got into the aircraft.

“I won’t forget your help today,” Yang Bum said in gratitude.

“Do I have to come here if I want to see you now?” Kang Chan asked him.

“For the time being, yes,” Yang Bum replied with a manly smile, ending their conversation.

Swoosh.

After Kang Chan entered the plane, the doors of the aircraft slid shut with a thud.

Rumble, rumble, rumble.

The aircraft soon began to take off. After a series of vibrations reverberating throughout the plane, it started to soar into the sky at a speed so rapid that it made the men inside lurch forward.

“Does anyone have any cigarettes?” Kang Chan asked.

One of the soldiers quickly pulled one out and held it out to Kang Chan.

“Those bastards. Would it have killed them to provide us with some coffee on the plane?” Kang Chan grumbled.

“I believe there is some in the back,” another soldier replied, then hurriedly headed to the back of the aircraft.

This was the first cigarette that Kang Chan had since the end of the operation. The smoke he exhaled swiftly flew to the back of the plane. This was the perfect environment to catch some raccoons—since they used to smoke up raccoon dens in the past to catch the animals.

It would’ve been better if the coffee was instant coffee, but the roasted scent from Americanos wasn’t too bad either. The soldier who brought Kang Chan a cup of it also found some bread to go with it.

Kang Chan leaned on the wall and sat on the ground, then shook his head.

This is what fucking happens when I start to care about others.

It was impossible for everyone to come back alive in battles and operations. A couple of people considered this side of him a pathetic weakness. If someone picked a fight with him when he was in this mood, there would be big trouble. That was also why Seok Kang-Ho was keeping his lips shut and walking around Kang Chan on eggshells.

Click.

“Whew,” Kang Chan exhaled.

He felt a little better when he started smoking his second cigarette.

“Let me tie up your leg, Cap,” Seok Kang-Ho offered.

“Leave it alone. We’ll get to Seoul soon, so I might as well get it treated there. You’re not having any bread?” Kang Chan said.

“I don’t feel like eating. Not hungry right now,” Seok Kang-Ho said, much to Kang Chan’s surprise. Seok Kang-Ho’s lack of appetite was so ridiculous that Kang Chan chuckled.

“Just eat one. Get me one too,” Kang Chan ordered.

There was no need to make the other soldiers uncomfortable. Kang Chan tore the bread that Seok Kang-Ho tossed him in half and took a big bite.

“What are you all doing? Eat up,” Seok Kang-Ho announced.

At his words, everyone stuffed their mouths with the bread.

It was a comical sight, soldiers choking down bread with the whites of their eyes highlighted by the dark camouflage paint.

Ding. Ding. Ding.

When Kang Chan woke up from his shuteye, the plane was already descending to the ground. It made quite a noisy landing, which all bulky aircraft did. The men disembarked and stepped onto the bus that was waiting for them.

The sun shone brightly down on them at this time of day. Even with the dark, tanned windows of the bus, there were curtains covering the glass.

Once they left the airport, Kang Chan saw a few sedans and vans on the side of the road, and Kim Hyung-Jung was standing next to them. Kang Chan stood up from his seat and turned to the men.

“Good work, all of you. I’ll see you again later,” Kang Chan said.

“Attention!”

Thud.

“Salute the commander!”

Thud.

Kang Chan knew there was no way he could ignore this kind of farewell. Kang Chan saluted the men back on behalf of his party, then stepped off the bus with Seok Kang-Ho, Woo Hee-Seung, and Lee Doo-Hee.

“Mr. Kang Chan,” Kim Hyung-Jun greeted as he quickly slid open the doors of the van for them.

Their attire was one thing, but they had to be especially careful because the dark paint on their faces would easily attract the attention of passersby.

The men swiftly climbed into the van, and the van left immediately after.

“Is your injury serious, Mr. Kang Chan?” Kim Hyung-Jung asked, concerned.

“It’s tolerable. Has Yang Bum contacted you yet?” Kang Chan confirmed.

“Yes. We have arrested five executives who were secretly in league with Chairperson Huh Ha-Soo. We have also secured all the evidence, including the confidential data leak and the distortion of internal information. This was why the director was unreachable for a time,” Kim Hyung-Jung informed him.

“What about Wui Min-Hook?” Kang Chan asked.

“We haven’t been able to locate him yet,” Kim Hyung-Jung said, fatigue evident in his voice. His haggard face also made it apparent that he did not get any sleep last night. “I will escort you to the safe house for now.”

“Got it. Will we be able to receive some medical attention there as well, Manager Kim?” Kang Chan asked.

“Yes. I’ve made all the necessary preparations,” Kim Hyung-Jung replied.

That marked the end of the urgent topics that they had to cover.

“An announcement has been made that all the economic sanctions will be lifted this afternoon,” Kim Hyung-Jung added.

“What happened to the prime minister?” Kang Chan asked curiously.

“We are planning to cancel his resignation using the reason that he is necessary to move forward with the Russian oil field development rights,” Kim Hyung-Jung answered.

It sounded as if they had put out most of the immediate fires now.

The first thing that Kang Chan did when they arrived at the Hannam-Dong safe house was receive medical attention for his injury.

“How did it manage to dig so deep into your outer flesh?” the doctor who had been waiting on standby asked. He tilted his head in wonder a few times as he treated the wound and wrapped some gauze around it.

Kang Chan covered his injury with a large rubber band and took a shower as well. They had been provided with formal clothes—a shirt and dress pants—but Seok Kang-Ho looked like a gangster in the outfit.

“Let’s get you fed for now,” Kim Hyung-Jung suggested.

They all finally looked human again.

After finishing his meal, Kang Chan drank the cup of coffee in front of him and smoked a cigarette in relaxation.

“Section Chief Jeon says he will be staying in the office until he’s done with the business with Wui Min-Gook. He was quite upset that he could not see you today. Would you give him a call when you get the chance? I’ll probably find myself in a difficult position otherwise,” Kim Hyung-Jung asked.

Kang Chan could definitely see Jeon Dae-Geuk pressing Kim Hyung-Jung, so he agreed to call the gentleman.

“Oh, right, Manager Kim, please give these men some paid leave,” Kang Chan requested.

“I have actually prepared for their breaks already. You two have a week off starting today,” Kim Hyung-Jung informed them.

“It’s fine, sir.”

“Don’t be stupid, you idiots. There will be gaps in the security if you two work while still tired. The B team is waiting on standby anyway, so there’s nothing to worry about. Take a break when Mr. Kang Chan offers it,” Kim Hyung-Jung ordered.

Woo Hee-Seung and Lee Doo-Hee looked as if they felt wronged, but they didn’t press the matter any further.

“You should get some rest too, Mr. Kang Chan,” Kim Hyung-Jung added.

“I will. I have to make a call to the embassy first, though,” Kang Chan said.

“What about you, Mr. Seok?” Kim Hyung-Jung asked.

“I’m going home, of course. What if someone stole my pretty wife while I was gone?” Seok Kang-Ho mischievously said.

Everyone laughed at the absurdity of the lousy joke.

Chapter 168.2: What It Means to Live (1)

Kang Chan was about to dial Lanok when he realized that he left his phone in the cargo plane earlier. He did think he was missing something—he just didn’t expect it to be his phone.

For now, he borrowed Kim Hyung-Jung’s phone to call the embassy directly.

- Mr. Kang Chan, your safe return truly makes me feel relieved. I sincerely apologize for the great mistake that my country’s DGSE has made.

“I know it wasn’t intentional on your part. All’s well that ends well, as they say. We were able to get China’s economic sanctions lifted thanks to the operation, so don’t take it to heart, sir,” Kang Chan assured him.

- With this incident, I have reason to launch an internal agency-wide investigation on my end. My standing has become unshakeable thanks to you, but I don’t know if I could ever apologize enough.

Lanok apologized two more times before finally changing the subject.

- Do you have time for a short meeting tomorrow?

“Yes, I do. I left my clothes and phone in the cargo plane, though, so I will have you call you through someone else’s phone again tomorrow,” Kang Chan said.

- I see, don’t worry about that.

When Kang Chan ended the call with Lanok, he finally felt as if he had finished all his homework.

“Are you heading home, Cap?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“Yes. I’m going to get some rest. I made arrangements to meet the ambassador tomorrow, so I’ll call you when I learn what time that’ll be,” Kang Chan replied.

“Sounds good,” Seok Kang-Ho responded.

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho took the car that Kim Hyung-Jung provided them back to the apartment complex.

“Rest up,” Seok Kang-Ho said as they parted ways.

“Will do,” Kang Chan replied.

After saying goodbye, Kang Chan immediately headed up to his home.

Yoo Hye-Sook was already standing at the front door when he put in the passcode and opened the door.

“I’m back,” Kang Chan greeted her.

“Channy! Why is your face so gaunt? Was what you had to do difficult?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked worriedly.

“It’s probably because I didn’t get enough sleep. Where’s Father?”

“He went golfing with some acquaintances he knows through work. Why?”

“Just curious,” Kang Chan replied. It wasn’t like he could say Wui Min-Gook was lying in wait somewhere, waiting to jump at the opportunity to hurt him.

“Channy! What happened to your leg?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked in shock.

“I just sprained it a bit,” Kang Chan responded reassuringly.

“Have you eaten, at least?”

“Yes.”

“Then hurry inside and get some sleep,” Yoo Hye-Sook urged.

“I will. I’m sorry.”

“Why are you saying sorry when you couldn’t sleep because you were working? Hurry, go to your room,” Yoo Hye-Sook scolded him.

Kang Chan went to his room and changed into more comfortable clothes before lying in bed.

Choi Jong-Il and Cha Dong-Gyun will get through this.

Now that he had come into his room and lay down in his bed, he smelled a familiar scent. It was home. He was finally back home.

‘Did my body get weaker? How can I be so sleepy just because I missed a single night’s worth of sleep?’

Well, he supposed he did receive two injections because of his leg injury.

Immediately afterward, Kang Chan fell asleep. He slumbered so deeply that when he woke up, his trip to China seemed like something that happened a long time ago.

The first thing he noticed was that his throat was parched, then he smelled something delicious outside.

He ruffled up his hair and got up from the bed, leisurely leaving the room. Even though the windows were open, the living room was still filled with the aroma of food. He could hear people talking as well.

Kang Chan blinked in surprise as soon as he went into the kitchen.

Why is she here?

Michelle, who had her hair tied back, was cooking with Yoo Hye-Sook.

“Hm? Look who’s up!” Michelle exclaimed.

“Channy! Do you feel better now?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“Yup,” Kang Chan replied.

He picked up a cup from the side of the kitchen where Yoo Hye-Sook and Michelle were, then poured himself some water from the purifier.

“Channy, did you lose your phone? I came because you weren’t picking up,” Michelle said.

She’s just speaking in Korean so openly now?

“Channy, Michelle seems to be really clever. Her Korean has improved so quickly, hasn’t it?” Yoo Hye-Sook remarked.

“She’s not clever, she’s sly,” Kang Chan said with a scoff.

Michelle avoided Kang Chan’s dark look as she told Yoo Hye-Sook, “Your compliment makes me so happy.”

“What happened to your phone though, Channy?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked, curiosity evident in her eyes.

“I probably just left it at my workplace. I’ll get it tomorrow or the day after,” Kang Chan said vaguely, not technically lying.

The clock in the living room showed that it was two in the afternoon at the moment. It meant Kang Chan had slept for about three hours.

“Channy, try a bit of this,” Yoo Hye-Sook said as she picked up some of the japchae with plastic gloves and fed them to Kang Chan.

Homemade japchae... This was actually the first time in Kang Chan’s life—both past and present—that he was eating japchae made at home. How should he describe this taste?

“Do you want to eat now?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“Can I? What about you?” Kang Chan asked.

“We haven’t had lunch yet either. I was going to wake you up when this was done,” Yoo Hye-Sook replied.

Yoo Hye-Sook pulled out the side dishes, poured some soup, and plated some japchae in a bowl. She also gave him a bowl of rice.

“Michelle, hurry and sit down with us,” Yoo Hye-Sook said.

“Got it. Thank you for the meal,” Michelle responded graciously.

“Channy, eat up, okay?” Yoo Hye-Sook said.

Kang Chan took some japchae and put it on top of his rice to eat with kimchi.

To live life is to appreciate these small things.

Kang Chan ate so much that he felt extremely full. Forcing Kang Chan to help, Michelle helped Yoo Hye-Sook clean up the dishes and brought out some cut fruit to the living room.

Michelle was pretty, easygoing, and had great table manners. Yoo Hye-Sook seemed to have taken a liking to Michelle.

The three finished a melon together.

“Mother, I should get going now,” Michelle said.

“So soon? You should have some of the cake I brought before you leave,” Yoo Hye-Sook said regretfully.

“I’m too full. And I just had a delicious lunch too, so I wouldn’t miss out by skipping cake. Please, next time, speak casually to me, ma’am,” Michelle replied to her.

How did Yoo Hye-Sook not think it was strange that Michelle’s Korean was so good?

“Channy, do you have time for some coffee?” Michelle asked.

“Good idea! You should go have some refreshments with Michelle, Channy,” Yoo Hye-Sook pushed.

Michelle looked as if she still had something to say, so Kang Chan immediately accepted and changed out of his clothes. Michelle exchanged a hug with Yoo Hye-Sook before leaving the apartment.

“What happened to your leg?” Michelle asked.

“I just twisted it a bit,” Kang Chan replied.

Michelle pecked Kang Chan’s cheek the moment the doors of the elevator shut.

“I was worried about you,” Michelle said.

“Why?” Kang Chan asked.

“Just because. There was that news about a terrorist attack in China on TV, so I thought maybe you were involved in that. Is your leg really okay?” Michelle asked.

Kang Chan silently gulped. He wanted a cigarette, but he couldn't smoke comfortably so close to home.

Kang Chan got in Michelle's car, which was parked in the underground lot, and they drove to the coffee shop at the intersection.

Kang Chan ordered coffee and sat down with it in hand, feeling as if life was finally peaceful.

“I need your signature on these documents,” Michelle suddenly said.

“What are they?” Kang Chan asked.

Kang Chan took a sip of the coffee and scanned the documents that Michelle gave him.

“This is a building acquisition contract, and these are the documents for establishing a corporation,” Michelle replied.

“A corporation?”

“Apparently, owning a building like this as an individual could result in various complications. According to the lawyer, setting up a corporation is better, so I prepared the relevant documents for that as well,” Michelle explained.

“Buying a building is so complicated,” Kang Chan complained.

Michelle smiled in amusement.

“You want me to sign all these documents?” Kang Chan asked in disbelief.

“You're the only one who's allowed to do it. And even if others can, this isn't something you should leave to others. Channy, you're not supposed to let other people take care of documents for you. I can just appoint a lawyer for you, though, and you can entrust things like this to them,” Michelle suggested.

“Ugh. Just do whatever you think is best.”

Michelle had a complicated expression on her face, but she still agreed in the end. Kang Chan signed a few of the important documents, then put the cigarette back in his mouth.

“That girl named Eun-Sil...” Michelle began.

“Hm?”

“You know, Heo Eun-Sil. The girl who likes you,” Michelle teased.

She's still joking about this?

Seeing Kang Chan's expression, Michelle quickly backed down.

"Michelle, that's enough with that joke," Kang Chan said firmly.

"Sorry, Channy."

It was Saturday afternoon. A bunch of idiots were sitting around, looking at Michelle with pitying eyes as if she were a helpless princess trapped by a monster.

"What did you want to say, though? What about Heo Eun-Sil?" Kang Chan asked.

"The festival. She has already planned most of the framework for it. That girl has potential."

"Potential?"

"I noticed it while discussing things with her. She's quite skilled in the field of stage direction and performance," Michelle replied.

Kang Chan wasn't interested in this topic. Whether he liked her or not, he didn't want to accept that the kid who trampled on the futures of other children could now blossom with her talents. She did say that she acknowledged her wrongdoings, but she had not received forgiveness from everyone yet.

Michelle carefully observed Kang Chan's mood.

Just then, an unfamiliar man approached the terrace. A glance at the way he walked was enough for Kang Chan to tell that he was an agent. When Michelle saw Kang Chan's sharp gaze, her expression tensed up. By the time she turned around to look, the man was already in front of their table.

"Section Chief Jeon would like to speak with you," he said.

He seemed to be the agent filling in for Choi Jong-Il.

Chapter 169: What It Means to Live (2)

If Jeon Dae-Geuk wanted Kang Chan to answer his call even though the latter was with Michelle, then it had to be for something urgent.

Have they found Wui Min-Gook?

Kang Chan answered the call without saying anything.

He pressed the 'answer' button in front of the imbeciles who were looking at Michelle. Their eyes showed that they felt sorry for her.

- Hello? Is this Kang Chan?

"Yes it's me, section chief. I wasn't able to talk to you earlier because I was told that you're busy. I left my phone somewhere else as well."

- How are your injuries?

It seemed Jeon Dae-Geuk didn't call to tell him about Wui Min-Gook.

“It got a lot better. What’s going on?”

- Chan.

He was the first person from work to call Kang Chan by only his name. Kang Chan really liked it, though.

- We have not experienced this yet, so I thought I should call you because you might know about this.

“Tell me what’s going on.”

Why is he acting like this?

- General Choi called me and said that the men’s eyes weren’t relaxing. He doesn’t know how to get them to relax. It’s not like they’re causing problems, and they’re acting the same as usual, but their eyes are still glinting so much it’s as if they’re about to explode. We have never experienced this before, so we don’t know how to handle this. Do you know what’s going on?

Kang Chan couldn’t answer.

Is it because we’re all Korean or because we became close through extreme training?

The only people whom he had shared these kinds of emotions with for almost the past ten years were only Dayeru and Gérard.

- Can you guess what’s going on?

“Yes.”

- What are we supposed to do?

“I’ll go there right now.”

- Right now?

Jeon Dae-Geuk sounded both happy and sorry at the same time.

“Will President Kim Tae-Jin make it?”

- Don’t even worry about that.

“He’ll know where to go if you tell him that I’m at the coffee shop at the intersection. We’ll leave as soon as everyone gets here.”

- Thank you so much. I’ll call General Choi as well.

After dropping the call, Kang Chan asked the agent for Kim Hyung-Jung’s number not only because he didn’t have his phone but because he didn’t have anyone’s number memorized due to his habit of jotting things down.

- Hello?

“Manager Kim, it’s Kang Chan.”

- Hello, Mr. Kang Chan!

“Can you call Seok Kang-Ho’s house and tell him to come to the coffee shop at the intersection? Tell him we have somewhere to go to. I can’t call him myself because I don’t know his number.”

- Alright.

Kim Hyung-Jung seemed roughly aware of what was going on, so Kang Chan didn’t have to talk much.

The agent accepted the phone back from Kang Chan, then politely said goodbye and left the terrace.

Michelle didn’t ask questions and only observed Kang Chan’s mood.

“I have to go somewhere,” Kang Chan said.

“Alright. Will your leg be okay?”

It was quite comfortable to be around Michelle at times like this, especially since she accepted Kang Chan’s work.

“Your guests will be coming here, right? I’ll leave first, then.” Michelle stood up, then opened her arms while looking mischievous.

It’s not like she’s trying to tantalize the guys around us.

“I’m sorry,” Kang Chan said. He lightly hugged her and patted her back.

“Bye!” Michelle said.

When Michelle left, people looked away. It was as if a scene in a musical just ended.

Kim Tae-Jin and Suh Sang-Hyun arrived while Kang Chan was smoking a cigarette. As if they were competing on who would get to the coffee shop first, Seok Kang-Ho arrived not long after. Kang Chan stood up and greeted them, then he bought coffee and sat down at his seat.

“What’s going on?” Kim Tae-Jin asked Kang Chan. It seemed he wasn’t fully aware of what was going on yet.

“The men haven’t gotten over the battle yet, so I’m planning to visit them.”

“Does something like that really happen?” Unlike Seok Kang-Ho, who immediately understood what Kang Chan meant, Suh Sang-Hyun looked perplexed.

“Didn’t they accomplish something great? Why can’t they still get over it?” Kim Tae-Jin asked again.

“They’re probably feeling guilty because of what happened to Choi Jong-II and Cha Dong-Gyun. I couldn’t control my expression either. Right now, they’re also forced to make up for the emptiness that Seok Kang-Ho, Choi Jong-II, Cha Dong-Gyun and I left behind.”

Kim Tae-Jin nodded. “Let’s hit the road now unless you’re not ready yet.”

“Sure.”

They decided to take only one car, so they left Seok Kang-Ho’s in the parking lot.

“I don’t remember something like this happening when we were working at the DMZ,” Suh Sang-Hyun commented.

“We didn’t experience large-scale battles back then, did we?” Kim Tae-Jin responded.

“Is that why?” Suh Sang-Hyun clearly wasn’t aware of such emotions.

The bigger and more intense the battle, the greater their sense of loss.

Despite making a great achievement, their guilt about what happened to their fellow soldiers were just as prominent as their happiness.

They could not help but think, ‘How can I be happy while someone is dying?’, ‘Does this make me a bastard?’, ‘Why couldn’t I keep them safe?’, and ‘If only I fought a little better!’

Kang Chan could already guess what the soldiers were feeling.

Those fuckers.

Kang Chan realized that he genuinely cared for them.

He couldn’t believe that people like them existed—people who would feel as distressed as he was because their brothers-in-arms were wounded instead of being happy about their accomplishment.

Suh Sang-Hyun drove on the highway with the sirens on.

“Did you get some rest?” Seok Kang-Ho asked Kang Chan.

“Yeah. I slept like a rock. What about you?”

“My wife and daughter told me that they thought our house would collapse because of how loud my snores were.” o

They talked about various other matters inside the car as they quickly sped through the road.

Going past the barricades and around the mountain path, a familiar barrack came into view.

When the car stopped, Choi Seong-Geon opened the barrack’s door and approached them so fast it almost seemed as if he jumped out.

“Welcome, sunbae-nim and Mr. Kang Chan,” Choi Seong-Geon said.

It was already almost six in the evening.

“Where are the members?” Kang Chan asked Choi Seong-Geon.

“They’re eating.”

“We’ll also eat first, then”

“Sure.”

Choi Seong-Geon looked like he wanted to talk first, but he didn’t stop Kang Chan.

Led by Kang Chan, they headed to the cafeteria.

Screech.

When they opened the door and went inside, they immediately felt the gloomy atmosphere land on their shoulders. The soldiers’ gazes shot straight toward them.

Kang Chan looked at the soldiers, then took a food tray and scooped some food into it.

He still found it uncomfortable to walk.

Kang Chan got some soup, a bunch of stir fried pork, kimchi, and seasoned vegetables.

Click.

Kang Chan put the food tray down in front of Kwak Cheol-Ho, then slowly looked around.

The soldiers looked angry and suffocated. The look in their eyes showed that they felt bad about something. At the same time, they also looked happy to see Kang Chan, Seok Kang-Ho, Kim Tae-Jin, and Suh Sang-Hyun.

“We fought against the Spetsnaz, the SBS, and China’s White Wolves and task force,” Kang Chan started.

Choi Seong-Geon came over with a food tray. He carefully put it on the table and quietly sat down.

“None of you probably expected that we won’t ever have to make sacrifices during operations like the ones we’ve gone on. Just as how none of you were afraid of death, Choi Jong-Il and Cha Dong-Gyun likely weren’t either,” Kang Chan continued.

The members sat up straight. It was as if they were being taught.

“Experience will be passed on. Everything that you all went through during the operations will all be passed down to your juniors and to those who find it unfair that they couldn’t participate in the operation. Even the emotions that you can’t get over right now will be passed on. Kwak Cheol-Ho,” Kang Chan called.

“Yes, sir?”

“In every mission we take, there will always be a chance that someone could die. If you die, will you resent those who survive?” Kang Chan asked.

“No, I won’t, sir!”

The members gritted their teeth.

“You guys fought well. We succeeded in an operation that seemed completely impossible. The two people fighting for their lives right now would not want any of you to making such expressions!” Kang Chan exclaimed.

Choi Seong-Geon examined the members’ expressions. As he glanced at Kim Tae-Jin, Kang Chan added, “What would Choi Jong-Il and Cha Dong-Gyun think if they saw South Korea’s best special forces team looking like this? You all are supposed to run out tonight or even right now during a meal if you guys are ordered to!”

Suh Sang-Hyun never imagined that Kang Chan would act like this. He didn’t think that Kang Chan would calm down South Korea’s best special forces team.

He didn’t know Kang Chan had this side to him. He even thought Kang Chan was arrogant when he first met him.

“Yoon Sang-Ki!” Kang Chan called.

“Sir!”

“If there’s an operation tonight, will you be able to go?”

“Yes, sir!”

“Even though you might die?”

“Yes, sir!”

“Will you resent the members who survive the mission?”

“Never, sir!” Yoon Sang-Ki’s answer was low, husky, and heartbreaking.

“This is what experience is like! It’s a heartbreak that mock battles and live ammo training can’t give you! The Spetsnaz, the SBS, and the White Wolves are glaring at you all! Survive so that none of you will feel ashamed to meet your fallen comrades!” Kang Chan exclaimed.

The skin around Choi Seong-Geon’s eyes became red.

“You are the special forces team that is supposed to be responsible for South Korea, so don’t lose to anything no matter what you’re up against. Never back off.”

As the soldiers’ faces and eyes grew red...

“What’s our motto?!” Kang Chan yelled.

“If I can!” the members fiercely shouted loud enough for the dividers in the cafeteria to shake.

“Protect the country with my blood!”

Before they knew it, Choi Seong-Geon and even Suh Sang-Hyun were shouting the motto at the top of their voices with them.

“I am!”

The cafeteria rumbled.

“Happy!”

Silence took over after their fierce shout.

They felt deeply touched, but they felt that much embarrassed as well.

“See? You all did great, so why do you feel bad?” Kang Chan asked. When he sat down and picked up his utensils, they started to eat again.

“Sunbae-nim,” Choi Seong-Geon softly called Kim Tae-Jin, who was picking up his chopsticks to control his emotions.

“Thank you.”

Kim Tae-Jin just smiled pleasantly in response.

“Where are you fuckers going? This is upsetting,” Choi Seong-Geon cheekily approached the open area in front of the barracks with a paper cup and cigarettes. “Come here! Why are you guys so stiff during our break?”

There was no way the soldiers wouldn’t know how Choi Seong-Geon felt.

Meanwhile, Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho were shamelessly exhaling cigarette smoke.

“Is your leg okay?” Yoon Sang-Ki asked.

“Yeah,” Kang Chan answered.

They had not completely gotten over their emotions yet, but at this point, they would go back to normal in a day or two.

After a while, an adjutant An adjutant came looking for Choi Seong-Geon in front of the barracks. “General! Someone is on the phone. They want to talk to you.”

“Who is it?”

The atmosphere became a bit better when Choi Seong-Geon left.

As Seok Kang-Ho grinned and patted a soldier’s shoulder...

Whe-oo! Whe-oo! Whe-oo!

... sirens sharply went off.

The soldiers threw away the paper cups and cigarettes and ran into the barrack.

A moment later, Choi Seong-Geon entered with a grim look on his face.

“What’s wrong?” Kang Chan asked.

“I was told that we should be on emergency stand-by.”

Is it because of Wui Min-Gook?

“Have they found him?” Kang Chan asked again.

“I wasn’t told anything more than that.”

It at least meant that there was a possibility that they had found where Wui Min-Gook was hiding.

“Will it be okay for the men to go out on an operation in this state?” Choi Seong-Geon asked.

“It’s going to be okay. They’re second to none no matter where they’re deployed.”

Choi Seong-Geon nodded, then looked at Kang Chan with a puzzled expression. “Where did you get this kind of experience, Mr. Kang Chan?”

“I’m a classified government secret.”

“Haha.” Choi Seong-Geon decided to just be thankful that they had soldiers like this.

“We’ll get going now,” Kang Chan said.

“Thank you, Mr. Kang Chan. What about the soldiers?”

“They’ll be fine.”

Choi Seong-Geon smiled instead of answering.

As Kang Chan was about to get in the car, the soldiers jumped out already armed to the teeth.

They had regrets, but Kang Chan saw greater determination in them.

Kang Chan raised his hand and tapped Yoon Sang-Ki’s helmet.

Kim Tae-Jin and Suh Sang-Hyun patted the helmets of the soldiers who were near them as well.

There was no need to say anything at times like this. When the soldiers’ helmets shook with a tap, everyone’s emotions—including the people leaving and those staying at the barracks—were completely passed on to each other.

The road toward Seoul was empty, unlike the road heading out of Seoul.

During the trip, they called Jeon Dae-Geuk twice with Kim Tae-Jin’s phone, but Jeon Dae-Geuk didn’t answer.

Something was definitely going on.

On the radio, a reporter said that China’s economic sanctions had been completely removed and that China would closely cooperate with South Korea to make sure that a misunderstanding like this would never happen again.

“Fortunately, the soldiers settled down before something like this happened,” Kim Tae-Jin commented.

“We should find Wui Min-Gook quickly,” Kang Chan responded.

“He’s a North Korean special forces soldier, but that doesn’t mean he can just recklessly provoke us. After all, we still have the security and the section chief has put in place effective countermeasures.”

“I see.”

“Anyway, when I saw the soldiers, I noticed that they have completely fallen under your command.”

Kang Chan couldn’t help but smirk. Strangely, his blood heated up when he met the soldiers.

He was still in denial, but he already genuinely cared for them.

Little by little, the traffic on the highway became heavier the closer they got to Seoul, but that didn’t become a big problem.

Kim Tae-Jin and Suh Sang-Hyun left after they dropped off Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho in the parking lot.

Naturally, Kang Chan returned home in Seok Kang-Ho’s car.

“Us not having a phone is really frustrating,” Seok Kang-Ho commented.

“Endure it for just one day. They said that they’ll find them tomorrow. Call my house or manager Kim if you run into any problem.”

“Alright. By the way, is your leg okay? We should’ve gone to Director Yoo, but we didn’t even have time to go see him today.”

“Go home. I’ll see you tomorrow,” Kang Chan said.

“Alright.”

Kang Chan parted ways with Seok Kang-Ho and went home.

He was worried for nothing—Kang Dae-Kyung was already home.

“I’m back,” Kang Chan said.

“Did you have dinner with Michelle?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“No—I parted ways with her earlier because I had to work.”

“You still got called to work even though you didn’t have your phone?”

“I met my co-workers by chance.” Kang Chan didn’t prepare for this conversation, so he just kept giving absurd answers.

“Let’s watch a movie together. It’s been a while. The movie that I’ve been wanting to see is also airing today,” Kang Dae-Kyung tactfully butted into the conversation, changing the atmosphere.

“Why don’t we also order chicken?” Kang Chan asked.

“Yeah.”

Yoo Hye-Sook looked happy as she listened to Kang Chan and Kang Dae-Kyung’s conversation. Things that Kang Chan never got to experience in his past life were now around him—and the more he had of them, the more he remembered when he went on operations.

What do Choi Jong-Il, Cha Dong-Gyun, and the agents think when they’re with their families? They do know that more than ten of them are sacrificed each year...

After ordering chicken, they talked about China’s announcement. Meanwhile, Kang Chan cracked his neck due to an uncanny feeling he was getting.

He first looked at the living room window.

Badum-badum. Badum-badum.

Damn it!

Of all occasions, his intuition was telling him that something bad was going to happen when he didn’t even have his phone and while he was sitting with his parents in the living room.

They won’t shoot a Mistral or an Iгла from the apartment across from us, will they?

Ding-dong. Ding-dong.

The doorbell rang.

Yoo Hye-Sook flinched, and Kang Chan quickly stood up.

“Channy?” Yoo Hye-Sook called Kang Chan in surprise, then noticed the look in his eyes.

“Mr. President! It’s me, Assistant Manager Kim!”

They heard the voice of an agent who was guarding Kang Dae-Kyung.

Chapter 170.1: We’re Okay (1)

Kang Chan immediately headed for the front door. Considering it was a National Intelligence Service agent, he probably would not ask for the door to be opened if there was a nearby threat.

Beep.

When Kang Chan opened the door, he was greeted by Assistant Manager Kim. The hallway behind him was filled with agents in suits.

“I have direct orders from the manager, sir. I will have to provide close proximity protection services to both of your parents,” Assistant Manager Kim said.

Kang Chan couldn’t deny this kind of offer even if he wanted to.

“What about the rooftop?” Kang Chan asked.

“We have not secured it yet. For now, it would be best for you to draw the curtains,” the assistant manager advised.

“Come on in,” Kang Chan permitted, and the agents began to head inside.

“Hello, how are you?” the agents greeted.

“Oh! We’re doing good. You?”

Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook met the agents before, so they weren’t as flustered. Nevertheless, they naturally could not hide their surprise when the agents suddenly visited them an hour before midnight.

Swish! Swoosh!

An agent scanned a window facing outward, then drew its curtains shut and stood guard in front of it. Meanwhile, the two female agents asked Yoo Hye-Sook if she could take them to examine the master bedroom, likely to determine if they could be shot from the room’s windows.

“Manager Kim would like to speak with you,” Assistant Manager Kim said as he handed Kang Chan the phone.

Amid the awkward and chaotic atmosphere, a sudden commotion occurred outside. After a while, the agent standing guard out in the hallway came in with a delivery of chicken. Kang Chan felt bad for the delivery man, who probably had quite the shock when he arrived.

Yoo Hye-Sook came out of the master bedroom and sat down next to Kang Dae-Kyung, looking both surprised and uncomfortable.

At that point, Kang Chan pressed the call button on the agent’s phone.

-This is Kim Hyung-Jung speaking.

“Manager Kim, what’s going on?” Kang Chan asked.

- Mr. Kang Chan. The director has been attacked, and the fourth deputy director was shot to death. Information was leaked from the National Intelligence Service, so your acquaintances may be in danger as well. Also...

Kim Hyung-Jung, who was speaking quite fast, suddenly paused.

“Go on,” Kang Chan said.

- One of the agents guarding the apartment complex’s perimeter has reported suspicious activity in the area. I know it will be quite uncomfortable for you all, but I suggest staying with the agents today or moving to a hotel.

Damn it, Wui Min-Gook! Can’t I at least relax on a Saturday and eat some chicken in peace?

Kang Chan almost cursed out loud. Fortunately, he managed to grit his teeth together before he could.

- I advise you to persuade your parents and relocate to a hotel, Mr. Kang Chan. We don't know where and how much information was leaked. Only the director and I had clearance to your information, so we were actually able to identify the assistant director as a traitor because he attempted to access your file. In the worst-case scenario, the enemy may have gotten their hands on all the information that we have.

“What about Seok—!” Kang Chan asked before stopping mid-question, almost having disrespectfully said Seok Kang-Ho's full name out loud in front of Kang Dae-Kyung.

- Mr. Seok and his family have been moved to a hotel.

Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook looked at Kang Chan worriedly from where they were sitting on the sofa.

“I'll talk to my parents,” Kang Chan stated with a low sigh before hanging up and taking a seat on the couch.

If someone saw how the agents were standing in front of the curtains, kitchen, and inside the master bedroom, they would probably think that Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook were being threatened.

“North Korea apparently plans to launch a terrorist attack because of the Eurasian Rail. Their goal is to make us give up on the project by targeting me and the people around me,” Kang Chan explained. His heart was thumping nonstop, so he kept glancing at the living room curtains as he spoke.

“You are welcome to stay here, but the agents will be with us the entire time. Why don't you go to a hotel for a night?” Kang Chan asked.

“And you? You'll be coming to the hotel with us, won't you?” Kang Dae-Kyung confirmed.

“Of course. I'll be going with you as well,” Kang Chan reassured him.

“Okay. Let's go, then,” Yoo Hye-Sook said with determination. She was trembling, but she seemed to be trying to endure it better than last time.

“Can I change into something else first?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked.

“I think you should pack a few clothes before we head to the hotel,” Assistant Manager Kim replied in Kang Chan's stead.

A female agent followed Yoo Hye-Sook into the master bedroom.

“I'll just get a change of clothes as well. I'll be out in a minute,” Kang Chan said before heading to his room to pull out a dress shirt and pants. Just then, Assistant Manager Kim quietly stepped into his room. He handed Kang Chan a

gun, magazine, and a silencer. Kang Chan holstered the gun to the right side of his back.

Badum. Badum.

His goddamn heart was still sending him warning signals.

“Do you have extra radios?” Kang Chan asked.

“I do, sir. I will find one and bring it to your room,” Assistant Manager Kim replied. He then headed out to the living room and soon returned with a radio set. Kang Chan put the earpiece into his left ear and hung the radio on the left side of his back. He tried to cover the lumps around his waist with a jacket, but it didn't help much.

“What about our transportation?” Kang Chan asked.

“We have prepared two vans in the underground parking lot,” Assistant Manager Kim responded.

Kang Chan nodded and walked out toward the living room, where he saw Yoo Hye-Sook and Kang Dae-Kyung carrying mid-sized travel suitcases.

The atmosphere was beyond tense. Kang Dae-Kyung looked as if he was trying to stay brave, while Yoo Hye-Sook already appeared to be completely terrified.

Kang Chan went to the sofa and turned the TV off.

“Do you think you can go?” Kang Chan asked worriedly.

“Yes, we can do it,” Kang Dae-Kyung replied, pretending not to notice the earpiece in Kang Chan's ear.

Kang Chan gestured to an agent with his eyes, and the agent stepped forward to carry their luggage for them. Kang Chan then put his shoes on.

Crackle.

“Status on the hallways,” he then spoke into the mouthpiece.

Crackle.

“All appears to be clear,” the assistant manager immediately replied through the radio.

Badum. Badum.

Kang Chan's heart warned him crazily not to let his guard down. Was it the stairs? Or the elevator?

Beep.

The moment he opened the front door, they were greeted by agents wearing formal black attire from top to bottom. Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook looked absolutely stunned now.

Ding!

Kang Chan met eyes with the agent who pressed the elevator button.

“We’re taking the stairs,” he declared, having decided against taking the elevator. Whenever his heart beat a mile a minute like this, it was best to avoid anything that made him even the tiniest bit anxious.

“We’re using the stairs! Get moving!” Assistant Manager Kim ordered, and the agents rushed about to surround Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook. They were standing guard all the way up to two floors up and two floors down, protecting them from all angles.

A glance was enough for Kang Chan to immediately notice that at least twenty agents were dispatched.

“Haah! Haah!”

Yoo Hye-Sook’s nervous and surprised breathing came out in rough puffs of air. The loud tapping of footsteps that echoed as they walked through the quiet staircase made them even more nervous.

Some of the agents descended first and blocked off each of the floors’ doors before Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook walked passed it.

It was a wonder how they managed to climb down intact.

Badum. Badum. Badum. Badum.

Kang Chan’s heart thumped even crazier the moment they stepped into the underground lot.

Vroom!

“Get a move on! What about the security on the perimeter?” Kang Chan asked.

Two vans came rushing toward them, and the agents began to approach the vehicles with Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook sandwiched between them.

What the fuck is it? What’s the problem? What the hell is causing this suffocating warning?

“What about the security of the vans?” Kang Chan asked, feeling quite tense.

“Two vans are waiting on standby near the exit of the parking lot, sir,” Assistant Manager Kim stiffly answered, making his nervousness evident.

If so, then there should be no problem. Kang Chan was told that Seok Kang-Ho was already at a hotel, and his own family was about to head there now, so what was the issue?

Badum. Badum. Badum. Badum.

His heart sent him one last warning that danger was right beneath his nose. What was it? What did he miss?

Throughout his entire life, his heart rarely raced so fast.

Is it on the way to the hotel?

Just as Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook stepped into the vehicle, two agents dropped to the ground following the sound of two gunshots.

Pew! Pew! Thud! Thud!

“Get going!” Kang Chan shouted through gritted teeth.

The car doors were still open.

Pew! Thud! Pew! Whoosh!

An agent protecting the van fell to the ground, and sparks flew from the car.

Creak!

The van parked behind them rapidly accelerated forward to block the direction where the bullets were coming from.

“I said get going!” Kang Chan shouted.

Vroom! Creak!

“Channy!”

The van began to move. Kang Chan ran beside it, holding the door on the driver’s side. There was no knowing what else could pop out, so he stayed on alert.

“Shut the doors!” Kang Chan commanded.

The agent inside closed the sliding doors.

Kang Chan’s right shin was in so much pain that he felt as if it was going to be torn apart. However, he couldn’t stop.

Pew! Whoosh! Swish! Swish!

Bullets ricocheted throughout the lot.

He knew he would break Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook’s hearts if they saw him limping, but he could never move away from the car. The glass was too thick for him to see inside, but Yoo Hye-Sook was probably watching Kang Chan at that moment.

Creak!

A screech rang through the apartment complex’s parking lot as the van took a sharp turn.

Vroom.

On the way toward the exit, they saw vans with their hazard lights flashing and about four agents standing around them.

“Go!” Kang Chan ordered.

One of the vans immediately began to drive off. A van followed behind it.

Chapter 170.2: We’re Okay (1)

After confirming that the vehicles left the complex, Kang Chan turned around to look elsewhere. The agent who brought him the phone this morning at the coffee shop and around five other agents were standing next to the van.

“It’s dangerous down in the lot!” Kang Chan said.

“The manager asks that you get to safety for now and to leave this to the agents!”

Really? Even though there’s a shoot-out happening underground right now?!

Kang Chan frowned and began to head for the parking lot. Just then, he was interrupted by the crackle of the radio.

“The underground parking lot has been secured. I repeat. The underground parking lot has been secured. All agents should hold their current positions.”

An urgent announcement was made over the radio.

There was no way they would lie about something like this. Kang Chan thought that it was a good idea that his parents left for the hotel ahead of him.

“Please connect me to Manager Kim Hyung-Jung,” Kang Chan requested.

An agent pressed the call button on his phone and then handed the phone to Kang Chan.

- Kim Hyung-Jung speaking.

“Manager Kim, my parents are now on their way to a hotel, and the shoot-out is now under control, but my guts are still telling me something bad is going to happen. Is the president in a safe place right now?” Kang Chan asked anxiously.

- Unfortunately, I have no idea either, Mr. Kang Chan. However, an emergency order has been given to the president’s security detail, so I’m sure Section Chief Jeon has taken all the necessary measures as well.

Hearing that finally made Kang Chan feel a bit relieved.

- Mr. Kang Chan, you should also head to a hotel now. You should stay there for now so you can observe the situation from a safe place before making a move.

Kim Hyung-Jung’s suggestion was reasonable as well.

“I understand. I’ll be taking the agents who are here with me, then,” Kang Chan replied.

After hanging up, Kang Chan glanced around the complex once more and told the agents that they should head to a hotel for now.

Their group consisted of three vans. Kang Chan rode in the van in the middle of the convoy.

The fastest way to put a stop to this issue would be to quickly get rid of Wui Min-Gook. The lunatic, whom not even China could hold by the reins, was currently running free in South Korea.

What if he’s after Ambassador Lanok again?

The chances of that were slim, though. Their enemies were already short on manpower, having dispatched their agents to multiple operations. Moreover, Lanok's security was tighter than ever since he got kidnapped.

Are they targeting Smithen, then?

Kang Chan couldn't help but worry.

"Go to Samseong-Dong," Kang Chan ordered. He would much rather stay with Kim Hyung-Jung at the office than pace back and forth on the floor of a hotel all night. The car turned around to go to where Kim Hyung-Jung was.

It was already past midnight, so the roads were fortunately empty.

As soon as they arrived, the agents protecting the building guided them down to the underground parking lot. Once they were parked, Kang Chan went up to the fifth floor.

Click.

The agent who opened the door for them also opened Kim Hyung-Jung's office for Kang Chan.

"Welcome, Mr. Kang Chan," Kim Hyung-Jung greeted.

Kim Hyung-Jung had been looking at the map of Seoul spread out in front of him.

As Kang Chan took a seat, Kim Hyung-Jung's phone began to ring. The latter picked it up.

"Yes. Good work. Hang on a moment," he commanded.

Kim Hyung-Jung put the receiver down and looked at Kang Chan.

"I just received confirmation that your parents have reached their hotel room. Would you like to talk to them?" Kim Hyung-Jung asked.

"Yes, thank you," Kang Chan responded.

Kim Hyung-Jung ordered the agent on the phone to give the phone to one of Kang Chan's parents, then handed the receiver to Kang Chan.

"Hello?" Kang Chan answered.

- Channy!

Yoo Hye-Sook sounded as if she was crying.

"You arrived at the hotel safely, I hope?" Kang Chan asked.

- We're completely fine! What about you, Channy? Are you okay? Where are you?

"I'm at the building where the agents are. It's safer here than the hotel since this is also where your security guards stay," Kang Chan clarified.

-Really? You're not just saying that to make us feel better, are you?"

Kang Chan was so tense from nervousness that his chest felt tight. Even though he was listening to Yoo Hye-Sook's voice, his mood didn't get alleviated.

"Yes, mother. I'm really fine. Don't worry, okay?" Kang Chan reassured her.

He persuaded and comforted her for a while before Yoo Hye-Sook hung up the phone.

"Can I have Seok Kang-Ho come over here?" Kang Chan asked Kim Hyung-Jung.

"I'll ask right now," Kim Hyung-Jung replied.

Kim Hyung-Jung dialed another number. The agent who picked up the call said he would arrive with Seok Kang-Ho in about five minutes.

"Our enemies are probably done for the day. They launched a total of six attacks on us and managed to kill the fourth deputy director and injured two agents. We were as alert as we have always been, but the enemies seemed to be aware of our agents' movements," Kim Hyung-Jung stated darkly.

Kang Chan scanned the map. Kim Hyung-Jung had marked some parts of it in red.

"The attacks were pretty much like guerrilla warfare," Kang Chan grimly remarked.

"I didn't expect them to provoke us to this extent," Kim Hyung-Jung agreed.

"They probably have a base somewhere, then."

"Our special forces team is already on their way to the Hwarang Mountains on the island of Daebudo. The Chinese government was the one who provided us with this intel. Since you're injured and didn't have time to join, they left without you," Kim Hyung-Jung answered.

It was regretful, but it wasn't as if Kang Chan could insist on going on every single operation.

"What about the suspicious activity that was reported at the apartment complex?"

"We are still analyzing the camera footage. At worst, all the information leaked about you will be crucial intel related to the operations we launched that you were a part of. However, as far as we know, your apartment, your parents' workplaces, and information about Mr. Seok Kang-Ho were the only ones that have been leaked," Kim Hyung-Jung replied.

Kang Chan let out a low sigh. His heart was no longer beating as fast.

He took in a huge breath and bit on a cigarette.

Click.

Just as he was lighting it up, the doors opened, and Seok Kang-Ho walked in.

“Welcome, Mr. Seok. I’m sorry for what happened. Your family must have been taken by surprise,” Kim Hyung-Jung apologized.

“They’re fine now. The room that you provided us was so luxurious and I ordered them tons of food from room service. I also promised them that we would eat something tasty tomorrow, so they have already calmed down,” Seok Kang-Ho responded good-naturedly.

Seok Kang-Ho nodded at Kang Chan in greeting and pulled out a cigarette for himself.

“Are your parents all right, Cap?” he asked Kang Chan.

“So you heard already?” Kang Chan answered with surprise.

“They told me on the way here,” Seok Kang-Ho replied.

Kang Chan told him that he had already talked to his parents over the phone.

“Did that bastard Wui Min-Gook do this?” Seok Kang-Ho asked afterward.

“We haven’t been able to confirm that yet, but we are already analyzing camera footage, so we should be able to get our hands on some leads soon,” Kim Hyung-Jung replied.

Kim Hyung-Jung leaned back in his chair and let out a long sigh.

“What’s wrong? You think something’s going to happen?” Seok Kang-Ho asked Kang Chan, having the latter’s eyes and expression.

“I’m having a bad feeling about this,” Kang Chan responded gruffly.

“Hm! I wonder what else could be out there,” Seok Kang-Ho mused to himself.

Hearing Seok Kang-Ho’s words, Kim Hyung-Jung got up.

“If that is what your gut is telling you, Mr. Kang Chan, then we can’t let our guard down. Fortunately, the high officials of the National Intelligence Service have already doubled their security, and both of your families have been moved to a hotel. The president’s security detail is on high alert as well. At the moment, I can’t think of anything else that we’re missing,” Kim Hyung-Jung said.

Kang Chan nodded. Since he wasn’t running an operation right now, there was nothing he could do either.

“Maybe it’s because your parents were attacked?” Seok Kang-Ho questioned.

“I’m not sure. I don’t know what to think,” Kang Chan responded.

His right shin throbbed rhythmically, seemingly trying to match his heartbeat.

Ring. Ring. Ring.

“Kim Hyung-Jung speaking. Ah, I see,” Kim Hyung-Jung answered. He extended his arm to pick up the phone from his desk, then spun his wheeled chair toward his workspace. “Yes, good work, sir.”

The sound of him setting the phone down seemed louder due to tension in the room.

“They said they didn’t discover anything in the Hwarang Mountains. The Third Airborne Forces will be examining the area for a little while longer before retreating,” Kim Hyung-Jung stated.

“If so, then our enemies are probably already somewhere in Seoul. Has China figured out how many we’re up against yet?” Kang Chan asked.

“We have not received any information about that yet,” Kim Hyung-Jung replied.

“Ugh. That sucks,” Seok Kang-Ho grumbled, guessing what they were talking about. He poured half of Kang Chan’s coffee into an empty cup.

It was already almost one o’clock. Unless the enemies were out of their minds, they wouldn’t launch another guerilla attack at this time. However, starting Sunday, everyone would have to be so alert that it would seem as if they were constantly walking on thin ice.

Kang Chan glared at the map on the desk.

There was still a small piece of discomfort that he couldn’t shake off.

It wasn’t as if the president would be strolling in the streets alone during this time. Who could be in danger this Saturday—no, this Sunday morning?

Feeling quite tired, Kang Chan rubbed his face and took a sip of his coffee.

Ring. Ring. Ring.

After a while, the phone on the desk began to ring again.

“Kim Hyung-Jung speaking,” Kim Hyung-Jung answered, then quickly glanced at Kang Chan.

“Good work, all of you,” Kim Hyung-Jung said with an upset expression. He then put the phone down. “Three of the agents who were shot underground have passed away. Two of the enemies were killed at the site, and they are currently searching the opposite rooftop building.”

Kang Chan gritted his teeth.

Wui Min-Gook, that son of a bitch!