

Blackfield 171

Chapter 171.1: We're Okay (2)

Kang Chan just wanted to have chicken with his family, but their Saturday ended up becoming a mess instead.

It was already late at night. Kim Hyung-Jung couldn't clock out for the night and go home due to the situation, but he also couldn't stay in his office.

"We'll go to the hotel," Kang Chan said.

"Alright. I'll contact you immediately if the situation changes," Kim Hyung-Jung responded.

"What should we do about the weapons?"

Kim Hyung-Jung hesitated for a moment. "You two should have weapons and National Intelligence Service IDs with you. If needed, I can give you belt holsters that you can strap around your waist."

Kang Chan looked at Seok Kang-Ho, unable to respond right away.

If they carried guns around, their families would inevitably find out about it. If something were to go wrong, then even others, including those at the coffee shop, could notice it as well. Carrying guns around in South Korea was not normal, so it could cause a lot of problems. If word got out about them on the internet, then things would be even harder to sort out.

"Others will likely notice that we have guns on our waists. It's much better to have them on our ankles instead," Kang Chan said.

"Good idea."

Kim Hyung-Jung went to his desk and found two ankle holsters. Seok Kang-Ho and Kang Chan took out the pistol on their waists and holstered them, returning the silencers. They also strapped two spare magazines on their other ankle.

"It'll be best for your parents to stay at the hotel for now," Kim Hyung-Jung told Kang Chan afterward.

"I'll have them do that."

"It would be dangerous for them to go to work for about a week. If they have to go out, they should use the van that we'll provide."

"What about my daughter? She has school," Seok Kang-Ho asked.

"How about your wife and daughter go abroad for about a week? We'll say that it's a field trip. That will give you the time and space you need to come here and help out," Kim Hyung-Jung suggested.

What was there for Seok Kang-Ho to help out in this office? Kim Hyung-Jung's suggestion wasn't bad, though.

"Will they have security abroad?" Kang Chan asked.

“They’ll be safer overseas, considering we don’t even know what Wui Min-Gook is up to. A week should be enough for us to check the CCTV footage.”

“My family doesn’t have passports,” Seok Kang-Ho said.

Kim Hyung-Jung smiled instead of answering.

“Let’s have our families go abroad—I’ll tell my parents as well. I’ll feel better with them out of the country instead of in a hotel. We have agents in the Foundation and my father’s company, so they will still be running seamlessly,” Kang Chan said.

“Sure. My family was so surprised, though, so I’m not sure if they’ll be willing to go without me,” Seok Kang-Ho replied.

“Let’s just talk to them about it for now.”

“Let’s have another cigarette before we leave,” Seok Kang-Ho suggested. Since he already picked a cigarette up, they all smoked first.

“You can’t go home, can you?” Kang Chan asked Kim Hyung-Jung.

“I didn’t expect a cot to be this useful.”

The cold coffee and cigarettes seemed to be comforting them for their long day.

“Have you had dinner yet?” Kang Chan asked Kim Hyung-Jung.

“I had a sandwich.”

“Why would you eat something like that instead of delicious jjampong?” Seok Kang-Ho abruptly grumbled.

“Things were hectic, so that was all I could eat. I threw it out after eating about half of it. Should I order you a jjampong though, Mr. Seok Kang-Ho?”

“We can still order right now?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

This was a conversation between Kim Hyung-Jung, who basically skipped dinner, and Seok Kang-Ho, who was always hungry. They both looked at Kang Chan, their eyes showing the answer to Seok Kang-Ho’s question.

“Please go ahead. It’s been a while since we’ve had a midnight snack,” Kang Chan answered.

Kim Hyung-Jung brought his phone to his ear.

Three agents died in the basement of his apartment, yet they were ordering jjampong. The battles in Africa and Seoul were no different.

They had to eat and sleep whenever they could. That way, they could maintain their condition for the next battle.

There were times when little things like this decided whether one lived or died in an emergency.

The jjampong arrived in less than ten minutes.

Kang Chan ate as he thought about visiting the damn Chinese restaurant someday.

“Wow! This is really amazing!” Seok Kang-Ho exclaimed. He would definitely say something like that again at breakfast tomorrow at the hotel.

They ate in moderation, then had coffee and smoked cigarettes again.

“We’ll be going now. You should get even just a bit of sleep. Do you want to go to the hotel with us?” Kang Chan asked Kim Hyung-Jung.

“I’m comfortable here. I still have to keep an eye on the situation, after all.”

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho said goodbye to Kim Hyung-Jung and left his office. They then went to the basement parking lot and got in the van that the agents prepared for them.

“Is this window bulletproof?” Seok Kang-Ho asked as he knocked on the window.

The agent in the passenger seat answered with a “yes.”

“Do you think Huh Ha-Soo is behind the attack in the underground parking lot?” Seok Kang-Ho asked Kang Chan.

“I do. Hearing Huh Hang-Soo was arrested in China probably angered Huh Ha-Soo so much that he’s no longer in his right mind. There’s no reason for Wui Min-Gook to listen to Huh Ha-Soo, though, so it’s hard to just conclude that he’s behind it.”

“That’s true.”

“Make sure you comfort your family. Your daughter must’ve been shocked.”

“Ugh. I can’t believe this happened just as she was taking an interest in studying.”

Kang Chan couldn’t help but smirk. He was not used to Seok Kang-Ho acting like this. Anyway, as Kang Chan expected, they were heading to the Namsan Hotel. That was fine, though. After all, no place was as safe as the Namsan Hotel from ambushes since it didn’t have any tall buildings around it.

It was already dawn, so it did not take them long to reach the hotel’s basement parking lot. They were given key cards as they got in the elevator.

“Why am I the only one getting two rooms?” Kang Chan asked the agents.

“We assumed that it would be uncomfortable for you to sleep with your parents.”

They weren’t wrong. They were at a hotel, after all.

“Great thinking. I feel uncomfortable sleeping in the same room as my daughter as well, so I’ll sleep in that room later too. What’s your parents’ room number?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“Nineteen-o-three,” an agent quickly answered in Kang Chan’s stead.

“I’ll take room nineteen-o-five, then,” Seok Kang-Ho commented.

Seok Kang-Ho’s room was on the seventeenth floor, and Kang Chan’s was on the nineteenth.

“I’ll see you in a bit,” Seok Kang-Ho told Kang Chan.

The two agents in the elevator with them followed Seok Kang-Ho out.

When the elevator reached the nineteenth floor, Kang Chan saw an agent in a suit waiting in front of it.

Kang Chan walked along the hallway and headed to their room.

“We’re on standby in the room across from here,” the agent said.

“Thanks. You did great.”

Kang Chan pressed the key card on the scanner and opened the door.

“Channy!” Yoo Hye-Sook exclaimed.

Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook were sitting in the living room.

“Have you guys slept yet?” Kang Chan asked.

“I can’t sleep,” Yoo Hye-Sook responded. She looked at Kang Chan’s feet as he approached them.

“The incident earlier must have shocked both of you.”

“Your mom is handling this a lot better though, isn’t she?” Kang Dae-Kyung commented.

“You always tease me!” Yoo Hye-Sook exclaimed.

Kang Chan was sure that Kang Dae-Kyung was also very surprised, but he seemed to be trying hard to be Kang Chan’s support.

“Do you guys want some tea?” Kang Chan asked.

“Sure. We already had a cup of green tea because your mom was shaking so much, but we can’t sleep anyway, so we might as well have another.”

“Please let me make it for you.” Kang Chan tried to stop him, but Kang Dae-Kyung insisted on standing up. Since Yoo Hye-Sook walked right along with him, they all made tea. They then sat on the sofa.

“Huh? Mother seems sleepy,” Kang Chan commented.

“Looking at you puts me at ease,” Yoo Hye-Sook said.

“Then please sleep—I’ll sleep in the room next door.”

“You got another room?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“I won’t be alone—they said that I have to be with an agent.”

How would Kang Chan explain to his parents if they ran into Seok Kang-Ho in this situation? He only actually said that he would be with an agent to prevent Kang Dae-Kyung from coming into his room.

“If you press the extension number, then I’ll answer the call from the room right next door. I’ll be going to the French embassy tomorrow, but let’s have breakfast before I leave. I also need to pick up my phone,” Kang Chan said.

Little by little, Kang Chan’s parents began looking calmer while sitting with him.

“Father,” Kang Chan called.

Kang Dae-Kyung looked at Kang Chan with eyes that asked, ‘What’s wrong?’

“I’m afraid you will have to stay here and be closely guarded for about a week, but you can also go on a trip to France and visit Gong Te automobile instead.”

“A trip?”

“Yes. They estimate this whole situation to last about a week. It could end a little bit earlier, but they also said that it could take longer than that,” Kang Chan explained.

Kang Dae-Kyung looked at Yoo Hye-Sook while exhaling softly.

“What about you?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“I will have to stay here.”

“Is that because you’re the one being targeted?” Kang Dae-Kyung prodded.

“That’s not exactly accurate. They also attacked the Director and the executives of the National Intelligence Service, so the main goal behind their aggression is probably to disturb the Eurasian Rail.”

Kang Dae-Kyung asked a couple more questions, and Kang Chan patiently answered them all.

“This doesn’t feel as real as the last incident, perhaps because I never expected people would openly shoot each other in this country...” Kang Dae-Kyung discreetly examined Yoo Hye-Sook’s mood. He seemed to suddenly remember that she didn’t know about him witnessing the knife fight in Yongin.

“The last incident? Honey—did something else happen to you aside from this?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“I’m talking about what happened in the Foundation office and our office in Kang Yoo Motors. You were much more surprised when that happened.”

“Ah, you’re right. I was so shocked when I saw Channy pounce on people right in front of me mainly because that was my first time seeing him do that.” Yoo Hye-Sook shuddered, seemingly finding the incident far too horrible to think about.

“Please go to bed now—we can talk about the rest tomorrow during breakfast,” Kang Chan suggested.

“Okay! Go to your room and get some sleep as well. You must be tired. Is this a safe place, though?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked.

“There are agents in the room across from ours.”

“We heard the gunshots earlier. Was anyone hurt?”

Kang Chan decided to lie as he picked up his teacup. “Three suffered minor injuries, but I heard everyone’s okay.”

“That’s a relief.”

“It is. Now, please go to sleep.”

Kang Chan left the room afterward. He locked eyes with the agent at the end of the hallway, then entered the room next door.

Damn it!

Kang Chan could hear Seok Kang-Ho snoring.

Kang Chan washed up lightly and went into the bedroom. He then took a pillow and a blanket from the bed and laid down on the sofa.

So many incidents were happening that they seemed to be waiting for their turn in a long line. It would’ve been really nice if Kang Chan’s guts kept giving him warning signals that felt as if something was holding the back of his neck.

Chapter 171.2: We’re Okay (2)

When Kang Chan woke up in the morning, the first thing he saw was the droplets of water on the window. As soon as he sat up, the gentle autumn rain came into view.

He yawned, stood up, and stretched.

According to the clock on the desk at the corner of the living room, it was only six in the morning.

Kang Chan thought he should let Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook sleep a bit more. He took out a bottle of water from the fridge and drank it, then went into the bathroom lightly washed his face.

“Huh? Why did you sleep in the living room?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“It was just more comfortable to sleep here.”

“Was I snoring that loud?”

“Not loud enough for me to kill you.”

Seok Kang-Ho grinned, then drank water. After a while, he went into the bathroom in the living room even though the bedroom that he slept in had its own bathroom.

“Let’s order coffee,” Seok Kang-Ho said afterward.

“Sure.”

Seok Kang-Ho ordered for them. Afterward, they wore their earpieces and sat on the sofa in just their pants and shirtsleeves.

“My wife and daughter want to go to Australia. I told them that South Korea was sending them on a trip to compensate for what happened a while back. They looked like they didn’t believe me, but since they couldn’t verify what I said, they just accepted it for now. What about your parents?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“I don’t know what they think yet since I had to keep our conversation yesterday about it short. It’s Sunday today, right? That means we have some extra time.”

Ding dong.

The doorbell rang.

Chk.

“We checked the coffee.” At the same time, they heard an agent on the radio.

Seok Kang-Ho opened the door after checking who it was through the peephole.

A metal carafe and coffee cups had been delivered to them.

When the server left, Seok Kang-Ho poured two cups of coffee.

Chk.

“Any of you want some coffee?” Kang Chan asked.

Chk.

“We have a lot here, sir,” someone answered.

Chk.

“We shouldn’t have ordered this much, then!”

All of the agents in the hotel heard the conversation with Kang Chan through the radio. There was laughter at the end of his sentence.

The coffee and cigarettes fully awakened their senses. At around half past seven, they headed back to their respective rooms.

Kang Chan pressed the doorbell. Kang Dae-Kyung opened the door soon after.

“Did you get enough sleep?” Kang Chan asked.

“Phew, I thought I wouldn’t be able to sleep, but I slept like a rock. Your mom is still in the shower. Did you get some sleep?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked.

“Yes.”

Kang Dae-Kyung turned on the news channel on TV. Kang Chan sat on the sofa with him.

“It looks like your mom finds it hard to go abroad because you’re not going. A lot of other things seem to be bothering her as well,” Kang Dae-Kyung said.

“If so, then just stay at the hotel with me. I only suggested going to France because living here for an entire week might be uncomfortable for you two. We’re not in enough danger to force yourselves to go on a trip.”

“Can we really just stay here?”

While Kang Chan was talking with Kang Dae-Kyung, Yoo Hye-Sook came out to the living room looking quite haggard.

“Did you get some sleep?” Kang Chan asked Yoo Hye-Sook.

“I did, Channy. I feel heavy, though.”

“That’s probably because it rained. Let’s have a delicious breakfast, then you should just get some rest for the rest of the day.

“Here?”

“Just consider this as our family staying in an international hotel.”

Yoo Hye-Sook seemed to like Kang Chan’s cheekiness.

“Let’s order something delicious for breakfast. You should try the sauna while I’m meeting the Ambassador of France. I heard the hotel’s fitness club is quite amazing,” Kang Chan continued.

“Sure! That sounds great. I was also thinking of working out anyway,” Kang Dae-Kyung said.

Kang Dae-Kyung then held up the menu in the room. “Honey! It’s been a while since we had an American-style breakfast. We should try it. It comes with toast, juice, and coffee. What do you think?”

“There’s also a breakfast buffet downstairs,” Kang Chan added.

“Since it’s raining, let’s just order food and eat in our room. Whenever I ate toast alone in the hotels I stayed in during business trips, I would often think about how nice it would be if you or your mom were there with me.”

They followed Kang Dae-Kyung’s strong wishes to have an American-style breakfast in their room. The meal that they ordered soon arrived.

They ate their breakfast while watching the autumn rain pour down on the living room window. When Yoo Hye-Sook drank coffee after breakfast, she finally looked like she could breathe again. Meanwhile, Kang Dae-Kyung appeared to be enjoying himself. He was even pestering his wife to go with him to the fitness center and the sauna. He really seemed to be on vacation.

Kang Dae-Kyung was trying hard to console Yoo Hye-Sook, who experienced quite the shock, while also trying to make Kang Chan feel comfortable.

“You’re going to meet the Ambassador of France today, right?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked.

“Yes.”

“Then you should go while it’s still early. We’ll just watch TV for a bit before going to the fitness center to exercise.”

“Will the two of you be okay?”

“Of course.”

With Kang Dae-Kyung urging him, Kang Chan stood up. He had to comfort Yoo Hye-Sook a few times first because of how worried she was before he could finally leave the room.

Click.

After Kang Chan left, Kang Dae-Kyung made green tea and brought it over to Yoo Hye-Sook, who was sitting on the sofa.

“You’re very worried, aren’t you?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked.

“Of course I am, honey. We saw him yesterday—I could feel my heart breaking while I was watching him run next to the car with a limp.”

“So that’s why you tossed and turned so much all night?”

“You couldn’t sleep either?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“I also felt the same way. How could I comfortably fall asleep after watching our son suffer like that?”

Yoo Hye-Sook looked at Kang Dae-Kyung. Her eyes showed how bad she felt for him.

“We promised each other last time, didn’t we? We said that we would watch Channy grow up. And we decided to accept that he’s a bit different from the other kids.” Kang Dae-Kyung held Yoo Hye-Sook’s hand. “Let’s have a good time in the hotel even if we have to force ourselves to, okay? That will make Channy feel a bit more comfortable when he comes back in the evening.”

“Thanks, honey.”

“For what?”

“For being so understanding whenever I feel anxious and for always understanding our extraordinary son. I seem to be complaining too much even though I know you’re having a hard time as well. Thank you, and I’m sorry, honey.”

In response, Kang Dae-Kyung wrapped his arm around Yoo Hye-Sook’s shoulder while tightly holding her hand.

Seok Kang-Ho was always early.

By the time Kang Chan went into the room next door, Seok Kang-Ho already poured himself some coffee and was smoking a cigarette.

“Welcome back. I reheated the coffee,” Seok Kang-Ho said.

Their morning felt so peaceful that Kang Chan wondered if they could return home if things kept going at this rate.

After drinking coffee, Kang Chan radioed an agent to bring over a phone. He found it uncomfortable to call Lanok using the hotel’s corded telephone. When Kang Chan called Lanok, Lanok immediately said that they should meet at the Namsan Hotel. Hence, Kang Chan now had an extra hour to himself.

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho sat around and talked about multiple matters.

Ring. Ring.

After a while, the phone in the room rang. Kang Chan answered it.

- The Ambassador has arrived. Please head to room eighteen-ten.

“I’m on my way.”

When Kang Chan stood up, Seok Kang-Ho said, “Make sure to bring back our phones.”

“If they didn’t find our phones, then let’s just buy new ones.”

Not having their phones was very inconvenient.

Kang Chan went down to the eighteenth floor and found a French agent waiting for him in front of the elevator. As the French agent guided him to the ambassador’s room, he noticed so many agents that he began to wonder if he was in a hotel or the headquarters of an intelligence bureau.

“Mr. Kang Chan.” Lanok gave Kang Chan a French greeting.

Now that Kang Chan thought about it, this was his first time meeting the ambassador since the operation in China.

Lanok guided Kang Chan to the sofa. An aide whom Kang Chan hadn’t seen before prepared tea, cigarettes, and cigars for them, then retreated into a room.

“Mr. Kang Chan, our intelligence bureau has now been sorted out, albeit barely. Throughout China’s long history, they had numerous forces fight to come into

power. That's why their intelligence bureau is extremely developed. Considering they're geographically close to South Korea, they probably have a good number of agents in this country as well," Lanok explained.

"Actually, something happened."

Lanok nodded as he was pouring out tea for him, which meant that he was already aware of the incident. "Although Yang Bum is now the head of their intelligence bureau, he's still in a precarious situation, and his foundation still isn't stable. He still requires quite a bit of time to completely come into power."

Kang Chan had a sip of the tea as Lanok stated the obvious. Lanok then held up a cigar, and Kang Chan bit on a cigarette.

Kang Chan was spending time with a very powerful ally that he could completely trust.

"Mr. Kang Chan, how about you take a step back from this incident?" Lanok asked.

Kang Chan lit up his cigarette as he silently waited for Lanok to continue.

"South Korea's National Intelligence Service can take care of this level of threat by themselves. That's why I can't help but wonder if it would be best for you to take a step back and use this time to receive training."

"What kind of training do you have in mind?" Kang Chan asked.

"Observe every country's intelligence bureau, specifically Germany, Switzerland, Russia, and France. That will prove quite helpful in the future you will live in. During that period, you will only ever meet important figures."

Will I really need that?

Kang Chan couldn't decide.

"It will be beneficial for South Korea's National Intelligence Service as well," Lanok added.

Is he telling me to work for the National Intelligence Service?

Kang Chan didn't like Lanok's second suggestion either.

Chapter 172.1: Let's Go by Temperament (1)

"The Eurasian Rail is a complicated project. Starting this October, Saudi Arabia will be producing ten times more oil," Lanok informed Kang Chan.

Kang Chan just blankly looked at him.

Lanok seemed to be telling him that people were trying to prevent the construction of the railway, but what did oil production have anything to do with it? Kang Chan didn't see any connection between the two.

"It means they are attempting to bring down Russia's economy," Lanok added.

“Will Russia’s economy really fall just because Saudi Arabia started producing a lot more petroleum?” Kang Chan wondered, genuinely unable to not understand what Lanok meant. He wasn’t embarrassed or ashamed, though. Lanok seemed to think that his question was valid anyway.

“Russia is one of the world’s top three oil production countries. If Saudi Arabia sells their petroleum at reduced, bargain prices, Russia’s economy will be shaken so much that the people in power within their country will change. Once they have defeated Russia, Saudi Arabia will raise their fuel prices again,” Lanok explained.

“Can’t Russia just sell their oil at cheap prices as well, then?” Kang Chan asked.

“They certainly can, but Saudi Arabia will last longer in that battle of attrition. Their supply is the world’s greatest. On the other hand, Russia is simply structured in a way that allows it to support its economy despite its limited supply. They will not be able to weather things out.”

“Are you trying to tell me that there’s a connection between Saudi Arabia producing a lot of oil and my training at an intelligence agency, Mr. Ambassador?”

Lanok smiled from ear to ear, causing the ends of his eyes to curve.

“That is indeed correct. While Saudi Arabia provides an unlimited supply of fuel, the United States will attempt to render South Korea helpless through the dollar. To prevent that, the National Intelligence Service’s incredible potential has to be unlocked,” Lanok said.

Not only oil but dollars too? Kang Chan had no idea what Lanok was saying. This subject was like a thorn in his side.

“They will most likely try to take control of Russia and South Korea first. The only way to solve this is through political negotiations.”

“Isn’t that something for the president or other politicians to solve?” Kang Chan inquired.

“The negotiation between intelligence agencies comes first,” Lanok replied.

“So what you’re ultimately saying is that I have to propose something,” Kang Chan confirmed.

“First and foremost, you have to establish a firm partnership with Russia.”

“With Vasili?”

“Yes.”

Lanok tapped his cigar in the ashtray to shake the ash off.

“To do that, South Korea’s National Intelligence Service requires power. At the very least, they have to be on the same level as Russia’s intelligence agency. Of course, developing an entire organization that much in such a short amount of time is difficult. That’s why a hero is needed during times like this,” Lanok added.

I can’t be a hero just because I led a few successful operations.

Thinking there was probably an actual future hero out there, Kang Chan just chuckled.

“It’s only right that you stand at the forefront of turning the Eurasian Rail into reality. In that process, South Korea will gain actual power. First will be intelligence, then politics, then, lastly, the economy,” Lanok stated.

Lanok’s eyes seemed to be full of hope that Kang Chan would accept.

Kang Chan knew Lanok would never suggest anything that would bring him harm. However, it was also true that Lanok had never pushed anything on him until now.

“Mr. Kang Chan, a battle will soon begin between the countries that will be connected to the Eurasian Rail and the countries that won’t. Of the latter countries, those that have immense financial power will be more proactive during the fight. Saudi Arabia is afraid of Russia and China’s resources being utilized through the Eurasian Rail. China’s connection to the railway will mean a bond with Mongolia,” Lanok informed him.

“And what does Mongolia have to do with this?” Kang Chan asked.

“They’re a repository of minerals.”

Kang Chan felt as if he was in class. He knew all the words that Lanok was saying, but he couldn’t understand a single thing—just like whenever he listened to a math teacher reading a formula.

“The abilities you have shown to the world are the center of attention right now. This is a fight that Russia, France, and Germany won’t be able to do alone. However, with you by our side, the enemies will have no choice but to yield,” Lanok continued.

“You’re the one who planned and actually made the Eurasian Rail happen, Mr. Ambassador,” Kang Chan protested.

“You have become someone whom multiple countries desire to connect with, Mr. Kang Chan,” Lanok rebutted.

“That’s my first time hearing of this.”

“I’m saying that will be the case soon. You asked me what I think you should do before. Consider this my answer to that question,” Lanok stated.

Kang Chan came here trying to set down a burden, but he ended up picking up a few more instead. He was also looking forward to obtaining some information about Wui Min-Gook, but it seemed he would have to suddenly take a tour around the European intelligence agencies instead.

“Now! That’s enough for the complicated talk,” Lanok exclaimed, then turned to the side. “Please bring me the documents and the phones.”

His aide appeared seemingly out of thin air and handed Lanok Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho’s phones and a large paper envelope.

“Here. First off, here are your phones, Mr. Kang Chan,” Lanok said.

Kang Chan used to be too lazy to carry his phone around when he first got it. Now, having it back in his hand made him feel as if he could breathe again.

“Now, I prepared this as an apology for sending you the wrong guide for the operation in China,” Lanok continued.

Kang Chan took the paper envelope from Lanok and pulled out the contents—huge pictures of Wui Min-Gook that filled the envelope to the brim.

In the photos, Wui Min-Gook was standing in front of a gray van parked on the road. Behind the ten or so pictures was a rough map to a certain location.

Kang Chan questioningly gazed at Lanok.

“We deployed three satellites. Our intelligence agency and the DGSE practically dropped everything they were doing to find this man as well. The information from the employee who betrayed us was the most decisive,” Lanok said.

The traitor obviously wouldn’t have truthfully answered their questions, which could only mean that they could not endure the DGSE’s torture.

Lanok was clearly the type to use any means to achieve his goals. There could be no better ally, but if he was an enemy, killing him should be prioritized.

“While you were carrying out the operation in China, he moved his base to Ansan and even stopped by the Chinese embassy,” Lanok stated.

“How could Yang Bum not be aware of that?” Kang Chan asked.

“Yang Bum still hasn’t taken full control in China. The Chinese ambassador is playing a double game as well. Yang Bum being defeated in this scenario will be a decisive turning point.”

With his gaze still firmly on Kang Chan, Lanok continued in a low voice, “La nuit tous les chats sont gris.”

It was a French idiom that translated to “At night, all cats are gray,” which meant that it was difficult to distinguish things in the darkness. He was essentially advising Kang Chan that the situation was so messy that it was difficult to discern who was on their side.

“Thank you for the gift,” Kang Chan gratefully said.

“I heard that the gunshots at the apartment parking lot yesterday were covered up as plumbing issues. Nothing good would come out of it for the current political party if word got out that there was a shootout in the middle of the city, especially since it was so close to Seoul. That matter has to be dealt with delicately,” Lanok stated.

Only Lanok could give him advice like this. Kang Chan thanked him again and sipped some of his tea.

“Mr. Kang Chan.”

When Kang Chan set down his cup and raised his eyes, he found Lanok looking as if he suddenly put a mask on.

“Everyone has a life that they want to live. However, there is surely a difference between what someone wants to do and what someone is good at. I hope you can live a life where you do what you’re good at while enjoying what you want to do as well.”

Their conversation ended with that.

As Lanok stood up, his aides and agents headed out from one of the rooms and opened the door. At the same time, the agents waiting in the hallway stood in attention.

“Let’s meet again once I’ve taken care of Wui Min-Gook,” Kang Chan informed him.

“I’ll be seeing you again soon, then.” Lanok smiled.

Kang Chan accompanied Lanok to the elevator. After seeing him off, he immediately went to the nineteenth floor.

Chk.

“Seok Kang-Ho, can you come to my room?” Kang Chan asked.

Chk.

“I’m already here,” Seok Kang-Ho replied.

The bastard was always a step ahead.

When Kang Chan opened the door, Seok Kang-Ho, who was watching TV, stood up from the sofa.

“Here, your phone,” Kang Chan said.

“Whew! I’m so glad to see this old friend!” Seok Kang-Ho gleefully exclaimed. He immediately looked through his recent calls.

“That gentleman even charged it,” he said in astonishment.

“Yeah. Have a seat,” Kang Chan said.

Kang Chan brought a bottle of water over to the sofa and told Seok Kang-Ho what Lanok told him. He showed him the pictures as well.

“Huh? We shouldn’t be lounging around like this. Let’s go over there right now,” Seok Kang-Ho urged him.

“Let’s call Manager Kim first,” Kang Chan stated.

Kim Hyung-Jung became the first person Kang Chan called after getting his phone back.

- Mr. Kang Chan! You found your phone?

“I have, Manager Kim. There’s something I wish to speak to you about in person. Can you come here?”

- Is it urgent?

“It’s about Wui Min-Gook. I’d prefer it if you don’t tell anyone that you’re coming here,” Kang Chan politely requested.

- I’m on my way.

Kang Chan set the phone down on the table and leaned back on the sofa. The noise coming from the TV seemed to have bothered Seok Kang-Ho, considering he took the remote and turned it off.

This stressful and annoying fight would finally be over once they left for Ansan and eliminated Wui Min-Gook.

Chapter 172.2: Let’s Go by Temperament (1)

Kang Chan had drunk about half the water in his bottle when the bell rang.

I know it’s Sunday, but that was fast.

Chk.

“Mr. Kang Chan. It’s me, Kim Hyung-Jung,” Kim Hyung-Jung radioed just as Kang Chan stood up and walked toward the door. Even then, Kang Chan still confirmed it was him through the peephole before opening the door.

“How did you get here so fast?” Kang Chan asked.

“I have my ways for situations like this,” Kim Hyung-Jung replied, entering the room with redshot eyes.

“Would you like some coffee?” Kang Chan offered.

“Yes, please,” Kim Hyung-Jung gratefully answered.

Seok Kang-Ho brought them some coffee, then sat down on the sofa with them. There was no need to drag things out, so Kang Chan immediately showed Kim Hyung-Jung the pictures and told him everything he heard from Lanok.

“Hmm,” Kim Hyung-Jung mused. He gulped as he glared at the pictures. “We have to take action immediately.”

“My thoughts exactly,” Kang Chan agreed.

Kim Hyung-Jung frowned as he glanced at the map.

“There aren’t many civilians around in this area, but I can’t believe we didn’t think he would be staying in a place like this...” Kim Hyung-Jung trailed off in regret.

“Can we begin the operation now?” Kang Chan asked.

“I’ll just report this directly to the director, then I’ll have the special forces on the way,” Kim Hyung-Jung responded.

“Seok Kang-Ho and I will go as well,” Kang Chan said firmly.

Kim Hyung-Jung let out a low sigh and nodded.

“I’ll take my leave now. I’ll call you as soon as I get an answer from the director,” Kim Hyung-Jung said. He looked extremely tired, but given the situation, Kang Chan couldn’t suggest the man get some rest.

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho saw Kim Hyung-Jung off and then sat back down.

Kang Chan finally felt as if he could breathe again, but a part of him felt bad for the National Intelligence Service and its inadequacies. How could the French intelligence agencies discover an enemy hiding in South Korea before they could?

Kang Chan felt as if the NIS was no different from the special forces team, who had been trained near perfection but hadn’t been able to display their abilities properly.

“How long do you think it’ll take?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“An hour or so, I’m guessing,” Kang Chan remarked.

“Then let’s stop by the other floors for a moment. Shouldn’t we let our families know ahead of time that we’re leaving?” Seok Kang-Ho suggested.

Seok Kang-Ho had a point. Kang Chan nodded and stood up. It was about eleven in the morning.

“What are you going to do about lunch?” Seok Kang-Ho questioned.

“Considering how much time we have left, I’m not really sure,” Kang Chan replied.

They got in the elevator, and two agents followed closely behind them.

“I’m just heading down for a bit. I won’t be long, so you don’t have to come,” Kang Chan told them.

“We are under orders, sir,” an agent responded.

Well, I guess everyone has their roles to play.

Kang Chan didn’t insist any longer. He waited for the agents to get into the elevator before pressing a button.

The fitness center and the swimming pool were on the third floor. Fortunately, they were divided into separate areas, so their families wouldn't run into each other.

"I'll see you later," Seok Kang-Ho greeted as he turned left.

Kang Chan turned right.

"Welcome. Will you be using our center today?" a female employee asked Kang Chan with a smile as she approached him.

"My parents are here. I just stopped by to see them," Kang Chan replied.

"I can escort them here if you point them out to me," the female employee kindly offered.

Kang Chan scanned the area past the glass window, finding multiple people exercising dressed in the same t-shirt and shorts that the hotel provided.

"There they are," Kang Chan said, immediately finding Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook working out on stationary bicycles.

"Just a moment, please." The female employee left to tell Kang Chan's parents. When the female employee walked over and gestured at Kang Chan, Yoo Hye-Sook quickly got off of the bicycle. She looked as if she didn't enjoy the exercise that much.

"Channy!" she exclaimed.

Kang Chan was glad that she kept herself busy with working out, which was evidenced by the beads of sweat on her forehead.

"I think I'm going to have to leave the hotel for a while. We might be able to go home in the evening if things go smoothly." Kang Chan grinned.

"Really?" Yoo Hye-Sook's smile from seeing him soon disappeared and was replaced with worry, however. Just then, Kang Dae-Kyung approached them while wiping the sweat off his face and neck.

"What's going on?" he asked.

"I'll be heading out for a bit," Kang Chan replied.

"Why are you making that face, then, honey?" Kang Dae-Kyung asked Yoo Hye-Sook.

"Well... Channy said we might be able to go back home in the evening... so I can't help but wonder if he will be the one taking care of the problem..." Yoo Hye-Sook trailed off. She seemed worried that Kang Chan was leaving to do something dangerous.

Kang Dae-Kyung turned to Kang Chan with surprised eyes.

Strangely, Kang Chan couldn't bring himself to lie. He should probably say that it was fine and that he would not do anything risky, but he didn't want to make an obvious lie when Yoo Hye-Sook already caught onto the situation.

“What about your leg? Will you be okay?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked, sounding clearly concerned.

“Yes. Oh right, I got my phone back too,” Kang Chan said.

Kang Dae-Kyung nodded.

“All right. Be safe. I'll be having lunch with your mother and staying in the room. Call us as soon as you're done with your business. I'm sure your mom will be worried,” Kang Dae-Kyung requested.

“I will. Don't worry too much, Mother. It's not that dangerous,” Kang Chan reassured her.

Yoo Hye-Sook wanted to hug Kang Chan but hesitated. She seemed conscious of the sweat on her.

Kang Chan smiled and held his arms open, and Yoo Hye-Sook carefully patted his back, cautiously making sure her body didn't touch his.

“Be careful,” she said anxiously.

“I will,” Kang Chan replied.

After bidding them farewell, Kang Chan walked out of the fitness center.

“What about Mr. Seok?” Kang Chan asked.

“He hasn't come out yet,” replied the agent standing by the exit.

It would be awkward for both of them if Seok Kang-Ho came out with his family.

“I'm heading up first. Let me know when he's out,” Kang Chan instructed.

“Yes, sir.”

Kang Chan entered the elevator, and one of the two agents accompanied him. Kang Chan started feeling as if going on operations was natural to him.

The moment he reached his room, his phone began to ring.

Buzz. Buzz. Buzz.

He couldn't have been more glad to get a call.

“Hello?” Kang Chan answered.

- Mr. Kang Chan, the special forces team has left. You can join them at a factory called Samhwa Facility past the Ansan Toll Booth. The special forces team is set to arrive at thirteen hundred. A van has been prepared for you in the underground lot.

“Great. I’ll see them soon,” Kang Chan replied, then called Seok Kang-Ho to inform him.

- I don’t have to go back to the room, then. Let’s leave immediately. I’ll see you in the parking lot, Cap.

“Got it.”

Time was of the essence, so Kang Chan immediately headed to the parking area as well. He hoped this would put an end to this incident. There was still a faint throbbing in his right shin, but although only a day had passed, he could move more comfortably now.

One of the agents sat in the driver’s seat while the other sat in the passenger’s seat. As soon as everyone got in the van, they immediately drove off.

“What are we going to do about lunch?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“We don’t know how heavy the traffic would be over there, so let’s just eat someplace nearby,” Kang Chan responded.

Kang Chan didn’t know if it was allowed because they were in a van or because he didn’t care about getting ticketed, but the agent used the bus-only road upon entering the interstate.

“There’s so much traffic,” Seok Kang-Ho remarked. He was feigning calmness about the situation, but his eyes were glinting in anticipation. “The men are getting one hell of a combat experience. I feel like we’ve been going out in the field more often than in Africa.”

Kang Chan chuckled wryly.

Seok Kang-Ho was right. Not even the Foreign Legion’s special forces had gone on so many operations. After this one was over, Kang Chan hoped things would be quiet for a while. He wanted to enjoy his peace with Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook, who forced nonchalance despite being worried out of their minds for him.

“Just how did they get into Ansan, of all places?” Seok Kang-Ho grumbled.

“Some motherfucker helped them, of course,” Kang Chan responded.

“I think I have a faint idea who that is.”

“Son of a bitch. If he got himself involved in this too, I’m going to twist his neck.”

Seok Kang-Ho grinned in response. The punk was starting to swallow his nervousness again.

They tried to drive as quickly as possible, but there was nothing they could do about the traffic. If they didn’t leave immediately, they likely wouldn’t arrive in time.

It was already forty minutes past noon by the time they got through the Ansan Toll Booth.

“Let’s have some kimbap somewhere,” Kang Chan suggested.

They wouldn’t be able to use their strength if they were hungry. The agent parked the car at a rest area with a gas station and bought some boiled eggs, kimbap, and beverages for them.

“How much further do we have to go?” Kang Chan asked.

“About ten more minutes, sir,” the agent replied.

They were right on time. They finished their lunch in ten minutes and immediately got back in the car.

Buzz. Buzz. Buzz.

As they did, Kang Chan’s phone began to ring. It was a call from a long number.

“Hello?” Kang Chan answered.

- Choi Jong-Il speaking, sir.

Kang Chan laughed in disbelief. Choi Jong-Il sounded like a sick man, but he was still putting up a strong front.

- I just woke up this morning.

“Good. Good work.”

Even the almighty Kang Chan couldn’t bring himself to ask about what happened to Cha Dong-Gyun. Maybe it was because Choi Jong-Il’s voice left him weak.

- I’ll switch you over to Cha Dong-Gyun.

Choi Jong-Il’s voice was listless. He sounded as if he would fall asleep at any moment, but his words were clearer to Kang Chan than any shout. The nurse was probably holding the phone to his ear.

- It’s me, Cha Dong-Gyun, sir.

“You idiot.”

- I apologize.

“Call General Choi too,” Kang Chan ordered.

- I will, sir. Anyway, we’re alive.

There was no way Kang Chan could tell these guys that he was leaving on an operation. Their enemies in China could be listening into their conversation too. Kang Chan hung up and told Seok Kang-Ho about the conversation, making him smile from ear to ear. The agents sitting at the front also looked pleased.

Chapter 173.1: Let’s Go by Temperament (2)

The Samhwa Facility—a makeshift building with a blue roof and white walls made out of panels—was at a higher elevation than the road. The only thing in front of it was a large parking lot.

When the van arrived, a bus that had been parked at the entrance to block it off moved, allowing them to enter. Once the van was inside, the entrance was shut tight again.

“Please come this way,” Kim Hyung-Jung, who had been waiting for them, guided Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho inside the building.

Screech.

When the large door was pushed open, the special forces team inside stood up.

They were no longer beginners at this.

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho put on a gray military uniform, bulletproof vest, balaclava, and helmet. They then armed themselves.

Click. Click.

Kang Chan could never get used to loading magazines onto his gun. After all, one bullet was all it would take to save a person's life.

Kim Hyung-Jung hung a large map on a hanger and pointed to one part of the map. "This is where we are right now."

He then slid his index finger to a red mark. "As you all have probably noticed by now, the area is quite remote, and there's only a low mountain behind the building. Mr. Kang Chan will be taking command of the operation, which we will be starting at fourteen hundred hours sharp. Until then, National Intelligence Service agents will keep the factory under watch."

The soldiers felt a strange sense of relief and excitement.

"Mr. Kang Chan."

Kang Chan stepped forward when Kim Hyung-Jung called him. Before he knew it, he was leading the special forces team.

"I received a call on my way here," Kang Chan looked at the soldiers. "Choi Jong-Il and Cha Dong-Gyun have regained consciousness."

Unable to contain their happiness, the soldiers smiled at each other.

"I studied the topographic map on my way here. Before we begin, we will be splitting into two teams. Those with Seok Kang-Ho will be climbing the mountain and entering the building from behind. My team will be moving along the road and approaching the building from the front. I also have to warn all of you to be careful of one simple factor." Kang Chan glanced at the map, then sharply looked at the men. "If you are burning with too much sense of duty, you'll find yourself moving without thinking. Make sure you don't break the rhythm of your team. The moment any of you lose control of yourself and recklessly charge into danger, you will put not only yourselves but the others at risk as well."

With grim expressions, the soldiers intently listened to Kang Chan. Nobody had ever taught them something like that.

All they were ever taught was how to fire a gun and that they should accomplish their mission no matter what. They never learned anything about rhythm or, to be more precise, how not to break it.

Kang Chan smirked as he looked at the soldiers. He then continued, "Make yourselves comfortable. Lean back against your chairs and stretch your legs out as much as you'd like. Be like Seok Kang-Ho over there."

Screech. Screech.

The members changed postures and relaxed as if they were imitating Seok Kang-Ho.

“Don’t forget about the look in your eyes and your postures right now. Protect the pride of the special forces team. Keep in mind that you all returned alive after blowing up a Chinese airport, so if anyone has to be nervous, it should be Russia, China, and the United Kingdom,” Kang Chan added.

Kwak Cheol-Ho smiled. He had a strange look on his face.

For some reason, Kang Chan was a lot more talkative whenever he was with these people. It was probably because he wanted to teach them as much as he could, even if it was just one more lesson, and because he couldn’t help but feel greedy about saving even just one more of them from injuries.

“What we have to be careful of is the possibility of Wui Min-Gook making himself explode. As soon as you guys find him, kill him immediately. If you think it’s too dangerous to confront him, then prioritize withdrawing away from danger. We will be sending out the snipers as soon as we arrive anyway. Any questions?” Kang Chan asked.

As soon as Kang Chan finished talking, a few of the soldiers smirked.

It seemed there were people who imitated Kang Chan even in this place.

After sending the soldiers on the operation, Choi Seong-Geon parked the jeep in front of the makeshift city and stared blankly in the distance.

Choi Seong-Geon had never acted like this before. He never even thought that he would develop this kind of habit. After all, he didn’t have experience sending his men to actual operations before.

The soldiers’ pride was crushed during the mock battle. They went through live ammo training and, finally, their first operation. Before they knew it, they turned into a special forces team that was constantly sent on missions.

Choi Seong-Geon thought that there was nothing more he could wish for, especially since the special forces team even completely destroyed the Spetsnaz and put an SBS helmet across from his desk as if to show off.

However, humans by nature were difficult to understand.

His men accomplished something great against world-famous special forces, which they were previously envious of, and also completely destroyed a Chinese airport. Nevertheless... he somehow developed a habit of waiting for the soldiers like an old father waiting for his son to return home from the military.

Even just yesterday, he dropped by Cha Dong-Gyun’s house with 1.2 kilograms of beef, drinks, an envelope full of money, and enough snacks to make it seem as if he swept an entire shelf of snacks into his cart at the market.

His wife—who was now used to things like this—was probably talking shit and having a mental rampage, but what could he do? He wanted to see Cha Dong-Gyun and was worried about the man's family.

Choi Seong-Geon had no salary left from being a General. He had spent it all on the families of Cha Dong-Gyun and the two soldiers left in France.

However, he regretted none of his actions. If he did, then he would have already been given a lot more promotions and would be in a completely different position.

'Please wake up, you bastard.'

As a commander of a field army, Choi Seong-Geon pretended as if there was nothing wrong and that he didn't feel anything. However, despite being a commander, he still could not help but hope to see his men return safely.

He wished to send his men to operations not too long ago, but now that his wish had come true, he could not help but feel as if he would not be able to last if all he could do was wait for them.

Ring. Ring. Ring.

After some time, Choi Seong-Geon's phone rang.

Did my wife find out already? Well, she would have received my credit card statements and withdrawal notifications through her phone, so it's not completely unlikely.

Choi Seong-Geon had no choice but to answer the call. Otherwise, his phone would just keep ringing until he answered and the issue that he could have ended with her bullshit would end up growing bigger and leading to her demanding a divorce.

With a frown, Choi Seong-Geon took out his phone and checked the caller ID. He didn't know who was calling him, but the number was long. He picked up the call.

"Hello?"

- General, it's Cha Dong-Gyun.

Choi Seong-Geon felt as if the world just stopped.

- General?

"I hear you."

Choi Seong-Geon couldn't be happier to hear weak laughter over the phone.

- I'm sorry for making you worried.

"Considering you've recovered enough to talk nonsense, I take it your life isn't in danger anymore?"

- You were the one who taught me, so how could I die?

Has this guy always been this cheeky?

"Have you called your family?"

- I'll do that later.

“Give them a call quickly.”

- Alright. I'll call you back.

“That's just bothersome. Make it easier for yourself and just get up quickly and come back here instead.”

- Sir, yes sir!

Choi Seong-Geon hung up, then sighed loudly.

“Phuhuhu.” His strange laughter echoed through the makeshift city.

Chk.

“All the snipers have been deployed,” Seok Kang-Ho radioed in.

Kang Chan examined their target area once more. The mountain at the back was low, and the front was completely open.

The factory was a two-story building with a warehouse attached to it, so it would not be wrong to assume that they would come across armed guards.

Kang Chan gestured to his eyes with his index and middle fingers, then pointed to the balcony on the second floor.

Considering the lack of cover, it would be difficult for Kang Chan and his team to ambush their enemies even under the cover of the night.

The North Korean soldiers' power and popularity in the Middle East and Africa were beyond imagination. They were great hand-to-hand combatants, had good aim, and even had nerves of steel, eliminating their fear of death. If Kang Chan had to point out their weakness, it would be that they were too old-school.

While fighting such soldiers, Kang Chan and his team had to run to an area that was devoid of anything that they could use as cover.

Kang Chan could only sigh softly as he glared at the second floor of the building.

Wui Min-Gook, who was sitting on the sofa, glared at Huh Ha-Soo as if he was going to kill him.

Behind Wui Min-Gook were two men with angular jaws looking at Huh Ha-Soo in the same way. Huh Ha-Soo looked somewhat frightened.

“We had a deal. We even cut off communications with China for it. Pretending as if the deal does not exist now is no different from completely ignoring North Korea and the soldiers who trust and follow me,” Wui Min-Gook said.

“About that—you're partly to blame for failing to keep your end of the bargain.”

Wui Min-Gook's eyes narrowed, and Huh Ha-Soo quickly averted his gaze.

“We ran over trusting the information you gave us, but when we got here, the Director of the National Intelligence Service and Kang Chan were already aware that we were coming. You don’t even know where Kang Chan and his parents are right now, do you?” Wui Min-Gook asked.

“Director Wui, let’s just stay hidden for the time being since it’s difficult for me to make a move with my current situation. I’ll be sure to deliver the things that I promised soon, but in return...”

“But in return, what?” Wui Min-Gook immediately responded when Huh Ha-Soo trailed off.

“Please just succeed in the rebellion,” Huh Ha-Soo continued.

Wui Min-Gook bit his cheek.

Chapter 173.2: Let’s Go by Temperament (2)

Buzz—. Buzz—. Buzz—. Buzz—.

His phone rang from his inner chest pocket.

Wui Min-Gook took out his phone. Still glaring at Huh Ha-Soo, he answered the call.

“It’s me.”

Wui Min-Gook’s eyes glinted, then narrowed.

“How many?” he asked, his cheek twitching a few times.

“Listen carefully—do what must be done to have an honorable death. I’ll take good care of the family you’ll leave behind.”

Wui Min-Gook hung up, then glared at Huh Ha-Soo with eyes so bloodshot they looked as if they were going to burst at any moment.

“Director Wui...?” Huh Ha-Soo asked.

“How did South Korea’s special forces team find out about the hideout that you created for us?”

However, Huh Ha-Soo seemed surprised as well.

“We don’t care about how you do it. You can work with Japan or suck up to China if that’s what it would take,” Wui Min-Gook said.

Huh Ha-Soo looked away with a displeased expression as Wui Min-Gook added, “That means I’ll even make myself explode if that means you’ll keep your end of the bargain. You have two weeks.”

“That’s not what we agreed on—there are things that I can and cannot do. I cannot make promises that I cannot keep.” Huh Ha-Soo was unexpectedly obstinate. “And I made this deal with the higher-ups, not you. I plan to keep my

promises, so we should hide and avoid being found for now. Can they find evidence in Ansan?”

Wui Min-Gook bit on his cheek.

“They will never find any evidence. Let’s get going.” Wui Min-Gook stood up and headed to the entrance.

“Ha, this is absurd.”

Huh Ha-Soo sighed as he looked at the river outside the living room window of his villa at Namyangju.

Ten minutes had passed since they closed in on the enemy, yet Kang Chan still had not given any orders.

The most textbook way to handle their current situation was for everyone to cover fire while two of his men ran to the building and broke the door. There were only four windows—one on the porch, another on the balcony, and two on the warehouse. Hence, there was a low chance of their enemies returning fire if they covered fire.

Kang Chan couldn’t help but notice his team members quickly examining him. Moreover, he thought that Kim Hyung-Jung, who was in the factory to keep the perimeter off-limits using his radio, was probably feeling nervous.

Nevertheless, Kang Chan did nothing but glare at the building. He was getting such a bad feeling from the situation that he felt as if he was jumping into a cesspit.

The dampness that the recent rain brought to the ground only helped intensify the unpleasant feeling.

‘Tsk!’

He was also unexpectedly getting the bad feeling that he couldn’t get rid of at his apartment last Saturday evening.

Kang Chan looked at the soldiers, then glared at the building again.

‘Come at me anytime if you want to die.’

If his enemy told him something like that, he would have pounced on them without a moment’s hesitation.

He would fight them with guns if they used guns, and knives if they used knives.

Kang Chan would never leave any enemy who provoked him alone, especially if they were targeting Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook.

However, only the building was provoking him right now. No, to be more precise, he felt as if a ghost had engulfed the building and was now trying to reel him in.

Kang Chan smirked as he kept staring daggers at the building.

This was a fight between the ghost of Ansan and the god of death.

It sounded grand, but in reality, all that was happening was Kang Chan glaring at the building so hard it seemed as if he was planning to destroy it.

After about five more minutes, Kang Chan shook his head. This wasn't right. If they were moving right now, then he would've definitely made them stop.

Chk.

“Daye, keep the snipers in position and move back ten meters,” Kang Chan ordered.

Chk.

Seok Kang-Ho hesitated for a moment before answering, “Alright.”

There were more than twenty meters between Kang Chan's team and the building, so he found no reason for them to move back.

Kim Hyung-Jung could hear everything being transmitted on the radio. He definitely would have asked questions if he was Kang Chan's superior, but he just stayed silent. Things like this couldn't be explained.

Only Seok Kang-Ho would have thought, ‘Is there something wrong?’

While Kang Chan was looking at the building, he noticed its windows suddenly turning white.

BANG!

A powerful blast echoed not long after.

Crumble.

At the same time that they dropped to the ground, a gust of wind and debris of the damaged building swept past Kang Chan and his men.

Only one grenade went off, yet it was still strong enough to cause the ground to shake. The explosion itself felt as strong as an actual earthquake.

Swoosh!

The stronger the explosion, the wind that blew from the very back was sucked into where the explosion occurred.[1] At the same time, the debris that the explosion sent flying fell to the ground.

Kang Chan tousled his hair as he looked at where the building used to be. Only frames of it were left.

Click.

Kang Chan stood up.

Chk.

“Daye, situation report,” he said.

Chk.

“No casualties or injuries.”

“Kwak Cheol-Ho, examine the scene and then retreat.”

“Understood.”

Kang Chan immediately walked to the factory building. The shockwave made their ears ring.

The air was still mixed with cement powder.

Kang Chan went down a waist-high hill and found Kim Hyung-Jung waiting for them in the parking lot.

“Wui Min-Gook made the building explode. The explosion was so strong that it only left the frame of the building intact. I doubt we’ll find anything in the ruins.” Kim Hyung-Jung looked as if he found the situation hard to believe.

The explosion occurred right after Kang Chan made his subordinates retreat a couple of meters back through the radio. If Kim Hyung-Jung didn’t know Kang Chan, he would have suspected him of secretly communicating with the enemy.

Chk chk.

“Whoo!”

Kang Chan entered the factory building and lit up a cigarette. After a while, Seok Kang-Ho and the soldiers came into the building as well, their guns clanking.

“That was a close call,” Seok Kang-Ho commented.

They certainly almost died today.

Seok Kang-Ho bit on a cigarette and lit it up. He then looked at his surroundings. “Do you guys have coffee?”

“It’s over here. Do you want a cup?” a soldier asked.

“Sure.”

Three to four soldiers rushed out to make instant coffee.

“Do you think Wui Min-Gook was in that building?” Seok Kang-Ho asked Kang Chan.

“I’m not sure.”

A member brought and handed over coffee in paper cups.

Dispirited, they smoked cigarettes and drank instant coffee on that rainy autumn day. The atmosphere and environment seemed to perfectly match each other.

A moment later, Kim Hyung-Jung came into the factory building. “As I told you earlier, we couldn’t find anything that we could use as evidence.”

From far away, Kang Chan heard someone asking, “Would you like some coffee as well?”

A moment later, Kim Hyung-Jung also received a paper cup.

“It would’ve been a close call if you weren’t here.” Kim Hyung-Jung drank coffee, then backtracked a bit. “It feels like we’re still one step behind. Mr. Kang Chan.”

Kang Chan threw his cigarette into his paper cup and then looked at Kim Hyung-Jung.

“How did you know that the building was going to explode? Was that a gut feeling as well?”

There was really nothing Kang Chan could say in response to this question or how he learned French and how to fight.

Fortunately, Kwak Cheol-Ho approached Kang Chan and briefly saluted him. “We’ve been ordered to withdraw.”

“Great work.”

“We learned a lot today.”

The soldiers’ eyes showed that they had become a bit more skilled.

With all the soldiers gone, only Kang Chan, Seok Kang-Ho, and Kim Hyung-Jung were left in the building.

“Section Chief Jeon called me. He wants to eat with us if you’re okay with it,” Kim Hyung-Jung told Kang Chan.

Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook were probably worrying about Kang Chan in the hotel right now.

“I have to get back to my family today,” Kang Chan said.

“Mr. Kang Chan, Section Chief Jeon’s hair is about to fall out. Can you help us without telling him that I told you about this?” Kim Hyung-Jung asked.

“How can I help?”

“This coming Wednesday, the president is scheduled for an event where VIPs from the three branches of government, ambassadors of major countries, and people related to the event will be in attendance. As you know, we’re suspicious of Chairperson Huh Ha-Soo, but it’s hard to guard them with so many attendees,” Kim Hyung-Jung explained.

“Wouldn’t it be safer if Huh Ha-Soo attends?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“The enemy probably won’t result in explosives, but it’ll be difficult to keep everyone safe if he helps smuggle weapons into the event. Honestly, we decided not to ask for your help on this matter, but the explosion earlier reminded me of what I heard during our training.”

“What would that be?” Seok Kang-Ho asked. This fucker really couldn’t hold back his curiosity.

“It’s what the king of the DMZ once said. ‘If you meet an enemy with heightened senses, then there should just be one thing in your mind.’”

“It’s probably to escape,” Kang Chan said.

“That’s right.”

Kang Chan couldn’t help but smirk. He wanted to meet this DMZ king and see who he was for himself.

“Please help us. Just think of it as saving the section chief’s life,” Kim Hyung-Jung continued.

They were supposed to guard the president, but Kim Hyung-Jung instead focused on saving Jeon Dae-Geek.

“I’ll help out, but I really have to go back to the hotel today,” Kang Chan said.

“Thank you, Mr. Kang Chan. I’ll call the section chief.”

Kim Hyung-Jung stood up after Kang Chan. He then said, “Right! Mr. Seok Kang-Ho, your family is departing tomorrow at lunchtime. Their passports will be delivered tomorrow morning, and a local agent will be greeting them and preparing their hotels and itinerary.”

They soon headed out of the building, the acrid smell wafting toward them.

Chapter 174.1: An Eye For an Eye (1)

Kang Chan called Kang Dae-Kyung as soon as the van started moving.

The way the operation ended was flabbergasting.

Kang Chan looked out the window and recalled the situation during the explosion. Putting himself in the enemy’s shoes, he guessed what happened.

There were likely only two to three enemies in the building. If there were more than that, they would have waited longer and tried to take more of the special forces down with them instead of sacrificing themselves without gaining anything in return. They clearly prepared a timed bomb because of how wary they were of being ambushed.

That meant Wui Min-Gook was still alive.

Uneasiness and discomfort kept on poking at Kang Chan. It was as if he accidentally stepped in shit and the pungent smell kept wafting up to his nose.

“Director Wui, is Kang Chan really that strong?” a North Korean soldier asked.

Wui Min-Gook twisted his upper lip in a snarl.

“South Korea is certainly a strange country. For every traitorous bastard like Huh Ha-Soo, there are warriors like the king of the DMZ, Jeon Dae-Geuk, and Kim Tae-Jin,” he responded.

It was a strange answer to a question about Kang Chan.

“Kim Tae-Jin? Didn’t that man surrender after losing to you?” the soldier questioned.

“Nonsense. Kim Tae-Jin was a real man. After I killed that bastard’s subordinates, he destroyed seven of our guard posts, killing everyone stationed in them with a bullet straight through their heart. It’s just not that well known because everything was kept under the table, but he even assassinated the head of security.”

Wui Min-Gook sighed before continuing.

“I was rendered helpless when I was fighting Kang Chan. On the way back home, I also suddenly felt fear for the first time in my entire life. Never forget. Those two South Korean men have to be eliminated at all costs,” Wui Min-Gook declared with sharp, glinting eyes. It was as if Kang Chan was sitting right in front of him. “Until now, every time South Korea gives birth to a warrior, we have always had someone who could stand against them on equal grounds. But this is a whole different story. That’s why you have to make sure you shake them up no matter what happens. Get to the people they care about and shift their focus if you have to. Once you succeed, we’ll be able to get rid of them all at once. There are only a few of them, but you better keep your head in the game. We’ll begin the operation tomorrow.”

The soldier sitting next to Wui Min-Gook didn’t seem to believe what he was saying.

Having arrived at the hotel, Kang Chan parted ways with Seok Kang-Ho and headed up to his room. Although he had a key card, he still rang the doorbell.

Click.

Kang Dae-Kyung opened the door and raised his finger to his lips.

“Your mom is sleeping. She went to the sauna after working out at the fitness center, but she insisted on staying up after she was done. She fell asleep right away only after you called,” Kang Dae-Kyung said. His eyes were also redshot.

Kang Chan could hear the quiet murmur of the TV in the background.

“Are you hurt anywhere?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked out of concern.

“I’m fine,” Kang Chan replied.

Kang Dae-Kyung sat down on the sofa and examined Kang Chan.

“Have you made up your mind, then?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked.

Kang Chan just looked at him silently.

“About what you said when you came to my workplace last time. You asked me what I think you should do. That matter was similar to this one, wasn’t it?”

“I actually still don’t know what I’m going to do. This morning, the ambassador suggested I go and observe in a few European countries, but I haven’t reached a decision yet,” Kang Chan answered.

“Is what you do the type of thing that comes out in movies?” Kang Dae-Kyung looked so serious that Kang Chan couldn’t help but chuckle in response.

“I know you have to go through intense training and more to do something like that, but I doubt someone as young as you would be asked to charge straight into danger just because you’re friends with the ambassador. Based on what happened in Yongin and the incident in the underground parking lot yesterday, though, what you do doesn’t seem like ordinary business even to a civilian’s eyes like mine. You learned all this through the Internet, much like how you learned French, huh?” Kang Dae-Kyung wryly commented.

“I’m sorry,” Kang Chan apologized.

Kang Dae-Kyung chuckled dismally. “Every parent in the world wants their children to be incredible. When someone on TV gets a gold medal, they hope their children do as well, and when a soccer player scores a goal in the World Cup, they hope such a large audience applauds their children too. When you were at the conference, a lot of people told me I was lucky to have a son like you.”

“What about you, Father? What kind of person do you hope I turn out to be?” Kang Chan asked.

“I want you to be ordinary,” Kang Dae-Kyung sorrowfully replied. He looked as if he pitied Kang Chan. “I don’t mind if you don’t go to a good college or grow up smart. I just want you to live the life that you want and enjoy the things that kids your age do.”

Kang Dae-Kyung seemed to feel apologetic about what he said, seeing as how he leaned forward to ruffle Kang Chan’s hair.

“I assume your talent shines in something dangerous, but remember what I told you before? Even if that’s the case, if that’s what you want to do, I’ll be supportive of you.”

Did Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook figure out that his work involved killing people?

“Your mom and I decided to go to France,” Kang Dae-Kyung added.

“What? France?” Kang Chan echoed.

“We don’t want you to be stressed about protecting us. Your mom made a big decision, but I’m actually excited about going since I’ll get to visit Gong Te automobile.”

Kang Chan dropped his gaze to the table, not knowing what to say in reply. Just then, the bedroom door opened, and Yoo Hye-Sook walked out into the living room.

“You’re up, Mother?” Kang Chan greeted.

Yoo Hye-Sook rubbed her eyes tiredly, but she still smiled at Kang Chan.

“You should’ve woken me up,” she scolded.

“I’m sure you’re tired. You should get more sleep,” Kang Chan suggested.

“No. That short nap did the trick. I’m feeling well-rested already,” Yoo Hye-Sook refuted.

Kang Dae-Kyung smiled in amusement, then turned to Kang Chan.

“I’m starting to feel a little hungry. Can we go down to the first floor?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked.

“Yes, that should be fine,” Kang Chan replied.

As long as they stay inside the hotel.

“Honey, let’s go buy some bread,” Kang Dae-Kyung declared.

“Dear! I can’t go anywhere looking like this!” Yoo Hye-Sook exclaimed, frantically stroking back her hair.

“We’re just going to buy bread—it’s fine. Let’s go,” Kang Dae-Kyung said resolutely. He seemed so set on going downstairs that he would just go with Kang Chan if he had to.

“You coming, Channy?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“Of course. We should all go together,” Kang Chan responded.

Hearing Kang Chan’s response, Yoo Hye-Sook returned to the room, brushed her hair, and put on her cardigan. She only put on lipstick afterward, but it took a whopping ten minutes.

Kang Chan only hoped Joo Chul-Bum wouldn’t appear out of thin air and make a scene.

Standing around, Jeon Dae-Geuk wearily rubbed his face with his palm as if he was washing his face.

“Isn’t this what you hoped for, sir?” Kim Hyung-Jung asked.

“Yes, but I feel like we’re taking Kang Chan for granted too much. I should be the one to step up and protect him, but he’s the one helping me instead,” Jeon Dae-Geuk replied, his voice filled with regret.

Kim Hyung-Jung nodded in agreement.

“It’s obviously hard to predict that a bomb is going to explode through gut feeling alone. The boy is tailor-made for special operations and bodyguard duties. Still, he is too good to be restricted to these kinds of things now. I even heard that the National Intelligence Service has recently received a lot of requests for information exchanges,” Jeon Dae-Geuk remarked.

“That’s correct,” Kim Hyung-Jung confirmed.

“That’s not all. Special forces teams from other countries keep sending us requests to conduct joint training. Some countries are even willing to pay large sums for commissioned training. Kang Chan singlehandedly made all of that possible,” Jeon Dae-Geuk added.

“I agree. We owe everything to Kang Chan.”

The National Intelligence Service and the special forces existed way before Kang Chan came onto the scene. However, the difference between before and after he did was like night and day.

“We still haven’t even properly compensated him. All we did was take care of his tax issues and have him stay at a hotel. In sports, what we’re doing would be no different from providing a few free meals to a player who has raised Korea’s status worldwide.” Jeon Dae-Geuk couldn’t help but sigh. “It would be shameless of me to ask him to handle security on top of that. If only it was just an event held by the Blue House. I would have been able to take care of it then...”

“Chairperson Huh was the one who suggested this event, so something about it seems fishy. In addition, the location he chose doesn’t seem to fit the occasion, considering the chief justice, the prime minister, and embassy officials will be attending the event,” Kim Hyung-Jung said, expressing his doubts.

“Well, since we already asked him, we might as well accept his help just this one time,” Jeon Dae-Geuk said in resignation.

“I think that’s the best course of action as well.”

Jeon Dae-Geuk and Kim Hyung-Jung both looked slightly more relieved.

“I didn’t know this was so expensive,” Yoo Hye-Sook exclaimed, leaning down to look at a cake. After a while, she stood back up.

It was Sunday. People dressed in nice clothes glanced at Yoo Hye-Sook as they bought their own slice of cake.

“Would you like to try some?” Kang Chan asked.

Yoo Hye-Sook seemed as if she wanted to eat it but couldn't because it was far more expensive than she expected. She looked like someone's daughter wanting to eat some chips but couldn't bring herself to ask her parents because she was aware of their household's financial situation.

“We came all the way here, so we might as well have a taste. I'll buy it for you, so don't worry and pick what you want to eat,” Kang Dae-Kyung said.

“I feel so sorry for the children, Honey. I didn't know it was so expensive...” Yoo Hye-Sook trailed off.

“It's been a while since we went on an outing with Channy, you know. I'll earn more money so the kids can try these too, so let's just enjoy this today. What do you say? I'm hungry,” Kang Dae-Kyung reassured her.

Just as Yoo Hye-Sook seemed to have reached a decision, however, the customer in front of them ordered the last three slices of the cake.

Yoo Hye-Sook made an apologetic face.

“Mother, there are some in the other display window too,” Kang Chan told her.

Half of the items on display were already gone.

Kang Chan went with Yoo Hye-Sook to where the walnut pies were. However, Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook didn't seem too interested in pies.

It was understandable. After choosing between the cakes topped with blueberries, Kang Chan also felt as if his throat was becoming dry from looking at the walnut pies.

“How about some red bean paste bread?” Kang Dae-Kyung suggested. He turned around to find an empty basket that was labeled “Red Bean.”

“Sorry, Honey,” Yoo Hye-Sook apologized.

“We just got here late, so it's not your fault. You don't have to apologize for anything. The bread here is really popular, huh?” Kang Dae-Kyung responded.

Kang Chan felt bad that Yoo Hye-Sook was sorry.

Is there nothing I can do?

Kang Chan glanced around.

“Chan, do you want to buy a pie and take it back up?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked, turning around.

It was already past four in the afternoon. They would have to have dinner soon, so Kang Chan agreed and ordered a walnut pie instead. They had the employee charge the room, so they only had to sign to pay.

Chapter 174.2: An Eye For an Eye (1)

Kang Chan and his parents took the elevator up and returned to their room. Once they were inside, they sat on the sofa and ate the pie.

“This is good too!” Yoo Hye-Sook exclaimed.

Warm tea, walnut pie, and family...

That damn Sharlan ruined things in the past, and now Wui Min-Gook was the one screwing him over. If it wasn't for that bastard, their family would be at home right now, happily eating chicken while watching a movie.

He couldn't imagine how Yoo Hye-Sook felt about having to suddenly go abroad.

Kang Chan carefully chewed the pie and swallowed.

“What should we have for dinner?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked.

“You're already thinking about dinner when we're still eating pie, dear?” Yoo Hye-Sook responded in disbelief.

Kang Chan wondered what Yoo Hye-Sook would think about Seok Kang-Ho.

“Right, Channy! Is it okay for your dad and I to visit France?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“Are you sure you're completely fine with that?” Kang Chan asked with concern.

“Of course. I'll enjoy the trip,” Yoo Hye-Sook replied.

Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook really couldn't lie. “I definitely don't want to go!” was clearly written in their eyes.

“Mother,” Kang Chan began.

“Yes? What is it?” Yoo Hye-Sook replied.

“Don't go,” Kang firmly Chan stated.

Unable to say anything, Yoo Hye-Sook just swallowed.

“Stay with me. You don't make me uncomfortable. Aside from feeling bad that both of you have to stay in a place like this, I'm really okay. So if you don't want to go, just stay here with me. On another note, I'll buy chicken for dinner,” Kang Chan persuaded.

Yoo Hye-Sook glanced at Kang Dae-Kyung.

“Well, if that's what Channy wants. I don't want you to force yourself to go to France either, so let's just follow our hearts. Working out together today wasn't bad anyway, was it?” Kang Dae-Kyung said.

Yoo Hye-Sook still couldn't bring herself to answer.

“Don’t go. I’ll be bored if I’m all alone,” Kang Chan joked.

When Kang Dae-Kyung smiled, Yoo Hye-Sook did as well.

“Yeah, let’s stay here, Honey! Just like we enjoyed ourselves in Jeju thanks to our talented son, let’s stay at this nice hotel, eat lots of tasty things, and work out for another week,” Kang Dae-Kyung chimed.

“I’m sorry, Honey.”

“Why do you keep saying that? I should be thanking you!” Kang Dae-Kyung exclaimed.

So this is what family is.

The three eventually concluded to stay together at the hotel.

Whenever Kang Chan was with his parents, he always felt as if he was being rewarded for everything he did.

This remained peaceful until Monday morning. The most unusual thing that happened was Seok Kang-Ho going to the airport with a few agents to send his wife and daughter off.

He still hadn’t received word about what kind of event would be held this Wednesday or where it was going to be held.

Jeon Dae-Geuk and Kim Hyung-Jung probably had something in mind, though, so Kang Chan patiently waited for them to contact him first.

Around one in the afternoon, Michelle and Cecile visited him to get his signature for the withdrawal of funds application.

If he told them Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook were here, they would insist on going up to the room and probably loaf around at the hotel after that, so Kang Chan didn’t mention anything.

He was currently in the lobby lounge. Joo Chul-Bum still hadn’t made an appearance.

‘Is that punk injured or something?’

Kang Chan couldn’t help but feel worried, considering the man had never missed a chance to silently creep up on him.

“You can sign here,” Cecile said.

Kang Chan signed the three documents that Cecile gave him and the eight documents handed over by the lawyer Michelle brought.

“Mr. Choi, you can leave first.”

“Understood. I’ll contact you once I’m done organizing the documents,” attorney Choi Young, whom Kang Chan met back when he was still acquiring D.I.

“You’re done with the building acquisition now. Congratulations, Channy,” Michelle said.

“Congratulations. The branch manager told me to deliver his congratulations too,” Cecile added.

“Thanks,” Kang Chan replied.

Observing Kang Chan’s expression, Michelle asked, “Is there something bothering you?”

“No, I’m fine,” Kang Chan responded. In truth, he felt bad for how he was treating Michelle and Cecile today. With the building acquisition finalized, he should buy them some wine over dinner. Unfortunately, the uncomfortable gut feeling he had just worsened so much that he couldn’t even stop his expression from stiffening.

He could barely conceal his emotions in front of Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook. Right now, his eyes and face wouldn’t listen to him.

Could Wui Min-Gook know about Michelle?

Noticing Kang Chan’s gaze, Michelle’s doe eyes mischievously widened.

Her eyes are really big.

“Do you have a cigarette?” Kang Chan asked to change the topic.

“Should we step out for a moment?” Michelle responded.

“Yeah, let’s do that,” he replied.

Cecile tactfully said that she would stay inside, so Kang Chan and Michelle headed to the front entrance.

“Here!” Michelle said.

Click. Click.

He felt as if he could breathe again now that he was smoking.

It would probably be more comfortable if they went up to the empty room on the 19th floor, but it would be awkward if they ran into Kang Dae-Kyung or Yoo Hye-Sook.

“Michelle, you have an idea about the work I do, don’t you?” Kang Chan asked.

Michelle’s eyes widened again. She waited for Kang Chan to continue.

“Things became a little complicated, so be careful for a while. Don’t go around by yourself, and don’t stay out too late. Okay?” Kang Chan said.

“You’re worried about me?” Michelle asked with a grin.

Kang Chan couldn’t help but smile.

“Alright, alright. I’ll be careful. But once you’re done with your business, make some time for me, Cecile, and Cindy, okay?” Michelle requested.

“I will. Sorry about today.”

“Don’t worry about it. You looked a little uncomfortable, so I was just worried. What about you? Are you okay?”

“I’m fine. Anyway, don’t go around alone for a while, okay?”

“We have the road managers, and I’ll stay where the actors are,” Michelle reassured him.

Kang Chan nodded.

They smoked another cigarette before returning to the lobby. Cecile observed their expressions first before greeting them in relief.

“I’m sorry about today, Cecile. I have some things going on, which explains my mood and why I don’t have time. I’ll treat you to a meal once it’s over,” Kang Chan said.

“Is it something difficult?” Cecile asked worriedly.

“Just a bit.”

After a little while, the two tactfully stood up and left. Now alone, Kang Chan sat in the lobby’s lounge and looked out the window.

His heart wasn’t beating fast or thumping—it felt as if something was slowly squeezing it.

Kang Chan spent about twenty minutes just staring out the window.

He couldn’t ask for all the people around him like Michelle to be assigned a guard.

If he asked Kim Tae-Jin’s company, he would essentially be making unarmed guards fight against enemies equipped with guns.

What was Wui Min-Gook after? Kang Chan really hoped Kim Hyung-Jung could find him as soon as possible.

Buzz. Buzz. Buzz.

After some time, his phone rang.

“Hello?” Kang Chan answered.

- Where are you? I’m arriving at the hotel right now.

“I’m at the lobby, but you should head to the room.”

- Got it.

After hanging up, Kang Chan headed up to his room. He decided to focus on protecting those close to him until Kim Hyung-Jung found Wui Min-Gook.

The day ended with Choi Seong-Geon being busy for the whole day. It was not easy dealing with phone calls and documents from the higher-ups while also taking care of the onslaught of joint training requests. Even the military had documents that needed to be handled. Moreover, since Choi Sung-Geon's opinion was crucial in making decisions, his statement had to be attached to every application.

He never imagined a day like this would come. There was a massive explosion during their recent operation, but not a single soldier was injured. Moreover, Cha Dong-kyun survived. He had been dreaming of this day since he had taken charge of the special forces.

“Is that all?” Choi Seong-Geon asked his aide.

“Yes, General,” his aide replied.

“What about the soldiers?”

“They’re having dinner, sir.”

“I’ll be out for a while, then,” Choi Seong-Geon informed him.

“Understood, sir,” his aide replied and then radioed commands.

A little later, Choi Seong-Geon left the barracks and departed the base in a car with a concealed license plate. He would reach a highway after driving around three hundred meters past the mountain road. From there, it would take about ten minutes to reach the military apartments in the direction of the terminal.

Choi Seong-Geon was definitely in a good mood.

Cha Dong-Gyun was alive. Although he ordered the punk to call home, Choi Seong-Geon knew that he would never do it. Hence, he planned to deliver the good news to them in person, then visit his wife for once...

Vroooooom!

Choi Seong-Geon looked to his right, finding a giant truck coming right at him.

Bam! Crash! Rumble!

He felt as if someone hurled him away.

His surroundings blurred as if he was submerged in water. However, he could still see the bloodied head of the soldier driving for him. It was bent at an odd angle.

“Argh.”

He barely raised himself with his left arm when a man approached the shattered glass window with a glinting knife.

Choi Seong-Geon instinctively turned his body to the side.

Swish!

“Agh!”

The blade that targeted his neck dug deep right next to his collarbone instead.

Choi Seong-Geon twisted the ankle of the enemy, but he did not have enough strength. The enemy's left thumb dug into his eye.

“Kegh!”

Crash!

Just then, he heard the window on the opposite side crack.

Swish! Swish!

“Krrrgh!”

Nevertheless, Choi Seong-Geon didn't let go.

Swish! Swish!

A knife pierced into him, but he didn't feel pain. The faces of the soldiers quickly flashed through his mind. Kang Chan's was one of them.

‘Mr. Kang Chan...’

Everything turned white.

Chapter 175: An Eye For an Eye (2)

Having finished his meal, Kang Chan sat in his hotel room. He felt as if he was imprisoned.

“We just have to stay inside and not go outside?” Kang Dae-Kyung quietly asked while he was watching TV. He seemed to be saying that staying at home would be more comfortable if they were just going to stay in their hotel rooms anyway.

Yoo Hye-Sook also looked as if she was secretly hoping that they could go home.

Kang Dae-Kyung could only ask that question because he had no idea how fights like this worked, though. They weren't just using melee weapons in this battle. They were using guns.

Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook wouldn't be able to avoid it if someone shot at them from the roof of the apartment across from theirs or the window near the stairs.

However, the main reason they couldn't go home was because the bad feeling Kang Chan had wasn't going away.

“I guess going home would be difficult, huh?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked again.

“Yes. Just until the end of this week, though.”

Kang Dae-Kyung nodded as if it didn't matter to him.

It was only natural that Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook were having a hard time. After all, Kang Chan also missed their home.

“It's hard staying here at the hotel, isn't it?” Kang Chan asked.

“I just asked because I feel guilty for staying here and not doing anything while this expensive hotel is being paid for. Changing clothes can also be a bit

uncomfortable. Anyway, don't worry too much about it," Kang Dae-Kyung responded.

The three watched TV again. Today was Monday, so they were thinking of watching the drama that D.I. produced together.

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

Now that Kang Chan thought about it, Seok Kang-Ho was alone.

That fucker is probably bored.

However, when Kang Chan looked at his phone, he learned that it was actually Kim Hyung-Jung calling him.

"Yes, Manager Kim?"

- Mr. Kang Chan, General Choi Seong-Geon was assassinated.

Kang Chan didn't want Kang Dae-Kyung or Yoo Hye-Sook to see the look in his eyes so he slowly pressed the inner corner of his eyes with his left thumb and index finger.

"Where are you right now?"

- I'm at Samseong-dong.

"I'll head over."

- Understood. You can use the van in the basement.

Kang Chan controlled his breathing, then forcibly suppressed his expression as he spoke to his parents. "I have to go to an office in Samseong-dong. If I come back late, I'll just sleep in the room next door and see you tomorrow."

"Alright." Kang Dae-Kyung seemed worried about Kang Chan, but he didn't say anything about it.

"I'll be back."

"Be careful, Channy," Yoo Hye-Sook said.

"I will." Kang Chan immediately left the room and went to the room next door.

Kang Chan opened the door and went inside. Seok Kang-Ho—who was leaning back on the sofa—looked at him. Startled, he asked, "What's wrong?"

"General Choi got attacked. I'm heading to Samseong-dong."

"What? General Choi got attacked? How is he?"

Kang Chan gritted his teeth instead of answering.

"Damn it! Those fuckers!" Seok Kang-Ho exclaimed.

By the time Seok Kang-Ho jumped up from the sofa and grabbed his jacket, Kang Chan was already out of the room.

The agents in the hallway also had grim expressions.

It felt as if security was tightened and even more agents were in the hallway and near the elevator.

Kang Chan got in the van. He remained silent until they reached Samseong-dong.

Kang Chan was so enraged that he was having difficulties suppressing his anger.

This was no different than a war.

Executives of the National Intelligence Service died two days ago, and today, the commander of the special forces team was killed.

Their enemies even opened fire in the underground parking lot of an apartment.

Nonsensical things kept happening.

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho got out of the van as soon as it parked in the basement and immediately went up to the fifth floor.

Kim Hyung-Jung opened the door for them. Jeon Dae-Geuk and Kim Tae-Jin were already in the room.

Kang Chan greeted them, then immediately sat at the table and asked, "What happened?"

"Choi Seong-Geon was just out for a simple visit to Cha Dong-Gyun's house, but before he could get there, someone hit his car with a truck and killed him with a bayonet. I heard they stabbed him more than ten times just around his neck," Jeon Dae-Geuk responded.

"Have they caught the culprit?"

Jeon Dae-Geuk pursed his lips, then sighed softly.

"Who sent the North Korean special forces team here?" Kang Chan asked again.

Jeon Dae-Geuk and Kim Hyung-Jung only looked at Kang Chan.

"They say that Wui Min-Gook works at China's intelligence bureau, but in reality, they would need someone to issue the order for the North Korean special forces team to be dispatched, wouldn't they? Who would that be?"

"It's not something you should get worked up about," Jeon Dae-Geuk said.

"Section chief, I'll pass off the fact that they tried to kill my parents as a terrorist attack. But killing executives of the National Intelligence and blatantly attacking a commander of the special forces team? I consider that a declaration of war. When it comes to warfare, we're done for the moment we're overpowered."

Kim Tae-Jin looked worried upon seeing Kang Chan's eyes.

“If none of you can answer me, then I’ll just have France’s DGSE look into it,” Kang Chan continued.

“What are you going to do with that information?” Jeon Dae-Geuk asked.

Kang Chan smirked.

“Don’t do anything reckless,” Jeon Dae-Geuk added.

“Our enemies are causing a ruckus in Seoul. Why can’t we do the same?”

“Kang Chan! Are you really planning to start a war?”

“We’re already at war.”

Jeon Dae-Geuk inhaled loudly, then exhaled slowly. “Our enemies have nothing to lose. It’s currently difficult for us to stay in power, and we’re in tough economic times. Our enemies will thank us if we start a regional conflict. This fight won’t end with just us fighting between ourselves. The United States and China will interfere, and Russia and Japan will also use the battle as an excuse to meddle with the Korean Peninsula. If we launch missiles at each other, then we’ll face even more losses!”

Kang Chan looked straight at Jeon Dae-Geuk. “I only know one thing: if I can’t even protect my people, then I will never be able to protect anything bigger than that. I’ll try to prevent Russia and China from interfering. Please have our government and the National Intelligence Service stop the United States or Japan.”

“You should calm down first,” Jeon Dae-Geuk told Kang Chan.

“Who is it?”

“Kang Chan, if I could, I would have immediately run over there as well.”

“You won’t be able to go anyway, will you?” Kang Chan brazenly asked Jeon Dae-Geuk.

Jeon Dae-Geuk sat there with a numb expression. He seemed at a loss for words.

“You came all the way to Anseong to ask me for help in going out into the world and executing preemptive attacks. But now that we actually do need to go out and fight with our lives on the line, you want to mull over your thoughts first to calculate and see what would bring the best results?” Kang Chan pushed.

“That’s not exactly true.” Kim Hyung-Jung, who had been silent all this time, finally butted into the conversation. “Before we even start thinking of retaliating against what they did, we have to first consider the fact that this battle could kill or injure the civilians near the Military Demarcation Line.”

Kang Chan shook his head. “If you have even the slightest intention to fight, then you should have already evacuated the civilians living in areas considered dangerous. Just this once, we should show our enemies that we’re prepared to retaliate immediately if they keep acting like this. The enemy

shot and stabbed National Intelligence Service executives and the commander of the special forces team to death, so please don't use the civilians as an excuse! Just this once, let's take the fight to them!"

No one responded to Kang Chan after that.

Kang Chan's lips curved into a snarl. "What happens now that General Choi Seong-Geon has been killed? Section Chief, who do you think will be next? I believe I told you some time ago that constantly getting beaten up will eventually turn into a habit. Now, let me tell you one more thing. We can fend off the enemies one, two, three, or even four times, but we can't keep doing this forever. The moment they breach our defenses even just once, someone will definitely die."

This wasn't right. Kang Chan stopped talking, having realized that he went overboard. The sudden silence felt very awkward.

"I apologize if I came across as too blunt and adamant," Kang Chan finished, then glared at the table. He dropped his gaze not because he felt apologetic but because he didn't want to see their faces anymore.

Now that he thought about it, Kim Hyung-Jung didn't bring them coffee yet.

"What has gotten you so worked up?" Kim Tae-Jin asked. He then began to talk as if he was calming down Kang Chan. "I'm going to be honest, so hear me out first before you make up your mind. I'm not a National Intelligence Service executive or even a member of the President's security service, but I think I roughly know what's on your mind. However, while it's possible for you to say that you'll fend off Russia and Russia, we require at least a little bit of time to prepare for the possibility of a war happening. We also have to calculate our gains and losses."

Once Kim Tae-Jin was done, a moment of silence passed.

"Mr. President, has the special forces team ever officially gone on an operation before?"

Kim Tae-Jin's expression turned grim as he waited for Kang Chan to continue.

"They have never gone on an operation with the Korean flag. Every time South Korea sent out the special forces team, they were told that if they ever died or were caught, they should use someone or some other country as an excuse. That's why I'm not sure why you guys have to make calculations for this fight and why you're all using the United States and Japan as an excuse to not go out."

Kang Chan seemed to have rendered the three speechless.

"If this is because South Korea is weak, then use me at times like this. Even if I have to cling to Ambassador Lanok, Vasili, and Yang Bum, I'll fend off the neighboring countries. In return, please have the president, the section chief,

and the director step up to the plate and deal with the United States and Japan,” Kang Chan added.

“And then? What are you going to do after that?” Jeon Dae-Geuk asked.

“I’ll infiltrate North Korea and stab a knife into the neck of whoever dispatched North Korea’s special forces team in South Korea.”

Unable to even make a sound, Kim Tae-Jin just took a deep breath.

“There is one thing that pisses me off, though,” Kang Chan said. He then looked at the three of them in order. “The enemy just killed someone who sacrificed everything they had for their country, but our country just chooses to busy itself making excuses instead of doing anything.”

Jeon Dae-Geuk’s cheek twitched.

Kang Chan didn’t say that in hopes of getting a response anyway.

“Where’s the funeral home?” Kang Chan asked.

“That hasn’t been decided yet since he’s at the field hospital at the moment,” Kim Hyung-Jung responded.

“I’ll take my leave now. Please let me know once they’ve decided on a funeral home.” Kang Chan stood up.

Instead of standing, Jeon Dae-Geuk just stared at the table that Kang Chan was glaring at until Kang Chan opened the door and went out of the office.

Kim Hyung-Jung pressed the elevator button for Kang Chan.

“I’ll have a cup of coffee at the specialty coffee shop across from here before heading back to the hotel. If I return to the hotel like this, I’ll be so frustrated that I doubt I’ll be able to stay there,” Kang Chan said.

“Alright.” Kim Hyung-Jung didn’t say anything else perhaps because he thought trying to stop Kang Chan would be useless.

Chapter 175.2: An Eye For an Eye (2)

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho went down to the first floor and found more than five agents at the specialty coffee shop. Kim Hyung-Jung likely contacted them about Kang Chan’s plan.

“Go get a table. I’ll order us some coffee,” Seok Kang-Ho said.

Kang Chan sat on the terrace, then bit on a cigarette.

What would have it been like if he didn’t know Choi Seong-Geon or if he didn’t know what kind of person he was?

Kang Chan’s rage grew further, making it even harder to hold back his anger.

If only he didn't die! Even if he was on death's door, for as long as he survived, I could've tried everything! I wouldn't even care if I collapsed from too much blood loss!

South Korea had to be wary of its neighboring countries' moods?

If that's the case, then do I have to make South Korea powerful enough to eliminate any need for it to keep worrying about how other countries would treat it?

Kang Chan gritted his teeth.

“Let's have some coffee for now,” Seok Kang-Ho suggested.

Seok Kang-Ho put the coffee down on the table when he saw the look in Kang Chan's eyes. He then took out a cigarette and put it in his mouth. He was trying to put Kang Chan at ease, but his eyes were glinting as well.

If they did go to North Korea, they most likely would not come back alive. Such an operation would be on another level than any of the other operations they participated in so far. Nevertheless, Kang Chan didn't want to back off.

Rather than seeing those precious to him die one by one, he thought that preventing his enemies from doing something like that ever again was the right thing to do.

“Do you think that traitorous fucker Huh Ha-Soo is also aware of this incident?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

That's right—I forgot about that son of a bitch.

Kang Chan smiled, his eyes burning.

“What's wrong?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“I'm going to fuck that son of a bitch up.”

As Seok Kang-Ho cocked his head, Kang Chan took out his phone and started to search through his call history.

I talked to him some time ago.

After scrolling for a while, Kang Chan found the number and dialed it.

He didn't have high hopes. He could ask Lanok for this if he had to anyway.

Ring. Ring. Ring.

It was almost nine in the evening.

- Hello?

Much to his surprise, Yang Bum answered the phone.

“It's Kang Chan.”

- I'm aware of that.

Yang Bum sounded confident.

“I have a favor to ask.”

- Well, I certainly can't refuse a favor you're asking from me. What is it?

Seok Kang-Ho, who was in front of him, looked at him with a face that asked, 'Who is he talking to?'

“You said that you arrested Huh Sang-Soo, right?”

- I arrested him under the suspicion of being a spy. We have also secured evidence.

“Can you kill him for me?”

Yang Bum remained silent for a moment.

- Can you tell me why you want me to kill him?

“I'm working on something right now, and I need him to die for it to work. It doesn't matter whether he dies from an accident or from a gunshot. I just need him dead,” Kang Chan answered.

Another moment of silence passed.

Now that Kang Chan asked, he finally realized how difficult his request was to accomplish. No matter how powerful China was, they couldn't just kill a member of South Korea's National Assembly.

“It seems I asked for something quite hard to execute. He has to die for what I'm doing right now, but it's fine if you can't—”

- I'll have him taken care of tomorrow.

Kang Chan couldn't believe his ears.

- I'll also announce his death by then. In return, please just make sure that the South Korean government doesn't misunderstand.

“This is a personal favor for me, so the government would probably have different conclusions about it.

Kang Chan heard Yang Bum laughing.

- You just need not interfere.

What does that mean?

Kang Chan couldn't understand what he was saying.

- The situation in China will be settled within a week. Please consider Huh Sang-Soo's death as me returning the favor to you for helping me last time. I'll officially invite you in a week. Is there anything else?

“Thank you.”

- I should be the one thanking you. I'll announce his death tomorrow, and I'll contact you in a week.

When Kang Chan hung up, Seok Kang-Ho grinned and asked, “Are you thinking of provoking Huh Ha-Soo?”

“I’m just doing what I do best.”

“How about meeting up with Ambassador Lanok?” Seok Kang-Ho was trying to say that they should call the Foreign Legion’s special forces team.

Kang Chan smirked instead of answering his question. After a while, he said, “I never thought about working for South Korea.”

“Then what have you been doing all this time?”

“I did all of that for the people that I like—for you, my parents, and the people who impressed me. But I changed my mind when I heard the news that General Choi Seong-Geon had been killed.”

Seok Kang-Ho had been understanding well until now, but then he cocked his head.

“Would we have acted like this if we were born in France or if we were American? Starting now, I’ll try turning South Korea into a country powerful and tenacious enough to make others start preparing for war before they can even plan to mess with a person like General Choi Seong-Geon.”

“There’s going to be so many things to do,” Seok Kang-Ho commented.

Kang Chan nodded. “Let’s take care of the son of a bitch in South Korea first.”

Seok Kang-Ho grinned. His eyes glinted.

It was late at night.

Jeon Dae-Geuk was sitting in Kim Hyung-Jung’s office, still glaring at the desk.

After they heard Kim Tae-Jin sighing softly...

“Manager Kim,” Jeon Dae-Geuk called, then looked up from the desk. “How would the United States react if we retaliated?”

Kim Hyung-Jung quickly looked at Kim Tae-Jin.

“Wouldn’t they pressure us as much as possible again like in the old days? There was the Korean ax murder incident[1] and the fact that when we were visiting foreign countries, North Korea bombed us and killed all of our talents who were supposed to showcase their abilities[2]. Even then, we didn’t have a choice but to bow down to the United States’ pressure, did we? What do you think would happen if we ignore the United States’ opinion like what we did during the last operation, though?” Jeon Dae-Geuk’s cheek twitched after he finished talking. He seemed to have gritted his teeth.

“An operation against North Korea is at a completely different level. The United States has wartime operational control, and in the worst-case scenario they also have the CIA, which would probably plan an assassination,” Kim Hyung-Jung responded.

He didn’t say who the CIA was going to assassinate, but it was so obvious that they could all guess who it was.

“Kim Tae-Jin, will you be able to go over to North Korea through the DMZ?” Jeon Dae-Geuk asked.

“If an active soldier helps out, then it’ll be possible. We also have Sang-Hyun, after all.” Kim Tae-Jin unexpectedly didn’t stop Jeon Dae-Geuk.

“Kang Chan’s comment about our country not doing anything is really painful. I know that our country has been acting like that until now, though. Even though we have gone on an operation to France and attacked China, we have never retaliated against our enemies for directly attacking us,” Jeon Dae-Geuk added.

“This matter is too big for the president to authorize,” Kim Tae-Jin said.

“That’s true. We can’t ask him to handle all of this. We don’t have enough power to do that yet anyway,” Jeon Dae-Geuk said. “I still don’t think it’s right to just do nothing, though. Our enemy has just killed a general who devoted his entire life to our country, so I really don’t feel right just worrying about how others would react.”

“Section Chief, please take a moment to think about this first,” Kim Hyung-Jung said.

“What made you think that I’ll suddenly go to North Korea? I’m already old, you know.” Jeon Dae-Geuk smirked. He then lifted his head and looked at Kim Hyung-Jung and Kim Tae-Jin, seemingly having just woken up from a spell.

“Even so, I can’t just bury Choi Seong-Geon like this. If I do that, I will never be able to tell my juniors that bleeding for our country is something that we should be happy about.”

A complicated emotion circulated around the office.

“I’ll meet the president and tell him about our honest thoughts,” Jeon Dae-Geuk said.

“Section chief, it would be best for us to meet the director first,” Kim Hyung-Jung said.

Jeon Dae-Geuk shook his head. “If I do that, then this will turn into a national affair.”

“How will you handle this, then? Mr. Kang Chan is probably just acting like that because he got angry at the spur of the moment,” Kim Hyung-Jung said, but he abruptly stopped when he saw the look in Jeon Dae-Geuk’s eyes.

“You didn’t get a good look at Kang Chan’s eyes a moment ago, did you? He’s never going to back down. If we old people hesitate and keep saying that we’re calculating what to do as an excuse, then we’re going to lose another extremely talented person. We don’t know when we’ll come across someone as talented as him again,” Jeon Dae-Geuk said.

“Section Chief, we can’t expect our men to come back alive from an operation that requires infiltrating North Korea,” Kim Hyung-Jung responded.

“Why not? The ordinary North Korean soldiers managed to return to North Korea after infiltrating our country using a submarine and crossing it. If they listened to me and did the operation as I instructed back then, that never would’ve happened. I can still clearly remember Choi Seong-Geon’s cry due to the indignation he felt at the end of the operation.” Jeon Dae-Geuk said. He looked as if he had firmly made up his mind. “I failed to protect my junior who once said that he would gladly die for our country. I understand that our country can’t interfere since we failed to make our country that powerful, but even then, I still refuse to let us plummet down again.”

Jeon Dae-Geuk’s determination filled the office.

Chapter 176.1: I feel better now (1)

It was already past ten that evening, yet Kang Chan still dialed Lanok’s number. It wasn’t that he wanted to request anything from Lanok—he figured a warning was the least he could do to show some respect to his intelligence agencies’ teacher.

- Mr. Kang Chan, to what do I owe the pleasure at this hour?

“Mr. Ambassador. I hope I didn’t catch you too late,” Kang Chan greeted.

- Of course not. I was actually just talking about you with Anne.

Damn it!

In other words, he disrupted some quality family time. Nevertheless, he still had to tell Lanok.

“Mr. Ambassador. I apologize for disturbing you. However, I had no choice but to call since I have something urgent to tell you. I just called Yang Bum a few moments ago to ask that he kill Huh Sang-Soo, whom they have arrested in China. He chose to accept the favor,” Kang Chan informed Lanok. He then tilted his head.

Much to his surprise, it sounded as if Lanok was chuckling in amusement.

- What do you have to gain by killing Huh Sang-Soo?

“We lost General Choi Seong-Geon. What I’m about to do will serve as a warning to our enemies. I want to teach them a lesson and let them know that if they touch my people, no one will get away unscathed.

- Are Anne and I also your people?

Does this man think I’m joking right now?

This snake wasn’t the type to take these things lightly, though.

“Mr. Ambassador, I’m obviously going to protect you and Anne as well. On another note, I also want to make South Korea powerful.”

-I see Unicorn has finally found its rightful owner. You should contact Vasili and Ludwig as well, Mr. Kang Chan. What is your next objective?

“I’m going to go to North Korea and stab a knife into the neck of the bastard who dispatched their special forces team here,” Kang Chan answered.

Lanok was silent for a moment, breaking his leisurely pace.

- You never fail to surpass my imagination, Mr. Kang Chan. I do think that the owner of Unicorn should have that much pluck, but I also can’t fathom the idea of so easily angering the beehive that is your surrounding countries and the United States.

Kang Chan didn’t understand what the “owner of Unicorn” meant, but at the very least, it Lanok didn’t seem against it at all.

- Are you confident you can return alive?

“I’m not, but I’m sure that if we just do nothing while everyone keeps beating us up, we’re going to lose everyone someday,” Kang Chan replied with determination.

Kang Chan felt as if air finally flowed into his lungs again.

- I will call Vasili and Ludwig then, Mr. Kang Chan. There are also a few things I’d like to get from the DGSE. At the very least, please don’t leave tomorrow.

Hell yeah! This is the kind of reaction that we should be getting!

Kang Chan once again promised to make South Korea’s intelligence bureau as strong as the French national intelligence bureau. He would make sure that the future directors of the National Intelligence Service could have a relaxed disposition like Lanok.

- Would you like to come for tea tomorrow?

“Yes. That sounds good,” Kang Chan responded.

- Anne sends her greetings. Oh, let me take this time to inform you that Louis has been discharged from the hospital as well.

Kang Chan was envious. He was extremely envious that Lanok could be so calm even though he just told him that he was going to North Korea.

“I’ll see you tomorrow,” Kang Chan said. After hanging up, he told Seok Kang-Ho, who didn’t understand French, everything about their conversation.

“Fuck. Our enemies killed one of our country’s generals, yet France seems to be more dedicated to taking care of this. It’s strange how envious that makes me,” Seok Kang-Ho complained.

“There’s no need to feel that way. All we have to do is become just as powerful,” Kang Chan declared.

Seok Kang-Ho tilted his head upon seeing Kang Chan’s eyes. He had never seen that look from him before.

“It seems like Unicorn has finally found its owner,” Lanok murmured.

“Are you talking about Channy?” Anne asked, to which Lanok nodded.

“Yang Bum is indeed worthy of taking over the Chinese intelligence bureau. He has probably come up with a plan to use Huh Sang-Soo’s death in that short phone conversation. If this is how things will play out, I suppose the time has come for me to punish China for kidnapping me too.”

Lanok was on friendly terms with Yang Bum, but he still spoke harshly about taking revenge. Anne couldn’t even dare attempt to guess how adept he was with politics.

“We also have to do everything in our power to make sure the owner of Unicorn returns safely,” Lanok continued.

“Papa, I know Channy is strong, but can he really be a hero who will have influence over the world’s economy and intelligence? For that, the country he was born in isn’t...” Anne trailed off when she saw Lanok’s smile.

“Anne, Monsieur Kang’s in-the-moment judgment, unwavering resilience in any situation, and superhuman abilities and determination that he demonstrates every time he goes on a mission are more than enough to go past what his environment can offer.”

Sitting across from him on the other side of the table, Anne listened closely to Lanok as if she was a student in a lecture.

“It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that the ability to recognize such a person’s potential is half the battle in information warfare. Why do you think Vasili yielded to Monsieur Kang? If you think it’s just because the Spetsnaz lost, you’ll never win against Vasili,” Lanok said.

“But Papa, if Vasili really put his mind to it, South Korea won’t be able to protect Monsieur Kang,” Anne argued.

He smiled as if he was wearing a court jester’s mask.

“If I were to set my mind to it, I could kill Monsieur Kang as well. However, the effort and resources I would have to pour into killing him would leave the French intelligence bureaus spending at least the next ten years trying to regain the power they lost.”

“Can one man really be so strong?” Anne questioned.

“That’s simply the kind of person Monsieur Kang is. If Vasili and Monsieur Kang were to engage in a full-scale battle, I am confident that some countries would stand on Monsieur Kang’s side. Even if South Korea can’t protect him, Monsieur Kang has the capacity to draw people to his side. In the end, even if Vasili were to win, his glory would be riddled with wounds.”

Anne still looked as if she couldn’t believe what he was saying.

Lanok raised his cigar.

“Call Yang Bum and find out when Huh Sang-Soo will be killed. We should have the Aigle dispatched to the waters near the Korean Peninsula around the same time,” Lanok ordered.

“Papa! The DGSE could refuse,” Anne protested.

“Anne.”

Lanok’s firm voice startled Anne. She cautiously raised her gaze and saw the cold and sharp look in his eyes.

“There is nothing more insulting than implying that the DGSE could refuse to follow my orders,” Lanok continued.

“I’m sorry,” Anne replied.

A short moment of silence enveloped the room as Lanok put his cigar in his mouth and puffed out the smoke.

“The intel that people create can determine whether someone lives or dies. Always keep in mind that those who make the judgment can dictate what happens to a person’s life,” Lanok warned.

When Anne nodded, Lanok held his glass out.

“If Monsieur Kang isn’t the owner of Unicorn, then France will be able to maintain its power if I step down from this position. It’s another stroke of luck for me that you’re the one who will be taking over the role.”

Clink.

Anne hesitantly clinked her glass with his.

After finishing his meal with Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook, Kang Chan hurried to the other room, which was where Seok Kang-Ho was.

Although he felt at ease now that he made up his mind, he still couldn't do anything about the glint that lingered in his eyes.

It was around half past eight in the morning.

He poured himself some coffee and lounged around with the news on the TV.

How should I take care of Yang Bum?

Deeply contemplating, Kang Cha stared at his cup of coffee when a sound interrupted his train of thought.

“Huh?” Seok Kang-Ho seemed surprised by what he saw.

What is it?

Kang Chan quickly turned to the TV.

“Take a look at that,” Seok Kang-Ho told him.

“Breaking News” was flashing in large text on the screen that Seok Kang-Ho pointed at.

[Chinese authorities have sentenced South Korean Congressman Heo Sang-soo to death in a trial held today at Nine AM in our local time. This is being evaluated as an unprecedented event not only diplomatically but also within China itself. I repeat, China has sentenced Congressman Heo Sang-soo to death. The government has not yet issued an official statement.]

“I bet that has made the son of a bitch furious,” Kang Chan said with a smirk.

“I feel a little better now,” Seok Kang-Ho replied.

They finally felt as if they were fighting back properly. Now that Kang Chan thought about it, he realized that he wanted to meet the bastard if opportunity allowed him. He turned to Seok Kang-Ho with a pleased expression.

“Phuhuhu,” Seok Kang-Ho cruelly laughed with a gleam in his eyes. Nervous tension was beginning to rise inside him.

Chapter 176.2: I feel better now (1)

It was bright and sunny in Jeungpyeong that Tuesday morning. It was already late autumn as evidenced by the red blanket over the mountains that were waiting for winter to arrive.

A sedan got off the highway and came to a stop halfway on the road leading to the mountains.

Click.

As soon as Kim Tae-Jin stepped out from the passenger seat, Suh Sang-Hyun got out of the driver's seat.

"Is this the place?" Kim Tae-Jin asked out loud.

The road that Kim Tae-Jin was looking at was clean of any trace of the accident—there wasn't even a single piece of debris. Kim Tae-Jin glanced at the mountain. When he turned to the road again, he pulled out a cigarette from his pocket and lit it up, cupping the fire from the wind with his hands.

"Whew!"

The autumn wind carried away the smoke he exhaled toward the mountains. As he set down the cigarette to one side of the road, his face wrinkled so much that it seemed he was trying to bottle up his anger.

He was in front of Suh Sang-Hyun right now. He had to behave as his higher-up should.

"Whew!" Kim Tae-Jin let out a long sigh and pressed his fingers to his temples. "I told Kang Chan that we should let Wui Min-Gook live. I relentlessly chased Wui Min-Gook around because I was furious that he killed my subordinates, but I did technically kill his subordinates as well. I wanted our generation to be the last to get that kind of blood on our hands."

Kim Tae-Jin turned to look at the mountains and highway again, his eyes glinting with intense anger.

"I realized I have become overly weak-hearted ever since I retired from the military. I can't believe I said we should stop the killing there when I used to regularly stab necks and hearts... I made an excuse that I didn't want to dirty Kang Chan's hands any further, and I foolishly thought that there would be nothing more cruel to Wui Min-Gook than having a disabled body anyway... Those are nothing but pathetic notions. I'm ashamed."

Kim Tae-Jin turned to Suh Sang-Hyun.

"Starting tomorrow, you will be in charge of Yoo-Bi Corp," Kim Tae-Jin ordered.

Suh Sang-Hyun's expression showed mixed emotions.

"Just until we catch Wui Min-Gook, at least. I suddenly remembered the old days after listening to what Kang Chan said. Back when I lost my subordinates and I started to desperately search for the enemy's outposts, I couldn't have felt more disappointed in my country. I remembered how I felt when I had to forcibly take off my uniform," Kim Tae-Jin murmured.

"So you plan to search for Wui Min-Gook yourself? To protect a talented individual like Mr. Kang Chan?" Suh Sang-Hyun asked.

Kim Tae-Jin gazed back at Suh Sang-Hyun's hurt expression.

“Have you forgotten, sir? Once upon a time, I followed in your footsteps, Director —I mean Sunbae-nim. I liked you so much that I took off my uniform with my own hands. I might not be as good as Mr. Kang Chan, but I’m not so bad either. And there are plenty of expert consultants who can run Yoo-Bi Corp anyway,” Suh Sang-Hyun confidently said.

Seeing Kim Tae-Jin’s grin, Suh Sang-Hyun reciprocated with a similar kind of smile.

There were only two people in the conference room, but the atmosphere was heavier than ever.

“There hasn’t been any response from the Chinese intelligence bureau. It seems like their power struggle is still ongoing.”

Hwang Ki-Hyun gulped down some water, parched from anxiety.

“There is no excuse for Congressman Huh’s espionage charges. However, there’s a prevailing opinion that there might be something else behind the decision to sentence him to death in this matter. This one-sided announcement from China is evidence of that,” Hwang Ki-Gyun stated.

“Something else?” Moon Jae-Hyun asked.

Hwang Ki-Hyun looked quite stumped.

“The most realistic analysis is that they are attempting to recover their pride, which they lost due to the recent Beijing airport terrorist incident,” he answered.

“I heard the faction responsible for internally eliminating Huh Geuk is in power now, though. Taking that into consideration, is all that still really necessary?” Moon Jae-Hyun questioned.

“The party in control right now probably finds it burdensome to completely suppress the opposition. Hence, they’re choosing to execute Congressman Huh as a form of warning and a gesture of reconciliation to the opposition party,” Hwang Ki-Hyun replied.

Moon Jae-Hyun remained silent, listening thoughtfully.

“Even though we have strengthened security, the number and anger of the protestors gathered in front of the Chinese embassy is surpassing our expectations. We can’t reach Chairperson Huh Ha-Soo either. And Mr. President...” Hwang Ki-Hyun trailed off after hesitantly addressing Moon Jae-Hyun. “Mr. Kang Chan is adamant about getting revenge for General Choi Seong-Geon.”

“I heard about that last night as well. His words are still ringing in my ears—that the country isn’t doing anything for a general who gave everything he had for his motherland,” Moon Jae-Hyun grimly said.

Seeing the look in Moon Jae-Hyun’s eyes, Hwang Ki-Hyun chose his next words carefully.

“Then what do you think, Mr. President?” he asked.

“The United States has never let any incident slide where their citizens were harmed. We have never done anything like that as well, but that doesn’t mean we don’t have the means to. Nevertheless, I’m hesitant for the same reason as always. Will my decision result in the needless sacrifice of our precious young people?” Moon Jae-Hyun solemnly responded.

“Yang Bum, the man who holds real power in China right now, and French Ambassador Lanok are on close terms with Mr. Kang Chan. Moreover, in the midst of the current situation, China has unusually sentenced Congressman Huh Sang-Soo to death, and the French ambassador has requested to meet us. I’d say Mr. Kang Chan was likely already aware of Congressman Huh Sang-Soo’s death sentence before it was even announced,” Hwang Ki-Hyun mused.

“Everything will depend on what we do now, then. I’m sure that’s why Ambassador Lanok requested a meeting with us,” Moon Jae-Hyun stated, then nodded. “There’s almost no chance of success in this operation, but even if it does succeed, there’s no chance that they’ll return alive, is there?”

Even Hwang Ki-Hyun didn’t have an answer to that question.

“And Mr. Kang Chan lacks the experience for these types of operations. He could potentially end up as a sacrificial pawn in information warfare,” Moon Jae-Hyun said, making another astonished expression due to the absurdity of the situation. “If he just continues to grow like this, he will certainly be a never-before-seen bundle of fortune for our motherland. We should be trying to keep him safe and protect him, but he now insists on launching an operation against North Korea—to kill the leader of our enemy, no less...”

Moon Jae-Hyun burst out laughing in disbelief. He shook his head from side to side.

“He’s making us stake everything on this. Will we present Kang Chan as the face of our intelligence and properly support him or will we keep hiding and covering him up? Either way, the person in question wants to take revenge for Choi Seong-Geon. I suppose this must be how fathers with outstanding sons feel,” Moon Jae-Hyun added.

“Mr. President, we shouldn’t provoke the United States any longer,” Hwang Ki-Hyun said out of worry.

“General Choi Seong-Geon called me not too long ago. I told him twice that no matter what happens, I will be responsible for him and his soldiers, but look at how things have turned out,” Moon Jae-Hyun muttered dejectedly.

A sense of sadness flickered across Hwang Ki-Hyun’s eyes as he listened to Moon Jae-Hyun.

Huh Ha-Soo’s mixed emotions were evident in his expression.

“The likelihood of canceling the event tomorrow has increased, hasn’t it? Given the situation, even the ambassadors would understand,” Huh Ha-Soo said anxiously.

“The security detail is still guarding the event hall,” his assistant informed him.

“What’s most important is knowing what China is planning and making sure I’m not negatively impacted by it,” Huh Ha-Soo said with determination.

“I think it would be wise to issue a statement, at the very least.”

“Yes, that’s right,” Huh Ha-Soo agreed.

“The reasons aside, public emotions are running high. There is significant criticism of the president and the government’s incompetence.”

“Have we gotten a response from the United States?” Huh Ha-Soo asked.

“They are adopting a wait-and-see approach.”

“The National Intelligence Service, and now China and the United States. All of my communication channels have been severed. We need something to turn this situation around. A move that can help us overcome this crisis in one fell swoop,” Huh Ha-Soo muttered anxiously.

Huh Ha-Soo’s burly assistant, Kwak Do-Young, carefully observed Huh Ha-Soo’s mood from across him.

“Is that young punk more capable than we expected or did we just miss something about Moon Jae-Hyun?” Huh Ha-Soo murmured to himself. “The poor guy is probably terrified on foreign soil. These punks didn’t have any power, ability, or even a proper diplomatic channel before, yet they have now sentenced to death a man who worked behind the curtains for the country.”

Huh Ha-Soo stared daggers in an empty space.

“Contact the broadcasting stations and newspapers to request their cooperation in criticizing this situation. They should be well aware that if we continue at this rate, we’ll only be gotten rid of one by one,” Huh Ha-Soo stated commandingly.

“Understood, sir,” Kwak Do-Young replied.

“The citizens are the only ones we can trust now. There are still many wise citizens in this country who recognize our efforts and support us. The media has to do its job properly to ensure that the people can see the current situation as it is,” Huh Ha-Soo announced.

“I will make your intentions clear,” Kwak Do-Young obediently replied.

“What about Director Wui?”

“He hasn’t contacted us yet,”

Huh Ha-Soo nodded. After a while, he emphasized, “Finding out what they’re trying to do this time should be our priority.”

“I will do my best, sir,” Kwak Do-Young reassured him.

“That poor guy,” Huh Ha-Soo muttered under his breath once more.

After listening to the news about Huh Sang-Soo, Kang Chan didn’t move from his room. He needed some time to organize his thoughts.

He had no doubt in his mind that Wui Min-Gook was the one who attacked Choi Seong-Geon and that Huh Sang-Soo was behind him as well.

But did Yang Bum really get rid of Huh Sang-Soo that way because he was grateful for the other incident in the past?

The execution day was still pending. There was something to this that Kang Chan was missing.

He had to look beyond the surface of the ocean and check what could be hiding beneath the water. That was just the tip of the iceberg of what he had to ponder about.

First and foremost, if permission for the execution wasn’t granted, he would have to figure out a new plan to carry out the revenge. Would Lanok send the Foreign Legion’s special forces team all the way to North Korea? Kang Chan doubted it.

He thought about it for quite some time.

Buzz. Buzz. Buzz.

After a while, his phone began to ring. Upon picking it up, he said, “Yes, Mr. Ambassador. This is Kang Chan.”

- Mr. Kang Chan, what does your schedule look like today?

“I don’t have anything scheduled at the moment,” Kang Chan replied.

- I was just requested for a last-minute appointment. There’s someplace I hope to go with you. I think I’ll arrive at the hotel in about an hour, so do you think you can come down when I call you?

“Yes, sure. I’ll see you then,” Kang Chan said.

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

“Anyhow, we have to take care of this issue with Wui Min-Gook as fast as we can if we want to go back home. What the hell are we doing right now?” Seok Kang-Ho griped.

“That’s exactly how I feel,” Kang Chan agreed bleakly.

He wanted to speed things up, but there was nothing he could do right now.

Chapter 177.1: I Feel Better Now (2)

It was hard to predict what on earth this sly snake was up to.

Informed of their destination upon getting in Lanok’s car, Kang Chan couldn’t help but be dumbfounded. After going through a bunch of complicated procedures, they headed into the Blue House.

Moon Jae-Hyun entered the meeting room and held out his hand to Lanok.

“Nice to meet you,” Moon Jae-Hyun said.

“Thank you for agreeing to talk with me in private, Mr. President,” Lanok said.

With a notepad in hand, the female interpreter relayed what Lanok was saying.

“Have a seat.” Moon Jae-Hyun gestured at the chairs, and they all sat down almost at the same time.

“I heard that you enjoy smoking cigars. It’s been a while since I last had time to smoke leisurely,” Moon Jae-Hyun commented.

An employee approached them and put cigarettes, cigars, and an ashtray on the table.

Click.

They stopped talking for a moment to light up their respective cigarettes and cigars. Afterward, Lanok looked at Kang Chan, seemingly able to understand why Kang Chan couldn’t smoke.

“Let’s have tea.” Moon Jae-Hyun offered. He was the first to take a sip.

“Mr. President, this is an unofficial meeting, so with your permission, I’d like everyone, including the interpreter, to leave this room,” Lanok said.

Moon Jae-Hyun looked around them. He seemed to have expected Lanok to say that.

Click. Click.

The employees left the room, closing the two doors behind them.

“Mr. Kang Chan, will you interpret what I say from here on out?” Lanok asked.

Kang Chan passed on to Moon Jae-Hyun that Lanok had asked him to interpret.

“China will execute Assemblyman Huh Sang-Soo at four in the afternoon today in Korean time,” Lanok said.

That was unexpected news.

Kang Chan and Moon Jae-Hyun both looked dumbfounded.

“Even though he’s a criminal now, Huh Sang-Soo is still a member of South Korea’s National Assembly. If China executes him, Korea and China’s relationship will deteriorate,” Moon Jae-Hyun said.

After Kang Chan passed on what Moon Jae-Hyun said, Lanok gave Kang Chan a meaningful look. He then said, “Yang Bum hopes to get that exact result.”

Damn it!

As Kang Chan passed on what Lanok just said, he promised never to act as an interpreter again.

“Yang Bum is fighting from both within and outside China to seize the real power in their country. Within China, he plans to centralize his power using Huh Sang-Soo’s death penalty. Unfortunately, he’s having trouble with his schemes outside China because they’re not proceeding as planned,” Lanok continued.

Even after Kang Chan told him what Lanok said, Moon Jae-Hyun remained calm and collected. It seemed he was already well aware of what was going on outside China.

“North Korea is also suffering due to a similar problem. The forces that supported Huh Geuk, who’s now deceased, are openly preparing for an armed provocation. Wui Min-Gook was one of the prominent figures who supported Huh Geuk,” Lanok added.

I didn’t know there’s this kind of inside story in executing Huh Sang-Soo.

Kang Chan drank all of the tea in his cup, taking his frustration out on it.

“North Korea is also nervous right now because they still haven’t taken care of Jang Kwang-Taek, their current Minister of Defense and the figure of authority who sent North Korea’s special forces team down to Wui Min-Gook,” Lanok said.

“Can’t China help North Korea with that matter?” Moon Jae-Hyun asked.

Kang Chan passed on Moon Jae-Hyun’s question to Lanok.

“China is having difficulties meddling with the Korean Peninsula’s political situation right now. Yang Bum will soon try to absorb the opposing parties by taking care of Huh Sang-Seo and dealing with the inevitable disgrace that will be caused by reversing their economic sanctions on South Korea and the consequential loss of prestige from what happened with the airport. They’re in a rush to unify the forces inside China by arousing hostility with South Korea, so they won’t be able to do anything about the power struggle inside North Korea,” Lanok said.

“Mr. Kang Chan, can you ask the ambassador what he wants?” Moon Jae-Hyun asked.

Kang Chan passed on Moon Jae-Hyun’s question to Lanok.

“Please dispatch South Korea’s special forces team. South Korea will get three benefits from taking Jang Kwang-Taek out of the equation: the stabilization of North Korea, revenge for General Choi Seong-Geon, and an important North Korean military stronghold will become South Korea's.”

Unlike Kang Chan, Moon Jae-Hyun looked as if he completely understood what Lanok was saying.

“Can’t France provide direct help?” Moon Jae-Hyun asked.

“If we do, then we’ll be giving the United States a reason to interfere. Russia will also be put in an awkward position. South Korea will likely find all of that to be very uncomfortable.”

“Even if we only send our special forces team, there is still a chance that the United States will interfere.”

It was Kang Chan’s first time seeing this kind of look in Moon Jae-Hyun’s eyes—it was soft but sharp at the same time. His gaze right now was similar to Lanok’s, but it clearly harbored a different kind of danger.

“France has already sent over an aircraft carrier. With your permission, we can have it on standby in international waters. If we do, China and Russia will follow suit, ordering their respective aircraft carriers and warships to remain on standby in the international waters of the Korean Peninsula,” Lanok said.

Moon Jae-Hyun’s expression hardened upon hearing what Lanok said from Kang Chan.

“Don’t worry. We have no intention of starting a war on the Korean Peninsula. On the contrary, this will suppress the military operations that Jang Kwang-Taek of North Korea may inadvertently cause. Moreover, it will also prevent the United States from interceding into this operation,” Lanok added.

“How will France, China, and Russia benefit from doing all this?” Moon Jae-Hyun asked.

Lanok drank some tea before answering. “This operation will allow China to display its military might, ultimately helping them repair their damaged prestige and regain some of their lost honor. As a result, they will also achieve unity within their country. Russia is planning to move forward with giving South Korea oil field development rights, so they want to take this opportunity to earn the right to speak in the Korean Peninsula. As for my country...”

Lanok looked at Kang Chan. The sly snake could still make other people curious about what he was going to say next despite requiring an interpreter for his remarks to be understood.

Kang Chan met Lanok's gaze after passing on everything that Lanok said. When he did, Lanok continued, "Economically speaking, my country wants North Korea's minerals. We also want to build a solid trust with the South Korean government."

"I see." Moon Jae-Hyun nodded. He then said, "I doubt trading for North Korea's minerals will be easy, though, considering the economic sanctions."

"Exceptions are made for simple trading."

Moon Jae-Hyun nodded, then said, "Mr. Ambassador, we have had close ties with the United States for a long time in terms of politics, economics, and security. We can't just destroy all of that just because we are going through a rough patch right now."

The difference between politics and information warfare was that in politics, politicians exchanged information to settle political issues behind closed doors.

Kang Chan felt as if he was studying about the real reason why information warfare was needed. At that moment, he realized that Lanok asked to come with him today on purpose as well.

"The United States can't strain their relationship with South Korea because of this matter. On the contrary, I'm certain that they'll end up yielding more things. After all, if the United States severs its relationship with South Korea right now, other countries will be able to exert their influence. My country will be the first to, followed by other countries, including China and Russia," Lanok explained.

Moon Jae-Hyun's expression already showed his answer.

Afterward, they talked about related matters for about twenty minutes, but it didn't make that much of a difference.

"Mr. Ambassador, I want to get some fresh air. If it's okay with you, I'd like to go for a walk with Mr. Kang Chan for a moment," Moon Jae-Hyun said.

Lanok extended both of his hands as if he had been waiting for Moon Jae-Hyun to say that. He then expressed that he would follow Moon Jae-Hyun's wishes.

"Kang Chan," Moon Jae-Hyun called. When he stood up, Kang Chan followed after him.

The two left the meeting room and went out to the back of the Blue House, arriving at a trail that led around the mountain.

From far away, Kang Chan could see security guards in suits walking in pairs.

"Do you really have to go there yourself? I'm not saying that our soldiers' lives are not important, but I'm worried that you're interfering in something too dangerous while the Eurasian Rail, a national undertaking, is still incomplete," Moon Jae-Hyun said.

Kang Chan understood what Moon Jae-Hyun meant. However, for them to go on an operation like this, they needed at least Cha Dong-Gyun or Choi Jong-Il.

Kang Chan did cheer them up in the restaurant, but they didn't have a commander that they could trust and follow yet. If they went on an operation in this state, then not only would they inevitably fail, but it would also be no different from sending them to their deaths.

When Kang Chan didn't respond, Moon Jae-Hyun looked at the mountain at the back.

"The United States always dispatches their best agents, especially if they think the operation has a low chance of succeeding. I know it's hard for you to reply to what I said. After all, it's our fault that we don't have anyone who can replace you. We're not that strong yet," Moon Jae-Hyun added.

Is he giving me permission to go?

Moon Jae-Hyun bitterly smiled when he saw Kang Chan looking at him.

"The National Intelligence Service will erase the identities of all the soldiers who will be joining this operation. Even their resident registration will disappear. If the operation fails or if one of the soldiers dies, it will seem like they weren't born in South Korea." Moon Jae-Hyun looked at the sky while inhaling loudly. "I hope you work hard enough so South Korea's intelligence bureau can become stronger once you return. If the President takes charge of politics, as you've seen a moment ago, then I hope you'll mediate for South Korea's opinions and benefits."

Moon Jae-Hyun lowered his gaze and looked at Kang Chan.

"I want to witness South Korea become a strong country where everyone is well off so you can represent a country that can never be overpowered even by strong countries. I also wish we had someone similar to the figures that Russia, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, China, and Germany send on the frontlines. "

This gentleman was strangely adept at making everyone else feel his sincerity.

Chapter 177.2: I Feel Better Now (2)

"Can you promise me that you'll become that person?" Moon Jae-Hyun asked.

Kang Chan didn't even know if he had that kind of power yet, but he was already being asked that question. He smiled instead of answering not only because it was awkward but also because it was embarrassing.

"I can't let you go if you don't make that promise." Moon Jae-Hyun stopped walking and looked at Kang Chan.

"I promise you that I'll become that person."

Moon Jae-Hyun smirked, then shook Kang Chan's hand. "My stay in the office won't last forever. When my term ends, I'm going to live a comfortable and peaceful life. Unlike me, things will just become more and more difficult for you as time goes by. Even so, please do your best for South Korea."

“I don’t know if I’ll be able to do as you said, but I’ll do my best.”

Will I really gain the capabilities to take responsibility for South Korea?

If Kang Chan had a wish, it was to never lose another person with a heart as great as Choi Seong-Geon’s.

Moon Jae-Hyun smiled pleasantly.

“Mr. Kang Chan, I hope that once this operation ends, you’ll go to the training that I recommended.” Lanok looked at Kang Chan as he calmly reiterated his suggestion. The car they were in was on the way to the hotel. “You personally going on every operation that has to be done is truly dangerous. I understand that this operation is very important and that it’s still difficult for you to trust the soldiers to carry their own weight without you around, but you have bigger things to tend to.”

Kang Chan was thinking the same thing—he knew South Korea needed someone to not handle only Yang Bum from China and Vasili from Russia but also keep the United States and Japan contained and at bay.

“Understood, Mr. Ambassador.”

“I’ll provide you with as much support as I can.”

When it comes to ability and trust, Kang Chan couldn’t find a better ally than Lanok.

Lanok smiled widely when Kang Chan thanked him.

When they arrived at the hotel, Kang Chan parted ways with Lanok and headed to Samseong-dong with Seok Kang-Ho, who was waiting for him in the lobby.

“Manager Kim sounded quite different than usual. What’s going on?” Seok Kang-Ho asked as soon as the car hit the road. Ever since he had finished talking to Kim Hyung-Jung, he had done nothing but wait for Kang Chan in the lobby.

“Let’s talk when we get there,” Kang Chan responded.

“Alright.”

Kang Chan had no reason to be suspicious of the agents, but he also had no reason to talk about sensitive matters inside the car. What he said was enough for Seok Kang-Ho to fully understand what he wanted to do anyway.

By the time Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho arrived at Kim Hyung-Jung’s office in Samseong-dong, Jeon Dae-Geuk and Hwang Ki-Hyun were already waiting for them.

For some reason, Kang Chan kept meeting people today that he found difficult to smoke with.

Kim Hyung-Jung brought over drinks for everyone.

As soon as Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho sat down, Jeon Dae-Geuk gravely said, “Have you heard what’s going on from the President? How would you like to select the soldiers joining this operation?”

“I’ll go to Jeungpyeong today.”

Jeon Dae-Geuk pursed his lips and nodded.

“Mr. Kang Chan, this has always been the case with all of the operations that you’ve participated in until now, but things are even worse this time. This operation is inside the Korean Peninsula, and you’re up against North Korea. As you have probably already guessed, if this goes wrong, then South Korea and North Korea will both be in deep trouble,” Hwang Ki-Hyun said, his eyes looking unusually sharp. “If there’s a possibility of that happening, then we have no choice but to give up on the soldiers.”

That was probably the reason why Hwang Ki-Hyun’s eyes were so fierce. Kang Chan nodded as he replied, “Alright.”

“The National Intelligence Service will prepare the infiltration route. We’ll contact you every hour through the satellite phone.” After Hwang Ki-Hyun finished saying everything that he wanted to say, he exhaled loudly. “When I look at you, I can’t help but feel old. It also makes me wonder what I’ve done in the past two years as the Director of the National Intelligence Service.”

“Haa!” Jeon Dae-Geuk sighed loudly as if he understood how Hwang Ki-Hyun felt.

“They decided to cancel tomorrow’s event,” Jeon Dae-Geuk said.

“That’s good.”

Kang Chan wasn’t able to smoke, and in return, Kim Hyung-Jung and Seok Kang-Ho weren’t able to say anything.

“All personal data of the soldiers who will go on the operation with you will be erased. As for you, on paper, we’ll make it seem like you flew to Thailand at nine this evening.”

Kang Chan knew they had to take that precaution because people knew what he looked like.

“Have you had lunch yet?” Jeon Dae-Geuk asked Kang Chan.

“Not yet.”

“Yeah? Let’s get something to eat, then,” Jeon Dae-Geuk suggested.

Kim Hyung-Jung took the initiative to order jjampong and tangsuyuk for everyone.

In the National Intelligence Service's lounge, the chief officer of the President's security service and the Director of the National Intelligence Service were having jjampong and tangsuyuk across from the manager of the National Intelligence Service, a high school teacher, and a high schooler. It was during moments like this that Kang Chan thought people weren't that different from each other.

Perhaps it was because they ordered tangsuyuk, but the meal arrived ten minutes later. Kang Chan had already eaten it a few times, but he still hadn't gotten tired of it.

It took twenty minutes for them to finish eating, at which point Kim Hyung-Jung cleaned up the dishes and brought over coffee.

"On another note, has Wui Min-Gook been found yet?" Jeon Dae-Geuk asked Kim Hyung-Jung after drinking coffee like sungnyung[1]. Let's be honest among ourselves—do we even have Huh Ha-Soo under constant watch? He's the only person who seems suspicious anyway, right? He also said that he wanted to meet Kang Chan in private."

When Kim Hyung-Jung glanced at Hwang Ki-Hyung, the latter looked around the room and softly said, "If Mr. Kang Chan succeeds in this operation, then we'll be able to arrest not only Wui Min-Gook but everyone who cooperated with him as well. It'll be like the time we arrested the five people who were leaking information from the National Intelligence Service."

"You are as cunning as I expected," Jeon Dae-Geuk said.

Kim Hyung-Jung forcibly held back his laughter since it was unclear whether that was a compliment or an insult.

"The fact China is planning on executing Huh Sang-Soo's death penalty this afternoon is probably done with the same intention," Hwang Ki-Hyun added.

"They're going to execute him?" Jeon Dae-Geuk asked.

"Yes. I'm sure the information is trustworthy. After all, it came from France's DGSE. Once China gets its hands on its enemies, it will eliminate them one at a time. That's just how they handle things."

"What? Are all their enemies stupid? If China plans to purge them one by one, then why would they surrender?"

Hwang Ki-Hyun smiled. "They should pledge their allegiance instead. China will only save those who can provide them with detailed intel on their opponents, though. China is essentially working on two things: relationships and justification. By executing Huh Sang-Soo, Yang Bum will get the justification he needs."

"Jeez! Those bastards are making my head hurt!"

As Jeon Dae-Geuk shook his head, Hwang Ki-Hyun looked at Kang Chan.

'Did you understand all that?'

That was important information.

Hwang Ki-Hyun's eyes clearly showed the reason he talked as if he was an older lady who dropped by a sauna.

Was I seeing things?

Kang Chan looked at Hwang Ki-Hyun, who smiled softly in response. His eyes were still extremely sharp.

At dinner time, Kang Chan went to Jeungpyeung. They went past the barricades and around the mountain path, finally arriving before a familiar barrack.

"The men are probably having dinner right now," Seok Kang-Ho commented.

As Seok Kang-Ho leaned forward and examined their surroundings, the adjutant came out and stood in front of the barracks. The white fabric wrapped around his arm was painful to see.

"Where are the soldiers?" Kang Chan asked.

"They're training."

"Training? Isn't it time for dinner?"

"I heard that they're practicing mountain warfare and that they get to decide when it ends," the adjutant said.

The adjutant looked as if he was about to cry. It seemed seeing Kang Chan reminded him of Choi Seong-Geon.

"Would the two of you like a cup of coffee?" the adjutant asked.

"Sure."

Kang Chan sat in front of the barrack. A moment later, the adjutant brought over two paper cups and handed them to Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho.

They took a sip of the coffee, then lit up a cigarette.

"Phew," Kang Chan exhaled. As the wind picked up the cigarette smoke and swept it toward the mountain, he heard footsteps approaching and guns clunking.

When the soldiers saw Kang Chan, their expressions became very complicated.

One by one, they approached him. No one said anything, but they looked at him with eyes full of resentment and anger that they couldn't release.

Chkk.

Kang Chan put his cigarette into the paper cup. He then said, "Your resident registration will be erased."

Kwak Cheol-Ho cocked his head but soon tightly gritted his teeth.

“If you die, you won’t even leave the tiniest trace of existence. Only your families will remember you. The same goes for when he fails the operation,” Kang Chan continued.

“Please tell us our target,” Kwak Cheol-Ho said.

“He is a prominent figure.” Kang Chan stood up and dusted off his bum.

The soldiers’ eyes glinted. It was as if they would shoot Kang Chan if he kept stalling.

“It’s Jang Kwang-Taek, the Minister of Defense[2] of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” Kang Chan said.

Kwak Cheol-Ho quickly took a step forward. Before he could even stop, everyone else had already gotten closer to Kang Chan as well.

“You all know exactly where our target is, don’t you?” Kang Chan asked.

Kwak Cheol-Ho grinned as if he was imitating Seok Kang-Ho.

Chapter 178.1: No different from back then (1)

“This is pretty much no different from back in Africa,” Seok Kang-Ho murmured under his breath as he drove with one hand on the wheel. Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho were currently on their way back to Seoul.

“The men looked like they softened up a bit after seeing you earlier, Cap. I feel sorry for them, but I can’t help but feel proud of them at the same time,” Seok Kang-Ho added.

“Why would you be proud of them?” Kang Chan asked, unable to understand what Seok Kang-Ho meant.

“Well, why else would they be out training for mountain warfare? They were doing what they thought would help them avenge General Choi, weren’t they?” Seok Kang-Ho reasoned.

That’s a good point. It does make sense.

Kang Chan put his cigarette in his mouth.

“There’s a resting area for drivers coming just up ahead. Let’s stop over and get some coffee,” Seok Kang-Ho suggested.

“I don’t see why not.”

At the very least, it would mean that he wouldn’t have to smoke a cigarette inside the car. Just like Seok Kang-Ho said, they soon reached the resting area. Seok Kang-Ho parked the car in the parking lot.

“Do you want anything else besides coffee?” Seok Kang-Ho confirmed.

Kang Chan shook his head in response. He then headed toward a bench that was in a secluded area.

The season was transitioning to a new one, so it was already starting to feel cold in the evenings.

Seok Kang-Ho came walking over a while later. He took longer than Kang Chan expected.

“I brought some hodu-gwaja too. Here’s the coffee,” Seok Kang-Ho said as if to explain why he took so long.

“You went to the bathroom, didn’t you?” Kang Chan asked out of suspicion.

“Why do you think so, Cap?” Seok Kang-Ho sounded a little hesitant.

“Did you even wash your hands?”

“Tsk, tsk! How can you say that when you used to live in Africa?” Seok Kang-Ho replied defensively.

Ugh! This disgusting bastard!

Although he had some complaints, Kang Chan still took a piece of the hodu-gwaja from inside the paper bag that Seok Kang-Ho ripped open wide. It was already dark outside. Insects could be seen occasionally flying under the lights illuminating the resting area.

After eating some hodu-gwaja and drinking coffee, Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho began smoking.

“Damn, I’ve experienced so many events that keep me on my toes in this lifetime!” Seok Kang-Ho grumbled as he put his cigarette in his mouth. Despite what he said, though, he didn’t seem to hate the life he had right now.

From the seats next to them, people chattered about how South Korea should never forgive China for what it did. They probably heard the news about China’s decision to proceed with Huh Sang-Soo’s execution.

Unaffected, Kang Chan flicked the ash from his cigarette and put it next to a large ashtray. “Let’s go.”

“Whatever you say, Cap,” Seok Kang-Ho agreed.

Could one of Wui Min-Gook’s men be following me?

Kang Chan subtly scanned his surroundings on the way back to the car.

“What’s wrong? Is there something here?” Seok Kang-Ho asked out of curiosity as he adjusted his seatbelt in the driver’s seat. He glanced outside the window.

“I was just checking to see if anyone’s tailing us,” Kang Chan replied.

“Who? Wui Min-Gook? There’s no way we would get that lucky,” Seok Kang-Ho responded with a grin.

“Why would we be getting lucky if someone’s following us?”

“If we can catch them, then we’ll get the opportunity to capture everyone else!” Seok Kang-Ho mused.

Seok Kang-Ho peered around their surroundings again as they hit the road.

“Hey! Just focus on the road ahead!” Kang Chan exclaimed in disbelief.

“I know there’s no need to feel this way, but this seems like a wasted opportunity,” Seok Kang-Ho remarked disgruntledly.

They didn’t run into any issues even as they exited the highway and reached the hotel. They arrived at around ten in the evening.

Kang Chan greeted Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook for a little while before returning to the room that Seok Kang-Ho was in. It didn’t take long for him to fall asleep.

Wednesday morning.

Kang Chan ate breakfast with Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook and spent some time with them for a while.

“Are you heading to the fitness center now?” Kang Chan asked the two.

“Yup. Want to come with us?” Kang Dae-Kyung responded.

Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook seemed to have somewhat gotten used to the hotel life by now.

“Actually, starting today, I’ll probably be staying in Jeungpyeong for a few days,” Kang Chan said.

“In Jeungpyeong?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked, feeling quite surprised.

“Yes. There’s something that I want to confirm first before we can return home.”

Kang Dae-Kyung seemed to think that Kang Chan wasn’t giving them the whole truth.

“Are you okay? Is something going on?”

“Of course not. Everything is fine,” Kang Chan replied, reassuring them.

Just like that, in the span of a few seconds, assassinating North Korea’s defense minister was reduced to an unimportant feat. Still, as Kang Chan replied to Kang Dae-Kyung’s question, he couldn’t help but think that what he was about to do was nothing short of pure madness.

“Will you be leaving soon?”

“Not really. I’ll probably stay for a little while before I leave, so you don’t have to wait up for me. Go ahead and work out, Father. That would help me leave with a lighter heart as well,” Kang Chan reassured him again.

As he always did in these situations, Kang Dae-Kyung looked like he was struggling to come to terms with what his son did.

“Be careful with whatever you’ll be up to,” Kang Dae-Kyung said worriedly.

“Channy, we can take our time going back home, so don’t overdo it, okay?” Yoo Hye-Sook urged.

“I won’t, Mother,” Kang Chan replied.

As Kang Chan’s parents stepped out into the hallway, where the agents were standing, Yoo Hye-Sook kept looking back at her son.

Kang Chan wished they could stop going on operations. In France too, he felt sick of having to constantly leave on missions. Unfortunately, he ended up having to go on another one anyway.

These kinds of things would repeat endlessly if one never stood their ground against the bastards who punched them. Moreover, if it kept happening long enough, even if one did try to rebel, the bastards would just think it was abnormal for them to fight back.

I’ll put an end to all of this now.

Through this opportunity, Kang Chan would brutally and surely show his enemies what would happen if anybody dared touch his people.

When the doors of the elevator that Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook were in finally closed, Kang Chan headed into the room where Seok Kang-Ho was.

Click.

“Come on in, Cap,” Seok Kang-Ho greeted.

As soon as Kang Chan stepped inside, he found Kim Hyung-Jung standing up to greet him.

“Hi. When did you arrive, Manager Kim?” Kang Chan addressed with a friendly tone.

“About an hour ago,” Kim Hyung-Jung responded.

“You should’ve called when you got here. I would have come sooner,” Kang Chan said as he sat down on a chair near the sofa.

“Well, I was planning on waiting until it was time for lunch, at least.”

A wide map had been spread out on the table in front of the sofa.

“Here. Have some coffee,” Seok Kang-Ho offered.

Kang Chan took a sip from the cup that Seok Kang-Ho gave him. The trio also leisurely enjoyed some cigarettes. Kang Chan felt as if he could relax a little since Jeon Dae-Geuk and Hwang Ki-Hyun weren’t with them.

“Take a look at this,” Kim Hyung-Jung said, broaching the subject. He pointed at a location that was on the eastern coast of the Korean peninsula. “There are a total of three routes that we can take to infiltrate into enemy territory. To start with, there’s this route through the ocean. It goes through Goseong in Gangwon Province and leads to Tongchon County. Next is a route that starts directly from

here in Gyodong, the west coast, straight to Nampo. Lastly, we have a route through China. It crosses the Yalu River and enters Chosan County through here.”

He moved his finger on the map accordingly as he elaborated on each route.

“The most viable plan is this route that leads to Tongchon County over the sea from Goseong. Jang Gwang-Taek is known to stay mainly in Sinpyeong County, and Tongchon County is just a hundred kilometers in a straight line from Sinpyeong,” Kim Hyung-Jung added as he drew a long line.

“These are all mountainous regions, aren’t they?” Kang Chan questioned.

“Well, in reality, you’ll be going around when you’re traveling there, so it’ll be more like a hundred sixty to a hundred seventy kilometers. You won’t be able to walk along the road anyway, so the hundred kilometer doesn’t matter,” Kim Hyung-Jung mused.

One hundred kilometers was typically about a day’s walk for an adult—but that didn’t take sleep, meals, or rest into calculation. One could cover approximately a hundred km in twenty-four hours if they walked at a consistent pace. However, the mountainous area that was shown on the map would take even the best-trained soldiers at least two days to traverse.

“As we planned yesterday, we intend to infiltrate tonight at high tide. If the operation fails, we will regroup in Yangsan within two weeks. Those who manage to survive until then will decide whether the soldiers who failed to regroup with them are alive or dead based on their individual abilities,” Kim Hyung-Jung added.

Kang Chan kept scanning the map even after Kim Hyung-Jung was done with his explanation.

“You will be provided with radios. We will make broadcasts twice a day, specifically at eight twenty-seven in the morning and evening. The codes will be translated and relayed to you by our agents,” Kim Hyung-Jung continued.

“What time do we leave?” Kang Chan asked.

“You’re scheduled to depart from Goseong at twenty-three hundred thirty hours,” Kim Hyung-Jung replied.

“What time should we leave Seoul, then?” Kang Chan asked this time.

“You should arrive on time if you depart from the hotel at three in the afternoon and join the agents in Chuncheon,” Kim Hyung-Jung answered.

Seok Kang-Ho nodded in response.

Chapter 178.2: No different from back then (1)

A bit into the discussion, Kim Hyung-Jung called, "Mr. Kang Chan."

Hearing his name, Kang Chan lifted his gaze from the map.

"Given the sudden nature of this operation, there's no guarantee that Jang Gwang-Taek will be at Sinpyeong County. Moreover, if this operation is exposed, our government intends to deny any involvement in the mission," Kim Hyung-Jung stated gravely.

Well, obviously. Why is he bringing this up when we all know about that already?

"The moment our government denies this operation, China and Russia may dispatch their special forces teams," Kim Hyung-Jung added.

Kang Chan already expected that as well. Although he wasn't exactly sure what Yang Bum had in mind, he knew Vasili was more than capable of switching sides.

"The National Intelligence Service is keeping a close watch on Chairperson Huh Ha-Soo. Once you take care of Jang Gwang-Taek, the North Korean leadership has agreed to provide evidence related to the collaboration between Chairperson Huh Ha-Soo and Wui Min-Gook. It's suspected that Chairperson Huh Ha-Soo directly made some kind of arrangement with the North Korean regime," Kim Hyung-Jung explained.

"That bastard! How many people is that traitor involved with? He was playing on all sides of the fence for sure," Seok Kang-Ho griped.

"We have leads that he was involved in the terrorist incident at the golf course and the press conference attack," Kim Hyung-Jung responded.

"And what if we fail?" Kang Chan asked.

Kim Hyung-Jung let out a deep sigh.

"To be completely honest, the chances of success for this operation are less than ten percent, which is why we are focusing on what will happen if we fail. To begin with, we plan to arrest Chairperson Huh with the evidence we collected. Of course, we will have to bear with the allegations that it's political maneuvering," Kim Hyung-Jung said grimly.

"Well, none of the missions we've been on so far had high success rates anyway. Anyway, what you're saying is that things will become complicated if we fail, right?" Kang Chan confirmed.

"That's correct," Kim Hyung-Jung responded with a nod.

Kang Chan's goal was to prevent anybody from messing with his people ever again, and the National Intelligence Service wanted to arrest Huh Ha-Soo and hold him responsible for his crimes. Although they had different objectives, both parties wanted the same man dead: Jang Gwang-Taek.

“Mr. Kang Chan,” Kim Hyung-Jung began as he glanced at Seok Kang-Ho and turned back to Kang Chan again. “If the operation fails, head to Dokgeom-ri here.”

What’s this now?

Kang Chan tilted his head.

“Kim Tae-Jin, Suh Sang-Hyun, and I will be behind the iron fences of Dokgeom-ri. I’m confident that you, Mr. Seok, and the rest of our soldiers are capable enough to break through to this location. If the operation fails, for seventy-two hours, I won’t let anything stop me from waiting for you here. Just get to the unarmed zone of Dokgeom-ri and you will be set,” Kim Hyung-Jung ordered him.

In other words, they were preparing for the worst: the deaths of the soldiers joining this operation.

“At least with these orders, our nation won’t abandon our men until the very end. We devised this plan in line with that directive. I hope you two can keep this to yourselves for the time being,” Kim Hyung-Jung emphasized.

“Understood,” Kang Chan replied.

No one mentioned whose orders and plan this was from.

With their conversation done, Kim Hyung-Jung pulled out two small maps and handed them to Kang Chan.

“What’s good to eat around here?” Kang Chan asked, changing subjects.

“Everything, to be honest. Nothing’s spectacularly tasty, though,” Kim Hyung-Jung answered.

“Oh, right! I got a menu here. Can you pick something out for us, Manager Kim?” Seok Kang-Ho requested as he extended his arm to pick up the menu and hand it to Kim Hyung-Jung.

“Should we have a warm bowl of galbi tang, then?” Kim Hyung-Jung suggested.

“Sure, sounds great,” Kang Chan replied.

Seok Kang-Ho ordered. Afterward, an awkward silence filled the room.

“I’m sorry for asking you to do something like this,” Kim Hyung-Jung suddenly apologized.

Kang Chan lifted his gaze to look back at Kim Hyung-Jung. For things like this, a smile was the best response.

He was never the type to be stopped by fear. In the first place, the mission wasn’t scary to him in the slightest. However, he couldn’t help but be worried about Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook.

He was concerned about how they would feel—the shock and pain they would struggle with—when they learned he was dead or if he went missing in action.

Their meal arrived after some time. They talked about various topics as they enjoyed the galbitang.

The ribs were large and meaty, but considering the price, Kang Chan still couldn't help but feel like it was a rip-off.

“Please take care of my parents while I'm away,” Kang Chan abruptly said.

“I will,” Kim Hyung-Jung replied resolutely.

They pushed the bowls to the side and shared the small remainder of their coffee. After brushing his teeth in the bathroom, Kang Chan was ready.

“Well then, shall we go?”

In response to Kang Chan's suggestion, the two men with him stood up. They left the room and headed to the elevator. Before getting in it, Kang Chan turned around to look at the room where Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook were staying.

A once-ordinary couple living in peace suddenly found their lives turned upside down when their son survived a fall from a rooftop only to frequently come home with injuries, participate in knife fights, and kill people in front of their eyes. They even almost got shot in an underground parking lot.

Nevertheless, the two made every effort to understand and trust their son. In what felt like a prison of a hotel, they forced themselves to exercise and refrained from questioning what he was doing.

Kang Chan sincerely wanted to put an end to this turmoil.

He managed to stop the terrorist attacks on the golf course and press conference and even got revenge for those by destroying a section of the Chinese airport. He also stopped the Japanese agents who attacked Yoo Hye-Sook's office by twisting their necks.

Now, however, his enemies tried to shoot down Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook and even killed Choi Seong-Geon.

Since they had a straightforward way to apprehend Huh Ha-Soo and Wui Min-Gook, who was the one giving orders, there was no need to take the long way.

When the three reached the underground parking lot, they found a van waiting at the exit. They promptly hopped into it, and it immediately departed. It was already one in the afternoon, so the sunlight streaming through the window made the weather seem pleasant.

‘How long do I have to live like this?’

He felt as if a lightning bolt suddenly struck him after reincarnating and spending a busy life. From school bullies and gangsters to Sharlan and Lanok, time flew by so fast that everything seemed like a dream.

He definitely wasn't living this kind of life because he wanted to. But at the same time, it wasn't in his nature to bow down to school bullies or gangsters.

‘Is my temper the problem?’

Kang Chan chuckled to himself and looked outside the window.

He used to see Kim Mi-Young before going on other operations, but this time, things took a strange turn.

Damn it! So annoying!

In the end, there seemed to be no other solution than to go and visit the foreign intelligence bureaus as Lanok suggested.

He would become stronger. In the world of intelligence, he would become as powerful as Vasili or Lanok. He would make people think that it was better to request his help than provoke him into a fight.

The van passed by Misari and entered the highway.

“I should go to Gapyeong and have some boiled chicken someday,” Seok Kang-Ho murmured to himself. His words broke Kang Chan away from his train of thought.

When Kim Hyung-Jung asked what Seok Kang-Ho was talking about, Seok Kang-Ho began to tell the story about him eating some chicken a while back.

Bored and nervous, trivial things started to sound funny to Kang Chan. He chuckled as he looked at Seok Kang-Ho.

Seok Kang-Ho, with his eyes glinting from nervousness, was talking about splitting the stomach and ripping the legs apart, making it sound a lot more gruesome than the topic should be. Around forty minutes later, they found a resting area on the roadside.

“Let’s have a cup of coffee before we continue,” Kim Hyung-Jung suggested. The car drove into the resting area, and sedans parked on either side of the van. An agent quickly stepped out before the others could.

The three opened the doors of the van and smoked a cigarette each.

They had to be careful about drawing the public’s attention.

“Hoo.”

An agent brought over some coffee for them.

“Nice!” Seok Kang-Ho suddenly cheered. Kang Chan understood how he felt.

The blue sky and white clouds looked beautiful.

After about fifteen minutes of rest, they hit the road again. They drove for about thirty more minutes before getting off the highway, then kept going for a while longer. Eventually, they came to a stop on one side of the quiet road.

Sedans parked some distance away ahead and behind them.

“We still have about thirty minutes left,” Kim Hyung-Jung remarked.

“Will the bus be coming here?” Kang Chan asked.

“Yes. We plan to move together from this point,” Kim Hyung-Jung replied.

They were infiltrating through the ocean, so they likely already had an area designated as the starting point for this operation.

Every time Kang Chan breathed in, he felt as if spite was slowly filling his lungs. He knew his eyes would be glinting soon.

He laughed out loud, realizing that he was no different from Seok Kang-Ho, whose eyes started turning sharp whenever he became nervous.

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho sat back and smoked. As time passed, Kim Hyung-Jung’s face stiffened.

“Are you nervous?” Kang Chan asked him.

“Huh? Oh. Yes. Strangely, this time I am,” Kim Hyung-Jung admitted.

The man had been through many special forces operations, so his nervousness likely wasn’t because he had a weak heart. Rather, it was probably the pressure of this mission that was making him feel that way.

“It’s okay, you can relax a little. This isn’t that different from when we went to Mongolia, France, or when we crossed into China,” Kang Chan said.

“That’s true,” Kim Hyung-Jung agreed.

Contradicting his response, Kim Hyung-Jung’s expression remained hardened.

It depended on the person, but nervousness could be contagious.

“Do you and Mr. Seok really not get nervous?” Kim Hyung-Jung asked.

Seok Kang-Ho glanced at Kang Chan. Kang Chan couldn’t tell the manager that they had tons of experience like this back in Africa, so he just smiled.

“Mr. Kang Chan, I wasn’t going to ask, but...” Kim Hyung-Jung trailed off, pressing his lips together.

Seeing Kang Chan’s smile, he already knew that Kang Chan wouldn’t answer anyway. As he sighed heavily, a bus approached them and slowly parked behind the van. It was a bus with tinted windows, preventing people outside from seeing inside.

“Let’s go,” Kim Hyung-Jung declared, shutting the doors of the van.

A sedan, a van, another sedan, and a bus—the entourage of vehicles drove down twisting roads for about ten minutes before speeding down different paths.

Chapter 179.1: No different from back then (2)

The sea eventually came into view to their right as they made their way from Goseong to the Hwajinpo beach[1].

The car went past a three-way intersection, a checkpoint, and drove a bit longer before reaching a second-story building that looked like a raw fish restaurant on an isolated beach. Kang Chan's first impression of it was that it had gone out of business.

Not only was it in a secluded area, but it was also fenced in with a lot of wire mesh. Even the god of the sea would find it hard to gain profit from a business started in this location.

The bus blocked the parking lot, completely removing the road at the back from view.

Swoosh.

They could hear the waves hitting the beach and retreating back into the sea.

"Let's head inside," Kim Hyung-Jung said as he pointed to the entrance. Kang Chan walked over to it.

Much to their surprise, there were already two soldiers waiting for them inside. The two guided them to the stairs on the right side of the building.

"Damn, this view is amazing!" Seok Kang-Ho exclaimed upon reaching the second floor with Kang Chan and the others.

It wasn't really good enough to be described as amazing. Even so, Kang Chan thought it wasn't that bad either.

The soldiers briefly saluted Kang Chan as they were coming up to the second floor.

Including Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho, they numbered twenty-four in total.

Kwak Cheol-Ho, Yoon Sang-Ki, and almost all of the other soldiers who joined the operation in China alongside Kang Chan were present.

Two of the men brought over military gear—which was packed very simply—after they removed everything that could be heavy.

"The Navy's special forces team will arrive at twenty-three thirty this evening. They will be bringing three boats, so we will be splitting into three teams," Kim Hyung-Jung told Kang Chan.

"You guys heard that, right? Split into three teams. I'll lead Team One, and Seok Kang-Ho will lead Team Two. Kwak Cheol-Ho, you'll take command of Team Three," Kang Chan told the members.

While they were finalizing the teams, an agent distributed watches.

"Mr. Kang Chan," Kim Hyung-Jung called Kang Chan as he laid out the map.

"This is where the Navy's special forces team will be dropping you off." Kim Hyung-Jung pointed to the boundary of the beach, then drew a triangle with his finger. "And this is where we think armed guards are stationed. Since North Korea is experiencing heavy power shortages, they normally don't use searchlights."

They didn't know how the situation would change if the guide didn't show up, so Kang Chan carefully examined the map as he nodded.

After their conversation, they had packed food for dinner. It tasted so good that Kang Chan even wondered if they came from Jeungpyeong.

Kang Chan could still see spite in the members' eyes. Unless they had a deep resentment for the packed food, Choi Seong-Geon's death had to be the reason behind their spite.

Sitting comfortably, Kang Chan drank coffee and watched the dark sea. As he did, Kwak Cheol-Ho approached him with another soldier and said, "This is our new member."

"I'm Master Sergeant Hong Ki-Yoon," the new member said.

They had never specifically introduced anyone before.

"He has experience infiltrating North Korea. He also has three operations under his belt," Kwak Cheol-Ho answered when he felt that Kang Chan was looking at him.

He's going to be helpful.

Their conversation ended with Kang Chan nodding.

They put on a faded black military uniform, then equipped themselves with an MP5SD silenced submachine gun, a Colt pistol, a bowie knife, a magazine, and a radio.

It was a little past nine, and the only source of light they had was a small lamp. It barely let them see each others' faces.

They were all in so much tension that it seemed as if they would snap and explode if anyone messed with them.

As the fishy sea breeze rushed toward them through the open window, Kwak Cheol-Ho approached Kang Chan once again. "I have something to say to everyone."

I see no harm in letting him speak.

Kang Chan nodded. "Attention!"

The soldiers, Kang Chan, Seok Kang-Ho, and even Kim Hyung-Jung now looked at Kwak Cheol-Ho.

"I have something that I want to say and a favor to ask all of you."

The light only let them see the contours of Kwak Cheol-Ho's face. Nevertheless, they could still see his eyes glinting like an animal's. "If the general hadn't been there for me, then I would have ended up becoming a gangster after going from military prison to military prison. I haven't told any of you about this, but my worthless father was conned and he almost went to jail, but the general got a loan to pay all of it for him. I heard he finished repaying the loan early last year."

Kwak Cheol-Ho exhaled with a "who!" and then turned his head toward the window. "The general hit all of you as well, didn't he? He slapped me in the face

twice. But it wasn't because I didn't train properly or said that I was going to be discharged!" Kwak Cheol-Ho gritted his teeth, then immediately continued. "The first time he slapped me was at a police station. It was for kicking up a fuss because of my fucked-up life. The second time was because I defied my father. I can't believe I fucking lost that kind of man while we were eating."

Kwak Cheol-Ho stopped talking for a moment, seemingly trying to control his emotions. "Lieutenant Cha Dong-Gyun called me yesterday. He was on the phone as he... as he sobbed nonstop. As you all know, he's the most committed and steadfast man. Not only was that the first time I ever heard him cry, but I never even thought he would weep like that."

"I'm passing on Lieutenant Cha Dong-Gyun's request." Kwak Cheol-Ho stopped talking, then loudly inhaled. After swallowing dryly, he looked at all of his colleagues. "We're with the strongest commander in the world now. If you're afraid, then I will not resent or condemn you if you back out right now. However, if you choose to join us, then don't ever think about coming back until we've beheaded Jang Kwang-Taek."

Kim Hyung-Jung looked at the seashore while gritting his teeth.

Despite having a hard time talking, Kwak Cheol-Ho pushed through with what he had to say. "I also have a favor to ask all of you. The general did everything to protect me even if that meant slapping me. He protected all of us. Let's use this operation to show everyone that he taught us properly."

Kwak Cheol-Ho seemed as if he was about to shout, but his voice calmed down at the end. However, that only tugged at their heartstrings even more.

By the time Kwak Cheol-Ho had returned to his seat, the second floor had been rendered silent.

Chk chk.

Kang Chan bit on a cigarette.

"Whoo!"

The sea breeze roughly whirled around inside the building, then left with the cigarette smoke.

"Let's have a cup of coffee," Kang Chan said.

"Alright." Seok Kang-Ho was the one who answered, but someone else made coffee for them.

After having a sip of the sweet instant coffee, Kang Chan looked behind him.

The soldiers looked as if they were expecting something.

"What General Choi hoped for was for all of you to gain actual combat experience and become a special forces team that's recognized internationally, wasn't it?" Kang Chan asked.

Yoon Sang-Ki nodded without meaning to.

“So if any of you has the shitty thought that they’ll be happy even if they die, then leave now. What I want is for all of you to do whatever it takes to return alive with Jang Kwang-Taek’s head. After all, General Choi asked me to turn you all into veterans so that you can pass on your experience to your juniors,” Kang Chan added.

Kwak Cheol-Ho gritted his teeth.

“We have more than an hour left, so get some sleep or smoke as much as you guys want since we won’t be able to smoke for a few days. You may drink coffee as well.” Kang Chan put the cigarette that he finished smoking in the paper cup. Afterward, he turned and looked at the sea.

Chk chk. Chk chk.

From behind him, he could hear the soldiers lighting up cigarettes and drinking coffee.

This is fine. Doing just this much is for the best.

If they were burning with too much sense of duty, they would inevitably find themselves in an accident.

“Urgghhh!” Seok Kang-Ho stretched and twisted his upper body.

“I’m going to get some sleep,” Kang Chan said.

The two got up from their chairs and positioned their military gear just right so they could rest on it.

The soldiers’ stiff expressions seemed to say, ‘They can sleep in this situation?’

It seemed as if they didn’t think of sleeping before leaving, even though they had been napping in France.

If they were really sleep-deprived, then they would fall asleep even if all of the other members on the second floor were corpses.

And if they kept facing that kind of situation, then they would develop the habit of eating when they could eat, and getting even a little bit of sleep when they could sleep.

Kang Chan eventually fell asleep.

“Mr. Kang Chan.” Kim Hyung-Jung carefully called, waking up Kang Chan. The reason he woke him up was so obvious that he didn’t even have to say it.

Kang Chan examined his surroundings. Most of the soldiers seemed awake already, which was commendable.

It was already ten past eleven.

They applied the camouflage paint on their faces, then equipped their military gear and weapons.

After about ten minutes, the dim light illuminating the building turned off.

Frowning, Kang Chan looked at the sea. He could see a boat and silhouettes in the space between the rocks in front of the ceasefire line.

Swoosh.

Much to their surprise, when the waves were at their loudest, the lower part of the steel-barred window opened.

“Mr. Kang Chan.” Kim Hyung-Jung called Kang Chan once more. He then nodded.

No word had to be said at that moment.

Kang Chan looked straight into Kim Hyung-Jung’s eyes for a moment, then turned his head away.

“Let’s go,” Kang Chan said.

Chapter 179.2: No different from back then (2)

Everyone went down the stairs and into a parking lot that had a fence in front of it. Eventually, they met up with six soldiers in diving suits, guarding three rubber boats.

After the three special forces teams got into their respective boats, the WARFLOT. The WARFLOT soldiers skillfully pushed the boats into the sea.

Woong.

They plan to use a motor?

Kang Chan was curious, but everyone had their respective area of expertise.

Waves slapped against the rubber boats as they drove through the waters.

Seawater splashed on them while they were lying down flat on the boats. In what seemed like an instant, they traveled enough distance for the two-story building to be shrouded by darkness.

The boat changed directions and navigated through the sea like crazy.

After about an hour at sea, the boats slowed down.

Seeing a dim light, Kang Chan guessed that there was a port in the distance.

The boats drove toward the strange-looking rocks for about five minutes before finally turning off the engine.

The two WARFLOT soldiers aboard each boat picked up the oars next to them and began rowing.

They were definitely professionals. Even though there only two of them rowing per boat, they moved at about the same speed as when they were using the motor.

Swoosh.

They docked the boats between the rocks, then jumped into the water and grabbed the boats.

Kang Chan nodded to the WARFLOT soldiers.

Swoosh.

Two soldiers jumped into the water, which rose from their knees to their waists with each sway, for every wave that hit the boats.

Kang Chan was the last to get off the boat. He gave a thumbs up to WARFLOT soldiers who manned the boats.

Swoosh.

By the time Kang Chan heard the waves hit the shores again, the boat was already some distance away. They were so fast that they seemed like ghosts.

Kang Chan and his team would move once the waves retreated back to the sea.

Kang Chan crouched close to the rocks and examined the shore.

As Kim Hyung-Jung said, North Korea didn't have searchlights on. Right now, they could only see the complicatedly installed wire mesh.

Swoosh.

Seok Kang-Ho and Kwak Cheol-Ho went to Kang Chan's side.

Kang Chan hadn't gotten a bad feeling about this yet. He turned to the left and slowly examined the place where he guessed the guard post would be. As he expected, he found a guard post, rocks, and a sand dune.

I can only see one guard post so far.

Kang Chan looked to their right. Due to the dark rocks around them, he could only guess where the guard post would be, not pinpoint it.

Swoosh.

The waves splashed against them, drenching their thighs and butt. Even so, they couldn't just recklessly rush into enemy territory.

He had to decide whether to dash to the rock that was five meters in front of them or wait until the guards' shift was over so they could properly locate the guard post to their right.

However, if they waited for so long that the sun started rising, they would be losing a golden opportunity.

Kang Chan pointed to the guard post to their left with his index and middle fingers, which was a signal that told their snipers to aim for wherever their commanding officer was pointing. In response, Kwak Cheol-Ho immediately issued an order to the snipers.

Kang Chan then gestured at Seok Kang-Ho and pointed to the ground with both his index fingers. He was telling him that they were going to secure the target location that they would soon be heading to.

They began to prepare for their next move.

With Seok Kang-Ho now on standby, the snipers aimed their rifles at the guard post.

It was only five meters away.

Even if the enemies in the guard post found Kang Chan and his team running toward them, they were at a distance where as long as they didn't have their guns pointed at the South Korean special forces teams, they wouldn't be able to immediately pull the trigger.

Swoosh.

As soon as the waves crashed on the shore and retreated back to the sea, Kang Chan began making his way toward the rock, which was his goal.

Crunch. Crunch. Crunch. Crunch.

The rocks on the ground were seemingly crushed with each step they took.

Kang Chan couldn't waste any time now—stopping halfway through was no different from him dancing around in the open and asking their enemies to shoot him.

As soon as he reached the rock, he pressed himself against it.

Haah. Haah.

The rock had tumbled over toward the sea.

Their enemies didn't seem to have noticed them yet, considering they hadn't shown any response. Moreover, Kang Chan wasn't getting a bad feeling from this either.

To the left of the rock was a path that they could use to go up the slope that was one meter tall.

There was the ceasefire line to worry about, but if they could cut the chain at the very bottom, then it would be easy to climb onto the slope.

Dayeru was the most reliable person in times like this.

It was better not to use the radio, but they didn't have any other way to communicate right now.

Chk.

“Daye, you're up,” Kang Chan said.

Swoosh.

Another wave violently crashed against the shores and headed back.

Crunch. Crunch. Crunch. Crunch.

At the same time, Seok Kang-Ho quickly approached Kang Chan.

Kang Chan gestured to the ceasefire line with his head, and Seok Kang-Ho answered with glinting eyes.

As the sound of the waves rushed toward them...

Click.

... Seok Kang-Ho cut the chain at the very bottom of the ceasefire line. Kang Chan then patted Seok Kang-Ho's shoulder and pointed to the top.

Swoosh.

With the noises from the sea covering their tracks, Kang Chan stepped on Seok Kang-Ho's hands and pulled himself up.

Despite the rocks and the pine trees in the distance, Kang Chan finally got a clear view of the guard post to their left.

He then looked to their right. He could see their surroundings a bit better from where he was propped up, but he still couldn't find the other guard post. At the very least, he felt relieved because they had rock formations in front of them, which they could use for cover, and the black sea behind them. Hence, their enemies also found it difficult to detect them.

Their snipers still had their guns aimed at the guard post to their left. Since they couldn't find the one to their right, Kang Chan decided to guess where it would be based on the location he saw on the map earlier. He then pointed to where it could be.

Swoosh.

Chk.

"Move to the rock in pairs," Kang Chan said.

Chk.

"Understood."

As ordered, the soldiers came over in pairs, moving along with each hit of the waves.

Haah. Haah.

Kang Chan could hear his own breathing. His heart wasn't pounding yet.

Swoosh. Crunch. Crunch.

The moment the waves grew unusually quiet, Kang Chan began to hear his subordinates stepping on the rocks.

Kang Chan sharply glared and aimed his gun to his right.

Swoosh.

After a while, he heard the waves again.

Kang Chan had to trust Seok Kang-Ho and his subordinates' judgments while they were below the rock.

Right now, it would be best to focus on taking out the enemies that they could see.

They still hadn't discovered the damn guard post that was supposed to be to their right. If it was made by boring a hole through the rocks or by digging a trench and building a bunker, then Kang Chan and his team would certainly have trouble finding it from where they were. For all he knew, the enemies there could have already detected him and his team and were already aiming their guns at them.

Swoosh.

Kang Chan couldn't even tell the soldiers to hurry since they couldn't move in crowds.

After the waves hit the shores a few times more...

Rustle.

... Kwak Cheol-Ho came up from the left side of the rock.

Kang Chan pointed to his eyes with his index and middle finger, then pointed to the guard post to their left. In response, Kwak Cheol-Ho began closely monitoring it, allowing Kang Chan to look for the guard post to their right.

Rustle. Rustle.

The soldiers climbed up the rock one at a time.

Considering they cut the chains of the ceasefire line, their enemies would find out that someone infiltrated their territory by tomorrow anyway.

Kang Chan and his team had to move as far as they could from this place before that happened.

Rustle. Rustle. Rustle. Rustle.

After the soldiers went up to the rock, they got into position.

Swoosh. Click.

Finally, Seok Kang-Ho grabbed the hand of a soldier on top of the rock and climbed up.

Kang Chan estimated the distance between them and the mountains on the horizon. From here, he concluded that it would take them two hours to reach the mountains. They had to get past the national road and rail as well.

It was thirty minutes past one right now.

Kang Chan crouched as low as he could while leading the way.

They were twenty minutes away from their next stop. If nothing happened within that time, then they would be able to get out of the seashore guard posts' range of vision.

When moving at night, making sure they didn't make any sounds was of the utmost importance. They also had to move slowly enough for anyone glancing over the area to not notice them.

After about ten minutes, they came across a small pine grove.

Kang Chan didn't see anything inside it that bothered him. His guts didn't find anything wrong with it either.

Things were going so well that Kang Chan was starting to wonder if things could be this easy.

They walked very slowly. The best-case scenario that they could hope for right now was to remain undiscovered until the sun rose.

Kang Chan slowly stood up upon entering the forest. The wind from the sea noisily went past him.

Kang Chan looked back at Seok Kang-Ho, then nodded. In response, Seok Kang-Ho and the soldiers squatted down and got into position.

An hour away from here, they would find a rice paddy and a field. Another hour beyond that, they would reach the national road, a railway, and a mountain.

Dayeru and Kwak Cheol-Ho brought up the rear of their formation. Dayeru was on the left, and Kwak Cheol-Ho was on the right.

As Kang Chan made his way through the dark forest, he gradually picked up the pace.

During times like this, the only things he could trust were his eyes and his intuition.

He couldn't let his guard down because his instincts weren't warning him about anything, but even if it did, he still couldn't waste any time.

Whoosh.

The sounds of the waves no longer reached them, but it was replaced by the wind noisily reverberating as it blew past the forest.

If their senses became overly sensitive now, then there was a chance that one of them would mistake a branch for a gun or an enemy with a dagger. If they opened fire because of that, then everything would be over.

On the other hand, if they stumbled upon an enemy but hesitated to take them down because they weren't sure if it was a branch, then they would be faced with an irrevocable consequence.

Swish. Whish.

The trees swayed as the wind blew violently.

I trust them. I have to trust them.

During times like this, Kang Chan had to trust his subordinates. They already had the skills to differentiate a branch from their enemy anyway.

Chapter 180.1: So just keep running (1)

Swoosh, whoosh, whoosh. The men had finally stepped foot into North Korean territory. After about another hour of traveling, the dense forest finally gave way to a landscape that was dotted with scattered trees between some rice paddies and fields.

Kang Chan quickly scanned his surroundings. It would take another hour or so to reach the mountains in the far distance.

There was no knowing when the North Korean enemies would discover the wire that they severed. The best case scenario would be if it was discovered during the morning check, but if they decided to perform an inspection in between the guard rotations, Kang Chan's breach would be noticed immediately.

For now, he decided to set the giant propaganda sign with the words "Great Leader" or something and a chubby man extending his hand to point at the air as his initial target. Once they reached it, he planned to make his team hide among the trees in the back for cover.

Kang Chan raised his index finger to gesture directions for Team One, then pointed his index and middle fingers down at the ground, mimicking running motions with his hand. Afterward, he pointed at the ground with his left index finger and made a signal with his right index and middle fingers, ordering the second and third teams to provide cover for the first team.

The members of Team One all looked Kang Chan in the eyes with understanding. They remained on standby around him, prepared to execute the command.

Click.

Teams Two and Three aimed their guns at their flanks.

One, two.

The men crouched down and moved as silently as they could. The path—a wet, damp road between rice paddies and fields—was slippery, and their boots would occasionally get stuck to the ground.

With their military gear and rifles in hand, they had to cover a distance of about three hundred meters. They also had to move at a fast pace with their backs hunched over, which only made things worse. If it wasn't for the arduous training they normally did and the tough determination that coursed them through, they would have found this situation difficult to overcome.

The sticky ground felt as if it was tying down their feet.

“Haah, haah.”

As a result, rough panting sounds inevitably began to fill the silence.

Splash. Splash. Slop. Slop.

Upon crossing the hundred-meter mark, their combat gear and weapons began to make clanking noises as well. Faced with the decision to either slow down or ignore the sounds, Kang Chan continued to stride forward, ignoring the noise and quickly scanning both sides. They couldn't miss this opportune window of time when the night was heavy and everyone was in a deep sleep. Kang Chan couldn't be more grateful that there weren't any 24-hour convenience stores or any lodges around this area. Only a few old houses that looked like something he had only seen on TV were in the distance.

Tat, tat.

Hiding behind the political sign, Kang Chan assigned positions for the soldiers to stand in.

Click, click, click.

The men arranged themselves in a circle around him and pointed their rifles in the direction they were in charge of.

Chk.

“Team Three, go,” Kang Chan commanded over the radio.

Chk.

“Yes, sir,” Kwak Cheol-Ho responded.

Kang Chan strategically made Kwak Cheol-Ho's team leave first in case anything were to suddenly happen. The best and safest option was for Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho to cover the third team from behind.

Kang Chan thought the soldiers were truly well-trained for operations. However, he couldn't help but become anxious as he watched them move.

Click, click, click, click.

“Haah, haah.”

When Team Three finally reached their positions, Kang Chan ordered Kwak Cheol-Ho to cover them from behind this time.

Next up is Dayeru.

Kang Chan pressed the button on his radio to give orders.

Chk.

As he did, he noticed a light flashing from far away. It was moving rapidly back and forth, which meant that it wasn't from a car or a bicycle—it was the movement of a handheld flashlight.

Chk.

“Dayeru, we've been discovered. Just run!” Kang Chan ordered.

Kang Chan straightened up and began to open fire.

Splash. Splash. Splash. Splash. Slop. Slop.

At the same time, Seok Kang-Ho and the members of his team quickly came dashing over.

“Haah, haah.”

They could hear people shouting in the distance. The moving lights began to converge around the propaganda sign.

Crackle.

“Dayeru! Run to the mountain up ahead! Kwak Cheol-Ho, you take the middle. Team One and I will cover the rear,” Kang Chan instructed them.

Rumble. Tat, tat.

As soon as Kang Chan gave orders, Seok Kang-Ho immediately began to rush forward. Kwak Cheol-Ho and the rest of Team Two slid past Kang Chan and also bolted out.

The rays from the flashlights were now about two hundred meters in front of them. Kang Chan estimated the enemy squad to have six or so soldiers.

“Follow them!” Kang Chan shouted.

At his command, his team members all began to run.

Leaning on the propaganda sign, Kang Chan aimed at the enemy figures faintly illuminated by the light.

Bang!

Sparks flew out as gunshots ripped through the quiet silence of the night.

Those motherfuckers!

Pew! Pew! Pew! Pew!

Three lanterns fell to the ground, illuminating the area.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Ping! Ping! Pew! Pew!

Kang Chan pulled the trigger twice in the direction where more sparks flew about. As he did, he realized that he bastards couldn't shoot in the direction of the propaganda sign. Even if it was extremely dark, they had to have seen the sparks coming from Kang Chan's gun, yet they still chose to aim for the advancing team in the distance.

Their pursuit was blocked just enough. If they got any further away, there would be no way to catch them.

Kang Chan quickly turned around and began to speed off.

Splash. Splash. Click. Click.

The dampness hidden in the darkness rushed over him, but Kang Chan just kept running with all his might.

Seok Kang-Ho and Kwak Cheol-Ho were also running with every ounce of strength they had, so if Kang Chan lagged behind even slightly, he would be left behind.

The soldiers up ahead appeared dimly black in the distance. There was no sign of light from behind or from past the surrounding fields.

“Hah, hah.”

He didn't have time to control his pace or even show the slightest hesitation. He could only focus on running as fast as he possibly could.

After sprinting for about two minutes, he finally caught up to the tail of Team One's members.

“Hah. Hah.”

He could hear loud and rough breathing as clear as he could hear their rifles and other weapons clanking.

Click! Click! Click! Click!

Around five minutes had passed. In another five minutes, a strike team would mobilize to block the national highway.

Kang Chan's heart and body began to rebel against the pain all this running was causing him, but this was better than dying. It was a hundred times better to run nonstop than to be captured, tortured, and wait to be killed.

Two minutes later, the dark silhouettes of the team members running ahead of him suddenly rose up and sank back down again.

Thump, thump, thump, thump, thump.

It was a lot easier to run now that they were on the dry land. Moreover, from where they were, they could see the other side of the national highway just a little further.

The team members and Kang Chan dashed through the highway and continued straight toward the mountain.

Click, click, click, click.

“Hah! Hah!”

It had already been ten minutes since they started sprinting at full throttle. He was in so much pain that he felt as if his nose was blocked, his chest was frustratingly being crushed, and his waist was about to snap.

Keep running! I have to!

Slump!

From ahead, someone fell to the ground.

Slump! Slump!

Two other team members tripped over the fallen soldier’s leg, causing them to fall as well.

“Get up! Run!” Kang Chan shouted.

If they stopped here, they would all be dead. At the very least, someone had to reach the mountains first and get into a good enough position to provide cover.

Kang Chan tightly grabbed the military gear of the two soldiers who tripped over the other’s leg and pulled them up.

“Go! Hurry!” Kang Chan firmly ordered.

The panting soldiers ran forward.

Kang Chan gripped the strap of the first soldier to fall and brought him back to his feet as well.

Fuck!

The soldier was gritting his teeth. Kang Chan swallowed the curse at the tip of his tongue when he saw the soldier’s arm. His middle and pinky fingers were completely bent backward, likely caught in his rifle.

“Run! Got it? Don’t let another soldier die because of you!” Kang Chan commanded forcefully.

“Please bend my fingers back,” the soldier requested grimly.

Seeing the look in the soldier’s eyes, Kang Chan nodded.

He grabbed the soldier’s wrist with his right hand and clasped the soldier’s fingers with his left.

From far away, light illuminated their surroundings. A car was quickly driving up the hill.

Crack!

Kang Chan snapped the soldier’s bent fingers back into their correct position. The soldier gritted his teeth, and his eyes turned bloodshot, but he didn’t scream.

“Give it to me!” Kang Chan ordered.

Click!

He took the soldier's rifle and hung it onto his shoulder.

Vroom! Vroom!

Engine sounds echoed from the distance as light began to illuminate the air and their surroundings even more brightly.

No command or word was necessary at that point. Kang Chan and the soldier began hauling together.

“Hah! Hah! Hah! Hah!”

We have to keep going like this!

In five to ten minutes, they would reach the train station. From Tongchon Station to here, it would at least be a twenty to thirty-minute drive. If they could avoid the truck driving toward them and get into the mountains, they would at least have a chance at success. It was less than an hour's walk at night, so if they maintained their current pace, it would take them less than twenty minutes.

“Hah! Hah!”

The soldier panted as if he was about to vomit his lungs out, but he kept persevering through their seemingly never-ending sprint. Unfortunately, he wobbled and lurched forward when the path suddenly turned rough and stopped supporting his weight. Kang Chan forcefully grabbed the soldier's back and staggered with him.

If they fell here, they would most definitely die. If they stopped here, the pain that they had been bearing so far would suddenly overtake them.

Chapter 180.2: So just keep running (1)

The strength was being drained from the soldier's body as much as Kang Chan was supporting him. He was letting himself go. The pain from his fingers was likely rapidly rushing in on him, and his exhausted lungs were probably demanding he get some rest.

“You're not a member of the special forces if you stop here, got that? So keep running!” Kang Chan roared.

“Arrgh!” the soldier cried out as tears sprang to his eyes.

Thump, thump, thump, thump.

Still, he pushed himself to run.

“Argh! Arrrgh!”

Overcoming his limits, the soldier moaned loudly.

The two of them ran side by side. To catch up with the rest of the team who were up front, they had to be quicker.

Clack. Clack. Clack. Clack.

Kang Chan realized why the road suddenly became more challenging to tackle—they were on a railroad track covered in gravel.

Kang Chan and the soldier sprinted over the tracks faster.

On the uphill path, the soldier stumbled for the second time, but Kang Chan quickly grabbed onto his military gear.

Thud, thud!

However, Kang Chan failed to overcome the weight of the soldier this time. He fell along with him.

“Hah, hah.”

Kang Chan immediately stood up and removed the team member’s gear from his body.

“Get up, motherfucker!” Kang Chan shouted.

The soldier’s right hand was as swollen as a rubber glove filled with air.

Clack!

Kang Chan slung the soldier’s gear on his back and positioned it diagonally across his soldiers.

“Hah, hah. What do you think General Choi would say if he saw you?” Kang Chan asked rebukingly.

“Argh,” the soldier groaned.

“Yeah, that’s right, punk!” Kang Chan agreed.

The two resumed running. Maybe it was because he wasn’t carrying his gear anymore or because mentioning Choi Seong-Geon got to him, but the soldier didn’t slow down anymore.

Kang Chan felt as if his neck and waist were going to be snapped in half.

Despite all the problems they had, they finally crossed over the railroad tracks.

They were now only five to ten minutes away from their destination. Kang Chan could even see the foot of the mountains now from where they were. It wasn’t too far off.

It was a damning incline, but seeing it motivated them more.

Weeoo. Weeoo. Weeoo. Weeoo.

The sound of old sirens echoed from the distance.

‘You’re too late, motherfuckers!’

Kang Chan and all of his team members would have the upper hand for as long as they could enter the mountains.

Damn it!

Why was it that all the operations he went on never went smoothly?

“Hah, hah!”

Kang Chan could feel his limits trying to stop him. With every step he took, it felt as if another person was climbing onto his back. In moments like this, Kang Chan could feel the weight of death approaching him. If he was too late or someone from behind started raining bullets on them, everything would be over.

Kang Chan lived tenaciously. It was always those who were alone who became mercenaries, and he only ever felt joy in life when he opened his heart up to his men. Hence, he always found the pain of losing people like them horrifying and unbearable.

“Hah! Hah!”

Although taking another step was as tough as dying, he couldn't stop. If he stopped or slowed down, he would really die.

Thwack, thwack!

From up ahead, Kang Chan could hear the sound of someone tapping his rifle's buttstock with his hand.

It was Dayeru. He was now in position and prepared to cover him while helping Kang Chan find where to go as well.

“Argh! Arrgh!” the soldier groaned again.

This son of a bitch! You got this! You should've run like this earlier!

The dark mountain was right in front of them. He could see the trees and the steep ridge higher above as well as the silhouettes of their team members and the muzzles of their rifles pointed in their direction.

Seok Kang-Ho quickly grabbed Kang Chan.

“Hah! Up! Go up!” Kang Chan ordered through his teeth.

Kang Chan didn't refuse Seok Kang-Ho's help, who was taking off his military gear.

Clack!

Seok Kang-Ho now carried the weight of the equipment.

To be honest, carrying the gear all the way up the mountain would have been a burden, so Kang Chan left it to Seok Kang-Ho.

Click!

Kang Chan also injected some morphine into the broken fingers of the soldier he was just running with. As soon as he was done, they began to climb up the steep ridge of the mountain.

Weeoo. Weeoo. Weeoo.

The siren sounds became clearer and clearer. Quite a few lights were now coming from the distance.

Are you really planning to cross the railroad tracks by car? Try all you want!

Kang Chan gritted his teeth as he went up the path.

There was nothing much to life. Was it so strange to eat jjamppong with the chief of the president's security and the director of the National Intelligence Service and then run across North Korean territory a few days later?

Clack! Clack! Crack!

“Hah! Hah!”

Pain throbbed all over him. It was as if his body was asking him if he had gone mad.

‘Whatever! Come at me with everything!’

Even if his waist snapped or his shoulder was dislocated, he would do whatever it took to live.

He would fight for as long as he had to until all the men who were with him returned home alive.

Clatter! Swish!

Small pebbles rolled down the incline, causing some soldiers to slip.

Maybe it was because they were in the mountains, but it was incredibly darker than usual. They had smeared camouflage cream on their faces, so only the whites of the soldiers’ eyes were visible. It was quite a scene watching all of them climb up the mountain.

The light came closer to the entrance of the mountain.

Ha. Those motherfucks are in for a panting treat.

From this point forward, it would be a battle of who could last longer. Kang Chan had experienced this kind of fight so many times that he was now sick of it, but that also served as evidence that he had never once lost in these battles.

“Hah! Hah!”

He knew the soldiers had already pushed themselves past their limits, but that didn’t mean they could stop here.

Everyone was well aware of that too.

That was why they braced their trembling legs on the steep ground and clung to the vines and rocks with their scratched and injured hands as they climbed up.

About twenty minutes further into their infiltration, Kang Chan could no longer see anything when he looked down at the mountain. He could only see the headlights of cars in the distance and stationary lights from ever further.

“Halt!” Kang Chan ordered.

At his command, the team members let out the gasps for air that they had been holding in.

“We’ll take a short break here,” Kang Chan announced.

Slump! Slump!

Kang Chan heard all the soldiers plopping down to the ground.

Click!

Kang Chan hoisted his rifle onto his shoulder and raised his left leg onto a rock as he scanned the surroundings below.

Clack!

Seok Kang-Ho threw down the extra military gear he had to carry and walked over to Kang Chan.

“Damn. We almost died back there,” Seok Kang-Ho remarked.

If someone heard their conversation, they would probably think that they were no longer in danger and had gone back to South Korea.

Kang Chan was so thirsty that his throat felt as if it was on fire.

“Turn around,” Kang Chan ordered Seok Kang-Ho.

When Seok Kang-Ho did as instructed, Kang Chan reached into his gear and dug through it until he found a water pouch that looked like an IV drip bag.

Glug. Glug.

He felt like he could drink all the water in the world. He couldn't drink too much, though, since doing that would make his body too weak.

Kang Chan wiped his mouth with his left hand and gave the water pouch back to Seok Kang-Ho.

Glug. Glug.

“Whew!” Seok Kang-Ho exclaimed.

Their surroundings were pitch black.

In the meantime, Kang Chan could hear the other team members downing their water pouches too.

Seok Kang-Ho twisted the water pouch closed and handed it to Kang Chan. Kang Chan put it back into his gear.

“Daye, you take the front. We're going to cross this mountain to get inside,” Kang Chan ordered.

“Got it, Cap,” Seok Kang-Ho replied.

Seok Kang-Ho, who had been standing on the lookout in a position that was similar to Kang Chan's, turned back to look at the soldiers, who were resting. He then turned to Kang Chan with a questioning look on his face.

“I'll take care of that one, so you just make sure you open up a path,” Kang Chan commanded him.

“Haah. Haah,” Seok Kang-Ho panted as his expression turned into one that seemed to ask if it was really okay.

When Kang Chan smirked, Seok Kang-Ho finally nodded. That smirk was enough of an answer for him.

“Team Two, take the lead. Team Three and Team One will take the rear. Let's go,” Kang Chan ordered.

Clank! Click!

Kwak Cheol-Ho picked up the gear of the soldier who had broken fingers.

It wasn't too bad. They could go around and take turns carrying the load for the soldier. It wasn't the team member's fault that his fingers were broken anyway. Rather, he deserved to be complimented for running all the way here in such a state.

The soldier with the broken fingers looked at Kang Chan. His expression showed mixed feelings as Kang Chan approached him.

"You did great running all the way here," Kang Chan complimented him.

Pat, pat.

Kang Chan thumped the soldier's helmet and gestured at him to start walking. He would be walking right in front of Kang Chan, which was the spot where soldiers could be most relaxed.

Tap, tap, tap.

The men traversed the rocky road and clutched the vines to climb again.

It was only challenging because it was a steep slope, but it was just like marching forward otherwise.

Drinking some more water made Kang Chan feel a little more refreshed. It was already around three thirty in the morning. The night sky was filled with stars, their twinkling lights seemingly about to rain down on them.

If they could dry their damp shoes, they could probably move even faster and make more progress.

Clatter! Click!

Small pebbles rolled down between the boulders. It sounded as if someone stumbled and slipped on the road.

All Kang Chan could hear was rough breathing, the sound of rifles clanking, and rocks crunching underfoot.