

Blackfield 221

Chapter 221.1: Which Bastard Gave the Order? (1)

Seok Kang-Ho had just as much experience as Kang Chan in this field. Albeit not as much as the other two, Gérard was also familiar with scenes and situations like this.

As Kang Chan looked straight into the child's eyes, Gérard and Seok Kang-Ho cautiously searched her for the bomb.

Meanwhile, a deafening silence fell over the desolate winter land. It was as if the gunfight they just had earlier never even occurred.

Tick. Tick. Tick. Tick.

They could hear the sound of a clock ticking from her.

Kang Chan stared directly into the child's eyes as he began to speak in a low, soft voice.

“Step back,” he quietly ordered all of his men.

The child's thin, boney thumb was resting on a button that was larger than Kang Chan's thumbnail. She wouldn't even have to exert a large amount of force to press it. The device to set off the bomb was so sensitive that even the slightest movement could trigger it to detonate and explode.

“Three meters to our three o'clock,” Gérard calmly and quietly mentioned, pointing out the safest area to retreat should they find themselves in the worst-case scenario. With the rest of the soldiers, he carefully stepped back, making an effort not to scare the child.

Haah. Haah.

‘Don't worry. I'll get you out of this.’

This was the first time he had seen this child, and they spoke different languages. But in moments like this, Conveying their intentions through the looks in their eyes was enough for people to understand each other.

Kang Chan just had to be extremely careful not to provoke or scare her.

There was no way of knowing how much time was left, but in these cases, the gaze Kang Chan had on them and the way the soldiers carefully retreated stopped most children from being tempted to press the button.

‘It'll be all right.’

As Kang Chan conveyed his intentions through his eyes, his heart suddenly began to beat louder.

Thump, thump, thump, thump.

Kang Chan didn't know how much time was left on the clock, but he had never abandoned children who were crying and frozen in fear. He wasn't about to start now.

He had no idea if this girl would become a kind mother like Yoo Hye-Sook, a charming young lady like Michelle, or a smart student like Kim Mi-Young, but he thought of that mystery as all the more reason to save her. She should at least have the chance to live a kind future.

“Daye,” Kang Chan prompted.

Seok Kang-Ho began to tell the girl in a quiet and soothing voice that they were going to remove the bomb and that she should stay calm.

‘Really?’

The child’s expression seemed to tell them she did not believe what he was saying.

They just had to make sure not to aggravate her. Children her age often accidentally pressed the button despite knowing it would trigger the bomb whenever they were surprised or roused.

‘I’ve done a lot of things like this in Africa, so let me come closer, okay?’

Thump, thump, thump, thump.

His heart wildly beat against his chest, warning him to give up on the child and get out of the area.

“Step back a little more,” Kang Chan ordered his men. As commanded, the soldiers retreated further even away from him and the girl.

Tick, tick, tick, tick.

Even though they were short on time, rushing toward the girl or doing anything to surprise her into pressing the button was still out of the question. No matter how painfully frustrating the situation was, he had to be patient and make his way to her as slowly as possible so she would understand that he meant her no harm.

Thump, thump, thump, thump.

No one can convince me to give up on this girl. How am I supposed to when she’s giving me that look?

Kang Chan slowly bent down to his knees, lowering his stance.

Clank.

He set his rifle down on the ground. Now, all he had to do was pull out the dagger strapped to his ankle and...

Du du du du du du.

An Apache helicopter came flying over from the opposite side of the hill, accompanied by the booming noises of its blades.

God damn it!

The child looked away from Kang Chan to glance at the Apache helicopter before turning back to him again. The child’s attention had been stolen from him.

It’s fine! It’s all going to be okay!

You motherfuckers! Hurry up and get the fuck away from here!

The thunderous whirring of the helicopter's blades whipping through the air caused the child to burst into tears again.

Shut up and go back!

Peeeeew!

However, instead of leaving, the Apache helicopter fired a missile instead.

There isn't a single enemy alive to fight back, you idiots! What's the fucking point of the missile?

Baaaam!

An enormous explosion and flames immediately erupted on the other side of the hill.

"Aaaah!" the child screamed.

"No!" Kang Chan shouted.

Click. Swish! Boom!

Kang Chan slammed his body onto the sunken ground and covered his head with both hands.

Swoosh!

Tall columns of dust and debris fell on top of Kang Chan.

It was a relief that the child was small and their enemies only strapped a small bomb to her so it wouldn't be as noticeable. Kang Chan didn't want to imagine what would've happened otherwise.

Damn it! Damn it!

Gérard pulled himself up from the ground and angrily shouted into the radio to cease fire.

Even though the pilots of the helicopter were aware of the frequency of friendly forces, they still fired a missile without even saying a word to the ground troops first—and they only fired it at nothing but the enemy corpses, no less.

Kang Chan stood up and glared at the Apache.

Du du du du du du du!

With a swoosh of air, the Apache helicopter stood imposingly in front of Kang Chan with a sharp and threatening presence.

Do you think you can avoid an Igla too just because bullets won't be able to get inside?

"Captain!" Gérard shouted through gritted teeth. At the same time, Seok Kang-Ho rapidly dashed over to grab Kang Chan.

"Keep a hold of your temper! We have to consider the French special forces, and we have to take care of our injured too! We should let them go for now," Seok Kang-Ho dissuaded him.

Du du du du du du du!

Those motherfuckers. I've come across my fair share of bastards acting all high and mighty even though they were late, but those people are the first ones I've ever seen fire a missile at corpses.

They probably did it on purpose, too. If they were watching the broadcast, then there was no doubt that they had seen everything that Kang Chan had been up to.

The Apache helicopter continued to hover in the air, seemingly refusing to back down as it glared directly at Kang Chan.

You assholes! You're going to painfully regret this someday.

“Captain! The injured are waiting in front of the abandoned houses with the trucks!” Gérard added.

Kang Chan looked at Seok Kang-Ho.

“Please! Let's just go for now. We can just create an opportunity to get revenge next time. We can find out which son of a bitch gave the order and make them pay with their life,” Seok Kang-Ho continued to dissuade him.

When Kang Chan looked back at the helicopter, it was already turning away, the rumbling of its engines sounding different from before.

Seok Kang-Ho was right.

“Let's go,” Kang Chan said darkly. Gritting his teeth, he finally turned around. As he did, his gaze landed on the spot where the girl was standing just a while ago. It had turned into a sunken pit.

Gérard, the French soldiers, Dayeru, and the bomb attack... everything made him feel as if he was back in Africa.

After descending from the hill, Kang Chan immediately headed to the truck. Three of the men with him rushed to their comrade, who had been the first to be taken out.

The one Kang Chan pushed to the passenger's seat was still unconscious, and the first to be injured had his left knee blown off.

One of the soldiers drove the truck over, and they all proceeded to get in.

It was over. The gruesome and horrifying battle they were in had ended.

Vrooom. Rattle! Clunk!

Standing on the back of the truck, Kang Chan turned to look at the hill one last time.

Upon arriving in Sanggar, the soldiers who had escaped earlier rushed to gather around them. The hostages were seated in a circle, heads put together.

“Did anyone else get injured or killed?” Kang Chan asked.

“We did not get into any further engagement with the enemy after we left the abandoned houses,” Kwak Cheol-Ho replied.

As Kang Chan spoke to Kwak Cheol-Ho, the medical team hurried over to treat the two injured French soldiers.

“Gérard! Got any cigarettes with you?” Kang Chan asked.

In response, Gérard took out cigarettes and a familiar Zippo lighter from his pocket.

“Let’s go find somewhere to sit down,” Kang Chan suggested.

They all headed to one of the three trucks in the open field, which were parked close to each other, forming an arc. Kang Chan leaned against its side, and the rest did the same.

Clunk. Swoosh!

“Hoo!” he exhaled, finally feeling as if he could breathe again.

Kang Chan had pulled his mask up from his neck just enough to reveal his mouth so he could smoke. He probably looked extremely strange, but it didn’t matter to him. It didn’t change the taste of the cigarette itself.

Gérard sat down very closely to him as he puffed on his cigarette. It was as if he didn’t want to part ways with him.

“Hoo. Right! The way you acted all fancy earlier was funny. I didn’t know you were from nobility,” Kang Chan said with a grin.

“You should have suspected it at least once with how cool I look,” Gérard smugly replied.

Kang Chan couldn’t help but find it unpleasant to see just the mouth moving on a half-masked face.

“Want another?”

Kang Chan accepted the cigarette and lit it up.

Chapter 221.2: Which Bastard Gave the Order? (1)

“Fallen noble families usually use different names because their family name often causes them inconveniences since some people contempt us for it. We do use it when we’re putting our life on the line or making a promise we intend to never break, though. It makes us seem pretty cool too,” Gérard said.

Kang Chan chuckled, making Gérard grin and laugh as well.

“Are you the top dog of the Foreign Legion’s special forces now?” Kang Chan asked.

“As of the moment, yes.”

Noticing Kang Chan’s curious gaze, he rubbed the end of his cigarette on the truck’s wheel to put it out. “I submitted my request to be discharged.”

“You better cancel that,” Kang Chan authoritatively replied.

Gérard just turned and looked at him in response.

“Stay there a little longer. I’ll have put you in charge of the entire special forces, not just the thirteenth regiment.” When Gérard tilted his head. He continued, “I’ll join you soon, I promise. There’s something I want to do.”

“Will I be doing whatever that is with you?”

Kang Chan glanced around their surroundings before nodding a little.

“Does it require the entire special forces?”

“Maybe.”

“Then I suppose I’m the only person who can do it,” Gérard confidently replied. He sounded a lot more composed and confident than a certain someone saying, “Fuck! I’m the only one for that role!”

“Africa suddenly seems like a fantastic place,” Gérard joked.

“Don’t act out too much and keep a low profile.”

“I will, Cap. You can leave it to me.”

Kang Chan crushed the tip of his cigarette on the ground and put the butt down next to the truck.

Du du du du du du.

Not long after, more damningly loud helicopter noises echoed in the air.

“Let’s go.” Gérard stood up. The rest of the soldiers followed suit.

Under normal circumstances, they would have prioritized treating the wounded first if they had a decent medical team and proper medical equipment. However, in this situation, making their way to Kabul as fast as they could seemed to be the better option.

Du du du du du du.

Three Chinook helicopters landed on the ground, their large frames looming over the soldiers.

Under Kang Chan’s command, they carried the critically wounded aboard the aircraft first, followed by the hostages, and then a mix of Korean and French soldiers.

As a precaution, they remained prepared for any potential fight breaking out during their flight.

Du du du du du du.

Kang Chan, Seok Kang-Ho, and the French soldiers stepped into the helicopter carrying the hostages they rescued.

The dried blood had hardened his mask so much that it was practically cracking. He was covered with soil, dust, and blood as well.

Turning around, Kang Chan unknowingly grinned at what he found. Not only did he not realize that the youngest member of the French special forces team had already gotten on board, but the man already had one foot on the helicopter door and his rifle aimed outside too. A safety harness was attached to his back, of course.

This was how a special forces team was completed. Once the lessons from hellish operations like this started to accumulate, a soldier's attitude toward something less significant such as training would begin to change as well.

The sun still hadn't set yet.

The desolate field could be seen through the helicopter door. The eerie winter wind rapidly rushed inside and left just as quickly.

The hostages had crouched down, huddled together.

They were probably having the worst experience of their lives. They had to sit down in the middle of a battlefield, so their legs were probably damp with blood, the metallic smell of which likely still lingered under their noses. To make matters worse, images of the hostiles the soldiers killed and the girls' corpses would be stuck in their minds for a while.

Du du du du du du.

One of the female hostages peeked at Kang Chan.

When they arrived at the airport in Kabul, they found an official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs waiting for them.

"The hostages will be taking a civilian aircraft from here. Thank you for your hard work," the official said.

Kang Chan walked with the hostages to the bus they would take. There were swarms of reporters at the building of the airport, but military personnel were preventing them from getting closer to the runway.

"Hurry on inside the bus please," the official instructed the hostages politely but with urgency.

The hostages seemed relieved but anxious about parting ways with the soldiers who kept them safe all this time. There was a mix of emotions in their expressions.

Even as they stepped onto the bus, no one managed to express their gratitude toward the soldiers. It wasn't that they didn't want to. They were just so genuinely shocked by what happened that it was difficult for them to say anything. They were essentially still in a daze. Fully aware of that, the soldiers found no reason to feel hurt for not being thanked or appreciated.

"We'll get going now. On behalf of all the citizens of South Korea, thank you so much. You made me proud to be Korean," the official said as he firmly shook Kang Chan's hand. When the official got into the bus, the doors closed behind him.

Kang Chan walked back to the airplane.

The French soldiers were standing with Gérard, and the Korean soldiers were standing around Seok Kang-Ho and Kwak Cheol-Ho.

“Have a safe trip back,” Gérard told him.

Kang Chan grinned as Gérard saluted him, the rest of the French special forces team following suit. He and the Korean soldiers returned the gesture.

“Let’s go,” Kang Chan announced.

Nothing good would come from staying too long in front of flashing cameras and broadcasting channels.

Seok Kang-Ho walked to Kang Chan’s left, and Kwak Cheol-Ho followed him from the right.

Clunk, clunk.

When they entered the aircraft, they found cots with blood bags and IV lines waiting for the injured soldiers. Three individuals in white gowns were standing next to them.

Beep.

The doors of the aircraft closed.

Ding, ding, ding, ding.

Before Kang Chan could even properly sit down, the transport plane’s red lights blinked. It had begun to take off.

Click.

Kang Chan and all the team members took off their helmets and then their bandanas. It felt like a breath of fresh air after taking off the masks that had been wrapped around their faces the entire time, but everyone had pieces of dark, stiff blood stuck to their faces.

Eeeerng!

The transport plane briskly raced down the runway and soon ascended.

This was not their first rodeo, so Seok Kang-Ho naturally stood up and wobbled over to bring a bottle of water and poured it over Kang Chan. It looked like the other guys would have to stack more experience based on how they were still in their seats just because the plane was on takeoff.

Kang Chan washed his face, then poured some water on Seok Kang-Ho in return. After washing his face and drinking enough water, he finally felt as if the world was back to normal.

“Do we have any coffee?” Kang Chan asked.

The soldier washing his face quickly headed to the back and shouted, “There is, sir!”

They all drank coffee together.

Looking around the plane, Kang Chan met Yoon Sang-Ki’s gaze, who was lying on a cot.

“Want some?” Kang Chan offered.

“Yes, sir,” Yoon Sang-Ki mouthed.

His comrades all sniggered at him. Not long after, someone went over to pour him a bit of coffee. The medical officer expressed his dissatisfaction, but he didn't dare try to stop him from drinking it.

They stacked up a mountain of C-rations in the middle and dug into it together. As they did, the medical officer checked each of the soldiers' injuries starting with Kang Chan. Still, even as the officer stitched up their wounds, no one stopped eating.

Kwak Cheol-Ho, who was looking over the soldiers, laughed in disbelief. Noticing his teeth were covered with the chocolate he was chewing, everyone laughed back at him.

Just moments ago, the soldiers were depressed because they felt sorry for their injured comrades, but they were now chuckling next to those same people as they ate.

They had nothing to feel guilty about, having realized that even if they were the ones lying on those beds, they would not feel resentment toward the others just because they were filling their stomachs after such a long and tiring battle.

"Kwak Cheol-Ho," Kang Chan called.

"Yes, sir," Kwak Cheol-Ho replied, changing his expression to one that Seok Kang-Ho or Gérard would wear.

"If you can, you should all take turns going on three-day leaves. If you overwork yourselves while you're all in that condition, you will inevitably cause issues in the next operation."

"Understood, sir," Kwak Cheol-Ho obediently replied.

Kang Chan glanced at each of the soldiers.

"With the ability that you've shown me in this operation..." Kang Chan trailed off.

The soldiers seemed to be dying to know what he was about to say.

"You will be at the top of the game wherever you go. Good work, all of you," Kang Chan continued.

"You too, sir," the soldiers replied.

After eating to their heart's content, they drank more cups of coffee. The soldiers then began to lie down one after another to get some rest.

Kang Chan leaned against the wall of the plane.

He could not save any of the girls. Even though he was laughing, eating, and drinking coffee with the others, the girls' faces continued to linger in a part of his mind.

I should've been able to save at least one of them like I did in Africa. If only I was more powerful... If only I had enough power to make the Americans think twice about launching that missile...

It was currently evening in Seoul.

No, with a time difference of about four hours and thirty minutes, Korea was probably under the dead of the night already. Kang Chan pulled out the phone that he kept in one of his pockets.

Kang Dae-Kyung, Yoo Hye-Soo, Lanok, Jeon Dae-Geuk, and Kim Hyung-Jung were probably all waiting for his call.

Kang Chan called Kim Hyung-Jung first.

- Mr. Kang Chan! This is Kim Hyung-Jung speaking.

Kang Chan laughed at the loud voice. He sounded as if he was shouting.

- Good work, Mr. Kang Chan. You've done a truly remarkable job.

Kim Hyung-Jung was speaking so fast that Kang Chan didn't even have the opportunity to reply to anything.

- Wait just a moment, please.

Kang Chan still hadn't been able to get a word in.

- Chan.

Jeon Dae-Geuk's gruff voice came from over the line.

- Well done. You've gone through a lot. Thank you.

Each of his words relayed the mixed emotions he felt through the call.

- We have never been prouder.

Kang Chan could only laugh.

- Get some rest for now. We can talk about the rest in person.

"Understood, sir," Kang Chan responded. That was the only sentence he managed to get into the call before it ended, but it was more than enough.

Whoosh.

The plane steadily headed for Korea. They could finally go home.

Chapter 222.1: Which Bastard Gave the Order? (2)

The plane Kang Chan and his men were in arrived at the Osan airfield two hours past midnight.

As soon as they landed, they prioritized carrying the injured soldiers to the ambulances first. Kang Chan walked next to Yoon Sang-Ki, who was the last to be transferred.

Yoon Sang-Ki forced a smile right before he got into the ambulance. "Thank you for your hard work."

Bam! Vroom!

When he got in and the doors were closed, the ambulances immediately hit the road.

Afraid that they would attract attention, they had turned off all lights around them even though they had ambulances in the area. This was the fate of the special forces. Those who would be upset by treatments like this would never find themselves risking their lives in the middle of military operations.

Kang Chan smirked as he walked over to the bus that would serve as the soldiers' transport. Right beside its door, he could see Cha Dong-Gyun saluting him. He couldn't tell him to stop. How could he? He didn't even have any idea how Cha Dong-Gyun felt about being unable to do anything but watch the entire operation on TV

Kang Chan felt as if he just saw Choi Seong-Geon in Cha Dong-Gyun.

"Thank you for your hard work," Cha Dong-Gyun told him and Seok Kang-Ho.

"We'll have the men rest for a few days. You better do whatever it takes to get better and come with us on the next operation during that time."

"Roger that," Cha Dong-Gyun answered.

The soldiers headed to the bus with their helmets held against their left side and their rifles over their right shoulder. Right now, the look in these fuckers' eyes, the way they walked, and how they behaved were second to none. They had really become a world-famous special forces team.

The soldiers briefly saluted Kang Chan, then got on the bus one by one.

"I'll get going," Cha Dong-Gyun said. He was the last to salute Kang Chan and get on.

Chk.

The bus left as soon as its door closed, its engine running quietly.

Once they had driven away, Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho walked over to the van waiting behind where the bus was.

"Thank you for your hard work," the agent in the driver's seat softly said. "We have a change of clothes for you both in the bag."

When Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho had gotten in, the agent stepped on the pedal and left the Osan airfield. Not long after, it stopped at the roadside where Jeon Dae-Geuk and Kim Hyung-Jung were waiting for them. A car was right behind them

Jeon Dae-Geuk approached them as if he was going to pounce on them. He held onto Kang Chan's arms, then looked straight at Kang Chan with an expression that made it hard to tell if he was crying or smiling.

"You've done well, Kang Chan. You too, Mr. Seok. You two have been through quite a lot," Jeon Dae-Geuk said.

"Why don't we go somewhere more private first, sir?" Kim Hyung-Jung suggested after looking around their surroundings. Agreeing with him, they all got in the van.

"We have contacted the Bang Ji Hospital ahead of time. We'll go there first," Jeon Dae-Geuk said.

"I think we have to wash up a bit before that. Wouldn't it be a problem if other people see us still wearing these clothes?" Kang Chan asked.

“We have taken all the necessary measures to prevent that from happening,” Jeon Dae-Geuk responded.

They didn't pressure Yoo Hun-Woo, did they?

As Kang Chan smirked, Kim Hyung-Jung asked, “Was it you that was walking on Mr. Kang Chan's left before everyone boarded the plane at the airport, Mr. Seok Kang-Ho?”

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho looked at him, unsure why he suddenly brought it up.

“There was a moment when the broadcast focused on the bloody national flag patch on your left forearm. It is making headlines right now and receiving an overwhelming response. The people think the scene fully encompasses the South Korean special forces' sacrifices and determination,” Kim Hyung-Jung explained. As Seok Kang-Ho glanced down at his shoulder, he continued, “The people have amassed quite a huge amount of donations for the wounded soldiers and the development of the special forces. The Military Manpower Administration is also having a really tough time dealing with all the phone calls inquiring about the qualifications of the special forces.”

“Phuhu,” Seok Kang-Ho laughed.

The people's sense of duty seemed to be burning so strongly that they applied to join the special forces. However, Kang Chan was certain that would all end up taking a step back as soon as they saw the look in Seok Kang-Ho's eyes.

Two police cars drove ahead and behind the van as their escort.

“Which bastard authorized broadcasting the operation?” Kang Chan asked.

“We haven't identified them yet,” Kim Hyung-Jung responded.

Kang Chan didn't ask any further questions. He was planning on making France's DGSE look into it anyway.

The van was already going quite fast, but he still hoped it would speed up a bit more due to Seok Kang-Ho's shoulder.

As they got closer to the Bang Ji Hospital, Kang Chan began to find traffic enforcers all over the area.

“Aren't we attracting too much attention?” Kang Chan asked.

“As far as the public knows, these are all being done in preparation for a completely unrelated event. A movie will be filmed over there, just a couple of blocks past the hospital,” Kim Hyung-Jung explained.

God damn!

Agents rushed toward them as soon as they reached the entrance of the hospital. When they opened the door and stepped out of the van, the agents covered Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho with blankets and guided them to the Director's office.

“Long time no see, Mr. Kang Chan and Mr. Seok Kang-Ho,” Yoo Hun-Woo greeted.

Kang Chan thought the doctor would be caught slightly off guard, but he still looked as sly as ever. On the other hand, the nurse standing beside him—the same one who always assisted—looked extremely nervous.

“Please prioritize treating Seok Kang-Ho's shoulder,” Kang Chan said.

As requested, Yoo Hun-Woo and the nurse cut off the bandages wrapped around Seok Kang-Ho's shoulder and top first, revealing a bullet wound.

“Oh my!” Yoo Hun-Woo frowned. He disinfected the wound before examining the others. They inserted an IV line connected to a blood bag into Seok Kang-Ho and immediately began to transfuse blood into him. Afterward, accompanied by an agent, the nurse left the room for a moment and came back wheeling in an X-ray machine.

“I think the bullet in his shoulder has broken into pieces. We should take an X-ray before we try to remove it,” Yoo Hun-Woo explained.

“Is there coffee here?” Kang Chan asked.

The question seemed to have caught Yoo Hun-Woo and the nurse off guard. It was nothing out of the ordinary for Kang Chan, though. Having gone through moments like this multiple times already, this was just another day for him.

One of the agents left the room and came back with coffee.

“What about me?” Seok Kang-Ho asked. The agent made him coffee as well.

They operated on Seok Kang-Ho and Kang Chan for over three hours in total. By the time they were done, it was already six in the morning. The two headed up to a room.

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho headed up to one of the rooms to rest. Inside, Jeon Da-Geuk and Kim Hyung-Jung were already waiting, looking more tired than those who had to undergo treatment.

“Are you two going to have breakfast?” Kim Hyung-Jung asked.

“We are,” Kang Chan answered. “Want to eat with us?”

The four eventually decided to have galbi-tang. They talked about the South Koreans' response to the broadcast while eating, but Kang Chan couldn't really care less about it. “We've assigned some agents to stand guard outside. We'll come back later,” Kim Hyung-Jung said.

“Get some sleep, Kang Chan. You too, Mr. Seok,” Jeon Dae-Geuk added.

The two looked disappointed for having to leave.

It's been a long time since I came to the Bang Ji Hospital.

“Phew! I’m going to hit the hay. You should rest too,” Seok Kang-Ho said.

“You go on ahead. I’m going to wash up first.”

Although they disinfected him with soap during the operation, he didn’t feel as refreshed as actually taking a bath.

Kang Chan wrapped his wounds with a cling film and washed up. By the time he got out of the bathroom, Seok Kang-Ho was already snoring.

Click.

Kang Chan jerked awake and sat up as fast as a sea creature jumping up from the depths of the sea. He glared at the door, finding a surprised and flustered nurse examining his mood.

Do I look too murderous right now?

He looked to the side and saw Seok Kang-Ho’s eyes had become cruel and cold. He looked as if he was about to break someone’s neck.

It seemed they were still on edge.

“What time is it?” Kang Chan asked the nurse.

“It’s eleven am.” The nurse hesitantly approached Kang Chan and added medication to his IV. She then did the same for Seok Kang-Ho.

“Ugh! Ugh!”

Seok Kang-Ho made weird noises to warm up his coarse throat as the nurse added medication to his IV, making her leave so quickly that she looked as if she was running away.

“Let’s have lunch. How does bossam and mak-guksu sound?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

This fucking guy hasn’t even properly warmed up his throat yet but he’s already dragging his IV pole around to order from a restaurant.

“Order whatever you want. I’m going to make a few phone calls,” Kang Chan responded.

“Alright.”

Yoo Hye-Sook was the first one he called.

- Channy! What happened?

Hearing her voice made a part of his heart warm up.

“I’m sorry I haven’t been able to call you.”

- When are you coming home?

“I will probably have to stay here for two to three more days. How have you two been?”

- We're fine. We just miss you.

“I'm sorry. I'll go home as soon as I can.”

- Okay, Channy. For some strange reason, your dad has been having a hard time since he watched the broadcast on the TV yesterday, so come home quickly and console him. Make sure to call him as well.

“I will.”

- I love you, Channy.

“I love you too.”

Seok Kang-Ho glanced at Kang Chan, a genuine smile on his face. “Woah! Seeing you act like that makes me happy. Are you going to call your father?”

“I was just about to.”

“Give me a moment. Let me order food for us first.”

Seok Kang-Ho ordered bossam and mak-guksu with a rough voice.

Chapter 222.2: Which Bastard Gave the Order? (2)

After calling Yoo Hye-Sook, Kang Chan looked for Kang Dae-Kyung's number and called him.

The call rang just once before it was picked up.

- Hello?

Kang Dae-Kyung sounded as if he was in a rush.

“Father, is everything alright?”

- Huh? Yes! Nothing's wrong! Where are you?

Why is he acting like this?

“I called to let you know that I'm doing well. I should be home in two to three days. I've already called Mother and told her about it.”

- Really...? Will you really be home by then?

He's aware that I was part of the operation!

Kang Dae-Kyung didn't have to say anything for Kang Chan to know.

“Father.”

Kang Dae-Kyung just stayed silent.

“I'm sorry.”

- Ugh! Don't be. I'm... proud of you.

Kang Dae-Kyung exhaled deeply.

“Father, I want to eat sushi.”

- You...

Kang Dae-Kyung stopped. He sounded as if he was going to burst into tears at any moment.

- Should I buy some on my way to see you?

“Sure. I'm at the Bang Ji Hospital.”

- Okay! I'll get you some, then! Should I head over there right now?

Kang Chan awkwardly looked at Seok Kang-Ho, who was sitting near him.

“Why don't you drop by around dinner time instead? You're going to have to bring a lot of sushi, though, since a pig lives here.”

Seok Kang-Ho blinked. He looked as if he found it unfair.

- Sure. I'll buy a lot of sushi. I'll be there tonight at around seven.

This was the first time Kang Chan heard Kang Dae-Kyung sound so happy.

“Okay. I'll see you later.”

- Alright!

Kang Dae-Kyung sounded like he was on top of the world.

“What's wrong?” Seok Kang-Ho asked when the call ended.

“It seems my father has caught on to the fact that I was part of the operation in Afghanistan,” Kang Chan answered.

Pressing his lips together, Seok Kang-Ho nodded as if he had figured something out.

“What is it?” Kang Chan asked again.

“Your mother aside, I knew your father would quickly catch on about what you do.”

Kang Dae-Kyung probably figured it all out by himself, considering no one would have ever told him.

While Kang Chan was mulling over his thoughts, an agent opened the door and brought bossam and mak-guksu inside.

“Oh shoot! We forgot to order for you guys as well. How many of you are outside?” Kang Chan asked the agent.

“Don't worry about us. Please enjoy the food.”

“Answer the question.”

“Mr. Deputy Director,” the agent called.

Kang Chan raised his head, the title catching him by surprise.

“Our morale has never been higher, so even if we don’t eat anything for the next hundred days, we’ll still be full. We have also decided not to have alcohol even during private occasions for the next fifty days or so to avoid causing you any trouble. For as long as you enjoy yourselves, we’re satisfied.”

Kang Chan felt as if he had suddenly been hit.

“Thank you for your hard work.” After the agent put the food and water down, he respectfully bowed and went outside.

“Why did he call you ‘deputy director’?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“Oh, have I not told you about that yet?”

Kang Chan walked over and sat across from Seok Kang-Ho, who split the wooden chopsticks in half and handed them to Kang Chan. Now that he thought about it, Seok Kang-Ho only joined up with them after he was appointed to the position.

After they ate bossam and mak-guksu, Kang Chan explained everything that had happened with President Moon Jae-Hyun.

“You can’t refuse to work in this field anymore, then?” Seok Kang-Ho asked afterward.

“Hey! Don’t talk when your mouth is full!”

Seok Kang-Ho forcibly swallowed the mak-guksu he had shoved into his mouth while staring at Kang Chan.

“Ugh!” he groaned.

Jeesh, what a dirty fucker!

After chugging some water, he picked up his chopsticks again with a satisfied look on his face.

The two ate to their heart’s content.

The agents would probably run over and help them if they didn’t clean up properly. Hence, even though they had a wounded arm and leg, they cleaned up after themselves and tied the plastic bags tightly to prevent them from smelling.

After having a cup of coffee, Kang Chan sat by his bed and held up his phone.

- Mr. Kang Chan.

“Mr. Ambassador, I apologize for only contacting you now.”

- Don’t worry. I completely understand. How are your wounds?

“The doctor has told me that I have to stay in the hospital for three more days because of the wound on my leg.”

- Didn't you also get stabbed around your chest?

“It isn't that deep.”

Kang Chan heard Lanok laughing.

“Mr. Ambassador, is there something I should know about that broadcast?”

- Mr. Kang Chan, we should meet and talk about that after you get discharged from the hospital. If there is anything else you're curious about, then Anne will know more about it than I do.

For some reason, Lanok sounded as if he was advising him to take action himself.

“I'll visit you as soon as I get discharged.”

- I'll be waiting for you with delight.

Lanok hung up.

Kang Chan felt as if the ambassador was hiding something. Just like Yoo Hun-Woo, Lanok was one sly fox as well.

Rattle.

Not long after, Yoo Hun-Woo entered the room with a nurse behind him.

“Woah! Where is that delicious smell coming from?” Yoo Hun-Woo asked as he approached their beds. He checked on Kang Chan's wounds first. The one on his side wasn't that bad, but the one on his right leg was quite severe.

Throbbing pain coursed through Kang Chan as Yoo Hun-Woo disinfected his wounds and wrapped them with new bandages.

Afterward, Yoo Hun-Woo went over to Seok Kang-Ho. He cut the old bandages with a pair of scissors, then examined his wounds. With a serious expression, he said, “You're healing even faster than before.”

He then turned to Kang Chan.

How am I supposed to answer something that even a doctor can't?

“Refrain from moving for about a day,” Yoo Hun-Woo advised.

“Will do.”

After disinfecting Seok Kang-Ho's wounds, he wrapped his shoulder in bandages and left the room.

“Am I healing faster because of the blood transfusion I received last time?” Seok Kang-Ho wondered.

“Do you really think it's because of that? Considering Jong-Il and Cha Dong-Gyun didn't heal this fast, maybe it's not the blood transfusion but because you have one of the Blackhead's energies inside you?”

“Didn’t those fuckers manage to recover from certain death? My wounds are light compared to theirs.”

Kang Chan couldn’t help but think that someone who had a bullet embedded in his shoulder shouldn’t be saying something like that.

“Let’s watch TV,” Seok Kang-Ho suggested. He then held up the remote and turned on the TV. The screen displayed a scene from their operation filmed from high in the sky.

“So this how the viewers saw the battle when it was being broadcasted,” Seok Kang-Ho commented.

How could those fuckers broadcast people putting their lives on the line?

Kang Chan suddenly remembered the Apache helicopter.

Those sons of bitches!

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

Kang Chan’s phone soon began to ring. Seok Kang-Ho quickly turned down the volume of the TV.

“Ello?”

- Mr. Deputy Director-General, it’s Anne.

“What?”

- You’ve been promoted.

France’s DGSE had promoted him to Deputy Director-General so quickly that it seemed as if they were just choosing a part-timer for a local convenience store.

- The United States’ DIA and Ethan from the UK were the ones behind the broadcast. Ethan has just arrived in South Korea. We expect him to meet with the Ambassador.

“What was the purpose of the broadcast?”

- Ethan’s goal was to take you and the Ambassador out. Theo, the previous Deputy Director-General, has been removed because he was a part of that plan.

Anne sounded a bit more polite and business-like than before.

“And the United States? Why did they agree to it?”

- We haven’t figured out the DIA’s motives yet.

As Kang Chan nodded to himself, he suddenly thought of something.

“Anne. I want to entrust the Foreign Legion’s entire special forces to Gérard. Is there a way to make that happen?”

- Yes, there is. All you have to do is issue the order, and we’ll have it done, Deputy Director-General.

“Great. Have Gérard take the lead of the entire special forces, then.”

- Understood.

“One last thing, Anne. Call me like you’ve done in the past. All these honorifics are making me uncomfortable.”

- Alright, Monsieur Kang.

Now he finally felt as if Anne was back to how he knew her before.

- On another note, we have figured out Wui Min-Gook’s location.

Kang Chan sat up straight.

Damn it. Why is the wound on my side suddenly throbbing? It hasn’t caused me any pain until now.

- He’s with Kwak Do-Young, the secretary of ex-assemblyman Huh Sang-Soo.

Disgusting fuckers. They’re like cockroaches endlessly connected to each other.

“Where are they?”

- I have texted you their location.

“How does the DGSE find these things?” Kang Chan asked, suddenly growing curious.

- We searched through everything, from the food that Wui Min-Gook liked to eat when he was in China to the items that he usually bought. We also checked his phone call records and traced every number, even those he just called once. That’s how we found out that he contacted Kwak Do-Young.

Now that Kang Chan knew the lengths they had to go to for their jobs, he realized that their role was not for everyone.

Unaware of what they were talking about, Seok Kang-Ho just observed Kang Chan’s expression.

“Are there any other matters that I have to be aware of?”

- That’s all I have right now.

“Thank you, Anne.”

After hanging up, Kang Chan told Seok Kang-Ho every information that he received through the phone call.

“Wui Min-Gook, that son of a bitch! We can finally get proper revenge for General Choi,” Seok Kang-Ho commented and immediately turned off the TV. His eyes were already glinting.

“I have fully recovered already, Cap, so don’t you dare leave me behind when you’re going to kill that motherfucking bastard,” he continued.

Does he have to act like this?

Seok Kang-Ho looked more worked up than usual.

“When I went to Jeungpyeong, I realized that if the general wasn’t around, the special forces that we know now wouldn’t exist either. Seeing Cha Dong-Gyun cry broke my heart,” he added.

Kang Chan smirked as he turned to him.

Dayeru, who had lived a very lonely life, had turned into someone who finally had people he genuinely cared for.

“Captain!” Seok Kang-Ho yelled when Kang Chan didn’t answer.

“Son of a bitch! Fine! Let’s make sure to give his neck a proper fucking twist!” Kang Chan exclaimed.

Seok Kang-Ho grinned like a hungry tiger that had found a dog to eat.

Chapter 223.1: Am I Upset? (1)

Buzz, buzz, buzz.

Seok Kang-Ho was still smirking when Kang Chan received the text message that contained an address somewhere in Itaewon.

The first time they got a chance like this, Kang Chan wasted no time initiating the operation to kill Jang Kwang-Taek and avenge Choi Seong-Geon. It was no different now.

“That son of a bitch!” Kang Chan gleefully exclaimed.

“Phuhuhu,” Seok Kang-Ho sniggered.

They looked at each other as their eyes glinted.

Soon, the door slid open with a creak.

“I heard you two already ate lunch, but I thought I should ask if you want to eat lunch with us anyway...?” Kim Hyung-Jung paused midway into entering the room and quickly scanned their expressions. “Did something happen?”

He sat down at the table, his gaze alternating between Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho.

“We’ve found Wui Min-Gook,” Kang Chan explained.

“What?! Where? Where is he right now?” Kim Hyung-Jung asked furiously. The way he behaved made it seem like he was about to run over to wherever Wui Min-Gook was and shoot him in the forehead.

“Mr. Kang Chan! Where is Wui Min-Gook right now?” Kim Hyung-Jung frantically repeated.

Although Kim Hyung-Jung didn’t say or show it, he appeared to have been deeply troubled by this issue as well. Kang Chan thought they had to have someone keeping an eye on the whole situation, so he decided to tell Kim Hyung-Jung.

“Do you know a man named Kwak Do-Young?” Kang Chan asked.

“You mean Chairperson Huh Sang-Soo’s assistant?” Kim Hyung-Jung responded.

When Kang Chan nodded, Kim Hyung-Jung looked as if he suddenly understood everything.

“That man used to work with Cho Il-Kwon, the chief secretary of Yang Jin-Woo. The records showed that he hadn’t returned to the country yet, but we appear to have been mistaken,” Kim Hyung-Jung mused.

“This intel is from the DGSE, so it can be trusted,” Kang Chan said with assurance.

“In that case, he must have used a fake identity.”

“This is where he is. For now, let’s just keep an eye on him. Please make sure Wui Min-Gook doesn’t catch you,” Kang Chan said, showing Kim Hyung-Jung the address. “If possible, please only assign agents who have experience in the special forces to this task. Wui Min-Gook aside, this mission is going to be dangerous if some members of the North Korean special forces team are still alive and accompanying him.”

“Understood,” Kim Hyung-Jung replied with a nod.

“Can you report this directly to the Director and only assign agents that you can trust to it?”

“As the head of the counter-terrorism special forces, all of those should be within your authority.”

Kang Chan felt pleased. With Kim Hyung-Jung’s assistance, everything was neatly falling into place.

“Great! Now, let’s all drink a cup of coffee to celebrate,” Seok Kang-Ho suggested with a satisfied smile as he stood up from his seat.

“Stay right there, Mr. Seok. I’ll go and make some coffee,” Kim Hyung-Jung offered. He then quickly headed to the table. A moment later, he carried over two paper cups filled with coffee.

“Hm

? You’re not having any, Manager Kim?” Kang Chan asked.

“I have to prioritize getting some of the agents to keep an eye over Wui Min-Gook,” Kim Hyung-Jung replied insistently.

Kang Chan supposed that was more important.

“I’ll be back in an hour.” Kim Hyung-Jung immediately left the room.

They talked about the task of killing someone as if it was nothing. They were even looking forward to it and were so excited about it that Kang Chan found it a bit ridiculous, but he concluded that it was okay to act like this since their target was Wui Min-Gook.

“If the men in Jeungpyeong find out about this, they’re all going to come running,” Seok Kang-Ho joked.

“Don’t say that out loud. You’re going to jinx it,” Kang Chan mischievously warned.

This was the first time in a long while that they got good news. As they relaxed and drank coffee, Kang Chan’s phone rang again.

“Hello?” he answered.

- Mr. Kang Chan, this is Yang Bum. Are you available to talk right now?

“I am. I’m sorry I didn’t give you a call first. Thank you so much for helping us during our most recent operation.”

- How are you doing?

“They say I can be discharged in three days.”

I’m getting a bad feeling about this.

Kang Chan glanced at Seok Kang-Ho as Yang Bum continued.

- If so, can I go to Korea and meet up with you around that time?

Kang Chan wasn’t expecting that question. However, since he had received something from him, it would only be proper to repay him, and while he was at it, he might as well do a good job.

“Sounds like a plan. Please inform me about the time once I’m out of the hospital,” Kang Chan responded.

- Thank you. I will contact you again once I have finalized my schedule.

“Geez, that guy! He seems to be in one hell of a rush,” Seok Kang-Ho grumbled. Their conversation was spoken in Korean, allowing him to get a grasp of what was going on.

“He said something about the borders and whatnot. I didn’t expect it to be something that he has to be so frantic about,” Kang Chan replied.

“I hope we’re not getting pulled into some regional war.”

“I’m sure we’re not. I doubt Russia and China will start shooting at each other. And even if they do, why would we get involved in their fight?” Kang Chan said with a reassuring grin.

“You do have a point.”

This was no different in Africa, After every battle or operation, they would sit around and chat about everything and anything.

“We have assigned agents from the counter-terrorism team to surround the house and ordered them to shadow anyone who enters and leaves,” Kim Hyung-Jung informed Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho.

Kim Hyung-Jung had returned exactly fifty-five minutes since he left. His eyes were glinting as sharply as Seok Kang-Ho’s now. When he arrived, Kang Chan told him about his conversation with Yang Bum.

“Have you heard any news about the soldiers?” Kang Chan asked next.

“One of the critically wounded has regained consciousness. The other three still have to be monitored. From what I heard, even the medical staff are surprised by how well they are holding up.”

Seok Kang-Ho glanced at Kang Chan. Kim Hyung-Jung wasn’t aware of the effects of the blood transfusion, so he just seemed to be thinking of it as a miracle.

After that, they all sat down and enjoyed their rest, listening to Kim Hyung-Jung talk about the response to this recent incident.

Creak.

The door soon opened again. Jeon Dae-Geuk and Kim Tae-Jin walked in.

Seeing these people is always a pleasure.

They exchanged greetings and sat down to chat about various things. Other than a nurse coming into the room in the middle of their conversation to administer another injection, nothing else happened.

“All right! We should go get something to eat. Dinner’s on me today,” Jeon Dae-Geuk announced.

It’s only five right now, though.

“I missed my lunch today. What’s the harm in eating a little earlier?” Jeon Dae-Geuk added.

“Section Chief, my father is supposed to come this evening. I’m just going to wait and have dinner with him, sir,” Kang Chan politely refused.

“I see,” Jeon Dae-Geuk said, turning to Seok Kang-Ho with regret.

“Well, since you’re paying, let’s go have some meat. We can eat in the room next door,” Seok Kang-Ho suggested.

“Meat? Should I bring some grilled beef over, Mr. Seok?” Jeon Dae-Geuk offered.

“That sounds fantastic!”

“Manager Kim, will you go outside and ask the staff if we can use the room next door?” Jeon Dae-Geuk requested.

“Understood, sir,” Kim Hyung-Jung replied.

Do these people think we're here on a picnic or something?

Kim Hyung-Jung returned shortly after he left the room. “I’ve talked to them and made all the arrangements.”

“Thank you. Let’s head over to the other room when Kang Chan’s father arrives,” Jeon Dae-Geuk said.

Kang Chan chuckled. “You can go on ahead, sir. After all, you said you didn’t get to have lunch. My father isn’t expecting other people to be here anyway, so seeing you will just make him uncomfortable.”

He had to convince them two to three more times before they all stood up and followed Jeon Dae-Geuk to the room next door. If others saw them, some would probably think that Kang Chan was upset that they actually left, but he didn’t feel that way at all.

The National Intelligence Service, the DGSE, England, the United States of America, and China... Kang Chan felt as if everything around him was getting tangled up and turning into a complicated mess. He needed some time to organize his thoughts.

A rush of silence swept in and filled the room, seemingly finally being let out after being bottled up somewhere for quite some time.

The things Kang Chan had to attend to next didn’t require joining operations, which meant he wouldn’t be fighting with guns or swinging daggers anymore. Instead, he was faced with the issue of having to meet the leaders of every country’s intelligence bureau. He also had to prioritize expanding and improving the capabilities of the South Korean National Intelligence Service. This matter wasn’t similar to training a special forces team, though. He was not familiar with this field.

At the very least, they should reach the same level as France’s DGSE. That’s the only way for them to be of any help in the future if Lanok or Anne is in danger.

Kang Chan looked outside the window.

I should do things one at a time.

He smirked to himself when he suddenly recalled the crying young girl they found near the end of their operation in Afghanistan.

It was regrettable and pitiable. Even right now, countless kids like her were probably being killed or getting their noses and ears cut off just because they were girls or because they violated some religious beliefs.

Kang Chan wished for greater strength. At the very least, he wanted to be powerful enough to save those children.

Pft!

Human greed knew no bounds.

Chapter 223.2: Am I Upset? (1)

Buzz, buzz, buzz. Buzz, buzz, buzz. Buzz, buzz, buzz.

Kang Chan wondered why he kept getting calls.

“Hello?” Kang Chan answered.

- This is Assistant Manager Kim speaking. Your father is waiting for the sushi. He will be arriving at the hospital in about thirty minutes.

“Got it. Take into account that we have agents stationed over here too,” Kang Chan said.

- I’ve already contacted them.

“Thank you,” Kang Chan responded. After the call, he went to the bathroom and looked at himself in the mirror. His eyes were still dangerously glinting. The spite that had simmered up inside him during his most recent battle still hadn’t left his eyes.

I wonder how he learned about it.

Did Kang Dae-Kyung really recognize him from the broadcast? Kang Chan probably wouldn’t have even recognized himself on the screen.

Kang Chan walked back out of the bathroom, sat beside the bed, and looked outside the window again. Time continued to pass by as if nothing was happening.

Creak.

The door then slid open, and Kang Dae-Kyung entered with Assistant Manager Kim.

“Hi, Father,” Kang Chan greeted him with a smile as he stood up.

“How are you?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked as soon as he saw his son’s legs. Meanwhile, Assistant Manager Kim set down the carryout bags on the table.

“They say I’ll make a full recovery in three days,” Kang Chan answered assuringly.

“I see.”

“Father.”

Kang Dae-Kyung glanced up and looked at Kang Chan.

“I’m sorry,” Kang Chan apologized, causing his father’s gaze to reflect the complex mix of emotions that he was feeling deep down.

Kang Dae-Kyung stared at him for a bit longer before nodding. "Come on, let's have some sushi."

"Okay." Kang Chan grinned.

Assistant Manager Kim poured them some water and set it on the table.

"Didn't you say there was someone with you who eats a lot?" Kang Dae-Kyung asked out of curiosity.

"He left to go eat dinner first."

"Ah, darn."

Kang Dae-Kyung walked over to the chair that Assistant Manager Kim had prepared for him.

"You should sit down and eat with us, Mr. Kim," he urged.

"I'll eat with my colleagues outside," Assistant Manager Kim refused with a smile.

"You probably won't have enough, then. Take this with you," Kang Dae-Kyung insisted.

"No, thank you, it's fine. Please don't worry about us and just enjoy your meal. We'll just order more if we need more," Assistant Manager Kim politely declined, then hurried out of the room. Only then did Kang Dae-Kyung finally sit down and pull out the sushi takeout containers from the paper bag.

"What about mother?" Kang Chan asked.

"I told her I had an important dinner appointment. I keep lying to her these days," Kang Dae-Kyung jokingly complained.

"I'm sorry," Kang Chan apologized again.

"You punk!" Kang Dae-Kyung joked. He extended his arm to stroke Kang Chan's hair. The corners of his eyes turned red again.

"Ahem! Let's dig in," he said, quickly suppressing his emotions. He opened the lid of the takeout box.

"You have some too, Father," Kang Chan said, opening the bowl of doenjang soup and setting it in front of his father.

"Let's see. Do you want to try this one?" Kang Dae-Kyung picked up a thick piece of sushi and offered it to Kang Chan.

This was a first. In the past, whenever Yoo Hye-Sook gave Kang Chan some fruit on a fork or cut a slice of cake for him, Kang Dae-Kyung would only ever watch on with a smile. Now, however, he was holding a piece of sushi with his chopsticks and moved it closer to Kang Chan's mouth.

Kang Chan opened his mouth and accepted the sushi.

“Is it good?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked, sounding quite hopeful.

“Yup! Hurry and have some too, Father!” Kang Chan insisted.

“Yeah? Let me try a piece, then.” Kang Dae-Kyung picked up the piece of sushi in the corner of the box and ate it. Afterward, he commented, “The place I bought this from has really delicious sushis.”

Kang Chan picked up his chopsticks and put another piece into his mouth.

“I feel sorry for your mom now.”

“Me too. Why don’t we save a box? You can give it to her later,” Kang Chan suggested.

“I’ll just get some for her tomorrow. She’s probably already had dinner, so if I bring some home for her tonight, we will probably just end up throwing them away,” Kang Dae-Kyung answered.

Kang Chan continued to eat sushi to show his appreciation.

“Take your time to chew.”

“I can’t help it. This is so tasty,” he replied.

Kang Dae-Kyung couldn’t seem to stop either. He wasn’t hungry, and although the sushi did taste great, he was more worried that Kang Chan would also stop eating if he did.

“Father?” Kang Chan called after they had eaten to their heart’s content.

“Yes?” Kang Dae-Kyung answered. He took a sip from the bowl of doenjang soup and then looked at him.

“How did you figure out that it was me?” Kang Chan asked abruptly.

Kang Dae-Kyung looked extremely flustered, seemingly not expecting to hear such a question. A brief moment of silence enveloped the room.

“Did you really think your own father wouldn’t recognize you?” he finally answered.

“So you really caught on just by watching me on TV?”

The edges of Kang Dae-Kyung’s eyes reddened again. “I caught on when you ran next to the truck. It was the same way you ran next to the van a while ago.”

Kang Chan was quite surprised. He didn’t expect Kang Dae-Kyung to recognize him through that dizzying camera footage.

“Chan,” Kang Dae-Kyung called, his voice low and solemn.

“Yes, Father.”

“I want to take your place for you.”

Kang Chan couldn't bring himself to look his father in the eye, so he looked down at the sushi instead.

“It was horribly painful to watch,” he continued.

“I'm sorry,” Kang Chan apologized again.

Kang Dae-Kyung forced down the emotions that were threatening to come out.

“I realized I need to become stronger.”

Kang Chan slowly lifted his gaze. His father was staring right at him.

“I don't know how or when you became such a capable young man, but seeing the soldiers and hostages following you obediently, I realized that I can't take your place or stop you from going. It also got me thinking about what else I can do for you, though. That's when I realized that I just have to become stronger,” Kang Dae-Kyung declared, stealing his resolve.

I'm unbelievably lucky to have him as my father.

Kang Chan was moved beyond words.

“Are all the soldiers okay?”

“Yes.”

“That's a relief,” Kang Dae-Kyung softly replied. He stretched out his arm to stroke Kang Chan's head.

“I can't believe my son was the fierce commander who annihilated the enemies!” he suddenly started laughing. Kang Chan laughed along with him.

“Don't worry. Your mother still doesn't know.”

“Got it.”

“Hurry and have some more.”

Kang Chan was already full, but he brought himself to eat more anyway. He ate another piece of sushi.

“You don't have to force yourself to eat if you're already full,” Kang Dae-Kyung reassured him.

“Phew, I'm glad. I already ate quite a lot,” Kang Chan said with a grin. His father returned the gesture with a smile of his own.

“Do you smell cooked meat or is it just me?”

“The pig that I told you about is probably eating meat next door right now.”

“If he’s one of the soldiers who were with you in Afghanistan, you should bring him some of this,” Kang Dae-Kyung suggested, nodding at the two untouched takeout containers.

“He’ll probably finish it all if you just leave it there,” Kang Chan replied, amused by the thought.

“Whew! Anyway, I feel a lot better knowing that everyone is fine.”

Kang Chan tidied the table a little and stood up to make two cups of green tea. He then sat down across from his father.

“How and when did you become so skilled in combat?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked, his expression filled with genuine curiosity. Before Kang Chan could even answer, he had already asked a follow-up question. “You are actually my son, aren’t you?”

Kang Chan had no way of answering those questions.

“Chan,” Kang Dae-Kyung called.

“Yes?”

“I hope someday you’ll be able to give me the answer to questions you can’t answer right now,” he affectionately continued.

Unable to say anything, Kang Chan just looked at him. What would happen if he told him the truth?

“Goodness, you punk,” Kang Dae-Kyung quipped. He seemed a bit more relieved now.

They spoke for about an hour longer before his father stood up, regret evident in his expression.

“Get some sleep. I’ll come tomorrow again if I can.”

“Okay. You don’t have to worry about me,” Kang Chan reassured him.

“All right.” Kang Dae-Kyung awkwardly hugged Kang Chan. He then left the room.

Meanwhile, Kang Chan sat back down. His father’s final words before he left echoed in his ears still.

Creak.

The door opened, and the four men in the room next door came in one by one. Afterward, an agent entered with a plate full of beef ribs in hand.

“Come. Dig in,” Jeon Dae-Geuk said.

“Hey, there’s some sushi left. Can I have some?” Seok Kang-Ho asked as he opened the takeout containers. The four men picked up a pair of chopsticks each.

Kang Chan ate a few pieces of meat as well to express his gratitude toward Jeon Dae-Geuk for not forgetting to buy him some.

“What about the agents?” Kang Chan asked.

“Don’t worry about them and just eat up. I ordered more than enough for everybody,” Jeon Dae-Geuk insisted.

Kang Chan ate with the others until they had finished all the sushi.

Once the long dinner was finally over, they spent some more time together before the three finally left the hospital.

Seok Kang-Ho stood up and opened the window. Handing Kang Chan a cigarette, he then asked, “What is it?”

Click.

“Hoo. Father knew. He said he realized I was the special forces team’s commander while he was watching the broadcast...”

Kang Chan told him about Kang Dae-Kyung’s two questions and his final words before saying goodbye.

“You must have been upset,” Seok Kang-Ho remarked.

“About what?”

“You think he’ll stop seeing you as his actual son if you tell him the truth, don’t you?”

How dare this bastard stab me where it hurts?

“Give him a call right now,” Seok Kang-Ho firmly said.

Kang Chan just looked at him, wanting to know why he would want him to do that.

“Do you really think someone who can recognize you through the broadcast alone won’t notice the upset look in your eyes? Your father is probably worried sick, thinking that he said something wrong that made you upset.”

That couldn’t be the case.

“Give him a call. Since you’re receiving this kind of love, you should at least act like a filial son to some extent.”

This punk really has evolved.

“That’s one of the duties of a good child. If you really believe you’re your father’s son, I think you should uphold those duties as well,” Seok Kang-Ho finished.

Kang Chan felt as if he had just taken a blow to the head. Dayeru was helping him... and with this kind of subject, no less.

Chapter 224.1: Where Someone They Missed Used To Be (1)

After asking for the agents' understanding, Yoo Hye-Sook left work earlier than usual and dropped by the supermarket.

Ever since they got hit on the nose while protecting her with their lives, she started feeling bad and sorry for them every now and then.

The female agents usually wore a black suit with a white blouse or a cotton t-shirt. Unlike other women their age, the female agents' forearms were so thick that their sleeves looked too small. They also sometimes walked with their backs straight and shoulders thrown back, which made Yoo Hye-Sook think they looked as if they weren't just walking but also swaggering.

What surprised Yoo Hye-Sook the most when she started a charity was that far more people than she imagined started forcing her to donate. They weren't just asking her to help, either; they were almost threatening her.

She used to be so surprised that seeing their horrible tattoos or scars made it hard for her to breathe. Now, however, they just looked cute in comparison to everything else.

People would sometimes even bring nail bats, file knives, and even hooks attached to their wrists to their meetings. They would then smack her desk, making Yoo Hye-Sook think that she was going out of her mind.

"Hey, you! Come out here for a second," one of the female agents had said.

"Are you bitches really that eager to die?" one man replied.

"Did you not hear me? I said come out here for a second!"

"Fine, bitch! I'll rip your fucking mouth off!"

None of those who had left with the female agents ever came back inside. Rather, it was the agents who would return, still dusting their sleeves and smiling. Sometimes they would even look as if all their stress had disappeared.

Whenever Yoo Hye-Sook asked if they were okay out of sheer surprise, the female agents would simply reply that the rude people were lucky.

"We couldn't have done anything if your son suddenly came in while they were kicking up a fuss in front of you," they would often say with a smirk.

Since then, Yoo Hye-Sook had fallen into the habit of looking at the door whenever someone was being rude toward her.

It was impossible for her not to notice her son's eyes glinting every now and then, which she guessed stemmed from him doing too much work for someone his age. Trying to accomplish tasks that were beyond his capabilities was likely making him furious.

Yoo Hye-Sook would always feel uncomfortable whenever he came home from his morning jog. To her, he seemed to be trying to endure everything one way or another but was struggling to.

She didn't exactly know what he did. Her son just suddenly changed one day and, in one swift motion, broke the necks of people whom not even the strong agents assigned to her could do anything to. He also became a figure so important that the President, Prime Minister, and Director of the National Intelligence Service often asked him to have dinner with them.

Yoo Hye-Sook was curious. She wanted to know what Kang Chan was doing. However, her fear of putting him in even more danger by getting answers to her questions made her just leave the topic alone.

Every now and then, she would suddenly feel anxious while going about her day or after she had a bad dream. Eating made her chest feel constricted on those days. She would also have trouble breathing.

On the day she had been suddenly attacked in the office, on the day all of them ran away to the basement parking lot at their apartment, and after she saw Kang Chan running alongside the van immediately, she fell into the habit of always examining the door if a dangerous person visited her.

No matter what anyone said, Kang Chan deeply loved his parents.

Imagine if that son saw a rough man swearing by saying ‘fuck!’ in front of Yoo Hye-Sook and then saw him stabbing a knife into her desk.

Yoo Hye-Sook was horrified by just thinking about it.

“What’s wrong?” one of the female agents asked Yoo Hye-Sook.

“Ah! It’s nothing.”

Yoo Hye-Sook quickly turned her attention to the wood ear^[1] when one of the female agents accompanying her began scanning their surroundings, surprise evident in her eyes.

Kang Chan would be going home today.

Yoo Hye-Sook remembered Kang Chan’s expression and the emotions that filled his big eyes when she fed him japchae.

“Are you going to make japchae?” one of the agents asked Yoo Hye-Sook.

“That’s right.”

The agent smiled in response as she examined their surroundings again.

Yoo Hye-Sook knew that the agents had a harder time doing their jobs in crowded areas, so she couldn’t take her time choosing what to buy. It was uncomfortable.

Honestly, there were a lot of times when she wanted to take her time looking around places by herself. However, that didn’t make her any less grateful that the government agents were protecting her, someone who could be considered nothing more than a normal citizen, so she couldn’t really complain.

“Madam, the ones over there look better,” one of the female agents recommended.

“You think so too?”

“Why are you buying that instead, then? Why don’t we just go over there?”

“Staying in places like this for too long will give you and the other agents a hard time,” Yoo Hye-Sook answered.

Cha Min-Jeong smiled as if she found her reply funny. “You’re planning to make japchae for your son, aren’t you?”

“How did you know?”

“Well, we do have to plan according to his schedule. Please take your time choosing.”

Even with her insistence, Yoo Hye-Sook still couldn’t stop feeling bad.

“Madam.” Cha Min-Jeong turned to Yoo Hye-Sook again after looking around once more. “If you hesitate to go to places that you want to go to or do what you want to do because you feel bad for us, then that means we’re not doing our jobs properly.”

“That’s not it.”

Cha Min-Jeong bowed as a way of saying thanks. She then continued, “We’ll let you know if things are really dangerous or if we’re having a hard time protecting you. Until then, please relax and do what you want to do.”

“Thank you.” Feeling a little more relaxed now, Yoo Hye-Sook got to properly choose what to buy as quickly as possible. She was so grateful for their consideration that she wanted to decrease the amount of time they had to guard her if possible.

After a while, she got some spinach, wood ears, and meat. Only after a while did she remember to buy glass noodles,[2] which was the most important ingredient when making japchae.

When Yoo Hye-Sook lifted her head and tried to find where the noodles were, Cha Min-Jeon quickly shifted. She radioed in orders from time to time, which meant a lot more agents were in the area. Yoo Hye-Sook simply couldn’t see them.

“Move to area B-3,” Cha Min-Jeong quickly told the other agents as Yoo Hye-Sook began to walk toward the noodles section.

Thinking they were communicating more frequently today, Yoo Hye-Sook found herself checking other people’s moods. As she walked past the coffee and oil aisle and turned to the ramen and glass noodles section, someone approached her.

“Channy!” Yoo Hye-Sook exclaimed. Tears suddenly welled up in her eyes.

“What happened?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“They told me you were out here shopping, so I thought about surprising you,” Kang Chan said.

Cha Min-Jeong greeted Kang Chan with a bow, then discretely stepped away.

“Let me take those. What are you planning to buy?” he asked.

“I’m buying ingredients for japchae.”

“Really?”

Yoo Hye-Sook let go of Kang Chan—whom she hugged tightly—and took one of the glass noodles that were on the shelf.

“Do you need anything else?” Kang Chan asked.

“No, I’ve got everything else I need.” Yoo Hye-Sook honestly felt somewhat upset that her surprise was ruined when Kang Chan came here.

“How about we look around to see if we need anything else?” Kang Chan suggested.

“Aren’t you tired, Channy?”

“Not at all!”

Smiling, Kang Chan pushed the cart past the shelves.

“Why don’t we go over there?” he then offered, leading her mother further inside the supermarket.

Yoo Hye-Sook felt as if she wouldn’t be afraid even if the entire world pounced on them right now.

While browsing, they tried bulgogi, dumplings, milk, buchimgae[3], naengmyeon, and even broth.

They carefully chose each orange and took their time finding the right melon, sweet potatoes, and carrots.

Wouldn’t Channy find this boring?

Yoo Hye-Sook turned her head, finding Kang Chan smiling.

“Mother, I’m sorry to ask this of you, but can you make a lot of japchae?” Kang Chan asked.

“Why? How much more should I make?”

“About six agents are working hard to keep us safe right now. I want to show off your japchae to them.”

“What if it doesn’t taste good?”

“That’s impossible.”

Yoo Hye-Sook was happy. Her son had become cheekier lately as well.

“Oh my! Hye-Sook!” someone exclaimed to Yoo Hye-Sook.

“Ah! Hello,” Yoo Hye-Sook greeted.

“Wow! You seem to be on a date with your son! I heard that he’s going to Seoul National University.”

As Kang Chan bowed and greeted them, the people nearby glanced at them.

“I’m jealous. Anyway, I’ll see you later.”

“She’s one of the older ladies that live at the apartment complex next to ours—the one that Mi-Young lives at,” Yoo Hye-Sook explained.

“Ah!” Kang Chan just nodded in response.

Chapter 224.2: Where Someone They Missed Used To Be (1)

After returning home, Yoo Hye-Sook made japchae with Cha Min-Jeong.

Numerous agents had been meticulously surveilling the area around Wui Min-Gook’s hideout for three days already, yet they still hadn’t seen anyone go in or out of it.

The lights turned on at night, though.

Kang Chan was dying to raid it, but they had to create a contingency plan about what to do if Wui Min-Gook wasn’t there first. Hence, all they could do right now was wait. Kim Hyung-Jung had been eating and sleeping in his car for three days straight now because of that.

“Dinner’s ready!” Yoo Hye-Sook delightedly exclaimed after a moment. Kang Chan immediately headed to the kitchen.

They had to make japchae for several people, including six agents.

There were fewer agents in the house because Kang Dae-Kyung—who dropped by the hospital earlier—had dinner plans. Otherwise, they would’ve had enough guests for a party.

They ate japchae at the table and in the living room.

Wouldn’t this be what heaven tasted like?

Kang Chan didn’t expect to understand what comfort food made with a mother’s love would mean.

Slurp. Slurp.

He couldn’t believe that putting kimchi on top of his japchae and filling his mouth with food could make him happy.

“Would you like to mix rice into your japchae, Channy?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“Sure.”

Yoo Hye-Sook served rice on a large plate and topped it with japchae.

The agents didn’t refuse anything as they ate either. In fact, Yoo Hye-Sook had already taken out three servings of kimchi. She looked very happy, and the agents looked proud.

They got to eat with Kang Chan, the man who swiftly elevated the South Korean special forces’ status to world-class and quickly rose to the rank of NIS assistant deputy director and head of its counter-terrorism department. They also ate with his mother, whom they felt honored to protect and serve.

If the agents could sell this moment to others, thirty people would immediately jump at the offer.

“You guys should eat more,” Kang Chan said.

“We have already eaten quite a lot,” Cha Min-Jeong answered, already feeling full.

“Does anyone want more?” Kang Chan asked. However, everyone seemed to agree with Cha Min-Jeong.

The female agents rushed over and helped do the dishes, after which they all sat down together and had tea.

The agents didn’t say anything, but their pride could be felt all over the apartment.

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

After some time, Kang Chan’s phone rang.

“Hello?”

- It’s Woo Hee-Seung. Do you have a moment to talk?

“Yeah. What’s up?”

Kang Chan glanced at Yoo Hye-Sook, who was in the kitchen.

- I don’t know if I’m allowed to tell you about this, but I’m calling because of Lee Yoo-Seul.

“What? What’s wrong?”

- We thought she was sleeping while the operation in Afghanistan was being broadcast, but she seemed to have watched it somehow. Ever since then, she hasn’t stopped crying and asking if the man who hugged her during the funeral has died. Lieutenant Cha Dong-Gyun called and asked if there was a way to calm her down.

“Is she in Jeungpyeong right now?”

The agents’ attention quickly turned to Kang Chan.

- Yes. Her family has moved to an apartment in downtown Jeungpyeong.

“I’ll be right over.”

- I’m sorry.

“What are you even sorry about? I already had dinner anyway, so I don’t mind leaving now. Contact Daye about this for me.”

- Alright.

After Kang Chan hung up, he went to the kitchen.

“Mother,” he called.

“Yes? Do you want some fruit?”

“I’m going to have to pass on that. Do you remember the time I went to Jeungpyeong last time to visit someone in the hospital?”

“Yeah.”

“I’m thinking of visiting him today as well.”

“Why? Is he not doing well?”

Kang Chan smiled. Yoo Hye-Sook looked as if she felt bad.

“I heard that he has recovered, but I’m thinking of going anyway since I promised to visit him again and I have the time to right now,” Kang Chan explained.

“What should we do? You’ll be tired. You should rest for at least a day first.”

“It’s fine. I’ll have plenty of time to rest from today onwards anyway. I’ll make sure to come home even if it’s late.”

“Okay, Channy.” Yoo Hye-Sook was about to hug Kang Chan but stopped. She glanced and checked the agents’ moods.

Kang Chan couldn’t help but find her cute whenever she acted like this. He hugged her, then went into his room and changed.

By the time he had gone back out to the living room, the agents already seemed aware of what was going on.

“Please be careful,” one of the agents said. The look in their eyes, their attitude, and their tone were all Kang Chan needed to learn that they had already been informed of the situation.

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho rode in the same car. Woo Hee-Seung and Lee Doo-Hee followed behind them in another.

Kang Chan’s leg hadn’t fully healed yet, and he still had bandages wrapped around his side as well. Seok Kang-Ho’s wounds were more severe. He even looked as if he found it uncomfortable to even drive.

They bought some coffee and drank it on the way to visit Lee Yoo-Seul.

“Poor Lee Yoo-Seul. What should we do?” Seok Kang-Ho commented.

“This is one of the difficulties that the special forces have to face. We should at least give her a sense of pride, even if we have to make her dad a hero...” Kang Chan said.

Since it was a weekday afternoon, there wasn’t much traffic on the highway.

Upon reaching the military camp, Cha Dong-Gyun and the adjutant headed out of the barracks. The other soldiers followed soon after, welcoming Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho.

“Have you had dinner yet?” Cha Dong-Gyun asked.

“We have. What about you guys?”

“We always eat on time.”

Few organizations can claim their people eat on time every day like the military.

“Then are we good to go now?” Kang Chan asked.

“Yes.”

Cha Dong-Gyun and Kwak Cheol-Ho got in the same car as Kang Chan. The other soldiers stayed at the military camp.

“Have they appointed a commander for the team yet?” Kang Chan asked.

“From what I heard, not yet. There are rumors that our special forces team is tough and wild and is always given difficult missions. People are apparently opting not to apply to work here because of that.”

Damn it! I can't believe soldiers, of all people, refuse to come here because they find what we do difficult!

The men over at Jeungpyeong would willingly risk their lives and die happy even if they were being paid less than thirty million won per year, yet those with stars for ranks refused to take charge of them just because they found it difficult.

“Is Yoo-Seul going to the hospital?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“I heard she is,” Cha Dong-Gyun answered.

As Cha Dong-Gyun guided them to downtown Jeungpyeong, tall apartments soon flanked them.

“They have moved into one of the apartments here. She was doing well until the Afghanistan broadcast startled her,” Cha Dong-Gyun explained.

Kang Chan nodded in response, then said, “Park the car at the bakery over there for a moment.”

“Looks like Yoo-Seul is outside right now. She's right over there.” Cha Dong-Gyun extended his hand from the backseat and pointed to one side of a playground.

When the car stopped, Kang Chan, Cha Dong-Gyun, and Kwak Cheol-Ho got out of the car. However, when they approached Lee Yoo-Seoul, she quickly held onto her mother's waist and hid behind her back.

“What's going on? Didn't you say that you missed me?” Kang Chan asked.

Lee Yoo-Seul peeked out from behind her mom, only showing her eyes, and looked at Kang Chan, who was crouching.

“Why don’t we go get some cake inside?” Kang Chan continued. Lee Yoo-Seul’s mom forced back her tears and covered her mouth. “Huh? If you don’t come here, then I’ll just go.”

“Aren’t you hurt?” Lee Yoo-Seul asked.

“I’ve already fully recovered.”

“Then are you okay now?”

“Yeah! That’s why I’m telling you that we should go inside and buy cake!” Kang Chan exclaimed with joy. As Lee Yoo-Seul stared at him, he continued, “Your dad watched us from heaven and saved all of us this time as well. He also told us to do our best for you.”

“Did he really say that?”

“Yup. He also said that he enjoyed your singing.”

“Didn’t my dad say that he misses me?” Lee Yoo-Seul closed her eyes. Her lips thinned.

“He said that he’s watching you every day and told me to hug you in his stead because he wants to hug you so much.”

Lee Yoo-Seul hesitated but soon walked over to Kang Chan.

“Come here,” Kang Chan said. “It’s okay.”

“Waaah!” Lee Yoo-Seul burst into tears. Kang Chan hugged her and stood up.

“Dad! I miss you so much!” Lee Yoo-Seul exclaimed. Wounds like hers didn’t heal overnight.

How could she easily brush aside the fact that her dad—who protected her from the entire world—could no longer be there for her?

Kang Chan just stood with Lee Yoo-Seul in his arms. After ten minutes, she finally stopped crying.

“Have you eaten?” Kang Chan asked.

Lee Yoo-Seul shook her head.

“What do you want to eat, then?”

This time, Lee Yoo-Seul looked at her mom.

“Why are you looking at her? What do you want to eat?” Kang Chan asked.

“Yoo-Seul said that she wants to have the chicken that she used to eat with her dad,” Lee Yoo-Seul’s mom answered.

“I see! Let’s go, then!”

Lee Yoo-Seul tightly wrapped her arms around Kang Chan’s neck and burst into tears again.

The people near the apartment glanced at them but started walking on eggshells when they saw Cha Dong-Gyun and Kwak Cheol-Ho.

As Kang Chan turned around, Lee Yoo-Seul's mom—who had wiped her tears away—walked beside him.

“Thank you for helping us,” she quietly said.

“I'm sorry. Your husband saved our lives, but all I could do was send money.”

“Not at all!” Lee Yoo-Seul's mom vigorously shook her head. “Money is important, but I gained courage when I found out that he didn't die in vain. I'll do my best to raise Yoo-Seul properly. For some reason, I feel like her dad really will be watching us.”

Lee Yoo-Seul stopped crying when her mom started talking to Kang Chan.

When they entered a chicken restaurant, Kang Chan sat down and ordered all the different kinds of chicken.

“Let's eat!” Kang Chan said. Everyone energetically ate on purpose.

“Cheers!”

They also clinked glasses with Lee Yoo-Seul and her mother, who were drinking cola.

“Your dad wants you to be strong,” Kang Chan said while pretending that nothing was wrong.

“Really?” Lee Yoo-Seul asked. Tears welled up in her eyes soon after, but she didn't cry.

Kang Chan took a big bite out of a chicken leg and then stared into Lee Yoo-Seul's eyes. “Your dad is going to have a hard time in heaven if you keep crying. The other men are going to tease him as well. Yoo-Seul, what do you think of becoming an awesome soldier like your dad?”

As Cha Dong-Gyun and Kwak Cheol-Ho looked at Kang Chan with startled expressions, Lee Yoo-Seul nodded as she answered, “I'll become a soldier!”

“Okay! Then be strong, eat lots of food, and get proper sleep. Don't cry, and make sure you call me immediately if something unfair happens. Can you do that?” Kang Chan asked.

“If I do that, will I become a soldier?”

“Yes. You remember your dad, right? Have you ever seen him crying?”

Lee Yoo-Seul shook her head.

“Have you ever heard him say that he didn't want to eat?”

When she shook her head again, he stroked her head.

Recruits who had just lost their colleagues behaved exactly like her.

“You should join the special forces,” Kang Chan said. Words like those always helped anyone recover from their wounds and feel better. The idea that they could be in the same spot as someone they missed seemed to console them quite effectively.

With the hope that they could reach where someone they missed used to be, they would be able to stand on their own.

Chapter 225.1: Where Someone They Missed Used To Be (2)

Kang Chan noticed that Lee Yoo-Seul was feeling a lot better now. The time they had spent together was brief since it was just the duration that they ate chicken together, but it was effective. Lee Yoo-Seul headed back inside her house as she eagerly waved Kang Chan goodbye.

When Lee Yoo-Seul said she was going to become a soldier, Seok Kang-Ho acted gruffly on purpose to hide his shyness, while Cha Dong-Gyun and Kwak Cheol-Ho looked noticeably moved. Kang Chan thought that the whole interaction went pretty well.

Instead of leaving immediately, the four watched and waited until Lee Yoo-Seul had fully gone past the entrance of the apartment complex.

“Do you have some time, sir?” Cha Dong-Gyun asked Kang Chan as they walked back to the car.

Kang Chan wondered what it could be. After all, aside from the matter involving Wui Min-Gook, nothing urgent was going on at the moment.

“There’s something I would like to discuss with you,” he added.

“We’re driving you back to the base anyway, right? We can talk about it there,” Kang Chan suggested.

The four all got in one car and headed back to base. Seok Kang-Ho drove for them. Upon reaching their destination, Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho headed inside the barracks. Kwak Cheol-Ho prepared some instant coffee for them as Cha Dong-Gyun sat down next to them with Choi Seong-Geon’s former aide.

“We’re having trouble finding someone to take over this place,” Cha Dong-Gyun began. “General Choi was well-known for the way he led this base, but that’s also why the other commanders seem to be uncomfortable with the fact that they could be compared to him. There’s a chance that they’ll also have trouble accepting our ways of doing things,”

Kang Chan lifted the paper coffee cup and took a sip as he waited for Cha Dong-Gyun to continue.

“Please allow me to take command of this place,” Cha Dong-Gyun said firmly but with much difficulty.

“Can you do that with your rank? You’re a lieutenant,” Kang Chan asked out of curiosity.

The aide quickly nodded in response. “If we can entrust the management of the unit to the National Intelligence Service, then it can be done. We will still be under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of National Defense, but the National Intelligence Service’s counter-terrorism team can manage the base.”

“Why are you suddenly asking for this?” Kang Chan asked.

“If we start following all the regulations of the military, we won’t be able to train as we’ve been doing anymore. General Choi used to prevent any issues from arising with the higher-ups, but if we get someone who does things strictly according to the manual, it’ll be suffocating for both the new commander and us,” the aide replied.

Kang Chan let out a quiet sigh.

If he did as Cha Dong-Gyun asked, it would likely seem as if he was attempting to take control of the special forces team. Considering the structure of military systems and the significance of the special forces, this wasn’t an easy demand to meet, especially given the recent rapid growth of the special forces.

“So the special forces team will be under the National Intelligence Service on paper, but in reality, you’ll be the one managing it?” Seok Kang-Ho asked Cha Dong-Gyun.

“Yes, sir,” Cha Dong-Gyun answered.

“Will they easily grant me approval if I make this request?” Kang Chan wondered.

“There’s about a fifty percent chance that it will be allowed,” the aide quickly answered. “The military won’t want to let go of the special forces team so easily, sir. Moreover...”

“I’ll be getting too much power, won’t I?” Kang Chan asked.

“Yes, sir.”

Kang Chan trusted Cha Dong-Gyun and the deputy officer. He knew they weren’t asking this of him out of personal greed. However, he couldn’t expect others to think the same.

“All right. I’ll talk to Manager Kim about it when I get back to Seoul,” Kang Chan informed them.

“Understood, sir,” Cha Dong-Gyun responded with gratitude.

At the same time, something occurred to Kang Chan. “That aside, you seem to be in much better shape than last time.”

“My recovery speed is getting faster and faster. The same goes for Jong-Il sunbae. Even the hospital staff was surprised. I wonder if it’s because I quit smoking,” Cha Dong-Gyun mused.

The corners of Seok Kang-Ho's lips curved into a smile.

Is it really because my blood was used for the transfusion?

At the very least, Seok Kang-Ho looked as if he thought that had to be the case.

"I see. Well, I'll head back to Seoul and think about it. For now, take care of the men," Kang Chan said.

"Thank you, sir. I will," Cha Dong-Gyun responded.

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho headed back to Seoul.

"Don't you think Wui Min-Gook is being too quiet?" Seok Kang-Ho wondered out loud.

"We should watch the situation for another week or so. If someone told us to hide and lay low, wouldn't you stay off the grid for at least two weeks?" Kang Chan contemplated.

"I suppose," Seok Kang-Ho agreed. He began to speed up when they entered the highway.

"I'm thinking of meeting the ambassador tomorrow, by the way. I might also take my father to see the first floor of the building too," Kang Chan informed him.

"Phuhu. If the foundation moves in as well, the building will be swarming with agents," Seok Kang-Ho said with a grin.

Kang Chan chuckled.

They chatted about various other topics as they headed back. At around ten in the evening, they finally reached Seoul.

"Thanks for driving," Kang Chan said.

"I'll call you in the morning tomorrow. I'm going to head straight to the office," Seok Kang-Ho replied.

"Got it."

After parting ways with Seok Kang-Ho, Kang Chan went to his family's apartment. When he pressed the buttons of the keypad and walked inside, he was greeted by Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook, who were sitting in the living room.

"How was your hospital visit?" Kang Dae-Kyung asked warmly.

"He's doing a lot better, so I'm feeling lighter now," Kang Chan replied.

After greeting his parents, Kang Chan changed into more comfortable clothes and walked out into the living room.

"Father, are you busy tomorrow?" Kang Chan asked.

“Me? Well, I am a bit busy since it’s the end of the season, but I might be able to make time. Is it going to take a while?” Kang Dae-Kyung replied

“No, I think an hour should be enough.”

“What is it about?”

“It’s the building that Michelle moved DI into. She said the first and second floors are empty, so I was wondering if you would like to move the showroom there,” Kang Chan explained. “Mother can move there too. Wouldn’t it be nice if you two could stay together in the same building?”

“Where is it?” Kang Dae-Kyung asked.

Kang Chan told him the approximate location of the building.

“I know that building. I heard its owner isn’t letting anyone take the first and second floors because some people are supposed to be moving in.” Kang Dae-Kyung tilted his head in contemplation.

“Would you be interested in it if you can?”

“It would be a lot better for business than where I am now since it’s located in a corner. Wouldn’t the rent be quite high, though? I’m sure a lot of other people are interested in the spot too since it’s a new building.”

“From what I heard, you should be able to secure it with the same amount of rent as you do now,” Kang Chan replied assuringly.

Kang Dae-Kyung was a smart businessman. He looked at Kang Chan in doubt and concern. “I’m sure you’re handling things properly, but I hope you’re not using your influence to get us a spot in that building. You don’t have to do that.”

“I promise you it’s nothing like that.”

“I’ll talk it over with the management of our current building first before making a decision. Would that be okay?”

“Yes, that should be fine. Please let me know once you’ve made a decision.”

“I’ll be sure to.”

“Honey! It really would be nice if we could work in the same building. All the agents will be staying in the same place too instead of being separated,” Yoo Hye-Sook exclaimed, her voice filled with hope.

Kang Dae-Kyung nodded in agreement.

Waking up at dawn, Kang Chan decided to skip today's morning workout after some contemplation. His leg wasn't completely healed yet, so he didn't want to put too much pressure on his muscles.

"Channy! You're not going to exercise today?" Yoo Hye-Sook asked when she saw him.

"No, I'm feeling a bit lazy today," Kang Chan responded.

"You're not hurt anywhere, are you?" Yoo Hye-Sook asked. She seemed glad to hear that Kang Chan was skipping his workout but also seemed concerned.

How could Kang Chan ever dislike her mother?

"What are we having for breakfast?" Kang Chan asked.

"I'm going to make some kimchi stew with bean sprouts."

"It is alright if I help you?"

While Yoo Hye-Sook was preparing the stew and the rice, Kang Chan pulled out the side dishes from the refrigerator and set the utensils on the table.

"Hm? You didn't work out today?" Kang Dae-Kyung asked in surprise.

"Nope. I decided to just rest for today," Kang Chan replied.

Kang Dae-Kyung quickly examined Kang Chan's leg, then made subtle eye contact.

'You're okay, right?'

'Of course I am.'

Only after seeing Kang Chan's smile did Kang Dae-Kyung finally look somewhat relieved.

Their family of three enjoyed a peaceful breakfast together for the first time in a long while. Afterward, Kang Chan saw his parents off and leisurely sat down at his desk. He then called Lanok.

- Mr. Kang Chan! How are you feeling?

"I'm sorry that I'm only reaching out to you now, Mr. Ambassador. If you have time, I'd like to come see you when you're available," Kang Chan replied.

It took a few moments for Lanok to check the appointments in his schedule.

- Would you like to have lunch together tomorrow, then? Twelve is the best time for me.

"All right. I will see you then, sir," Kang Chan accepted.

Fwoosh.

Kang Chan stretched himself out on the sofa and blankly gazed up at the ceiling. His plans for today were to see the building with Kang Dae-Kyung and meet Lanok, but he ended up having nothing to do all day.

Chapter 225.2: Where Someone They Missed Used To Be (2)

‘Should I go see Mi-Young?’

Since it was vacation now, he could call her and...

Buzz, buzz, buzz. Buzz, buzz, buzz. Buzz, buzz, buzz.

Before he could finish his thought, his phone began to ring, seemingly reminding him that he didn't have any time to fool around.

“Hello?” Kang Chan answered.

- This is Yang Bum speaking, Mr. Kang Chan. I heard you made plans to meet with Ambassador Lanok tomorrow. Would it be fine for me to join you?

These men moved around to different countries as casually as Kang Chan stopping by to visit Jeungpyeong.

“Sure, I don't mind,” Kang Chan responded.

- Then I'll drop by the embassy at twelve as well. See you then.

“Yes, see you,” Kang Chan replied.

Even though Kang Chan didn't have any plans for today, the fact that Yang Bum was coming to South Korea made him feel as if his schedule had suddenly become too tight to make time for Mi-Young.

Nevertheless, that appointment wouldn't be until tomorrow. He could meet up with Mi-Young now and have lunch before...

Buzz, buzz, buzz. Buzz, buzz, buzz. Buzz, buzz, buzz.

His phone began to vibrate furiously again. It seemed to be telling him that he would never see Mi-Young today.

It was Kim Hyung-Jung.

Kang Chan quickly answered the call.

“Hello?”

- Kwak Do-Young has made an appearance.

Kang Chan suddenly shot to attention.

“I'm on my way,” he said solemnly.

- Understood.

Lunch wasn't the issue right now. Kang Chan hurriedly changed clothes and left the apartment.

He called Woo Hee-Seung first. As he came down to the complex, he then dialed Seok Kang-Ho's number.

“Kwak Do-Young has apparently shown up. I'm going to head over in Hee-Seung's car,” Kang Chan informed him.

- I'm at the office, but I'll make my way there as soon as I can.

“Get off somewhere far away so he doesn’t notice you,” Kang Chan advised.

- Got it.

It took exactly fifteen minutes for Kang Chan to reach Itaewon from his home. As soon as they arrived, he got in the van where Kim Hyung-Jung was waiting. He had heard Kim Hyung-Jung had stayed inside the van for three days straight, which was made evident by how scratchy his face was.

“Is he still in his home?” Kang Chan asked.

“Yes. He hasn’t shown any significant movement ever since he entered,” Kim Hyung-Jung answered.

There were a total of five monitors inside the van, each one showing various angles of Kwak Do-young’s house shot from above.

“What about the agents?” Kang Chan asked.

“The armed counter-terrorism team is waiting on standby. We have also deployed twenty additional undercover agents in the area,” Kim Hyung-Jung replied.

Kang Chan put on the radio that Kim Hyung-Jung handed him and holstered a gun to his waist.

While Kim Hyung-Jung was keeping a sharp eye on the monitors, the doors opened and Seok Kang-Ho popped inside.

Without even having to be given instructions, Seok Kang-Ho also put on the radio and attached a holster to his waist.

“Are you heading in?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

Kang Chan looked at Kim Hyung-Jung with a questioning gaze.

“It’s not necessary to enter at the moment. If Kwak Do-Young comes out alone, we can tail him and check where he’s going before arresting him. That way, we’ll have the opportunity to also arrest anyone who is helping him,” Kim Hyung-Jung replied.

“That’s true. Thinking about it makes me wonder where that bastard has been before suddenly appearing here,” Seok Kang-Ho pondered.

“He may have been staying at a hotel,” Kim Hyung-Jung guessed.

While listening to the conversation between the two, Kang Chan glanced at the clock. It was thirty minutes past ten.

Should I just kick the doors down and go in?

The problem was that they had no idea if Wui Min-Gook was also in the house.

If they went in without a plan and only found Kwak Do-Young inside, they would essentially be sending a loud message to Wui Min-Gook to escape.

Under Kim Hyung-Jung's instructions, the agent behind him brewed some instant coffee for them. The three took their time to drink it.

Damn it!

Kang Chan had rushed over after hearing that Kwak Do-Young had shown himself, but the fucking bastard now stayed holed up inside his home. For the next two hours, Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho could do nothing but sit in the van with their radios and guns.

“What do those punks have so much to talk about?” Seok Kang-Ho grumbled.

Meanwhile, Kang Chan slowly scanned the monitors. Kwak Do-Young's house was a two-story Western-style house with a spacious yard. It seemed quite expensive.

“Manager Kim, whose name is that house under?” Kang Chan asked.

“It was rented six months ago on a one-year lease by someone named Kim Cheol-Ung. All of its rent was prepaid,” Kim Hyung-Jung answered.

“Who's Kim Cheol-Ung?”

“It's a pseudonym. The Kim Cheol-ung specified in the contract lives in Gayang-Dong, and he has absolutely nothing to do with this case,” Kim Hyung-Jung said.

Kang Chan nodded. After some time, he saw a large, bulky man walk out of the front door.

“That is Kwak Do-Young,” Kim Hyung-Jung informed Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho.

The moment Kim Hyung-Jung spoke, Kwak Do-Young glanced back inside the house and then turned to the door again.

There was definitely someone else inside.

Chk.

“Surveillance team, stand by.”

Chk.

“Team Two, move out.”

Chk.

“Team Three, move out.”

Immediately after, they radioed in two more orders from inside the van.

“We have two teams riding motorcycles, two more in sedans, and two other vehicles disguised as taxis. They are all on standby right now,” Kim Hyung-Jung declared.

Kang Chan kept his glare on the monitors as he listened to Kim Hyung-Jung.

Wui Min-Gook, that son of a bitch!

If that bastard didn't cause trouble, Choi Seong-Geon would still be alive, which meant Lee Yoo-Seul's father wouldn't have died either.

Chk.

"This is Team One. He's heading over Hannam Bridge."

Chk.

"Team Three, take over. Team One, move ahead."

Chk.

"Roger that. Team Three, moving out."

The bottom-right monitor changed to a map of the area around Hannam Bridge. The call of the team tailing Kwak Do-Young was marked with arrows. This was a state-of-the-art method of following someone, but the graphics and the arrows seemed a bit primitive and old-fashioned.

Where the hell is this punk going?

Chk.

"He's heading toward Nonhyeon-Dong. Team Two, take over."

Chk.

"Copy. Team Two, moving out."

Kang Chan felt frustrated for not being able to do anything but listen in. At the same time, he also felt even more nervous.

Chk.

"He's dropped down at a hotel. Teams Five and Six, take over."

Chk.

"This is Team Two. We copy."

A short moment of silence fell and enveloped the van.

Chk.

"He's checked into the hotel. Team One, attach tracking devices to his vehicle. Teams Five and Six, determine the route of his cargo."

Chk.

"Copy."

What? Is he really just checking into the hotel?

Kang Chan lifted his gaze to look at Kim Hyung-Jung when the radio crackled again.

Chk.

“Checked into Room 511. No unusual items other than the cargo.”

Kang Chan nodded. They already had enough information. There was no need to drag it out any longer.

“Manager Kim, can you block cell phone signals again like we did around Smithen’s house?” Kang Chan asked.

“Yes, that is possible,” Kim Hyung-Jung confirmed.

“Please activate the device for me,” Kang Chan asked again.

“Are you planning on heading inside?” Kim Hyung-Jung asked.

“Don’t you think confirming whether or not Wui Min-Gook is actually inside the house is our best course of action right now?” Kang Chan responded.

“Understood,” Kim Hyung-Jung replied as he consecutively pressed three switches in succession. “The moment I press this last button, all cell phone signals will be blocked within a three-kilometer radius. The counter-terrorism team and agents are on standby.”

Click.

Kang Chan then took out his gun, checked the safety, and pulled back the breechblock.

“I’ll stay behind,” Kim Hyung-Jung said. Someone had to be in command of the entire operation, after all.

Kang Chan nodded. He then stepped out of the van with Seok Kang-Ho.

The two agents waiting in front immediately headed to a nearby alley.

Chk.

“Block off traffic from the outside.”

Chk.

“Copy.” Kim Hyung-Jung’s command was immediately answered.

“Electricity interception, stand by.”

Chk.

“Copy.”

Chk.

“Snipers, stand by.”

Chk.

“Copy.”

As they walked down the empty alley, they continued to hear Kim Hyung-Jung's orders on the radio followed by prompt responses.

"It's that house," one of the agents said, pointing at a house next to two buildings.

The wall was quite high, contrary to what Kang Chan had seen on the monitor.

"The counter-terrorism team is waiting on standby over there," the agent added.

There were two black vans parked inside. Walking toward them, Kang Chan scrutinized the house. The alley had a curve, so the building wasn't visible from the vehicles.

"Has the outer perimeter been blocked off?" Kang Chan confirmed.

"Yes, sir," the agent replied.

"What about the houses next door?" Kang Chan asked.

"All four nearby houses are empty," the agent responded.

How?

Noticing Kang Chan's curious gaze, the agent quickly added, "The family in one of the houses won a free trip, and another had issues with their green card, so they left for the US. We received assistance from KOTRA for the other two houses."

The details of the assistance they received weren't important. All that mattered was whether Wui Min-Gook was truly in that damn house and what he was armed with.

Kang Chan glanced to the side. Seok Kang-Ho's eyes were glinting as much as his.

He wasn't getting any bad feelings from his gut yet, but if Wui Min-Gook had planted a bomb like in the factory and detonated it, it would be difficult to hope for the safety of the soldiers and the agents here. Considering Wui Min-Gook was hiding at a house of this level, it wouldn't be unreasonable to assume that the bastard had installed a few surveillance cameras too.

"What's the entry plan?"

"We plan to rappel down from the two houses next to it and simultaneously have another team climb over the wall," the agent answered.

"What if he has a bomb installed in there?" Kang Chan questioned.

"We have no option but to suppress it as quickly as possible, but we do have another plan that involves a female agent," the agent said.

A female agent?

Noticing Kang Chan's expression again, the agent promptly added, "The house's safety inspection for the city gas is already overdue. We can use the valve inspection as an excuse to infiltrate."

Kang Chan shook his head.

Underestimating Wui Min-Gook or the North Korean special forces would only cost them many lives. Kang Chan let out a low sigh and glared at the building.

Son of a bitch!

The bastard was still making it hard for them to take him down.

Chapter 226.1: The Guys That Are In My Heart (1)

The best way to enter the house was for the counter-terrorists to break the glass front door. However, no matter how they entered, it wouldn't matter if Wui Min-Gook was prepared to take them down with him.

If he were to detonate C-4 like what happened in Ansan, then it would be safe to assume that the people inside the building at the time of the explosion would all be as good as dead. It would also destroy the center of this residential area.

Wui Min-Gook not only killed Choi Seong-Geon but could even kill the agents here as well. Considering the damage he could do, the outcome of this battle would be in his favor either way.

If Kang Chan was in Wui Min-Gook's shoes, he would've done the same.

Son of a bitch!

Kang Chan was certain that the bastard was prepared to blow himself up and spiral the situation out of control. Now that Jang Kwang-Taek was dead, Wui Min-Gook wanted to shake South Korea as much as Kang Chan did to China.

"That fucker's planning on blowing himself up, isn't he?" Seok Kang-Ho asked, making Kang Chan look at him. "There's no way he doesn't know that we've got him surrounded. If we were in his shoes, wouldn't we have done the same?"

"You think so too, huh?"

"Yes!"

Kang Chan nodded. He held up the sleeve on his left hand and pressed the button on his radio.

Chk.

"Manager Kim, how far will a C-4's blast radius be?"

The agents could hear everything that was said through the radio.

Chk.

"Please wait for a moment," Kim Hyung-Jung replied.

Chk.

After about a minute, Kim Hyung-Jung continued, "Assuming the enemy will be using three pounds of C-4 just like in Ansan, then its explosion will put everything within thirty meters of it in danger. It'll also affect everything within three hundred meters."

Chk.

"Evacuate everyone inside the danger zone. Make sure there are no civilians left in the area."

The agents turned to Kang Chan, surprise evident in their eyes. Kim Hyung-Jung couldn't immediately respond either.

Chk.

"Mr. Assistant Deputy Director, we will have to request cooperation with the Capital Defense Command and the National Police Agency to make that happen," Kim Hyung-Jung finally explained, having recollected himself.

Chk.

"Wui Min-Gook will do whatever it takes to blow us up with him. He's just waiting for us to go inside the house. To avoid unnecessary casualties, we have to lure him out by pretending that we're going to start the raid. That should buy us enough time to evacuate everyone within the blast radius."

Chk.

"As the head of the counter-terrorism division, you can use your authority to accomplish that. However, let me at least inform you that doing so will most likely cause problems later on."

Chk.

"The agents' lives are more valuable than my obligation. I believe you feel the same way," Kang Chan replied.

Chk.

"Alright."

After talking to Kim Hyung-Jung on the radio, Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho headed to the van that the counter-terrorism team was in.

"Did everyone hear what we talked about on the radio?" Kang Chan asked.

"Yes," a soldier wearing a mask quickly answered.

"Good. Like I said, we're going to stall for time. Did you bring Barretts with you?"

"We have M82A3s[1]."

"Prepare two for us," Kang Chan commanded.

Chk.

As he was issuing orders, Kim Hyung-Jung addressed him on the radio again. "The commander of the Capital Defense Command would like to talk to you."

Chk.

"I'll be right over," Kang Chan answered. Not long after, he headed back to Kim Hyung-Jung's van with Seok Kang-Ho.

Rattle.

When the two entered, they found Kim Hyung-Jung looking as if he was in a serious predicament. The latter passed over the receiver to Kang Chan, then put his hand on the button.

“Please connect me to him,” Kang Chan requested.

Kim Hyung-Jung was about to say something but chose to press the button right away instead.

- This is the Capital Defense Command.

“National Intelligence Service.”

Since the person on the other end of the call didn't state their name, Kang Chan matched their attitude.

- I heard that you're the new assistant deputy director. Since you've only just assumed your position, I'm sure you don't know how things work around here yet. When the military and the National Intelligence Service need to collaborate, they have to get Assistant Deputy Director Jung Tae-Seup's approval first.

“We don't have time for that.”

- If so, then we, the Capital Defense Command, will be taking charge of this case.

Kang Chan softly inhaled.

“Let's do this properly. No matter what we do in this situation, the explosives inside the house will still inevitably blow up. If the Capital Defense Command was in charge, how would they respond to such a threat?”

- We can stop Wui Min-Gook before he blows up the C-4!

Suppressing his anger, Kang Chan answered, “Commander, we are also more than capable of taking him down, but we will have to sacrifice agents and innocent lives in the process, which is exactly what our enemy wants. That's why we're trying not to rush into the scene blindly. Even if this is the last operation we do, we want to make sure those sons of bitches die discouraged and afraid! We want to accomplish our mission here in a way that would make our soldiers and agents proud! Only the civilians have to evacuate! Can you tell my men, all of whom are willing to lay down their lives for their country, that you can't even make something so simple happen?”

The commander didn't answer. Kang Chan could only hear his ragged breathing.

“If you still want to stop him, then I'll hand over the operation to the Capital Defense Command.”

Kim Hyung-Jung quickly looked at Kang Chan. Seok Kang-Ho gazed out the window with a grin.

- Will the National Intelligence Service's counter-terrorism team take responsibility for all the problems this operation could cause?

“Yes.”

- Alright. The 35th brigade has already arrived.

“They will be under the command of manager Kim Hyung-Jung.”

Click.

The call ended.

Kang Chan handed the receiver back to Kim Hyung-Jung.

“What about the police?” Kang Chan asked.

“They’re already forcing everyone in the outskirts of the danger zone to evacuate. I heard a lot of powerful people are arguing about this, which is only making things harder than they need to be.”

Kang Chan couldn’t help but smirk.

One’s power didn’t matter here. During both his lifetimes, he had never seen anyone rival the power of a C-4 yet.

Kim Hyung-Jung commanded the 35th brigade to evacuate the surroundings as well.

Chk.

“Our target is at the window at three o’clock on the second floor. We have a clear shot,” someone radioed in, much to Kang Chan’s surprise.

Chk.

“I repeat. Our target is at three o’clock on the second floor. Awaiting orders to shoot,” the same man repeated.

“I’ll get going. Let me know once everyone in the area has been evacuated,” Kang Chan said.

“Understood.”

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho immediately headed to where the counter-terrorism team was.

“Is Wui Min-Gook behind bullet-proof windows?” Seok Kang-Ho asked Kang Chan.

There was no way for them to know that. However, Kang Chan thought that, at the very least, Wui Min-Gook wouldn’t have stood behind a window without a plan or simply because he didn’t know that they could shoot him.

Chk.

“He’s holding a switch in his right hand,” someone said.

Motherfucker!

Wui Min-Gook had caught onto the situation. He was trying to drag them into the explosion.

How can he act like this just so he wouldn’t die alone?

Admitting that their enemy right now at least had guts, Kang Chan quickly pressed the button for his radio that was hanging on the sleeve of his left hand.

Chk.

“Snipers—remain on standby,” Kang Chan ordered.

Chk.

“Standing by,” someone responded.

Afterward, Kang Chan carefully climbed the wall. Seok Kang-Ho closely followed behind him on his right. The agent who guided them here also accompanied them on his left.

Kang Chan slowly walked away from the wall. The roof of the house soon came to view, followed by the windows on the second floor, which were protruding outward like the canopy of a plane.

The window was about twenty meters away from them.

‘Wui Min-Gook?’

Tilting his head back, Kang Chan looked up.

Wui Min-Gook was holding a square box in his right hand. It was clearly a detonator. He also had his left hand held up, his index and middle fingers straightened out.

That son of a bitch can't be making a peace sign at a moment like this, can he?

Was he trying to say two guys? Was he telling Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho to come into the house?

The moment their eyes met...

‘I know you want to come in, but can you bring yourself to?’

Wui Min-Gook confidently smiled at Kang Chan. He looked as if he was asking him, ‘Now then, what are you going to do?’

He was provoking Kang Chan.

Kang Chan smirked. Everything was fine now that he knew Wui Min-Gook was right where they wanted him to be.

I'll blow up that entire building even if I have to bring over not just an Igla but something that doesn't exist.

Kang Chan momentarily worried about causing an explosion in the middle of Seoul earlier, but he took that back now.

I'll wreak havoc in the middle of North Korea the same way you're doing here now! What makes you think we can't do this much in retaliation? Do you think South Korea's special forces don't have the guts or the capabilities to do that? Why don't you die already and ask Jang Kwang-Taek about it.

Kang Chan held up his sleeve while looking straight at Wui Min-Gook.

Chk.

“Are the Barretts ready yet?” Kang Chan asked.

Chk.

“They are, sir,” someone responded.

Kang Chan cocked his head out of sheer curiosity.

He wanted to talk to Wui Min-Gook to determine what was making him believe that they couldn't take revenge for this.

“I'll tear down a building in Pyongyang even if it's the last thing I do. Tell Jang Kwang-Taek I said hi,” Kang Chan slowly said while staring daggers at Wui Min-Gook.

With his gaze alternating between Kang Chan's mouth and eyes, Wui Min-Gook looked as if he couldn't believe what was happening.

Chapter 226.2: The Guys That Are In My Heart (1)

Vroom! Screech!

A black van soon stopped near Kang Chan, and the four agents inside propped two Barrett M82A3s on the van's window.

The Barrett was about a hundred and fifty centimeters long. Its magazine had bullets that looked like cute little cannon balls. Bulletproof glass? Its bullets could go through bulletproof vests and even concrete walls.

Wui Min-Gook took a step back as he frantically held up the switch.

You didn't expect us to do this, did you, Wui Min-Gook? You probably thought that our chivalrous spirit would force us to charge right in and get ourselves killed if you pretended to negotiate. You son of a bitch! I say this all the time, but I've handled things like this so many times back in Africa that I've grown bored of it.

There was a chance that Wui Min-Gook sincerely wanted to talk because he had other things planned. However, if they negotiated with that son of a bitch, they would be betraying Choi Seong-Geon, who was unjustly killed, and Lee Yoo-Seul's father, who died holding back his screams and pain.

Wui Min-Gook slowly mouthed, “If. You. Let. Me. Go.”

Chk.

“We have Wui Min-Gook in our sights. We have a clear shot,” one of the agents inside the van reported.

“I'll. Tell. You. Who. South. Korea's. Spy. is,” Wui Min-Gook continued.

All of the soldiers who were watching the surveillance camera and those who came out of the van could clearly tell what Wui Min-Gook was saying.

Kang Chan slowly held up his left hand and brought it up to his lips.

Chk.

“I trust that you all know who General Choi Seong-Geon and Lee Yoo-Seul's father is. As the head of the counter-terrorism team and the one in charge of this

operation, I'm going to make sure Wui Min-Gook is killed no matter the sacrifices we have to make later," Kang Chan said.

The soldiers quickly looked at Kang Chan. Wui Min-Gook looked as if he was thinking, 'What is that crazy bastard saying?'

Chk.

"From this day forward, no matter how our enemy provokes us, the South Korean National Intelligence Service's counter-terrorism team and our military's special forces will always regard retaliation and revenge as our core policy," Kang Chan continued.

Seok Kang-Ho grinned as he looked at the Barretts' large muzzle.

Chk.

"We have finished evacuating everyone within a thirty-meter radius around the house," Kim Hyung-Jung radioed in. He sounded as if he was in a hurry.

When Wui Min-Gook saw the look in Kang Chan's eyes, he quickly mouthed, "I'll. Call. One. Of. The. Spies. Here!"

"You're too late, you son of a bitch!" Kang Chan yelled so loud that all of the agents nearby heard him.

Chk.

"All agents, prepare for an explosion. On my command, the Barretts are to destroy any possible entrances. Snipers, you are to open fire right after. Our goal is the death of the armed spy Wui Min-Gook," Kang Chan ordered.

Whoosh!

As Wui Min-Gook ran away from the window...

Chk.

"Fire!" Kang Chan ordered.

Bam! Pow! Bam! Pow!

Pew!Pew! Pew! Pew! Pew!

The counter-terrorism team, which was on standby, simultaneously fired...

Bam! Pow! Bam! Pow! Bam! Pow! Bam! Pow!

The Barretts mercilessly broke the windows, the front door, and the door of the veranda on the second floor.

The walls around the perimeters of the house were so large and thick that the explosion from the C-4 would find it difficult to get past them. That was why explosions often splattered upward with these kinds of houses.

Bam! Pow! Bam! Pow!

Perhaps it was because they were in a quiet residential area, but the gunshots from the Barretts sounded like cannons being fired from far away.

Bam! Bam!

The moment the window frame on the second floor shattered...

GRUMBLE! Pow! Shatter!

... with a deafening roar, the house exploded, its fragments and wreckage shooting out in every direction.

Flop! Plop!

As if someone threw them backward, Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho were slammed to the ground.

Swoosh!

The cement powder, dirt, and various fragments struck them.

You son of a bitch! Make sure to send Jang Kwang-Taek my regards!

Kang Chan smirked as he tousled his hair.

“You have to cancel it!” Jung Tae-Seup—one of the assistant deputy directors of the National Intelligence Service—exclaimed. His eyes and cheeks were red. “He’s a high schooler. You said that’s okay, but he just turned the middle of Seoul into a battlefield against one of this case’s central figures even though the man intended to surrender. Even if this doesn’t stir up the foreign press, the world will still probably think South Korea is at war right now.”

Hwang Ki-Hyun just listened.

“You shouldn’t take this lightly. He had already done things like this many times. At the rate we’re going, we will soon have a war in our hands, Mr. Director! I’ve endured everything until now, even the fact that you classified a high schooler as a special agent, but this isn’t right. The military and the Capital Defense Command have also said that they can’t just stand back and watch anymore,” Jung Tae-Seup continued. He then sighed instead of adding more to his complaints because Hwang Ki-Hyun just continued to listen.

A moment of silence passed.

They had only installed three signal detectors and two low-frequency dispensers inside Hwang Ki-Hyun’s first meeting room to stop others from wiretapping. They didn’t have anything else.

“If you keep Assistant Deputy Director Kang Chan, then I’ll step down from my position. This is the last warning that the military will send to the National Intelligence Service,” Jung Tae-Seup said with spiteful eyes.

Hwang Ki-Hyun still didn't say anything.

"Hahaha!" Lanok's laughter filled his office. "The DIA's second plan has failed!"

Anne couldn't determine if he was shouting in delight or lamentation.

- The Deputy Director-General probably didn't even know the DIA's plot at all.

"That's probably true! Still, I sincerely applaud his courage and determination. Anyway, we can use this as an opportunity for our country. Stop providing South Korea's National Intelligence Service with top secret information."

- Alright. What should we do to the Deputy Director-General?

"We'll still provide all the information Monsieur Kang requires. Even if South Korea disregards him, the decision is his to make in the end. He simply is that kind of man." Despite having just used a serious tone, he burst out laughing again. "Brandon must be having a torturous time."

- We have obtained intel that the DIA, CIA, and even the FBI are gathering information about the Deputy Director-General again.

"Mobilize all lines of the Intelligence Bureau. Ensure the information that those organizations will gather will only further confuse them."

- Alright.

Lanok put down the phone and smiled again. He seemed amused. "Vasili is probably in an uncomfortable position right now. I won't wish for more if Monsieur Kang is able to work for France's glory like this."

Raphael carefully filled up Lanok's cup with black tea.

"Things have taken an unusual turn," Woo Hee-Seung quietly told Choi Jong-II, who was sitting on a bench in the hospital's park.

"The agents and soldiers in Jeungpyeong's fully supporting the assistant deputy director seem to be factoring in on the other executives' uneasiness," Woo Hee-Seung continued.

"Got any cigarettes?" Choi Jong-II held out his hand.

"Yeah." Woo Hee-Seung held out his cigarette case and then took out his lighter.

Chk chk.

"Whoo!" The smoke that Choi Jong-II exhaled was picked up by the winter wind and instantly disappeared.

“We just have to follow orders. We shouldn’t worry about what’s going on around us or who’s supporting whom,” Choi Jong-II. After another puff, he threw it in the ashtray.

Woo Hee-Seung was about to say something but chose to stay quiet instead.

“Remember when the prosecution kicked up a fuss?” Choi Jong-II asked.

“Yes.”

“What’s our duty?”

“To protect the assistant deputy director.”

“So do you really have time to focus on other things?”

Woo Hee-Seung’s expression seemed to say, ‘Oh shoot!’

“I’m getting discharged next week. Until then, take responsibility and protect the assistant deputy director. We just have to focus on our duty and on the commands that we are given,” Choi Jong-II added. When Woo Hee-Seung smirked seemingly in satisfaction, he asked, “Got anything else for me?”

“Not really. I should go now. I left behind quite an important task.”

“Didn’t you say that you were off duty?”

“I haven’t been paying attention to things like that lately. This is a matter of life or death, after all. Anyway, I’ll get going.”

Choi Jong-II smirked as watched Woo Hee-Seung stand up.

Pew! Pew! Pew!

The gunshots from the special forces team’s rifles consecutively rang out in the makeshift city.

Chk.

“Building One has been destroyed!” someone exclaimed.

Chk.

“Building Two has been destroyed as well!” another exclaimed.

Cha Dong-Gyun, who was sitting inside a jeep parked at the ramp, pressed the button on the stopwatch.

The adjutant tilted his head and checked the time. He then quickly wrote the time on the training log.

Chk.

“We’ll end the morning training here. Gather at the entrance,” Cha Dong-Gyun ordered.

The soldiers completed his command quite quickly.

“It took us sixteen minutes. Since he said that we’re world-class, our capabilities should be around that level. That means sixteen minutes is already on par with the other special forces. However, we need to be even better,” Cha Dong-Gyun said.

The fire in the soldiers’ eyes was blazing as strong as Cha Dong-Gyun’s.

“We should never forget what he said while he fought Wui Min-Gook in our stead. From now on, we will consider retaliation as our main objective. Anyone can back out of this if they’re tired and having a difficult time. No one, not even me, will sneer at or mock you. I understand why anyone would make that choice. After all, our goal now is much more strenuous and difficult!”

Cha Dong-Gyun gritted his teeth as he slowly looked at all the soldiers before him.

“That being said,” Cha Dong-Gyun exclaimed. “I’m going to risk my life for the day South Korea’s special forces become the world’s most powerful. That’s what General Choi Seong-Geon wanted, and it’s the best I can do to honor our fallen comrades!”

When Cha Dong-Gyun gritted his teeth again and took a deep breath, the adjutant glanced at his wounds to examine them. Cha Dong-Gyun hadn’t healed enough yet for him to be yelling.

“If anyone wants to back out, now’s the time!” Cha Dong-Gyun yelled.

“None of us do, sir!”

The low and husky reply echoed all over the makeshift city.

“Then from now on,” Cha Dong-Gyun yelled again. Blood started to seep out of the bandages wrapped around him. “We’re going to show General Choi Seong-Geon how determined we are!”

The adjutant turned his head away to hide the emotions suddenly overwhelming him.

With red eyes, the soldiers waited for Cha Dong-Gyun’s next command.

“What’s our motto?!”

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

The soldiers’ pained shouts filled the area.

Chapter 227.1: The Guys That Are In My Heart (2)

Kang Chan reached the French embassy and entered the ambassador’s office around twenty minutes past eleven. He had told Lanok that he wanted to arrive a bit earlier than the time of their appointment so he could have a moment to collect himself. Lanok had willingly accepted.

“Mr. Kang Chan!” Lanok greeted as he scanned Kang Chan’s face with interest. Kang Chan had two big bandages on his forehead and one on his cheek right now, so he most likely wasn’t the best sight to look at.

“Do you regret it?” Lanok thoughtfully asked.

The incredible operation resulted in all the windows within a hundred-meter radius and a whole house right in the middle of Seoul being blown away.

Kang Chan just smiled awkwardly in response.

“Take a seat,” Lanok offered as he poured him some black tea. He then handed over a cigarette.

“The DIA was planning to use Kwak Do-Young to sacrifice several American intelligence agents in South Korea,” Lanok began.

Click.

After lighting up the cigarette for Kang Chan, Lanok paused and lit a cigar. He then took a long drag on it.

“They wanted to restrain you through Wui Min-Gook and hoped to use a list of spies to sow chaos in Korea. If North Korea and Japan had joined forces with them, they would have had achieved quite a lot of their goals.”

It was Kang Chan’s first time hearing of this, but it didn’t even come as a surprise to him anymore. He had been encountering things like this quite often lately.

“The United States was planning to announce you as the South Korean special forces’ commander in Afghanistan. That would have kept your hands tied,” Lanok added.

“Can’t they just announce something like that whenever they want?” Kang Chan asked.

“If they did without having any justifiable reason to, the masses would just criticize them and call it a political move. That’s why they wanted to mark you as dangerous through North Korea and Wui Min-Gook. Announcing this themselves would also expose their true intentions, causing them more harm than it would to you.”

“Do you know the United States’ motives?”

“They want to get rid of your power and influence in Korea.”

“Do I really have enough influence for them to target me?” Kang Chan questioned with a joking smirk.

Contrary to his expectations, Lanok’s gaze became serious.

“Intelligence bureaus all around the world consider you the most dangerous individual. The United States will likely target you again or make you an offer that you can never refuse.”

“Won’t the DGSE be able to uncover what it is?”

“It will be difficult,” Lanok responded, much to Kang Chan’s surprise. “You should not take the United States lightly, Mr. Kang Chan. Although it may seem as if their power has waned right now, they don’t simply keep an eye on individuals or countries that go against their national interests. Taking their influence and vast economic and informational power into consideration, the DGSE and National Intelligence Service would’ve had to make every effort in such a battle.”

Kang Chan let out a low sigh. He wanted to become stronger, but enemies even more powerful than him kept coming up.

“If you weren’t the Deputy Director-General of the DGSE, the United States would surely have eliminated you in Afghanistan. We have evidence to back this information.”

Damn it!

Kang Chan cursed internally. As he did, he remembered a certain bastard’s name and face.

“What happened to Ethan?”

“He has returned to England,” Lanok replied, his eyes glinting mysteriously. Kang Chan didn’t pry any further. With the gaze that Lanok had, Kang Chan trusted Lanok had taken care of it properly. If Lanok had left Ethan alive, there had to have been a good reason for doing so.

As if reading Kang Chan’s mind, Lanok smiled. “Ethan can still be of great use. Otherwise, he wouldn’t even have been able to leave the United States and come to Korea.”

“I trust your decision,” Kang Chan responded with certainty.

Lanok’s smile widened into a grin. Not long after, their meeting was interrupted.

“Mr. Yang Bum has arrived,” Raphael announced as he quietly entered the room.

Yang Bum walked in as Lanok and Kang Chan stood up.

“Mr. Ambassador, Mr. Kang Chan. It’s been a while,” Yang Bum greeted.

“Should I call you Director now?” Lanok joked.

“Not you too, Mr. Ambassador,” Yang Bum said with a mock groan.

It hadn't been that long since Kang Chan last saw Yang Bum, but in that short period, it seemed the man had taken on the solemn weight that came with the Director of Intelligence position. His gaze, expression, and even movements had changed so much that he seemed to be a completely different person.

"Mr. Kang Chan." Yang Bum offered a handshake to Kang Chan with a firm gaze. "Your performance was quite remarkable."

Kang Chan just smiled at what Yang Bum said. What else could he do?

"If it's alright with you, would you like to head to the dining area? How about we have lunch together, then enjoy some tea and cigarettes after?" Lanok suggested.

"That sounds great," Yang Bum responded.

Lanok's perfect mask was back on his face as he spoke to Yang Bum. Kang Chan thought that he should learn that trick someday.

Lanok guided them to the dining area. When they arrived, the staff waiting inside quickly brought out some wine.

One of the occasional mistakes Asians made during French meals was to take the bottle from the host and fill the host's glass after the host poured the guests their wine. It was an act of courtesy in Asian culture, especially if it was a bottle of wine that the guest had brought as a gift. However, in French dining etiquette, only the host or guest of honor could pour others wine.

Kang Chan couldn't help but chuckle to himself during situations like this because it reminded him of the first time he went to France.

"Is there something amusing?" Lanok asked.

Kang Chan told them about what happened when he was invited to his first meal in France.

"When was this?" Yang Bum asked, leaving Kang Chan speechless.

The timing wouldn't be right, and Yang Bum's eyes were glinting. He looked as if he was trying to uncover something.

"It hasn't been that long," Kang Chan replied with his best straight face. If he had to, he would wear a mask too. He would wear countless masks if that was what it would take for him to become strong enough to protect his people.

"Now! Let's have a toast to celebrate this meeting," Lanok suggested.

Clink!

The three sipped their wine, all with their masks on.

"I'm sorry for what happened with Wui Min-Gook. It seems I unwillingly put the burden on you," Yang Bum apologized.

“It went well. I did get these battle scars, though,” Kang Chan said lightly as he pointed to the bandages on his face. The three burst out laughing.

They were soon served appetizers, marking the start of their course. Kang Chan was cutting into his lamb steak when he remembered something. He turned to Yang Bum and cautiously asked, “I heard you met with Vasili. May I ask what you spoke about?”

Yang Bum had a piece of meat in his mouth, so he lifted his napkin and dabbed his lips first. “China, Russia, and Mongolia all share borders in the Mongolian region called Chuluunkhoroot District. Russia calls it Zabaykalsky,”

Yang Bum lifted his wine glass and took a sip before turning to Kang Chan.

“It’s a key strategic point. Neither Russia nor we can afford to give it up. Russia has recently changed their methods to sending the Mafia there under the pretext of denadite mining.”

Denadite?

That was the name of the mineral that was used to fill in for the Blackhead’s energy shortage.

Kang Chan shot Yang Bum a suspicious gaze, but there was no knowing if the latter intentionally brought it up or if it was a coincidence.

“Have you heard of opencast mining?” Yang Bum asked.

“This is my first time hearing of it,” Kang Chan replied.

Yang Bum nodded understandingly.

“In that region, the ore is laid out just a meter below the surface within a radius of fifty kilometers, so there’s no need to dig underground tunnels.”

“There shouldn’t be an issue about who owns the mineral that comes from a mine in Mongolian territory, should there?”

“The head of Mongolia’s border defense cannot handle the Russian mafia,” Yang Bum explained.

Kang Chan set down his fork and knife and dabbed his mouth, focusing on what Yang Bum was telling him.

“Our involvement could lead to a regional war between us and Russia, so we plan to sell the development rights of denadite in that region to a third-party country instead. The condition is simple—the organization to be stationed in the area have to take down the Russian mafia.”

Vasili is going to go batshit crazy, isn’t he?

Thinking of Vasili’s cold gaze made Kang Chan smirk. However, there was something he had to confirm first. “What will the denadite be used for?”

“A variety of things. Glabonite, milabonite, and denadite are most commonly used for dyeing, bleaching, and washing. China, Europe, and the United States can no longer use the sulfuric compounds derived from petrochemicals, so there is a tremendous demand for denadite.”

Was Yang Bum giving him vague responses on purpose? Kang Chan was starting to doubt that the denadite would really be used as Yang Bum claimed.

“Denadite is a soft mineral, but when put into alcohol, it transforms into a substance as hard as a diamond. It also emits an energy that we are not familiar with yet.”

Kang Chan just nodded in response and took a sip of his wine.

“Combining it with cetinium in that state gives it an immense explosive power. Since Russia already has access to cetinium, we cannot just sit still and let them take the denadite as well.”

“Can’t Russia just buy the mine?” Kang Chan asked.

“Mongolia doesn’t have a strong enough economy to ignore our influence,” Yang Bum replied.

Kang Chan had a rough grasp of what was happening. If this was what was revealed on the surface, there had to be something related to the Blackhead hidden within.

Chapter 227.2: The Guys That Are In My Heart (2)

“Mr. Kang Chan, Vasili won’t be able to openly stop you. Since the denadite has to be transported by railway, you can visit the site under the pretext of expanding the Unicorn. You can then change the denadite mined there into sulfuric compounds and export it. There will be initial costs for establishing a factory, but it will likely yield yearly profits upward of three hundred billion Korean won,” Yang Bum said.

“Under the condition that I eliminate the Russian mafia,” Kang Chan interjected.

“That is the very reason mining companies from the United States and Canada haven’t been able to rush in.”

“I’m sure the United States isn’t too afraid of Vasili.”

“The United States and China are collaborating to stop Russia from combining the cetinium with denadite. However, if the military or intelligence bureaus interfere for any reason, Vasili will use that as justification to exert his authority.”

“What about former special forces? The Russian mafia is composed of former military or intelligence agents anyway, aren’t they?”

“That should be fine.”

“How much will it cost to set up the factory?” Kang Chan inquired.

“About sixty billion Korean won,” Yang Bum answered.

“Is this an urgent matter?”

“The Russian mafia is openly taking the denadite as we speak.”

Kang Chan nodded, then asked, “What makes you think I won’t combine denadite with cetinium once I get my hands on it?”

Lanok turned to Yang Bum with a masked expression.

“You wouldn’t be able to. No one knows what the resulting energy it emitted could do. Moreover, Russia and China can determine if you’ve combined them based on the energy waves the reaction produces,” Yang Bum replied.

These people know everything!

Kang Chan was once again impressed by the people in intelligence bureaus and disappointed of the National Intelligence Service, which couldn’t even decide about what to do with Wui Min-Gook without their opinions clashing.

He steeled his resolve again, having already thought of the perfect person to take care of this matter—a gangster punk who was just right for something like this.

“How will you proceed with the contract?” Kang Chan asked.

“We will have the Mongolian Ministry of Resources contact the company of your choosing. However, before you sign the contract, you should negotiate the basics with Vasili first,” Yang Bum advised, looking directly into Kang Chan’s eyes. “That is the best way to reduce sacrifices, even if that means saving just one person. Would you help us?”

Yang Chan raised his wine glass to Kang Chan.

At times like these, Kang Chan wanted to put Lanok forward, especially since this was China they were talking about, the very country that had kidnapped him. Noticing Kang Chan’s gaze, Lanok smiled as if to say that he should do what he wanted.

Hence, Kang Chan lifted his wine glass. “Thank you for recommending this great business to me.”

Lanok smiled in amusement and lifted his glass as well.

Clink!

The meal, which they hadn’t even finished halfway, ended on that note.

They decided to stay at the table since they were already there anyway. The staff cleared the table and prepared some coffee, tea, and ashtrays for them.

“I wonder why this doesn’t taste the same when I drink it in China,” Yang Bum remarked.

“I noticed that with pu erh tea as well. I remembered how marvelous it tasted and brought some back, but it didn’t have the same taste as the ones I had here,” Lanok agreed.

Kang Chan didn’t know any teas he could speak of, and the instant coffee that he drank tasted the same anywhere he went—Delicious and sweet.

“Mr. Ambassador, I believe the United States will move the UN soon,” Yang Bum suddenly opened. “There will be a large-scale civil war in the Horn of Africa.”

Lanok looked at Yang Bum with interest. Kang Chan knew that meant the sly snake wasn’t aware of this yet.

“You must be talking about Somalia,” Lanok responded.

Yang Bum nodded in affirmation.

“I assume they plan to gather special forces from various countries, starting with the French Foreign Legion, in the Horn of Africa to have them confront the civil war. As you all have probably guessed by now, their target is…” Yang Bum trailed off, turning to Kang Chan. “It seems they dislike having a new hero.”

Kang Chan hadn’t even gotten started with the Mongolian business yet. Why would he bother himself by going to Africa because of those damn Americans?

Reading into the look in Kang Chan’s eyes, Yang Bum continued, “People who also find you burdensome within the Korean government and military will likely agree to your deployment. If they do, it’s safe to say that many of the agents and special forces who follow you will also be deployed.”

Pft.

Kang Chan tilted his head.

South Korea dispatching soldiers to Africa? And a combat unit, at that? That would be a sight to see.

Nevertheless, Kang Chan thought he still had to be careful.

The National Intelligence Service and the military really had to step up their game to deal with these kinds of people.

The look on Yang Bum’s face seemed to say that he had told them everything he wanted to say. Perhaps that was why he offered Kang Chan a cigarette with a relaxed expression.

“Would you like to smoke together?” he asked.

Click.

Kang Chan felt as if there was more room to breathe after they took turns lighting up their cigarettes.

“Mr. Kang Chan, the world of intelligence has many ups and downs. It might be inappropriate to say this while the ambassador is present, but in this world, no

one can guarantee their survival. That holds even truer for those in leadership positions,” Yang Bum said.

Lanok exhaled the smoke from his cigar as he listened to Yang Bum.

“The same goes for me as well. I got this role with your help, but I have no idea when I will get shot in the back. Moreover, many within my country’s intelligence bureau have developed a level of resentment toward you with the recent incident with Wui Min-Gook,” Yang Bum added.

Kang Chan exhaled a cloud of smoke as he nodded. It was only natural that the Chinese found it difficult to like him. After all, he blew up their airport and killed Wui Min-Gook, one of their agents.

“I support Mr. Ambassador. That’s why you have to grow stronger faster, Mr. Kang Chan. Our immediate common enemy is the United States, but in our current state, if the enemy hiding behind them starts to make their move, we won’t be able to handle them.”

“Is it because of the Unicorn?” Kang Chan asked.

“Yes. That issue involves the economy of the entire world, after all.”

“I find it hard to believe that there’s a more powerful enemy than the US.”

“You’ll easily figure it out if you know who controls their money.”

Kang Chan just laughed. Formidable enemies were lying in wait all around him. He thought it might be a good idea to convince Ethan to give him a subterranean shock device and install it in South Korea.

I’m going to let earthquakes rip where all those annoying punks are! Well, that would hurt innocent civilians too, though. They don’t know anything and didn’t do anything wrong.

Lanok and Yang Bum burst out laughing at the same time as if they had read what was on Kang Chan’s mind. Kang Chan took it as a sign that he still wasn’t adept at wearing a proper mask.

“On another note, your performance in Afghanistan has created quite a commotion among our White Wolves. Jiang Kanglin seems to have become a fervent fan of yours, which is making me a bit anxious. Hearing about what you did to one of our airports did not really help me understand the extent of your operations, but when I saw it for myself, I must admit I felt a little scared,” Yang Bum added in a lighter tone. He didn’t look scared in the slightest, though, so Kang Chan just chuckled.

“Ah, I’m afraid I have to get going now,” Yang Bum said regretfully.

“So soon?” Kang Chan asked in surprise.

“Now that I’ve had a delicious lunch and an informative conversation, I should return to my house. If I leave my seat empty for too long, my desk will be taken and replaced with a casket.”

Yang Bum didn’t sound as if he was joking, making his words all the more frightening.

Kang Chan and Lanok stood up to see Yang Bum off. Considering how he was behaving, he seemed to just be heading over to the Chinese embassy in the next neighborhood.

“Mr. Ambassador, thank you for lunch today,” Yang Bum said as he gave Lanok a French farewell. He then turned to Kang Chan.

“Mr. Kang Chan, know that I, the Director of the Chinese intelligence bureau, support you. Please don’t forget that. During my most difficult times, when I’m at my lowest, I’ll think of you.”

Kang Chan’s smile disappeared as he stared straight into Yang Bum’s eyes. Yang Bum just chuckled good-naturedly.

“I feel strangely reassured when I look into your eyes. I will stop by to see those eyes occasionally,” Yang Bum said.

Kang Chan thought Yang Bum was going to shake his hand, but Yang Bum gave him a French embrace instead.

After seeing him off, Lanok took Kang Chan back up to his office.

“It seems you have a lot on your plate now.”

“Looks like it,” Kang Chan agreed.

“It makes me quite envious,” Lanok joked.

“Then I’ll have to think of a way to take you around with me,” Kang Chan grinned.

Lanok smiled in return. He had removed his mask now.

“Mr. Ambassador, is it really okay to leave Anne and Louis at the DGSE?”

“It should be okay. At least for now, I’m holding my position safe.”

Kang Chan saw no reason to doubt Lanok.

Kang Chan only had lunch, yet he felt as if he was given a mountain-load of assignments in return.

“Mr. Kang Chan,” Lanok called, making Kang Chan raise his gaze.

“If you want, you can use your authority as the Deputy Director-General. It’s hard to endure when you have too many enemies. You may even end up giving up important people around you as payment.”

“Are you telling me to order an assassination?”

“You have to figure out the best way to handle this yourself.”

It had been a while since Kang Chan saw Lanok look so serious. Hence, he decided to ask what he was truly curious about now. If he left this question unanswered any longer, he would end up making his own conclusions and imagining things.

“Mr. Ambassador, can you tell me your exact position?”

Lanok looked at Kang Chan without any surprise on his face.

“Not yet,” he replied leisurely. “When I feel that you have truly become powerful, I will let you know then.”

Kang Chan found comfort in that answer. This man had also found his way to his heart. He trusted him.

Seeing the look in Kang Chan’s eyes, Lanok gave him a smile that was quite difficult to read.

Chapter 228.1: The Start of a Legend (1)

Oh Gwang-Taek sat underneath the window in the door that was separating the prison cell from the hallway. He was wearing winter clothes for prisoners under trial. Its sky-blue top had an ID tag that stated prisoner number 1768 and prison cell number B3U7, which meant that he was assigned to the seventh cell on the second floor of the third building.

As there was a toilet in the cell, the ‘seat of honor’ in a detention house and a prison was naturally against the door, right under the window. With Oh Gwang-Taek occupying the seat of honor, the people sitting across from him were all holding their breaths and trying to read his mood.

“Hyung-nim,” someone called from the hallway.

Oh Gwang-Taek raised his head in response, finding a huge gangster in his early thirties in front of him.

“Have you eaten yet, hyung-nim?” Unable to greet him directly, the gangster bowed at him in a direction slightly away from him.

Unlike Oh Gwang-Taek, who did nothing more than just look up a little and give the man a short glance, the two young gangsters inside the room with him quickly stood up and greeted the man with respect.

“I’ll get going now, hyung-nim. I have a visitor to meet,” the gangster bid farewell. He turned in the same off-angled direction as before, bowed, and headed toward the stairs.

The so-called ‘active gangsters’ were all on the upper floors of the third building. They always paid their respects to Oh Gwang-Taek before going their way to exercise, meet a visitor, or even go to the infirmary.

Hence, those in the same room as Oh Gwang-Taek couldn’t loosen up even for a moment. They felt as if they would be called during exercise hours and get beaten to death if a passing gangster saw them relaxing around him.

They could certainly defy the gangsters or simply yell to save their necks. However, few people could even hope to be safe after being involved in a matter that Oh Gwang-Taek, the very person who owned Gangnam, was involved in. If they were violent criminals whose lives revolved around their connections to gangsters all over the country, then their chances of survival would be even slimmer.

The detention house classified the room that Oh Gwang-Taek was in as the ‘violence room.’ After all, it was where they gathered the strong and spiteful—the people who were most definitely aware of who he was. Nevertheless, they thought of Oh Gwang-Taek as someone far scarier than the Grim Reaper.

The two gangsters whom Oh Gwang-Taek shared the room with served as his lookouts. More often than not, the atmosphere wasn’t so bad. They just regularly swept the dust and dirt on the floor toward the door to help Oh Gwang-Taek get a good result during his trial, which in turn would help him get out of prison quicker. For as long as they didn’t suddenly mix rice into their soup or water and eat it on the morning of the trial[1], then there wasn’t much they could do that could negatively affect or outright ruin his chances.

Although it could be seen as being overly critical, they also made sure not to step on the threshold of the door whenever they were entering or exiting the room[2]. In fact, no one dared step on it. Even the prison guards who came over to their cell and conducted thorough inspections did their best to avoid stepping on it while walking inside and heading back out.

Naturally, staying in the same room as Oh Gwang-Taek also came with a lot of benefits. For one, the kitchen sent them beef bulgogi and red pork bulgogi every morning and evening in secret. They were also often served jjampong broth, whole chicken soup, tangsuyuk, and even boiled pork belly.

Moreover, people were so afraid of him losing his appetite that they would even send strawberries, jokbal, and bossam to the room during holidays. To top it all off, the other prisoners also sent over other delicacies like stew, jajangmyeon, bibimmyun, and parboiled squid created out of otoogi[3] products.

With the food nearly good enough to make the prisoners say that it was better than the ones served outside prison, the cheeks of the gangsters Oh Gwang-Taek shared the room with naturally became chubbier.

Nevertheless, Oh Gwang-Taek just stayed in his cell without saying anything, making those with him feel quite uncomfortable. He didn’t frown at all. However, his eyes hadn’t stopped blazing ferociously since last night.

The prison officer who came inside the room to do his morning routine brought over coffee and tried to console him, but his gaze didn’t relax even a bit.

“Hyung-nim,” someone called.

Oh Gwang-Taek raised his sharp gaze to the source of the voice. As expected of the two young gangsters, they stood up and greeted the towering gangster standing in front of their cell.

“Do-Seok hyung-nim has been sent to a hospital,” the gangster quietly said.

Whoosh!

Oh Gwang-Taek swiftly jumped to his feet and grabbed onto the iron bars. “What did you just say?”

“A hospital has agreed to admit Do-Seok hyung-nim. I made sure that he’s already been transferred before coming over,” the gangster quickly added when he noticed that Oh Gwang-Taek’s eyes were turning red. “From what I heard, Kang Chan hyung-nim exerted his influence. The prisoners working at the clinic told me that they heard his name being mentioned.”

“That son of a bitch!”

“Please rest easy now, hyung-nim.”

“How’s Do-Seok doing?”

“As he was going out, I was told that he was so apologetic that he asked about what he should do to make it up to you.”

“Fuck! What a fucking idiot! If he was just going to feel sorry, then he shouldn’t have gotten fucking wounded!”

The gangster outside the room only bowed perhaps because he didn’t have anything to say in response. On his left arm, he was wearing an armband that said ‘prison boss.’

“Anything else I can do for you, hyung-nim?”

“No. You worked hard.”

“Thank you. Please get some rest, hyung-nim.”

Oh Gwang-Taek didn’t sit down even though the prisoners’ boss already bowed deeply and disappeared.

After some time passed, he shouted, “Hey! Is anyone out there?”

The two assistant prisoners in the waiting room appeared before Oh Gwang-Taek so quickly that it seemed as if they teleported right in front of him.

“I want to have a cup of coffee. Bring me some water.”

“Understood, hyung-nim!”

He sat back down as the two young gangsters he shared the cell with accepted the hot water in his stead. Not long after, the smell of black coffee filled the room.

“Oh Gwang-Taek, you have a visitor,” the prison officer responsible for the upper floors of building 3 called out from the other side of the bars. “It’s some guy named Kang Chan. We’re going to bring you to him now, so get ready.”

Oh Gwang-Taek’s eyes relaxed for the first time in two days. The two young gangsters quickly cleaned up the coffee.

Upon entering the counsel's meeting room, Oh Gwang-Taek approached Kang Chan and sat across from him.

"Was it you who took Do-Seok to the hospital?" Oh Gwang-Taek asked.

"What? Of course not. The prison guards did."

"Don't joke with me!" Oh Gwang-Taek frowned. Kang Chan only smirked. "Was it you or not?"

"Oh Gwang-Taek," Kang Chan quietly called, stopping Oh Gwang-Taek from prodding further. He sounded a little different than usual.

"We had to come to an agreement with the victims, which is why it took us quite some time to actually make it happen. I tried my best to give Do-Seok the medical attention he needed as quickly as possible, but I had to negotiate with the victims first. Otherwise, people would have created issues about you and your men receiving special treatment as soon as they found out that a criminal was sent to a hospital. In that scenario, Do-Seok would have likely been sent back to prison."

"You fucker..." Oh Gwang-Taek trailed off.

"Chul-Bum and Do-Seok will be granted bail today as well."

Oh Gwang-Taek gritted his teeth as his eyes became red.

Kang Chan continued, "And as for you—"

"I'm good. I'm already grateful that you sent Do-Seok to the hospital, but you're even getting Chul-Bum bailed. I can't ask for more. Thank you. I will remember this for the rest of my life."

"Phew

!" Oh Gwang-Taek sighed in relief and calmed himself down. As he did, he noticed Kang Chan smirking.

"Oh Gwang-Taek," Kang Chan called again.

"Why do you keep calling me, you fucker? I already said thanks, didn't I?"

"You're going to be granted bail tomorrow."

Oh Gwang-Taek blanked out.

"If you choose to keep getting yourself involved in gang-related matters, then this is where I sever our connection. However, if you're going to stay true to your word and start leading your life in a different direction, then I've got something prepared for you. It will require you to head to Mongolia and fight far more

desperately than you've ever fought here. At least until you've eliminated all our enemies there."

"What about you, though? What are you planning to do?"

"I'm thinking of staying with you for a bit."

"Got it."

"You're accepting it that quickly? Did you even understand a word of what I just said?" Kang Chan asked.

"What's there to understand? I just have to go to Mongolia and fight, don't I?"

"At least give it some more thought before you decide. This isn't something you can just recklessly jump on."

"Be quiet, you bastard. Do you think there's some other fucker out there that's better at things like this than me?"

Kang Chan smirked. Oh Gwang-Taek smiled in return, his eyes still red.

Perhaps it was because the year was ending, but Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook had quite busy schedules.

Tomorrow would be the last day of 2010.

They couldn't help but feel as if they were running out of time. After all, Kang Dae-Kyung also decided to move the exhibition hall when he saw the new building.

Bang!

Yoo Hye-Sook froze up as the door was violently opened again before she could even digest her lunch. Just this morning alone, she had already dealt with two Karens.

"Who's the chief director of this foundation?" A man barged in and spoke in the same manner as the others. It was as if they were reading the same script when they entered her office.

However, he wasn't alone. The man came inside with two other men. One of them was covered in long scars while the other had a tattoo of a devil with glaring eyes. It covered the back of his hand.

"The chief director... Ah, you must be the person we're looking for."

The man sat down on the sofa with a flop and stared at Yoo Hye-Sook. The two with him stood behind him.

"I'm So Jin-Cheol from Yeongdong. I'm doing my best to pull my life together with my guys. You should help us."

Cha Min-Jeong, who was next to Yoo Hye-Sook, stood up from her spot and approached the man on the sofa. She was wearing a black suit and a white cotton shirt.

“Hey. Why don’t we talk about this outside?” she firmly said.

So Jin-Cheol tilted his head and simply leaned to the side in a cocky manner.

Chapter 228.2: The Start of a Legend (1)

So Jin-Cheol took out a filet knife in response to Cha Min-Jeong’s request to talk it out outside. They seemed to have already planned to resort to this before they even came inside, seeing as how the two others also brought out similar weapons.

The two female agents behind Cha Min-Jeong stood up from their seats and glared at the three men in front of them.

“Fuck! I heard this place is swarming with shitty bitches, but I can’t believe you’re actually treating me, So Jin-Cheol, of all people like this as well.” So Jin-Cheol looked at Yoo Hye-Sook as he continued, “Well, I already expected this much. That’s why I brought all of my men with me. They’re right outside. Now then, Mrs. Chief Director! What are you going to do now? Give us exactly one hundred million won and we’ll leave quietly. Otherwise, we will just have to fight for it!”

“Didn’t I just tell you that we should talk outside?!” Cha Min-Jeong exclaimed with a frown.

Bang!

The door loudly burst open again.

The two agents behind Cha Min-Jeong quickly stood in front of Yoo Hye-Sook, blocking anyone from reaching her. Cha Min-Jeong looked at the men who were coming in with threatening glares.

“You said that you’re So Jin-Cheol, right?” Cha Min-Jeong asked.

So Jin-Cheol scowled. “That’s right, you bitch—”

Bam! Flop!

Cha Min-Jeong struck So Jin-Cheol’s left cheek so hard that he fell over to the right side of the sofa.

“You bitch!” the man behind So Jin-Cheol yelled,

Swoosh!

Bam! Bam! Crash! CRASH!

As he did, Cha Min-Jeong kicked the two on their chins, slamming them to the floor. Afterward, she jumped over to the sofa and tightly grabbed a handful of So Jin-Cheol’s hair.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

She struck him at the back of his neck with the edge of her right hand.

People could sense the atmosphere.

Having witnessed what Cha Min-Jeong was capable of, the men who shoved the door open were overwhelmed. The expressions of the agents standing in front of Yoo Hye-Sook and blocking any incoming threats from ever reaching her only made them feel even worse.

Was Cha Min-Jeong acting like this because she couldn't suppress her anger even though she was an agent? She wasn't planning on acting like this when she first started beating them up. Rather, she interfered simply because Yoo Hye-Sook could get injured if she gave these lawless men the confidence to randomly or recklessly swing their knives and bats around. Not to mention she would have to draw her gun if she let them carelessly attack them with the weapons in their hands.

Bam. Bam. Bam. Bam.

Cha Min-Jeong showed them no mercy as she beat them up.

She knew that Kang Chan was backed into a corner right now. The agents and the soldiers in Jeungpyeong were all well aware of just how much determination Kang Chan put into his decision. Witnessing someone threaten and insult the mother of the very man who kept protecting South Korea's future made it hard for her to control her anger, causing her to explode into a fit of rage all at once.

Thud!

When Cha Min-Jeong loosened her grip, So Jin-Cheol slammed down onto the sofa.

“Yoon Yeong-Hee! Contact the police and put all of these fuckers in jail for the threats they made,” Cha Min-Jeong ordered.

“Yes, ma'am.”

Only when Yoon Yeong-Hee—who was standing in front of Yoo Hye-Sook—held up her hand and pressed a button could everyone move again.

Worried about Yoo Hye-Sook being startled, Cha Min-Jeong turned her head and looked at her. Much to her confusion, however, both Yoo Hye-Sook and Yoon Yeong-Hee were giving her a very shocked look.

Oh fuck!

A shiver went down Cha Min-Jeong's spine, having let her guard down just because she flew into a rage. The men she kicked were so insignificant that she unknowingly went easy on them. She only remembered now that they were carrying file knives!

Feeling someone approach her from behind, Cha Min-Jeong quickly threw the person to the sofa.

Bang! Bang!

She then walked over the coffee table and stood in front of Yoo Hye-Sook's desk.

“What are you doing?” the person she threw asked.

Cha Min-Jeong couldn't answer.

She didn't know when Kang Chan entered the room, but he was right in front of her right now, looking at So Jin-Cheol—whom she had beaten unconscious—and the pile of other thugs with a mysterious expression.

“Chan!” Yoo Hye-Sook hastily stood up.

Kang Chan walked over to her. “You okay?”

“Yes! This is nothing. You shouldn't worry about it.”

“Alright. Are you sure you're fine, though?”

“Of course!” Yoo Hye-Sook answered. Contrary to her reassurance, she looked pale with fright.

Kang Chan nodded, then quickly turned to Cha Min-Jeong and the other agents in the room with him.

“We have contacted the police. Since the year is almost over, quite a lot of people like these men have been trying to force us to donate to their cause,” Cha Min-Jeong explained.

“Is that so? Are you hurt anywhere?” Kang Chan asked.

“No, sir.”

“That's a relief. Thank you for protecting my mother. Make sure situations like this don't end with any of you getting injured. Otherwise, my mother and I would feel bad.”

Cha Min-Jeong just answered with an awkward smile.

Not long after, the police rushed in. Yoon Yeong-Hee stepped up and assisted them, handing over So Jin-Cheol and the men who barged into the room with him. After a few moments, peace finally filled the office again.

Yoo Hye-Sook felt frustrated, but she couldn't even bring herself to tap her chest. She was far too concerned that doing so would make Kang Chan worry about things like this.

“Mother, you're having trouble digesting your food again, aren't you?” Kang Chan asked.

“Huh?”

Kang Chan sat across from the sofa. He then reached out, held Yoo Hye-Sook's cold hand, and pressed the area between her thumb and index finger[1].

“Ow! That hurts!” Yoo Hye-Sook winced in pain.

Kang Chan smiled. He didn't let go of her hand, though.

“Ow! Ow!”

Cha Min-Jeong and Yoon Yeong-Hee turned their heads to the side to hide the smiles on their faces.

“Alright, alright. I’m okay now,” Yoo Hye-Sook said.

Kang Chan made sure that she actually was back to normal before letting go of her hand.

“What brings you here?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“I was in the area, so I thought I should go see you. If I remember correctly, you have a gathering tonight, right?”

“I do.”

“I was told that you might become the secretary as well.”

“Your dad also mentioned that to you?”

“He told me all about it while we were taking a look around the new building.”

While they were talking, an agent brought them coffee.

“What should we do? I don’t want you to eat dinner by yourself,” Yoo Hye-Sook said.

“What do you mean? I’m also going to go to the gathering, you know. Didn’t you say that it’s going to be held at the hotel?” kang Chan asked.

“It is, but do you really have time to go?”

Yoo Hye-Sook felt as if she just received a large gift. When Kang Chan smiled at her, she smiled back. She looked genuinely happy.

Kim Tae-Jin looked as if he got slapped. “So you’re saying that you want Yoo Bi-Corp to be in charge of that now?”

“Oh Gwang-Taek will be released on bail tomorrow, so we’re planning on appointing him as the field manager. We need employees with military experience, though, which is why we’re asking for your help,” Kim Hyung-Jung responded.

Kim Tae-Jin still looked as if he didn’t understand a word he just said.

“Didn’t you already expect to some extent that the Russian mafia was going to get involved? Even if we don’t face an all-out war, we will most likely frequently find ourselves in small gunfights or close-quarters combat situations,” Kim Hyung-Jung added. His expression gradually darkened as he detailed their predicament. “There’s a limit to how much the National Intelligence Service can support this. Moreover, too many people are wary of Mr. Kang Chan right now to just jump into starting anything reckless. That’s why I’m asking for your help. You

get to choose who to send to this mission, but I do hope you prioritize deploying the soldiers who were discharged from the DMZ.”

“That won’t be easy to do.”

“I see. Well, even if it means a few of the soldiers in our special forces would have to write and submit letters of resignation, we are still planning on pushing through with this and seeing it to the end. We also plan to have a few people under the section chief submit resignation letters as well.”

Kim Tae-Jin knew that Kim Hyung-Jung was leaving something out that was important.

“Will some of the soldiers in Jeungpyeong get discharged as well?” Kim Tae-Jin asked.

“This is a huge opportunity for us, considering one end of the Eurasian Rail will be connected to the borders of Mongolia, Russia, and China. South Korea has a chance to secure the minerals in that area right now. We refuse to throw this opportunity away just because people are being wary of Mr. Kang Chan.”

“Phew!” Kim Tae-Jin sighed as he looked at the map that Kim Hyung-Jung spread out. “Sang-hyun and I will go. This is not negotiable. If we want to have a fighting chance against the Russian mafia, then we are going to need to send a lot more employees with professional capabilities as well. We will have to train Oh Gwang-Taek’s men too...”

Kim Tae-Jin raised his head. “Gangsters have more guts than ordinary people, but they’ll probably have trouble fighting the Russian mafia since they don’t have experience with firearms and haven’t learned proper close-quarters combat techniques.”

Kim Hyung-Jung just nodded, his expression still grim.

“As expected, it’ll be quicker and easier to just deploy those who can go among our sunbaes or hoobaes.”

“That’s our most realistic option,” Kim Hyung-Jung answered.

Kim Tae-Jin stared out the window with a look of disappointment. “If only he was here...”

“You’re talking about the DMZ King, aren’t you?”

Kim Tae-Jin solemnly nodded.

Chapter 229.1: The Start of a Legend (2)

“We could probably find him if we wanted to,” Kim Hyung-Jung murmured.

“Don’t you think it’ll be shameless of us to go looking for him?” Kim Tae-Jin asked grimly.

Kim Hyung-Jung could only respond with a quiet sigh.

“I still remember the look in his eyes like it was yesterday. He was the only person who brought back soldiers who were dragged to the DMZ...” Kim Tae-Jin replied.

“Our country was too weak to stand against the pressure of the United States back then.”

“It’s far too cruel to use the trend of the times as an excuse for our incompetence. No matter how you put it, abandoning someone who is at a crossroads of life or death is ruthless. If it weren’t for his last words, something bad would have happened. The reason Section Chief Jeon and the rest of us are all so hung up on keeping talented individuals is because we are reminded of his glory days, is it not?” Kim Tae-Jin questioned. He smiled bittersweetly as he continued, “He always referred to me as a baby chick.”

“It wasn’t just you, was it? Even Section Chief Jeon was summoned alone and reprimanded for acting up,” Kim Hyung-Jung reminisced.

“Right, I remember,” Kim Tae-Jin replied. He then took in a deep breath. His expression changed as he put his hands on his knees and straightened his back.

“I understand what you’re saying. But it will take at least three to four days for me to talk over this with Sang-Hyun and select the right people for the task,” Kim Tae-Jin said, lifting his gaze to look directly at Kim Hyung-Jung. “I may have taken off my military uniform, but I’ve never for a second thought that I’m no longer a soldier of South Korea. Our friendship aside, I want to make one thing clear. This job will be putting the lives of my employees on the line. Can you guarantee that our republic will be reaping benefits worthy of the risks they’ll be taking?”

“I guarantee it. I’m more than sure enough of it that I’m willing to bet my life on it.”

“All right, then.” Reassured, Kim Tae-Jin stood up, marking the end of their conversation.

It had been a while since the last time Kang Chan had visited Namsan Hotel. He used to hang in here so often that he started becoming sick of seeing its lobby, but he couldn’t help but feel glad to be basking in its elegance now. The thought made him smirk.

Kang Chan stuck close to Yoo Hye-Sook and walked with her to the conference hall on the third floor, which was where the event was being held.

Chk.

“Situation report on the third floor.”

Chk.

“No sign of anything unusual.”

The receiver in his ear relayed the agents’ comms to him.

Employees of the hotel and executives of the alumni association stood at the entrance, greeting those who were coming in.

“Welcome!”

When Yoo Hye-Sook arrived, one of her old friends, wearing traditional Hanbok attire, extended her hand in a welcoming manner and clutched both of Yoo Hye-Sook’s.

“It’s good to see you again!”

“Likewise. I hope you’ve been well,” Kang Chan replied politely.

“Oh, right! I heard you were admitted to Seoul National University! Congratulations!”

“Thank you, ma’am.”

Kang Chan then headed inside with Yoo Hye-Sook. A lot of people acted as if they were close friends with her, and most of them insisted on saying hello to him once they were near. Although he was aware of how superficial this meeting was, he didn’t know when he would have to leave for Mongolia again, so he wanted to make Yoo Hye-Sook happy while he still could.

Once everyone had finished exchanging greetings with Kang Chan and Yoo Hye-Sook, a female manager quickly came over to Kang Chan and Yoo Hye-Sook with a polite smile.

“Mr. Kang! It’s been too long. And have you been well, Mrs. Yoo?” she asked.

A few people around them stole glances at the female manager’s attitude and way of addressing them, but Kang Chan didn’t pay any mind to things like that anymore.

He slowly scanned his surroundings. Seeing agents dressed as hotel staff standing guard at the entrance and all four corners made him feel very assured. With security this tight, he didn’t feel too uncomfortable about stepping out for a minute.

“Mother, I’m going to get some fresh air,” he informed Yoo Hye-Sook.

“Okay, go ahead,” Yoo Hye-Sook replied.

Yoo Hye-Sook probably wanted some time to speak to her old friends in private anyway. Kang Chan quietly stood up and headed to the lower floors.

Now he just had to find a place to smoke a cigarette...

But Kang Dae-Kyung hadn’t arrived yet. What if he ran into his father while he was smoking at the entrance of the hotel?

Buzz, buzz, buzz. Buzz, buzz, buzz. Buzz, buzz, buzz.

Just then, his phone began to ring.

“Hello?”

- Mr. Kang Chan, this is Kim Hyung-Jung. Can you spare me a bit of your time?

“I’m at the Namsan Hotel right now. I was thinking of staying with my parents until their event today is over,” Kang Chan replied.

- Then I’ll head over to you instead. Is that all right with you?

“I see nothing wrong with it. I was actually just about to have a smoke, so that works out great.”

- Understood.

The phone call ended with a farewell mixed with laughter from the other end. Kang Chan headed to the lounge for the time being.

“Welcome, sir,” elegantly greeted another manager Kang Chan hadn’t seen in a while. After taking his order, he turned around to prepare it.

Kang Chan passed the time drinking coffee.

Darkness had fallen far beyond the horizon. The car lights now stretched into elongated streaks along the road.

Although he was drinking coffee in a luxurious outfit and sitting in an extravagant hotel, he would much rather run over to Jeungpyeong and share pieces of thickly sliced pork with the other special forces soldiers.

Pft.

Kang Chan chuckled to himself. His heart kept on being taken from him. The image of the stocky and simple soldiers entered his mind and would not leave.

Buzz, buzz, buzz. Buzz, buzz, buzz. Buzz, buzz, buzz.

Is he already here?

Kang Chan picked up his phone. “Hello?”

- It’s Chul-Bum, hyung-nim.

This gangster punk!

Kang Chan couldn’t have been gladder to hear the title “hyung-nim,” though. It had been far too long since he last heard from him.

- I won’t ever forget how you took care of Do-Seok hyung-nim and Gwang-Taek hyung-nim, sir.

His voice sounded as genuine as could be. Kang Chan didn’t know when that would change, but for now, at the very least, he knew that Joo Chul-Bum was being honest with his feelings.

“I’m sure you were having a hard time as well. Good work.”

- I will thank you in person sometime later. Please have a nice evening, hyung-nim.

Kang Chan hung up and took another sip of his coffee.

Chk.

“Mr. Kang Chan, this is Kim Hyung-Jung. I’m waiting by the entrance,” Kim Hyung-Jung informed over the radio.

Chk.

“I’m on my way out now,” Kang Chan replied.

Kang Chan stood up and walked out of the lounge. He wanted to pay for his coffee first, but the manager stopped him with an earnest plea. It wasn’t because Kang Chan looked as if he was broke, though. Probably.

Kang Chan strode out of the hotel’s main entrance. Not long after, he noticed a black van parked on one side.

Creak.

The doors opened as he approached it.

“Welcome,” Kim Hyung-Jung greeted him from inside the vehicle. They left as soon as Kang Chan got in.

“Where are we going?” Kang Chan asked.

“Just out front. I know a good place to have a smoke there.”

It didn’t take long for the van to leave the premises of the hotel. Cars filled the roads and the front of the hotel. It was probably because it was the holiday season, but the area looked so picturesque that it seemed peaceful and prosperous.

The van drove for about five minutes around the hotel and came to a stop in the middle of the road that led to Itaewon.

“This cafe is good for smoking,” Kim Hyung-Jung said.

Kang Chan followed him out of the car and entered the establishment.

What kind of fucking cafe is this?

The first thing he noticed inside was the large traffic light, its green and red lights flashing in sync. It also had a doll the size of a person on display, holding up its thumb.

The two headed to the second floor and stepped onto the terrace, where tables with open overhead gas heaters that opened like umbrellas were waiting for them. They occupied one of the tables and ordered some coffee.

Click.

Afterward, they lit up their cigarettes.

“Kim Tae-Jin and I have finished discussing the terms. Yoo Bi-Corp will handle the security at the beginning of the operation. After some time, they plan to transfer the security duties to the company Oh Gwang-Taek created,” Kim

Hyung-Jung began. Their coffee arrived as he finished his sentence, temporarily interrupting their conversation.

“Our main problem is that the Russian mafia claiming that area as their territory is made of former special forces soldiers with tactical military training. To counter that, we decided to reach out to retired soldiers who have experience serving at the DMZ. We plan to have them hired as staff of Oh Gwang-Taek’s company.”

Kang Chan just nodded silently. Matters like this were Kim Hyung-Jung’s expertise. There was no doubt about it.

“Mr. Kang Chan,” Kim Hyung-Jung quietly uttered as he put his cigarette out. “I have three things to tell you.”

Well, that’s three too many.

Kang Chan also put out his cigarette and turned to Kim Hyung-Jung.

“To start with, a lot of agents have submitted their resignation letters to join this upcoming mission, and more are trying to resign as we speak. There’s also a lot of talk about it.”

That can’t be because they suddenly received a hefty amount of severance pay, can it?

Kang Chan set his cup down and waited for Kim Hyung-Jung to continue.

“They decided to move to Yoo Bi-Corp when they heard that it’ll be handling this operation.”

“That isn’t right, though,” Kang Chan countered.

Kim Hyung-Jung hadn’t even taken a sip of his coffee yet. Kang Chan felt as if the man had something to say but was hesitating to get it out.

“What is it? You’ve already started talking anyway, so I see no reason to hold anything back now,” Kang Chan reassured him.

“Until recently, the counter-terrorism team and the military’s special forces have always been stopped from going on operations just before they began. However, when the news of the suppression in Itaewon spread, there has been a rapid increase in agents who support you,” Kim Hyung-Jung explained.

Kang Chan nodded. Something like this definitely wasn’t good news to people in power. The same thing happened in Africa.

Chapter 229.2: The Start of a Legend (2)

Whenever Kang Chan became popular, there always emerged some leader who was envious of him. They would dispatch him on operations that seemed impossible or were just ghastly—the kind of operations where his team’s death was inevitable no matter what he did.

“But I’m not going to stay at Yoo Bi-Corp,” Kang Chan interjected.

“From the looks of it, they will probably try to work for you as independent agents after we’re done with this matter.”

Kang Chan grinned, but Kim Hyung-Jung’s expression stayed grim. Kang Chan already expected that the atmosphere over there wouldn’t be too sunny, but he didn’t expect it would be this bad.

If he was being honest, he didn’t give a fuck what happened. However, in an instant, the lives of the agents and special forces soldiers who had spent years following their mission of offering their all for their country could be changed. It wasn’t like Kang Chan could take all of them to the French DGSE either.

Chk.

“The director has arrived.”

Chk.

“Nothing unusual in the lobby.”

Chk.

“Nothing unusual in the conference hall.”

Based on the incessant radio communication about the current security situation, it sounded as if Kang Dae-Kyung had arrived at the hotel.

“What about the rest of the things that you wanted to tell me?” Kang Chan asked.

“We are thinking of recruiting an individual over to Oh Gwang-Taek’s company. He’s known as the DMZ King,” Kim Hyung-Jung said.

Kang Chan looked at Kim Hyung-Jung with a curious face. He had heard of how legendary the DMZ King was, but he had to have aged a bit by now. Old age was a significant handicap in combat and operations. That was why older soldiers were reassigned to command divisions.

“I believe it would be of great assistance to our objective in Mongolia if we have someone as skilled and experienced as he is leading our men.”

“Well, if you say so. I’ll let you be the judge on that, but Oh Gwang-Taek has to agree with it as well,” Kang Chan mused.

“The employees of his company will undergo training regarding this, so you don’t have to worry about that.”

Rather than being bothered by it, Kang Chan actually thought it was a solid plan. Now, he only had to listen to the last thing that Kim Hyung-Jung wanted to tell him. However, instead of immediately continuing, Kim Hyung-Jung picked up a cigarette. It seemed what he was about to tell him was far more pressing than the first two.

Kang Chan accepted and lit up the cigarette that Kim Hyung-Jung offered.

“Special forces are scheduled to be dispatched to Africa—Somalia, to be precise. The National Assembly will likely approve of this plan in a few days.”

Kang Chan jumped to attention and put down the cigarette he had already raised halfway to his mouth. His eyes focused on Kim Hyung-Jung.

“The UN and the United States have requested for assistance. All five countries will be joining this operation. We initially planned on turning down the deployment request, but the opposing political party has come together to make the National Assembly accept it. It will most likely be granted approval.”

“What about the commander? Cha Dong-Gyun hasn’t recovered enough to be deployed yet.”

“We are looking into selecting one of the lieutenant colonels with a long field career right now.”

“Is there any way to prevent this from happening?” Kang Chan asked with frustration.

Seeing Kang Chan’s extreme reaction, Kim Hyung-Jung tilted his head in confusion.

“Manager Kim, you can’t underestimate Africa. Without any experience, even the most capable teams wouldn’t be able to come back alive from that place.”

“Haven’t our men already gained quite a considerable amount of experience?”

Kang Chan shook his head.

“We still haven’t faced a proper Islamic enemy yet. Compared to the SSIS that they will be encountering in Africa, the enemies that we fought in Afghanistan are…” he trailed off, realizing that his voice had become too loud. He pressed his lips together and looked around him before continuing. “... nothing but little children. Among the Islamic forces, the SSIS is a particularly brutal faction. Even the Shiites gave up against them.”

“Did you just say the SSIS?” Kim Hyung-Jung asked in surprise.

Kim Hyung-Jung hadn’t fully grasped the severity of Kang Chan’s words. Regardless, Kang Chan had to say what had to be said.

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho were up against the SSIS in the operation that got them killed.

“You probably won’t understand this until you’ve seen the brutality of their ways, but they are the most extreme terrorist faction among the Islamic forces. The soldiers in our special forces team can’t pull the trigger on a 5-year-old kid’s forehead yet. Against the SSIS, that moment of hesitation is all it would take for everything to end. There wouldn’t even be a body left intact.”

“France, Russia, the United States, and England will be joining this mission,” Kim Hyung-Jung rebuffed.

Kang Chan smirked and chuckled out loud.

“France’s Foreign Legion special forces created a unit specifically to fight the SSIS. The United States’s special forces primarily use Apache helicopters or bombers rather than infantry, and the Russian Spetsnaz have already had multiple experiences against them. Compared to them, there is no doubt in my mind that the Korean special forces will face huge casualties at the very forefront.”

Kim Hyung-Jung looked back at Kang Chan with a dazed expression that seemed to ask him, “How do you know that? Is that really true?”

“Don’t you know that the least experienced team in joint special forces operations is always positioned at the forefront?” Kang Chan asked.

“That can’t be true,” Kim Hyung-Jung interjected.

“Manager Kim, if you were in charge, would you deliberately send our special forces team out to die? It could be different if our team is the one in charge of the entire operation, but with several countries simultaneously joining the fray, the inexperienced team will inevitably find itself standing at the very front.”

“What? Why?”

“Because they don’t know the situation! Since the newer teams lack the experience, the more battle-hardened ones will ask them to handle reconnaissance. However, going to battlefields like that without any experience is no different from walking into death’s embrace itself,” Kang Chan stated.

Kim Hyung-Jung looked as if he still couldn’t fully comprehend the situation yet. However, Kang Chan’s expression, which was completely different than usual, seemed to be enough for him to catch on that this matter was more serious than he thought.

“Can we still stop their deployment?” Kang Chan asked.

“It would be difficult to do that now. The proposal will be submitted within two days, and they will approve of it not long after,” Kim Hyung-Jung answered gravely.

“Fuck!” Kang Chan exclaimed, then sighed. “Can Seok Kang-Ho and I join the operation?”

“We can definitely make that happen, but if you do join this mission, then we will have to postpone our business in Mongolia. To be completely honest with you, you are the only person who can handle the Russian intelligence bureau.”

Damn it!

Kang Chan swallowed the curses threatening to spill out from the tip of his tongue. It wasn't as if he could opt not to go to Mongolia now. After all, he did give his word to Yang Bum.

"Mr. Kang Chan, this is my first time hearing of a group called SSIS," Kim Hyung-Jung questioningly opened.

"It's an Islamic State formed by the union of the extremists from the Shia and Sunni factions. It was initially formed in Africa but has since become a powerful organization that has members across the globe," Kang Chan responded.

"Our intelligence network has never come across something like this yet."

Kang Chan contemplated for a brief moment before finally replying, "The French Foreign Legion fights that group quite often in Africa. The United States and Russia also know about them. So does England,"

Kim Hyung-Jung couldn't even bring himself to ask another question.

"This is simply where the limits of South Korea's National Intelligence Service show," Kang Chan said matter-of-factly.

Hearing that made Kim Hyung-Jung tightly press his lips together and sigh quietly.

"Once the National Assembly grants approval for this mission, how long will we have left before the men are deployed to Somalia?"

"About two weeks."

"Haah!" Kang Chan sighed loudly again.

They wouldn't even have time to properly train for the dangers that they would be going up against.

Damn it!

The South Korean special forces team had just managed to accumulate more experience, yet it already looked as if they were about to sprint headfirst into a battle they weren't familiar with in the slightest.

It went without saying that their deaths weren't certain, but they would only have a twenty percent chance of survival in this operation. With odds that low, Kang Chan could bet everything he had that they would be annihilated. They would be in such a dire situation that if thirty of them were sent into this battle and only ten managed to come out alive, they could still consider that a success.

"Did the United States come up with this plan?" Kang Chan asked.

"If the plan's so off that it made you think of that, then you're likely not too far off," Kim Hyung-Jung responded.

"Those damn motherfuckers!" Kang Chan exclaimed.

Kang Chan recalled the Apache helicopters that they had come across in Afghanistan. He also remembered what Lanok told him. If it wasn't for his position as Deputy Director-General in France's DGSE, those helicopters would have killed him.

The South Korean soldiers put their lives on the line to fight for their country, yet they were now being pushed into hell.

The foolishly sincere special forces soldiers were definitely going to fight to the bitter end and give it all they had even in that hellish place. They wouldn't be as wise as the Caucasian soldiers, and they wouldn't run away to survive either.

Kang Chan was sure they were going to be relentless. They would do whatever it would take to save their comrades and defend the honor of the Korean special forces until they all fell and took their last breaths.

You motherfuckers better watch your backs. I don't know who's behind this, but I guarantee that the son of a bitch who sent the Apache helicopters and the jerkass who came up with this plan is going to die by my hand.

Kang Chan gritted his teeth in fierce determination.

Chapter 230.1: Something That I Wanted To Tell You (1)

After dropping Kang Chan off at the hotel, Kim Hyung-Jung headed back.

Kang Chan originally planned to have dinner with Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook, but he had completely lost his appetite due to the conversation earlier. He couldn't get rid of the spite in his eyes either, making it hard for him to go up to the third floor.

Kang Chan would never allow anyone to send the special forces team to Africa alone. Moreover, as soon as the National Intelligence Service ran over and began investigating the SSIS, Kim Hyung-Jung wouldn't be able to sleep a wink again.

They had to take care of their business in Mongolia as soon as they could. However, there was only one man who could stop the Russian Mafia—Vasili.

If I knew we were going to end up in this mess, I would have beaten up Andrei a little lighter during our training in France!

Kang Chan was sitting on a sofa in the lobby when he got a call from Kang Dae-Kyung.

- Aren't you going to have dinner?

"I'm thinking of eating with the agents here."

- Are you sure?

"Ah! Don't worry. I'll be heading back up there in about ten minutes," Kang Chan replied, having changed his mind. Kang Dae-Kyung would be upset otherwise. It was only proper for him to be considerate of Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook right now since he chose to accompany them to the hotel.

- Don't overwork yourself.

"I won't. I'll be there in a bit."

Kang Chan rubbed his eyes with his hands, then went up to the third floor.

"Father?" Kang Chan called.

“Hey! Welcome.”

Now that he thought about it, they came here for Yoo Hye-Sook’s reunion. After Kang Dae-Kyung delightedly welcomed Kang Chan, the three ate together.

Mothers were quite strange. Kang Chan always felt as if he was the one taking care of her during occasions like this, but in emergencies and urgent situations, she wouldn’t think twice about sacrificing everything to protect Kang Chan.

How could he disappoint Yoo Hye-Sook after all that she had done for him?

“Mother, say ah!” Kang Chan said.

“Channy!”

“Quickly!”

Yoo Hye-Sook side-eyed Kang Chan but eventually gave in and ate the food he was trying to feed her anyway. She even pretended that she couldn’t win against him.

A few of Yoo Hye-Sook’s previous classmates also brought over their sons and daughters, yet everyone’s eyes were on Kang Chan. They probably saw him being treated with respect during the previous gathering in this hotel and were aware that President Moon Jae-Hyun visited his parents. These people likely also knew that Kang Chan attended the announcement for the Eurasian Rail at the presentation hall and that he was accepted to Seoul National University.

Kang Chan had to go to Mongolia. However, he was also planning to go to Africa using any means necessary.

He wanted to gift his parents with at least one good memory while he still could.

“Why are you looking at me like that?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“I just like getting to see you,” Kang Chan responded.

“You’re getting more and more cheeky!”

“Right, honey? Our Channy has become so mischievous,” Kang Dae-Kyung said. He seemed quite satisfied to see Yoo Hye-Sook so happy.

Nothing worthy of note happened after dinner. They simply headed home and spent a bit more time together in the living room.

Today was the last day of 2010.

After his morning workout, Kang Chan took a bath. Feeling refreshed, he then had breakfast.

“Are you busy today?” Yoo Hye-Sook asked.

“I have some plans today, so I’ll probably be home late. What about you and mother?”

“We just have the year-end celebration to attend, but other than that, we don’t have anything special planned. We’re thinking of just staying at home, which we haven’t done in a long time,” Kang Dae-Kyung answered. He then scooped up and ate the bean sprouts soup.

Kang Chan didn’t have any appointments that morning, so he did the dishes and had a cup of tea with his parents.

Afterward, he headed to his room and got changed. He was thinking of dropping by the office first.

“I’ll be back,” Kang Chan said.

“Bye, Channy!”

Since Kang Chan was told that the year-end celebration of Kang Yoo Motors and Kang Yoo Foundation was at half past ten that morning, he left earlier than his parents today. He headed out of his apartment and the building.

Kang Chan had told Seok Kang-Ho to meet up with him and accompany him to the office. Much to his surprise, however, he found Choi Jong-Il standing with Woo Hee-Seung at the entrance.

“Aren’t you overworking yourself?” Kang Chan asked Choi Jong-Il.

“My wife told me not to be a crybaby and that I won’t die with this many wounds.”

Kang Chan couldn’t help but smile when he remembered the look Choi Jong-Il’s wife had in her eyes.

Nothing good could come out of spending too much time in open areas like this. Hence, they immediately got into Seok Kang-Ho’s car and left.

As they drove off, Kang Chan unintentionally looked to the side and saw the apartment that Kim Mi-Young lived in. He had a lot of things that he wanted to do now that he had finished his training. He wanted to watch a movie with her, hear her unique laugh, and treat her to expensive raw fish.

Unfortunately, he kept getting dragged into the matters of dark-skinned men with angular chins.

Kang Chan smirked as he stared at the passing scenery.

How can I pretend not to notice that the men I’ve grown attached to are about to die?

As soon as they reached the building, they immediately took the private elevator to go up to their office. Kang Chan then sat across from Seok Kang-Ho with cigarettes and coffee in front of them.

Kang Chan began by telling Seok Kang-Ho that the special forces team was going to be dispatched to Africa.

“What did you just say?” Seok Kang-Ho asked. His response wasn’t off the mark from what Kang Chan was expecting.

“They’re all going to die if they’re deployed to that place,” Seok Kang-Ho continued.

“That’s exactly what I told them.”

“Who are the fuckers that decided to do this? They support the soldiers so poorly yet have the gall to force the soldiers to march to their deaths so easily! I can’t believe bastards who have never even fired a gun before are given the authority to make decisions like this. Being deployed to Africa is nothing like simply going to the house next door!” Seok Kang-Ho flew into a fit of rage as he picked up a cigarette. “What do you plan to do about this?”

“We can’t stop it now, can we? This has already been decided, after all.”

“But we can’t just let them all charge head-on to their deaths either, can we?”

“We have to take care of our business in Mongolia as fast as we can. After that, we’re running straight over to Africa.”

Chk chk.

Seok Kang-Ho lit up a cigarette. With glinting eyes, he said, “Captain, let me join our men in Africa.”

Kang Chan didn’t respond.

“At this rate, half of them are going to die within a few days of landing in that fucking hell. Let me go with them. We’ll do everything in our power to hold off whatever enemy we’ll face until you arrive,” Seok Kang-Ho added.

The office had an open space layout.

Choi Jong-Il, Woo Hee-Seung, and Lee Doo-Hee were drinking coffee at a table a short distance away from them. However, they were now looking in their direction and listening attentively.

“Our men don’t know the first thing about the SSIS. They don’t even know that those bastards put boobytraps in the diapers of newborns and that they would stop at nothing to kidnap people and hold them captive. Our men are going to die as soon as they try to save someone...” Seok Kang-Ho trailed off.

“Let’s think about our options for now.”

“Captain!” Seok Kang-Ho shouted but quickly shut his mouth when Kang Chan looked up with glinting eyes.

“Calm down. Why are you getting so worked up? Don’t you know how our soldiers will react if they see you behaving like this?”

“Alright.” Seok Kang-Ho put his cigarette into the ashtray and dropped his gaze.

“The people under Oh Gwang-Taek are fighting against the Russian mafia. That’s as difficult an operation as our team fighting against the SSIS. Even

though they're gangsters, we can't just tell them to die out there, can we?" Kang Chan asked.

"That's true."

Kang Chan held up his coffee. Seok Kang-Ho did the same.

"Oh Gwang-Taek's sentencing has been pushed back a week. Since that's already going to take up much of our time, I'll meet with Vasili first and try to stop the Russian mafia as fast as we can. After that, we'll have to ask President Kim Tae-Jin to take care of the aftermath so we can fly over to Africa. That's the wisest course of action we can take right now," Kang Chan explained.

"For some reason, I feel like we've been pushed into a trap."

"I feel that way as well," Kang Chan agreed. "A few people have probably teamed up so they can bullshit their way into killing us off."

Kang Chan picked up a cigarette. Seok Kang-Ho quickly lit it for him.

"Phew. Alright. I'll talk to Vasili now." Kang Chan took out his phone.

Kim Tae-Jin, who was staring at the paper that he was holding, looked up, his gaze landing past the gate of a detached house on the outskirts of Bupyeong.

The yard was tiny and had an old living room glass door inside the house.

"Is anyone home?" Kim Tae-Jin asked.

No answer.

"Anyone in there?" Kim Tae-Jin asked again.

Bang. Bang. Bang.

Kim Tae-Jin carefully knocked on the gate, making sure not to use too much force since it was old and rusty. Nevertheless, the loud noise it let out made him think it was going to break at any moment.

When Kim Tae-Jin tilted his head, he noticed a silhouette past the closed living room glass door move.

Rattle.

"Who is it?" someone asked back.

"My name is Kim Tae-Jin. I'm here to see Kang Chul-Gyu sunbae-nim."

The man walking to the door raised his head. He had unkempt short hair, no fat on his cheeks, and an angular chin.

"Who did you say you were?" Kang Chul-Gyu asked again. He approached the gate as he tilted his head.

Clunk. Screech.

“Sunbae-nim...” Kim Tae-Jin trailed off.

Kang Chul-Gyu looked at Kim Tae-Jin—who was standing in front of the gate—for a moment, then smiled painfully. “Are you perhaps...?”

Chapter 230.2: Something I Wanted To Tell You (1)

“Sunbae-nim, I’m Kim Tae-Jin. Do you remember me?” Kim Tae-Jin asked.

“I do. What brings you here? Ah, why don’t you come in first?”

Unlike Kim Tae-Jin, who suddenly filled up with emotions, Kang Chul-Gyu remained calm. He stepped aside to make room for him.

Kim Tae-Jin handed over the box of juice that he brought to Kang Chul-Gyu. When entered the living room, Kang Chul-Gyu closed the glass door behind them. It had damage all over it and was already quite worn down.

“I only have green tea. Would you like a cup?” Kang Chul-Gyu asked.

“No, thank you. I had tea before coming here.”

“You think I’d just let you go without even a drink after you’ve come all the way here? At least have a cup of green tea.”

“Alright. I’d like some, then,” Kim Tae-Jin gave in.

“Great. Have a seat. I’ll go prepare it.”

As Kang Chul-Gyu walked over to the gas stove, which was across the living room door, Kim Tae-Jin took a slow look around the house.

The entire living room had an old and moldy smell. The door of the bedroom was also quite worn out, and the floor was so cold that he couldn’t feel even the slightest warmth from it. A very small table, the kettle in the tiny and old sink, and a few plates seemed to be all of Kang Chul-Gyu’s kitchenware.

“The floor is cold. Sit on this,” Kang Chul-Gyu said as he unfolded the table and then pushed the blanket that was hidden behind it toward Kim Tae-Jin. The old blanket was clean and neatly folded, which seemed to be a testament to his character.

“Do you live alone?” Kim Tae-Jin asked as he sat, taking Kang Chul-Gyu up on his offer.

Kang Chul-Gyu brought over two differently shaped teacups and sat in front of him. “Yes. Anyway, how can I help you?”

As Kim Tae-Jin accepted the teacup that Kang Chul-Gyu handed over, he realized that Kang Chul-Gyu’s hand was trembling a little.

“Actually...” he began. It took him about ten minutes to explain the situation.

“Many people out there are better suited than me to handle something this important. Coming all the way here is nothing more than a fool’s errand.”

“Sunbae-nim, as I’ve told you, only a few employees have completed their training. I was wondering if you could take charge of them so they can receive proper training.”

Kim Tae-Jin noticed the smirk on Kang Chul-Gyu’s face.

“I was dead drunk and high on drugs, all to overcome the pain, when I got the news that my son died in vain. The next morning, I came out of the bedroom still feeling dazed and out of it. That was when I found my wife hanging from the very same ceiling we’re under right now,” Kang Chul-Gyu said.

Kim Tae-Jin swallowed dryly as he glanced up.

“I’ve been going to a hospital since then. Now, I’m like this,” Kang Chul-Gyu continued. He held up his hand and showed it to Kim Tae-Jin. It was faint, but it was trembling.

“To this day, I have to fight against the pain every night. I still crave drugs and alcohol so much that it’s driving me insane. Even if I want to go with you, I can’t. My body won’t listen to me anymore. And even if I do go anyway, I won’t be of any help. More importantly...” Kang Chul-Gyu smirked again. “I have been thinking of looking for my son, so I don’t have time to focus on other things.”

Kim Tae-Jin cocked his head as he looked at Kang Chul-Gyu. He couldn’t fully understand what he meant.

“I was told that he died in Africa,” Kang Chul-Gyu explained.

“I see.”

Kim Tae-Jin sighed. After a short while, an idea popped into his mind. “How about we help you find your son?”

Kang Chul-Gyu’s eyes glinted, making it hard for Kim Tae-Jin to meet his gaze. The look he had in his eyes hadn’t changed in the slightest.

Where have I seen those eyes before?

“Please don’t get me wrong. You don’t have to help us with the situation we’re facing in exchange for our help. I’m simply suggesting this because I would like to lend a hand if you really think that you have to find your son,” Kim Tae-Jin added.

Kang Chul-Gyu didn’t say anything.

- How can I help our new hero?

“Vasili, I have something I'd like to discuss with you. Are you available to talk?”

- I should be free right now, yes.

Did this fucker really just say that to me?

Vasili somewhat seemed as if he was being sarcastic. It annoyed Kang Chan quite a lot. Nevertheless, he chose to let his cocky behavior pass for now and keep the conversation going.

“Yang Bum just presented a good proposal to me. I'm reviewing it right now—”

- Kang Chan.

Vasili immediately cut Kang Chan off. He had a strong Russian accent—something Kang Chan only noticed now. For some reason, he felt as if he was talking to an entirely different person.

- We're going to have problems if you think of me as a pushover and treat me as if I'm insignificant just because I've been considerate since we met each other. I truly hope you're not planning on asking me to take care of the aftermath of your battle against the mafia. Otherwise, I wouldn't be able to stop myself from being really upset.

Kang Chan looked out the window.

Vasili was essentially telling him that they should fight. He seemed intent on figuring out who would win between them.

Kang Chan smirked.

“I was at least going to ask for your understanding, Vasili. After all, you're still a representative of Russia. Thank you for telling me all that, though. If that's how you truly feel, then I'll take care of the mafia myself. You better not spout complaints later.”

Vasili didn't respond right away.

You son of a bitch! Did you really think I would cling to you just so I could ask you to stop the Russian mafia or something?

- Huhuhu.

Much to his surprise, however, Kang Chan heard Vasili laughing from the other end of the line.

- You're catching too much attention, you know. There are moments and situations when you have to stay out of the spotlight and take action in the shadows. You should learn how and when to flatter others and to surrender when you need help. This whole ordeal should be a good learning experience for you.

“Thank you for your advice.”

When Kang Chan put his phone down, he noticed Seok Kang-Ho looking at him. He had quite the curious expression.

“It seems like Vasili doesn’t want to help us. Considering he’s essentially suggesting that we fight each other, we’re likely going to have a hard time bringing down the Russian mafia,” Kang Chan explained.

“Hmm!” Seok Kang-Ho’s sigh perfectly summed up how they felt right now.

“Daye,” Kang Chan called.

“Yes?”

“Starting tomorrow, I want you to stay at Jeungpyeong. Tell the men everything you can about the SISS—the same enemies we fought against when we were in Africa. If you can, I also want you to train them how to respond to whatever situation they might find themselves in during their battle against those bastards.”

“Alright.” Seok Kang-Ho nodded as soon as he saw the look in Kang Chan’s eyes. “Can’t we put off attending to the matters in Mongolia?”

“Yang Bum lent us a helping hand when we were in dire need of one. It would be hard to turn a blind eye to him now, especially since he told me that this is an urgent matter. We also have no idea how Russia is going to use the denadite, which is only making it even more difficult for us to put this whole ordeal on the back burner.”

“Phew!”

“Anyway, starting tomorrow, you are to take charge of the special forces team’s training,” Kang Chan commanded.

“Alright.”

Seok Kang-Ho stood up and called Cha Dong-Gyun. At the same time, Kang Chan called Kim Hyung-Jung.

- It’s Kim Hyung-Jung.

“Manager Kim, Oh Gwang-Taek will be free to go today, won’t he?”

- Yes. He will be walking out of prison in about an hour. While I have you, I’d like to inform you that the DMZ King has decided to join the Mongolian team.

“Is that so? Good to hear, then.”

- Kim Tae-Jin decided to come here. I was hoping you could meet up with us. Do you have the time for it?

“If it’s not too much of a bother, I would like you two to come here. We should have lunch together.”

- Sounds good. I'll tell Kim Tae-Jin about it before I head to your office, then.

Kang Chan hung up soon after. He felt greatly disappointed that they didn't have enough time. He hoped that they could go to Mongolia earlier or to Africa a bit later. Unfortunately, neither matter was making it easy for him to make decisions.

The DMZ King?

How much aid can an old person give us in this situation? He wasn't even part of the military.

Tsk! Well, he'll probably be somewhat helpful. Kim Hyung-Jung and Kim Tae-Jin were willing to do whatever it took to get him to join, after all.

After his call with Kim Hyung-Jung, Kang Chan received two more phone calls.

One of them was from Michelle. She asked if he could attend the year-end ceremony that was being done at DI, and the other call was from Kim Mi-Young, who asked if he was busy today.

The two were clearly doing their best not to bother him.

Kang Chan could understand Michelle going through all that trouble. After all, she was well aware of how he was doing lately. However, he wasn't expecting Kim Mi-Young to behave the same way as well.

Nevertheless, even though he wanted to see her, he simply told her that he would have to call her back later and then hung up.

'Why am I like this?'

Still looking at the scene outside, Kang Chan walked over and stood in front of the window.

He was frustrated. However, it wasn't because something was filling him up with anxiety. He just felt as if he had something heavy weighing down on his chest.

Am I feeling this way because I'm worried about the men?

Kang Chan looked into the distance.

Since things are like this!

In any case, the lives of the members of the special forces team, Oh Gwang-Taek's men, and Yoo Bi-Corp employees—Kim Tae-Jin included—were all on the line right now.

However, Kang Chan didn't have to rack his brains out trying to correctly judge the situation and make the right decisions. After all, Seok Kang-Ho, who could understand what he was trying to say with just a look, would be heading to Africa first.