

Blackfield 261

Chapter 261: I Can, But Not You (2)

If the approaching helicopter was an ally, then Kang Chan and his men would be able to turn things around. However, if it was an enemy, then everything would be over.

The battlefield grew completely silent. Everyone glanced at each other in an attempt to figure out what was going on.

“Bring the weapons to the front! Go!” Kang Chan ordered.

Since Kang Chan himself couldn't move, his men gathered all the rifles and magazines they could find even faster than before.

Cha Dong-Gyun, Choi Jong-Il, and Kwak Cheol-Ho pressed the wounds on Park Chul-Su's chest, stomach, and thigh as he sat against a boulder. No matter how much pressure they applied, blood just kept spurting out between their fingers.

Breathing heavily, Park Chul-Su smiled at Kang Chan, fighting through the pain. “Mr. Kang Chan... Haah, haah.”

Kang Chan crouched in front of Park Chul-Su so that Park Chul-Su could face him.

Park Chul-Su continued, “Thank you.”

Damn it! Why is everyone thanking me? I'm the reason people are dying!

“General Choi was the one who paid for my tuition,” Park Chul-Su barely managed to say. “I was scolded a lot and slapped several times.”

Park Chul-Su looked at Cha Dong-Gyun, who was beside him, with an apologetic gaze. “Please take care of these men.”

“You're our commander, Colonel! You have to survive so we can have someone to depend on!” Kang Chan replied.

He gestured at Cha Dong-Gyun, Choi Jong-Il, and Kwak Cheol-Ho to move Park Chul-Su to the back.

Thwup thwup thwup thwup thwup

The helicopter noises were getting louder.

“Gérard! Have the snipers watch out for mortars and RPGs!” Kang Chan yelled.

“Copy that!” Gérard answered, then addressed the snipers through the radio.

“Allahu akbar![1]”

The enemies' shouts echoed past the tribespeople's hut and into the mountain, reaching Kang Chan and his men. They often used that Arabic phrase before attacking or slitting their enemy's throats.

Whoosh!

Kang Chan quickly positioned himself in front of Seok Kang-Ho to cover him.

“Head back to your positions!” he then yelled.

Clink! Clank!

Gérard ran over and stood next to Kang Chan.

Clatter! Clatter!

“Choi Jong-Il! Cover Seok Kang-Ho’s flanks!” Kang Chan ordered.

“Yes, sir!”

Kang Chan expected Seok Kang-Ho to kick up a fuss, but the man simply frowned as he glared at where their enemies would be coming from.

The soldiers would have to be accurate enough to gun down their enemies from this distance. Otherwise, Kang Chan wouldn’t be able to properly fight in close quarters.

“Cha Dong-Gyun! On my right!”

Whoosh! Clank!

Cha Dong-Gyun did as commanded.

Come at me!

The dirt crumbled as loudly as the helicopter rotor blades’ whirring.

“Allahu akbar!” their enemies yelled again. “Waaaaaaaah!”

Damn it!

Without hesitation, the Quds launched another attack on Kang Chan and his allies. They didn’t even bother taking cover behind the huts.

Pew! Pew! Pew! Du du du! Pow pow pow! Pew! Bang!

Kang Chan shot at them as soon as they came into view. Infernal gunshots and sparks erupted from both sides immediately after.

Haah. Haah.

From Kang Chan’s perspective, everything seemed to be moving in slow motion.

Thud!

One of the enemies running toward them stumbled and collapsed.

PEW! BAM!

At the same time, blood spurted out from Cha Dong-Gyun’s left shoulder.

Bam! Pow pow pow! Pow pow pow! Du du du! Du du du du du!

Dirt splattered into the air. A moment later, the defensive barrier in front of Kang Chan exploded, revealing the enemies’ guns sparking as they traded fire.

Before Kang Chan and his allies knew it, their enemies had reached their defensive barrier.

Swish!

Kang Chan immediately unsheathed his bayonet.

Stab! Stab! Stab!

He used his left hand to push away the rifles of the enemies coming at him from his flanks and up front, then stabbed them with his right.

Pew! Pew! Pow pow pow! Pow pow! Pew! Pew! Pew!

The snipers took down as many as they could, wasting not even a second.

Du du du! Pow pow pow! Du du du du! Pow pow pow pow!

Hit by a bullet, one of Kang Chan's men fell down. He trembled so hard that he almost seemed to be convulsing. By the time another soldier had shot his assailant, he had already gone off to the afterlife.

Kang Chan shoulder-tackled the enemy that had climbed over their defensive barrier. After stabbing them in the side, he slit the armpit and neck of the other enemy that was in front of him.

“Choi Jong-Il!” Kang Chan yelled as he pushed his new target into the defensive barrier. Not long after, he heard grenade pins being pulled.

Puk! Puk!

Kang Chan had just stabbed two more Quds when he felt a sharp pain in his thigh. It seemed as if someone had lit it on fire.

Swish! Whish!

It's now or never!

Gritting his teeth, Kang Chan pushed an enemy with his shoulder.

Bam! Bam!

If they hadn't thrown a grenade at their enemies, he would've been shot to death by their enemies.

Puk!

“Kegh!”

Stabbed by Kang Chan, the enemy coughed up blood.

You should be prepared to die if you're trying to kill me, you fucking son of a bitch!

Puk! Puk! Puk!

Kang Chan swung his bayonet like crazy, creating more space around him.

Swoosh! Thwup thwup thwup thwup thwup!

At the same time, from behind Kang Chan, the helicopter finally reached the airspace above them. The winds from its rotor blades scattered clouds of dust all over the battlefield as its blinding light gave him and his men a clear view of their enemies.

Kang Chan's heart began to sink.

Du du du du du du! Du du du du du du!

Pow pow pow pow pow pow! Pow pow pow pow pow pow!

Contrary to his expectations, however, the soldiers in the helicopter fired the heavy machine gun at their enemies, brutally tearing them apart.

Pew! Pew! Bam! Bam!

Kang Chan hurriedly ducked to avoid the body parts hurtling through the air.

Thud! Bam! Bam! Clatter!

Relief washed over him as he and his men watched the Quds being obliterated. The machine gun had covered the area with mutilated bodies.

However, the battle wasn't over yet.

Du du du du du du! Du du du du du du! Du du du du du du!

As the Spetsnaz fired at their enemies with their AK-47s, two more helicopters came into view.

Pew! Pew! Pew!

The snipers took down every enemy that tried to launch RPGs at the aircraft. Meanwhile, the soldiers on the ground focused on sending hails upon hails of bullets toward the hostiles in front of them.

Pew! Bam! Pew! Bam!

The Gazelles[2] flying above them looked beautiful and noble.

With the soldiers on the ground protecting them, the helicopter pilots could act without worry.

“Gérard! Cha Dong-Gyun!” Kang Chan called as he picked up a rifle. “Rally the others and follow me!”

As he jumped over the defensive barrier, Andrei ran after him with four other soldiers. They were covered in so much blood that their eyes and mouths looked terrifyingly disgusting.

“Let's go!” Kang Chan roared.

Du du du du! Pew! Pew! Pew!

Kang Chan and his men fought the enemies that were left behind in their hasty retreat. With Kang Chan in the center, they charged down the curve of the mountain, using the huts as cover whenever necessary.

Most of their enemies were below the ridge now.

The soldiers breathed heavily. “Haah! Haah!”

Thwup thwup thwup thwup thwup!

Unable to chase after the Quds anymore, the helicopters hovered above the ridge.

The enemy still had close to two hundred troops. They seemed to be acting with extra caution because they didn't know what weapons were in the helicopters.

“Gérard! Change your channel to UHF[3]!” Kang Chan yelled.

Gérard pressed a couple of buttons on his radio. After talking to the person in the channel, he turned to Kang Chan.

“They’re asking us to position our snipers in the area so they can guard our perimeter until medevac arrives!” he yelled above the rotor blades’ loud whirring.

As requested, Kang Chan assigned the snipers to three locations in front of the ridge.

Clank! Clink! Clank!

The snipers ran toward their new positions as soon as they received the order through the radio. They looked a lot cleaner than the other soldiers.

As Lee Doo-Hee ran past them, Kang Chan patted his helmet.

Kang Chan wanted to rest.

Fuming, Andrei insisted on pursuing the enemies when he ought to be resting. As much as Kang Chan wanted to do just that, he needed to rest as well. Everyone did.

“They said that the rescue helicopter and the ground forces will be here in twenty minutes!” Gérard told Kang Chan.

“Tell them that we’ll rest until then!”

Gérard nodded, then proceeded to yell into the radio.

Each team had a different UHF channel assigned to them. That was why Kang Chan, who only had access to the South Korean special forces team’s frequencies, couldn’t talk to the people on the helicopter. He wasn’t sure why they insisted on using only the UHF channel, though.

Now that they had gone past the defensive barrier and all the enemy corpses, Kang Chan finally felt as comfortable as being at home.

“Any of you got a smoke?” he asked.

Choi Jong-Il handed him a pack of cigarettes. Kang Chan took two out from it and lit them with a lighter.

Kang Chan exhaled cigarette smoke. “Good work. Get some rest.”

Keeping the cigarette in between his lips, he pressed a button on his radio.

“Our medevac and reinforcements are expected to arrive in twenty minutes. Use this time to check on the wounded and catch a break!”

As if throwing themselves against the defensive barrier, the soldiers around him plopped down on the ground.

Kang Chan walked over to Seok Kang-Ho and put a cigarette in his mouth. He then sat against the wall next to him.

Rustle! Rustle! Thud!

As Seok Kang-Ho joyously exhaled cigarette smoke, Gérard walked toward him and sat across from Kang Chan.

The three were covered in so much blood that only their eyes were visible. It made them look as if they used it as camo face paint.

Gérard took out a cigarette, put it between his lips, then lit it up.

He exhaled. "Hoo!"

Finally getting to relax a little, Kang Chan began to feel throbbing pain coursing through his entire body.

"Gérard! Give me another cigarette!"

Even though Seok Kang-Ho was speaking in Korean, Gérard still handed him a cigarette and a lighter.

Chk chk! Chkk! Chkk!

The gunshot wound on Seok Kang-Ho's right shoulder forced him to light up his cigarette with his left hand. Kang Chan and Gérard didn't bother helping him. In battles like this, his injuries weren't even considered wounds.

"Give me one as well," Kang Chan said.

After getting another cigarette from Gérard, Kang Chan lit it up with the lighter that Seok Kang-Ho had handed over.

A few moments later, Andrei trudged toward Kang Chan.

"What are you planning to do with those bastards?" Andrei asked Kang Chan.

He kept his entire focus on Kang Chan, completely ignoring Gérard and Seok Kang-Ho's gazes.

"Wait until reinforcement arrives. We're going to act after seeing how everything goes," Kang Chan said.

"Our enemies could retreat while we're sitting around doing nothing."

Kang Chan let out a short, cold laugh as he looked up at Andrei. The effects of the battle lingering in his mind made his eyes glint more than necessary.

"Andrei! You are to rest, eat, and sleep when I tell you to! If you have truly accepted me as your commander, then act like it!"

Infuriated, Andrei thinned his lips.

"Andrei?" Kang Chan called.

"Understood, Captain."

Gérard's cheek twitched right after Andrei answered and turned around.

"You've become nicer, Captain," Gérard commented.

"Shut it!"

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

Kang Chan had always had a hard time getting some peace and quiet whenever he was with these two.

“Seriously, though. What’s the plan?” Gérard asked.

Kang Chan exhaled softly. “We’ll prioritize getting our wounded medevacked. The Quds can’t leave this place anyway.”

Gérard’s eyes glinted as he looked at Kang Chan.

“Those fuckers attacked the UN’s peacekeeping forces, which is probably why they used AK-47s against us. No place is safe for those sons of bitches anymore.”

“If that’s the case, then…” Gérard trailed off.

“We’re going to surround and hunt the Quds with our reinforcements. Did you really think I’d let you guys go home without getting revenge for the French rookie first?”

As Gérard grinned, Kang Chan interpreted what he said in Korean for Seok Kang-Ho, who had grown curious.

Kang Chan was parched. Unfortunately, since none of them had water, all they could do was keep smoking.

After getting about ten minutes of rest, Kang Chan stood up. The soldiers behind the defensive barrier simultaneously looked at him.

He raised his hand to his helmet and pressed a button on his radio.

“We’ll wipe out the rest of the Quds once our backup arrives. I want each team to choose who will be joining this operation. Report back to me once you’ve decided!” Kang Chan ordered in French.

The army interpreters passed on his commands in their respective native languages.

Andrei was the first to run over.

“I and seven others will be joining!” Andrei declared.

“Six will be participating from our team,” Tyler yelled afterward. He looked like a gorilla covered in blood now.

“Four of the Green Berets will be joining as well!” someone shouted.

It was tragic that only so few of the Green Berets could participate, but Kang Chan couldn’t really blame them.

Click!

Choi Jong-Il and Cha Dong-Gyun approached Kang Chan.

“We’ve got thirteen men ready to go, sir,” one of them reported.

Seeing the look in the South Korean soldiers’ eyes, Kang Chan couldn’t help but smirk. These men no longer required any training. Considering their performance in the last six months, this team could probably execute even the most difficult operations better than any of the other special forces teams here.

“It’s about time we make them suffer for what they’ve done,” Kang Chan coldly said.

Cha Dong-Gyun smiled, his eyes glinting. Kang Chan made a mental note not to let him hang around Seok Kang-Ho anymore.

Gérard was the last to report. “Captain! Nine of us are going to participate,”

Kang Chan raised his hand to his helmet again.

Chkk!

“I want everyone who will be joining armed and ready! We’ll leave in five minutes!”

Strange excitement enveloped the area behind the defensive barrier as the army interpreters passed on Kang Chan’s order to the other soldiers.

“Ugh!”

Gritting his teeth, Seok Kang-Ho leaned against the wall and used it to help him stand up.

“You should just stay here and get some rest,” Kang Chan commented.

“What are you saying?”

Clank!

Seok Kang-Ho frowned and glared at Kang Chan as he pulled the breechblock of his gun. “I can eat five ramyeon right now!”

“You’re not thinking of our enemies as ramyeon or eggs, are you?”

Choi Jong-Il burst into laughter.

Fine! Where would I be without this fucker anyway?

“Make sure you double-check your magazines.”

“All right.”

After issuing a reminder, Kang Chan inserted new magazines in his rifle and pistol. He then took a bayonet and an extra magazine.

Clank! Clank! Clank!

Smelling the sweat in his helmet with each breath, Kang Chan decided to take off his helmet. The unpleasant and putrid scent wafting toward them from the corpses and the tribespeople's huts alone was already too much to handle as it was.

He removed the radio secured inside it and put it in his chest pocket. He then hung the earpiece around his ear and wrapped a bandana around his head, tying it at the back.

Copying Kang Chan, Gérard and Seok Kang-Ho also took off their helmets and put on bandanas. It made Seok Kang-Ho look like a leader of an insurgent group.

Clink! Clank!

One after another, the soldiers gathered in front of Kang Chan. Everyone had a sharp glint in their eyes.

Even if Kang Chan had disliked someone enough to feel annoyed just by seeing them sitting in silence or hearing them breathe, his blood would've still boiled if his enemies killed them in battle.

These special forces soldiers, who had gone through every available training and joined all sorts of operations in various locations, had just been attacked one-sidedly and overwhelmed with numbers. They had just watched their colleagues—their brothers-in-arms—get killed right before their very eyes.

I doubt any of these men aren't crying injustice right now.

Through the radio, Gérard explained their plan to the soldiers in the helicopters.

They attempted to dissuade him against it but no longer said anything when Gérard fiercely stood his ground.

Clank!

I'll make sure none of you sons of bitches will get out of here alive!

Clatter! Clatter! Clatter!

Kang Chan was pulling the breechblock of his gun when they suddenly heard the dirt crumbling.

What's going on? Did the Quds manage to get close to us without being spotted by those in the helicopters?

Clink! Clank! Click! Click!

When he aimed his rifle past the defensive barrier, everyone pointed their guns in the same direction.

Clatter! Clatter! Clatter!

'What's going on?'

Kang Chan was still trying to figure out what was happening when he got goosebumps all over his body.

"Fall back! Run up the mountain! Go!" he immediately yelled in French and Korean.

Clatter! Clatter! Clatter!

As if a clogged drain had just been cleared, dirt and the enemies' corpses were sucked into the ground in between the huts and the defensive barrier.

Clatter! Clatter! Clatter!

It looked like a large monster had just opened its mouth to devour the deceased.

While the soldiers quickly retreated, Kang Chan went as close as he could to the back of the defensive barrier and then looked down.

The hole thankfully didn't get any bigger, but the nearby enemy corpses were still falling into it.

Ba-dum ba-dum.

Kang Chan froze as he looked down the hole.

Damn it!

A monster was clearly glaring at Kang Chan.

Ba-dum ba-dum.

The red light seemed to be yelling at Kang Chan.

'You can't leave this place! I won't let you slip through this time!'

Chapter 262.1: Just You Wait! (1)

Swish!

The monster's eye between the rain of crumbling dirt and the pile of corpses disappeared. With seemingly no more dirt to suck in, the corpses also stopped plunging into the pit.

Thump, Thump. Thump. Thump.

The same bone-chilling sensation Kang Chan had gotten at that weird base in England suddenly surged up inside him again.

The Blackhead!

It felt as if the monster had been revived and growled at Kang Chan again, promising to rip his throat apart to finally put a proper end to him.

Du du du du du du du du!

Now, the only audible sound was the noisy thumping of the helicopters in the distance. No one moved or dared to speak.

Ha! Bullshit! You're just a fucking rock!

Everyone turned around to look at Kang Chan, awaiting his next command.

Did none of them see the red light just now?

Based on how they waited for his orders with expectant eyes, it didn't look like anyone saw the bright red light that was staring right at him earlier.

Rustle! Rustle! Swish!

Kang Chan climbed over the barrier toward the left side of the pit that had just been created.

You fucking rock! This isn't the last time I'll see you!

Afterward, he took a few steps forward and glanced back at Gérard, his gaze telling him to follow.

Rustle! Rustle! Swish!

As commanded, Gérard climbed over the barrier after him. Dirt crumbled away little by little with every step he took, causing the corpses to slide closer toward the pit.

“Catch!” Kang Chan shouted.

He grabbed the arm of the corpse right in front of him as Gérard lifted its leg.

One! Two!

Just looking at each other was enough for Kang Chan and Gérard to easily tell the timing for things like this. They swayed the corpse back and forth to gain momentum, then finally tossed it toward the pit.

Thud! Rustle, rustle! Swish!

As the corpse landed, the dirt and other bodies around the pit started to slide down.

Eat your fucking fill, you motherfucking son of a bitch!

They had done it. Now that they knew the circumference of the pit and how close they could get without falling into it, they had found their way out.

Kang Chan nodded to the men standing by on the other side of the barrier. As he did, gunshots from their snipers rang out in rapid succession.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

A frantic radio call followed right after.

Chk.

“RPGs! There are too many of them!”

At the same time, the sounds of RPGs being launched one after another echoed.

Damn it!

If their snipers weren't enough to take care of it, then they would need everyone to run over and provide the choppers as much support as they could.

“Gérard! Let's go!” Kang Chan shouted.

Kang Chan stuck as close to the left side as possible as he dashed forward.

Rustle! Rustle!

Running a few steps ahead, Kang Chan vaulted over the barrier in front of him. Seok Kang-Ho and a few other soldiers followed right behind him.

Boom! Boom!

Like the last firecrackers of a fireworks show, white beams of light began to rain down from the two helicopters.

Baaaam! Du du du du du!

One of the helicopters tilted sideways and began to plummet straight down toward the huts.

“Gérard! Run!” Kang Chan shouted, sprinting as fast as his legs would allow him.

Tu ta ta ta ta ta ta ta! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The helicopter was right on top of the huts when Kang Chan heard machine guns and sniper fire coming from it.

Booom! Du du du du du du du du!

The helicopter fell on its side and skidded into the pit before finally crash-landing at the bottom.

Crack, crack, crack, crack! Swish!

As a horrendous ear-splitting crash reverberated throughout the mountain, the ground began to give way.

“Haul your asses up! This way!”

Crash! Crash!

Kang Chan stuck to the corner as much as possible while getting a tight hold and pulling over Seok Kang-Ho and the other soldiers who were running over one after another. He didn't even have time to think about the pain in his shoulder making him feel as if it was being ripped apart.

Rustle, rustle, rustle, rustle! Clack! Rustle! Clack!

Gérard positioned himself next to Kang Chan and helped pull the soldiers over to safety.

“Move fucking faster!” Kang Chan shouted through gritted teeth.

These were special forces soldiers. Even though they were dashing over at a lightning-fast speed, something normal people couldn't hope to achieve, the ground sank in at an even faster pace.

The South Korean special forces team was at the very back of the group.

One, two, three, four, five!

Swish! Crash! Clank! Rustle! Swoosh! Clack!

Kang Chan fought through the dizzying pain throbbing from his shoulder and right arm as he pulled the soldiers to safety.

The pit was opening its gluttonous jaws wider and wider until there was nearly no room left for the soldiers to secure their footing.

Swish!

Cha Dong-Gyun and Kwak Cheol-Ho, who were at the very back of the sprinting soldiers, already had their feet buried in the crumbling soil.

“Run!” Kang Chan shouted at the two as loud as he could.

They jumped forward, and Kang Chan gave their forearms a death grip.

“Argh!”

Choi Jong-Il and Cha Dong-Gyun dangled from Kang Chan’s arms. Kang Chan held on tighter as the dirt gave way below them.

Seok Kang-Ho grabbed Kang Chan’s legs, and a row of men behind him held on to them with all their strength.

“Kwack! Kwack!” Gérard shouted for Kwak Cheol-ho as he stuck his upper body in the pit and held out a hand.

“Fucking hell!” Seok Kang-Ho cursed through gritted teeth while grabbing onto Gérard’s waist.

Swish! Whoosh!

Kwak Cheol-Ho managed to catch Gérard’s waiting hand.

Rustle! Swish!

“Argh!”

Kang Chan, Gérard, and Seok Kang-Ho groaned in pain and frustration at the same time.

“God fucking damn it! Pull!” Seok Kang-Ho vehemently growled.

Even without him swearing, however, everyone was already doing everything in their power to pull the men up.

Rustle! Rustle!

However, that wasn’t enough to prevent all the soldiers who were holding on from being dragged into the pit little by little.

Rustle! Rustle, rustle!

Kang Chan was now waist-deep inside the pit. With furious, glinting eyes, he glared at Cha Dong-Gyun.

“You little motherfucker!” he shouted, anger accompanying every word.

Rustle! Rustle!

“We’re all going to die at this rate!” Cha Dong-Gyun, who was hanging from Kang Chan’s left arm, shouted back at him through gritted teeth. “Let go, sir!”

This motherfucker doesn’t actually think I’m going to let go of him, does he?!

“Cut the bullshit and hold on tighter!”

Cha Dong-Gyun attempted to shake Kang Chan's grip off, but instead of letting him fall, Kang Chan clenched his jaws even harder as he pulled Cha Dong-Gyun up.

"Aaaaaggggh!" Kang Chan shouted as he pulled.

Thud!

Finally, he grabbed Cha Dong-Gyun by both of his wrists.

"Grab onto my shoulders, you fucking son of a bitch! You're dead when I get you out of there!"

Kang Chan groaned in pain as he pulled his subordinate up. He felt like his shoulder blades and muscles were being torn away little by little.

Seeing Kang Chan's ferociously glinting eyes, Cha Dong-Gyun determinedly extended his left hand and grabbed onto Kang Chan's shoulder.

"Arrrgh!" Gérard cried out as he pulled Kwak Cheol-Ho up.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

Slowly getting pulled into the pit, Kang Chan was already into his thighs.

Flash!

A red light shone from inside the pitch-black hole.

You son of a bitch! You fucking little rock! Just you wait! I'll come after you real fucking soon!

As Cha Dong-Gyun grabbed onto Kang Chan's waist to climb up, Kwak Cheol-Ho escaped the pit by grabbing Gérard's shoulders for support.

"Pull! Pull!"

Swish! Swish!

Once the two were out, the soldiers pulled Kang Chan and Gérard out of the pit like they were playing tug of war.

The moment Kang Chan secured his footing and stood up, he strode up to Cha Dong-Gyun.

Pow!

He slammed his fist into Cha Dong-Gyun's face. Everyone, not just the South Korean team, held their breaths as they quietly watched on.

"You son of a bitch! How dare you think about dying here?! You're a senior member of the South Korean special forces team! Did you even think about the men who are relying on you?!" Kang Chan shouted, his fury getting the best of him.

"I'm sorry, sir," Cha Dong-Gyun replied as he grinned, his eyes glinting.

He wiped the bridge of his nose with the back of his arm.

I have to stop this guy from spending more time with Seok Kang-Ho.

Gérard and Kwak Cheol-Ho brought their hands up in a grip and bumped shoulders.

Fuck this! These motherfuckers keep getting better and better at putting on a show!

Pat, pat!

Seok Kang-Ho patted Cha Dong-Gyun on the back, finally bringing an end to the tense atmosphere.

Considering the pit had grown so large that even the barrier had been sucked into it, the men could no longer just recklessly head back. Only the wounded soldiers who had been at the back during the whole commotion could move right now. They should be able to pull everyone out once the rescue helicopters had arrived, but they would have to eliminate the remaining enemies to protect the aircraft beforehand.

Kang Chan shook his head.

Smoke was rising from the helicopter that had fallen into the pit earlier. Unfortunately, they had no means of getting down there right now.

“Everyone, check your weapons!” Kang Chan ordered and then turned his gaze. “Gérard! Ask that helicopter if they need support in rescuing the people in the chopper that crashed on the other side!”

Clank! Click!

While the soldiers were examining their weapons, Kang Chan lowered his stance and walked over to where the snipers were hiding.

Du du du du du du du du du.

The roars of the helicopter’s rotor blades and the fierce wind hit Kang Chan.

Rustle!

The army interpreter looked at Kang Chan, fear evident in his eyes.

Although the snipers required someone to keep an eye on the perimeter while they were fulfilling their duties, they didn’t have enough hands at the moment. Moreover, their position was probably the safest place to be in right now. Perhaps that was why the interpreter was with them.

Kang Chan hoped that the shock hadn’t made the army interpreter forget how to speak French.

Chapter 262.2: Just You Wait! (1)

Past the helicopter in the sky, he could see smoke billowing from the helicopter that had crashed on the other side.

Kang Chan walked over to Lee Doo-Hee. He then crouched down even lower.

“How is it looking?” Kang Chan asked.

“I believe the enemies still have a couple of RPGs left,” Lee Doo-Hee replied. He kept his gaze on the area ahead of him.

“The ground has fallen in. Whatever the case, we still have to get rid of all the enemies. That’s the only way we can guarantee the rescue helicopters’ safety.

We'll initiate our attack once we've got an update on the rescue team's situation."

"Understood, sir!"

Pat, pat!

Kang Chan grinned as he patted Lee Doo-Hee's helmet. His hand was covered in cuts, scratches, and a mix of blood and dirt. Hence, he left a handprint behind where he touched the helmet.

Chk.

"Captain, the people in the chopper on the other side seem to have successfully been evacuated. Moreover, our backup should be arriving in about ten minutes," Gérard said over the radio.

Chk.

"What about the helicopter that fell in the pit?"

Chk.

"We haven't gotten any response from them yet. We'll probably only get to start helping them once backup arrives," Gérard replied.

Kang Chan stepped away from Lee Doo-Hee and headed to a spot that overlooked the lower part of the ridge.

About fifty meters from where the special forces teams were located, the enemies had parked their trucks in front of each other, forming a barrier that they used as cover while lying in wait.

Chk.

"As soon as our reinforcements arrive, we're going to advance and push back the enemies. Tell the chopper to back us up once we start firing. Make sure you inform our reinforcements about our plan as well," Kang Chan instructed.

Chk.

"Got it, Cap."

Kang Chan turned around and then sat down, leaning against a rock.

The waning moon in the sky was now behind him.

Du du du du du du du du.

Below its watchful gaze, the two opposing factions glared at each other. The helicopter slowly flew back and forth, keeping watch.

Those motherfuckers! They were really stupid enough to think six hundred of their special forces would be more than enough, huh?

In spec-ops and combat in general, having more numbers would always be seen as an advantage, but they also had to keep in mind that numbers alone didn't always decide the outcome of a situation.

Rustle! Rustle!

Gérard, Seok Kang-Ho, and Cha Dong-Gyun walked over to Kang Chan with their backs hunched over.

Grinning, Seok Kang-Ho peered over the ledge as he sat next to Kang Chan.

“Those punks must be feeling frustrated!” he shouted over the noisy chopping noises.

“They have nowhere else to go, so they’re going to be coming at us with all their might! Brace yourselves!” Kang Chan shouted back equally loudly.

Just then, Gérard turned around with his hand on his earset.

“Captain! The reinforcements are arriving now! They say we should be seeing a light!”

“All right! Tell all the men on standby to come over here! I want the rescue helicopter to take the wounded at the back and transport them stat!” Kang Chan commanded.

“Copy!” replied Gérard as he moved to a quieter place for radio communication. He then began to relay Kang Chan’s instructions at the top of his lungs.

Click!

This was probably the hundredth time that Kang Chan had checked his ammo, but before going into combat, he had to make sure his weapons were in order. He would check a hundred or even a thousand times if that was what it would take.

Kang Chan turned around and gazed down at the enemies below the ridge as his men approached from behind. He could see the unmistakable glow of headlamps coming from behind enemy lines.

He liked the numbers that he was seeing.

“Gérard!” Kang Chan called. “Tell them to get out of their vehicles and proceed on foot! Otherwise, the RPGs will take them out before they can even drive all the way here! Ask them if they brought over any heavy weaponry as well!”

After issuing commands at the top of his lungs, Kang Chan looked at the men behind him, all of whom were now waiting for new orders.

“On my mark, we’re going to bear down on the bastards waiting for us at the bottom! Protect the choppers until our reinforcements arrive!

The soldiers looked on with sharp gazes, awaiting Kang Chan’s signal.

Before they could head out, however, Gérard rushed over. “Captain! The reinforcements are telling us to wait for a moment!”

It would probably take a while for them to get out of the vehicles and get their heavy weapons ready. Nevertheless, they would soon be on their way to avenge their one-sided beating.

You dare try to outnumber us, you less-than-cockroach motherfuckers?! Have a taste of your own fucking medicine!

Kang Chan, Seok Kang-Ho, Gérard, Cha Dong-Gyun, Andrei, and everyone else stood waiting, their eyes glinting in anticipation.

Gérard tilted his head a few times as he pressed his headset against his ears and shouted into the radio multiple times. After a while, he turned to Kang Chan.

“They’re all ready now!”

The corners of Kang Chan’s lips twitched. He felt as if intense heat was rising from all over him.

Chk.

“Snipers! Target the RPGs!” Kang Chan ordered.

Chk.

“Yes, sir!”

The helicopters were quite loud, but they could still readily understand each other.

Click! Clack! Clack!

Kang Chan lifted his rifle to signal the beginning of the attack. Following his lead, everyone took aim.

Pew! Pew!

Kang Chan pulled the trigger twice, the two bullets he let loose knocking down two enemies hiding behind a truck.

Peeeeew! Peeeeew!

As if they had been waiting for it, the helicopter launched its missiles at the Quds’ position.

Boooooom! Thud!

The hot flames that erupted instantly lit up the area.

“Let’s go!”

When Kang Chan began to run down the hill, the machine gun on the helicopter unleashed a barrage of bullets.

Tu ta ta ta ta ta ta ta ta!

Pew! Pew! Du du du du! Bang, bang, bang, bang! Bang, bang! Bang, bang, bang!

Kang Chan ran down as he shot their opponents.

Baaam!

From the opposite side, he heard the roars of a 20mm Vulcan rotary cannon, which could fire a thousand bullets per minute. A streak of white lines flew toward the enemy.

This was probably why their reinforcements asked for more time earlier. Kang Chan couldn't feel more satisfied.

Vroom! Vroom! Vroom!

Kang Chan could also see trucks zooming over from the opposite direction. He aimed at their opponents as soon as he reached them.

Pew! Thud! Pew! Thud! Pew! Thud!

You motherfuckers! It's time to pay the price of killing the chick in cold blood and using your numbers to overwhelm my men!

Du du du du du! Du du du du du du! Du du du du du!

Like a madman, Andrei swung his AK-47 from side to side.

Bang, bang, bang! Bang! Bang, bang, bang, bang! Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

Gérard and the other Foreign Legion soldiers fired hails upon hails of bullets.

Ding! Ding! Swish!

Crash! Boom!

Having managed to pincer two hundred hostiles, their allies on the other end of the battlefield acted quite trigger-happy as well. They unleashed all hell using missiles, grenades, and the Vulcan cannon. The helicopter also strafed them with its machine gun.

If they hadn't been so mad, they would've suggested the enemy surrender instead of annihilating them like this. However, the special forces had also lost people whom they treated like family, and the Air Force had lost some of their men as well.

At that moment, nobody was willing to stop them—and nobody would have been able to.

The enemies fired back a few times before falling to the ground.

Blood spurted from their necks and foreheads among other parts of their bodies. No one felt even the slightest sorry for them. Combat in Africa had always ended in such brutal ways.

Tribes and armies often fought unseen and unrecognized battles like this, ones where no one would be able to point fingers at them.

Considering this had been the kind of life that Kang Chan had used to live in the past, it was only natural for him to be shocked when bullies attacked him back in high school. Although he deemed that breaking their arms was an appropriate punishment, even that was nothing but child's play compared to sticking a knife in someone's throat and yanking it out to let blood spurt out of them.

Du du du du! Du du! Du du! Du du! Bang, bang, bang! Bang, bang!

The gunfight soon began to die down.

Kang Chan stepped on the driver's side step of the truck in front of him and climbed onto its roof.

Click! Click, click! Click!

The soldiers cautiously swiveled their guns back and forth, scanning the area as they pushed onward. They could no longer see any movement.

Black smoke rose from the burning trucks and scattered into the African sky.

Du du du du!

Andrei aimed the barrel of his gun down at the head of an enemy writhing on the ground. He then squeezed the trigger.

Cruel bastard!

The soldiers all stood at their posts, rifles aimed at the Quds' corpses.

Du du du du du du du du!

In the distance, they saw the bright lights of a Chinook flashing. The wounded were soon loaded into it.

Their long day had finally come to an end.

Clunk! Hiss!

Gérard lit a cigarette and handed it over to Kang Chan.

“Hoo!”

As Kang Chan blew out the smoke, he saw tiny sparks flashing all around him. The other soldiers were lighting up cigarettes of their own.

The reinforcements checked the corpses again as they closed in on the special forces teams.

Bang, bang, bang! Bang, bang! Bang, bang, bang, bang!

They were certainly meticulous.

It was normal for a few bastards to writhe even in death. It wasn't that they were alive. Their muscles were just spasming. Nevertheless, the reinforcements still put bullets into them just to be sure.

“Voici!”

Gérard waved his hand. The leader of the reinforcements soon walked over to him, his HK417 clunking.

They exchanged salutes.

“I'm Major Blanchet of the Foreign Legion's 13th Regiment!”

“Gérard!”

Blanchet raised his gaze and looked at Kang Chan, who was still on the roof of the truck.

“He's our commander,” Gérard said.

“Is that the Deputy Director-General, by any chance?” Blanchet asked.

When the scar on Gérard's cheek twitched, Blanchet immediately turned around.

Swoosh!

“I’m Major Blanchet of the Foreign Legion’s 13th Regiment!”

Kang Chan lightly raised his right hand in response.

“Blanchet!”

“Oui!”

“Can I leave the rest to you?”

“Of course!”

The confident reply made Kang Chan grin in satisfaction. He moved his cigarette to his mouth.

“Hoo.”

Africa was still swathed in darkness.

Chapter 263.2: Just You Wait! (2)

After finishing his cigarette, Kang Chan climbed down from the truck’s roof.

Gerard, who had just finished his conversation on the radio, walked over to him. “Captain! The soldiers in the helicopters said they’re bringing the wounded and the deceased to Mogadishu!”

Kang Chan nodded in response. He saw no problem in moving the critically wounded to the American and French military bases near Mogadishu.

Gérard immediately relayed his approval to those in the helicopter.

“We have neutralized all hostiles, sir!” Blanchet reported afterward.

“Blanchet! Help move our wounded and fallen to the vehicles. It’s time to wrap things up,” Kang Chan ordered.

“Yes, sir.”

Unaware of the inside story that had given Kang Chan such authority, the Russian, British, and American special forces stared at him with puzzled expressions as he issued commands.

Ignoring their confused gazes, Kang Chan just kept barking orders. “Everyone, return to base!”

Click! Clank! Clank!

The soldiers, covered in blood, split into groups and got in the two Humvees and the truck.

Vroom! Vroom! Vrrrooom!

Smoke was still rising into the sky from the battlefield, seemingly watching over Kang Chan as he walked away.

They had won.

Not only had they claimed victory, but they had taken down every last one of their six hundred enemies despite being only sixty soldiers strong.

Nevertheless, the vehicles were enveloped by an atmosphere so heavy that it seemed as though they were covered in lead. They couldn't forget about their fallen or wounded brothers who were on their way to other bases.

Rattle! Vroom!

Kang Chan stared at the horizon in the distance. He felt no different from his men. Only now did he finally get the time to vividly remember the South Korean special forces soldiers the French rookie who were killed during their hard-fought battle.

Despite everything that happened, the rookie never once removed the bandana that Kang Chan had given him during the operation in Mongolia. In Afghanistan and even here in Africa, he always smiled sheepishly after running over to Kang Chan as soon as he saw him.

How nice would it have been if they could all return together and snicker as they smoked?

Even though Gérard was trying hard to not make it obvious, he also seemed to be starting to feel a sense of loss for losing his men.

They were only on the road for forty minutes, but it felt like four hours. When they finally reached the base, the soldiers waited for Kang Chan's orders. They were visibly tired, but he couldn't tell them to get some rest yet.

"I want each team to assign three people to inspect their respective barracks first. Be especially careful of boobytraps!" Kang Chan ordered. "I'm leaving this to you, Seok Kang-Ho. Take Cha Dong-Gyun and Kwak Cheol-Ho with you."

"All right!" Seok Kang-Ho answered.

The soldiers' rifles clunked as they followed Kang Chan's command.

Kang Chan continued, "Blanchet! Assign people to guard our perimeter, then send some to investigate the UN command center! Once we've determined it's safe, let's use it as a temporary infirmary!"

"Oui!" Blanchet answered fiercely, then walked toward the Foreign Legion soldiers.

Kang Chan stood at the center of the base, looking at each of the buildings.

Five minutes had passed when Andrei walked back to him. "Our barracks is clear!"

"Spetsnaz—go to your barracks," Kang Chan ordered in Korean.

Click! Clank! Clank!

The Spetsnaz couldn't understand what Kang Chan said, but they did get the meaning behind Kang Chan's nod toward their barracks.

Following his command, the Russian soldiers walked toward the building assigned to them.

"There's nothing wrong with ours either!" Tyler reported.

Not long after, the SBS soldiers also headed toward their barracks.

“Everything’s in order, Cap!” Seok Kang-Ho reported as he exited one of the buildings.

Not long after, Gérard and Robert—the commander of the Green Berets—walked out at almost the same time and approached Kang Chan.

“Our barracks is safe,” Gérard reported.

Unlike the others, Robert looked devastated as he reported the situation in the Green Berets’ barracks.

“They decapitated all five of our wounded that stayed behind.”

“Do you need help?” Kang Chan asked.

“Please.”

Kang Chan nodded. He then called Blanchet again.

“There are five decapitated men in the Green Berets’ barracks. Move them to the UN command center and make plans to transfer them.”

“The medical team’s rescue helicopter is on its way. I’ll have them transport the dead.”

Perhaps Blanchet found all of this to be bothersome, but he never once stopped looking dependable.

“Any of you got any smoke?” Robert asked.

Gérard took out cigarettes and a lighter. Kang Chan, Gérard, and Seok Kang-Ho—who just stayed silent since he couldn’t understand what they were saying—all smoked with him.

Chk chk! Chk!

“Hoo!” Robert let out a long exhale, blowing out cigarette smoke.

The five wounded soldiers likely couldn’t even fight back as they were decapitated. This could be the worst moment for Robert since becoming the commander of the Green Berets.

“Do you know why the Quds attacked us?” he asked Kang Chan.

“I wish I did, but I’m just as clueless and curious as you are.”

Robert nodded. He then dropped his cigarette and stepped on it.

“Thank you for commanding and helping us today,” Robert said. He then turned around and headed to their barracks.

Traces of a gunfight were all over their barracks, but they weren’t damaged enough for the soldiers to have trouble using them.

“I’ll go take care of my kids as well,” Gérard told Kang Chan. He stood up and walked away.

Not long after, Kang Chan made his way to the South Korean team’s barracks.

“Choi Jong-Il! Bring me the satellite phone!” he ordered as soon as he arrived.

A moment later, Choi Jong-Il handed him the phone. Kang Chan immediately called Kim Hyung-Jung.

The dial tone rang twice before the call was answered.

- Kim Hyung-Jung speaking.

“This is Africa. I can’t go into details due to security reasons, but we have just returned from a battle that started yesterday and ended two hours ago in local time. We don’t know who’s behind the ambush, but eleven of my men are dead. Six are in critical condition, and one of them is Colonel Park Chul-Su.”

Silence dawned over their conversation. A moment later, Kim Hyung-Jung finally broke it.

- Please repeat that one more time.

Kang Chan did as requested.

“We don’t have the UN to command us over here anymore, so we’re having trouble taking any action or returning him. If the UN command center still doesn’t return to normal by tomorrow, then I’ll have a discussion with the other teams about what to do. I’ll inform you about our decision if we ever come to that.”

- Thank you for your service. Things must have been hard for you. Um... Please contact me again if anything else comes up.

Kim Hyung-Jung was about to say something but decided against it, having remembered Kang Chan’s comment earlier about not being able to say much due to reasons involving security.

“Will do. I’ll talk to you later.”

Kang Chan dropped the call.

Thwup thwup thwup thwup thwup.

As dawn broke, they began to hear fast-approaching helicopter noises.

The loud rotor blades blew rough winds all around them. When the helicopter finally landed, the medical team got out and began moving the corpses of the Green Berets.

Before meeting up with them, Kang Chan headed further into their barracks and washed up. Murky water and blood flowed down onto the floor. As the water ran past his wounds, he burned up so much he felt as if oil had been poured over him and he had been set on fire.

Kang Chan put on shorts and a cotton t-shirt, left the bathroom, and headed to the temporary infirmary.

The medical team removed the bandages that Seok Kang-Ho had wrapped around Kang Chan during the fight. They then disinfected his wounds as if they were bathing him in antiseptic.

The members of the medical team frowned even deeper than Kang Chan did. Kang Chan could bear the pain right now, but he knew that the moment he relaxed and fell asleep, he would feel like hell as soon as he woke up.

“Ugh!”

Despite enduring the pain, he still couldn't help but groan. To disinfect his wounds, one of the medical team dug into his skin with an antiseptic-soaked cotton boll held between a pair of tweezers.

He felt as if he was being tortured. If they had continued for a little longer, he believed he would have at least confessed that his father was Kang Dae-Kyung, and his mother was Yoo Hye-Sook.

After pushing through the horrible disinfecting process, the open wounds all over his body were stitched up. They then wrapped so many bandages around him that barely any of his bare skin was left visible.

The awful and tedious treatment was finally done.

Kang Chan left the temporary infirmary and walked over to the bench in front of the barracks, finding Gérard sitting on it and smoking a cigarette. He was wearing the same clothes as Kang Chan and also had bandages wrapped around him.

The anguish and pain that commanders had to cope with were visibly evident in his eyes and the scar on his cheek.

“Go get some sleep,” Kang Chan told Gérard.

“Are you going to contact the UN?”

“It's best to keep information from the UN for now. Just report to the higher-ups.”

“Blanchet already did. What about you? Have you contacted the South Korean government yet?”

“I have. I gave them a call a while ago,” Kang Chan responded.

Kang Chan thought about calling Lanok as well since he had already given Kim Hyung-Jung a call anyway. However, he decided to postpone it when he remembered Lanok saying that he couldn't even freely talk about what he would have for dinner.

He would wait for how the UN would react before making a decision, believing that, of all people, they would know what was going on here best.

‘What are you all going to do now?’

Kang Chan couldn't help but be curious about how the UN would respond.

No matter what anyone said, it would never make any sense for a war to break out here before anyone had even shown their faces. Hence, Kang Chan was at least willing to wait for about a day to listen to what they had to say.

If the UN didn't show up, then they would essentially be confessing that they were on the same side as those who sent six hundred Quds to ambush them. In that situation, Kang Chan would simply

have them over their bill and make sure they paid for every single atrocity they had done to him and his men.

Chapter 264: Looking For a Weakness (1)

Kang Chan woke up with the sunlight piercing his eyes.

His entire body was throbbing, and his eyes stung. The moment he tried to sit up, indescribable pain washed over him.

‘Argh!’

He could barely even hold onto the side of the bed. Every time he moved his arms, it felt as if he was ripping the bones out of both his shoulders.

“Haaa!”

Kang Chan let out a low sigh, then forced himself out of bed. Being shot again would probably hurt less than how he was feeling right now. A sharp pain coursed through him as he moved, his body seemingly protesting and begging for him to stay in bed.

You want me to take the day off? Too bad, then. You’re unlucky to have an owner like me.’

Kang Chan left the bedroom.

It was already an hour past noon, but the soldiers were still fast asleep, sprawled out on the couches and the floor of the barracks’ air-conditioned living room. Kang Chan considered making himself a cup of coffee but just headed for the exit instead, not wanting to wake his men.

A wave of heat rushed at him when he opened the door.

He had to walk and stretch his muscles. Otherwise, he would have trouble going around later on.

After walking across the clearing in front of the benches, Kang Chan raised his arms to his eyes. Clenching his teeth, he fought through the pain coming from his shoulders as he brushed off the hardened dirt and blood from last night around his eyes. They clicked against the ground as they fell.

Feeling a bit better after about ten minutes of walking, he started to twist his arms behind him. If he stopped now, he would never be able to move properly until he was fully healed.

“Argh!”

As he bent over and interlocked his arms behind his back, the doors of their barracks burst open. Seok Kang-Ho, who was now towering over Kang Chan, stuck out his head.

“Want some coffee?” Seok Kang-Ho offered.

“Only if the others are up as well,” Kang Chan eagerly replied.

Seok Kang-Ho shouted something inside the barracks and popped back out again.

“I thought you were offering to make one for me,” Kang Chan said.

“They’re all already up. Anyway, let’s have coffee and then grab lunch,” Seok Kang-Ho suggested. “You want to go back to the mountain, right?”

“Yup.”

They sat down on a bench. Seok Kang-Ho stretched his arms, ferociously scowling and frowning as he did.

A few moments later, a soldier brought over two cups of coffee for them.

“Why do you want to go back there, though?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

In response, Kang Chan told him what he had seen and felt at the location yesterday.

Seok Kang-Ho looked around them to make sure nobody could hear them. He then quietly asked, “So you think that’s where the Blackhead is?”

“I’m sure I saw a red light, and I felt the energy too. I thought about the Blackhead when they asked my permission to blow up the helicopter in the pit yesterday. I decided to proceed with it anyway because the others might find it weird if I took too much time.”

Kang Chan nodded toward the Spetsnaz’s barracks.

“That’s strange. I thought the Blackhead was just an expensive jewel. That aside, since that happened in the dead of the night, the flash of light from the stone must have been quite visible to you,” Seok Kang-Ho remarked.

“That’s why I’m saying we should head over,” Kang Chan replied.

“Well, we’ll probably get some answers once we get there.”

The two talked a bit more over their coffee when Choi Jong-Il stuck his head out of the barracks.

“Lunch is ready, sirs,” he said.

Lunch was bibimbap made from instant rice, kimchi, and eggs.

“As I mentioned before, I’ll be going back to yesterday’s combat zone after lunch,” Kang Chan announced. “As for the rest of you, just rest up and focus on recovery unless otherwise ordered.”

“How should we go about security?”

“The Foreign Legion is guarding the perimeter, so just having a gun with you at all times should suffice.”

They finished their bibimbap faster than they had eaten the ramyeon noodles yesterday.

After brushing his teeth, Kang Chan headed straight to the makeshift infirmary with his men to have their wounds disinfected and their bandages changed.

With his injuries taken care of, he returned to their barracks to prepare for the journey ahead. He changed to a new uniform, then tied a bandana around his head. Afterward, he hung a military bonnie hat around his neck.

He couldn't explain why, but having his radio, weapons, and magazines on him made him feel as if he could move more fluidly.

"Grab some ropes and flashlights," Kang Chan ordered, and Kwak Cheol-Ho and Woo Hee-Seung immediately grabbed a few of each, respectively.

Upon leaving the barracks, Kang Chan was greeted by Gérard, who was sitting on the benches fully armed. There was no need for any words between them.

The Spetsnaz and SBS soldiers who were also sitting on the benches looked at them curiously. Paying them no attention, Kang Chan headed toward the entrance.

"Blanchet!" Kang Chan called.

"Oui."

"I'm going to go examine yesterday's battlefield. If you see any vehicle or personnel that looks even remotely suspicious or isn't under our control, shoot them down."

"Understood, sir."

Vroom! Vroom!

Lee Doo-Hee and Kwak Cheol-Ho each drove a Humvee. Kang Chan, Seok Kang-Ho, and Gérard got into Lee Doo-Hee's.

They were off.

Since it would take some time to get to their destination, Kang Chan took this opportunity to give Gérard a quick explanation about his resurrection, what happened in England, and what he felt last night. They were speaking in French, and the engine of the Humvee was roaring so loudly that he didn't have to worry about Lee Doo-Hee hearing what he said.

When he was done, Gérard gave him a look of disbelief. Kang Chan supposed no one would just nod in understanding and go "I see" after hearing a story like his.

"Is that son of a bitch Sharlan still alive, Cap?" Gérard asked.

"He's probably still in the underground site at Loriam," Kang Chan replied.

"And that man's really Dayeru?"

This motherfucker! I just told you everything!

"Why is that punk saying my name?" Seok Kang-Ho asked with a frown.

"I told him about everything that happened," Kang Chan answered.

"Poor guy. He probably feels like his world has been turned upside down."

Gérard did look completely stunned. He had been calling Kang Chan "Captain" and Seok Kang-Ho "Daye" all this time, but it seemed he still had trouble accepting or even just wrapping his head around it.

“England and France have developed a weapon that can cause earthquakes, and it gets its energy from the Blackhead. It’s the reason Daye and I ended up being reincarnated. We thought that energy was gone for good, but I saw it again during the battle last night,” Kang Chan summarized.

“We’ll have to keep this a secret,” Gérard mused.

“The energy aside, the discovery of a Blackhead always causes trouble, so it would be best to keep this on the down low,” Kang Chan agreed.

“You should have delayed blowing up the helicopter a bit.”

“Somebody would have likely found it strange if I did. Also, to be honest, I was hoping the explosion would completely bury the Blackhead.”

“I see. Oh, right! Can you trust the soldiers who are here with you?” Gérard asked in doubt as he nodded at Lee Doo-Hee.

“If they betray me, I’ll just let them do it.”

Gérard grinned.

“Even though you’re right here with me, I still find it hard to accept all of this.”

“How do you think Daye and I feel?”

After putting himself in their shoes, Gérard nodded in response.

Not long after, they saw African eagles leisurely gliding in the sky above the place where they had fought against more than two hundred men. Some were also busily bobbing their heads where the burnt cars were.

Creak.

A few minutes later, they reached the foot of the mountain.

Clunk. Clunk.

They climbed out of the Humvee and made their way up the ridge, finding gruesome signs of combat along the path. Following the ridge and the main road, they eventually found the tribal village again.

Fuck!

The area from the villagers' homes to the bottom of the opposite side of the mountain had all crumbled down. In the middle of it all was a huge pit.

“It’ll be hard to stay here long,” Seok Kang-Ho remarked.

There were at least a thousand decaying corpses here. The stench of rotting flesh lingering in the air wafted over to them.

“Hang a rope over there,” Kang Chan ordered.

While Woo Hee-Seung and Kwak Cheol-Ho chose one of the villagers' houses to tie one end of a rope to, Kang Chan looked for an appropriately sized rock and threw it down the hole.

Whoosh!

Judging from the noise, it seemed to be around twenty meters deep.

“Let's take a look around first before deciding what to do.”

Seok Kang-Ho, Gérard, and the others stepped forward and held onto the middle of the rope. The hut was unstable and just made of dirt, so they wanted to make sure it was sturdy enough to hold their weight.

Kang Chan loosened the bandana from his head and wrapped it around his nose. Afterward, he grabbed a flashlight and tied the rope around his waist.

“Be careful,” Seok Kang-Ho reminded.

Kang Chan nodded before slowly descending the hole.

Rustle! Rustle!

About ten meters down, Kang Chan aimed his flashlight downward to illuminate the area below him. He could only see the wreckage of the helicopter, which had been reduced to scrap metal. He didn't see anything suspicious.

Kang Chan had been expecting two things: the red light and a warning from his heart. However, all his senses delivered to him was gas and a stench so acrid it made his eyes water.

This was the furthest he could go.

Chk.

“Pull!” Kang Chan ordered.

Swish! Swish!

As commanded, the people above pulled him up meter by meter.

“Here!” Seok Kang-Ho shouted as he offered his hand. Kang Chan grabbed it and lifted himself out of the pit.

“Ph-yew!”

Seok Kang-Ho's face wrinkled in disgust as he fanned the air away from his nose. Gérard and the other soldiers frowned as well.

“Shit! This is as far as we can go without proper equipment. There's nothing special about the pit either,” Kang Chan said.

“It looks like the tribesmen's corpses also fell in it. At least a thousand bodies must be inside that hole,” Seok Kang-Ho deduced.

Kang Chan nodded. He didn't want to sift through a thousand bodies that were already starting to decompose just to look for the Blackhead. It wasn't like he was dying to see it again anyway.

“Shit. Looks like you overdid yourself, Cap,” Seok Kang-Ho said, nodding at the growing bloodstain on the sleeve around Kang Chan’s shoulders.

Kang Chan thought it was likely because he overexerted himself while hanging from the rope.

“We should head back for now,” Seok Kang-Ho suggested.

Kang Chan agreed. “All right.”

They turned around to head back down to their vehicles. As they walked along the ridge, Gérard suddenly spoke up.

“They still haven’t asked why we’re here, have they? They’re good.”

Only then did Kang Chan realize that Choi Jong-Il, Cha Dong-Gyun, and the other three had come all the way here and pulled the rope up for him without even asking why they were here. Gérard didn’t speak any Korean, but carefully observing them was enough for him to learn that much.

Kang Chan didn’t know what to say, so he just strode over to the Humvee without bothering to reply.

Vroom! Vroom!

Six hundred villagers and six hundred Quds. Not taking into account their fallen comrades, that battlefield now served as the grave of one thousand two hundred people.

“Why don’t we have a smoke here before leaving?” Kang Chan suggested.

In response, Gérard handed him some cigarettes.

Flick! Hiss!

Kang Chan lit up two cigarettes and walked up to the front of the ridge. Something would always bother him whenever he left battlefields like this.

It might sound childish and ridiculous, but he couldn’t help but wonder if his fewer-numbered allies would suffer in this place because they had six hundred enemies with them here. Perhaps that was why religion existed—so he could hope that his dead comrades wouldn’t have to stay here.

Kang Chan gathered up dirt from the ground in front of him, creating a small mound. Afterward, he stuck a cigarette in the center of it.

I’m sorry I couldn’t protect you properly. I’m sorry I got you killed in Africa.

Kang Chan stood back up and walked to the Humvee.

“If the witch doctor was still alive, they would’ve insisted even more that you’re the Surdkad,” Gérard joked as he tossed the cigarette that he was smoking.

“Let’s go!”

They took off once Kang Chan had climbed in.

Upon arriving back at the base, Kang Chan realized that the UN command had returned before Blanchet could even report it to him. He didn't need any special powers to know. The three cars with the letters "UN" written on them in white were simply quite obvious clues. Anyone who knew the alphabet could easily put two and two together.

When Kang Chan stepped out of the vehicle, two men from the command barracks quickly rushed toward him.

"Monsieur Kang."

Motherfuckers. Of course, you're surprised. You're seeing a man who should be dead by now walking around.

"We wish to meet with the leadership of each team."

"That's not something you need to ask my permission for," Kang Chan replied.

"The Green Berets and the SBS said they would meet with us when you're available."

The UN employee glanced at the soldiers and then quickly looked back at Kang Chan.

"Can I have the wound on my shoulder looked at first?"

"Of course. Your injuries take priority," the UN employee said.

Soldiers from different nations were scowling at the UN command, their gruesome wounds out on display. It was probably making the UN employees quite anxious.

When the two returned to their barracks, Andrei immediately approached Kang Chan.

"I'll come listen to whatever they have to say with you," Andrei said.

"I'll get my wound checked out first. You can just wait here or go in first."

"I'll stay here," Andrei replied. He then examined Kang Chan's shoulder. "Where did you go off to anyway?"

This guy was dependable most of the time, but his tone and expression made him seem as if he was always relentlessly looking for a weakness.

"I looked around the battlefield yesterday."

Andrei tilted his head and looked back at Kang Chan. He looked as if he wanted to know why.

Pft.

He was understandably frustrated. After all, he couldn't use a gun or violence to threaten Kang Chan into giving what he wanted.

"Andrei."

Kang Chan suddenly felt like picking on this asshole, so he nudged his head to Andrei's ear.

“I thought I saw something sparkle in the pit before the chopper went down yesterday, so I went back to look. Unfortunately, we had no way of getting to the bottom of the pit.”

Andrei turned to Kang Chan, his expression a mixture of doubt and surprise.

“What did you think it was?” he asked eagerly.

At this point, Kang Chan was sure that Andrei had received orders to uncover something about him.

“What else would sparkle in Africa?”

Andrei’s eyes narrowed in suspicion. He seemed to be asking why Kang Chan was telling him something so important.

This punk is always so fucking doubtful.

Instead of replying, Kang Chan just turned around and headed to the makeshift infirmary.

“If you keep this up, your wounds will become inflamed. Stop pushing yourself so much,” the medical staff warned.

After having his injury disinfected, Kang Chan headed straight to the barracks and changed.

“Interpreter! Cha Dong-Gyun, Daye! Come with me!” Kang Chan said.

After ordering the other soldiers to take a break, he headed to the UN command center.

Without being called, Gérard, Andrei, Tyler, and Robert were already waiting for him on the benches. Their eyes were all blazing, making it seem as if someone had started a fire right in front of them.

Click!

The conference room was a standard briefing room with a small portable screen in the center. When Kang Chan sat down, the others settled into their own seats and looked across the table, where the two UN command staff were sitting.

“To start with, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to all of you for overcoming the difficulties yesterday despite the absence of Command.”

Pft.

Seeing Kang Chan’s expression, the employee quickly continued, “I also heard that many of your men were killed in the battle yesterday. I would like to extend my deepest sympathies and—”

Clunk!

The UN employee looked up. Kang Chan had pulled out a pistol.

Click.

Kang Chan set the pistol down on the writing board mounted on the chair.

“Let’s not make things uncomfortable,” Kang Chan said.

Nervous, the UN employee gulped. Meanwhile, the other commanders simply gazed at Kang Chan.

“I’ll keep this short and simple, so listen up,” Kang Chan coldly ordered.

The two UN staff quickly nodded.

“Yesterday, we found ourselves in the middle of an enemy ambush. Meanwhile, you disappeared during that operation so fast it was like you were never here in the first place.”

“That’s—”

“Too many of our men died to gloss over this, so I have to start asking questions. If you’re slow to answer or you say something stupid, things won’t end well for you.”

The commanders' and other soldiers' glares were already enough to intimidate the two UN staff. Faced with Kang Chan’s demeanor and scowl, they grew as white as a sheet of paper.

“First, when did you learn that the enemy would be launching an attack?”

Pft.

Kang Chan moved to lift his pistol.

“We didn’t know. We were just following orders. They told us to return to the UN headquarters in Mogadishu as soon as possible.”

Baang! Thwack! Baang! Thwack!

Kang Chan pulled the trigger twice. Trembling, the UN employees squeezed their eyes shut.

Tat tat! Click! Clack!

Soldiers from the Foreign Legion rushed in when they heard gunfire. When Gérard waved them off, they saluted and left immediately.

“I aimed for the screen this time, but I’ll make sure the next bullet goes through your foreheads. Now, then! Let’s go with something a little easier. What’s the UN’s official position on this incident?”

“We’re blaming this on the rebels! We will be announcing that despite a massive ambush by six hundred rebels, the UN troops were able to emerge victorious,” the UN employee quickly and confidently replied.

“Who was the commander who sent the rebels, then?” Kang Chan asked.

The two quieted down once more, unable to answer his question.

Chapter 265.1: Looking For a Weakness (2)

Kang Chan smirked.

“We really don’t know!” the UN employee immediately exclaimed. He then held up the document on the table. “They just gave us this guideline for reporting the

incident on the news, then ordered us to return to this base and send everyone back to their home country!”

Kang Chan gave the UN employee a serious look.

They seemed to have been on multiple battlefields in Africa but only took care of the paperwork rather than joining the battle itself.

How much would they know about things like this?

Kang Chan looked at the other teams’ commanders, who were on either side of him. “Does anyone have any questions?”

When nobody said anything, he continued, “When is our flight home?”

“We’ll have a transport aircraft prepared for you a few days after the announcement has been made.”

“From now on, you are to ask for my permission before leaving the base.”

“Yes, sir.”

Kang Chan slowly slid his pistol back into its holster.

They had probably never expected Kang Chan to behave this way or believed that someone would stop him because they were UN employees. However, if someone had interfered and stopped Kang Chan...

It was better for everyone not to imagine the horrible events that would have transpired in that situation.

Kang Chan left the command center and went into their barracks. He then changed into shorts and a cotton t-shirt.

“You look awful. Maybe it’s because you lost a lot of blood? You should get hooked to an IV,” Seok Kang-Ho suggested.

Kang Chan did feel quite heavy and sluggish. This was his first time experiencing something like this.

“All right. Keep me updated,” Kang Chan responded.

A few soldiers were already on IV in the living room. Seok Kang-Ho peeked outside and yelled, and the army interpreter loudly answered back.

“I’m going to get some rest,” Kang Chan said. “Call me if something urgent comes up.”

“Everything has already been taken care of. What could even happen now?”

A soldier brought over an IV and hung it on the clothes hanger on the wall. They then connected it to Kang Chan’s arm.

“Get some sleep,” Seok Kang-Ho said.

Kang Chan just nodded in response.

Once Seok Kang-Ho and the soldier had gone outside and closed the door behind them, Kang Chan turned his head to the table next to the bed. The now-unreadable letters that he had received from Lee Yoo-Seul, Yoo Hye-Sook, and Kim Mi-Young were inside its drawer.

Kang Chan finally started easing up and relaxing.

After his meeting with the President, CIA Director Sherman left the White House and got in the car that was waiting for him. They drove off not long after, passing the barricades behind the White House.

On the road, Sherman took out an old model phone from his chest pocket and dialed a number. The call was immediately answered.

- We're standing by.

"Take care of him," he ordered.

- Yes, sir.

As soon as he got their affirmative, Sherman ended the call, finding no reason to prolong it.

Sherman thought of Brandon as he looked out the window. 'What an idiot.'

Brandon could've worked with the Arabs or sent an operation that would specifically target the other countries' special forces teams. Either way, he should've done whatever was necessary to stop the Green Berets from siding with the other special forces teams.

To make things worse, Brandon had also been caught accepting bribes from Abib. As the DIA director, he probably needed secret money for himself.

'You should've been more meticulous at hiding your tracks—no, you should've done things the right way to begin with.'

Brandon made two crucial mistakes—he broadcasted the situation in Afghanistan via satellite and then ordered the Quds to ambush the soldiers in Africa. If even just one of them had been successful, he wouldn't be in such a bad spot today.

Because of his failures, the United States was left with no other choice but to release a statement that they had absolutely no involvement with the ambush and that it was all a personal action of his. They also had to be subservient to France and South Korea for a short while.

Ring. Ring.

Sherman opened the flip phone and brought it up to his ear.

- The target has been eliminated.

That was the answer that he wanted to hear. Nevertheless, he just closed the phone again, not even bothering to respond.

The God of Blackfield.

The CIA tried their best to investigate everything about him, but they had never encountered anyone as veiled as that man. Despite being a high schooler who hadn't even graduated yet, he suddenly appeared in the world of Intelligence and became a commander of an exceptionally talented, world-famous special forces team.

The analysis of the CIA regarding South Korea's most recent Afghanistan operation only dumbfounded Sherman further.

According to their reports, Kang Chan's French was almost perfect, had the same codename as a Foreign Legion special forces soldier who had been killed in battle in Africa, and had all of the distinct characteristics of Foreign Legion soldiers, including their shooting and close-quarters combat skills.

The US believed that Brandon should've used this opportunity to do everything in his power to kill Kang Chan.

Ring. Ring.

Sherman's phone rang again, interrupting his train of thought. He answered it.

- The twenty Islamic warriors who were headed to South Korea have all been eliminated in China. According to our intel, the DGSE and Russia's intelligence bureau collaborated with China to take them out.

Click!

Sherman didn't say anything this time either before he hung up.

Not only was this hard-to-investigate South Korean high schooler working closely with the Eurasian Rail, but he was also working closely with the next-gen energy source. Moreover, Lanok and Vasili were backing him up.

What was even more absurd was that even Ethan—who stood right beside Kang Chan, bearing witness to everything that had transpired in the secret facility for the subterranean shock device—claimed that he had no idea how Kang Chan controlled the subterranean shock device.

Sherman pursed his lips.

Kang Chan was the Deputy Director-General of the DGSE, the Assistant Director of the National Intelligence Service, and someone whom Vasili directly supported and sided with. He also played a crucial role in Yang Bum's journey to becoming the Intelligence Bureau Director of China—the tiger that had woken up from its slumber.

Hence, Sherman concluded that attempting to get rid of Kang Chan right now wouldn't be wise. On the contrary, he had to find ways to get on his good side.

'Do I have to visit him myself, like Lanok or Vasili?'

"This is driving me nuts," Sherman muttered to himself as he rubbed his forehead.

He couldn't believe that the CIA director would have to go out of his way just to meet a South Korean high schooler!

Do I have to bring an expensive toy with me and dance for him too?

Sherman shook his head, realizing that Lanok or Vasili's worth didn't fall behind his at all.

For the first time in his entire career, Sherman found himself curious about someone's identity. However, he believed this was only natural. After all, Kang Chan was the only person that the CIA had failed to find useful information about.

“Sunbae-nim!” Kim Hyung-Jung exclaimed a little louder than he intended.

It had only been three days since Kang Chul-Gyu regained consciousness, and they had just moved him to a regular room today, yet he was already walking around right next to his bed.

“Welcome,” Kang Chul-Gyu responded as he pushed through the pain to turn toward his bed.

“Why are you moving around so much already? Shouldn't you still be in bed, resting as much as you can?” Kim Hyung-Jung worriedly complained.

“I needed a bit of exercise.” Frowning, Kang Chul-Gyu sat on the bed. “If let myself rest for too long, it's going to become a habit.”

“How's your head?”

“I'm still a little hazy, but I feel much better now,” Kang Chul-Gyu said. He then looked at Kim Hyung-Jung. “How's the men over in Mongolia?”

“From what I've heard, everyone seems to be doing well. They want you to bring them a lot of pork belly and kimchi when you return.”

“I will probably have recovered enough to return to Mongolia in ten days.”

“We won't even be able to finish the basic examinations in ten days,” Kim Hyung-Jung argued.

Kang Chul-Gyu managed to smile in response despite having trouble too. “I have a good reason to go there.”

“You don't have to overdo it. The base in Mongolia isn't in any danger or trouble right now”

“There's something I haven't told you yet,” Kang Chul-Gyu replied, making Kim Hyung-Jung look at him. “This could be my chance to be forgiven, so I want to go back there as soon as I can. Knowing that there are things I can do for him has made every second I spend here feel like a year.”

Kang Chul-Gyu smirked as he looked at Kim Hyung-Jung, who couldn't understand what he was saying.

Kang Chan was completely drenched in sweat because of his fever, but he still had a blanket covering him because he felt so cold that he was trembling.

The army interpreter went to the infirmary and told the medical team about his condition. One of their staff injected a few IV medications into Kang Chan, but he didn't get any better.

"You should get more sleep. We'll make you some porridge for dinner later," Seok Kang-Ho said.

Kang Chan nodded weakly.

He had been wounded many times both in his previous and current lives. He had also lost consciousness a few times, but he had never experienced body aches this painful before.

Did I abuse my body too much?

As a consequence of his refusal to let anything stop him, his body seemed to be doing everything it could to make him suffer now.

Drowsy because of the IV medications, Kang Chan soon fell asleep. Seok Kang-Ho went outside soon after.

The other soldiers also looked as if they were having a hard time. The longer they rested and relaxed, the more pain they seemed to be in. Seok Kang-Ho wasn't any different either. The wound on his shoulder certainly felt more painful than this morning.

Chapter 265.2: Looking For a Weakness (2)

After eating dinner, Seok Kang-Ho headed outside. Gérard approached him.

"Interpreter!" Seok Kang-Ho gruffly called.

The army interpreter brought over two cups of coffee and handed them to Seok Kang-Ho and Gérard.

"How's the captain doing?" Gérard asked.

"He hasn't been doing well since he left the command center."

"He lost too much blood and has severe wounds. If I were in his shoes, I would've already collapsed," Gérard replied, then offered him a cigarette. "Want one?"

Seok Kang-Ho took the cigarette and lit it up. Afterward, he looked at the Spetsnaz's barracks.

"Why are those fuckers so quiet?"

"They left shortly after the meeting with the UN employees. They haven't returned since."

"Where did they go?"

"Considering they know we went back to the pit, wouldn't they check it out as well? That's the only place I can think of that can attract their attention right now," Gérard answered with a smirk.

After a while, they heard vehicle engines turning off from the entrance.

“Seems like they’re back,” Gérard commented. He then turned his head toward the entrance, finding Andrei and four other soldiers entering the base.

Seok Kang-Ho cocked his head, a look of surprise on his face. “Huh?”

An elder and a child with albinism were with the Spetsnaz soldiers.

Click. Clank.

Andrei walked over to Seok Kang-Ho and Gérard. “Call the captain.”

The army interpreter immediately relayed what he said.

In response, Seok Kang-Ho told him that they couldn’t and explained why.

“I’m not weak enough to require your permission,” Andrei replied.

For some reason, he looked furious.

Gérard understood what Andrei said without needing the army interpreter to relay it in French. However, he couldn’t say anything because Seok Kang-Ho—the person that Andrei was talking to—chose to remain silent.

“Can you bring over the soldier who can speak Somali?” Andrei asked Gérard.

After contemplating what to do, Gérard answered, “The captain is severely wounded. If it’s not urgent, we should take the day off. We can just listen to what the tribespeople have to say when the captain comes out tomorrow.”

“Can you bring over the soldier who can speak Somali?” Andrei repeated.

“I’ll call him when the captain comes out tomorrow.”

“Gérard?”

Gérard stood up from the bench, the scar on his cheek twitching. Silence immediately enveloped their surroundings.

“Don’t test me. You’re not the only commander who lost their men,,” Gérard warned.

Unlike Andrei, who was stupid and simple-minded, Gérard gained integrity from his wealth of experience.

‘Between these two, who would win in a fight?’ Seok Kang-Ho wondered. He took a sip of his coffee with a look of excitement.

The two refused to look away from each other.

“I’ll return after dinner,” Andrei said, finally breaking the silence. “You better be here with the interpreter by then.”

“I’ll leave that decision to the captain,” Gérard answered.

Andrei's cheek twitched. Turning away, he walked back to their barracks, his rifle clicking with each step.

"Where did they find those tribespeople?"

"I'm more curious about why that fucker went back to the pit in the first place," Gérard replied as he sat back down.

"I wonder how only those two survived."

"We can look into that with everyone once our captain wakes up."

Changing the topic, Seok Kang-Ho asked, "What are we having for dinner?"

"The UN seems to be preparing a meal for us."

"I'm just going to have ramyeon in our barracks."

Gérard just shrugged in response, seemingly telling Seok Kang-Ho to feel free to do what he wanted.

"Do you think that fucker will cause another commotion once he's had dinner?" Seok Kang-Ho asked.

"Hmph! It's not like this is our first time meeting someone like him here in Africa. If I can't tolerate him anymore, I can just beat him up."

"Good luck with that," Seok Kang-Ho said with a short laugh. He then stood up.

Gérard looked at him. "Where are you going?"

"I'm going to have dinner. I also have to check how our captain is doing."

Gérard nodded. He then stood up as well.

When Seok Kang-Ho entered the infirmary, he found Kang Chan sitting on the bed.

"Whoa! Why are you sweating so much!" Seok Kang-Ho exclaimed.

Under the sunlight seeping in through the window, Kang Chan was completely covered in sweat.

"You should get some more sleep," Seok Kang-Ho suggested.

"I've already had enough sleep. I'm already feeling better anyway."

Kang Chan glanced at the IV that was connected to his arm.

"We should remove that," Seok Kang-Ho said.

"Yeah."

Seok Kang-Ho walked over to Kang Chan, removed the bandages and gauze, then pulled out the needle. He then sat to help put the bandages and gauze back over the area of the injection.

"We think Andrei went back to the pit," he commented afterward.

Kang Chan smirked.

“You know why he went there, don’t you?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“I was the one who goaded him into it. I told him I think I saw the Blackhead inside the pit.”

“Did that bastard search the entire fucking pit? Is that why he was so full of spite when he got back?”

“I’m not sure, but he would have definitely gone through a lot of trouble if he searched through the piles of corpses in that place.”

Seok Kang-Ho’s grin disappeared, his expression turning serious. “Oh, right! That fucker Andrei brought back an elder and a child with albinism! They probably hid in the area and waited until the entire battle was over. Andrei told me to call you. When I said I couldn’t, he started throwing a fit. He even told Gérard to call the guy who could speak Somali before returning to their barracks.”

“Did they fight?” Kang Chan asked.

“Almost, but Andrei walked away before anything could happen. We should teach that bastard a lesson so he can start getting his shit together.”

“I’m hungry. Let’s eat.”

Grinning, Seok Kang-Ho stood up.

After grabbing a pair of shorts and a cotton t-shirt, Kang Chan walked into the bathroom and took a shower. He didn’t worry about the water soaking the bandages since he had to have them replaced anyway.

By the time he was done, the soldiers were already preparing dinner.

“I’ll eat after getting my bandages changed,” Kang Chan told Seok Kang-Ho.

“I’m going to make ramyeon, so don’t take too long.”

Does this fucker never get tired of ramyeon?

Kang Chan left the barracks and headed to the command center.

He didn’t need to say anything. The medic immediately went to work, meticulously disinfecting his wounds and carefully changing his bandages.

“Did you use other medications on your wounds?” the medic asked.

“No.”

The medic treating Kang Chan cocked their head. At times like this, pretending not to know anything was the best thing to do.

Upon leaving the infirmary, Kang Chan had ramen, instant rice, and kimchi, all of which Seok Kang-Ho had prepared for dinner.

“Are you sure you’re okay now?” Seok Kang-Ho asked Kang Chan afterward.

“Yes. Sweating a lot has made me feel better.”

“That’s good. Let’s go. I’ll make delicious coffee.”

“Are you sure you’re not just going to order someone else to do it for you like last time?”

“Hey! I swear I’m making it this time!” Seok Kang-Ho exclaimed.

“Make one for Gérard too, then.”

“I was already planning to.”

After their conversation, Kang Chan slowly made his way out of their barracks.

All the special forces soldiers were now sitting on the benches in the middle of the base, seemingly having already finished their dinner at the mess hall. They were all smoking and drinking coffee.

Gérard was the first to approach Kang Chan. “How are you feeling?”

“It seems I was just sleep-deprived. I feel a lot better now that I’ve got plenty of rest.”

“That’s good to hear.”

“I heard Andrei kicked up a fuss.”

Gérard just smiled in response, the scar on his cheek twitching.

Where is that fucker, though?

As Kang Chan glanced at the Spetsnaz’s barracks, Seok Kang-Ho walked out carrying three mugs.

“You brought Korean coffee!” Gérard exclaimed.

Gérard walked over to Seok Kang-Ho and took one of the mugs. Seok Kang-Ho handed one over to Kang Chan as well. The three took a sip.

Just as they were about to light their cigarettes, Andrei walked out of the Spetsnaz’s barracks and made his way to Kang Chan.

“I went back to the pit earlier today,” he began.

With the sky already getting darker, the moths were starting to buzz around. They had to finish their coffee as quickly as they could even though it was still hot. Otherwise, the insects might fall into their mugs first.

Slurp!

Seok Kang-Ho audibly drank his coffee.

After briefly glaring at him, Andrei continued, “We didn’t find anything in there.”

He then looked at Kang Chan, annoyance evident on his face. It seemed as if he found this situation unfair.

Kang Chan lit up his cigarette before looking Andrei in the eye.

“On our way back, we found two tribespeople at the ridge below the huts. You should meet with them with the army interpreter who speaks Somali,” Andrei said.

“I’ll finish my coffee before we go. Are they in your barracks?”

“Yes.”

“Have they had dinner yet?”

“I already handled it.”

Kang Chan smirked at Andrei.

People could pass on emotions through the look in their eyes, their expressions, and their body language. Kang Chan thought that this fucker had the potential to be dependable, but he was also the type to make a rod for his own back and ask people to beat him up.

Seeing Kang Chan’s smirk, Andrei turned around and walked back to their barracks. Kang Chan couldn’t believe he dared cross the line even though he was definitely being careful.

With most of the sun already below the horizon, their surroundings were almost completely dark now.

Kang Chan quickly finished his coffee and called Roberre—the French soldier who interpreted Somali for them. They then headed to the Spetsnaz’s barracks with Seok Kang-Ho and Gérard.

Opening the door and entering the building, they found the elder and the child with albinism sitting on the sofa. The two turned their heads toward them in surprise.

“Surkard!” the elder yelled at Kang Chan. With only two teeth at the top and one tooth at the bottom, he couldn’t quite pronounce the word properly.

I’m so sick and tired of this! Why do they have to keep making things awkward?!

The elder was saying something when Kang Chan heard a commotion outside. A few moments later, the door of the barracks swung open.

“We need you outside!” a soldier said.

What’s going on?

Kang Chan, Seok Kang-Ho, Gérard, Andrei, and the Spetsnaz soldiers quickly ran out.

Most of the soldiers were already outside and staring in the same direction. A few of them even stood on the bench as they watched the sky.

“It’s over there!”

Kang Chan looked at where the French soldier was pointing.

“What the hell is that?” he asked.

A part of the dark sky was tinged with red light, making it look as if it was soaked in blood.

Chapter 266.1: What Comes First? (1)

God damn it!

Seeing the red light soar into the dark sky above had Kang Chan at a loss for words. If he were being honest, he couldn't really care less about the stupid legend or myth or whatever the hell it was, but something about this situation did bother him.

The Blackhead had been so quiet and meek when he visited the pit to search for it. Tonight, however—long after he had gone back to base—it suddenly decided to cause a commotion. He racked his brain trying to figure out what to do now that everyone had seen the red light as well.

“Captain,” Gérard quietly called Kang Chan, his gaze remaining on the red light. “Act normal. Keep watching the light, but don't let yourself get flustered in front of everyone.”

When did this bastard start using his brain?

Well, Kang Chan supposed he was living in a new world now. Even Daye had been thinking before acting lately, putting his head to good use. It couldn't get any stranger than that.

“Before we left the Spetsnaz's barracks, Roberre told me that the old man said the red light is calling you. He also told me to pretend not to know anything because the situation could turn tricky if that bastard Andrei finds out.”

As if aware that they were talking about him, Andrei walked over and stood beside Kang Chan almost immediately after Gérard was done.

“Do you know anything about this?” Andrei pointedly asked.

“Just the bull crap about the guardian of Mount Surdkad turning the mountain turn red by doing something, which you've also already heard before,” Kang Chan nonchalantly replied.

“Are you sure?” Andrei asked, his tone coated with doubt.

Have I been treating this son of a bitch too softly?

Seeing the threatening look in Kang Chan's eyes, Andrei quickly looked away and raised his gaze toward the light. Kang Chan had started heading to the benches when Andrei spoke to him again.

“You're not going to see what that's about?” he asked.

Andrei glanced at the light with suspicion, then turned back toward the barracks again. He looked like he wanted to go but couldn't bring himself to leave the old man and child by themselves.

“Gérard! Bring a squad and check that light out!” Kang Chan commanded.

“Oui!”

“Daye! Go with them. Take a few of our men with you as well.”

“Got it.”

Andrei watched Kang Chan giving orders in French and Seok Kang-Ho immediately preparing to live.

“I’ll come with them,” Andrei said.

Of course, you will, you simple-minded bastard!

“If that’s what you want, then go ahead,” Kang Chan casually replied.

As Gérard chose a few soldiers to bring with him, Seok Kang-Ho ordered the army interpreter and a few other South Korean soldiers to join them as well. Meanwhile, Andrei looked back at their barracks with a doubtful expression.

Much to everyone’s surprise, Tyler also walked over to the benches with two SBS soldiers, all armed and ready to move out.

“We’re tagging along too,” he said.

“Join them at your own discretion! Roberre! Escort the old man and the child over here,” Kang Chan boldly gave commands right in front of Andrei for Roberre to bring the two people over.

“Why don’t we speak to the two of them together after I come back...” Noticing the look on Kang Chan’s face, Andrei trailed off.

“We’ll see you soon,” Gérard told Kang Chan.

“We’ll be back,” Seok Kang-Ho said.

The two walked to the entrance of the barracks. Tyler followed right behind them.

Andrei’s face filled with anguish as he rushed off and chased after them. Kang Chan had only ever seen such an expression in works of art before. He looked as if he had just decided to check the situation himself over listening to a potentially deceitful interpreter conveying the conversation between him and the old man.

Robert was the only other commander left in the base, but he didn’t seem interested in this kind of talk.

When the old man saw Kang Chan again, he no longer called him “Surdkad.” Roberre must have said something to him.

“Ask him if he’s had dinner yet,” Kang Chan instructed.

The old man quickly replied to Roberre’s question. He then turned his wrinkled face toward Kang Chan.

“He says the child needs medicine,” Roberre interpreted.

“Then take the child to the infirmary first. Go with them and assist with the conversation.”

“Understood.”

Under Kang Chan's instructions, Roberre took the old man and the child to the command center, where the infirmary was.

This wasn't part of Kang Chan's original plan, but it at least probably made all the people sneaking around to eavesdrop on their conversation feel pretty dumb.

Robert walked up to Kang Chan, who had been staring at the red light in the distance. "Want a cigarette?"

Kang Chan readily accepted the cigarette and lit it.

"Did you have another mission on this deployment?" Robert questioned.

Kang Chan smirked. He huffed out a long stream of smoke.

"You also asked me that question last time. If you want to know so badly, feel free to join the men heading back to the mountains or listen in on the conversation I'm about to have with the tribesman. I'm more interested in knowing why the UN decided to send us on this bullshit deployment and who the fuck ordered the ambush yesterday."

Robert tossed his cigarette onto the ground in front of the benches, then crushed it with his foot.

'None of the people here knows how to properly dispose of cigarette butts,' Kang Chan thought.

"This place feels like hell, God of Blackfield. keep thinking of my wounded men being decapitated. If you ever get the chance to avenge what happened here, I hope you reach out to me. I'll even take off my uniform if that's what I have to do to join you."

Robert looked at Kang Chan, his eyes dead serious. "Everyone on our team knows each other's families. That's how close we are. If I return home now, I won't ever be able to live another normal day. Please contact me."

"If I get the chance, I will," Kang Chan replied.

"Thank you."

Kang Chan didn't give him a definite answer, yet he was already genuinely thanking him.

"You don't want to listen to the conversation I'm going to have with the old man and the child later?" Kang Chan asked.

"I couldn't care less about that light. All I want to know is who was behind the horrid ambush."

Afterward, even though Kang Chan tried to convince him against it, Robert left for his barracks.

Overwhelmed with so much anger and frustration, Robert was ready to explode. Kang Chan knew all too well how he felt.

Ten minutes after Kang Chan had finished his cigarette, Roberre returned with the old man and the albino child, who was clutching bottles full of pills in his arms.

“What medicine did they give him?” Kang Chan asked.

“They said he’s suffering from malnutrition. They injected him with something and gave him some supplements as well,” Roberre replied.

Kang Chan glanced at the medicine bottles in the child’s arms. Seemingly embarrassed, the child looked away and examined Kang Chan.

“What’s his name?”

Roberre asked for the child’s name, and the child replied “Akrion” with a hint of shyness.

Kang Chan smiled. “That’s a cool name.”

Akiron looked down at the ground, smiling ever so timidly.

“Captain,” Roberre began. He positioned himself across from Kang Chan so the men who were on the other side of the field couldn’t see his face. “He says there’s a cave here that emits red light, but only the Surdkad can go inside. He wants to go in with you. I’ve already told him never to speak a word of this in the presence of others because it could put you in danger.”

Kang Chan shook his head.

“There’s no proof that I’m the Surdkad,” Kang Chan argued.

“He says the proof is the mountain turning red. Such an event will apparently only ever happen when the Surdkad, the one who will rescue the African tribes, appears.”

“God damn it! Every last member of their tribe is dead except for these two. Tell them that even if I do visit the cave, that doesn’t mean that I’m the Surdkad.”

When Roberre relayed Kang Chan’s words to the old man, the man swiftly responded with a long stream of words.

“He says that it is their tribe’s duty to guide the Surdkad to the cave. Only after they have accomplished that can their fellow tribespeople go to heaven,” Robere interpreted.

Bullshit!

If people had to die en masse and fall into a pit with the Quds before they could go to heaven, how high up were those who died peacefully and had a nice funeral supposed to go?

Reading Kang Chan’s expression, the old man began to speak again.

“According to him, you’ve already done your part by saving the tribe and bringing them back to the mountain. He says that he thought someone was after

his grandson, so he avoided the turmoil, which was how he managed to survive the battle,”

After a brief pause, Roberre continued, “He also has a request.”

When Kang Chan looked at him, the old man spewed out a slew of words through his neglected, toothless mouth.

“He hopes you can protect the child. He wants your help in getting him to a place where he won’t be killed or troubled because of his albinism,” Roberre added.

Kang Chan looked down, finding Akiron shaking his head at the old man.

“Tell them that if they wish, we can try to make arrangements for them both to leave Africa,” he ordered.

After Roberre interpreted the offer, the old man raised his rake-like hand to his mouth.

Kang Chan would never have been able to say something like this back when he was the leader of the Foreign Legion unit. Evacuating six hundred tribespeople would have been difficult as well. However, since it was just the two of them, Kang Chan thought that there had to be a way to get them out of here. He would even be willing to pay with his title as Deputy Director-General of the DGSE or Assistant Director of the National Intelligence Service.

How could those titles be more important than the future of a child who would smile shyly over receiving a few bottles of supplements and cry upon hearing what his grandfather said?

The child’s eyes were brimming with tears. However, after Kang Chan’s words were relayed in their native language, he looked up at his grandfather with a bright smile.

“Anyway, we’ve just sent soldiers out to investigate the area where that light’s coming from. Won’t they find the cave he’s talking about sooner or later?” Kang Chan asked.

The old man answered with an expression that made him look as if he had just remembered his original intent for coming over to speak.

“He says the light comes from a tree, so it’ll be impossible for them to find the cave,” Roberre said.

“A tree?” Kang Chan repeated.

“He’s certain it’s a tree.”

Kang Chan nodded in understanding.

“For their own safety, at least, tell them to keep this a secret. Inform them as well that even if I can’t get to the cave, I’ll be there to accompany them when they leave this place,” Kang Chan instructed. “They seem comfortable talking to you, so have them sleep in your barracks for tonight.”

“Yes, sir.”

Roberre took the two tribespeople to the Foreign Legion's barracks. As the old man and Akrion followed him, a Spetsnaz soldier flinched and glanced at Kang Chan before sitting down on the bench nearest to him.

Chapter 266.2: What Comes First? (1)

Kang Chan's mind was overflowing with questions and information.

The light was definitely from the Blackhead, but if it was, then how could it suddenly light up in the middle of the night when it had been inactive earlier? It seemed to be fucking imitating the light from a butcher's shop.

Is it the energy?

Considering it was similar to the rays of red light that enveloped the basement of the cement building in England a while ago, then he might just be right.

Give me a fucking break!

Their situation was already tough enough as it was, yet the damn rock had just forced them to send a group of special forces soldiers over to its location and look for it in the middle of the fucking night.

That wasn't the only thing that had been bothering Kang Chan either. He was certain Andrei had caught onto something, so he was wondering how he would protect those two tribespeople from his prying eyes. He had to come up with a lie for that as well.

While Kang Chan was busy thinking about different matters, Woo Hee-Seung walked out from inside the South Koreans' barracks.

"Huh? Didn't you come with them?" Kang Chan asked.

"No, sir. Too many people wanted to go. Would you like a cup of coffee?" Woo Hee-Seung offered.

"I'm good. If I stand out here with coffee right now, it's going to become bug soup in less than a minute."

Woo Hee-Seung's lips curved into a wide smile.

"About our fellow South Korean soldiers..." Woo Hee-Seung began steadfastly as he met Kang Chan's gaze. "We have really become a world-class team now, haven't we?"

Kang Chan thought Woo Hee-Seung was going to say something important with the way he paused. He smirked and turned his gaze toward the entrance.

Woo Hee-Seung continued, "We're completely different now compared to when we were still in training. Captain Choi Jong-Il also said yesterday that it was an honor to be able to come on an operation with a team like this."

"Don't bother with bullshit like that and just focus on getting to see another day. In this line of work, surviving is the greatest honor anyone could have," Kang Chan said gruffly.

He spent a bit more time talking to Woo Hee-Seung. After a while, a commotion rose by the entrance. The soldiers who had left were coming back.

Once inside the base, Seok Kang-Ho, Gérard, and Andrei walked over to Kang Chan.

“There’s a glow coming from some trees. It was so strange. When we blew some of them up, they stopped emitting any light. Moreover, we did no damage to the ground,” Gérard said.

After listening to the interpreter, Seok Kang-Ho nodded in agreement.

Andrei took advantage of the pause to jump into the conversation.

“Where are the old man and the child?” he asked.

“They’re in the Foreign Legion’s barracks. The child is malnourished and frightened. It’s best to just let them rest for the night. You can talk to them tomorrow,” Kang Chan responded.

“Just because you’re the captain doesn’t mean you get to break your word when you want to.”

“Andrei, I told you. Once you call me captain, you jump when I tell you to jump, and you bark—”

“Doesn’t that only apply to the South Korean team?” Andrei argued.

Kang Chan shook his head and stood up, putting his face right in front of Andrei’s.

“This is the first time I’ve ever been this patient after losing men,” he warned.

Andrei’s cheek twitched as he gritted his teeth.

“I don’t give a flying fuck about that stupid fucking light. All I care about is why six hundred natives and the men who trusted and followed me had to die here and who’s the son of a bitch that laid a fucking ambush for us. This is your last and final warning. Don’t ever interrupt me again when I’m speaking.”

Andrei stubbornly held his ground against Kang Chan’s murderous gaze.

“I’m only holding myself back because I know the other commanders and soldiers all feel the same way I do. We all lost someone here. If you keep pushing me, you better not let me get my hands on you or I’m not going to stop until I’ve fucking killed you. Do you understand?” Kang Chan threatened.

Andrei swallowed dryly.

“Andrei.”

“Understood, sir,” Andrei replied with formality.

Gérard noticed Andrei’s eyes wavering.

Kang Chan slowly calmed his breathing. If Andrei had said another word, made even the slightest provocative expression, or done anything to tick him off, Kang Chan couldn't even predict what would've happened next.

This motherfucker thinks I'm a pushover just because I let him go once! If you're going to act up like this, you shouldn't have called me captain in the first place, bastard."

Although he called Kang Chan captain, he kept treating him as if he were some neighborhood fool.

In a sudden surge of anger, the corners of Kang Chan's lips twitched, causing Andrei to immediately drop his gaze down to the ground.

"Go. You can ask me whatever you have in mind tomorrow," Kang Chan gritted out.

"Yes, sir," Andrei replied meekly before turning around.

"Huh! That punk has a talent for dodging beatings," Seok Kang-Ho joked as he watched Andrei walk away.

Click! Hiss!

Gérard lit three cigarettes at the same time and handed one to Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho each.

"Hoo!"

"Aren't you becoming more and more impatient? I thought it was strange that you weren't showing it, but you've just been holding it back all this time, huh?" Seok Kang-Ho remarked.

"What?" Kang Chan asked, unable to understand what he meant.

"What do you mean, 'What?' Aren't you feeling this way because of the rookie and our French and South Korean men dying? I'm not really surprised, though. I already found it odd that you were taking the deaths of our men so well!"

"I'm not really in the mood to talk about this."

"Hoo!" Seok Kang-Ho exhaled a long puff of smoke instead of answering. "That asshole was like that the whole time we were in the mountains. He was acting like he was on a deadline or something."

"I think the Russian intelligence bureau told him something about the energy of the Blackhead. That's probably why he's been acting out so much. Anyway, I heard there's a cave where the Blackhead is supposed to be. The old man wants me to come with him there, but I doubt it'll be that easy," Kang Chan said.

Gérard nodded.

“I’ll call the DGSE when I get the chance, probably tonight or tomorrow. For now, protect those two. If there’s any trouble, feel free to use my name and title. Tell them you’re just following my orders,” Kang Chan ordered.

“Understood,” Gérard confidently replied.

Having issued orders and made all the necessary preparations, Kang Chan parted ways with Gérard and went back to the barracks. Once inside, he sat down with Seok Kang-Ho and told him everything that Roberre had interpreted for him earlier.

“So you’re saying he knew the light would be coming from trees?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“That’s what he said!” Kang Chan replied in disbelief.

“I wonder if something like this has happened in the past too.”

Kang Chan gave Seok Kang-Ho a look of confusion.

I can't believe he came to such a conclusion all on his own!

“Hey! You’re looking at me like that again! Anyway, does that mean an energy-filled Blackhead is somewhere in some cave in that mountain?”

“That’s right,” Kang Chan answered, feeling as if their roles had been reversed.

“And the mountain lit up because you’re the Surdkad?”

“According to the old man, yes.”

Seok Kang-Ho hummed with his lips pursed in thought. He looked dead serious.

Did this punk come up with something again?

“We should visit the cave as soon as possible,” Seok Kang-Ho suggested.

“What?”

“Think about it. If the Blackhead really is in the cave, then we can just take it and put an end to all this bullshit.”

“That’s your whole plan?”

“Is there any way to take it without going there?” Seok Kang-Ho confidently asked.

Yeah, that one's on me. It was such a stupid question to ask. I shouldn't hope for things that will never come to be...

“That bastard Andrei probably smelled something suspicious, so let’s part ways with him before going. It doesn’t matter if we have to do it at a later time,” Kang Chan said.

“Won’t the others catch on before then?”

“If they do, then that only means they already know. We can’t handle that situation with just our men, so it doesn’t really matter.”

“Got it,” Seok Kang-Ho replied.

“Tell the men to keep their guards up. More importantly, don’t forget that the Blackhead doesn’t mean anything compared to the old man and the child’s safety,” Kang Chan emphasized.

“I couldn’t have cared less about it if it didn’t have anything to do with you, Cap,” Seok Kang-Ho grumbled.

After their conversation, the two walked out into the living room together. Kang Chan picked up a satellite phone and contacted South Korea.

- Kim Hyung-Jung speaking.

“People from the UN have just arrived,” Kang Chan immediately reported.

- The UN has already released an official announcement about that. They have also given our government a list of the dead and wounded, so we are making plans to evacuate them right now.

Considering there wasn’t anything else that they had to take care of, that would pretty much tie up all loose ends.

After a few more formalities, Kang Chan ended the conversation with Kim Hyung-Jung. He then called Lanok.

Chapter 267: What Comes First (2)

- Monsieur Kang.

Hearing Lanok’s voice brought joy to Kang Chan as if this was the first time he had heard it in years.

"Mr. Ambassador, have you heard the UN’s excuses?" Kang Chan inquired. He presented the question as though he intended all eavesdroppers to hear.

Kang Chan heard laughter almost instantly after. Sure enough, the ever so observant and intelligent Lanok had immediately picked up what he was trying to say.

- If anyone’s listening to us, their hearts would have surely dropped in surprise.

“The UN's excuses are nonsensical, but we still plan to withdraw from this area for now," Kang Chan said.

-You may proceed as you see fit, Mr. Kang Chan.

"Understood. It's truly a pleasure to hear your voice, Mr. Ambassador."

Lanok warmly accepted Kang Chan's compliment.

- It would be even better to meet in person.

"I will visit you as soon as I get back."

- I'll prepare some fine wine and a meal for the occasion, then.

"I look forward to it."

- I believe you will conclude this as elegantly as the wine.

Lanok's words made Kang Chan's eyes flash, reflecting a peculiar feeling.

It was different! Though subtle, Lanok's accent, tone, and timbre had changed.

Does he know about the Blackhead? Or am I just being too sensitive?

- I didn't expect you to be nervous just because I said you would wrap things up nicely.

"That's not it. I was just worried that you would be expecting a gift from me," Kang Chan answered.

Lanok burst into loud laughter.

- Hahaha!

Unable to determine if it was genuine or if there was a meaning behind it, Kang Chan couldn't bring himself to laugh along.

- You are leaving a mystery for the ones still listening in with us. As always, the greatest gift for me is your safe return, Mr. Kang Chan.

"Understood, Mr. Ambassador. I'll contact you as soon as I'm back."

After hanging up, Kang Chan lost himself in thought.

Lanok repeatedly hinted at the presence of others listening in. Considering how concerned he was, wouldn't talking to Anne about the issue with Akrion and the elder also pose a problem?

Andrei, Tyle, and the UN staff had likely already reported the whole red glow event. Moreover, those who were targeting Kang Chan and his people would have likely already surmised it as well.

Even if the elder responded to Andrei's questions with awkward answers tomorrow, Roberre would be able to manage to steer the conversation elsewhere. However, that wouldn't make it any easier for Kang Chan to go to the mountain with just the elder.

Kang Chan also wondered how they would take it if he insisted on taking the sole survivors. Would they simply stand by and watch when they had enough power to orchestrate an ambush? There was no guarantee that the Korean and French teams wouldn't find themselves facing six hundred hostiles.

That damn rock!

Although his true intention was to avoid greediness, Kang Chan realized that he underestimated the stakes. His oversight could potentially even endanger the lives of his team in their mission to protect the elder and Akrion. After all, in a way, it could be seen as Kang Chan monopolizing the Blackhead.

Why didn't he act more cautiously instead of idling away the afternoon and ultimately drawing Andrei's attention? Lost in thought, he was suddenly struck by a sudden vagary thought. Since everyone in their base was using satellite phones, it wasn't just his comms that were vulnerable to wiretapping.

Why should he bear the burden alone? Andrei, Tyler, and the UN staff's conversations were likely also being monitored. If he was right, then the orchestrator behind the ambush would undoubtedly already be aware of the elder and the child's existence.

With a solidified resolve, Kang Chan dialed a number without hesitation.

The call rang twice before it was picked up.

- This is Anne.

"Don't you ever take a break?"

Like Lanok had done earlier, Anne responded with laughter to Kang Chan's comment.

- If you're tired of my voice, I can connect you with a colleague.

"How am I supposed to handle the ambassador if you do that?" Kang Chan said, eliciting an even heartier laugh.

- I didn't realize you could be afraid of anyone, Monsieur Kang.

"I'll have you know, the ambassador can be pretty intimidating at times even for me," he responded, though Anne offered no reply.

Kang Chan continued, "The ambassador's gaze, especially in the face of an enemy, can be quite daunting."

- I find both of you equally formidable.

"That's a misunderstanding. I'm nowhere near the ambassador's level," Kang Chan clarified, chuckling briefly.

- What are your instructions, Deputy Director-General?

Anne's tone changed, now ready for business.

"Anne, I plan to have an elderly Somali and a child with albinism transferred through the French Foreign Legion. I believe you know the precarious fate of albinos in Africa. I ask you to take steps to ensure their well-being in France," Kang Chan replied.

- I'll coordinate with the Ministry of Justice's Immigration Bureau to find a solution.

"Thank you, Anne."

- Any other directives?

"Please send my regards to Louis."

- Consider it done.

Their conversation concluded with Anne's witty response.

Kang Chan knew that whatever challenges awaited, they could be addressed with the new day. Fretting now wouldn't change the outcome. He had to take every chance to rest that he could get.

Following his own rules, Kang Chan settled into bed.

A shocking report emerged overnight. Using the situation in Afghanistan as a pretext, the United Islamic State released a video on the internet declaring a holy war against South Korea. It was a clear declaration about the merciless retribution that was coming for Korea and its people.

The next morning, news broke that eleven members of a special forces team deployed in Africa were killed, while another six, including their leader, were critically injured. The public was rendered speechless upon learning that this team of fewer than a hundred had engaged six hundred insurgents in combat.

The identities of those killed were not disclosed, but it was revealed that this special forces team consisted of members who had previously served in Afghanistan, linking this incident to the retaliatory holy war reported the day before. However.

Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook talked about the morning news on their way to work.

"At times like these, I'm actually relieved our son is in Mongolia," Yoo Hye-Sook remarked.

"Right?" Kang Dae-Kyung responded.

"Does anything about this worry you?" asked Yoo Hye-Sook.

"Worry? All I'm worried about is you regularly getting indigestion and having a hard time sleeping. Let's get you checked up later in the afternoon."

"We don't have to go that far. I just miss our son. I know all this uneasiness will disappear with just one phone call from him."

Entering the building's underground parking lot, Kang Dae-Kyung headed straight for the elevator, flanked by agents moving with them and those awaiting their arrival.

"Don't worry about me, honey. Cheer up and have a good day!" Yoo Hye-Sook said.

"You too!" answered Kang Dae-Kyung.

He got off on the second floor, and the agents inside the elevator followed him. He walked down the corridor to the CEO's office at the innermost part of the floor.

Both his Executive and Managing Directors had expressed that they wanted to have private offices. They also expressed that the size didn't matter. Since their new building was much larger than the old one, offering them plenty of space, Kang Dae-Kyung decided to give in and accommodate their requests.

"Assistant Manager Kim," Kang Dae-Kyung called upon entering the room.

"Yes, sir," Assistant Manager Kim answered. As always, he was maintaining close security.

"Do you have a moment?"

"Of course, sir. What do you need?"

"Have a seat."

"Thank you, sir."

Kang Dae-Kyung sat opposite the assistant manager. "I'd like you to be honest with me."

"I will. Is there a problem?"

They had become quite friendly, often exchanging light jokes.

Noting Assistant Manager Kim's curious expression, Kang Dae-Kyung forced himself to open, "Is my son, Channy, in Africa?"

The question was unexpected and baffling, yet Kang Dae-Kyung felt that the assistant manager's reaction was enough of an answer.

"Is he part of the eleven or six mentioned in today's report?" Kang Dae-Kyung asked.

Seeing Kang Dae-Kyung's alarmed expression, Assistant Manager Kim took a deep breath before asking, "How do you know about this?"

Kang Dae-Kyung's face darkened. "It's strange, but I can tell when Channy is in trouble. For the past two days, my wife has been having indigestion and waking up in the middle of the night, so I was focusing on the news from Mongolia wondering if something was happening there."

He tilted his head, waiting for the assistant manager's response. Though he felt that he already knew the answer, he wanted confirmation.

"Assistant Manager Kim?"

"He is in Africa."

Kang Dae-Kyung covered his face with his left hand.

Assistant Manager Kim continued, "There's no need to worry. As far as we know, he's safe."

After a moment of silence, Kang Dae-Kyung apologized, "I'm sorry... I'm feeling conflicted over those who sacrificed themselves for our country. Wondering whether my son was among them and feeling relieved that he wasn't... seem wrong. Perhaps Channy is alive today because of their sacrifice."

"Sir," Assistant Manager Kim said, wanting to help Kang Dae-Kyung gather himself, "thanks to the Assistant Director, our special forces team had the highest survival rate. As you might have already heard, the US only had nine survivors, wounded included."

Speechless, Kang Dae-Kyung simply nodded.

Softly yet firmly, Assistant Manager Kim continued, "Two of my colleagues volunteered for that operation. Everyone wanted to lead the way for our country, believing in the motto we always shout—that it would be an honor to protect our nation with our blood."

Having finally calmed his heart, Kang Dae-Kyung listened intently.

"Your son protected twenty-one of those soldiers."

Kang Dae-Kyung choked up. The survival of twenty-one soldiers was significant, yet the deaths of eleven remained foremost in his mind and heart.

Why must people like Assistant Manager Kim keep dying in unseen places? It was heart-wrenching and tragic that fathers, husbands, and sons suffered such noble and grievous deaths in Afghanistan and Africa.

"I'll bring you some tea, sir," Assistant Manager Kim said.

Kang Dae-Kyung was still at a loss for words. He felt a mix of gratitude and apology. The realization that his opportunity to sell cars and earn profits was founded on the sacrifices of those laying down their lives for the country weighed heavily on him.

Oh Gwang-Taek stepped outside. He looked almost indistinguishable from the local Mongolians. Not only had he grown a beard but his face had been weathered by the exposure to the harsh sun and winds as well.

Click! Clack!

With adept movements, he checked the magazine and bolt of his rifle before climbing into a jeep waiting for him.

"Let's go!"

Vroom! Vrooo-m!

The engines of two jeeps roared to life. They exited the base in a convoy.

"Director Oh, I've completely mastered this rifle!"

Oh Gwang-Taek grinned as he surveyed his surroundings. He had never imagined that some people could wield knives and firearms with unparalleled skill, but what he found most surprising was that those same people instantly respected and lowered their heads to the mere mention of Kang Chul-Gyu's name. Despite being around him, Oh Gwang-Taek had been so ignorant of how significant of a figure the man was.

Vroom! Rattle. Rattle.

By the following day, their thirty-three new members had divided the territory into four sectors.

"What are you doing?" Oh Gwang-Taek inquired out of curiosity.

"We need to fully secure this area before the older Kang, our sunbae, arrives," said one of them.

'What does that even mean?' Oh Gwang-Taek thought.

Puzzled, he glanced at the others.

"You don't know Kang sunbae that well yet, but you'll understand once you see him in action. It's in our best interest to claim this entire location before he arrives. We've divided this area into four sectors, establishing these points as our base," explained the agent.

They spoke in a casual tone, seemingly just discussing the location of a newly opened bar.

The agent continued, "Tomorrow, we'll start patrolling and controlling all traffic passing through here. The scope will likely expand when Kang sunbae returns, but this should be enough for now."

Oh Gwang-Taek looked at Kim Tae-Jin with a bewildered expression.

"How far do you intend to take control?" Oh Gwang-Taek carefully asked, making sure to be respectful toward Kim Tae-Jin's sunbae.

"We plan to stop anyone from passing through here without our permission. We've already received authorization from the Mongolian border guards, but the final decision naturally rests in your hands, Director Oh."

When attention turned his way, Oh Gwang-Taek blanked out.

"This base was built on our juniors' blood. We plan to enforce strict control and make it impossible for anyone to pass through this area without your signature."

It was said that extreme astonishment could bring laughter. That was precisely what happened to Oh Gwang-Taek at that moment.

"We also plan to attack these locations before Kang sunbae arrives," Kim Tae-Jin said.

"Wait, what?" Oh Gwang-Taek asked.

"According to the satellite images, there seems to be two temporary Russian mafia bases. We plan on initiating a preemptive strike on them. We'll seek your approval once we have ironed out all the details, Director Oh."

Where in South Korea had these monsters been hiding before emerging in Mongolia? Oh Gwang-Taek felt embarrassed by his unruly behavior in the past, swinging around a cleaver and leading a gang.

'So this was why Kang Chan faced the thugs fearlessly!'

Fear? Would someone who could discuss taking the fight to the Russian mafia with such gleaming eyes be afraid of a cleaver?

Suddenly growing curious, Oh Gwang-Taek asked, "Will this satisfy Director Kang when he arrives?"

The agent who had spoken up earlier shrugged. "Maybe? With Kang sunbae's arrival, our current scope could expand all the way here."

He pointed out locations of the map that included both Russia and China.

"W-What?"

"We're not facing military forces, so it's definitely possible. Anyway, we plan to eradicate all bandits and mafias within this place first."

"Hmm! We'll need to coordinate with the foreign corporations over here beforehand," Kim Tae-Jin stated, pointing at a spot on the map.

The agent nodded. "We expect to take over all security operations in this vicinity soon. It's entirely possible now that Kang sunabe is coming. Of course..."

The agent looked straight at Oh Gwang-Taek. "This is contingent on your approval, Director."

'Fuck!' Oh Gwang-Taek inwardly cursed.

Vroom! Rattle. Rattle.

Afterward, they swiftly proceeded with the plans.

These people are fucking scary as shit!

Oh Gwang-Taek had participated in both raids on the temporary mafia bases. By the second battle, he had realized something. Their feelings when charging forward were no different from his own when he would rush ahead to shield his juniors from being stabbed!

Before each battle, the leader always asked, "Who had a restless dream today?"

The leader would then give them a minute, waiting for those who were scared or in bad condition to step back.

Every time, the people that Oh Gwang-Taek had brought with him were excluded from the selection. They didn't raise their hands, but hesitation did flicker across their faces during those moments.

They were likely embarrassed, their faces burning with shame. After all, they always vehemently denied it!

Now? Without second thoughts, they would volunteer to join the patrols heading toward the Chinese side or the Russian border.

Screech!

The car suddenly stopped in front of a hill. Oh Gwang-Taek immediately leaped out and ran toward the nearest boulder ahead of them.

Click!

He then lifted his rifle and took aim. Turning his head, he saw a member of their team signaling three times with his index and middle fingers, indicating that an unknown vehicle was approaching.

Damn it! Kang Chan! I'm really thankful!

Click.

Oh Gwang-Taek disengaged the safety on his rifle. Life might be a mess, but at the very least, he felt like he was becoming somewhat of a respectable father. He returned his focus to checking out the approaching group. The Mongolian border guards had delegated him this task!

Waiting behind cover, he suddenly found himself desperately wanting to see Kang Chan.

Chapter 268.1: It's an Opportunity (1)

For breakfast, Kang Chan decided to have whatever the UN had prepared. Seok Kang-Ho glared at the ramyeon and the instant rice as they left the barracks.

Akrion and his grandfather, who were already in the mess hall, nervously looked around, seemingly anxious despite having Gérard and Roberre taking care of them. Only when Kang Chan came into the establishment did they finally look relieved and at ease.

Akrion kept stealing glances at Kang Chan instead of looking at him directly, making Akrion look like a shy little girl. Kang Chan found it a little odd.

"Subax wanaagsan!"^[1] Kang Chan greeted in Somali. He had picked up the language during his ten years of mercenary work in Africa.

In response, Akrion timidly smiled and fluently greeted back in the same language.

“Is that all you’re going to eat? Why not take more food?” Kang Chan asked.

Roberre quickly passed on his question to the two tribespeople.

Their expressions were enough to answer him.

Kang Chan stood next to Akrion and picked up a pair of tongs. He then put a ridiculous amount of food on the child’s plate.

“You’re malnourished, aren’t you? You have to eat a lot so you can recover. Don’t worry about anything and just eat as much as you want.”

Akrion glanced at the elder, then looked back at Kang Chan.

“Your grandfather can eat as much as he wants too,” Kang Chan said, answering Akrion’s silent concern.

Using the tongs, he picked up meat similar in size to the one he had given Akrion and put it on the elder’s plate.

The elder only had two teeth at the top and one tooth at the bottom. He looked like he would have trouble eating noodles, let alone any meat.

The elder and the albino boy put a lot of other delicacies on their plate, including mashed potatoes, salad, bread, stew, and some more meat. Sitting across from Kang Chan afterward, they set their giant plate of food on the table.

“Get this kid some milk,” Kang Chan said.

Smiling, Kwak Cheol-Ho put a glass of milk in front of Akrion.

“Mahadsanid,”[2] the elder said, thanking Kwak Cheol-Ho, before they started eating.

“Are these seats taken?”

Kang Chan turned toward the voice. Much to his surprise, Andrei, Tyler, and even Robert were right beside their table, hoping to join them for breakfast.

Why are these bastards here?

Kang Chan smirked at the trio.

“Got some time to spare after breakfast?” Robert quietly asked Kang Chan.

“Why? What’s up?”

“From the looks of it, we’ll probably withdraw and return home today. We were hoping to share a drink with you before we go our separate ways.”

“Everyone’s leaving today?”

“I’m not sure about the other teams, but we are.”

Tyler immediately added, “We’re also planning to withdraw today.”

Since Gérard would follow Kang Chan's orders, the only one left who hadn't decided yet was Andrei.

"Andrei," Kang Chan called.

He was doing everything he could to stop himself from hitting Andrei's very punchable face.

"Yeah?"

Andrei's response was strangely filled with defiance.

This son of a bitch is really getting on my nerves!

Kang Chan smiled as he turned to Akrion. He had to hold back his anger at all costs.

"Well? What is it?" Andrei urged.

Seeing the red light had clearly driven this fucker crazy. It would be quite a feat to find someone as consistently detestable as him.

"I'll be having a meeting with Robert and Tyler after breakfast. You can either come with us or ask the two tribespeople questions. You may talk to them only when Gérard and Daye are with them, though," Kang Chan replied.

"All right," Andrei forced himself to answer, then put down his fork.

Gérard's cheek twitched in annoyance, but when Kang Chan glanced at him, he swiftly returned his attention to his food.

If they argued or fought now, they could unintentionally scare Akrion and the elder.

Pretending that nothing was wrong, Kang Chan cut up big pieces of the lamb meat with his fork and ate it.

It was strange, but a lot of African kids would turn their heads like deer and smile whenever they saw something funny.

Akrion did just that.

Perhaps it was because Kang Chan was with him, but he ate quite a lot. He didn't even seem to mind the fact that he was sitting at a table that was a little too high for him.

How could Kang Chan put his fork down when a kid was eating so heartily right in front of him?

He remained seated at the table and kept eating, stopping only when the Akrion had finished his food.

Won't he eating that much make him sick?

Akrion's condition had given him white hair, eyebrows, and skin.

His people had a superstition that cutting and putting the limbs of kids like him in their homes would make them rich. They also believed that beheading albino children and keeping their heads would make their household prosper. Hence, Akrion had lived the majority of his life in fear.

That same boy had just finished all of the food on his plate and was now sitting back with a satisfied look on his face.

Deciding to digest their breakfast first, Kang Chan led the elder and the child to the benches, ignoring Andrei's gaze. He then spent a bit of time playing and having childish conversations with the boy.

"I have to go to the barracks over there for a bit. See that person? Yes, him. While I'm gone, I want you to sit here and watch him and your grandfather talk," Kang Chan told Akrion.

After listening to Roberre's interpretation, the elder gave a short answer. Akrion nodded then, disappointment written all over his face.

"I'll see you later."

Kang Chan waved at them as he headed to the Green Berets' barrack.

"Come on in," Robert said.

He and the other Green Berets were in the middle of packing.

"I've already said everything that needed to be said yesterday. I just called you today to give you these." Robert held out five Green Beret helmets. "These belonged to the soldiers we left behind at this base to go on the recent operation. I believe you, of all people, would know the value of these helmets."

"My men and I thank you for commanding us, God of Blackfield," he said as he looked straight at Kang Chan. Deep eyes like his were quite common among Caucasian men. "We also thank the South Korean special forces team for their dedication. We're giving these helmets in hopes that you wouldn't leave us out if you ever find an opportunity to take revenge on those bastards."

Kang Chan silently stared at Robert. Accepting these helmets made him feel like he was accepting an award despite having recently gotten a lot of his allies killed in combat.

The Green Berets giving these helmets to him meant that they had completely lost to Kang Chan and the South Korean team. It also symbolized their alliance and their promise to work together in taking revenge on their enemies.

Smirking, Kang Chan reached out and accepted the helmets.

Whoosh.

Tightly gritting his teeth, Robert saluted Kang Chan. He probably felt as if he was giving away his fallen brothers.

After Kang Chan returned the salute, the two put their hands down.

"Good luck out there."

"I won't ever forget this operation," Kang Chan said in English.

“You can speak in English?” Robert asked, surprise evident in his expression.

“Nah. That’s all I know how to say.”

Kang Chan didn’t just play around during his training in France.

After shaking hands with Robert, Kang Chan brought the five helmets to the South Korean team’s barracks.

“Bring these inside the barracks. Consider them as the Green Berets’ respect for our team’s determination,” Kang Chan told his men.

Kwak Cheol-Ho walked over to Kang Chan, respectfully took the helmets, and headed inside.

Kang Chan had to meet with the SBS next.

On his way to the SBS’ barracks, he found Tyler sitting on a bench.

“Want some coffee?” Tyler asked.

“Sure.”

Now that he had thought about it, he hadn’t had a cup of coffee today yet.

Once Kang Chan had sat down on the bench, Tyler offered him a cigarette.

Chk chk!

“Huu!” Tyler exhaled the cigarette smoke. “Considering you already have some of our helmets, I doubt you need more.”

The gorilla’s serious expression made it hard for Kang Chan to tell if he was joking or picking a fight. Hence, he simply smirked. This was the best response he could give in moments like this.

Kang Chan glanced at Tyler, who threw his cigarette on the ground and stepped on it.

What’s he doing? Is this his way of saying that he wants to step on us like that?

“As much as I hate to admit this, I’m thankful that you took command of us during the operation,” Tyler said. He then stood up and straightened his firm shoulders. “I hope that we never have to meet as enemies.”

“Likewise.”

After they shook hands, Tyler headed to their barracks. He still had a bitter expression even though their joint operation was about to come to an end.

Extinguishing his cigarette, Kang Chan looked around him. He couldn’t see Seok Kang-Ho and Gérard.

Did they go back to the mess hall? Should I spend some time here while I’m waiting for my coffee? No, I should let that one go. If Tyler forgets about his offer because he’s busy packing, that cup of coffee is going to make me look ridiculous.

Kang Chan stood up and headed to the mess hall.

Chapter 268.2: It's an Opportunity (1)

Bam! Pow!

As soon as he pulled the door of the mess hall open, he immediately heard people fighting.

Gérard elbowed Andrei in the cheek. Meanwhile, Andrei was punching Gérard's side with his left fist.

Bam! Pow! Bam! Crash! Bam! Bam!

The two traded swift and powerful blows, pushing the table away.

Kang Chan rushed to Akrion—who was frightened by the commotion—and picked him up.

The fight was gruesome.

Full of spite, Andrei looked as if he planned to release all of the anger that had been building up inside him. Meanwhile, Gérard's eyes glinted with the rage from losing his rookie and his loathing for Andrei's attitude.

Bam! Pow! Pow!

Akrion flinched every time he heard them exchanging frightening blows.

Gérard's cheek and the area above his left eye were cut open, and blood burst from Andrei's mouth and nose.

Pow pow pow! Pow pow! Bam! Bam bam bam!

Roberre gritted his teeth as he stood in front of the elder to protect him.

There was no room for Kang Chan to butt into this. After all, this battle was between two special forces teams, between two commanders. Only when one of them had been knocked out cold or rendered unable to fight would all of this end.

Bam! Crack!

Andrei hit Gérard on the side again, making the latter twist in pain. In retaliation, he elbowed the area between Andrei's nose and cheek.

Crash!

Andrei fell backward. Using a table as leverage, he pushed himself back up.

Gritting his teeth, Gérard reached out toward him.

Bam! Pow! Pow! Bam! Bam! Bam!

They would put an end to this whole affair with this final clash.

As Andrei punched him in the side and armpit, Gérard landed consecutive elbows on Andrei's cheek.

Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam! Crash!

After sustaining a couple more hits, Andrei finally took a couple of steps back and leaned against a table.

Bam! Bam! Bam! Crack!

'That should do it,' Kang Chan thought.

He glanced at Seok Kang-Ho, who in turn rushed toward the two.

"Enough!" Seok Kang-Ho shouted.

"Huff! Huff!"

Seok Kang-Ho put his arms around Gérard and pulled him away from Andrei.

Crash! Thud.

The table slid back a little bit more, sending Andrei falling to the ground.

"Get him out of here," Kang Chan ordered.

When he looked at the Spetsnaz soldiers, they immediately helped Andrei walk away. They seemed to have understood him even though he spoke in Korean.

"Roberre," Kang Chan called.

"Oui."

"Prepare two cups of warm tea."

"Oui."

As Roberre headed to their barracks, Gérard approached Kang Chan, blood flowing from the cut on his cheek and above his left eye.

"Go get treated. Make sure to have your ribs checked as well," Kang Chan ordered.

"Yes, sir," Gérard answered. He left the barracks with a frown.

"What happened?" Kang Chan asked Seok Kang-Ho.

"Well, I need to know what they said first before I can answer that."

Oh right! Seok Kang-Ho doesn't can't speak French.

As Kang Chan smirked, Akrion carefully looked up.

"Let's go outside. Tell the men to clean up this mess," Kang Chan ordered.

"Got it."

With Akrion still in his arms, Kang Chan walked out of the mess hall.

Even though this was their last day here, their situation still refused to get any easier for them.

Kang Chan headed to the bench near their barracks and seated Akrion next to him.

The elder carefully sat next to the child.

Soon, Roberre brought over two mugs and a few biscuits from the Foreign Legion's barracks. He handed them to the elder and the child.

“What happened?” Kang Chan asked Roberre.

“We didn’t get to ask. The fight started as soon as our commander said that he wouldn’t let it go if anyone other than me butted into the fight—”

Crunch. Crunch.

The sound of him eating biscuits startled Akrion. Kang Chan smiled pleasantly at him.

Why is he so shy?

Finding Akrion’s response funny, Kang Chan burst into laughter.

“I’ve sent some people to the mess hall to clean up the mess. Seok Kang-Ho, who had dropped by their barracks, exclaimed. He then handed one of the cups of coffee that he prepared to Kang Chan. “Anyway, that bastard Gérard’s improved a lot since the last time we saw him!”

“What did he improve on?” Kang Chan asked.

“Didn’t you see the way he fought? I heard that a position changes people’s manners, but damn! I shouldn’t fight him unless absolutely necessary!” Seok Kang-Ho commented. “Well, look at that fucker suddenly appearing the moment we started talking about him! Nobility my ass.”

Gérard made his way to Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho as they spoke. He had folded gauze and bandages over the two cuts on his face.

“How’s the wound on your shoulder? It got ripped open again, didn’t it?” Kang Chan asked.

“I already got it stitched back up.”

Is it even possible to stitch him up and send him on his way so quickly? It’s not like they can use a sewing machine on him.

“Why didn’t you let us finish the fight?” Gérard wondered.

“Were you planning on killing Andrei?”

“No. I was just planning to beat him up until he can never be a part of the special forces ever again.”

Kang Chan just smiled in response.

Gérard took out a pack of cigarettes but quickly put it away again, realizing Akrion was with them.

Damn it!

Gérard often looked mischievous when he smiled. However, his face was so swollen right now that he looked like a monster when he did.

“Things would get out of hand at this rate, Gérard. Let’s just observe how things go for a bit and then withdraw. Otherwise, the Spetsnaz might suspect that we’re going after the red light,” Kang Chan said.

“What about that, then?” Gérard asked, looking toward the mountain.

“If what the elder said is true, then we can just let those who want to check for themselves search through the mountain as much as they want. They’re never going to find it anyway. I’m sure as hell they’re going after these two if they don’t find anything, though, so we’ll leave this place while they’re wasting their time. If we get into another fight here, we probably won’t survive.”

“Understood.”

Having sorted everything out, Kang Chan consoled Akrion and went back to their barracks.

“Has South Korea contacted us yet?” he asked as soon as he was inside.

“Yes, sir. They said our transport is expected to arrive tomorrow,” Cha Dong-Gyun firmly answered.

“What about our wounded at Mogadishu?”

“From what I’ve heard, they’re still there.”

“I know everyone is having a rough time right now, but once the US and UK special forces have left, I want everyone armed and ready for combat.”

“Understood.”

By the time Kang Chan had gone back outside, the Green Berets were already out of their barracks with their luggage. A UN employee stood next to them.

“The Green Berets are leaving! Let’s see them off!” Kang Chan exclaimed.

As he walked over, his men walked out of the barracks and crowded at the entrance.

They respectfully shook hands with each other, their free hand positioned under the elbow of the extended arm.

They nodded at each other every time their eyes met, exchanging respect one last time as their joint operation came to an end.

Not long after the French and South Korean teams sent the Green Berets off, the SBS departed as well.

The base suddenly felt empty.

After sending off the two teams, Kang Chan turned his head to the nearby South Korean and French soldiers.

“From now on, I want everyone armed at all times,” Kang Chan ordered in South Korean, then in French.

Starting with Gérard, the soldiers went back into their respective barracks.

As soon as Kang Chan entered their barracks, he strapped a pistol to his waist and left leg and a bayonet to his right leg. Afterward, he put magazines in the pouches of a vest, then put the vest somewhere he could easily grab at any given moment.

Heading back out, he found Akrion giggling.

This is fucking absurd! Gérard had been fighting with glinting eyes just a moment ago, but he’s now spouting bullshit just to make a child laugh even though he’s armed!

Kang Chan was watching the two when Seok Kang-Ho approached him.

“What have you decided to do with the child?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“I’m sending him to France with Gérard for now.”

“That’s probably better than staying here.” Seok Kang-Ho looked at the barracks that were near the entrance. “Even though there were only a few of us left to begin with since many of us died in the ambush, the two teams leaving still makes this place feel quite empty.”

“Why are you acting like you’re new to this?”

“I can’t smoke as much because of the kid!” Seok Kang-Ho grumbled while looking up at the sky.

They were in Africa.

Under its scorching sun, standing on dry and rough ground and basking in the rising heat only made them want to drink more coffee and smoke more cigarettes.

“South Korea is still lacking in a lot of aspects,” Seok Kang-Ho commented.

“What makes you say that?”

“Our transport should be at our location on the same day we decide to withdraw. Does it make sense to you that we have to stay here for another day or two because they still have to figure out how to get the aircraft here? If you weren’t here, the UN would have seen this as a perfect opportunity to treat us as a nuisance.”

The Spetsnaz’s barrack opened amid their conversation. Andrei—who looked like a mess—and his men came out with their luggage.

Kang Chan cocked his head. “Has that bastard decided not to stay here anymore?”

Did Andrei really decide to leave, even though he had stayed at the table with the other guys until the end when he could only eat soup because he couldn’t chew properly during our training in France?

Andrei definitely wasn't the type to leave first just because he was ashamed of losing to Gérard.

Looking embarrassed, Andrei walked past Gérard and approached Kang Chan.

"We'll get going," Andrei said. His eyes were so swollen that not even Kang Chan could see them.

"Did Russia contact you guys?"

"Yes."

"See you later, then," Kang Chan said.

"All right."

Andrei was so simple-minded that he could even be mistaken as stupid.

"Andrei," Kang Chan called.

Andrei, who was about to walk away, looked over his shoulder and toward Kang Chan.

"As an ally in joint special forces operations, you're really reliable. However, you're lacking as a commander. Keep in mind that the more you fight those on your side, the more you discourage your men."

Why is this simple-minded fucker smirking?

Even though Andrei's eyes were swollen, Kang Chan could tell Andrei was looking straight at him.

"Got it," Andrei answered, then walked toward the entrance of the base.

This was Kang Chan's first time encountering someone who would choose to be detestable until the very end.

The Spetsnaz followed behind their commander. A moment later, Kang Chan and the others heard the Russians' cars leaving.

Should I have taught Andrei a lesson before sending him home so that he can get his shit together?

As Kang Chan pursed his lips, Seok Kang-Ho leaned closer to him.

"This is an opportunity," Seok Kang-Ho said.

"What do you mean?"

"With the US, the UK, and Russia now out of the picture, only us, France, and the two tribespeople are left in this base."

Following Seok Kang-Ho's gaze, Kang Chan looked at Akrion and his grandfather.

Gérard, who was entertaining the child, seemed to be feeling his best.

Chapter 269: It's An Opportunity (2)

"What time is it?" Kang Chan asked.

"Uh, it's ten o'clock," Seok Kang-Ho answered.

“Let’s go talk to the old man first.”

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho headed to the benches together.

“Hahahaha!”

Akrion’s laughter was so rambunctious that Kang Chan immediately knew that Gérard’s show had reached its climax.

“Fucking idiot,” Seok Kang-Ho criticized. Kang Chan couldn’t have said it better himself.

If anyone saw Gérard now, they wouldn’t be able to tell that he was the commander of the Foreign Legion and the same man who had beaten Andrei to a pulp earlier. While Andrei had gone mad over the red light, it looked as if the scorching heat of Africa had done it for Gérard.

When Gérard’s great performance ended, Akrion passionately applauded him with enthusiasm. Perhaps this memory would stay with the child for the rest of his life.

“Roberre. Ask the old man if we can go to the cave right now,” Kang Chan ordered.

“Oui.”

As commanded, Roberre talked to the elder in Somali. The elder glanced at Kang Chan before replying.

“He says we can,” Roberre said.

Kang Chan steeled his resolve.

“Gérard. I want you, Roberre, and two more of your men armed and ready to move out. I’ll meet you back here in a bit.”

“Roger that, Cap.”

Gérard and Roberre dashed over to the barracks.

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho also went back to their barracks to get ready.

“Who are you bringing with us?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“Jong-Il and Dong-Gyun,” Kang Chan suggested.

“Doo-Hee’s better if we want to ride comfortably, don’t you think?”

“Then let’s bring him too.”

“Got it.”

Upon reaching their barracks, Kang Chan immediately started barking orders.

“Choi Jong-Il, Cha Dong-Gyun, Lee Doo-Hee. We’re heading out. Get ready.”

The three sprang to their feet.

“You won’t need helmets, but bring handheld radios and plenty of C-rations and water,” Kang Chan instructed. “Kwak Cheol-Ho!”

“Yes, sir!”

“I’ve got Blanchet in charge of the outer perimeter. If there’s a problem, talk it over with him and deal with it together. If you get raided, inform me over the radio ASAP and retreat to the village in the mountains. You don’t have to defend this base,” Kang Chan added.

“Yes, sir. We’ll keep ourselves armed until you get back.”

Kang Chan simply nodded in response.

Click!

He zipped up and buckled his vest and wore the radio earsets into his ears. Afterward, he wrapped a bandana around his head and slung a military boonie hat around his neck.

Clunk!

Before leaving the barracks, Kang Chan examined his rifle.

“I don’t know how long we’ll be away,” he said.

“Understood.”

With their current capabilities, the South Korean team could calmly and wisely handle any situation that could come their way.

By the time Kang Chan had walked out of the barracks, Gérard, Roberre, and two French soldiers were already waiting for them.

“Let’s go.”

Kang Chan went to the entrance with the rest of the men. While they prepared two Humvees, Blanchet walked over.

“We’re going to take another look at the tribe’s village. Continue guarding the perimeter,” Kang Chan told him.

“Yes, sir.”

Vroom. Vroom.

Roberre helped the old man into the French team’s vehicle. With the size of their group, it would be best to keep him around someone who could understand what he was saying, especially since they might have to change directions somewhere down the line.

Akrion glanced over at Kang Chan and nervously shifted on his feet.

“Do you want to come with us?” Kang Chan asked in Korean as he nodded toward the Humvee. When Akrion walked over to him, he added, “Let’s get you in, then.”

Kang Chan lifted the child into the vehicle. The expression on Gérard's face was almost as good as the show of a lifetime that he had put on earlier.

Vroom. Vroom!

The two Humvees soon drove off.

Noticing the sun glaring down right above them, Kang Chan removed the boonie hat from around his neck and put it on Akrion's head. He then secured it by tightening the chin strings, preventing it from falling due to the car bumping up and down.

Akrion tightly held onto the hat with his white arms.

Clunk! Clunk!

Is this really that fun?

Gérard's show seemed to have put Akrion at ease, considering he laughed every time the car shook. It was a shame that the first Western culture that he had encountered were weapons and military vehicles, but one wouldn't be able to survive even just a day in Africa if they let such things bother them.

"Captain, if there really is a Blackhead there, won't it put you in danger?" Seok Kang-Ho asked.

"I'm not sure. I'll only know when I get there," Kang Chan replied.

"Let's withdraw the moment you feel something is even just a bit off."

Kang Chan nodded.

Akrion's laughter died down as they got closer to the mountain, the eagles hovering above it coming into view. When they finally reached the foot of it, they found human bones scattered among the trucks that had been turned into scrap metal.

Kang Chan couldn't really do anything about this sight.

Creak!

The car screeched to a halt, and everyone stepped out.

"Where do we need to go?" Kang Chan asked.

Roberre spoke to the old man, then turned back to Kang Chan. "He says we have to go straight over the ridge."

"Daye, scout ahead with Choi Jong-II," Kang Chan ordered.

"Got it."

As the two climbed over the ridge, Cha Dong-Gyun and the French soldiers swiftly moved into positions they could provide cover fire from.

Upon reaching the top, Seok Kang-Ho climbed over the ridge. He came back up a few moments later.

Chk.

“All clear,” he said.

“Let’s go.”

Kang Chan crouched down with his back to Akrion. If the enemy launched a surprise attack on them now, Akrion would be like a wildebeest calf surrounded by a pride of lions.

Kang Chan inevitably felt a rush of heat run down his back when the child got on his back.

Tat. Tat.

He slung his rifle over his shoulder and put his index finger on the trigger guard. Afterward, he began climbing up the ridge.

“Lead the way, Roberre. Gérard! Form an advance party with your men and recon ahead,” Kang Chan ordered in French.

“Oui!”

Kang Chan then turned to Seok Kang-Ho.

“Daye, bring up the rear with Cha Dong-Gyun. Choi Jong-II, protect our left flank. Lee Doo-Hee, our right. Eliminate any threat you see.”

“Yes, sir,” Choi Jong-II replied.

“Got it,” Seok Kang-Ho responded.

They were off.

As the old man guided them, Roberre pointed Gérard and his men to their next positions. The tactic they employed was stupid and uncomfortable, but to survive in Africa, one always had to proceed with as much caution as they could muster and then more.

With the sun right at the zenith, the heat grew quite intense. The tribe’s village was up the ridge to their right, and to their left was where the Green Berets had fought.

The old man led them straight over the ridge and down, stopping at the foot of another mountain. When the old man pointed to the waist-high bushes in the middle of it, the group resumed walking.

Rustle! Rustle!

The dirt being swept away sounded different than before.

After about half an hour of walking straight back up the mountain, the old man turned right, leading them to a big loop around the lower half of the mountain. Since there was no path, they had to go around the mountain on the crumbling dirt.

“Would you like me to carry him?” Choi Jong-II quietly asked.

Kang Chan shook his head. If his stamina was that low, he wouldn’t have been nicknamed “God of Blackfield.”

They walked for another half hour.

Chk.

“Roberre, ask how much further we have to go,” Kang Chan directed.

Chk.

“Until the sun tilts about one more palm,” Roberre replied.

Damn it! Is that an hour? Two?

Chk.

“Gérard. Find a place to rest but keep your guard up.”

Chk.

“Understood.”

After about ten more minutes, they saw Gérard waiting up ahead in an area recessed into the cliff face, giving them a clear view of everything below. It wasn't a bad spot to rest in.

“Let's take a short break,” Kang Chan stated.

He set Akrion down in the recession. The part of his back that had been in contact with the child was soaked with sweat.

Cha Dong-Gyun and Lee Doo-Hee pulled out water and C-rations from their packs. The water was lukewarm, but it was still refreshing.

“Daye, you and Gérard eat first,” Kang Chan said.

“Got it.”

Kang Chan and Cha Dong-Gyun stood near the cliff to get a better view of the area below.

They heard rustles coming from the men eating biscuits, chocolates, and the other food in the C-rations, the contents of which differed for every country.

The food was laid out in groups, sorted by type and Akrion ate it steadily, going through the groups one by one.

After about five minutes or so, Seok Kang-Ho and Gérard got up and switched with Kang Chan and Cha Dong-Gyun.

In this kind of terrain and during missions like these, nothing was more important than vigilance. Hence, regardless of their rank, their more outstanding soldiers would always have to stand guard unless they had a good reason not to.

Kang Chan tore open a C-ration and ate some chocolates and biscuits. After finishing it all in about five minutes, he drank some water and stood up.

“Let's get going.”

They didn't have much time to spare.

Only the South Korean and French teams were left at the base. There was no knowing what might happen, so he wanted to return as soon as possible.

Kang Chan carried Akrion on his back again, then ordered his men to set out in the same formation as before.

I wonder what's waiting for us in the cave that the old man's talking about.

Rustle. Rustle.

The longer they walked, the more Kang Chan's chest tightened in frustration. He felt as if he was doing something wrong.

It would be bad if there was nothing there, but it would also be a problem if they found a Blackhead. If it tried to suck the energy out of him, he wouldn't be able to do anything about it.

Thirty minutes into their walk, Kang Chan's heart began pounding against his chest.

Thump, thump, thump, thump.

Damn it!

Kang Chan immediately realized that things were finally starting, putting him on edge.

It seemed today wouldn't be any easier than the days before.

Fuck these warnings.

He had no idea if it was telling him that the base was under attack, he was about to face impending danger, or someone he cared about was in danger.

Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump.

When his heartbeat grew even stronger and faster, he immediately pressed a button on his radio.

Chk.

"Gérard, stay on your toes," Kang Chan ordered.

Chk.

"Oui."

Chk.

"Daye, keep your guard as high up as you can. Shoot anything suspicious on sight."

Chk.

"Got it."

Kang Chan's eyes glinted.

Fine. Let's do this, you fucking rock! I'm fucking coming for you.

Thump, thump, thump, thump.

Ignoring the warnings that his heart was giving him, Kang Chan pressed on. However, due to his orders, their progress slowed down. If they let down their guard during moments like this, they could regret it for the rest of their lives.

Rustle! Rustle!

As they proceeded, they scanned the area as if they were in enemy territory, making sure not to miss anything.

Haah. Haah.

Kang Chan's senses sharpened so much that he could now see the tips of the bushes's dry branches and hear even the dirt crunching under Roberre's boots.

They'd gone on for about twenty minutes when Roberre raised his fist.

Kang Chan immediately raised his left fist as well, causing the entire group to stop and lower their stances. They seemed to have spotted something suspicious up ahead.

Haah. Haah.

It was Gérard's call—a pullet that had been through all kinds of wars in Africa and just recently beaten up a Spetsnaz commander. Kang Chan waited for the next signal, ready to run forward at any moment.

What is it, Gérard?

After about a minute of stifling silence, Roberre gestured ahead of him with his index and middle finger.

Forward.

The vanguard had likely just found a animal in hiding.

Rustle! Rustle!

Amid their torturously slow and frustratingly intense march, Choi Jong-Il swerved his rifle toward every crunch of the dirt under their feet.

It was a laborious and tiring advance for the man in the lead, a position Kang Chan never had entrusted to anyone but Gérard.

After about forty minutes, they had finally gone around the bottom of the mountain.

Chk.

“He says we have to go down,” Roberre radioed.

After a moment of collecting their bearings and getting a rough direction, they pushed onward again.

Akrion, who was still clinging to Kang Chan's back with his hands and feet, did his best not to make even the faintest sound. He acted as if he had experienced hiding this way before.

They walked for about twenty more minutes. They were only twenty meters away now from getting out of the mountain and meeting up with Gérard.

From there, they would either have to climb up the mountain in front of them or walk between the mountain they had just descended and the mountain in front of them

Roberre spoke over the radio again.

Chk.

“He says we have to walk up the mountain in front of us and go right.”

Before heading down the last few meters of the mountain they were on, Kang Chan stopped for a moment and quickly scanned their surroundings. If hostiles were lying in wait for them on top of the mountain, they would be sitting ducks out there.

Thump, thump, thump, thump.

His heartbeat had become even heavier.

Gérard had been at the front for over an hour now. Making him stay in the same position any longer than that would put him in danger. However, it would also be quite dangerous for everyone to descend the mountain all at once.

Chk.

“He wants you to stop there,” Roberre radioed first.

Chk.

“Gérard! Check the area above us,” Kang Chan commanded.

As Gérard responded affirmatively, Kang Chan waved to get Lee Doo-Hee’s attention.

“I want you on a nearby vantage point.”

“Roger that.”

“Choi Jong-II, cover Lee Doo-Hee.”

“Yes, sir.”

Choi Jong-II and Lee Doo-Hee headed back up the mountain.

Kang Chan still hadn’t given any signal to the rear yet. The old man and Roberre were already quite near Gérard.

Chk.

“The old man says this is the place. This cave apparently ends at the pit in front of the village,” Roberre said on the radio.

Chk.

“What about the cave?” Kang Chan asked.

Chk.

“I don’t see it from here.”

Chk.

“I’ll hold this position. Gérard, check the cave. Secure it as well while you’re at it.”

Chk.

“Copy that, Cap,” Gérard replied.

Once Kang Chan was done issuing orders, Lee Doo-Hee informed him on the radio that he had found a good vantage point.

Kang Chan was currently looking down from twenty meters up the mountain. However, no matter how closely he looked, he couldn't see the entrance to the cave near Gérard.

He wondered if the old man was starting to go blind, but the description about the pit in front of the village was too convincing.

The old man pointed to the mountain several times. He then took Roberre's hand and walked headfirst into its side.

Huh?

Frowning, Kang Chan narrowed his eyes at where the old man had just disappeared.

Did he just walk into the mountain?

Gérard briefly looked up at Kang Chan and then turned back toward the mountain.

Chk.

“Roberre!” Gérard shouted into the radio.

No response.

Chk.

“Gérard, what happened?” Kang Chan asked.

Chk.

“I don't know, sir... It's like the mountain swallowed them.”

Gérard sounded quite shocked.

Thump, thump, thump, thump.

Go back! Let's go back!

As Kang Chan's heart pounded even harder, Roberre and the old man walked out of the mountainside. They then spoke to Gérard.

Chk.

“That was amazing! It looks like it's just another part of the mountain, but when we pushed through like the old man said, we found ourselves in a cave.”

“What the fuck?” Kang Chan swore.

What in the world is happening?

Chk.

“Captain, what should we do?” Gérard asked on the radio.

Kang Chan glared sharply at their surroundings.

Thump, thump, thump, thump.

Shit!

Kang Chan's heart was beating so hard that it was almost unbearable.

Chk.

"Gérard, head inside with the others and make sure the cave is clear. If you don't find anything suspicious, come back outside and give me a signal," Kang Chan ordered.

Chk.

"Understood."

After asking Roberre a few questions, Gérard walked toward the mountainside with the two French soldiers.

His face crumpled right before impact. However, like before, he and the two soldiers just mysteriously disappeared.

Huh?

Thump, thump, thump, thump.

The heavy pounding of Kang Chan's heart had caused his chest to tighten. After a few torturous moments, Gérard walked back out of the mountain.

Rustle.

Chk.

"All clear," Gérard radioed.

Fine! Since you insist on calling me out, I'll fucking go! I'm the one who told you to wait in the first place anyway!

Kang Chan looked back for a moment.

Leaving only the sniper team out here would be no different from telling them to die.

Chk.

"Sniper team, regroup with Gérard. You too, Daye, but keep covering our rear as you do," he instructed.

Chk.

"Roger that," Seok Kang-Ho responded.

Given the situation, their best option was to go in together.

Kang Chan started his descent, keeping a wary eye on his surroundings. A moment later, Seok Kang-Ho and the sniper team also reached Gérard.

“This is the place,” Gérard said as he nodded toward the mountainside. The old man nodded in agreement.

“What’s all the fuss about?” Seok Kang-Ho grumbled.

“We’ll be getting in through here,” Kang Chan answered.

“How long do you think it’ll take us to dig through this? We didn’t bring any equipment,” Seok Kang-Ho complained.

Having to drill a hole to get inside would have made Kang Chan feel a lot more at ease than just running headfirst into it.

“Gérard, go in,” Kang Chan said.

“Understood.”

Gérard rushed in toward the mountain.

“Huh?” Seok Kang-Ho exclaimed the same way Kang Chan did earlier. “What in the fucking voodoo shit just happened?”

“Roberre! Go inside with the old man!” Kang Chan commanded.

“Yes, sir.”

Roberre relayed Kang Chan’s words to the old man. Soon, they disappeared into the mountain as well.

It was truly an absurd and incredulous sight.

“Daye!”

Receiving a look from Kang Chan, Seok Kang-Ho glared at where Roberre disappeared with glinting eyes.

“Fuck!” Seok Kang-Ho cursed as he dashed forward.

All Kang Chan could do was laugh in disbelief now.

Choi Jong-Il, Cha Dong-Gyun, and Lee Doo-Hee went inside right after.

Thump, thump, thump, thump.

What do you want me to do? Want me to go back now even though I’ve already gone this far?

Kang Chan looked over his shoulder to check on Akrion, who just looked exhausted.

How can he make that kind of expression after seeing something like this?

Fine!

Kang Chan charged toward the mountain.

Swoosh!

Chapter 270: I Can't Just Go Back (1)

Damn it!

Kang Chan noticed a sudden change in the air as soon as they entered the cave. Their surroundings had become dark as well.

He checked his surroundings with spiteful eyes, finding the French and South Korean soldiers looking quite flustered. They, too, were scanning their vicinity while awaiting new orders.

The cave didn't seem man-made, but it looked as if it could collapse at any moment. Perhaps it was because a large part of the mountain had been destroyed by their battle a few days ago.

The cave was twenty-five meters tall and about six meters wide. Since light didn't get into the cave from the entrance, it felt like they were standing under the moonlight at night.

“Turn on the flashlights,” Kang Chan ordered.

Choi Jong-Il, Cha Dong-Gyun, and the two French soldiers turned on their tactical flashlights and attached them to their rifles.

Ba-dum. Ba-dum. Ba-dum. Ba-dum.

Receiving yet another warning from his heart, Kang Chan became certain that a Blackhead was inside this cave. He was feeling the same shitty electrifying buzz that he had felt in the basement in the U.K.

Gérard looked at Kang Chan with surprise.

What's wrong?

Seeing Kang Chan's confusion, Gérard walked over to him while keeping an eye on the other soldiers.

“Captain,” Gérard called, his voice echoing despite speaking softly.

Kang Chan glanced at Seok Kang-Ho and the others as well, finding them with similar expressions. “What? Why does everyone look so surprised?”

“Surkard!” the elder shouted, surprise evident in his eyes.

“Your eyes are... glowing red,” Gérard said.

“What?”

“Your eyes are glowing red, Captain.”

Kang Chan turned his head toward Seok Kang-Ho.

“I don't know what Gérard said, but you've got red lasers coming out of your eyes right now,” Seok Kang-Ho said.

Are they pulling a prank on me or something? Do they think I'm stupid?

Gérard added, “I remember Andrei looking flustered as you were saying something at the mess hall yesterday. That fucker's a bastard, but he's no coward, so seeing him behave like that surprised me a bit. I think I understand now why he reacted that way, though. Your eyes might've been glowing red back then as well.”

While listening to Gérard, Kang Chan suddenly felt a tingling sensation. The Blackhead's energy was enveloping him.

"The glow's a bit brighter now," Gérard said, looking into Kang Chan's eyes. He didn't seem afraid, but he did look worried.

"This is getting weirder and weirder, Cap," Seok Kang-Ho said. "We should head to the base at the first sign of danger."

Ba-dum. Ba-dum. Ba-dum. Ba-dum.

As if agreeing with Seok Kang-Ho, Kang Chan's heart pounded against his chest harder.

"You might have the energy in you as well, Daye," Kang Chan said, "so I want you to bring up our rear again."

Seok Kang-Ho looked at Kang Chan straight in the eye. After a moment, he firmly answered, "All right."

He called Cha Dong-Gyun over and positioned themselves at the back of the formation.

"Roberre! Ask if the path splits somewhere in the cave and how much further we have to go until we reach our target location," Kang Chan ordered.

"Oui!"

As Roberre spoke to the elder, Gérard remained by Kang Chan's side.

Huff. Huff.

Let's end this today, then, you fucking rock!

Kang Chan steeled his resolve. Even if he avoided the Blackhead now, he would inevitably run into it someday anyway. Ending things now was far better than letting it drag him all over the place.

A few moments later, Roberre walked back to him. "He says there's only one path in the cave and that we have to walk as much time as... it takes a snake to digest a rat?"

Damn it!

At least tell us the sizes of the snake and the rat it swallowed!

"I'll take point. Gérard, I want you to follow with a bit of distance between us. Prioritize the child and our men's safety," Kang Chan commanded.

Gérard's cheek twitched. He considered disputing the order but ultimately decided not to. Kang Chan had never been the type to tolerate soldiers disobeying his orders or arguing with him.

"Oui," he obediently answered.

"Roberre, follow me with the old man," Kang Chan added.

"Oui!"

"Choi Jong-Il. Lee Doo-Hee. Watch our flanks."

“Yes, sir.”

Lee Doo-Hee handed a flashlight to Kang Chan, who then attached it to his rifle.

“Let’s go,” Kang Chan said afterward.

They kept the barrels of their guns pointed at the ceiling as they moved.

The floor sank a little with every step they took, making it seem as if they were walking on hardened sand.

Huff. Huff.

Having walked for quite some time now, Kang Chan began to wonder how big of a rat the snake had eaten.

Will the snake digest the rat quicker if we pick up the pace?

Ba-dum. Ba-dum. Ba-dum. Ba-dum.

‘I warned you multiple times, but you kept ignoring me,’ Kang Chan’s heart told him. It was still racing, seemingly making an excuse for what was about to happen.

Kang Chan soon felt the unpleasant tingling sensation coursing through him again like electricity.

However, despite how amazing the Blackhead was, it was still just a rock in the end. It didn’t have hands or feet!

Kang Chan swept his rifle from side to side, illuminating the cave.

Insects with disgusting numbers of legs moved quickly to avoid the light from the flashlight. One of them strode to hide in a corner with its long, curved legs.

After a while, they started smelling an unpleasant odor. The deeper they went into the cave, the stronger it became.

How long does it take for a snake to eat a rat anyway?

Kang Chan just kept walking, taking not even a single break. He felt more alert than he had ever been.

They kept finding more and more insects wherever they pointed their flashlights.

‘Ugh!’

As if someone had put a power cord in him, Kang Chan felt the tingling sensation return. His momentary pause made everyone behind him stop in their tracks and examine him.

The shock soon intensified, becoming incomparably stronger than the ones before. He couldn’t even take another step forward.

‘Ugh!’

Kang Chan gritted his teeth and pushed through the pain. Not long after, he saw a red light flaring from deeper into the cave.

“Surkard! Surkard!” the old man called, his tone making it hard to determine if he was surprised or touched.

Kang Chan was sick and tired of that nickname.

‘Goddamn it!’ he cursed as another electrifying wave coursed through him, causing his body to burn up.

This isn’t right! I can’t just stand here and let that damn rock kill me!

Kang Chan tried to move away, but his feet refused to listen to him.

Fucking shit! The son of a bitch got me right where it wanted me!

This was exactly what happened in the basement in the UK. Right now, the Blackhead was likely taking his energy away while it had him restricted.

“Gérard!”

Choi Jong-Il and Lee Doo-Hee were right behind him, but Kang Chan’s instincts made him call Gérard instead.

“Oui!”

“Pull me away!”

Whoosh!

Gérard ran toward Kang Chan and pulled him by the collar.

Thud!

The scene startled everyone in the cave. They didn’t expect Kang Chan to collapse so powerlessly like this.

Hissssss!

When Gérard started dragging Kang Chan away, Choi Jong-Il and Lee Doo-Hee ran over to help. They grabbed onto Kang Chan’s arms and pulled with all their might.

Hissssss!

The red light only disappeared when Kang Chan had been moved ten meters away from it. However, the tingling sensation remained.

“I’m good now,” Kang Chan said.

Gérard and the others leaned him against the cave wall and then surrounded him. They all looked flustered and worried.

Damn it!

A rock had just humiliated Kang Chan.

An insect brushed against his nape, making him step away from the wall.

“What’s wrong?” Gérard asked.

“Are you okay?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

What do I tell them? Who can I trust with this information?

Kang Chan not only felt like shit but also had so many things to think about right now.

“Roberre! Ask the old man why he brought me here. If I’m really the Surkard, then what do I have to do?”

After relaying his questions, Roberre turned back to Kang Chan. “He says he doesn’t know why he brought you here. All he knows is that when the Surkard returns, it’s their tribe’s duty to guide them to the guardian that resides in the deepest part of this cave. A shaman would normally be here to help us, but they died in the recent massacre.”

If that were the case, then what the elder said wouldn’t work.

“Gérard, remember what I told you a few days ago?” Kang Chan asked.

“Yes.”

“I’ve already experienced this same phenomenon in the UK. Back then, as if I was electrocuted, I found myself unable to move an inch. I then felt my energy gradually draining out of me.”

“Hmm.” Gérard glanced at the front of the cave, then looked back at Kang Chan. Worry was written all over his face. “Why don’t we just withdraw and return to base for now?”

“Give me a sec,” Kang Chan said.

He called Seok Kang-Ho and told him what he had just told Gérard.

“What do you want to do?” Seok Kang-Ho asked afterward.

Since the others weren’t a part of the conversation, Kang Chan had no choice but to interpret for them.

“Daye, for the captain’s sake, don’t you think it would be better to return to base?” Gérard asked.

“That’s what I told him earlier, but if that would mean he’d keep finding himself in situations like this even when we’re not around, it wouldn’t be such a bad idea to slug it out with the rock now.”

“Seriously? Have you found a way to end this?”

These absurd fuckers are only talking among themselves because I’m interpreting!

“Roberre!” Kang Chan called, suddenly growing curious. “Ask the old man how much farther we have to walk.”

The elder would likely just answer that they still had the length of the snake to go, but it wouldn’t hurt to ask anyway.

“He says we have to get close enough to hear the guardian talk,” Roberre said.

Damn it! That depends on how loud their voice is!

Keeping himself from shouting, he instead told Seok Kang-Ho what Roberre said.

“Captain, how about sending me and Gérard to scout ahead before we proceed?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

Kang Chan felt as if he had just been stabbed in the back. Seok Kang-Ho had clearly finished evolving.

“What did Daye say?” Gérard asked Kang Chan.

“He wants you two to scout ahead.”

“That’s actually a great idea. We can just decide once we’ve determined how much longer we have to walk and what’s waiting for us deeper into this cave.”

Hearing Gérard’s response made Kang Chan feel much better. He wanted to smoke, but Akrion was with them. Hence, he stood up and walked over to the old man instead.

“Roberre, ask him to take Gérard and Daye to the guardian,” he ordered.

“Oui.”

Roberre quickly did as instructed. The old man answered with an unwilling expression.

“He says that they can’t find the guardian without the Surkard himself. The shaman has to be present as well.”

Goddamn it. That means all of the plans we’ve put so much effort to make are now useless.

Since they were talking in French, Kang Chan walked over to Seok Kang-Ho and explained what was going on.

The other soldiers still had their guards up.

“So the old man knows he needs to bring you here but doesn’t know what we need to do?” Seok Kang-Ho asked afterward.

“That’s right.”

“What do you think about this, cap?”

Kang Chan cocked his head.

“If the situation here is anything like what happened in the UK, then that rock will definitely stop me and try to take my energy again. I had to rush toward it and connect a cable to it to stop it.”

Kang Chan also told Gérard the same thing.

“What if you touch or grab the Blackhead? Would you end up taking its energy instead?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“I’m going to need a way to touch it, then. We don’t have the spacesuit that I wore in the UK.”

Kang Chan examined the cave. For some reason, it felt like the damn rock was licking its lips while looking at him.

How do I kill that son of that bitch?

Kang Chan glared at the deeper part of the cave as he filled up with spite.

“Daye, what if you and Gérard grab onto me and run toward it?” Kang Chan asked.

“What are you saying?”

“The Blackhead will probably keep being a threat if I just leave it be. I have to put an end to all of this while I still have this opportunity. You can just bring me back here if charging toward it doesn’t work anyway.”

“What?! It can already paralyze you from this distance! What if getting closer to it does something even worse to you? We should find a safer way to do this than that stupid idea. It doesn’t matter if it takes some time.”

This is fucking unbelievable!

Kang Chan didn’t expect that Daye of all people would tell him that his idea was stupid.

“This plan has worked before! If I grab or touch it, I might be able to turn it into a useless rock just like what I did to the one in the UK!” Kang Chan argued.

“But wasn’t the Blackhead’s energy in the UK unstable because of us?”

“Well, yes. Fair point.”

Kang Chan interpreted their conversation for Gérard, who looked quite curious about it.

“Isn’t that too dangerous?” Gérard asked afterward.

“I’ll yell like I did earlier if I can’t handle it. You and Daye can pull me away then.”

Seeing the look in Kang Chan’s eyes, Gérard smirked. “You look like you’ve already decided to push through with this no matter what we say.”

“I can’t just go back now.”

“All right, fine.”

This time, Seok Kang-Ho was the one who looked curious. Kang Chan relayed their conversation to him.

“Let’s take Choi Jong-Il and Lee Doo-Hee with us,” Seok Kang-Ho suggested afterward.

“Sure.”

Now that they had a plan, they no longer had any reason to hesitate.

If Akrion wasn’t with them, Kang Chan would’ve smoked with Seok Kang-Ho and Gérard before pushing through with this.

Kang Chan walked further into the cave, causing the tingling sensation to grow even stronger.

“Choi Jong-Il, Lee Doo-Hee,” Kang Chan called.

He briefed the two about their plan, making sure to leave out confidential information.

Nevertheless, they didn’t bother asking him about the Blackhead or why they were doing this. They simply asked a few questions about how they should move.

“Get ready,” Kang Chan said.

He took a deep breath.

Damn it!

This was no different from how he felt right before the thick high-tension cable was placed on his body.

About time I make you pay, you worthless fucking rock! I’ll make sure to kill you here like how I killed you in the UK!

Seok Kang-Ho and Gérard put their arms under Kang Chan’s armpits, then lifted him.

“Ready?” Seok Kang-Ho asked, his worried tone making him sound as if he was asking Kang Chan if he was done getting ready to die.

Ba-dum. Ba-dum. Ba-dum. Ba-dum.

Kang Chan’s heart raced even faster, seemingly shouting at him about how crazy this plan was.

As Seok Kang-Ho and Gérard got into position, Choi Jong-Il and Lee Doo-Hee took aim and supported them from behind.

Huff. Huff.

Looking ahead of him, Kang Chan’s eyes filled up with resentment.

If he hadn’t dealt with the Blackhead in the UK, he might’ve told his men to run more easily.

“Don’t overdo it, Captain,” Gérard said softly.

Kang Chan didn’t respond.

You must be scared shitless about me getting to approach you. That’s the only reason I can think of about why you’re trying to stop me in my tracks. You did the same thing in the UK. Are you really that afraid of my glowing red eyes?

Huff. Huff.

Kang Chan glared inside the cave.

“Go!” he shouted.

Seok Kang-Ho and Gérard easily lifted Kang Chan.

“Let’s go! Gérard!” Seok Kang-Ho yelled.

Running as fast as they could, the trio soon reached the same area they had retreated from earlier.

Blood-red light flashed from deeper into the cave once more.