

Blackfield 321

Chapter 321: I'm Sorry (2)

Seok Kang-Ho had just finished his hamburger and coffee when Kim Hyung-Jung called Kang Chan, relaying unexpected news about a bomb threat.

- I've contacted the Presidential Security Service, the Defense Security Support Command, and the Military Counterintelligence Command. We've also deployed the Jeungpyeong special forces team and the 606's Special Operations Unit. Additional agents have also been sent to the hospital and Chairman Kim Gwan-Sik's residence, sir.

While Kim Hyung-Jung was talking, Choi Jong-Il entered the room with a serious expression.

"I'm heading over, Manager."

- Understood.

After hanging up, Kang Chan quickly got up from his seat.

"How's the hospital security?" he asked.

"We've completely blocked the entrance." Choi Jong-Il replied.

Unaware of the situation, Seok Kang-Ho and Gérard simply blinked.

"Bombs have been detonated to take out Directors Hwang and Song. We need to head to Samseong-dong to assess the situation. If you have extra handguns, give Mr. Seok one."

Choi Jong-Il upholstered his handgun and handed it to Seok Kang-Ho along with a magazine. Meanwhile, Gérard was still confused about what was happening. However, he could tell from their actions and Kang Chan's expression that the situation was serious.

Kang Chan briefly explained the situation to Gérard. Afterward, he ordered, "Stay here for now. We'll decide what to do next based on how things unfold."

Gérard simply nodded.

Kang Chan hurried out of the room and got into the car driven by Lee Doo-Bum. They headed straight to Samseong-dong.

Damn it! No wonder my heart was racing like that!

"Do you have a handgun and a radio?"

Woo Hee-Seung handed him a pistol, a magazine, and a radio from the glove compartment. Kang Chan clipped the radio to his waist and wore the earpiece.

Click! Clack!

The pistol was already loaded and ready to fire.

It was late, but Kang Chan knew Lanok would never miss out on such an event. He immediately gave him a call.

- Mr. Kang Chan.

His voice was as clear as it had been that day.

"Mr. Ambassador, we're under a bomb threat. We'll send military forces to secure and control the embassy entrance as quickly as possible."

- I see. The embassy has already been closed, so we should be safe until morning. Please stay calm and rational.

Lanok sounded reassuring. He seemed to be trying to comfort Kang Chan.

"Understood. I'll call you again," Kang Chan replied.

Nearly two hours had passed since midnight.

Thanks to Lee Doo-Bum driving at an extremely high speed on the empty roads, they were already entering the NIS' Samseong-dong branch by the time the call ended.

As they went up the elevator, Kim Hyung-Jung opened the door.

"Welcome."

Kang Chan knew they were under a bomb threat, but he still found Kim Hyung-Jung's gloomy expression concerning.

He silently followed him into the office and sat down across the table.

"Directors Hwang and Song have..."

Kim Hyung-Jung struggled to continue.

"I've just received reports that they have died in the explosions."

It was devastating news, but they felt surprisingly and eerily calm.

"Was it just two bomb threats?"

"Yes."

That was probably the end of the threat for now.

"I understand our enemy being able to figure out Director Hwang's routine, but I find it hard to believe that they could do the same to Director Song."

"We'll look into it once the situation stabilizes, but it won't be easy to uncover."

Kang Chan nodded in agreement.

The deep night was slowly turning into dawn. As they handled the aftermath, including minor things like traffic control, the sun began to rise and loom over them.

It was nothing short of chaos. Domestic broadcasts and even international media were intensively covering the terrorist attacks on Hwang Ki-Hyun and Song Chang-Wook.

Before dawn, Kim Hyung-Jung deployed the 606's Special Operations Unit to the French embassy and took other contingency measures. He then made two cups of strong coffee, placing one in front of Kang Chan.

Kang Chan was furious, but there was nothing he could do at the moment. Retaliation and all that crap could only be done when they knew who they were dealing with. Unfortunately, all they were aware of was that the UIS militia had attacked and there were rumors that Abibu was involved.

After taking a sip of his coffee, Kang Chan set the mug down.

"Apart from essential operations, I'll close down the Samseong-dong branch," Kim Hyung-Jung said with resolve. "That's what the director instructed me to do in situations like this."

Kang Chan just listened silently. Normally, he would be clamoring for retribution, but he was just quietly sipping his coffee now.

Kim Hyung-Jung looked at him worriedly.

"Manager."

"Yes?"

"Can you move the personnel from the four countries that are helping us to my office?"

Kim Hyung-Jung failed to immediately answer. Kang Chan's overly calm reaction seemed almost frightening.

"Who appoints the Director of the National Intelligence Service?"

"The president does."

Kang Chan stared at Kim Hyung-Jung intently, clearly expecting an answer to his previous request.

"That's also part of the director's instructions. I'll have them in your office within two days," said Kim Hyung-Jung.

Daylight had fully broken. Kang Chan's mind was clear, but his eyes stung so much he felt as if he had rubbed lemon juice on them.

"I'll go now."

Kang Chan stood up.

"Mr. Kang Chan."

Kim Hyung-Jung caught his gaze amid the odd silence. He normally would've had to plead with him to calm down and be rational. However, right now, he felt that perhaps Kang Chan should blow off some steam instead.

"You should get some rest, Manager," Kang Chan said in his usual tone. He left the office with a smirk.

As he reached the underground parking lot, Choi Jong-Il immediately walked over to him. It was rush hour. Carelessly heading out now would mean spending all his time stuck in traffic.

What to do?

Ever since he heard about the deaths of Hwang Ki-Hyun and Song Chang-Wook, he had been feeling lost. It was as if he had driven like mad believing he was heading to Seoul only to unexpectedly arrive in Daecheon and find himself facing the sea in the morning.

Choi Jong-Il stood right beside him as he looked at the parking lot exit.

Buzz, buzz, buzz—.

Kang Chan pulled out his phone and checked the caller ID.

"Hello?"

- We agreed to meet, didn't we?

Romain sounded laid-back, which annoyed Kang Chan.

"Speak if you've got something to say. Otherwise, just hang up."

Romain lightly chuckled.

- I'll update you about the place. I just want you to remember one thing.

Kang Chan remained silent.

- It would be wise to be more polite to me. Otherwise, you might regret it.

Smirking, he hung up.

Where should I go? The hospital? The house in Hannam-dong? The office?

As Kang Chan sighed, Choi Jong-Il handed him a cigarette.

Click.

"Hoo."

This damn next-generation energy project had already cost him so many people. Strangely, however, this incident felt particularly draining.

Buzz, buzz, buzz.

This morning was dreadfully busy. Kang Chan glanced at his phone again. The caller ID showed Seok Kang-Ho.

"Hey," he answered.

- Captain, where are you?

"I'm just about to leave Samseong-dong. Why?"

Seok Kang-Ho's voice sounded unusually urgent.

- Hurry to the office and watch the television.

"What's going on?"

Another bomb threat?

Kang Chan was about to crush his cigarette underfoot when Seok Kang-Ho continued his report.

- One of the news claims that Ambassador Lanok has engaged in illegal and shady activities. The news came out first in France, but it's now being linked to the current terrorist events.

Since it wasn't about someone dying this time, Kang Chan leisurely just replied, "Got it."

- Captain, are you okay?

"I'll head to the office for now."

Buzz, buzz, buzz.

Right after Kang Chan hung up, his phone buzzed again. All these calls were starting to get on his nerves. He was so annoyed that he felt like throwing the phone on the ground.

"Hello?"

- Mr. Kang Chan, we've been getting unusual reports. I'll be at your office in about an hour. Please stay there for now.

"Do that. I'll be at the office."

After ending the call, Kang Chan turned to Choi Jong-Il.

"Seems like we have to go to the office."

"Understood."

As they drove out of the Samseong-dong branch into rush-hour traffic, Kang Chan suddenly felt as if all his energy had been drained.

He was genuinely exhausted.

Why did he have to keep up with this farce? Why had he struggled so hard until now? He couldn't even remember his reasons anymore. He wasn't particularly close to Hwang Ki-Hyun or Song Chang-Wook, yet the sense of loss he felt now was incomparable to when his comrades were killed.

Why is this happening?

Every time they stopped at a signal, Choi Jong-Il and Woo Hee-Seung vigilantly looked around.

What nonsense is this?

Kang Chan smirked. Despite how important they thought he was, perhaps his expertise was limited to setting up special operations after all. Maybe he really wasn't equipped to handle something of this scale.

Sinking back into the car seat, he looked out the window.

Upon reaching the office, he turned on the TV in the conference room. The news broadcast showed the site of the terrorist attack and the hospital where Hwang Ki-Hyun had died, along with a couple of images. Kang Chan flipped through the channels looking for the news about Lanok.

[Today, the leading French newspaper Libération reported that Ambassador Lanok has been engaging in illegal activities related to the entry of Gont automobiles into Korea. He has also allegedly been interfering in South Korea's domestic affairs.]

The familiar sight of the French embassy appeared on the screen.

"Particularly, Ambassador Lanok is reported to have given preferential treatment to a Korean high school student and exerted pressure on the Korean government. Evidence will be presented in sequence," the report continued.

Click.

Kang Chan turned off the TV.

"Choi Jong-Il," he called.

"Sir."

"I'm going to take a nap on the sofa. Don't wake me up unless it's something important."

"Yes, sir."

Kang Chan handed his phone to Choi Jong-Il and took off his jacket.

As if by magic, he immediately fell asleep on the sofa. He slept so deeply that when he suddenly woke up, his body still felt trapped in slumber—almost as if he had suffered a huge injury.

He felt a bit better after waking up. After leaving the conference room, Kang Chan looked at the people in the office and smirked.

Seok Kang-Ho, Gérard, Kim Hyung-Jung, Choi Jong-Il, and Woo Hee-Seung were present.

"I'll go wash my face," Kang Chan said.

Washing his face with cold water in the bathroom made him feel much better than when he had woken up. Upon returning to his office, he sat at the table.

"Why are you here?" he asked.

"I've been discharged," Seok Kang-Ho replied.

"Stop messing around and go back to the hospital."

Choi Jong-Il brought a cup of coffee to Kang Chan.

As Kang Chan grabbed the mug, Kim Hyung-Jung began, "We're in a really grave situation."

After a brief hesitation, he continued, "French newspapers are putting pressure on Ambassador Lanok, and several TV stations and newspapers are mentioning you, Mr. Kang Chan."

Kang Chan briefly glanced at him.

"Although they've only mentioned you as the student connected to Ambassador Lanok so far, because of the incident at the press conference, those related are already aware."

Is this the work of the DGSE? Having my name in the newspapers isn't exactly deadly, though.

"By tomorrow, I would already have the agents from the other countries moved to the inner office. I will also keep monitoring and responding to the situation."

"Got it," Kang Chan replied.

"I'll take a look around and come back," Kim Hyung-Jung said, then moved to the room inside.

"Gérard," called Kang Chan.

"Oui."

Kang Chan gazed out the window, then turned to Gérard again.

"Can we win this intelligence war?"

Gérard looked puzzled.

"We can handle any spec-op situation, but we're all chicks in this type of battle. We can snipe, but we can't bomb."

Gérard's lips stretched into a long smile.

"What?" Kang Chan asked.

"Captain, it's not the intelligence bureaus that do bombings. It's terrorist groups."

Is that how it works?

Chuckling, Kang Chan picked up a cigarette from the table.

"Are you seriously considering this?" Gérard asked.

"Well, this feels a bit chaotic, but that doesn't mean we can just sit back," Kang Chan answered.

Click.

Kang Chan blew out a puff of smoke. "Hoo."

"I'll call three men from the Foreign Legion," Gérard offered.

As Kang Chan turned to him, he added, "They're snipers, so they're quite capable."

"You're already conspicuous enough as it is, yet you're still planning to add three more Frenchmen to the mix? They know everything, even when you go to the bathroom."

"Michelle can handle it."

Kang Chan tilted his head. "Michelle?"

"Didn't you say she's producing a drama? It's hard to distinguish special makeup nowadays. If the National Intelligence Service just makes the right ID for that face, we should be able to avoid any major problems."

Is this guy smart or is he just babbling nonsense?

As silence fell, Seok Kang-Ho, sensing the mood, picked up a cigarette with a resigned look.

If Gérard is right, does that mean they can make Daye look like an Algerian?

Kang Chan smirked as Gérard reached for a cigarette as well. He and Seok Kang-Ho lit their sticks up.

"Your men aside, we have quite capable people on this side too if it comes to sniping."

"Can Korean soldiers do that kind of work?"

That was a hard question to answer.

Is this guy smarter than Daye after all?

Kang Chan extinguished his cigarette and relayed his conversation with Gérard to the others.

"Hehehe."

"Why are you laughing?"

"I prefer a mask of my old face."

Kang Chan realized that expecting a proper answer from Seok Kang-Ho was a mistake.

He took a sip of his coffee. As he set his mug down, Kim Hyung-Jung came back in with Choi Jong-Il.

"There's enough space. We'll move the facilities and agents here tomorrow."

"Okay, thank you for your efforts."

"I'm going back to Samseong-dong. The injured from Mongolia will arrive this afternoon. I'll keep you updated on other situations as they arise."

Seeing Kang Chan's expression, Kim Hyung-Jung seemed somewhat relieved as he left the office. Something was being done, but the feeling of helplessness persisted. It wasn't possible to just give up the power plant, but couldn't just march out and attack Saudi Arabia or Libya either.

"Why aren't you thinking of hitting back twice as much this time?" Seok Kang-Ho asked, throwing Kang Chan's thoughts out the window.

"In situations like this, you normally would have already listed the people to kill and told Cha Dong-Gyun to assemble the men."

Kang Chan smirked.

"What? Why are you smirking?"

"It's because I don't know who to kill."

"You said it's the director of the DGSE and a guy named Josh."

"Would killing them solve anything?"

Seok Kang-Ho grinned, his face still pale. He clearly hadn't completely recovered from his injuries yet.

"You're the one who said that if we bow our heads when we're hit, we'll live the rest of our lives bowing to our oppressors. We can't just let the ones who killed Director Hwang and Director Song go, can we?"

His eyes glinted as he locked gazes with Kang Chan

Chapter 322: Don't Make Him Your Enemy (1)

Kang Chan felt as if he was sitting in the middle of a typhoon. The media relentlessly reported on the bombings, and the political sphere was abuzz.

In the meantime, four severely injured people from Mongolia had been admitted to the Bangji Hospital, and the agents from the four countries had settled into Kang Chan's office. Time passed as he silently handled what needed to be done. It was only after two days that Kang Chan could visit the hospital.

"You bastard," Oh Gwang-Taek said. He sounded like he had a hole in his throat, not his lungs.

How could his first word be a curse?

"They're trying to crucify you on TV...." After grimacing and gasping, he added, "Go and beat them all up."

Kang Chan smirked. Oh Gwang-Taek did as well.

"Back in the days...."

"Don't overdo it," Kang Chan reminded, noticing that he seemed to be struggling to speak for long periods.

Nevertheless, Oh Gwang-Taek just looked sharply at him and continued, "I've always hated people like you."

Kang Chan chuckled, causing him to smile slightly.

"Stubborn, tenacious, and impossible to shake off."

Oh Gwang-Taek kept his gaze fixed on him.

"I don't know who the bastards on the other side are," Oh Gwang-Taek seemed to strain himself as he spoke, "but they probably feel exactly the same way. You have Director Kang, President Kim Tae-Jin, Dong-Sik, and Kang-Ho on your side."

Unfortunately, Kang Chan knew that the bastard wouldn't shut up just because he was told to.

Still seemingly having a difficult time, Oh Gwang-Taek swallowed his dry saliva.

"Next time, show up with some real fucking fire in your eyes. The Kang Chan who took care of Park Gi-Beom by himself in the parking lot and then casually asked for a cigarette? That's the Kang Chan I know," he finished with a venomous look in his eyes.

A brief silence followed.

"I'm going. Take care of yourself," Kang Chan said.

Oh Gwang-Taek nodded. Kang Chan left the room and headed toward the elevator.

Buzz, buzz, buzz.

These past few days, his phone had been ringing non-stop. It was an unknown number.

"Hello?"

- This is Kim Gwan-Sik.

"How can I help you, sir?"

Although he had already noticed that he had been getting quite a lot of unexpected calls lately, he still never would have expected to get this one.

- I know you're busy, but could you spare some time?

"Where are you right now?"

- I'm at the Fuel Resources Office. It doesn't have to be right now, just sometime today would be fine.

"No, it's fine. I'll come over right now."

After Kang Chan hung up, Choi Jong-Il immediately drove to the Fuel Resources Office. Given the recent bombing, he and the other agents had grim expressions. After about twenty minutes on the

road, they entered the underground parking lot of the Fuel Resources Office building. They then took the elevator up.

Much to their surprise, an employee with a somber expression guided them to Director Song Chang-Wook's office. As Kang Chan entered, Kim Gwan-Sik, leaning over the desk and looking at documents, quickly motioned to the sofa.

"Sit down."

After gesturing Kang Chan to a seat, Kim Gwan-Sik moved to the opposite side, leaving the main seat empty. Once both sat down, a female employee brought in tea that smelled of herbal medicine.

Without even offering Kang Chan to have a drink, Kim Gwan-Sik opened the drawer of the side table and took out a square paper box. The box was thin, wide, and had the usual brownish-yellow of an ordinary paper bag. It appeared to contain documents.

"Director Song had asked me to handle this." Kim Gwan-Sik pushed the box toward Kang Chan. His expression seemed to suggest that he should open it.

Kang Chan silently lifted the lid of the box. Inside was a Taegukgi. Its red and blue yin-yang emblem had lost its original vivid colors and faded to a yellowed hue over the years.

He slowly looked up at Kim Gwan-Sik.

"I stepped down as Chairman of the Eurasian Rail Committee today, so let me talk to you as Kim Mi-Young's father, who knows you quite well."

With a solemn expression, Kim Gwan-Sik continued, "I trembled while I was watching our soldiers' operation in Afghanistan on TV. I also felt my heart race. Even though I was watching the battle from afar, I still found it terrifying."

Kang Chan listened intently.

"If I were put in such a situation, I probably couldn't have taken a single step."

Perhaps it was because he was a former judge, but he never once took his eyes off Kang Chan.

"However, that doesn't mean I'm afraid of dying because of what I do. Director Song shared the same sentiments."

Kim Gwan-Sik momentarily glanced at the box in front of Kang Chan before adding, "I plan to take over the Fuel Resources Office starting tomorrow."

So that's how it is.

Kang Chan mentally nodded.

"Seeing that Taegukgi flying at the next-generation energy facility was Director Song's fervent wish."

Kang Chan looked at the Taegukgi.

What exactly is the significance of this faded flag?

"If something were to happen to him, he wanted me to make sure this Taegukgi was passed on to you. He wanted you to wave it once the next-generation power facility is completed." Kim Gwan-Sik's voice had softened, perhaps due to emotions rising. "He said it half-jokingly...."

Struggling, he tightly pursed his lips and looked at Kang Chan.

After a deep breath, he continued, "I won't place the burden of Director Song's wishes solely on you. I'm also committed to this task enough to put my life on the line for it. Please make sure to complete the next-generation power facility."

Kang Chan looked at the Taegukgi.

Why are they all behaving this way?

People like Moon Jae-Hyun, Jeon Dae-Geuk, Kim Hyung-Jung, the soldiers from Jeungpyeong, the DMZ team, and many others he knew kept staking their lives on this flag. Meanwhile, right next door, some were too busy filling their own bellies.

Running down this road, determined to protect those precious to him, had placed a tremendous burden on Kang Chan. There was just one reason behind it all—to honor this Taegukgi.

Kang Chan raised his head and looked back at Kim Gwan-Sik. "It would be easier if you asked me to avenge Director Song. I don't quite understand the value this Taegukgi holds."

It seemed so wrong to just go along with it. He would feel as if he was deceiving the late Song Chang-Wook and Kim Gwan-Sik, who created this moment.

"While some are thriving with money and power, those who are willing to die fighting for this Taegukgi get a meager pension. Even Director Song will likely be forgotten. I'll fight, but I can't say it's for the Taegukgi."

For the first time since they met, Kim Gwan-Sik smiled.

Isn't this supposed to be an unpleasant topic?

Kim Gwan-Sik seemed to have read Kang Chan's mind.

"It's not about flaunting faded patriotism in times like these," Kim Gwan-Sik replied, his tone and expression that of a father addressing his son.

"The ground your beloved ones walk on... that's what the Taegukgi represents. If you lose it, you lose words, soul, and everything else. Let's not ignore the truly precious ones just because of the few who are drowning in wealth."

His words sounded as if it was taken straight out of a textbook, so it wasn't particularly moving.

"Shall we have some tea?"

Feeling perhaps that the tea had gotten cold, Kim Gwan-Sik finally offered it. Reluctantly, Kang Chan picked up his cup and took a sip.

"Why haven't you been in touch with Mi-Young lately? Have you decided not to see her?"

Choking on the tea, Kang Chan spat it out in a nasty cough. "Keugh!"

Kim Gwan-Sik pulled a tissue from the side table.

"Did you two fight?"

"No, sir."

"Why then are you turning someone's precious daughter into a giraffe[1]?"

With a mischievous smirk, he added, "I told her not to bother you because you're busy, but that doesn't mean you should just throw her to the side."

"Yes, sir."

"You haven't done anything terrible, have you?"

Kang Chan almost coughed again.

"Didn't you two promise each other a future?"

"Huh?" Kang Chan responded as if dazed.

"I heard that once she has become a diplomat, she would claim she got ahead because of her husband."

"Ah, yes, sir!"

"Hmm! The world has changed, so I can forgive kissing before marriage, but nothing beyond that!"

His warning left no room for response.

"Take a break sometimes. It's not good for anyone to keep running endlessly."

"Yes, sir," Kang Chan promptly replied. The awkward silence that followed was soon broken by his phone's ringtone.

Buzz, buzz, buzz—.

"It's okay. Go ahead," Kim Gwan-Sik offered.

Given the circumstances, Kang Chan pressed the answer button.

"Hello?"

- Are you free this evening?

Huh? What's this about?

Kang Chan checked the caller ID again. It was definitely a Korean mobile number.

- I'd like to meet with you and the ambassador at the embassy.

It was Romain. Romain was in Korea.

"What time should I come?"

Kim Gwan-Sik curiously watched Kang Chan speaking French.

- Six? Seven? Whenever is convenient for you.

"I'll be there by seven."

Romain immediately hung up.

That crafty bastard!

He was probably suggesting a meeting at the embassy to avoid assassination.

"You seem busy. You may go now."

"Thank you, sir."

After closing the paper box, Kang Chan picked it up and stood up.

"Starting tomorrow, I'll start treating you as the assistant director again."

"I'd rather you didn't. It makes me uncomfortable."

"Maybe when we're alone, but it's better that way when others are around."

Kim Gwan-Sik extended his hand, and Kang Chan shook it before leaving the office.

Ambassador Lanok's office, French Embassy.

Romain relaxedly set the phone down on the table. "He said he'll be here by seven."

Lanok's lips curved into a sly smile.

"You'll be recalled to France next week," Romain said. He seemed to hate the smile on Lanok's face. "We're renovating the basement of Lorian. If there's anything you need, think about it now and let me know."

"Will there be cigars, at least?"

"Of course. "I've already heard all about Monsieur Kang's secrets from Sharlan, yet you still plan to enter Lorian for Monsieur Kang?"

Lanok seemed to have no intention to answer.

"Didn't you say it was for the glory of France?"

"That hasn't changed."

"Then shouldn't you focus on positioning France at the center of your plans?"

With a mask-like expression, Lanok raised his teacup. As he sipped his tea, Romain waited, refusing to take his eyes off him.

Click.

Lanok set down the teacup, his eyes void of emotion as he met Romain's gaze. "Do you really think following Josh's plan serves the glory of France?"

"Josh is not yet a match for the DGSE."

Click.

While lighting a cigar, Lanok advised, "I don't know how the Star of David is structured, but don't take your eyes off him. If a nuclear warhead falls on Paris, you and your family will live in disgrace for as long as the world exists."

"The DGSE knows the position of the flèche[2] better than anyone."

"I trust you, then."

Romain's expression filled with displeasure.

"I'm willing to enter Loriam on the condition that you stop all the operations against Monsieur Kang. You are never to provoke him again either."

"Don't you think that warning puts him in even greater danger?"

"Romain," Lanok called as he extended his arm to shake off the ash from his cigar. "You'd be wrong to assume I'm entering Loriam quietly because I'm afraid of you and the DGSE."

As they locked gazes, Lanok smirked. "My greatest fear is not you or Monsieur Kang. It's that he starts seeing France as an enemy. If I start a fight with the DGSE, I'll be doing just that."

You're well aware of the power of the DGSE, aren't you? Even now, if you side with France and give just one command, Monsieur Kang would be as good as dead, Mr. Ambassador."

Despite Romain's temptations, Lanok kept his expressions masked.

"Didn't Vasili, Yang Bum, and Ludwig already think of that?"

"That's because you, Mr. Ambassador, have kept them centered."

Lanok softly exhaled.

"They move for their own country's interest, not as an organization that has sworn loyalty to me. What they feared the most when planning to eliminate Monsieur Kang was not me, but the possibility of their plan failing."

"But he's still Korean."

"You're saying the exact same thing that someone once told me."

As if suddenly thirsty, Romain sipped his tea.

"Since you're now aware of Monsieur Kang's secrets, then I'm sure you already know this. Then tell me, what's the secret to his survival in Afghanistan and Africa?"

"That's...." Romain trailed off. Hesitant to answer, he quieted down.

"What about when he wiped out the British and Russian special forces teams trying to destroy our particle accelerator?"

Romain still didn't answer even though he did not seem to agree with him.

"Did you properly examine the abilities he displayed in the Foreign Legion's special forces team?"

"I did."

"It was a coincidence of three things."

Romain slightly tilted his head.

"Sharlan planned to divert the Blackhead, we launched the particle accelerator to Africa, and lastly, Sharlan himself took the shot at him."

"Look at that. He dies just like anyone else when shot."

Lanok shook his head. "What if we hadn't activated the particle accelerator? Are you so sure he would have died then?"

Romain clearly struggled to accept his reasoning.

"Don't rashly provoke him into seeing France as an enemy. By the time I have to step in to clean up your mess, you'll be already dead."

Romain clenched his jaw as he glared at Lanok.

Every time the guards changed, the prisoners' expressions visibly shifted... all because of Yang Dong-Sik.

Apart from hanging two guys upside down on the first day, he didn't do much else. However, specifically, whenever he rotated in for guard duty, the prisoners' faces changed color. Now that the special forces soldiers and the injured had left the base, a desolate feeling settled with the dust every time the wind blew.

Yang Dong-Sik, on guard duty, looked down at his rifle and stared at the materials laid out in front of the base. They were to be used to construct a factory.

He had also received news that construction workers would be arriving in two days.

We did it.

He had protected the base in the clay-colored plains of Mongolia, and now, the materials for the factory had been delivered.

Overwhelmed, Yang Dong-Sik exclaimed, "Let's fucking go!"

Scabs had formed where his face was scratched. He had also already had his forearm bandaged.

"Hey!" Nam Il-Gyu called as he walked over, a large cup in hand.

"Why did you make coffee and just leave? Don't you know how precious instant coffee is here?"

Yang Dong-Sik sheepishly smiled as he took the mug.

"Do you like the prisoners that much?"

"Damn it..." Yang Dong-Sik roughly retorted. He then drank his coffee.

He didn't like the damn parasites one bit. However, they needed to keep them in tight lockdown.

After drinking, he exclaimed, "Caha!"

The prisoners flinched and looked over at him to read his mood.

"Where's Kang sunbae-nim?"

"He seemed to be on a call from Seoul," Nam Il-Gyu answered as he glanced back inside the barracks.

"We have to clear them out before construction starts. That's what worries me."

"That's true."

Yang Dong-Sik glared at the prisoners with a profound expression.

"It seems like Seoul is in chaos."

"Seoul? Why?"

"I heard there was a bombing, and it seems the assistant director got into quite a bit of trouble because of it. The news broadcasts have been attacking him on TV. Because of that, Kang sunbae-nim—"

"What the fuck?!" Yang Dong-Sik cursed, cutting off Nam Il-Gyu.

"Those motherfuckers! What the hell are they saying about the assistant director? Even in Libya, he kept running around on the field for the nation! Who else fucking does that but him?!"

Despite having already cursed vehemently, Yang Dong-Sik still looked furious.

"Don't make it impossible for Kang sunbae-nim to talk. Just because you've been informed about the situation doesn't mean you should fuss about it in front of him. He seems to be stressed enough about it already."

"Really?"

"Yeah, dude. Now, finish your coffee already."

"Alright."

Yang Dong-Sik gulped down his coffee as if it were cold water.

Chapter 323: Don't Make Him Your Enemy (2)

Kang Chan and Gérard, both wearing a suit and a shirt, arrived at the embassy. Choi Jong-Il accompanied them to the entrance.

Clunk. Clunk.

The commander of the 606's Special Operations Unit, who had been put in charge of the embassy's security, approached them. He was wearing a beret with a black uniform and had a rifle slung around his right shoulder.

Choi Jong-Il showed his ID and then introduced Kang Chan to the commander. "This is Assistant Director Kang Chan."

"I've heard a lot about you. It's an honor to meet you," the commander said after a brief salute.

He knows me?

"Some of my colleagues are in Jeungpyeong," the commander answered as if reading Kang Chan's mind.

Kang Chan suddenly remembered his men. He also concluded that he'd find it a hundred times more comfortable to be in a military uniform with a rifle in hand than be in a suit.

“Please spare no efforts in keeping the embassy safe,” Kang Chan said.

“You’ve got nothing to worry about.”

Kang Chan smirked. South Korea had a lot of soldiers like this.

While they were talking, Raphael walked out of the embassy.

“Where’s Louis?” Kang Chan asked Raphael.

“He’s with the ambassador.”

Raphael had looked nervous, but seeing Kang Chan seemed to have made him feel a bit relieved.

He continued, “Please follow me. They’re waiting for you in the dining room.”

Raphael guided them to the dining room beside the office on the second floor. He then opened the door for them.

Click.

Lanok and Romain, who were sitting at a table, stood up.

“Welcome, Mr. Kang Chan,” Lanok said.

Kang Chan gave Lanok a French greeting, then shook hands with Romain.

“Mr. Ambassador, this is Gérard de Mermier, the commander of the Foreign Legion’s special forces team that I’ve told you about. Gérard, this is Ambassador Lanok,” Kang Chan said.

Smiling, Lanok gave Gérard a French greeting.

He acted so warmly that Kang Chan wondered if Lanok had ever given such a friendly smile to others he had been introduced to.

Gérard also shook hands with Romain, which even Kang Chan found extremely fucking uncomfortable.

Lanok gestured at the table. “Please, have a seat.”

Taking him up on his offer, they all sat down.

Louis stood beside Lanok with his feet apart and hands clasped together in front of him. Raphael was right next to him.

The atmosphere was somewhat strange.

After looking around him, Kang Chan discretely examined Louis and Raphael.

There had to be a reason behind their nervousness and the mournful gaze they kept giving him.

Is Romain threatening Lanok?

“Mr. Ambassador, is Anne doing well?” Kang Chan asked, believing that this signal would make Lanok answer his real question.

Lanok's answer didn't have to be verbal. Kang Chan would be able to recognize what he meant from the look in his eyes or even a small movement.

"She's doing well. I'll make sure to tell her that you said hello," Lanok said.

"Alright."

That was weird. Lanok wasn't asking for help, but he was behaving differently than usual.

What's going on? What am I missing?

"Why don't we eat for now? It's already quite late," Lanok said. He seemed to be trying to change the atmosphere.

Raphael poured wine into everyone's glasses. Two employees then served them escargot dishes.

"I approved your application to have Gérard discharged," Romain said as if he was doing something kind for Kang Chan. At the same time, he was served his plate of escargot.

Smirking, Kang Chan nodded. Right now, Gérard's resignation wasn't important.

What if Romain has something absurd planned and is just pretending to be nonchalant?

Kang Chan decided to save Lanok even if it meant making Romain's head explode.

"I requested to see you because I wanted to have my application for Gérard approved. Since that's already been done, I take it you're the one who has something to say to me?" Kang Chan asked.

"You're still as impolite as can be, I see."

Romain held up his fork as he looked at Kang Chan, his expression showing that he had expected him to act like this.

"We're just about to eat. Although there's no need to act formal, at least have the manners to wait until we've finished our food and had tea before talking about business," Romain said.

Except for Romain, no one picked up their fork.

Even Lanok was only watching them. It was hard to tell what he was thinking.

"I know about the secret of the God of Blackfield now. I found it hard to believe, but I've received information that's even more absurd, so I've learned to accept it," Romain added.

Click.

Romain finally put down his fork. He then looked away from Kang Chan to Raphael.

When Lanok nodded, Louis, Raphael, and the servers quietly went outside the dining room.

Romain stopped their dinner himself even though Lanok was with them at the French embassy. It was displeasing... and suspicious.

Kang Chan decided to trust the look that Raphael had given him before leaving.

‘This son of a bitch dared threaten the ambassador right in front of me?’

Their meeting briefly paused as Lanok turned to bring over the tray behind him to the table.

Kang Chan looked at Gérard.

‘Shoot him if things go south.’

‘Yes, sir.’

That should be enough for now.

Making his signature smirk, Kang Chan reached toward the tray Lanok had set on the table. It had cigars, cigarettes, and an ashtray.

Lanok picked up a cigar, and Kang Chan and Gérard took a cigarette each.

Chk chk.

A strange silence passed as they lit up their smokes.

Although Romain looked like he was willing to wait for them to smoke, Kang Chan and Gérard acted as if they would smoke no matter what anyone said.

Kang Chan still couldn’t figure out what Lanok was thinking.

“You seem to have misunderstood something, so let me make something clear before I begin,” Romain told Kang Chan.

They were speaking in French, so Gérard naturally understood them.

The structure of the dining room, its tables, and the people present made Kang Chan feel as if he was in the DGSE, not South Korea.

Romain continued, “Do you honestly think you could’ve been as successful without the ambassador? If you didn’t have the support of the DGSE, you and South Korea’s special forces team would still be at a level where the United States’ helicopters would’ve killed you all in the operation in Afghanistan.”

He didn’t even hide his arrogance.

You son of a bitch! Go on, keep spouting your bullshit!

“South Korea is no different. It normally would have been like a steak served to powerful nations, cut all over with their forks and knives as much as they pleased,” Romain added.

Was this what it was like? Did Moon Jae-Hyun, Go Gun-Woo, Jeon Dae-Geuk, and Hwang Ki-Hyun say that South Korea needed to become a powerful nation so many times because they kept being treated like this?

Kang Chan looked straight at Romain.

“South Korea doesn’t even have the capacity to build a next-generation energy facility, much less the power to protect it. Look back at what you’ve done. Your military might? South Korea’s administration keeps putting the safety of your nation on the line because of you! To make things worse, they’re making such sacrifice without even being aware of your real capabilities—”

“I doubt you’re here to deliver a speech in front of me. Get to the point,” Kang Chan said, cutting Romain off.

Dumbfounded, Romain glared at Kang Chan.

“Cooperate in moving the energy facility,” he answered.

“What will I get for doing that?”

“You won’t have a war in your hands.”

“You’re telling me to hand the next-gen energy over just for that? Aren’t you being too greedy?”

“You want a bigger reward than the war not happening? Fine. If you want, I’ll put enough money into your bank account to last you the rest of your life.” Romain glanced at Lanok, then added, “I’ll also make sure the news stops mentioning you.”

This fucker must think we’re stupid.

“I’m sure you’re well aware that Abibu is coming to South Korea in two days. In exchange for my cooperation, I’m sure the conditions that he’ll offer me will be similar to yours,” Kang Chan coldly replied.

Romain narrowed his eyes. One end of Lanok’s lips curved to a smile. Unfortunately, it was difficult to determine what his smile meant.

Kang Chan continued, “I’ll get the same results by yielding the energy facility to Vasili right now. No, for something so important, won’t I be able to demand the assassination of the DGSE’s Director-General as well?”

He didn’t plan to say that—it was nothing more than a last-minute thought that he blurted out. However, much to his surprise, that seemed to have silenced Romain.

“Let’s say you’re right about us being a steak. We won’t be able to do anything about being cut to pieces, but who do you think gets to decide who’ll be eating us?” Kang Chan asked.

“Nothing good will come out from you acting cute in front of me.”

“Romain,” Kang Chan called. He tilted his head from side to side. Right now, he just wanted to see what Lanok had in mind. “I don’t care how the media talks about me, so you should be the one treating me with respect. More importantly, you better be even more polite when you’re in the presence of the ambassador.”

Gérard smiled, the scar on his cheek curving.

“I have a pistol strapped to my ankle. Gérard does as well. It’s childish, but if you keep getting on my nerves, I can just shoot you, and you won’t even be able to do anything about it.”

Afterward, Kang Chan picked up a cigarette.

Chk chk.

Gérard held up a lighter and lit up the cigarette for Kang Chan.

They didn’t plan on doing this—they just synced perfectly.

A newfound silence dawned upon them.

Even if they didn’t exchange words, people could still tell things based on the feelings they were getting, the expressions of those around them, and the way everyone behaved.

Likewise, when Gérard flicked open the lighter and lit up Kang Chan’s cigarette, he clearly told everyone that he would immediately kill Romain if Kang Chan ordered him to.

Kang Chan exhaled the cigarette smoke to the side. He then looked at Romain. “There’s been a lot on my mind these past few days.”

Wisps of smoke rose from the cigar that Lanok was holding and the cigarette between Kang Chan’s fingers.

With the smoke swaying, Kang Chan continued, “I wanted to stop a war from happening even if it meant having to over the next-gen energy facility but only under the condition that it would not damage South Korea’s honor and that I’d be able to find whoever ordered the recent terrorist attack. I genuinely hoped France would help me with all of those.”

Kang Chan smirked, causing Romain to turn to Lanok. He looked as if he was hoping for something, but Lanok just kept silently listening.

“Since we’re not on good terms, I’ll also step down as the Deputy Director-General of the DGSE. I’ve also reached a decision.”

‘What’s it going to be?’ Romain wondered as he sharply glared at Kang Chan.

Kang Chan pressed a button on his radio.

Chk.

“Choi Jong-II. I’ll be sending Gérard down to you. Come up to the dining room that I’m in with the commander of the 606’s Special Operations Unit.”

Kang Chan spoke in Korean, preventing the others in the room from catching a word he said. All they could do was stare at him with different expressions.

Lanok looked like he found the situation interesting, Romain looked frustrated, and Gérard looked like he was looking forward to what Kang Chan was going to do.

“Gérard, head down and bring Choi Jong-Il and the commander of the 606's Special Operations Unit over,” Kang Chan ordered.

“Oui.”

Gérard stood up and exited the dining room.

“As the Assistant Director of South Korea's National Intelligence Service, I hereby detain you here in the embassy for the next three days until I meet Abibu. The moment the 606's Special Operations Unit sees you outside, they'll shoot you to death. You make the call.”

Romain seemed so dumbfounded that he couldn't even respond.

The table grew silent, causing them to feel strange emotions.

Click.

Soon, the door opened.

Clunk. Clunk.

As Gérard sat down again, Choi Jong-Il and the commander of the 606's Special Operations Unit entered. The commander had his rifle around his shoulder.

Respectfully gesturing at Romain, he introduced him in Korean. “This is Romain, the Director-General of France's DGSE.”

Choi Jong-Il was already aware of the DGSE's status, while the commander of the 606's Special Operations Unit looked like he would just take Kang Chan's word for it.

“There has been a major problem related to South Korea's safety. Hence, I'm keeping him detained here for three days. If he leaves the embassy, you have my permission to shoot on sight,” Kang Chan added.

“Yes, sir.”

The commander of the 606's Special Operations Unit sharply glared at Romain. He looked and sounded firm, enough to make the others believe that he would still act the same way even if he was aware of the DGSE's capabilities.

With a nod from Kang Chan, Choi Jong-Il and the commander of the 606's Special Operations Unit headed back out of the dining room.

Although they spoke in Korean, the others would have to be idiots to not understand what Kang Chan and the commander just talked about.

“What you're doing now is breaking an unwritten rule between intelligence bureaus. Don't forget that what happens after this is completely your responsibility,” Romain warned through gritted teeth.

Kang Chan understood why Romain was furious. After all, the Director-General of France's DGSE had just been caught off guard by the Assistant Director of South Korea's National Intelligence Service.

Kang Chan turned to Romain. “This is your final warning. Show some respect when you’re around me and the ambassador.”

He was dead serious. He gave the DGSE three days not because he was scared of this motherfucker but because he was worried about Anne’s safety.

Kang Chan would check on Anne and ask about Lanok’s intentions in three days.

“You want me to bow down even though we’re in South Korea just because the DGSE is powerful? I’ll spare your life but only because the ambassador is here. Behave yourself until I’m done negotiating with Abibu. If you keep messing with me, I’ll just hand over the next-gen energy facility to Abibu under the condition that he destroys France.”

Did this crazy bastard really just say that? Can he not see what’s going to happen in the future if he does that?

Kang Chan could clearly see how Romain felt through the look in his eyes.

“If you were telling the truth when you said you already know all of my secrets, then that means you also know what I did in the UK. Don’t forget that I can start an earthquake in any country if I use the next-gen energy facility. I don’t know if I’ll work with Abibu or Josh, but I know for a fact that it won’t be with you.”

“Did you talk to Josh?” Romain asked, finally managing to say something.

“Vasili advised me to work with the DGSE and to be wary of Josh, but this meeting has taught me that I should be doing the opposite.”

Romain’s sighs and groans seemed to be saying that he didn’t expect the conversation to turn out like this.

He looked away from Romain and turned to Lanok, who was still just silently watching them, something he couldn’t decide how to take.

However, it was clear to him that Romain was oppressing Lanok with something.

Kang Chan felt as if he was looking at a commander who had the command over his unit taken away from him.

Perhaps that was why Romain’s arrogant behavior angered him even more. If Romain wanted to say something to Kang Chan in a situation like this, Lanok normally would’ve been the one to say it in his stead.

“Mr. Ambassador.”

Lanok met Kang Chan’s eyes.

“I’m thinking of meeting Abibu, Josh, Vasili, and Mr. Yang Bum in order. I’ll visit you once we’ve finalized things.”

“I’m looking forward to seeing how things turn out.”

Romain looked at Lanok, his expression saying, “This isn’t what we discussed!”

He definitely had something up his sleeve.

Although their dinner had ended, the dining room was filled with only the smell of escargot.

Kang Chan was just about to stand up.

“Even if you lock me up here, I can issue any kind of command to the DGSE,” Romain said as if he was playing his last card.

“Do what you want.”

Romain should’ve considered who his opponent was a bit more. Kang Chan wasn’t even fazed by his threat.

Smiling ambiguously, Lanok stood up with Kang Chan.

Kang Chan didn’t feel comfortable.

What if Lanok wants me to kill Romain for him? Did Romain lock up Anne and is blackmailing him with her life? Should I just kill Romain right now?

Kang Chan glared at Romain, who had also stood up.

“Mr. Kang Chan,” Lanok calmly called. As if reading his mind, he added, “If things go wrong, no one will want to meet you in the future.”

“I look forward to the results that you’ll bring.” He held out his hand. “Please don’t worry about Anne. Let’s have a meal with her the next time you come here.”

The look in his eyes clearly told Kang Chan that deep down, he was smiling.

Chapter 324: Do You Think I'll Lose? (1)

Moon Jae-Hyun looked haggard.

“At the very least, we need to protect the National Intelligence Service. If we can’t control the news reports right now, then everything will go down the drain,” Moon Jae-Hyun said.

Go Gun-Woo, who was sitting across from Moon Jae-Hyun, looked grim.

Go Gun-Woo was currently filling the seat of the Director of the National Intelligence Service. However, the position was too much for him to take on since he didn’t have expertise in the military and Intelligence fields.

Moon Jae-Hyun continued, “We need someone who can protect the Samseong-dong branch and Assistant Director Kang Chan. Take charge of the National Intelligence Service until the factory in Mongolia is built and the construction of the energy facility starts in Goseong.”

Go Gun-Woo couldn’t think of anyone to recommend for the role either.

If people found out that they had sent their troops overseas—no, if they were to learn that special forces soldiers had been sent to Mongolia on vacation leave, the political situation would become difficult to handle.

People were going to find out about it someday, but they couldn't afford to let that happen now.

"Yes, sir," Go Gun-Woo said with difficulty. He looked at Moon Jae-Hyun, who was smiling plaintively. "I shouldn't have quit smoking."

"We're thinking of going with Manager Kim's plan and bringing over the captives from Mongolia tomorrow. Let's use this opportunity to make an official announcement as well. I don't know about anything else, but please do your best to catch the culprit behind the recent terrorist attack."

"I will," Go Gun-Woo answered.

Thwup thwup thwup thwup thwup.

One after another, helicopters landed in front of the base. Four men then hopped off of one of them and walked over to Joo Chul-Bum and the DMZ team standing guard.

"We're the Foreign Affairs division of the National Intelligence Service," one of them greeted.

Kim Tae-Jin checked their ID, then nodded at Kang Chul-Gyu.

"Kang sunbae-nim," the agent, who looked to be in his mid-forties, called as he took off his sunglasses.

Kang Chul-Gyu cocked his head. "Hwang Ha-Ryeong?"

"That's right, sunbae-nim! I'm glad you remember me."

Hwang Ha-Ryeong delightedly held out his hand, and Kang Chul-Gyu politely shook it.

"Ha-Ryeong, Kim Tae-Jin. Tae-Jin joined us right after you moved divisions," Kang Chul-Gyu said.

The two greeted each other.

Kang Chul-Gyu then held up his hand and called Nam Il-Gyu and Yang Dong-Sik.

Clunk. Clunk.

The two hurriedly walked over to them. Upon seeing Hwang Ha-Ryeong, their eyes filled up with surprise.

"Hey! Are you...? Ha-Ryeong, is that you? Hwang Ha-Ryeong?" Yang Dong-Sik asked.

"Sunbae-nim! I didn't expect to see you here."

"Hey, you fu—"

Examining Kang Chul-Gyu's mood, Yang Dong-Sik cut himself off.

"What brings you here, though?" he asked instead.

“I was sent to pick up the captives. I’m with the NIS Foreign Affairs division.”

“Woah! Glad we’re all alive and well enough to meet again!”

“On my way here, I was told that you were the ones stationed in this base. Even though we’re part of the same company, we don’t really get told about who’s in which team of other divisions. The list of names for the person in charge and the administrator had a familiar name, so I started to wonder if it really was you guys —”

“Wait! Are you leaving immediately?” Yang Dong-Sik asked.

“Yes.”

It seemed difficult to drag out their meeting, considering the captives tied up in ropes and handcuffs were already being brought to the helicopters.

“Why not have coffee with us before you go, at least? I’ll bring you one. It won’t take long,” Yang Dong-Sik said, then ran toward the barrack without giving anyone time to stop him.

Hwang Ha-Ryeong smiled. “Yang sunbae hasn’t changed one bit.”

Watching Yang Dong-Sik run off, Nam Il-Gyu smiled.

“The equipment and the construction workers will arrive tomorrow. They’ll have Chinese and Mongolian technicians and probably foreign intelligence bureau agents among them. Anyway, things have taken an unusual turn. People are even saying that Japan is getting ready to change their stance even if it means their entire cabinet has to resign,” Hwang Ha-Ryeong said.

One after another, the captives got on the aircraft.

Kim Tae-Jin was the only person who fully understood why Japan would go so far just to change its stance. However, even Kang Chul-Gyu and Nam Il-Gyu could tell that trouble was brewing.

Kang Chan called over and had dinner with Seok Kang-Ho, Choi Jong-Il, Woo Hee-Seung, and Lee Doo-Bum.

Their dinner required a lot of patience because Gérard wanted to order their food by himself. He even asked Kang Chan to not step in.

Even Kang Chan couldn’t understand what he was saying in Korean, but at the very least, he tried his best.

Damn it. Even if we had to catch the pig ourselves, we could’ve still grilled the pork belly quicker than this.

Because Gérard had ordered food with difficulty, they needed to eat quickly.

Even if the others wanted to eat more, they likely would've just ignored their hunger so that Gérard wouldn't have to keep ordering. It was quite frustrating for everyone to watch even the restaurant owner ask, "You don't speak English?" several times.

Kang Chan felt frustrated and sorry for the ones with them since all they could really do was watch. Afterward, Gérard suggested that they should go to a specialty coffee shop. However, Kang Chan rejected the idea with the excuse that they didn't have instant coffee there.

Just imagining Gérard repeatedly saying, "You don't have this here? What about this?" in awkward Korean made Kang Chan shudder.

Kang Chan, Seok Kang-Ho, and Choi Jong-Il realized once more how relaxing it was to be able to have a cup of coffee in the office. They were genuinely grateful.

The door to the office soon opened, and Kim Hyung-Jung entered.

"Have you had dinner?" Kang Chan asked.

"I had a simple meal."

Kim Hyung-Jung looked so exhausted that people were beginning to wonder if they should just hit him on the back of his head to make him faint just so he'd be able to get some sleep.

"Did you order the 606's Special Operations Unit to shoot someone to death?" Kim Hyung-Jung asked.

"Yes. I decided to detain Romain at the embassy for three days. I ordered them to shoot him on sight if he went outside."

"Who's Romain?"

"The DGSE Director-General."

Kim Hyung-Jung looked so surprised that Kang Chan thought that if the news had been a little more shocking, Kim Hyung-Jung would've fainted.

Seok Kang-Ho, who was next to them, let out his signature laughter. Only then did Kim Hyung-Jung manage to pull himself together.

"Can you detain him? Are you sure this is alright?" Kim Hyung-Jung asked.

"It should be. I issued the order with the ambassador present. I also did it to confirm something. Oh, right! Have you found the organization or the commander behind the terrorist attack yet?"

"The NIS Foreign Affairs division is currently reinvestigating the list of people who entered South Korea. There are a hundred and ten thousand people. We believe that the terrorists used fake IDs, but we haven't even found any evidence that would help further the investigation—not even passports, hotel check-ins, or credit cards," Kim Hyung-Jung answered with an angry expression.

“The entire National Intelligence Service is on this matter. Since we lost both Director Hwang Ki-Hyun and Director Song Chang-Wook, they’re working with the determination to catch the culprit and take revenge. That’s why I believe we’ll get results soon.”

Kim Hyung-Jung looked terrifying. It was as if the anger that he had been suppressing until now had finally exploded amid his report.

“Manager Kim, after meeting Abibu, I’m thinking of looking around China and Russia. If needed, I’ll do the same in Germany and the UK. There might be a way to find the culprit if I discuss it with the representatives of those countries’ intelligence bureaus,” Kang Chan said.

“Alright. Anything I can do to help?”

“Can you get me a flight to those countries?”

“We can borrow a private plane.”

Kang Chan nodded. “I’ll let you know when I’ll need the plane once I’ve planned out my schedule. You can stop people from wiretapping us on that plane, right?”

“Yes. You just have to bring the equipment that you’ve seen at the hotel.”

That should be enough.

After a brief silence, Kim Hyung-Jung said, “Mr. Kang Chan, Prime Minister Go Gun-Woo is filling in the role of the NIS Director. He’s wondering if you can go with him when he visits North Korea.”

“Why would he want that?”

“He believes you’ll be able to determine the exact situation if you go with him. We also can’t ignore the risk of war even though we can’t see it happening.”

Kang Chan thought of Go Gun-Woo for a moment. If Go Gun-Woo believed this to be a wise decision, then Kang Chan had to respect his wishes.

“I’ll plan my schedule accordingly. Have we decided on a date for our visit to North Korea?” he asked.

“It has been indefinitely postponed because of the recent terrorist attacks, so please feel free to choose a date that works for you.”

“Then I’d like to do it after I’ve gone to the countries I mentioned earlier. We should determine what exactly is going on with the other nations before we go to North Korea.”

“Understood.”

They were pressed for time.

They had to catch the culprit behind the terrorist attacks and eliminate the risk of war. To make matters worse, day after day, France mentioned Kang Chan by raising questions about Lanok's past actions.

“When the captives from Mongolia arrive tomorrow, we plan to announce them as accomplices to the terrorists in South Korea. We'll have a bit more leeway if we turn the media's attention to that matter,” Kim Hyung-Jung said.

To Kang Chan, it only sounded as if Kim Hyung-Jung was saying that they would cover up the articles about Kang Chan using this matter.

Kim Hyung-Jung added, “Abibu could think of the announcement as a diplomatic discourtesy, but they won't be able to blatantly protest about it since it's going to be attributed to the terrorist attacks.”

A diplomatic discourtesy?

Kang Chan just remained quiet.

There was supposedly no connection between the terrorist attacks in South Korea and the captives coming in from Mongolia. However, based on what he had heard, Abibu clearly had a hand in both matters.

How can this be a diplomatic discourtesy to that son of a bitch!

After discussing a few more things with Kang Chan, Kim Hyung-Jung left the office. He didn't even have the time to take a breather.

“Isn't he working too hard? He'll faint at this rate,” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

He worriedly looked at the entrance, then at the room inside the office.

“Anyway, what is that fucker even doing inside that room?” Grumbling, Seok Kang-Ho turned to Kang Chan again and took a sip of his coffee. “Well, having him deal with those guys is actually making things much more comfortable for us.”

Kang Chan just nodded in response.

The foreign intelligence bureau agents, who were all now working in the room further into the office, knew how to speak French. Hence, when Gérard joined them, he began acting like he was in his element.

Even Kang Chan found it fascinating.

I can't believe they can look into an area they want to see in real-time without leaving their office tables!

Gérard examined the areas in Africa where the Foreign Legion was stationed. Afterward, he widened his scope and gathered information related to the terrorist attacks, making him look as if he had been working as an intelligence bureau agent for quite some time now.

For as long as he wasn't practicing his Korean, he was quite a decent guy.

The president himself made the government's first official announcement since the terrorist attacks. Since all of the TV channels were broadcasting live at the site, filling it with reporters waiting for the announcement to begin, people couldn't watch anything else.

[Today, the government will officially announce its position regarding the first terrorist attack in South Korea ever since the Gimpo International Airport Bombing incident in 1986[1] and the attack in the Presentation Hall during the presentation for the Eurasian Rail.] a reporter explained to their viewers while the screen was showing the presentation hall.

[The world's most prominent press and news broadcasts have sent their reporters over to broadcast this event back to their respective countries. We expect today's announcement to be a warning about the organization that led the terrorist attacks and a declaration of the government's determination to take them down. Ah! President Moon Jae-Hyun is entering the hall right now.]

Camera flashes filled the room until Moon Jae-Hyun reached the podium and looked up.

He began, [To our honorable citizens of South Korea and the domestic and foreign journalists present today...]

Loud camera shutters continued.

The screens now showed a TV camera that had the logo of a foreign broadcasting company.

[It is to my greatest sorrow that I announce the tragedy that has befallen us. The Director of South Korea's National Intelligence Service and the Director of the Energy Resource Department[2] have unfortunately lost their lives to suicide bombings. Those two great men sacrificed themselves for our country. May they rest in peace along with the agents who died protecting them.]

The loud camera flashes momentarily stopped Moon Jae-Hyun.

[Moreover, at the same time as the terrorist attacks, our enemies also tried to raid our resource base in Mongolia, an act of aggression that could be seen as a declaration of war.]

The murmurs grew as loud as the camera flashes.

[They sent a total of three hundred one men to our base in Mongolia. Two hundred forty-nine were killed in combat, while six succumbed to their wounds while they were being transported to our nation. Finally, the remaining forty-six were taken in as captives. We moved them to South Korea in secret last night.]

Moon Jae-Hyun's announcement was so shocking that even the number of camera flashes decreased. The people watching the announcement on TV looked at each other, wondering if what they had just heard was correct.

[President Oh Gwang-Taek, who commanded the base in Mongolia as its field manager, and three other wounded agents have been brought back to South Korea and are currently being treated in a hospital. On behalf of all of South Korea, I would like to express my endless gratitude toward him.]

Camera flashes brightened up the room again.

The masses didn't expect that there would be so many surprising announcements.

[For invading our sovereignty and territory, the South Korean government considers the recent terrorist attacks in South Korea and Mongolia as an act of war.]

Even the viewers could feel the suffocating nervousness permeating the presentation hall now.

[From this day forth, South Korea considers the organization or country behind the terrorist attacks as an enemy. If they do not take actions that South Korea and our citizens can accept, we will retaliate against them ourselves,] Moon Jae-Hyun concluded while glaring straight at the camera.

Right after, the reporters held up their hands and requested permission to ask questions like crazy.

Although war hadn't broken out yet, South Korea had already taken more than forty captives from the raid on South Korea's base in Mongolia.

The newscasters looked as if they had lost their minds due to the president's announcement.

As Kim Hyung-Jung had planned, the news brought everyone's focus to Mongolia. However, as a result, people also ended up focusing on Oh Gwang-Taek, who used to be a gang leader but was now the hero who protected one of South Korea's bases.

Anyone with their TVs on would see Oh Gwang-Taek's face or hear his name at least once every ten minutes.

The photo that the National Intelligence Service had given the press played a part in drawing people's attention. It showed him in a light gray military uniform and a Taegukgi on his left forearm. His rifle was pointed downward.

After talking to Ludwig on the phone, Kang Chan decided to meet Vasili and Yang Bum.

Due to the suicide bombing in Seoul and France's reports about Lanok, Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook had been living as if they were locked up in their house. Even though the news hadn't mentioned a name, suspicions that hinted toward Kang Chan's involvement also kept being released.

Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook had handed over their company and foundation to other people and asked their employees to complete their remaining tasks. They had also turned their phones off.

- My goodness, Hye-Sook! This must be upsetting you. Is there anything we can do?

Some of the calls that they had received were from people who were genuinely worried about them. However, a lot were from people who only wanted to sneer at them. They said things like, "Serves you right for acting out so much! You did this to yourselves!"

Although they finally had some spare time for the first time in a while, they were afraid of turning on the TV.

The two couldn't even bring themselves to search anything on the internet. If they had to contact someone urgently, they made Assistant Manager Kim and Cha Min-Jeong, who stayed a floor above and below them, do it for them.

Kang Chan hadn't been able to come home for the past few days.

As usual, Kang Dae-Kyung and Yoo Hye-Sook had breakfast and headed to the circular table in their yard with their tea. Whenever they were bored, they'd often stare at the river until lunch. They also read books.

After lunch, Assistant Manager Kim and Cha Min-Jeong suggested playing badminton. Hence, the four played together. Honestly, having them around made the married couple's daily lives much more fun.

In truth, the two wanted to go out to supermarkets, department stores, and cinemas. Every now and then, they'd also find themselves hoping they could walk out of their house and go to a small curry restaurant to have cheap food.

The agents weren't going to stop them from doing all of that if they insisted on going.

However, considering South Korea had just suffered a terrorist attack not too long ago, they couldn't just drag multiple agents out of the house with them to have jjajangmyeon or curry with rice.

"Should we go abroad?" Kang Dae-Kyung asked.

Yoo Hye-Sook blankly blinked. "Abroad?"

"Now that we're not managing any companies, we've got a lot of spare time. You wanted to go on a trip to Europe anyway, didn't you? Going abroad should make it much easier for the agents to do their jobs as well."

Yoo Hye-Sook turned to the river. "I'm not sure about that."

The large office seemed to be getting smaller and smaller.

As if it was a dorm, the foreign agents supporting South Korea had taken up three rooms. Choi Jong-Il, Woo Hee-Seung, and Lee Doo-Bum stayed in the office as well.

Moreover, temporary beds had also been set up for Kang Chan, Seok Kang-Ho, and Gérard. Even Kim Hyung-Jung slept on the sofa in the meeting room every now and then.

They had cereal and toast for breakfast.

Wearing comfortable clothing, Kang Chan sat down at the round table next to the window, which was where he always sat.

"Why don't you go home?" Seok Kang-Ho asked as he put a mug of coffee in front of Kang Chan.

"I want to," Kang Chan genuinely answered.

Although they were staying in an office, he had been living like a soldier in the field army. He even received a lot of phone calls every day.

"How do you feel?" Kang Chan asked.

“Like I’m at the Foreign Legion. We’ve got you, Gérard, and the eight guys from abroad in the adjacent rooms. Jong-Il’s subordinates are also here.”

Smirking, Kang Chan drank his coffee. He felt the same way as Seok Kang-Ho.

“You should get changed soon,” Seok Kang-Ho commented.

“Already?”

“Don’t you have to go to the Park Hotel in Samseong-dong at ten today?”

“Yes,” Kang Chan replied.

“It’s already nine.”

Kang Chan nodded.

“Stay here. I’ll bring your clothes out,” Seok Kang-Ho said.

As he went into a room, Gérard came out and walked over to Kang Chan. It was as if they were on shifts.

“Captain,” Gérard called Kang Chan in Korean.

“What?”

“Dou want to smoke a cigarette?”

Kang Chan didn’t know who was teaching Gérard Korean, but he was definitely going to die from lung disease before Gérard became fluent in it.

“Sit over here,” Kang Chan said.

“Alright.”

However, he was at least learning quite fast.

Perhaps it was because foreigners shamelessly continued to speak other languages even if they made a mistake, but they were quick to pick other languages up.

Chk chk.

The two smoked a cigarette each.

“Found anything? No, what are you even looking for?” Kang Chan asked.

“I’m looking into the materials we were given. I didn’t discover much since the materials are pretty limited, but I was hoping to discuss them with you later,” Gérard responded in French. “I feel like things are somehow related to each other. Sergey Gee stole the nuclear warhead from Russia, didn’t he?”

He moved the cigarette that was on the table to the middle as if it were the nuclear warhead.

“Russia had been watching this situation play out, but then...” Gérard trailed off. He put the lighter next to the cigarette. “Gabriel looked like me after the three of them died.”

Slide.

Gérard put the mug next to the cigarette.

“The problem is that the nuclear warhead could land in South Korea, which is already occupied with the risk of war breaking out in the Korean Peninsula.”

“So?”

Did Gérard figure something out? Is he finally getting something done?

“Won’t Gabriel and the Star of David be the bridge between everything?” Gérard asked.

“Everyone already knows that.”

“They do?”

Shaking his head, Kang Chan extinguished his cigarette. He knew better than to expect a lot from Gérard and Seok Kang-Ho, but they kept fooling him.

Just as Kang Chan finished his coffee, Kim Hyung-Jung entered the office. For the first time in so long, he looked tidy.

“Good morning. Want some tea?” Kang Chan asked.

“What time is it...?” Kim Hyung-Jung trailed off and checked his watch. He then sat down. “I should have time for a quick drink. I’ll have to leave right after, though.”

As Seok Kang-Ho walked out with Kang Chan’s clothes, Gérard headed to the data analysis room.

“Abibu had a breakfast meeting with the opposition party’s members who are part of the assembly. They’re having tea as we speak. Chairman Kim Kwan-Sik decided to join us at the hotel lobby,” Kim Hyung-Jung reported.

“How’s the hotel’s security?” Kang Chan inquired.

“Please rest easy. We even mobilized patrol cars for this.”

Choi Jong-Il filled a mug with tea and then gave it to Kim Hyung-Jung.

Chapter 325: Do You Think I'll Lose (2)

That morning, Kang Chan arrived at the Park Hotel in Samseong-dong around ten minutes before ten, accompanied by Seok Kang-Ho and Kim Hyung-Jung. Upon entering the lobby, agents quickly surrounded them and led them straight to the elevator.

"Director Kim Gwan-Sik is waiting on the seventh floor in the lounge. We'll meet him there first and then head up to the ninth floor at ten sharp," Kim Hyung-Jung said, his tense and uneasy expression directed toward Seok Kang-Ho.

It certainly surprised him when he discovered that Seok Kang-Ho would be their Arabic interpreter.

Di-Ding.

As the elevator doors opened, three agents blocked their way, only stepping aside after verifying their identities. The security staff was on high alert following the recent bomb attacks. Kim Gwan-Sik was sitting alone on a sofa inside.

"Welcome," greeted Kim Gwan-Sik.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, sir," Kang Chan said.

"I haven't been here long," Kim Gwan-Sik responded, politely using honorifics.

"Director, this is Mr. Seok Kang-Ho. He will be our Arabic interpreter today."

"It's a pleasure to meet you. I'm Seok Kang-Ho," Seok Kang-Ho respectfully greeted.

He would probably be more surprised than Kim Hyung-Jung to know that he used to be Kim Mi-Young's gym teacher.

"Shall we go up now?" Kim Gwan-Sik suggested. They then headed back to the elevator.

Kang Chan, Seok Kang-Ho, Kim Gwan-Sik, Kim Hyung-Jung, and two agents headed back and rode the elevator up to the ninth floor.

Ding.

Upon arrival, agents once again blocked their way but moved aside after checking their IDs. Kang Chan walked alongside Kim Gwan-Sik, followed by Seok Kang-Ho and Kim Hyung-Jung.

An Arab middle-aged man, who appeared to be Abibu's secretary, exchanged nods with them and gestured toward the conference room connected to a VIP suite.

Kim Gwan-Sik and Kang Chan sat down on one side of the long table. Seok Kang-Ho and Kim Hyung-Jung were behind them on auxiliary chairs.

Since there was a chance that Abibu was the one who ordered the terrorist attacks, Kang Chan was not in a good mood. In fact, there was no doubt that the bastard had directed the assassination of the South Korean agents in Libya and had almost gotten Seok Kang-Ho killed in the process.

Earlier, on his way to this hotel, a sudden thought had consumed him.

Why would they order the killing of our agents operating in Libya?

Kim Hyung-Jung, whom he had asked the question to at the time, still couldn't figure out the answer.

The National Intelligence Service was the one who dispatched the agents. Still, they couldn't have just been killed just because they bumped shoulders with someone or failed to avert their gaze. There had to be a substantial reason.

A man, likely Abibu's attendant, served Kim Gwan-Sik and Kang Chan tea and dates. Starting a conversation felt awkward, and the silence only added to the discomfort of the setting.

That bastard! If he knows that people are here, he should show up already!

As Kang Chan shook his head, a man dressed in a white kandura entered the conference room.

Kang Chan, Kim Gwan-Sik, Seok Kang-Ho, and Kim Hyung-Jung stood up.

"Sorry to keep you waiting," said Abibu.

His English was fluent.

"We haven't been waiting long, and you may speak in Arabic. We have an interpreter with us," Kim Gwan-Sik replied in fluent English as well. Kim Mi-Young seemed to have gotten her smarts from her father.

"I am Kim Gwan-Sik of the Fuel Resources Department, and this is Assistant Director Kang Chan of the National Intelligence Service."

Kim Gwan-Sik introduced them in Korean, and Seok Kang-Ho fluently interpreted their words into Arabic.

"Nice to meet you. I am Abibu. Please take a seat."

Perhaps it was because this was Seok Kang-Ho's first time interpreting, but his Korean sounded as if he was reading from a book. Kang Chan couldn't understand Arabic, but maybe it was just as awkwardly interpreted.

Once Abibu sat across the table, the attendant put tea in front of him.

"Please allow me to express my deepest sorrow regarding the unfortunate events that South Korea has suffered."

Abibu had the distinctive large eyes and thick eyebrows typical of Arab men. He also had a slightly crooked nose.

"Thank you for your concern," Kim Gwan-Sik briefly replied.

The conversation didn't continue, leading to an awkward silence enveloping the room. Abibu turned his gaze to Kang Chan.

It had been said countless times, but people could understand some things without speaking. The moment Kang Chan saw Abibu's eyes, he knew that this man had orchestrated the recent terrorist attacks as well.

Abibu's eyes seemed to say, "You can't do anything about me. The same goes for the next-gen power facilities."

Kang Chan just smiled, feeling relieved.

This bastard's the culprit.

He was the one who ordered the assassination of the South Korean agents in Libya and the killing of the director of the National Intelligence Service and the first director of the Fuel Resources Department.

Kang Chan remembered the always upright Hwang Ki-Hyun and Song Chang-Wook. Hwang Ki-Hyun was now a nameless star, and Song Chang-Wook didn't even leave behind an intact body.

Kim Gwan-Sik just silently watched Kang Chan. Kim Hyung-Jung swallowed dryly as Kang Chan and Abibu locked eyes with each other.

"Your eyes are quite impressive," Abibu said, finally breaking the silence.

If Kim Gwan-Sik hadn't been around, Kang Chan would have bluntly retorted, "Cut the crap and take good care of your head."

However, a proper response was necessary now.

"I heard you wanted to see me," Kang Chan responded.

Abibu nodded.

"I wanted to meet you because of your remarkable achievements."

"I see," Kang Chan replied, then blatantly chuckled.

Bastard! Take good care of your head!

Abibu was not to be outdone. He gave Kang Chan a sneering smile.

Don't get too carried away, young man!

Kim Gwan-Sik, Seok Kang-Ho, and even Kim Hyung-Jung all knew it. Kang Chan and Abibu were openly challenging each other. It was hard to specify how much time had passed exactly, but it was long enough for them to be in discomfort. Once again, Abibu was the first to break the silence.

"Our country is very interested in the next-generation energy facilities that South Korea has planned."

He then turned his gaze toward Kim Gwan-Sik. About ten minutes of predictable conversation ensued. After exchanging formalities like, "It was nice meeting you," and, "We will consider your points carefully," they rose from their seats.

After shaking hands with Kim Gwan-Sik, Abibu extended his hand toward Kang Chan. Kang Chan accepted it.

Thud.

It would be more accurate to say their hands briefly touched than to describe it as a handshake.

Does this bastard treat people like they're untouchables?

Feeling uncomfortable, Kang Chan and his party immediately headed for the elevator.

"Have you met Abibu before?" asked Kim Gwan-Sik.

"This is the first time," answered Kang Chan.

Kim Gwan-Sik seemed to struggle to understand.

"I've got a busy schedule today, so I will be leaving now. Where will you be going, Assistant Director?"

"I plan to go to the office, sir."

They were inside an elevator, making it hard to talk about anything else.

Ding.

Soon enough, they arrived at the lobby.

"Good work today."

Kim Gwan-Sik shook hands with Kang Chan, Kim Hyung-Jung, and Seok Kang-Ho in turn, then headed toward the entrance with the agents.

"Manager, do you have a moment?"

"Can you go to the Samseong-dong branch?"

"Sure."

It was only a ten-minute walk from the Park Hotel anyway. Kang Chan, along with Seok Kang-Ho and Kim Hyung-Jung, headed to Kim Hyung-Jung's office. Once inside, they all had coffee and cigarettes.

"Manager, please look into whether there's a connection between the assassination of our agents in Libya and the recent terrorist attacks on the directors."

"Did you notice something odd earlier? Maybe a clue?"

"Vasili once said that Abibu was the mastermind behind the Libya incident. I wasn't sure before, but after finally meeting Abibu, he definitely seems suspicious. Please check if he's connected to all these or if we're missing anything."

"Understood," Kim Hyung-Jung replied.

He then quickly took notes on the memo pad beside him.

To catch the murderer who killed Hwang Ki-Hyun and Song Chang-Wook, they would even be willing to grasp for straws. Hence, there was no reason not to try.

"That damn bastard, looking at the boss like that!"

"Why?"

"Those dates looked really delicious."

"Hooo." [1]

Kang Chan exhaled a long stream of cigarette smoke. He knew better than to expect much from this guy and Gérard. After leaving the Samseong-dong office, Kang Chan called Lanok and immediately headed to the French embassy.

There was definitely something hidden behind all these. If he could find it, he'd be able to kill Abibu. Ever since he had seen the man, anger had been simmering inside Kang Chan. It was unclear why. Despite hearing about the terrorist attack and the deaths of Hwang Ki-Hyun and Song Chang-Wook, Kang Chan had been strangely calm. Was it because he thought too much had been lost?

From Lee Yoo-Seul's father to the Foreign Legion rookie, the Jeungpyeong special forces soldiers, the National Intelligence Service agents, Hwang Ki-Hyun, and Song Chang-Wook—perhaps the downfall of all these people, who had dedicated themselves to the country, had been triggered by Abibu's own actions.

Bastard!

A deadly look gradually filled Kang Chan's eyes. How could Abibu ruthlessly kill a powerless country's dedicated individuals just to satisfy his own greed?

As they arrived at the embassy, a member of the 606's Special Operations Unit stopped the car. Kang Chan, Seok Kang-Ho, and Choi Jong-Il got out.

Click, click.

"Welcome back, sir," said the commander as he approached Kang Chan from behind and saluted him. "As you've ordered, we haven't let Mr. Romain leave the building at all."

Kang Chan nodded and entered the embassy. As he opened the door and stepped inside, he came across Raphael, who was just about to head out and greet him.

"Monsieur Kang, Mr. Ambassador is in his office."

Raphael looked tense today as well.

"How's Anne?"

Walking half a step ahead, he looked over his shoulder and answered, "She's doing well, sir,"

"I would like to speak to the ambassador. Please give me Anne's phone number. Louis' too."

"Yes, sir."

Honestly, Kang Chan wanted to ask if Lanok had any other matters, but if Raphael could answer such a question, he would have already asked for help while they were walking.

Upon entering the office, Kang Chan found Lanok at his desk, and Romain sitting at the table, reading a thin current affairs magazine.

"Welcome back, Mr. Kang Chan," Lanok greeted Kang Chan as if nothing was wrong.

Since Kang Chan and Romain had already met, it was difficult to pretend not to know each other now. The two shook hands. Lanok walked over to the table, and the three sat together.

"I've just met with Abibu," said Kang Chan.

Brightening up, Romain focused.

"All we did was exchange pleasantries about wanting to see each other due to our impressive feats."

The corner of Lanok's eyes curved into a subtle smile. His expression suggested that he could already guess what the meeting with Abibu had been like.

"Mr. Ambassador, I plan to meet with Vasili next, but before I do, I would like to hear your opinion on one matter."

At that moment, the door opened, and Raphael came in with black tea. They had so much to talk about that they hadn't even gotten a chance to have tea. Lanok personally poured the beverage for them. He kept his eyes on Kang Chan, seemingly asking what he wanted to know.

"I would like to know if I can propose the construction of a next-generation power facility in Russia or China on my own."

"Why did you think of that?" asked Lanok.

Romain looked at Lanok with eyes as hot as the tea.

Lanok continued, "It would be difficult for you to decide on such a matter alone, wouldn't it? Shouldn't you also consider the image of the President of South Korea, Mr. Kang Chan?"

"I plan to keep the construction in South Korea as is. However, I'm thinking of proposing to build another one in Russia or the UK."

"Are you thinking of diverting the attention focused on this nation?"

Like a teacher watching a student who had passed a difficult exam, the emotion in Lanok's eyes was clearly conveyed to Kang Chan.

"There's that, but," Kang Chan looked at Romain, "if necessary..."

"Are you thinking of creating a subterranean shock device?"

"Yes."

"Mr. Kang Chan, the next-gen facility will need technicians from France, the UK, and Russia. If that's your intention, then your best option would be the UK."

"Mr. Ambassador!" Romain urgently called.

However, Lanok did not even turn his gaze away from Kang Chan.

"Josh is a dangerous man. Giving him such a weapon will surely lead to problems that are difficult to manage."

"What if we build the subterranean shock device here and construct the next-generation energy facility in the UK?"

Lanok shook his head. "If it becomes known that South Korea is building such a weapon, it will become the public enemy of every country in the world."

Kang Chan smirked. It was a foolish question that would have had the same answer even if he just thought about it a little.

"Then I will discuss the possibility of setting up an additional next-generation power facility with Vasili."

Romain watched Kang Chan with a persistent gaze.

"I also plan to retaliate against those who ordered the terrorist attacks."

Although Kang Chan could clearly read Lanok's thoughts from his previous expression, Lanok just silently watched him this time, making it impossible to discern what he was thinking. Lanok's agreement to his decision to build another facility meant that it was a good plan. If so, then his unreadable expression now could mean that he disapproved of the retaliation.

Knock, knock, knock.

The three turned their gazes to the door as Raphael carefully entered, walked over to Kang Chan, and offered a tray with a half-folded piece of paper the size of a palm on it.

"Ah! I asked for this. Thank you, Raphael," said Lanok.

Raphael gracefully bowed his head and then left the room.

Kang Chan put the notepad into his jacket pocket.

"Let's have some black tea first," Lanok offered, gesturing toward the tea cups.

Kang Chan obediently picked up a cup and took a sip of the tea.

"Mr. Kang Chan, the retaliation you speak of isn't that simple. It could be used as a pretext for war," Lanok softly advised as he set down his cup. "You should proceed with your plan to meet with Vasili and Yang Bum first. Meeting Ludwig wouldn't be a bad idea either."

"I see. I'll do just that, Mr. Ambassador," answered Kang Chan.

Those matters had already been arranged. Hence, he readily accepted Lanok's advice.

"I will be returning to France in a few days," Lanok suddenly revealed.

Kang Chan looked up in surprise. Lanok smiled as he met his gaze.

Lanok continued, "I have already conveyed all I wanted to say during my last office visit."

Kang Chan didn't know what to say. He had never considered the chance that Lanok could be deported out of Korea.

At a time like this? Now that it's been revealed that Romain and Josh are part of the Star of David?

Kang Chan glared at Romain venomously.

Did this bastard play some game?

"Mr. Kang Chan."

Lanok caught Kang Chan's gaze.

"There might be an answer to what you told me. Meet with Vasili first. Listen to what he says and hear Yang Bum's opinion before you make a decision."

Kang Chan felt like he had just received a severe blow to the back of his head, leaving him dazed and unsure about what to do.

"I have a request."

"Yes?"

"Will you release Romain?" Lanok requested.

He was politely asking to let Kang Chan go despite how angry and flustered it made him, perhaps so Kang Chan would be able to proceed with his plan.

Kang Chan slowly turned his head to Romain. He had stopped himself from killing Romain even though he already knew that Romain was part of the Star of David. He even tolerated his arrogance when they met three days ago. However, this bastard had crossed a line that should not have been crossed.

"Romain," Kang Chan called.

Romain did not respond, but he did not avert his gaze either.

"I will release you from detainment."

At that moment, a smile formed on Romain's lips.

"However, if I find out that the you or the DGSE is involved in the ambassador's departure from South Korea..." Kang Chan's eyes blazed as fiercely as if he were in the middle of combat. "France will surely regret it."

A heavy silence descended in Lanok's office.

Chapter 326: Keep Mum? (1)

Kim Hyung-Jung was well aware of Kang Chan's animal-like sense of danger. It was risky, and he knew that wrong judgments could lead to confusion. However, on the flip side, it wouldn't hurt to heed warnings and be cautious in advance.

The same principle applied now. Right after meeting Abibu, Kang Chan suggested looking for connections between the murders of Hwang Ki-Hyun and the agents sent to Libya, broadening Kim Hyung-Jung's perspective on the case anew. Kim Hyung-Jung naturally already had an inkling of these connections. He had even already thoroughly investigated Hwang Ki-Hyun's surroundings, which naturally included examining the connections to the agents.

Moreover, the agents' deaths and the sudden strike in Mongolia were carried out by Arab enemies, with unofficial information linking the Libyan militia and UIS to the incidents. Hwang Ki-Hyun's death was also tied to their preferred method of suicide bombing, so efforts to find connections were already underway. Even today, their agents were carrying out over seven operations in Libya, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Sudan, and Chad.

Kim Hyung-Jung meticulously reviewed the data that appeared on the monitor. After a while, he frowned as he looked at the data on the screen. He couldn't elucidate why the agents were killed in Libya or why Hwang Ki-Hyun and Song Chang-Wook were targeted.

What exactly do I know?

Kim Hyung-Jung, the branch manager of the National Intelligence Service's Samseong-dong branch, felt drained of energy.

How many people in the world would be in a position to detain and order the execution of the director of the DGSE?

Yet, there Kang Chan was, running a lonely race ahead while the entire National Intelligence Service had yet to obtain any evidence. The bombings were certainly brutal. Hwang Ki-Hyun, Song Chang-Wook, and their security detail all perished in the massive explosion, leaving them no way to properly obtain information about the incidents.

"Phew."

Kim Hyung-Jung picked up a cigarette from the table and flicked his lighter on.

Click.

Kang Chan was planning to fly to Russia to meet Vasili, then stop in China to meet Yang Bum before returning. He had to find evidence within that time.

The only clue was that the timing of the terrorist attacks involving Hwang Ki-Hyun and Song Chang-Wook overlapped, both occurring an hour past midnight.

Was it truly just a coincidence that both were leaving work at that hour on the same day?

Kim Hyung-Jung blew out a long puff of smoke and examined the call records of Hwang Ki-Hyun and Song Chang-Wook. Neither had called each other on the day of the incident nor had they ever communicated by phone before that day. There were no text messages between them either.

Click. Click.

While reviewing the call records on the computer, Kim Hyung-Jung suddenly felt a chill run down his spine.

‘Why is this...?’

It was the day Song Chang-Wook had been asked to become the director of the Energy Resource Administration. That evening, Hwang Ki-Hyun, Song Chang-Wook, and Kim Hyung-Jung had dinner together.

Neither Hwang Ki-Hyun nor Song Chang-Wook had their mobile numbers on their business cards, so Song Chang-Wook entered Hwang Ki-Hyun’s number into his phone, which was actually done by Kim Hyung-Jung himself. He clearly remembered pressing the call button to enter both numbers, yet that record was missing too.

I knew it!

Kim Hyung-Jung felt as if he finally found a single piece of fluff at the scene of the terror.

Kang Chan and the others boarded the private plane, which, although smaller than the one Lanok had used, offered comfort of movement incomparable to using a commercial aircraft.

"Phew!" Seok Kang-Ho exclaimed as he recalled the trip back from the department store in front of the office. He had returned with a load of dates, which he, Gérard, and Choi Jong-Il had now devoured together.

"Isn't it too sweet? Jong-Il, want some instant noodles?"

Kang Chan shook his head. Using the excuse of security, Seok Kang-Ho insistently followed them, turning this urgent moment into a complete “gourmet trip.”

Kang Chan sat alone, meticulously examining what was displayed on the laptop provided by the National Intelligence Service. There had to be something—a reason for the calm expression and look in Abibu's eyes.

Buzz. Buzz. Buzz.

Just then, a call came in from Kim Hyung-Jung.

"Hello?"

- It's Kim Hyung-Jung. Are you on the laptop right now?

"Yes."

Kim Hyung-Jung sounded slightly excited.

- I once called the director and the chairman to save their phone numbers, but those records have disappeared.

What's that supposed to mean?

- The call records of the director and the chairman have been intentionally deleted. Both were attacked an hour past midnight, and the deletion of the call records seems connected. Do you have any idea what this might imply?

Kang Chan neatly noted down on a memo pad next to the laptop what Kim Hyung-Jung had spilled.

- Hello? Mr. Kang Chan?

"I'm listening. So you're saying there's a possibility that they contacted each other using different numbers, unknown to anyone else?"

- Yes! It was confirmed that the chairman himself deleted the director's record three days before the accident. As a precaution, only a special forces team was allowed to check his call records. The chairman had to know about that, yet he intentionally deleted them.

"Are there other deleted records?"

- Since he deleted them himself, unless I remember them, there's no way to confirm.

Would you look at that?

It felt as if a beam of light was flashing through a dark cave.

- I've dispatched agents to the homes of the chairman and the director. I'll report back if anything turns up.

"Yes. Thank you for your efforts."

Kang Chan hung up the phone and reviewed the records on the laptop. However, he could only confirm what Kim Hyung-Jung had said. He didn't really discover anything else.

He picked up a cigarette.

Click.

"Hoo."

There had been as much progress as the size of a thumb. However, by approaching bit by bit, he would eventually be able to grab Abibu by the head. Kang Chan moved the mouse and brought up Abibu's photo on the screen.

This bastard. Should I have gouged out his eyes back then?

Bitter thoughts kept creeping in.

Abibu focused his gaze on the VIP room's window on the ninth floor. The tall International Building across the diagonal intersection sparkled in the sunlight.

"Is everything ready?"

- Just give the order, sir. We will proceed immediately.

"What about Korea's response?"

- They haven't detected anything yet.

Abibu sneered as he stared down the International Building. Despite losing two men to the recent bomb attacks, South Korea remained vulnerable to other terrorist threats.

"Console the warriors and keep reporting on the youngster's movements. This holy war will teach that youngster and Korea a lesson about our greatness."

- Yes, sir.

Abibu hung up. With a satisfied expression, he looked at the International Building.

Agents dispatched by the National Intelligence Service to the Middle East put their lives on the line for their mission. What they needed now was information.

They had scoured every direction to uncover clues related to the terrorist attacks on Hwang Ki-Hyun and Song Chang-Wook, the sudden strike in Mongolia, and other war-related evidence. Unfortunately, although they had acknowledged the big picture and also received information about the UIS and the Libyan militia, neither solved anything.

The National Intelligence Service agents had done their best through local informants and contacts to identify the leaders and participants in the terrorist attacks. The more they did, the more death clung to them in a more definite form. However, no agent feared it.

Um Ji-Hwan was no different.

Chk.

"Um Ji-Hwan, can you hear me? Is the sound okay?"

Um Ji-Hwan checked the radio hidden in his ear and grabbed his weapons and bag of money. It was noon.

"Since your face isn't known here and you're a rookie, don't be stubborn or get greedy."

"Yes, sir," Um Ji-Hwan firmly answered.

"Once we get the satellite coordinates, don't worry even if the contact is broken. Just memorize them as instructed, and if anything seems off, immediately run to the rendezvous point. Got it?"

"Yes, sir."

"It doesn't matter if you can't get the satellite coordinates since you haven't reported back to South Korea yet. You are an active intelligence officer. If anything even slightly suspicious happens, get out of there immediately."

As if feeling slightly pitiful toward Um Ji-Hwan, the senior agent reiterated the precautions two or three more times.

"I'll go now," said Um Ji-Hwan.

He emerged from the second floor, which offered a distant view of the target location, and walked to the agreed spot.

Chk.

“All clear for now. You may sit down.”

The radio could only be heard through the earset. Um Ji-Hwan sat at a café on the outskirts of Al Fayoum in Egypt. He then put a cigarette between his lips.

Click.

While he was lighting his cigarette, a large employee approached him.

"Turid 'an tamura?"[1]

"Alshaya albard." [2]

There weren't many things he could spout off in Arabic. After placing his order, Um Ji-Hwan flicked the ashes of his cigarette while still holding the lighter in his right hand. He glanced at his right hand. The direction of the lighter's flame was clearly pointing downward. He wasn't particularly nervous, but his throat was strangely dry.

As Um Ji-Hwan quietly exhaled, the server brought him a large glass filled with dark, iced tea. Drinking a served beverage was foolish. To put it harshly, it was akin to committing suicide.

Intelligence agents never knew when, where, or by whom they could be killed. Hence, if one did not want to clutch their throat and shiver to death on the street, they should not carelessly drink any beverage. Um Ji-Hwan set the cup back down, seemingly remembering something. He then took out his phone but not because he had someone he had to call urgently. Rather, it was to inconspicuously avoid drinking the tea. He checked the phone number and smiled upon seeing Seok Kang-Ho's name.

"Four two point six two, One three six point nine three[3]," someone suddenly said in English.

He didn't expect to hear those, but he couldn't turn around either. Hence, he quickly stubbed out his cigarette with his foot and took out a new one instead.

Click.

It was a signal for the numbers to be repeated.

"Four two point six two, One three six point nine three," the person repeated as requested.

Um Ji-Hwan repeatedly verified the numbers, confirming that each one was the same as before. He made an effort to remember the dispersing numbers desperately. Leaving his bag behind and getting up would close off their deal.

Thud! Thud! Thud-!

However, the moment Um Ji-Hwan stood up, sudden gunfire simultaneously erupted from all directions. he ducked and quickly ran forward.

Thud! Thud! Crack!

Um Ji-Hwan's table exploded, and the cup on it shattered loudly. An Egyptian man in his middle years behind him fell.

Bang! Bang! Thud! Thud!

There was no radio contact.

Did a firefight break out with the sunbae-nims?

Thud! Ping! Thud! Ping!

The dirt around Um Ji-Hwan burst roughly.

Squeeze.

While running breathlessly, Um Ji-Hwan pressed the call button. It was Seok Kang-Ho's number, which he had been looking at just before.

Thud! Thud! Bang! Bang! Bang!

The numbers kept getting jumbled in his head.

Chk.

"Run! Forget the rendezvous point and just run!" his senior shouted.

Please! The numbers are confusing!

Chk.

"Find a way to transmit those coordinates!" his senior agent ordered.

At the same time, Um Ji-Hwan heard Seok Kang-Ho's gruff voice. "Hello?"

"Forty-two point six two, one thirty-six point nine three!"

"Hello? Hey? What are you saying?"

"Please memorize it! Forty-two point six two, one thirty-six point nine three!"

Thud! Thud! Crack! Crack! Ping!

"What?"

"They're coordinates! Forty-two point six two, one thirty-six point nine three!"

Seok Kang-Ho didn't respond, clearly trying to memorize the numbers called out. Um Ji-Hwan turned into an alley.

"Huff! Huff!"

He had to escape this place as fast as possible. There was a hiding place up ahead, near a secluded building.

Seok Kang-Ho hastily scribbled down the numbers Um Ji-Hwan had relayed on a notepad in front of Kang Chan.

"What's this?" asked Kang Chan, looking at the numbers.

"Ji-Hwan called and blurted out these numbers, telling me to memorize them. There was gunfire in the background."

Kang Chan looked at the numbers.

Seok Kang-Ho added, "Coordinates! He said they're coordinates!"

Having been in the Foreign Legion, he knew how to read latitude and longitude on a map.

"You know Ji-Hwan, right? Um Ji-Hwan."

"I know. Did you say there was gunfire?" asked Kang Chan.

"Yes. He seemed under fire when he asked me to memorize the numbers three times."

Seeing Seok Kang-Ho's expression, Gérard and Choi Jong-Il walked over to them.

"Let's ask Manager Kim about this for now."

Just as Kang Chan was about to pick up the phone, Gérard tilted his head. Looking at the numbers, he asked, "Aren't those satellite coordinates?"

The three looked at Gérard, but only Kang Chan understood what he meant.

"Satellite coordinates?"

"I've been looking at satellite images lately. There might be more numbers, but generally, this is how they are displayed."

"Where is this pointing to, then?"

"I'm not sure."

Of course. I shouldn't expect anything from this guy.

"Captain, what's Gérard saying?" asked Seok Kang-Ho.

"He thinks they might be satellite coordinates."

"Satellite coordinates?" Seok Kang-Ho blinked. He then asked where the place was.

"I don't know. Let's call Manager Kim."

Kang Chan picked up the phone and dialed a number.

- This is Kim Hyung-Jung.

"Manager Kim, I just received a call from Um Ji-Hwan."

- Um Ji-Hwan? Our agent?

"Yes. Um Ji-Hwan, the one who went to Libya with us. He called out some numbers as coordinates amid gunfire."

"Hold on a moment," Kim Hyung-Jung said. They then heard him tapping away on his computer keyboard.

- He is currently in Egypt. The last report we received from him stated that he would gather information today, but it didn't say anything more specific than that. Did you say he called out coordinates?

What the hell happened over in Egypt?

Kang Chan explained what had just happened and read the numbers from the notepad.

"It seems there was a gunfire exchange. Do you have any updates on the situation?"

Seok Kang-Ho, still holding the phone to his ear, shook his head. Hence, Kang Chan added, "We can't get in touch with Um Ji-Hwan anymore."

- The local manager isn't answering either. Please hold on.

They heard him typing again.

- The satellite coordinates you sent are over international waters between Japan and Russia. It connects to the Sea of Japan.

"International waters? It's in the middle of the sea?"

Seok Kang-Ho and Choi Jong-Il looked at each other. Meanwhile, Gérard stared at Kang Chan in frustration.

- Yes. The coordinates point to that area. I'll check for other possibilities.

"Thank you. Please let us know as soon as you get any information about Um Ji-Hwan or the situation in Egypt."

After hanging up, Kang Chan briefed the three on the conversation.

"Considering those coordinates were sent over in such an urgent situation, could there be a ship or submarine nearby?"

A ship or submarine?

Kang Chan looked blankly at Gérard.

"Coordinates at sea are usually checked for designated ships or submarines."

Kang Chan picked up the phone again and called Kim Hyung-Jung to check if there were any ships or submarines in the area.

- We already checked; no ships are passing through that area. We will request cooperation from the foreign agents in the office to check for submarines.

"What about the agents in Egypt?"

- We still can't contact them.

Damn it!

Kang Chan clenched his teeth.

"Gérard, if there's a submarine here, is there a way to verify it?"

"The guys at the office based their checks on information from our country. If the location is around there, it's likely a Russian, Chinese, or Japanese submarine, right? Ah! Why don't we ask the agents who came from Russia and China?"

"Would they know about it?" asked Kang Chan.

"Those people always keep track of their submarines," Gérard answered.

"Do we have agents stationed at the office?"

"Yes."

Kang Chan hurriedly picked up the phone.

In the corner, Seok Kang-Ho grumbled, "Hey! Call back as soon as you get this message."

"Captain! They will give the location of their ships but will probably keep mum about the submarines," Gérard said.

While listening to them, Kang Chan searched for a certain number and pressed the call button.

Keep mum? We'll just have to tear it out of them, then.

The dial tone leisurely rang.

Chapter 327: Keep Mum? (2)

Kang Chan had Woo Hee-Seung, who was in the office, hand the phone to the agent Russia had sent to South Korea.

"This is Kang Chan. I need you to check a satellite coordinate and see if Russian and Chinese submarines are passing through the area."

Because he was speaking in French, naturally, only Gérard understood. However, Seok Kang-Ho and Choi Jong-Il could tell what was going on by the atmosphere.

"If you need me to, I can call Vasili and let him know."

- That won't be necessary, sir. We recently received an order to comply with your instructions to the best of our abilities.

Kang Chan expected more resistance from the agent, but the agent was surprisingly cooperative.

- Please state the coordinates.

Fortunately, he wouldn't have to waste time getting other people's approvals.

"Forty-two point sixty-two, one thirty-six point ninety-three," Kang Chan said, repeating the numbers that Seok Kang-Ho had written down.

Since the call was still connected, Kang Chan could hear the Russian agent asking the Chinese agent in French if a Chinese submarine was nearby. He then heard tapping noises from the computer keyboard.

- No ships or submarines have passed by in the past twenty-four hours.

Kang Chan glanced at Seok Kang-Ho and Gérard.

"Can you check for aircraft too?"

- I'll have to get back to you.

"What about before twenty-four hours?"

- I'll set the time to forty-eight hours prior and call you back.

“Thanks.”

Kang Chan felt disappointed. He expected this to be the answer.

“What did they say?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

“It was a bust,” Kang Chan responded, disheartened.

“What?”

“No ships or submarines have gone through the area in the last twenty-four hours.”

“Those bastards wouldn’t lie to us, would they?” Seok Kang-Ho muttered to himself while Kang Chan told Gérard about the conversation.

“Gérard, is it possible these guys were lying?” Kang Chan asked.

“It’s possible,” Gérard replied. “They’d certainly try to hide the location of their submarines as much as they could.”

This was frustrating. If Kang Chan had been next to the agent, he would have immediately known if he was lying or not.

While Kang Chan was deep in thought, looking at the numbers on the notepad, his phone began to ring.

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

“Allo?”

- According to our data, no ships or submarines have sailed nearby in the past seventy-two hours. Two civilian aircraft did pass by, but they were following regular routes, so I believe there is no need to investigate them.

Damn it!

It didn’t seem like the agent was lying. Even the National Intelligence Service could check which vessels had passed by that location during that time anyway.

“Just to be safe, I want you to run a satellite scan over it on an hourly basis. Let me know if you find a ship, a submarine, or any vehicle passing nearby.”

- Understood, sir.

Kang Chan put the phone down and turned back to Seok Kang-Ho and Gérard to tell them what he’d been talking about.

“Ji-Hwan put his life on the line to give me those coordinates. I highly doubt it doesn’t mean anything,” Seok Kang-Ho mumbled, looking at the phone in his hand.

What was it? What did all this mystery mean?

They could easily find the answers if they called any one of the agents in Egypt, be it Um Ji-Hwan or someone else. However, right now, one mistake could cost all the agents their lives.

Kang Chan felt sorry for failing to make sense of the information that the agents had risked their lives for.

Ding, ding, ding, ding.

Just then, the airplane's seatbelt sign flashed four times.

This wasn't Kang Chan's group's first rodeo. They all immediately sat down but didn't buckle in.

Kang Chan closed his laptop and stared out the window.

All of this had to mean something.

Dmitri reoriented the coordinates of Alexandra the nuclear submarine—or Alex for short—and glared at the instrument panel.

Aside from Dmitri, only the second-in-command and the helmsman knew that Alex was carrying nuclear warheads.

It was an amazing plan.

Russia had scattered all of the submarines it could gather around the Korean peninsula to keep an eye out for unidentified submarines. As if that weren't enough, the country was also conducting joint operations with Chinese submarines.

The commander in charge of it all was Dmitri, who was aboard Alex.

The submarine's ballistic missiles could only be fired by entering a code sent by the command center on the mainland.

Dmitri would get that number on this trip, which would allow him to launch Bulava, the ballistic missile aboard Alex, without permission from the mainland command center.

His gray eyes flicked to the nap.

If a nuclear missile was launched on the Korean Peninsula, the world would enter a new era.

He took a deep breath, his chest heaving in anticipation. 'I can't believe I'm in charge of such a historic mission!'

Choi Jong-Il opened the door to the airplane.

The first thing they saw was a few sparsely scattered barracks, then Vasili, who was standing by the side of a jeep with a sharp expression.

"Welcome to Russia," Vasili said as he stuck out his hand for a shake before looking behind Kang Chan.

"Let me introduce you all. This is Seok Kang-Ho, Gérard de Mermier, the former commander of the French Foreign Legion, and Choi Jong-Il."

As he shook hands with the three, Vasili nodded once, as if stamping their entries into the country.

“This is a large group for a car. Shall we walk for a bit?” Vasili suggested.

That’s fine.

Kang Chan had been feeling weary from sitting on the plane for so long anyway. He walked down the tarmac with Vasili.

“Vasili, did you know Ambassador Lanok would return to his home country?”
Kang Chan asked.

Vasili smiled widely. “Romain has cleverly exploited his weakness.”

“The ambassador had a weakness?”

“Hmph.”

Kang Chan thought the bastard needed to learn to speak more politely somehow. Whoever would teach him would probably explode from frustration, though.

Kang Chan and Vasili walked ahead. Seok Kang-Ho, Gérard, and Choi Jong-Il followed closely behind.

“Have them rest in the barracks, then come with me, Monsieur Kang.”

Kang Chan turned toward the three men and then nodded at the barracks.

Seok Kang-Ho worriedly glanced at him. However, he knew that if they doubted every single thing, Kang Chan would never be able to have a meeting with Vasili.

Inside the barracks was a bar set up against one wall and a couch in the center.

“This place is more comfortable,” Vasili said, pointing at the front of the bar and heading inside. It felt like Kang Chan was at a run-down bar in some Russian back alley.

“Vodka? Black tea?”

“Coffee.”

“Coffee!” Vasili shouted as if to confirm Kang Chan’s order, then pressed a button on the electric pot.

Click.

Afterward, he set down a small glass on the bar and poured vodka into it.

Glug.

“You don’t have any ashtray?”

“You’re a demanding guest.”

Vasili grabbed an ashtray from the bottom of the bar.

Son of a bitch! Acting like it's a chore even though it was right there.

While Kang Chan pulled out a cigarette and lit it, Vasili poured water that hadn't even boiled yet and made coffee.

“Here! Coffee!”

Kang Chan lifted the coffee cup, and Vasili lifted his glass as if to toast, then downed it in one gulp.

Click. Sip.

“So, what business does the main character have with me?”

Kang Chan repeated the conversation he'd had with Lanok.

“Why didn't you just kill Romain?” Vasili asked.

“If the ambassador hadn't stopped me, I would've put a hole in his forehead already.”

“Hmph! Romain got lucky.”

Vasili made the same sharp expression he had when Kang Chan first saw him earlier.

“We can't afford to build a next-generation energy facility elsewhere right now. Yang Bum, Ludwig, Vant, and I don't have the time to spare. We're already working our heads off as it is.”

Vasili looked at Kang Chan's cigarette, then continued, “If a war breaks out in Korea, we'll lose everything we've bet on in one fell swoop. We have to prioritize figuring out what the Star of David is up to.”

“Is there something I don't know?”

Vasili took a long swig of his vodka.

Is he some vodka-drinking machine or something?

Kang Chan smirked as he brought his cigarette to his mouth. If that was true, then a cigarette-smoking machine was sitting across from Vasili.

Click. Glug.

“I'm not surprised Romain is a member of the Star of David. However, Josh is different, which is why Lanok and I have been keeping an eye on him and pretending we didn't see Ethan's shenanigans.”

“You think he's going to build a new subterranean shock device?”

“Hmm.”

Vasili let out a long sigh.

“I think Josh wants a third world war.”

When Kang Chan tilted his head, he continued, “He’s planning an epic war that involves nuking the Korean peninsula and then connecting all the neighboring countries to the United States and Europe.”

Kang Chan smirked. Meeting his gaze, he replied, “If that’s the case, a hole through his forehead should put an end to everything.”

Vasili laughed. “Hmph. Monsieur Kang, look farther into the future. We barely managed to catch Romain and Josh’s tails after revealing our extraordinary plan for the next-generation power plant. If we kill Josh now, where else will we find a tail?”

“Why does everything have to be so complicated?”

“It’s just the way it is. You’re upsetting the order that has been in place since World War II.”

With a serious expression, Vasili reached for one of Kang Chan’s cigarettes.

Click.

Kang Chan lit the lighter up for him.

Vasili looked at him for a moment before holding the tip of his cigarette to the lighter.

“Hoo. Let me get this straight. You’re about to take away the source of income of some very wealthy people. To them, it’s no different than a well-behaved minion trying to sit on top of their heads.”

“Is that what Josh thinks?”

“That’s what the Star of David thinks, and that’s why they’ve put him in the forefront. Don’t confuse the two. Sergei stole the warheads long before you made a name for yourself.”

Kang Chan blew out his frustration in a puff of cigarette smoke. He then tapped the ashes off into the ashtray.

“Let’s look at it two ways. The Star of David has always wanted war. They have made several attempts, most recently using Islamic forces, but the United States hasn’t been willing to get involved. Moreover, they found it difficult to influence Africa because the French had such a strong grip on it.”

Is he talking about Abibu?

“However, South Korea has given them a great excuse,” Vasili added pointedly.

Kang Chan looked at him sharply. “Is that why you’re building the next-gen energy facility in South Korea first? Because you know it will provoke the Star of David?”

Vasili glared at Kang Chan.

“I advise you not to look at me like that. Don’t treat me like Romain or Ethan, Monsieur Kang.”

They both stared each other down for a moment.

“Hmph.”

Vasili lifted his glass and sipped some vodka, shifting his gaze away.

Click. Glug, glug.

“If the next-generation power plant was built in Russia, France, or China, the United States would have joined hands with the Star of David to start a war, and all of us would’ve had to be involved. We wouldn’t have been able to help you from the sidelines as we are doing right now. Do you understand now, main character?” Vasili asked mockingly.

After a brief pause, he continued, “We created the Eurasian Intelligence Council to counter the Star of David. Its first commissioner was Lanok, but he’s now going to the basements of Loriam. The very person who created the French DGSE, the High Commissioner of the Eurasian Intelligence Council! Why do you think so?”

Kang Chan looked at Vasili blankly.

“One word from him, and Romain or Josh would have a hole in their foreheads. He called me before you arrived and told me to protect you no matter what. Do you understand, main character? Our commissioner has named the God of Blackfield as the only hero who can stand against the Star of David.”

Damn it!

Kang Chan felt a strange tug on one side of his chest even though this wasn’t the moment for that.

“At your word, I, Yang Bum, Ludwig, and Vant will move unconditionally, because that’s what the Commissioner told us to do. It’s offensive, of course, but we all have no choice but to nod in agreement, especially now that the special forces teams we command have bowed to you.”

Keeping his eyes on Kang Chan, Vasili downed his vodka.

“Do you want Josh dead? If so, just give the order in the name of the God of Blackfield. The same goes for Romain. However, God of Blackfield,” Vasili growled his name as his eyes filled with venom, “you have to stop the war. You need to complete the next-gen energy facility and bring down the Star of David.”

Glug.

Vasili sank the vodka like he was drinking cold water, yet he didn’t seem drunk at all.

Click.

When he was done, he grabbed another glass and put it on the bar.

Glug.

Two shots of vodka were filled to the brim.

“Monsieur Kang, why do you think we gave you satellites and dispatched agents to help you?”

Seeing Kang Chan grin, Vasili shook his head.

“Commissioner Lanok was gambling with his life. The man the Star of David was most wary of has entered Loriam on the condition that what happened with you was forgotten. Now, what will you do? If you say no, Yang Bum, Ludwig, and I will rush in to get Lanok out. And a world war will begin.”

“Why does the Star of David want a war?”

“They don’t want their dominance weakened.”

“I thought you said you don’t know exactly who they are.”

“We have a general idea. That’s why we’re trying to pull their tail as hard as we can to drag the body out. Understand, main character?”

Watching Kang Chan smirk, Vasili pushed a vodka glass forward.

“It’s an order from the chairman, so how can we not obey? Russian intelligence will unequivocally carry out the orders of the God of Blackfield.”

Vasili raised his glass to Kang Chan.

Damn it!

Kang Chan didn’t expect that what he started with the Eurasian Rail would become so big.

Where did it all go wrong?

Kang Chan wordlessly stared at Vasili.

That sly raccoon!

This was how Lanok was expressing his intent toward Kang Chan.

It couldn’t be avoided. There was no way out.

Kang Chan had planned on putting a hole through Abibu, Romain, and Josh’s foreheads anyway. When he lifted his glass in return, Vasili smiled darkly.

The two then downed their vodka at the same time.

Motherfucker!

It felt like a war had broken out in his throat.

After talking for another half hour, Vasili accompanied Kang Chan back to the plane.

Seok Kang-Ho’s eyes flashed as he walked out of the barracks not because he was displeased by the way they were treated in Russia but because he was worried about Um Ji-Hwan.

Vasili shook hands with Seok Kang-Ho, Gérard, and Choi Jong-Il.

The three stepped onto the plane.

“Take it easy, main character.”

Even Vasili’s smile seemed sharp.

“Wreck whatever havoc you want. If you can’t, tell me anytime,” Vasili said with a ferocious expression. He looked as if he would push Kang Chan at any moment.

Kang Chan just listened. Even though Vasili was talking nonsense, Kang Chan could see the concern for Lanok in his eyes.

Kang Chan thought Vasili should stop making things unnecessarily hard for himself. He could just come clean and say that he was worried about Lanok.

“Don’t worry about the ambassador, Vasili.”

Vasili laughed sharply again.

“Спасибо[1], Monsieur Kang.”

This motherfucker.

Even the way Vasili thanked him sounded like he was cursing at him.

Kang Chan shook Vasili’s hand and looked him straight in the eye.

There were too many people prepared for death around him.

Chapter 328: Would You Like To Eliminate Them? (1)

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

As the airplane took off and gained altitude, Kang Chan received a call from Kim Hyung-Jung.

“Manager Kim.”

- Mr. Kang Chan, I’ve finally gotten in touch with our agents in Egypt. According to their report, all of them have been shot and injured, and are currently in a compound near Al Fayoum.

“How hurt are they?”

Seok Kang-Ho’s eyes glinted as he whipped around to Kang Chan. He had called Kim Hyung-Jung twice from the barracks earlier.

- They say one is heavily wounded, but I think he’ll be okay. I’ve sent the agents in Sudan to reinforce them, so you can rest assured for now.

Out of respect, Kang Chan couldn’t ask if it was Um Ji-Hwan. All the agents who were shot were special and noble, so how could he ask about a specific person?

- Agent Um Ji-Hwan was wounded in the back and leg, but I heard it wasn’t serious.

Fortunately, Kim Hyung-Jung was considerate and seemingly understood Kang Chan’s feelings.

Kang Chan covered the receiver with his hand and quietly told Seok Kang-Ho, “He’s all right.”

He then asked, "Have you heard anything about the coordinates?"

- The coordinates came from an Egyptian intelligence officer who died in the field. He said he didn't know the exact details and was trying to verify the information before reporting back, but all we know is that it was important information for Korea.

"Can we trust the officer?"

Kim Hyung-Jung paused for a moment. He seemed to be flipping through a monitor or a report.

- Normally, we would only accept information from verified personnel. Even then, we would check the intel's authenticity first. An agent in Egypt connected us to him, and we were about to hand over three hundred thousand US dollars in exchange for it. His schooling, military experiences, and everything else about him were solid, but strangely, he was from Greece.

"Greece?"

Why did everything have to be complicated in some way?

- He's a senior intelligence officer in the Navy, so it must be something related to ships or submarines.

"I checked the satellites earlier. There were no Russian or Chinese ships or submarines that passed by the area."

- I see. We'll try to look into it as well.

"Manager Kim."

- Yes?

"Have you found out who attacked our agents in Egypt?"

Kim Hyung-Jung told him in a low, dark voice that they hadn't.

"I see. Take care."

After hanging up, Kang Chan relayed the message to Seok Kang-Ho and Gérard.

"How come he's not picking up his phone?" Seok Kang-Ho asked as he glared at the phone in his hand.

"Captain, Sergei is a Greek name," Gérard suddenly said. "I'm pretty sure my adoptive father told me that. He said that although they're often used in Russia, the names Sergey and Dmitri originated from Greece."

"Sergei? You mean Sergey Gee?" Kang Chan asked.

"Yes."

What was this now? It sounded like a bit of a stretch.

"There are family names in Korea that came from China too. That's probably just a coincidence."

"Even so, it's worth checking, isn't it?"

Well, they didn't have any better option. Kang Chan immediately picked up the phone and called Woo Hee-Seung.

“Put me the Russian agent on the phone.”

He heard Woo Hee-Seung hurrying around. After a few moments, a familiar voice came from the other end of the call.

- Allo?

“This is Kang Chan. Have you ever heard of the Russian names Sergey and Dmitri coming from Greece?”

- I believe I have. Would you like me to confirm?

“Yes.”

After hanging up, Kang Chan looked at Gérard.

‘Don't get your hopes up too much.’

‘I know, sir.’

Seok Kang-Ho was looking at Kang Chan in confusion again as if to ask what was going on. Before the latter could answer, the phone rang.

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

“Allo?”

- You were right, sir. Sergei and Dmitri are of Greek origin, but some people with those names were born in Russia. Hence, it's hard to say that they have a connection.

See?

It was a stretch to find a connection just because one's ancestors came to Russia from Greece.

Kang Chan decided to stick to the facts for now—the coordinates the Egyptian intelligence officer gave him. Their agents had risked their lives to deliver this information.

“Lock the satellite to the coordinates I had given you earlier. Watch for any ships within a hundred nautical miles of the area or any submarines that have set a course in that direction. Call me immediately if you see anything unusual.”

- Oui, Monsieur Kang.

Kang Chan could be sure that the dispatched agent wouldn't falsely report to him after what Vasili told him earlier.

“What is it? What's happening?” Seok Kang-Ho asked.

Kang Chan explained everything to Seok Kang-Ho.

“Oh. You had me thinking it was something bigger! Anyway, are we not going to eat?”

Kang Chan looked at Seok Kang-Ho in disbelief.

“What? If you don’t want rice, we have cup noodles too,” Seok Kang-Ho said.

Chuckling, he moved to where the in-flight meals were. It seemed like his appetite had been revived after finally hearing news about Um Ji-Hwan.

Kim Hyung-Jung rubbed his temples with his fingers.

The ashtray in front of him was full of cigarette butts, and he had drunk more than ten mugs of coffee already.

The entire team of agents in Egypt had been shot and were scrambling to relay information back to command.

It wasn’t just them.

The entire agency was chaotically running around trying to find the organization or country that ordered the terrorist attack on Hwang Ki-Hyun and Song Chang-Wook.

Ring, ring.

“Hello? Yeah.”

Kim Hyung-Jung’s ears perked and looked forward to the response on the phone.

“Yeah? I see. Good work.”

However, the agents who visited Hwang Ki-Hyun and Song Chang-Wook’s homes couldn’t find anything either.

This left them with only one clue.

“Why did he erase it?”

Kim Hyung-Jung looked through the phone numbers again. There had to be a reason.

The National Intelligence Service’s contacts would never be released to the public no matter the reason—not even if it was to carry out the law or to investigate him.

None of this made sense. After all, they had a whole team in Samseong-Dong with the ability to delete the entire record if they wanted to. Hwang Ki-Hyun didn’t have to delete a single call himself.

“Director, please tell me,” Kim Hyung-Jung muttered as if the monitor was Hwang Ki-Hyun. “Why did you erase it?”

Kim Hyung-Jung had run out of ideas. Although he wanted to figure it out, he didn’t know how.

He reached into his crushed cigarette pack and looked inside. It was already empty.

He normally only smoked about a pack per week, so he didn’t even have any extras.

“Whew.”

Kim Hyung-Jung stared at the phone numbers again.

As expected of the NIS director, Hwang Ki-Hyung didn't have a significant call history. That was why Kim Hyung-Jung immediately noticed any missing information.

He slowly scrolled through the numbers again. By now, he had practically memorized all of them.

He started at the beginning and slowly worked his way down to the last call. Then, he glared at the number that was in the middle of the last page.

010-3751-1270.

It was a random number.

It didn't show up on the former pages, and since it was the last page, this was the last record of it.

'Who is it?'

Kim Hyung-Jung picked up his phone, punched the numbers in, then pressed the call button.

- Hello?

It was an older woman's voice.

"Hello. I'm calling because the director has informed me that he has something to give you."

- Director? What do you mean?

"You don't know Director Hwang?"

- Director Hwang? I don't know who you're talking about. I'm sorry, but who is this?

"Oh my, I must have called the wrong number."

Kim Hyung-Jung quickly hung up and picked up the extension.

"Yeah. Write down the number."

He repeated the phone number that he thought was suspicious.

"Log a month's worth of calls from this number and identify the caller. As soon as possible."

Kim Hyung-Jung glared at the number and reached his hand down.

Oh.

He had run out of cigarettes earlier.

It was quite late at night when they landed at the airport in China.

Like Vasili, Yang Bum himself came out to the tarmac to greet Kang Chan.

"How are you?"

After exchanging pleasantries with Kang Chan, Yang Bum heartily greeted Seok Kang-Ho, Choi Jong-Il, and then Gérard.

“Please, get in.”

Darkness still permeated the military airport.

Kang Chan could see two sedans and three military trucks in the distance, presumably for Yang Bum’s security.

Kang Chan stepped into the sedan that Yang Bum had pointed to.

“You must be tired.”

“It’s bearable.”

Amid their small talk, they reached a single-story cement building attached to the outside of the airport.

The word “welcome center” was carved into the old wood in Chinese characters.

“That building used to be for Communist Party directors. Outsiders aren’t allowed inside now, so it’s perfect for meetings like this.”

Once inside, the first thing Kang Chan noticed was the intense red color. The floor, walls, and every inch of the room were painted red.

“I’ve prepared a table for the three of you.”

Yang Bum pointed to his right.

A long round table was set deeper in the room, which was sectioned off by a curtain. A steaming, hearty meal was waiting for them on top of it.

“Would you mind stepping outside with me for a bit, Mr. Kang Chan?”

Kang Chan wasn’t here to eat sweet and sour pork or seafood and vegetables anyway. He willingly followed Yang Bum out the back door of the welcome center.

“This is nice.”

A table and chairs had been set up in a gazebo facing the runway.

“Come on!”

Yang Bum gestured toward the seats in an exaggerated manner that was straight out of a Chinese movie.

When they sat down facing each other, a staff member quickly served them tea, ashtrays, cigarettes, and lighters before heading back inside.

“I received a call from Monsieur Vasili,” Yang Bum said as he gestured at the tea. He seemed to enjoy motioning with his hands.

Kang Chan opened the lid of the teapot and had some tea. Yang Bum also offered him a cigarette. Moments like this were business as usual to Kang Chan now.

Click.

After the two lit their cigarettes, they began their conversation.

“To be honest, I initially didn’t like this plan,” Yang Bum admitted, then turned away to exhale the smoke. “I only learned about the Eurasian Intelligence Council after taking over the intelligence bureau. Part of me thought that Ambassador Lanok, Vasili, and you intentionally put me in this position after eliminating Huh Geuk.”

“That never occurred to me.”

“I assumed as much.”

Yang Bum chuckled goodnaturedly.

“If such an operation was planned, I would probably still be wondering if my hunches were true even now. Besides, someone as straightforward as you would never take part in such a scheme.”

Kang Chan grinned. It sounded like Yang Bum was calling him simple.

“Some of the reason behind my cooperation with you was influenced by Ambassador Lanok.”

So that was why he did everything for me so easily.

Kang Chan inwardly nodded in agreement.

“When I found out that the Ambassador would be heading to the basements of Loriam, I decided to just go with the flow. I didn’t think I could ever match up to him, and I wanted to stop the war,” Yang Bum added with a firm expression.

“However, from now on, I’ll actively cooperate with you.”

“I’m already very grateful for your help so far.”

Yang Bum grinned in response. He then added, “We’ve been thoroughly searching for Josh and Romain on the European side. However, Monsieur Vasili and I are searching for the Fleche.”

“The Fleche?”

“It’s slang for a lost warhead.”

Kang Chan nodded. “I see.”

“We think the Fleche is inside a submarine. However, we don’t know which submarine it is or where it might be moving.”

“So you’re saying there’s a chance it could actually be fired?”

Yang Bum nodded with a heavy expression.

“Our intelligence bureau has been running hypothetical scenarios, and we’ve concluded that there is no other reason the Star of David would want to start a

war on the Korean peninsula. If so, then what do you think would be the worst-case scenario?"

Meeting Kang Chan's gaze, Yang Bum immediately continued, "The world will be plunged into war."

Kang Chan sighed quietly as he took out another cigarette.

He was exhausted from the long flight and had spent the whole day focusing on coordinates. Moreover, he kept finding surprise after surprise that he couldn't help but constantly reach for cigarettes.

Click.

At least it was already evening. The breeze was cool enough to keep him awake.

"If a nuke falls on Seoul, the entire Korean peninsula will turn into a hellhole. You've got Japan, Russia, and China fighting over vested interests. If the US and the UK join in as well, it will definitely turn into a world war."

"Would they be interested in a country that had already been nuked? Moreover, since everyone would already know the situation by then, wouldn't they think twice about taking action?"

Yang Bum shook his head. "If we don't intervene, North Korea will either go after Japan or move to Manchuria. At the very least, they'll need a place to avoid the nukes. One more thing."

Kang Chan was sick of it.

Damn it! There's always one more thing!

"If a nuke is dropped on Seoul, Mount Paektu's eruption becomes a hundred and seventy times more likely than they are now."

"That's quite high."

"Exactly. It wouldn't be wrong to assume that it would definitely erupt."

Yang Bum looked sharply at Kang Chan, who was putting out his cigarette.

Kang Chan met his gaze. He didn't know why the previously friendly was suddenly looking at him with these eyes, but he had never avoided such a challenging gaze before.

"Will you prevent war on the Korean peninsula and eliminate the Star of David, an organization that isn't afraid of the consequences of their actions?"

Kang Chan smirked.

How many times did that devious Lanok have to hear the same answer before he was relieved?

"I will."

Yang Bum grinned slyly. Kang Chan smirked again.

Kim Hyung-Jung tilted his head as he looked at the records.

The call from Hwang Ki-Hyun's phone to the strange number was only a second long. That meant that he hung up as soon as the call connected.

Furthermore, the owner of the number was an ordinary woman in her sixties, living in an apartment in Bucheon with her retired husband.

“Whew!”

Kim Hyung-Jung stood up from his seat, wetting his lips.

He needed a cigarette.

A quick trip outside for some fresh air while he was getting a cigarette and a strong cup of coffee to start from the beginning again would make him feel much better.

Kim Hyung-Jung left the office and pressed the elevator button.

Ding.

However, Kim Hyung-Jung didn't get on the elevator. He just stared at the number “5” above the elevator entrance.

Woosh!

He hurriedly spun around and quickly slapped his ID card against the panel.

Clunk! Thud!

He opened the door so frantically that two employees came running out with wide eyes.

Kim Hyung-Jung gripped the extension phone.

- Yes, Manager Kim.

“Write this number down! 0-1-0, 3-7-5-1, 1-2-7-0!”

- Please confirm. 010-3751-1270.

“That's right. Think of the number as a password and try to match it with satellite coordinates, a location on a map, an address, a specific zip code, anything to find an important building or something special!”

- Do we have any other clues?

“No. Do me a favor. Find it at all costs. This may be a code from the director.”

- I understand.

After his firm reply, the employee hung up the phone. Kim Hyung-Jung put the phone down, stared at the monitor again, and then turned his head away.

The two employees who had rushed out were carefully walking back.

“Got some cigarettes?”

“Huh?”

“If you do, let me bum one. I’ll buy you some in a minute.”

Kim Hyung-Jung looked like he was going to pull the trigger on them if they said they didn’t have any.

The employee quickly approached him and held out a pack of cigarettes.

Click.

“Hoo. You can take back the rest,” Kim Hyung-Jung said.

“I have extras.”

“You do? Then I’ll get back to you in a minute and—”

Ring, ring.

Click.

“Hello? Ow!”

Kim Hyung-Jung had picked up the extension in such a hurry that he accidentally burned himself with the cigarette.

- What’s going on?

“It’s nothing. Did you find anything?”

Kim Hyung-Jung brushed the back of his hand off with his other hand, and the employee quickly extinguished the fallen cigarette.

- As a satellite coordinate, it points to the International Building, the largest building in Korea. Moreover...

“What did you just say?”

- We checked starting from the closest place. Thirty-seven point fifty-one, twelve point seventy is the coordinates of Samseong-Dong’s International Building. And...

“Wait! That’s fine. Can you print out all the places in the country with those coordinates?”

- Yes, sir.

After hanging up, Kim Hyung-Jung looked blankly at the monitor.

“Oh! The assistant director! I have to tell him!”

“Huh?”

The employee next to him looked at him in surprise, but Kim Hyung-Jung was already dialing Kang Chan’s number.

Chapter 329: Would You Like To Eliminate Them (2)

Kang Chan’s phone rang right after he left China. Upon answering it, he sharply looked outside the window.

- ... When we looked into that number as satellite coordinates, it pointed to the International Building at Samseong-Dong.

Kang Chan lost himself in his thoughts for a moment.

- Assistant Director? Are you there?

“Yes. When is Abibu leaving South Korea?”

Kang Chan heard Kim Hyung-Jung typing on a computer.

- He’s leaving in three days.

“Can the International Building be seen from the Park Hotel?”

- Yes. People can see the building with ease. There’s nothing tall enough in between them to block the view.

Kang Chan cocked his head.

Two coordinates were discovered in a day? This is suspicious. That motherfucking Abibu must be trying to set off explosives before our very eyes.

For some reason, Kang Chan could see Abibu doing just that.

He flew into a rage as he remembered the look in the bastard’s eyes, which drove him crazy.

“Manager Kim, I should be back in South Korea in about two hours.”

- I’ll go out to the airport.

“You don’t have to. Instead, issue an emergency decree on Jeungpyeong’s special forces team, the 606’s Special Operations Unit, and the 35th Brigade. I want the entire National Intelligence Service’s counter-terrorism team fully armed, too.”

Seok Kang-Ho and Choi Jong-Il looked at him in surprise. Meanwhile, Gérard examined the three of them, perplexed.

- We need the Director’s approval to issue an emergency decree on the 606’s Special Operations Unit and the 35th Brigade. I’ll report this to the Director and take action immediately.

“Please do.”

Kang Chan put down his phone and then explained the situation twice. At the same time, he wondered how many times he had had to do this per day. He had done it so many times already that he even considered teaching Gérard Korean

“What are you going to do?” Seok Kang-Ho asked afterward.

“We should inspect the International Building first. I wouldn’t have even thought of doing that if we didn’t know about the coordinates,” Kang Chan answered.

“Anyway, now that we’re in this situation, we might as well check it out even if we have to do it in the dead of the night.”

“Then get some sleep while you still can. If you sleep now, you’ll be able to get two hours of rest.”

“I will, but you go on ahead. I’ll talk to Manager Kim first,” Kang Chan said.

After telling Gérard what they had just agreed on, the latter also bent his chair as far back as possible.

They had to eat and sleep whenever they could.

Choi Jong-Il was also adapting quite well to situations like this.

Kim Hyung-Jung went to the National Intelligence Service's main building in Naegok-dong.

Like someone destined to work as an administrator, Go Gun-Woo lived in the office while working to understand the tasks that he needed to do as the Director of the National Intelligence Service.

“Hmm. Assistant Director Kang Chan requested all these?” Go Gun-Woo asked.

“That’s correct.”

Go Gun-Woo had never experienced a situation like this. He sharply examined the two-page document again.

“Manager Kim, we used a total of 2.3 billion won to cover our special operation expenses in the Middle East last week. We used so much of our citizens’ precious tax money to gather information, but we only got two unconfirmed coordinates in return,” Go Gun-Woo commented.

His eyes glinted, but he couldn’t hide the fact that he was tired.

“People are barely starting to relax. Are you aware that we can incite unnecessary fear if things go wrong, especially with unconfirmed information?” Go Gun-Woo asked again.

Kim Hyung-Jung could clearly feel that Go Gun-Woo wasn’t berating him. He was just coldly examining the situation.

“Director, these measures could be excessive, but we’re doing this to stop terrorist attacks against the International Building and war from breaking out. Instead of wasting time calculating the potential of the information, we believe that looking into it ourselves through our agents and soldiers is the right thing to do.”

Go Gun-Woo looked straight at Kim Hyung-Jung. “Did Assistant Director Kang Chan think that or is that your opinion?”

“I’m following the Assistant Director’s wishes, sir,” Kim Hyung-Jung answered.

Go Gun-Woo’s lips strangely curled, making it seem as if he was holding in his laughter.

A moment of silence passed.

Go Gun-Woo sighed, then looked down at the documents. “Where do I sign?”

“Here, please,” Kim Hyung-Jung said, then quickly moved the documents so that the area Go Gun-Woo needed to sign was right in front of him.

Go Gun-Woo signed without hesitation.

“Thank you, Director,” Kim Hyung-Jung said.

“Manager Kim,” Go Gun-Woo called.

“Sir.”

“Thank you for teaching me and working so hard for South Korea. Please guide the soldiers and the agents well.”

“Yes, sir,” Kim Hyung-Jung answered, feeling deeply touched. However, he forcibly suppressed his emotions.

“Now, go! Our men need you out there,” Go Gun-Woo urged, extending his hand to the door.

Kim Hyung-Jung bowed and then left the office.

Ring. Ring.

Kwak Cheol-Ho answered the interphone. “Jeungpyeong training center.”

The training center didn’t follow the rules of communications security or thanked others for calling them. They also didn’t state their name or rank.

“Yes. I see. Understood!”

After hanging up, he immediately pressed the button next to the desk.

Weeeoo! Weeeoo! Weeeoo!

Kwak Cheol-Ho kicked open the door to the barracks and ran outside.

Cha Dong-Gyun, in his military uniform and military boots, also ran out from the barracks next door.

“The National Intelligence Service has issued a counter-terrorism emergency decree. We’re supposed to leave fully armed in twenty minutes,” Kwak Cheol-Ho explained.

Cha Dong-Gyun and Kwak Cheol-Ho briefly smirked at the same time.

The head of the National Intelligence Service’s counter-terrorism team was Kang Chan himself.

Whoosh!

The two then immediately ran and entered another barracks.

The counter-terrorism team had to wear a black military uniform, helmet, and bandana. They also had to pack a harness and many other things.

Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep.

The emergency waiting room of the National Intelligence Service's counter-terrorism team.

A red light circled as the uncomfortably loud siren blared.

Whoosh! Whish! Swoosh!

Click! Click! Clank! Clank!

The twelve people prepared to leave in complete silence.

There were two rooms inside, the counter-terrorism team had a total of thirty-six members. Nevertheless, as they ran through the hallway, none stopped to ask, "What's going on?"

The agents' eyes glinted because they were full of spite.

They had lost their Director and some of their precious colleagues to the recent terrorist attacks, yet after so much time had passed, they still hadn't obtained the faintest idea of who the culprit was.

This was an emergency.

Others would have no idea how much they looked forward to going into action for an emergency. Even the off-duty agents relentlessly insisted on not going home because they wanted to join the action so badly.

The National Intelligence Service's counter-terrorism team only went into action for terrorist attacks.

Clank! Click! Click!

Whoosh! Whish! Swoosh!

The agents pulled their rifles' breechblock, then ran outside.

Weeeoo! Weeeoo!

- 606! We've received a counter-terrorism emergency decree!

The officer on duty's order rang out through the speakers in the hallway.

Swoosh! Whish! Bang!

The soldiers in the bathroom and those resting against the railing kicked open the door and got ready.

Click! Click! Clank! Click!

They had to take different weapons depending on the role they were in charge of. Much like the Jeungpyeong special forces team, they also packed a harness and a couple of other things.

Click! Click!

Arming himself with his rifle and pistol, Jeong Won-Min—the commander of the 606's Special Operations Unit—thought of Kang Chan.

Although Kang Chan looked young, he was the one who had predicted that a missile would be launched at the presentation hall for the Eurasian Rail and even saved the President and all of the other key figures.

Jeong Won-Min later found out how terrifying the Director-General of France's DGSE was.

He almost became known as the 606 soldier who had killed one of the top five most important people in the intelligence world.

Click! Click! Click!

After clasp ing a bayonet on him and inserting magazines into some of his pockets, Jeong Won-Min ran out to the entrance. He was the first to finish.

The average person wouldn't know how it felt to go on an operation commanded by someone they looked up to and against the enemies who invaded their home country.

Whoosh! Swish! Whoosh!

Jeong Won-Min proudly examined the soldiers running out of the building.

We're going to complete tonight's operation and return in one piece. We're the 606's Special Operations Unit, after all.

After checking Kim Hyung-Jung's report, Kang Chan slept for about an hour.

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

His phone, which he had placed on top of his stomach before falling asleep, was now ringing.

Tousling his hair, Kang Chan answered the call.

“Hello?”

- This is the satellite surveillance team.

The moment Kang Chan heard the nervousness in their voice, every bit of drowsiness left him.

“What's going on?”

- A ship we think is for commercial use is heading toward the satellite coordinate.

The news was more plain than Kang Chan had anticipated.

- They have turned off their Automatic Identification System and their GPS. We wouldn't have discovered them if it wasn't for the satellite pictures.

Kang Chan suddenly sprang to his feet.

“How long do you think it'll take for that boat to reach the location?”

- It can't move very quickly since it's nighttime, so around an hour and a half, maybe two hours.

“What’s the nearest Russian airport to the coordinates?”

- One moment please... It’s the Vladivostok International Airport.

“Alright. Don’t lose sight of that ship.”

- Yes, sir.

As soon as the call ended, Kang Chan called Vasili.

- Monsieur Kang. You don’t have to inform me that you’ve arrived.

“Vasili, I’m turning the plane around right now to head to the Vladivostok International Airport. I need a helicopter and enough weapons for four people.”

- Who will you be fighting against?

Vasili sounded serious.

“It’s an unidentified commercial ship, so we don’t know yet. However, a gunfight is highly likely.”

- What’s your ETA?

“About an hour.”

- I’ll have everything prepared by the time you arrive.

After hanging up, Kang Chan stood up and headed to the cockpit. When he opened the door, the two pilots looked at Kang Chan, clearly tired.

“I need to go to the Vladivostok International Airport,” Kang Chan said.

The captain looked blankly at Kang Chan.

I can see why he’d be caught off guard—I did just tell them to turn the plane around like we’re in a taxi.

“Can we go there or not?” Kang Chan asked.

Looking into the flight instrument panel, the captain cocked his head before saying, “We’ll barely make it.”

“Make sure we get there in an hour.”

The pilot stared back at Kang Chan. He, too, was a member of the National Intelligence Service.

Kang Chan continued, “I’m acting based on the information the agents have risked their lives to give us. If I miss this chance, I’d be too ashamed of myself to face them.”

The captain sighed softly, then nodded.

“There will be severe turbulence. Please secure any items that can move and make sure to put on your seatbelt,” the captain replied with a determined expression.

Kang Chan nodded. “Thanks.”

He then returned to his seat.

Having just woken up, everyone's eyes were bloodshot.

"Stow everything that can move or fall during the flight. Secure those that we can't stow away somehow. Tie them up if you have to," Kang Chan ordered.

Ding. Ding. Ding. Ding.

The seatbelt sign turned on, seemingly telling them to hurry.

Seok Kang-Ho and Choi Jong-Il placed things such as their food and bags at the back, and Kang Chan placed his laptop in his seat pocket.

Brrrrr.

The small plane swerved as if it was being twisted to the side. It gained altitude, making it seem like it was exerting itself.

"The captain also said to put on our seatbelts."

The three sat down and followed Kang Chan's instructions.

Once roughly done with the preparations, he told the others what had just happened a moment ago twice.

"He said that the trip will take about an hour, so get some more sleep," Kang Chan said.

"What about you? Aren't you going to sleep?" Seok Kang-Ho asked.

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

"I'll sleep after going through some calls."

Kang Chan held up his phone and showed Seok Kang-Ho that someone was calling him.

"Alright. We'll sleep first, then," Seok Kang-Ho answered."

Even though his eyes were glinting, the fucker slept comfortably. After all, he knew how much even just an hour of sleep benefited them in a crucial moment.

Kang Chan answered the phone.

- It's Kim Hyung-Jung.

"Manager Kim."

- The 35th brigade has been sent to the outskirts of the International Building. We had the 606's Special Operations Unit position themselves by the entrance and sent the National Intelligence Service's counter-terrorism team and the Jeungpyeong special forces team inside the international building.

"Have them check the entire building for bombs. Place a sign on every area they've searched through."

- Yes, sir.

Kang Chan also told him that they were heading to the Vladivostok International Airport and explained why they were going there.

- Unfortunately, sending our troops over right now would prove difficult. We would also need Russia and China's permission before we could mobilize our fighter jets. I'm sorry we can't help you.

"Discovering that the International Building is being targeted is more than enough. I'll let you know if I need anything."

- Understood.

"Please do your best to secure the building."

- We'll be thorough with our inspection.

Kang Chan hung up and then looked outside the plane. He suddenly remembered the first time he got on a private plane with Lanok and traveled abroad with him.

I think I met Gérard around that time as well.

He also remembered NIS Director Hwang Ki-Hyun eating the rice that Seok Kang-Ho had mixed in a washbowl and Song Chang-Wook, who had asked him if he loved South Korea.

He smirked as his memories of them played in his mind.

Abibu glared at the International Building. The lights in his room were turned off.

"Does it make sense to you that the youngster managed to figure out that we're targeting that building?" he asked the person he was on a call with.

He was losing his temper, but he was trying his best to stop it from showing in his deep voice.

"They've stationed so many armed soldiers at the building. Doesn't that show that he's caught on to our plan?"

While listening to the other person answer, he gritted his teeth.

"Where are our warriors?"

He then looked up and glared at the International Building.

"Hmm. What about the youngster?"

Abibu turned his gaze to an empty space, seemingly calculating what he should do.

"I'll see how things play out before deciding."

He then put down his phone and rubbed his thumb, index, and middle fingers together out of habit. He'd always done this whenever he was thinking about something.

Ding. Ding. Ding. Ding.

Brrrr!

Kang Chan woke up and tousled his hair. At the same time, the others also sat up. They all had similar expressions.

Seok Kang-Ho groaned. It sounded uncomfortable. “Ugh!”

His voice seemed to be cracking because they had slept in snatches and the plane had a dry atmosphere.

After they straightened their seats, Gérard brought over two bottles of water.

His eyes were glinting.

“I feel like we’re back in our military camp,” Gérard commented.

Crackle.

Gérard removed the cap of a water bottle for Kang Chan, then handed it to him.

The two sat across from each other and drank water.

Brrrrrr!

The plane started to descend at a frightening rate—almost as if it had run out of fuel and was dropping from midair.

“Captain,” Gérard called afterward.

Kang Chan looked up.

Gérard continued. “I’m happy.”

“Shut up, you son of a bitch.”

Gérard smiled, the scar on his cheek curving. Kang Chan also smirked, then burst into laughter.

That’s right! I should be happy too. I’m accompanied by three people I cherish, and more are waiting for us back in South Korea. If they were all with us, this plane would’ve been filled to the brim.

What more can I wish for now? I had always dreamed of living like this in my previous life. I was so lonely back then.

Kang Chan smirked when he remembered Lanok and Song Chang-Wook’s wishes.

Wooong!

He wondered if the descending plane also slightly rose upward.

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

The plane landed on the runway soon after. They felt intense vibrations coming from it.

Brrrrrr!

As the engine let out loud noises, Kang Chan craned his neck from side to side.

You idiots made a big fucking mistake. I’m fucking destroying you Star of David bitches and turning South Korea into a very powerful country.

Chapter 330: Things Had Escalated (1)

It was already quite late in the evening. Hence, as soon as he got off the plane, a chill enveloped him.

Thud, thud, thud, thud.

While he was distracted by the sound of a distant helicopter, two armed soldiers rushed over. Their surroundings were bustling with activity and flickering lights.

"Monsieur Kang?" one of the soldiers asked.

Kang Chan nodded.

"Come this way," the soldier said in fluent French.

He then led Kang Chan and his group toward the helicopters. There were four Mi-28 helicopters, which rivaled the Apache, and one KA-60 Kasatka transport helicopter.

Considering the firepower they had prepared against a mere commercial ship, Vasili had definitely taken this seriously.

"Where are we going?!"

"Satellite coordinates! Forty-two point sixty-two, one thirty-six point ninety-three!"

"Understood!"

The man gestured toward the helicopter. As soon as they boarded, it took off. Inside the transport, armed agents watched Kang Chan intently.

Thud thud thud thud!

The helicopter blades were deafening.

"Here!"

The soldier handed over a rifle, bulletproof vest, and helmet all at once.

Why is he giving me all these all at once?!

Kang Chan wore the bulletproof vest and then the helmet.

Click. Clack.

The rifle was a modified AK.

"How long will this take?!" Kang Chan yelled, his frustration evident, despite the radio being attached right inside the helmet.

Their guide pointed to the radio button on the helmet and pressed it.

Chk.

"About an hour, sir!" the soldier answered afterward.

This fucking idiot yelled anyway!

Thud thud thud thud!

Kang Chan looked at the dark sky outside the helicopter. He then gazed at the sporadic lights below, the dark sea in the distance, and the attack helicopters flying slightly apart.

He smirked toward the sea.

Um Ji-Hwan and the agents had risked their lives to get this information. Hence, Kang Chan felt that he had to be equally prepared.

This night was unpredictable in every sense.

Seok Kang-Ho and Gérard exchanged glances, while Choi Jong-Il looked down with a stern expression.

Inside the lobby on the first floor of the International Building, a temporary table had been set up. Five fully armed counter-terrorism agents were standing guard.

Kim Hyung-Jung was honestly scared, but it was not because of the possibility of a bomb exploding or an enemy suddenly rushing out and shooting at them. If those were the reasons, he would already have run to the front to get it over with.

Things had escalated. Only now did the reality sink in.

An armed special forces team currently surrounded the building with fifty-two floors and five basement levels in the center of Samseong-dong.

The 35th Brigade assigned to the perimeter had even mounted machine guns on their jeeps. Surprised, the citizens gathered, and the lights of the neighboring buildings turned on.

How could they be in the mood to watch this after the recent bombings?

As if mocking Kim Hyung-Jung, cars began to crowd around the International Building as if it were rush hour.

Whir, whir!

Despite the continuous gestures by police officers, the number of cars only increased.

What would Kang Chan have done in this situation? What would he look like during such a desperate time?

Chk.

"The control room has been secured," one of the agents radioed in.

Kim Hyung-Jung hurriedly pressed the radio button.

Chk.

"Block off every light you can. Evacuate everyone in the building and lower the fire barriers in areas that have already been emptied! Deactivate security systems as you search, too."

Chk.

"There are about three hundred people in the main building and about two hundred in the cinema. Announcements are being made, but controlling them is proving difficult."

Kim Hyung-Jung frowned as he looked deeper inside the building. The escalator in the distance would lead to the cinema.

Chk.

"I'll take responsibility. If cooperation doesn't work, force them out. Hurry!"

Chk.

"Yes, sir."

After finishing the transmission, Kim Hyung-Jung spread out the floor plans laid on the temporary table. The International Building was connected to a hotel, a city airport terminal, the ASEM Center, a theater, and a shopping center. Moreover, the underground parking lot had space for five thousand cars. Agents were searching with bomb-sniffing dogs and equipment, but there were currently over seven hundred parked cars.

Ring, ring, ring.

He was insanely busy. His phone had been ringing nonstop all night.

"Kim Hyung-Jung speaking."

- This is the security office. Any progress?

Jeon Dae-Geuk sounded quite gruff. When heavily armed troops were mobilized within a fifty-kilometer radius of the presidential residence area and when the 35th Brigade, the Special Warfare Command, or other special forces teams were called, the security office immediately received reports about it.

"We've just started," answered Kim Hyung-Jung.

Jeon Dae-Geuk remained silent. He knew Kim Hyung-Jung was investigating a massive building amid uncontrolled external conditions and the stress of live broadcasts.

They hoped that they wouldn't meet any incidents, but if they did, someone had to take responsibility. This event could potentially lead to significant political backlash, sparking arguments that appointing Go Gun-Woo—a director with limited experience—was the cause of this absurd commotion.

- Manager Kim.

"Sir."

- Since you've started, think about the consequences later and thoroughly investigate. If something happens after we withdraw from doing all this...

Jeon Dae-Geuk trailed off, implying the aftermath could be difficult to manage.

"Understood, sir," Kim Hyung-Jung responded. At the same time, he heard a soft sigh from the other side of the call.

- Anything you need?

"For now, we're okay."

Kim Hyung-Jung turned his gaze outside. Beyond the glass, broadcasting lights intensely surged toward the building.

Thud thud thud thud thud thud!

They had been flying for about an hour.

Chk.

"We're here. This is the location indicated by the coordinates."

Kang Chan leaned out and looked down. Apart from the white clouds around the helicopter, he couldn't really see anything else. Taking out his phone, he immediately realized that there was no signal. Moreover, it was too noisy to make a call.

Chk.

"We need to find the ship! Connect me to the Russian intelligence bureau via radio!" Kang Chan was shouted in frustration.

Chk.

Right after, he heard a quick Russian conversation on the radio.

Thud thud thud thud!

The helicopter quickly changed direction.

Chk.

"We have eyes from the satellite! They've pointed us in the right direction, but our target is about five minutes away! Heading there now!" the guide explained in French.

Five minutes? I'll wait, then!

Kang Chan used this time to brief Seok Kang-Ho and Choi Jong-Il on the situation.

Abibu answered the phone just after midnight. Sitting in the dark, his silhouette was faintly reflected on the window.

"The youngster to Russia? Why?" He asked.

It seemed to be unexpected news to him. He looked up into the void as if pondering. Outside the window, the streets of India were crowded with people and vehicles. After listening to the other party for a moment, Abibu spoke again.

"Korea is certainly an interesting country. Its people gather to spectate despite the threat of a terrorist attack. Isn't this the perfect opportunity to demonstrate our warrior's capabilities?" He said.

A brief silence followed.

"If it even makes it to the broadcast, that would be ideal. Spreading fear will change public opinion. It will teach the youngster what excessive ambition brings."

Abibu leaned forward and surveyed the area beyond the International Building.

"Ensure you have accurate reports on the youngster's movements."

After listening for a bit, he said, "Not yet. Wait."

He put down the phone.

The scene outside the International Building unfolded as if it was from a movie, Watching through the window, it overlaid Abibu's figure.

"You little child."

The reflection of Abibu's eyes on the glass strangely glinted.

"Don't rush. Otherwise, you might miss a splendid scene."

His expression filled with anticipation.

Thud thud thud thud thud thud.

About four minutes later, the five helicopters finally spotted a ship.

Groooong!

A strange engine noise followed as they sharply descended.

Thud thud thud thudthud thud.

Just then, sparks flew from the Mi-28 helicopter leading their formation

Tat, tat, tat, tat, tat, tat, tat!

These bastards!

"Cease fire! Cease fire!" Kang Chan yelled.

The attack helicopters—which were made to counter Apache helicopters—had opened fire! In seconds, their 30mm machine guns shredded the ship's exterior. The guide hastily sent a radio transmission, and the firing stopped.

These untrained idiots! I didn't fucking order them to fire!

It was a close call; the ship nearly exploded.

Thud thud thud thudthud thud.

Four lights encircled the ship as Russian radio transmissions hurriedly continued.

Chk.

"The satellite has confirmed that this is the correct ship."

How quick.

Kang Chan held onto the door of the helicopter and looked down. It was around a twenty-meter drop. Aside from the waves being pushed out by the propeller, there was no movement from the ship.

"I'm going down! Lower the helicopter and throw down the ropes!" Kang Chan barked at the soldier he had been guiding.

Chk.

"Send the agents down first, sir!"

Kang Chan thought about it for a moment and then shook his head.

You never know what these bastards might do.

"We'll go down first! You guys follow!" Kang Chan firmly ordered.

An agent pulled out the ropes near the entrance.

"Daye! You go down first! Gérard! You follow behind him from this side! Choi Jong-Il will be the last to descend!" Kang Chan said.

Seok Kang-Ho, Gérard, and Choi Jong-Il nodded in turn.

Thud thud thud thudthud thud!

It was a noisy night over the quiet sea. Only the rough winds and the loud noises of the large helicopter blades could be heard.

"Throw it!"

Whoosh! Swoosh!

The two ropes, lit by the light, writhed like snakes.

Click!

Seok Kang-Ho went down ten meters without any regard for his life. Kang Chan leaned on the doorframe and aimed his rifle downward, unwilling to entrust Seok Kang-Ho's life to someone whose skills he had yet to verify.

Thud thud thud thudthud thud!

Dressed in a suit, Seok Kang-Ho was slower than usual but not enough to be boring. Soon enough, he dropped down onto the ship.

Seok Kang-Ho swung his arms wide.

"Gérard!" Kang Chan called.

As commanded, Gérard hung onto the other rope.

‘That bastard!’

Kang Chan swallowed the curse on the tip of his tongue. Gérard descended so quickly that he was at risk of tearing off his palms and ankles.

"Here we go!" Kang Chan yelled at Choi Jong-Il as he slid down the rope.

The cold wind hidden in the darkness and the salty scent unique to the sea rushed at him. Water splashed the moment he landed.

Click! Clack!

The ship was tilting heavily. Seok Kang-Ho swung his arms, and Choi Jong-Il came down.

Thud thud thud thud thud thud thud thud!

The place lit by the light was as bright as day. The cabin and its surroundings were riddled with huge holes, leaving the ship a total mess.

Kang Chan gestured largely with his index and middle fingers to Gérard. Gérard nodded and quickly turned to the opposite side of the cabin. While the Russian agents were descending in succession, Kang Chan slowly moved forward.

Step. Step.

He was heading toward the cabin. Seok Kang-Ho supported him from behind, and Choi Jong-Il guarded the rear.

Sigh. Sigh.

Gérard turned back from the other side, and their eyes met.

‘Stay calm!’

‘Understood!’

In this situation, carelessness could mean death.

‘One, two!’

Gérard kicked the door open.

Crash! Bang!

Click!

Kang Chan aimed his rifle inside the cabin. The ship was rocking, but it wasn't enough to throw him off balance.

Sigh. Sigh.

Kang Chan stepped inside. The room was as big as the master bedroom of the apartment he used to live in.

Click!

After checking behind the door, Kang Chan looked left and right, then slowly straightened up. Three corpses and rifles were haphazardly scattered on the floor.

"What a mess," Gérard said while kicking one of the bodies.

Even if he hadn't said anything, looking at the corpses riddled with machine gun bullets would have made anyone have the same thought.

"Check if there's anything worth salvaging!" Kang Chan ordered in both Korean and French as he left the cabin.

Damn! Did we come too noisily?

As Kang Chan surveyed the front and back of the rocking ship, Gérard emerged from the cabin.

"They're built and trained like soldiers. They all seem to be Greek."

"Greek?"

"Yes."

Kang Chan nodded. Strangely, they kept getting tangled up with the Greeks. Inside, he heard someone rummaging and knocking on walls to find hidden compartments.

"Let's leave this to the Russians and head back," said Kang Chan.

"Sounds good."

Just as Kang Chan started heading to the cabin to call Seok Kang-Ho, Seok Kang-Ho's head popped out.

"Take a look at this," said Seok Kang-Ho.

He then ducked back in. Kang Chan hurried inside, following him.

"Over here!"

Seok Kang-Ho pointed forward. The space under the ship's steering key was wide open. Kang Chan leaned over to look inside and found a metal case.

Better safe than sorry.

Kang Chan closely inspected the space for any sloppy connection linked to a dynamite or grenade.

Creeeak! Creeek!

With each sway of the ship, an unsettling noise reverberated. At the same time, the suitcase slightly shifted.

I can't find any explosive devices.

Kang Chan reached out and pulled the suitcase toward him.

"Check these bastards for something like a key," ordered Kang Chan.

Choi Jong-il and Seok Kang-Ho searched the dead, but they didn't find anything.

'Is this a nuclear warhead?'

It was too light, though.

Kang Chan eyed the suitcase in front of him with a mysterious gaze.

If it contains dynamites or a C-4 attached to a timer, bringing this back to the helicopter could end our life spectacularly.

Kang Chan looked around. A case this small couldn't possibly have hidden compartments.

C-4s are easy to get in the Middle East or Africa, so would they really put one in a metal suitcase straight out of a 007 movie just to deliver it to this place?

Kang Chan shook his head.

Unless it was to catch fish in the sea, there was no reason they'd secretly deliver C-4 to this place. Moreover, if C-4 was their product, this ship should be half-filled with it. Otherwise, this delivery wouldn't be profitable.

"Let's head up," Kang Chan said. "Gérard, take this."

After entrusting the suitcase to Gérard, he left the cabin.

Chk.

"We're going up. Pull the rope!"

Kang Chan and Seok Kang-Ho braced the ropes, and they quickly ascended.

"We're heading back! Take care of the ship!"

"Yes, sir!"

Gérard and Choi Jong-il then ascended using the thrown ropes. It was after the guide had rattled off something.

Thud, thud, thud, thud, thud, thud, thud, thud!

As the helicopters began to move away, Kang Chan peered back. The ship rocked on the pitch-black sea, with the agents visible on it.

"Why don't we take them with us?!"

"The navy will arrive soon!" the guide shouted.

Cruel bastards. They could have at least left one helicopter.

Thud thud thud thud thud thud thud thud!

Kang Chan shifted his gaze back.

The metal suitcase was in front of Gérard.

Is that really as valuable as the agents' lives?

Kang Chan pulled out a cigarette and put it in his mouth.