

## World's Greatest Militia - Chapter 2

### 2. Fog

“Hahahaha!”

“Dude, some random weirdo came up to me asking when I graduated from the military academy, right? So I just—”

Kwang Hwi's body trembled in shock as the white room and the solitary gun rack vanished without a trace. A familiar scene filled his vision once again. He was sitting in a circle, surrounded by his compatriots. In the center, there were a variety of snacks to compliment the soju and beer. He remembered now. They were reuniting over drinks, a year after the team had disbanded.

“Hey boss, what's the matter? You look like you just saw a ghost.”

“Wait a minute boss. Where'd you get that gun?”

Silence engulfed the room in an instant, as Kwang Hwi felt everyone's eyes move to his hands. Looking down, his face froze in a grimace.

The HK416C he had bought in that dream sat in his hands. He pulled out the magazine, just to check. 30 rounds of 5.56mm NATO, steel in brass casing, live. It hadn't been a dream after all.

“Damn boss! How'd you get that gun?! Did you smuggle it in?”

“Man, I don't know who, but wow boss, you must've made a deal with someone, huh? Please, boss! Get me one too! I wanna relieve my stress every once in a while; fire one, you know? Oh man, how about a .50 Barrett!”

His subordinates laughed and drank their beers. Whether it was the alcohol or just an acceptance of Kwang Hwi's antics, they seemed entirely unperturbed by the fact he had found a gun.

Kwang Hwi winced as they spoke; their loud voices were giving him an ear-splitting headache. He was sure of it now. It definitely hadn't been a dream.

“Quiet.” He raised his hand as he spoke. A tense silence quickly fell over the room and the previously smiling faces turned into grim stares.

Kwang Hwi looked around. Something felt off. Suddenly, it hit him.

“The fog,” he whispered.

“Eh?”

“Look outside.” Kwang Hwi jerked his head to the side.

They had been holding their reunion at Kwang Hwi’s house; on the 2nd floor, to be precise. Kwang Hwi had personally designed the home, and one of its walls was made entirely out of glass. As his former subordinates turned their heads and stared out the window, their voices rang out in surprise.

Outside, the warm sunshine had been suddenly replaced by a thick, gray mist, which made it impossible for anyone inside the house to see more than a few feet past the windows. It covered everything; the trees, the buildings, even the lot just outside the house and the cars parked within.

“What is with this fog?” As if sensing the danger from this incredibly bizarre scenario, the men jumped to their feet.

Kwang Hwi picked up the remote next to him and turned on the TV.

– BREAKING NEWS. An unusually thick fog appears to have covered the entire country, reducing visibility to only a few feet. Accidents have been reported across multiple freeways and roads. Local police departments have been quick to declare a state of emergency.

Kwang Hwi flicked through a few more channels, ignoring the culture and variety shows. Every single news channel was reporting on the unbelievable,

country-covering fog. Some even reported that the Minister of National Defense had issued an order to immediately recall all foreign-deployed soldiers.

Inside the house, a nervous tension filled the air. “I’ve never seen fog that looked like this in my life.”

“Me neither. What about you boss?”

Kwang Hwi shook his head. “It’s a first.” Indeed, as Kwang Hwi stared uneasily into the void, he felt like calling it ‘thick fog’ was a massive understatement. It was like staring into a terrible abyss, a dark hole that could swallow everything in the world.

‘... Is this related to the gun?’ The thought occurred to Kwang Hwi quite suddenly. While he had been drinking, he had a dream. But it wasn’t a dream – he had brought back a real gun from that place, and almost as soon as he returned, the fog appeared. He couldn’t accept that as simple coincidence.

On a hunch, he opened a small window. As if it were a beast, simply waiting for an opportunity, the fog immediately leapt into the room.

The men nearby rushed forward to close the window, but Kwang Hwi waved them off. He watched with tense curiosity as the fog, like it truly did have a

mind of its own, reached out a long, misty tendril and wrapped it around the HK416C on the floor. It trembled, every now and then, as it engulfed the rifle.

Kwang Hwi swallowed. It was abundantly clear that this was no ordinary fog. Instead of pouring in and filling up the room like a normal mist, it had chosen, in defiance of the typical laws of physics, to focus its presence on the rifle, ignoring everyone and everything else in the room.

Exactly 10 minutes passed, but the rifle appeared totally unchanged. Rather, Kwang Hwi noticed that the fog had started thinning out. Finally, as the fog disappeared entirely from the room, Kwang Hwi reached down and picked up the rifle again. He inspected it carefully, looking over its joints and hinges. It appeared perfectly intact.

“Why did the fog wrap itself around the rifle, and only the rifle?” He turned to the others.

One of his subordinates replied, “It had a purpose?”

“Yeah, it certainly did. The question is... what purpose?”

“Maybe it was trying to destroy the rifle?”

“Destroy?” Kwang Hwi thought about it. It was far too early to jump to conclusions, but this was the only reasonable hypothesis they could come up with. “Then, can anybody confirm this?”

Everyone’s gazes landed on one person.

“Jackson, I heard you’re still employed. Don’t you have a pistol and a silencer with you?” asked Kwang Hwi.

“Y-yes. But I don’t have them with me right now. They’re in my car.” His unusual name betrayed his foreign heritage, but he (perhaps surprisingly) spoke fluent Korean nonetheless. Jackson was a black American, but had joined Kwang Hwi’s crew while they were still active; learning Korean to alleviate his difficulties communicating with the others.

“Your car? The sedan outside?”

“Yes.” He nodded reluctantly.

Everybody’s eyes darted towards the window, and one of the men gulped. Their cars were parked just beyond the dense wall of fog, but nobody wanted to chance wandering out there.

“Let’s go then.” Kwang Hwi stood up as he spoke, and raised his HK416C to chest level. “Everyone else, stay here. Only Jackson and I will go.”

“Understood. Please be careful.”

Kwang Hwi nodded. He could tell that his subordinates wanted to go with him, but in this case, it was dangerous to move as a group. In the thick fog where it was easy to lose one’s bearing, a large group would have a hard time staying together.

The duo carefully opened the door and stepped into the fog. As if it were waiting for their approach, the fog enveloped them instantly. A particularly dense patch arose around Kwang Hwi’s rifle, but to his relief, nothing seemed to happen to the gun itself.

“It should be somewhere around here....”

Jackson kept one hand on Kwang Hwi’s shoulder, while pressing his car keys with the other. A loud beep, and a brief flash of orange light greeted them.

Kwang Hwi slowly moved towards the flash, careful to take note of his direction.

Amidst the fog, a pitch black sedan slowly came into view. It was barely visible, but it was enough for the two of them, who possessed finely tuned physical abilities and senses.

Jackson quickly jumped into the driver's seat and Kwang Hwi moved to sit next to him. "Please wait," he said, as he opened the hand rest between the driver's seat and passenger's seat. A few objects lay strewn about the storage space haphazardly: a capsule of anti-drowsiness gum, a notebook, and various pens amongst other things.

Jackson gently pressed the gum capsule, and a hidden compartment opened with a click. Kwang Hwi could clearly see a pistol with the silencer already attached, and 3 magazines sitting inside. He saw Jackson reach for the gun, then pause, and frown.

"Holy fuck!" Jackson exclaimed.

Kwang Hwi looked at the gun more carefully. His eyes narrowed. The gun that should've been well-maintained was completely covered in rust, as if it had been sitting in the ocean, decaying for years. Firing it was almost certainly out of the question. Similarly, the ammunition in the cartridge looked like it would explode if it was fired.



“It shouldn’t have touched the fog...” Jackson muttered.

“Let’s go back,” Kwang Hwi said.

“Roger.”

They left the car, stepping back into the cold, oppressive gray air. The all-encompassing fog was dizzying, but Kwang Hwi expertly retraced his steps as he worked his way back towards the house. Jackson followed without question. It had been a year since Kwang Hwi retired, but Jackson still believed in his boss’s senses.

Suddenly, Kwang Hwi stopped.

“Boss?”

“Shh,” he whispered in response, as he strained his ears. It was quiet earlier, but now Kwang Hwi could clearly hear heavy footsteps — from the side.

He swerved around.