

After Ten Millennia in Hell

Chapter 13 - Second Awakening (2)

Munch, munch.

"..."

Glug, glug.

"Kaaah!"

Clang.

Oh Kang-Woo trembled after finishing a pint of beer. The beer flowed throughout his body like water seeping into dry, drought-stricken ground.

'Yes, this is it!'

It was a taste that made a person nod with satisfaction.

Fried chicken and beer was a combination that couldn't even be imagined in hell.

"Is it good?"

"Yes, it's the best."

"Hmm." Han Seol-Ah narrowed her eyes as she looked at Kang-Woo, who was frantically eating the chicken.

She spoke while sulking slightly, "Is it better than my kimchi stew?"

Seol-Ah knew that being jealous because of something like this was ridiculous, but she couldn't help but feel a bit jealous when he saw Kang-Woo enjoy eating the fried chicken that much.

"Umm..."

There was a visible sense of internal conflict in Kang-Woo's eyes. Choosing between fried chicken and kimchi stew... wasn't an easy decision to make.

"...Even so, I prefer your kimchi stew," Kang-Woo ultimately answered after thinking about it for a while.

The chicken was delicious, but his love for kimchi stew was stronger.

"Ahem. R-Really?" Seol-Ah said, blushing slightly. Then she giggled and expressed, "I think you're a bit quirky, Kang-Woo."

Kang-Woo had seemed like a violent beast while fighting against Tae-Hyun, and his usual appearance was cold and calm. Yet, he looked as pure as a child when he was eating.

Seol-Ah couldn't find a better word than 'quirky' to describe Kang-Woo. She found it hard not to be curious about him.

"Kang-Woo... do you have any friends or f-family?"

Seol-Ah thought that if she met people who knew Kang-Woo, she'd be able to hear more about him.

When Kang-Woo heard that question, he silently took a sip of beer.

Eventually, he replied, "I don't."

"Pardon?"

"I don't have friends or family."

Seol-Ah fell silent for a moment.

Kang-Woo had lived his whole life alone. His parents had abandoned him back when he was just a baby. Then, after he left the orphanage, he'd been so busy making a living that he hadn't had time to make friends. During those times, the only thing that kept him going was the delicious food he ate from time to time. He might have given up living a long time ago if it wasn't for that.

"Then why were you at that E-rank Gate—"

"One day..." Kang-Woo cut Seol-Ah off. He looked at her with deep, sunken eyes and stated, "I'll tell you everything one day."

There was no point in explaining his situation to Seol-Ah right now. She probably wouldn't believe him, but even if she did, he didn't want to tell her yet.

"Okay. I understand," Seol-Ah said while smiling bitterly. "I'll trust you to tell me one day."

"Thank you."

With a slight nod, Kang-Woo took out an envelope and gave it to Seol-Ah.

"What's this...?" she asked.

"It's the money that was left over after buying a smartphone. It should be approximately three million won."

"Why are you giving me this...?"

"I'm staying at your house, so think of this as paying for the rent."

"N-No! I can't accept this." Seol-Ah shook her head.

Kang-Woo had saved her life. She couldn't accept money from him as payment for rent.

"You've spent a lot of money on basic training. I know that your family isn't very well-off."

"But..."

"You don't have to feel burdened by it since I'm getting to eat your delicious food every day. If you don't feel comfortable considering it as rent, think of it as money for groceries."

Even objectively speaking, Seol-Ah's cooking skills were very good. It would be a huge loss for Kang-Woo if she couldn't show the full extent of her abilities because she didn't have money to buy ingredients.

"Thank you very much, Kang-Woo."

Seol-Ah accepted the envelope while looking like she was about to cry at any moment. She had been worried about this month's living expenses, so that envelope of money was equivalent to rain in the middle of a drought.

"Fufu, tomorrow I'll buy better meat for the kimchi stew. It'll be even more delicious than last time," Seol-Ah said with a kind smile before placing the envelope in her bag.

"Woah..."

The moment he heard the words 'kimchi stew,' Kang-Woo's eyes lit up. Seol-Ah hadn't meant much by what she said, but Kang-Woo was so moved by her words that his hands shook and clenched into fists excitedly.

'Seol-ah seriously is an angel.'

She was going to make him kimchi stew every day...? That wasn't something someone could do unless they were an angel.

'Let's spend the rest of our lives together, darling!'

A field of flowers appeared in Kang-Woo's mind, and in that flower field stood Seol-Ah. She had wings on her back, and she was smiling at him. Pots of steaming hot kimchi stews were floating around her.

An ironic scene of a demon feeling moved by his imagination of an angel and kimchi stew was playing out at this moment. If someone who knew Kang-Woo's identity as the demon king saw what he was imagining, they would've been shocked by the abomination.

"Oh, come to think of it, Seol-ah..."

"Yes?"

"Is there a D-rank Gate around here?"

"Hmm... Yes, there's one," Seol-Ah said as she recalled the Gate.

"I see. What monsters are in that Gate?"

"I haven't been in there myself, but I've heard that there are Lizardmen."

"Lizardmen, huh?"

It was a monster that often appeared in fantasy novels.

'I'll go there tomorrow.'

While thinking that, Kang-Woo continued talking.

He asked, "Is there anything you know about them? Things like habits or weaknesses."

Kang-Woo had no intention of relaxing just because they were D-rank monsters. Being confident about one's skills was a good thing, but being overly confident could bring trouble. By then, one's overconfidence would turn into a sharp knife and slash their throat. The reason why Kang-Woo had been able to kill countless demons was that they'd underestimated him as a weak human.

So, it didn't matter if Seol-Ah didn't know anything about the Lizardmen, but it was better if Kang-Woo could learn as much about his opponents as possible before trying to hunt them.

"Lizardmen are weak to fire. And... they're very sensitive to sound."

"Sound?"

"Yes. They have bad eyesight, but they can use sound to detect the presence of enemies. Parties that hunt Lizardmen try to kill them quickly while making as little sound as possible."

"I see..."

It was useful information.

'Weak to fire, huh?'

Kang-Woo thought of one of the Authorities he was now able to use thanks to his explosive increase in demonic energy.

'Hunting them is going to be easy.'

He smiled at the thought of getting enough mana stones to increase his Player rank.

"Kang-Woo, don't you have to buy equipment like armor or weapons?"

Seol-Ah tilted her head while looking at Kang-Woo, whom she thought was a high-level Player but had equipment that was worse than a newbie's.

"I don't feel the need for them at the moment."

Kang-Woo had the Authority of Blades as his weapon. On top of that, he had dozens of different defensive Authorities he could use.

If he bought equipment, he could hunt more efficiently because the amount of demonic energy that he needed to consume would be reduced. However, for now, he wasn't going to be doing any difficult hunts that required him to buy equipment.

'I can always buy equipment later on.'

With the amount of money that Players earned, Kang-Woo would probably be able to live comfortably soon. He could always buy equipment once he reached that point.

The most important thing for him now was to level up.

'I need to achieve my Third Awakening and check if that weakens the Ten Thousand Demon Core's seal.'

From what he'd read, it normally took other Players between two to three months before they were able to achieve their Third Awakening. Meanwhile, Players with lower-ranking Traits often needed up to six months.

Nevertheless, that didn't apply to Kang-Woo. He already possessed great power that was incomparable to Players of the same level as him.

'I guess I'll be eating grilled lizard tomorrow.'

Kang-Woo's eyes lit up as he bit into a chicken leg. "Hmm..."

"Did something happen?"

"No, I was just wondering what grilled lizard tastes like."

"...?"

It was said that one's thoughts usually followed a stream of consciousness.

'Now I really want to eat it.'

Kang-Woo finished his beer while thinking that he should cut off and bring a Lizardman's tail with him tomorrow.

"One more pint, please!"

* * *

"Have a safe trip, Kang-Woo."

"Thank you. Good luck with your basic training, Seol-Ah."

"Fufu, thank you. I want to achieve my Second Awakening as soon as possible so I can be a full-fledged Player like you!" Seol-Ah answered with a firm voice, clenched fists, and bright eyes.

'What an angel.' Kang-Woo smiled as he gazed at her.

After a little while, he turned away and said, "Right, let's get going then."

Kang-Woo went to request for his Player rank to be raised with the exchange receipt that he had received from the Mana Stone Exchange Center the day before. He had decimated a Monster Hideout alone, so his rank went up by one letter. In just a day, he had become a D-rank Player.

Murmur.

"Looking for a healer who has completed their Second Awakening! C-rank Trait or above!"

"Offering a carry service to quickly and safely reach your Third Awakening! We charge 1.3 million won per hour!"

"I'm a rogue! Someone, anyone, please let me join your party! I'll provide first aid if nothing else!!"

There were several times more people gathered in front of the D-rank Gate than the E-rank one. Players who had completed the basic training course were immediately promoted to D-rank, so that's why they went straight to a D-rank Gate after completing the course.

However, it was undoubtedly difficult for Players who had only just achieved their Second Awakening to hunt in a D-rank Gate. Rank aside, most of these Players had little to no battle experience.

That's why many Players with more experience offered to help others as a paid service. Kang-Woo, who wasn't interested in those people, paid them no mind.

'Someone, just take that rogue with you.'

Kang-Woo's attention was focused on the young man shouting for someone to let him join their party. He looked at him with pity, but he turned away too. After all, he had no reason or obligation to help the young man.

"Excuse me," someone called out to Kang-Woo.

It was right when Kang-Woo was about to enter the Gate after getting his Player license checked.

Kang-Woo turned his head toward where the voice came from and saw that the person who had called him was a young man with a shortsword. Behind him were four other people who seemed to be his party members.

'Are these guys like Tae-Soo?'

While thinking about the guy he'd seen the day before, Kang-Woo said, "Yes, can I help you?"

"Judging by your equipment, you seem to be a newbie. Would you like us to carry you?" the young man, who had acne on his face, asked with a smile.

"We'll level you up safely, Oppa~" a young woman who was quite pretty said to Kang-Woo while winking.

If Kang-Woo had met them right when he first arrived on Earth, he might have mindlessly followed them. However, he was currently living with a woman that looked

like a model—Seol-Ah. The words of a woman with only decent looks couldn't move Kang-Woo anymore.

"I'm fine," Kang-Woo answered coldly and entered the Gate.

"Ah, wait!" the young man called out.

He extended his hand and tried to grab Kang-Woo to no avail. The young man frowned angrily.

"Arrogant prick..." he muttered while gazing fiercely at the Gate.