

# After Ten Millennia in Hell

## Chapter 5 - Unfamiliar Earth, Familiar Scenery (2)

"I'm the one who said that refusing an offer isn't the same as being modest, so I guess I can't refuse," Oh Kang-Woo said while nodding with bright eyes.

It was obvious from his attitude that he hadn't had any intentions of refusing right from the beginning.

"Fufu. Okay, then please follow me," Han Seol-Ah replied with a smile and turned around.

At that moment, a man who was in front of the Gate walked toward Kang-Woo and Seol-Ah. He was dressed in what seemed to be a military uniform.

"Your Player license, please," the man said.

"Oh, yes. Here you go." Seol-Ah nodded and showed him a license with 'E-rank' written on it.

"Thank you."

The man merely looked at Seol-Ah's Player license for a second before nodding in acknowledgement. It was as if doing this job bothered him.

This was a similar procedure to when employees asked for your identification card in a bar.

"You too, sir," the man said to Kang-Woo.

'Damn it.' Kang-Woo frowned a bit. 'I wasn't expecting someone to ask for my license.'

He was in trouble. Kang-Woo didn't have a Player license.

'If I say I forgot it, I'll probably have to go through some long-winded process.'

Without a license, things could get rather bothersome. After all, Kang-Woo had been missing for five years. This meant he was in a weird place regarding his identity. So, it wasn't even just that things could get bothersome; his plan of trying to integrate into society as naturally as possible could crumble as well.

'But most importantly...'

The great opportunity that he had spent ten millennia waiting for could fade away into nothing.

'I must prevent that from happening.'

Only an idiot would let an opportunity like that go.

"Just a moment, please," Kang-Woo said and put his hand into his pocket.

Of course, there wasn't anything inside the pocket.

'This Authority will be a bit difficult to use with my remaining demonic energy, but...'

He remembered the attitude of the man when he checked Seol-Ah's license. The man had only looked at it for a second.

'If it's only for that long...'

It was worth a shot, even with Kang-Woo's current amount of demonic energy.

"Here it is."

While saying that, Kang-Woo took out his hand from his pocket and showed his middle finger to the man.

Simultaneously, Kang-Woo activated one of his Authorities—the Authority of Blindness. It was Dantalion's Authority, and it distorted the target's perception and deceived their eyes. However, an enormous amount of demonic energy had to be consumed to produce this effect. The stronger the target, the more the amount of demon energy consumed would increase.

Nevertheless, the soldier checking the licenses seemed weaker than the Level-6 Seol-Ah. His eyes became blurry under the effect of the Authority of Blindness, and he nodded at Kang-Woo, who still had his middle finger raised.

"Thank you," the soldier said.

It had been only for one second, but Kang-Woo felt as if most of his demonic energy had been drained from his body. Kang-Woo put his hand down while trying to control his breathing.

"Then let's go."

"Okay."

After that, Kang-Woo joined Seol-Ah, and they headed toward her home.

'Finally,' Kang-Woo thought as he followed her with light steps.

Didn't people say that there was no end to a human's greed?

At first, Kang-Woo had said he would be okay with it as long as she had two eyes, one nose, and one mouth, but as time passed, he couldn't help but appreciate how beautiful Seol-Ah was.

He clenched his fists while thinking of everything that was about to happen.

'YOLO!'

\*\*\*

"This is my home."

The pair had arrived at a shabby-looking apartment. However, it wasn't just her apartment; all the other apartment buildings in the area also seemed very old and shabby.

'It seems like they're financially struggling.'

The buildings here looked different from the modern buildings that he had been expecting.

Nevertheless, Kang-Woo looked at Seol-Ah with a determined gaze. 'Don't worry, my honey! I'll quickly earn a lot of money and buy a nice house for us!'

Although they had just met, they already had a happy future in his mind.

Creeeak.

"Mom, I'm home," Seol-Ah greeted as she opened the door to her apartment.

'Wait... Mom?' Kang-Woo thought in surprise.

He had been certain that Seol-Ah would be living alone, considering how Seol-Ah had seduced him so confidently.

A woman with a tired expression quickly walked out to meet them.

She said to her daughter, "A-Are you okay? Aren't you hurt anywhere?"

"Yes, I'm okay," Seol-Ah replied.

"You went to the Gate with a party like I'd told you to, right?"

"Oh... Yes, of course," Seol-Ah mumbled while avoiding her mother's gaze. Then she glanced at Kang-Woo. "This is Mr. Oh Kang-Woo. I met him inside the Gate. I found myself in a dangerous situation while hunting monsters, but I was able to get out safely thanks to him."

"Oh! Th-Thank you very much!" The middle-aged woman grabbed Kang-Woo's hand and bowed her head in gratitude.

It showed just how worried she had been about Seol-Ah entering the Gate.

'Damn,' Kang-Woo cursed inwardly.

He wasn't listening to Seol-Ah's mother's words of gratitude at all.

'I can't believe she really meant just dinner.'

Kang-Woo looked at Seol-Ah dejectedly. The future that he had imagined having with her shattered. He felt as if the plane he was on had fallen down a cliff before it even gained enough speed to take off.

"Kang-Woo...?" Seol-Ah called out.

"Oh, I'm sorry. It's nothing," Kang-Woo replied quietly and shook his head.

It was his fault for having thought too far ahead, but he couldn't help feeling a little bit disappointed.

"Haha. This place... isn't that great, is it? But don't worry. I'm quite confident in my cooking skills," Seol-Ah said slightly gloomily.

She thought that Kang-Woo's disappointment was from seeing the state of her home.

"Oh, it's not about that, so please don't worry," Kang-Woo clarified.

He had been born an orphan, so before falling to the Nine Hells, he'd lived in a home smaller and more worn down than Seol-Ah's. Those had been miserable times when he struggled to eat and live each day.

'But it was still better than Hell.'

In the Nine Hells, he had to fight each day for his life. So, even though he had suffered from a lack of food on Earth, life here had been far better than in the Hells.

"Come in, Kang-Woo."

"Ahem, I'm sorry for inviting you into such a shabby place..."

Kang-Woo entered the home while receiving a warm welcome from the mother and daughter.

The apartment had an approximate surface area of sixty-six square meters. It was quite spacious compared to how aged and withered it was.

"Give me a few minutes, Kang-Woo. I'll get dinner ready immediately," Seol-Ah said.

"Oh, can I ask something?" Kang-Woo asked.

"Yes, of course." Seol-Ah nodded without hesitation.

"I've lost my smartphone. Could you lend me yours for a little while?" Kang-Woo asked her with a calm voice.

"Oh! Sure thing." She took her smartphone from her pocket and gave it to him.

Taking a closer look at Seol-Ah's phone now, Kang-Woo saw that her phone was also quite old, with a long crack running across the screen. Additionally, he knew its exact model and generation number.

'Considering that five years have passed...'

He once again realized that their financial situation wasn't good.

'I guess it's good enough to search up some articles on the internet.'

Kang-Woo wanted to know what had happened on Earth in the past five years. Gates and Players—such things hadn't existed on the Earth that he knew from the past.

He slowly began reading articles from five years ago.

[February 22, 2018, the Day of Calamity. The world has been turned upside down.]

[The world enters a chaotic state after hundreds of Gates suddenly appear.]

[Firearms are useless against the monsters that appeared from the Gates. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers have died at the hands of monsters.]

[The U.S. creates a worldwide emergency alliance. Korea becomes the ninth member.]

[The first Player appears in the U.S. Who is she?]

[The number of Players increases worldwide. Are they the hope of humanity?]

[A novel became a reality? Korean fantasy novels predicted the appearance of Players for many years. Just searching 'Player' gives hundreds of different titles to read...]

"Hmm..."

Kang-Woo's eyes narrowed after reading the new articles.

'February 22, 2018...'

That had been the day when Gates suddenly appeared all around the world. It was also the day when Kang-Woo was absorbed by a pitch-black Gate and thrown down into the Nine Hells.

'Does that mean I was absorbed by one of these Gates that suddenly appeared?'

Considering the circumstances, that seemed the most likely answer.

Kang-Woo tried to search for some information on the Gate that had sent him to the Nine Hells for ten millennia, but he couldn't find anything. All available information was speculation, and none of them contained detailed explanations about what the Gates were.

'I'll have to search for more information myself.'

Maybe an important federal organization had information that wasn't publicly available. Kang-Woo decided he would infiltrate a federal organization later once his life became more stable and he had recovered his strength.

"What are you searching for?" Seol-Ah asked him while she was cooking.

"I was looking at some news because there was something I needed to check," Kang-Woo replied.

"I see. Then should I prepare dinner later?"

"No, it's okay. Let's eat as soon as it's ready."

Anyway, he understood the general situation now. It was better to go looking for answers to his questions on his own.

"Then just wait for a little bit. I've just finished cooking," Seol-Ah said. She returned to the kitchen and brought out a pot. "It's kimchi stew. I wanted to treat you to something better, but... I'm sorry."

While making an apologetic expression, she put the pot on the table and opened the lid. White steam rose out of the pot, and a mouthwatering aroma emerged.

"...!" Kang-Woo's eyes widened as a shiver ran through his body. "Kimchi... stew..."

His eyes trembled while looking at the kimchi stew on the table. The hot stew with red kimchi and slices of pork belly drew him in.

"Kimchi stew!!!" he exclaimed excitedly.

Thump!

How long had Kang-Woo been waiting for this moment? He had dreamed about it almost every day in his sleep.

Kang-woo rushed to the table like someone who had starved for many days.

'I'm glad I returned.'

A warm tear ran down his cheek.