

LEVEL 4 HUMAN IN A RUINED WORLD

Chapter 1

Chapter 1

[Translator – Peptobismol]

Chapter 1: Chaebols Transform into Dragons (1)

Yeongwoo pondered in his half-asleep state.

What if, six years ago, he hadn't quit his job?

If he hadn't jumped into internet broadcasting, claiming that there was no future as a salary worker.

'Truthfully, I knew it, too. That it was an escape from reality, a gamble.'

But he wanted to take that gamble before it was too late.

Of course, the haphazard gamble he took ultimately ended in failure.

And as a consequence, Yeongwoo experienced how detrimental a career break could be to replaceable labor.

He spent two years as a job seeker, then another year working two part-time jobs to make ends meet.

He was thankful that he was at least able to get two part-time jobs.

And now, one more year has passed since then.

"Yeongwoo, what are you doing? Get up quickly!"

He was lying in the dormitory of a factory in *Gumi, Gyeongsangbuk-do, wandering through his dreams.

[TL/N: *Gumi is a City in Gyeongsangbuk-do, South Korea.]

“Hey! Wake up!”

“Ugh....”

Only when the other person shook his shoulder roughly did Yeongwoo realize that the owner of this voice was his dorm roommate.

“Now is not the time to sleep! Something really big has happened!”

That word ‘big’ stuck in his ears.

Yeongwoo finally blinked his eyes open, feeling a chill run down his spine.

“Ugh! Wha... What time is it, Hyung? I’m on the night shift today.”

“Hey, in times like these, is going to work that important?”

“...What?”

At the unexpected statement, Yeongwoo wore a bewildered expression, and his roommate urgently spoke again.

“You, quickly, open your right hand. Let me see how many you’ve got.”

“Wh-what are you talking about right now?”

Only belatedly did Yeongwoo realize something was off.

His dorm roommate. That is, the 38-year-old man, Im Bonghee, seemed too cheerful.

No, beyond cheerful, he seemed almost thrilled with some kind of excitement.

“Damn, the whole world is turning upside down! It seems like chaebols and everything else are all disappearing? This can’t be a dream, right?”

“Since earlier what...?”

Before Yeongwoo could finish saying, ‘nonsense are you saying?’ something caught his eye.

—Would you like to nominate [Chaebol Leader – Kim Dongho] as a candidate for elimination? If you agree, please use your karma points to exercise this right.

A blue text slowly ascended in the corner of his vision.

Then, more lines followed below.

—[Actress – Hyun Songae] is a candidate for elimination...

—[Serial Killer – Kim Eungpyo] is a candidate for elimination...

—[Internet Broadcaster – Lee Hoyeon (Pupi)] is a candidate for elimination...

“What... what is all this...?”

As Yeongwoo reached out to touch the text in the air, Bonghee glanced at his palm and widened his eyes.

“Hey, what’s wrong with you?”

“What?”

“Check your right hand now. You only have three karma points.”

Yeongwoo hastily spread his right hand and saw the bright number ‘3’ shining on his palm.

“...?”

Was this a dream? But everything felt too vivid.

“Wait a minute. What exactly is happening right now...”

“Hey, looking at your reaction, I definitely know this isn’t a dream.”

As Yeongwoo asked, Bonghee seemed to have been waiting for his question.

Bonghee, who was looking closely at Yeongwoo’s dumbfounded expression, came to his own realization and held out his palm.

Whoosh.

[9]

“Do you see this? I also have some left over after using some of them. I think it was around 20 at the beginning.”

“You used it?”

As Yeongwoo asked, he shifted his gaze to the problematic messages:

—[Politician – Kang Hongse] is a candidate for elimination...

—[Singer – Kim Kwangtae] is a candidate for elimination...

‘No way.’

Now that he looked closely, there was one thing in common among the individuals highlighted in the messages.

They all had caused some form of social controversy.

For instance, Chaebol Leader, Kim Dongho, had a history of verbally abusing his chauffeur, while the actress Hyun Songae had been criticized after her past abuse of power toward her stylist was exposed.

In essence, those marked by the blue messages were individuals who had earned the public’s disdain for their actions.

“...”

Yeongwoo, having grasped the minimum understanding of the situation, took a deep breath and closed his eyes.

It was a ritual he adopted when he had to make the most rational judgment possible.

“If this isn’t a dream, what exactly is happening here?”

Yeongwoo asked, prompting Bonghee to respond as if he had been waiting.

“You’re seeing the same thing I am... Isn’t there something above your head or around there?”

“Above my head?”

Whoosh.

As Yeongwoo raised his head following Bonghee’s lead, he spotted a fist-sized blue sphere.

“...Huh?”

And finally, the information he had missed while he was sleeping began to fill his eyes.

[Hello, this is an announcement from the Board of Directors.]

[At 10:12:08 AM on Tuesday, June 10, 2025, a state of ‘imbalance’ has occurred.]

[This indicates that the number of humans holding hostility toward the world has exceeded the majority, triggering the enforced activation of the reset function.]

More than half of humanity has become hostile toward the world.

Simply put, around 4 billion people had dissatisfaction with how the world was, prompting this action.

‘Wh-what are they talking about...?’

Yeongwoo wore an unbelievable expression but he still felt a pang of self-reproach deep down.

Terms like ‘imbalance’ and ‘reset’... It felt like they were picking at his delusions.

Not that it was an extraordinary thought.

When he read articles about chaebols losing their temper or heard about a *BJ buying a supercar, he'd entertain fleeting thoughts at that level.

[TL/N: *BJ = Broadcast Jockey / Korean term for streamers.]

He always thought that the world was a little unfair and wrong.

So, it was true that he occasionally had such delusions, like what would happen if the world turned upside down?

But interpreting that as 'humanity holding hostility toward the world'?

'It feels like things are going really, really wrong.'

Yeongwoo swallowed hard unconsciously.

In the meantime, the message left by the self-proclaimed board of directors continued.

[The first stage of the reset is 'Filtration.' During this stage, we will filter out and eliminate the main culprits that have brought the world into a state of imbalance.]

[Therefore, a vote for their elimination will soon be held.]

[The majority of voters will nominate candidates they perceive as perpetrators of the imbalance, and those who receive enough votes will face either elimination, mutation, or dismemberment.]

[Translator – Peptobismo!]

Reaching this passage, Yeongwoo looked at his own palm again.

'Then, are they asking each person to use their karma points to target famous individuals? This is basically a witch hunt.'

Among the candidates there were indeed truly wicked individuals, but in many cases, they were not.

No, in reality, they were the vast majority.

“If it goes on like this, it will be a catastrophe...”

Yeongwoo tried to tell Bonghee to stop voting, but it was already too late.

Bonghee’s karma points, which were 9 just a moment ago, had now decreased to 6.

“Oh, found you, you bastard!”

Vote.

Bonghee’s karma points decreased to 5.

“Uh, Hyung, who did you just vote for?”

“You know that BJ I watch all the time? That guy, he’s always harassing women, even without the show.”

“The hunting broadcast? That’s the one you always watch, right?”

As Youngwoo spoke, Bonghee, who had been gazing into space, grimaced.

“Yeah, but even while watching it, I felt like shit. Without the broadcast, he’d be working at some shady place.”

“...But does that mean you have to vote for his death?”

“There’d be a lot of people voting for him, wouldn’t there? And when else would we ever take down guys like this?”

“...?”

Despite Youngwoo’s darkening expression, Bonghee paid him no heed and cast another vote.

Paat.

Now he only had 4 karma points, and then, an alert appeared in both their sights.

[There are 5 minutes remaining until the candidates for elimination are confirmed. Activating the search function for faster voting.]

Alongside, a small search bar appeared at the bottom of the candidate list.

“Hey, if there’s anyone you want to get rid of, do it, don’t waste your vote. You’ll regret it later.”

Saying this, Bonghee turned back to the empty space.

Meanwhile, Youngwoo, after some contemplation, shifted his gaze to the search bar.

Instantly, the keywords he thought about appeared in the bar.

#Murderer

#SerialKiller

#R████████

These were the crimes Youngwoo deemed “deserving of death.”

But surprisingly, only a few people appeared in response to these keywords.

There were only 5 candidates in total, and all of them were notorious serial killers.

‘...Why?’

Youngwoo pondered for a while, recalling the explanation he saw earlier.

—The list includes the main culprits of the imbalance as perceived by the majority of voters...

‘Oh my god. The rest weren’t as popular, that’s why only famous people made it to the candidates’ list.’

Then what was the point?

There could be possibly hundreds if not thousands of living murderers, so what kind of 'filtering' would it be to eliminate only the famous 5?

'Is this really not a dream but reality...?'

Youngwoo couldn't believe it. If all of this was 'real,' the arbiter of the reset must be a being far superior to humans, be it a god or something else entirely.

But doing things like this...?

While he was shocked, Bonghee, sitting next to him, was rapidly reducing the number on his palm.

From 4 to 3, then 3 to 2... next 1, and finally...

Paat!

As the remaining karma points reached 0, the number vanished entirely from Bonghee's palm.

"Ha, I've cleared it all out."

Youngwoo, on the other hand, was still looking at the list of candidates.

[There is 1 minute remaining until the candidates for elimination are confirmed.]

The karma points he currently had remaining were the same as before: 3.

'In any case, even if I use all of my karma points, I can't even deal with the 5 candidates on the list.'

Moreover, since those 5 were infamous, they would likely have received a lot of votes already.

"..."

After some contemplation, Youngwoo averted his gaze from the list without casting his vote.

He didn't want to participate in this madness in any way.

Not only that, but for some reason, he felt uneasy.

Shortly after, an announcement indicated the end of the voting period.

[The Candidates for elimination have been confirmed.]

[In a moment, the fate of each candidate will be decided based on the number of votes.]

[Confirmed candidates will be able to choose between elimination, mutation, or dismemberment.]

“What? They weren't guaranteed to die?”

Checking the message, Bonghee's eyes widened.

But what he really needed to worry about was what happened next.

[During the vote tallying, we will proceed with the second stage of the reset, 'Individual Filtration.']

The name alone sounded ominous.

“Huh...?”

Sure enough, Bonghee looked anxious, and soon, a new notice appeared in everyone's sight, including his.

[Starting now, you can spend karma points to send 'Deaths' to desired targets.]

[Each Death will consume one point, and to prevent a Death aimed at you, you'll need to spend your own karma points.]

[If you fail to prevent the Death, you'll inevitably face elimination. Please be cautious.]

“Wait... What are they talking about right now?”

It seemed like Bonghee thought death would definitely come for him.

As soon as he finished reading the notice, his body began trembling uncontrollably.

“What’s wrong, Hyung?”

Even though Youngwoo suspected that the other had a story, he asked indirectly.

At that, Bonghee stared at Youngwoo in surprise.

Then, noticing the ‘3’ still in Youngwoo’s hand, Bonghee’s expression brightened with hope.

“Oh, Youngwoo...! You still have karma points left, right? Could you use them to stop the death coming for me? It might work, right?”

“Well, why would someone send a Death toward you, Hyung? Who would even bother spending karma points to...”

“Uh, that’s right... it might not come, but... you never know.”

“Really? Then maybe I should save mine just in case.”

Youngwoo responded nonchalantly, trying to sit back on the bed, but Bonghee abruptly grabbed his shoulders.

“No!”

“...?”

“No, don’t! Death, it’ll definitely come for me!”

Clearly agitated, Bonghee was trembling intensely.

“But... why? If you can give me a proper reason, I’ll do my best to help.”

“I-I...?”

Ultimately, he decided that he had no other choice, and at the moment Bonghee was about to say something...

Swoosh!

A sound seemed to come from the ceiling, or rather, from the sky beyond, and soon, a bright white light shot down.

Precisely aimed at Bonghee's forehead.

"Ah!"

For a moment, an incredible fear flashed through Bonghee's eyes, and shortly after, Youngwoo saw a message appear above his head.

—[R██████]— Im Bonghee] couldn't prevent the Death and has been eliminated.

And then, silently.

Swish.

Bonghee's body disappeared as if melting into the thin air.

There were still 3 karma points remaining in Youngwoo's palm.

[Translator – Peptobismol]

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