

Level 4 Human in a Ruined World

Chapter 16

[Translator –

Chapter 16: Golden Ratio (2)

‘There was definitely something there.’

Yeongwoo gazed at the newly appeared trophy symbol in the corner of his field of vision.

Suddenly, the symbol flashed, filling his sight entirely with a golden hue.

“Whoa?”

「Welcome, User ‘Jeong Yeongwoo07,’ to Achievements!」

「Become a great figure and change the world through completing achievements.」

‘Change the world... what? Become a great figure?’

Yeongwoo felt bemused at the grandiose welcome message, then examined the achievements window that appeared.

Click!

However, unlike the earlier message, the nuance of the first line was different.

[Your achievement tendency is “Stubborn.”]

||Achievements Completed: 1

|Caller of the Golden Rain [Legendary] – First

“Huh...?”

Yeongwoo blinked in disbelief. The word ‘Stubborn’ was prominently placed at the top of the solemn-looking achievement interface.

“I’m called ‘Stubborn’? Who decided that?”

As Yeongwoo fumed while examining the achievement window, a list of recommended achievements appeared below.

Presumably, these were the achievements the system recommended for a 'Stubborn' individual.

〈Recommended Achievements〉

[Golden Horde]

|Summon the Golden Rain in two or more regions. (1/2)

[Excellent Social Worker]

|Send the mutants back alive.

[Jeweler's Touch]

|Wear two rings of Hero grade or higher on the index and ring finger each. (1/4)

[Complete Orphan]

|Find and eliminate parents. (1/2)

Reading through the recommended achievements, Yeongwoo was startled by the final option. Not only the directive but also the current status was significant.

'1/2...?'

In all likelihood, it meant that only one parent was still alive.

In other words, it implied finding and eliminating the last remaining root, whether it was the 'father' or 'mother.'

'The more I find out, the more shitty this world becomes.'

The fact that such a task was included in achievements was nonsensical in itself.

Just a while ago, weren't they talking about becoming a great figure through achieving these tasks?

'Still, these are just recommended achievements. There's no real need for me to complete them all.'

Since only the recommended achievements were visible, the rest seemed to be in a hidden state.

‘Then, what’s next?’

As Yeongwoo wished to see if there was anything else, the list of achievements automatically scrolled up, revealing the next screen.

[There are 2 unclaimed achievement rewards.]

「Golden Flash」 - Legendary Glove

【Steal 50% of the enemy’s Senses during combat.】

【Accumulated Golden Ratio: 1】

*‘Caller of the Golden Rain’ special reward.

「Covert Mark」 - Artifact Tattoo

【Can conceal titles.】

*Obtained through unlocking achievements.

‘Legendary Glove...’

Even though Yeongwoo didn’t understand this world’s equipment grading system, it was undoubtedly an impressive piece of equipment.

Just stealing 50% of an opponent’s Senses was an unbelievable effect.

‘So, if my opponent’s Senses is 1000, I’d take 500?’

Moreover, ‘steal’ meant depriving, so if the tooltip was accurate, the opponent would have to fight with their Senses halved.

Meaning, no matter who he faces in the future, he’d always have the upper hand in terms of Senses.

‘Next up...’

Yeongwoo’s gaze naturally fell upon the second effect of ‘Golden Flash.’

【Accumulated Golden Ratio: 1】

‘I’m not sure about this one. Maybe there’ll be an additional effect as the number of times the Golden Ratio is summoned increases.’

Since this glove was a reward from the Golden Ratio achievement, it had a certain degree of validity.

The equipment was even named 'Golden Flash.'

Swoosh.

After some time, the tooltips that had filled his vision disappeared, and a message asking whether to receive the reward appeared.

「Would you like to receive all achievement rewards?」

'Of course.'

As Yeongwoo nodded with a troubled expression, his hands were immediately enveloped in a golden light.

"...Whoa!"

Despite mentally preparing himself, even Yeongwoo couldn't help but shiver at this moment.

His hands were being encased in real-time in golden-hued metal gauntlets.

With each touch of the chilly metal pieces brushing against his palms and back of his hands, he felt a tingling sensation.

Clank! Clink!

After about ten seconds, the light that had enveloped Yeongwoo's hands vanished, leaving behind only the golden metal gloves.

And finally...

Pit!

"Ugh."

A sharp twinge of pain was felt in Yeongwoo's left chest.

In response, he pulled down his shirt to look down at his chest.

'Oh, for real.'

Yeongwoo's brow furrowed deeply.

As expected, there was a tattoo etched on his skin.

「Covert Mark」 - Artifact Tattoo

【Can conceal titles.】

Resembling a spiral-shaped flame, the tattoo was fairly large and embedded in Yeongwoo's left chest.

To him, who had never even dyed his hair, let alone had a tattoo, this change was unpleasant.

“What's this now?”

As the questioning gaze of Yechan approached upon seeing the sudden flash of the “Golden Flash,” curiosity was only natural.

“It's an achievement reward.”

“Achievements?”

“It's kind of a trade-off for giving up 3 million...”

Yeongwoo briefly explained the achievement system to Yechan.

Upon hearing this, Yechan looked up at the clear sky and asked.

“So, do you have to keep spending money from now on?”

“To keep receiving achievement rewards, I guess so.”

More precisely, to maintain the ‘Stubborn’ tendency.

It seemed that recommended achievements varied according to the achievement tendency.

‘But considering there are higher-tier achievements, focusing on one tendency all along might be wise.’

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Yeongwoo recalled one of the recommended achievements he had seen earlier, the ‘Golden Horde.’

[Golden Horde]

|Summon the Golden Rain in two or more regions. (1/2)

It was undoubtedly a higher-level version of 'Caller of the Golden Rain.'

So, there was a high chance that...

'If I complete that achievement, there might be another reward. Something better than this one.'

Of course, Yeongwoo knew well what he might face if he continued down that path.

'To go to multiple regions and summon the Golden Rain, I'd have to sacrifice a significant amount of Karma each time, and on top of that...'

He'd have to compete for the mutants. With the person who originally defeated the mutants in that area.

For instance, the Strongest Sword in that region... The person who most likely chose the 3 million Karma after defeating the mutant.

"..."

As he contemplated this, the effect of the Golden Flash seemed a bit different.

「Golden Flash」 - Legendary Glove

【Steal 50% of the enemy's Senses during combat.】

【Accumulated Golden Ratio: 1】

'It's a tool to target the Strongest Sword in other regions.'

The Covert Mark that allows hiding titles might have been given in a similar context.

Because having the title of the Strongest Sword in another area would undoubtedly draw attention.

'But is it possible to defeat the Strongest Sword of another region with just a little more Senses value? I don't think it will be easy.'

Yeongwoo glanced around to see if there were any other mutants in Gumi.

However, he couldn't spot any other red-glowing pillars. Instead, people were rushing towards him.

"Wh-What's happening?"

“Do you need anything?”

Though Yeongwoo didn't know it, they had been watching his every move since a while ago.

Understandably so, considering Yeongwoo was the Strongest Sword and a great figure who had bestowed grace upon them.

Knowing that if he wished, he could easily confiscate the 'commemorative coins' given to them, they were cautiously watching him.

“Well, I guess I do need something.”

Yeongwoo was about to shrug and say this when suddenly...

A loud growling noise erupted.

“Ah.”

“...Ph.”

Before he knew it, dusk was setting in.

‘What time is it now? The sun is about to set.’

The reset had occurred around 10 in the morning.

Since then, despite the sun starting to set now, it was strange that Yeongwoo hadn't eaten anything and had been engaged in battles continuously. He hadn't felt hungry.

Grumble.

Once again, the sound of trouble emerged.

“...”

Perhaps it was due to the relief of tension, but suddenly, an immense hunger began to surge through him.

“I don't know if everyone else ate.”

Yeongwoo muttered some words randomly while rummaging through his backpack.

And finally found it.

Swish.

A chocolate bar turned into stone.

“...!”

As Yeongwoo grabbed the gray chocolate bar, the people around and even Yechan focused their attention back on him.

‘For the sake of my quality of life, I need to get rid of these people quickly. I can’t even enjoy a chocolate bar in peace.’

Yeongwoo retrieved a 1000 Karma coin from his backpack and placed it on the surface of the chocolate bar.

Ting.

Then...

[Chocolate Bar: 500]

The price of the chocolate bar appeared.

‘It’s 500 for a chocolate bar... It’s more expensive than I thought. The bicycle was 3000.’

Perhaps the prices were set high for items directly related to survival?

Ting.

As Yeongwoo confirmed the purchase by placing the coin again, smoke emanated from the chocolate bar, and the petrification began to fade away.

Sizzle...

“Oho?”

“Whoa, I’ve never seen anything like that.”

The fascinating sight of petrification wearing off drew the onlookers a few steps closer.

As a result, Yeongwoo instinctively felt threatened and clenched the chocolate bar.

Odd as it may seem, practically, the chocolate bar was an irreplaceable resource in this situation.

And then, simultaneously...

Plunk.

From the air, a tiny coin dropped.

“Huh?”

A bluish-green small coin.

It was the currency equivalent to 500 Karma.

Although it was the moment of discovery of a new unit of currency, no one was paying attention to this small find right now.

What mattered immediately was...

“...”

Yeongwoo was focused on unwrapping the chocolate bar in his hand.

Snap.

Finally, as Yeongwoo tore open the packaging, a chunk of dark chocolate popped out, capturing the attention of the kids who had been observing.

And Yeongwoo, avoiding their curious gaze subtly, took the first sweet bite.

Munch...

The chocolate bar was not melted at all.

The layer of chocolate on the surface was quite firm, almost like it would crack.

‘So the state just before petrification is preserved throughout.’

Feeling the caramel spread beneath the chocolate layer in his mouth, Yeongwoo took a slow breath.

‘Hmm.’

A completely new kind of enjoyment and satisfaction overwhelmed him.

It was the joy one found in the midst of a city where two-meter goblins might rush in, reverting a petrified chocolate bar back to its original state for consumption.

Munch.

By the time he had eaten half of the chocolate bar, Yeongwoo finally began to notice the children.

But not knowing when he might have to engage in battle again, he couldn't casually give away these precious calories, even if the opponent was a hungry child who hadn't eaten since morning.

“...”

Yeongwoo stared at the tiny open mouth of a child, but soon shifted his gaze away and finished the remaining chocolate bar.

“Ugh.”

He was still hungry, but his mental satisfaction was tremendous.

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Chapter 17: Dignity of the Strongest Sword (1)

After Yeongwoo finished his first meal, a brief silence fell upon them.

The hunger was so pervasive that it momentarily made everyone forget the terrifying reality of this world being amidst a reset.

“Um... Strongest Sword-nim.”

The elderly man with the wolf cut from the Haneulchae Residence finally spoke up.

“Yes? Oh, um... if it's okay, just call me Yeongwoo.”

“Yes, Yeongwoo-ssi.”

What could he possibly want to say?

Yeongwoo looked at the stern-faced elder.

Then the elderly man cautiously brought up the commemorative coins and asked.

“If it's alright... could we use these?”

30,000 Karma per person.

It was a subtle way of asking if he was planning to reclaim it.

“Oh, that...”

Yeongwoo gazed blankly at his face engraved on the coin and nodded.

“Of course, I’ve distributed those for you to use.”

“Woah...!”

“Are you sure?”

Finally, relief washed over the Haneulchae Residence members, laughter breaking out.

Yeongwoo faintly smiled along with them, then suddenly asked.

“But may I ask how you plan to use it specifically?”

It was a question to gauge how the billions of Karma influx into Gumi City would be utilized.

“We haven’t decided for sure yet... but...”

This time, the woman from the couple answered.

“We plan to reserve 10,000 per person for taxes and use the rest to enhance our abilities. It’ll make it easier for us to fight against monsters.”

“Ah, I see. And will the children also raise their abilities?”

Yeongwoo’s subsequent question silenced the Haneulchae Residence members momentarily.

They hadn’t considered that far yet.

“Well... Maybe it’s better to start by enhancing the guardians’ combat abilities?”

“Yes. I guess discussing that would be the way to go. I was merely curious.”

After this conversation, Yeongwoo turned his gaze to Yechan, who was quietly waiting behind him.

“Are you hungry? Let’s go find something to eat now.”

“Where to?”

“Anywhere there might be food. Since this is a residential area, there should be a market or something nearby.”

At this, an elderly member from the Haneulchae Residence courteously gestured southward.

“It’s actually our neighborhood. I know the supermarket’s location, so let me guide you.”

Obviously, it was a brilliant move to remain close to the Strongest Sword.

However, Yeongwoo needed to secure food before it got dark, so he nodded without a word.

* * *

Initially, there were clearly nine of them when they set out.

The total number of Yeongwoo’s group and the Haneulchae Residence members combined.

But now...

“Is this... really okay?”

Yechan held onto the window, constantly looking back.

It was due to the growing crowd that had started gathering, one by one.

“...Is there anything we can do? We can’t just kill them.”

When Yeongwoo glanced back, immediate reactions poured out.

“Wow... It’s really the Strongest Sword.”

“He looks just like the one on the coin.”

“He doesn’t seem as menacing as I thought.”

Within fifteen minutes, a group of dozens had swelled up, murmuring and following relentlessly.

“...”

Ignoring the continuous assessments about himself, Yeongwoo asked the elderly man guiding them.

“Excuse me, sir, are we still far?”

“We’re almost there. That’s it, ahead.”

The old man glanced back again and added.

“Bothering you, huh?”

“Yes. It’s just that...”

“But I don’t think they have ill intentions. After all, who would bear a grudge against their lifesaver? Especially those with families.”

Ironically, the person saying this had no family.

“Besides, it’s a first.”

“A first?”

“Since this whole reset thing, it’s the first good thing that has happened. Thanks to what Yeongwoo did.”

The elderly man cracked a dry smile, causing Yeongwoo to unconsciously nod his head.

“That way, please.”

Finally, the elderly man raised his hand and pointed ahead.

By now, it had gotten darker, and the surroundings appeared as mere silhouettes. Yet, Yeongwoo could tell exactly where the supermarket was.

Since there was already a considerable crowd there, making a lot of noise.

“Is this for real?”

“Why won’t they just let us in? Are they expecting us to starve?”

“Everyone has to eat to survive, right? Let’s compromise a bit!”

Around a hundred people surrounded the entrance of the market, shouting various things.

And at the center of it all...

“Compromise? Are these guys insane? This is outright robbery! Don’t you get it?”

A man, full of intensity, along with what seemed like his family, blocked the entrance in protest.

Both groups were armed, a tense situation unfolding.

“Oh no.”

The elderly man assessing the situation clicked his tongue.

Yeongwoo, realizing the complexity of the situation, looked perplexed.

‘They’ve come here looking for food due to hunger, but the market owner isn’t allowing them in.’

It was only natural.

While most things had turned to stone due to the reset, ownership hadn’t changed.

Even Yeongwoo himself still considered the chocolate bar he had brought out at the start of the reset as his own.

He had paid for it at the convenience store before this all began. It was a legally owned item.

So, in the same context, the market owner was merely asserting their rightful claim.

‘Yeah, when you release something from petrification, you’d naturally expect them to pay Karma for the service. But if the original owner isn’t getting paid for the item, whether you release the petrification or not...’

Hence, the bicycle Yeongwoo and Yechan were using was essentially stolen from someone else.

In essence, there were two main causes of this situation.

First, the supermarket owner’s family was still alive up to this point.

Second, a social consensus on ‘past ownership’ has not yet been reached.

“...”

It was a complicated problem.

Feeling a headache coming on already, Yeongwoo slowly approached the entrance of the market.

With dozens acting like paparazzi behind them.

Then...

“Huh?”

“It’s Gumi Strongest Sword!”

“Ohh...!”

The attention of the crowd surrounding the market shifted towards Yeongwoo.

Meanwhile...

“Dammit, I’m screwed.”

The market owner spat on the ground, a look of utter frustration evident on their face.

Given the circumstances, the Gumi Strongest Sword probably had come to raid the market.

And if he tried to use force to enter, he couldn’t be stopped.

If that happened, the numerous people would rush in and loot the place indiscriminately.

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“ ...”

The market owner, sensing a disaster, instinctively scanned the faces of their family.

And coincidentally witnessing that, Yeongwoo calmly placed his Early Bird on his waist and surveyed the surroundings.

‘There are too many people. If the owner keeps holding out, it’s inevitable there’ll be bloodshed.’

Moreover, what the crowd wanted was food, second only to taxes for survival. So, they weren’t likely to back down easily.

Then, what to do?

As Yeongwoo continued towards the market in silence, the crowd automatically made way for him.

It was the power of the commemorative coins distributed to everyone and the title of Strongest Sword hanging over Yeongwoo's head.

"Oh, Strongest Sword-nim..."

"Please, do something about this person."

"Strongest Sword-nim, please solve this."

With each step Yeongwoo took, people voiced their appeals.

And finally...

Thud.

Yeongwoo, Yechan, and the Haneulchae Residence group arrived in front of the market owner's family.

"Damn it."

"Dad..."

The market owner's family consisted of the owner couple and a boy who looked to be in middle school.

Their forces looked feeble compared to the hundred-strong crowd surrounding the market.

However, the reason the crowd hadn't forcefully entered wasn't because they had obtained tokens of sympathy.

Shing...

The silver-white blade that was carefully pointed at Yeongwoo trembled slightly.

'An Early Bird. Not your average player.'

Yeongwoo gazed fixedly at the Early Bird held in the market owner's hands.

Then, encased in a golden armor, he extended his right hand towards the tip of the opponent's blade.

"You have to step back. I understand your unfair situation, but... if things stay this way, you will end up dead."

"What did you say...?"

The market owner, eyebrows twitching in dissatisfaction, met Yeongwoo's golden fingers.

It was an unusual piece of equipment to him.

"In a reset world, who's going to consider someone else's circumstances? Holding onto everything from before the reset is greed. Right now, survival should be your priority. We're all starting from scratch."

As Yeongwoo spoke, the market owner grew agitated.

"Greed? I'm only trying to protect what I had."

"If you're forcibly holding onto something you can't keep anymore..."

As he spoke, Yeongwoo recalled the youth at the currency exchange, picking up coins even when a gang of robbers was approaching.

"If you keep this up, both you and your family will die horribly. So, if I were you, I'd gather as much food as possible and leave."

"Are you threatening me?"

"Yes."

Indeed, it was a threat.

Yeongwoo, like everyone else, had no intention of starving just to respect the market owner's property rights.

"You have an Early Bird too. If you use the coins I gave you to increase your abilities, you can hunt monsters sufficiently. Use that to start again, step by step, like everyone else."

When Yeongwoo said this, the market owner's wife, who had been quietly listening, looked inside the store and spoke softly.

"Maybe we should do as that person says. Otherwise, we might not be able to keep anything."

This 'anything' included not only food but also their lives.

After all, what more could they do when the Strongest Sword himself had come here.

"..."

However, the market owner wouldn't relent... no, he couldn't let go of his pride.

So, in the end...

"Kraat!"

As Yeongwoo shifted his gaze to the market owner's wife, he committed an atrocity by attempting a surprise attack.

Swoosh!

A silver-white blade grazed past Yeongwoo's golden fingers.

But Yeongwoo was already keenly observing the opponent's sword.

'You choose the worst option in front of your family.'

The hologram of Gumi Sword Technique appeared before him, signaling the beginning of combat with a Senses increase alert.

「Your Senses has temporarily increased from the 100 to 116.」

It was a Senses augmentation effect from the Golden Flash.

'At least there's one benefit.'

Recognizing the unintended effect of the new gloves, Yeongwoo attempted to subdue the opponent.

"...?"

However, upon seeing the subsequent alerts, he changed priorities.

「Your Senses has temporarily increased from 116 to 131.」

「Your Senses has temporarily increased from 131 to 145.」

「Your Senses has temporarily increased from 145 to 163.」

Meanwhile, someone in the crowd behind was lurking.

It was also the moment when Yeongwoo confirmed that the 'Golden Slash' served as a rear camera.

Ting!

After briefly deflecting the market owner's Early Bird, Yeongwoo turned around, releasing the energy of Strongest Sword.

Whoosh!

Then he spoke fiercely, his golden eyes flashing.

"These bastards, it's time to recover the disaster relief funds."

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Chapter 18: Dignity of the Strongest Sword (2)

The Strongest Sword was furious.

This fact was palpable to everyone to the extent that their hearts could feel it chilling.

In reality, as soon as the 'Aura of the Strongest Sword' was unleashed, everyone involuntarily clenched their chests, feeling an overwhelming pressure.

"Ugh!"

"Grrr...!"

Meanwhile, in the midst of the crowd, Yeongwoo noticed three golden patterns floating above someone.

It was an incredibly intuitive sight, and Yeongwoo immediately understood.

They were the ones who had their Senses halved, the ones who were about to stab him in the back while he was comforting the owner of the mart.

"Move aside."

Unconsciously perceiving everyone in the audience as potential assailants, Yeongwoo, with a chilling tone, pushed through the crowd.

The first assailant identified.

A man in his 40s dressed in a suit.

His pupils, filled with fear, glittered with a golden hue under the influence of Yeongwoo's gaze.

As Yeongwoo twisted the blade threateningly in front of the man's face and asked, the pupils dilated even more, expressing sheer terror.

"Do you have a family? If not, consider yourself lucky. At least there won't be anyone else suffering because of you."

"Heeik..."

The man's body trembled with fear at Yeongwoo's words filled with intense hostility, and then...

Swoosh!

A silvery trail traced a diagonal line, and the man's head rolled off his body.

Decapitation.

Yeongwoo's increased strength allowed him to sever his opponent's neck with a single slash.

Splurt, spurt...!

The decapitated man, making gurgling sounds resembling a malfunctioning water pump, spewed blood from his neck.

"Kyaaaah!"

"H-he's crazy!"

"Please spare us...!"

As the decapitated corpse collapsed through the crowd, the atmosphere inside turned into complete panic.

No one was strong enough to counter the Aura of the Strongest Sword, so everyone remained forcibly seated.

In the midst of this, the unexpected plea from Yechan managed to break through the forceful presence.

"Mister! Others haven't done anything wrong! And the children..."

"...?"

Just as Yeongwoo was about to strike the second attacker in a fit of extreme rage, he flinched upon hearing Yechan's words.

It was then that he finally realized the extent of his extreme agitation.

Shwaaa....

At that moment, the Aura of the Strongest Sword dissipated entirely.

"Uwaaah!"

"Save me!"

Around a hundred people, their fear palpable, hurriedly found paths through the darkness, fleeing for their lives.

Of course, the remaining two attackers who were still in good health tried to join the escaping crowd.

Swoosh! Plunch!

They were unable to escape Yeongwoo's swift pursuit and were killed one after another.

In the end, what remained in front of the mart was...

"Ugh..."

"This is awkward."

Only Yechan and the Haneulchae group.

Thud! Thud!

Before long, Yeongwoo returned from the darkness, making heavy footsteps.

The atmosphere in front of the mart had subsided.

Yeongwoo's face still retained a reddish hue from the recent experience with blood.

"Haa."

Yeongwoo let out a deep breath.

He realized that the atmosphere had settled, and it seemed uncomfortable to him.

About a hundred people.

Although a tiny fraction in the context of the entire Gumi City, they were the ones who would now live with faces marked by fear on commemorative coins for the rest of their lives.

“...”

Yeongwoo looked at the vacant space where people had fled, his eyes filled with bitterness.

Then, he turned his attention to Yechan and the children hiding behind their parents, glancing at Yechan for an answer.

“Do the kids also...”

A question about whether they were exposed to the Aura of the Strongest Sword.

Upon hearing this, the parents answered instead of Yechan.

“Ah... it doesn't seem like it. If they were affected, they would have cried and caused a scene.”

The parents made reassuring expressions, trying to convey that everything was fine.

However, regardless of the Aura, the children had seen enough of what shouldn't have been seen, so Yeongwoo still felt remorseful.

The Strongest Sword. As the Strongest Sword that spread the commemorative coins with the golden rain, to truly live up to that role, he knew he had to be a proper human being first.

It's easy to become powerful, but becoming a hero is difficult, especially in times like these.

Swoosh.

Yeongwoo looked at the mart family with melancholic eyes.

Suddenly, the mart owner handed over the Early Bird to his wife and knelt on the ground.

“I... I apologize. I think I lost my mind for a moment. I'll accept any punishment, but please spare my family.”

Perhaps he overheard Yeongwoo mentioning something about family to one of the assailants earlier.

Considering for a moment, Yeongwoo pointed inside the mart with his finger.

“As I said before, pack as much stuff as you can carry and leave. Others will come here soon.”

“Yes...?”

“Go, now.”

“...!”

In an instant, the mart owner’s eyes widened.

For some reason, he realized that the Strongest Sword was showing an unexpected mercy.

Practically a miracle.

Thud!

Without a word, the mart owner hastily got up and rushed back into the mart.

His family hurriedly followed suit.

And Yeongwoo...

Click.

He waited for the mart family to reappear, fiddling with the coins he had retrieved from the assailants he had dealt with moments ago.

Nine commemorative coins and sixteen regular coins.

“Haa, haa.”

It was about five minutes later that the three families, once the owners of the mart, returned, gasping for breath.

But their appearance was...

“Ah...?”

“Oh... my!”

“What, what’s this? Can they really take all this?”

The Haneulchae group widened their eyes, each trying to stifle their exclamations.

The mart family emerged carrying far more items than anyone could have imagined.

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They had attached around ten shopping baskets inside the mart with tape and piled various goods inside, creating a towering structure resembling a boulder.

And astonishingly, there were three such ‘boulders’ in total.

If the sun had been at a slant, the shadow of the mart family’s creation might have covered even the group and still remained.

It was similar to... a dung beetle.

The insect that rolls a dung several times its own size.

“Is that okay, Mister?”

Yechan looked at Yeongwoo, unintentionally showing bewilderment.

Yeongwoo was equally bewildered.

‘These people are insane, seriously.’

To carry such a load, it would have required the combined strength of the entire family.

Even the baskets and tapes were likely turned into stone and returned to their original form using Karma.

What was more astounding was that they managed to plan and execute all of this within five minutes.

Should they be called the business family?

“...”

Yeongwoo quietly observed as the dung beetles carefully arranged their colossal load in front of the mart.

Clunk.

After assessing that they had finally settled in, the mart owner, pointing toward Yeongwoo, asked,

“We... we’ve gathered everything. Can we leave now?”

A strange silence fell.

Neither Yechan nor the Haneulchae group looked at the mart family with pity anymore.

“...”

Without saying a word, Yeongwoo nodded as if to indicate they could go.

“Th... thank you so much.”

The mart owner bowed hastily in gratitude. Then, without looking back, he ushered his family into the darkness.

“Hmm. Now then...”

With the mart completely empty, it was now their turn to take charge.

With a somewhat awkward gesture, Yeongwoo attempted to usher Yechan and the Haneulchae group into the mart.

Ping!

Suddenly, an alarm rang out, breaking the silence.

‘What now?’

[Achievement Unlocked: Forgive Your Enemies]

|Achievement Rank: Hero

|Achievement Grade: 46th

It was an achievement not listed in the recommended list.

‘Did this trigger because I let those people go?’

Yeongwoo glanced in the direction where the mart family had disappeared.

But a new message intercepted his view.

[There is one unclaimed achievement reward.]

[Would you like to receive the reward?]

‘Hero Rank... if it’s about items, it should be at the level of the Early Bird.’

When Yeongwoo approved receiving the reward, the message vanished all at once, making a sound.

Click.

“Huh?”

What happened next was as expected.

Swoosh!

Six coins appeared out of thin air.

‘Six?’

With his current Senses value of 100, it wasn’t difficult for Yeongwoo to accurately locate the six coins’ positions and catch them before they hit the ground.

Thud.

Yeongwoo caught all the coins swiftly.

This time, they were blue coins.

Four vertical lines and one horizontal line adorned the front.

So how much were they worth?

As Yeongwoo tilted his head and looked at the coins, a tooltip appeared.

「Blue Coin」 – Normal Currency

|Worth 50,000 Karma.

‘There were 50,000 Karma coins.’

That meant the reward for this achievement was 300,000 Karma.

‘Money is growing faster than I thought.’

Of course, it was also due to pocketing from killing people. In truth, when it came to amassing wealth, this was the quickest way, after all.

‘Then, my current assets are... 45,950. In terms of stat points, it’d be 459.’

After purchasing what he needed from the mart, Yeongwoo decided to invest the remaining money back into ability points.

* * *

He still didn't know the time.

Even the clock at the mart had turned to stone.

The same fate befell the indoor lighting, so Yeongwoo and the Haneulchae group had to search through the darkness for flashlights and batteries.

"That mart owner seems even more impressive now, doesn't he?"

Yechan exclaimed in awe after gathering all the supplies and turning on the flashlight.

"He probably had a good grasp of where things were placed."

Eventually, even Yeongwoo found batteries borrowing Yechan's flashlight.

Then it was swift progress.

They released petrified plastic baskets, began gathering essential items, and swept them into their bags.

"We'll have to move around in strange ways like those people earlier, won't we?"

"Well, I don't really want to."

Plus, how durable could the tape be?

It was evident that within not even a day, let alone an hour, everything would spill onto the ground.

Moreover, from Yeongwoo's perspective, who needed to go to other areas for achievement purposes, being too conspicuous was not ideal.

"We have bicycles. Let's find suitable bags and ropes to attach them to the bikes."

Although acquiring a car could be an option... it came with the drawback of constantly needing fuel.

"Truthfully, if you have strength, you won't starve no matter what."

Yechan remarked somewhat cynically.

And it was true.

Petrified food doesn't decay, but to consume it, one had to pay in Karma.

Therefore, as long as there was the strength to seize what others had, the chance of dying was extremely low.

"Um... Mister Strongest Sword, excuse me, but can we start our meal first?"

"Yes?"

Someone politely inquired, and turning back, Yeongwoo saw the Haneulchae couple waiting in line.

They had probably already arranged the food.

"Oh, yes, please don't mind me. You don't have to call me the Strongest Sword..."

"Thank you."

The couple quickly moved away as soon as Yeongwoo gave his approval.

And Yeongwoo, after watching their retreating figures for a moment, turned his head towards Yechan.

"You should eat too. I think I need to replenish some energy. Surely today won't end just like this..."

Beep!

His premonition hit.

The sharp warning sound drowned out Yeongwoo's trailing words.

「The night is approaching.」

"The night?"

What kind of new predicament was unfolding this time?

Yeongwoo held the can he had just picked up and tapped it with a coin, waiting for the next message.

And just as expected.

「Therefore, to ensure your right to sleep, the Lodging System will commence in one hour.」

Once more, something eerie seemed about to happen.

Even Yeongwoo felt perplexed.

“The Lodging System...? Is it the same lodging?”

[Translator –

Chapter 19

[Translator –

Chapter 19: Dignity of the Strongest Sword (3)

*Lodging.

*[*Changed “Lounge” to “Lodging” for better accuracy.]*

Renting out rooms for a fee.

The term itself wasn't particularly special or dangerous, in fact.

The issue lay in the world where this term was being used.

A world of dragons, quests, where most people carried weapons.

For Yeongwoo, as the Strongest Sword, it merely led to confusion, but others were downright terrified.

“Lodging...?”

“What'll happen at night?”

“Do we have to pay even to sleep?”

Amidst the gathered Haneulchae residents filled with worry, Yeongwoo hurriedly finished his meal, as if time was slipping away.

At that moment, Yechan, sitting across from him, cautiously asked while nibbling on bread, lowering his voice.

“Mister.”

“Yeah?”

“What do you think about the lodging?”

From the currency exchange to monster appearances and elimination of the mutants.

Yeongwoo’s entire trajectory since the reset was nothing short of a miracle, thus, Yechan had no choice but to trust his insight.

“Not sure. I don’t know whether they’ll continue providing lodging or are just offering it for convenience on the first day...”

“Yeah.”

“Be it the Strongest Sword or anyone else, while they’re asleep, they’re completely defenseless, right? So, maybe it’s about ensuring that one can sleep safely, no matter how it’s arranged.”

Of course, it won’t be free, but that’s what Yeongwoo concluded with.

Yet, Yechan’s doubts lingered.

“Then where?”

“Huh?”

“Lodging means renting a room, right? But in a way, isn’t this mart a huge room?”

A valid point.

Even Yeongwoo found it hard to imagine how the world’s offered “lodging” would manifest.

It wouldn’t even be strange if a motel suddenly appeared in the city center.

“We’ll find out in an hour. But one thing’s certain.”

Yeongwoo stopped mid-sentence and stuffed canned tuna into his mouth.

“With enough money, you can solve most problems.”

* * *

Time flew by in an instant.

Just by seeing that it was much darker outside the mart, one could tell.

Maybe not even an hour had passed?

During that time, all Yeongwoo and Yechan did was eat and pack their belongings onto the bicycles.

There were several visitors bringing food from outside, mostly thanking Yeongwoo and dispersing to find their own meals after seeing his title.

Thanks to the commemorative coin, he had become something of a recognized figure in Gumi.

Of course, not everyone was kind to Yeongwoo.

Those clearly experienced in battles above the average tended to either be wary or jealous of him.

Some subtly tried to gauge his power, especially since they hadn't seen him handle the mutants.

“ ... ”

Feeling the gazes from all around, Yeongwoo checked the local status.

|Currently in the area of 'Gumi.'

|The Strongest Sword in this area is 'Jeong Yeongwoo07.' Rank 1, Defenses 6.

Perhaps due to the incident at the mart entrance, his defense count had increased to 6.

'Not as high as I thought.'

He thought this himself, but how did others perceive it?

Some might consider the Strongest Sword a mere bubble.

Especially if they hadn't seen him deal with the mutants.

“Mister, I'm all set.”

Finally, Yechan, done with packing, reported.

So, Yeongwoo did a final check on the bags strapped to the bicycles and the ropes.

Suddenly, a middle-aged man who had been loitering nearby approached slowly.

“Um... Strongest Sword-nim.”

“ ... ”

Tired of correcting his title every time, Yeongwoo continued the conversation as it was.

“Yes. What can I do for you?”

“Do you happen to need a watch?”

“A watch?”

When Yeongwoo glanced at the wall clock that was still intact, the man reached into his sleeve and produced something.

It was nothing other than a digital wristwatch. Not petrified, a real watch.

[20:48]

Current time: 8:48 PM.

For the first time in a while, Yeongwoo widened his eyes at the sight of ‘time.’

“Why are you selling this when you’ve already reversed it back from petrification?”

“Because I don’t have any money right now. I heard the lodging will start soon, and I might need money by then.”

“Have you spent all the commemorative coins?”

The man looked apologetic at Yeongwoo’s question.

“Ah, they were actually taken from me.”

“By whom?”

“The younglings.”

Younglings. Even in a situation where he’d been robbed, the man’s expression remained polite.

He must be a fairly decent person.

Yeongwoo remembered the somewhat hazy policemen at the currency exchange and tried to relax his expression as much as possible.

“So, how much do you need?”

“I’d like half the amount I spent to reverse the petrification. 2,000 Karma.”

So, that meant he paid 4,000 Karma to initially reverse the watch.

“Yes. Alright.”

With his backpack brimming with crimson coins, Yeongwoo essentially bought change by giving away coins.

Jingle.

As Yeongwoo rummaged through his backpack for 2,000 Karma, the man’s eyes sparkled.

“Looks like luck’s on my side this time. To think I’d be selling a watch to the Strongest Sword.”

“You think too highly of me.”

As Yeongwoo handed the man the coins, he also received the wristwatch in return.

It was, in essence... a barter based on trust.

A belief that the other party wouldn’t hand out a knife instead of money.

“I really must go now. Seems like the lodging starts at 9 PM.”

After finishing the transaction and resting his hand on the bicycle, Yeongwoo said this, and Yechan glanced at the Haneulchae group on the other side.

“What about those people?”

“They have to go their own way. I’m not interested in trailing after them.”

The Haneulchae group still seemed occupied with packing.

Understandable, considering they probably had a lot of people to take care of over there.

While here, they were in a position where they might have to constantly deal with challengers, mutants, and perhaps even fight with Strongest Swords from other areas.

It was best not to get involved with each other.

“...Alright. Let’s go quickly then.”

Yechan seemed to understand the situation soon enough and pulled the bicycle away from the gazes of the Haneulchae residents.

* * *

[Translator –

The time spent by Yeongwoo and Yechan in the mart was probably only about an hour, yet the atmosphere outside had completely changed.

It had turned into complete chaos.

“Please, move!”

“Let us through. We’re heading out now.”

The chaos was caused by people trying to enter the mart and those finishing their business and leaving, all jumbled together.

And then, on top of that...

“Please give me just one coin. I was robbed...”

“Could someone share a bit of food? I haven’t eaten anything all day.”

“I’m looking for work! Porter, companion, odd jobs, I’ll do anything!”

Beggars, people trying to earn money through odd jobs – the crowd was a complete mess.

“Goodness... how did it become like this in just an hour?”

“It’s no surprise, especially in a place like a mart.”

To Yeongwoo, it was quite understandable.

The current time: 8:56 PM.

It was the time when those who hadn’t eaten a meal would be extremely hungry, and it came after the hologram of the president had sufficiently explained the function of Karma.

The fact that with Karma, even petrified food could be reversed.

‘I even went as far as giving money to everyone.’

After handing money to hungry people, rushing to buy food was a natural thing to do.

Of course, there seemed to be quite a few people who had been robbed on their way here.

Nevertheless, now that people with money had gathered at the mart, it was natural for those in need of money to come here.

“People will probably gather in places like the mart, restaurants, and convenience stores for a while.”

It seemed like a dual purpose of job hunting.

In other words, a new economic center had emerged.

“Oh... the Strongest Sword?”

“It’s the Strongest Sword!”

“Mr. Yeongwoo!”

“Jeong Yeongwoo!”

As Yeongwoo and Yechan stepped out of the mart entrance, the already bustling area became even more chaotic.

However, it was different from the previous chaos where people were unwilling to make way. Instead, now everyone seemed inclined towards Yeongwoo, showing a friendly attitude, clearing the path, or following him.

“Mr. Yeongwoo! Where are you going?”

“Strongest Sword-nim! Can I come with you?”

“I’ll use the coins wisely!”

This was thanks to the commemorative coins, carving a sense of familiarity among Gumi citizens.

Moreover, everyone knew Yeongwoo had gave up his monopoly of 3 million Karma to distribute the coins.

“...Mister, you’re incredibly popular.”

Yechan struggled to keep up, continuously nudged by people trying to get past to follow Yeongwoo.

“We might get trapped here if this continues. Let’s get out quickly.”

Yeongwoo signaled Yechan behind him and swiftly got on the bike, pedaling away.

“Huh?”

“Let’s go together!”

“Mr. Yeongwoo!”

As Yeongwoo’s group picked up speed, people attempted to run after them, but due to a significant difference in abilities, they were soon left behind.

“It’s almost frightening.”

Yechan, still trailing behind a few people, murmured.

To which Yeongwoo replied in a subdued voice, looking back at those chasing.

“I guess it’s because everyone’s been through so much.”

“Because they’re in such a difficult state, they’re so happy to see you?”

“Hmm. There’s hardly anything to be genuinely happy about now.”

Youngwoo stopped going on and remembered what the old man from the Haneulchae group had said.

—Since this whole reset thing, it’s the first good thing that has happened. Thanks to what Yeongwoo did.

What Youngwoo did.

“...”

Yeongwoo kept contemplating the last sentence the old man from the Haneulchae group had pronounced, which had made him feel quite good, even as he pedaled through this dismal world.

Beep! Beep!

After about a minute of pedaling, the wristwatch beeped, indicating exactly 9:00 PM.

Bzzt!

Simultaneously, a system message appeared before Yeongwoo and Yechan.

「The Lodging System has commenced.」

「All buildings classified as ‘residential’ will now be in an inviolable state due to the Lodging System.」

‘All buildings classified as residential?’

Referring to existing buildings that were used for lodging purposes.

Places such as villas, apartments, and other accommodations.

「Everyone can occupy any desired residence by paying Karma for a certain period.」

「During the lodging period, access to the space will be controlled, and collecting accommodation fees is also possible.」

It essentially meant acting as a hostel operator. Depending on the perspective, it could also be a way for several people to split the lodging fee.

But did one have to pay money to sleep?

Coincidentally, Yechan seemed to be having a similar thought.

“Um... Can’t we just find a suitable place and sleep without using the lodging?”

“If you don’t mind getting stabbed in your sleep, that might also be a good option.”

But there seemed to be another reason.

Just when they thought the explanation was over, there was one last piece of information.

「For your information, tonight’s weather is a Red Mist.」

「Please beware of possible respiratory damages.」

[Translator –

Chapter 20

[Translator –

Chapter 20: Overnight Lodging (1)

Red Mist and respiratory damage warning.

The latter probably won't just mean a simple coughing, considering how things have been going in this world.

'Even lungs might corrode.'

The initiation of overnight lodging services came with weather alerts, essentially prompting the use of these lodgings.

"Should we go to a motel?"

"...What?"

"To use the lodging."

"There are plenty of other places nearby, though?"

As Yechan pointed out, the surrounding area was scattered with 'residential' buildings.

Behind the mart from earlier, there were tightly packed neighborhoods and apartments.

However, according to Yeongwoo's perspective, these residential areas had a fatal flaw.

"There is a high probability that the owners will return. Those places were originally inhabited by someone."

"Right? Oh, I see..."

Yechan belatedly understood Yeongwoo's argument.

"That's true. Regular homes likely had people living in them..."

"Motels have owners too, but not every room is occupied by them. There might be vacant rooms."

Of course, that would be if they hurried there.

"But even if all the rooms are full, it won't be a problem for you, Mister? Since everyone would want to stay the Strongest Sword."

Upon this, Yeongwoo shook his head.

"I'll decline that offer. Even if it starts with good intentions, seeing the Strongest Sword asleep might bring out unexpected feelings."

"That's... yeah, that could happen."

While Yechan understood Yeongwoo's words, he found him to be quite peculiar.

He was someone who would distribute money to everyone, even in front of mutants, starting with the kids.

Yet, he held such distrust for people... It was impossible to gauge what was truly on his mind.

「Two hours until the [Abnormal Weather] Red Mist forms.」

Soon enough, a climate notification appeared along with a timer at the top of their field of view.

Tick-tock!

「01:59:58」

‘Two hours? So, the abnormal weather starts around 11 at night.’

Considering that the majority of people were crowding stores and convenience shops to get food, it wasn't ample time at all. In truth, Yeongwoo and Yechan weren't at ease either.

“Do you happen to know where a motel is around here?”

“I-I don't know... Shouldn't you, Mister?”

“Just because I'm an adult, am I supposed to know everything?”

As Yeongwoo argued this, he finally realized something.

He had never been to a motel in Gumi even once.

“Let's just follow this main road for now. If we can't find any, we'll have to go back towards the station or just enter any house.”

Their current location was in Bisandong, quite a distance northeast from Gumi Station.

It was an entirely unfamiliar neighborhood for Yeongwoo, who rarely ventured beyond the dormitory.

Creak, click.

They cycled along the main road for about ten minutes, searching.

Finally, Yeongwoo spotted a family ahead, causing him to slow down.

“Excuse me! Can we ask for directions?”

Upon which, the woman at the front raised her axe threateningly in her right hand.

The two men carrying a sack on their bikes had appeared rather odd.

Soon, they recognized Yeongwoo’s title and their eyes widened.

“Wait, aren’t you Jung Yeongwoo-nim?”

As the woman spoke, her husband and children behind her began rummaging through their pockets.

Probably trying to pull out those commemorative coins again.

“Yes... Do you live around here? We’re looking for a motel.”

“A motel? There might be one around... I’m not exactly sure of the exact location, though.”

The woman looked like she wasn’t sure about the exact location.

“In that case, we’ll have to keep searching for now.”

As Yeongwoo made a brief farewell and attempted to pedal again, a hand waved from the husband’s side.

“If you follow that road up ahead, there should be a motel on the left named Riverside Motel. It’s nestled between buildings, so you’ll have to look closely.”

“Ah, thank you.”

As Yeongwoo nodded his thanks, the woman smiled and glanced at her husband.

“You’re really good with directions.”

“Oh, that’s... ”

Before the husband could finish his sentence, Yeongwoo pedaled away.

* * *

Riverside Motel.

Although not exactly by a river as its name suggested, it was indeed wedged between large buildings, making it hard to find.

Even so, being a five-story building hinted at ample room availability.

“Is this it?”

“Looks like it.”

Yeongwoo and Yechan approached the motel entrance on their bicycles.

Despite the talk of the Lodging Services, there was nothing particularly distinct about the exterior. Only something flickering beyond the opaque glass entrance hinted at activity inside.

‘Is the owner still here?’

Given they couldn’t leave their heavily loaded bicycles outside, Yeongwoo opened the entrance while still holding onto his bike.

Clang.

The bell on the door shook, signaling the arrival of a guest inside, and at the same time.

Swoosh!

“.....!”

Unexpectedly, the Gumi Sword Technique hologram taking a defensive stance appeared along with a piercing sound.

「Senses stat has temporarily increased from the 100 to 122.」

‘Who on earth...?’

Senses increased by 22 implied the opponent’s original Senses stat were now at 44.

Meaning, if they were originally a low-level human, they could be considered a veteran who had accumulated a significant amount of Karma. If not, then most likely...

‘A high-level human, at least level 1 or 2.’

Regardless, a surprise attack was not forgivable.

Yeongwoo swiftly retrieved his Early Bird and countered the attack.

Ping!

Simultaneously, from the other side of the door, the hilt of a sword bounced into the air.

Almost immediately, someone fell backwards, screaming.

“Ah—aaah!”

Reacting instantly to the sound, Yeongwoo swung open the glass door, surveying the scene.

“Ugh!”

The source of the horrific scream seemed to be a young man in his early twenties.

“...”

Yeongwoo alternated his gaze between the man’s deformed right hand and the one-handed sword stuck under the motel counter.

“Ah.”

The recent counterattack was so powerful that not only did it disarm the opponent, but it also shattered the hand holding the weapon.

‘Come to think of it, my strength is currently at 300.’

[Translator –

Initially, his base strength was merely 19. He was practically a superhuman now.

Yet, despite this, Yeongwoo’s ability to handle food or ride a bicycle stemmed from the fact that not too long ago, he lived as an ordinary person.

This allowed him to gauge how much strength to exert in daily life.

However, if he were to let go of that sense anytime soon, it could lead to unforeseen consequences.

“Whoa.”

Yechan, following Yeongwoo inside, frowned at the young man sprawled on the floor.

“Guuugghhh!”

The assailant continued his cries of agony.

Yeongwoo then searched through the attacker’s pockets.

As expected, there wasn’t a single coin in his possession.

This meant he had likely come to the motel well-prepared for robbery.

The next step would usually involve delivering a fatal blow, but...

“What level are you? What’s your role? An extra? A supporting role?”

Yeongwoo postponed the opponent’s death by asking these questions.

“Ugh, uggh!”

However, with a broken wrist, would he even register such questions?

The young man’s continuous groaning and screams made it impossible for him to hear or respond.

And so, eventually...

Thud!

“Uuaaagh!”

Yeongwoo’s Early Bird pierced the young man’s thigh, an attempt to provoke a reaction and distract him.

“Ah, Mister? Why are you doing this again...!”

Surprised, Yechan tried to stop Yeongwoo.

While the opponent had initiated the attack, Yechan believed there was no need to resort to torture despite that.

However, Yeongwoo had his reasons.

He felt it necessary to investigate other high-level humans to understand the specific nature of a Level 1 supporting role, like his mother.

“What level of human are you? What’s your role? Just tell me that, and I’ll let you live or kill you, whichever you prefer.”

“You... you insane...!”

Enraged, the young man tried to spit at Yeongwoo but stopped upon seeing the Early Bird held in his grasp.

“Wait! I... I’m a Level 1. A Level 1 Extra.”

“Level 1?”

Yeongwoo’s eyes widened.

He was indeed a high-level human.

“And your occupation?”

“Uh... I don’t have one, anything like that.”

“So, unemployed? Then what about your parents?”

Upon Yeongwoo’s inquiry, the expression on the young man, who had been in despair until then, suddenly changed.

It was as if he had become an entirely different person.

“You guys killed them.”

“What?”

“You killed them! You damn vultures...!”

It was more than just expressing malice; the rage and sorrow were so intense it seemed to make the air around them boil.

Perhaps the young man’s parents were also high-level humans, and judging by his extreme reaction, they might have been targeted and eliminated by public vote.

“Now you’re trying to act innocent? Just kill me too!”

The young man seemed to have lost control entirely.

But regardless what happened to his family life due to the reset, the fact remained that he intended to kill anyone entering the motel.

“...”

Seeing that further conversation was futile, Yeongwoo followed the young man’s orders and swung his Early Bird.

Fssh!

In a blink, a red streak crossed the young man’s throat, and soon, the head fell with a sickening thud, the severed neck emitting a gushing sound.

Witnessing it all, Yechan's face turned pale.

“...”

As a high school student, this sight was too brutal and bizarre for him to comprehend.

To think a person he considered a colleague would resort to torturing for information, and that the tortured individual's parents had been erased by the public...

It was a moment when he realized that he was living in a much more terrifying world than he had thought.

“Is... is this really happening?”

As Yechan spoke, staring at the head lying lifelessly, Yeongwoo raised an eyebrow and asked.

“What? Just because I didn't kill him right away?”

It was purely Yechan's uncertainty about what he was troubled by that led to his words.

Hence, Yechan found himself at a loss for words. In truth, he didn't precisely know what was making him fearful and anxious.

Whether it was due to Yeongwoo gradually becoming inhuman or if the world itself was the issue.

“...No.”

Yechan shook his head, gesturing to continue on their way.

So, with an uneasy expression, Yeongwoo moved, leaving the severed head behind.

「01:16:32」

According to the mist timer at the top of their field of vision, they had roughly an hour left.

If there were no rooms available in the motel or if there were other issues preventing them from staying there, they'd have to pedal their bicycles again to find another place to stay.

‘Of course, if both options fail, we might have to end up entering a room someone else rented and get our throats slit in the middle of the night.’

Yeongwoo and Yechan crossed the lobby, avoiding the young man's blood that had already reached their feet.

Thud.

All the lights were off, so they carefully walked up the dark stairs.

But for some reason, a faint blue light seeped from above, gradually illuminating their surroundings with each step upward.

"...What is it this time?"

"I don't know. I doubt any monsters will show up again at this point."

Yeongwoo tightly held the Early Bird in his right hand and steadily moved his gaze upward.

Eventually,

Click!

Both of them reached the second floor of the motel, and soon, they discovered the source of the bluish light.

It was none other than the room entrance doors emitting a subtle glow.

"..."

It was a surreal scene, but Yeongwoo, mindful of the limited time, walked towards the room at the end of the corridor.

Yeongwoo chose room 208.

Approaching it, the frame of the door, previously shining blue, intensified in color.

Subsequently, its unique interface appeared.

「Would you like to use the Lodging Service?」

[Riverside Motel Room 208]

|Space: Compact

|Facilities: Bathroom

|Lodging fee: 3,000 Karma

|Duration: Until 10 a.m tomorrow.

「How many people are planning to stay? Please enter the number of occupants.」

Next, a sort of holographic keypad appeared.

“...”

After a moment's thought, Yeongwoo reached out his hand.

「2」