

Level 4 Human in a Ruined World #Chapter 311 - Read Level 4 Human in a Ruined World Chapter 311

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Chapter 311: Noble Family (3)

— We're going to space with those people's money?

Song Jiseon showed interest in her son's words for the first time since their reunion.

She was starting to get curious about exactly what her son was doing in this unusual city.

"Yes. While we're collecting taxes legally now, we used to receive defense fees."

— Defense fees? You mean payment for using your combat abilities?

As expected from a former businesswoman, Song Jiseon grasped the situation quickly, making it easier for Yeongwoo to explain.

"Well... something like that. I actually prefer to call it a life fee. At one point, all of the city's Strongest Swords were in competition with each other."

— Hmm. So even if it weren't for you, they'd be too busy fighting amongst themselves to choose a leader.

"Yes. Through that process, they selected a person capable of handling abnormal beings like you."

When Yeongwoo subtly praised his mother by referring to her as an "abnormal being," she remained silent inside her helmet.

—

However, Yeongwoo was sure of one thing.

His mother was likely feeling quite proud of herself at the moment.

— So, are those over there... the normal kind of mutants?

Jiseon pointed toward the Strongest Swords and the mutants behind them as she asked.

Yeongwoo nodded.

“For the most part, yes. Those are your typical mutants.”

Typical mutants.

Even so, these were formidable beings—powerful enough that the renowned Strongest Swords of various regions couldn’t handle them on their own and were forced to retreat.

And among them was the exceptionally powerful Song Jiseon, the “abnormal” being.

— Hmm.

Jiseon made a sound of satisfaction before quietly raising her massive sword.

Sliiide.

— You said I shouldn’t kill any humans, right?

“Yes. Think of it as reducing our travel funds by 5% for each person you kill. You can’t afford to make mistakes.”

This comment was partly due to the upcoming re-election vote that might take place, but Yeongwoo kept that part to himself.

— I have no reason to kill them anyway. But if they get caught in my attack by accident, that can’t be helped.

“...What did you say?”

As Yeongwoo’s brow furrowed in frustration, Jiseon raised her ice greatsword high.

Whoosh.

Upon seeing this, Yeongwoo immediately shouted toward the Strongest Swords.

“Run! You’re all going to die...!”

He had momentarily forgotten that his mother used to be a corporate tycoon just a short while ago.

Given that she was still upset from losing the power struggle with her son, she wasn’t in the mood to care about such “trivial” matters.

— You’re telling me those little guys hold a 5% stake each? Either your math is wrong, or we’re riding in a total junker.

“What the hell?! I was just estimating!”

As Yeongwoo’s eyes widened in disbelief, Jiseon’s body became enveloped in a glowing blue aura.

Fwoooooosh!

She was beginning to transform back into a massive ice dragon.

“Ah, come on!”

This time, even Yeongwoo had no choice but to retreat, and the Strongest Swords, realizing that a major catastrophe was about to hit Gwangjin District, hurriedly turned around.

In fact, they even ran in the direction of the mutants who had been chasing them.

“What the hell is going on?!”

“What is that...?”

The ball of light radiating from Jiseon had already risen over 100 meters into the sky.

Unaware of the situation, the Strongest Swords instinctively realized that the mutants they had been running from were safer than whatever this massive thing was.

“Yeongwoo! What have you done this time?!”

One of the Strongest Swords had astutely guessed that this was Yeongwoo’s doing, but before he could hear a response, a deafening roar blanketed Gwangjin District, drowning out everything else.

— If you don’t want to die, move aside!

At the thunderous warning, the Strongest Swords, who had been facing off against the mutants blocking their escape, looked around in confusion.

“Move?”

“...Which way is ‘aside’?”

Jiseon had told them to move “aside” from her perspective, but her body was so enormous that the Strongest Swords couldn’t tell which direction was considered “aside.”

Meanwhile, Jiseon, having re-formed her ice dragon body, opened her massive maw wide.

— Mooove!

As she unleashed a forward breath attack, the massive ice shards shot out, narrowly missing the Strongest Swords who had correctly guessed the direction to dodge.

BOOM!

However, some of the Strongest Swords who had moved in the wrong direction were not as lucky.

“Huh?”

“W-wait!”

They were immediately caught in the breath attack before they could react to the absurd scale of the assault.

Of course, the mutants who had been chasing the Strongest Swords weren't spared either.

— Huh?

— Is that... a dragon?

— What the hell is that thing?

Even the highly dangerous 7th-day mutants, who had been specifically sent to this world in their enhanced states, were bewildered by the sight of a dragon over 100 meters tall.

And soon...

BOOM!

The mutants, who had been staring in disbelief, were also swept away by Jiseon's breath.

— You're telling me these guys are my peers? How ridiculous.

Jiseon, looking down proudly at the battlefield she had cleared with a single breath, noticed a black streak running toward her.

Thud!

It was none other than Yeongwoo, rushing toward the scene while holding a slime core.

“Are you out of your mind?! I told you not to touch the humans!”

Luckily, none of the Strongest Swords had died from the breath attack.

They had managed to perform evasive maneuvers just in time, avoiding full exposure to the breath attack.

Still, most of them had lost limbs or had their lower bodies completely shattered, leaving Yeongwoo frantic with frustration.

“I-I’m sorry.”

When Yeongwoo approached the Strongest Sword closest to death, Lee Hanwook, the man, terrified and barely clinging to life, let out a nonsensical scream.

“Ugh, ugh! Ughhhh!”

“Stay still! I’m here to save you!”

Since a single slime core wasn’t enough for a quick recovery, Yeongwoo had no choice but to use his “Unfair Trade.”

Shiiing!

「Unfair Trade」 - Unique One-Handed Sword

【Inflicting wounds on enemies, increasing wearer's recovery rate.】

「Slime Core」 - Mutation Bracelet

【Regenerative power increases dramatically.】

After placing the Unfair Trade sword in Hanwook’s one remaining hand, Yeongwoo had him stab his own shoulder.

Thud!

“Huh?”

“This will heal you quickly.”

Just as Yeongwoo had promised, Hanwook’s body began to recover rapidly, and as soon as Yeongwoo was sure the man was out of danger, he moved on to the next person.

“Yeongwoo! You bastard!”

The next swordsman in line was coincidentally Jang Jeongho, the Strongest Sword of Dongdaemun.

“Shut up, I’m saving you. I never thought I’d be the one saving lives.”

Yeongwoo once again had Jang stab him with the Unfair Trade, allowing his recovery.

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“This is what you call the Sword of Life.”

As Yeongwoo watched the man’s legs regrow quickly, Jang gritted his teeth and asked,

“What the hell is that thing? What did you bring this time?”

Naturally, he was referring to the ice dragon, Song Jiseon, and though Yeongwoo knew this could hurt him in the next election, he couldn’t help but answer.

“She’s my mother.”

Now, Yeongwoo, Jeonggu, and Jiseon were “family.”

“Your mother? That’s your mom?”

Of course, Jang’s jaw dropped, and he pointed toward Jiseon as if asking if Yeongwoo was serious.

In response, Yeongwoo calmly lowered his hand and warned him.

“Don’t provoke her. If you don’t want to die.”

“.....”

Song Jiseon was one of the very few people Yeongwoo couldn’t subdue in an instant.

At least, among those from Earth.

If she ever decided to actually kill one of the Strongest Swords, Yeongwoo wouldn’t be able to stop her in time.

For the first time, Yeongwoo now had a serious problem to deal with.

"I'm sorry. But things will get better moving forward. As a gesture of apology, I'll make sure the spheres here are returned to each region."

At that, Hanwook, who had been lying far away, screamed in shock.

"What do you mean, 'moving forward'? What does that imply? Don't tell me that's...!"

Then he hurriedly clamped his mouth shut with one arm, which had yet to fully heal.

It was because he realized that Song Jiseon, the Ice Dragon, was staring down at him.

—How is he still alive? It seems they're not completely incompetent, after all.

She then raised her head and upper body, looking down at Metal Seoul from hundreds of meters in the air.

She was enjoying this wide and high view.

—Is one mutant dropping into each district? Then the areas we haven't heard from must have handled it on their own.

Song Jiseon was learning this world at an astonishing speed.

Suddenly, as if something occurred to her, she turned her head far off to a distant place outside Seoul.

—What about the others?

"What? Who exactly?"

—What's happening overseas? Do you even know? What's the point of being a thug only in this country?

"Oh."

Of course, the head of Jinhyeon Group, a global corporation.

Yeongwoo thought that even if his mother had been reset as a human instead of a mutant, she would have survived just fine.

"Overseas, it's a mess there too."

—Really?

Song Jiseon made a sound of surprise.

It seemed unexpected to her that her brute of a son was aware of the situation abroad.

—Have you been overseas? Have you fought there? Have you competed with the extraterrestrials?

Song Jiseon narrowed her large eyes and asked, to which Yeongwoo wiped his nose and shrugged.

“If someone aims to touch the universe, wouldn't they have at least visited abroad?”

Yeongwoo wanted to boast that he owned billions in foreign bonds, but explaining all that would take too long, so he held back.

Besides, he hadn't fully dominated the entire world yet.

“Of course, I haven't been to every single country, but I'm pretty sure of this: I'm the strongest on this planet.”

When Yeongwoo made this bold claim, Song Jiseon gave him a skeptical look.

—The world is bigger than you think.

“That's exactly what I want to say.”

Just as Yeongwoo and Jiseon were about to start another argument.

Fiiiing!

A sharp signal sound came from the distant sky.

—What now? Is someone else coming?

Song Jiseon opened her mouth again, preparing to unleash her breath into the sky, while in the meantime, Yeongwoo caught sight of a beam of light rising from the west.

Something from the west had just communicated with something beyond the sky.

“Oh, the west! That's where it is!”

—What? What's there?

“The Victory Monument!”

As Yeongwoo remembered the significant structure to the west, a system message appeared in everyone's view within Seoul.

「In one hour, Promotion Inspectors will arrive.」

「Prepare a gift in return.」

“Huh? What the hell?”

As Yeongwoo's eyes widened with a sense of déjà vu so strong it tingled his scalp, Song Jiseon closed her mouth, which had been aimed at the sky.

—What's going on?

It seemed she hadn't seen the system message.

So Yeongwoo stomped his feet and shouted.

“The planetary inspectors are coming! In one hour!”

—What? Inspectors?

Song Jiseon would now be able to witness a part of the 'universe' she had longed for.

The problem, however, was—

“We have to prepare a gift in one hour! The kind of people who receive these are incredibly high-ranking!”

For instance, that had been the case with the shareholders of Dogo.

When they first met, the system had kindly informed him to prepare a gift for these distinguished guests.

—What the hell. You've got such important visitors coming, and you're just now thinking about the gift?

Song Jiseon snorted in disdain, her blue breath puffing out, but then Yeongwoo suddenly lifted his head as if struck by a brilliant idea.

“Mom!”

—...?

“What would be a good gift?”

—How should I know, you reckless idiot?

The sudden use of the term 'Mom' caught her so off guard that Song Jiseon forgot to be angry and took a step back.

Then, as Yeongwoo glanced at the guest timer that had appeared in his view, he spoke again.

“You were the owner of Jinhyeon Group, right? A global hospitality genius! So, if you were me, what would you give to the planetary inspectors?”

—...What is this kid even talking about?

In reality, wasn't her son the real genius of hospitality?

Song Jiseon felt a strange pressure closing in on her.

After her son had just praised her as a hospitality genius, standing there saying nothing would make her look foolish.

—Well, I don't know. What exactly did the system say?

In the end, Song Jiseon reluctantly took on her son's assignment, and Yeongwoo grinned wickedly before climbing onto Negwig.

“Then I'll just make a quick trip to Gangnam while you think it over! I'm a little busy today!”

—What?

By the time Song Jiseon realized she'd been tricked, Metal Seoul's mayor, Jeong Yeongwoo, had already left the outskirts of Gwangjin-gu.

Crash, crash...

—That little punk dares to subcontract the job to me?

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Chapter 312: Noble Family (4)

‘Hmm, having a competent subordinate is certainly convenient.’

After entrusting his mother with the matter of the thank-you gifts, Yeongwoo, who had fled to Gangnam, was now looking at the COEX building that had started to appear in the distance.

‘At least my house is still intact. But where is the mutant?’

The reason Yeongwoo had outsourced the thank-you gift matter to the conglomerate leader and left the area was because of the mutant in Gangnam.

If mutants had appeared in Gwangjin-gu, it was only natural to think that something similar might have also appeared in Gangnam.

However, contrary to his expectations, there were no signs of mutants in Gangnam at all.

Only a few blue pillars of light—symbols of monsters—were visible here and there, slowly disappearing one by one.

In other words, the monster hunters had been active, and nothing major had happened in Gangnam so far.

‘What’s going on? This doesn’t make sense.’

As Yeongwoo tilted his head in confusion and headed toward the entrance of the Parnas Hotel to meet with Taewon’s people, he was greeted by Lim Suna, who had been waiting for him there.

“Mayor...!”

“...”

Seeing Lim Suna, who had taken it upon herself to start calling him "Mayor" without being asked, Yeongwoo wore a slightly displeased expression.

“My title has changed to 'Mayor' already?”

“Well, you are the mayor, after all.”

“Anyway, what happened with the mutant? I might have been a bit late getting to Gangnam because I stopped to see my mother.”

“Your mother...?”

Clearly caught off guard by the unexpected word, Lim Suna's face briefly showed confusion before she composed herself again.

“Your mother is here?”

“Yes, but isn’t there something more urgent than that right now?”

The mutant.

What had happened to the mutant in Gangnam?

There was no way it had simply disappeared on its own while the top fighter of the district was absent.

Whip.

As Yeongwoo continued to look around, searching for any sign of the mutant, Suna glanced behind her and cautiously said,

“If you’re looking for the orb, it’s at the Kyunggi High School baseball field.”

“Kyunggi High School?”

Kyunggi High School was located a bit to the north of Samsung-dong, not far from here.

If the orb was there, it meant the mutant in Gangnam had already been dealt with.

“A golden orb is there? Are you sure?”

As Yeongwoo asked in disbelief, a tall man emerged from the hotel lobby behind Suna.

Thud, thud.

“...Huh?”

The person was none other than the self-proclaimed "Strongest Spear of Gyeongbuk," Kang Yechan.

He was a 2-meter-tall high school student from a world that had already collapsed.

“When did you get here?”

Surprised, Yeongwoo asked as if he hadn’t expected him, and Yechan dropped the bags he was holding to the ground.

Clang!

It was the 8.6 million in gold coins that Yeongwoo had been promised from Busan.

"I've been here for a while. What have you been doing, running around without even checking on your house?"

Yechan, who now had a stronger presence befitting a warrior, asked accusingly, making Yeongwoo flinch momentarily.

'Uh... My mother's position as second-in-command might be in danger at this rate.'

Come to think of it, Yechan's martial prowess was extraordinary too.

After all, he had been able to fight off the Japanese masters who had invaded Busan by himself.

"So, you dealt with the mutant?"

"Yes. I saw the mark as soon as I arrived."

"...That's a relief."

Since this whole Gangnam situation had been Yeongwoo's fault, he had no excuse.

Thankfully, Yechan had arrived in time, bringing good fortune to the residents of Gangnam.

"Anyway, take the money quickly and show me around Seoul."

Yechan nudged the bags of gold coins with his foot, but Yeongwoo looked troubled.

"You've really done a great job coming here, but it's a bit difficult right now."

"...Huh?"

Yechan's expression, which had been full of excitement, turned cold at the unexpected rejection.

"Why? Do you have someone more important than me to attend to?"

"Oh."

Yeongwoo immediately responded as if he had just realized something.

"I have a very important guest."

"...What?"

"My mother has arrived."

“...Whose mother?”

“My mother.”

“Huh?”

Yechan's face twisted into a ridiculous expression.

“You're an orphan, aren't you?”

“Unfortunately, not anymore.”

“What? So now I'm the only orphan?”

The orphan solidarity was broken.

“This can't be happening.”

Yechan's world came crashing down at that moment.

How could Yeongwoo, the top output of the orphan world, no longer be an orphan?

It was unbelievable.

“Where is your mother now?”

“She's in the neighboring district. Probably catching up with my father.”

“You have a dad now too?”

When Yechan shouted in disbelief, Yeongwoo raised his hand, gesturing for him to calm down.

“Honestly, being an orphan might be better. It all depends on the parents.”

With that, Yeongwoo handed the bags of coins Yechan had brought to a goblin.

-Kiieek!

The amount of coins Yechan had brought totaled exactly 8.6 million Karma.

Flash!

*Available Karma: 12,779,605

*Available Defense Funds: 0

Thanks to this, Yeongwoo's cash reserves returned to over 10 million, but it still didn't feel like enough.

There was a time when he had more than 100 million, after all.

'I need to get the money from Master Bang soon. I also need to do some equipment farming today.'

Now that the mutants had been dealt with, merchants would soon start appearing all over.

To shop, Yeongwoo needed cash.

He also had to prepare for all the taxes that would be due soon.

'Come to think of it, now that I have both parents, I won't be eligible for tax deductions.'

The single-parent family tax deduction reduced taxes by a whopping 30%.

But now, he had to give up this massive benefit.

'In this world, even parents are a luxury.'

However, paying more taxes wasn't necessarily a bad thing when it came to competing for planetary shares, so it wasn't an immediate loss.

"Let's just move on for now."

"Uh, to where?"

"Gwangjin District, and then we need to head to Sajikdan. A very important guest will be arriving there soon."

"A guest even more important than your parents?"

"...That's how it is."

This is the weight that the mayor of Metal Seoul must carry.

[Translator - Night]

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Clang!

As Yeongwoo mounted the Negwig once again, Yechan looked at the otherworldly metal horse with an uneasy expression.

“Am I riding too?”

“Of course. Can you run faster than this?”

“I’m probably three times faster than you think.”

“What?”

Yeongwoo blinked, momentarily stunned, knowing that Yechan wasn’t the type to make a casual joke.

‘Wait a minute... This guy came up from Busan, didn’t he?’

Only now did Yeongwoo realize the mystery behind Yechan.

It was just past 1 PM, but Yechan had come all the way to Seoul, despite starting from Busan.

‘The Road of Vengeance is only available to me and my brothers.’

No one else had been registered to use the high-speed travel route.

In other words, Yechan had covered the vast distance by foot in just a few hours that morning.

“How are you so fast? Are you wearing like ten pairs of speed-boosting boots?”

No matter how much he farmed, it was impossible for Yechan, who didn’t even have a gear Catalog, to—

Yeongwoo’s thoughts trailed off as he looked at Yechan’s hands, then bit his lip.

“You’re absolutely insane.”

Indeed, all ten of Yechan’s fingers were adorned with rings.

He even wore several bracelets on each arm, making him look like a luxury carpet vendor from some foreign land.

‘Without a Catalog, that’s what you end up looking like.’

This meant a lot.

No matter how much karma one accumulates, without breaking through certain limits like a gear Catalog, there's a ceiling to how strong one can become.

Sure, stats could be increased indefinitely, but raw stats alone wouldn't compare to the effects of hundreds of gear pieces a Catalog user could access.

"Why don't you have any equipment, Mister?"

Noticing Yeongwoo's gaze, Yechan blinked and asked.

However, Yeongwoo couldn't bring himself to reveal that he could store an infinite amount of certain types of equipment and benefit from all their effects simultaneously.

How shocked would Yechan be if he learned the truth?

"I'll... I'll tell you later."

Swish.

Yeongwoo's head tilted north.

"For now, let's focus on what we need to do. Our important guest will arrive soon."

* * *

After retrieving the golden sphere from Gyeonggi, they moved on to Gwangjin District.

The distance was short; at Yeongwoo's level, using the travel route seemed almost unnecessary.

But the journey left a strong impression.

Tat tat tat!

It was painful to admit, but Yechan's mobility, while wearing ten rings, was beyond imagination.

'What the hell? He's turned into a complete monster.'

Running alongside the Negwig the entire way to Gwangjin, Yechan displayed the peak of human capability within the 'normal range.'

'Why is it that there's not a single normal person around me?'

Yeongwoo stared at Yechan in disbelief, only to see him grinning.

“How’s that? Pretty amazing, right?”

“Yeah. I admit it. It’s incredible.”

Yeongwoo couldn’t help but feel a bit guilty again.

What would Yechan think if he learned about the high-speed travel routes?

‘But then again... I could use this guy as my debt collector. For intercontinental travel, I’d just let him use the routes, and with his speed, he could catch anyone owing me money in no time.’

Unlike the late Im Dupyeong’s debt collectors, who were slow and often had their stashes robbed by bandits on the Korean Peninsula, Yechan would be different.

He was arguably the strongest human around, excluding the extraterrestrial proxies operating on Earth.

So there’d be no chance of someone overpowering him to escape paying, and his speed would be unmatched.

“Yechan, would you perhaps—”

Just as Yeongwoo was about to offer him a job after finishing his calculations—

“Hey!”

Yechan suddenly cried out in shock, his eyes wide.

“Mister! There’s a huge dragon over there...!”

Yechan had finally spotted the Ice Dragon, Song Jiseon.

So Yeongwoo shrugged and pointed at his mother with his index finger.

“Oh, yeah. That’s...”

“What are you doing? Get ready to fight! That thing must’ve already seen us!”

“What?”

Before Yeongwoo could say another word, Yechan dashed forward with his usual swift movements.

Tat tat tat!

“Ye—Yechan! That person is...!”

Yeongwoo hurriedly tried to explain the dragon’s true identity, but he stopped short.

He was curious.

Right now, Yechan was the strongest human within the ‘normal’ limits.

In other words, he was the true strongest in the reset world.

And while his mother was an extraordinary mutant, she had returned to this world through legitimate means, a recognized threat.

‘So, who would win if they fought?’

In a way, this fight was supposed to be part of the ‘true history.’

So instead of revealing that Yechan was rushing toward his mother, Yeongwoo decided to say this instead:

“Yechan! Be careful! That thing looks incredibly strong! It’s definitely not your average mutant!”

Thus began the duel to decide the second strongest in Seoul, right in front of the mayor himself.

[Translator - Night]

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Chapter 313: Noble Family (5)

— Oh, have you finally come to your senses?

Jiseon, who had been pondering over the problem with the return gifts contracted out, brightened as she saw her son reappear from the south.

Well, no matter how much of an orphan he might be, how could he treat his mother, whom he had barely gained, so cruelly?

It was clear that after leaving, he felt uneasy and was now returning.

— Right. Once could be a mistake.

Just as Jiseon decided to forgive her son's disrespect with a generous heart.

Tat-tat!

Suddenly, a swift presence burst out from behind her son.

— Huh...?

Someone who looked much younger than the problematic son had the audacity to point his finger and charge towards her.

Tat-tat-tat!

His movements were unusual.

Jiseon's head, still in the form of a dragon, was hundreds of meters above the ground.

From her vantage point, the approaching figure appeared as a tiny dot, yet she could feel the incredible speed at which he was moving.

An unexpectedly skilled opponent had suddenly appeared.

— What is this...?

Jiseon's gaze naturally shifted to her son, running behind the intruder.

She saw him glance over at her, saying something to the young man holding a spear.

And then...

— ...!

Whirr!

The extremely young man raised his spear threateningly and began to accelerate.

She could feel his intent to fight in his movements.

He was coming to engage in battle.

— This insolent brat!

Realizing belatedly that her son had sent an assassin, Jiseon's body began to glow blue.

It was due to the boiling blue blood within her.

— You insolent fool!

As the "Iron-Blooded Empress," the ice dragon Song Jiseon, opened her massive jaws and roared, Yechan, who had unwittingly gotten involved in a contest to determine the second strongest in Seoul, widened his eyes in shock.

The power in her voice was anything but ordinary.

“What... what is that? Is that really a mutated one?”

It was understandable.

The ice dragon in front of him was incomparable in size to any other mutated ones he'd encountered.

Until now, the largest mutated beings he'd seen were only about 10 meters tall at most, but this dragon was at least 100 meters tall.

— Dieeee!

As Jiseon unleashed a long breath towards the south, sharp, blue ice shards poured down like a tidal wave.

KWAHHHHH!

In response, Yechan pushed his mobility output to the maximum, hurriedly dodging to the side.

Whoosh!

“Is this for real? Is Seoul always like this?”

He swallowed heavily as he watched the massive ice shards pierce the spot where he had just been standing.

He was certain that taking even one of those shards would mean instant death.

‘But if I can just get close...!’

Yechan's eyes gleamed again.

It was clear that he had encountered an opponent far more formidable than expected, but backing down now would hurt his pride.

Besides, wasn't his hyung watching from behind?

This was his first public battle in Seoul.

Claiming to be the "Strongest Spear in Gyeongbuk" and failing to defeat even one mutated creature would be unacceptable.

Tat!

Yechan gripped his spear, and black flames erupted from his entire body.

Whooosh!

This was the effect of Yechan's most prized legendary spear, "Shadowless."

「Shadowless」 - Legendary Spear

【Lumoa's Incarnation】

Transforms into a black fire demon, gaining a powerful piercing attack, and all combat abilities increase by 15%.

Unlike Yeongwoo, who had roamed the central and southern regions, Yechan had met various merchants and once even encountered someone who traded goods through a kind of card gambling.

The trade involved guessing three consecutive numbers between 1 and 9 on an overturned stone tablet.

If successful, one could obtain the desired item; if not, 1 million karma would be forfeited.

Yechan succeeded in just 11 tries, obtaining the legendary spear "Shadowless."

While extraordinary luck or immense capital was required, there were still ways to obtain legendary gear in this world.

Moreover, Yechan had unlocked the "Monarch Without a Crown" achievement series, which is gained by defeating mutated beings consecutively without a Strongest Sword title.

Currently, he owned three legendary items.

In other words, as Yeongwoo predicted, Yechan was indeed one of the strongest within the 'standard,' and thanks to that...

KA-KA-KA-BOOM!

He dodged all of the ice dragon's furious breath attacks and was now within reach of her front paw.

Finally, he had drawn the gigantic beast into his range, just as he had hoped.

‘Now it’s over! I’m confident in close combat!’

Certain of victory, Yechan prepared to strike the ice dragon's front paw, and Jiseon, who was about to cast an ice spell, momentarily hesitated.

— Damn it.

There were still injured humans in Gwangjin-gu who hadn't recovered yet.

They were the Strongest Swords, supposed to help fund her trip to space.

And during that brief hesitation...

SWISH!

Yechan's spear thrust towards her front paw.

“Take this!”

It was a strike from a legendary spear.

Though it couldn't compare to Yeongwoo’s mythical demon sword, it was still a sufficiently threatening attack.

Crack!

The spearhead managed to break through Jiseon's scales, digging slightly into her flesh.

— You...!

For Jiseon, it was only a slight sting, but the fact that her opponent’s attack had landed was infuriating.

After all, another relatively threatening figure had appeared, following her insane son.

— These crazy bastards, enough is enough!

Finally fed up, Song Jiseon dispelled her dragon form.

SWOOOSH!

Her massive body, spanning hundreds of meters, transformed into a giant mass of light, forcing Yechan to retreat.

In that instant, the light rapidly compressed and, in the blink of an eye, created a grayish-white swordsman standing 3 meters tall.

This was Song Jiseon's polymorph ability.

In less than an hour after her return to this world, she had already fully armed herself twice.

— Do you even know who I am, you little brat?

Wearing thick steel armor over her face and letting her long white hair billow in the air, Song Jiseon's presence was enough to make anyone think of the word 'strongest.'

"W-who are you...?"

Feeling the overwhelming force of his opponent, the cocky Kang Yechan hesitantly pulled his spear back and asked.

In response, Song Jiseon pointed at the name tag above her head as if she couldn't believe what she was hearing.

—You really don't know who I am? You've never heard of Song Jiseon of the Jinhyeon Group?

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

"...I've heard of Jinhyeon Group, but..."

No matter how formidable Yechan had become in this reset world, he had just been an ordinary high school student in his previous world.

So while he may have heard the name of Jinhyeon Group, it was understandable that he didn't know the name of its head.

—Is that so? Well then, I suppose it's time you learned.

"Huh?"

Suddenly finding himself in a swordfight with an offended business tycoon, Yechan turned around with a bewildered expression.

Swoosh.

That's when he spotted Jeong Yeongwoo, a former orphan, standing far away, just watching.

"Yechan! Look ahead! She's coming in now!"

Yeongwoo called out while casually gesturing with his fingers as if he were giving some relaxed advice.

"Huh?"

At the moment Yechan finally realized something was off.

KRAAAASH!

A massive greatsword sliced through the air, heading straight for him.

"Ugh!"

Even without having to take the hit, Yechan could feel the immense strength behind the attack.

The mere force of the sword swinging towards him was enough to make his hair flutter.

"Argh!"

As Yechan instinctively gripped his spear tightly and raised it to guard, the merciless downward slash of the business tycoon's greatsword landed on top of it.

—You insolent brat!

THU-UUUNG!

With a loud ringing sound, like striking a giant bell, a blue flame sparked from the center of Yechan's spear shaft.

Simultaneously, the ground beneath him cracked like a spider web.

CRAAAACK!

"...!"

It had been a long time since he had felt such overwhelming strength.

But Yechan was no longer the boy who trembled in front of heavily armored goblins.

Despite the overwhelming situation, he angled his spear shaft slightly, attempting a counterattack.

SCREECH!

As the greatsword pressed against his spear shaft, Song Jiseon's body naturally tilted, and Yechan, waiting for this moment, thrust the tip of his spear towards her neck.

"Just being strong isn't enough! Let me teach you a lesson!"

Sensing victory, Yechan shouted boldly, but Song Jiseon merely scoffed from within her helmet.

—You're going to teach me? How amusing.

With that, she quickly grabbed Yechan's spear shaft with her left hand, which she had already freed earlier.

KRAK!

Right before the tip of the spear could reach her neck.

"Huh?"

Yechan was stunned.

No mutants he had fought before were this skilled in combat.

It made sense for Strongest Swords to be battle-hardened since they had to fight to earn their titles, but not mutants.

This was essentially a duel, each wielding their own weapons.

How could a corporate tycoon engage in such intricate combat, unless she had secretly trained in fencing or kendo as a hobby?

"How... how did you block that?"

Seeing Yechan's bewildered expression, Song Jiseon, using only her raw strength, pushed his spear shaft away as she spoke.

GRIND.

—Always assume your opponent has one more move than you. Crises always come from places you can't anticipate, kid.

This was not only Song Jiseon's management philosophy but had also become her combat principle now that she possessed extraordinary physical prowess.

Even in moments when victory seemed certain, she focused on preparing for unexpected moves.

"Ha."

As Yechan, who truly felt like he had learned something, let out a sigh, a red flash suddenly appeared at the edge of his vision.

"...?"

When Yechan turned to look in that direction, the red demonic energy of the cursed sword, Bastard, had already cut through the air.

CLAAAANG!

Yeongwoo, who had seemed like a passive observer until now, had suddenly thrown Bastard into the fray, crashing into the scene.

"When your opponent's last move has been exhausted, that's when you strike from behind. That's how you become the strongest."

Yeongwoo said confidently as he extended his empty hand, and the cursed sword that had lodged itself in Song Jiseon's shoulder swiftly returned to him.

SWOOSH, THUNK!

With the strength drained from her arm, Song Jiseon dropped Yechan's spear shaft, and Yechan didn't miss the chance to retreat quickly.

"Huh, what just happened?"

Yechan looked back and forth between Song Jiseon and Yeongwoo, asking in confusion.

Yeongwoo pointed his sword at his mother and said,

"Say hello. This is my mother."

"Huh?"

Then he swung the red blade to point at Yechan.

“Mother, this is my younger brother, Kang Yechan. He helped me out a while back. You’re not strangers anymore, so feel free to get acquainted.”

— What?

Still trying to process the situation, Song Jiseon made a sound of disbelief from inside her helmet, and Yeongwoo continued.

“Now, Mother is the second strongest in Seoul, no, in the entire Korean peninsula.”

— ...?

Yeongwoo then turned his head back to Yechan.

“Yechan, since you lost to my mother, that makes you the third strongest. So you’ll be responsible for debt collection now.”

“Mister, what are you talking about...? Why am I suddenly in charge of debt collection? And what does that even entail?”

As expected, Yechan immediately expressed his refusal, and Yeongwoo pulled out a pre-prepared argument.

“Well then, how are you going to pay for trying to attack my mother...?”

“What?”

Yechan’s pupils widened to their maximum size.

He was so shocked that his entire body became stiff, making breathing hard.

He had walked right into a colossal trap.

‘Th-this is Seoul...?’

Yechan glanced at Song Jiseon with fear in his eyes.

The corporate tycoon clad in steel armor was right.

Crises indeed came from places he couldn’t imagine.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 314: Noble Family (6)

“What’s a collection team? Why do you need that?”

"Collection team."

It was such a unique term that even Song Jiseon showed curiosity.

Yeongwoo, staring off somewhere beyond Gwangjin-gu with a distant look in his eyes, replied,

“Since I’m not yet the true ruler of this planet, I can’t automatically collect taxes from other countries. It’s really unfortunate.”

Jiseon tilted her head, puzzled, and asked,

— What are you saying? So you're saying that in other countries, taxes are collected manually?

“Something like that. Though, right now, it’s closer to alliance fees than taxes.”

When Yeongwoo explained that they had to send people to various Chinese cities that had been ‘convinced’ to collect money, Jiseon gestured in disbelief.

— Are you kidding me? China is huge. How are you sending people everywhere to collect money?

“That’s why I built highways.”

— ...What? Roads? In China?

“No, across the world.”

— W-what...

Jiseon hesitated, finding it hard to believe such a claim.

Yeongwoo pointed at one of the ‘towers’ planted even in Gwangjin-gu, lifting Bastard, that he was holding.

“That right there is our highway. My sworn brothers, the Red-footed Orcs, built it.”

Most likely, the roads were still under construction even at that very moment.

By now, his brothers were probably crossing Europe and building roads somewhere on the African continent.

— Orcs are building highways across the world? And you're using those roads to extort foreign currency?

"It seems like you still don't understand the concept of alliance fees, but yes, on the surface, it's something like that."

As Yeongwoo nodded, Jiseon finally seemed to understand.

She raised her greatsword with one hand, pointing it at her son.

— Are you serious? You're a complete imperialist! You're crazier than I thought...

Jiseon, now realizing the 'foreign policy' of the Korea her son kept mentioning, was in utter shock.

— So, when you said you were the 'owner of this planet,' you meant that you're in a position to extort money from the entire world?

"Extort? No, mother. Soon, it'll be a legitimate tax, and until then, it's revenue."

— ...What?

"What is the one thing in this world that everyone wants to have?"

Yeongwoo asked seriously, leaving Jiseon speechless.

Instead, it was Yechan, who had been silently watching, who cautiously raised his hand.

"Yechan, go ahead."

Glancing nervously at both Jiseon and Yeongwoo, Yechan voiced his answer.

"Life... isn't it?"

Life.

Indeed, Yechan was able to answer right away because he had purchased his life from Yeongwoo on the very first day of the reset.

The price of life.

Or to dress it up a bit, a protection fee. H

e had hired Yeongwoo before, paying for his protection.

As expected, Yeongwoo patted Yechan on the shoulder, looking pleased.

“That’s right! Who in this world doesn’t want to avoid death?”

“ ... ”

Even though Yechan had given the correct answer, he couldn’t feel happy about it.

Meanwhile, Jiseon, hearing the answer, was utterly incredulous.

— Are you insane? How is that a product? Demanding money not to kill someone—that’s robbery!

In other words, her son had turned Korea into a giant den of thieves.

But Yeongwoo was thinking far beyond what Jiseon could imagine.

“Robbery? Please, call it the violence business.”

— ...What?

“The world has reset, so many concepts need to be redefined. In this world, even life can be a product.”

Then, Yeongwoo grabbed the ground with his hand, clad in his Vesedel armor.

Crack.

The asphalt beneath his hand crumbled like a cookie, and dirt clung to his fingers.

“This country was the same before and now—without a single drop of oil to sell. So, what should we sell?”

At this point, Jiseon could somewhat predict what her son was going to say next.

— You crazy bastard.

“Exactly. We have to mortgage other people’s lives and sell them.”

It was nothing short of creative economics.

If only the essence of this business wasn't outright robbery, it would have been an incredible business model.

After all, wasn't it creating value out of nothing?

Even Song Jiseon, a businesswoman to her core, couldn't overlook this point.

However, to accept such radical ideas only an hour after arriving in this world was too much.

"Mother, this is like an insurance or investment product. It's creating intangible value based on the trustworthiness of the company."

— Where's the trustworthiness in what you're saying? Insurance and investment rely on trust in the company's ability to pay out...

When Jiseon tried to argue based on the old world's concepts again, Yeongwoo raised his hand to stop her.

"Why isn't there trust? The belief that 'this guy can kill me anytime'—that's trust. And I can guarantee that I'll instill that trust within three moves, no matter who it is."

Surprisingly, this also included Song Jiseon herself.

The brief exchange between her and Yeongwoo had been settled in three moves.

"So, in this business, my sales power is equivalent to my strength. And with that in mind—"

Thud.

Yeongwoo firmly gripped Yechan's shoulder once more.

"No one is better suited for the collection team than you, Yechan."

"...What?"

The sudden shift in target left Yechan dazed.

"If I refuse to the very end...?"

"Then I'll have no choice but to 'convince' you, too. To earn your trust."

"..."

Gulp.

As Yechan swallowed nervously, Jiseon pointed to the view of Gwangjin-gu... no, of Seoul, and asked,

— Do people know that the country is being run like this? That you're collecting taxes?

In response, Yeongwoo placed his right hand over his left chest and spoke in a solemn tone,

"Isn't there a reason taxes are collected automatically? I am the first-ever elected 'Strongest Sword' in Korean history."

— Elected?

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

"And my approval rating is 76.8%."

— What?

Jiseon widened her eyes inside her helmet and scanned the distant sight of the metal Seoul skyline once more.

76.8%? That was an unheard-of approval rating.

What had happened in Seoul?

No, more importantly... what had her son done in Seoul?

"But using that approval rating to bring peace to the world is just laying the groundwork. My ultimate goal is to ensure that we don't back down even in space."

Swoosh.

As Yeongwoo looked up at the sky, Jiseon's voice began to tremble.

—To you, "global" basically means a space force.

"Yes. I've seen a part of space after all. Just like my mother once led the Jinhyeon Group and competed on the world stage, I will take this planet and head for space."

With that, Yeongwoo scattered the earth he was holding back onto the ground.

"So, the disputes on this planet are nothing more than a preliminary round. The real contest is about who will decide the direction we'll take in space."

And in that competition, the three significant space powers were already involved.

So, 'space' had effectively begun.

—But you can't keep doing your robbery... no, your violence business in space, can you? Aren't you setting yourself up for global trouble?

To this, Yeongwoo surprisingly nodded in agreement.

"You make a valid point."

Then, he quickly changed course.

"But it's not the right point."

—What?

"My sponsors are people who even beat up public officials. The fact that they have both sufficient force and background... proves that you can run a violence business in space too."

"....."

Yechan, who had been quietly listening, realized at some point that the conversation had gone completely off track, but he remained silent.

After all, this was a cosmic-level conversation, and someone like him, who barely claimed to be the 'Strongest Spear of North Gyeongbuk,' couldn't possibly interject.

On the other hand, Jiseon, who had joined forces with her son to board a spaceship to space, couldn't help but keep asking questions.

—Let's assume sufficient force, but what do you mean by background?

"The chairman of my sponsor is a royal before he is a space thug."

—What?

At this point, the fact that her son was blatantly calling his business partner a 'space thug' didn't even register as a threat anymore.

No, after all, he was backed by space royalty.

—Royalty?

"Yes, I think that's why he can kill public officials or invade other planets without facing any consequences."

Of course, it was just a theory for now.

But no other explanation seemed plausible.

—And what about you? Compared to space royalty, you're just...

As Song Jiseon raised her finger, aiming to point at her son, Yeongwoo shouted back fiercely.

"Hey, 'just' what? If I kill my second uncle, I will be the sole heir to the Great Jinhyeon family and the only son of the Iron-Blooded Empress, Song Jiseon, won't I?"

—...Is this kid really out of his mind?

"Of course, right now I'm just an illegitimate child, unacknowledged by my parents, with no background or even a proper family."

For a moment, sadness flickered in Yeongwoo's eyes.

But only for a moment.

"So, if I don't have it, I'll have to create it. The background."

—What?

At that moment, Yeongwoo was looking at the achievements bestowed upon his family.

[Family: Root Restoration]

"From now on, I will become the master of a violent business that even aliens tremble at the sound of. To do that, I first need to conquer Earth and solidify my foundation. I need a background, a family."

And of course, a family must have members.

Click!

Yeongwoo suddenly grabbed his mother's arm, and a startled Song Jiseon tried to pull away.

But Yeongwoo's grip was too strong, and she couldn't easily escape.

Meanwhile, Yeongwoo turned his gaze to Yechan.

"Now that I have my mother and father to form the basic family unit, I should have at least one retainer too. After all, that's what a great family is."

"A retainer...?"

As Yechan also tried to back away, Yeongwoo grabbed him too, not letting go.

"Welcome to the family of a cosmic dynasty."

".....!"

The goal of this family was to grow into something that could rival the royal families of space.

'And to do that, of course, the family's status on Earth, its origin, must rise too.'

As Yeongwoo thought this, he saw the VIP timer on his system display drop to 10 minutes.

[00:10:02]

And then.

Pop!

As the timer dipped below 10 minutes, a system message appeared.

"In 10 minutes, the promotion examiners will arrive."

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 315: Noble Family (7)

"Ten minutes? It's almost here."

As Yeongwoo mumbled while looking at the timer, Song Jiseon asked.

—Ten minutes? Is that how long we have until they arrive?

"Yes. Did you take care of the thing I asked you about earlier?"

The favor.

He was referring to the matter of the gift, something Yeongwoo had practically subcontracted out to her.

In response, Jiseon instantly snapped and drove her greatsword into the ground.

Thud!

—Damn it. I've been busy fighting, so when would I have had time to do that?

Despite her grumbling, she gazed up at the sky, preparing for her next words.

Although her pride was hurt and she had said something, she actually had a gift prepared in her own way.

No matter how annoying a business partner was, she couldn't afford to ruin the entire operation because of that.

—By the way, where are these examiners coming from? The space government? Or maybe some specialized review agency?

"I don't know either. But since the whole 'Reset' system is within the space governance structure, there's a good chance they're civil servants."

—What? Didn't you say that the gift is supposed to be given to people of high status?

"It's all relative. From the perspective of a remote planet like ours, whoever comes from the outside is considered a VIP."

—That's absurd.

"It can't be helped. That's why it sucks not to have power."

Yeongwoo, her son, dared to lecture his mother.

A woman who once led a group that competed in the global market.

—Hmm.

Jiseon rubbed her chin with one hand and then, still looking at the sky, asked another question.

—What do you think?

"...Sorry?"

—I'm asking what you think about this gift.

"It's just... a gift, isn't it? A customary token given from those of lower status to those of higher status... It's probably part of the space etiquette."

The universe that Yeongwoo had learned about so far was one of strict hierarchy.

Naturally, he understood gift-giving as an act of submission to the hierarchy.

However, Jiseon, who had only recently been thrown into this universe and had no preconceived notions, saw it a little differently.

—Do you really think so? That it's just about saving face? Even though they officially announce it to everyone?

Yeongwoo tilted his head, puzzled by his mother's remark.

"Then what do you think? Just get to the point; we don't have much time."

[00:08:13]

Only 8 minutes were left until the examiners would arrive.

As Yeongwoo pressed her for an answer, Jiseon smirked and finally shared her thoughts.

—Here's what I think...

She made a circle with her thumb and index finger.

It was the universal gesture for money.

—The gift is a legal bribe opportunity.

"...What?"

Yeongwoo's eyes widened in surprise at the unexpected answer.

Jiseon continued.

—Why do they give the gift in advance? Even if it's to show gratitude for visiting our planet, couldn't it be given when they leave?

"Maybe you're reading too much into the timing. They could just be giving it first, you know?"

—Just giving it first?

Jiseon shot a frustrated look at her son.

—The word 'gift' itself means you're repaying something you've received.

"Well, that's true, but..."

Still not quite convinced, Yeongwoo frowned, and Jiseon made a gesture as if she might pull her greatsword out of the ground.

—Why are these examiners coming here?

"They're coming to decide whether our planet can be upgraded."

—But the decision hasn't even been made yet, so why are we giving them gifts in advance? What are we so thankful for?

"Uh..."

Yeongwoo thought for a moment.

Then, he finally said something that was somewhat close to what Jiseon had in mind.

"We're... going to be promoted?"

—Exactly. It's like saying, 'Thanks to you, we'll be really grateful,' putting pressure on them. And that pressure is directly proportional to the size of the gift.

"So, you're saying... this whole gift system was set up to encourage bribery?"

—Isn't it? To me, it looks like a legitimate bribery system. Why else would they systematically make us express gratitude?

"...I guess that makes sense."

Thinking about it that way, it didn't seem too far-fetched.

If gifts were expected every time a higher-ranking individual visited a lower-tier planet, it could certainly be seen as a form of request or solicitation.

When a notorious villain visits, the gift could mean, "Please spare us."

When an examiner visits, it could mean, "We hope we pass the exam," with the gift being offered in advance.

—And what is bribery, really? In a broader sense, even greeting someone you know is a form of lobbying. It's like saying, "We're still doing okay, right? Let's keep things smooth between us." It's just a free form of lobbying.

Jiseon was now fully stepping on the pedal of sophistry.

—It's just that if you put a little more effort into that 'greeting,' you can get closer to the other person a little faster. And that's what society calls 'lobbying.' So, bribery is...

"...A paid greeting."

—Exactly. Now you're getting it.

"Yeah. I guess I've learned that you casually handed out bribes, just like saying hello."

—Hey, in America, lobbying is legal.

"It's illegal in most other places."

—But just like in America, it's legal in space. That's what I'm saying. The folks in space know what's up.

"..."

With his mother concluding the matter like that, Yeongwoo had nothing more to say.

In any case, they wouldn't know for sure until they tried.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

—Come on, is this even something to worry about? Bribery isn't a big deal. It's just a more impressive form of greeting.

"No one gives money when they greet someone."

—That's why a greeting that comes with money is more welcome. Because it's rare.

"...Damn it."

Her argument, no matter how twisted, had no obvious flaws.

And since they were dealing with beings from space, who often acted outside the norms of Earth, Yeongwoo had no choice but to take it seriously.

If this gift really was a legal bribe system, he had to take full advantage of it.

After all, it was a crucial exam that would determine the status of their planet.

"But what if space officials are unexpectedly clean and see bribery as a sin? We could end up being penalized instead. Forget promotion, we might get punished."

Yeongwoo made one final rebuttal, but Jiseon, disappointed, wagged her finger at him.

—You crazy idiot, why do you only go half-crazy? If you're going to do something, do it properly. You're planning to take over this planet, and you're scared of a little punishment?

"...You might not know, but apparently, the mortality rate for people who are detained and prosecuted in space is 84%."

—...What?

It was true.

According to the tax officer Kubu, 84% of those waiting for trial in space detention centers die due to unforeseen accidents.

In other words, they end up dying before a verdict is even reached.

"And by the way things are going, it seems like I'll be visiting one of those detention centers soon enough."

Yeongwoo said this, scrunching his nose, while Jiseon crossed her arms.

Click.

—The mortality rate in space detention centers is 84%?

"Yes."

—So, that means 16% come out alive?

"...?"

Technically speaking, they emerge alive to face their trial, but it wasn't entirely wrong to say that.

"That's true, yes."

—And you don't have the confidence to be in that 16%? Then just quit right now. This Earth and space stuff—all of it.

"What?"

—You idiot! How can I partner with someone who doesn't even have the guts to survive a mere detention center? Do you really think you can round up those who started this 'Reset' business with that level of courage?

"No, I mean..."

Once again, Yeongwoo was at a loss for words.

As crazy as it sounded, it wasn't entirely wrong either.

"You're being a bit harsh just because it's not your problem, don't you think?"

—You cowardly idiot! Do you really think you'd go to prison just because you gave out a few too many thank-you gifts?

Song Jiseon curled her index finger and pointed it accusingly at Yeongwoo.

—Even if the people who received the gifts lodge a complaint, we can just say we prepared those thank-you gifts sincerely. The system clearly has exploitable loopholes, so why are you scared already?

Song Jiseon was a veteran entrepreneur who had been through the wringer on the global stage.

So, of course, she was adept at exploiting such systemic flaws.

On the other hand, Yeongwoo was a novice entrepreneur with barely seven days of experience, not even enough to call it a startup.

He was no match for his mother in this field.

—At worst, we might lose some money over excessive thank-you gifts. But if it goes well, the bribe will work, and we'll secure the planetary promotion. We might even get promoted higher than originally expected.

"So, you're really suggesting we bribe them?"

—Do you have any other options left at this point? Time's running out, isn't it?

Jiseon tapped her empty wrist, mimicking checking a watch.

When Yeongwoo looked at the timer in his field of vision, just as his mother said, the remaining time had sharply dwindled.

[00:01:33]

1 minute and 33 seconds until the inspector's arrival.

The problem was that they hadn't prepared anything because they had been busy arguing.

"There's 1 minute and 30 seconds left."

When Yeongwoo informed his mother about the remaining time until the VIP's arrival, Jiseon pulled the large sword she had stuck into the ground back out.

Wham!

—Is that so? We'll find out soon enough if space bureaucrats accept bribes.

"What about the money? Even if we combed the country for cash, we couldn't get it here in 1 minute."

Not even using high-speed transport.

Jiseon looked at her son again.

—Do you have a coin or something? Something that feels like it could substitute for money.

"A coin?"

At his mother's request, Yeongwoo took something out from his armor.

Swish.

It was a gold-colored coin.

A commemorative coin with Jeong Yeongwoo's own face and name engraved on it, worth 10,000 Karma.

—.....

Seeing this, Jiseon flinched momentarily, but then continued her line.

—Make a product with that thing you like so much.

"A product?"

—Write a blank check. Tell them they can write down the thank-you amount they expect when they leave after the inspection.

"Isn't that too risky? We don't know how much they'll write."

—They'll probably write a modest amount if they're honest bureaucrats. But if they write down a considerable sum...

"Then that means bribery is possible even in space."

—Exactly. And what's more, you'll find out the going rate.

"The going rate?"

—The going rate for bribes in space.

"...Mom, are you insane?"

—Business is all about matching the tone and manner of your counterpart. If you're dealing with crazy people, you have no choice but to cross the line too.

And this business market was nothing less than space.

For the first time in a while, Song Jiseon felt her heart race.

—But if this all goes wrong, and I mean spectacularly wrong...

"Goes wrong?"

—You'll be the one going to prison, son.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 316: Cosmic Lobbying (1)

Lobbying, a prison, and space.

These disjointed keywords floated in Yeongwoo's mind, but there was no time to dwell on them any longer.

Rumble, rumble...!

Already, high above Seoul's sky, something like the eye of a typhoon had started forming in the distance.

— What? Are the examiners heading straight here?

At the bizarre phenomenon of the swirling sky, Song Jiseon gripped her greatsword threateningly, while Yeongwoo, after a brief moment of thought, turned his gaze to the west.

“No, they're probably headed for where the Shrine of the Four Deities is. Right in front of the Victory Monument.”

After all, that's where they submitted the promotion evaluation request by accumulating enough glory points, so that was most likely where the examiners would land.

Then, Yeongwoo pointed far off toward Jeonggu and the orc lord, Bantubangtong.

“Mother, can you give my companions a ride?”

— What?

“I'll take Yechan with me, so please give the others a ride.”

— You want me to play chauffeur?

“If you're not going to attack Seoul, there's no other use for your dragon form now.”

As Yeongwoo gestured for Yechan to get on Negwig, Yechan shook his head.

“No, thanks. I'd rather run like before...”

Since Negwig wasn't any faster than he was, there didn't seem to be any need to ride together.

But Yeongwoo never intended to take him all the way to Jongno in the first place.

“What are you talking about? There's no way you'll make it to Jongno on time by running now.”

“Then what?”

Yechan tilted his head in confusion, prompting Yeongwoo to point at the "tower" in Gwangjin-gu.

"We'll take that today. It's the only way to get to Jongno in less than a minute."

* * *

Screech!

As Yeongwoo and Yechan approached the tower on the Negwig, the tower's tightly shut outer walls split open to reveal a path.

"What the—? What is that?"

Yechan, who had never used this transportation method before, was in utter shock, and Yeongwoo pointed to the top of the tower as if to emphasise its importance.

"Think of it as your future workplace. This tower lets you move at near the speed of light to the next tower."

"Near the speed of light...?"

"Each tower functions as a station. Towers like these have already been built across China. You'll use them to collect money from now on."

Yechan asked a perfectly reasonable question.

"Wait, did the Chinese just leave these towers alone? I bet they tried to destroy them as soon as they saw them."

"Of course they did. But they failed."

"...?"

"If you try to destroy it yourself, you'll see why. This tower isn't easily broken."

"So who can destroy it?"

"Me."

"...?"

"Even my mother would find it difficult to destroy this tower. So..."

Whoosh!

As the Negwig carrying the two of them shot up toward the top of the tower, Yeongwoo finished his thought.

“If you ever see someone managing to damage the tower, don’t even think about fighting them. Run away and call me as fast as you can.”

“The durability of this tower is that high?”

“It’s built with souls, after all.”

Just as Yeongwoo said, they reached the top of the tower in the blink of an eye.

Then a system message, seemingly embedded in the transportation system, appeared as a notification.

「A new user has been detected. Would you like to register as a regular user?」

Without hesitation, Yeongwoo placed his hand on the control device in the center of the tower’s summit and authorized Yechan’s user registration.

Flash!

「Kang Yechan306 has been registered as a regular user.」

The message displayed after the process was already complete, and Yechan, seeing the same message in his vision, widened his eyes.

“What? Did something just happen?”

“Congratulations on your new job.”

Yeongwoo, saying this, was already looking out beyond the tower’s open outer walls.

Even in broad daylight, a path of light was glowing brilliantly.

“There are only 30 seconds left. We need to hurry.”

“Thirty seconds? Then it’s already too late, isn’t it?”

“Do you even know what ‘near the speed of light’ means?”

“Well, it’s not exactly the speed of light...”

Just as Yechan was about to retort, his surroundings turned blindingly white.

Shooo!

In an instant, their location shifted to Seongdong-gu.

“...Huh?”

Then again.

Flash!

“Wait, hold on!”

Before Yechan could say anything, a strange sensation washed over him as they transitioned again.

Boom!

A blinding light filled Yechan’s vision, and when he opened his eyes again...

“...?”

The view from the top of the tower looked just the same, but they had arrived in a completely different area.

“We’re here. This is Jongno.”

As Yeongwoo slammed his palm down on the round control device, they rapidly descended.

Whoosh!

“When did you even build something like this?”

Yechan asked in awe, marveling at Seoul’s incredible development.

Yeongwoo replied calmly.

“We’re on our way to meet the planetary examiners. Is this really that impressive to you?”

“Well, yeah, but still...”

Yechan had adapted fairly quickly to this world, but what was happening in Seoul was beyond imagination.

For one, the fact that Yeongwoo had taken the position of mayor was surprising, and then there was Metal Seoul, not to mention how orcs were now building bridges.

“Aren’t you afraid?”

“Of what?”

“Of everything that’s happening. You’re the one who caused all of this, right? So doesn’t that mean you’ll be responsible for everything?”

“That’s right.”

Yeongwoo answered briefly, then after a moment of thought, spoke with a serious tone.

“That’s why I can’t afford to fail. I’ll do whatever it takes to succeed.”

Surviving in the vast universe as a small planet—Yeongwoo was learning how to do just that, step by step, starting from the bottom.

Clang!

Negwig’s iron hooves clattered as they sped toward the Shrine of the Four Deities and the Victory Monument in the distance.

At the same time, from above, the ice dragon Song Jiseon descended, holding Jeonggu and Bantubangtong in each hand.

Though there had been some bumps along the way, everyone had finally gathered.

The founding members of the "noble family" that Yeongwoo had dreamed of.

“Is that orc part of your retinue too?”

As the Negwig galloped, Yechan pointed at the orc lord, Bantubangtong.

Yeongwoo shook his head.

“Retinue? No, Master Bang is my brother. He’s more than just a retainer.”

Yeongwoo’s family wasn’t just multicultural—it was multi-species.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

“...That’s definitely cosmic.”

Yechan, now appearing more composed, glanced up at the sky, just in time to see a massive lightning strike.

“Huh? Sir!”

As the sky flickered blue, Yeongwoo looked up, but what he saw wasn't lightning.

“Oh, what?”

What Yechan had mistaken for lightning was actually the blue light emitted intermittently by a colossal ship.

It had just shone through the clouds, making it look like lightning from below.

“They really arrived right on time.”

Yeongwoo's guest timer had also just hit zero.

And then, from the sky—

Rrrrrroooooaaar!

A tremendous noise, like a machine growling, reverberated wide and deep.

This bizarre sound came from the ship that carried the examiners.

“How big is that thing? I can't even tell what it looks like.”

Yechan muttered as he gazed up at the ships of the inspectors, which filled the sky.

Next to him, Yeongwoo, with a frustrated expression, spat out,

"Damn it... Why don't we have something like that?"

He was genuinely upset.

They were forced to admire ships like that, which were given even to mere planetary inspectors.

It was in this moment that the vastness of the universe truly hit him.

And as expected.

Boom, boom!

Song Jiseon, in the form of a giant dragon, approached with heavy footsteps.

She set down Jeonggu and Bantubangtong with an extremely displeased look on her face.

— You don't have anything like that? We really are small fry.

At this point, she realized just how massive the "universe" her son wanted to enter truly was.

"Which is why we need to be the ones bribing them, not the ones getting bribed."

With these words, Yeongwoo pulled out a commemorative coin from his pocket, and Song Jiseon bared her teeth.

— But those guys don't seem like your average civil servants, do they? You can just tell by looking at them. Even if the bribe works, it's going to cost us a lot.

"....."

Yeongwoo couldn't help but agree with his mother's words.

The only civil servant he'd ever met in person was the registrar of the temporary district office of the National Tax Service, Jiazol, and even he didn't have a ship like that—just a simple portal for transportation.

Sure, portals were more convenient in terms of practicality, but...

'That's a whole different level of protocol. They haven't even shown themselves yet, but they're already intimidating.'

At this point, a question occurred to Yeongwoo.

'Then... could the Chairman beat them?'

The Dogo Chairman was known for beating up civil servants, but Yeongwoo wasn't sure about his limits.

And he had no idea whether the "commissioner" the Chairman had supposedly killed outranked these inspectors.

The civil servant he'd met from the National Tax Service, Jiazol, was ranked an impressive 86th grade.

So, just how many kinds of civil servants were out there in the universe?

'The one who took issue with the transfer of mythic weapons probably wasn't low-ranking either... But judging from these ships, the inspectors don't seem to be lower-level either.'

While Yeongwoo's face contorted with confusion, a bright light turned on from the sky and shone in a circle near the Sajik altar.

Thoom!

For the first time, the inspectors spoke.

[Step forward, the one who has requested the promotion review.]

"Ugh."

".....!"

As the inspectors called for the applicant, Yechan and Jeonggu instinctively shrank back, covering their ears.

The voice seemed to be broadcasted through the ship, a modified version of the mechanical cry they had heard earlier, forming into words.

The pressure from the voice was immense, but there were at least three people in the area who stood tall.

Those three were Jeong Yeongwoo, the mayor of Metal Seoul, Song Jiseon, the ice dragon, and Bantubangtong, the red-footed orc lord.

Each had their own reasons for refusing to bend in front of such overwhelmingly superior beings.

And among them, especially Yeongwoo.

'I'll beat you all down someday...!'

Fueled by sheer willpower, he withstood the pressure from the inspectors.

Click!

Yeongwoo, clad in the Vesedel armor, stepped forward into the spot designated by the inspectors, and the light that spotted him flickered, almost as if blinking.

Then suddenly:

[Who the hell is that guy?]

An unintentional broadcasted voice rang out through the ship's loudspeakers.

Then came the sound of someone calling another person urgently.

[Take a look at this.]

[...What is it?]

[It's Vesedel.]

[What?]

There seemed to be several inspectors, as multiple voices with different tones overlapped.

Song Jiseon, who was quietly listening to the commotion, turned to her son and asked.

— What's Vesedel?

"It's my backer. The royal family of the universe."

— Ah.

But the royal family had long since fallen.

What Yeongwoo was wearing was closer to a relic of past glory.

Perhaps that's why.

[Ha, when was the last time we heard about Vesedel?]

One of the inspectors scoffed audibly, and Yeongwoo's brow furrowed.

'This could get complicated.'

It meant that the inspectors knew enough about the universe to recognize the name "Vesedel," yet still had the nerve to scoff at it.

Being "named" could be a great advantage against those who respected it, but it could backfire just as easily against those who didn't.

It seemed like this was the latter case.

Next, one of the inspectors shot a question as if interrogating a criminal.

[Are you some sort of lackey of Vesedel? Reveal your identity properly.]

Yeongwoo's brow furrowed deeply, and sensing her son's anger rising, Song Jiseon quickly intervened.

— You idiot, don't do anything reckless! It's a strategy to bend temporarily when the storm hits.

But Yeongwoo's hand was already on his sword, Bastard.

"Do you really want to know who I am?"

As Yeongwoo boldly lifted his head, Song Jiseon sighed, realizing they were doomed.

— No! It's not the time yet!

However, what came out of Yeongwoo's mouth next was something no one had expected.

"If you really want to know, it's an honor! Inspector sir...!"

— What...?

"But this little thing here will explain who I am."

Shhh.

Yeongwoo raised the small piece of metal he had been holding in his palm.

It was none other than a commemorative coin with his own face engraved on it—a "karma" type of object, known throughout the universe.

In other words, money.

As if waiting for this moment:

[Oh.]

The voice inside the ship let out a sound of interest.

[So the rumors were true.]

The light that had been shining on Yeongwoo flickered rapidly.

[Isn't Vesedel supposed to be the most skilled in etiquette in the entire universe!]

‘...Damn it.’

Yeongwoo flashed a bright smile toward the ship, holding up the coin.

Then he whispered to his mother through clenched teeth.

"These bastards are taking bribes. You were right this time, Mother."

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 317: Cosmic Lobbying (2)

Vesedel.

One of the royal families of the universe, which gave birth to the "King of Destruction," Dogo.

There's no way to know how mighty the Vesedel family was during their prime, but the fact that their name is embedded in equipment grades means they were undoubtedly a noble house recognized by the order of the universe.

'And yet, one of the examiners looked down on Vesedel, as if it were nothing.'

Of course, Vesedel no longer existed as a royal family, so it wasn't too surprising for someone to make jokes about them.

However, in the universe, lower beings couldn't even dare to utter the names of higher beings.

For someone to ridicule a royal family in such a universe...

'Wouldn't you need to be at the same level as the Chairman? After all, the Chairman is still active.'

In Yeongwoo's mind, a sort of hierarchy was being drawn.

The Chairman's existence rank, according to universal law, was 3rd-grade.

That's just below the 2nd-grade beings, whose names can't even be mentioned without permission.

So, was the Vesedel family also ranked as 2nd-grade?

'Probably not. They said this Bastard created myths by defeating transcendent beings, so Vesedel likely wasn't born as an elite family.'

Then should Vesedel be considered 3rd-grade?

It was possible, considering even among 3rd-grade beings, their prestige could vary.

Moreover, since Vesedel was a royal family, they probably had significant renown within the 3rd-grade.

‘Then what about the examiners?’

This was a tricky question.

On Earth, even among humans, it's possible to insult others regardless of status, but the universe was different.

‘There's a limit. At best, they'd be 3rd-grade beings.’

But when recalling one of the examiner's lines:

— Hah, Vesedel? That's ancient history.

Ironically, this line contained a certain level of fear.

The phrase "ancient history" implied that at least in the past, Vesedel had been extraordinary.

In other words, had it been during the height of the Vesedel family, that examiner wouldn't have dared to mock the name.

‘So, the examiner's rank must be between 3rd-grade and somewhere around 4th or 5th-grade.’

After organizing his thoughts, Yeongwoo felt a bit more at ease.

He thought that as long as he didn't make any huge mistakes, and as long as he wasn't executed on the spot, things could be managed somehow.

After all, hadn't he already dealt with Chairman Dogo, a notorious 3rd-grade being?

So, if his opponents were also below 3rd-grade, he was confident he could navigate the situation.

‘This is why it's important to have diverse experiences.’

Pop!

As Yeongwoo raised the medallion higher, the light illuminating him expanded to nearly twenty times its size.

Swoosh!

“...!”

Yeongwoo opened his eyes wide, and Song Jiseon, who had been quietly observing from behind, whispered softly.

— Hey, it means you should step out of the spotlight now. You should probably back off.

This was actually a common tactic in business or political arenas.

It was often used to showcase the difference in stature between the two sides by deliberately leading one to change positions.

However, this wasn't just a display of power but a business strategy to psychologically undermine the other party's decision-making ability.

But if the difference in rank was too great, the weaker party was forced to comply, making it a political act.

— Seriously, just step out already.

Jiseon urged him again, but Yeongwoo didn't budge.

“Why? There's plenty of space here. We can just share it.”

He knew full well what he was doing.

— There's nothing to gain by being stubborn now. Just step back.

Yeongwoo shook his head.

“No.”

— Why?

“I'm curious. Aren't you? I want to see what happens if I don't move. Aren't you curious, Mother?”

— ...You crazy bastard.

Ironically, the system that judged Yeongwoo's achievements had already categorized him as a "stubborn."

“No matter how rude this may be, they can’t really harm me. They know I’ll offer a hefty gift in return.”

— ...

Jiseon was left speechless.

Because he was mostly right.

— But that curiosity might increase the amount we have to bribe them. Don’t forget, we pledged a blank check as a gift.

“It’s fine. The Chairman will cover any shortfall.”

— What the hell do you mean?

“The Chairman is watching this scene right now.”

As Yeongwoo spoke, he lifted his chin confidently, and the Dogo crest on his right shoulder glowed brightly.

The advertisement tattoo Yeongwoo had on his upper right arm was being projected onto the Vesedel armor.

“What other reason would a small fry like me have to stand confidently in front of planetary examiners of the universe? Right, Mother!”

Jiseon’s pupils trembled momentarily before she cautiously opened her mouth.

— Because of... Dogo? Is ‘Dogo’ really that significant...?

She wasn’t clueless.

She realized that her son was engaging in some sort of product placement.

And as if on cue—

Roaaaaaar!

That strange sound filled the air again, and from inside the ship in the sky, there was the noise of something being unlocked.

Clank!

The examiners were finally descending to Earth.

Roaaaaaar...!

The mechanical wailing echoed again.

As the huge light that had been illuminating Yeongwoo flickered, a strange presence descended from above.

“...What?”

It wasn't just the feeling of a large being descending.

There was a strange, smoky sensation, as if something...

— Damn it, what is that?

Sure enough, Song Jiseon, who had been floating a hundred meters in the air in her dragon form, trembled slightly.

She had seen the examiner before Yeongwoo.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Yeongwoo tried to use his "clairvoyance" to look into the sky, but it was unnecessary.

Whooosh...

By now, the examiners had descended close enough to be seen with the naked eye.

‘...Are those really government officials?’

Yeongwoo's pupils widened.

The aura the beings exuded felt more like that of demon kings rather than civil servants.

There were three examiners descending to Earth.

Each was over 20 meters tall, but the one in the center stood out the most.

■

That being wore a metal mask and had a thick, enormous cape covering its entire body.

Its sheer size made even the swaying of the cape seem terrifying.

And most importantly, they had come from the universe.

There was no guarantee that what was under that mask and cape resembled a human.

For all Yeongwoo knew, inside could be grotesque tentacles, like some kind of monstrous creature.

‘That guy. He’s the one who mocked Vesedel.’

They hadn’t introduced themselves yet, but Yeongwoo instantly knew.

The one wearing the cape was the one.

Sss...

The examiners descended to about 100 meters from the ground, and people around them began showing symptoms.

It started with Jeonggu.

“Yeongwoo!”

His father called urgently, and when Yeongwoo turned to look, he saw Jeonggu half-kneeling on the ground.

“What’s going on? Why all of a sudden?”

“I-I can’t breathe...!”

Realizing the situation, Yeongwoo immediately searched his accessory catalog.

He found a pair of earrings and tossed them to his father.

「Bear Heart」 - Mutant Earring

【Becomes braver.】

“Hang in there. When else will you have a chance to meet beings like that?”

But Jeonggu wasn’t the only one in trouble.

“...Gasp!”

As the examiners descended closer to the ground, Yechan planted his spear into the earth.

Thud!

"Can't you do it either?"

As Yeongwoo saw Yechan's hands trembling as he gripped the spear's shaft, he asked. Yechan nodded in response.

"We should probably step back. It'll get much worse when the inspectors get closer."

By "we," Yechan was referring to himself and Jeonggu, as the one wearing the Bear's Heart, Jeonggu, was barely catching his breath but still trembling violently.

"And what about Mom...?"

When Yeongwoo turned around, he saw his mother relinquishing her dragon form and reverting to her normal appearance as a swordswoman.

Ssshhhh!

— It seems like it really is the inspector, huh?

Song Jiseon's voice was trembling too, but it was still impressive.

Unlike Yechan and Jeonggu, she didn't have any equipment to resist the overwhelming pressure.

And of course, neither did Yeongwoo, who had given the Bear's Heart to his father.

All he had left was the Inviolability effect of the Aratubank shield.

【Immunity】

| This shield cannot be destroyed and can block most non-physical damage and mental attacks.

But what was overwhelming everyone now wasn't a mental attack.

It was the sheer presence the inspectors exuded.

A kind of dominance.

So, Yeongwoo also had to endure their presence purely with his accumulated courage.

'Damn, these guys could kill someone just by breathing.'

It was an entirely different feeling from the chairman.

Unlike the chairman's aura, which felt like solid steel, these guys exuded a sharp, threatening arrogance, like a blade.

It was also the moment Yeongwoo realized how much the chairman must restrain himself on a daily basis.

'Chairman...!'

Yeongwoo called out to the chairman inwardly while looking up at the sky, but all he could see was the massive navy warship the inspectors had brought, blocking his view of the sky.

And finally.

Thud!

The three inspectors landed on Earth.

On the left side of the one cloaked in a cape was a massive body of water, which was also one of the inspectors.

Inside the water, a single giant eyeball, about 10 meters in diameter, was glaring at Yeongwoo.

The water itself, which surrounded the eye, was about 30 meters in diameter, making it feel like he was trapped deep underwater every time he looked at it.

'...The chairman is at the same level as these guys? Or even higher?'

On the other hand, the one standing in the air to the right of the cloaked figure had a familiar appearance.

It was skinny like a spider, but it had two legs, two arms, and a head that resembled a human's.

Its entire body was wrapped in pitch-black cloth, almost like it was dressed in a suit.

'Wait, that...'

Yeongwoo blinked.

The inspector on the right looked familiar.

A tall, pale face, with familiar eyes, nose, and mouth.

The nose had no bone and was just two hollow holes in smooth skin.

And instead of white sclera, there were pitch-black pupils.

If you ignored the fact that it was 20 meters tall, it resembled Jiazol, the tax office registrar.

‘It’s the same race as Jiazol! Must be a big shot among them!’

As Yeongwoo blinked, pleased to see something familiar, the cloaked figure finally spoke, noticing the contractor still standing in the same light as them.

■ This place is not for you. Leave.

Suddenly, an immense pressure swirled through the area like a storm, forcing Yechan, Jeonggu, and even Jiseon, who were standing nearby, to quickly retreat.

- Move, little one!

By now, the only ones still standing were Yeongwoo and Master Bang.

Even though Yeongwoo felt like his heart was going to explode, he gritted his teeth and held his ground.

‘I’ve got too much money to make to let them scare me off.’

Realizing that Yeongwoo wasn’t backing down, the cloaked figure bent slightly at the waist and looked down at him.

Rumble...

The massive shadow cast by its huge form covered all of Yeongwoo, and the pressure intensified until Master Bang finally couldn’t withstand it and stepped back.

Tap.

He retreated, unable to bear the overwhelming pressure.

But at that moment, Yeongwoo’s mind cleared.

‘These guys cast shadows?’

He realized it just now, seeing the shadow fall over him.

The laws of Earth’s physics still bound these inspectors.

Their rank in the cosmic hierarchy might be much higher, but fundamentally, they were beings that could be cut, stabbed, and beaten.

In other words...

‘One day, I’ll beat the hell out of them.’

The moment Yeongwoo thought this, the pressure that had been suffocating him suddenly vanished.

The cloaked figure, sensing this, laughed incredulously.

■ Do you know what you are doing right now?

"Entertaining you, of course. I’m honored to host such distinguished guests,"

Yeongwoo said as he raised the commemorative coin once more.

The cloaked figure responded.

■ Your audacity touches the board itself. Have you prepared a suitable offering to spare your life and this planet?

It was a clear threat that if his offering was lacking, they would wipe him out then and there.

In response, Yeongwoo pointed to the sky, obscured by their warship, and said.

"I wouldn’t know."

■ Why not?

Then, without warning, Yeongwoo drew his cursed sword and thrust it into the sky.

Slash!

"Because this negotiation! Is sponsored by the intergalactic weapons brand Dogo!"

■ Dogo!

Yeongwoo was finally beginning to test the limits of his sponsor.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 318: Cosmic Lobbying (3)

As Yeongwoo declared the lobby in a transcendental language by shouting “Dogo,” the inspector on the right, who resembled Jiazol, pointed a skinny finger at him.

Swish.

■ Dogo!

To be precise, the inspector was pointing at the Dogo wedge emblem that was being projected above Yeongwoo's right shoulder.

Only now had these inspectors, who were the representatives of this planet, started to show interest in the insignificant creature standing before them.

And this made Yeongwoo somewhat angry.

‘Wait, are these guys supposed to be planet inspectors and yet don’t even know what exists on the planet they’re inspecting?’

Well, from the perspective of these beings who held some authority in the universe, the circumstances of a small planet requiring their “inspection” wouldn’t have been of much concern to them.

‘They still have a long way to go. Even with Dogo backing me, there are still public officials out there completely unaware of this fact.’

The notoriety was clearly lacking.

With a frustrated expression, Yeongwoo glared at the inspectors and the massive navy-blue spaceship visible above their heads.

Right then, at just the right moment...

Piiing!

A strange sound came from above the sky.

“Huh?”

Yeongwoo made a face as if he had realized something, and the cloaked inspector seemed to have understood something too.

■ It's coming!

The cloaked inspector hurriedly tilted their head upward and their eyes sparkled with a sharp gleam.

‘What... what’s happening?’

As Yeongwoo observed the cloaked figure’s behavior, he could only gasp in astonishment a moment later.

Tszzzz!

The moment the cloaked inspector tilted their head and sent some sort of signal to the spaceship, the massive ship, which had filled the sky, started flickering rapidly, transforming into an afterimage.

“.....?”

It was only then that Yeongwoo realized what this all meant.

Sssshhh!

Immediately afterward, something shot down from outer space, passing through the now illusory spaceship.

In other words, sensing that something was approaching from outside, the cloaked figure had turned the massive spaceship into a temporary illusion so that it would not be affected by physical force.

‘Are they... insane? How is that even possible?’

As Yeongwoo stared in shock at the cloaked figure, the latter let out a deep sound from behind their mask.

■ This has complicated things.

And almost at the same time...

Boom!

A black object fell between Yeongwoo and the inspectors.

It was none other than—

—I’ve brought a gift in return.

“Huh? Black Eyes...”

Yeongwoo's eyes widened as he recognized the new arrival.

It was someone he had met before but was not exactly familiar with in real life.

The military department head of Dogo Corporation, Desirak, stood before Yeongwoo's eyes.

A massive knight clad in chainmail armor, covering his entire body, including his face.

'He looks exactly the same as the one I saw in the dungeon.'

Yeongwoo had first encountered Black Eyes Desirak in the dungeon, "Moral Lecture," which recreated the chairman's past as a prince.

That was the first and last time.

And now, after what must have been a significant amount of time, Desirak was still guarding the old prince.

"De-Department Head?"

As Yeongwoo tried to make himself known to Desirak, the 5-meter-tall knight looked down at Earth's boldest swordsman.

—Attempting to bribe an 11th-level public official? Bold, but beyond your capabilities."

".....!"

At first glance, it seemed like Desirak was scolding Yeongwoo for causing trouble, but in reality, he was offering a valuable hint.

From that one line, Yeongwoo had learned that the inspectors standing before him were 11th-level public officials.

Given that Jiazol, who worked in the National Tax Service, had been 86th level, it made sense that planetary inspectors would be relatively high-ranking officials.

But more importantly—

'Beyond my capabilities? Does that mean the bribe required to sway an 11th-level official is that high?'

As Yeongwoo's eyes filled with curiosity, darting between the cosmic beings, Desirak raised his index finger and made a quick slash in the air.

Flash!

A sharp blue light followed the line he drew in the air, producing a long, narrow paper-like object, resembling a receipt.

“What is that?”

Unable to contain his curiosity, Yeongwoo asked.

However, Desirak didn’t answer.

Instead, he held up the paper and presented it to the inspectors.

—“We’ll offer money as a gift in return. Write down the amount.”

Despite Desirak being an enormous 5-meter-tall figure by Earth standards, the inspectors standing before him were at least 20 meters tall.

Yet, the commanding presence with which Desirak handed over the blank check was undeniable, and the inspectors didn’t question his bold stance.

‘The Department Head... He’s of a similar status to the inspectors.’

Yeongwoo learned yet another important lesson.

And from this, he could deduce one more thing.

Desirak, the military department head, and the planetary inspectors were likely 4th or 5th-level beings in the cosmic hierarchy.

■ Hmm.

Eventually, the cloaked inspector, seemingly the leader of the group, let out a troubled sound from behind the mask.

When dealing with the representative of a small, insignificant planet, they had exuded the aura of an absolute authority.

But now that they were sitting at the negotiation table with someone of a similar rank, they showed their true colors as “bribe-taking officials.”

‘This is style! In the universe, strength is everything!’

For Yeongwoo, this was nothing short of a revelation.

The inspectors, who had appeared so intimidating just moments ago, now seemed like mere public servants.

It was clear—if you wanted to see someone’s true nature, you had to stand on equal footing.

■ Is the payment going to be in karma?

The bribe negotiations had begun.

—The entire amount will be in karma. We’re not considering any other form of payment.

■ Had Dogo sent you directly, you would have factored in the inspection fee.

—Do you ever say anything that isn’t already obvious? Now shut up and write.

“.....!”

It seemed like Desirak was crossing the line, but surprisingly, the inspectors said nothing.

Despite being outnumbered three to one, Desirak stood his ground without issue.

Whether this was due to Desirak’s notorious reputation or the power of Dogo Corporation backing him, Yeongwoo couldn’t yet be sure.

However, a hint soon presented itself.

■ 5 billion, in a lump sum. Pay in full, deliver it in person, and if this bribe is discovered, you take responsibility for the prosecution.

‘5 billion?’

Yeongwoo’s ears perked up.

The inspectors had just demanded a bribe of 5 billion karma, to be paid in a lump sum, with the added condition that if this deal were exposed, Desirak’s side would be liable for the prosecution.

‘That’s why they said it was beyond my capability.’

The amount, as well as the legal responsibilities, were far beyond what Yeongwoo—or even Earth—could handle at this point.

However, the truly surprising event happened next.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

—5 billion karma as an evaluation fee? I can pay it, but that's beyond my authority to execute. Would you like to meet the chairman directly?"

At this, the three evaluators hesitated immediately, and the giant eye submerged in the water kept staring at Desirak while sending silent signals.

‘They’re scared of the chairman.’

This is the difference between those who want to hit public officials and those who actually do.

Even though he was wearing Vesedel armor, he was still looked down upon by the evaluators, while the chairman's mere mention struck fear.

Then, one of the evaluators pointed at Yeongwoo again.

■ Be cautious of Dogo. They test their products outside.

The one who said this was a skinny guy resembling Jiazol.

He pointed to the metal cloak draped over Yeongwoo's shoulder, Dogo’s latest product, "Cosmic Etiquette."

「Cosmic Etiquette」 - ◇ Dogo Visangche

【20% increased damage to public officials】

【20% resistance to special abilities】

【Dogo】

These evaluators were well aware that Dogo was a company that manufactured equipment specifically for assaulting public officials.

So, what would happen if they dared ask such a company for more money?

Especially if they had a direct meeting with that infamous chairman...

‘They’d surely become the target for testing new products.’

The only regret was that Yeongwoo was too weak to test his own company’s products personally.

While Yeongwoo clenched his fists, the evaluators asked Desirak again.

■ How much can you execute right now?

Desirak folded and unfolded his chain-wrapped fingers a few times before raising three fingers.

—3 billion in one lump sum. But we won't stop any indictment.

In simple terms, it was a risky 3 billion.

At this, the cloaked one shook his head.

■ No indictment.

In other words, they couldn't afford to go to jail.

Even the evaluators seemed to fear the universe's discipline system, which had an 84% mortality rate while awaiting trial.

—So, will you forgo 1 billion out of fear of an indictment? If we take on the risk, the most we can pay right now is 2 billion.

Desirak provoked the evaluators.

Yeongwoo, hearing this, wanted to ask if Desirak had a criminal record, but there was no time for that.

■ There are plenty of planets to evaluate. We won't do anything foolish.

—Fine, coward, then just write down 2 billion. That's the maximum favor we can offer.

Desirak waved the paper in his hand, and Desirak turned his head to glance at the skyline of Metal Seoul briefly.

■

What was he thinking right now?

Yeongwoo had no way of knowing.

■ An intriguing place, this planet.

Then, the figure asked for the human's name for the first time.

■ What's your name?

Yeongwoo looked up at the figure, holding the "Bastard" in his hand.

"I am Mayor Jeong Yeongwoo07 of Dogo Special City, Metal Seoul."

In this brief introduction was contained the extraordinary events of Yeongwoo's last seven days.

“If we meet again, I will prepare a gift with my strength in return.”

Yeongwoo offered a more courteous greeting than usual, and Desirak let out a big laugh from behind his mask.

■ What a cunning planet.

It was unclear whether it was praise or insult.

Then, the one resembling Jiazol reached out his long fingers, took the blank check from Desirak's hand, and drew a long line with his fingertips.

Swish!

■ I've received enough of a return gift. We will now begin our basic investigation of this planet and will take into account all events since we began our stay here.

This referred to everything from the first encounter with the evaluation requester, Jeong Yeongwoo07, to Dogo's proxy return gift, and all the upcoming events on the planet.

In essence, the planetary evaluation had begun even before Yeongwoo attempted lobbying.

“So, what should I do now?”

Yeongwoo asked the evaluators, and Desirak left a brief piece of advice.

■ Prove that this place is superior to other planets.

Then, the skinny one smiled, splitting his long mouth.

■ Creatures like you shouldn't exist in the universe. But since it's come to this, it must be written in the scripts.

Though it sounded meaningful, Yeongwoo couldn't fully grasp its significance.

And finally, the one in the water spoke for the first time.

■ It's been a while since I took on such a heavy karma. I'll watch to see what kind of reward it brings.

‘So... even 11th-grade public officials will take on karma if enough money is involved?’

Despite this thought, Yeongwoo waved the "Bastard" cheerfully at the evaluators, seeing them off with a bright smile.

Their entire bodies were already being enveloped in light, sucked back into their spaceship.

"Your excellencies! Safe travels...!"

Perhaps the promising villain bidding them farewell might become the source of the evaluators' karma.

In response, dozens of blue beams shot out from the ship as a form of farewell.

「The planetary promotion evaluation has begun.」

[Translator - Night]

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Chapter 319: Special Planet (1)

The bribe amount initially proposed by the inspectors: 5 billion.

The amount actually settled on: 2 billion.

This meant that the usual bribe rates for an 11th-grade civil servant fell somewhere between those numbers.

If the head of Dogo Corporation wasn't the type of villain who could rough up even civil servants, wouldn't the actual bribe amount have been more than 3 billion?

'Moreover, from the inspectors' perspective, this was just one planet among many they received money from... The scale of the bribe amounts alone here is massive.'

Yeongwoo marveled at the vast world he had just glimpsed, a world so large that it was beyond his comprehension.

But the most important point was this:

'In any case, the company incurred a significant investment cost.'

Of course, for the company, 2 billion might be considered mere pocket change, but everything must be seen in relative terms, right?

Currently, under his contract, Yeongwoo's weekly wage was a conditional maximum of 400 million.

But due to this lobbying issue, the company had shelled out 2 billion all at once.

This meant that the importance of Jeong Yeongwoo⁰⁷, formerly just a simple advertising model, had now far surpassed what was stipulated in his salary contract.

'I'm no longer just a mere ad model. Regarding the planetary development rights, I'm also a business partner.'

Still, there had to be a reason why the company responded so readily to Yeongwoo's unilateral lobbying request.

The profits from obtaining planetary development rights must be immense, or else...

'It could only mean that I have an extraordinary level of favor with the Chairman.'

While Yeongwoo was grinning smugly to himself, Desirak, the "Black Eyes," who had just finished his task, looked down at the Earthling who had drained Dogo of 2 billion in one go.

— Now is the time to prove your worth. You must succeed in advancing the planet's rank.

"Uh... can it fail even after we've paid such a bribe?"

— It's impossible to make the impossible happen.

This meant that even though lobbying was done, if the planet was below a certain level, it wouldn't succeed in advancing.

'But since Dogo is already involved with this planet, and since I'm the client wearing the Vesedel Armor, wouldn't that at least make us above average?'

While Yeongwoo was thinking this, Desirak, sensing his thoughts, added another comment.

— Don't overlook the fact that the other planets being reviewed also initiated their applications on their own merits.

"Ah."

Yeongwoo's mind sharpened at that.

Come to think of it, that was true.

Just as they had accumulated enough honor points to join the review queue, the other planets must have done something impressive to summon the inspectors too.

The only difference was in the character of the representative leading the application, but any planet that made it to this stage must have something remarkable to show.

"You're right. For planets to go through a review that costs a minimum of 2 billion in bribes, they must all be extraordinary."

As Yeongwoo nodded in agreement, Desirak, having successfully conveyed his point, began preparing to return.

Swish.

He raised his large head and looked up at the sky.

Suddenly, the sky that had been hidden behind the inspectors' ships was now fully revealed.

"Huh? The ships."

— They've begun their work. You should move as well.

With that, Desirak's entire body was engulfed in light, and Yeongwoo hastily asked,

"Sir! Are you a criminal?"

Desirak, still wrapped in light, slightly turned his head to look at Yeongwoo.

— Show some respect! That may be a badge of honor for some, but not for me.

"Oh, so you are a criminal? How did you survive...?"

Yeongwoo's eyes widened in curiosity as he asked reflexively, and Desirak's glowing aura began to dim.

The military department head, clearly irritated, paused his return.

At that moment, watching from a distance, Song Jiseon hurriedly rushed over.

Swoosh!

— You idiot!

The moment she arrived, she smacked her son across the face with a large fist.

Thud!

Though Yeongwoo saw his mother's fist coming, he took the hit quietly, knowing he had spoken out of turn in his excitement.

"Ugh!"

His mother's fist packed quite a punch, and sensing her opportunity, Song Jiseon also kicked Yeongwoo in the shin while apologizing to Desirak.

— Department Head, as his mother, I sincerely apologize. My son truly wasn't thinking. I assure you this won't happen again.

She bowed deeply, expressing her apologies repeatedly. Desirak, in his chain armor, waved her off.

— Oh, no, not at all, ma'am. I'll take my leave now.

He gave Yeongwoo a quick glance before looking back up at the sky.

Swoosh!

Once again, Desirak was wrapped in glowing light and, in the blink of an eye, was sucked into the sky.

"...Is he gone?"

Noticing the sudden absence of any large presence, Yeongwoo cautiously lifted his head.

Jiseon, equally fascinated, was still gazing at the sky where Desirak had disappeared.

— Do they have parents even in space? This actually worked?

"Well, the Chairman is a Vesedel bastard. Even aliens don't grow from trees, you know?"

— So, does that mean that department head also has a mom and dad?

"Probably."

No matter how intergalactic a being may be, one can't naturally exhibit perfect etiquette that they've never been taught.

The way Desirak had just addressed "Mother" was almost flawless, both in tone and usage.

This meant that Desirak might also be a filial son who respected his parents in his own household.

Though out here, he dealt with planetary inspectors by threatening them to "shut up and take the bribes."

'So, is the Chairman the only one in our company who's parentless and all alone?'

Vesedel.

A fallen royal family.

Since Yeongwoo had never met anyone of Vesedel blood except for the Chairman, he couldn't help but think that way.

Based on what the inspectors had mentioned earlier, it was clear that Vesedel was a former royal lineage.

'What a tragic fate.'

Born as an illegitimate child of a galactic royal family, he had risen to become the first prince, but some event had caused him to lose his kingdom and live as a space bandit.

Although Yeongwoo, now possessing a rather intergalactic perspective, still found it difficult to understand the Chairman's life fully.

What exactly had happened to the Chairman, and what was his goal in life now?

"Well, for now..."

Yeongwoo turned to the others gathered around and began to speak.

"As you all saw, our planet is now officially under review for advancement. So, we should unite our efforts for a successful promotion, right?"

"....."

No one responded, sensing the potential for more schemes.

So Yeongwoo pointed at Bantubangtong and said,

“Now, Master Bang, you’ll return to Australia and bring back the 100 million. We need to settle the accounts.”

Without a word, Bantubangtong nodded.

They had promised to reimburse Yeongwoo for the money he had spent opening Darwin’s portal.

— And after that?

“After you hand over the money to me, we’ll complete the donation of the battle records to the Victory Monument.”

Yeongwoo had already received considerable help from the Red Foot Orcs through the hyperfast transit routes and the Aratubank, so he had no intention of asking for anything more punishing.

“And you.”

Yeongwoo pointed at Yechan next.

“From now until sunset, you’ll travel to various cities in China and collect money. I’ll tell you which cities are already ‘convinced’.”

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Yechan tilted his head at this.

“What do you mean? If you’re going to tell me the cities that are already convinced, does that mean I have to go to the ones that aren’t convinced yet?”

“Of course. If there’s an area where the Mutants haven’t been dealt with, go and help out. Convince the local representatives there. A couple of duels should make communication possible.”

As Yeongwoo said this, he held up three fingers.

“In return, I’ll give you a 30% commission on the money you collect.”

“...!”

For the first time, Yechan’s expression brightened at those words.

“Really?”

“Of course, but...”

Yeongwoo added,

“With that money, meet as many merchants as possible, whether in China or elsewhere.”

“...What?”

“And buy the equipment you want. Of course, it’s for your own use.”

“And then what?”

Yechan asked, once again with a wary expression.

He had started to understand the uncle’s tendencies by now.

The uncle he met back in Gumi wasn’t an ordinary person, but now, as the mayor of Metal Seoul, he was someone who never suffered a loss.

And indeed, he continued.

“Occasionally, you’ll come across some unique equipment. Whenever you find such gear, make sure to buy it and bring it to me.”

The reason Yeongwoo was offering such a high commission to Yechan was that he intended to use him to procure rare equipment.

“Unique equipment?”

“Increasing anomalous attribute damage, converting damage into anomalous types, that sort of thing. You’ll know it when you see it.”

“That kind of stuff sounds really expensive though.”

“If you end up spending too much money, just send me the bill. Securing that equipment is what matters most.”

No matter how fast the transport routes were, going around various cities across the continent to collect money would inevitably take a significant amount of time.

However, with Yeongwoo busy handling mutants in major areas, dealing with alien forces during the day, and entering dungeons at night, he didn’t have the luxury to go around collecting payments himself.

That's why he decided to make full use of Yechan, with whom he had formed a deep connection in this reset world and whose martial abilities were outstanding.

"So, what will you be doing while I'm running around with sweat on my feet?"

"I'll be dealing with crazy aliens and tracking down planetary shareholders."

"..."

It was an answer that left Yechan speechless.

After all, Yeongwoo was truly irreplaceable at the moment.

"As I mentioned earlier, if you arrive at a city you're visiting for the first time and find any damage to its tower, leave immediately. Then report to me right away."

"You're saying there's someone I won't be able to beat, right?"

Since Yechan's question was laced with a sense of defiance, Yeongwoo repeated his warning with a worried expression.

"I'm not joking—you absolutely won't be able to win. If the tower has been damaged, it means there's something at the level of a myth involved."

"..."

"So please be careful. Especially when you're holding my money."

"Got it."

Reluctantly, Yechan nodded, and Yeongwoo's gaze finally turned to his father, crouching nearby, and his mother, exuding a chilling aura.

"Both of you, come over here."

Yeongwoo pointed to the ground in front of him, and Jeonggu awkwardly glanced around as he approached his son.

On the other hand, Jiseon...

— What now?

Sensing what was coming, she spoke in an extremely displeased tone.

By now, there was only one thing her son could possibly be asking for.

Finally, with a solemn expression, Yeongwoo spoke.

“I used to be an orphan, so I received enormous tax benefits. But now, because both of you are alive, I have to start paying a huge amount in taxes from today.”

“...”

— So?

“What I mean is, I’m already doing high-level filial duty just by paying these taxes. So both of you need to start showing some love for your child. And the best part is, this doesn’t even cost you any money.”

— ...Fuck.

Realizing that the inevitable had come, Song Jiseon let out a bitter sigh, and Jeonggu closed his eyes tightly.

“Marriage, right?”

Jeonggu asked, eyes still closed, and his son’s voice cut through the darkness.

“Yes.”

A single, but powerful syllable.

Had he ever heard anything so terrifying in his life?

“Sigh...”

Jeonggu’s fingers trembled slightly.

Then, Song Jiseon grabbed his neck roughly and spoke.

— Uou think you’re the only one feeling miserable? Stop throwing a fit by yourself and stay still.

“J-Jiseon...”

— Don’t even say my name!

As Song Jiseon’s armor started to glow blue with anger once again, Yeongwoo quickly intervened and pulled Jeonggu out of her grasp.

“Whoa, hold on! Both of you, calm down!”

Then he scolded his father.

“Dad, you were wrong. Why would you call Mom by her name?”

“Then...?”

— What?

Typically, when Yeongwoo spoke calmly, it was only because he was about to say something outrageous.

And this time, his parents’ intuition was correct once again.

“Don’t you get it? ‘We’ are a family now. So.”

With a meaningful expression, Yeongwoo alternated his gaze between his mother and father.

“From now on, start calling each other ‘honey.’ That’s an order from your son.”

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 320: Special Planet (2)

"Dear,"

The effect of this single word was tremendous.

“Aren’t you going a bit too far?”

—Don’t say something so crazy. No way that’s happening.

For the first time, both Jeonggu and Jiseon agreed on something.

In response, Yeongwoo nodded as if he understood.

“It’s nice to see the two of you finally on the same page. But...!”

Swoosh!

Finally, Yeongwoo drew bastard sword from his belt and pointed it at his parents.

“It’s been over 30 years since you two created me, and you still haven’t figured out how to address each other? Does that make sense?”

In desperation, Jeonggu begged Yeongwoo to spare him.

“No, Yeongwoo, we’ve only really known each other for less than two days!”

That was true.

One day at the Renaissance in Bulkwang-dong, and one day in the reset world.

Even combining their time across two worlds, the time they had spent together was barely two days.

In essence, they were practically strangers.

—Come on! Just because people are forced together doesn’t mean they’ll stay together.

Jiseon also voiced her objection with a sharp tone, to which Yeongwoo twisted the sword threateningly and delivered a biting line.

“Then what about that day? You two already got together once, so why can’t you do it again? Thanks to that, you even have a son now!”

“...What?”

—What the hell is this brat saying...?

Bastard on a dizzying tightrope.

Regardless, as the parents of this crazy kid, both felt a chill each time their son crossed a line.

“Isn’t it normal for married couples to keep going, even if they’re not all that into each other, for the sake of their child? So, why not at least pretend to be a married couple, for my sake!”

—You idiot, that’s not the same at all!

“What’s the difference? And you might have to get married today—how long are you going to keep hurling insults at each other?”

—You...!

Jiseon started to curse again but stopped herself.

At least half of what their son had just said made some sense.

Strictly speaking, it was only Jiseon who hurled curses in the relationship, but nonetheless, his point was generally valid.

“I’m not expecting you two to become the world’s greatest couple suddenly. But at least try, alright? Do you think it’s easy to become parents?”

With that, Yeongwoo pointed at his father.

“Dad, you go first.”

“W-What?”

“Call my mom ‘dear.’”

Terror swept over Jeonggu’s face.

“I-I can’t... No, I won’t. She’d actually kill me.”

As much as he feared his son, he feared Jiseon even more.

“Why not? You can do it. Now you have to. Mom won’t hurt you. Right, Mom?”

—.....

Click.

Yeongwoo walked over and gestured towards Jiseon.

“Alright, now do it. From what I see, the first step to fixing your relationship is changing how you speak to each other.”

Yeongwoo thought that their relationship might improve a little if they stopped using terms like “Jiseon” and “dumbass” and instead addressed each other as “dear.”

After all, to complete the last mission of the “Restore the Roots” achievement, he had to make them into proper parents who blessed his existence.

“Just do it, already!”

With an intense look in his eyes, Yeongwoo pressed Bastard to his father’s throat, and Jeonggu looked at Jiseon with a terrified expression.

Could he really go through with this?

To dare call someone he'd met only briefly decades ago, who was practically a stranger to him, such an intimate term...

"D-De..."

When the first syllable left Jeonggu's mouth, a blue light flashed across the clear sky.

The Planetary Examiners were watching this moment as well.

Yechan and Bantubangtong, who had also been holding their breath while watching, silently cheered Jeonggu on.

'Go, Yeongwoo's dad!'

—Summon your courage, human!

And at last...

"D... Dear."

For the first time in his life, Jeonggu declared himself as the spouse of the Iron-Blooded Empress, Song Jiseon.

They had never had a wedding, nor had they made any promises for the future; in fact, they were still essentially strangers to each other.

"Alright, now."

Yeongwoo turned to his mother with momentum, only to see her raising a massive greatsword.

Swoosh!

".....!"

—Why the hell would I be his 'dear' when we aren't even married yet, you little punk?!
This is all illegal!

Her muttering about legality in the midst of all this revealed that Song Jiseon was clearly panicking.

"What's illegal about it? The universe will soon validate it!"

Clang!

With the power of the universe behind him, Yeongwoo blocked her attack, further enraging her.

Through the blocked blade, she could see her foolish future husband.

—Should've killed this brat ages ago.

As Jiseon glared at Jeonggu, who stood frozen beside her, Yeongwoo hurriedly summoned their tax consultant.

“Kubu! Mr. Kubu!”

A gap in the air opened up near Yeongwoo and Jiseon, and Kubu blinked his enormous eye.

Swoosh.

—What on earth is this?

Jiseon's anger quickly dissipated at the sight of Kubu's odd appearance.

Kubu, equally surprised by the bloodthirsty setting he had walked into, blinked rapidly before addressing Yeongwoo.

—It is an honor to once again meet the master of the Bastard, Mayor of Metal Seoul, Jeong Yeongwoo07!

Then, he blinked toward Jiseon and offered his greeting.

—I am in the presence of Song Jiseon, Ice Dragon, and biological mother of Jeong Yeongwoo07!

—Uh...?

Jiseon had never received a cosmic greeting in her life.

—What is all this?

Naturally, she turned to her son.

In matters like this, her son was the expert.

“What do you mean? It's a greeting. In the universe, they address people with titles based on their achievements and statuses.”

—Achievements? That's my title?

Jiseon looked back at Kubu, replaying his earlier words in her mind.

Song Jiseon, Ice Dragon, and biological mother of Jeong Yeongwoo⁰⁷.

She finally understood that this was her official status in the universe.

—Could this be considered my cosmic business card?

“Pretty much. The difference is that the universe evaluates it, not you...”

Before Yeongwoo could explain further, a sharp blue light burst from Jiseon.

Flash!

—Is my business card limited to being some freak’s mom? Just this and a monster?

“...That’s how the universe sees it. Even your past as a corporate mogul doesn’t hold any value here.”

Yeongwoo held back more words he could have said.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

‘They used ‘biological mother.’

In the universe, words are never chosen lightly.

Kubu’s title, “biological mother,” was literal.

As Yeongwoo felt every day, Song Jiseon was not yet his true mother.

So far, she was merely the one who bore him, only his biological mother.

And the universe recognized that, officially labeling her as the “biological mother” of Jeong Yeongwoo⁰⁷.

—Hey, that brat... He didn’t even say it was an honor to meet me.

Jiseon’s sharp instincts caught on.

“Of course not; it’s not actually an honor to meet you yet. In terms of the cosmic hierarchy, Kubu ranks higher.”

After reminding her of her place in the universe, Yeongwoo carefully nudged her sword to the side.

Swoosh.

"Mom, if you want that revenge, it's not a simple matter. You'll have to seek out someone with significant status in the universe."

Yeongwoo pointed to the sky with his fingertip.

Then, he swirled his hand around and pointed to Jeonggu.

"But if my mother marries my father and helps establish my family... things might turn out quite differently, wouldn't they?"

"What nonsense are you spouting now?"

"Calling it nonsense, really? Would you rather live the rest of your life being disregarded, even by mere tax agents of the universe?"

At that, Kubu attempted, for the first time, to object.

— I wouldn't say I'm disregarded...

"Shut up, Kubu! A person without a mouth sure has a lot to say!"

Squawk!

Yeongwoo thrust Bastard before Kubu's eyeball, and even Jiseon chimed in.

— Honestly, leaving out the term 'glory' so blatantly, that does sound like disrespect.

—

There was nothing left to say.

In front of these crazed people, Kubu could only hold his tongue.

— So what exactly are you planning to do?

"What I'm saying is, my father's marriage is a necessary condition for this grand venture. And the beginning of it all..."

The single word, "Honey."

It begins with a small change in terms of address.

— Damn, that crap again.

“Though the beginnings are humble, the end shall be glorious. Don’t you know that?”

Then, pointing to the sky once more, Yeongwoo began selling dreams.

“To build a family to venture into space, we need a proper family first. Everything happening now is laying the foundation.”

—

“So, Mother, cut the nonsense and just say one word. ‘Honey.’ After all, nobody can see your face.”

Indeed, for Jiseon, hidden behind her mask, it was much easier to say the word “Honey.”

“Do it quickly! That one word from you, Mother, is what sets the grand journey in motion!”

As Yeongwoo pointed fiercely to the sky again, Song Jiseon reluctantly let the word slip.

— ...Honey.

“What did you say? I couldn’t quite hear it!”

— I said, Honey, you punk! Are your ears clogged?

Squawk!

Having been forced to say “Honey” twice already, Jiseon grit her teeth, raising her sword menacingly.

Startled, Kubu closed his eye deeply and recoiled.

Swish!

Then, he urgently revealed a shocking fact to Yeongwoo.

— Jeong Yeongwoo07 has no parents!

“What?”

— What?

This shocking revelation from Kubu was impactful not only to Yeongwoo but also to Jiseon.

— Hey, tax agent. What the hell does that mean?

If her son, Jeong Yeongwoo, had no parents, then he wouldn't be able to establish the family he so desperately wanted.

And that would mean Jiseon herself would have to continue living on this wretched planet.

For her, it was the worst-case scenario.

At this, Kubu blinked his eye, looking at Yeongwoo, Jiseon, and finally Jeonggu in turn.

— According to universal law, the concept of 'parent' is valid only if there is an official agreement between both parties.

"What exactly does that mean? Both of them agreed already. Mr. Kim Jeonggu is my father, and Ms. Song Jiseon is..."

Yeongwoo paused mid-sentence, suddenly realizing something, and closed his eyes as if in sudden comprehension.

"Oh... That's 'father' and 'mother' separately."

— Exactly.

In the universe, 'father,' 'mother,' and 'parent' were distinct concepts.

In other words, Yeongwoo had physical parents, but conceptually, he didn't have them.

"Then how can I get official parents?"

Yeongwoo asked Kubu, who rolled his gigantic, universal-law-bound eye around in a circle.

— Only by performing an official agreement ceremony following the forms and procedures specified by the family court.

"An agreement ceremony? Are you talking about a wedding?"

Yeongwoo asked for confirmation, and before Kubu could even respond, Jiseon took a step back, and Jeonggu hid himself even further behind Yeongwoo.

Then, shortly after.

— That's right. According to current disclosure, the ceremony requires gifts equal to the number of participants, at least two agreement guarantors, and at least five witnesses...

As Kubu recited the structure of a universal wedding ceremony, Yeongwoo waved his hand to interrupt the tax agent's lecture and got straight to the point.

"Hold on, answer this first."

— Yes. Go ahead.

"Witnesses? So, is there a custom of guests?"

At this, Kubu paused for a moment and rolled his eye around, seemingly trying to interpret the concept of 'guests,' which was unique to Earth.

— Witnesses and guests on Earth serve slightly different roles and purposes.

"Really?"

— However, there are what we call 'blessers.'

"What are those?"

— Each party to the agreement and the ceremony host may select a certain number of blessers to observe the ceremony...

"But that's basically the same as guests."

— The agreement parties and the host must submit the list of blessers to the family court.

In other words, they needed to submit a guest list to the court.

"So, wait. How do you summon these guests... blessers? Do you have to send out invitations?"

Kubu blinked his eye.

— The family court handles blesser invitations. However, if an invitee is wanted by the court, they may be difficult to locate, leading to a failure to summon.

"Oh, so the court sends the invitations on your behalf. That's interesting."

Nodding as if he finally understood, Yeongwoo then asked the question he had really wanted to ask all along.

“Then... just one more thing. This is the most important part.”

— Go ahead.

“Can I collect congratulatory money?”

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]