

Level 4 Human in a Ruined World #Chapter 331 - Read Level 4 Human in a Ruined World Chapter 331

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 331: Negotiation (6)

‘A card of the same grade... so, a legendary card can win against anything of the same grade but loses to every other card?’

It was oddly anticlimactic.

Yeongwoo found it hard to hold back a chuckle.

The effect was absurd—just like something his father would come up with.

‘...Well, I already drew it, so there’s no choice.’

Yeongwoo gazed blankly at the bizarre card.

In a way, he wondered if it was much different from life.

Like the so-called ‘blood bond’ between parents and children.

Once you draw a card, you accept whatever outcome it brings, just as you have no control over who your parents or children are.

Once a parent-child relationship is established, it doesn’t change.

Even if you bring in new parents or new children, the essential relationship of birth mother and father remains the same.

For that reason, Yeongwoo’s family—who had once been strangers—was beginning to resemble a family.

‘Of course, for now, I have to step in if we’re even going to pretend to be one, but occasionally...’

Yeongwoo thought of his father, Jeonggu.

The man who had stopped him when he tried to confront his biological mother, piercing through the ice storm to do so.

That reckless act even thawed the frozen heart of the Ice Dragon, Song Jiseon, who spared Jeonggu by withdrawing her cold aura.

‘But... the truth is, he’s pretty weak. Without me or Mother, he can’t do much on his own.’

Yet he was also the link between two formidable beings.

In that sense, the strange card named “Jeonggu Before the Storm” seemed a good representation of the man, Kim Jeonggu.

‘Father! Can I trust you? I almost got into trouble earlier by not trusting Mother.’

Yeongwoo murmured, looking at the card, when an animated image appeared on its blue surface.

—Ssshhh!

It was an image of Jeonggu on a small boat, struggling through rough waves.

A faint outline of land could be seen in the dark sea beyond, and between Jeonggu and the land was an enormous typhoon, creating a massive whirlpool.

—Crash!

A massive wave in the image engulfed Jeonggu.

—Whoa.

For a moment, Jeonggu disappeared in the image, only to reappear, emerging with his battered boat from the black waves.

“Damn, why is this image so intense?”

It was then that Yeongwoo noticed that one-third of Jeonggu’s oar was broken.

Yet, the Jeonggu in the image rowed on undeterred.

Perhaps he would continue until he faced something not legendary but mythical, or until some low-grade card caused his absurd demise.

‘...Well, let’s give it a shot. I’ll row with this broken oar too.’

Holding his father’s card, Yeongwoo looked across the table at his opponent, and the system initiated the negotiation.

《Both sides have reviewed their cards. Negotiations will now begin.》

Pop!

As expected, Yeongwoo was given three negotiation options.

Upon seeing his opponent's card in the previous round, he immediately proposed what he had thought of.

“All infrastructure.”

“.....?”

“If you lose in battle, I take control of all space-related infrastructure.”

“What?”

“That space communications device in Japan. I'm curious what exactly it is.”

Yuto looked up, as if confirming if the system would accept Yeongwoo's proposal.

And, unfortunately for him...

[The representative of Lemu will transfer all physical infrastructure to the representative of Dogo upon losing the battle.]

The system formalized Yeongwoo's proposal.

“You're saying you'll take all of it? Ridiculous!”

“Seems like there's more than just the space communication device, huh?”

Noticing his opponent's reaction, Yeongwoo pressed on, and Yuto clenched his jaw.

“But if I don't lose this match, all the infrastructure you have becomes mine.”

“Yes, if you win.”

And that wasn't all.

Yeongwoo held back, but this offer would be worthless until the war's outcome was decided.

Even if Yeongwoo lost the card game, the infrastructure transfer would be null and void if he won the war.

So if Yuto had any doubts about his performance in battle, he should be negotiating for something that would help him in combat, not afterward.

'But I'm confident in battle. Although those 200 naked warriors... they might be mentally unsettling, but... actually, Aratubank might block even that.'

Aratubank was a mythical shield that could block mental attacks.

【Immunity】

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

And with a mythical sword in hand, it would be almost impossible for Yeongwoo to lose to Yuto in battle without some absurd penalty.

"So, what's your proposal? Let's not waste time."

Tapping his wrist as if urging Yuto to hurry up, Yeongwoo noticed his opponent scratching his cheek for the first time.

Yuto had kept his cool fairly well so far, but at the final stretch, he could no longer hide his nervousness.

Then he raised a finger and pointed at Yeongwoo's sword.

"That sword... Bastard?"

"What?"

The unexpected question surprised Yeongwoo for a moment.

"So it is the Bastard."

"I'm just surprised you only recognized it now."

"Then don't use it."

"When? In the war?"

"I'll propose it in negotiation. You can't use the Bastard in this war!"

"Hmm."

Yeongwoo let out a satisfied sigh as the system accepted Yuto's proposal.

[The representative of Dogo cannot use the Bastard in this war.]

It wasn't the best move, but it was a solid, calculated choice given the information available.

Since the ban was limited to the 'Bastard,' it wouldn't harm Yuto if he lost this round.

Moreover, it had a direct impact on the upcoming battle.

Yeongwoo nodded, acknowledging his opponent's efforts.

"That's pretty clever, but..."

"But?"

"..."

Yeongwoo chose to say nothing more.

He didn't need to reveal that he had more than just the Bastard at his disposal.

Of course, Yuto couldn't help but feel irritated listening to the conversation.

"But, what?"

"....."

《The proposals for Round 4 negotiations have been finalized.》

As both negotiation proposals were settled, Yeongwoo, who had been keeping quiet, finally recited his lines.

"It's getting closer."

"What? What's coming?"

"The time when I can finally beat you directly."

Round 4 was now complete.

After this match, only the final round remained.

And once they escaped this frustrating room, the time for violence would finally arrive.

"If only I were a little older, I would've ignored the intergalactic court and taken you down already."

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As Yeongwoo clenched his fist, looking frustrated, Yuto lifted the corners of his mouth into a mocking smile.

“Hurry up and reveal your card. I’ve prepared something special just for you this time.”

“You sound confident.”

“You’ll see.”

It really seemed like Yuto had something up his sleeve.

In response, Yeongwoo flipped his card, revealing his father rowing with a broken oar.

“My father, still alive and well.”

Thwap!

As Yeongwoo sent the card flying across the table towards Yuto, seawater really seemed to splash around the card, and the sound of waves filled the air.

—Kwahhhhh!

[Jeonggu Before the Storm]

"Jeonggu is still alive, wrapped in the mysteries of the universe."

| Card Rank: Legendary

| Power: 1,000

Suspicious Straw

<This card always defeats cards of the same grade. However, it loses to any other grade.>

“What the... Power of one thousand...?”

Yuto leaned back, eyeing the bizarre card that had flown his way.

Then, when he saw the special effect listed below, his expression hardened.

“What does this mean?”

“Why? You didn’t bring a legendary card, did you? Even a unique card would be enough to take down my father.”

As Yeongwoo leaned in close to the table with an expectant look, Yuto threw the card in his hand down on top of "Jeonggu Before the Storm."

Thwap!

[Everyone's Desire, Lemu]

“If you know everyone's desires, you can captivate everyone.”

| Card Rank: Legendary

| Power: 900

Irresistible Proposal

<Multiply the basic power by the number of previously activated cards.>

“What the...”

Yeongwoo's pupils widened in an instant.

Lemu.

The Lemu card had finally appeared.

“But... it’s ranked as legendary?”

Though the effect was overwhelming, the problem was...

“Lemu is a legendary card?”

With Yeongwoo’s exclamation, Lemu’s power surged to a staggering 2,700, yet it failed to affect Jeonggu, who was busy rowing with a broken oar.

Crash!

Soon, Lemu’s card was sucked into the typhoon.

Crack-crack-crash!

“Ah...!”

“Wow, Father!”

Amidst Yuto's lament and Yeongwoo's exclamation, Lemu shattered, and the winner of Round 4 was granted to Yeongwoo.

《The proxy of Dogo has won the Round 4 match. The Dogo faction may finalize or revise the negotiation proposal.》

'It's only fair to adjust the penalty a bit.'

When Yeongwoo tried to change the Bastard penalty to apply to his opponent instead of himself, even the name of the weapon on the proposal was modified.

[The proxy of Lemu cannot use the Giant Hunter in this war.]

Giant Hunter.

It was Yuto's legendary weapon, unveiled in Round 2.

The negotiation system had interpreted "Bastard" as each side's main weapon and automatically applied it.

'That guy's really done for now.'

The outlook for Lemu's proxy, Yuto, had become grim.

Meanwhile, the negotiation system mercilessly began the final fifth round.

Whirr!

《The fifth round will begin soon. Shuffle count has been replenished.》

'Shuffling? Not anymore. Now it's just pure gambling for pleasure.'

The only possible cards left to draw were two mythic ones and one epic.

Thus, the chance of drawing a mythic was significantly higher.

'Thanks to Father appearing earlier, the odds for mythic cards have risen.'

If he failed, an epic would appear instead of a mythic, but Yeongwoo was only focused on success.

'A mythic card has to come out, no matter what. If an epic appears here, I... I'm afraid of what I'll do.'

Yeongwoo looked up at the ceiling, or rather, far beyond.

'If I even see the first character of "epic," I swear I'll destroy everything!'

After threatening whatever unseen force he was addressing, Yeongwoo picked up one of the cards on the table to his right.

Thwap!

"With this game, Japan will fall! It's my turn! Draw!"

Then, the atmosphere darkened all at once, and a massive steel anchor shot down from the sky.

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Chapter 332: Negotiation (7)

CLAAANG! BOOOM!

It was an utterly overwhelming entrance.

A massive anchor dropped straight onto the table, making the cards scattered there jolt from the impact.

"W-What did you just draw?"

Yuto, nearly stumbling back, managed to regain his balance and asked.

In response, Yeongwoo raised the card responsible for summoning the anchor to eye level.

"...Dogo."

"What?"

"「Dogooooo」!!"

FWOOSH!

In an instant, Yeongwoo's eyes glowed gold, and his intense loyalty to the chairman surged with the authority of the Strongest Sword, flooding the room.

"Kegh? S-Spare me!"

Yuto's heart felt like it was about to burst, and soon a warning message popped up from the system.

「Violence is prohibited in this public area.」

「Please cease any violent actions toward your opponent.」

Then, a flashing red countdown started.

「Five seconds remaining until forced suppression.」

...5.

...4.

As Yeongwoo quickly retracted his aura and raised his hands, the countdown that had dominated the scene came to a halt.

Pop.

'Wait, does that mean if I start flexing again, the countdown will resume from 5 seconds?'

A burning urge to test this theory rose within him, but he managed to hold it back.

After all, he couldn't ruin everything at the last moment.

This was the final round—success at the negotiation table was within reach.

And, most importantly...

'Right? This has to be a Mythic card.'

The card he'd drawn in the final round was Mythic level.

And not just any Mythic card—it was the Chairman's card.

[Our Chairman]

"Dogo has no weaknesses."

| Card Rank: Mythic

| Power: 3,000

Master of the Ten Thousand Swords

<If the 'Bastard' card was previously activated, power increases by 2,000. Additionally, for each equipment card activated earlier, power increases by another 1,000.>

Saving Face

<Power level is adjusted to always be higher than your opponent's. However, the increased power will reduce the power of the next card in the round.>

'What the heck, this is completely overpowered.'

True to its Mythic rank, the base power alone was overwhelming.

And with the Bastard already activated and classified as an equipment card, "Our Chairman" now boasted an astonishing power of 6,000.

But the reason Yeongwoo muttered "overpowered" was because of the unique effect, "Saving Face."

'It guarantees that my power is always higher than my opponent's, but at the cost of weakening my next card? This is basically...'

It was as if he was taking out a power loan with hefty interest.

Of course, with the "Master of the Ten Thousand Swords" effect, its raw power would generally increase so much that the burden on the next card would be minimal.

But there could always be exceptions.

For example, what if he faced a card of higher rank than Mythic with just the base power of 3,000?

'It means I'll forcefully overpower the opponent's card, but pay the price later, right?'

Could this also be how the Chairman operated his business?

Come to think of it, Yeongwoo had never seen the Chairman do anything that would harm his own image.

Nor had he even come close to that level of the business world.

'Somewhere out there in the universe, there must be a world where even the Chairman has to overextend to match others... right?'

For some reason, his heart swelled—no, it expanded to the size of the universe.

And then, he spotted a pale-skinned, naked swordsman entering his field of vision.

"Have you checked the cards?"

Yeongwoo asked, and Yuto nodded, holding a bluish card in his hand.

《Both parties have confirmed their cards. Negotiation begins now.》

Finally, the last round had arrived.

Yet, after that anchor drop, Yuto had already guessed he was going to lose the fifth round.

That entrance seemed like it could only belong to a top-tier Legendary card, or perhaps even another Mythic.

"How... how is it that your strength has no end?"

Yuto asked, sounding genuinely curious, and Yeongwoo raised a finger to point to the ceiling.

"Because the universe is watching over me."

"...What?"

"The energy of the cosmos... it's starting to flow into me. I can feel it."

To an outsider, it would sound like utter nonsense, but Yeongwoo was dead serious.

While he didn't fully understand the aliens' constant talk about something called "the Blueprint," he did feel one thing clearly.

Whether by chance or destiny, if mysterious events kept happening in succession, it meant that the universe's will was guiding him.

His mother, who returned as a dragon after being the head of a conglomerate, and his father, who was reset but tied to her decades ago in fate.

And Dogo, who supported him until the day he reunited with his father.

Could all of this really just be a coincidence?

Sure, at one point, it must have all been due to sheer luck and effort.

But somewhere along the way, he started to feel like he was part of a grander flow.

Maybe the universe had been searching for a ruler of this planet all along, with those who met certain criteria becoming candidates, riding the cosmic current.

And now...

'I am the clear front-runner.'

The fact that Yuto, who was once a decent rival, was crumbling here spoke volumes.

In a way, this game was a test that summed up all the accomplishments he'd accumulated over time.

And the result?

"You're out."

"What?"

"You're out. You're too weak to lead this planet and challenge the universe."

Yuto frowned, looking puzzled.

"What nonsense are you spouting? Why would anyone fight the universe?"

"You really don't get it, huh? Mara's representative probably understands the universe better than you."

Yeongwoo shook his head, holding the Chairman card.

"Now that our lands are practically neighbors, I won't be too harsh."

He added a final note.

"But since you attacked first, you'll have to pay the price. I'm demanding reparations for the war."

"Reparations for war?"

"Prepare 300 million karma every day."

"What? 300 million a day? That's insane!"

Shocked at the absurd amount, Yuto sprang to his feet, and Yeongwoo calmly placed the Bastard card on the table.

Clank!

"If you win this match, we'll pay you 300 million instead, right? So just win if you want to avoid it."

Even in a card game, you didn't have to pay the indemnity if you won the war.

After all, the concept of indemnity was money a defeated nation gave to the victor.

But both men knew well: in this card game, and in the real war, the maniac dressed in clothes had a far higher chance of winning.

"...Our people won't stay quiet. 300 million every day? That's absurd."

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"For all of Japan, that's not even much."

Then, Yeongwoo pointed Bastard at Yuto.

"Besides, you won't even hear that resentment. You'll be dead in Tsushima, so you won't be around when the indemnity is due."

".....!"

It was an obvious statement, yet hearing it like that made it feel entirely new.

"I'm going to die in Tsushima?"

"We could spare you to manage Japan, but unfortunately..."

Yeongwoo's gaze drifted back into the air.

"Sorry, but I'd prefer if all the high-taxpaying types other than me were dead. You pay your taxes diligently, don't you?"

Hearing this, Yuto had to maintain his best poker face.

However, disoriented from their prior conversation, Yuto instinctively twitched his lips, forgetting himself.

"Wh-why does that..."

"Well, you're a stakeholder in the planet too. So you have to die."

As Yeongwoo posted the negotiation proposal, a system message appeared between them.

Paah!

[The defeated nation must pay 300 million Karma in indemnity to the victor each day.]

“If you refuse, I’ll raise it to 500 million. Don’t do that to those you’ll leave behind.”

Adding a chilling threat, Yeongwoo made Yuto withdraw his hand from the veto button.

“...You’re ruthless.”

“This is me being generous. I mean it.”

Like a cornered rat biting a cat, excessive indemnity could provoke Japan’s deep resentment, potentially sowing the seeds of unnecessary civil strife.

‘What I promised my voters was peace. So I’d rather not have a neighboring country as a constant headache.’

Of course, if he followed the Chairman's method, he could solve it by erasing Japan entirely, but... for the sake of long-term global productivity, he had to keep enough humans around.

“You might die today or, at the latest, by tomorrow, but your country and its people will live well under a mighty planet. So post the proposal and get lost.”

“...You madman.”

Yuto looked at the card in his hand.

And at last, he submitted his proposal.

“If I win this game, I’ll nullify the terms agreed upon in the last round!”

[If the representative of Lemu wins in Round 5, the agreement from Round 4 will be nullified.]

This was his way of saying he’d lift the transfer of Japan's material infrastructure and the ban on using the ‘Giant Hunter.’

He still hadn’t given up hope.

“If you get your hands on our facilities, I can only imagine how much you’ll trample on Japan. I can’t hand it over!”

“This bastard knows me too well.”

Even so, Yeongwoo confirmed the proposal.

‘It’s a fight I’m going to win anyway. Might as well grant the wish of a soon-to-be dead man.’

Piiing!

《Round 5 agreement has been confirmed.》

At last, the final negotiation was over, and confident of victory, Yeongwoo placed the Chairman’s card on the table with the utmost respect.

Taat.

“Not all sponsors are the same. Our Chairman stakes even his dignity and the future. So there’s no way he’d let me lose in such a petty fight.”

“.....!”

Seeing Yeongwoo’s card, Yuto went beyond shock and let out a hollow laugh.

“Ha.”

As Yuto exhaled a shallow breath, he revealed his card.

Taat!

[Conference of Tokyo]

“A revival of the Empire’s dream.”

| Card Grade: Legendary

| Power: 1,100

Empire’s Memory

<Automatically defeats lower-grade cards.>

A card so powerful it couldn’t guarantee victory even against another legendary card, let alone a mythic one.

And sure enough.

Shaaah!

The moment the opponent's card was revealed, a mass of iron surged from the Chairman's card, tearing the 'Conference of Tokyo' to shreds.

"Ah...!"

A deep sigh.

As the conference card that was in his hand just moments ago disintegrated instantly, Yuto's face twisted in despair as he stepped back.

《The representative of Dogo has won the Round 5 match. The Dogo faction may finalize or modify the agreement.》

Yeongwoo then nullified Yuto's proposal, leaving only the indemnity treaty.

All the cards on the table vanished.

Paah!

《The negotiation between both sides has ended.》

Then, all accumulated war agreement terms unfurled like a monumental declaration.

[The battle between Dogo and Lemu factions will only take place within Tsushima.]

[The representatives of Dogo and Lemu must engage in combat in a naked state.]

[Dogo's representative must enter combat after severing one of his arms.]

[Lemu's representative will transfer all wartime earnings gained through his contract with Lemu to Dogo's representative.]

[If Lemu's representative loses the war, all material infrastructure will be transferred to Dogo's representative.]

[Lemu's representative is prohibited from using the Giant Hunter in this war.]

[The defeated nation must pay the victorious nation a daily indemnity of 300 million Karma.]

And this entangled battle of Tsushima was set to begin in just a few hours.

"Hm."

Scanning the list of agreements, Yeongwoo's gaze fixed on one particular point.

It was none other than the "naked combat" clause.

[Dogo and Lemu's representatives must engage in combat in a naked state.]

"What is this? So we're the only ones who have to strip? Then the 200 naked warriors are just a ploy to earn extra points?"

Yuto nodded.

"...Something like that. If baring ourselves boosts national interests, that's patriotism."

"Oh, really? You mean 200 people actually went along with that?"

Yeongwoo blinked quickly.

Then, alone, he made a decision.

"I guess we have no choice."

"...?"

"We'll look for patriots too."

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

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Chapter 333: Earning Foreign Currency (1)

What is patriotism?

If the intent to serve one's country is embedded within, then anything can be considered patriotic.

In that sense...

'If there are many undressed soldiers on the battlefield, Lemu has to pay Japan more money. And that money, as per the agreement, will come to us. So, if you're a true patriot...'

Swoosh.

Yeongwoo once again shifted his gaze to the void, or rather, somewhere beyond the ceiling into space.

‘You have to undress. An undressed soldier is a patriot. In other words, if you don’t undress, it’s practically the same as not serving your country!’

Yeongwoo’s eyes began to fill with madness, and across from him, Yuto looked concerned.

He was worried for the people of South Korea, who were led by this crazy man as their representative.

《All processes are now complete. The negotiation table will be closing shortly.》

Soon, as the system message appeared, the negotiation hall began to light up, and shortly afterward—

Whoosh!

A portal opened up behind each of the representatives, drawing in everything nearby.

“Ugh!”

Forced ejection.

Both Yuto and Yeongwoo were sucked into the portals that appeared behind them, and their vision was soon filled with the disorienting sensation of the portal’s space.

Flash!

In an instant, the surrounding scenery shifted to a hotel bedroom.

‘I’m back.’

They had been returned to the location they were at just before entering the negotiation hall.

In that case, the next thing to check was—

‘What time is it?’

Yeongwoo raised his wrist, and the time was projected over the Vesedel armor.

Beep!

Current time: 5:48 p.m.

There was roughly 1 hour and 12 minutes left until the locations of each company's headquarters would be revealed.

'However, I already have a good idea where Lemu's base is located.'

Tokyo, the capital of Japan.

It was highly likely that Tokyo was Lemu's Earth headquarters.

It was easy to deduce from the "Tokyo Summit" card that Yuto had played during negotiations.

'So, what about Mara? Is there no separate negotiation with Mara?'

Yeongwoo casually turned his head to the west, Japan's opposite direction, but no system message appeared even as time passed.

'If that's the case, I'll need to prepare for the Tsushima War first.'

Even if the addresses were revealed, the only place to meet Japan was on Tsushima Island.

On the other hand, Mara was different as its location was still unknown.

Once the addresses were revealed, there was a high chance Mara would immediately invade Seoul.

Of course, their first target might still be Tokyo.

'But attacking Tokyo is no longer acceptable. All the infrastructure there is mine now.'

As Yeongwoo pondered for a moment over his first-ever war, he felt Jiseon's presence as she walked out from the living room.

—What, you're back already? Did the negotiations go well?

"Yes, they went very well."

It was practically a landslide victory.

But in order to realize the profits gained from the negotiations with Japan, they had to win the Tsushima War, and to maximize those profits, he would need as many undressed soldiers as possible.

And all within the next hour and 12 minutes.

‘There’s enough time to move the troops. I can use the super-speed routes.’

The problem, however, was Japan.

Could Yuto and his 200 undressed soldiers make it to Tsushima on time?

“We should’ve set a specific time for the war... but the space closed as soon as the negotiations ended.”

—What? But you said we’d know each other’s locations by 7 p.m., right? Doesn’t that mean the war will automatically start then?

“Well, that’s true.”

Yeongwoo was about to explain the details of the agreement he made with Japan, but the system saved him the trouble.

「The representatives of Dogo and Lemu have agreed to conduct their war on Tsushima Island!」

「At 7 p.m. today, Tsushima Island will be designated as a war zone, with a white capture flag to be installed at its center.」

—A capture flag?

Since Jiseon could see the universal announcement, she looked puzzled, and Yeongwoo added a comment while looking toward the living room.

“I was wondering how the winner would be decided in this war... and now they’ve told us.”

“The method of victory in this war is flag domination.”

Flag domination.

Yeongwoo had a pretty good idea of how this war would go.

「The faction that makes contact with the capture flag will enter a ‘capture’ state, and if this capture state is maintained for over two hours, they will immediately be declared the victor.」

In simple terms, it was a game of capture the flag.

The objective was to guard the flag installed in the center of Tsushima for two hours to win.

There was also a faster way to end the war.

「During the war, both factions must attempt to seize the capture flag.」

「If either faction fails to attempt flag seizure for more than an hour, the war will immediately end.」

—So it's saying to keep fighting without rest?

Jiseon muttered after reading the rules, but Yeongwoo shook his head.

“If you don't want to guard the flag for two hours, you can end the war in one hour by wiping out the enemy on the battlefield.”

—...Really?

“If we start at 7 p.m. and eliminate the enemy right away, we'll finish around 8... more realistically, it would end around 8:30 p.m. at the earliest.”

—Then what happens next?

“I don't know. This is my first war too. Who knows what Mara might do in the meantime?”

They still had to pay taxes by 10 p.m., and by 11 p.m., strange weather would once again envelop the world.

So would the war continue into the night?

‘I haven't even negotiated with Mara yet... so what happens in that case?’

It was confusing.

One thing he knew for sure, though, was that a system-scheduled war with Japan was set to start today at 7 p.m.

“Mother.”

—What?

“You're now the proud guardian dragon of Seoul, aren't you?”

—...So?

“So, you’ll need to look after Seoul.”

—You’re telling me to protect the neighborhood while you go have fun on Tsushima?

“It’s better for you to stay here. You have to fight undressed on Tsushima.”

When Yeongwoo finally made the infamous statement, Song Jiseon’s silver hair spiked up in shock, and she practically screamed.

—What? What do you mean by that?

“There’s a special clause for this war. If participants fight naked, Lemu pays us. It’s a huge opportunity to earn foreign currency.”

—What... what kind of nonsense is this?

“If you don’t understand, just accept it. Don’t try to comprehend the universe, Mother!”

—You crazy... what on earth are you doing?

Clank.

Jiseon took a few steps back to put distance between herself and her son.

Hearing her shout, her husband Jeonggu came rushing into the bedroom.

“What’s going on?”

Yeongwoo, waiting for this, pointed to him.

“What else? We’re preparing for war. Hurry up and grab your weapons.”

“What? My weapons?”

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“Yes. Aren’t you going to fight in the war?”

Jeonggu pointed at himself with a baffled look.

“You want me to join the war? Why?”

* * *

War.

The war starting in about an hour was no ordinary war.

This was a war in the reset world.

It was a gathering of superhumans who had survived countless invasions by monsters and mutants.

But given the wildly mutated state of the world, even among superhumans, the difference in power could be immense.

For instance, even if there were a hundred Strongest Swords like Jeonggu, they probably wouldn't be able to take down Yeongwoo alone.

So—

"Why do I have to go to the battlefield? Shouldn't you cherish your parents now that you've finally found them?"

To Jeonggu, being dragged into this war was incomprehensible.

Honestly, it seemed like Yeongwoo could handle the entire war on his own.

"Yeongwoo! Say something!"

When Jeonggu loudly shouted from the backseat of Negwig, Yeongwoo finally glanced back at him.

"You're not a real parent yet. You have to show proof that you're a true father."

"A-Ah! That's why we're getting married tomorrow...!"

The groom-to-be, Kim Jeonggu.

Only now did he start to tremble, as if he had just realized something.

"Damn it! The wedding is tomorrow, and you're pushing me into a war zone? Does that make any sense?"

At that, Yeongwoo looked back at him again, speaking in a low voice.

"Oh? You're getting bold because Mom's not around."

"You...!"

“Should I send you back to her?”

When Yeongwoo asked this, Jeonggu was left speechless.

“...Why on earth do I have to go to a war zone?”

“What are you so worried about? Do you think I’d make my father a human shield? There’s no need to worry about getting hurt.”

“You say I won’t get hurt? That sounds a bit off. So, you mean I’ll get hurt in some other way?”

Jeonggu wondered what on earth could get hurt if not his body.

As his confusion deepened, the destination of the two travelers appeared below.

The Great City of the Red Footed Orcs, Darwin in Australia.

"We're here. Get ready."

“Huh? Ready for what?”

Jeonggu tilted his head, checking his equipment.

To this, Yeongwoo replied with an ambiguous phrase.

“Be ready to give everything for this land... no, for this son.”

And at that moment, Negwig carrying the two men plunged into the tower in Darwin.

CRASH!

The Red Footed Orcs guarding the top of the tower spotted Yeongwoo and exchanged uneasy looks.

–Little Foot?

–What’s going on all of a sudden?

By now, the orcs had learned well.

Whenever Little Foot visited, it meant trouble was coming.

“Where’s the Lord? Is he in the city?”

–Of course. He’s always here to guard the clan.

–I'll let him know you're here.

One of the orc guards pulled out a pouch of powder from his waist.

He hesitated between a red pouch and a black one.

The red signal meant welcome, the black one meant warning.

Yeongwoo, noticing this, rested his hand on his weapon and spoke.

“Are you out of your mind, brothers?”

–It's a tough call.

–But you're still our brother.

The orc guards, reluctantly, tossed the red pouch into the air.

An orc on the opposite side shot an arrow to burst it.

FWOOOSH, BANG!

The signal took shape in the sky as a red footprint.

“Good.”

Yeongwoo, satisfied with the signal, pressed the descent device, and the two moved to the lower floors of the tower.

SWWWISH!

A wondrous sphere of light surrounded Negwig and the two men, instantly passing through hundreds of meters, revealing the vast northern Australian landscape before their eyes.

–Little Foot!

–Little Foot is here!

A swarm of Red Footed Orcs, even larger than before, gathered around the tower to welcome Yeongwoo. Soon, Bantubangtong, the first chief who sold off the clan's history, approached with a huge wave of his hand.

–Little Foot! What brings you here so suddenly?

Looking at his assembled brothers, Yeongwoo spoke.

“Has the news not reached here yet?”

–News? What news?

“The first war has been declared.”

–War? Have you finally found Mara?

A rare excitement crossed Bantubangtong’s face.

But Yeongwoo shook his head.

“No, but we’ll meet them soon. In the meantime...”

Yeongwoo scratched his chin thoughtfully, and Bantubangtong took a step closer.

–What is it? Please, don’t deceive me.

Yeongwoo nodded solemnly as if he understood.

“Before we go to war with Mara... we’ve found a way to gather a massive amount of military funds.”

–What? Military funds?

How words are phrased can completely change how they’re received.

As expected, the “war vocabulary” worked well on his brothers.

–What’s the method?

As Bantubangtong showed significant interest, Yeongwoo gave a sly grin and asked his next question.

“How many brothers are currently staying in Darwin?”

–As of sunrise today, there are seventeen thousand six hundred and four brothers.

17,604.

Yeongwoo couldn’t help but be surprised that Bantubangtong knew the exact count of his brothers to the last digit.

“Lord Bang.”

—...Must blood be shed again? This is too much. I won't barter my brothers' lives any longer.

"No, I don't want any of my brothers to get hurt either. Isn't it almost time for vengeance? Every single brother should savor the moment of glory."

—...W-What? Then why do you keep calling me 'Lord Bang'?

"Lord Bang! How much does revenge weigh for you and your brothers?"

—You dare to ask the weight of our revenge? It's already like Mount Tai...

"That's right! It's so heavy that even the armor on our bodies can barely withstand it, almost to the point of turning us naked in an instant!"

—Wh... what did you say?

For a moment, the grand tone vanished from Bantubangtong's voice, replaced by deep confusion.

—Why would our armor suddenly shatter?

At that moment, he noticed that Little Foot had already taken off his top.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 334: Earning Foreign Currency (2)

—Hey, Little Foot? What on earth are you doing?!

In a surprised voice, Bantubangtong scolded him, but Yeongwoo, who had already taken off the upper armor, was unlocking the clasp at his waist.

Clink!

"Master Bang... I've found a way to bring in a massive amount of military funds from outer space. However, unfortunately, this is the only method."

Thunk!

Then, the lower armor, split into two, dropped to the ground.

The tattoos Yeongwoo had been hiding between his thighs were now exposed.

"Huh? You rascal, why do you have so many tattoos there?"

As expected, Jeonggu widened his eyes and pointed at Yeongwoo's tattoos, though only for a moment.

Rustle!

Yeongwoo continued and even removed the chain mail covering his groin and buttocks.

"Y-Y-Yeongwoo...?"

Shocked by the unexpected performance, Jeonggu stuttered, while Bantubangtong, standing right in front of Yeongwoo, looked him up and down before taking a step back.

—...I don't understand what this means.

In response, Yeongwoo raised his index finger, pointing to the sky.

Flash!

"In exactly one hour, we'll fight the first battle on Tsushima Island."

—So?

"However, it will be a naked war."

—What?!"

A naked war.

For Bantubangtong, it was a phrase he had never heard in his life... no, even in the vast history embedded within his mind and heart, no one had ever come across such a strange term.

—Did you say... naked war?

"It's a preliminary battle before the clash with Mara. The victor in this war will secure massive military funds and gain peace for eastern Asia."

Yeongwoo clenched his fist, emphasizing the point that even the neighboring country, Japan, was now bordering northern Australia, thanks to the supercontinent Pangaea.

"But unfortunately... only those who are bare can receive the military funds."

—What nonsense is that? What kind of war is this...?

Bantubangtong was about to object when Yeongwoo silenced him with a single line.

"Because the one funding us is a porn production company."

—.....

Darkness seemed to descend over him.

Bantubangtong closed his eyes tightly.

—Little Foot, how far into darkness are you planning to lead us?

"Darkness? The path of vengeance is filled with starlight."

Yeongwoo pointed to a high-speed transport route, glittering like stars in the sky.

"However, for the stars to shine brilliantly, darkness must come first."

Swish.

Yeongwoo then lowered his hand, pointing at Bantubangtong's body, and the Orc lord, who carried the history of his clan, flinched.

"It's merely a temporary shadow to brighten the path of vengeance. But my little shadow alone isn't enough. So, please, help me."

As he finished saying this, he took off his steel boots, and Bantubangtong instinctively covered his mouth.

—Little Foot! Are you saying that the light our brothers have forged isn't enough?

Bantubangtong pointed to the already-glowing transport route, but Yeongwoo glanced back as if there were no other option.

Then, he spotted his father, who had been wearing a terrified expression from the beginning.

"Father, by now, I assume you're ready."

"W-What are you talking about? I haven't done anything...."

At this, Yeongwoo looked at Jeonggu with a terrifying gaze.

A look that seemed to say he already knew.

"Please, just a small but significant favor. Do you want to die on the eve of the ceremony?"

"Goddammit... what on earth do you mean by a 'small but significant favor'?"

Despite his reluctance, Jeonggu raised his hands to his shirt.

He knew all too well that if he didn't undress along with his son at this moment, everything would fall apart with all the Orcs watching.

Besides, hadn't his son expressed his commitment by being the first to undress?

The kid was serious.

If he botched things here, he could truly die.

"This is just a dream...."

With an expression as if he was in a trance, Jeonggu took off his shirt, and seeing this, Bantubangtong looked on in dismay, a sorrowful expression coming over him.

—...Jeonggu.

For the first time, Bantubangtong addressed Jeonggu by his name.

In response, Jeonggu pleaded with the Orc lord, folding his ungroomed, unimpressive body that hadn't seen proper enhancements.

"The talk about military funds is mostly true. Please, at least for my sake... help my son."

With these words, Jeonggu, with trembling hands, reached for his pants, but the massive shadow of the Orc lord, Bantubangtong, loomed over him.

And then.

Grab!

Bantubangtong seized Jeonggu's hand as it reached for his waistband.

—Jeonggu! Though you're human, you're a great father. But how you ended up as Little Foot's father remains a mystery.

Then, he looked over at Yeongwoo.

—Little Foot, show proper respect for your father. If you promise, I'll create the shadow instead.

This was his offer to participate in this so-called naked war in Jeonggu's place, on the condition that Yeongwoo pledged not to strip his father.

"Oh... Master Bang!"

Yeongwoo exclaimed with admiration, as though he'd been waiting for this.

Then he approached his father, along with Bantubangtong, both gripping Jeonggu's waistband, and he said,

"My father, Jeonggu, will not be stripped in this war. I swear on my mother."

Then Jeonggu, held by the two giants, murmured to Bantubangtong in a voice as if crawling out of a hole.

"Master Bang... thank, thank you...."

However, Jeonggu was practically as good as naked.

All the Orcs filled the area, staring at him with sympathy in their eyes.

Snap!

Bantubangtong let go of Jeonggu, and then began to remove the large iron armor draped over his shoulder.

Clang!

—But I'm the only one here who promised you a shadow."

He would undress and join the battle, but he refused to drag his brethren into such an absurd affair.

Of course, for Yeongwoo, it was enough that Master Bang alone was stripping down.

"Of course. I've obtained only Master Bang's promise."

Little Foot, Jung Yeongwoo, knew very well.

As a mere honorary Red Foot, it was impossible for him to persuade all 17,604 brothers.

So the one Orc he had set out to convince was Bantubangtong, the vessel holding the history of their clan.

"Getting Master Bang on my side is like having the whole world as my ally."

At the moment Yeongwoo thought this, he heard the sound of metal clinking from within the crowd of red-footed orcs.

".....!"

It was unmistakably the sound of a clasp on armor being undone.

And then, a rough orcish voice came from within the ranks of brothers.

—In that case, who will honor Bantubangtong? Let me replace his armor with my own shadow!

Thump!

One of the red-footed orcs threw off his armor.

Since Master Bang had taken off his armor to protect his honor, the orc was now stripping himself in turn to honor Master Bang.

Such a thought was only possible because he was a red-footed orc who spoke and thought from the heart.

Of course, from a logical standpoint, the more orcs without armor, the less Bantubangtong would stand out.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

‘Goddamn, that’s it. They’re here.’

Yeongwoo felt an inner surge of delight, just as he heard another clinking sound.

Clang! Clank!

Red-footed orcs, their chests burning with passion, began to undo the locks on their armor one after another.

Taking advantage of the moment, Yeongwoo shouted out,

“Tonight, we will create a night so dark that only the path of vengeance we’ve forged will be visible!”

Hwaaah!

At the end of his speech, Yeongwoo raised his hand to the sky with force, prompting the orcs, armor in hand, to raise their armor high in the air in unison.

Huahhh!

—For the path of vengeance!

—Tonight, our heavenly brothers will shine more brilliantly!

—For the brothers!

The lifted armor cast shadows so dense that the entire area grew dark, and seeing this, the other orcs widened their eyes and hurriedly began stripping off their own armor.

Clang! Clank!

It almost looked like a domino effect.

—My...my god.

Overwhelmed by the influence of Littlefoot’s rallying abilities, Bantubangtong stood speechless, unable to break the flow.

Then, as if remembering something important, he hastily asked Yeongwoo,

—Littlefoot! Littlefoot!

“Yes, what is it?”

—In Daemado, what exactly will we be facing? Though my brothers feel fearless now, it doesn’t mean that death won’t seek us out!”

[PR/N: Daemando is korean claim to tsushima island, altho lord bang saying that is crazy imo 🐼🐼]

His concern was whether sending the brothers to battle in such a vulnerable state wouldn’t endanger their lives.

Despite the heated atmosphere, Master Bang was worried about the safety of his comrades.

“Ah...Master Bang.”

Yeongwoo felt a warmth fill even his heart, which was like poison and steel, and he clutched at his chest.

“Now that both of us are stripped bare, I won’t lie. Even I don’t know exactly what the enemy is preparing.”

—What?

It was the truth.

No matter how much Lemu might be a producer of indecent films, surely they wouldn’t strip their warriors and send them in unprepared.

There must be some kind of gear provided that made the lack of clothing irrelevant.

But on Yeongwoo’s side, they really would be going into battle unprotected.

So, for the sake of the brothers, the only possible plan had to come from Yeongwoo himself.

“I will handle all the combat. Master Bang, please just remain on the battlefield with your comrades.”

—Are you telling us not to fight?

A wall of 17,684 naked orcs.

All Yeongwoo wanted from the brothers was just that.

But Master Bang refused immediately.

—How far do you intend to insult us? If this war is about obtaining military funds, then it is also a war for our red-footed brothers.

“Master Bang!”

—The battlefield is a place for fighting. Don’t demand that we become cowards.

“Damn it! Then stop complaining that fighting naked puts you at a disadvantage!”

Yeongwoo almost blurted this out, but he understood what Master Bang was saying.

The reason why a naked battle was more dangerous for the brothers was because they would fight unafraid of death.

“Brother... I will try to figure out a way. I'll ensure our brothers are harmed as little as possible.”

The best approach would be to clear the battlefield before the brothers even began fighting, though how feasible that would be was uncertain.

‘Using artillery fire, I can take care of the small fry, but there will surely be experts on their side too.’

Having a large number of troops also meant they could be swept away easily.

Though the brothers were quite strong, each one's skill level was likely no match for even a top regional swordsman.

‘Then....’

Yeongwoo's eyes widened, and among the red-footed orcs, Jeonggu, who had been blinking in confusion, approached him.

“Are we heading out now? Is it really all over?”

In response, Yeongwoo pulled out his prized ring, the ‘Wave,’ from his inventory and nodded.

“Yes. We're almost done.”

“Almost...?”

“Our Seoul needs to share in the suffering, too.”

Yeongwoo then used the Wave to send a message to Seoul's Strongest Swords.

<<In one minute, we'll have an emergency meeting in Samseong-dong. I'll lift the route restrictions, so come at the speed of light..>>

After a moment of thought, he added another line.

<<Any swordsman who is even one second late will earn a spot in this naked battle. Starting the countdown now..>>

<<59..>>

<<58..>>

As Yeongwoo began counting down, Jeonggu, who was watching his son, asked,

"What are you talking about? Even if we follow the routes to Seoul nonstop, it'll still take at least five minutes. How will you catch any latecomers?"

Yeongwoo looked calmly at his father and replied.

"It takes me a minute just to go and unlock the route restrictions. Since everyone will be late anyway, it's fine."

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

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[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 335: Earning Foreign Currency (3)

"What... what did you say?"

The fact that the crazy person laying traps effortlessly was his son left Jeonggu with his mouth agape.

"You said that anyone who's late has to join in the battle naked?"

"Yes."

"That, that can't be! It's too much of a deception!"

"But practically speaking, it's an internal conflict on Earth. Is it fair for only brothers to sacrifice themselves? If we don't want any backlash later, the Strongest Swords should participate too."

At Yeongwoo's words, Jeonggu closed his mouth.

Although the method was extremely cunning, the intention itself wasn't entirely wrong.

In the long run, for the Red Foot Orcs and Seoul's Strongest Swords to coexist, both sides needed to contribute to this war to some degree.

"And if we win this civil war, the ones who stand to benefit most, both directly and indirectly, are Seoul and the Strongest Swords. They'd essentially gain a position of power in the planet's capital."

As he said this, Yeongwoo waved subtly at Bantubangtong.

"Master Bang, I'll stop by Seoul before heading to Tsushima."

—So when should we move out to the battlefield?

"To move all the brothers here... you'll need to start preparing right now. The war starts on time, so just wait on the outskirts of Tsushima and move into the central area on time."

—Understood.

"I'm counting on you."

Yeongwoo bowed respectfully toward Bantubangtong, who furrowed his brow and muttered quietly.

—It seems like you can put your clothes back on now, Little Foot.

"I'll just have to take them off again soon anyway, so it's fine."

* * *

In Darwin, an Orc city in Australia, stood a towering building.

In front of the towering station known as the Path of Vengeance, built by the brothers, Yeongwoo still stood, stark naked.

And the timer he had announced through Seoul's bulletin...

<<10.>>

There were only 10 seconds left.

"Isn't this too much? Giving them only 10 seconds practically."

As Jeonggu shook his head, Yeongwoo glanced back.

"The real unfair thing is making only the brothers strip."

"Well, if that's the case, the most unfair person would be..."

But Jeonggu didn't finish his thought of, "Isn't that you?" It would have been pointless to say it anyway.

Even now, his son was intimidating Seoul's Strongest Swords.

<<7 seconds remaining.>>

Only now did Yeongwoo finally lift the restrictions on using the express pathways.

Along with the already cleared Yechan, even those with the Strongest Sword title of Seoul could now access the pathways.

"There, it's done, right?"

"What's done?"

"Preparations for the war."

Yeongwoo spoke as he moved to enter the tower on his Negwig, but Jeonggu asked urgently.

"Hey, are you really going to Seoul naked?"

"Don't you know the phrase 'lead by example'?"

"..."

Jeonggu, momentarily speechless, quickly put on the shirt he had been holding.

"You do as you like. I'll go in fully dressed."

"That's why you're the Dobong Strongest Sword and I'm the Strongest Sword."

"...You lunatic."

Soon, Negwig ascended from the lower floors to the top floor of the tower, and in front of the two, the Path of Vengeance, glowing with starlight, appeared.

By now, the Strongest Swords across Seoul would be running with all their might on the pathway.

"But won't the others wonder why they're supposed to strip in Tsushima? Will they just go along with it?"

Only Yeongwoo and Yuto knew the specific details of the agreement for the Tsushima war.

Thus, the Strongest Swords in Seoul would be blindsided by this talk of fighting naked.

"Of course they won't go along with it easily. They never have before."

"Telling them to strip down and fight is a different level from the stuff you've pulled before. This isn't just squeezing money out of people."

At this, Yeongwoo, calmly guiding Negwig along the brilliantly shining pathway, responded.

"That's exactly what makes it the duty of an elected Strongest Sword."

"...What?"

"Going to battle naked, in a broader sense, serves the national interest. It's a chance to attract significant foreign currency. So, why wouldn't we do it?"

"..."

"Besides, as the strongest warriors of each district, the Strongest Swords have enjoyed certain privileges. So, to repay their communities, fighting naked is only fitting."

"The fact that repayment involves stripping is the issue. They'd rather put their lives on the line than be comfortable with this."

"Why? If these warriors are willing to risk their lives for the people, why not take off one measly piece of clothing?"

It was a clever argument, nonsensical yet oddly persuasive.

"It's just a different kind of fear. If fighting mutant monsters is about overcoming fear of death, then fighting naked is about overcoming conventional beliefs—the belief that nudity is silly."

"..."

"When you were about to strip, did any of the brothers laugh at you? In that moment, you were revered. Your nudity wasn't ridiculous at all."

"...Ye-Yeongwoo..."

"Yes?"

"Shut up. We're almost in Seoul."

Jeonggu, sitting in the back, pointed below the path.

There, the entire view of southern Seoul unfolded.

They had already neared Samseong-dong.

"It's time to earn our tax money."

As Yeongwoo ominously muttered, Negwig surged into the tower's top floor.

BOOM!

Finally, they reached Seoul.

As soon as they touched down in the tower, Yeongwoo struck the descent lever.

BANG!

A blinding white light enveloped the two, shooting them down to the ground.

Soon after, the sound of a crowd reached them.

Responding to Yeongwoo's summons, Seoul's Strongest Swords had already gathered in front of the tower in Samseong-dong.

"Yeongwoo!"

"Fighting naked—what is that supposed to mean?"

"Isn't it you who's actually late, Yeongwoo?"

As the lower part of the Samseong-dong tower brightened, the Strongest Swords gathered there started hurling questions at him like reporters who had caught a scoop.

But it only lasted a moment.

FLASH!

Yeongwoo and his father emerged from the tower's inner glow, and everyone instantly covered their mouths, taking a step back in shock.

"...Huh?"

"Gasp."

"Y-Yeongwoo...?"

Their reaction was only natural.

Sitting at the forefront of the Negwig was Jeong Yeongwoo, entirely and unmistakably naked.

"...This crazy bastard."

Someone muttered in horror, a mixture of disbelief and dread plastered on their face.

It was now clear to all that the earlier announcement about "naked combat participation" wasn't some bizarre joke.

Seeing Yeongwoo stride out in the buff, everyone quickly realized their turn to disrobe was coming, and soon none of them would be clothed either.

"N-No way..."

"Is this guy for real?"

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

"Is he going to make us strip too?"

As the Strongest Swords muttered grim predictions, Yeongwoo finally opened his mouth.

"The Tsushima War begins today at 7 PM. Everyone's aware of this, right?"

"....."

The Strongest Swords nodded cautiously, and Yeongwoo continued.

"Then do you understand why I've already stripped down?"

"W-Well..."

"How would we know?"

"Yeah, why exactly are you naked?"

Sensing an opportunity, the Strongest Swords voiced their frustrations.

In response, Yeongwoo raised a finger to the sky.

Whoosh.

"Let me get straight to the point."

".....!"

"If you participate in this war naked, you'll earn money. From... outside."

“Money?”

“From outside?”

“Who’s giving it?”

Their curiosity ignited by the unexpected claim, the Strongest Swords bombarded him with questions.

But instead of answering, Yeongwoo calmly drew his sword.

Shiiing!

The sharp sound silenced the crowd.

“Does it really matter who’s paying? Normally, we’d only be suffering losses in war, but now we’re getting paid. Isn’t that what matters?”

Yeongwoo’s fierce gaze swept across the group, silencing further dissent.

But then, someone raised their hand.

“It does matter. Quite a bit, actually.”

It was none other than Songpa’s Strongest Sword, Oh Yeonhee.

“Judging from how seriously you’re taking this, it’s clearly not just pocket change.”

Yeonhee eyed the strategically placed Negwig that obscured Yeongwoo’s more sensitive parts, then pressed on.

“But if you expect us to do the same, don’t you think we deserve a proper explanation? The fact that stripping makes money suggests this isn’t coming from a clean source.”

Her words emboldened the other Strongest Swords, who began chiming in one after another.

“She’s right!”

“Exactly, what if it’s dirty money?”

“You’ve got to tell us what’s really going on!”

At this, Yeongwoo sighed and scratched his chin, as if conceding their point.

“You’re right. I was wrong to keep this from you.”

“.....!”

The sudden shift in his demeanor threw everyone off.

Watching this unfold, Gwanak's Strongest Sword, Jo Sangik, instinctively took a step back, hiding behind the others.

‘Something’s... something’s coming.’

Jeong Yeongwoo wasn't just a formidable warrior; his political skills had grown just as fearsome.

In this situation, he could've easily resorted to intimidation alone—brandishing his sword and forcing his “naked combat” plan through sheer pressure.

But Yeongwoo wasn't aiming for partial compliance; he wanted all the Strongest Swords stripped bare.

And to achieve that, he had chosen a different tactic.

“Well then, let me reveal everything to you, and to the voters in Seoul.”

Flash!

With a flourish of his arm, the broadcast screens he had purchased for “business presentations” appeared across the city.

Bzzzzt, bzzzzt

“W-What the...?”

“What is he doing now?”

“Is he seriously about to broadcast himself naked to the entire city?!”

The Strongest Swords gawked at the massive screens now hovering over places like Samseong-dong.

Meanwhile, Yeongwoo leaped off the Negwig, his bare feet landing solidly on the ground.

Thud!

“Is nudity embarrassing? No! What's truly shameful is refusing to shed a single garment for the sake of our nation!”

He pointed dramatically at the screens above.

"In ten seconds, I'll announce the list of naked combatants to the voters. If you're unwilling to fight for the national interest, step aside and start drafting your public statements."

He vaguely gestured toward an undefined direction on his right.

Then, with a benevolent tone, Yeongwoo offered a word of comfort to the still-stunned Strongest Swords.

"Today, I'll be the only one baring all in front of these screens. You'll only need to strip when we're in Tsushima."

At this, Yongsan's Strongest Sword, Kim Doha, paled as he asked in a trembling voice:

"S-So... the public won't see us naked, right?"

To this, Yeongwoo beamed brightly and responded.

"Of course not. They'll never see a thing."

[Translator - Night]

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Chapter 336: Becoming Each Other's Shadow (1)

"....."

All the Strongest Swords fell silent.

They were simply at a loss.

They couldn't bring themselves to strip naked on Tsushima Island, but at the same time, they couldn't dare to say on national television, "I won't strip."

"Whatever we choose, it's going to be humiliating anyway...."

Finally, when someone muttered this under their breath, Yeongwoo, who somehow overheard it, stepped forward and countered before the Strongest Swords.

"Yes, that's correct. There's no option that isn't disgraceful for you."

".....!"

"Then wouldn't it be better to at least make some money out of it if you're going to suffer humiliation anyway? Standing over there will only leave you branded as a coward!"

Swish!

Yeongwoo pointed to a still empty space.

According to him, it was the spot where "those who would not act in the national interest" would gather.

"Now, you have 6 seconds left. If you're afraid to strip, please move over there and prepare a coward's statement."

At Yeongwoo's merciless words, Lee Hanwook, the Strongest Sword of Dongjak District, responded with a solemn expression.

"This is... violence."

Immediately, Yeongwoo pressed Lee Hanwook by showing his naked body.

"Hey, you punk! Isn't what you're doing violence against the nation and its people? What do you think people will say when they see you, refusing to strip off a mere piece of clothing, sacrificing national interest?"

"Th-that's...."

"And the opponent is Japan."

".....!"

Japan.

At the mention of this contentious name, Lee Hanwook clammed up, and at this point, Yeongwoo turned on the broadcast screen.

Flash!

"The military funding for this war was originally supposed to go to Japan. But thanks to my victory in the negotiation game, that right has been transferred to us."

Yeongwoo, glaring at Lee Hanwook, pointed his finger towards the direction of Japan.

Then, Oh Yeonhee asked a question.

"So we have to strip in front of the Japanese?"

As Yeongwoo had mentioned earlier, the Korean public wouldn't see the Strongest Swords naked, but the Japanese opponents would.

Yeongwoo nodded in agreement.

"Of course. But the Japanese will also be fighting naked."

"...This is absurd."

Oh Yeo-hee looked as if she might collapse at any moment.

The expressions of the other Strongest Swords standing in line behind her weren't much different.

"So, both sides will be fighting this war naked?"

This time, it was Choi Nahmee, the Strongest Sword of Seocho District.

With questions disguised as objections flying in from all directions, Yeongwoo was practically fighting a one-against-many battle, but at least on the broadcast screen, Yeongwoo seemed to be the one dominating the room.

Every time he moved or spoke, all the Strongest Swords flinched.

"If you kill all your opponents, that's it, right? There won't be any witnesses left. So make your decision now. The broadcast has already started."

As Yeongwoo pointed to the sky screen, all the Strongest Swords looked up in shock.

On the massive screen filling the sky, their faces were clearly visible.

Yeongwoo's naked figure, being the only one without clothes, stood out prominently.

"Because all of you arrived late, it would be appropriate for you to strip without complaint, but I still want to leave it to your free will."

Then, Yeongwoo pointed to the spot designated for cowards.

"With a war ahead to secure military funds, if your heart isn't burning with patriotism, go stand over there."

A few people instinctively took a step, but in the end, no one moved to change their spot.

No one had the courage to be the first coward.

"Very well."

As Yeongwoo's tone became calm again, Jo Sangik, who had earlier noticed ominous signs, looked dismayed.

In the end, that devil had succeeded in stripping all the Strongest Swords of Seoul.

"We will participate in the Tsushima Island War at 7 PM today in a naked state!"

Yeongwoo announced the war against the Lemu side while looking at the broadcast screen.

He then added a comment, possibly directed at the people watching the screen across Seoul.

"Half of the proceeds from this war will be used for the development of Metal Seoul and the Korean Peninsula!"

Hearing this, one of the Strongest Swords muttered quietly.

"Then, where will the other half go.....?"

* * *

6:47 PM.

With about 13 minutes left until the promised Tsushima Island War.

Yeongwoo had already arrived at the upper floors of the 'Tower' set up on Tsushima Island with the stiff-looking Strongest Swords.

"This is Tsushima Island."

Yeongwoo stated an obvious fact.

Then, he emphasized another well-known fact.

"It's time to strip."

Finally, the Strongest Swords, who had only been making gloomy expressions, spoke up.

"Right now? Why.....?"

"Isn't there still quite a bit of time left?"

"Do we have to strip this early?"

All the Strongest Swords wanted was to minimize the time spent naked, even by a second.

But Yeongwoo had his reasons.

"If you go down there to strip, it would mean piling your gear in the middle of the battlefield... Does that make any sense?"

On the other hand, this 'Station' was a place where only those with Yeongwoo's approval could enter.

It was the perfect place to use as a changing room.

"And if you leave your gear on Tsushima Island, who knows if one of you might change your mind during the fight and pick up your clothes."

"....."

This was Yeongwoo's real intention.

"So let's strip safely here."

As Yeongwoo brandished his sword menacingly in the air, the faces of the Strongest Swords twisted with despair.

They had prepared themselves to some extent, but when it came time to strip together in one place, it was beyond mortifying.

"Hurry up and strip. We don't have time."

As Yeongwoo waved his sword in the air, urging them, Choi Nahmee, the Strongest Sword of Seocho District, hesitated as she touched her top.

"Why don't we have time? We still have at least 10 minutes, don't we?"

Yeongwoo scratched his chin with an awkward smile.

"We need to go down and secure our combat positions, and more importantly...."

"...More importantly?"

"You need to greet your comrades."

"What?"

"What?!"

"Comrades? What do you mean?"

"Is there something else?"

All of a sudden, the Strongest Swords in the room widened their eyes in shock.

Seizing the moment, Yeongwoo quickly held his weapon, Bastard, up to Choi Namhee's neck.

"That's enough. You first. Strip."

"You... You crazy bastard, was this another lie?"

Choi Namhee's face looked as if his world had crumbled.

Unfazed, Yeongwoo responded with a shameless smirk.

"A lie? I just didn't mention it."

Then he pressed the tip of Bastard closer.

Swoosh.

"Down there, in Tsushima, a massive army of red orcs is waiting for us."

"What did you say?"

"Yeongwoo! What are you talking about?"

"The orcs are here?"

This unexpected shock tactic left the Strongest Swords reeling, unable to regain their composure.

"The silver lining is that the orcs are our allies."

At this, Gwanak's Strongest Sword, Jo Sangik, pointed out a very important detail.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

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"Yeongwoo, does this mean... they are also naked?"

"I'm sorry."

"Oh...!"

Jo Sangik was left speechless, merely opening and closing his mouth in disbelief.

Every person in the top floor of the tower was within Yeongwoo's striking range.

"Try not to think of it too badly. When else in your life would you get to fight a naked war? And with over seventeen thousand orcs, no less."

".....!"

Shock upon shock.

"W-Why... Why is this happening?"

Jo Sangik looked at Yeongwoo with a face full of dread, as if staring into the face of pure horror.

At that moment, a system message appeared before everyone.

「In 10 minutes, the business addresses of the companies bidding for planetary development rights will be disclosed.」

"We only have 10 minutes left. Let's all strip. What happens here stays between us."

Dongdaemun's Strongest Sword, Jang Jeongho, muttered with a bead of sweat rolling down his forehead.

"Damn it, what do you mean between us? You said there are seventeen thousand orcs down there."

But surprisingly, Jang Jeongho's pants were already falling to the ground.

Whoosh!

Yeongwoo had swiftly flicked Bastard, snapping off Jang Jeongho's pants button in an instant.

"Huh?"

"Gasp!"

"W-What just happened?"

As Seoul's Strongest Swords faced off against domestic mutants, Yeongwoo's martial skills, honed beyond foreign lands and even alien worlds, had reached a near-supernatural level.

He could undress an opponent without leaving a single scratch.

"For those of you still hesitant to take off your clothes, I'm happy to assist."

With a resigned sigh, Jo Sangik began undressing quickly.

This marked the point at which every Strongest Sword in the room began to strip.

‘This is true unity.’

Watching the Strongest Swords strip swiftly, Yeongwoo smiled in satisfaction.

As soon as the last one was naked, he activated the descent mechanism.

Boom!

The descent mechanism activated, enveloping the room in a bright, white light.

And in an instant—

Flash!

Yeongwoo aimed to transport all the Strongest Swords of Seoul to the center of Tsushima.

If the system hadn't intervened.

「The predicted destination is currently restricted.」

‘...What?’

「Destination changed automatically.」

With a final notification, Yeongwoo and the Strongest Swords stood on a field about 100 meters away from the tower.

Flash!

"What just happened?"

"Did we just teleport?"

The naked swordsmen, realizing something had gone wrong with the teleportation, looked around in surprise.

The situation equally took aback Yeongwoo.

"A restricted area? What the hell is going on..."

With a displeased look, Yeongwoo glared at the lower section of the tower, where he finally realized the problem.

"Ah, right over there."

The high-speed transit station of Tsushima had been installed at the island's center, overlapping with the critical war zone where the "Capture Flag" was located.

Indeed, near the tower's lower section, a translucent, circular barrier had been erected, with a white capture flag planted in the middle.

"It looks like we're restricted from entering until the war officially begins. That's the capture flag we need to seize."

Swoosh.

Yeongwoo pointed at the enormous flag with Bastard, and the Strongest Swords huddled behind him, covering their bodies with their weapons as best as they could.

"If we hold that flag for two hours, we'll be declared the victors of the Tsushima War."

Upon hearing Yeongwoo explain the rules, the Strongest Swords were stunned.

"Two hours?"

"So we have to stay naked for the entire time?"

"That's insane."

Yeongwoo grinned wickedly, as if he had been waiting for this moment.

"There is, of course, one way to end the war faster."

"W-What is it?"

"To ensure no one even attempts to seize the flag, we could eliminate the enemy entirely before then."

As Yeongwoo pointed in the direction the Japanese troops were expected to arrive from, a trumpet sounded loudly from behind him.

Blareeeeeee!

Then, a gigantic shadow fell across Yeongwoo and his group.

"They're here."

Sensing something massive approaching, Yeongwoo turned around.

A red tide filled his vision, as if a crimson wall was rushing toward him.

The naked orc army had come to Tsushima, keeping their promise.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

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[Translator - Night]

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Chapter 337: Becoming Each Other's Shadow (2)

"Th-this is impossible..."

"This is... a nightmare."

"How many orcs are there?"

The endless line of orcs left even the Strongest Swords, standing bare and exposed, with their jaws agape.

"...Fuck, never thought I'd find myself face to face with orcs, especially naked ones."

Just as Jang Jeongho, Strongest Sword of Dongdaemun said, seeing over seventeen thousand naked orcs in one glance was a truly shocking sight.

Meanwhile, elsewhere:

"Master Bang!"

Yeongwoo ran forward, calling out to Bantubangtong, who was supposed to be leading the brothers.

Tat-tat!

Soon, from within the ranks of red-skinned, similarly naked orcs, emerged Master Bang in his bare state.

-A small foot.

"Master Bang! Thank you for traveling such a long way!"

Yeongwoo greeted him cordially, but instead of acknowledging the greeting, Bantubangtong looked at the naked humans gathered behind the small foot.

-Who are they?

"They are the best swordsmen of Seoul. They have considerable martial skills and will help protect the brothers."

Yeongwoo intended to position these swordsmen among the brothers to face the Japanese army.

-I see.

After listening to Yeongwoo's words, Bantubangtong nodded.

Then, raising his head again, he searched for Jeonggu.

-Where is Jeonggu? Is he dressed as promised?

Bantubangtong wanted to verify whether the troublesome small foot had clothed Jeonggu as agreed.

Anticipating this, Yeongwoo gave a sly smile.

"I left my father safely in Seoul."

-...Are you sure? Is Jeonggu really in Seoul?

"If you don't believe me, you can visit Seoul after the war is over."

-.....

Bantubangtong still looked doubtful.

However, with the war about to begin, Yeongwoo couldn't afford any more delays.

"There are far more brothers than expected. I think placing our people in units of around 2,000 brothers each would be best."

Just as Yeongwoo said this and was about to call the naked Strongest Swords gathered in the distance, a large timer appeared above the occupied territory far away.

Flash!

[00:04:59]

"Five minutes...!"

The war on Tsushima Island was about to begin.

But there was another issue.

Screeeech!

It wasn't just the timer that appeared with five minutes left until the start of the war.

"Huh, what is that?"

"...Huh?"

"Everyone, look at the sky!"

The Strongest Swords, already on edge due to their nakedness, were the first to notice the change.

A bluish barrier was forming in the sky above Tsushima Island.

Then, soon after:

Pop-pop-pop!

Tiny metallic objects started forming a mesh-like structure over the barrier.

"What... what is that?"

"They look like metal balls."

"What is this, a concert stage?"

The Strongest Swords's worried comments were pretty accurate.

Moments later, those 'metal balls' started rolling around in place like eyeballs.

Seeing this, Yeongwoo let out a deep sigh.

'These insane bastards are installing cameras out in the open?'

Knowing that this war was being filmed as content by Lemu, Yeongwoo realized that those objects in the sky were thousands of miniature cameras.

Indeed, a few moments later:

Whirrrr!

Some of the metal balls in the center of Tsushima Island's sky fused together, forming a much larger, round camera.

'...The main camera.'

Yeongwoo realized there was no longer any point in hiding the fact they were being filmed.

As he closed his eyes in resignation, the Strongest Swords began screaming and pointing at the sky.

"Th-that, isn't that a camera?"

"What?"

"Fuck, it really is?"

"Is this all being recorded?"

The Strongest Swords, realizing they were being filmed by an advanced alien camera, directed their gaze towards Jeong Yeongwoo, the person behind this unbelievable scene.

"Yeongwoo?"

"You madman, Jeong Yeongwoo!"

"What is going on here? Explain yourself!"

"....."

Yeongwoo responded with a bitter smile, looking up at the camera.

"Yes, that's right. It's all being recorded."

"W-what?"

"Are you saying that's really a camera?"

The flustered Strongest Swords tried to cover themselves with their arms and weapons.

However, turning their backs to the main camera exposed them to the naked orc army, and turning around made them face the camera head-on, leaving them in a dilemma.

Eventually:

Thud!

Jo Sangik, the Strongest Sword of Gwanak District, gave up even trying to cover himself and stepped forward to face Yeongwoo.

"...Yeongwoo."

"Yes."

"Given the situation, I won't complain pointlessly."

"That's what I expected from the Vice Minister."

At that moment, a holographic guide appeared in Yeongwoo's vision.

".....!"

Just as Yeongwoo's pupils dilated, former Vice Minister of Strategy and Finance Jo Sangik lunged at him, grabbing him by the throat.

"But, you crazy bastard! Have some damn sense...!"

Finally, Yeongwoo's devilish schemes had shattered even Jo Sangik's composure.

"You... argh!"

Jo Sangik, completely losing his temper, clung to Yeongwoo naked, screaming in rage.

Yeongwoo allowed him to strike a bit before gripping Jo Sangik's arm tightly and throwing him effortlessly.

Thud, wham!

"Vice Minister Jo, aren't you part of the core of this country's administration? There's a lot more ahead; if you lose your temper over this, how will you handle what's coming next?"

Jo Sangik, sprawled on the ground, asked in a voice that sounded like he was about to cry.

"Over this? What the hell is going on next? What is this all about?"

"I'm sorry. It's true that this scene is being filmed, and yes, we're getting paid for it."

"Wh-who is filming...?"

"Lemu. It's a galactic adult film production company."

"Are you saying we are currently appearing in some kind of... galactic adult film?"

"Yes, probably. Although I'm not sure exactly how it will be used."

"....."

Jo Sangik closed his eyes as if resigned to his fate.

The other Strongest Swords, who had been listening closely, did the same.

"Still, the people on Earth won't be able to see this footage."

Although the words 'most likely' were left unsaid, the Strongest Swords knew what it implied.

If aliens could see it, then one day, the people of Earth would too.

After all, Jeong Yeongwoo's vision was to make Earth part of the universe.

"You've sold our dignity. To the galaxy, no less."

Jo Sangik muttered in agony, eyes still closed.

Yeongwoo pulled him up forcefully.

"Don't be ridiculous, Vice Minister. Whose dignity did I sell? I sold your naked bodies."

Then, pointing south of Tsushima Island, he said:

"If a bit of nudity can make your dignity vanish, then you might as well go die out there."

And in the direction he pointed, there was the sound of a roaring crowd:

"Waaaahhh...!"

"There it is! I see the occupation flag!"

The enemy in this Tsushima War, the Japanese army, was charging forward.

And they were completely naked.

It was exactly as Yeongwoo had said.

"What... what is this?"

"Huh...?"

"They're naked over there too?"

The Strongest Swords, seeing the naked Japanese soldiers, were confused.

It was one thing for them to be naked, but having everyone on this battlefield unclothed was an entirely different matter.

In that moment, Yeongwoo quickly took control of the situation.

"The Japanese army! The Japanese army is attacking!"

"...What?"

The term "Japanese army" wasn't technically incorrect, but it was a deliberate choice meant to stir emotions.

As soon as they heard that the Japanese army was attacking, the fighting spirit of every Strongest Sword surged.

Perhaps it was a deep-seated national resentment.

In a way, it wasn't just the Red-foot Orcs who embodied history in living vessels.

"If we lose the occupation flag to the Japanese army, not only will we be defeated, but we won't get paid either! Stop them now!"

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

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Yeongwoo shouted roughly while brandishing his sword, and the Strongest Swords, who had been busy covering themselves up until now, hesitated before picking up their weapons.

No matter how much their naked selves were exposed in the universe, losing to the Japanese army right in front of them was something they couldn't bear.

“Damn it, this really is a Korean-Japanese War.”

“Why the hell are those guys naked too?”

“Let's win this war first, then we can talk.”

Finally motivated to fight, the Strongest Swords sprang up from their positions, while Bantubangtong, standing in front of the Red-foot Orcs' formation, looked at the timer in the air.

[00:00:23]

There were 23 seconds left until the protective shield around the occupation flag disappeared.

Bantubangtong turned back to his brothers and gave an order.

- It's time to make our fallen brothers shine even brighter!

Then, waving his hand forward, he shouted.

- Spearmen, to your positions!

Seventeen thousand Red-foot Orcs immediately shifted their stances, and the spearmen, who had been preparing their spears among the infantry, stepped forward.

[00:00:06]

And with only 6 seconds left...

- Ready!

At Lord Bang's command, the spear-wielding brothers took their throwing stances, and as the timer hit 2 seconds...

[00:00:02]

With a shout!

A brother holding a large brazier ran forward from a designated section of the formation.

Boom!

And then...

[00:00:00]

Bang!

The moment the timer expired, he hurled the large brazier towards the direction of the occupation flag.

Whoosh!

The flames and torches inside the brazier scattered, creating a kind of flare effect, and the advancing Japanese soldiers were suddenly illuminated.

“Huh!”

“What, what is that?”

“Orcs...!”

“Orcs!”

The current time was exactly 7 PM.

The sky was growing dark, so the Red-foot Orc army was also revealed by the brazier's light.

Realizing that an Orc unit had been lying in wait across the Tsushima region, the naked Japanese warriors momentarily froze, and in that instant, the Red-foot Orcs launched their spears.

- Spear throw, commence!

At Lord Bang's command, thousands of large spears soared into the air.

Whooosh!

It was as if they were under a massive storm cloud, with the sky filled with piercing sounds, and in an instant, spear tips rained down over the Japanese soldiers.

But even more surprising was the skill of the Japanese soldiers.

Ping! Ping! Ping! Ping!

Naked, without a single piece of armor, the Japanese soldiers displayed incredibly precise movements, deflecting all the spear tips.

‘What is that? I’ve never seen this kind of weapon before.’

Yeongwoo’s eyebrow twitched.

He noticed that every Japanese soldier held something like a glowing sword.

It was a faint, slightly blurred light, as if light was refracted underwater, and every Japanese soldier had one.

This must be the special blessing granted by Lemu.

“What the hell... Why are they fighting so well?”

Seeing the Japanese soldiers deflecting thousands of spears, the Strongest Swords from Seoul suddenly became tense.

And finally...

Swoosh!

The Japanese side easily cut down the last spear and let out a triumphant cheer.

“Waaaah!”

“The Tsushima War will be our victory!”

“Charge forward, everyone!”

Having successfully defended against the first attack, the Japanese army's morale soared, and as they rushed toward the occupation flag, the Seoul Strongest Swords realized the identity of their opponents.

“Those are... Sword Masters, Sword Emperors.”

“Swordmasters? Aren’t those regional titles?”

Most of the 200 naked warriors Yuto had prepared were top-tier Japanese fighters with regional titles.

“Go secure the flag!”

By now, the Japanese army was almost at the white occupation flag, and the naked Strongest Swords, growing anxious, turned to look at Yeongwoo.

“Is it time to move in? We’ll lose if they take the flag, right?”

“Yeongwoo, are you going to fight or not?”

“Look at that! They’re about to capture the flag!”

The Strongest Swords hastily got into their fighting stances.

However, the Japanese force included hundreds of elite fighters.

Engaging without Yeongwoo would be a suicidal move, so everyone awaited his battle command.

Then finally, Yeongwoo looked around with a satisfied expression.

“It seems everyone is ready now.”

“What?”

“Ready for war, that is.”

Then, he suddenly looked up at the sky.

“General! It’s been a while since we requested artillery support. The target coordinates are...!”

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

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[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 338: Becoming Each Other's Shadow (3)

"Earth! 319, 104, 8113, 62!"

When Yeongwoo shouted the coordinates of the central part of Tsushima, everyone on the Korean side flinched and stepped back.

This was because both Seoul's Strongest Swords and the Red-footed Orcs harbored a fear of Yeongwoo's asymmetrical power.

And soon after...

Boom!

With a sound like the heavens splitting open, a laser designed for planetary bombardment shot down from above.

It covered only half of the central part of Tsushima where the occupation flag was planted.

'Let's try killing only half of them for now!'

There were two main reasons why Yeongwoo targeted only half of the Japanese forces, despite having access to such a laser bombardment.

The first reason was that if all the top Japanese fighters in this place were massacred, it would become difficult to handle Japan's mutants in the future.

After this war, they would need to demand reparations daily, and for those reparations to be obtained, someone needed to deal with the mutants.

More importantly, the mutants had to be managed before civilians were wiped out.

Therefore, it was more convenient for Yeongwoo if some of the regional titleholders from the Japanese side survived.

'But it's not like all of them need to stay alive.'

And the second reason was none other than:

[The Proxy of Dogo must fight with one of their arms severed.]

This was part of the current war agreement—an "arm-severing" rule.

However, since no warning message had appeared yet, it seemed that...

'Does the system consider that the battle hasn't officially started? I thought it would warn us immediately, but it's surprisingly lax.'

Contrary to Yeongwoo's thoughts, it wasn't the system that was lacking.

The real shortcoming was...

Boom!

Yeongwoo's predictive ability.

Swoosh, Bang!

Toma's planetary bombardment struck the central part of Tsushima but couldn't penetrate the camera network installed by Lemu above.

"Huh?"

Not only did it fail to penetrate, but it even seemed like the cameras scattered by Lemu over Tsushima were absorbing the laser.

"What the hell? Is this really what those Toma bastards call a weapon?"

Of course, that didn't mean Toma was weak.

It was just that Lemu wasn't so easy to beat down like a mere punching bag.

"What... what was that?"

"Did something just come from the sky...?"

"Huh?"

The sudden appearance and disappearance of the laser bombardment left the Japanese side equally bewildered.

It was shocking enough that a laser had suddenly appeared from the sky, but for it to vanish like a lie in an instant?

"Did we imagine that...?"

"No, I definitely heard it. Someone called out coordinates from over there..."

While the Japanese "Naked Resistance" unit of 200 warriors looked confused, someone stepped forward to resolve the situation.

And that was none other than:

Thud!

『Tokyo Sword Emperor』

Kawachi Yuto03, the person who brought Lemu to Japan.

Like his comrades, he was also in a naked state.

Pointing at the cameras above Tsushima, he spoke confidently.

"Did everyone see? Lemu is protecting us!"

Even though he knew the difference in strength between both sides due to a previous card game, Yuto's spirit was truly incredible.

Even Absolute Demon Yeongwoo had to admire it secretly.

'He's definitely something else.'

As expected from a human with an alien sponsor and one of Japan's representatives.

He probably sensed defeat was near, yet he still chanted for his sponsor until the very end.

"Everyone, raise your voices together! Lemu!"

"Leeemuuu!"

"Lemu...!"

As the naked warriors raised their glowing weapons to the sky and chanted Lemu's name, the large camera of Lemu installed above shone down on them.

And then, soon after:

Tap!

Yuto touched the occupation flag planted in the central part of Tsushima.

Immediately, the white occupation flag displayed Lemu's emblem—a square.

A system message then appeared in the air.

「The Proxy of Lemu has secured the occupation flag!」

「Lemu's Cumulative Occupation Time: 1 second」

This was the moment when the official war interface appeared.

Flash!

[17,619 – 201]

"Huh? What's that...?"

"What is that?"

"No way."

It was obvious to anyone: those numbers represented the forces of both sides.

The Korean side, composed of Seoul and the Red-footed Orcs, showed their combined troop numbers.

Meanwhile, Japan's side consisted of Yuto and his 200 naked warriors.

"Is there really such a huge difference in numbers?"

"This is insane... It makes us look like total bullies."

Seoul's Strongest Swords expressed discomfort.

Of course, the majority of the Japanese side were titleholders, so there wasn't a huge difference with the Korean side in terms of total combat power.

Still, it felt disgraceful to pit nearly 20,000 soldiers against just 200.

"Uh, Yeongwoo, is this okay?"

"...Is there no concept of war ethics in space?"

When the Strongest Swords voiced their concerns about the overwhelming difference in numbers, Yeongwoo became furious and raised his sword against his allies.

"What nonsense are you spouting in the middle of a war? If you had to kill me, wouldn't you bring 200,000 soldiers?"

"Uh, well... that's true..."

Hearing such words, they found it convincing.

"Those guys are also crazy people with alien sponsors. Don't be swayed by mere numbers!"

「Lemu's Cumulative Occupation Time: 17 seconds」

As Yeongwoo pointed to the steadily increasing occupation time of Lemu, the Strongest Swords finally gripped their weapons tightly.

"Now that I think about it, you're right."

"...Yes. If we think about trying to kill Yeongwoo..."

But the lukewarm atmosphere lasted only for a moment.

Swoosh!

Suddenly, a series of white beams rained down from the sky like a barrage, and this time, Lemu's cameras didn't block them.

"...Damn it. Of course."

Sensing something, Yeongwoo turned his gaze towards Lemu's forces.

There, white silhouettes appeared endlessly around Yuto and the 200 naked warriors.

Pa-pa-pa-pat!

Lemu had sent reinforcements to Yuto.

The mercenaries sent by Lemu were a type of android, equipped with swords and shields made of light.

They were two meters tall and looked like mannequins with a fully humanoid appearance, but their semi-transparent material was clearly not of Earth origin.

At first glance, it seemed like glass, but since no one would send glass robots into battle, the strength of that strange exterior was unknown.

"What the...?"

"They... they keep increasing?"

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

The top swordsmen pointed out the state of the growing army in mid-air.

[17,619 – 1,849]

The Lemu faction's numbers, which were only 201 a moment ago, had swelled to 1,849.

Then, a second wave of even larger white beams fell from the sky, and it was then that everyone on the battlefield realized what was happening.

Lemu was matching their headcount with Dogo's side.

[17,619 – 4,735]

As the Lemu faction's total surged to 4,735, Yeongwoo stepped forward towards the enemy and spoke.

"Why do villains in manga always lose? It's because they foolishly wait for their opponents to finish transforming."

He then took out a black sword from his weapon inventory and threw it forward.

Swooosh!

Just as the Lemu androids were getting up after landing on Earth, they were pierced one after another by Yeongwoo's sword.

Crash!

Twenty of Lemu's androids were shattered with a single throw, causing the previously confident Japanese forces to hesitate.

Taking advantage of this moment, Yeongwoo abruptly severed his own left arm.

Swoosh!

"Huh?"

"What?!"

"What the heck is that?"

Both allies and enemies were stunned by this shocking display.

But to Yeongwoo, it was merely a doping tactic to instantly boost his stats through the loss of a limb and the resulting blood loss.

“Let's go! Kill them all before their reinforcements are finished!”

Determined to end the battle quickly without worrying about the aftermath, Yeongwoo shouted with a murderous glint in his eyes, and the 17,000 Red Foot brothers responded first.

- Shield bearers, to the front! Initiate the advance formation!

Bantubangtong commanded, pointing his massive sword toward the Lemu faction.

The javelin throwers in the front row stepped back, positioning their spears forward, while the brothers with large shields took the front line, forming their ranks.

And then.

Thud, thud, thud!

The 17,604 Red Foot brothers started marching forward in perfect unison.

It was the same infantry tactic they had practiced countless times on their home planet, now being executed on this foreign world.

Yeongwoo hastily shouted at the naked top swordsmen.

“Our brothers are not invincible! There will definitely be bloodshed, so spread out and help maintain the formation!”

At this, Jo Sangik, who had already seen the advancing Red Foot orcs behind him, asked in a flustered voice.

“Then, Yeongwoo, what about you...!”

But Yeongwoo was already gone.

Leap!

He was already rushing toward the Lemu faction, holding his severed arm aloft.

“Yuto! Come out and face my sword!”

As Yeongwoo yelled, intending to cut off the enemy commander's head, Yuto, who was hiding among the naked warriors, gave a sly grin.

[17,619 – 13,402]

The two armies were now nearly equal in numbers.

All he had to do was deal with that one-armed Strongest Sword, and Lemu's reinforcements would handle the rest.

“Comrades, our moment has come. If we kill that one-armed man, this war is ours.”

Yuto pointed his blazing sword tip at Yeongwoo as he spoke.

At that moment, the one-armed warrior unexpectedly blew a whistle.

Fweeeet!

“...?”

Suddenly, the sky darkened, and an ominous presence could be felt from far above.

Yuto was reminded of the cards he had seen at the negotiation table.

Those cards were based on the actual forces present, so it was possible that some of them might appear on this battlefield.

And just as he thought, he saw it.

— Waaah!

— Aaaah!

— Look at that, the place is crawling with those invaders.

— W-What... there are so many of them?

With eerie voices, four massive silhouettes, known as "Workers," fell from the sky.

“...The Workers.”

Yuto instinctively looked up and recognized the reinforcements as the very same "Workers" he had only seen on the cards.

[The Workers]

"Yeongtae, Taejoon, Younghyeom, Geumhwa."

| Card Grade: Epic

| Power: 1,000

Performance-based

If this card is drawn again, its power doubles.

But then, something unexpected happened, even for Yeongwoo, who commanded the Laborers.

「A special condition of this battlefield has been partially fulfilled.」

“...What?”

「The effects of certain cards deployed on the battlefield are now activating.」

At that moment, the bodies of the Laborers, who were just about to hit the ground, started glowing with an unusual light.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 339: Becoming Each Other's Shadow (4)

“What? What kind of crazy nonsense is that?”

Yeongwoo's eyes widened as he read the system message.

「Some card effects from the power deployed in the battlefield are now activating.」

No matter how many times he read it, it meant that the special effects of the cards used at the negotiation table were also taking effect here in this battle.

Take, for instance, the “Workers” card.

Performance-based

If this card is drawn again, its power doubles.

The performance-based effect doubled its power.

And sure enough, the workers descending from the sky were now surrounded by a radiant glow, different from before.

‘How does this make sense? Even if the war rules were set at the negotiation table, the card effects are actually being implemented here?’

Yeongwoo still looked confused.

If the special effects of the cards were indeed being applied here on Tsushima, what would happen to his father, Jeonggu?

[Before the Storm: Jeonggu]

“Jeonggu is still alive, shielded by the mysteries of the universe.”

|Card Grade: Legendary

|Power: 1,000

Suspicious Straw

<Always defeats cards of the same grade. However, it loses to all other cards.>

A card that always wins against cards of the same grade, such as Jeonggu.

Which meant that he would automatically win against Lemu, another Legendary.

‘What kind of place is this?’

If Jeonggu had been here, what would have happened?

Yeongwoo felt a shiver run down his spine.

And meanwhile...

—What the...?

—It feels like my body got bigger?

—I... feel strange.

Yeongwoo's friends, officially titled “Workers,” landed on the battlefield.

BOOM!

Four mutated giants entered the battlefield, and the Lemu forces surrounding the capture flag collapsed in an instant.

To avoid being crushed by the mutants, they had no choice but to fall back.

On top of that, due to the "Performance-based Pay" card effect, Yeongwoo's friends' bodies had indeed grown larger.

Even General Kim Younghyeom, who had returned as a white tiger, was originally around 5 meters long, but now looked closer to 8 meters.

—Fighting the Japanese on Tsushima—now that’s a strange situation. Am I allowed to kill every Japanese here?

General Kim Younghyeom bared his gleaming fangs with a sinister line, and Yeongwoo spoke up loudly, making sure everyone heard him.

“You can kill anyone holding a sword, but if they disarm or flee outside Tsushima, don’t kill them. We should spare a few for post-war administration.”

“.....!”

For the Japanese soldiers, this sounded like a compelling surrender offer.

It was essentially saying that they would be spared if they dropped their swords and fled Tsushima.

And it wasn’t out of compassion; it was simply for easier post-war governance.

‘Is this guy... really going to spare the ones who surrender?’

‘This is basically our last chance, isn’t it?’

‘If we don’t take this chance now, we might not get another...’

The Japanese soldiers’ resolve began to waver.

With morale already crushed by the combined forces of the orc legion and mutated giants, they were all the more inclined to give in.

Seeing this, Yuto, the Tokyo Sword Emperor, widened his eyes and looked around at his allies.

“What is happening? Does that nonsense really shake you all after coming this far?”

“.....”

“If we lose here today, Japan will become a defeated nation forever!”

Yuto understood better than anyone that there would be no next time.

This wasn’t just a national conflict; it was a proxy war for the powers of the universe.

Once this war ended, there was a high chance that no further internal wars would occur.

From then on, they'd be busy with planetary development and making contact with the worlds beyond the sky.

"When we took off our clothes, we also threw away our lives! Fight with everything you have! Lemu is still with us!"

As Yuto shouted and gripped his sword tightly,

BOOM!

The Red Foot Orcs, maintaining their formation, struck Lemu's flank.

-Shield-bearers! Keep pushing forward!

-Split their forces!

-CHARGE...!

Like bulldozers, the shield-bearers pressed forward, spear-wielders thrusting behind them, while axemen swiftly infiltrated the gaps created by the assault.

The Red Foot Orcs, who had experienced numerous large-scale battles, were leagues ahead of the Japanese troops, who had only a week of experience in this reset world.

The same went for the combat robots Lemu had sent as reinforcements.

Not being a company that made war machines, Lemu's combat robots were simply physically powerful and numerous, but lacked any sophisticated combat abilities.

Smash, crash!

They were swept away helplessly by the three-stage tactics of the Red Foot Orcs.

Moreover, Seoul's Strongest Swords mingled within the orc formation, reinforcing their firepower, causing Lemu's numbers, which had overtaken the Dogo forces, to dwindle again.

[17,619 – 19,330]

When both sides clashed, the numbers had been nearly 19,000.

Flash!

[17,602 – 17,483]

But in the blink of an eye, it dropped to 17,000, with some casualties on the Red Foot Orc side as well.

However, the exchange ratio was so disproportionate that the balance of power on both sides, briefly even, was broken in an instant.

[17,531 – 15,207]

Lemu's forces lost 4,000 in an instant.

While the remaining numbers were still roughly equal, the two armies felt vastly different.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

The Dogo forces, seeing their opponents crumble as they advanced, gained momentum, while the Japanese swordsmen on the collapsing side felt their morale drain rapidly.

Seeing only alien robots all around them, even those were flung around like paper dolls each time one of the massive mutants swung their bodies.

—What the hell is this? It's neither glass nor metal.

General Kim Younghyeom spat out some remnants of a Lemu combat robot that was caught in his teeth, growling as he did.

A Japanese swordsman who happened to be standing nearby trembled, realizing that a human body would be as crushed in those teeth as the remnants of the robot.

Finally...

"Screw it!"

He became the first deserter from the Lemu forces.

Tap tap!

Throwing away the sword Lemu had given him, he started sprinting south.

"No... no way!"

Yuto, who was the first to spot the deserter and thus the first crack in the Japanese ranks, felt his face twist like a demon's.

He instantly realized that this would lead to a chain reaction of further defections.

“Stop! Anyone leaving now is a traitor to the nation!”

As Yuto shouted and prepared to hurl his sword at the deserter’s back, a crimson silhouette blocked his path.

Whoosh!

It was none other than Jeong Yeongwoo, the proxy of Dogo.

He had finally broken through Lemu’s reinforcements and arrived before Yuto.

“Yuto-san, doesn’t Japan also need a future?”

“...What?”

“If all of Japan’s Sword Masters and Sword Emperors die here today, it will put us in a very difficult position. Someone has to survive to pay the tribute, don’t you think?”

Yuto ground his teeth, glancing at the deserter, who was now a distant figure.

“And who’s supposed to pay this tribute? The war isn’t over yet.”

“Is that so?”

Yeongwoo didn’t rebuke him directly.

Instead, he shifted his gaze to the battlefield status displayed in the air.

[17,422 – 11,829]

“You already know you can’t beat me in a one-on-one duel. You even lost to me in that card game.”

“.....”

“And now you’re losing this war as well. At this rate, the Japan you worked so hard to uplift will end up stripped of everything—even its soles.”

Yeongwoo was offering Yuto one last chance—a chance to live long enough to keep paying the tribute.

But.

Slash!

Contrary to Yeongwoo's expectations, Yuto lunged forward, swinging his sword and shouting:

Achwing!

"One-armed bastard! If I kill this guy, the war ends! Forget everything else, focus on killing him first!"

His plan was to immobilize Yeongwoo's sole arm and have his men attack from behind.

But things didn't go as he intended.

Clang!

Yeongwoo effortlessly parried Yuto's blade and then thrust forward with Bastard, piercing through Yuto's sword. It was the activation of one of the mythical blade's unique effects: Contempt the Weak.

【Contempt for the weak】

| This blade's attacks can only be blocked by equipment of mythical grade or higher.

"Wha...?!"

Yuto's disbelief was evident as he saw Yeongwoo's blade cut through his guard.

He had never encountered a mythical weapon before and couldn't have imagined such an extraordinary ability.

In contrast, Yeongwoo...

Slash!

...severed Yuto's right arm in a single stroke, finally revealing the voice befitting a commander of a foreign land.

"My true enemies are beyond that sky. You are not even worthy to be my foe. This sword is proof of that."

The mythical sword Bastard was designed to prevent even a single exchange with anyone unworthy.

With Yuto's blood dripping from the blade, Yeongwoo turned to face the Japanese swordsmen who had been about to flank him.

Seeing Yuto lose his arm in a single strike froze them in place.

They realized that even if all the Sword Masters and Sword Emperors here attacked at once, victory was far from guaranteed.

“.....”

Finally, Yeongwoo made a proposal—not mercy, but an offer to defect.

“Those who leave here alive will prepare the tribute for the Korean Peninsula. That is how you’ll survive.”

“.....!”

“If you have family or friends left back on the mainland, you’ll get to see them again. You’ll even get to keep breathing.”

Then, he looked skyward once more.

Perhaps the night had grown darker because the paths of vengeance shining in the heavens appeared even more radiant.

“Of course, dying heroically here is also an option. I won’t force you to choose. But if you wish to live, start running now.”

Whoosh!

Yeongwoo pointed south with Bastard, and the Japanese swordsmen hesitated, their expressions conflicted.

If staying here meant certain death, then running and surviving seemed like the wiser choice.

In the end...

Tap tap!

Dozens of swordsmen began fleeing southward.

At that moment, a new war notification appeared.

Ding!

「Mara’s proxy has discovered Dogo’s planetary business site!」

“What? Are those bastards looting the empty house...?”

While this scenario had been anticipated, there was one variable Yeongwoo hadn't accounted for:

-Mara?

-Mara...!

-It's Mara!

The red-footed orcs stationed in Tsushima also saw the war notification.

Unsurprisingly, moments later, Bantubangtong, pointing to the tower next to the occupation flag, roared:

-The path has finally opened! All troops, advance to Seoul!

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 340: The Path of Vengeance (1)

"What? Lord Bang! What are you talking about? The war here isn't over yet!"

Yeongwoo looked dumbfounded as he saw the brothers already beginning their retreat.

No matter how one-sided the battle seemed, the war wasn't finished.

They needed to hold the flag for at least another hour to secure victory.

If the Lemu faction attempted a counterattack, they'd need to fight for another two hours at the very least.

-That's right. The war isn't over yet.

Lord Bang nodded in agreement, but his eyes were already filled with vengeance.

-Our war starts now! Mara is in Seoul... Mara!

As Lord Bang roared with rage, his voice seemed to pierce the heavens.

Seventeen thousand brothers raised their weapons in unison, shouting in response.

-Mara!

-The path of vengeance is open!

-Maraaaaa!

'These lunatics.'

Of course, Yeongwoo understood the sentiments of the brothers.

Mara had mercilessly massacred their kin, even driving them to the brink of extinction, after taking their home planet.

How could they not be consumed with vengeance against Mara?

Compared to that, the war over Daemado seemed trivial in their eyes.

But for Yeongwoo, who had ambitions to claim dominion over this planet and secure massive funding from extraterrestrial backers, this war was a crucial business opportunity.

"No one leaves until this war is over."

Yeongwoo brandished his sword menacingly as he spoke, causing Lord Bang, who had been heading toward the tower with the brothers, to twitch his eyebrows.

-What did you say?

"Mara's true body isn't even in Seoul. It's just a proxy that's been found. Hardly a reason to halt the war."

-But now...!

Wasn't the presence of a proxy in Seoul essentially a signal for full-scale war with Mara?

To the Redfoot Orcs, the news was tantamount to declaring an all-out battle against Mara.

-This planet is your planet, yes. But it's also our new home.

The message was clear: they couldn't allow Mara to claim this planet, which was supposed to be their new sanctuary after losing their home.

Yeongwoo nodded as if it were obvious.

“Indeed. As I promised, the brothers will thrive on this land. But to ensure that—”

Swish.

Yeongwoo reached out, and from the distance, a golden goblin scurried over, handing him a commemorative coin bearing Yeongwoo’s face.

Yeongwoo tossed the coin to Bantubangtong.

Whizz!

-...What’s the meaning of this?

Thud!

Catching the coin, Bantubangtong tilted his head in confusion.

“Money.”

-Money?

“Don’t lose sight of the bigger picture by getting caught up in immediate concerns, Lord Bang. Money comes first.”

-What nonsense are you talking about? There’s someone from Mara in Seoul right now...!

“And what about here?”

-...?

“There’s a mountain of wealth here, yet you’re willing to abandon military funding just to chase after one of Mara’s proxies?”

With that, Yeongwoo made his trademark scheming gesture.

Fwoosh!

He pointed his scimitar toward the sky—or rather, the cosmos.

“Mara’s proxy is just a human under Mara’s shadow. Your true enemy lies beyond, out there in the universe.”

-Small Foot...! Are you trying to deceive us again?

Bantubangtong, sensing déjà vu, raised his voice.

But Yeongwoo silenced him with an even louder retort, crushing his momentum.

“The Master of the Void! The King of Ten Thousand Demons!”

-What...?

“The one who walks in the shadow of cosmic law. In the universe, that’s what Mara is called. And that bastard is the ultimate tax evader, the kind even our chairman couldn’t touch!”

Of course, there was no official evidence about taxes.

“To face a lunatic of Mara’s caliber, what do you need? Courage? Burning vengeance?”

Yeongwoo’s rhetorical question left Bantubangtong speechless.

As victims, neither he nor his brothers knew much about Mara, who loomed large as a cosmic force.

But Yeongwoo, who had looked toward the stars early on, knew what was essential to challenge the King of King of Ten Thousand Demonss.

“Money. A ridiculous amount of money.”

Money—known as Karma in universal terms.

Coincidentally, a word also used on Earth to mean “fate” or “consequences.”

And with enough Karma, one could transcend the limits of their species, even bribing cosmic officials.

Perhaps...

“We can defeat even the King of King of Ten Thousand Demonss with enough money. Forget about clashing with one of his underlings.”

As Yeongwoo laid out the reasons for finishing the war, Bantubangtong swallowed hard, his expression grim.

-But... isn’t Seoul important to you and us as well? Your kin live there.

‘Your kin,’ referring to the citizens of Seoul.

“Yes, that’s why I left my parents there.”

-...Jeonggu!

“My mother is the guardian dragon of Metal Seoul. She’ll do her duty—protecting her husband and the city. And she only needs to hold out for an hour.”

-An hour...?

As Bantubangtong tilted his head in confusion, Yeongwoo strode toward the battlefield, moving among the Redfoot Orcs, Strongest Sword, and a significant number of Japanese troops who still held their ground.

He placed his hand on the central flag planted in Daemado.

Thump.

The flag, previously marked with Lemu’s insignia, now bore the wedge-shaped symbol of Dogo, transitioning its status to “Contested.”

“One hour! If the opposing faction doesn’t attempt to reclaim the flag in an hour, the war ends automatically.”

Yeongwoo’s words drained the color from the faces of the Japanese forces.

“So if you truly want to head to Seoul to deal with Mara’s proxy, finish this war cleanly first.”

The implication was clear: if they killed every enemy here to prevent any attempts to retake the flag, they could secure their military resources and head to Seoul afterward.

-...

Bantubangtong looked away from the tower, instead gazing at the sky—or rather, the universe.

The seventeen thousand Redfoot Orcs followed his gaze upward.

-...The cosmos.

Bantubangtong murmured as he envisioned the universe beyond.

Yeongwoo shook his head, correcting Bantubangtong’s line.

“To us, the cosmos is ‘Mara.’ And in this war, we’re earning our fare to reach Mara. In one hour.”

Having completed his universal logic for vengeance, Yeongwoo pointed his sword at the Lemu faction.

“They’ll open the path to Mara for us! The path of vengeance still shines brightly!”

With golden light gleaming in his eyes, Yeongwoo’s words spurred the Redfoot Orcs to reorganize their ranks.

Before Lord Bang even issued an order, they decided on their own: finish the Daemado War first, then march to Seoul.

-Mara!

-Open the path to Mara!

-Maraaaa!

The furious cries of the orcs sounded like the whirring of cash registers to Yeongwoo.

‘Perfect. Time to bleed Lemu dry.’

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

As the brothers turned back from the tower, the Japanese swordsmen began retreating in fear.

Having overheard the earlier conversation, they were utterly overwhelmed.

How could they possibly outdo this madness aimed at the universe?

Even the desperation of Tokyo’s Sword Master, who sought foreign backing at the cost of his dignity, paled in comparison.

“Screw... screw this. What path is there for us?”

“These guys are completely insane.”

The only sensible course of action when dealing with madmen: avoid them.

Especially when those madmen were enraged orcs.

And so, finally—

Clank, clank!

The Japanese Sword Masters, along with their elite forces, threw down their weapons and fled.

The retreat had begun.

Yuto, still holding his sword, desperately shouted after them.

"If we retreat here, Japan is finished! Are you willing to be ruled by them?"

In response, a swordsman who had been standing by Yuto's side until then slowly lowered his sword and stepped back, saying:

"Those guys... they're already aliens. They never planned to rule us; they're just lunatics."

"...What?"

Hearing this, Yuto hastily turned to look at his side, but the swordsman in question was no longer there.

Tat-tat!

He was already far away, retreating with his back turned.

Instead...

Fwaaaaah...

A massive shadow, so large it darkened the twilight air of 7 PM, began to stretch over Yuto's feet.

"Yuto."

"...!"

The voice and the shadow's owner—

"...Ye-Yeongwoo."

The number one swordsman of the Korean Peninsula, Jeong Yeongwoo⁰⁷, stood before him.

Had he always been this large?

Yuto blinked nervously and finally saw clearly:

Behind the now-naked Jeong Yeongwoo⁰⁷ stood an endless line of orc soldiers, forming a fortress-like wall.

Darker than the darkness itself.

Yuto looked at the figure towering before him like a demon king and muttered:

"You... you're the true evil, aren't you?"

At this, Jeong Yeongwoo raised his crimson demon sword high and spoke in a flat tone:

"Thank you for sending my brothers and me to space. Send my regards to Mara in the void."

Then, without hesitation, he struck down at Yuto.

* * *

Same time, near the tower in Samsung-dong, Metal Seoul, Dogo Special City.

「A representative of Mara has discovered Dogo's planetary office!」

The ominous alert had appeared five minutes ago, prompting Jiseon to rush outside.

Yet despite this, nothing seemed to be happening in Seoul.

—What's going on? Isn't this the only Dogo planetary office?

Jiseon let out a shallow sigh as she scanned the still and quiet Seoul skyline.

Although she was tense—her son was away during this unexpected situation—the lack of any actual incident left her feeling anticlimactic.

Then, moments later—

Tat-tat!

A faint presence. Jeonggu came running out from the direction of the Parnas Hotel.

"Dear! Are you alright?"

Apparently, he'd been hiding inside the hotel for the five minutes following the alert, only now daring to emerge.

Jiseon frowned and pointed the tip of her frost greatsword at Jeonggu.

—You idiot, don't say things like that when Yeongwoo's not here. Just don't call me at all.

“But... but...”

Jeonggu faltered, looking around nervously.

He couldn't help but worry Yeongwoo might have installed cameras throughout Seoul to keep an eye on his parents.

But Jiseon didn't care about that.

What mattered to her was the ominous alert she'd just seen.

—This is the Dogo office, isn't it? Yeongwoo said as much.

“Yes, yes. This is where Dogo Special City was declared...”

And this is where their son would return to after the battlefield.

—Then what is this? There's no way that alert was just a system error.

A representative of Mara has discovered Dogo's planetary office...

According to the message, the enemy had already located Metal Seoul.

They were watching from somewhere.

—...

As Jiseon carefully surveyed the buildings around Samsung-dong, from the smaller structures to the tower leading to the high-speed transit network, something strange caught her attention.

She turned to Jeonggu and asked:

—Hey.

“Y-yes? What is it?”

—Was it always this dark at this time?

“Pardon?”

—The sky. Doesn't it seem unusually dark?

Jeonggu looked up at the sky and blinked.

“Huh... You're right. It's like midnight already. Not a single cloud, either.”

Suddenly, Jiseon raised her sword and pointed it at the hotel.

—You, go back inside and sleep. Now.

“What? Why the sudden—”

Jeonggu gave her a hurt look.

But Jiseon wasn’t looking at him.

—Just get lost. If you want to walk into tomorrow’s wedding hall alive.

“...?”

Finally, Jeonggu realized something.

Following Jiseon’s gaze, he, too, looked up toward the sky above Seoul.

Sshhhhhh.

And then he saw it.

The pitch-black sky flickered for a moment.

“Ah!”

Jeonggu gasped instinctively, and at that moment, the eight anti-aircraft cannons installed throughout Seoul raised their barrels in unison.

Weapons Yeongwoo had set up had detected something.

Duuuuuuuuuuuuuu...!

A deep, resonating horn-like sound spread from the sky above.

—Damn it. What the hell is that? There’s something above us.

Jiseon’s words slipped through gritted teeth within her helmet.

Even though her eyes saw only darkness, her dragon instincts told her the truth.

Something was covering the entire sky above Seoul.

And then—

Thut-thut-thut-thut-thung!

The anti-aircraft cannons of Metal Seoul began firing into the heavens.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]