

Level 4 Human in a Ruined World #Chapter 381 - Read Level 4 Human in a Ruined World Chapter 381

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 381: A New Family (2)

"Are those really the coordinates of the Machine Tower? How do you know?"

Jeonggu scrutinized the coordinates floating on the wreath's surface with a doubtful expression.

In contrast, Yeongwoo explained matter-of-factly.

"Lemu's epithet is 'The Architect.' So, it must have made an offer I could understand."

After all, wouldn't it need to bait its prey in precisely the way it intended?

'This matches exactly what was written on the card.'

As Yeongwoo looked at the coordinates, he recalled the Lemu card he'd seen during the negotiation table.

[The Desire of All, Lemu]

"If you know everyone's desires, you can captivate them all."

Card Grade: Legendary

Power: 900

Effect: An Irresistible Offer

<Multiplies the base power by the number of activated cards.>

Just like the card described, the real Lemu also understood exactly what Yeongwoo—or rather, Earth—desired.

Hadn't it just shaken Yeongwoo's resolve with that brief activation of the wreath?

And that wasn't all.

'If this really provides power to all of Seoul, my approval rating will skyrocket.'

A representative who could keep the entire city running 24/7 in a "fully operational" state.

And if the power supply didn't merely enable residential functions but also reactivated halted factories and facilities, its value would be incalculable.

'Overcoming the Reset... It'd be a promise no other candidate could match. An impossible pledge to replicate.'

If he managed to bring such a function to Seoul, re-election wouldn't just be guaranteed—he could potentially remain in office for life.

'Of course, there's no way Lemu would hand over such insane power for free.'

Yeongwoo closed his eyes for a moment.

Having learned the coordinates of the Machine Tower, he could theoretically request the general to bombard it immediately.

But would something called the Machine Tower collapse from a single planetary bombardment?

'That would be reckless. For all I know, Lemu could've deliberately given me false coordinates, anticipating such a move.'

Whatever the case, one thing was certain.

'It really is an irresistible offer. No wonder the chairman hated it.'

However, before visiting the Machine Tower, one prerequisite had to be met.

And that was—

'A ship. You absolutely need a vessel for interstellar living.'

Even the esteemed chairman himself had always used a ship when visiting Earth.

'Ah... I want one, a ship.'

As Yeongwoo thought longingly of a ship and looked up at the sky, a massive silhouette resembling a vessel appeared beyond the dark clouds.

It wasn't a ship, however.

It was the shadow of a dragon.

Rumble!

By then, it was already 1 p.m., the time for Mutants to emerge.

Whoosh!

As usual, blue beams of light shot down from the sky over Seoul, and a Mutant marker landed squarely in the middle of Gwangjin District.

Boom!

“Ah, right. I guess Gwangjin District got assigned a Mutant too.”

Jeonggu clicked his tongue as he observed the Mutant marker in the distance.

Like a shrimp caught in a whale fight, today’s Mutant in this area seemed fated for an unfortunate appearance.

A place where two dragons and Korea’s Strongest Sword might clash—what an unwise spot for a Mutant to show up.

“Yeongwoo, what about that one?”

“That one?”

“The Mutant, I mean.”

Jeonggu gestured toward the Mutant marker in Gwangjin District as he spoke, and Yeongwoo shrugged.

“We’ll shape it into an orb. After all, we’ll be showering Gwangjin District with golden rain today.”

“...Got it.”

As Jeonggu sighed over the fate of an as-yet-unseen Mutant, the blue beam at the marker finally flashed.

Zap!

The Mutants of Reset Day 8 began their descent.

Whooooosh!

Soon, a heavy sonic boom echoed from high above, followed by a coarse voice as a massive figure landed in Gwangjin District.

Crash!

「Ha-ha, I'm back!」

The Mutant, clearly pleased with its landing, moved its body with delight, causing the sound of clanking metal.

Clang.

The source of the noise was the silver ornaments dangling from its limbs.

“What... is that?”

Jeonggu's eyes widened at the sight of the Mutant, and Yeongwoo drew his sword with a casual air.

Shing!

“It's a troll.”

“A troll?”

“Yes. Though it seems to be a rather... plump one.”

As Yeongwoo noted, the Mutant troll had a bulging belly, making it appear more stocky than fat.

Standing about 5 meters tall, its oversized stomach looked capable of holding and digesting several people at once.

However, its thick, muscular limbs gave it a robust, almost imposing appearance rather than a purely obese one.

It wielded a silver club in each hand and wore chainmail shorts around its lower abdomen.

Most strikingly, however, was the name displayed above its head.

[National Assembly Member—Jang Dongsoo]

“Jang Dongsoo?”

Yeongwoo tilted his head at the unfamiliar name, and Jeonggu helpfully elaborated.

“He's the guy who got caught drunk-driving. And wasn't he just about to be investigated for taking bribes?”

“What... Drunk driving is practically a default setting, huh?”

To Yeongwoo, he seemed like a typical corrupt politician.

But Jang Dongsoo himself appeared to think differently.

「What's this? Has the city already been punished?」

Jang Dongsoo smirked as he surveyed the ruined Gwangjin District.

But before long, he noticed Yeongwoo and his group approaching.

“Shouldn't a National Assembly member feel bad seeing a city in ruins?”

Yeongwoo asked, but Jang Dongsoo merely narrowed his eyes and bared his teeth.

「What? Did you come to greet me?」

Then his gaze shifted to the cosmic wreaths behind Yeongwoo, and he looked momentarily stunned, unable to guess their purpose.

“You could say it's a greeting. This place is a graveyard for Mutants.”

「A... graveyard?」

Boom!

Annoyed, Jang Dongsoo stomped the ground, sending tremors through the earth.

「Huh?”

He looked surprised at his own stomp.

More accurately, he was shocked at the immense power and size granted to him as a Mutant.

「Hah, of course.”

As the memories of his rebirth as a Mutant returned, a sinister grin spread across Jang Dongsoo's face.

He clashed his silver clubs together.

Bang!

「Bring it on. I'll crush you first.」

[Translator - Night]

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The ex-National Assembly member and current troll, Jang Dongsoo, declared he would destroy Yeongwoo, Korea's most popular swordsman with a 76.8% approval rating.

But Jang Dongsoo's problem wasn't just Yeongwoo.

Rumble!

As expected, Song Jungho had begun his descent, aiming for the marker assigned to him.

「What... What is that?」

Sensing a powerful presence above, Jang Dongsoo looked up at the sky.

There, amidst the darkened clouds, bright white lightning swirled chaotically.

「Who... who's there...?」

Being a Mutant himself, Jang Dongsoo could clearly feel the overwhelming presence of the figure floating beyond the clouds.

Finally—

— Song Jiseon!

A thunderous voice burst forth from the heavens, and an enormous figure descended, tearing through the pitch-black clouds.

「Uh, ah...!」

Jang Dongsoo's face twisted with fear.

A massive figure, so overwhelming it could haunt dreams.

Following Song Jiseon's arrival in Seoul, another dragon of the Jinhyeon family appeared—a Thunder Dragon with a body length of 250 meters.

"Whoa, that's insane! Is that really your uncle?"

Jeonggu asked incredulously, glancing at Yeongwoo.

But Yeongwoo was just as stunned by the unimaginable majesty before him.

‘This is truly overwhelming.’

The Thunder Dragon, Song Jungho, was covered in blue scales, between which white lightning flickered and danced like flames, giving him the appearance of a radiant white dragon.

His massive wings spread wide, vast enough to evoke an oppressive aura not just on Earth but across the cosmos.

‘Can my mother... really win?’

As Yeongwoo cast a slightly worried glance toward his mother, Song Jiseon, he noticed her entire body was turning snow-white.

She was transforming back into her dragon form.

— Song Junghooo...!

Fwoooooosh!

Her body expanded in an instant as she transformed into a massive Ice Dragon, causing the surrounding air to chill and take on a bluish glow.

And amidst all this chaos, the most bewildered person was undoubtedly Jang Dongsoo.

「What is this? A dream...?」

He finally realized he was not the main character of the day.

From the moment the two dragons appeared—one in the skies and the other on the ground—no one paid any attention to him.

Even Jang Dongsoo himself had been watching the appearance of the dragons in a trance, forgetting his own predicament.

「Well, maybe now’s my chance...」

Snapping back to reality, Jang Dongsoo hastily attempted to flee.

— Fight!

— Kyaaaaah!

Song Jiseon and Song Jungho clashed mid-air over Gwangjin-gu.

BOOOOOM!

The mere impact of their forepaws colliding sent shockwaves through the entire district, and hundreds of bolts of white lightning struck across Gwangjin-gu.

「Argh!」

A bolt struck dangerously close to Jang Dongsoo, making him scream in terror.

Just then, a reddish shadow appeared behind him.

「...?」

Turning around, he saw a sword wreathed in crimson energy.

「You... you bastard.」

Korea's Strongest Sword, Jeong Yeongwoo, had pursued the fleeing Jang Dongsoo.

“You’re too late.”

「...What? What are you talking about?」

“It’s too late for you to pretend to be a traitor. At this point, only something like that could even fake being threatening.”

Shhhk.

Yeongwoo raised his sword, pointing at the two Song siblings.

Jang Dongsoo glared at him, his frustration evident.

「Fine, fine. I’ll just leave quietly, then.」

True to his nature as a former politician, Jang Dongsoo was quick to read the room.

But there was one thing he had yet to realize.

And that was—

“Sorry, but in this country, traitors only have two fates: death or becoming my slave.”

「W-what?」

Death or slavery.

Neither option was welcome, and while Jang Dongsoo hesitated, Yeongwoo's sword lashed out like lightning.

Slash!

The blade, now extended to 6.6 meters, sliced cleanly through the air.

「Ack!」

With a strangled cry, Jang Dongsoo's eyes rolled back, and his head fell to the ground.

His massive body soon crumbled as well.

Thud!

And there, a familiar golden orb materialized.

Hummm...

With this, releasing golden rain over Gwangjin-gu would fulfill one of the conditions for completing the Golden Typhoon.

— Kyaaaaa!

—You son of a—!”

Meanwhile, the fierce sounds of battle between Yeongwoo's uncle and mother shook the heavens and earth.

The two dragons, now thoroughly entangled, were rolling across the ground in Gwangjin-gu, while Jeonggu, far removed from the battlefield, anxiously stomped his feet.

“Goodness, brother!”

Spotting Yeongwoo standing near the orb, Jeonggu hurriedly ran over.

Thud-thud!

“Yeongwoo, Yeongwoo!”

“Yes? What's the rush?”

“How can I not be? Your uncle might actually die at this rate! Your mom's stronger than I thought...!”

“Well, of course. She’s powered up with the Guardian Dragon buff.”

That said, it was remarkable that Song Jungho could hold his own against Song Jiseon even under these circumstances.

‘It’s a shame to put him in a coffin... but there’s no other choice.’

【Coffin】

| You can place blood relatives into the coffin. Special effects are granted depending on the phase and condition of the stored targets. (0/2)

There were two spots left in the Aratubank, but no other members of Jinhyeon would appear moving forward.

If Yeongwoo didn’t place his uncle in the coffin, the only options left would be his parents—and they were set to get married today.

‘So my unmarried uncle has to make the sacrifice.’

Tears welling up, Yeongwoo placed his hand on the orb.

Tap.

A choice appeared immediately.

Yeongwoo selected the 30,000 Karma replenishment option, and the orb shot skyward.

Fwoooooosh!

The golden orb soared into the dark sky above Gwangjin-gu.

Then—

BOOM!

With a deafening explosion, golden ripples spread across the blackened sky.

Shaaah...

The sky turned golden in an instant.

Even the Song siblings, who had been grappling on the ground, paused to gaze upward.

Swoosh...

It was Yeongwoo's signature golden rain falling from the heavens.

Ssshhh!

—What... what is this?

Song Jungho murmured as golden droplets struck his forehead.

Gripping his collar, Song Jiseon replied.

—It's your nephew's welcome gift.

—What?"

—Oh, and I'm getting married today.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

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[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 382: A New Family (3)

—What... what are you saying?

Was it because of the warm aura unique to the golden rain, or was it simply the shock of hearing the words "Song Jiseon's marriage"?

The murderous intent in Song Jungho's eyes disappeared in an instant.

—You're getting married?

Jungho asked again, as if he couldn't believe it, taking a step back.

—Today.

Jiseon replied curtly, exhaling a cold breath, and Jungho asked again.

—No, seriously?

—Seriously. Why would I lie about something like marriage at a time like this?

—Who the hell are you marrying? What kind of idiot would agree to marry someone like you...?

As Jungho twisted his face and started to spit out harsh words, Jeonggu quickly stepped forward, bowing his head.

"Hello, sir! My name is Kim Jeonggu!"

—...?

—Greet him. This guy's the man who's going to be my husband.

—...Doesn't seem like it.

—It's true, dammit.

Standing at a towering 120 meters tall, Song Jungho finally bent his neck and lowered his gaze to examine Jeonggu, who was standing firmly on the ground.

—And who exactly... are you?

It was a loaded question.

No matter how much of a thorn in his side Jiseon might be, she was still the head of Jinhyeon Group.

From Jungho's perspective, it was only natural to be curious about the identity of the man who dared to marry her.

Why?

What kind of background does he have?

And how did he even develop romantic feelings for this crazy woman...?

—No, damn it. This is ridiculous. Do they think I'm some kind of fool?

Failing to find any rationality in the idea of "Song Jiseon getting married," Jungho rejected the reality, but then Yeongwoo stepped forward, parting the golden rain.

"It's a political marriage."

—What?

"A political marriage for business benefits. That's the story behind the union of Song Jiseon and Kim Jeonggu."

—And who the hell are you?

At this point, even Jungho began to realize something was deeply amiss.

The blue scales on his body, imbued with lightning, began to tremble.

"Me? Allow me to introduce myself."

Thud.

Yeongwoo stopped in place, looking around.

"I am the mayor of Metal Seoul, the Strongest Sword of the Korean Peninsula, Jeong Yeongwoo, and the biological son of Song Jiseon and Kim Jeonggu."

—What the...!

An outrageous introduction.

But there had been clues all along.

Earlier, when the golden rain had begun to fall, Song Jiseon had said it herself.

That it was a welcome gift from his nephew.

—You have a son...?

Suddenly, Jungho's jaw dropped.

It had been over 30 years, so he had nearly forgotten the incident.

But now, he remembered the scandal — the one that had turned the Jinhyeon family upside down.

—You're... you're that kid?

Understanding what "that kid" referred to, Yeongwoo closed his eyes briefly before opening them wide and declaring with conviction:

"Yes! I'm Song Jiseon's only son and the Jinhyeon family's illegitimate child! The Strongest Sword of the Korean Peninsula, Jeong Yeongwoo!"

—Unbelievable...!

Staggered by Yeongwoo's bold self-introduction, Jungho stomped his foot as if he'd stepped on a landmine.

—How the hell...?

"Is that important right now? What matters is that you have a nephew now, isn't it?"

When Yeongwoo asked this, Jungho couldn't respond, only blinking.

It was confusing, but it didn't feel entirely wrong, either.

—So... what do you want?

"Your only nephew in this shattered world. Doesn't that make you want to do something for him as an uncle?"

—What?

A nephew he met, or even learned about, just five minutes ago, was now demanding an uncle's kindness.

—What do you want me to do for you?

Clinging to what little sanity he had left, Jungho managed to respond, prompting Yeongwoo to finally show some courtesy.

"Be a witness at my parents' wedding. There's still one spot left."

—There's a spot left?

No matter how reckless Jungho might be, he was still a child of a business-oriented family.

His sharp mind picked up on something odd immediately.

—You're saying there are other witnesses at this wedding? Who are they?

"Uh..."

Taken aback by the quick feedback, Yeongwoo blinked.

"Aliens."

—What?

As Jungho furrowed his brow, a loud sonic boom erupted from the sky.

Boom! Crash!

With the sound of an explosion, a massive metallic object began to plummet to the ground.

"What the hell is that?"

Narrowing his eyes, Yeongwoo looked at the falling object, and Jiseon asked her son:

—It's not a bomb, is it?

"Everyone knows there's a wedding here today. Who would be crazy enough to send a bomb?"

And it wasn't just any wedding.

Guests included the King of Ten Thousand Demons and the Universal Destroyer.

"It's probably a congratulatory gift."

As Yeongwoo drew his conclusion, the mysterious object landed right in front of him.

Thud!

The enormous object, resembling a cannon standing upright, revealed its purpose.

—Ah, are you President Jeong Yeongwoo? We're here to deliver a commemorative gift from Toma Corporation.

"Oh, Toma."

Recognizing the name, Yeongwoo nodded, and a rat-like humanoid approached from the side of the metallic object, holding out a clipboard.

—Please sign here to complete the delivery.

"Sure."

Thud.

As Yeongwoo placed his hand on the clipboard, the ratman twitched his whiskers and looked back at the gift.

—The commemorative gift from Toma comes with interception capabilities.

"....."

Interception again. Yeongwoo scratched his cheek silently.

"Okay, continue."

—If you press the button on the lower part, you, as the owner of the gift, can intercept any object of your choosing.

"Oh, really?"

This was good news.

While there were already many interception devices at the wedding, this was the first one he could control himself.

—Also... Toma included a memo with the delivery.

"What does it say?"

—It reads, 'Usable on guests... but exercise caution.'

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

The ratman paused, blinking blankly at the odd message.

Then, quickly regaining his composure, he retrieved the clipboard from Yeongwoo.

—Well then, I'll be taking my leave...!

The ratman trembled as he alternated his gaze between the two massive dragons standing like skyscrapers on either side.

Then, hastily, he set up a teleportation device on the ground and stepped onto it.

Click!

"What? Aren't you going to hand over a business card?"

—C-Congratulations on your wedding!

That was the last line of the delivery courier who had brought the floral wreath from the Toma clan.

He then became a beam of light and shot up into the sky over Gwangjin District.

Piiiiing!

As the courier fled like a man on the run, Song Jungho, who had been staring blankly in the direction he disappeared, took a deep breath.

—Damn it, what did I just witness?

Finally, he came to a realization.

The world he once knew no longer existed.

“Uncle passed away, and now the only uncle I have left is you. So, I don’t want to be on bad terms with my last remaining uncle.”

—W-What... My brother is dead?

“Yes, he arrived a few days before you, but he had an unfortunate accident.”

—There’s no way that bastard would die so easily.

Song Jungho then narrowed his eyes, scrutinizing Jiseon suspiciously.

In his experience, the only one strong enough to kill his brother in this room was his crazy little sister.

But in truth, the most insane and powerful person here was none other than Yeongwoo.

—What the hell are you thinking? It’s not me.

—Then who?

When Song Jungho glared at Jeonggu, Jeonggu quickly averted his gaze, shaking his head to signal his innocence.

That left only one person.

—Don’t tell me... it’s you.

As Song Jungho’s gaze settled back on his nephew, Yeongwoo smirked bitterly and spoke.

“Uncle chose death rather than becoming a part of our family.”

—What? Are you saying you really killed him?

“Technically, I didn’t kill him. He chose to die.”

—You crazy bastard!

The tense atmosphere erupted in an instant.

Krrraack!

Enraged, Song Jungho emitted white lightning from his entire body.

Seeing this, Yeongwoo swiftly raised the Aratubank and said,

“Why? Do you want to die too, Second Uncle?”

—You little bastard!

Finally, Song Jungho opened his maw wide and unleashed a lightning breath aimed at his nephew.

Shaaah!

With a deafening roar, countless tendrils of lightning poured down on Yeongwoo’s head.

Yet Yeongwoo didn’t so much as flinch.

The sacred relic of the Red Foots, the Aratubank, stood steadfastly, absorbing the attack.

“I didn’t expect a calm conversation to work anyway! Let’s get into the coffin first!”

As Yeongwoo activated Coffin Binding, the Aratubank, which had been defending against the lightning, opened its outer shell.

Click-clack!

From within,

Fwoosh!

a crimson wave surged forth, racing toward Song Jungho.

—What the...?

Realizing the threat, Song Jungho tried to evade.

But it was already too late—the Aratubank’s tendrils had coiled around his chest and chin.

Crack!

The once-bloodlike red wave had transformed into a sticky, binding substance.

—What is this? Let me go!

Feeling the monstrous substance pulling him, Song Jungho cried for help, but Jiseon didn't respond.

—I'm sorry. This is for our family.

—What? You crazy...!

But his words were cut off.

The crimson substance completely encased his upper body, tightening its grip.

【Coffin】

| You can place blood relatives into the coffin. Special effects are granted depending on the phase and condition of the stored targets. (0/2)

'Of course, I thought casting Coffin on a blood kin would immediately seal them inside the coffin, but isn't this practically the same as a real-time abduction?'

Snap!

Soon, the abduction force for Coffin strengthened another level, and at this moment, Song Jungho's massive body began to shake.

He was truly being dragged toward Aratubank.

— N-Nephew! What was your name again? Yeongwoo?

"Yes, it's Yeongwoo. Are you finally ready to talk now?"

— Yeah! That's right! Let's talk, but can you put this thing down first?

Even amidst this, Song Jungho struggled to escape the red substance engulfing him, lightning pouring out from his entire body.

Yet, it didn't go as he wanted.

Meanwhile, Aratubank's abducting material had already engulfed the top of his head, and soon, it seemed it would consume even the tip of his tail.

In a word,

‘It’s... packaging. They’re packaging him.’

Yeongwoo looked at Aratubank with newfound horror.

Now he realized—it was an incredibly monstrous shield.

‘Well, it is a mythical item, after all.’

Until now, he had thought Aratubank was a lower-tier myth compared to its siblings.

But through this incident, he realized that was a misunderstanding.

Snap!

Aratubank too was an absolutely insane piece of equipment, far beyond imagination.

Crunch!

Finally, the ominous red substance completely covered Song Jungho, from his tail to the top of his head, and at the moment it even swallowed his half-open mouth—

Shlurp!

In the blink of an eye, his entire body was sucked inside the shield.

Krrrch!

With immense force, it dragged him toward the Aratubank, leaving Yeongwoo stunned.

‘Wait, is this how it works? By literally kidnapping people?’

Swoosh!

“What?”

“Huh? Where did he go?”

—What the... where is that guy?

As the enormous figure of Song Jungho disappeared, everyone in Gwangjin District froze in bewilderment.

Then, before Yeongwoo’s eyes, an unfamiliar interface appeared.

「Song Jungho」

| Type: Dragonkin/Thunder Dragon

| Status: Alive/Angry

【Thunder Dragon in the Coffin】

【Will of the Living】

【Legacy of the Dead】

‘What? What is this?’

Yeongwoo blinked rapidly.

It was clearly the effects of having sealed his second uncle in the coffin.

【Thunder Dragon in the Coffin】

| Gain 20% additional lightning damage to final attack power.

【Will of the Living】

| The closer to the states of “Alive” and “Happy,” the more damage reduction is gained, ranging from 5% to 25%.

【Legacy of the Dead】

| In the “Dead” or “Decayed” state, gain a 20% increase in attack power.

“What? So the best effects come when he’s ‘Alive’ and ‘Happy’? But Uncle went in ‘Angry.’”

As Yeongwoo muttered, something unexpected happened.

The Aratubank began to vibrate, and a furious voice roared from within.

∴ You brat! Do you think I’m happy right now?!

Then, Song Jungho’s status changed.

| Status: Alive/Sad

[Translator - Night]

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Chapter 383: A New Family (4)

“What... what is this?”

Yeongwoo stared at Aratubank with a startled expression.

It was shocking enough that his second uncle had been sealed inside the coffin in such a brutal manner, but to think that the uncle inside the coffin was still alive—he hadn’t anticipated that at all.

And on top of that, the fact that the uncle sealed inside the coffin was loudly talking was beyond anything he could have expected.

“How can a sealed person still talk?!”

At last, Yeongwoo began to understand the full effects of Aratubank’s sealing ability.

【Will of the Living】

| The closer to the states of “Alive” and “Happy,” the more damage reduction is gained, ranging from 5% to 25%.

【Legacy of the Dead】

| In the “Dead” or “Decayed” state, gain a 20% increase in attack power.

The terms “survival/happiness” and “death/decay” written in the description didn’t only refer to the moment of sealing but also reflected the real-time condition of the person.

‘Wait a second, then this means...’

Yeongwoo blinked rapidly.

【Will of the Living】

| The closer to the states of “Alive” and “Happy,” the more damage reduction is gained, ranging from 5% to 25%.

‘The maximum damage reduction rate can only be achieved if the sealed person is in a state of happiness... So, doesn’t that mean the uncle trapped in there has to be happy for the sealing effect to reach its maximum potential?’

There was no need for further analysis; it was undoubtedly true.

The forcibly sealed person needed to feel happiness, by any means, in order to achieve the maximum damage reduction rate of 25%.

‘Damn it, what kind of nonsense is this? This is ridiculous.’

When Yeongwoo glared at Aratubank with a face full of complaints, a similarly disgruntled voice echoed from inside the coffin-like mythical shield.

∴ What’s with that look? You annoyed about sticking with me for a long time? Well, I’m just as pissed off about it. So how about letting me out right now? I’ll forgive everything that’s happened so far.

Song Jungho’s voice grew calmer as he continued.

After all, there’s a saying: “Even if you’re dragged off by a tiger, as long as you keep your wits about you, you’ll survive.”

Song Jungho was pouring all his effort into escaping this ridiculous trap.

He couldn’t possibly spend his entire life trapped in that coffin, could he?

∴ Nephew, no, Yeongwoo! You’re listening, right? Let’s reconcile! We’re family, aren’t we?

Song Jungho spoke the word “family” with genuine sincerity.

A moment ago, this would’ve been unthinkable for him, but right now, if it meant escaping the coffin, he felt he could accept having a nephew like Yeongwoo.

∴ Hey, hey! Didn’t you say I’m your only remaining uncle? Is this how you’re supposed to treat such an important family member?

He wasn’t wrong, but in this reset world where the Jinhyeon Clan had been reorganized, his plea fell on deaf ears.

“I’m sorry, but someone has to be in this shield, and there’s no one else available. Like you said, you’re my only uncle left.”

Swoosh.

Yeongwoo drove Aratubank into the ground.

Thunk!

Then he fell into thought.

‘I’ve sealed him, but... how on earth do I make Uncle happy?’

| State: Survival/Anger

In the meantime, his uncle’s emotional state shifted again, from “Sorrow” to “Anger.”

Yeongwoo found himself facing an unprecedented challenge.

Leaving his uncle in an angry state would result in losing too much.

The gap between a 5% and 25% damage reduction was immense—like heaven and earth.

Especially for someone like Yeongwoo, who dreamed of venturing into space, this kind of versatile effect was something he had to secure at all costs.

‘I wish Uncle could just be happy.’

Muttering to himself while staring at the sky, Yeongwoo eventually pointed his sword at Aratubank and spoke.

“Uncle, what would make you happy? While you’re in there, I mean.”

∴ If you’re going to keep spouting nonsense, don’t even bother asking me.

“But it’s possible to be happy, even while trapped. I’ve done it before, you know?”

∴ What kind of lunatic are you? What the hell are you talking about?

Yeongwoo, however, was completely serious.

After all, there were “friends” of his locked away in the Returnee’s Chamber out there, beyond the universe.

Although they were technically his captives, they seemed to live relatively decent lives—or at least, Yeongwoo thought so.

‘Of course, they have televisions and chess there...’

Not to mention, they were occasionally allowed to venture outside into the world.

‘Ah...!’

A sudden idea struck Yeongwoo like lightning.

His eyes widened, and his mouth fell open.

“Uncle, I’ll let you out.”

∴ What? Are you serious?

“Yes, but on one condition.”

∴ ...Condition?

“When I’m asleep or in battle, you have to return to the coffin. Think of the time I let you out as a sort of vacation.”

∴ What?

Song Jungho was left momentarily speechless at Yeongwoo’s absurd yet utterly serious proposal.

And then...

∴ F-Fine. Let’s try it. It’s still better than being trapped in here forever.

Surprisingly, he readily agreed to Yeongwoo’s suggestion.

“Really? No running away after I let you out, okay?”

∴ I swear. No running away.

“Alright, then.”

After confirming his uncle’s promise repeatedly, Yeongwoo took a deep breath and opened Aratubank.

Clink!

The crimson substance inside surged out, gradually releasing Song Jungho’s massive body back into the outside world.

Ssshhh!

From within the red waves, Song Jungho’s figure slowly emerged.

As before, he appeared as a majestic Thunder Dragon, with sparks of lightning dancing between his scales.

It seemed he retained all the powers of a Thunder Dragon as well.

In other words...

∴ You fucking brat, die—!

Crack!

Song Jungho lunged at Yeongwoo without hesitation, swinging his massive right claw at his unsuspecting nephew.

Swoosh!

!

His furious claws left behind trails of lightning, carving bright white paths through the air. Soon, those paths coalesced—

Bang!

As if he had anticipated it, Yeongwoo intercepted the strike, already holding out his Illegitimate Shield.

“Uncle, I’m disappointed in you.”

Holding the shield casually in one hand, Yeongwoo spoke.

Hearing this, Song Jungho replied with a trembling voice.

∴ Hey, I didn’t run away as promised, did I?

He realized instantly that this insane nephew wasn’t just morally dubious but also no slouch in martial prowess.

“Well, you’re not wrong about that.”

Yeongwoo nodded in agreement, as Song Jungho drew his front paw back and suddenly began radiating an intense white light.

Fwoooooosh!

“Ugh! What is it this time?”

Blinded by the sudden flash, Yeongwoo stumbled back, clutching his Aratubank shield.

He sensed a massive presence close by.

However, the hologram function of the regional swordsmanship system wasn't activating, leading Yeongwoo to a conclusion.

"Damn it, Song Jungho! You broke your promise, didn't you...?"

He guessed his uncle had chosen to flee.

Whoosh!

As the white haze cleared, Yeongwoo's restored vision caught sight of a thunder dragon desperately fleeing through the distant skies.

Despite its massive size, the creature's speed was astonishing—it had already covered several kilometers.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Yeongwoo looked down at the Aratubank in his left hand with a calm yet sinister gaze.

Why?

[RETRIEVE]

Because the Retrieval Menu had appeared on the shield's surface.

As if the system had been designed with this very scenario in mind.

'No matter how I see it, this clearly means to retrieve the escapee the clan set loose, right? It has to be.'

Even Yeongwoo found this function a bit too ruthless.

But what choice did he have?

For the glory of the family, someone had to make sacrifices.

"Uncle! Your field trip is over!"

Yeongwoo shouted, activating Retrieve, and the massive body of Song Jungho, still fleeing in the distance, suddenly glowed red.

And then—

Swoooooosh!

In an instant, his colossal form was sucked back into the inside of the Aratubank.

“Whoa!”

Even Yeongwoo, holding the shield, was stunned by the overwhelming retrieval force.

For Song Jungho himself, it was far worse—

∴ Aaaaaaargh!

A guttural scream erupted from him as he was dragged across kilometers in the blink of an eye, locked back inside the shield.

|STATUS: ALIVE/DESPONDENT

“...”

Song Jungho had turned transparently pale, almost ethereal in his despair.

Yeongwoo carefully examined his uncle’s status window before cautiously addressing the shield.

“Uncle, are you okay?”

Thankfully, Song Jungho managed to respond, albeit weakly.

∴ Damn it... Did I just become a genie in a lamp?

‘As expected, he’s a true member of the Jinhyeon Clan. His mental fortitude is solid.’

Believing there was still room for negotiation, Yeongwoo offered a half-hearted but plausible olive branch.

“You’ve seen it too, haven’t you, Uncle? The special features of this shield.”

∴ So what?

“To be honest, I only care about the default effects. I don’t need to pander to you just to get some extra damage reduction.”

Of course, this was practically a lie.

“But wouldn’t it be better for both of us if we tried to get along? I want you to be happy too.”

∴ Then let me out.

"I can't do that."

∴ What the hell, you insane brat! Then what do you expect me to do?

"Wouldn't it be better to make the best of this situation rather than being enemies? Choose the lesser evil. I'll offer you two welfare options."

Yeongwoo held up two fingers as he spoke.

"As I said earlier, during my sleep and important battles, you'll need to remain sealed. But outside of those times, I'll let you out whenever you want."

He folded one finger as he finished speaking.

Song Jungho asked, cautiously.

∴ And the other option?

"The other option? The Right to Annihilation."

∴ ...What?

"If you truly find life as a sealed entity unbearable, I'll give you the opportunity to end it. You can do it yourself, or I can assist."

∴ You... insane... bastard.

"Simply being alive and conversing with me right now is already a privilege, Uncle. Every other mutant that landed in Seoul has either died or become my slave."

Yeongwoo tapped the surface of the Aratubank meaningfully.

"Isn't it better to live as a genie in a lamp than to die and disappear completely? You can safely observe from within."

∴ Observe what?

"Your sister's wedding."

∴!

"And the rise and growth of the great interstellar clan, Renaissance."

At these words, Jiseon, who had been silent until now, jumped in shock and rushed forward.

—What are you talking about? Why are you suddenly bringing up ‘Renaissance’?

“Didn’t we settle this last time? That’s what we decided to name our clan.”

—When?! You lunatic!

Grinding her teeth in frustration, Jiseon unsheathed her greatsword, but Yeongwoo anticipated her move and blocked it with a well-placed kick.

Clang!

He then turned back to his second uncle, who remained in the shield.

“One more thing, Uncle. I promise you this.”

∴ ...What’s that?

“One day, I’ll grant you complete freedom.”

At this, a status type appeared on Song Jungho’s window that Yeongwoo had never seen before.

Flash!

|STATUS: ALIVE/SUSPICIOUS

The “Will of the Living” effect applied to Yeongwoo increased its damage reduction bonus from 5% to 10%.

‘Huh?’

Song Jungho’s tone became cautious as he asked.

∴ Complete freedom? When would that be?

Yeongwoo paused, giving it some thought, before replying.

“When the Aratubank is no longer needed. I promised to return it to my brothers. No matter how late it is, I’ll release you by then.”

Song Jungho fell silent for a moment before asking again.

∴ No, I’m asking—when exactly will that be? At least give me a timeframe so I can have a shred of hope.

Yeongwoo nodded in agreement.

A goal was necessary to cling to even the faintest glimmer of hope.

After counting with his fingers, Yeongwoo finally folded all of them and told Song Jungho:

“Before a hundred days pass, I’ll set you free.”

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 384: A New Family (5)

∴ A hundred days?

“Yes. A hundred days.”

∴ Why a hundred days? Are you lying?

Yeongwoo could only shrug at the skeptical question.

There wasn’t a particularly grand reason behind it.

The reason Yeongwoo set his second uncle’s release deadline to 100 days was simply:

“Because a hundred days is enough time for a beast to become a person. Imagine how much change could happen here in that time. After 100 days, we might not even need Uncle’s help anymore.”

∴ Might not need my help anymore? Hey, it might be no big deal to you, but to me...!

“I understand what you mean. But when I make a promise, I keep it. I’ll release you within 100 days, no matter what.”

Yeongwoo reassured him again.

And truthfully, the probability of not needing his uncle—or the help of Aratubank—after 100 days was quite high.

After all, it only took 8 days to rise as the Strongest Sword of the Korean Peninsula and launch Metal Seoul in Dogo Special City.

Besides, who knew what kind of butterfly effect today's wedding of his parents might set in motion?

'A hundred days should be enough, right? By then, I'll probably have a few more pieces of mythic equipment. And considering Lord Bang's face, I'll have to return Aratubank eventually anyway.'

Of course, this was just wishful thinking, but Yeongwoo decided to trust the energy of the universe surrounding him.

He believed he could achieve several times his current growth within the next 100 days.

"You have no idea how big a deal my mother's wedding is going to be, Uncle. And today's only the 8th day since the reset. So 100 days will be more than enough."

As Yeongwoo spoke confidently, four brilliant blue beams of light suddenly shot down from the sky.

Fiaaaat!

"What?"

∴ W-what is that? Again?

While Song Jungho, now trapped in a coffin unable to move, panicked, the beams passed through the airspace of Gwangjin District and struck the ground.

Paaaaat!

"It's not an attack."

Expecting another flower arrangement or bombardment, Yeongwoo instinctively raised Aratubank above his head, but then lowered it again.

Seeing this, Song Jungho asked, almost as if doubting his sanity:

∴ What are you doing? Aren't you preparing to fight? Do you even know what that is?

"I think I do."

∴ What?

Meanwhile, Yeongwoo glanced at his watch to check the time.

Current time: 1:49 PM.

The beams that had descended across Seoul were already fading, and, from afar, Yechan was running toward him.

He was probably coming to report that all the mutants in Gangnam and the surrounding Seoul area had been dealt with.

“Uncle!”

As Yechan approached, waving his arms enthusiastically, Yeongwoo nodded and asked first:

“What about the mutants?”

“I’m on my way to deliver the message that they’ve all been cleared. All that’s left is to collect the orbs in Gangnam.”

Yechan pointed toward Gangnam as he spoke.

Yeongwoo placed a hand on Yechan’s shoulder and said:

“I have a lot to do here today, so you handle the Golden Rain.”

“...Me?”

“From now on, you’re acting mayor of Metal Seoul. When I’m not around or too busy, you’ll take care of things.”

Effectively, he was assigning unpaid cleanup work to a mere high school student, but Yechan hadn’t realized that yet.

“Really? I’m acting mayor?”

“Make sure to let Suna know as well. She’ll take care of the details.”

In reality, the acting mayor was practically Lim Suna, who, as Yeongwoo’s assistant, was more familiar with his weekly schedule than anyone else.

Still, parts of the schedule were tasks that only someone at the level of the Greatest Swordsman could handle.

Like dealing with the mutants that had fallen in Gangnam.

“If you’re not sure about something, ask Suna. Oh, right.”

Yeongwoo glanced at the beams of light scattered across Gwangjin District as he spoke.

“Since today’s a special day, no protection fees will be collected.”

He didn’t bother mentioning that he planned to collect wedding gifts instead.

“...Then what should I do today?”

“You’re attending the wedding, of course.”

As Yeongwoo said this, he pointed to the beams of light in Gwangjin District.

The beams thickened to about four or five times their original size, becoming true pillars of light.

“Huh? Wh-what?”

The sight, which reminded one of monster or mutant markers, startled Yechan.

Yeongwoo clarified:

“No need to be nervous. It’s just marking the wedding venue.”

“What?”

Even Yeongwoo was initially unsure what it was.

But after noticing that connecting the beams with imaginary lines created a massive rectangle, he realized.

Those beams were location markers sent by Hammer of Kwaya.

They were likely confirming the wedding venue location before construction.

‘They’re so meticulous, probably because they’re used to building prisons.’

Of course, the next step would involve actual construction materials descending, so precise positioning was essential.

“Wait... Is that our wedding venue?”

Jeonggu stared at the light pillars with his jaw dropped.

“...It’s huge.”

“The guests are huge too.”

Both in terms of existential scale and physical size.

Especially with Mara—it was impossible to predict what form they might take.

“Out of all the companies I could hire, Hammer of Kwaya had the most experience dealing with various aliens. There’s a reason they planned the venue that big.”

The wedding venue they were looking at was an enormous rectangle, about 2 kilometers wide and 5 kilometers long.

“Can you even manage guests in a venue that big?”

Jeonggu still seemed worried, but Yeongwoo answered without hesitation:

“They’ll manage. It’s a wedding venue built by a prison company, after all.”

The entire area likely wasn’t just for the main ceremony hall.

The order included a direct passage from the “tower” for Earth-based guests, a docking area for alien guests’ ships, and a vast lobby with an execution platform.

‘The venue installation today costs 1.22 billion. They’d better make it worth it.’

Available Karma: 976,969,405

Available Defense Budget: 0

After paying taxes last night, Yeongwoo was left with approximately 970 million karma.

On top of that, there was a national tax of around 80 million karma waiting to be collected.

"The defense budget for the Korean Peninsula, 82,443,375 karma, is pending collection."

This was the tax remotely collected from the people of the Korean Peninsula the previous night.

‘Last time, it was about 78 million. It’s increased quite a bit since then.’

The defense tax, in this world, was levied at a rate of 6.8% on the income exceeding the minimum amount required for survival per individual.

In other words, the higher the citizens' income, the more defense tax would be collected.

Currently, the national income was heavily influenced by factors such as the total amount of golden rain falling in the region and the stable completion of daily quests.

'Is there no way to increase that income further? No matter how well the rotation of daily quests is optimized, there's a limit to the final income because the number of golden spheres is fixed.'

As Yeongwoo pondered this problem, he couldn't help but look up at the sky again.

The vast world beyond the sky—space.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

'If only we could take on jobs from space. At this rate, not just the nation, but the planet itself might stop growing, and someday, the income could completely vanish.'

This had been a concern he had often thought about.

The karma that had become Earth's universal currency since the reset.

Currently, a significant portion of Earth's karma production depended on the golden rain.

A minimum of 30,000 karma per person.

This could only be barely achieved by completing dozens of daily quests through inter-regional agreements and rotations.

But what if, one day, no more mutants appeared?

What would happen then?

'The income of all survivors would drop to less than half, and my defense budget would also plummet. It would be difficult for anyone to earn more than the minimum survival amount.'

However, it was inevitable that mutants would eventually stop appearing.

This was because the number of mutants created through the extinction vote was finite.

At most, there might be a few thousand left.

Perhaps the remaining mutants were already close to being exhausted.

Ironically, one of the calamities of the reset world—the mutants—had become its gold mine.

'I need to switch the karma supply system from the mutant-based model to something else before it's too late.'

While Yeongwoo was engrossed in these highly innovative thoughts, "it" began to fall from the sky.

BOOOOOOOM!

The actual components of the wedding hall that was to be set up shortly had begun descending.

"Yeongwoo?"

As black chunks of metal fell from the sky, Jeonggu called out to his son in a frightened voice.

However, Yeongwoo didn't comfort his father.

Instead, he pointed to the sky and said:

"Take a good look. That's going to be the wedding hall where you two will walk in later."

"That's really the wedding hall? No matter how you look at it..."

Jeonggu's voice trembled.

The components falling from the sky looked terrifying and bleak.

All of them were either black or dark gray metals.

Clang! Clang!

Soon, the metal structures pierced through the sky and began descending sequentially onto the wedding hall site.

THUD!

It was as if the components had been sent down in the order of construction.

Massive black chunks of metal landed at the four corners of the site marked by beams of light, digging into the ground.

'...Are they starting with the groundwork?'

Yeongwoo's jaw dropped.

The time was 1:58 PM.

There were about 25 minutes left until the promised time for the wedding hall installation by "Kwaya's Hammer".

Judging by what was happening now, it seemed like the materials still descending from above would methodically build the wedding hall from the ground up within the next 25 minutes.

The leveling of the wedding hall site, spanning several kilometers, had already begun.

Rrrrrrr!

The metal structures that had earlier dug into the four corners of the site were now rolling around, solidifying the ground across the expanse.

Then, massive circular saw-like objects fell from the sky and began carving out sections of the ground.

Sssssssshhh!

The sight of saws several dozen meters in diameter spinning and moving around on their own was so surreal that even Yeongwoo's iron will couldn't help but be shaken.

'S...Shit, what is this? Is stuff like this possible in space?'

It was a technology he desperately wanted.

At the same time, it made him worry.

If a space prison construction company had this level of efficiency, what kind of skills would Earth need to secure jobs in space?

'Even if you put thousands of Earthlings to work, they wouldn't match that speed. Then, what kind of jobs could we take on in space...?'

In the end, would piracy, like the Guppy of the developing planet Zargal, be the only realistic option?

PEW!

Finally, something flashed in the distant sky, and countless small star-like lights began raining down.

Tat-tat-tat-tat!

The star-like lights scattered across the flattened ground, and thick, wide steel plates soon began pouring down over them with overwhelming force.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

‘Oh, those lights must have been devices to secure the foundation, like screws or magnets.’

The steel plates quickly covered the ground, and another round of star-like lights was scattered.

Another layer of steel plates descended.

“It...It’s definitely going to be sturdy.”

Jeonggu, who had finally accepted that this was indeed his wedding hall, swallowed hard.

And then, finally—

FWOOOOOSH!

Unfamiliar structures began falling from the sky.

A long metal pillar resembling a flagpole appeared first, followed by menacingly sharp blades descending after it.

—What...What is that...?

Even Jiseon, who had been quiet until now, couldn’t help but speak.

Yeongwoo, thrilled, dashed toward the wedding hall site.

BOOM!

“They...They really built a guest execution platform for the ceremony...!”

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 385: The Dignity of a Wedding (1)

—N-No way. Did they really make that?

Jiseon removed her helmet as if entranced.

Her silver-white hair fluttered as she turned her gaze toward the execution platform in question.

It was a towering, pitch-black iron pillar, approximately ten meters high.

At the base, there was a spot where the condemned could rest their head, much like an ordinary guillotine.

Chains, whose purpose was disturbing even to imagine, hung ominously from it.

At the very top of the execution platform, a horizontal iron bar extended outward.

It seemed to be designed for hanging executed guests.

Would they... would they really hang guests who didn't bring wedding gifts?

—What the hell? How is this even a wedding?

It was a level of vulgarity beyond comprehension.

Jiseon had never heard of such an idea in her life—let alone conceived of it herself.

And yet, it had come from none other than her own son.

To think that such a monstrosity would be placed in the lobby of his wedding hall—was beyond absurd.

Swoosh!

At that moment, a spaceship resembling a rusted monkey wrench descended through the skies over Gwangjin-gu.

"Ah!"

It was none other than kwaya's Hammer, the team responsible for designing the wedding venue.

They had arrived to personally explain the ongoing construction process.

"Kobu! Tobu! Chobu!"

As Yeongwoo called out the names of the three contractors he had assigned, a ship landed on the outskirts of the wedding site.

Kwoooooom!

From within, three towering figures emerged, their bodies cloaked in massive, black, wing-like garments.

Each stood around four meters tall.

Their faces were obscured by masks riddled with small holes, making their expressions unreadable.

Even so, it was clear to everyone that they were delighted to see Yeongwoo.

Whoosh!

Kobu was the first to lift an arm and wave enthusiastically.

Well, today was the day they were receiving their final payment of 1.2 billion credits—so of course, they were happy.

"Kobu!"

Yeongwoo waved back as he approached them.

The three contractors—Kobu, Tobu, and Chobu—moved toward the execution platform.

—Sir, it is an honor to meet you again.

Kobu extended his right hand in greeting, exactly as he had learned before.

Ssshhh...

Yeongwoo briefly glanced at Kobu's right arm, which was made entirely of jet-black bone, before extending his own hand to shake it.

"You must have had a long journey. You're here about the wedding venue, correct?"

—Yes. All designs for the venue have been finalized, and construction will be completed by 2:23 PM, Earth time.

Even now, materials were being dropped from the skies above Gwangjin-gu at a breakneck pace.

The passage connecting the tower to the wedding hall lobby was already nearing completion.

—Guests will begin arriving on the planet approximately one hour before the ceremony begins.

"Oh? Then shouldn't you start explaining the venue right away?"

—Indeed, which is why we hurried here.

Kobu lifted his head and looked at the execution platform.

Though his expression was hidden behind his mask, his next words revealed exactly what he was thinking.

—A remarkable piece of work. We designed it with the guests in mind, envisioning those who would be hung there.

"Uh... Of course, the best scenario would be if no one actually gets hung there."

—Then, may I proceed with explaining how the execution platform functions?

Kobu's tone carried a hint of excitement for some reason.

"....."

Yeongwoo silently stared at the towering execution platform for a moment before finally nodding.

"Go ahead."

—Yes, as you can see, this is a guillotine-style execution device.

With that, Kobu picked up the chain connected to the headrest of the guillotine.

—We pondered: how could this execution platform serve not only for executions but also to psychologically pressure guests into paying their wedding gifts?

"...And?"

—Thus, we devised these ankle shackles.

"Ankle shackles?"

Clank!

As Kobu raised the chains high, Tobu, who was standing behind him, retrieved a white-painted metal mannequin from his coat.

—This represents an Earthling.

Taking the mannequin from Tobu, Kobu fastened the guillotine's chains around both of its ankles.

—Before execution, the guest's ankles are shackled like this.

Then, he pulled the lever attached to the lower section of the guillotine.

Swoooooosh!

A chilling metallic screech echoed as the ten-meter-high blade came crashing down.

Slick!

The steel blade effortlessly decapitated the iron mannequin.

"Wow...!"

Yeongwoo gaped at the unexpected efficiency of the device as the severed head tumbled down a slope, finally settling neatly into a recessed compartment.

—That is the head storage area. This model can hold up to ten heads at a time.

In other words, the execution platform could process up to ten guests in succession.

—The bodies of the executed guests can then be hoisted up for display using this lever.

"A display stand?"

Yeongwoo asked, puzzled. Instead of answering, Kobu demonstrated by pulling another lever.

Clank!

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

As soon as the lever was pulled, the chains connected to the guillotine's upper section began to retract.

Consequently, the mannequin's legs were yanked upward, lifting the "corpse" into the air.

"...My God."

Yeongwoo instinctively covered his mouth.

kwaya's Hammer had built an execution platform that not only beheaded guests but also displayed their corpses afterward.

—Will this be acceptable?

"Excuse me? Shouldn't I be the one asking you that?"

—You were the one who requested an execution platform for the wedding venue, sir.

"Well... that's true."

—If you approve, we will proceed with final installation.

Kobu then placed his hand on another lever positioned slightly higher up.

"And what does that one do?"

—We considered the possibility that you may wish to execute non-humans as well, so this lever allows you to adjust the execution platform's settings.

"...Oh."

Was this really worth 1.2 billion?

It seemed that with enough money, contractors became quite proactive.

—If you pull this lever all the way down, the execution platform expands to its maximum size.

Clank!

When Kobu yanked the size-adjustment lever all the way down, the central pillar of the execution platform extended upward, growing to a towering height of 20 meters.

The stands where the guests' heads would be placed also expanded to nearly three times their original size.

At this scale, even beheading giants would be no issue.

"It's absolutely perfect. Let's proceed as is."

As Yeongwoo instinctively clapped his hands, his uncle, who had been silent within the shield, finally spoke.

∴ You... you bastard... What the hell are you talking about? Hanging the guests?

"It might be a bit hard for someone who just arrived in this world to understand, Uncle."

∴ Even your mother doesn't seem to understand yet.

"Well, there are always individual differences."

After answering like that, Yeongwoo turned to Kobu with another question.

"What's over there?"

He was pointing at a vast, empty lot in the distance.

A significant portion of the land designated for the wedding venue by kwaya's Hammer was nothing more than a flat metal-plated area.

Kobu glanced up at the sky before turning back to Yeongwoo.

—That's where the guests' ships will land.

"Ah, so that's why the site was designed to be so large."

The designated wedding venue covered a rectangular area spanning 2 kilometers in width and 5 kilometers in length.

Now that he was paying closer attention, about 70% of that space was essentially a parking lot.

Even so, the location where the ceremony would take place was still enormous.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The jet-black outer walls of the wedding hall had just begun to rise, and at a glance, the front width of the hall was already several hundred meters.

"Wait a minute... then how long is the virgin road going to be?"

—Virgin road? What is that?

"Ah, it's the path the two participants walk down when they enter."

At that, Kobu turned his head to glance toward the wedding hall.

—By Earth standards, about 800 meters.

"800 meters?!"

Yeongwoo's mouth dropped open, and Jiseon and Jeonggu were equally stunned.

"You're telling me they have to walk 800 meters...?"

—What? The venue is going to be packed with aliens, right?

An 800-meter-long virgin road, lined with aliens itching to exert legal intimidation.

"Wait... at this rate, the bride and groom shouldn't be walking in—they should be sprinting."

Yeongwoo tilted his head, mumbling his thoughts.

As if anticipating his curiosity, Kobu retrieved a steel box from his coat.

Swipe.

"What's this?"

—It's the ceremonial gift box.

"Ceremonial gift box...?"

—The participants' entrance is practically the only part of the cosmic wedding ceremony that involves the guests.

"I suppose. I heard the guests test their courage throughout the entire entrance process."

That meant the most thrilling moment for the guests would be the participants' entrance.

"And what does that have to do with the ceremonial gift box?"

Without a word, Kobu suddenly grasped the box with both arms and tucked it under his armpit—just like a football player.

".....?"

—Each participant must place their prepared gift inside this box and carry it all the way to the end of the wedding hall without dropping it.

"Ah."

Which meant...

"So the guests try to scare the bride and groom into dropping their ceremonial gift box?"

—Exactly.

"Wait, why is that even a tradition? What do the guests gain from terrifying the ceremony participants?"

Kobu then revealed a reason so undeniable that no one could argue against it.

—If even one of the participants drops their ceremonial gift box, the hosts must refund all the congratulatory money.

"Oh, for fuck's sake. You've got to be kidding me, right?"

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 386: The Dignity of a Wedding (2)

The Wedding Gift Refund Policy.

For Yeongwoo, it was an absolute nightmare.

After investing so much money into preparing for everything, was there really a chance they would have to refund the main source of revenue—the wedding gifts?

"Does that even make sense? What kind of wedding gift refund system is this?"

—It is an ancient tradition of cosmic weddings.

"Come on! Isn't breaking tradition what makes things stylish? Can't we change the entry rules?"

—Impossible. If you wish to avoid the 'Wedding Gift Breakthrough,' you must forgo receiving wedding gifts in the first place.

The Wedding Gift Breakthrough.

As Kobu had mentioned, it was an age-old tradition, and a corresponding term had long been established.

The act of the bride and groom transporting the wedding gifts while breaking through numerous threats from the guests was referred to as the Wedding Gift Breakthrough.

"This is completely insane."

Yeongwoo clutched his forehead.

Everything had been going too smoothly—it was suspicious.

Of course, the universe wasn't such a lenient place.

'And if even one of the bride or groom fails, the refund is immediate. If even one major guest changes their mind, everything will turn into a complete disaster.'

Yeongwoo's mind raced.

Which major guests were attending today's wedding?

The first one that came to mind was the Chairman.

But the Chairman was obsessed with honor—there was no way he would make a scene just to get his wedding gift refunded.

'Then... next? Mara?'

Mara.

The so-called King of Ten Thousand Demons, a being who walked in the shadows of cosmic law.

If anyone would shamelessly and wholeheartedly attempt to obstruct the groom or bride, it would be him.

'But Mara is a strong contender for first place. He's a top-tier big spender who might go head-to-head with the Chairman in a wedding gift competition.'

And the guest ranked first in wedding gift contributions had the right to banish anyone below third place.

'I just have to hope the Chairman takes first place. Then the Mara problem will solve itself...'

But was that the only issue?

Unfortunately, the guests Yeongwoo had invited included not just business moguls but also figures like Lemu, an adult film producer; Toma, a heavy weapons manufacturer; and Osik Credit, a loan shark company.

‘D-Dammit... This is karma, isn’t it?’

As Yeongwoo’s vision darkened, he clenched his eyes shut.

‘...How humiliating!’

Just then, someone approached him and firmly grabbed his shoulder.

Clank!

It was none other than his mother from the heavens, Song Jiseon.

—Why the hell are you closing your eyes? Get a grip, kid.

"Uh, Mother..."

—All you have to do is make sure the bride doesn’t drop the wedding gift box, right? You said the guests can’t actually injure us.

It was like playing rugby, but instead of a ball, they were carrying a wedding gift box.

"But in the universe... there's something called authority. If you're experiencing it for the first time, it might be overwhelming."

Authority.

It wasn’t too different from aura or presence.

Each entity accumulated a certain level of authority based on their history and achievements, and once it reached a certain level, merely releasing that authority could paralyze opponents.

Just as Yeongwoo had once used the Strongest Sword's authority to immobilize his enemies...

But that was merely a small-scale authority clash on Earth.

This wedding ceremony would be filled with cosmic-level authorities beyond imagination.

Worse yet...

'If someone hears about the refund policy, they'd try their hardest to sabotage the ceremony—even I would.'

Some beings in the universe could kill with authority alone.

Of course, his mother was absurdly strong, so it was hard to imagine her being crushed by someone's authority.

But if, by any chance, she dropped the wedding gift box, it would be a catastrophe.

"Are you sure you'll be okay?"

—And what if I'm not? What's the alternative? There isn't one. Just focus on keeping your father in check.

Jiseon gestured toward Jeonggu, who looked absolutely terrified.

Yeongwoo sighed and nodded.

Just then, in the distance, the main structure of the wedding hall, which was still being assembled, completed its foundational construction, and its jet-black outer walls rapidly rose into place.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The hall was built from an unknown obsidian-like metal, resembling a fortress with a towering ceiling.

Perhaps an extraterrestrial prison would look similar from the outside.

—Since today's guests are from various species, we made the ceiling as high as possible.

Kobu pointed to the very top of the hall before shifting his gaze to the execution platform in the main lobby.

—Near the entrance, we will install the wedding gift reception table and guestbook. Additionally, we have allocated ample space to prepare for any potential conflicts.

"Good. It's always better to be prepared."

As Yeongwoo approved, Kobu looked toward the large open area behind the gift table.

—As I mentioned earlier, that area will serve as the landing site for guests' ships. Once disembarked, they will follow the guide lines into the lobby, submit their wedding gifts at the reception table, and then...

Creak.

Kobu stepped forward and pushed open the main entrance to the wedding hall.

With a deafening grinding sound, the dark, cavernous interior was revealed.

Rumble!

“...No way.”

—This... is our wedding venue?

Both Yeongwoo and Jiseon were stunned.

Despite being designed by prison architects, the hall's interior resembled a cathedral.

The only issue?

Everything inside was black.

Rather than a wedding hall, it looked more like the lair of a demon king.

The 800-meter-long virgin road was constructed from polished, glossy black stone.

As Kobu stepped onto it, holographic text appeared, displaying the remaining distance.

Beep!

「799」

—Once the bride and groom begin their procession, the remaining distance will be updated in real-time.

“...This really feels like a sports competition.”

—At the end of the aisle is the ceremonial altar. Once the wedding gift box is placed there, the procession will be complete.

So, in short, the altar was like a touchdown zone.

"Wait, is that... the ranking board behind the altar?"

When Yeongwoo pointed to the massive iron plate floating alone behind the distant altar, Kobu nodded.

— Yes. Once the wedding gift payments are completed, the ranking of the contributions will be revealed there, and the emblem of the top gifter will be engraved on all decorations inside the venue.

An extravagant tradition.

Yeongwoo asked again.

"What about the second round of wedding gifts?"

— The second gift round for ranking rebounds will be replaced by the ceremonial altar.

"Huh?"

In other words, since the altar has no specific purpose until the main ceremony begins, they decided to use it as the second gift station.

— Wait, you're saying they'll be collecting a second round of gifts at the very place where vows are exchanged? Does that even make sense?

Jiseon, unable to hold back any longer, cut in between Yeongwoo and Kobu, speaking irritably.

Yeongwoo blinked a few times before responding.

"I don't think it's a bad idea, actually."

— What?

"Our ceremonial gifts are just commemorative coins anyway... and, honestly, the guests who are passionate enough to participate in the second round of gifts are practically the real hosts of this event. Symbolically, it makes sense, right? Think of it as receiving lavish gifts from the guests."

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Besides, installing another donation station inside the main building would be an eyesore.

‘And there's something quite poetic about massive donations exchanging hands at the ceremonial altar.’

With that in mind, Yeongwoo found it easy to approve.

"Sounds like a good idea. Let's go with it."

— Then, the next matter...

Kobu waved his hand in the air, and suddenly, a steel throne that had been placed near the back of the ceremonial altar began to float into the air.

"...What? What is that?"

— It is the seat for the number one donor.

"Oh."

— The top seat never touches the ground, and its position and altitude can be freely adjusted.

Then, Kobu pointed to another seat positioned at the very front, providing a direct view of the ceremonial altar.

This seat, also made of luxurious steel, was impressive—but not on the same level as the floating throne.

— This is the seat for the third-place donor, who holds immunity from expulsion.

"So, this seat has the authority to oppose the will of the first place, yet it still remains on the ground."

— Yes. It cannot be moved at will, nor can it float.

"What about second place? Where is their seat?"

Yeongwoo looked around, searching for a special seat for the second-place donor, but Kobu shifted his gaze toward the regular guest seats.

— There is no special seat for second place.

"Huh? Why not?"

— That, too, is part of the tribute to the first-place donor.

"Ahhh..."

Yeongwoo was a beat late in grasping Kobu's deeper intention, and his mouth slowly fell open.

In the fierce battle of wealth for the number one donation spot, the top two contenders inevitably became first and second place.

From the perspective of the first-place donor, the second-place donor had forced them into massive financial losses—there was no way they could harbor good feelings about it.

So Kobu's solution was simple: don't even acknowledge the second-place donor with a special seat in the ceremony hall.

'You either go all out to secure first place, or you aim for third from the start.'

If someone dared to challenge for first place but lost in a cash showdown, they wouldn't even get the privileges of third place—they'd be treated worse than an ordinary guest.

They'd spend a fortune and still have to sit among the general audience.

In reality, though, they would most likely just be expelled by the first-place donor and wouldn't even get to witness the ceremony.

'This is going to be intense.'

Yeongwoo looked at the second donation station with an amused glint in his eyes.

Just then, Tobu and Chobu, who had been outside the main ceremony hall, entered the building.

Clank, clank.

— Kobu.

— Hm? What is it?

— We need to speed things up a bit.

— Why? Is there a problem with the construction?

Tobu and Chobu both shook their heads.

That meant there was no issue with the work itself.

— Then what is it?

Kobu, sounding slightly irritated, asked again.

Tobu raised a dark finger and pointed outside the venue.

— A few ships have already arrived. The guests are coming.

— What? Already?

Kobu flinched in surprise just as a strange vibrating sound began to echo from outside the hall.

Wooooooooong...!

That was the sound of a high-speed transit station activating.

Guests from Earth were starting to arrive at the ceremony.

‘Well, of course, some people would come early.’

Those like the infamous Shandong Twin Evils, who had already aligned their allegiances, would naturally be in a hurry to get there.

As Yeongwoo recalled the names of some guests he was unexpectedly looking forward to seeing, he turned to face the entrance of the main hall.

At the same time, Kobu stepped forward and spoke.

— You should hurry.

"Huh? Is there something else?"

— While we finish construction, you need to welcome the guests.

"Oh, right. The guest reception. Of course."

Yeongwoo nodded repeatedly, as if he had just remembered.

Then, he turned to Kobu and asked.

"By the way, can we start using the execution platform now?"

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 387: The Dignity of a Wedding (3)

—The execution platform... it is now available for use.

Kobu then added, as if concerned,

—But welcoming guests is also an important part of the union ceremony.

"Oh, of course. Weddings on Earth follow a similar tradition."

A wedding on Earth.

There, the groom typically greets guests in the lobby of the wedding hall, while the bride does so in a separate waiting room.

However, in cosmic weddings, there was no separate waiting room for the bride.

Instead, the host, groom, and bride all stood together to welcome the guests—a rather unusual sight.

'So, today's guests are both wedding attendees and a bunch of troublemakers. They're going to cause a mess during the bridal treasure challenge, aren't they?'

As Yeongwoo frowned at this thought, Jiseon, who happened to be passing by, bumped his shoulder and spoke.

—Fix your expression. These people came all this way for you, so greet them with gratitude.

"Yes, of course, I'm grateful, but... if we lose the treasure challenge, it's over, isn't it? That means we'll end up bankrupt because of our guests."

—How is that the guests' fault? Isn't it your own greed for making such an extravagant gamble?

"....."

Yeongwoo couldn't find a rebuttal, so he closed his mouth. Seeing this, Jiseon delivered the next line.

—But what if we win the treasure challenge? Then, we get to keep all the money they contributed as congratulatory gifts, right?

"I suppose so?"

—In the end, this has turned into a high-stakes bet. But it was only possible because they put their money down first. So, who should be more grateful?

"...You're saying it should be us, right?"

—Of course. And don't forget that this is, above all, a wedding. Smile and welcome the guests properly.

With those words, Jiseon straightened her posture, standing tall with elegance.

—And if, by some chance, we lose the treasure challenge, don't act disgracefully.

"You mean no threats of self-destruction?"

—What? You were planning to self-destruct?

"When did I say that? I said self-destruction threat."

—...Just pay up cleanly if you lose. The fact that so many guests showed up already proves your connections. There will always be another opportunity.

"You sure speak lightly since it's not your problem."

—You idiot, I'm the one who has to run 800 meters while carrying the bridal treasure chest. How is this not my problem?

With that, Jiseon suddenly removed her mask.

Shhhk.

Then, with a bright smile, she stepped out of the main wedding hall.

"What the...?"

Finding it odd, Yeongwoo followed after her, only to see people emerging from the guest passageway, bowing their heads as they walked.

It was a specially constructed passage, 1.5 meters high, connecting to the Tower.

The low height made it difficult to draw swords inside, forcing the guests to crawl or bend low as they exited.

Jiseon, having noticed this earlier, had gone out to greet them.

—Ah, welcome! You've had a rough journey!

However, since Jiseon stood at a towering 3 meters even in her human form, her white hair flowing wildly as she approached, the newly arrived guests recoiled in fear, attempting to crawl back into the passageway.

"What the hell, are you crazy?! Stop scaring people! Weren't you just telling me to greet them properly?"

—What, you brat?

"Can't you see they're terrified? Step back. I'll handle the Earthlings."

Yeongwoo reached into the passage and pulled out one of the hesitant guests—someone with a familiar face.

"Huh?"

"Oh...!"

It was none other than Wu Qingjin, one of the Shandong Twin Evils.

And right behind him—

"Ah, Grandmaster Jeong!"

Zhang Jaham of the Shandong One Evil was standing with his head bowed in greeting.

As expected, those who knew Yeongwoo's strength best on Earth had arrived first—Shandong.

Behind them, a long line of Shandong residents emerged, carrying a horizontal pole in groups.

"What is that?"

Yeongwoo pointed at the pole inside the passage, and Zhang Jaham awkwardly smiled before replying.

"We brought a banner."

"A banner...?"

"Yes."

As Zhang Jaham nodded and gave a signal, the Shandong residents lifted the pole and carried it into the lobby.

Sure enough, a white cloth hung between the poles.

It was a congratulatory banner from Shandong, meant to be displayed at the wedding venue.

[Sincere Congratulations to Grandmaster Jeong Yeongwoo on the Wedding.
Respectfully, the People of Shandong.]

The Korean characters were a bit crooked, but their sincerity and courage were admirable.

Even with an invitation, traveling to another country for a wedding was a dangerous feat.

"Oh... Thank you. Please, step into the lobby."

Yeongwoo stepped aside, allowing the Shandong guests to fully exit the passage.

Then, he pointed to Jiseon and to Jeonggu, who had just walked out of the main hall.

"This is my mother, Song Jiseon. And the man walking toward us is my father, Kim Jeonggu."

Zhang Jaham looked up at Song Jiseon, then quickly knelt and bowed his head to the ground.

Thud!

"I, Zhang Jaham, pay my respects to the honored mother!"

Naturally, Wu Qingjin and the Shandong residents followed suit, bowing deeply.

Seeing this, Jiseon tilted her head and glanced at Yeongwoo.

—These people... what's their connection to you?

"We've been through a lot together. They're the most trustworthy allies I have in China."

—But you always take their money without giving anything back. What kind of supporter would they be?

As expected of a global corporation's CEO, Jiseon had sharp insight.

However, contrary to her concerns, the Shandong Twin Evils and their people were deeply loyal.

After all, martial artists often had a pure and straightforward side.

Having witnessed Yeongwoo survive with a sword through his heart, they were awed by his strength and mysterious abilities.

In a reset world, they had personally seen what a mere human could achieve when reaching the pinnacle of power.

"A wedding in a world like this... Amazing. As expected of Grandmaster Jeong."

Zhang Jaham once again clasped his hands in salute and glanced around the lobby.

Then, his eyes widened upon spotting something in the corner.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

"Th-That... What is that?"

"The execution platform."

"E-Execution platform...?"

"You brought the congratulatory gift money, right?"

"...Yes, of course."

"Then you won't have anything to worry about over there."

"....."

At Yeongwoo's words, Zhang Jaham swallowed heavily.

That meant that someone who didn't bring the congratulatory gift money might end up hanging there.

"You can submit your gift money and sign the guestbook over there. After that, please wait in front of the main building for a while. It's still under construction."

As Yeongwoo pointed to both the gift submission area and the main building, Zhang Jaham nodded solemnly.

Then, along with the people carrying large sacks, he headed toward the gift submission area.

It seemed they had brought the money in cash.

'Well, of course. Among Earthlings, no one has the ability to convert cash into another form, so it's only natural.'

On the other hand, cosmic beings were more likely to make remote payments or use cards for their gift money.

—Hey, by the way...

Jiseon cautiously brought up a question while watching Shandong Twin Evils head toward the gift area.

"Yes, go ahead."

—Is there a minimum amount for the gift money?

"What?"

—I mean, is there a lower limit for cosmic gift money?

"Hmm, I'm not sure."

Come to think of it, that was a question Yeongwoo had never considered before.

Could there be a minimum requirement for congratulatory money?

—No, but think about it. Someone could just bring a single coin. Technically, that still counts as a gift, right?

"Well, that's true, but... Weren't you the one saying earlier that people should have a grateful heart?"

—You idiot, that's completely different! If I have to run 800 meters later, it better be worth it!

"Well, I suppose... but I've never heard of a minimum gift requirement before."

Of course, that was something they could establish from now on.

They could simply make a rule that anyone who doesn't bring a certain amount would be executed.

'But shouting that out loud would look ridiculous... I still have a long way to go. I should've thought of this in advance.'

As Yeongwoo was berating himself for his oversight, Shandong Twin Evils seemed to have completed their gift submission.

Because—

Fwooooosh!

Suddenly, the gift area flashed brightly, sending a beam of light toward the front of the main building.

"What the—?"

—What the hell is that?

The beam from the gift area projected a message onto the flat surface of the main building.

And the words that appeared were—

[Shandong Twin Evils, Zhang Jaham / Wu Qingjin]

「Congratulatory Gift Submitted!」

"...Are you serious?"

A gift ceremony.

Yeongwoo's jaw dropped at the absurdity of it all. Then, the amount of the submitted gift was revealed.

「To celebrate the wedding of Strongest Sword Jeong Yeongwoo's parents, Kim Jeonggu and Song Jiseon, we have received 30 million Karma.」

‘These crazy bastards.’

Kobu, Tobu, Chobu.

As Yeongwoo shook his head, searching for the lunatics who designed this insane system, another message appeared on the main building.

「Since the first gift submission was 30 million Karma, the minimum gift amount is now set at 15 million Karma!」

"What?"

A loophole in this wedding's planning that Yeongwoo hadn't noticed—

The minimum gift amount—

Had already been taken care of by Kwaya's Hammer.

‘These guys...!’

A delayed wave of emotion hit him.

And then, from the passageway connected to the tower, another familiar figure emerged.

It was none other than Gwanak’s First Sword, Jo Sangik.

He had essentially been Yeongwoo’s guardian when he first came to Seoul, and even now, he was a reliable administrative supporter.

He was the second guest to arrive.

“I hope I’m not late?”

As Jo Sangik stepped out of the passageway, bowing slightly, Yeongwoo greeted him warmly.

“Vice Minister! Late? No, I’m just grateful you came at all.”

Yeongwoo faithfully followed the etiquette his mother had taught him.

But that politeness didn’t last long.

Because at that moment—

Fwooooosh!

Another message appeared on the front of the main building, announcing the next procedure.

「Guests who have brought less than 15 million Karma in gift money, please proceed to the execution platform.」

“Uh...?”

Jo Sangik’s expression stiffened as he read the announcement.

Yeongwoo, just as shocked, turned to him.

“Vice Minister?”

“Yes...?”

"No way, right?"

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 388: The Dignity of a Wedding (4)

"Uh... that is..."

Jo Sangik unconsciously hid the pouch he was holding behind his thigh.

However, Yeongwoo didn't even need to open the pouch to know.

Anyone could tell it was much smaller than the one the Shandong Twin Evils had brought.

"Even the nobles from China brought 30 million."

At Yeongwoo's somber tone, Jo Sangik looked as if he had committed a grave sin.

"I really... I really didn't know. I had no idea there was a minimum amount."

"Is the issue here just the minimum amount? The real problem is that your sincerity is less than that of people who came from another country."

"That, that's..."

"Do you think sincerity is only about intention? Material offerings are sincerity too!"

"....."

Jo Sangik lowered his head.

If material offerings were also sincerity, he really had nothing to say.

"I wasn't thinking clearly."

"...Sigh."

Just then, an announcement from the congratulatory gift reception was broadcast again.

「Guests who have brought less than 15 million Karma in gifts, please gather at the execution platform.」

An announcement seemingly directed straight at Jo Sangik.

Yeongwoo glanced at his pouch and asked,

"How much do you have?"

"Ten million..."

Ten million Karma.

To be honest, it wasn't a small amount at all, nor could it be considered an insignificant contribution.

After all, the protection fees Yeongwoo had been collecting from different districts in Seoul were 5 million Karma.

So Jo Sangik had tried his best, bringing twice the usual protection fee as a wedding gift.

'So, technically speaking... it's not that he lacked sincerity.'

Besides, the primary revenue of this wedding was from the high rollers' ranking competition.

Considering the amounts they would contribute, whether it was ten million or fifteen million didn't really matter.

However—

'But the minimum wedding gift is set based on what some alien guests brought. And yet, this is still only half of that... That's just insulting.'

Yeongwoo's expression twisted mischievously, and Jo Sangik, noticing it, trembled.

"Y-Yeongwoo..."

"Minister."

"...Yes?"

"There's no other way. You need to sign a loan agreement."

"A loan agreement...?"

"Yes. I learned how to draft one during my travels in space."

Of course, this was still Earth, not an alien planet.

But Yeongwoo was sure the method he had used at the promotion hall would work here too.

After all, Earth had long been "open to the universe."

Yeongwoo had already drafted universal official documents here before.

"I won't charge too much. Just a 100% daily interest rate."

"...What?"

"You're short by 5 million, right? I'll lend you that amount right now. But by tomorrow, you have to return 10 million."

"How is that even...?"

"Or would you rather hang over there? If you die, at least you won't have to repay the debt."

Whoosh!

Yeongwoo pointed at the execution platform, just as the guillotine blade came crashing down.

Shaaak!

The platform was already going through operational tests to prepare for the guests.

"...Ugh! That's really a guillotine?!"

"I don't want to lose you over something like this. You still have a lot of work to do for Seoul, don't you?"

"But, this is all just..."

"We live in an era of space globalization. And space weddings have always been like this. So next time you attend one, be prepared."

With those words, Yeongwoo grabbed Jo Sangik's right arm.

Grab!

"Ugh, what are you doing?"

"Drafting the loan agreement."

Yeongwoo placed his finger on Jo Sangik's palm and drew a line.

Immediately, a contract template appeared above it.

Flash!

「Loan of 5 million Karma, daily interest rate of 100%. Loan execution pending.
Approve?」

"Huh?"

Jo Sangik's eyes widened at the absurd contract.

Since when did this insane swordsman learn to do something like this?

"A-Are you serious?"

"It only looks like loan sharking on the surface. In reality, you're saving your life with just 5 million Karma. Don't be fooled by the wording."

"...What?"

Just then, the massive execution blade fell once more.

Shaaak!

"...Ugh."

Being a little short on wedding money leading to immediate decapitation—this was insane.

But Jo Sangik knew better than anyone that Yeongwoo routinely did insane things.

"It would be useful to set an example by executing someone... But I'd rather it not be you, Minister."

With Yeongwoo's serious tone and expression, Jo Sangik's common sense finally crumbled.

"A... Alright. I'll sign it."

In the end, he nodded and accepted Yeongwoo's terms.

Pop!

Loan approved.

「Loan of 5 million Karma at a daily interest rate of 100% has been executed.」

As this message appeared, a holographic number floated above Jo Sangik's head.

Ping!

[+5,000,000]

At the same time, the same amount appeared above Yeongwoo's head with a minus sign.

Yeongwoo's balance had decreased by 5 million Karma.

[-5,000,000]

In other words, Jo Sangik had just become the first Earthling to be in actual debt to Jeong Yeongwoo.

"What... What have I done...?"

Having taken out a loan just to afford his wedding gift, Jo Sangik looked down at his trembling hands.

Then, an unmistakable sound rang beside him.

Clink!

"Huh?"

It was the sound he had heard on reset day at the exchange center—the sound of cash being prepared.

Then, suddenly—

Clatter!

Countless Karma coins poured into Jo Sangik's chest.

"Wait, what? It works like this too?"

Yeongwoo looked astonished.

Unlike the promissory notes issued at the promotion center, this direct loan had instantly materialized in hard cash.

"Minister, is that real money?"

Yeongwoo asked as Jo Sangik, still crouching, picked up the coins.

Jo Sangik looked up.

"...Amazingly, it seems so."

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

And that amazement was genuine.

After all, in this reset world, Karma was as valuable as life itself.

It was the currency used to pay survival taxes, obtain necessities, and even enhance combat power.

But for such a valuable currency to be instantly generated and dispensed just from signing a loan contract... That was beyond shocking.

What's more, the subject of this contract was none other than a fellow human, Jeong Yeongwoo.

"What on earth have you been doing out there to learn something like this?"

As Jo Sangik diligently picked up the coins, he asked, to which Yeongwoo simply shrugged.

"As I said earlier, we are now in the era of space civilization. If you don't know how to do things like this, you'll end up getting pushed around by aliens."

Then, placing a hand on Sangik's shoulder, Yeongwoo pointed toward the congratulatory donation stand.

"You can now proudly make your contribution."

Jo Sangik, the second congratulatory donor of this wedding, hailing from Gwanak-gu.

As he walked toward the donation stand with a money pouch in hand, Jeonggu, watching from behind, spoke with a worried expression.

"Are we seriously going to keep collecting money like this? Isn't this basically loan sharking instead of greeting guests? I mean, this is no different from being a loan shark...."

"A mountain is made of tiny specks of dust."

"...Huh?"

"If we squeeze 5 million in interest from just ten people, that's already 50 million. And the best part is, even if we fail the ceremonial breakthrough, we don't have to return this money."

"R-Really?"

"Of course. The money returned due to a failed ceremonial breakthrough only applies to the 'congratulatory fund,' but the interest I collect isn't considered part of that."

Besides, Yeongwoo didn't even have the cash to pay the remaining balance for the wedding venue at the moment.

His total assets, including defense funds, amounted to about 1.05 billion Karma.

Meanwhile, the venue's outstanding balance was 1.22 billion.

"If we fail the ceremonial breakthrough today and have to return all the congratulatory funds, we won't be able to pay the wedding venue balance."

"Huh? Then what happens?"

"One of two things. Either we get sued by Kwaya's Hammer and end up in prison, or I take out another loan to somehow cover the cost."

With that, Yeongwoo shifted his gaze toward an alien approaching from the other side, carrying something on their back.

Standing about 2 meters tall, the figure was cloaked in a reddish-brown robe with the hood pulled down deeply, carrying a rather peculiar object.

'That....'

It was none other than a wreath made entirely of Karma coins.

Remarkably, it even resembled a traditional Earth wreath, complete with a ribbon bearing a congratulatory message.

Through the writing on the ribbon, Yeongwoo was able to identify the visitor.

[Interest rates cheaper than death! Osaek Credit.]

[Congratulations on your wedding!]

‘These guys... They came here to advertise their business.’

To a fellow businessman like Yeongwoo, their intentions were blatantly obvious.

— Ohhh, Jeong Yeongwoo07-nim!

The representative from Osaek Credit placed the wreath on the ground and bowed politely before approaching.

"Ah, you're from Osaek Credit. I believe we only spoke over the phone once before, and now..."

Notably, Yeongwoo had never actually done business with them.

— Yes, it is an honor to meet you again on such a wonderful day.

Then, the alien took out a small communicator from within their robe and handed it over.

Swoosh.

— I am Daouk, Executive Director from the Sales Division.

"Ah, Executive Director, it's a pleasure."

As soon as Yeongwoo accepted the communicator, an equipment tooltip appeared in his vision.

Pop!

[Osaek Communicator] - Common Tool

【Interest rates cheaper than death! Osaek Credit.】

| Sales Division Executive Director, Daouk.

‘An executive...? They sent a high-ranking officer?’

Yeongwoo tilted his head in curiosity.

Sure, a wedding was a joyful occasion, but for Osaek Credit to send an executive to the wedding of someone they had never even done business with—it was suspicious.

"Well then..."

Still, having an extra guest was always a good thing, so Yeongwoo gestured toward the congratulatory donation stand.

But before he could say anything, Daouk quickly interjected.

— Yeongwoo-nim, if I may...

"Yes?"

— Before I present my contribution, may I ask for a small favor?

"A favor? Go ahead, let's hear it."

Daouk then extended a vaguely shadow-like arm from within their robe, rubbing both hands together in a crafty manner.

— If you would be so kind as to allow it...

"Yes?"

— I'd like to conduct some loan business at this wedding venue.

"Loan business? Specifically...?"

— I heard a rumor that a congratulatory donation ranking system has been introduced.

"Yes, you heard correctly."

— Then surely there must be significant competition among the top contributors...? And in such cases, some might find themselves short on immediate cash...

"So, what you're saying is that you want to provide loans to the top donors, correct?"

Daouk nodded repeatedly.

— Exactly. But on an exclusive basis. No other lending companies should be allowed to operate here.

In other words, Osaek Credit wanted to be the sole ATM at this wedding.

They intended to lend money to any donor who lacked immediate cash in exchange for interest.

"Aha..."

At last, Yeongwoo understood why Osaek Credit had sent a sales executive.

But he didn't dislike the idea.

After all, this wedding itself was a massive business operation.

Having a business partner on the side wouldn't be a bad thing.

However, the important question was—

"Then what about me? If I allow Osaek Credit exclusive loan rights, what do I get out of it?"

Daouk rubbed his hands again and glanced toward the donation stand.

— Naturally, a satisfactory congratulatory donation...

"No."

— ...?

"Congratulatory funds have to be returned if we fail the ceremonial breakthrough, don't they?"

— Then what do you suggest?

"Pay a commission."

— A commission? You mean on the loans we generate here?

"Yes. I want half of the interest you make from these loans. In return, I'll grant you exclusive rights to operate here."

Then, Yeongwoo pointed to the donation stand.

"And, of course, you can make your donation over there."

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 389: The Dignity of a Wedding (5)

Half of the interest generated from the loan was to be paid as a fee.

It was an absurd condition, but for Daouk, there was no other choice.

That was because this wedding market was also monopolized by Jeong Yeongwoo.

After all, wasn't he the host of the wedding and the sole decision-maker?

—F-Fine. But it must be an exclusive business deal.

"Of course. No other loan companies will be allowed."

As Yeongwoo nodded and spoke, Daouk, who had keenly picked up on something, asked again.

—Then... are you saying that someone other than a loan company could come in to do business?

'Oh. He's quick.'

Indeed, executives operated on a different level.

Yeongwoo admired this internally before answering honestly.

"I will personally handle the congratulatory gift loans for Earthlings."

—...What?

"I only have about 1 billion in cash anyway. And since the minimum congratulatory gift amount is 15 million Karma, the amount Earthlings would need to borrow would all be small-scale."

So Yeongwoo's proposal was that he would handle loans for Earthlings, while Osaek Credit would take care of loans for extraterrestrials.

After all, he didn't have the capital to fund the congratulatory gift competition of the big spenders.

—Hmm...

Daouk, the director of Osaek Credit's sales division, pondered for a moment.

It didn't take long before he accepted Yeongwoo's proposal.

—Alright. It seems we have no other option.

"A wise choice. You won't regret it."

With this, Yeongwoo ensured a significant profit as long as the wedding proceeded without any issues.

Even in the worst-case scenario, where all the congratulatory gifts had to be refunded, he could still cover the remaining wedding expenses with the interest collected from Earthlings' loans and the business commission from Osaek Credit.

Ping!

<Strongest Sword of Gwanak, Jo Sangik>

「Congratulatory gift payment complete!」

Soon, a notification popped up, confirming that Jo Sangik had paid his gift.

「Celebrating the wedding of Jeong Yeongwoo's parents, Kim Jeonggu and Song Jiseon: 15 million Karma received.」

And, as expected, the amount was publicly displayed.

Daouk looked at the projected congratulatory gift records on the main building with a somewhat bitter expression.

—The congratulatory gifts... are completely public?

"Oh, that wasn't my decision. The construction company is a bit eccentric."

As Yeongwoo said this, something suddenly occurred to him, and he called out urgently.

"Kobu! Mr. Kobu!"

From across the venue, Kobu, who had been managing the congratulatory gift system, approached.

—Yes, boss? What is it?

"The visibility of the congratulatory gift amounts—can it be conditionally restricted?"

Kobu tilted his head.

—Conditionally...?

"If an additional fee is paid, can the gift amount be made private?"

In other words, Yeongwoo was considering charging a fee for confidentiality.

—The venue isn't fully completed yet, and from a system standpoint, it's possible.

As Kobu confirmed that the feature could be added, Yeongwoo's face lit up with excitement.

This was because he knew that the big shots engaging in the high-stakes congratulatory gift competition would not want their amounts to be publicly displayed.

—Shall I add the private conversion function now?

Kobu asked.

Yeongwoo gestured for him to wait.

"Give me a moment to think."

A privacy option—it was clearly a necessary feature.

The only question was, how much should they charge for it?

The chairmen attending were already prepared to spend a fortune here, but if it looked like they were being blatantly squeezed for money, it could backfire.

'Honestly, charging 5% of the congratulatory gift for privacy would be extremely profitable.'

But from the perspective of those paying, it would feel like an unfair money grab.

They were already giving a substantial amount, and demanding an extra 5% just for privacy would seem excessive.

'People need to feel good about spending money. If we irritate the chairmen too much, they might close their wallets.'

In truth, just having a ranking system for the gifts was already somewhat offensive to them.

So Yeongwoo came to a decision.

"The privacy fee will be 10 million Karma. However, for gifts of 200 million or more, privacy will be free."

Jiseon, standing behind him, widened her eyes in shock.

—You sneaky bastard, you're a real businessman.

She was astonished by Yeongwoo's cunning business tactics.

Not only did he avoid losing big clients with exorbitant fees, but he also managed to incorporate an element of VIP service.

Charging 10 million Karma for privacy meant that this system was never intended for small-time contributors.

Someone who only gave the minimum 15 million wouldn't likely pay an extra 10 million for privacy.

In other words, this privacy option was only viable for those giving at least 100 million.

Even for those giving 100 million, paying an extra 10 million meant an additional 10% fee, so the real target was those contributing 200 million or more.

And by waiving the privacy fee at exactly 200 million, Yeongwoo subtly created an exclusive privilege for high-tier guests.

"This way, the chairmen who donate over 200 million can enjoy privacy at no extra cost, while those below that threshold will have to pay around 5% of their gift to keep it confidential."

"...So those below 200 million will be competing for third place?"

"Yes. And even if they don't aim for the top three, some executives might still prefer to keep their amount private."

Meanwhile, small-time contributors, upon seeing the already-public amounts, would hesitate to be too stingy.

In other words, even those who initially planned to give only the minimum 15 million would feel pressured to contribute more.

"Every little bit adds up. We need to squeeze out as much as we can from all donors."

As Yeongwoo nodded at Kobu, the gift registry lit up.

Flash!

The privacy conversion feature was now implemented.

"Alright, Mr. Director, you heard that? You can now make your gift private if you wish."

Yeongwoo grinned at Daouk, who, beneath his tightly pulled hood, had an expression of horror.

At this point, Yeongwoo seemed more like a loan shark than a wedding host.

—You have excellent business acumen.

Daouk lowered his head toward the Earthling, who might one day become a formidable competitor.

Then, he walked toward the congratulatory gift table to offer his contribution.

Meanwhile...

"Huh?!"

"Huh? The Deputy Minister is already here?"

"What the...? What's that over there...?"

One by one, the Strongest Swords of the Seoul Alliance emerged from the Earthlings' passageway.

Since they were from the same country, they had arrived early at the wedding venue.

"Ah, welcome!"

Behind Yeongwoo, who was warmly greeting Seoul's Strongest Swords, stood a towering execution platform.

"...Yeongwoo, what is that?"

Oh Yeonhee, the Songpa Strongest Sword, who was at the front of the guests, pointed at the execution platform and asked.

Yeongwoo glanced at the pouches in the hands of the Strongest Swords and casually replied.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

"Well, we had no choice but to entrust the construction of the wedding venue to a cosmic prison company... and that thing showed up."

"A... cosmic what?"

"The minimum congratulatory gift for this wedding is 15 million Karma. Unfortunately, any guest whose gift falls short... will have their head chopped off."

Swish, swish.

Yeongwoo pointed alternately between the congratulatory gift table and the execution platform.

The Strongest Swords all dropped their jaws in shock.

"H-How much?!"

"You mean... beheading?!"

They had come expecting to hear a bizarre wedding speech at worst.

The idea that they might lose their heads over an insufficient gift had never crossed their minds.

Swoooooosh!

Right on cue, the execution platform demonstrated its deadly function once more.

At that very moment, a payment notification rang out.

<Osaek Credit, Daouk Corporation>

「Congratulatory gift successfully paid!」

"Huh?"

"Osaek Credit?"

The Strongest Swords checked the name of the payer with puzzled expressions.

Then, upon reading the details, their mouths fell open again.

「From Osaek Credit, Daouk Corporation: Congratulations on the wedding of Jeong Yeongwoo's parents, Kim Jeonggu and Song Jiseon. Amount received: 50 million Karma.」

Daouk, the executive of Osaek Credit, had proudly made his contribution in public.

"Fifty million... A bit disappointing, but I suppose it's enough to carry some weight. It's the highest amount so far, after all."

While Yeongwoo considered it merely "a bit disappointing," for the newly arrived Strongest Swords from Seoul—cosmic country bumpkins, so to speak—50 million Karma was an astronomical sum.

"Who... Who in the world would give 50 million as a wedding gift?!"

"And what even is Osaek Credit...?"

Realizing that they would soon have to stand before the congratulatory gift table themselves, the Strongest Swords began to panic.

Yeongwoo reassured them,

"He's in the space loan business. You don't need to concern yourselves with him."

Then, he pointed back at the execution platform.

"But if your gifts don't meet the 15 million minimum, things will get... difficult."

And by "difficult," everyone present understood it meant execution.

Swoooooosh!

The guillotine, still without its first victim, continued slicing through empty air in vain.

"Material wealth is a reflection of one's heart, isn't it? So please, offer what your heart desires."

Clap!

Yeongwoo gestured toward the gift table, prompting Seocho Strongest Sword, Choi Namhee, to hesitantly speak up for the first time.

"Uh... Yeongwoo?"

"Yes? What is it?"

"Would it... be possible for me to return to my office for a moment? I promise to be back before the ceremony starts."

Choi Namhee discreetly clutched the pouch hidden behind her thigh.

Yeongwoo got straight to the point.

"How much?"

"...Pardon?"

"How much did you bring?"

Choi Namhee, looking utterly distressed, reluctantly handed over her pouch.

Clink.

It was light.

Even lighter than the one brought by Gwanak Strongest Sword, Jo Sangik.

Inside was only 5 million Karma.

"Ah."

Yeongwoo let out a vague sound, and Choi Namhee, realizing the predicament, anxiously glanced back and forth between Yeongwoo and the execution platform.

"I-I'll be right back! I'll return quickly!"

"How much?"

"...Huh?"

"If I let you go safely, how much will you bring back?"

A cold sweat formed on Choi Namhee's forehead as she furrowed her brows in deep thought.

The minimum gift requirement was 15 million.

But just now, someone had given 50 million.

What was the safest amount to offer in order to escape from this madman's grasp?

Swoooooosh!

Again, the ominous sound of the guillotine echoed in the air.

Clenching her eyes shut, Choi Namhee blurted out a number.

"Thirty million!"

"Oh?"

"I-I'll bring 30 million Karma!"

Yeongwoo's expression suddenly softened into a warm and friendly smile.

Plop!

"No need to trouble yourself with the trip."

"Huh?"

"I've already prepared a way for you to make up for your insufficient... heart."

"W-What do you mean...?"

Sensing imminent doom, Choi Namhee's pupils widened in terror.

Then, right in her palm, Yeongwoo drew a straight line and issued a loan agreement.

Flash!

「Principal: 25 million Karma. Interest rate: 100%, calculated daily. Loan is pending execution. Do you accept?」

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 390: The Dignity of a Wedding (6)

"What...? The daily interest rate is 100%?"

Choi Namhee looked incredulous.

A loan of 25 million Karma with a daily interest rate of 100% meant that even if it were repaid the very next day, she would need to prepare 50 million in cash.

"Yes, that's correct."

".....!"

"Even the guests from Shandong brought 30 million without me even asking. And yet, you, my fellow countrymen, only brought 5 million? Does that even make sense?"

"T-That's...!"

"To be honest, I'd love to make an example out of you and hang you on the execution platform, but since you're one of the people responsible for Seoul's safety, I'm letting you off."

With those words, Yeongwoo looked around at the other Strongest Swords.

“Those who didn’t bring enough congratulatory money, step forward and sign a promissory note. If you refuse, the only other option is to die over there.”

“.....!”

Choi Namhee, Oh Yeonhee, and the other guests from the Seoul Alliance gasped at Yeongwoo’s drastic statement.

But his next words were even more shocking.

“I feel like everyone’s been living too comfortably lately.”

“...Excuse me?”

“What did you say?”

“You’re not afraid of anything anymore, are you? You don’t even feel tense, right? After all, I haven’t been threatening you.”

Yeongwoo placed his hand on Bastard, and in that moment, all the Strongest Swords recalled something.

The time when Jeong Yeongwoo 07 had cut off the head of the previous Gangnam’s Strongest Sword Jeong Hyunsik 04 with his elbow.

They had momentarily forgotten, but the Strongest Sword before them was like a ticking time bomb—a monster that could explode at any moment.

“The reason I haven’t squeezed you dry until now is that my external businesses have been doing so well that I had no reason to trouble my own people.”

“.....”

“But what’s today? Isn’t it my wedding day, a day to celebrate the success of my external endeavors on your behalf? And yet, instead of showing your utmost sincerity... what? You bring a measly 5 million?”

Yeongwoo furrowed his brows menacingly, making Seocho’s Strongest Sword Choi Namhee flinch and bow her head.

The long-forgotten fear of death clamped around her neck once again.

“I’m not asking you to hand over your entire fortune. But at least show some sincerity. Aren’t you all freeloading off the work I’ve done? Our planet is about to receive an additional promotion.”

As Yeongwoo looked up at the sky, he saw a spacecraft descending in the distance—likely carrying guests from outer space.

“The new guests are arriving soon. Go make your contributions.”

“Y-Yes, sir...”

“...Of course.”

“Let’s hurry up!”

Following Yeongwoo’s command, the Strongest Swords hesitated but began moving toward the offering table one by one.

Soon, Dongdaemun’s Strongest Sword Jang Jeongho cautiously approached and requested a loan.

“I... I’d like to borrow 10 million.”

“Really? Show me your hand.”

Since Yeongwoo needed to deal with the Strongest Swords quickly and prepare for the extraterrestrial guests, he swiftly prepared a new promissory note.

「Principal: 10 million Karma, Daily Interest Rate: 100%. Loan is pending execution. Approve?」

A new loan contract with Jang Jeongho.

He had initially brought 10 million Karma, meaning he had now committed a total of 20 million Karma as a wedding gift.

Paaaah!

After finalizing the contract with Jang Jeongho, Yeongwoo turned to the remaining Strongest Swords and asked,

“Alright, anyone else need a loan?”

* * *

2:23 PM.

The hammer of Kwaya struck at the exact scheduled completion time.

Boom!

The moment a massive black spire was embedded into the top of the main hall, the entire construction was finished.

Beeeeeeep!

A long signal sounded, announcing the completion of the wedding hall.

Then, from inside the main building, Kobu, Tobu, and Chobu walked out side by side.

-Boss, the wedding hall installation is complete.

“Oh, great job.”

As Yeongwoo expressed his gratitude and looked up, he saw a massive, jet-black main building made of numerous spires.

It looked more fitting for a demon king's coronation ceremony than a wedding, but to Yeongwoo, it was the best possible outcome.

Bringing in prison architects to design it had paid off in a major way.

“Kobu, how's the contribution ranking? Can we see it inside the main hall?”

-Yes. There's an official ranking board inside the main hall, and we've also set up a real-time ranking display in the lobby.

With that, Kobu snapped his fingers in the air, and a hologram projection shot from the donation table onto the exterior wall of the main building.

Paaah!

It was none other than the wedding contribution ranking.

「We sincerely appreciate your support.」

[1st Place] Osaek Credit – 50 million

[2nd Place] Voltak – 40 million

[3rd Place] Shandong Twin Evils – 30 million

[4th Place] Seocho Strongest Sword – 30 million

[5th Place] Songpa Strongest Sword – 25 million

Only the top five rankings were displayed.

Even so, three of the top five were still Earthlings.

‘Seriously? The Shandong Twin Evils are still in third place? Damn... what a pathetic contest.’

Yeongwoo rubbed his forehead.

At least the second-place slot was taken by Voltak’s wandering merchant, who had just arrived and was now observing the donation ranking with interest from the lobby.

—This is like some small-town convenience store.

Jiseon, who had been watching the rankings with Yeongwoo, scoffed.

—Hey, do you think you’ll even break even with this?

“Just wait. The chairmen will arrive soon and clean up the mess.”

Perhaps only the true "big spenders" could be relied upon.

Clenching his teeth and waiting for the white knight to appear, Yeongwoo suddenly had a brilliant idea and widened his eyes.

“Kobu.”

-Yes, Boss?

“You haven’t contributed yet, have you?”

-That’s right. Shall we do it now?

"Yes. But please add an extra 100 million to the original amount."

-What...?

"I'll add 100 million to the wedding hall's remaining balance."

In Earth terms, it meant he was offering a payback.

It was also a form of self-dealing.

Hearing this, Jiseon widened her eyes and exclaimed,

—Hey, you bastard! That's market mani—

"Let's call it a promotional activity. Mr. Kobu, can you do it?"

When Yeongwoo requested Kobu's cooperation in market manipulation, Kobu hesitated for a moment.

-On Earth... is this illegal?

"Here, I am the law. You won't be arrested, so don't worry."

-...Understood.

Besides, Earth didn't even have a proper prison capable of holding someone like Kobu.

"Alright, let's go!"

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

As Yeongwoo pushed Kobu forward, the three brokers—Kobu, Tobu, and Chobu—lined up in front of the congratulatory gift station.

<Kwaya's Hammer, Kobu>

「Congratulatory gift paid!」

「A monetary gift has been delivered in celebration of the wedding of Kim Jeonggu and Song Jiseon, parents of the Strongest Sword, Jeong Yeongwoo.」

‘Oh... so private gifts are recorded like that.’

Then, in an instant, the top rank of the congratulatory gift rankings changed to Kwaya's Hammer.

Beep!

[Rank 1] Kwaya's Hammer, Private

[Rank 2] Osaek Credit, 50 million

[Rank 3] Boltak, 40 million

[Rank 4] Sandong Twin Evils, 30 million

[Rank 5] Seocho Strongest Sword, 30 million

At last, the top three were filled with alien guests.

‘Now, the real party begins.’

While Yeongwoo admired the ranking board with satisfaction, a glossy, black oval-shaped spaceship descended from the sky.

Swaeaaaaak!

The ship landed almost like a crash in the distant parking area from the lobby.

It was none other than the arms dealers of Cheok.

As the oval-shaped ship split open from both sides, a gigantic wheel-like creature, five meters long, emerged from within.

“...Ugh.”

Yeongwoo immediately recognized it—it was the merchant he had encountered on his way to Seoul, back in Chungju.

The creature was so distinctive that Yeongwoo still remembered it clearly.

"What the hell, why is a giant wheel rolling up here?"

Jiseon, stunned by the unexpected guest, gaped in shock, while Jeonggu instinctively hid behind his wife.

-Gigit...

The strange guest let out an eerie noise, clicking its massive claws against the ground as it approached the lobby.

It lifted its massive body and stared intently at the congratulatory gift ranking board.

"...Git."

For some reason, the single utterance felt oddly dramatic.

Then, it placed one of its massive forelimbs onto the gift station.

<Cheok's Arms Dealer, Garta>

「Congratulatory gift paid!」

Now, the question was—how much did this giant wheel contribute?

「A monetary gift of 90 million Karma has been received in celebration of the wedding of Kim Jeonggu and Song Jiseon, parents of the Strongest Sword, Jeong Yeongwoo.」

“...Huh?”

“What? 900 million?!”

“Did they just gift 90 million?”

The moment the amount was revealed, the entire hall erupted in shock.

But what was even more surprising—despite this enormous gift, it still didn’t take first place.

[Rank 1] Kwaya’s Hammer, Private

[Rank 2] Cheok, 90 million

[Rank 3] Osaek Credit, 50 million

[Rank 4] Boltak, 40 million

[Rank 5] Sandong Twin Evils, 30 million

“Wow...! At least we’re still in 5th place, right?”

Amid the commotion, Sandong Twin Evils excitedly cheered upon seeing their name still on the leaderboard.

Meanwhile, Kobu leaned in close to Yeongwoo and whispered in a low voice.

-Your plan is working perfectly.

"If the top rank had been shattered immediately, it might’ve backfired... This way, the next contender will have to consider at least 100 million before making a move."

Then, Yeongwoo turned to Kobu and asked,

"By the way, how much did you put in? Whisper it to me."

Kobu bent down and brought his head close to Yeongwoo’s ear.

-160 million.

“...What?”

Upon hearing the amount, Yeongwoo instinctively offered a handshake.

"You did an amazing job."

It was already incredibly generous for Kwaya's Hammer—the company responsible for constructing the wedding hall—to contribute a separate congratulatory gift.

And the amount was nothing to scoff at.

Even after deducting the 100 million payback, 60 million Karma remained.

And after factoring in the privacy fee, it was effectively a 70 million donation.

—One hour until the ceremony. Guests should start arriving soon.

Having grown accustomed to the wedding atmosphere, Jiseon gazed up at the sky and muttered.

At that moment, another spaceship descended.

—But who's that? The ship looks kind of different.

"Huh? Where?"

Following Jiseon's gaze, Yeongwoo looked up—then immediately widened his eyes in shock.

Whooooosh...!

The ship descended with a graceful, elegant hum.

“...Oh?”

The ship was a glowing white cube—the personal vessel of the Architect, Lemu.

"Lemu?"

—Huh? Lemu? That's Lemu's ship?"

As Jiseon asked in disbelief, Yeongwoo was already sprinting across the lobby, heading straight for the parking zone.

Tat-tat!

"The era of petty gifts is over! Now it's time for the 'real' players to step in!
LEMUUUUU...!"

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]