

## **Level 4 Human in a Ruined World #Chapter 421 - Read Level 4 Human in a Ruined World Chapter 421**

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 421: Sole Candidate (3)

“A promise? We never made any promises...”

“Since when did we ever agree to hand over our equipment?”

Both the Guardian of Italy and the Shadow of Tundra widened their eyes in denial.

After all, none of them had made such a promise.

“What? You’re saying there was no promise?”

Yeongwoo scratched his chin with the tip of Bastard he was holding.

Then, he suddenly pointed the blade at the three powerful figures and spoke.

Whoosh!

“Then let’s make a promise now. Only those who willingly hand over their equipment get to return home.”

“...What?”

“T-That’s your promise, not ours.”

The jaws of both the Italian and the Tundra dropped.

Meanwhile, the Conqueror of the Great Lakes, who was already stark naked, wore a subtle expression.

After all, he had no equipment left to give.

“Then... since I’ve already given everything I can, does that mean I can go home now?”

The Great Lakes Conqueror asked cautiously, forcing a servile smile.

Yeongwoo slowly turned his head and stared at him.

“You’re right. There’s no equipment to take from you.”

“I was dragged here out of nowhere, after all.”

The Great Lakes Conqueror shrugged helplessly.

Then, Yeongwoo spread his palm, conjuring yet another loan contract out of thin air.

Swoosh!

“...?”

“Then you can just pay 200 million more and leave. Let’s make it a neat 1 billion.”

The Conqueror of the Great Lakes had previously managed to secure a reduced loan contract of 800 million instead of the standard 1 billion.

But now, Yeongwoo was shoving a new 200-million loan contract in his face.

“W-What kind of insane nonsense is this? If that’s the case, I’d rather just hand over my equipment...!”

To the Great Lakes Conqueror, it was an absurd proposition.

Even if he sold all the equipment he had previously worn, it wouldn’t amount to a billion—hell, not even close to hundreds of millions.

Yet before he could voice his protest, Yeongwoo cut him off.

“Frankly, I already have plenty of equipment. So, you just give me the money.”

As Yeongwoo held out the loan contract and the tip of his sword simultaneously, the remaining two figures hastily began stripping off their armor.

Clearly, tossing their gear and getting the hell out of there seemed like the smartest move.

“What the hell is going on...?”

“If this continues, is that bastard really going to become the master of Earth?”

As the Guardian Sword of Italy and the Shadow of the Tundra grumbled under their breath while removing their equipment, Yeongwoo’s lips curled into a faint smile.

“Lay your stripped equipment neatly in front of you. I’ll take only what I need.”

“What? Seriously?”

The Shadow of the Tundra, now nearly naked, blinked in disbelief.

Yeongwoo nodded.

“You guys still need to make a living on Earth, right? I’m not that cruel.”

Of course, Yeongwoo had already turned the three of them into penniless beggars.

Still, he meant it when he said he would leave them with enough to survive.

“I’m looking for resistance gear against super powers, elemental damage, and lightning damage. Oh, and special resistance items too.”

This was because Yeongwoo had already set up his resistance stats using the Osmosis effect.

| Fire Resistance: 15% 【Osmosis 60%】

| Cold Resistance: 15% 【Osmosis 60%】

| Lightning Resistance: 15% 【Osmosis 60%】

| Poison Resistance: 15% 【Osmosis 60%】

| Ability Resistance: 60%

| Dragon Resistance: 10%

Currently, all basic resistances were configured to mirror his ability resistance value.

Therefore, he had no need for any elemental resistance gear.

Moreover, since his stats had already reached their maximum potential, equipment that increased base stats was now meaningless.

‘Of course, if I wanted to fill out my catalog, I should probably just take everything... but this is the space era now. No need to be too harsh on Earthlings.’

In Yeongwoo’s mind, he was genuinely being merciful.

Clank!

Soon, all three figures, including the already naked Great Lakes Conqueror, were fully stripped.

“You sure brought a lot with you.”

Yeongwoo scanned the equipment laid out before him, examining each item’s effects.

As expected of Earth’s elite, most of the gear had familiar effects: basic resistance buffs, conditional stat increases, and weather-specific protection.

Naturally, there were no bizarre effects like "increased favorability with machines", nor did he find any % stat-boosting equipment, which was what he actually needed.

‘Not much value here. I should’ve just taken more money instead.’

Then.

Clink!

Yeongwoo halted his steps as he came across a particular dagger with a faint violet hue.

“...Oh?”

The weapon caught his attention.

「Dark Thorn」 – Mutant Dagger

【Increases ability damage by 45%.】

【--Empty Slot--】

“What the hell? Why do you guys even have ability damage gear?”

Ability damage was a special effect that bypassed armor and weakened defensive gear.

However, it was generally useless on Earth.

After all, for ability damage to be effective, the attacker needed to possess ability properties—which Earthlings didn’t.

But Yeongwoo was different.

He had long since recognized the value of ability properties and had been collecting related gear.

「Horn of Kelpite」 – Legendary Spear

【20% of attack power converted to ability damage.】

【40% increase in ability damage.】

「Heresy」 - Unique Gauntlets

【15% of attack power is converted into mental damage.】

Currently, 35% of Yeongwoo's total damage output was ability.

Moreover, he had fine-tuned his resistances accordingly, making him effectively a space-ready combatant.

“Whose is this?”

As Yeongwoo picked up the Dark Thorn, the Guardian of Italy hesitantly raised his hand.

“...That's mine.”

“You've been carrying around something so useless. This is confiscated.”

“.....”

But Italy's misfortune didn't end there.

“What's this now?”

Yeongwoo halted once again.

「Halo of Light」 - Epic Armor

【15% Resistance to Supernatural Abilities】

【When receiving supernatural damage, all stats increase by 1,000.】

“Don't tell me this is yours too?”

When Yeongwoo lifted Halo of Light, the Guardian of Italy nodded.

“...Yes.”

“Wait, this is epic gear.”

In other words, unlike the Dark Thorn, which was likely a reward for defeating a mutant, this was equipment he had paid for.

“Did you seriously buy this on purpose? You’ve probably never even fought an ability-based opponent before.”

“Yes. But for some reason, I had a feeling it would come in handy one day, so I made a big investment.”

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That was the instinct of a planetary powerhouse.

Well, back when he bought the armor, he must have been at the top of his region.

It was only natural that he had the luxury to invest in an uncertain future.

“Ah... you truly have foresight, sir.”

“.....?”

Yeongwoo suddenly switched to formal speech.

Then, he carefully cradled Halo of Light in his arms.

“Thanks to this armor, you’ve made a great contribution to our planet. It turned out to be useful after all.”

Although the stat-boosting effect was meaningless for Yeongwoo, the 15% resistance to abilities alone was valuable.

For Yeongwoo, it wasn’t just single resistance—it was...

‘An additional 15% boost to all basic resistances... This will practically push them to the cap.’

There was no need to delay.

Yeongwoo immediately registered Halo of Light in his armor catalog.

Fwoosh!

Right before the Guardian of Italy’s eyes, the armor vanished into thin air, and Yeongwoo’s resistance levels skyrocketed to absurd heights.

「Due to Osmosis, some resistance values have been adjusted.」

|Fire resistance: 15% 【Osmosis 75%】

|Cold resistance: 15% 【Osmosis 75%】

|Lightning resistance: 15% 【Osmosis 75%】

|Poison resistance: 15% 【Osmosis 75%】

|Ability resistance: 75%

|Dragon resistance: 10%

All basic resistances, along with ability resistance, had reached 75%.

Having 75% resistance meant he would only take 25% of the damage from those types of attacks.

And even that would be further reduced by his various damage reduction effects.

‘This is insane... I need to find someone to beat up right now.’

Honestly, at this moment, the thing he most wanted to see was Earth.

The planetary representative he had to convince for the construction of the planetary battleship.

“Seriously though, this guy doesn’t have anything decent.”

By this guy, Yeongwoo was referring to the Shadow of Tundra.

After all, he had already confiscated two pieces of equipment from the Guardian of Italy.

“Hmm.”

Yeongwoo paused for a moment, then summoned the interface for his equipment catalog.

Fwoosh!

The Weapon Catalog interface appeared at the top, showing the upcoming catalog effect.

[Weapon Catalog]

[19]

[Catalog Effect: 10]

| +1% damage per registered weapon

‘Ah, I need to fill my weapon catalog.’

Just one more weapon was required to unlock the second catalog effect.

“I guess I’ll just take a sword, then.”

When Yeongwoo casually picked up the long sword left by the Shadow of the Tundra, the man’s face twisted.

Understandable, as it was a legendary weapon—a rare and valuable item by Earth standards.

「Gambler」 - Legendary One-Handed Sword

【Increases attribute damage by 30% when the attack count is odd.】

【Increases attack power by 15% when the attack count is even.】

【55% chance to reduce damage by 25% when defending.】

“...What the hell is this?”

The bizarre item effects made Yeongwoo frown.

Then again, legendary-grade gear often strayed from conventional patterns.

‘Wait... after a closer look, this is actually pretty good.’

Considering Yeongwoo already possessed a substantial amount of elemental damage, all three effects of Gambler were beneficial to him.

During attacks: constant bonus damage.

During defense: 55% chance to reduce incoming damage by a quarter.

Clang.

As Yeongwoo gripped the elongated, single-edged sword, a message appeared in his field of vision, prompting him to register the weapon in his catalog.

「Do you want to register Gambler in the weapon catalog?」



‘Of course. Let’s see what the second-stage effect is.’

The second catalog effect for equipment was often significant.

Especially in the armor catalog, the effects varied greatly depending on the gear's quality.

[Catalog Effect: 20]

| +50% enhancement to the effect of a selected piece of gear

It was only natural for Yeongwoo to anticipate an offensive advantage for the weapon catalog’s second effect.

‘It’s the weapon catalog, after all. It’s bound to be attack-related.’

Yeongwoo registered Gambler in his weapon catalog.

His vision flashed with a bright light, followed by a clear notification sound.

Piiiiing!

「A new catalog effect has been unlocked in the weapon catalog!」

‘Finally.’

In the dazzling white light, Yeongwoo squinted to see the new catalog effect listed beneath the first one.

[Catalog Effect: 10]

| +1% damage per registered weapon

[Catalog Effect: 20]

| Sword Mountain

‘...Huh? Sword Mountain?’

Sword Mountain.

An unfamiliar term.

‘The catalog effect is called Sword Mountain? What the hell is that?’

As Yeongwoo wondered, the system displayed a new information window.

「You are now the master of the Twenty-Sword Mountain.」

‘What?’

「You can now summon a Sword Mountain at any desired location using the weapons registered in your catalog.」

‘Huh?’

His mouth fell open involuntarily.

Sword Mountain.

Upon further thought, it wasn’t an unfamiliar term.

—I am Dogo, the King of Destruction, the one born on the battlefield, the master of the Hundred Thousand Swords Mountain!

‘Shit, is it that Sword Mountain?’

Feeling a sudden wave of dizziness, Yeongwoo staggered slightly.

And right on cue, the system displayed a new prompt in his field of view.

「Do you wish to summon the Twenty-Sword Mountain?’

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Chapter 422: Sole Candidate (4)

Twenty Sword Mountain.

As the name suggests, it refers to a mountain formed by twenty swords.

‘But honestly, with just twenty swords, isn’t it more of a sword pile rather than a sword mountain?’

Of course, that wasn’t the important part.

The truly significant thing was this:

‘Wait, then how the hell do you form Hundred Thousand Sword Mountain?’

Yeongwoo blinked.

If Hundred Thousand Sword Mountain was taken literally, it meant a mountain made of one hundred thousand swords.

And according to the Weapon Catalog, the definition of "Sword Mountain" was as follows:

「You can summon a Sword Mountain at your desired location using the weapons registered in the Catalog.」

In other words, Hundred Thousand Sword Mountain implied that there were 100,000 weapons registered in the Catalog.

‘That can’t be right. The second collection effect triggers with just twenty weapons. Are you telling me that some lunatic actually registered 100,000 weapons in their Catalog?’

It was almost impossible to believe, but the evidence pointed to one such person.

The man who claimed ownership of Hundred Thousand Sword Mountain—Dogo, the King of Destruction.

Unless the Chairman was spewing utter nonsense, his Catalog genuinely contained 100,000 weapons.

‘What the hell...’

Yeongwoo was at a loss for words.

No wonder a Grade-3 being had the term "Sword Mountain" associated with them.

‘So, does that mean this universe has hundreds of thousands of different weapons?’

If the Chairman’s Hundred Thousand Sword Mountain was real, that was the only logical conclusion.

This universe must contain at least hundreds of thousands of weapons, and someone had managed to obtain 100,000 of them and register them all in the Catalog.

‘That’s just insane. The first effect of the Weapon Catalog grants 1% damage increase per registered weapon.’

[Collection Effect: 10]

| Damage increased by 1% per registered weapon

That meant the Chairman was enjoying a +100,000% damage increase from the Catalog alone.

‘No wonder he keeps calling everyone insects.’

Yeongwoo instinctively shut his eyes.

The universe was vast, and the Chairman remained an impossibly towering figure.

To think that Mara could stand on equal footing with him...

‘That guy had ridiculous epithets too, didn’t he? No wonder, there was a reason for it all.’

Mara.

The Lord of the Void, the One Who Walks in the Shadow of Universal Law, the King of Ten Thousand Demons.

Perhaps declaring Mara his enemy had been the greatest mistake of his life.

「Would you like to summon Twenty Sword Mountain?」

Even as these thoughts raced through his mind, the summoning prompt continued to flash before his eyes.

‘Twenty Sword Mountain...’

Now that he knew about Hundred Thousand Sword Mountain, summoning only twenty swords felt almost insulting.

‘What’s the point? Throwing out 20 weapons isn’t going to do much.’

Still, he figured he should at least see it in action.

With the conference hall brimming with empty space, Yeongwoo turned his gaze beyond the round table and muttered softly:

“...Summon Twenty Sword Mountain.”

In an instant, a deafening rupture echoed through the hall.

KWAJAAAK!

“Huh?”

“Wha—what the hell?”

The three powerful figures present, as well as Jiseon and Jeonggu, all snapped their heads up in surprise.

And then they saw it.

KWAGWAGWAGWAGWAT!

From a massive vertical rift torn open in midair, blades came screaming out at breakneck speed.

—What the...?

Jiseon’s eyes widened beneath her helmet.

The blades flew so fast that she barely caught a glimpse of them only when they embedded into the ground.

—Wha... what did you just do?

“New technique. You saw it, right?”

—...What?

“If those swords had fallen over your head, would you have been able to dodge them in time?”

—You crazy bastard.

Jiseon scowled but didn’t have an immediate answer.

“You probably wouldn’t have, huh? Even I thought they were pretty fast.”

—.....

“Definitely an offensive technique.”

Yeongwoo calmly stroked his chin, drawing his own conclusions.

‘The more weapons there are, the larger the Sword Mountain becomes. Hundred Sword Mountain alone would be devastating.’

So then, what kind of power did Hundred Thousand Sword Mountain hold?

“.....”

Yeongwoo tried to imagine the sight of 100,000 weapons being launched like that, but he simply couldn't picture it.

There was no way anyone could dodge something like that.

‘It's clear now—I've never seen the Chairman's true power.’

Yeongwoo felt a wave of disappointment wash over him.

Even fantasizing about beating the Chairman now seemed futile.

A Grade-3 being was simply on an entirely different level.

Could he ever hope to even graze the heels of a Grade-3 existence within his lifetime?

“Administrator, are you there?”

Yeongwoo called out into the void.

Soon, Kubu opened its eyes behind him.

—Yes, Master.

“What's my Universal Law rank as the Head of the Renaissance?”

He asked with hopeful anticipation, only to receive an answer that dashed his expectations.

—You are currently ranked as Grade-7 under Universal Law.

“...What?”

Universal Law Grade-7 was the status he had achieved way back when he first made waves as an advertising mogul.

“Wait, seriously? Even though I see humans as insects now and have established my own family, I'm still only Grade-7?”

Yeongwoo's brow furrowed deeply.

“Then who the hell is holding on to Grade-6?”

At his question, Kubu blinked its large eyes.

—The range of entities classified as Grade-6 is rather extensive.

“Even at Rank 7, it already feels that way. The difference between me back when I first started getting sponsors and now is like night and day.”

Well, of course.

Trying to divide the vast beings of the universe into just a dozen or so ranks was never going to be an easy task.

Naturally, there would be significant differences even within the same rank.

So, Yeongwoo changed the question.

“Then, what’s the fastest way for me to reach Rank 6?”

Kubu rolled its eye around once and immediately gave an answer.

— By monopolizing planetary shares and gaining Earth’s support.

“...What?”

Yeongwoo’s eyes widened in surprise at the unexpected response, and Kubu elaborated.

— In most cases, planetary shares are divided among multiple families.

“Oh, really?”

— Yes. That’s why planetary share wars are usually waged...

Kubu rolled its eye toward the three influential figures in the grand hall.

[Translator - Night]

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But in Earth’s case, thanks to this crazy head of household, things were unfolding in an extremely bizarre manner.

“Right. We don’t need to have a share war, do we?”

Yeongwoo nodded in agreement.

Then, glancing at the three influential figures, he added with a grin.

“You all prevented a war just by taking off your clothes!”

“.....”

“Ugh... Fine. Just send us home already.”

The Guardian Sword of Italy, still stark naked, glanced at the pile of twenty swords nearby.

No matter how they looked at it, they could tell even more absurd things were bound to happen if they stayed any longer.

— Hey, seriously, just send those people back. How long are you going to leave them like that?

Jiseon frowned as she glanced at the three still-naked influential figures.

Yeongwoo turned to Kubu again.

“You can send them back remotely, right?”

Kubu rolled its eye again and mumbled.

— Uh...

“Huh?”

— What? Don’t tell me you can’t?

Jiseon’s words made the faces of the three naked figures turn pale.

“W-wait... You dragged us here unilaterally. Shouldn’t you at least have the ability to send us back?!”

“You’re not seriously telling us to walk home, are you?”

“We’re already one billion in debt from coming here... You seriously can’t do this to us!”

The Guardian Sword of Italy, looking genuinely aggrieved, pleaded with Yeongwoo.

Even the ruthless scoundrel, Jeong Yeongwoo, was at a loss for words.

“Just... put your clothes on.”

Yeongwoo gestured toward the scattered equipment on the floor, and the three influential figures reluctantly began to dress.



“Since the movement restrictions on the high-speed travel route have been lifted due to the wedding, you can use it to return to your homes.”

“.....”

For the three influential figures, it was a ridiculous solution, but they had no choice.

— Even I think this is too much.

“At least they’re not walking home, right?”

Yeongwoo shrugged and walked toward the Twenty Sword Mountain embedded in the ground.

Clank, clank.

Before him stood the weapons he had acquired—Early Bird, Lightning Rod, and many others—all firmly planted into the ground.

‘Wait... these weapons physically drop?’

Yeongwoo had assumed they merely materialized and vanished, but seeing them stuck into the floor made him tilt his head in curiosity.

Then, with a casual motion—

Swoosh.

He reached out and picked up the Early Bird embedded in the ground.

Flick.

It was real.

A genuine Early Bird weapon he could wield or throw.

“Hey, this isn’t just for attacking. We could use it for weapon supply too. We can let others wield them, right?”

Yeongwoo tossed the Early Bird to Jiseon as he spoke.

Tap!

— Huh? Whoa, it’s real.

When Yeongwoo recalled the Sword Mountain, not only did the weapons stuck in the floor disappear, but the Early Bird in Jiseon's hand also melted away into thin air.

Swaaat!

'Oh... and I can just summon them again?'

This time, Yeongwoo fixed his gaze on the far wall and activated the Twenty Sword Mountain again.

The space behind him tore open, emitting that familiar rending sound.

Crash!

".....!"

This time, the sword mountain formed a horizontal line, embedding itself into the wall.

Crash-crash-crash!

In the blink of an eye, the grand hall's wall was turned into a honeycomb.

Yeongwoo's jaw dropped as he took in the sight.

'What the hell... It doesn't just rain down from above?'

He realized it could likely fire from below or launch upward as well.

'At this point, it's practically a machine gun.'

Although he hadn't yet used it in actual combat, the power was evident.

'Should I try this out on the board members?'

As the thought crossed Yeongwoo's mind, Kubu rolled its eye again.

— Head of household.

"Yes?"

— Your first meeting with the board is scheduled in approximately 30 minutes.

"Good news. Do we need to prepare anything?"

— You need to designate the meeting location.

“Oh. We have the authority to do that?”

Yeongwoo recalled his first meeting with the shareholders of Dogo.

Back then, he didn't have the right to choose the meeting location.

“Is it because we're both Earth-affiliated this time?”

— Since you now own the grand hall, you could hold the meeting here.

Kubu's suggestion was the logical and sensible choice.

However, Yeongwoo was already turning his head toward the grand hall's entrance.

— Head of household...?

Kubu followed Yeongwoo's gaze with its rolling eye.

Beyond the grand hall's wide-open doors, where the three influential figures were hurriedly making their exit, the wedding hall came into view.

“How about we hold the meeting in that wedding hall?”

Yeongwoo pointed at the venue and asked.

Jiseon, startled, immediately interjected.

— What the hell? Why there? That's where the ceremony took place. The chairs and everything else are all wrecked!

Yeongwoo scratched his chin with the tip of his sword, Bastard, and replied.

“Don't you think the board needs to know?”

— ...Know what?

“That Earth's first—and only—family is actually a gang of bandits.”

— What does that have to do with holding the meeting in the wedding hall?

“Because the chairman and Mara's signing plates are there.”

— ...What?

“We'll show the board those signing plates and tell them: don't worry, we're not just any band of bandits.”

— .....?

“We’re a premium, first-class band of bandits blessed by Dogo’s chairman and Mara. So, Earth doesn’t just get the chance to become a regular planetary ship...”

Clunk.

Yeongwoo pressed the tip of Bastard into the floor.

“It gets the chance to become a pirate ship. And I think that’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Earth.”

[Translator - Night]

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Chapter 423: Sole Candidate (5)

—A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity...? Isn’t it more like a once-in-a-lifetime crisis?

Jiseon questioned her son’s assertion.

No one had ever asked Earth for its opinion.

In fact, they didn’t even know what kind of personality Earth had.

—Do you know what Earth likes? What it fears? You know nothing about Earth, so how can you be sure it’ll see us as an opportunity and not a threat?

There was nothing wrong with Jiseon’s words.

After all, Renaissance, the family dreaming of becoming an intergalactic band of brigands, was a self-proclaimed group.

No being on Earth had ever declared the need for a band of robbers.

If there was anyone to blame for the birth of Renaissance, it was none other than that gangster chairman from beyond the stars—Dogo Vesedel.

—I’m honestly a little worried. We might be nothing more than a thorn in Earth’s side.

To be precise, she was concerned about the potential discord between Earth and Yeongwoo.

In any kind of business, a conflict with the land itself was something that had to be avoided at all costs.

—We still don't know how much authority Earth holds. That's why... talk of pirate ships and whatnot is insane.

But Yeongwoo tilted his head.

"Why is a pirate ship insane? The chairman himself built a corporate empire through thuggery, and Mara—that bastard—isn't even worth mentioning."

Of course, Mara, who was likely a void-born entity, was a special case.

"In this balanced universe, someone has to play the hero, and someone has to play the villain."

—...But why are you so determined to cast Earth as the villain?

"Because that's what we're good at."

—...What?

"Isn't it natural to choose a profession based on your strengths? I don't know what Earth's childhood dream was, but if there's only one family on the entire planet, wouldn't it be fitting for it to aspire to become a notorious band of pirates?"

Thus, Yeongwoo argued that Earth, too, should accept the hand it had been dealt and walk the path of villainy.

Specifically, as a planetary battleship—no, a pirate ship.

—You're out of your damn mind. A pirate ship, seriously...?

"Technically, it's a privateer vessel. After all, Earth and we are practically a community."

—...Whatever you call it, if I were Earth, I wouldn't be pleased.

Jiseon let out a blue-tinged sigh and pressed her fingers to her forehead.

With the meeting with Earth's council just around the corner, she was beginning to think it would be a miracle if they avoided an all-out civil war.

—...Do the council members fight well?

Jiseon asked the administrator cautiously.

Kubu's eyes rolled slightly.

—When you say 'fight well'... may I ask for clarification?

—Do the council members know how to fight?

—Ah.

Letting out a vague exclamation, Kubu blinked twice and glanced at Yeongwoo.

He, too, understood Jiseon's underlying question without needing further explanation.

What she wanted to know was whether, if things went south and a brawl broke out, Yeongwoo would stand a chance against the council.

—The planetary council represents the planet in certain decisions and, in times of crisis, safeguards the planet's well-being.

Here, the planet's well-being did not refer to the people or the ecosystem—it referred to Earth itself, the sentient being.

In short, the council was on the side of the planet, not its inhabitants.

—...Then their combat prowess must be substantial?

—When someone attempts to force a planetary meeting, the council uses physical force. In general, the council does not lose.

Kubu explained this with a surprisingly serious tone.

Well, it made sense.

It was a planetary council, after all—it was only natural that it would be equipped to fend off mere planetary residents.

“But in non-general cases, they do lose sometimes, right?”

Yeongwoo asked, recalling the home planet of the Redfoot Orcs.

On their homeworld, a massacre had occurred at the hands of Mara.

From the planet's perspective, its native people had been wiped out by an external force.

So, how had the Redfoot planet's council responded?

Since no one had forced a planetary meeting, did they simply observe the massacre in accordance with protocol?

Or...

—The council's defeats typically occur due to external invasions.

"Oh, really?"

—The council's use of physical force is fundamentally limited to situations where planetary negotiations are forced. However...

"There are exceptions, huh?"

—Yes. In cases of planetary emergencies, the council can vote to intervene.

In other words, if the planet wished to save its native inhabitants, the council could step in and interfere in terrestrial affairs.

This also meant that if the planet disliked its native people, it could simply turn a blind eye to external invasions.

'My guess is that the Redfoot brothers didn't do anything particularly offensive to their planet... So, the council must have lost to Mara.'

Mara, a rank 3 being.

If a rank 3 entity could overpower a planetary council, it meant they were of a caliber that could hunt entire planets.

In other words, true cosmic predators.

"So, our council fundamentally exists to preserve 'Earth's' safety and, if necessary, serves as a secret weapon to prevent Earth's doomsday."

Just like the slumbering annihilators beneath Seoul's four gates and Namsan.

—Precisely.

"We'd better not pick a fight."

Besides, Yeongwoo wasn't even sure if he could beat them.

'If they're weaker than rank 3 beings but still capable of handling planetary emergencies...'

The key question was how much weaker they were.

If they could endure even a single blow from a rank 3 monster, they had to be at least fourth-tier in combat power.

'Still, Earth is just some backwater planet... Would its council really be that strong?'

After all, how many planets in the universe even had councils?

If every planet with a council wielded fourth-tier strength, then fourth-tier beings would be a dime a dozen.

'That would make fourth-tier beings seem pretty worthless. It doesn't add up.'

Lemu, Toma, and the planetary adjudicators.

Considering the stature of the fourth-tier beings Yeongwoo had encountered so far, it was hard to imagine they were that common.

[Translator - Night]

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—Master, the meeting begins in 10 minutes.

While Yeongwoo was still caught up in his musings, the time to face the council was rapidly approaching.

Only ten minutes remained.

'Well, meeting them in person should give me some answers.'

Seeing is believing.

Since there was no changing the fact that they were a band of brigands, the real variable was the council.

"Let's go. We'll hold the council meeting in the wedding hall."

\* \* \*

Wedding Hall.



The execution platform still towered sky-high at the front gate, and the interior of the main hall—where the ceremonial breakthrough had taken place—remained a complete wreck.

—Still, since we're expecting guests... shouldn't we tidy up a little?

When Jiseon muttered while gazing at the shattered chairs, Yeongwoo shook his head.

"We need to show them how our family was born."

He then gestured toward Jeonggu and the celebrant squad.

"Father, go and bring the signature board. Focus on the chairman's and the presidents' names."

"Ah, got it."

Jeonggu nodded and left the hall to retrieve the signature board.

Meanwhile, Yeongwoo summoned Song Jungho, who was sealed inside the Aratubank.

"Uncle."

∴ What is it?

"I'll let you have a rare look at the outside world."

∴ What?

Surprised by the unexpected offer, Song Jungho let out a bewildered noise, and Jiseon also asked with a confused tone.

—What do you mean? A look at the outside world?

"Mother, you should transform into your dragon form over there as well."

Shff.

As Yeongwoo spoke, he pointed toward the back of the ceremonial altar—the farthest corner of the hall.

In other words, he was instructing them to stand there like a living backdrop.

—What exactly are you doing?

"This might be the first and last meeting with the council, so we should put everything on display."

—Then why not bring in Lord Bang as well?

Lord Bang.

That referred to Bantubangtong, the Redfoot Lord.

"Honestly, that would make sense, but they're not natives. It might backfire."

The council they were about to meet was, in principle, composed only of the defenders of Earth.

Thus, it wouldn't be surprising if they turned out to be staunch fundamentalists or species supremacists.

"Now then, Uncle. Let's see you in person after so long."

With that, Yeongwoo released Song Jungho from his seal.

The lid of the Aratubank snapped open, and a crimson torrent burst forth.

Paaaaaaat!

In an instant, the blazing surge filled the surrounding area for hundreds of meters, forming the massive, sapphire-scaled body of the thunder dragon, Song Jungho.

∴ Kraaaaaah!

Finally free in his draconic form again, Song Jungho let out a roar, spreading his jaws wide as though he had been born a dragon.

"You two, just stand behind me and look imposing as the council approaches."

Yeongwoo then ordered Kubu to seal the side exits of the hall.

"Close off everything except the main entrance."

—Why?

"I want the councilors to walk down the aisle and see the remnants of the ceremonial breakthrough."

The traces of physical combat between galactic criminals and high-tier beings.

He wanted to flaunt the fact that they had successfully hosted a ceremony in the midst of such madness.

—You think that kind of petty boasting will work? They're planetary councilors, after all.

"If the remnants are from 3rd- and 4th-grade beings that could crush them underfoot, it's no longer mere boasting."

—...Is that so? But what about you? Are you going to sit on the throne?

When Jiseon glanced at the floating throne of the top-ranked celebrant, still hovering alone in midair, Yeongwoo shook his head.

"That'll be marketed later as the chair the chairman once sat on. I can't use it—it needs to retain its value."

—What? So you're just going to stand around?

In response, Yeongwoo leapt onto the ceremonial altar and perched himself on its edge.

"This will do for me."

Then, he gestured toward Jeonggu, who was returning with the signature board.

"Line the board up below here."

He pointed directly beneath the altar—meaning he intended to sit atop the signatures of galactic beings.

—Isn't that a bit insolent?

Jiseon expressed concern as she glanced up and down at the altar, but Yeongwoo merely cast his gaze at the hovering throne.

"Do you think the chairman wouldn't expect that from someone like me? But their seat is still above my head."

And just then, the awaited moment arrived.

Kubu rolled its eyes and announced the news.

—Master, the council will arrive at the meeting location in one minute.

At that instant, a thin, vertical holographic line appeared in front of the hall's entrance.

Paaaat!

It was likely a marker indicating where the council members would materialize.

"What species are the councilors? Are they tall? They can't be bigger than Mother or Uncle, right?"

—Regarding detailed information on the planetary council...

Just as Kubu was about to answer.

Kuuuuuuuuung!

A thunderous roar erupted from beyond the ceiling, followed by a commanding voice that resounded throughout the hall, pronouncing each word with piercing clarity.

「Thief Lord Jeong Yeongwoo-07!」

"What?"

「Come outside and receive the planetary envoy!」

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 424: Sole Candidate (6)

The bandit leader, Jeong Yeongwoo07.

At the absurd title, Jiseon burst into laughter.

—Ha! Seriously? Those guys are no pushovers either.

It was only natural.

After all, their opponents were the planetary council.

Even Yeongwoo didn't expect the council members to yield so easily.

“The council is already trying to establish dominance right from the start.”

—Are you sure it's the council trying to assert dominance? Logically speaking, shouldn't we, as the residents of Earth, be the ones greeting the council?

No matter how capable Yeongwoo was, he was still, at his core, an Earthling.

A resident of this planet, Earth.

So, in Jiseon's view, the council, which was responsible for overseeing Earth, naturally outranked Yeongwoo in the hierarchy.

—Aren't we all part of the same family anyway? There's no need to create unnecessary hostility. Go out and greet them properly.

Hearing this, Yeongwoo frowned and looked up at Jiseon.

"Are you seriously saying that as the root of this bandit clan?"

—What?

"If we grovel before the council now, how do you expect us to negotiate with Earth later? Besides, those bastards just called us bandits, didn't they?"

—...Honestly, they're not wrong.

The Renaissance, Earth's first-ever family, had originally set its primary industry as banditry and violence.

Naturally, the council had no reason to speak kindly of them.

—Still, being called bandit leader is actually somewhat restrained. It means they're not going all out against us yet.

"But they don't seem particularly fond of us either."

—...That's true.

Jiseon nodded begrudgingly.

Meanwhile, across from them, Song Jungho's blue scales quivered faintly.

∴ Looks like they're here to establish discipline before we get too out of hand. If we let them dominate us right from the start, we're screwed.

Jungho, perhaps without realizing it, was now using the term we.

Yeongwoo glanced at his uncle, then rested his hand on Bastard at his waist.

"I have no intention of letting them intimidate us either. We are this planet's only family. Why should we bow?"

Then, turning toward the front entrance of the venue, he raised his voice.

《The doors are open. Council members!》

His voice carried a commanding presence.

There was no overt hostility in his tone, yet it was enough to send a chill down the spines of Jiseon and Jungho standing behind him.

The sheer presence in Yeongwoo's voice made their backs shiver involuntarily.

And naturally, the council members waiting outside the venue must have felt the full weight of the bandit leader's presence.

「.....」

Sure enough, silence fell outside the venue.

—What the hell? Did they leave or something?

Jiseon glanced around in confusion at the unexpected stillness.

Jungho, meanwhile, dispelled the lightning surrounding his body and muttered.

∴ Did they chicken out?

And as if on cue—

BOOOOOOOM!

The middle wall of the venue exploded, creating a massive hole.

“You crazy bastards.”

Seeing his business venue get obliterated, Yeongwoo sprang to his feet.

But before he could move, a voice heavy with authority rang out from within the gaping hole.

■ Just stay where you are. I won't make unreasonable demands of a cripple.

“.....!”

The speaker was clearly different from the one who had previously called them bandits.

The sheer weight and presence in this voice was on another level.

And then, the earlier familiar voice called out once again.

「The Chairman is entering!」

‘Chairman?’

Yeongwoo narrowed his eyes.

At that moment, a figure stepped through the opening created by the explosion.

Tap.

The first thing to appear was a polished black leather shoe, shining to the point of reflection.

“.....?”

Then, continuing upward, sharply tailored trousers of a suit came into view.

—What the...

Jiseon muttered without meaning to.

∴ ...Huh?

Jungho, too, let his maw, covered in blue scales, fall open in surprise.

The chairman of Earth’s council—their so-called representative—was unmistakably human.

Step.

The man took a second step, fully emerging through the wall’s jagged hole.

He was a tall man dressed in a dark gray suit.

His hair was slicked back, jet-black and immaculately styled.

The face beneath it was so enigmatic that it was difficult to determine his ethnicity.

His age was equally ambiguous.

At a glance, he appeared to be in his early 40s, but his smooth, wrinkle-free skin made him seem younger.

Yet, paradoxically, he exuded a profound sense of age and experience.

‘...Is he really human? No, that can’t be.’

Seeing the chairman, Yeongwoo felt disoriented.

He couldn’t tell if the man was a genuine human or an alien imitating human form.

Step. Step.

Behind the chairman, seven men and women in black suits followed him through the opening.

Their presence was equally imposing, and Yeongwoo’s instincts told him that they were the rest of the council.

‘The regular council members... they actually seem human.’

Unlike the chairman, the seven council members were clearly of different ethnicities and varying ages.

In other words, they looked human enough that Yeongwoo could guess their age.

They each had skin and eyes appropriate to their years.

One of them, notably, had a long, graying beard.

And that particular individual caught Yeongwoo’s attention.

‘That guy... He looks Korean, no matter how I see it.’

It was because the man had his hair styled in a traditional topknot.

While topknots weren’t exclusive to Korea, the cap encircling it had a familiar design.

And more importantly...

‘Why the hell is that old man staring at me?’

Of the seven council members, the elderly man with the topknot was the only one sending Yeongwoo an oddly warm, almost fond gaze.

Glance.

In response, Yeongwoo narrowed his eyes slightly and returned a sharp look.

However, rather than flinching, the old man’s eyes grew even deeper, as if he were earnestly savoring the sight of Yeongwoo.



‘...Ugh.’

Something about the old man’s gaze felt as vast and boundless as the open sea.

In the end, Yeongwoo involuntarily lowered his eyes, and the chairman observing this scene wore an intrigued expression.

■ So, you truly are human. Are you finally ready to talk?

The nuance in his words made it sound as if he were not human himself.

Unable to hold back any longer, Song Jungho abruptly asked,

∴ What the hell? Are you saying you’re not human? What about the ones behind you? Are they at least people?

It might have been a rash question, but surprisingly, the chairman let out a chuckle.

■ I am a servant of Earth. Humans are of no concern to me. However...

The chairman subtly tilted his head and glanced at the seven directors behind him.

■ The directors’ stance will inevitably be different.

He was implying that the directors were on humanity’s side.

‘...What? Does that mean the directors might actually be human?’

Yeongwoo's eyes widened in disbelief.

But of course, they couldn't be “human” in the true sense.

These beings were cosmic entities collaborating with planets from the hidden recesses of the universe.

For them to be genuinely “human,” there was only one possible explanation.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

‘No way.’

That would mean they were ancestors.

And Yeongwoo had already witnessed a similar case firsthand.

He had seen Kim Jung-un, turned into a mutant, return with two predecessors at his side.

Moreover, the red-footed orcs, the natives of another planet, had preserved their ancestors' spirits through relics and each chieftain's rites.

So, if Earth also had a similar "preservation" system...

'Are you telling me that ghosts have been running the planetary council all this time?'

Yeongwoo blinked in disbelief.

If that were true, the actual number of directors could be in the hundreds or even thousands.

Meanwhile, the chairman casually pointed at a broken chair lying on the floor.

Tap.

To Yeongwoo's astonishment, the chair suddenly stood upright on its own and slid smoothly toward the chairman.

Shuaaah!

'What the...'

That was no mere telekinetic trick.

Despite having one of its legs broken, the chair balanced itself as though it were alive.

Click.

The chairman then settled into the chair, lowering himself onto it.

■ The two most important duties of our council are as follows.

With that, the chairman pulled a palm-sized rectangular object from his coat.

Fwoosh.

Made of ashen-gray metal, the object turned out to be a cigarette case.

".....?"

As Yeongwoo cocked his head in confusion, the chairman flipped open the case and pulled out a cigarette.

‘An alien bastard smokes cigarettes?’

Of course, there was no way to be sure it was actually a cigarette.

The chairman was clearly imitating human customs by wearing a suit, so why not smoking as well?

Moreover, he lit the cigarette without a lighter—just by snapping his fingers.

Chiiik!

As he took a drag, the chairman raised two fingers.

- Our first duty is planetary protection. That task essentially falls on me.

The chairman made a clear distinction between himself and the human-born directors.

He then took a long, contemplative drag from the cigarette.

- The second duty is the prosperity of the inhabitants.

“The prosperity of the inhabitants...?”

Yeongwoo's eyes widened at the unexpected mission of the council.

In other words, their goal was to promote humanity's prosperity.

- Strictly speaking, this falls under the directors' jurisdiction. Within the given conditions, they make decisions that foster the inhabitants' prosperity.

‘At least that’s a relief. Human-related matters are handled by the human-born directors.’

But the real problem came next.

- However, an issue has arisen.

“...What is it?”

When Yeongwoo asked, the chairman exhaled a massive plume of smoke, like a great dragon.

Hwaaaah!

- The problem is that your group is the only family to emerge on this planet.

Renaissance.

A rising gang of bandits with Yeongwoo07 as their head.

■ In fact, 73% of the council voted in favor of you.

In other words, the human-born directors believed that the bandit clan, Renaissance, would benefit humanity's prosperity.

"Huh? Seriously?"

Caught off guard by this unexpected turn of events, Yeongwoo glanced at the seven directors.

Then, he asked,

"But why is that... a problem?"

The chairman flicked the stub of his cigarette onto the floor and replied,

■ Do you truly not understand why?

"I genuinely have no idea."

Yeongwoo feigned innocence, staring at the chairman with a brazen expression.

The chairman scanned the utterly wrecked hall of the wedding venue.

Then, his gaze fell upon the signature plaques beneath the altar where Yeongwoo sat—

Plaques bearing the signatures of the galaxy's most notorious criminals.

■ Do you really think sending you into space would help protect this planet?

"Ah."

Yeongwoo, sensing the weight of the situation, finally stood up.

At the same time, the chairman also rose from his seat.

Shuaaah!

In his hand was a sword, forged at some unknown moment.

■ In my judgment, you are this planet's greatest threat. As chairman, I will carry out a duel for Earth's safety.

Upon hearing this, Jiseon twisted her body into a combat stance.

-Looks like we're screwed, Yeongwoo. We've got a sharp one here!

Meanwhile, Song Jungho was already brimming with lightning in his mouth.

∴ They said 73% of the council supports us! Why the hell are we getting this kind of treatment?

Yeongwoo, however, was already gripping his bastard sword.

"You alien bastard... Now that I think about it, if you were gone, the entire council would be made up of human-born directors, wouldn't it?"

■ What?

Momentarily startled by the audacity of a mere human making such a statement, the chairman's mouth slightly parted.

During that brief lapse, Yeongwoo grabbed the chairman's signature plaque from the altar.

"For the prosperity of humanity and the militarization of Earth, I challenge you to a duel!"

With that, he hurled the chairman's plaque toward him.

"Ah! W-Wait! Careful! It'll break!"

■ .....!

The plaque bore the signature of a Grade 3 entity—a tremendously valuable artifact.

Startled, the chairman instinctively caught it.

In that moment, Yeongwoo's eyes flickered toward the ground beneath the chairman's feet as he incanted a spell.

"Summon Twenty Swords Mountain."

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

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[Proofreader - Gun]

## Chapter 425: Sole Candidate (7)

CRACK!

With Yeongwoo's sword mountain spell, a sharp rupture tore through the air, and at the same time, the chairman's expression stiffened.

■ Th...!

In that instant, he instinctively realized what was about to happen.

And the choice he made next left Yeongwoo utterly dumbfounded.

Thud!

Suddenly, the chairman wrapped his left arm and upper body around the signing board, gazing into empty space.

'No way.'

It looked like he intended to block Twenty Sword Mountain with just one arm, solely to protect the signing board.

'That's just a steel plate, though. What's the point of going that far?'

Whether it was due to the chairman's infamous reputation or his mastery of extreme political maneuvering was unclear.

Regardless, blades were already shooting through the air like bullets from the rift.

KWAKWAKWAKWAK!

From Early Bird to Lightning Rod, the weapons bearing Yeongwoo's strange and storied past tore through the void.

And in the blink of an eye, the chairman identified the composition of Twenty Sword Mountain and let out a bitter chuckle.

■ What a troublesome bastard.

Then, he twisted his body to dodge Lightning Rod—which bore the seal of Lemu—and began parrying the remaining weapons with his sword.

PIPIPING!

Movements so fast and precise they were almost unbelievable.

Even more so considering that he was still holding the signing board with one arm.

“Wh... What...!”

But Yeongwoo’s eyes widened not because of the chairman’s overwhelming martial prowess.

‘No way... was that on purpose...?’

Yeongwoo’s gaze was fixated on Lightning Rod, the only weapon embedded in the ground.

The legendary spear crafted and gifted to him by Lemu.

Judging by the circumstances, it seemed the chairman had deliberately refrained from deflecting the weapon out of respect for Lemu.

In other words—

‘What... Is he a complete moron? What is he, some kind of caste-obsessed slave?’

Yeongwoo had encountered his fair share of cosmic beings, but none as absurdly hierarchical as this one.

For a moment, he forgot to continue his assault and simply stared in disbelief as the chairman deflected the last of the flying weapons.

“You... What the hell are you? If you’re going to be so reverent to high-rankers, shouldn’t you be backing me, the one who’s rapidly ascending in status?”

After all, with the establishment of his family, Yeongwoo’s rise signified the rise of the entire planet.

■ .....

Yet, the chairman’s expression remained indifferent.

■ I am |||||—Chairman of Earth, Nezra.

Then, Nezra handed the signing board to the board members.

It was a declaration that the real fight was about to begin.

He then swept his gaze over the ceremonial hall adorned with the sigils of Dogo.

■ I acknowledge your exceptional achievements.

“...And?”

■ But you are a poison to Earth. You will inevitably plunge this planet into peril.

“Inescapably? Who the hell do you think you are? You’re not some divine editor of fate—how dare you talk like that?”

Yeongwoo countered with sharp, extraterrestrial logic.

“And with 73% board support, isn’t that basically unanimous approval? Who the hell are you to decide whether I’m a threat or not?”

As he said this, Yeongwoo grabbed Bastard.

Recognizing the artifact’s mythic nature, Nezra subtly adjusted his stance.

Tsszzt.

■ The board members only know a narrow sliver of the universe. That is the primary reason why the chairman was not designated as a human.

“That’s exactly why I emerged—to take us beyond that tiny universe. The planet should be grateful.”

■ Ridiculous. You should know what happens when you fly too high with fake wings.

He was alluding to the myth of Icarus, whose wax wings melted when he flew too close to the sun, resulting in his fall.

It was a warning—an outer rim planet like Earth shouldn’t overreach.

And yet, despite not being human-born, Nezra had opted for a human metaphor.

However, Yeongwoo, a native human, responded with alien terminology.

“Shut up, you alien bastard! My future spouse is the Princess of the Sun, for crying out loud.”

■ Wha...?

At that, Nezra’s eyebrow twitched in reaction to the revelation of Yeongwoo’s future, which was evidently recorded in the records.

And almost simultaneously, Yeongwoo made his move.

TAAAT!



Though Nezra was technically an ally by virtue of being Earth's chairman, the direction of the conversation made it clear that they wouldn't get anywhere without a fight.

"Let's see if you're really fit to be Earth's last line of defense!"

Earth's greatest threat, Jeong Yeongwoo 07, charged with two mythic weapons in hand.

KWAAAT!

No longer suppressing his power, golden lightning-like rays burst from his eyes.

■ So, you're finally revealing your true nature!

Nezra met him head-on, gripping a pitch-black greatsword with both hands, his eyes now emitting a cold, blue radiance.

And at last—

SSSHWEEEEEEET!

With a violent shockwave, the first official clash between the two monsters took place.

KWAAAAANG!

Nezra's blade swung first, slicing down toward Yeongwoo's neck.

But of course, Yeongwoo—

"...Huh?"

Almost instinctively, he raised Aratubank and blocked the strike.

It was an attack he would never have been able to react to under normal circumstances, but thanks to the item Sinister Eye, a blessing of Mara's Axis, his reaction speed had greatly increased.

「Ominous Eye」 – Void Eyeball

【Insight ability increased by 50%.】

【Sensory stats increased by 40%.】

【Ashen Gaze】

With a 50% boost in perception and a 40% increase in sensory stats, his defense was flawless.

Nezra's face briefly registered astonishment.

The chairman, the last bastion of the planet, had just been parried.

And worse—

SSSHWEEEEEEAK!

His opponent's weapons were also mythic.

■ Ugh...!

Feeling the terrifying presence, Nezra twisted his body in desperation, but a crimson blade still stabbed into the spot where his chest had been.

"Chairman! Next time, it'll be your body that gets pierced! So just resign already!"

Yeongwoo, speaking like a villain, prepared for his next strike, but Nezra swung his sword first.

Hwaaaak!

■ You still don't seem to understand what kind of beings are appointed as directors.

"What?"

Even as he instinctively blocked the incoming attack, Yeongwoo's expression tightened.

Kaaang!

Blue flames flared beyond the Aratubank barrier as Nezra's next words shot out.

■ For me and the other directors, resignation does not exist. This is our final cycle. There is nothing beyond this.

"Cycle...?"

From the context, it was clear that he meant cycle in the sense of a period, such as a life cycle or an orbital cycle.

"What the hell does that mean...?"

As Yeongwoo pondered Nezra's words, his eyes suddenly widened.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Now that he thought about it, the directors observing the duel in the background were all ghosts.

Beings whose lifespans had ended but were deemed valuable enough to be recycled by the planet.

'But they're nothing more than the dead, merely existing as planetary directors.'

In other words, they were wraiths whose lives had already ended once.

If Nezra was the same as them...

"Are you saying you're already a dead man, too?"

Yeongwoo asked in disbelief, but in that brief opening, Nezra's blade slipped past the side of the Aratubank barrier.

Tchiiiaaat!

"Damn...!"

The holographic guide's emergency alert flashed before Yeongwoo's eyes, but he didn't have time to read it.

Instead, he twisted his body and threw his right shoulder forward.

If he didn't, the strike would pierce his heart directly.

His only chance was to block it with his shoulder.

Hwaaet!

But Nezra's sword, already empowered with enough force, skewered Yeongwoo's right shoulder on a diagonal line and pushed through to his left chest, where his heart was.

Kwaa-gwa-gwak!

"Khuek!"

■ You insane bastard, you're the curse of this planet and of us all! Just die already, I beg you!

At last, Nezra, having landed a decisive blow, spat out his true feelings in a frenzy.

But the sound that came from the blade piercing Yeongwoo's chest was...

Kaaaanng!

A strangely clear, metallic ring.

■ ...?

Nezra, confused, stared at Yeongwoo's chest where the unexpected sound had originated. Yeongwoo glanced at the notification message that popped up in the corner of his vision.

「'Gambler' has activated.」

'What?'

【55% chance to reduce incoming damage by 25% during defense.】

'Ah...'

In that critical moment when both his shoulder and chest were about to be pierced, Gambler activated, deflecting the sword's edge just enough to stop it from fully penetrating his heart.

'So... I was just 45% away from death?'

The realization sent a chill down his spine.

"Just now... you missed your last chance. You had a 45% success rate."

■ What?

Sensing impending doom, Nezra tried to drive the sword in deeper.

However, his blade, having lost its momentum, wouldn't budge.

That was because Yeongwoo had already gripped the middle of the sword with his right hand.

Kwiiiigik!

■ What... then...

Where the hell did Bastard that had been in Yeongwoo's hand go?

Just as Nezra's pupils quivered with confusion, a familiar rupture sounded above his head.

Kwooooojak!

■ ...!

The Twenty Blades were summoned once again.

Nezra desperately tried to yank his sword out from Yeongwoo's chest, but he was too slow. The torrent of blades descended faster than he could withdraw.

■ Shit.

In his bleeding state, Yeongwoo's strength surged even further.

"Consider it an honor to meet your end in mythology."

With that farewell, Bastard —now part of the Twenty Blades—cascaded down like a waterfall.

Chwaaaaaaat!

■ Kuaaaagh!

Nezra swung his arms wildly, trying to deflect the storm of weapons, but there was one thing he couldn't block.

The mythical strike.

■ Eek...!

The moment Nezra sensed the presence of something among the barrage of blades, a crimson arc pierced his forearm, his forehead, and finally his chest in succession.

Kwoooooaak!

—Ack!

∴ Huh?

Seeing the vertical red line split across Nezra's body, Jiseon and Jungho gawked with their mouths agape.

Meanwhile, the seven directors who had been silently observing the duel exchanged disbelieving glances.

Of course, with Yeongwoo's approval rating among the directors at a staggering 73%, they had refrained from interfering in the duel on purpose.

Yet, none of them had expected the chairman to actually lose.

But that was exactly what had happened.

Kuuuuung!

Nezra, his body impaled by Bastard, staggered and collapsed awkwardly, his body splitting in two from the center.

On the other hand, Yeongwoo, whose chest and shoulder were riddled with holes, pulled Nezra's blade from his chest and threw it in front of the remaining directors.

"The chairman is dead. The board is now entirely yours."

The seven directors all nodded in unison.

"Then, grant me direct access to Earth for negotiation. Open the path to him."

As Yeongwoo stared at Bastard, still embedded in the ground, something astonishing happened.

Hwaaaaaaaah!

Countless semi-transparent human silhouettes appeared behind the seven directors—far more than anyone had expected.

There were thousands, at least.

".....!"

That must have been the true form of the board.

‘Shit... so those seven weren't the only ones.’

As Yeongwoo blinked in disbelief, a system message appeared in the air, visible to everyone on Earth.

「The board has initiated a new vote.」

<<On the matter of granting Earth negotiation rights to the thief king, Jeong Yeongwoo 07.>>

「Please consider this vote carefully.」

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

## Chapter 426: Sole Candidate (8)

"There's not a single easy thing, is there?"

As Yeongwoo slumped to the ground, spewing poisonous blood from his chest, Jiseon approached in her human form.

— A... are you okay?

She had just witnessed a blade drive into her son's chest.

Yeongwoo glanced up at his mother and said,

"I really almost died this time."

— Yeah, anyone could see that.

Jiseon nodded and turned her gaze toward the bisected corpse of Chairman Nezra.

— That guy's really dead, right?

"Probably."

Chairman Nezra.

An alien of unknown origin, dispatched to Earth to prevent its worst moments.

— You did well. But wasn't this guy supposed to be the strongest being on Earth? Not anymore, though.

Was he only the strongest on Earth?

Nezra was, in truth, the planet's final bastion.

As someone who would stand at the front lines during planetary crises, his martial prowess was practically cosmic in scale.

By nature, he was not an opponent that a mere native should have been able to face.

However, Yeongwoo07, long since derailed from his original trajectory, was far too powerful to be considered just a native.

In the end, Nezra died in the line of duty—a casualty of occupational hazards.

‘What kind of conviction did he have to stake his life on stopping me? Did he really think I was the planet’s greatest threat?’

Following his mother’s gaze, Yeongwoo’s eyes rested on Nezra’s corpse.

The alien worker’s sole purpose was the preservation of his assigned planet, Earth.

Thus, the fact that he ignored the board’s 73% support rate and proceeded with the duel anyway meant that he had been genuinely committed to the planet’s safety.

"In a way, he might have been Earth’s last loyalist... but now he’s gone."

— What do you mean by that?

"From Earth’s perspective, I mean. After all, Earth itself isn’t human, right?"

— That’s true.

"So, the only one truly on Earth’s side, despite being an alien, was Nezra."

Nezra had already lived through at least one complete life cycle and was now granted his final existence.

Yeongwoo knew this for certain because Nezra had said it himself:

— For us directors, there is no such thing as resignation. This is our final cycle. There is nothing after this.

Our final cycle.

Just as the thousands of other board members were the ancestral spirits of different eras, nations, and bloodlines, Nezra was likely an alien who had left a significant mark somewhere in the universe.

And if that were the case...

‘...Wait, does that mean there’s some form of reincarnation in this universe?’

It was a lingering question that had nagged at him throughout the fight.



The fact that individuals who had presumably died in the past were now serving as planetary directors suggested that others—himself included—might also be assigned a new life after death.

‘Come to think of it, I did meet Im Bonghee again at the bottom of that dungeon, even though he died on the first reset day.’

The mutants were possibly no different.

After all, his mother and his second uncle had also seen their first lives end when they became candidates for the reset’s erasure vote.

Perhaps, by choosing mutation, they had voluntarily selected their second lives.

— What? Why are you looking at me like that?

Noticing the change in her son’s gaze, Jiseon tilted her head, puzzled.

Yeongwoo shifted his eyes back to Nezra’s corpse.

"No, I was just wondering... What kind of being was Nezra before he reincarnated as a chairman?"

— Maybe he was a famous warrior or something? Judging by how he fought, he was no ordinary combatant.

Moreover, Nezra had shown a deep reverence for higher beings, which hinted at a great deal.

Yeongwoo, on the other hand, had carelessly tossed aside the 3rd-class existence’s signboard during the battle.

One could call it quick thinking, but it could just as easily be described as uncouth.

After all, he had no formal education about the universe.

He simply learned how to win, no matter how vulgar the methods.

In contrast, Nezra...

‘The chairman had a certain dignity. He was definitely well-educated. That’s probably why he died, though.’

In the end, even fortune abandoned him.

Mysteriously, fate—the energy of the cosmos—sided with Yeongwoo<sup>07</sup>.

And finally...

Swish...!

The two halves of Chairman Nezra's corpse began dissolving into the air.

"Huh?"

— Hey, what the hell? Where's he going?

The sight was eerily similar to how mutants disintegrated upon death, prompting Yeongwoo to blink rapidly.

If what Nezra had said was true, then this was the absolute end of his life cycle.

— This is our final cycle. There is nothing after this.

'There is nothing after this...'

As Yeongwoo mulled over the deceased's words, the chairman's hand, still clutching his sword, was pulled into the void.

Shwoosh!

And then,

"Hey, wait!"

Even the sword Nezra had used to pierce Yeongwoo's heart began dissolving into nothingness.

Unlike with other foes, there were no spoils to be claimed from the chairman's death.

"W-wait! My Twenty-One Sword Mountain...!"

Alarmed, Yeongwoo hastily grabbed Nezra's sword, but by then, half of the blade had already vanished.

"No way! He's seriously leaving without leaving anything behind?!"

As Yeongwoo cried out in disbelief, even the chairman's sword sheath faded from his grip.

And then—

Fwoosh!

Everything that once made up Chairman Nezra vanished.

Without leaving a single trace in this world.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

「Earth has lost its chairman.」

A brief notification message appeared, and the directors, who had been murmuring among themselves, simultaneously turned their eyes toward the sky.

— What, are they sending him off?

As the entire board observed a moment of silence, it became clear that they were indeed bidding Nezra farewell.

Though he had come from a different origin and held a different political stance, they still honored him, as he had now reached the end of his final cycle.

— S-shouldn't we do something too?

Awkwardly removing her helmet, Jiseon glanced around, unsure of what to do.

Meanwhile, Song Jungho, who had quietly joined the board members in their silent tribute, muttered under his breath:

∴ The universe is starting to grow on me.

—You crazy bastard.

Meanwhile, Yeongwoo grabbed Bastard left behind in the chairman's place and addressed the directors.

"How far has the vote progressed?"

The directors, who had been silently bowing their heads, slowly looked up and displayed their respective colors.

Paah, pa-pat, pat!

Roughly 30% were green, 10% red, and the remaining 60% gray.

—...Pretty intuitive.

Jiseon's remark was spot on.

Perhaps because they were all originally humans, they were using signals that would be easily recognizable to any Earthling.

Most likely, green meant approval, red meant opposition, and gray indicated those who had yet to cast their vote.

"So, only 40% of the total members have voted, with 30% in favor and 10% against?"

Yeongwoo's brow twitched with displeasure, and the directors who had displayed red signals quickly concealed their colors.

"You bast— No, Directors. Are you still not thinking straight? You just witnessed it with your own eyes, didn't you...?"

Yeongwoo raised Bastard and pointed it at the directors filling the hall.

"I'm sorry the chairman is dead, but honestly, isn't this just a workplace accident? The chairman, in reality, was just a combat power gauge, wasn't he?"

—...?

It was a claim difficult to agree with.

Jiseon quietly turned to look at her son, while the thousands of Earth directors, clearly flustered, seemed to share the same sentiment.

"Why was the chairman so strong? Wasn't it because the universe granted him physical power so that Earth could maintain its planetary dignity?"

Was that really the case?

There was no way of knowing, as the directors offered no answer.

In fact, the directors had never once spoken directly.

"But the chairman is now dead. Why? Because he was defeated by a human like me."

Yeongwoo raised his thumb and pointed to himself.

"So, what does that mean?"

He posed the question to the directors but didn't wait for an answer before continuing.

"It means that humanity has finally attained full sovereignty over this planet. It means that the chairman can now be replaced by a human."

Although Yeongwoo couldn't claim a vote in the council, he had nonetheless proven that he could assume the chairman's core responsibility: serving as the planet's final line of defense against external threats.

"The chairman was bound to this planet for life, meaning his combat power was fixed. But I'm different."

Then, Yeongwoo raised Bastard and pointed to the sky.

"I, we, will venture into the universe and continue to grow in a much larger expanse. One day, even the chairman will seem insignificant by comparison."

Fwaaaah!

Golden light suddenly burst from Yeongwoo's eyes.

It was a manifestation of his overwhelming aura.

"Vote for me. From now on, Earth's dignity will stem from humanity's stature."

As the bandit lord, Jeong Yeongwoo<sup>07</sup>, declared this with his golden eyes blazing, the directors, who had been staring at him in a daze, began murmuring once more.

After all, the fact that a human like Jeong Yeongwoo had defeated Chairman Nezra was a remarkable feat.

And with the chairman gone, it was true that they needed a powerful figure to replace him.

But in return, what they would have to offer was...

—The directors must be facing a dilemma. If they really are ancient wraiths, doesn't that mean they're all people from the old era?

On the other hand, Jeong Yeongwoo embodied progress itself.

He was already half a spaceman, with one foot firmly planted in the vast universe.

∴ But wasn't his approval rating already at 73% before the duel with the chairman?

Song Jungho scratched his chin.

∴ Humanity's history is steeped in war. Those directors, who would have lived their entire lives in the era of conflict, would have no reason not to follow overwhelming power.

—What?

∴ You can only cry for peace when you have strength. If I were one of the directors, I'd have voted in favor too. That lunatic would be terrifying as an enemy, but as an ally, there would be nothing more reassuring.

Before Song Jungho could even finish speaking, the council resumed its vote.

Pa-pa-pat!

The wraiths, who had been displaying gray signals, rapidly began shifting to a single color.

Pa-pat, pat, paah!

That color was—

"...!"

Green.

The color of approval.

The council had ultimately decided to place Earth in Jeong Yeongwoo's hands.

Paaah!

Finally, the last of the thousands of council members turned green, concluding the vote.

「The council has completed the vote.」

<<On the matter of granting Earth negotiation rights to Bandit Lord Jeong Yeongwoo07.>>

「Approval: 89%. Opposition: 11%.」

‘89%? Overwhelming.’

As Yeongwoo nodded in satisfaction at the result, a new message appeared before everyone's eyes.

「The council has granted Jeong Yeongwoo07 the right to negotiate on behalf of Earth. ||||I, comply with the rightful authority.」

||||I was Earth's unique code.

In other words, the system was ordering Earth to comply with the council's decision.

Then, right after, a message unlike anything anyone on this planet had ever seen appeared.

Paaah!

『Fucking hell.』

"What?"

『So much for good days.』

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 427: Sole Candidate (9)

—What the fuck?

Hearing Earth's first words, Jiseon's eyes widened in shock.

—Wait... Can Earth even talk like that?

The sight before her was nothing like what she had imagined.

Ever since learning that this planet had a consciousness, she had conjured countless scenarios in her mind. But this? This was nowhere in the realm of her expectations.

“Well... there's no rule saying it can't, I suppose.”

Of course, Yeongwoo was just as surprised by Earth's demeanor.

The only thing he knew about Earth was that it was a low-tier planet on the outskirts of the universe, and low-tier planets typically didn't try to break free from their orbits.

Because of that, Yeongwoo and the rest of the Renaissance family had assumed Earth would be timid by nature.

Never in their wildest dreams had they expected it to be so brash—a being that would immediately start cursing the moment communication was established.

“What happens now?”

—What do you mean? We have to meet with it.”

But where should he look?

To see Earth, should he gaze into the void above or glance down at the ground below?

As Yeongwoo’s gaze drifted ambiguously, he suddenly realized that the number of board members had noticeably dwindled.

“...Huh?”

And sure enough.

Swish... swish...!

The board members who had filled the venue were now tilting their heads toward the void, transforming into streaks of light and vanishing one by one.

∴ Hey, wait! The board members are clocking out!

Song Jungho shouted in alarm, his voice urgent. Yeongwoo, caught off guard by the unexpected “early departure,” quickly protested.

“Wait! Board members? You’re just leaving like this? No tips or advice before you go?”

At that moment, one of the seven board members who had accompanied the chairman—a figure presumed to be Korean—turned to look at Yeongwoo.

“.....!”

Startled by the sudden eye contact, Yeongwoo hesitated.

The board member smiled faintly.

‘Who... who is this elder?’

A distant ancestor?



Or perhaps one of the great historical figures?

Whoever they were, they clearly weren't an ordinary human.

Yeongwoo slightly bowed his head out of reflex, and in that instant, the board member's body was engulfed in white light.

Swish!

"Ah..."

As the board member's presence disappeared, Yeongwoo quickly lifted his head.

But the old man was already gone—vanished without a trace.

—...He left.

Jiseon muttered while staring blankly at the spot where the old man had stood.

In the meantime, the remaining board members rapidly followed suit, making their way out.

They had effectively granted Yeongwoo the right to meet with Earth and then made a swift exit.

Swish, swish!

Thousands of board members transformed into beams of light, streaking across the venue and disappearing.

The hall flashed with chaotic brilliance for several minutes.

Then, about two minutes later.

Swish!

The last of the board members departed, leaving the venue completely empty.

"Wow, those ghostly bastards. They really just up and left, huh?"

It felt surreal.

But the board members hadn't left without leaving something behind.

∴ Huh? What's that?

Song Jungho spotted something where the spectral figures had once stood.

“Where?”

Yeongwoo followed his uncle's gaze and spotted a single document envelope lying on the floor.

“Huh.”

There was no way such an ordinary envelope would have been present at this grand cosmic ceremony.

Clearly, this was a parting gift from the board members.

—What is that? Hurry up and pick it up.

Jiseon urged Yeongwoo to retrieve the document.

Without hesitation, he strode forward.

“It really is just an envelope. Made of paper, too.”

In a world where the petrification phenomenon had swept over everything, seeing a non-essential item like this in pristine condition was a rare sight.

Tap.

When Yeongwoo picked up the envelope, even Jeonggu began inching closer out of curiosity.

“That’s a pretty big envelope.”

As Jeonggu pointed out, the envelope was significantly larger than a standard contract-sized one.

“It’s definitely something the board members left behind.”

Yeongwoo observed the envelope closely and noticed a seal affixed to the flap.

“.....?”

When he touched the seal with his finger, it sparkled momentarily before vanishing without a trace.

Swish!

The flap of the envelope slowly unfolded on its own, and a single sheet of pure white paper slipped out.

“Paper? Is it some kind of manual?”

Jeonggu asked, eyes wide with curiosity.

Jiseon, on the other hand, offered a different opinion.

—If it were just an instruction manual, they would’ve transmitted it through the system. There’d be no need to wrap it like this.

However, neither of them was right.

Rustle.

The moment Yeongwoo picked up the sheet, large system text appeared in the air.

Flash!

「Planetary Shares Are Being Distributed!」

“What?”

It was the day when the planetary shareholders would receive their allocated shares based on their tax contributions.

That day was today—this very moment.

‘The board members gave us a massive gift.’

As Yeongwoo’s eyes widened in astonishment, the system displayed another message.

「A 'paper' has been delivered to all shareholders.」

「Future planetary shareholders, please check your number.」

“Number?”

—What number are they talking about?

Jiseon asked, her voice brimming with excitement.

The system promptly provided the answer.

「The number on your paper represents your planetary share percentage.」

“Holy...”

—What?!

∴ Wait, so what’s our number?

Jungho asked the decisive question.

The answer was already in Yeongwoo’s hands.

“Let’s see.”

Had the strategy of driving out the other shareholder candidates left them with a monopoly?

Rustle.

Yeongwoo fully pulled the paper from the envelope, revealing a large, bold number written at the center.

The number was:

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[100]

“Gah...!”

—...One hundred?

∴ Wait, does that mean we own 100% of the shares?!

Jeonggu, Jiseon, and Jungho’s jaws dropped simultaneously.

But Yeongwoo simply looked around at his family, as if this outcome was only natural.

“From now on, this planet is ours.”

The moment he declared this, the white paper in his hand began to glow and dissolved into the air.

Shhhhhhh!

Then, an unexpected message appeared.

「Prestige Threshold Increased.」

‘Wait, no way.’

「+0.3 for Planetary Share Monopoly」

In other words, his current Prestige Level’s achievement threshold had just increased by 30.

And in reality, Yeongwoo’s Prestige status had indeed changed.

Piiing!

[Prestige Level: 38]

|50/100

\*Required karma per achievement point: 250 million

‘What the hell? It’s already halfway there?’

At his current level, it would take a whopping 750 million karma to gain 30 Prestige points through karma alone.

In other words, by monopolizing the planetary equity, he had essentially earned 750 million karma without lifting a finger.

He was practically saving millions just by breathing.

‘This is insane. So this is how growth works in space.’

It was also a testament to how difficult it was to monopolize planetary equity.

‘Shouldn’t Earth be rushing out barefoot to welcome me at this point?’

As Yeongwoo mused to himself and gazed down at the ground, the space behind him suddenly split open, and Kubu opened his eyes.

— Master.

“Oh, is there some kind of change again?”

Yeongwoo squared his shoulders and looked at Kubu, somewhat expecting the answer that came next.

— Since you have monopolized the planetary equity, Renaissance has gained several decision-making authorities.

Authority acquisition through planetary equity monopoly.

It was clearly no trivial matter.

“Decision-making authority? What kind?”

— First, you can designate the planetary capital.

“Ah, the planetary capital. Right.”

In truth, the capital had already been predetermined.

And even if they gave other cities the opportunity, who in their right mind would want their city to be the capital of a planet of marauders?

The higher the planet’s infamy, the more likely the capital would become a target of attack.

‘That’s why I’ve been shaping Metal Seoul into such a militarized city.’

Yeongwoo took a deep breath and turned back to Kubu.

“What’s next?”

— You now have the authority for Blank Commands.

“Blank Command?”

The term was unfamiliar.

— Yes. It is the authority to use physical force against residents in specific areas if the region is needed for planetary development.

“What do you mean? Explain it more simply.”

Kubu rolled his eyes once before clarifying.

— You can now place a timer over any area, and when the time runs out, the region will be obliterated.

“...What?”

In other words, it was forced eviction rights.

“Hey, I said I’d be a marauder, not a mass murderer.”

Now that he had acquired full planetary equity, Yeongwoo had no reason to torment the native inhabitants further.

The real pressing issues were the possible visits from neighboring planetary families and the militarization of Earth.

— And the final authority you currently hold...

“What is it?”

— You have gained Earth Negotiation Rights.

“Didn’t the directors already grant me that?”

At Yeongwoo’s words, Kubu blinked twice.

— Since we now hold 100% of the planetary equity, you are the sole eligible negotiator. Therefore, Earth can no longer refuse negotiation requests.

“Ah.”

He had heard about this in passing before.

Apparently, to negotiate with Earth, one needed Earth’s consent.

But now that he held 100% equity, the entire framework had shifted — Earth could now only negotiate with Jeong Yeongwoo<sup>07</sup>.

And even more significantly.

“They can’t refuse?”

Yeongwoo muttered in disbelief, and Kubu blinked once more.

— Correct. Your negotiation requests must be accepted.

“So when they said Earth’s golden days were over, this is what they meant.”

Finally grasping the full picture, Yeongwoo nodded in understanding.

“Then, can I request a negotiation right now? A negotiation they can’t refuse, I mean.”

By now, dusk had already fallen, and the area outside the ceremonial hall was growing dark.

“If possible, I’d like to negotiate with Earth before I pay the taxes.”

Barring any sudden interruptions, another dungeon was likely to open tonight.

So, Yeongwoo wanted to wrap up all his business before nightfall.

— Negotiation commencement is possible immediately.

“Oh, really?”

— Since the planet holds no veto power, the passage will open as soon as you request it.

“Wait, so the negotiation doesn’t take place somewhere I designate?”

Then what could he do?

“Well, let’s go see Earth’s face. Start the negotiation. Right now.”

At Yeongwoo’s command, Jiseon, who had been listening, was startled and opened her mouth.

— What? You’re going right now? Are you even prepared for this?

“Shouldn’t Earth be the one preparing, not me?”

With a smirk, Yeongwoo placed his hand on Bastard, the sword at his waist, prompting Kubu to roll his eyes once more.

— Master.

“Yes?”

— It is customary not to carry weapons when meeting with a planet.

“Oh, is that so?”

— Yes.

“Then from now on, it isn’t.”

— .....?

“On a planet where robbery and assault are the main industries, does it make sense to leave my weapons behind?”



With that, Yeongwoo fully armed himself before stepping into the elevator.

Click.

‘Oh, it even has buttons.’

Inside the elevator were only two buttons: Enter and Exit.

Yeongwoo pressed the Enter button, and just as Kubu had mentioned, a prompt appeared asking him to disarm.

「For a smooth negotiation, please refrain from bringing weapons. Thank you.」

However, Yeongwoo ignored the message and pressed the Enter button again.

Beep.

The elevator seemed ready to operate, but the same message popped up once more.

「For a smooth negotiation, please refrain from bringing weapons. Thank you.」

“.....”

With a resigned sigh, Yeongwoo reluctantly pulled Bastard from his waist.

Chwaaaat!

Then, using the tip of Bastard, he pressed the Enter button once again.

Beep.

Finally.

Clunk!

The elevator shuddered once before it began descending below the surface.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

Chapter 428: Sole Candidate (10)

In truth, he had never once thought about it.

The perspective of Earth itself.

What would it feel like to exist as a planet?

And to a planet, what did its inhabitants truly mean?

‘Come to think of it, I don’t know a single thing.’

No one knew what Earth did throughout the day, what its usual concerns were, or how it spent its time—not even Yeongwoo or any of the planet’s original residents.

‘Well, I might find out this time.’

Meanwhile, the elevator was descending at an incredible speed.

But whether it was truly a physical descent, he couldn’t be sure.

After all, as soon as the elevator dropped below ground, the surroundings had shifted into a holographic display.

Thus, it was entirely possible that this was actually a separate space, connected like a wormhole.

‘So, just because I’m going to meet Earth, they’re mimicking an underground descent? How amusing.’

Inside the rapidly falling elevator, even the entrance and exit buttons were nowhere to be found.

Instead, faintly engraved on the wall near the doors was a single code.

[||||]

Earth’s unique identifier.

Just as human elevators had serial numbers, Earth had attached its own nameplate.

‘No, wait, this might not be Earth’s doing.’

Staring at the code, Yeongwoo quickly reconsidered.

‘Would Earth really refer to itself as [||||]? That’s clearly the code assigned by the intergalactic system to distinguish it.’

He recalled the message that had appeared when he was granted the meeting rights.

「The council has granted Jeong Yeongwoo07 the right to meet with Earth. |||| shall comply with the appropriate authority.」

According to the interstellar delivery agent, there were many planets in the universe with the same name.

Earth was no exception, hence the need for a unique code and coordinates.

‘So, this elevator might not even belong to Earth?’

In fact, the entire space could be a massive relay zone.

Like when passing through a void during a portal jump into a dungeon.

‘Then, couldn’t there be elevators for other planets here as well?’

Curious, Yeongwoo pressed his face against the holographic wall, trying to peer outside.

Through the layers of holographic panels, he caught a faint glimpse of the area beyond.

At first, it seemed like nothing more than a sea of scattered, multicolored film fragments.

But as he focused—

“.....!”

Everything in his field of vision was moving at incredible speed.

“Wha... what the hell.”

Hundreds, thousands—no, perhaps far more elevators were descending simultaneously within the holographic domain.

From the outside, each elevator looked less like an actual transport and more like rectangular pieces of colored paper cut out of reality.

“Hey, you! Look over here!”

Yeongwoo banged on the wall and shouted at a nearby elevator, but unsurprisingly, there was no response.

Of course not.

The individuals in those elevators were likely heading for their first-ever meetings with their respective home planets after a long and arduous journey.

There was no reason for them to pay attention to someone beyond their own capsule.

Unless they were a peculiar curiosity-seeker like Jeong Yeongwoo07, that is.

“These lunatics... Not a single one of them is looking outside.”

As Yeongwoo cursed under his breath and smacked the wall again, the elevator’s unique code suddenly began to flash.

[||||]

“Huh? Is that the disembark signal?”

It likely indicated that they had reached their destination.

And sure enough, an announcement sounded inside the elevator.

「You will soon arrive at your destination. Farewell.」

The sensation of acceleration grew stronger, confirming that they were indeed closing in.

Yeongwoo pressed his face to the wall once more.

It was then that he noticed something—the number of elevators had visibly decreased.

‘So, there is a sense of direction in this place. The longer we move, the more we disperse.’

And soon after—

Swaaaaat!

“Ugh.”

The area beyond the wall was suddenly flooded with blinding white light.

In reality, Yeongwoo’s elevator had simply entered the light.

‘...Is this the destination?’

The elevator’s target.

The domain where ||||—Earth—resided.

What form it would take, Yeongwoo had no idea.

Not that he felt any fear—he was fully armed, after all.

‘Even if there’s no atmosphere, it won’t be a problem.’

Currently, Yeongwoo was clad in armor that Earth could never produce—the Vesedel Full-body Plate Mail.

「Authenticity」 - Vesedel Royal Armor

【Vesedel Royal Family’s Protection】

【Resilient Defense】

【Adapts to any planet.】

【Increases resistance to abnormal abilities by up to 5%.】

【--Empty Slot--】

【--Empty Slot--】

【--Empty Slot--】

◇ Dogo: Advertisement Space

Among its absurdly overpowered features was this:

【Adapts to any planet.】

In other words, as long as the domain was planet-based, he could survive.

Whether it was a fiery hurricane or a vacuum devoid of air.

Chiiiiiaak!

The holographic elevator gradually reverted to its original form.

The walls returned to solid metal, and entry and exit buttons reappeared by the door.

‘Can’t see beyond the wall anymore, huh.’

Feeling slightly disappointed by the now-sealed view, Yeongwoo turned toward the doors.

Chaaaak!

The elevator doors slid open.

And beyond them—

‘Huh? That’s unexpected.’

It was a dense forest.

The sound of birds could be heard from somewhere—it was a real forest.

Crunch.

As Yeongwoo stepped out of the elevator, his foot sank into damp earth and trampled over tiny weeds.

“.....”

Pausing for a moment, he returned Bastard to his waist.

Clack.

Then, he removed the metal boots covering his feet and pressed his bare soles against the ground.

A mysterious sense of calm and serenity washed over him.

“...Shit, whatever this is, it feels pretty damn good.”

Beep-beep!

Right on cue, a bird chirped in the distance.

Ahead of him stretched a straight path cutting through the forest—a visitor’s trail, without a doubt—so Yeongwoo set his feet in that direction.

‘Wait a minute, why the hell isn’t that bastard here to greet me?’

Yeongwoo had expected to meet Earth the moment he stepped off the elevator.

Annoyed, he exhaled sharply through his nose and trudged along the unfamiliar forest path.

Crunch, crunch.

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

After walking for about ten minutes, just as he was contemplating drawing his sword again, the forest path opened into a vast field.

Swoooooosh...!

As the wind swept through, the golden reeds filling the field bowed in unison, creating a rustling sound.

And there, in the middle of the field, stood the one he sought.

“.....!”

A man was painting at an easel, facing the direction Yeongwoo was approaching from.

“Are you Earth?”

The distance between them was well over 100 meters, but Yeongwoo spoke aloud, confident that the man would hear him.

And sure enough, the man gestured for him to come closer.

As expected, since this was Earth’s domain, even the faintest sound carried effortlessly to him.

Swish.

Yeongwoo instinctively glanced up at the sky.

“Hah.”

Above him was a quintessentially earthly sky—crystal clear, with white, lofty clouds.

Though the sun’s exact location was obscured, soft rays of light shone down from somewhere.

And in the midst of it all, a meteor streaked across one side of the blue sky.

‘A meteor in broad daylight... How poetic.’

Yeongwoo chuckled wryly and started walking toward the man—toward Earth.

As he did, he noticed the man at the easel waving more fervently.

‘Wait, is he painting me?’

Frowning slightly, Yeongwoo quickened his pace.

Then, the man—Earth—peeked out from behind the easel.

“.....!”

He was younger than Yeongwoo had imagined.

And strikingly handsome.

Even with his slightly wavy black hair cascading down to his chest, it didn’t look the least bit out of place.

Finally, Earth parted his painted lips and spoke.

『You impatient bastard.』

“...What?”

『Slow the hell down. I haven’t even finished painting half of you yet.』

Swoooooosh...!

Once again, the wind swept across the field.

Like before, the reeds bent in a synchronized wave, and Earth’s long hair fluttered in the breeze.

And so did Yeongwoo’s.

Shraaang!

He drew Bastard in a flash, casting a long shadow over the reeds.

“You’ve gotta be out of your goddamn mind.”

As golden light gleamed from Yeongwoo’s eyes, he ground his teeth together.

Yet, Earth didn’t even glance away from his painting.

He merely opened his mouth and said:



『If you're so hell-bent on killing me, go ahead. It's only gonna screw you over.』

'What?'

Yeongwoo halted in his tracks for the first time.

In that brief exchange, he learned two things.

First, that he could indeed kill Earth right then and there.

Second—

"You're saying it'd be my loss if you die?"

When Yeongwoo asked this, Earth once again peeked out from behind his canvas.

『Of course. Do you have a spaceship? Do you have anything at all? If I die, you'll have nowhere to go. You won't even be able to leave.』

"....."

Damn it.

Yeongwoo couldn't find a single flaw in Earth's logic.

Planets might not need their inhabitants, but inhabitants sure as hell needed their planets.

『Honestly, don't you think this is a bit unfair?』

"What is?"

『Our fate. I've waited an eternity, only to end up with you of all people...』

"And what's wrong with me?"

When Yeongwoo scowled and snapped back, Earth finally pulled his hand away from the easel.

『I didn't expect my representative to be a saint or anything. But I was hoping for someone a bit more decent. Instead, they gave me some goddamn bandit. Isn't that just cruel?』

It sounded like the lament of a parent disappointed by their child.

“Hey, asshole. You might wanna be careful with your words. Bastard here might take offense.”

Yeongwoo leveled the sword’s razor-sharp tip at Earth.

“And what about you? You think you’re so special? While I was busting my ass through the planet assessment trials, what the hell did you do for me? You’re just some outdated, bottom-tier planet.”

For the first time, Earth’s face twisted with anger.

『...Stop calling me bottom-tier. If you keep that up, you’ll be living on bottom-tier Earth forever.』

“...What?”

That was a loaded statement.

Yeongwoo’s instincts immediately sharpened.

“What the hell does that mean? You saying if I keep calling you bottom-tier, something else might happen?”

Yeongwoo’s tone flipped in an instant, now keenly interested.

Earth squeezed his eyes shut and pressed his fingers against his temple.

『Ah... Seriously, this bastard is all I’ve got?』

[Translator - Night]

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Chapter 429: Fate (1)

『Haa...』

Earth let out a deep sigh.

And in the midst of this, Yeongwoo was peeking into Earth's inner thoughts.

‘This bastard... despite what he says, he doesn’t actually want to die.’

The reason was the paintings.

Now that he looked closer, there were countless easels set up beyond the field.

Each easel was filled with paintings depicting natural landscapes from all over the world and significant historical moments.

‘Of course... This guy must have witnessed all of human history.’

It turned out that Earth’s primary interest was humanity.

How long had it been painting?

The number of artworks easily reached the thousands.

Then just how many years had Earth spent in this place?

— Swooooosh —

As the wind blew again, flattening the reeds, the legs of the easels were fully revealed.

At that moment, Yeongwoo straightened his body, which had been cowering in humiliation.

"Let me take a look at your paintings."

『What?』

Earth twitched its eyebrows, sensing a sudden shift in Yeongwoo’s demeanor.

— Step. —

Yeongwoo had already moved closer, examining the paintings resting on the easels.

"...No offense, but they’re complete garbage. You’ve been painting for thousands of years, and you still haven’t improved?"

『You little...! Have you completely lost it?』

Then, without warning, Yeongwoo grabbed Earth by the collar and yanked it out of its chair.

"Hey, you bastard! Who’s really lost it here? You don’t even want to die, yet you dare to test me?"

『You...!』

Dangling in midair, Earth flailed but didn't fight back.

"You weakling, put up a fight! Is this all you've got? Are you just going to dangle there if I actually try to kill you?"

Yeongwoo easily lifted Earth with one hand.

— Fwoosh! —

Seeing this, Earth grimaced and kicked Yeongwoo in the face with its bare foot.

— Thwack! —

However, what bent instead was Earth's toes.

『Argh!』

Yeongwoo's face, having surpassed the limits of human endurance, was harder than steel.

"Tch, you've never been in a real fight, have you?"

As Yeongwoo smirked and shook Earth's collar roughly, Earth finally bared its teeth, glaring at him.

『You crazy bastard, do you have no respect for your own planet? Why the hell are you acting like this toward me?』

Yeongwoo seemed to be waiting for that question.

— Thud! —

Though he greatly restrained his strength, it was still enough to send the feeble Earth crashing to the ground.

"This is what happens when you have no power. Didn't you see what Mara did at my wedding?"

『You... You're completely insane. Mara isn't like us! He's a being on an entirely different level. How can you even compare yourself to him?』

"This bastard still doesn't get it."

Yeongwoo raised his fist again in a threatening manner, but Earth didn't even flinch.

Despite its weak physical strength, it had a surprising amount of grit.

"Mara directly interferes in my life, so why shouldn't I compare myself to him?"

Of course, Yeongwoo knew well that Mara was akin to a force of nature, something beyond mortal reach.

But that didn't mean he would just stand by and take it.

Another representative might accept it, but as Earth's only rightful owner, Yeongwoo would never allow it.

"So what? You're just going to stay a low-tier planet forever, getting beaten down by stronger beings whenever they show up? What about us? Do you have no respect for your own people?"

With his fist clenched tightly, Yeongwoo pressed the question.

『...99% of the universe consists of low-tier planets. That's just how it is. That's the natural order of the universe.』

In other words, the representative Earth had been waiting for was someone who would maintain the status quo and keep the planet barely surviving—not some radical villain like Yeongwoo.

"The natural order of the universe? Then why do planetary promotions exist? Why do beings have the ability to ascend in rank? If that's really the case, then why was the Chairman even allowed to lose to me?"

『.....!』

Earth's eyes widened for the first time at Yeongwoo's words.

The Chairman was assigned to prevent planets from facing such calamities.

But even the Chairman wasn't invincible—if a "natural disaster" came from beyond the universe, the security could be breached.

However, the catastrophe standing before Earth hadn't come from outside the universe.

『Th-Then...』

Earth's mouth gaped open.

And then it uttered something Yeongwoo didn't expect.

『You are the natural disaster! You're the calamity!』

It sounded eerily similar to what the Chairman had said.

"Hah."

Yeongwoo let out a deep sigh and grabbed Earth's hair.

— Crunch. —

"You idiot. In a way, you're right—I am a natural disaster. But I'm a disaster for the sake of Earth."

『What... What?』

While Earth was struggling to understand, Yeongwoo glanced at the painting it had been working on.

"You moron."

The painting on the wooden board depicted a burning forest, with Jeong Yeongwoo 07 walking forward.

From head to toe, he was clad in Vesedel armor—the form of a Demon.

"....."

Yeongwoo stared at the painting for a while.

Then, suddenly, he swung his leg and kicked the painting.

— Crash! —

With a sharp shattering sound, the painting was destroyed into pieces, revealing Yeongwoo's bare foot.

『Ah...!』

Earth's eyes widened upon noticing the dirt covering Yeongwoo's feet.

That meant he had walked through the forest barefoot.

『The... The reeds...』

Before Earth could finish saying, 'They hid your legs, so I didn't notice,' Yeongwoo cut in.

"Is my legs the only thing you failed to see?"

『What?』

"I am Jeong Yeongwoo 07. Born on Earth. Earth's guardian, you dumbass. So why the hell is the forest burning in your painting?"

Yeongwoo released his grip on Earth.

At that exact moment, a meteor streaked across the clear sky, trailing a long tail.

— Fwooooosh! —

And only then did Earth finally realize—

That an extraordinary event, one that naturally felt like a disaster, had come upon it.

That crazy bandit was, as he himself declared, the guardian of Earth.

He was also a colossal calamity, one that had even taken down the Chairman dispatched for the defense of the grand universe.

In other words, Jeong Youngwoo 07 was both a catastrophe powerful enough to shake the planet and, paradoxically, an existence meant for Earth's sake.

"You bastard, it's because I'm this kind of monster that I managed to make it this far. Frankly, if Prince Aldo had been born on this planet, do you think he could've survived even a single day of reset?"

『.....』

Earth had no counterargument.

"A representative fitting for this planet's nature has emerged, that's all. You're the one failing to adapt to the universe's flow."

With that, Yeongwoo tossed something at Earth's face.

— Toss! —

[Translator - Night]

[Proofreader - Gun]

『Ugh...!』

Caught off guard, Earth grabbed the object that landed on its face.

A system message popped up.

「Slime Core」 - Mutation Bracelet

【Regenerative power increases dramatically.】

『Uh...?』

“Stop whining and get up. We need to negotiate now.”

『Negotiate?』

Meanwhile, Yeongwoo was looking around.

But since there were no other chairs, he dragged the one Earth had been using and sat down.

“I only want one thing from you.”

『...What's that?』

“A planetary ship.”

『.....!』

The moment Yeongwoo saw Earth's fingertips trembling, he tilted his head.

“Is it really something to be that scared of? Anyway, I'll be the one fighting in the actual battle.”

Then, Earth threw the slime core back at Yeongwoo and said,

『It's not that simple.』

“Why? The fighter is ready, and I've gathered a lot of money.”

『You idiot.』

This time, Earth hit Yeongwoo.

『Money isn't the problem. Well, money is a problem, too.』

Then Earth looked up at the sky.

『Didn't you feel something strange in my sky?』



“What?”

Yeongwoo tilted his head again.

Then he looked up at the sky.

In the clear sky, meteors kept falling.

It was a peculiar arrangement, but it seemed too obvious to be referring to that.

‘Then what is it?’

The sky on this peaceful midday.

As Yeongwoo followed the clouds drifting very slowly with his eyes, he soon realized.

‘That’s right. I felt it when I first came here.’

There was no sun in this sky.

Clearly, there was light coming from somewhere, but the source could not be seen directly.

“Is there... no sun?”

When Yeongwoo cautiously asked, Earth, keeping his gaze fixed on the sky, took a deep breath.

『That’s right. There’s no sun.』

“Why?”

『They don’t even allow making a replica of the sun.』

“What.”

『What do you think a planet is? Just like humans have their places in society, a planet has its position in the universe. And my position is.....』

Swoosh.

Earth slowly raised his hand and pointed to his sky.

『I’m a subsidiary of the sun. I must orbit the path assigned to me.』

It was at that moment that the previously clear sky suddenly turned pitch black.

Fwooooosh!

“Wh-what...!”

As the universe unfolded above them in an instant, even the bold Yeongwoo couldn't help but hesitate.

“What is that?”

What Yeongwoo was looking at was a faint line stretching across the dark space.

『That's the path I've been maintaining my entire life, the orbit of the planet you're standing on.』

“Orbit.....”

What could Earth's orbit really mean?

For Yeongwoo, who had lived as a planet's resident his whole life, it was hard to understand.

『Becoming a planetary ship means declaring that I will deviate from that orbit. But the problem is.』

Ssshhh.

Suddenly, the angle of the ceiling that Yeongwoo and Earth were looking at tilted.

And in an instant, the entire field of view was filled with yellow light.

“...Fuck.”

Without needing further explanation, Yeongwoo understood what it was.

The enormous mass of energy, appearing far too large in comparison to the angle, was the sun.

『I'm part of the sun. To be exact, I'm part of the many orbits the sun holds.』

“Th-that's right? We're a planet in the solar system.”

If each planet is seen as a giant organism, the solar system could also be seen as an ecosystem.

Various planets orbiting around the sun like an ecosystem.

『So, to become a planetary ship, I would have to damage the sun's integrity.』

In simple terms, the moment Earth deviates from its orbit, the solar system would no longer be 'the solar system.'

That is, it would be a great offense to the sun.

『But I neither have the authority to do that, nor the will.』

"Considering that you're not even allowed to keep a replica of the sun in your room, that makes sense."

Then Yeongwoo asked,

"No, but if you don't have the authority, why don't you have the will?"

『Because it's impossible.』

"...Why?"

『Where would I get the enormous energy required to deviate from my orbit? From birth, I'm inherently dependent on the sun.』

"Ah."

As someone who knew the universe's principles far better than humans, Earth couldn't help but see the grandiose plans of this planet's representative as mere delusions.

'The chairman's mention of Icarus was actually quite relevant.'

Since Earth, as a planet in the solar system, was inevitably bound to the sun, the idea of turning it into a planetary ship was realistically impossible.

But for Yeongwoo, a human, the whole concept of the universe's order and planetary ships was all unreal.

So, he posed an idea.

"No, then why not have the sun orbit around Earth instead?"

『...What?』

Earth lost his expression for a moment due to Yeongwoo's bizarre suggestion, which skipped several pages of meaning in one leap.

『Would... would that work?』

“What’s the problem? I’ll talk to my in-laws about it.”

[Translator - Night]

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