

LEVEL 4 HUMAN IN A RUINED WORLD

Chapter 5

Chapter 5: The Best Sword of Gumi (1)

‘The term ‘Sword Mountain’ was quite literal.’

Watching weapons raining down from the sky and piling up at an incredible speed, Yeongwoo had a gut feeling that this would soon form into an actual ‘mountain.’

And he realized something else.

‘There will be way more people gathering here than at the currency exchange.’

His deduction stemmed from the vast area occupied by the Sword Mountain and the students from Gumi High School moving in the same direction.

‘I started from Gongdan-dong, and now I’ve encountered students from Gumi High School...’

Gumi High School was right in the heart of Gwangpyeong-dong.

So, compared to the dozens to hundreds at the currency exchange, the Sword Mountain was attracting people by neighborhoods.

Hence, Yeongwoo anticipated crowds gathering even from adjacent neighborhoods like Songjeong-dong and Sinpyeong-dong.

‘Some of them even have the Early Bird.’

His hand holding the sword felt sweaty.

What would be the chances of winning if someone with an Early Bird like him, rushed in and tried to snatch the coins or the swords?

‘It’s one challenge after another.’

While Yeongwoo mulled over these thoughts, the Sword Mountain continued to grow in size.

It had already reached the scale of a substantial hill in some local mountains, now practically a landmark. The students witnessing this picked up their pace even more.

Clang! Clang! The thunderous sound of weapons colliding with the mountain echoed like roaring thunder in Yeongwoo's ears.

Whoosh!

Yeongwoo shivered as the entire air seemed to vibrate each time the falling weapons collided and bounced, briefly revealing the silhouettes of some of the weapons.

'A sword... an axe... is that a shield? There are shields too.'

While Yeongwoo identified the types of weapons, the students from Gumi High School, who had already increased their speed, began entering the outskirts of the mountain.

Pfft! Fizz!

"...!"

It was then that the number '5' appeared above the students' heads.

Soon after,

[4]

The number changed to 4, then swiftly to 3.

'...There's a time limit for choosing weapons.'

This was a foreseeable variable.

Observing students scrambling to find the nearest weapon pile, Yeongwoo deliberately slowed down, running sideways instead.

'As long as I don't approach the weapon pile, the timer won't appear. So, if I use this well... I can enter after locating the weapon I want.'

As observed earlier, the Sword Mountain held not just swords but also axes, hammers, spears, and various other infantry weapons.

However, the issue was their random arrangement.

Thus, to select the desired weapon within 5 seconds, Yeongwoo needed to find a point where that weapon was exposed on the outside.

And just now...

'...Found it.'

Ahead of Yeongwoo lay the spot he desired.

No one had entered first, and a 'shield' was exposed at the edge of the weapon pile.

Swish!

Yeongwoo immediately sprinted towards it.

'Is it possible to grab more than one weapon within the time limit?'

He pondered this while quickly scanning the weapons around the shield.

Axes, spears... most were large weapons, but here and there, a sleek silhouette caught his eye.

It was none other than a dagger.

'If I have the chance to grab one more, after the shield, it'll be the dagger.'

However, Yeongwoo's Plan B didn't materialize.

Snatch!

As he approached the weapon pile, an announcement abruptly appeared.

[You have entered the Sword Mountain.]

[Choose one survival gear within 5 seconds.]

'...One?'

This meant the choices were now limited to one.

Staying on alert of his surroundings, Yeongwoo pulled out the shield stuck in the pile of weapons.

Shhrrk!

Then the timer vanished instantly and an equipment tooltip appeared in front of him.

[Steel Round Shield] – Ordinary medium-sized shield

[Can also be used as a weapon.

'Can also be used as a weapon... Does that mean I can strike opponents with the shield?'

The shield had a diameter of about 50 centimeters, and its thickness suggested it carried a considerable weight.

And indeed.

Thump.

Sliding his left hand into the handle inside the shield, Yeongwoo felt the weight press on his entire left arm.

‘Now I understand why it can be used as both a shield and a weapon.’

Yeongwoo’s admiration of the shield ended there.

Suddenly, from behind, a rough movement occurred.

Thud!

‘A surprise attack?’

Every cell in Yeongwoo’s body seemed to ignite.

Yeongwoo covered his upper body with the shield and turned around, assuming a stabbing stance with his sword.

Whoosh!

Beyond the outline of the shield, a boy appeared.

“Ah... Mister.”

A facial expression that was perfectly in sync with the frightened voice. It was a Gumi High School student.

At most a first-year student, with a youthful face and a rather petite frame.

“What are you doing here?”

With a hint of agitation, Yeongwoo cautiously stepped back only after confirming the student was unarmed.

Then he noticed a number above the student’s head.

[2]

Soon after.

[1]

“Huh.”

“...Ah.”

As Yeongwoo uttered in surprise, a sigh escaped from the student’s lips.

Before he could choose a weapon, the time limit had expired.

Now there were no indicators above the student’s head, and both his hands remained empty.

‘This.’

Observing the student's crestfallen expression, Yeongwoo softened his tone compared to before.

"Why did you come here alone instead of being with your friends?"

To this, the student glanced briefly over his shoulder before answering softly.

"...They're not my friends."

"What?"

"Just because we go to the same school doesn't mean we're all friends."

That was true.

It was also a believable story given the circumstances.

'That's right. The timing of our encounter doesn't fit. Those guys entered the mountain before me.'

[Translator – Peptobismol]

Moreover, this spot was several meters away from where the Gumi students were.

In other words, this student had been moving separately from the Gumi group from the start.

'Well, I'm in the same boat, traveling alone.'

Thinking this, Yeongwoo glanced away from the student for a moment, but then he suddenly noticed something and his brows flinched.

The student's school uniform name tag was severely damaged.

'No matter how you look at it, it looks like someone burned it with a lighter.'

Yeongwoo stared fixedly at the half-burnt name tag. But before he could speak, the student quickly brought up a different topic.

"Um... Mister."

"...?"

"Is it okay for me to try and grab a weapon now?"

"Weapon?"

While questioning this, Yeongwoo remained vigilant of the surroundings.

Although there were distant silhouettes, nobody was currently approaching their location.

“Sure, go ahead.”

Truthfully, Yeongwoo was curious about it as well.

He wanted to know what would happen if someone tried to grab a weapon after the time limit had ended.

Thud!

Stepping back one more step, Yeongwoo watched as the student nervously raised both hands.

Then the student reached into the pile of weapons where Yeongwoo had earlier taken the shield from.

Swish!

The weapon the student desired turned out to be a spear.

Because of his small stature, he probably preferred a weapon that didn't require him to be close to the opponent.

Thump!

The student grabbed the handle of the spear with both hands.

“Ugh...!”

However, that was the end of it.

No matter how hard the student tried, the spear wouldn't come out.

“This...! Ugh...!”

The student's expression turned increasingly miserable.

He knew it too—that living without a weapon in a world inhabited by monsters was challenging.

‘Guess it won't come out after the timer runs out after all.’

Yeongwoo's heart wasn't at ease watching this, but what could he do?

“I'm sorry that this happened. But don't stay here for too long. People will gather soon.”

All Yeongwoo could do was offer awkward advice with an uncomfortable feeling.

Then, as he glanced at the arrow at his feet.

Thud!

The student, who had been crying while facing down, suddenly grabbed the edge of Yeongwoo's shield.

"Ah... Mister!"

".....?"

"Could you please take me with you? If I stay alone, they'll definitely kill me."

It dawned on Yeongwoo then that this boy wasn't afraid of monsters but of other people.

He knew how cruel the world could be to the weak, as evidenced by the chaos at the currency exchange booth, it would be the same even now that the world had turned upside down, if not worse.

But what could he do with a boy without a weapon and such a small stature?

'I think I'll be lucky if I don't get hit in the back of the head at some point.'

Yeongwoo, with a steeled heart, intended to push the student away.

Only if he hadn't seen the number on the boy's right hand.

'What, did I see it wrong?'

Yeongwoo tilted his head, the student who noticed this, stretched out his right hand.

"Oh, this...!"

"Huh?"

In an instant, Yeongwoo's eyes widened.

There really was a number.

And it was none other than...

[17]

17 Karma Points.

Converted to coins, it would be a whopping 170,000 Karma.

"How come you still have this? Didn't you come here after visiting the currency exchange?"

With an agitated voice, Yeongwoo asked again, and the student appeared frightened.

"I couldn't do the exchange. There are so many people there..."

“What?”

Yeongwoo, who had a dumbfounded expression on his face, quickly gathered his thoughts and asked again.

“What’s the name of the quest you’re seeing right now?”

“It’s... ‘New Life.’”

“Oh my god.”

[Main] ‘New Life’

[Mission] Follow the arrow to find the nearest currency exchange booth.

[Reward] Basic living funds

[Special] Additional rewards on a first-come, first-served basis

In other words, this student was here without passing through the currency exchange section.

“How did you find this place?”

“The kids who got the swords cleared the way. I followed them secretly.”

It seemed like he was referring to the group of students Yeongwoo had seen while coming to the Sword Mountain. Probably the top students of Gumi since they had Early Birds.

‘So, does the weapon selection get activated as soon as you arrive at the Sword Mountain, even if there is no quest?’

Was this kind of bug? It felt like he had discovered a loophole in this world’s system.

Anyway, the crucial fact now was that someone with 170,000 Karma was pleading for help.

Of course, there were issues.

‘I can’t go back now; I need to find a new currency exchange. But there’s no guarantee the new currency exchange will proceed properly.’

However, he had a gut feeling that it was too much money to give up without even trying.

Wasn’t the basic living fund given through the first main quest 3,000 Karma?

‘170,000 Karma is more than 50 times the basic living fund. Even if 3,000 Karma is the equivalent of the daily wage, it’s enough money to lead someone almost two months ahead of others.’

Yeongwoo rechecked the student's palm again and made a serious proposal.

“Right now, your entire wealth is 170,000 Karma. How much are you willing to give me in exchange for saving your life?”

[Translator – Peptobismol]