

Level 4 Human in a Ruined World

#Chapter 51 - Read Level 4 Human in a Ruined World Chapter 51

Chapter 51

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

Chapter 51: The Judge with the Longsword (4)

‘What...’

Yeongwoo looked blankly at the approaching Chungju’s Strongest Sword, with her hair fluttering in the air.

Contrary to the fearsome strength, the actual appearance of Strongest Sword was surprisingly slender.

Her arms were so thin that it seemed doubtful if she could properly wield a sword, and her thin lips and dry cheeks gave a frail impression.

Of course, judging combat power based on appearance in a world where ability points exist was a futile act.

However, aside from that, on the first day of the reset, wouldn’t she have overcome the chaos at the money exchange with that weak body?

While Yeongwoo was fumbling for the first day of the Chungju’ Strongest Sword’s reset, which was not easy to picture, the other side made the first move.

Swish!

The opponent swung his arm while looking at the SUV that Yeongwoo and his group were riding and threw the sword.

“Ik!”

“Huk!”

Myeongho and Myeongae, who recalled the moment they first met Yeongwoo, screamed in shock.

Even Jongsu, who had shown a calm demeanor so far, looked at Yeongwoo with a bewildered expression at this moment.

On the other hand, Yeongwoo...

“...”

He silently watched as the thrown sword flew like an arrow and stuck on the left side of the road.

Paeaeang!

He had noticed that it was not a sword thrown at a person from the beginning.

‘What’s this? Is she trying to see how we react?’

Moreover, what the opponent threw was an early bird.

It was a provocation that was very expensive unless there was a way to remotely retrieve it, like having a belt similar to a remote control.

“Since the Strongest Sword has come personally, there’s no need for you to guide us so hard.”

When Yeongwoo casually spoke after taking his eyes off the early bird stuck in the ground, the police officer who had been stiffly standing in place belatedly regained his composure.

“...Huh.”

Then, as if fleeing, he opened the back seat door and rushed outside.

Tatat!

The direction the police officer ran away was none other than behind Chungju’s Strongest Sword, and Yeongwoo, after seeing this, slowly got out of the car.

Chuk.

Yeongwoo’s bare feet touched the common asphalt.

Then, the eyebrows of Chungju’s Strongest Sword, who was closely examining the car from a distance of about 30 meters, twitched slightly.

It was because there was nothing floating above Yeongwoo’s head that indicated the status of Strongest Sword.

In contrast, Strongest Sword Shin Youngju²², like other Strongest Swords, had a splendid title above her head, attracting Yeongwoo's attention.

'If she assumes the role of the city's public security, she might have taken the golden route... Was she such a reckless character?'

The artifact tattoo 'Stealth Mark,' which allowed hiding the title, was given as a reward when Yeongwoo first opened the achievement system through the Golden Ratio.

At that time, it was thought that the reward was given to anyone who opened the achievement system, but looking at the fact that all the Strongest Swords encountered so far did not know how to hide the title, it was likely a special reward for the Golden Ratio.

In other words, the Strongest Sword in front of him probably chose to monopolize 3 million karma with a high probability.

'Well, if she took the golden route, she should be wearing some golden equipment or something, but I don't see anything like that.'

Yeongwoo looked at the Chunju Strongest Sword, who wore an unbelievably 'businesslike' outfit.

Black slacks, a navy shirt, and a watch with the petrification released on her left arm.

Of course, she was also barefoot and held a longsword in her right hand, making her appearance quite awkward.

"From what I heard, you were looking for me."

Strongest Sword, who opened her mouth first after a while.

Suddenly, the tone was mild compared to when she threw the sword.

In response, Yeongwoo nodded and greeted.

"Yes, I'm Jeong Yeongwoo from Gumi. As I mentioned before, I didn't come here to fight..."

As Yeongwoo tried to continue his words, glancing at the police officer hiding behind Chungju's Strongest Sword, Shin Youngju²² raised her left hand slightly and intervened.

"Sorry to interrupt, but what's your number?"

"...Excuse me?"

“Your number. The number after your name.”

She was asking for the identification number assigned based on the order of contact with the exchange office among people with the same name.

For example, if the name of the Strongest Sword is Shin Youngju22, it means she was the 22nd Shin Youngju in the country to contact the exchange office.

In other words, the smaller the number of this identification number, the more daring the movements on the first day of the reset could be considered.

‘Checking if I’m a dangerous person.’

Yeongwoo felt that the opponent was a very cautious person.

“...7. Jeong Yeongwoo 07.”

“Jeong Yeongwoo is a common name, but you worked very hard. Number 7...”

Chungju’s Strongest Sword, hearing Yeongwoo’s number, pondered the number 7 and showed an unknown smile.

Then, she took a few steps to the side and glanced into the SUV.

“Are they your companions over there?”

“Yes. They are not people I’ve known for a long time. I borrowed the car on the way here.”

“Oh, I see.”

Looking at Yeongwoo’s bare feet, who said he borrowed the car, Chungju’s Strongest Sword cast a fleeting glance.

Then, she bowed deeply towards Yeongwoo and introduced himself.

“I am Judge Shin Youngju22 from Chungju branch.”

Her long hair extending towards the ground created a slightly eerie atmosphere, but for Yeongwoo, it was quite surprising.

To bow without hesitation to someone who may be an enemy and who is much younger than you.....

“Although I’m a Strongest Sword, I’m doing my best to maintain order in this area. I apologize for throwing the sword earlier. From my perspective, I needed to see how Mr. Yeongwoo would react.”

“Ah...! It’s, it’s okay.”

Yeongwoo was greatly surprised by Shin Youngju’s background.

It was amazing enough to break through the exchange zone with such a small physique, but to be a judge as well.

‘So, is she receiving support from the citizens? It seems that she’s not just supporting the city with strength alone. Her personality seems extraordinary...’

Many things have happened, but considering that it’s only the second day since the great upheaval called the reset occurred, everyone still held onto the values and systems of the previous world.

“Mr. Yeongwoo, what about you? You were giving your introduction, but I cut it off in the middle.”

“Ah, right.”

A Strongest Sword from Chungju, the guardian of order in Chungju City.

After learning about Shin Youngju’s splendid background, it was difficult for Yeongwoo to speak out.

Following the opponent’s introduction format, there was nothing particularly outstanding to present here.

Jeong Yeongwoo, who worked at a display factory in Gumi.

Somehow, he became a Strongest Sword in Gyeongbuk, and in order to achieve achievements, he defeated mutants and is heading to Seoul without a clear purpose...

There was no impressive profession, and he didn’t have a lofty sense of purpose.

“I am...”

When Yeongwoo could not easily continue his conversation even after he began to rumble, Shin Youngju spoke with a gentle smile.

“Are you feeling a bit pressured because I’m a judge? It seems like I said unnecessary things. Don’t worry about it.”

Then, glancing at the peculiar-looking Yeongwoo, she asked.

“How old are you? Can I ask what you did in Gumi?”

“Yes, I’m thirty-four. I worked at a display factory in Gumi.”

“Oh, I see. Gumi has quite a few factories. It must have been tough for you, especially coming from Gumi, which is quite far from here.”

After finishing this sentence with a friendly smile, Shin Youngju quietly looked at Yeongwoo.

It was time to get to the main point.

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Yeongwoo slowly opened his mouth in response.

“I’m sure you’re curious about why I came all the way up here.”

“I guess so.”

Nodding, Shin Youngju narrowed her eyes.

Yeongwoo pointed to the SUV behind him.

“Well... They mentioned that their family is here. I wanted to help those who I was indebted to and, at the same time, help them find their family.”

“Family?”

To the surprised expression of Shin Youngju, Yeongwoo briefly explained the reasons for coming to Chungju, from leaving Gumi to encountering the Jeong family on the highway, killing mutants on the way to Seoul.

Then, Shin Youngju looked at the SUV and said thankfully.

“Fortunately, we conduct a headcount in front of the city hall every day at 7 PM. Not everyone attends, but... Anyway, you can try finding the husband there.”

“7 PM is two hours before the start of the nightly quest.”

“Yes, that’s right. When we gather at that time, we inevitably end up renting a house near the city hall. It’s a measure to create a densely populated area. It helps with maintaining public order, and I always sleep near the city hall, contributing to security.”

“Ah, I see...”

Yeongwoo marveled at Chungju City’s management system, which was different from other cities.

Of course, the outskirts of the city might become blind spots in terms of security, but it was much better than the entire city becoming lawless.

Chungju City found the best practical solution.

“Now, shall we hear why Mr. Yeongwoo came to see me? What business could there be when there are no mutants here?”

After Shin Youngju subtly exerted some strength in her body and asked, Yeongwoo looked at the sword held in the opponent’s hand.

“You might think this is ridiculous, but I wanted to know why you were willing to take on something like this, so I asked to see you.”

“This... What is it?”

Shin Youngju had a face that didn’t immediately understand Yeongwoo’s question.

In response, Yeongwoo gestured with his arm around.

“Chungju City. In essence, you’re volunteering for people who are complete strangers. It’s certainly a good thing, but I’ve never seen a Strongest Sword of this type, so I found it fascinating.”

“You must have met many Strongest Swords so far.”

A significant tone of inquiry.

It was not an illusion that Yeongwoo felt the will to survive from the opponent.

However, the alarm to detect an attack by the Golden Flash did not ring yet.

The opponent still maintained composure.

“Citizens see me as just a stranger? It’s true. Depending on the perspective, it might be accurate to say that I am doing volunteer work. However.”

After a brief pause, Shin Youngju looked up at the sky.

“I had to do it.”

“Yes...?”

“The first Strongest Sword was just a criminal, and the second was too narrow-minded. If I had left them alone, the Strongest Sword himself might have survived somehow, but the city would have collapsed.”

“You consider the city’s preservation very important.”

When Yeongwoo responded this way, Shin Youngju’s expression suddenly became very cold.

“Of course. If monsters are pouring down every day, and there is no order in the city, what would happen?”

“Well...”

Yeongwoo knew the result, as he had witnessed it firsthand.

If a strong figure emerged, a dictatorship would begin, as in Sangju City.

In the worst-case scenario, the city could face extinction due to a single mutant, as happened in Gimcheon.

“Of course, it originally started as witch hunting, so I don’t expect wisdom from people. In a way, it’s like living in a world that suits their level.”

Then, Shin Youngju added with frustration.

“But I’m not like that. I wasn’t a person vile enough to throw votes in witch hunting, and I lived sincerely. I had no reason to share the punishment with others.”

Yeongwoo had nothing to say in response.

He understood Shin Youngju’s perspective.

She asserted that she hadn’t lived badly enough to deserve such ‘punishment.’

If there had not been a reset, or even if a reset had occurred, if there had not been a senseless witch hunt, this world might have been a little more normal.

However, the situation took a turn for the worst, and Shin Youngju ended up having to deal with it.

‘To take control of her own destiny rather than leaving it to others.’

The 3rd Strongest Sword.

If her claim about not participating in the witch hunt was true, her growth assets would be the massive Karma obtained through currency exchange.

‘How she managed to escape the exchange and bring that money with her is still unknown...’

Nevertheless, it was clear that Shin Youngju was an extraordinary individual.

Many citizens of Chungju City must have willingly joined the witch hunt.

Despite that, she faithfully fulfilled the role of guardian of Chungju City.

“You’re truly remarkable. Compared to a judge like you, I...”

As Yeongwoo was about to lower his head, a new figure suddenly appeared from the SUV belonging to the Jeong family.

It was none other than the golden goblin, a unique slave.

-Keet.

He jumped out of the car to stick close to Yeongwoo, his owner, when Yeongwoo didn’t appear in his sight for a while.

Then, when he stuck to Yeongwoo’s leg, Shin Youngju’s eyes lit up.

“What’s that? Could that... Yeongwoo?”

“Yes, um, it’s like a pet.”

“A pet...?”

Although Yeongwoo introduced him as just a pet, Shin Youngju found it hard to believe it literally.

She, too, had experienced facing extraterrestrial beings.

“Do merchants sell living creatures too? This is the first time I’ve seen something like this.”

While Shin Youngju gazed curiously at the goblin, she soon shifted her gaze to scan Yeongwoo from head to toe.

Finally, the things that the alien possessed began to be visible again.

A snake wrapped around his forearm, a golden bracelet, a black cape draped over his shoulders, a belt that looked different from standard issue, and on the belt, there was another black sword along with the early bird.

Not to mention the charm hanging around his neck and the ring on his finger.

“ ... ”

Shin Youngju unconsciously counted the items that seemed like artifacts and then, inadvertently, her eyes widened.

She started looking at Yeongwoo up and down once again.

Yeongwoo, who was about to bow his head in embarrassment, closed his mouth when he saw Shin Youngju's eyes.

Her eyes were familiar – the same gaze he saw in the eyes of the thugs during the incident at the currency exchange two days ago.

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[Proofreader – Gun]

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Chapter 52

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Chapter 52: The Judge with the Longsword (5)

‘Ugh.’

Detecting a sinister glint in Judge Shin Youngju's eyes, Yeongwoo instinctively stopped himself from reaching for the hilt of his longsword, realizing his hand was already near the scabbard.

However, the awkward silence settled in as Judge Shin Youngju had clearly observed his movement.

“ ”

“Ah, did I stare too openly? I’m sorry if it made you uncomfortable. There are so many unfamiliar gadgets here.”

Quickly shifting the atmosphere, Judge Shin Youngju offered a clumsy line, then redirected the conversation, looking towards the SUV of the Jeong family.

“You came to find their family in Chungju, right? So, Yeongwoo, are you planning to stay here until then?”

“Oh, that...”

Yeongwoo’s gaze momentarily touched his wristwatch and then shifted to the timer at the top of his field of vision.

Current time: 4:10 PM.

[Time until advertiser’s arrival: 03:56:31

‘Time is running out. The lodging will start again from 9 PM.’

Since the population check in Chungju was scheduled for 7 PM, to observe the Jeong family’s reunion, he had no choice but to stay here for the night without a break.

Of course, as long as order was maintained in Chungju, a peaceful night was guaranteed.

‘The problem is those advertisers. They might be extraterrestrial monsters for all we know.’

Yeongwoo didn’t want to involve Chungju in the ominous event of the advertisers’ visit.

Regardless of the advertisers’ personalities and tendencies, their appearance alone would undoubtedly cause significant chaos in Chungju.

Moreover, he was uneasy about Shin Youngju subtly coveting the equipment he had.

Considering the responsibilities she held, it was natural for her to have a strong desire for power.

So, in the end, Yeongwoo chose to continue heading north as originally planned.

“No, I plan to move right away. I want to reach the next city before the lodging starts.”

“...I see. Too bad. I had quite a few things I wanted to ask you, Yeongwoo, as it seemed you have more worldly experience than me.”

Shin Youngju's mention of 'worldly experience' probably referred to the world after the reset.

In reality, Yeongwoo, who had traversed various regions, had much higher experience points than her, who had been confined to Chungju.

"If I had the leisure, I would have learned a lot from Judge-nim. Still, we'll probably meet again someday."

As Yeongwoo tried to leave with these words, Shin Youngju pulled out the early bird she had stuck into the ground, asking before him.

"Do you have other business? I thought you came here to meet a merchant, seeing you have so many pieces of equipment."

"Ah... I did think about it."

Since the other party brought up the merchant topic first, Yeongwoo, somewhat flustered, looked towards the dark pillar inside the city.

"Would it be okay with you? If you allow, I would like to meet the merchant."

"Of course. I've bought everything that can be bought, and it will disappear tonight anyway."

It was the first time Yeongwoo learned that even the merchant had a limited stay.

After a moment of thought, Yeongwoo nodded towards Shin Youngju.

"Then, I'll ask for your permission."

"Okay. But there's one condition."

"Condition...?"

* * *

4:31 PM.

Finally passing through the tollgate and entering Chungju City, Jeong's family's SUV was still full.

This time, instead of the police, Chungju's Judge, Shin Youngju, was in the back seat, as her condition for Yeongwoo to accompany her until the merchant's deal was done.

Yeongwoo had no reason to refuse Judge Shin Youngju's condition, as he anticipated being under the surveillance of Chungju's Strongest Sword during his stay in Chungju.

In fact, it was somewhat surprising for the Jeong family, as they were in a position where they had to make Chungju their base for their lives, unlike Yeongwoo.

And finally, Jongsu said.

"Um... If things go this way, do I no longer need to stay with Myeongho? We've already achieved a peaceful coexistence here, haven't we?"

He was contemplating using this situation to break free from the agreement with Yeongwoo.

"Isn't that right, big brother? If you're going to stay here for a long time, you don't really need a bodyguard, do you?"

When Jongsu asked casually, Myeongho nodded his head somewhat flustered.

However, this was partly sincere.

Before Chungju's safety, Jongsu himself was burdensome.

With his large build, excessive toughness, and an intimidating presence that felt more like a gangster than just a younger brother...

There was nothing easy about him.

"Indeed, right? Yeongwoo, what do you think?"

Confirming that Myeongho's head moved up and down, Jongsu then looked at Yeongwoo.

However, the fierce gaze he had when looking at Myeongho was nowhere to be found.

No, instead of fierceness, there was even something close to awe in his eyes.

"Um..."

Of course, even in Yeongwoo's eyes, there was no way Myeongho could handle Jongsu.

But that didn't mean Yeongwoo would easily abandon the agreement with Jongsu like this.

Moreover, his statement about not making someone a burden was also genuine.

“If you two have reached an agreement, it doesn’t matter how you decide. However, that doesn’t mean I’ll take in Mr. Jongsu. Having a companion imposes many restrictions when moving.”

When Yeongwoo said this decisively, Jongsu’s expression sank with disappointment.

In the meantime, a rectangular, robust building appeared on the other side of the car window.

It was none other than Chungju City Hall.

“There’s City Hall Square. If your husband is still in Chungju, he probably set up near here.”

Shin Youngju pointed to the spacious square in front of the city hall and explained.

Myeongae gazed at City Hall Square with a complicated expression.

Even though it wasn’t the meeting time yet, there were quite a few people in the square.

Unlike those in the open field at the entrance of Chungju, most of the people here were sitting or lying on the ground.

“Oh, are they waiting for monsters here too?”

Jongsu muttered, looking at the crowd gathered in the square.

At this, Shin Youngju shook her head.

“No. Most of the people gathered here are just killing time. From my perspective, it’s a ticking time bomb.”

“A time bomb?”

Myeongae asked, raising her eyebrows.

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It was because she was wondering if there might be her husband among the crowd, scanning through the crowd with her eyes.

“Yes. Most Chungju citizens are trying to earn more Karma in any way possible at this time. Whether risking their lives to find monsters, challenging daily quests, or even picking up useful items, they do anything.”

Every day at 7 PM, a temporary market opens along with the gathering time.

Shin Youngju explained that even petrified items could be traded.

“Then the people there now...”

Pointing to the crowd in the square, Myeongae asked, and Shin Youngju’s expression coldly changed.

“They are people who are not implementing even minimal safety measures. When their money runs out, they have no choice but to die. Will they accept it willingly? Those people wouldn’t be strange if they turned into robbers at any moment.”

Of course, there were some people performing daily quests, but that alone was not enough, Shin Youngju added.

It was not a big problem for now, but only solving daily quests wouldn’t address issues beyond room and board, taxes, and fees.

For example, the problem of food.

“It’s been almost two days since the reset started. In other words, most people have been starving for two days already.”

“So how is Chungju managing food? Aren’t there food supplies in places like supermarkets or department stores?”

This question was thrown by Yeongwoo, likely due to witnessing people fighting in front of a mart in Gumi earlier.

In response, Shin Youngju’s gaze lifted to the sky.

“There’s nothing to manage. Everything, including marts and whatnot, was looted during the chaos of the First Strongest Sword era.”

“...Ah.”

As Yeongwoo sighed, Shin Youngju gave a wry smile.

“However, even if you have food, you can’t eat it without Karma. In the end, you have to bring it out through the market.”

“But even petrified food can be traded with Karma, so those who looted during the First Strongest Sword era would have benefited the most, right?”

At Yeongwoo’s remark, Shin Youngju squinted her eyes.

"I don't want to admit it, but that's the truth. It's a realistic limitation. However, even if we forcibly collect all the food owned by individuals, it would cause even greater chaos. Perfect collection is impossible from the start."

Anyway, it was a flaw that Shin Youngju couldn't deny.

And in reality, she wanted to talk about something else.

"Well, shall we end this conversation here? Since we've arrived at the square, if you're okay with it, let's go see the merchant right away."

With these words, Shin Youngju opened the back seat door, and the bustling sounds of the square rushed into the vehicle.

"Are we really parting ways like this? I feel a bit unfair..."

Turning around with a voice that seemed to express awkwardness, Jongsu looked back.

In the meantime, Yeongwoo followed Shin Youngju out of the car.

As they did, Myeongho quickly got out of the car and bowed towards Yeongwoo.

"Th-thank you for everything."

"Is there something to be thankful for? It hasn't been all good, and I'm also indebted to Mr. Myeongho and your mother."

"..."

"By the way, would it be okay if Mr. Jongsu is not with you anymore? He seems like someone who would go his own way sooner or later."

Yeongwoo glanced at Jongsu, who was just getting out of the car, and said so.

Myeongho, in turn, awkwardly smiled.

"I think it'll be okay here. Besides, Mr. Jongsu is ultimately a stranger after all. It was a relationship that couldn't last long anyway."

Then, Myeongho's gaze shifted inside the vehicle.

Seeing Yeongwoo turning his eyes in that direction, on the back seat, Myeongae bid farewell silently.

"..."

“Mother, take care. Thank you for your help.”

This was probably the last conversation shared with the Jeong family.

Yeongwoo greeted Myeongae politely and then hurriedly followed behind Shin Youngju, who was already a few steps ahead, heading towards the direction of the black pillar of light.

* * *

4:52 PM.

Not long after leaving City Hall Square, Yeongwoo sensed something strange.

Thump, thump!

Shin Youngju, who was running ahead, didn't match the pace on this side and was moving at her own pace.

Of course, now there were no other companions, and there were only two people with the status of the Strongest Sword, so it made sense for them to move at high speed. But still...

‘No matter what, as an outsider and formally a guest, is it okay to run ahead so recklessly?’

So, in Yeongwoo's thoughts, this couldn't be seen as anything else.

‘Could she be trying to gauge my abilities?’

Given the situation, that seemed to be the only interpretation.

And if that were the case, Yeongwoo was making it clear that his abilities were significantly lower than those of a Strongest Sword.

If Shin Youngju increased her speed a bit, he would easily fall behind.

“Is it too fast? We're almost there... Shall we slow down a bit from now on?”

Shin Youngju, looking back for a moment with a worried tone, asked.

In response, Yeongwoo forced a smile and looked at the black pillar of light that had already come a few steps closer.

“No, it's okay. We're almost there now.”

As he looked around, he felt that there were no people near them, unlike the surroundings near City Hall.

Perhaps the area near the merchant was a kind of restricted zone where even people trying to catch monsters couldn't approach?

'Well, merchants only sell products on a first-come, first-served basis... It wouldn't be surprising if a restraining order was issued with the authority of the Strongest Sword.'

So why did Shin Youngju readily allow a foreigner to do business with the merchant?

Suuu... ..

Shin Youngju had stopped a little way ahead.

When Yeongwoo caught up with her, he couldn't help but notice the unique discomfort in the air.

Shoo...

Finally, the feeling of discomfort specific to the merchant spread through the air, and the view that had been hidden by large and small buildings suddenly opened up.

They had finally arrived at the intersection where the merchant had settled.

And at the right moment, Shin Youngju, who had been running ahead, stood firmly in place.

Tap!

Then, she raised her hand and pointed towards the pillar of light in front.

"I hope there are some useful items left."

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Chapter 53

[Translator – Night]

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Chapter 53: The Judge with the Longsword (6)

I hope there are still useful items left...

Yeongwoo pondered Shin Youngju's words as he walked towards the pillar of light in front of him.

Currently, the total amount of karma he possessed was 871,000.

'With this money, I can probably buy top-notch equipment.'

Of course, Shin Youngju would have seized good items in nine out of ten cases, but Yeongwoo still had a chance.

It was thanks to his intermediary, Kubu.

'There's a variable. The merchants here have already completed one transaction.'

The benefit provided by Kubu, Yeongwoo's intermediary, was to show the merchants who had bid on the transaction and allow him to choose the desired target from among them.

But what if Yeongwoo contacted the merchant who had already completed the bidding and finalized the transaction?

Would Kubu still show a new list of merchants, allowing Yeongwoo to choose the trader he wanted?

'I should look into it now. As long as no unexpected events occur.'

Turning around quietly, Yeongwoo saw Shin Youngju following him at a suitable distance.

Her expression was calm, and the Golden Flash showed no signs of hostility, but Yeongwoo couldn't relax.

If he were Shin Youngju, he would not let this outsider live and leave.

'No one around... It's the perfect place for a secret murder. If I strike during the transaction, her reaction will be slow.'

Having come this far, she must have noticed that his abilities were lower, so if she lowered her morality a bit, this situation would be an unparalleled opportunity for Shin Youngju's growth.

And with that gained power, she could more firmly defend Chungju City.

But even so, if she did not continue to pursue him until the end...

'Then I have to admit it. I've been looking at the world too harshly.'

Yeongwoo thought this way while pulling out the black sword and early bird from his waist and thrusting them into the ground.

Clang!

In case Shin Youngju had to endure a surprise attack from behind, these swords were called upon for a counterattack.

Seeing this, Shin Youngju, who had been watching, asked with a puzzled expression.

"What's going on all of a sudden?"

"It's my way of showing respect. It's a bit weird if someone who came for a trade is holding weapons, isn't it?"

"...?"

Ignoring her expression of bewilderment, Yeongwoo turned away and walked towards the pillar of light again.

'About 20 meters or so.'

The distance from the point where the sword was stuck into the ground to the pillar of light was about 20 meters.

Swish.

When he touched his chest, he felt the dagger he had put in his pocket.

If Shin Youngju's movements were faster than expected, he planned to pull out the dagger before the sword returned.

'Even a slight touch of the sword... Should be enough to gain an advantage.'

「Golden Punishment」 – Legendary Bracelet

【Inflicts pain on the enemy.】

【Cumulative golden ratio: 4】

Yeongwoo, who was undoubtedly confident in his 12-level increase in abilities, believed in the tremendous pain that the Golden Punishment would inflict.

Wasn't it an effect that even the extremely enraged mutants couldn't properly contain?

"Hoo."

When Yeongwoo finished preparing himself mentally, the distance between him and the black pillar of light decreased to about ten meters, and finally, the figure of the merchant began to appear.

Squeak.

From the other side, it seemed that Yeongwoo's presence was felt, it started making an eerie sound, and soon.

"Ugh...."

Even Yeongwoo, who had experienced numerous battles, momentarily hesitated at the sight of a grotesque being that seemed to freeze even him, protruding part of its body beyond the pillar of light.

Swoosh.

It was a giant cockroach.

A common sight on Earth.

The only difference was that its body length seemed to easily exceed five meters.

If it couldn't come out completely beyond the pillar of light, a long antenna that should have been straight was noticeably bent along the wall of the pillar.

"Good heavens."

Yeongwoo muttered with a horrified tone, and Shin Youngju behind him spoke in a subdued voice.

"I still can't get used to it. Every time I see that, it scares me. We can't predict what else might happen in the future with things like this."

In Shin Youngju's voice, Yeongwoo sensed fear for the first time.

"But you still managed to make the trade. Judge, what did you buy from the merchant?"

At Yeongwoo's question, Shin Youngju, after a moment of blank expression, burst into laughter.

“The merchant? I’ve been feeling this since earlier, but Yeongwoo, you’re really a unique person. Maybe it’s because you’re young.”

Then she pointed her finger at the merchant in the form of a wheel.

“Check it out yourself. I didn’t buy much.”

Squeak.

The merchant wheel emitted a cry in response.

At this, Yeongwoo took a deep breath and began walking towards the pillar of light.

Soon, the space between him and the pillar of light split, and the intermediary Kubu appeared.

Smoothly.

-I am honored to meet you again, the Earthling, the strongest in Gyeongbuk Province, Mr. Jeong Yeongwoo07!

-I am Kubu, the guardian of Tenta and the owner of Daro, who is mediating this transaction.

Kubu’s usual greetings.

But this time, he blinked his eyes twice before starting to look around.

It was the first time Kubu had examined the trading scene, probably because in the previous two transactions, Yeongwoo was the first trader.

However, this time.

=Someone else has already been here. There is a record of the transaction.

Seeing Kubu’s awkward expression in his voice, Yeongwoo asked.

“Is the trade still possible? Or has the commission changed?”

-The trade is possible. The commission is also unchanged, but the trade target can be changed...

As Kubu was about to continue his answer, he suddenly rolled his eyeballs and looked somewhere.

Then.

-Be careful.

Yeongwoo unexpectedly spat out a warning line.

But he seemed to know the reason.

“...!”

The Golden Flash that had been silent until now displayed a warning message at this moment.

「The sensory value has temporarily increased from the original 100 to 866.」

‘Crazy.’

The sensory value increased by a whopping 766.

This meant that the opponent who had ambushed had a sensory value of 1532.

And in this vicinity, there could only be a presence with such high abilities...

Swish!

Turning his head backward, Yeongwoo saw Judge Shin Youngju²² rushing towards him with a golden glint in her eyes.

According to the hologram guide of Gyeongbuk Sword Law, the opponent’s blade had already reached his neck.

“....!”

As the hologram advised only evasion without attempting a counterattack, Yeongwoo twisted his body in accordance.

Thud.

Then, Shin Youngju’s thrust came very close to Yeongwoo’s neck.

“Judge...!”

Yeongwoo rolled backward to increase the distance, but it was in vain.

Shin Youngju’s movements were much faster.

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

“I’m sorry.”

Before Yeongwoo could even pull out his dagger, Shin Youngju’s sword cut through the air.

“Kwak!”

A sharp pain in the abdomen.

Yeongwoo immediately realized that something was seriously wrong.

Even if it wasn’t just the pain, his upper body was tilting forward against his will.

‘No way.’

There was no need to look down.

The intensified pain and the floating sensation in the air explained a lot more than could be seen.

His body had been severely damaged by the recent blow.

Among the misfortunes, the good news is that the senses he had taken from the opponent had not yet left him.

Although not certain, he felt like he could still move his arm, and his mind seemed intact enough to think this far.

“Ah!”

Yeongwoo screamed, a sound of either determination or agony, pulling out the two swords that were stuck 20 meters away.

At the same time, he drew the dagger he had kept in his pocket and swung it.

Swoosh!

Since his head was already crashing into the ground, the dagger only swung near the opponent’s ankle.

However, Yeongwoo’s final struggle had a significant effect.

“What, what is this...?”

This is because he succeeded in diverting Shin Youngju's attention, even if only for a moment.

To the point where she realized a little too late that two knives were flying at her from behind her back.

Swoosh!

"Huh."

Shin Youngju, who had belatedly realized the meaning of the holograms that were blinding her vision, was already swinging her sword to parry the early bird.

This was purely a reflexive action.

The early bird, catching the sunlight, flashed as it swung.

So inevitably.

Quack!

She didn't even see the common knife that had just passed through her chest.

"Haak...!"

Having experienced significant damage to her body for the first time in her life, Shin Youngju didn't know what to do as she saw blood flowing from her chest.

"Ye-Yeongwoo!"

She was so helpless that she asked for help from Yeongwoo, who she had cut to pieces just seconds ago.

However, Yeongwoo was busy watching the strange scene where the black sword returned to its original position after completing its mission.

He was lying on the ground, pouring out blood from his lower body.

"...It was almost done."

For some reason, consciousness remained clear. Yeongwoo felt intense pain and a burning sense of injustice simultaneously.

Then, as Shin Youngju collapsed to the ground, unable to support her body any longer, Yeongwoo finally paid attention to the chaos.

“Jud... Judge. Judge, you’re not dead yet, right?”

He asked because Shin Youngju’s legs were trembling, but there was no response.

Perhaps, due to experiencing the pain inflicted by the golden punishment, she might not even have the strength to speak.

When Yeongwoo reached this conclusion, a genuine sense of apology overwhelmed him.

“I’m sorry. If I had the strength left, I would have killed you quickly. Now, I can hardly move my arm, and I’ll die soon too.”

Upon closer inspection, Shin Youngju’s trembling had decreased compared to before.

She was also dying.

“Whoever it is, the next person passing through here will be in for a surprise.”

As Yeongwoo tried to open the inventory window for his last attempt before death, a small silhouette appeared in the distance.

-Keet...

It was none other than the Relic-grade slave, the Golden Goblin.

He had been observing the battlefield from a safe distance when the fight began.

“Oh? Here, here!”

-Keet?

Although the Goblin confirmed Yeongwoo’s consciousness, it only looked around without coming to help.

“Well, I guess you’ll be free when I die. Anyway, I lost.”

It seemed this was the end.

Perhaps it was difficult for a Strongest Sword, who was born as a level 4 human, to live a long life?

“I couldn’t even survive for two days. If it weren’t for the reset, I might have lived for three years.”

|Name: Jeong Yeongwoo

|Role: Level 4 Extra

|Function: Background, Maintenance Crew

|Creation: April 8th, 1992, 11:41 PM, edited due to unintentional deliberate intervention.

|Annihilation: November 7th, 2028, 8:36 PM, fatally assaulted by a drunk passerby while returning home.

Yeongwoo recalled his once repulsive Fate Record and chuckled bitterly.

Then, as he attempted to slowly close his eyes...

Paang!

Suddenly, a car horn blared from somewhere, jolting him awake.

“...?”

It wasn't far away.

Even the characteristic vibration of a car transmitted through the ground.

Although he was now too exhausted to turn his head, he could easily guess who the person was without seeing.

“Hyungrim? Where are you?”

Jongsu, who had cast aside the Jeong family, was approaching.

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

Chapter 54

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

Chapter 54: Different Species (1)

“Jongsu...!”

Yeongwoo called out to the unexpected visitor with an uncertain voice.

Kim Jongsu, a 29-year-old native of Andong.

Although it was not their first meeting, their relationship was not close enough to expect loyalty.

Also, when he thought about it again, he wondered if it would be helpful if someone came to see his body cut in two.

“Hyung-nim, where are you? I really can’t see... Ugh!”

Jongsu, who had arrived near the scene, discovered Yeongwoo, whose upper and lower body were separated, and abruptly stopped.

Squeak!

He then stuck his head out of the driver’s seat in disbelief to double-check.

“Hyung-nim?”

“Yes, I’m here.”

“Ugh!”

Jongsu, startled, jumped out of the car and stood still for a while, blinking his eyes.

It was an unexpected sight, to say the least.

A giant cockroach trapped inside a pillar of light, and in front of it, a giant eyeball floating in the air...

But more chilling than that was the fact that Yeongwoo, whose lower body had been cut off, was speaking and alive.

“No, how on earth are you alive?”

“Well, it seems it’s not easy for a person to survive like this. Or maybe it’s because I’ve increased my stats a lot.”

“Even so, this doesn’t make sense. How long have you been like this?”

“Ah...”

It was only now that Yeongwoo realized how long he had endured to an excessive extent.

And the reason became clear after he opened the inventory that he had neglected until now.

Pahat!

「Slime Core」 – Mutation Bracelet

【Regenerative power increases dramatically.】

The Slime's core.

A loot taken from the Sangju Province's Strongest Sword, Dokgo Sehwan 01.

It was the Dokgo Sehwan who, despite having his head and body torn apart, had managed to survive with his breath attached.

'Oh my. So it was this.'

The phrase "Significant increase in regeneration" likely meant this level of effect.

'Could it be that if I continue like this, the severed parts will heal?'

It was a plausible guess.

Originally, he should have died early on due to excessive bleeding or shock.

Of course, the amount of blood he had already lost was considerable, but if he attempted to stitch it up now...

"Hey, Jongsu."

"Yes?"

"If it's okay, could you bring my leg and attach it under here?"

"...What?"

After Yeongwoo's response, Jongsu opened his mouth wide and trembled in disbelief.

Then, as if greatly shocked, he muttered while holding Yeongwoo's lower body with both hands.

"So, if I do that, will your body really stick together...?"

"Maybe."

“...”

“So, you mean... you just want me to stick this back on?”

“Yes, for now.”

With his weakened energy, Yeongwoo nodded his head, and Jongsu followed suit by nodding his head.

Next, Jongsu brought Yeongwoo's lower body closer to the upper body.

Sliiide, sliiide.

Now, all that remained was to align the two cut surfaces properly.

But when Jongsu came this far, he suddenly stopped moving.

“...”

“Jongsu?”

As Yeongwoo called out to Jongsu, who seemed more static than he expected, a calm voice flowed out from him, unlike before.

“If I don't stick it, will you die like this?”

Well, that's true.

Yeongwoo sighed deeply.

“Yes, that would happen. But I won't resent you even if you leave me to die. I would have thought the same if I were in Jongsu's position.”

“That's right. If I hadn't come here, hyung-nim would have either withered away without a word or been stabbed by some ruthless guy.”

While saying this, Jongsu glanced at the early bird attached to his waist.

Then, still emitting a formidable presence, he shifted his gaze towards the alien merchant and mediator Kubu.

“You can't even imagine how weird I feel right now.”

After Jongsu finished speaking with a loud gesture, Yeongwoo closed his eyes, thinking that he was about to draw a sword.

However, all Jongsu did was attach Yeongwoo's lower body back together.

Clunk.

"Do you really expect it to stick together on its own like this? Damn... I feel like I can't live properly in a world like this."

Jongsu spat out a skeptical line, but before he finished speaking, Yeongwoo could sense that something was happening.

"Ugh."

The sensation of heat surged from the spot where Jongsu had attached the lower body.

Of course, it was unclear whether the body was actually attached or if an infection was progressing, but something was happening for sure.

"Um... just in case, did you align the front and back properly?"

Yeongwoo asked out of curiosity, and Jongsu, after momentarily blanking out, laughed.

"Check it for yourself when you stand up later."

And at that moment.

"Kkng."

Youngju, who had been lying there as if dead, finally twitched his fingers and truly died.

「Chungju's Strongest Sword has been acquired and merged!」

The title merge message appeared in Yeongwoo's field of view as evidence.

Following that, system messages about the current status of titles continued to appear.

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

...You have acquired one title in the Chungju region.

...You possess four titles in the Gyeongbuk region.

「The current Gyeongbuk's Strongest Sword is 'Jung Yeongwoo07.' Rank 1, 2 defenses.」

‘Oh, titles from different regions are collected separately.’

As Yeongwoo stared at Youngju’s corpse on the ground, Jongsu, with a deep voice, said.

“This distinguished lady finally initiated a fight, huh? Unlike earlier when she pretended to be gentle.”

“She must have thought about it until the end. She had a lot to lose.”

Just as Yeongwoo said, Youngju lost too much as the price for her failed bet.

Even if another mutant comes down to Chungju tomorrow, can they defend against that monster without the Strongest Sword?

‘Without the Strongest Sword, it’ll be difficult to maintain order in this city.’

Originally, the region status window should have information about the Strongest Sword, but now it looked more like a warning message.

[Currently staying in the area of ‘Chungju.’

]There is no Strongest Sword in this area.

Nevertheless, the majority of Chungju citizens couldn’t even imagine what that status window meant.

Chungju’s Strongest Sword had gambled with the lives of the citizens.

In any case, due to this incident, Chungju was expected to return to lawlessness, and there was a high likelihood that it would be ruined by mutants.

“How about it, does the body seem to be attached a bit?”

Jongsu, feeling bored with waiting, sat on the ground and asked.

In response, Yeongwoo, unconsciously examining his waist, stood up abruptly, surprised.

“Ah.”

“...Huh?”

Jongsu, too, widened his eyes.

Yeongwoo’s upper body stood straight, supported by the waist and abdomen.

Just a moment ago, wasn't this the person whose upper and lower body were separated?

This was an impossible situation.

"What the hell."

Jongsu exclaimed in amazement as he sat down, and Yeongwoo, with an unbelieving expression, raised his top to inspect it.

Swoosh.

Then, it became apparent that the flesh on the cut surface, while not completely healed, was sticking together.

"No, this is..."

While Yeongwoo struggled to find words, the suturing process continued.

After a while, a severe hunger struck.

As the body reattached, even the internal organs that had lost function began to restart.

'Is... is this really happening? If so, you can't consider it human anymore.'

As Yeongwoo sat and examined every corner of his body, the golden goblin, which had been observing the situation from a distance, hurriedly approached.

It had noticed that Yeongwoo was recovering.

"This guy."

Jongsu made a gesture as if kicking with his foot, but the goblin ignored it and placed a pouch next to Yeongwoo.

-Kit.

"You're quite an opportunist too."

Yeongwoo briefly looked at the now polite goblin, then turned his gaze to Jongsu.

"But Jongsu, why did you save me? It was a chance to become the Strongest Sword."

"That's true."

At Yeongwoo's words, Jongsu shrugged.

Then, he glanced at Yeongwoo's recovering body in real-time.

"Well... if I had to give a reason, I didn't want to live like this. I clearly realized it when I saw that body really sticking together."

By 'like this,' he meant living in a state where it was ambiguous whether he was human or a monster.

"You seem to be the type who subtly dislikes being tied down. But if it was someone other than my brother, I would have drawn my sword without hesitation. I'm not interested in being the Strongest Sword, but I always think becoming stronger is the right thing."

An excessively honest remark.

As a result, Yeongwoo felt relieved.

"There was also a way to take only my equipment."

"Yes. I hadn't thought that wasn't an option... Well, even if you look like this, you're probably stronger than I would be with them. So, I chose to become the benefactor of your life."

In other words, he didn't want to become a monster and chose to receive the protection of a monster.

"I may not empathize, but I understand what you're saying."

Yeongwoo, saying this, had recovered to some extent during that time.

In other words, even if Jongsu changes his mind now, there's nothing he can do about it.

Of course, Yeongwoo wasn't ready to fight other Strongest Swords or mutants right away.

'I'll need some rest during the journey until we arrive at the next area.'

Fortunately, thanks to Jongsu getting a car, they could take breaks while moving.

'Jongsu coming to find me is truly a stroke of luck. Maybe it's not my time to die yet.'

Yeongwoo unconsciously looked up at the sky.

Then, along with the clear sky, the timer that was hanging at the top of the field of view caught his eye.

[Time until advertiser's arrival: 03:04:11]

A considerable amount of time had passed since he attached his body back together.

‘It’s almost in the 2-hour range. Tight schedule.’

At this rate, shortly after entering the next area, he would encounter the presence known as the advertiser.

“Can you continue driving?”

When Yeongwoo slowly asked while getting up, Jongsu glanced at the car and replied.

“Yes, of course. Where do you want to go?”

“North... I mean, towards Seoul.”

“Then we’ll have to cross through places like Icheon and Yeosu.”

As if drawing a map, Jongsu gestured with his finger in the air.

Meanwhile, Yeongwoo searched the body of the deceased Shin Youngju, who lay with a hole in her chest.

Surprisingly, she didn’t have a single penny, but instead...

‘Oh my god.’

There was an Epic equipment that could only be obtained by consuming legendary achievements.

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

Chapter 55

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

Chapter 55: Different Species (2)

Swoosh.

As Yeongwoo picked up the problematic equipment, Jongsu tilted his head.

“What is that, Hyung-nim?”

“It’s a compass.”

“...That’s a compass?”

It was a perfectly normal reaction.

Even Yeongwoo, looking at it, couldn’t see how it could be related to a compass from the outside.

「Fearful Cat」 – Epic Compass

【Indicates a threatening target.】

【–Empty slot–】

The equipment that came out of Shin Youngju’s left pocket was a small, three-colored cat model smaller than a palm.

It crouched down as if frightened, and its eyes were closed in its current inactive state.

‘Does that mean there’s no threatening target nearby right now?’

Yeongwoo instantly figured out how the “Fearful Cat” worked.

It was because he already had a similar device.

「Serpent of Greed」 – Epic Compass

【Always seeks rarity.】

In the reset world, Yeongwoo was one of the people who quickly encountered the new material.

‘Thanks to the compass, Shin Youngju found me right away.’

Of course, at that time, it was impossible to know why the Fearful Cat perceived this side as a threatening target.

‘I never had the intention of fighting from the beginning... There might have been conflicts due to merchant problems, but I still wanted to solve it through conversation.’

However, this was only Yeongwoo’s one-sided thought.

Anyway, the result was that Shin Youngju died, so wasn't Yeongwoo a threatening figure?

“...”

Yeongwoo put the Fearful Cat in his pocket with an uncomfortable feeling.

Then the Serpent of Greed, wrapped around his left wrist, turned its head with a flick of its tongue.

Swoosh.

The object it stared at was none other than the sword that Shin Youngju had been holding all along.

It wasn't the supply-type sword stuck in the mountain of the sword, nor was it the early bird, which made Yeongwoo curious.

'Is it a mutation equipment?'

The probability was high.

If it was the current Strongest Sword, even if it couldn't use mutation equipment, it would have at least two.

One obtained from a mutant and one that the former Strongest Sword had.

Thunk.

Eventually, when Yeongwoo pulled out the sword from Shin Youngju, a tooltip appeared in his field of vision.

Ping!

「Underdog」 – Mutated one-handed sword

【Power increases by 25% against targets larger than the user.】

'Oh.'

Compared to its relatively plain appearance, the special ability was outstanding.

'If this applies permanently against mutants, it would be good.'

If the 'build' mentioned in the tooltip simply referred to height, it would be activated against the majority of adult males.

Conversely, it would have no effect against smaller males and most females.

Clang.

Clang.

Yeongwoo pulled out the early bird from his waist belt and replaced it with Underdog.

Jongsu, who was watching this, let out a dry laugh.

“Even the Strongest Sword rummages through corpses after the fight. How did the world end up like this?”

“...There's no other choice. Even the Gangnam Strongest Sword probably goes around digging through corpses.”

Gangnam Strongest Sword.

Yeongwoo didn't have much knowledge about that side, but mentioning Gangnam gave the impression of a wealthy neighborhood, so it was half-joking.

Surprisingly, Jongsu took this seriously.

“Come to think of it, there might be a Gangnam Strongest Sword. Or maybe just lump it all under Seoul Strongest Sword...?”

“I don't know.”

Listening to it, it made sense.

Although both are 'cities,' the population difference is staggering.

The population of Chungju is about 200,000, while Seoul has a population of 9.4 million.

That's a difference of 47 times.

So, logically, there should be more Strongest Swords for Seoul.

For example, one for each district.

Even so, considering the population, there could still be fewer Strongest Swords in Seoul.

Seoul is divided into 25 districts.

“I don't know if there's really a Gangnam Strongest Sword.”

When Yeongwoo said this, Jongsu spoke with an excited voice.

“That’s right, isn’t it? Hyungnim, aren’t you curious? Who holds a position like Gangnam’s Strongest Sword?”

“ ... ”

[PR/N: It’s PSY. He holds the position. Trust. Oppar gangnam style.]

For some reason, unlike the excited Jongsu, Yeongwoo found it difficult to understand the other’s emotions.

Is it because everything still feels like a game or a dream?

From the beginning, abandoning his former comrades abruptly and sticking with this side, giving up the opportunity to become Strongest Sword...

Yeongwoo felt that Jongsu didn’t seem to take post-reset life seriously.

“Mr. Jongsu, how do you plan to live from now on?”

“From now on?”

Receiving Yeongwoo’s question, Jongsu made a face as if he hadn’t thought about that far.

Then, he once again let out his characteristic playful laugh.

“Moderately... I hope to travel and see the world without too much trouble.”

“See the world?”

“Yes. Isn’t it fascinating how the world has turned out like this? Just a few days ago, you wouldn’t have thought you’d end up getting stabbed by a judge’s sword, right?”

“But...?”

It became clear.

Jongsu regarded life after the reset as some kind of bonus.

Otherwise...

“Hyungnim, do you think I’m strange right now? Like a crazy person.”

As if reading Yeongwoo's mind, Jongsu uttered a line that seemed to peer into Yeongwoo's thoughts.

So, Yeongwoo didn't press the matter any further.

"Yes. Usually, people are busy trying to survive or panicking. It's rare to find someone who wants to see the world in the midst of all this. I doubt there will be many more like you in the future."

"Haha, that's true. Because, for most people, the top priority is to survive."

Jongsu's forced laughter somehow sounded artificial.

In contrast to his animated appearance, Yeongwoo found it difficult to understand the other's emotions.

For some reason, Jongsu's face, even with the fading laughter, appeared quite imposing, reminiscent of their first meeting.

It didn't match the subsequent dialogue at all.

"Mr. Jongsu, is survival not your top priority?"

Surprisingly, Jongsu remained silent.

His face, now lacking even a trace of a smile, was unexpectedly intimidating.

And then, the words that followed seemed completely incongruent.

"I didn't want to live, let alone survive. Originally, I should have committed suicide today."

"...?"

Yeongwoo, wondering if he heard wrong, tilted his head. Jongsu, with a wrinkled nose, confirmed his statement.

"When I checked the Fate Record, today was supposed to be the day I die. If it wasn't for the reset, I would have really committed suicide as planned."

And this means...

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

“Are you saying you’ve been thinking about suicide even before the reset?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

Yeongwoo reflexively questioned.

He couldn’t understand it at all.

Wasn’t he a guy with exceptional physical abilities who looked like a dangerous person in this world?

Of course, external appearance and inner circumstances are separate, but it was hard for Yeongwoo to easily believe in someone who seemed so strong.

“The reason... I’ll tell you slowly later. It’s not something to brag about.”

Seeing the shadow on Jongsu’s face, who always laughed so heartily, it seemed like he truly desired suicide.

After all, it was written in the Fate Record, and if it wasn’t for the reset, he would have truly died.

“So, for now, since I’m not dead, might as well live, is that it?”

“Well, something like that... and I have a bit of curiosity. The conglomerates are rumored to turn into dragons after they come back. Can you just ignore that?”

With his regained momentum, Jongsu burst into laughter.

Yeongwoo, finding it absurd, also laughed.

* * *

Having a bizarre conversation with a man with former suicidal behaviour and bursting into fake laughter was only temporary.

Soon, Yeongwoo had to continue searching for Shin Youngju’s corpse.

For some reason, the second mutation equipment didn’t come out from her body.

‘Could it be the one who defeated the mutant on the first day wasn’t the Strongest Sword?’

It was a difficult thing to accept, but given the circumstances, there was no other way to think about it.

Even the Serpent of Greed wasn't looking at the corpse anymore.

'Really, it's not here. Strange.'

As Yeongwoo, with a serious expression, continued to search Shin Youngju's pocket, Jongsu asked.

"Why? What's not there?"

"Equipment. When you defeat a mutant, equipment usually comes out, but there's none. Any Strongest Sword should have had it..."

"Oh, really? Then maybe the former one didn't have it from the beginning."

"Yeah. Given the circumstances, it seems likely."

Yeongwoo decided to stop searching for equipment at this point and stood up.

Perhaps the missing mutant equipment was something consumable like a potion.

"..."

For some reason, it felt unclear, but there wasn't much time left.

"Can we still trade?"

When Yeongwoo asked Kubu, who was looking in this direction from the empty air, the creature blinked its eyes.

—Yes. It is possible. The commission fee remains unchanged, but the target of the trade cannot be changed as there is already a record of the transaction.

As expected.

Kubu's provided selection of trade targets was only available to Yeongwoo as a first-come-first-served basis.

"I guess there's no other choice. Please proceed."

As Yeongwoo nodded, Kubu blinked its eyes once more and recited a formal statement.

—The intermediary commission for this transaction is 10%, included in the product price. The trade partner is the Black Market merchant in Cheok's Martial Arts Hall.

‘Cheok’s Martial Arts Hall...’

Learning about the opponent’s origin, Yeongwoo unintentionally stared at the giant wheel trapped inside the pillar of light.

Whether Cheok was a planet or another dimension, he didn’t know, but there seemed to be a wheel like that there.

—The product list is complete.

Soon, Kubu rolled its eyeballs to inform that the products were ready.

Then, blue spots appeared in front of Yeongwoo’s eyes and began to take the shape of human characters.

Ssslik.

1 — 「Executioner」 – Ancient Two-Handed Axe

【Destroys ordinary weapons.】

【Significant decrease in power when used with one hand.】

◇ 70,000 Karma

2 — 「Myol’s Crystal」 – Hero’s Shield

【–Empty slot–】

【Double effect of equipped gems.】

◇ 116,000 Karma

3 — 「Vanguard」 – Relic Helmet

【This helmet does not get damaged.】

◇ 310,000 Karma

4 — 「Illusion」 – Unique Shoes

【30% chance of detection evasion.】

◇ 630,000 Karma

As expected, the fifth slot was empty.

Shin Youngju, who had visited this place before, gave a legendary achievement and bought a compass.

However, in the end, the item came to Yeongwoo, so he practically saved one legendary achievement.

‘The rest are tremendous. Shin Youngju didn’t deliberately leave some items behind; she just didn’t have the cash to buy them.’

In comparison, Yeongwoo currently possesses 871,000 Karma.

‘The axe is now meaningless, and the shield is ambiguous. It’s not that I can’t use it, but it’s better to use another sword.’

Therefore, the only things that Yeongwoo urgently desired were the relic helmet, ‘Vanguard,’ and the unique shoes, ‘Illusion.’

Especially for ‘Illusion,’ the tooltip was not ordinary, just like its high grade.

‘What does ‘30% chance of detection evasion’ mean... precisely?’

Detection.

In a literal sense, it means discerning the opponent’s thoughts.

‘Could it be?’

Yeongwoo blinked his eyes widely, taking a deep breath.

Among the things he experienced in the post-reset world, the only thing somewhat similar to detection was the hologram guide provided by the ‘Sword Techniques.’

‘If it’s a 30% chance of detection evasion, does that mean 30% of my movements won’t be captured by the hologram?’

For the first time, he considered it genuinely crucial for him, who had to fight with a stat disadvantage.

‘The Illusion costs 630,000. I have enough money, but I have to give up the helmet for now.’

After buying the Illusion, the remaining money was 241,000.

‘I can’t afford to buy the Vanguard, which requires 310,000.’

Certainly not a small amount, but it wasn't a considerable sum either.

'I can earn that money by hunting a few more monsters, but I don't have any right now, so...'

Swoosh.

Feeling regretful, Yeongwoo searched around, hoping he might find some remaining monster marks.

Suddenly, he realized one thing.

"Ah."

Then, turning his head to the benefactor of his life, who was observing this trade from a distance.

"Jongsu, how much money do you have?"

"...?"

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

The source of this content is fre(e)webnovel

Chapter 56

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

Chapter 56: Different species (3)

"Coins...?"

Jongsu, who was looking at Yeongwoo with a surprised expression, quickly regained his composure as he grasped the situation.

It was clear that the Gyeongbuk's Strongest Sword in front of him was in a difficult situation due to a lack of cash.

So, Jongsu reflexively asked how much was needed but quickly changed his words.

"Would you be surprised if you knew? I have quite a bit."

As Jongsu placed the backpack he was carrying on his back on the ground, an unusual sound was heard.

Clang.

The sound of coins clashing loudly inside the backpack.

And the one most surprised by this was none other than Yeongwoo.

In fact, 69,000 karma might be a small amount of money for him, but it could be a significant sum of money that could be a matter of life and death for most people.

In addition, carrying such an amount of money in cash without investing it in stats was an unusual thing to do.

“...How much is it?”

When Yeongwoo asked curiously, Jongsu opened the backpack and showed him a handful of crimson coins.

“It’s 114,000.”

The amount far exceeded the ‘balance’ Yeongwoo needed.

“Wow. Why do you carry so much cash?”

“Because there’s no guarantee when you might encounter a monster. So, I’ve prepared enough in advance. If I think I might have to fight a strong opponent, I can immediately use it on my stats.”

“Then, do you lend it to others in case of emergencies? About 69,000?”

At Yeongwoo’s request, Jongsu chuckled with a slippery smile.

“Hehe, it’s quite a large amount. Would it be helpful if I lend it to you?”

“I can buy one more piece of equipment.”

At Yeongwoo’s words, Jongsu shrugged his shoulders and took a few steps back from the backpack.

It meant he could take as much as he wanted.

Then, the golden goblin standing on Yeongwoo’s footplate saw the coins in the backpack and twitched its body.

-Kiit.

Instinctively, the eyes kept going there because it was holding back without receiving the owner's command.

"Can you choose the coins you want? If you can, bring only 69,000 karma."

Finally, Yeongwoo pointed to the backpack and ordered, and as soon as his words ended, the goblin jumped out, leaving behind a golden trace.

Tatang!

It was a movement at an incredible speed, as seen before.

In the blink of an eye, it grabbed the backpack, opened the spatial pocket, and poured in the crimson coins.

Chwarruk!

At a glance, it seemed like it was pouring the coins without counting, but as soon as it emptied 69,000, it returned the backpack to its original position.

-Kit.

The goblin's gesture seemed to say, "Check your balance."

Indeed, Yeongwoo's cash total was now 940,000 karma.

An exact amount that would leave nothing after buying the helmet and shoes.

"Thank you very much. Thanks to you..."

Unconsciously, Yeongwoo's gaze turned to the product list.

3 — 「Vanguard」 — Relic Helmet

【This helmet does not get damaged.】

◇ 310,000 Karma

4 — 「Illusion」 — Unique Shoes

【30% chance of detection evasion.】

◇ 630,000 Karma

Still, both pieces of equipment existed only in blue text.

Acquired!

As soon as Yeongwoo confirmed the purchase, a change occurred.

Shwaaaaah...!

A strange sound began to come from somewhere in the sky.

“Huh?”

“...!”

Since it was a sound similar to when the early bird first fell, both Yeongwoo and Jongsu looked up at the sky, and soon they saw it.

Paaah!

Two very thin pillars of light were descending straight towards Yeongwoo.

“...Ugh!”

Startled, Yeongwoo crouched down, and as the pillars of light passed by him, an immense heat emanated from them.

Hwarlut!

“Oof.”

Although Jongsu, who was nearby, felt the heat to the point of taking a step back, Yeongwoo was unaffected.

There was only a slight discomfort.

‘Ah.’

From the moment the pillars of light passed, Yeongwoo felt a slight pressure on his head and feet.

Having purchased equipment several times already, he quickly understood what had happened.

‘Every merchant has a slightly different way of filling up equipment.’

As Yeongwoo touched his cheek, he felt the cold touch of metal.

On his feet, he wore shoes made of a silvery metal, and contrary to appearances, they were so light that he could hardly feel the weight.

'If it's a unique item... it shouldn't tear even if I run, right?'

Looking at the shoes, practical concerns crossed Yeongwoo's mind.

On the other hand, Jongsu was observing the transformed appearance of Gyeongbuk's Strongest Sword, now even more comical with the helmet and shoes.

"Hyung-nim."

"Yes?"

"Can't you hide your equipment... like, some kind of ability?"

"Why? Does it look that strange?"

"Yes, quite a lot."

After scanning Yeongwoo from top to bottom again, Jongsu shook his head.

It was understandable, as Yeongwoo was now wearing a black cloak over the training suit he had on at the factory dormitory, with a rugged bronze helmet on his head.

He even had a snake on one arm, a golden bracelet, and gloves.

Adding an iron belt with two swords and silver shoes, it went beyond strange and looked downright bizarre.

"I now understand why there were skins in the game. Still, Shin Youngju was tolerable, but Hyung-nim, you're a bit eccentric."

"I can't help it. I can't just wear less equipment to look cool. But isn't it better than being barefoot?"

"Well, I don't know."

With an expression that clearly indicated he didn't know, Jongsu moved towards the car he had brought.

"Anyway, you're done here, right? I don't want to keep staring at those guys all day."

The 'guys' Jongsu mentioned were the unknown alien merchant, who came from the Cheok and mediator Kubu.

Regardless of their roles and origins, they both looked equally repulsive to Jongsu's eyes.

"Yes. Let's go now. We've delayed enough time."

After saying this to Jongsu, Yeongwoo bowed his head slightly towards the two aliens, bidding them farewell.

In response, Kubu and even the giant wheel responded.

– May you continue to live.

-Zkrrrk.

* * *

5:56 PM.

While driving on the road for a while, the regional status window changed.

| The current area you are in is 'Eumseong.'

| There is no Strongest Sword present in this area.

"Huh."

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

"Oh, what's this?"

Both Yeongwoo and Jongsu were surprised simultaneously.

Just like in Chungju, the Strongest Sword was absent in Eumseong.

"Doesn't that mean another Strongest Sword has visited here?"

Jongsu asked, and Yeongwoo nodded in response.

"Yes. It means the title of Eumseong Strongest Sword has been absorbed into a different area."

In other words, someone else was collecting titles while moving.

In a nationwide context, this might not have been uncommon.

It was natural for a Strongest Sword to completely organize their assigned area and search for other anomalies while encountering and inevitably clashing with other Strongest Swords.

Before disputes over who would defeat the anomaly, there were cases where a fight was initiated because the opponent's equipment looked tempting.

In Yeongwoo's case, it was Chungju's Strongest Sword Shin Youngju who had done such a thing.

"Is the next area also negative?"

As the regional status window remained fixed on Eumseong, Jongsu checked the sign ahead.

"No. We're on our way to Yeosu... It was just Eumseong in the middle."

And not long after, the displayed area changed to 'Yeosu.'

The problem was:

| The current area you are in is 'Yeosu.'

| There is no Strongest Sword present in this area.

"...!"

"Uh?"

Both of them were astonished by the unexpected situation.

"What, what's going on here? Who's going around killing everyone...?"

The laughter disappeared from Jongsu's face.

He had a premonition that from here on, it would be a series of unusual incidents.

Yeongwoo also felt tension in the air, different from before, but he quickly regained his composure.

"Eumseong is in Chungcheongbuk-do, and Yeosu is in Gyeonggi-do, right?"

"Yes...? Oh, right. That's correct."

"Then, it's possible that different people have visited each area. There could be both the Chungbuk Strongest Sword and Gyeonggi Strongest Sword in different places."

“Wouldn’t that be a more terrifying situation...?”

“Just looking at me being Gyeongbuk’s Strongest Sword... It’s likely to have happened.”

With eyes full of caution, Yeongwoo looked out the car window.

He was a 4th-grade human by birth and not particularly specialized in combat compared to others.

However, with a bit of luck and courage at crucial moments, he became the Gyeongbuk Strongest Sword.

What about others with different types of backgrounds?

For example, unknown killers or powerful criminals not eliminated in the first screening phase, or 1st-grade humans.

‘Already, all the titles are taken from the outskirts, so there must be formidable individuals roaming inside.’

A sense of tension arose.

The first day of the reset, when the surroundings were dangerous everywhere and there was no escape route, the image of the exchange station came to mind.

“Are we continuing? We’ll soon enter Yeosu. After that, it’s Icheon.”

Jongsu asked for confirmation, and Yeongwoo brushed his hand against the two swords at his waist.

“We have to keep going. That’s why I bought a lot of equipment.”

“Yes. Then I trust you and will step on it, Hyung-nim.”

As Jongsu stepped on the accelerator, the scenery outside the window retreated even faster.

Vrooom!

The highway to Yeosu had almost no blocked lanes, and thanks to that, they could soon see a sign indicating the beginning of Yeosu city jurisdiction.

“Oh, we’re in Yeosu now.”

Of course, the fact that they had arrived in the next area did not resonate yet, as the surroundings were just hills and mountains.

There was only a small rest area that they had just passed by, the only building nearby.

“Wow, it’s really desolate. Is it because everyone’s been killed?”

As Jongsu jokingly said this, a sudden noise erupted.

Grrrrrr...!

It was a completely different, aggressive engine sound coming from behind.

The sound direction was towards the rear.

“Oh, man, it’s a foreign car.”

Jongsu, who quickly checked the rearview mirror, chuckled in disbelief.

At this, Yeongwoo also captured the ‘foreign car’ mentioned by Jongsu through the rear window.

Grrrrrr...!

‘Are they crazy?’

Jongsu wasn’t just making nonsense.

Indeed, two Audi convertibles were making a loud noise as they approached.

Their colors were white and yellow, quite noticeable.

“Were they waiting in the rest area we just passed? What the hell is happening in this area?”

Jongsu, with a quick glance at the rearview mirror, could see the foreign sports car that was rapidly closing in on them.

At this moment, Yeongwoo felt a shiver down his spine.

The situation was getting dangerous.

“Hyung-nim, we’re about to be overtaken.”

Jongsu chuckled nervously, realizing the impending situation.

The sports car accelerated and approached them rapidly.

It seemed like they were about to overtake Jongsu’s car.

“That’s right. Get ready.”

Yeongwoo took out the Epic-grade compass ‘Fearful Cat’ from his pocket.

「Fearful Cat」 – Epic Compass

【Indicates a threatening target.】

【–Empty slot–】

Then, he put the compass back into his pocket, signaling his partner.

“Stop the car. Let’s fight now.”

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

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Chapter 57

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

Chapter 57: Different species (4)

A sudden chase on the road.

Even before the reset occurred, it would have been a particularly tense situation for Jongsu.

However, he remained surprisingly calm as he engaged in a chase in this harsh world.

Tick.

He was so composed that he could even turn on the emergency lights to warn the car behind before starting to decelerate.

Of course, a lot of credit for his calmness went to Gyeongbuk’s Strongest Sword sitting in the back seat.

The probability of someone stronger than Gyeongbuk’s Strongest Sword was extremely low, regardless of the pursuers’ identity.

But what Jongsu was more concerned about than that was nothing other than a rear-end collision.

If he suddenly slammed on the brakes and the cars behind crashed into him...

‘Then I’ll become a duck egg in the Nakdong River.’

Even aside from the fact that he could be seriously injured in such an accident, if he lost his means of transportation right away, unable to keep up with the mobility of the Strongest Sword, Jongsu would naturally be abandoned.

So, he was doing his best to ensure that the car did not suffer any damage.

Vroom...

As Jongsu turned on the emergency lights and decelerated, the two Audi cars chasing them also quickly slowed down.

Squeak!

One car passed Jongsu and Yeongwoo, blocking the direction they were heading, while the other one, as if indicating that it would block the exit, stopped closely behind.

“I’ve done this a couple of times before.”

Jongsu alternately looked around and applied the handbrake.

And in the meantime, people started getting out of the two Audi cars that surrounded the vehicle.

Clang!

The identity of the opponent who appeared from the wide-open doors was...

“...?”

“Oh? They’re kids.”

Jongsu’s statement was accurate.

They were at most in their late teens. There were a total of five of them.

Of course, each of them had a weapon, so it was insufficient to simply call them “kids,” but regardless, they were much younger than the two had expected.

“These little bastards... probably don’t even have a license yet? Is this really the end of the world, Hyung-nim?”

Jongsu, who usually referred to him as ‘Hyung-nim,’ couldn’t just stand by quietly in the face of such bold delinquents.

Clang!

Sure enough, with the gleam in Jongsu’s eyes, he pushed open the driver’s seat door.

Trusting Yeongwoo in the back seat was one thing, but Jongsu, who was also a skilled individual among civilians, was also curious.

But even if they were minors, were these guys who dared to commit vehicle robbery normal?

Thud!

Before Jongsu could fully open the driver’s seat door, a nimble boy jumped out and, using his body, pushed the door shut, blocking the road.

Boom!

“Don’t move, just stay still.”

The voice was as sharp as the appearance.

Looking inside through the car window, even a sense of hostility emanated.

“What? This little brat.”

Eventually, as Jongsu’s original temperament began to show, he tried to push the car door back onto the road, but this time, a sharp gesture came from his side.

Crack!

Suddenly, the passenger-side window shattered, and a long blade came in.

“What...!”

Turning his head to the side, Jongsu, who was already shocked by the approaching blade, was amazed to see the blade edge coming dangerously close to his neck.

Thud!

A hand that popped out from the back seat grabbed the blade.

Then he simply broke the sword into pieces as if breaking a cookie.

Jongsu who saw Yeongwoo's skills turned his head back, even the 'kids' surrounding the car, had no choice but to turn their gaze to the back seat.

"Get close to the left, Mr. Jongsu."

But even anticipating that there might be a companion for today's prey, they never imagined that there would be a passenger who would wield a 5-meter-long black sword inside the car.

Swoosh!

The long blade extended from the back seat, targeting both the spear wielder and the shotgun-wielding co-pilot, creating a large arc as it swung, cutting them to pieces.

"Whoa! Fuck!"

The nimble boy saw his friend getting cut to pieces, and staggered back.

Thud!

Jongsu got out of the car, and with a swift motion, he struck the guy's thigh with the car door.

Thunk!

"Ah!"

A flying teenager rolling on the ground.

In perfect timing, Yeongwoo also kicked open the back seat door, revealing himself outside.

Whoosh!

"Unbelievable. They're all so young."

It was 6:21 PM.

The newly improved form of Gyeongbuk's Strongest Sword, Jung Yeongwoo 07, was shining oddly bright even before the sunset.

It was because of the golden achievement gear and the silver-white illusion that reflected the natural light.

“Huh.”

“What is this...?”

In fact, just looking at the appearance, it was an utterly ridiculous sight, but no one could find it amusing after what had just happened with this monstrous warrior.

Everyone was simply confused and frightened by the unexpected situation.

“Oh, sir... Please spare us. We’re sorry.”

Finally, the only girl among the bandits swiftly attempted to change her stance.

She dropped the knife she was holding and knelt down.

“If you let us go this time, we promise we’ll never do it again. Okay?”

Starting with the girl’s plea, the other two boys near Yeongwoo also knelt one after another.

“...Sorry.”

“Really sorry.”

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

Although these guys also surrendered by dropping their weapons, Yeongwoo understood well.

This means that they would never have shown mercy to the weak they had encountered before.

Just looking at their attack method of forcefully pushing the spear into the driver’s seat window is evidence enough.

Moreover, the blade of the girl who first dropped her weapon was stained with blood and had a grim, eerie color.

“...”

After confirming that the weapons of the remaining guys were also tinged with red, Yeongwoo sighed and said.

“No need to apologize; you’re villains too.”

“...?”

“Yes.”

The delinquent teenagers raised their heads in surprise at the unexpected answer.

And soon, their comfort was disrupted by Yeongwoo’s dry voice.

“Don’t think of me as someone who goes easy on the young. You guys are going to die here.”

“...!”

The three youths who had been kneeling with faces that looked like they were about to cry changed their expressions to a cold one as soon as they heard Yeongwoo’s words.

Then, they exchanged some kind of signal with each other.

Swish!

Very quickly, each of them reached for their weapons.

Their intention was clear; all three simultaneously planned to attack Yeongwoo.

But their opponent was not just anyone; he was Gyeongbuk’s Strongest Sword.

Shhh!

As soon as they showed their hostility, a black trail split the air, and soon after.

Thud, thud, thud...

Three adorable heads fell to the ground in succession.

Of course, the only ones who witnessed this scene were Yeongwoo and Jongsu, as well as the ‘clever guy’ who was still clutching his thigh on the ground.

“Um, well...”

Soon, Jongsu, alternating between glancing at the last trembling boy on the ground and the three heads that had rolled away, murmured.

Though he still knew that these guys were villains and had tried to kill him, witnessing the heads rolling weakened his resolve.

“.....”

Observing him closely, Yeongwoo tilted his head and said.

“Surprising, Mr. Jongsu. Haven’t you been through all sorts of life-and-death situations?”

“Well, that’s true... But killing monsters and killing people are somewhat different, don’t you think? It’s more instinctive...”

Jongsu chuckled.

However, Yeongwoo wasn’t laughing.

No, rather, he looked perplexed as he glanced at the early bird Jongsu was holding.

“Are you saying you’ve never killed a person? Even if it meant not committing murder at the exchange station because of that knife.”

The early bird, a special reward given to the first-come-first-served at the exchange station.

In Yeongwoo’s case, he made that comment because as soon as he received the sword, many people rushed at him.

But this time, Jongsu wore a puzzled expression.

“At the exchange station...? In a situation where I held a sword first, could it have led to murder? From that moment on, if I faced a threat, it would be different...”

“.....”

Hearing Jongsu’s words, Yeongwoo seemed momentarily at a loss for words, as if he had been hit in the back of the head.

Well, it was only natural.

Jongsu was physically stronger than Yeongwoo and much more imposing.

That’s why, once he got hold of the early bird, no one dared to challenge him.

He didn’t look easy to deal with at all.

On the other hand, at that time, Yeongwoo...

‘Jeez.’

He felt a strange sense of defeat.

He knew well that his facial expression wasn't being managed properly right now.

But it was truly unfair.

Even though the world had reset, not everyone had experienced the same world.

"So, have you really never killed anyone until now?"

"Well... I've been in situations where a fight almost broke out, but there haven't been guys as crazy as this until now."

Of course, this was just Jongsu's one-sided story, highlighting his physical prowess.

Since becoming Gyeongbuk's Strongest Sword, Yeongwoo had to keep fighting challengers who underestimated him.

"Well, anyway, hyung-nim... It doesn't seem right to mindlessly kill them like this."

"It's not mindless. It's making them pay for trying to kill us."

"That's true... but it feels a bit different."

Jongsu let out a sigh, nervously stroking his chin.

For him, killing was a tremendous burden, crossing a line that should not be crossed.

In a way, Jongsu seemed like a thoroughly normal person.

"If you can't do it, step aside. I don't plan to spare a single one of them."

As Yeongwoo approached the last bandit, exuding an intimidating aura, Jongsu twitched but eventually retreated.

Then, the boy who had been listening to their conversation intervened, grabbing Jongsu's thigh with desperation.

"Hy... hyung! Please, stop that sir! We didn't know any better! Please...!"

However, the boy's plea didn't last long.

Without any hesitation, Yeongwoo swung his sword, and Jongsu, who couldn't see the movement, eventually stepped back.

What Jongsu clearly saw was...

Thud.

In the blink of an eye, the head had fallen from the boy's body.

"...Huh."

Jongsu shook his body unknowingly and stepped back, and the headless body fell to the ground with a twist in the air.

Fwoosh.

"I-Is this really happening, Hyung-nim?"

Jongsu, with a somewhat destroyed tone, stared at Yeongwoo alternately, who was searching the dead man's pockets with composure.

"If you still don't understand, think about how many people these kids might have killed. Also, think about what those people might have felt just before they died. I've been through it a bit, so I might understand."

Yeongwoo spoke after finishing his words, glancing briefly at the partially shattered Sonata.

"That won't roll anymore, right? Let's switch to a new car."

He was talking about the Audi that blocked the Sonata from moving forward.

Then, Yeongwoo opened his mouth again.

"If you want to be torn apart, this is your last chance. We have two cars now, so if you've changed your mind, leave now."

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

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Chapter 58

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

Chapter 58: Land of Chaos, Gyeonggi Province (1)

" ... "

Jongsu alternately looked at the two Audis at Yeongwoo's words about the opportunity to tear apart.

Then, tightly gripping his facial muscles, he made a smiling face.

"Ah, where would I go? If it weren't for you, I would have died at the hands of those brats long ago."

While saying this, Jongsu looked at the five headless corpses with a grim expression.

"Since the world has changed, the way of survival has also changed. Still, I think you, hyung, are the kindest among the strong."

With these words, Jongsu moved towards the white Audi.

"By the way, the yellow is too conspicuous, isn't it? I wonder what kind of guys are in Seoul again."

Suddenly.

Jongsu, who had opened the driver's door, sat on the seat.

Then, he started the engine, emitting a loud noise.

Vroom...!

The sound was so loud that it would be impossible not to notice if there were other bandits nearby.

Upon this, Yeongwoo looked around, and commanded the goblins to search the bodies around.

– Kit!

As soon as the order was given, the goblin that popped out like an arrow returned with a loot of 8,000 karma.

It was an absurdly insufficient amount to repay Jongsu's debt of 69,000.

'They were much poorer than I thought.'

Was the profit from robbery not as good as expected?

It was clear that the amount of cash they had was low compared to the number of heads, even though they could invest the money they took from others into their stats.

‘Well, since the time for monster appearances has passed, there aren’t many ways to make money. Maybe robbery or daily quests.’

Yeongwoo’s gaze naturally shifted to the quest log.

[Daily] “Daily Ration”

Remove the petrified state of any food.

1,000 karma

[Daily] “Scout”

Approach the monster until the distance is 10 meters.

3,000 karma

Surprisingly, the daily quests of the lord were lower in difficulty than any other region seen so far.

‘Scout seems to be fixed in any region... and the other one is chosen randomly.’

Now, instead of commuting to work at the company, everyone would continue their livelihood through hunting, just as the first day’s prediction came true.

The daily quest even seemed to induce a confrontation with monsters.

Moreover, even if 10 meters were reached and the quest was completed, it was a distance that could not guarantee survival.

‘But with a reward of 3,000 karma and only one opportunity per day, it’s a job that can’t be avoided.’

Current time, 6:36 PM.

As expected, there would be no more monster appearances today based on the patterns so far.

In other words, Yeongwoo, who doesn’t need to avoid monsters, can’t immediately perform the scout quest.

Then, what remains is...

“ ... ”

Yeongwoo approached the waiting golden goblin and looked at it.

“Do you have any petrified food in your bag? I think I’ve collected quite a bit.”

When Yeongwoo asked this, the goblin rolled its eyes and opened its right index finger, pointing to the sky.

-Cat!

Then, letters with a blue light above its index finger appeared.

Then, above the goblin’s index finger, characters with a blue light appeared.

“Huh...?”

It was none other than the status of items in the dimensional pocket.

|Food: 21

|Tools: 13

|Equipment: 11

|Special: 1

Like a system window, the goblin had its own interface.

“13 tools... including things like ropes.”

As Yeongwoo examined the goblin’s displayed inventory, he paused when he reached the last category, ‘Special.’

“Special? What’s this?”

When Yeongwoo asked, the goblin took out a small black gem from the pocket.

-Kit!

As the goblin raised the gem, a tooltip appeared in Yeongwoo’s view.

「Kekidaite」 – Heroic Gem

【Slot: Mental Resistance 10%】

“Ah.”

Kekidaite.

It was an item purchased along with this slave goblin.

A kind of enhancement item that can be worn in an empty equipment slot.

‘I’ve never seen Mental Resistance before, but... I bought it just in case. Maybe I should use it now.’

Through the Epic necklace ‘Antinomy’ seen last time, the existence of elemental resistances such as fire and cold was confirmed.

The effects of those options could be easily guessed, as they were intuitive.

However, it was different for Mental Resistance.

‘There’s no reference for this. It’s not a commonly used concept in games either.’

Therefore, for Yeongwoo, it was only a vague guess that it might be related to powerful mutants or aliens.

‘Anyway, since there are quite a few empty slots, there’s no reason not to use it.’

Yeongwoo immediately opened the equipment window and selected items with empty slots.

Pop!

「Furious Goblin」 – Mutant Ring

【Daily Strength Increase: 100】

【–Empty Slot–】

「Assassin’s Finger」 – Artifact Ring

【10% Increase in Stats in PvP】

【–Empty Slot–】

「Fearful Cat」 – Saga Compass

【Indicates threatening targets】

【–Empty Slot–】

He currently had a total of 3 gem slots.

‘Spacious.’

The problem was where to insert Kekidaite.

According to common sense in games, such enhancement gems were usually disposable.

‘Or you have to pay something when removing them.’

Since there was no specific guide on gem wear, Yeongwoo’s speculation was that ‘once you put in a gem, you can’t remove or replace it.’

Considering the current situation, it was better to prepare for the worst.

So, in the end, Yeongwoo’s choice was.

Ping!

「Assassin’s Finger」 – Artifact Ring

【10% Increase in Stats in PvP】

【Mental Resistance 10%】

It was the artifact ring called “Assassin’s Finger.”

While Furious Goblin might become useless someday when the total stats reach tens of thousands, Assassin’s Finger seemed like it would remain useful for a very long time since its effects were proportional to the possessed stats.

Of course, Fearful Cat also had high potential for long-term use, but since it was a Epic-grade item, Yeongwoo decided to put it on hold.

‘You never know, there might come a time when you have to dismantle high-grade equipment to obtain something or make a trade.’

This was intuition gained from playing numerous games during the era of internet broadcasting.

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

“Hyung-nim! Aren’t you going?”

Timely, Jongsu stuck his head out of the car window and asked.

In response, Yeongwoo took out two pieces of bread wrapped in plastic from the dimensional pocket and walked towards Jongsu's white Audi.

"Do you have any money left? Let's eat this."

"What...?"

Just as Jongsu was about to ask, a palm-sized stone flew towards his forehead during the moment of his curiosity.

Hwaet!

"Ouch!"

Startled, Jongsu instinctively caught the stone, and Yeongwoo faintly smiled as he spoke.

"It's good to have a simple snack before we leave. There's also a daily quest."

"Yes? What?"

It was only after hearing Yeongwoo's words that Jongsu realized what had just flown towards him.

"Ah..."

Come to think of it, he hadn't even had a single meal today.

And Yeongwoo, who had also been fasting, just found out about it as well.

The hunger that had been felt for a long time was now piercing through their backs.

[Cream Bread: 1,000]

What Yeongwoo pulled out was a cream bread that filled one hand, and the price was a whopping 1,000 karma.

'1,000...? The bike was priced at 3,000, so does this make sense now?'

Up to now, on the second day of the reset, 1,000 karma was undoubtedly a large sum for the absolute majority.

In other words, the prices were set unreasonably high.

'The reason the quest reward is 1,000 karma must be here. It means it guarantees just one meal.'

However, except for the Scout quest, each region had different quests every day, so it was limited to guaranteeing one meal for today.

Shuaat.

As Yeongwoo released the petrification of the cream bread, a white smoke rose, revealing the original appearance of the packaging hidden beneath the gray crust.

“1,000? The price is outrageous.”

Jongsu, who had just released the petrification, also seemed dumbfounded, muttering in disbelief.

“I guess they want to squeeze out more money.”

When Yeongwoo looked up at the sky, as if he had been waiting, the quest reward dropped down.

Ping!

A crimson coin corresponding to 1,000 karma.

‘In the end, it’s just breaking even.’

Yeongwoo, whose entire fortune was now back to 8,000 karma, handed it over to Jongsu.

“I’ll repay the 8,000. So, there’s 61,000 remaining, right?”

However, Jongsu didn’t accept it.

“Hyung-nim, I’ll feel sick eating while you’re repaying me. Just pay it back all at once later.”

“Pay it back all at once?”

“Yes. I don’t really need the money right now anyway.”

After brief replies, Jongsu quickly ate the bread, confirmed that Yeongwoo got into the back seat, and stepped on the accelerator.

“Are we leaving right away? You said there’s not much time.”

It seemed like Jongsu was now thinking of entrusting his fate to Yeongwoo, as he rushed him forward.

So, while tearing open the bread packaging, Yeongwoo nodded his head.

“Yes. Let’s leave right away. We can eat while moving.”

* * *

6:40 PM.

Approximately 1 hour and 26 minutes left until the advertiser arrives.

The white Audi carrying Yeongwoo and Jongsu continued to speed along the highway.

“That should be the downtown area of Yeosu, but I don’t see anything.”

Jongsu pointed to the right side of the road and shrugged.

Yeongwoo turned his head towards Yeosu, but there was no excitement or anticipation.

“There’s no need to go there. The fact that there’s a daily quest means a mutant has been caught.”

“Ah... I didn’t know that.”

“Most people don’t.”

The daily quest was one of the basic benefits that applied once a mutant was defeated on the second day.

Therefore, even for someone like Jongsu, who could be considered skilled, it was natural not to know such a fact.

“Do you only visit cities with mutants or monsters, Hyung-nim?”

“Yes. For now, that’s right. Since farming is the main objective.”

“Then what about after all the farming is done?”

“ ... ”

When the conversation reached this point, Yeongwoo fell silent.

It was doubtful whether there would be a point when farming for survival would end, and even from the beginning, he didn’t know exactly how this world had changed.

Even if the reset happened suddenly, no one explained the background of why extraterrestrial merchants suddenly started doing business.

Moreover, in a while, he would meet an advertiser who came from outer space.

An advertisement...

Who, what, and why would someone use Earth as an advertising medium?

He didn't know, but it might be related to the reset.

'...It's a headache. I don't understand anything.'

Just as a real headache seemed to be coming, when Yeongwoo was about to touch his forehead, Jongsu mumbled from the driver's seat.

"Ah, what's that again?"

It had a subtly ominous tone, so Yeongwoo quickly stretched his head forward to look ahead.

Swish-

Then.

Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom...!

A powerful charge from the opposite side, a single cow appeared in their sight.

'A cow...?'

And right after that.

"Yaaah!"

Shouting and chasing behind the cow, around a dozen people also appeared.

Seeing that the distance to the cow was not easily closing, it was clear that they were closer to 'ordinary people', and therefore, what Yeongwoo and Jongsu were seeing now was...

"Hyung-nim, are those people hunting cows because they don't have food?"

"Exactly. It's not that they don't have food, but they don't have money to release the petrification."

"Ah. But cows are living creatures, so they won't turn into stone."

Understanding the situation, Jongsu casually tapped his knees as if he got it.

It meant that some humans had regressed to the era of hunting.

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

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Chapter 59

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

Chapter 59: Land of Chaos, Gyeonggi Province (2)

“Can I help? Those people over there.” Jongsu asked, pointing to the cows approaching.

His right hand had already reached the early bird at his waist.

If Yeongwoo agreed, he would get out of the car and hit the cow on the head.

With just that one guy, wouldn’t all the people rushing over there right now be able to fill their stomachs?

“...”

In response, Yeongwoo looked at the cow with a discerning look and hesitated for a moment before nodding.

“Let’s do it, and gather information about the situation nearby.”

“Yeah.”

As soon as Yeongwoo’s approval came down, Jongsu opened the driver’s seat door and got out.

Thunk.

Then the people chasing the cows hesitated and slowed down.

It was not common to see a ‘moving car,’ and now someone came out of it with an early bird, making them scared.

-Uh...!

Even the cow fleeing felt an unusual energy from Jongsu and turned its head towards the edge of the road.

Snap!

A rough movement that showed the intention of hitting the forehead if it continued to interfere.

However, Jongsu, being no ordinary guy, did not step back.

Rather.

“Wait!”

Running towards the cow at an angle, he grabbed the early bird with both hands and swung it down vigorously.

Shwack!

A creepy sound echoed as the cow rushing like a tank crashed to the ground.

Thud!

It was also the moment when the large head of the creature bounced up into the air.

It had just been severed by that blow.

“...!”

At this scene, the people chasing the cow realized that Jongsu was no ordinary skilled person.

It would have required tremendous strength and endurance to stop a cow in full sprint.

Of course, Yeongwoo knew this fact well, so he was actually worried about Jongsu.

‘Handling that level of attack would not be easy with ordinary stats. Isn’t it too reckless?’

It was a thought that Yeongwoo, who had steadily built up his stats and grown, could afford.

“Ugh.”

Jongsu’s face twisted with considerable burden on his arm.

But it didn’t seem like his elbow was broken or anything.

“Are you okay, Jongsu?”

Yeongwoo asked, sticking his head out of the car window.

Jongsu clenched and loosened his hand repeatedly, smiling.

“Yes. Stronger than I thought, this guy.”

Jongsu looked at the fallen cow with a pitiful expression.

Then he waved his hand towards the people standing far away who couldn’t approach.

“What are you doing over there? Come here.”

Upon seeing this, people glanced at each other, then one by one approached Jongsu and the cow, each carrying weapons such as knives and axes.

A total of 11 people.

Not only were there many of them, but each had a weapon like a knife or axe, but there was no threatening feeling at all.

It was because there was no feeling of the energy typical of strong individuals emanating from their eyes.

The energy emitted by someone who has experienced ‘success’ in this world is a momentum derived from expectations and hopes that, given any opportunity, they can achieve something again.

In simpler terms, it can be called confidence.

However, the 11 people who had chased the cow showed no sign of that.

On their faces, there was only a sense of defeat and worry.

Perhaps it was because the prey they had been chasing for their survival was unexpectedly taken away by a predator that suddenly appeared.

As always, they had failed this time as well.

“What... what is happening?”

Finally, one of the eleven gathered the courage to speak.

They hadn’t even imagined that the person facing them would have killed the cow for their benefit.

Based on experience, those with an early bird did not treat others as equals unless they were in an equal position.

“...”

In response, Jongsu looked at the blood splattered on his clothes, then pointed the tip of his knife at the cow’s head, which had rolled far away.

Swish.

“Weren’t you trying to eat it? That Hanwoo. That’s why I helped.”

“Ah.”

Almost simultaneously, the eleven opened their mouths wide.

And by this time, Yeongwoo, who had been sitting in the car, opened the rear door and set foot on the road.

Squeak.

The unique sound of his shoes touching the asphalt echoed strangely.

Thanks to this, the attention of the eleven, which had been focused on Jongsu, shifted to Yeongwoo all at once.

And...

“Huh?”

“Gasp.”

As if by agreement, all eleven dropped the weapons they held in their hands to the ground and prostrated themselves flat on the ground.

“What’s happening all of a sudden?”

Jongsu, looking perplexed, sheathed the early bird, and Yeongwoo also questioned the unexpected ‘welcome.’

“What are you doing now?”

When Yeongwoo asked, the one lying at the forefront of the eleven lifted his head slightly.

“Aren’t you guys from Seoul...? If we happen to meet, we were told to do this.”

“By whom?”

In response to Yeongwoo’s question, the other party raised his head a little more and uttered a very strange line.

“By those who have met people from Seoul.”

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

“...?”

People who have met people from Seoul.

As Yeongwoo pondered over this bizarre sentence, Jongsu asked a question on his behalf.

“What on earth is a person from Seoul?”

“Well, um...”

Only then did the eleven, from their heads to their upper bodies, finally lift themselves up obliquely.

It was only now that the two men in front of them realized that these two were not ‘people from Seoul.’

Come to think of it, the direction they had come in the car was not Seoul but the outskirts of Gyeonggi Province.

“Oh, you’re not from Seoul...?”

“...”

In response to the lame remarks of the eleven, Yeongwoo and Jongsu could only make blank expressions.

Why were people who had never directly encountered those from Seoul so frightened even at the mention of them coming and going?

“Are you not going in that direction?”

Yeongwoo said, pulling out the ‘Fearful cat.’

According to this compass, there was still no threatening presence around.

“But why Seoul? Are people from there coming down to cut and stab you?”

When Yeongwoo put the compass back into his pocket and asked, the 11 individuals just stared at Yeongwoo without saying a word.

It was as if ‘people from Seoul’ were indeed coming down to commit violence.

“Is it really true? Are they just randomly killing anyone they see on the road?”

Yeongwoo expressed disbelief, and the representative among the 11 cautiously spoke up.

“There’s nothing good about getting in their way. We know that those who hinder monster hunting are all dead.”

“Ah.”

Yeongwoo immediately grasped the bizarre situation upon hearing the term ‘monster hunting.’

“So, people from Seoul are meddling with the monsters in Gyeonggi Province. And they kill those who might pose a threat.”

Perhaps this is also the reason why there is no Strongest Sword in Yeosu.

| Currently in the area of ‘Yeosu.’

| There is no Strongest Sword in this area.

‘It’s a power struggle. The world has come to this already....’

It made sense, as everyone’s lives were directly at stake.

Getting stronger meant an increased chance of surviving encounters with any kind of being.

‘How is Seoul doing anyway?’

Yeongwoo glanced briefly in the northwest direction where Seoul was.

Then he gestured to the Gyeonggi Province residents to get up.

“Anyway, we are not from Seoul, so there’s no need for you to act like this. We were just curious about what was going on.”

In Yeongwoo's 'what was going on,' everything, including the cow lying on the ground with spilled blood, were also included.

"Have a good meal... anyway."

For some reason, Yeongwoo felt uneasy, and he retreated into the Audi like taking a step back.

Then, after a while, Jongsu came to the driver's seat, sat down, and checked his complexion in the rearview mirror.

"Hyung-nim, should we leave like this? Do you need more water over there?"

In response, Yeongwoo, hesitating while glancing around, looked with a bitter gaze at the people who were subtly gathering near the 'Hanwoo.'

Would they really cut up and eat the meat like that?

"They've never seen people from Seoul in person. Even if you ask more questions, you won't get proper answers."

"Yes. That's true."

"Let's just go up quickly. We might be able to meet someone or something. Whether it's people from Seoul or whatever."

The current time was 6:54 PM.

The outside of the car window was already getting dark.

Therefore, those people who luckily solved their meals for today needed to hurry.

They should find a room before complete darkness and abnormal weather arrives.

Of course, it was the same for Yeongwoo and Jongsu.

* * *

Vroom...!

The two continued to drive the car northwest.

And just like before, they saw three more groups of people chasing cows.

It seemed like the cows had escaped from some nearby ranch.

Anyway, the sight of people wielding knives and chasing animals was still eerie, no matter how many times they saw it.

“It’s probably just for a moment, right? Those who can’t pay taxes today will all die immediately.”

Jongsu had not mentioned helping those chasing cows since a while ago.

It was because they had realized that those running around at this point were likely to die within a few days.

Tax collection at 10 PM, abnormal weather at 11 PM.

Even if someone managed to survive unnoticed by monsters and mutants, they still had to overcome at least two more survival hurdles.

And that had to be done every day.

However, could those who didn’t have the money to secure food immediately, nor the ability to run faster than cows, overcome such challenges?

Moreover, it was rumored that now people from Gyeonggi Province couldn’t even touch monsters in their own area, as people from Seoul were preventing it.

Betting their lives had become impossible.

‘The world has become a place where once you fall, it’s hard to get up again.’

Yeongwoo thought, gazing at the darkening sky.

If this wasn’t hell, what else could it be?

If things continued like this, only superhumans would remain on Earth, facing mutants falling every day...

‘Wait a moment.’

Lost in various thoughts while looking out the window, Yeongwoo suddenly blinked as something occurred to him.

‘Come to think of it, what about other countries?’

The reset.

According to the announcement on the first day, the ‘reset’ was an extraordinary measure applied to the entire human race.

「This means that the majority of humans had become hostile towards humanity, and accordingly, the reset function was forcibly activated.」

In other words, it wasn't just happening in Korea;

Japan, China, even places like the United States or Africa might be experiencing the same situation.

‘Oh my God.’

As horrific scenes flashed through his mind, Yeongwoo, in the midst of trying to shake off those thoughts, noticed a faint message appearing in his field of vision.

「An advertiser will visit in 1 hour.」

「Prepare gifts for the guest.」

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

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Chapter 60

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

Chapter 60: The Pestilent Sword (1)

Advertiser.

A mysterious presence summoned by the certificate Yeongwoo purchased from an extraterrestrial merchant.

Of course, Yeongwoo didn't summon the advertiser willingly.

Following the advice of the Serpent of Greed, he did purchase the certificate, but the fact that it would summon something from another world was not disclosed anywhere.

「Morning Star」 – Ancient Scroll

【Activated in the Open Door state.】

Moreover, the certificate was used automatically, unrelated to Yeongwoo's will.

Through this, all Yeongwoo could know was that this world was currently in a 'Door open' state.

So naturally.

'No, is he coming unilaterally and asking me to prepare a return gift?'

Yeongwoo couldn't help but feel unjust.

He was a bit scared and annoyed.

「In one hour, the advertiser will visit.」

「Prepare a return gift for the guest.」

Considering the system's instruction to prepare a return gift, it was clear that the advertiser, unlike the extraterrestrial upper class Yeongwoo could meet with basic welfare, was something different from the beginning.

And above all.

'This isn't part of the regular reset procedure. Whether it's bad luck or not, it's something close to an accident.'

The visit of the advertiser would not have happened if Yeongwoo hadn't purchased the ancient certificate.

Therefore, unlike when he first encountered the extraterrestrial merchant, this meeting might not be protected and mediated by the system.

'Fuck.'

With the situation like this, the instruction to prepare a return gift felt more like a warning than guidance.

"...Jongsu."

Calling his partner in a somewhat subdued voice, Yeongwoo looked back as Jongsu held the steering wheel.

"Yes, Hyung-nim?"

"Someone might come in an hour, and there's a bit of a problem."

“...Yes?”

Momentarily, Jongsu stepped on the break, causing the car to jerk.

“Suddenly?”

“Well, not exactly sudden...”

Only now did Yeongwoo, scratching his chin apologetically, start explaining about the advertiser.

The certificate that broke in Yeongwoo’s hand when Jongsu first joined was the one summoning the advertiser.

It came from across the vast universe to this place.

“No, Hyung-nim! Why are you telling me this now?”

Sure enough, Jongsu furrowed his eyebrows and raised his voice.

However, the next line was completely different from what Yeongwoo expected.

“That’s what I’m saying, an extraterrestrial is coming to sign an advertising contract with you, Hyung-nim! The more I think about it, the more exciting it gets.”

Jongsu’s eyes twinkled.

He was excited.

Probably in a good way.

There’s no guarantee when the dragon he so eagerly wanted to see might come, and the extraterrestrial advertiser is said to arrive within an hour.

‘Is he really out of his mind?’

Looking at Jongsu’s excited shoulders as if possessed, Yeongwoo mumbled.

“But we need to prepare a return gift.”

“A return gift...? Like, ‘Welcome to Earth, is this kind of thing?’

“Well, something like that. Anyway, if they’re really an advertiser, we’re in a position where we have to sell.”

Even as he said this, Yeongwoo didn’t feel the reality of what he was saying.

Meeting an extraterrestrial and making an advertising contract in the midst of this chaotic world...?

'I just can't adapt to this world.'

However, if it's an advertising contract, there must be some compensation.

After all, the reason this started was because of the Serpent of Greed that 'looks at rare things,' so there must be some rare compensation.

"A return gift... What would an extraterrestrial coming for an advertisement want?"

Jongsu pronounced the seemingly crazy words seriously.

"Like a souvenir, shouldn't we give something like a specialty product unique to Earth?"

"A specialty product?"

"Yes. Something that the advertiser aristocrat can't get anywhere else. We also buy souvenirs when we travel abroad."

"Well, that makes sense."

Yeongwoo nodded in agreement with Jongsu's opinion.

It seemed like a reasonable suggestion.

From the other party's perspective, they might be on a business trip overseas.

'A souvenir unique to Earth....'

As Yeongwoo looked out the window, the dim outside scenery overlapped with the inside of the vehicle.

Inside the car was brighter than the dark outside, as the sun had set.

And it was only now that Yeongwoo realized that the vehicle he was driving was quite high-end.

Swoosh.

Turning his head to look at Jongsu in the driver's seat, the Audi emblem gleamed in the center of the steering wheel, radiating a presence.

" ... "

Upon this, Yeongwoo said as if enchanted.

“How about an Audi?”

“Huh?”

“As a souvenir. What if we give them this Audi?”

“Oh.”

Upon hearing Yeongwoo’s words, Jongsu made a bewildered expression for a moment, then nodded.

“It wouldn’t be bad, surprisingly. It might look fascinating to an extraterrestrial. Isn’t this some kind of craftwork?”

“That’s right. And we’ve been driving it ourselves. Depending on the perspective, it might be a used item, but...”

On the other hand, couldn’t it be considered a Gyeongbuk Strongest Sword Edition?

Yeongwoo’s unconventional thinking was greatly influenced by the meeting with the intermediary Kubu.

—Greetings to the human of Earth, Mr. Jung Yeongwoo⁰⁷, the strongest in Gyeongbuk.

Before Yeongwoo could introduce himself, Kubu had already defined him as the ‘strongest in Gyeongbuk.’

In other words, he already knew where Yeongwoo stood in this world.

Which means.

‘The advertiser probably knows who they are contracting with.’

So, if the opponent highly values the position of the Gyeongbuk’s Strongest Sword, there was a good chance that the value of the item the Gyeongbuk’s Strongest Sword used would also be high.

“But if we give this as a gift, we might have to buy a new car.”

Jongsu, looking disappointed, caressed the Audi emblem with a regretful expression.

However, Yeongwoo wasn’t particularly interested in foreign cars.

“Yes. Next time, let’s switch to a car with better fuel efficiency.”

* * *

It could be seen from the moment they entered the vicinity of Icheon that the advertiser was by no means a trivial existence.

Gooo...!

Suddenly, a sound like a cry was heard, and the sky over the Icheon area began to ripple.

Due to the darkening sky, it appeared as if the entire sky had become turbulent like the sea.

“What, what is this?”

Only now did Jongsu, scared, look at the sky with an anxious gaze.

However, not long after, he had to avert his gaze.

It was because he felt an unbearable eeriness.

It was like seeing a giant silhouette pass under you while swimming in the sea.

Graaah...!

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

This time, a sound slightly different from before scratched the inside of the sky.

Perhaps it meant that the advertiser was getting closer.

And around this time, the local status window changed.

[The current area is ‘Icheon.’

[The Strongest Sword in this area is ‘Kim Byeongcheol139.’ Rank 2, 6 defenses.

Kim Byeongcheol139.

There was a Strongest Sword in Icheon.

“!”

As the status window changed, both Yeongwoo and Jongsu widened their eyes.

“Oh, Hyung-nim.”

“Yes, I saw.”

Yeongwoo met eyes with Jongsu through the rearview mirror and then shifted his gaze outside the window.

Although the stay area had changed to Icheon, the landscape was still filled with rough mountains and fields.

“After passing through Icheon this time, where’s the next destination?”

In response to Yeongwoo’s question, Jongsu looked up into the sky and answered.

“Um... it’s Yongin. And then it’s Seongnam.”

If it’s Seongnam, it’s right below Gangnam, so practically, they would be on the outskirts of Seoul.

However, as they entered Gyeonggi Province, the number of abandoned vehicles on the road significantly increased, causing the actual travel distance to extend much longer due to the need for evasive maneuvers.

Squeak!

Just now, Jongsu was sweating profusely trying to avoid the zigzagging cars.

“Do you think we can reach Yongin by 8 o’clock?”

In response to Yeongwoo’s concerned question, Jongsu grinned.

“Well, I’m not sure. If the road continues like this, we might be late...”

Current time, 7:26 PM.

In about 30 minutes, the advertiser would arrive.

And an hour after the advertiser’s arrival, the lodging would begin.

‘It’s getting ambiguous. If we don’t go into the city, we’ll have to secure a room near the outskirts to handle the lodging problem in time.’

It’s decision time.

Should they continue past Yongin, or should they meet with the advertiser near Icheon and then deal with the rental issue more stably?

‘Still, it would be better to meet the advertiser in a less populated area, so let’s try to get as close to Yongin as possible...’

Ultimately, at the moment when Yeongwoo’s mind leaned towards Yongin.

Kwagwang!

A thunderous roar from the sky, followed by a crimson pillar of light shooting down.

And this was right in the middle of Icheon.

“Huh!”

Surprised, Jongsu slammed the brakes, bringing the car to a stop, and Yeongwoo also looked at the formidable pillar of light with a perplexed expression.

Goooo...

From the sky, a deafening noise rang out, and a crimson pillar of light descended.

It was undoubtedly the arrival destination of the advertiser.

“Is that the advertiser? Seems like he already decided on the location himself.”

“He’ll be arriving soon.”

After taking a deep breath, Yeongwoo made a quick decision.

“Well, we can’t help it. Let’s go to Icheon.”

“...Alright.”

Although there was a problem of how to handle the Icheon’s Strongest Sword, Jongsu didn’t insist on making a detour.

* * *

Not long after entering Icheon along the central road, Yeongwoo and Jongsu saw cars rushing out, blaring their horns.

Bang, bbaaang...!

They were all cars leaving Icheon, in other words, evacuation vehicles.

Startled by the untimely pillar of light, they were leaving the city.

“This is causing tremendous inconvenience unintentionally.”

As Jongsu mentioned, the fact that Yeongwoo was passing by Icheon at this particular time was a significant disaster for the citizens.

Moreover, the lodging was about to begin soon.

Leaving the city at the moment when they needed to secure a room was akin to risking their lives.

Bbaaang!

Another vehicle from the opposite side approached, honking its horn.

And this time, Yeongwoo noticed that the face of the other driver was stern.

But it was unlikely that they were carrying their family in the back seat.

Just the sight of the sky heaving like the night sea was enough to instill fear.

Kurrung!

Thunderous sounds reverberated loudly from somewhere above the pillar of light.

Then, people on bicycles appeared in a line this time.

Floating in an orderly manner, they were also leaving the city.

‘Bicycles are the last resort. Running won’t get them to the next city on time.’

Yeongwoo turned back to look at the procession of bicycles, already far away.

At most, only three groups had left by car.

Those on bicycles were not even in their twenties.

It meant that everyone was struggling with financial difficulties.

“Hyung-nim, we’re almost in downtown Icheon now.”

As Jongsu said this, a ticking sound came from inside Yeongwoo’s pocket.

Kkigik.

It was the Epic-grade compass, ‘Fearful Cat,’ making a noise.

‘Surely.’

Yeongwoo took out the compass from his pocket, and there, a crouching tricolored cat with open eyes was visible.

Somewhere nearby, there was a threatening presence.

And the direction was as expected.

Quaaaa...!

A crimson pillar of light was spreading in the center of Icheon city.

[Translator – Night]

[Proofreader – Gun]

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