

Level 4 Human in a Ruined World

#Chapter 7 - Read Level 4 Human in a Ruined World Chapter 7

Chapter 7

Chapter 7: The Strongest Sword of Gumi (3)

Gulp.

Without realizing it, Yeongwoo swallowed hard, a heavy lump forming in his throat. It was the premonition of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity or danger looming ahead.

‘The Strongest Sword of Gumi... The moment I get this title, I’ll become the target of all the strong ones.’

Logically, refusing this opportunity would have been the right thing to do. Eventually, he’d encounter adversaries with comparable equipment but superior physical abilities.

‘But this isn’t just a simple title.’

Yeongwoo knew well that the tooltip in front of him meant more than just a “title.”

[Gumi’s Strongest Sword] – Unique Title

[Authority of the Strongest Sword]

[Gumi Sword Technique]

Because he already possessed an item with the same format.

[Early Bird] – Hero’s One-Handed Sword

[Extremely Lightweight]

In other words,

‘A title is also a type of item. The next two lines are special attributes.’

The Authority of the Strongest Sword, Gumi Sword Technique. Their exact effects weren't immediately clear, but they seemed to have a significant impact on combat prowess.

Especially the "Gumi Sword Technique."

Even just the "Extremely Lightweight" attribute of the Early Bird sword had a remarkable effect. What then could be expected from an option labeled "Sword Technique"?

"..."

As Yeongwoo pondered, the countdown began abruptly.

—Would you like to become the Strongest Sword of Gumi?

...The acquisition privilege will disappear in 5 seconds.

...4.

...3.

'Damn it, they're not giving me time to think.'

As time dwindled, Yeongwoo quickly reassessed the assets he had secured.

He now had a total of 133,000 Karma, including what he'll receive from Yechan. On top of that, there'd likely be more coins in the pockets of the attackers scattered on the ground.

Additionally, the equipment dropped by the raiders, such as spears, axes, and hammers, were also types of assets.

So, in this situation, what would be the wiser choice: becoming stronger and attracting more enemies or avoiding attention to oneself?

'No, the latter wasn't possible from the start.'

Yeongwoo's gaze fell on the silver blade of the Early Bird sword.

And just as the countdown reached one second, Yeongwoo hastily accepted the position of the Strongest Sword of Gumi.

'I'll do it, the Strongest Sword of Gumi...!'

Worried that he might have been too late, he widened his eyes. Soon, not only Yeongwoo but everyone in Gumi City witnessed the announcement.

[The Strongest Sword in the Gumi region has been chosen!]

[The current Strongest Sword of Gumi is 'Jeong Yeongwoo07,' 1 unit, 0 defenses.]

[Once you become the Strongest Sword, you can experience overwhelming growth.]

[Anyone can ascend to the Strongest Sword position through duels, the method of succession being 'killing.']

"Killing" is the method of succession...

Yeongwoo felt a chill down his spine as these words echoed, and a colorful light gathered above his head.

And then—

Ping!

It created a single string of characters.

[The Strongest Sword of Gumi.]

It was none other than the title. As Yeongwoo expected, they affixed it above his head for everyone to see.

"Um... Mister."

Yechan, who had been watching the scene in a daze, called out to Yeongwoo.

Turning his head towards Yechan, Yeongwoo soon realized the reason and fell silent.

'This...'

As he saw it with his own eyes.

[Current region 'Gumi']

[The current Strongest Sword of Gumi is 'Jeong Yeongwoo07,' 1 unit, 0 defenses

The small text in the upper right corner of the field remained unchanged over time.

Essentially, anyone could now instantly check the region's Strongest Sword's name and battle records in real time.

'A defense count of 0 likely means I haven't defeated any challengers yet. Looks like there might be a constant stream of challengers for a while.'

In other words, it was currently a vulnerable period.

So, how many defense victories would need to be stacked up before more challengers stop appearing?

“ ... ”

No matter how much one thought about it, it seemed like an insurmountable mountain.

With a somewhat gloomy feeling, Yeongwoo glanced at the shining title above his head.

Then, Yechan approached him, rattling something.

“Mister, what do we do about this?”

Curious, Yeongwoo looked over and saw Yechan awkwardly holding three weapons close to his chest, remnants collected from the assailants.

“What about the coins?”

“...Huh?”

Seeing Yechan’s confusion, Yeongwoo searched the bodies without saying anything and retrieved the coins.

7,000, then 4,000, and finally, the last person had 5,000.

‘They must have been quite vicious people.’

Given that they’d been provided only 3,000 as basic living funds, having more than that meant either robbing coins from others at the exchange or being an exchange person who barely managed to salvage some... But it was hard to say.

‘Well, would those guys who went after everyone else leave their points unused?’

This was a fact he knew from experience.

The evil individuals probably had a lot to do, so they wouldn’t level karma points unused.

Like Im Bonghee, his roommate.

On the other hand, those who still had points after all the sniping was done were relatively good.

Such as the police officer he had met at the first currency exchange booth, and even Ye Chan, who he had met at the Sword Mountain.

Clink.

Yeongwoo said to Yechan as he poured the coins he had taken from the bodies into his backpack.

“Let’s do the settlement properly once we find a safe place.”

Suddenly, Yechan’s face brightened.

“Oh... sure.”

For Yechan, sticking close to Yeongwoo was advantageous for survival. Moreover, this Yeongwoo was now the ‘Strongest Sword of Gumi’.

However, the Strongest Sword himself didn’t have much leeway.

“Did you say you wanted to use the spear?”

Yeongwoo spoke as he withdrew the axe Yechan was carrying and tucked it into the makeshift pouch in his backpack.

“There’s no room for the sword. You carry the rest. Use them in case of emergency.”

“Really?”

Rather than answering Yechan directly, Yeongwoo glanced briefly at the people gathering in the distance.

Then, in a subdued voice, he nudged Yechan’s shoulder and said.

“Of course. You’ve got to pull your weight now.”

Westward, then further west.

Yeongwoo and Yechan moved relentlessly along the arrow without stopping.

And they encountered numerous potential challengers.

It was all because of the title “Strongest Sword of Gumi” that could be seen even from a distance.

However, nearly nine out of ten retreated after getting a closer look at Yeongwoo's armed state.

Even if they weren't the Strongest Sword, facing someone fully equipped with a sword and shield was something they weren't ready for.

But not everyone gave up instantly.

[Translator – Peptobismol]

"Are you really the Strongest Sword? I don't believe it."

A sharp voice directed at Yeongwoo.

A large individual had been following them from a distance of about ten meters since a while ago.

The guy only had an axe in his hand.

"Well then, come at me. What's with the unsightly stance?"

Yeongwoo retorted, glancing behind.

Of course, since he was not a born fighter, he was just bragging.

However, if things continued like this, there was a chance another challenger would come and a 2-on-1 situation would arise, and he was cautious of being attacked from behind if he let my guard down, even for a moment.

That was probably also what that large individual was aiming for.

Although he was cowardly, he was employing the best strategy.

'If I approach to attack first, they run away quickly... There is no obvious way to do this.'

Was this the life of a first-time Strongest Sword?

"People like me know it when they see it. I can tell just by looking at a person whether they're an easy target or not."

That guy was persistently provoking Yeongwoo, assessing his response.

Yeongwoo understood the implied threat of potentially facing more challengers in a short time.

And If Yeongwoo attacked, he planned to run behind him.

Eventually.

“Ugh, what’s this? It’s not just one or two.”

A seemingly tough new challenger appeared from the side of Yeongwoo’s group.

Even a duo this time.

They were more about their intimidating gaze and weapon combination than sheer size.

Especially the guy holding the shield – muscular and with a reddened edge to the shield – a clear sign of having used it extensively.

‘That probably means that he has used it to hit someone before.’

Yeongwoo sensed trouble approaching.

“What on earth are you guys thinking? It’s not like all of you are from a criminal background.”

As Yeongwoo spoke, the muscular man looked up at the sky and replied.

“All the higher-ups are dead, and everything has turned to stone. Isn’t the world already ruined? So, when there’s an opportunity, I’ll try to grab a little more for myself.”

“We don’t just kill anyone either. It’s just that you’re the Strongest Sword, and it seems like you have a lot, so that’s why.”

The dialogue from behind was the knife-wielder pointing at Yeongwoo’s backpack as he spoke.

Then, the large man interjected smoothly into the conversation.

“Hey, how about teaming up with me? If we waste more time here, more competitors will show up. Let’s split the loot fairly into thirds, and the title can be left to each one’s luck.”

Strong and persuasive... It was quite different from the tone and expression used when provoking Yeongwoo earlier.

“Not a bad idea.”

“Let’s do it.”

An agreement was quickly reached.

Upon this, Yeongwoo quietly informed his client.

“I will fight as hard as I can, but if it looks like there is no hope for me, find an opportunity to run away. Don’t die for no reason.”

However, Yechan’s response that followed was unexpected.

“Even if I run away, won’t I just face those people again and end up dying? Now that I have a weapon too, I’ll help in any way I can.”

Yechan gripped his spear so hard that his hands looked as pale as a corpse.

Meanwhile, the imposing figure in the distance was closing in with a large shadow.

Thud!

Simultaneously, from the side, the sound of two men’s shoes kicking the ground was heard.

Almost simultaneously, a joint attack took place.

‘It’s do or die.’

Thud.

Yeongwoo pushed Yechan aside as a signal to keep a distance and pulled his shield close, taking a defensive stance.

He planned to withstand the initial assault somehow and deal with them one by one.

However, the opponents were not letting their guard down and scattered Yeongwoo’s attention by attacking from three directions.

Shwaaat!

“...!”

In the blink of an eye, they closed the distance. The pressure was different from the previous opponents.

‘You damn...!’

With no time for tactical considerations, Yeongwoo instinctively made a decision.

“Huaaah!”

While guarding the left side with the shield, he swung the Early Bird to the right.

Hwaaeeaat!

A silver streak cut through the air.

Then, in quick succession...

Paaah!

Around Yeongwoo, a golden shockwave erupted.

“...?”

“Ugh?”

Even the three challengers, who were about to attack Yeongwoo, stopped in their tracks. It was because a sudden intense pain erupted, as if their hearts were about to burst.

“Ugh...!”

The same was true for Yechan, who looked at Yeongwoo to see what was going on, but immediately stiffened.

The eyes of the Strongest Sword were glowing in a golden hue.

“What...?”

Not knowing what this strange phenomenon was, Yeongwoo shook his head, and the golden glow left a dizzying trace in the air.

“Is this?”

Only then did Yeongwoo realize what it meant.

He looked up, and as usual, titles and tooltips appeared.

[The Strongest Sword of Gumi] – Unique Title

[Authority of the Strongest Sword]

[Gumi Sword Technique]

‘The Authority of the Strongest Sword, could it be...’

As Yeongwoo's eyes widened, the large man swung his axe again.

Just barely managing to escape the influence of the Authority, Yeongwoo moved his body.

"Get lost!"

Hwaeaaack!

The axe blade flew with a heavy presence.

However, Yeongwoo wasn't focused on that.

'What is this...?'

Right in front of him was a hologram identical to himself, standing with his sword tilted at an angle.

And it didn't take him more than a moment to realize that it was in a defensive posture.

Hwaeaat!

Youngwoo quickly copied the posture following the hologram.

Precisely at the moment when the axe blade hit the exposed edge of the hologram, it slid down to the side.

"...?"

Squish.

For a moment, the large man's body shifted to the side.

And in accordance with that, the hologram pierced the edge of the man's neck.

—Kill

The character 'kill' appeared at the point of impact.

'Ah...!'

Without missing a beat, Yeongwoo quickly followed the hologram's movements.

Hwit!

Under the weight of the axe blade, the previously tilted blade of the hologram sprung up with elasticity, and using that force, it pierced through the opponent's neck like a lightning strike.

Fwish!

“Uh.”

“Huh.”

The attack was so fast that both the person who had stabbed and the person who had been stabbed had no idea what had just happened.

And then...

Kwoong.

The bulky figure of the large man collapsed to the ground.

[Translator – Peptobismol]

Chapter 8

Chapter 8: The Level 4 Extra (1)

‘This is insane...’

Yeongwoo, who had made a hole in the large man's body in an instant, took a few steps back with a bewildered expression.

‘This is the Gumi Sword Technique.’

To be more precise, it could be called real-time swordsmanship training.

The hologram only demonstrated where to attack and how to defend, leaving it entirely up to Yeongwoo to execute it.

Moreover,

‘The hologram disappeared without a trace again. Does it only appear during battles?’

Yeongwoo looked at the two challengers frozen about six steps away.

Their gazes were shifting between the bodies on the ground and Yeongwoo, indicating that they sensed something significant.

“Hey... Sorry. It seems we made a mistake.”

“We’ll step back quietly if you just let us go.”

At the mention of letting them go, Yeongwoo finally realized.

They were still under the influence of the ‘Authority,’ after all.

‘What’s going on?’

Yeongwoo then glanced at Yechan, who had been acting normally for some time.

“Are you okay?”

“Huh? Yes. I was really scared earlier; my legs almost gave out, but I’m fine now.”

“Really?”

This meant one of two things.

First, Yechan’s energy was strong enough to quickly shake off the Authority’s influence.

Or second,

‘Since I didn’t consider this guy an enemy...’

This was a problem that could be easily verified by showing hostility to the other person, but it wasn’t easy to genuinely want to kill someone.

‘Just staring at someone won’t cut it. Do I really have to be willing to kill?’

If anyone could have murderous intent, they wouldn’t be an ordinary human.

‘Then, on the other side...’

Swish.

As Yeongwoo approached the two challengers, a sudden change occurred.

“...!”

Symbols of ‘kill’ appeared all over their bodies, but the hologram was still not visible.

‘Anyway, I genuinely feel like killing them.’

For some reason, it felt bitter.

However, he had no more time or reason to hesitate.

‘It makes no sense to let people like them go.’

As Yeongwoo twisted the angle of the Early Bird threateningly, the two men, who felt the impending danger, screamed like mad.

“No, please!”

“Stop! I’m really sorry!”

Nevertheless, Yeongwoo mercilessly stabbed their throats one after the other.

Shwoop, pith!

Then, before the blood had a chance to pool on the ground, he searched their pockets and found some coins.

1,000, 3,000.

The big man holding the ax didn’t have a single penny.

Despite his robust physique, he hadn’t even managed to bring basic funds from the currency exchange.

‘So, that’s why he clung to my backpack.’

Maybe he, too, had been robbed at the currency exchange.

Yeongwoo glanced briefly at the area status in the corner of his vision.

| The current region is ‘Gumi.’

| The Strongest Sword in this region is ‘Jeong Yeongwoo07.’ Rank 1, 3 Defenses.

‘Three defenses...?’

He calculated the recent battle as three consecutive title defenses.

People were still passing by the area, most avoiding Yeongwoo and the scattered bodies.

“Uh... Should I take all of this?”

“...?”

When Yechan spoke, Yeongwoo turned his head, and saw him carrying various weapons.

Hammer, spear, shield, sword.

Spoils of the battle.

“You wouldn’t be able to walk far with all that.”

“Yeah, I-I guess.”

Yeongwoo stared at Yechan’s thin forearms.

“Take the spear and shield. Discard the rest. You can’t use them anyway.”

“You want me to throw all this away?”

Yechan looked at the weapons with an expression of regret, but Yeongwoo had already made up his mind.

“We’ll encounter new challengers with new weapons. Don’t cling to useless things. Let’s move on.”

Back to the west.

With his watch and even his phone turned into stones, it was impossible to know how much time had passed, but one thing was certain.

—A new component, ‘Dungeon,’ has been added to this world.

—A new component, ‘Requests,’ has been added to this world.

Even now, the world was changing second by second.

—A new type of monster, ‘Knight,’ has been added to this world.

—[Chaebol Heir- Shin Yeonhwa] has now become a Black Knight, threatening all of you.

Once again, a new ‘Named’ monster type was added.

Although Yeongwoo hadn't encountered any monsters yet, just the fact that such creatures now existed was terrifying.

'Reset, they said... This seems more like punishment.'

To anyone looking, the reset world was closer to hell than a new one.

After the reset, the only things happening among people were murder and robbery.

'Is there really nothing good about this? Is this how we're going to live from now on?'

As Yeongwoo wore a gloomy expression, Yechan, apparently worried about the future, cautiously initiated a conversation.

"What do you plan to do from now on?"

"What?"

"After we finish our transaction. Once we find a safe place, settle accounts, the transaction will be over, right?"

"That's true, but... I haven't thought about what comes after that."

Upon hearing this, Yechan looked at Yeongwoo with a puzzled expression.

"What about your family? Usually, people go to find their families."

"I'm alone. If I had a family to find, I wouldn't be doing this with you."

"Oh."

After hearing Yeongwoo's answer, Yechan made a complicated expression.

"And what about you? Shouldn't you hurry to find your parents?"

"I'm also in an orphanage right now."

"What a mess."

"Yeah."

Observing Yechan's bittersweet smile, Yeongwoo asked again.

"What Level are you in?"

"I'm in 3rd Level."

“You’re older than I thought. You’ll be leaving soon, then.”

He was talking about leaving the orphanage.

As a rule, once he turned 18, he would have to leave the orphanage.

And when Yechan heard this, he realized that Yeongwoo also came from an orphanage.

[Translator – Peptobismol]

“Yeah. It won’t matter now, I guess.”

“Probably.”

Yeongwoo nodded and looked at the arrow at his feet.

It had been tilting rapidly since a while ago.

“I think we’re almost there.”

As Yeongwoo spoke, a huge crowd, he hadn’t seen before, appeared on the other side.

“Huh...?”

Seeing what seemed like hundreds, Yechan halted first, while Yeongwoo, in contrast, moved forward to examine the armed state of the people.

‘So, those who passed through the Sword Mountain have gathered here.’

Yeongwoo noticed that most of the crowd was carrying weapons, and even those with Early Birds seemed quite formidable.

The top leaders from various parts of Gumi had gathered here.

Yet,

‘Where on earth are they looking...?’

Everyone was so focused on looking ahead, not bothering to check the rear.

Thanks to this, Yeongwoo and Yechan joined the rear of the crowd without any hindrance.

Some belatedly noticed Yeongwoo’s title but quickly turned back to face forward.

“...?”

It was indeed strange, but soon both Yeongwoo and Yechan understood.

Swish.

They turned their heads, following the gazes, and saw something they hadn't seen before.

‘Park Dohwan...?’

President Park Dohwan, who had ‘Dismantled’ and thought to be dead, was standing in the middle of the street.

‘How can he be here? Wasn't the Quest added after he died?’

Yeongwoo looked at the President in disbelief but realized something was off.

The face, clean suit – all exactly as seen on television. His height and build were just like the President's, but one thing was different.

That was the occasional flickering of the President's body.

‘Wait, is this a hologram too?’

Swoosh.

Just then, Park Dohwan's figure disappeared and reappeared.

It felt unsettlingly alien.

Additionally, there was a red circle drawn around him, about a 10-meter radius, preventing anyone from approaching recklessly.

‘There's no way that's the real Park Dohwan. It makes no sense for him to come here out of all the cities.’

Then what could it be?

Could an unknown entity be using Park Dohwan's appearance to manifest here?

Perhaps similar entities had appeared in every city across the country.

“...”

Yeongwoo once again confirmed that the arrow of the Early Bird was pointing at Park Dohwan.

And then, simultaneously,

Swoosh.

Park Dohwan made a gesture as if checking his wristwatch.

Then he looked around the crowd, before speaking.

–Time’s up. I will now reveal each of your predetermined destinies.

“...Destiny?”

“Destiny is destiny, but what is this predetermined destiny?”

“There was something about changing your destiny in the quest. I think that might be it.”

Amidst the buzzing crowd, a yellow-tinted rectangular object appeared in front of everyone’s heads.

Bzzt! Bzzt! Bzzt!

Then followed Park Dohwan’s explanation.

–What you are currently seeing is the pre-reset destiny log. If the reset hadn’t occurred, all of you would have lived and died exactly as written there.

“What did he just say?”

“Does that make sense?”

Upon hearing Park Dohwan’s words, everyone’s eyes widened, focusing on their respective destiny logs.

Yeongwoo was no exception.

Right from the first line of his destiny log, something caught his attention.

[Jeong Yeongwoo-49523-III_II-Level 4-Extra]

Level 4... Extra.’

Amongst unknown numbers and barcodes, he could clearly recognize his name and the designation of Level 4 Extra.

And the subsequent contents confirmed what it meant.

[This character is a random combination of Level 4 settings.]

[Influenced by parental settings, this individual possesses the following immutable elements from birth: #Level4 #Orphan.]

[As a Level 4 combination character, it'll receive reverse compensation for acquiring settings of Level 2 or higher throughout its lifecycle.]

To put it simply, this meant that it would be difficult for someone born as a Level 4 person to become a Level 2 human even if they worked hard throughout their lives.

And parents seemed to have a huge influence on the Level at birth.

‘...Is this for real? Was it predetermined from the start?’

The destiny log continued downwards.

[Father]: Level 6 Extra

[Mother]: Level 1 Supporting Role

‘My father was a Level 6 Extra. But my mother...’

A Supporting Role, not an Extra, and a Level 1 at that, 5 Levels higher than his father – likely the highest Level.

Then what kind of person was a Level 1 Supporting Role?

‘No, even before that, how did the man who was a Level 6 Extra meet a Level 1 Supporting Role?’

Yeongwoo knew nothing about his parents except for being abandoned as an infant in front of an orphanage. So, he had no idea about their identities, let alone their whereabouts.

It was only after the world reset that he indirectly learned about his parents’ status, peering into the internal settings of the former world.

“ ... ”

As Yeongwoo wore a perplexed expression, the destiny log pushed upward once more, revealing the next content.

[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.

'Fuck, what is this?'

A nauseating feeling engulfed him.

Yeongwoo couldn't endure it any longer and turned away from the destiny log.

Right beside him, he noticed Yechan with a pale face, staring at his destiny log as well.

And the log floating before him revealed:

|Name: Kang Yechan

|Role: Level 6 Extra

|Function: Background, Eraser

|Creation: July 16th, 2006, 2:30 AM, edited due to forced adultery.

|Annihilation: February 1st, 2039, 8:36 PM, committed murder in a bar while working and then committed s*ic*de.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9: The Level 4 Extra (2)

"Uh..."

It was irresistible.

Yeongwoo couldn't tear his eyes away from Yechan's destiny record.

Creation... In '06, alteration due to forced adultery.

Annihilation... In '39, killed a customer at a bar and committed su***de.

In summary, Yechan was a product of assault, and perhaps because of that, he was abandoned in the world as an orphan, growing up he was destined to kill a customer at a bar and then commit suicide around his mid-thirties.

Of course, Yeongwoo's destiny of being murdered by a drunkard three years later was shocking, but it couldn't compare to Yechan's.

Moreover.

'...I guess he didn't know either.'

Seeing Yechan's gaze fixated on the phrase 'forced adultery,' Yeongwoo swallowed hard.

What could he be thinking right now?

"This... is crazy."

"I... was going to die next month?"

"Who decided this? Does it make sense that the future was predetermined?"

The area that had been quiet for a while began to stir again.

Everyone was greatly shocked by the realization that their origins and endings had all been predetermined.

But where was this place?

It was the world after the reset.

A world with dragons and quests, where swords rained down from the sky.

Here, anything could happen.

And one of those things had already occurred. No, it had been confirmed.

His predetermined destiny, and his role.

"..."

In the midst of the previously bustling area, silence returned rather quickly.

Then, Park Dohwan, who had been silently observing everyone, spoke up.

—I apologize deeply to everyone. I understand that those who glimpsed at their gloomy destiny must be greatly disappointed.

—On the contrary, those who were destined for a prosperous life have lost it due to the reset.

This means that in the reset world, the previous destinies were no longer valid.

Some reacted to this immediately.

“So, what happens now? Since there’s no destiny, are we just supposed to live however we want?”

“No, even if destiny has disappeared, people are still the same, right? Those born as level 1 will probably still have their level 1 settings.”

“That’s right. The hierarchy hasn’t been reset completely. So, what’s the point of all this?”

This argument had a lot of logic behind it.

Even Yeongwoo faced disadvantages due to his unchanged physical condition during running or physical fights.

And there was a real problem beyond that.

“Even if destiny is gone, what should we do to live from now on? Money, food, everything turned to stone.”

“Exactly. Where do we earn money now?”

The sight of people armed with various weapons worrying about survival was so bizarre that it was almost comical.

At this, as if Park Dohwan had been waiting, he lightly applauded.

Clap!

The contents of the destiny records, which had been displayed to everyone, disappeared, replaced by various sequences of numbers.

From as low as 0 to as high as 100,000.

Yeongwoo’s count was 153,000.

[153,000]

And upon seeing this, Yeongwoo immediately realized what the number meant.

‘...The accumulated karma.’

It wasn’t just a simple amount either.

This was a figure that even took into account his contract with Yechan.

The transaction between the two that was merely verbal had automatically reflected in the destiny record.

—What is now inscribed in your destiny records is the amount of karma you have secured at this moment.

—In the future, you can use this karma to change your appearance, enhance your physical abilities, and even further, restore items from the previous world that have turned into stone.

‘Change your appearance and enhance your physical abilities?’

While Yeongwoo made an incredulous expression, people quickly began asking questions.

“What about those who don’t have karma right now?”

“Where can we get more karma?”

At this, the holographic figure of the president lightly clapped.

Clap!

[00:25:19]

Along with the clap, a massive timer appeared in the air.

All eyes turned towards it, and Park Dohwan explained further.

—The only way to acquire karma is by defeating mutants and monsters that will appear about 25 minutes from now.

“...Mutants?”

“What’s this all about?”

They all raised an eyebrow, yet their expressions hinted at something ominous.

Subconsciously, they understood the meaning behind those lines.

And Yeongwoo felt the same way.

‘...They’re coming back, those who chose mutation.’

Annihilation, mutation, dismantle.

People who were forcibly dragged by the public to stand before these three choices.

Among them, those who chose to become monsters through ‘mutation’ were in a state of immense anger at the situation they found themselves in.

So, what would those individuals do when they returned to this world?

‘...Seek revenge.’

Yeongwoo scanned his surroundings.

He felt he finally understood the reason for the supply of weapons through the Sword Mountain.

—Most mutants will appear alongside groups of similar-type monsters and these monsters, too, will leave karma behind when annihilated.

“Wh-what are you talking about... Fighting monsters to earn money?”

“What about those who don’t want to fight? Or those who can’t fight?”

Expected responses followed.

Nobody wanted to earn money by fighting monsters instead of going to work. But the disaster that befell everyone wasn’t over yet.

Clap!

Park Dohwan clapped once more.

Instantly, a series of numbers appeared under the timer in the air.

[1,000]

—Starting tomorrow, a tax of 1,000 karma will be automatically collected every night at 10 p.m.

—Failure to pay the tax at the collection point will lead to immediate annihilation, so it's essential to secure karma.

“...!”

It was like a bolt from the blue.

They had been given a basic living fund of only 3,000 karma, and even that wasn't entirely secured due to chaos at the currency exchange.

In other words, if they didn't fight monsters, they would die within a few days due to unpaid taxes.

—Now, there are 22 minutes left until the mutants return. I wish you all the best.

With those words, Park Dohwan's form blurred, and the 'Rookie Soldier' quest was completed.

Ding!

[Quest Complete – “Rookie Soldier”]

[Reward Issued]

|Survival Gear

Sssshhh.

With the change in quest text, everyone was suddenly given a waistband.

It was a kind of simple sheath with an iron ring to insert weapons.

“Huh.”

“What's this supposed to be?”

“Survival gear?”

At the moment of dissatisfaction with the quest reward being below expectations...

Wooong!

Immediately, an enormous roar echoed from the sky.

Dozens of huge pillars of light began to rain down on various parts of Gumi City.

What was it again this time?

People didn't dwell on it for long.

Anyone could understand that those were the locations where monsters would appear.

One of the light columns even shone on a spot less than 10 meters away from their current location.

"Ahh!"

"R-run away!"

The overwhelming majority followed their instincts and chose to flee.

However, Yeongwoo was an exception.

'...Run away? The only way to earn money is by fighting monsters. We have to pay taxes every day starting tomorrow, so what's the point of running away?'

In fact, this was a thought that only Yeongwoo, among others, could entertain.

[Translator – Peptobismol]

Because, he had diligently accumulated 'success experiences' in the reset world.

Obtaining an Early Bird at the currency exchange, securing a shield at the Sword Mountain, and even winning a 1-on-3 battle to become the Strongest Sword of Gumi...

Therefore, it was natural for him to consider the threats of this world as something not merely to fear and avoid but to overcome.

However, it seemed his instinct based on the Level 4 settings did not seem to want to go any further.

"..."

Even now, his hand holding the Early Bird was trembling.

'The combat power of the monsters might not be unbelievably high. Wouldn't it at least be at a level where the average person would have a chance? Since they said monster hunting is the only source of karma.'

Recalling the information Park Dohwan had provided, Yeongwoo surveyed the area around the column of light.

And then, he belatedly noticed Yechan standing a short distance away.

He seemed to be staring blankly at the spot where his destiny record had been.

Was he still in shock from learning about the ‘secrets of his birth’?

“...Are you okay?”

Yeongwoo cautiously touched Yechan’s shoulder and, then, the eyes of the boy, who had looked like a dead man a moment ago, seemed to come back to life slightly.

“Uh... I’m fine.”

Then it was Yechan’s turn to ask.

“Are you okay, Mister?”

“Huh? Oh, I’m just...”

His mother, a Level 1 Supporting Role, and his father, a Level 6 Extra. Yeongwoo was also curious about his own background, but it was a secondary issue at the moment.

[00:19:26]

Because the swarms of mutants and monsters were scheduled to appear in 19 minutes.

“First, as promised, let’s do the settlement. You’ve worked hard too so far. I’m grateful too.”

As Yeongwoo opened his backpack and took out the coins corresponding to the customer’s share, Yechan seemed surprised.

“...Didn’t you say that you would do the settlement in a safe place?”

“Is there a place safer than here right now?”

“No...”

Unable to refute Yeongwoo’s words while scanning the surroundings to question him, Yechan soon had to close his mouth.

Moments ago, the area had been crowded with people, but now they had all fled, leaving it empty.

“Take this for now. My hands are tied up.”

“What?”

When he turned his head, he saw Yeongwoo clutching the coins in his hands.

It meant Yeongwoo didn't want him to be left unarmed.

“Oh...!”

As Yechan hastily took the coins, Yeongwoo, now with empty hands, pulled out the Early Bird from the scabbard.

“I'll rest here for a bit and then take on the monsters. Now that you can handle yourself, go wherever you want. Our security contract ends here.”

With those words, Yeongwoo sat down in his spot.

Of course, he kept an eye on Yechan, probably prepared for any sudden attacks. His right hand gripped the Early Bird, and his left hand held the shield firmly.

At that, Yechan hesitated for a moment before settling down on the ground, following Yeongwoo.

“No matter how strong you are, wouldn't it be dangerous to stay here alone? It might be safer to go where there are more people...”

The implication was that with more people around, the attention of the monsters would at least be divided.

But Yeongwoo thought differently.

“The more people there are, the higher the chance of being ambushed from behind. The number of monsters we have to deal with might increase as well.”

So, Yeongwoo intended to wait here and confront the monster from one of the pillars of light.

‘Even so...’

Yechan initially considered Yeongwoo excessively reckless but quickly reconsidered.

Come to think of it, this man was the Gumi's Strongest Sword. A title that can only be inherited through murder.

Therefore, it was evident that showing one's back to the people and fighting the monsters would lead to an inevitable ambush.

“...Okay.”

As Yechan cautiously began to withdraw, Yeongwoo continued to gaze as if urging him to keep speaking.

“What about someone fighting from the side, not from behind?”

“From the side? Are you planning to stay here and fight?”

Yeongwoo scratched his chin, staring directly at Yechan.

Then he spoke again.

“One person from the side might be fine. But if I make a wrong judgment, you could end up in a deadly situation. Think carefully.”

To this, Yechan responded with a somewhat bitter smile, speaking almost as a murmur.

“Well, if it weren’t for you, I would’ve ended up dead anyway.”

“...”

Was he referring to what was written in the destiny record, or to what happened at the Sword Mountain?

Seeing Yeongwoo’s expression stiffen, Yechan made an effort to raise his voice.

“Hey, I was joking. By the way, after hearing that explanation earlier, about enhancing physical abilities with karma, can it really be done?”

It was an awkward change of topic.

But since Yeongwoo seemed inwardly curious, he picked a coin from his backpack and examined it.

“He probably wasn’t lying... but he disappeared without explaining how to use it.”

A crimson coin the size of a five hundred won coin.

There was nothing on the back, only a single horizontal line inscribed in the center of the front.

‘Is this a representation of 1,000 karma?’

Yechan pressed the coin with his fingers, but nothing happened.

Even when he tried tossing it on the ground or pressing it against his arm, nothing seemed to reveal its purpose.

If the special function of karma could be activated merely through physical contact, they'd have known the moment they picked it up.

'How am I supposed to use this? At this rate, my baggage will only get heavier. People without bags will be in real trouble. I can't get rid of this by eating or anything...'

As Yechan contemplated this, he was caught off guard by a sudden thought.

Could this be eaten?

It was said to be used to change appearance and enhance physical abilities, so it wasn't entirely implausible.

'...'

But in the current world, did it really matter if it made sense or not?

Without hesitation, Yeongwoo put the coin in his mouth.

Then.

Ding!

Before he could even bite down on the coin, something happened.

[Translator – Peptobismol]

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Chapter 10

[Translator – Peptobismol]

Chapter 10: The Level 4 Extra (3)

"...Ah!"

Yechan, who was staring at Yeongwoo, was so startled that he almost fell backward.

Yeongwoo's appearance suddenly changed when put the coin in his mouth, which was the reason.

"Wh-what's happening?"

Yechan asked with his eyes wide open.

It was clear. Yeongwoo was surrounded by a translucent dotted line outlining his body.

Moreover, this dotted line seemed to flow in a certain direction, just like blood circulating.

Seeing this, Yeongwoo took the coin out of his mouth and examined his body.

“Seems like some kind of customization mode... or something like that.”

“Customization mode?”

“Yeah, you know, like those modes in games where you can readjust a character’s appearance.”

“Really? Then, right now...?”

Before Yechan could finish his sentence, a new interface appeared in Yeongwoo’s sight.

[Character settings change]

|Appearance

|Stats

“That’s it. So, inserting the coin in my mouth opened up this function?”

At Yeongwoo’s words, Yechan quickly grabbed the coin and brought it close to his mouth.

Ding!

“Oh, it seems like just touching the lips is enough.”

“The lips?”

Yeongwoo looked at the coin, now covered in saliva, with an amused expression.

Nevertheless, now that they understood how to use it, it seemed fine.

‘It doesn’t look like anyone else is coming yet.’

Yeongwoo raised his head to see that the timer had already decreased to 11 minutes, and then turned his gaze back to the interface.

|Appearance

|Stats

There were only two menu options: Appearance and Stats.

‘I’m curious about changing my appearance, but there’s no time.’

Yeongwoo skipped the appearance option and chose “Stats.”

As he did, a sort of guide screen appeared first.

Pah!

[From now on, you may use karma to enhance your physical abilities. Please carefully select after reading the description of each category.]

[Strength]

|Affects body strength and speed.

[Endurance]

|Affects the ability to sustain and repeat movements.

[Durability]

|Affects the durability of skin, bones, muscles, etc.

[Senses]

|Affects overall body control, reflexes, balance, etc.

There were only four physical abilities that could be enhanced with karma: Strength, Endurance, Durability, and Senses.

Thanks to this, it didn’t take long to grasp the concepts of each ability.

‘Durability seems a bit peculiar. What’s next?’

As Yeongwoo thought this, the guide text vanished, and the actual settings page appeared.

[Character: Jung Yeongwoo07]

[Strength] 19

[Endurance] 21

[Durability] 13

[Senses] 24

* 1,000 Karma is consumed per Stat Point.

* Available Karma: 153,000

‘1,000 Karma per point? So, I can raise the stats by 153 points in total?’

If he invested all of it into Strength, it would increase his strength by a whopping 8 times.

‘...Incredible.’

Yeongwoo felt a rush as if every cell in his body awakened.

He felt as if he finally understood the true value of the currency called karma.

‘This is a way to transcend the level one’s assigned at birth.’

As long as one can continuously secure enough Karma, even a Level 4 individual could become stronger than anyone else.

Considering there’s an ‘Appearance’ option among the other settings, it was highly likely that things like appearance or physique could also be altered.

It had truly become a world where anything was possible as long as one had money.

“ ... ”

Yeongwoo swallowed dryly and checked the timer in the air once more.

[00:06:22]

In 6 minutes, monsters and mutants would appear.

‘Anyway, if I can’t win against them, my neck will be on the line right here. So, using the money I have for stat growth is the right move.’

Now, which stat should be enhanced?

‘I don’t know how many and what types of monsters will appear. So...’

It should be evenly distributed as much as possible.

However, he decided to exclude Durability and Senses.

‘Even if I put 50 points into durability, I don’t think I’ll be able to deflect a knife or claw with my bare skin.’

He also felt that Senses wouldn’t be of much help initially.

So far, he felt more lacking in Strength and Endurance.

‘Let’s divide it appropriately between Strength and Endurance. If my strength improves, handling the shield will be easier, boosting my survival chances.’

As soon as he made his decision, he started distributing the points.

He put 77 points into Strength and 76 into Endurance.

It was an ‘all-in’ move, leaving no Karma even for the tax due tomorrow at 10 PM.

Then...

Pahaht!

Numbers began to fill up in his pitiful settings window.

[Character: Jung Yeongwoo07]

[Strength] 96 (19+77)

[Endurance] 97 (21+76)

[Durability] 13

[Senses] 24

Simultaneously, a change occurred in Yeongwoo.

“...!”

Though he hadn’t suddenly grown in size or developed new muscles, he could tell just by sitting still.

His strength and stamina had increased enormously.

‘...I can barely feel the weight of the Early Bird.’

Moreover, the shield he held in his left hand felt much lighter than before.

Whoosh.

Even the act of getting up from his seat felt different. He didn't need to push off with his hands; the strength in his legs alone was enough.

'What's this? It's so different.'

His Strength had increased from 19 to 96.

In pure numerical terms, that meant his strength had increased about 5 times, so feeling the difference was natural.

"Mister, are you... okay?"

Seeing Yeongwoo's thoughtful expression, Yechan asked with a concerned tone.

[Translator – Peptobismol]

Instead of answering, Yeongwoo jumped with all his might.

Thud!

Friction on the soles of his shoes felt like they might tear apart, and he immediately sprung into the air.

"Whoa...!"

Yeongwoo's shadow passed over Yechan's widened eyes.

Even Yeongwoo, looking down from a much higher point than he anticipated, was surprised.

At least 1.5 meters, by eye estimation.

Yeongwoo felt a sudden fear.

Such a high jump was far from his regular exercise routine, he had no idea about any falling techniques or landing from high altitudes.

Whoosh!

Eventually, gravity grabbed hold of Yeongwoo's body abruptly.

"Huh!"

For a moment, it felt like his body's center was tilting forward, but thankfully, his feet touched the ground before that.

However, the impact of the landing without any cushioning sent piercing pain from his heels to his knees.

“...Ugh!”

Reflexively clutching his knees, Yeongwoo realized his mistake.

‘So, that’s why there are separate Stats like Durability and Senses.’

For instance, assuming he leapt about 5 meters with much stronger strength than now.

Even if soaring to 5 meters high wasn’t a problem, how would he land?

Would his legs, with a mere Durability of 13, be able to withstand the impact?

It would probably be the same while facing monsters with swords or blocking powerful attacks with a shield.

‘If I survive this time, I definitely need to pay attention to Durability and Senses.’

As Yeongwoo was resolving this, Yechan called out to him in a somewhat urgent tone.

“Mister...! What about me? Which stat should I raise first?”

“Huh?”

Yeongwoo belatedly came to his senses and turned his head in that direction, noticing that Yechan was also surrounded by a translucent dotted line.

“How many points can you use?”

“I can use 73 if I spend everything.”

“Then, put 30 each into Strength and Endurance, 10 into Durability, and 3 into Senses.”

Given the recent trial and error, Yeongwoo recommended the best possible choices within his knowledge limit.

Following the advice without a word, Yechan adjusted his stats accordingly.

[Character: Kang Yechan306]

[Strength] 44 (14+30)

[Endurance] 52 (22+30)

[Durability] 27 (17+10)

[Senses] 22 (19+3)

Soon after, Yechan, too, made a face similar to Yeongwoo's a while ago.

"...Uhh, what is this?"

"I don't know how much karma we'll gain in the future, but if things continue like this, it won't be long before superhumans start to appear."

"Ye-yeah, that seems likely."

"So, if possible..."

After speaking up to this point, Yeongwoo checked the timer in the air.

[00:00:49]

49 seconds left.

"It's better for us to become those superhumans. There is nothing bad about being strong."

Actually, it was not just not bad—it's a necessity.

Yeongwoo still remembered vividly.

Being surrounded by faceless individuals at the exchange booth, he got slapped, and his arms twisted.

Even now, when entering combat situations, their angry gestures and hands full of instruments came vividly to his mind, making him tremble.

That's why he didn't want to be pushed down under their feet again. Never again.

[00:00:21]

21 seconds.

Around this time, Yechan also stopped swinging his spear and stood straight in his place.

Meanwhile, Yeongwoo scanned his surroundings for any potential ambushers.

[00:00:10]

Then finally, when the timer reached 10 seconds, both of them were staring at the blue light pillars from above.

Will the monsters pour down from above?

Or will they suddenly appear where the pillars of light touch the ground?

While inwardly pondering various thoughts to calm their restlessness, the timer hit 3 seconds.

...3.

...2.

...1.

And then.

Boom!

A tremendous rumbling echoed and spread from the top of the light pillars, followed by an unusual tearing sound from the edge where the sky met the pillars.

Squeak!

Squeak!

“Mister...! Something is coming down!”

“I can see that. You’d better step back.”

Yeongwoo saw several faint lights appearing inside the upper part of the light pillars.

And their sizes were oddly increasing.

Squeak!

‘Those things’ landed successively from the top of the light pillars right in front of Yeongwoo and Yechan.

Thud! Thud!

“ ... ”

Precisely 12 entities.

As they landed, they crushed the ground, and Yeongwoo could easily guess that if a person were standing underneath, they would have shattered into pieces.

‘Fortunately there aren’t too many.’

Of course, with 12 creatures per light pillar, there could easily be hundreds of monsters scattered throughout the Gumi City.

While falling from the sky, they were all wrapped in oval-shaped white spheres, receiving some sort of protection.

But the issue was that the spheres were much larger than expected.

“Oh, Mister...?”

Yechan stepped back, suggesting something was wrong.

Yeongwoo was equally stunned.

Each of the 12 spheres stood at about 2 meters in height and had a width of around 1.5 meters.

‘What on earth could they...’

Clunk!

Before Yeongwoo could finish his thought, the spheres suddenly split apart.

Then...

Boom!

12 heavily armed goblins stepped out from within their respective spheres, striding out valiantly by kicking the inner walls of the spheres.

“ ... ”

At this, Yeongwoo and Yechan could only look up in dismay.

These entities stood at a height of 2 meters.

[Translator – Peptobismol]