

SPELLCRAFT 951

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Chapter 951: Instant Celebrities

"We're back!"

Kuzon and I appeared in the Hunter Association Headquarters, meeting the Chairman and Director about to leave for somewhere on an aircraft after gathering their men and preparing all their gear.

Since I sensed them on the roof of the massive building, I transported Kuzon and I there.

It was quite strange to meet a couple of stern-faced strangers, as well as seeing the Chairman and Director in suits of armor.

'Guess they also act as Hunters occasionally...' I mused.

"Where are you guys headed?" Kuzon blurted out, his nonchalance once again adding a layer of disregard to the tone he used.

"To... Busan...?"

"There's no need, though." I said, looking at the Chairman point-blank.

'Didn't he already tell us to help him out? Why is he... ah, I see. I understand, then.'

It had to do with the whole Hunter Image, and the politics of this world.

In the end, it would be weird if they, the Hunter Association HQ didn't make a single move when one of their largest cities was attacked.

"Y-you're already done...?"

"Yes. Can't you confirm or something?" The Chairman and Director stared at themselves as soon as I said this.

Nodding, they used a watch they equipped on their wrist to project a holographic map that showed Busan.

Sure enough...

"I-I see... it is indeed true." Chairman Sung seemed to be shaking slightly, though I could tell he was trying to hide it.

"Haha... guess there was no need for gathering South Korea's available best Hunters..." Director Baek muttered, straining a chuckle.

Hold on, were they really making an effort to come and assist Kuzon and me? That was a good gesture, but completely unnecessary.

"Thank you, the both of you." Chairman Sung and Director Baek had already come out of the aircraft, and we're now bowing before us.

I didn't know where they got the Hunters behind me from, but they also bowed as well.

"It's fine. We were just doing the right thing." A smile coursed through my face.

It was met with cheers and beams from the audience—though I could see Kuzon rolling his eyes from my peripheral vision.

Still, I didn't care.

'We saved everyone. The people are safe. All's well that ends well. It was a perfect mission.'

I couldn't have been more wrong by this.

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"NOOOOOOOOOO!!!" Chairman Sung cried out loud in his office.

At this point, he no longer cared about keeping his composure in front of us. His howl, like an old man, was filled with both pangs of pain and shock.

To be honest, he wasn't the only one who was surprised by the unexpected news. Kuzon and I had also been caught off-guard by it.

Director Beak had some sweat running down his face, and from how he fidgeted, the situation was quite bad.

What situation, one might ask?

Well...

"There are so many videos and footages of you guys leaking all throughout WeTube. Not just that, but in practically every Social Media. It's become viral in South Korea, and it's only a matter of time before the whole world catches wind of this!"

The pain and frustration in the Chairman's voice echoed in my heart, and I truly felt his pain.

This was something I didn't want as well.

'I guess relying too much on [The Hermit] in a strange world isn't advisable—at least, when considering the consequences my acts will have on the future.'

The difference between seeing the future of this reality and that of my own reality was the dimensional dissonance I had with this one.

I had solved the synchronization problem, which allowed me to tap into the laws of this world, but that didn't mean I was personally an integral part of it.

'This world sees Kuzon and I as a foreign element, so the future and paths of this world that I'm allowed to see do not include the changes that we will make to the timeline until it occurs.'

That meant I wouldn't have seen the consequences of my actions ripple into the future until I had actually committed the action and affected this world one way or the other.

'If this was my original world, and I was a natural contingent, it would have taken account of my existence and action.'

As a result, it seemed I had been blindsided by that mere fact and made such a reckless move.

There was also one thing that had caught me by surprise—or rather, that I underestimated.

"Curse those new-gen Smartphones..." I muttered.

I couldn't believe that while I was rescuing those people, they would be capturing Kuzon and I with their phones.

'Worst part is I could sense people around, but how could I have sensed that I was being recorded by the camera of a phone?'

In the end, we messed up more than we thought.

'Oof...'

"Honestly, we would have preferred the news not to be widespread, considering the fact that we are trying to keep you two hidden from the Zenith—for your sake and ours." Chairman Sung sighed, interlocking his fingers while placing his hands on his desk as he regained his composure.

"Unfortunately, it's too late now. It's only a matter of time before it reaches their ears now, if it hasn't already."

"But what of Aloe? You said she was very helpful to you, right? How did you handle her situation and keep her hidden from the Zenith?" Kuzon asked.

And so, with yet another troubling sigh, the Chairman explained it to us.

Apparently, even though Aloe helped in dungeon Breaks, it was often smaller scale ones, or those in deserted areas. She also didn't display as much power as the both of us did.

"This puts our Hunter Association in the limelight, and it seems we'll be under the Zenith's radar for some time."

"Haha... is that so?" Kuzon chuckled a little, "Sorry about that, then."

There was no real need to apologize or feel bad, though. While this was indeed an unforeseen situation, it wasn't all bad.

'We just need to use the opportunity wisely.'

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Chapter 952: Trouble Brewing

The room was tense with silence, both sides contemplating what to do about the situation.

Somewhere along the line, Director Baek had gone out to ease himself, leaving just us three in the room to mull over the issue.

On the positive, the Hunter Association had temporarily solved a great deal of their money issue, thanks to the number of resources they were able to obtain from the Dungeon Break.

Unfortunately, the infrastructure that had been devastated thanks to the attack of the monsters was going to take up a sizeable amount from the profit they would gain.

'I could do something about that, but let's hold off on that for now.'

At this point, I was adjusting my plans to fit into the current situation. If I could find a way to improve it, then it would end up being advantageous for both myself and the residents of this world.

"Chairman, I have urgent news!" The Director rushed into the room, his face as pale as snow, and sweat dripping from his facade.

I could instantly tell, from the strain in his tone, the heavy breaths he made, and the desperate, fearful look in his eyes, that what he had to say was of grave importance.

Perhaps even worse consequence.

"What is the matter, Director Baek? You can speak, we're the only ones here."

So, the Chairman wanted us to listen, despite it probably being a very sensitive issue?

'Is he trying to curry our favor? Maybe Garner our sympathy?'

I knew he didn't want Aloe to leave anytime soon, thanks to the pinch their country was in. Perhaps this could be a way to appeal to us.

"W-well... it's about the SS Grade Monster Core that was in transit..."

'Ah...!' My eyes widened slightly, and I could already see the parking expression of the Chairman from those simple words uttered.

"The transport vehicle was attacked, and the cargo was stolen! Based on the symbol they left at the scene... it has to be the Shadows of Light."

"N-no... no way..." The Chairman's usually energetic voice crumbled under the weight of the news.

The SS Grade Core was supposed to be given to the Zenith, yet it was stolen before it got to them.

The ones who would bear the responsibility for this was none other than the South Korea. Hunter Association.

In essence, they were in deep trouble.

~So this was their game all along. Use the Dungeon Break as a distraction, so they can go ahead with their plan. A smart move, wouldn't you agree?~ Kuzon's voice echoed in my mind.

He was correct. The Shadows of Light were really brilliant in the implementation of their plan.

'Though it's not as if I wasn't already aware of it.'

In the first place, this was the natural progression of events. And, from what I could see, this would only be the start of the downward spiral that this organization—and country—would go down.

'Not unless I stop it, of course.' A small snake radiated from my face and I spoke up.

"Chairman Sung. The situation seems quite bad..."

It was a lot more than 'quite bad.' A lot of problems seemed to be collapsing on the Hunter Association, and I could see it consuming the Chairman.

"Do you want me to help you?" I asked, a serious, yet calm expression playing on my face.

"H-help us?"

"Yes. I will solve this entire problem for you. In exchange, you will answer one of my requests." A small smile formed on my face.

Some would consider my condition exorbitant, since these people were in a desperate situation.

The shock on their faces, and the looks of hesitation the Chairman especially had was proof of that worry.

"Don't be too concerned about it. I won't be unreasonable in my demand. I promise, it won't be harmful in any way. This arrangement benefits you all more, actually."

Once everything concluded, they would see it with their own eyes.

'For now, I just have to make the offer.'

After a lot of mulling and weighing his options, the Chairman finally asked his final question.

"Can I trust you with this?" His tone was sullen, without any bias or pride.

I could tell he was just trying his best to be honest—to make a plea of reliance.

"Yes. You can trust me." My response had already been determined.

"Very well. I accept your offer." I used Sound Magic to record our entire conversation, just in case.

Though, I doubted there would ever be a need to use it again.

"Great. There's no need to worry about it anymore, then. Chairman Sung... once I'm done, you'll see it with your own eyes—how much of an opportunity all of these problems are."

"I certainly look forward to it..." He chuckled, though echoes of sadness, pain, and worry leaked from his hollow tone.

"You both must be tired already. Director Baek, please lead them to their rooms."

"Chairman..." The Director glanced at his boss with a bit of hesitance and concern flickering in his eyes.

"I'll be fine. Don't you worry." Straining a smile, the Chairman sent us on our merry way.

The last thing I saw of him when I left the office was his bittersweet smile.

'Don't fret too much, old man.' I smiled. 'All is well that ends well.'

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"Please, make yourself feel at home." Director Baek bowed as he initiated his leave after leaving us at a marvelous suite truly befitting VIPs. "I should be going now."

"Director... don't you worry too much too. I'll take care of everything. I promise you that."

"Thank you, Mr. Leonard. You too, Mr. Kuzon." He smiled, and then walked away.

I knew he had a lot on his mind too, so I left it at that and closed the door of our room.

Once again, I was made to appreciate just how great the place looked. I had definitely seen better, but the culture and civilization of this world made me simply appreciate the new aesthetic that greeted my eyes.

Unfortunately...

"We need to talk, Jared."

... That didn't last very long.

Kuzon was already seated, his stern expression showing me how he wasn't in a very good mood.

I also knew the reason why

"Why in the world would you offer to help them?"

We were currently in a hurry to get back home. Why would I decide to waste even more time here?

"As you can tell, this situation is something that needs to be handled intricately, and over time. It's not something that sheer power can just solve." Kuzon added, his glare becoming more obvious.

Of course, I understood that.

"Then why...? Why would you go so far? We have our own problems to worry about."

Even though he was upset, Kuzon was being mature enough to let me have the floor and explain myself.

His annoyance was justified, and his focus on our goal was commendable.

I just had a different perspective of the whole thing.

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Chapter 953: Illusion Of Control

"Truthfully, I can travel back in time and stop the whole thing from happening. I can prevent the Core being stolen, and even ensure the non-existence of our viral video."

I had [The Hermit] Arcana, after all.

The damages and future problems were not irreparable, especially since everything had only occurred within such a span of time.

"I could also get what I want from the Hunter Association without resorting to a deal. I already have a good idea who's behind everything, and perhaps I could even confront them right now to end everything."

Kuzon looked at me with a suspicious gaze, creasing his brow and making a frown.

"So why don't you? Since you claim to care for these people, isn't it better to just solve the issue rather than beat around the bush?"

"I have my reasons." I smiled calmly.

"What reasons could those be?"

"Control. Both the Hunter Association, and the Shadows of Light... all the key elements in this narrative. It is to give all of them the illusion of control."

Agency was very important for every sentient entity. If someone felt they were being forced or made to do something, the optimal effect of that action would differ from a person who felt they were in charge of their own actions and did everything based on their free will.

By ensuring each person—both on the good side, and on the bad—played their part while having the sincere belief in their agency, my plan had a much higher chance of success.

"You're using them, while they think the situation is playing out naturally?" Kuzon asked, his eyes already burning with something akin to annoyance.

"They're using us too. People use each other all the time. It's not necessarily a bad thing. The important thing to note is whether the person using you can also be used, and the intention behind their use of you."

In my opinion, if someone had a genuinely good intention, and required my help, that was them using me, but it wasn't particularly bad.

The narrative changed if they were using me malevolently.

"In the end, as long as the best results are achieved, and all sides get what they sincerely want, with no one really getting hurt... isn't that what's best for everyone?"

Kuzon shook his head and sighed. I could see his face scrunch up a little in disgust.

"I can see why you have such a high opinion of Neron. The both of you are more alike than I realized."

"What? What does that have to do with anything?" My brows twitched in surprise.

"The very fact that you can supposedly see through everyone and everything, yet you can't recognize that simple fact, is incredibly ironic." Kuzon rose to his feet, chuckling a little.

I could sense sarcasm in his tone.

"Do what you like, Jared. I'll play along with your game... for now."

With that, Kuzon left the parlor and went into his room, leaving me standing still.

For a while, I remained motionless, unable to take a single step forward or behind.

'Did I make the wrong choice?' I asked myself.

By seeing the future possibilities and recognizing the most beneficial and advantageous path to take, while seeing everything as chess pieces that had to be arranged in a particular order to fit the narrative... had I taken a wrong path without realizing it?

Or, perhaps I was simply guided by something Kuzon and everyone else could not see and understand.

'Haaa... I think I understand now.' A sad smile formed on my face.

When Kuzon said I resembled Neron, he must have been referring to this very thing.

'So that's how it is. Neron, you... you also saw things this way, didn't you?'

Looking into the future and knowing the possibilities while using the most optimal situation to gain the best results.

'Were we all pawns, given a false sense of control and agency by you? Are we still playing the game you want us to play?'

I couldn't feel bad about it, even if that was the case. I was doing the same to these people, and it was for their benefit.

However, something about the whole thing made me uneasy.

That was simply because, unlike in my case where I knew my intentions were good, Neron's intentions were a complete mystery to me.

'What exactly do you want? I... I have no idea.'

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[A Rank Dungeon//Frost Wilderness]

>BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMMM!!!<

An eruption soared through the air, creating an echo that reverberated across the vast, frozen landscape.

The massive Frost Giant, already considered a B Class Monster of the highest caliber, was shattered to pieces as a result of an impact with its sturdy body.

It joined the rest of its comrades in death, leaving behind its core which shone with a dark blue hue.

"Haaa... haaa..." Sung Han Soo gave heavy breaths as he rushed to grab the Core.

His dark hair swayed and his innocent face brimmed with both wonder and excitement as he grabbed the thing and placed it within the backpack he had on him.

As a Guide, he was pretty much just a Porter for the Party—even though this particular Party involved just him and someone else.

"Haaa..." Misty breaths escaped his lips as he raised his head to witness the final two Frost Giant survivors who lunged at his floating colleague.

Brilliant sparks occupied his eyes as he witnessed her golden radiance. In one hit respectively, the flying woman destroyed the Frost Giants with ease.

The ice shards fell, and he once again rushed to obtain the Cores.

How many times had he witnessed this sight already? He simply couldn't have enough of this sight.

The sight of a goddess meting out punishment on grotesque monsters.

That was what this situation was to him; and that was who the woman in the sky was in Sung Han Soo's eyes.

A Goddess!

"You did it once again..." The young Hunter smiled as he watched her glorious form illuminate the cloudy skies.

"... Miss Vida."

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Chapter 954: Within The Dungeon [Pt 1]

Sung Han Soo and Aloe Vida ventured into the confirmed A Rank Dungeon quite early that morning, and they had been inside for the whole day.

The reason wasn't due to Aloe Vida's incompetence, or the Dungeon posing some sort of special difficulty for her.

The true reason behind them taking their time relied on the fact that an early clear would be too suspicious in the Hunter Association Records.

In order not to draw too much attention to themselves, they had to resort to such means—even going as far as filling the raid member count by employing ghost members.

As a result, while the other team members were outside the Dungeon, busy with other activities after registering for the Dungeon, only Sung Han Soo and Aloe were actually in the thick of it.

Both of them were used to this, though. Ever since Aloe made the agreement with Korea's Hunter Association, she had been helping them this way

A complete one-man-army!

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"How long has it been since we started camping again?" Aloe asked, sitting opposite Han Soo as they both huddled close to the campfire that separated them.

All the monsters in the Dungeon had been defeated, except the Boss.

They were currently waiting outside the Boss Room, and just Han Soo only needed to tilt his head a little to see the imposing frosty gate that menacingly invited them to venture inside.

It wasn't time yet, though. Since Aloe had eliminated all the monsters too quickly, they had to wait for a couple of hours before they could subjugate the Boss Monster.

"It's been almost three hours. Two or three more, and we should be good to go." He checked his Hunter-specific equipment.

It was a watch that calculated the dimensional energy wavelength and used it to determine how much time had passed in a Dungeon.

Considering how gravity, time, space, along with other laws that existed in the normal world, functioned relatively different in certain Dungeons, this was an item that at least one member of a Hunter's Party had to have on them.

"I see. Well, that's fine, I suppose." She smiled, her eyes trailing to the Boss Room's massive gate.

"Haha..." Han Soo could tell that she wanted to subdue the monster and get rid of the threat of this Dungeon.

He had learned to read a lot of her facial reactions and derive intentions from them over the past couple of weeks.

Perhaps that was because he found himself looking at her more times than he would consider normal.

'What am I doing?' He sighed to himself, hearing the flickering flames breaking the silence the silence that existed between the two of them.

'Miss Vida is just such an awesome woman. No, she's a goddess.'

As the son of one of the world's greatest S Class Hunters, and the grandson of the Chairman of South Korea's Hunter Association, certain expectations had been thrust upon his shoulders, especially by society.

People expected him to follow the footsteps of his predecessors, and even he thought he would.

Unfortunately, unlike his father and grandfather, he simply didn't have the talent.

His natural affinity for Dimensional Energy was extremely low—only enough for him to be an E Class Hunter.

The backlash he received from the very society that cheered him on and praised his heritage, was heavy.

At some point, he even despaired.

Despite that, he purposed within himself that he wouldn't give up no matter what. He picked himself back up and chose to do the best he could do as an E Class.

He became a Guide, serving as a Porter, or even Monster bait when the situation demanded for it.

'South Korea is incredibly short-staffed. Especially after that S Class Dungeon Break...'

The disaster that took the lives of his parents—both of whom were Hunters.

A lot of South Korea's top Hunters perished that day, and it was because of the strange nature of the Dungeon Break.

Three S Class Dungeons... all appearing and bringing out monsters at the same time...

It was the most catastrophic event in South Korea.

In the end, it led the country to receiving the aid of the Zenith, which was just starting out at the time.

The Zenith promptly subjugated the problem that had plagued South Korea for several days, handling everything so swiftly and precisely.

Their leader, Chad, even made an appearance.

After that incident, South Korea became subordinate to the Zenith, and other countries followed not long afterward.

'Why didn't they just help on time? Why did so many have to die? Why...? Why could I not do anything?!'

Sung Han Soo perhaps hadn't let the past completely go. His current actions reflected that, at the very least.

'I... I don't want disasters like that to occur again. Even if it's in my own little way... I want to help people!'

As a result of that desire, he often ventured into Dungeons any chance he got.

Of course, someone of his caliber could never be allowed beyond C Class Dungeons, and even that was a stretch.

Still, since his role was non combative, he was allowed some of the time.

And... it was during one of those expeditions that a sudden Dimension Spike appeared, merging two Dungeon landscapes into one, which in turn increased the power and number of the monsters.

Before anyone realized it, the difficulty had skyrocketed from C Class to Class.

No, it wasn't simply S Class. It was something more.

The first recorded SS Class Dungeon!

Every member of his Party was slaughtered, and the remaining monsters began toying with him as he hid behind his barrier.

He really thought he would die right there and then.

There was no apparent hope of survival, and all hope seemed to be lost.

But...

>BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMM!!!<

... It was in that exact moment that the brilliant light of hope shone the brightest.

Within mere moments, the source of illumination eliminated all the monsters, and in one hit, the Boss Monster perished.

He was saved by that light—no, the source of it.

That was the first time he met Aloe Vida—the one who saved his life and rescued him from the pits of despair.

Sung Han Soo still remembered the only thought that coursed through his mind when he witnessed her radiant beauty.

'She... she's a goddess!'

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Chapter 955: Within The Dungeon [Pt 2]

'It seems he still sees me that way...!' Aloe smiled sadly as she looked at Sung Han Soo's face for a brief moment.

They both maintained eye contact for a split second before she looked away. In the brief moment her eyes connected with his, though, she could see his look of admiration towards her.

'He still considers me a goddess...!' Even after all this time, she couldn't change the impression Sung Han Soo had of her.

At first, she spoke against how he idolized her. However, after realizing it was pointless, she simply chose to ignore it.

Perhaps it was because Aloe realized how hypocritical it would be for her to chastise him for the same offense she had been guilty of.

'I also saw Jared that way...!' A small smile formed on her face as she remembered her immature days.

Thankfully, she realized it early—how, despite a person's amazing abilities, they were still fallible humans.

'I was immature, then.' Her smile graduated into a soft giggle. 'I guess I don't need to worry too. He'll also grow out of this phase.'

Aloe knew she wasn't some goddess or perfect entity that Han Soo liked to think of her as.

She was just a woman who was lost in a strange world, finding a way to return home.

'So far, my investigations have led to nothing substantial.'

Something kept gnawing at her that the information at her disposal wasn't complete and accurate, but she also knew the South Korean government wouldn't dare deal with her so deceptively.

'They gave me all the information I wanted, which is all the information they have on Dimensional Energy, Gates, Monsters, and Dungeons.'

She had also taken her time to go over them in the past month.

'Yet... nothing. Something feels off. It feels like I'm missing something.'

The Hunter Association even allowed her access to the International Database that all the countries used to share information concerning the Dimensional affairs, managed by the Zenith.

'Even then, it feels insufficient. Is it just my suspicion? Haaa... in any case, I've hit a dead end.'

She could only hope to help the country that treated her so well, helping in gathering materials and helping in their research so they could advance the information and applicable science they had on the topics she needed.

'My Magic knowledge and skills aren't sufficient.'

These were the thoughts that afflicted Aloe, but she kept up her facade.

'Let's complete this mission first. I'll think of the rest when we return.'

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[Boss Room]

The icy hall that was the Boss Room greeted both Aloe and Han Soo, who didn't waste any time in walking straight forward once the time for waiting was over.

The shiny frosty tiles, and the exquisitely designed throne-room didn't seem befitting to the monster who sat on a primitive ice throne.

It was almost like pearls thrown before swine.

"GRRRRRRRRRAAAAAAAAAOOOOOUUUUUUUU!!!" The Frost Giant King rose to his feet, sending vibrating roars into the air.

Its bulky frame was five meters, and its intimidating form gave off a chill that couldn't be merely explained as cold air.

It felt like the aura of death.

Despite that, however, Aloe did not cease her advance.

>VWUUUUUUUSSSHHHH!!!<

Cloaked in golden light, Aloe leaped from her position and charged straight forward.

Faster than the Frost Giant could move a muscle, and much faster than Sung Han Soo could perceive, she clenched her fist and sent a devastating blow to her opponent.

>BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMM!!!<

The Frost Giant King shattered instantly, its body breaking into tiny chunks, thanks to the intense energy Aloe sent coursing through it.

In that moment, that single second, the Boss Monster was subjugated

... And the Dungeon was cleared.

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"You should have kept it occupied while I harvested the Dungeon materials!" Sung Han Soo whined, almost in tears as soon as he saw the Boss Monster's body was no more.

He took the Monster Core and kept it in his backpack.

Since it was a Special Item, it could store a whole lot of things, and it also eliminated most of the weight that accompanied the load.

The Chairman gave it to Han Soo because he was the one accompanying Aloe Vida, their VIP

'Its unfortunate that we can't harvest any more than this...' Han Soo thought to himself, nearly in tears.

Sure, his goddess was flawless, but she could be really impulsive sometimes.

"How long before the Gate closes?"

"It usually takes thirty minutes for A Rank Dungeons, but it also depends on its size." Han Soo sighed.

The bigger the Dungeon was, specifically the distance between the entrance and Boss Room, the longer it took for the Gate to completely close.

It almost felt like the Dungeon was being considerate of the Hunters.

"It'll take about ten minutes for us to reach the entrance if we hurry, so it'll leave about twenty minutes to mine. But that's not even enough time for all the things we could obtain."

Since South Korea really needed resources right now, they had to make the best of every Dungeon raid.

This was yet another reason it was more profitable compared to Dungeon Breaks.

"Oh, no worries. You can leave it to me." Aloe suddenly spoke, a bright smile radiating on her face.

"W-what?"

"[Original Magic: Aurora Vidalis]"

Those were the last words Sung Han Soo heard before blacking out.

No, perhaps it felt more like he blinked his eyes.

By the time he reopened them, both he and Aloe were already in front of the Gate.

"H-huh...??"

The backpack Sung Han Solo had on felt way heavier than before, and the sudden change in his environment flustered him.

"I took care of everything. We just have to wait a while before leaving."

Took care of everything? What exactly did she mean?

Checking the time, Han Soo realized that only a few seconds had passed since he was in the Boss Room.

Counting for the fact that he had been flustered for a few seconds already, it meant all that Aloe did—harvesting the appropriate ores and loot, as well as bringing the both of them before the Gate—literally took no time at all.

"A-ahhh... haaa..." He never expected this, even from Aloe Vida.

She really was a goddess—an awesome one, in fact.

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Chapter 956: Heartwarming Surprise

>VWUUUUUUUUUMMMMMM<

The diminishing Gate that stood in a remote station, already surrounded by security officials, and cut off from the rest of civilization, began to warble.

Two silhouettes reflected on its blue and white surface, and in no time at all, the silhouettes became actual people.

The E Rank Hunter, Sung Han Soo, and the provisional Hunter, Aloe Vida.

A one would expect from a team that had their secret weapon, none of them were scathed. In fact, from the expression they had, it almost felt like they were just returning from a field trip.

They both exited the Dungeon ten minutes before the Gate would close, a very reasonable conclusion to their adventures within it.

The officers who stood outside the Gate watched them both emerge in grace. While not all of them had the courage and wit to be Hunters, they still served their nation by guarding the Gates and securing the area around it.

"Welcome back, Miss Vida."

"Welcome back, Hunter Sung."

Sung respond with his usual awkward greeting, however Aloe said nothing.

Instead...

"W-what is... this...?"

She seemed to be shaking a little, her body growing rigid as her eyes widened. It was as if she had entered a daze, but also felt completely in tune with reality.

"Miss Vida... is everything fine?" Sung Han Soo asked, a concerned expression forming on his face.

"... They're here." She whispered, a wide smile forming on her face.

"What? Who are here?"

"I sense two... Jared and... is that Kuzon? They're both here." Her teeth were displayed now, and excitement coursed through her.

"Ja...red? Are you talking about your—"

Before Han Soo could conclude his words, Aloe swiftly placed her hands on his shoulders, her expression showing immense seriousness.

"I have to go, Han Soo. Take care of all the remaining details."

"Wait... what?"

"My friends are here! I gotta go see them!"

"B-but—!"

"I'll make it up to you later, I promise!" Her elated voice kept soaring.

Han Soo quickly realized there was nothing he could say or do that would stop her. Since that was the case...

"F-fine. I'll do it."

He had to just give up.

"Thanks, Han Soo!"

"Y-yeah, no pro—"

Before he finished his response, a bright light surged from Aloe's location, and in that brief moment it seemed like she disappeared.

Technically, she just flew to the location where she sensed them. However, with speeds already on par with the speed of light, it was bound to appear as teleportation in the eyes of most.

"Well..." Sung Han Soo looked at the protocol officers with an awkward look.

He had just gotten ditched in front of everyone. Even though he knew Aloe meant no harm, and he didn't really suffer any injury, he felt a little stung in his heart.

'She left so easily...'

In the end, even though he thought they were very close, they had only been together for over a month.

'I guess it's only right that she pays her proper friends more attention.'

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"Jareeeed!!!" Almost as soon as I sensed Aloe, she flung open the door of our suite and rushed in excitedly.

"Aloe! It's been a while." I grinned, watching her draw nearer with her staple brilliant smile.

I actually missed that quite a lot.

"Would you look at you in that getup." Aloe was dressed like a Hunter—with gear decorating her body like a costume.

"Haha! Well, I had to look the part. I guess you've already spoken to Chairman Sung and Director Baek, considering you're here."

"Damn straight." Kuzon's voice surged from his room, and he stepped out, looking as nonchalant as possible.

I could tell he was relieved to see Aloe, though.

"I'm so glad to see you guys are okay."

"Haha! No, we should be saying the same about you."

Aloe's warmth quickly pervaded the room, and it brought smiles on both my face and Kuzon's.

Despite the fact that the suite was heavy with negative emotions before she arrived, her mere presence changed everything.

This was what I loved most about Aloe.

"Oh my. We have a lot to discuss!"

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It was evening already, but we spent hours just discussing our escapades in the strange new worlds we found ourselves in.

Of course, Kuzon explained the situation of how things were. He told her about how only a few of us were scattered, and how the rest were safe on Earth.

Thankfully, her optimism didn't vanish after all of that.

"Neron didn't even tell me anything..." She retorted, her cheeks almost pouted. "Anyway, I'm jealous of you guys. You had so much engaging adventures and fun. Mine has been very lackluster."

According to Aloe, after settling in South Korea, all she did was fight monsters and hang out with Sung Han Soo, pretty much her only friend in this world.

She explained the dead end she had reached on her researched, which I completely understood. I was even surprised when she voiced out her suspicions about the Zenith, and the information they might have been hoarding.

I was happy not to be the only one thinking in that direction.

'She's right, after all. The Zenith is suspicious.'

"So, what now?" Aloe interrupted my thoughts with her charming voice.

I could already tell her intentions from the expression she made.

"We're supposed to be on our way to the next world now, but Jared insists we remain here for a while on order to achieve his goals. Pretty insensitive, right?" Kuzon sighed, looking at Aloe for support and empathy.

'Poor Kuzon,' I thought to myself.

If there was anyone whom he could seek to support his ideology, they certainly wouldn't be Aloe.

She was the last person who would want to go back home now—not with a world in danger.

"I agree with Jared! Let's stay a while longer!" With a bright smile, and pumped fists, she nodded in total support

'As expected.' I smiled at Kuzon in absolute victory.

Aloe was not the type to abandon those in need of help. She had always been this type of person ever since I knew her.

'And now the majority is on my side.'

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Chapter 957: The Night Incident [Pt 1]

"Haaa... fine. Whatever. I'll just cooperate for now."

In the end, Kuzon folded under the pressure of Aloe and my solidarity. I suppose one could say we won him over.

"So what are we supposed to do now? Do you have any way to solve the problems?" Aloe asked, her eyes sparkling with curiosity and interest.

"Yeah. Do you?" Kuzon seemed to be curious as well.

As much as I would have loved to divulge everything to them, it was unnecessary at this point.

"Don't worry about anything for now. I'll involve you all in it soon enough, but for now just enjoy your stay here."

I needed to do some things on my own first, before involving anyone else. Since results were paramount, I would need then to cement the trust I needed to build.

'Aloe trusts me, but Kuzon's disposition is somewhat shaky.' We still had to work together regardless.

"Fine, then. I'm going to sleep." Kuzon yawned, rising to his feet and dragging himself to bed.

"What about you, Aloe? What will you do?" I smiled at her.

"W-what are you talking about? I have my own suite, you know? It's inappropriate for girls to stay in the same—"

"That's not what I meant!" I cried out instantly. She should have known that.

"Hehe. I'm just teasing, Jared. I'll first see the Chairman and Director before heading off to bed. I also want to have some shuteye."

Even though the monsters in this world posed no challenge to her, she had been in the Dungeon all day.

It was understandable that she needed rest.

"Alright then. Take care."

"You too, Jared. It really is nice seeing both you and Kuzon again."

"Likewise." I deepened my smile and nodded.

Soon we would be reunited with all our friends. Afterward... it would finally be turn of our malevolent enemies to suffer.

"Well, goodbye!"

With her final statement of farewell, Aloe left me in the suite. Now that I was all alone, with no distractions, it made for the perfect opportunity to act.

'Let's wait till it gets a bit darker. This should be fun.'

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[Hours Later]

"Come forth." I whispered.

Instantly, several silhouettes sprang from me, all flowing like incorporeal mist.

The living room became shrouded in darkness thanks to their sheer number, and seeing so many Shadow Demons before me gave me an oddly sensational feeling.

"As you know, Kahn will coordinate you all. Your mission is simple." A satisfied grin formed on my face.

Their numbers were in the hundreds.

""Integrate yourselves with the shadows of the targets I will provide. I'll also grant you their coordinates with Magic, so make sure you all get the job done before dawn."

"UNDERSTOOD!" They responded in their hollow tone.

"Very good. You are all dismissed."

Like spoke, they all dissipated into the air, commencing their mission.

'They're quote capable, and they must be trying their hardest to curry my favor, so they'll do the job well.'

"Now then..." After delegating tasks to my subordinates, and telling my allies to rest, it left only me.

'I suppose it's my turn.' Rising to my feet, I used the [Unknowable] Spell, erasing my presence in the room in a mere instant.

"Alright, then. Let us begin."

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Sung Han Soo arrived at his apartment building later than usual.

After getting a cab to drive him home, thanks to getting a little tipsy, he got into the apartment complex and climbed the stairs in silence.

'I sorted out the details, just like you wanted me to... but still...'

She just ditched him for her friends. It wouldn't have hurt him so much if he hadn't been planning on asking her to see a movie with him on that very day.

After watching the movie alone, he went to the bar and got some shots before he could take no more.

"Why am I surprised, though? This is how it should be, I guess..."

With another tired sigh, he reached his own apartment and opened it casually.

"... Hm?" The moment Han Soo entered, however, he instantly felt a chilling effect course through him.

'Why do I feel this way?' He took a few steps forward, looking around the dark room.

He turned on the lights, but they only served to further his confusion.

'Nothing is here. Yet why do I...?'

Han Soo's brow knotted into a scowl, and he slowly began to reach for something in his pockets.

A weapon, perhaps?

>WHOOOOOOOOOOSSSHHHH<

A silhouette suddenly emerged, charging straight toward Han Soo.

'I knew it!' His thoughts echoed, and he swiftly pulled out the gadget he had as a precautionary measure.

A smoke bomb!

>BOOOOOMMM!!!<

The thick mist covered his entire room, but considering this was his home, Han Soo already knew the location of his apartment entrance.

'I need to leave... NOW!' Carrying his legs with desperation, not showing an ounce of hesitation, Sung Han Soo rushed to the exit.

He had no idea who the man we're, considering they had masks on.

'I just need to—' He felt like he suddenly hit a wall the moment he tried to escape.

"Urgh!" Knocking himself to the ground as a result of the sheer force, Han Soo groaned in shock.

What just happened? He was certain he was at the exit!

That was when the mist cleared, and he soon realized why he should have given up from the get-go.

Blocking the entrance were three men—all of whom were already way stronger than him.

'A-ah... C Rank...' His device beeped. "What do you guys want?"

The fact that they broke into his house meant their actions or even the intention behind them, weren't legal.

"Hehehe..." The bulkier man at the center laughed.

He was most likely the one Han Solo had hit.

"... It's simple, kid. We're here to kidnap you."

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Chapter 958: The Night Incident [Pt 2]

What happens when a powerless person goes against those with strength?

The answer is obvious, isn't it?

Pure, inevitable defeat.

That was the same reality that Sung Han Soo faced in the presence of these three overwhelming figures.

They were probably on the level of average Hunters, but to him, they were monoliths he could not overcome.

Even the Special Item his grandfather gave him was undergoing repairs, so he didn't have it on him.

He was utterly powerless!

And so, as one would expect from their clash, he lost by an overwhelming margin.

Of course, Han Soo struggled, fighting with the full power he could draw from himself, but still found himself to be no match for even one of the men.

He tried calling for help, but he couldn't even world his smartphone for one second.

His opponent was too fast.

In the end—

"Geuk!!!" One sharp thrust of the enemy's hand to his throat sent all the strength in his body shimmering away.

"I hate slippery kids." The man who did this said.

His grin was the very essence of sadism. "You're a tenacious one, aren't you?"

Han Soo could not answer. The man's strong grip was tightening around his throat, prevention him from uttering even one syllable.

He could only grunt and groan.

"Sleep tight, little guy. When you wake up, the real action begins."

And so, just like that, Han Solo lost consciousness .

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'W-where...' Han Soo's blurry vision was greeted by a very spacious and unoccupied space.

It looked like a warehouse of some kind.

'Where am I?'

The weather was cold, and he was barely in anything except his vest and boxer shorts.

'A-ahh... I feel so....'

In front Han Soo sere the three men who abducted him. They were busy mumbling to themselves why they enjoying the conversation they were having.

"H-hey, you bastards!" He would have liked to say, but he had a gag on that prevented him from saying anything

Was this the fate of the weak? Expressing such suffering, so close to imminent death, and yet remaining ignorance.

'Can I at least know what I did wrong?!' He held back his tears, and his body shivered.

'Do they want money? These bastards!' His family was in a terrible state now, so money was a big problem for them.

'Still, they could just be upfront with what they want!'

Almost immediately after making this thought, a crimson warp in space appeared, and a silhouette emerged from the red portal.

"B-boss!"

"We greet you, great leader!"

"We have secured the target, per our agreement!"

Wasn't it strange how these three men acted so confident when they were at the top of the food chain, only to suddenly become bubbling idiots in the presence of their master?

The strong bowed to the stronger, and the weaker would be pushed down by those who were not as weak as they were

"It seems you've secured the property." The man's voice was dignified, yet deadly.

It sent chills down Han Soo's spine, and it took him everything to endure the malefactor's presence.

He began walking closer and closer to Han Soo, causing his heart to race faster than what anyone would consider healthy..

Was this the moment of his death? No, if they were going to kill him, why go through such an elaborate method?

They were definitely after something else!

"Oh? I like those eyes of yours. It shows you're thinking." The malefactor smiled, removing his hat.

He had dark brown hair, with glowing orange eyes. He looked younger than his voice connoted, probably in his early thirties.

"My name is Sloth. I'm one of the Seven Stars of the Shadows of Light."

'Shadows of Light?!' Han Soo's eyes widened instantly.

What did they want with him?!

"Seems you know who we are. Then again, who doesn't." An air of pride coursed through his words.

"I'll keep it short, kid. You're the grandson of the Chairman of South Korea's Hunter Association. We're going to use you as a bargaining chip to get something we want.

To think he would end up being the weak link that would make others attack his grandfather.

'I'm sorry... I'm so sorry, grandad.'

"Hey, don't cry on me, brat. We haven't even started yet." The malefactor's grin widened, displaying his sets of teeth. "We just gotta know a few secrets is all.,"

The moment Han Soo heard the word 'secret', his mind went to only one person.

'Miss Vida! Do they want to know about her?!'

It was only a matter of time before she became public, but they had taken a lot of precautions so she wouldn't be so needlessly exposed.

This was premature!

"It seems you know what I'm taking about. You're young, so I'm sure you check your smartphone a lot Those two are trending everywhere."

The man called Sloth pushed a phone in front of Han Soo, forcing him to watch a completely unexpected sight.

'H-huh? Who are those?' He was witnessing two people go head-on against an army of Grand Orcs, and several variants.

'This is the first time I'm seeing this? But... this intensity... who's the they? How were they able to ..?'

Han Soo had a plethora of questions, and his curiosity surfaced in response to the mystery presented before him.

"This happened while you were recorded to be in a Dungeon, and while the Hunter Association claims they share no attachment to those two, it's obvious that's a lie."

'Could they be... Miss Vida's friends?' Han Soo's thoughts echoed.

"It appears you know a little about the matter, kid. Mind enlightening us a little before your grandfather replies my threats, ah, I mean, invitation for discussion."

"E-eh...?"

"Come on, kid. Say something." Suddenly, the air grew heavy, and Han Soo felt as though he would be crushed by the sheer weight that was afflicting him.

It was too much!

'KEUK! Is this... the end ..?!'

As his vision blurred, Han Soo's gaze wandered to a strange figure who stood inconspicuously behind the Star, wearing a hood, and placing his hands in his pockets.

The stranger had a smile on his face, and he appeared like a ghost..

However, even if it was just a ghost, Han Soo couldn't bear the pain any longer.

Thus, he cried from the depths of his heart.

'P-please... HELP ME!'

"

[SPELLCRAFT: Reincarnation Of A Magic Scholar](#)

Chapter 959: Shadows Of Light [Pt 1]

A dark presence.

An overwhelming pressure.

An immense helplessness that seemed to swallow him whole.

Having these emotions churn within him, Sung Han Soo could do nothing but cry for help—specifically at the smiling stranger that suddenly appeared in his line of sight.

He begged with all his heart... for salvation.

And then—

"This much should be enough."

—A voice echoed in the warehouse, filling the ears of all the occupants.

"Hm?" The Star who called himself Sloth looked in the direction of the sound's origin.

The three others also did the same, their eyebrows raised in both curiosity and shock.

In everyone's line of sight was a young man, most definitely a teenager, who had yellow blond hair, though most of his face was covered in a hood.

Even though he seemed young and small, the hooded boy had a mysterious air of dominance about him.

'This guy...' Sloth thought to himself in caution as he maintained a glare

This stranger had suddenly appeared out of thin air, almost as if he was always in the room without anyone noticing.

Caution and suspicion interweaved into Sloth's heart as he spoke.

"Who... are you?"

"I'm the one you're looking for." Pulling his hood down to reveal his face, the men gasped.

They instantly recognized him to be one of the two who fought the monsters in the S Class Dungeon Break—especially Sloth.

After all, he had been watching the whole thing with his partner from a distance.

"You... figured out we were watching you?"

"Isn't that much obvious?" The impudent boy spoke, advancing with a single step.

"H-hey, how dare you talk to boss like that?!"

"Yeah! You better—"

One look from the young boy caused all the three men to instantly fall flat on their face, passing out immediately.

"Did you just kill them?" Sloth asked, his lips curling upward to form a grin.

"They're just sleeping." The stranger spoke, shrugging as he spoke nonchalantly. "They're not the ones I am after."

Once he heard this, Sloth's smile intensified. He instantly realized that this boy in front of him wanted a fight with him.

'Is that why he didn't come with his partner, even though he figured out my location?'

"I've been bored waiting for you to arrive, you know? Thankfully we can finally meet like this."

"Oh? So you knew I would be arriving here?" Sloth had many questions, and while he knew he would be able to extract as much as he could after defeating this idiot before him, he didn't mind gaining bits and bits from their interactions.

'To think that the Leader wanted us to eliminate them, and one is already in front of me. If I complete this task, and I end up taking care of the other one... wouldn't that finally make me due for a promotion? Hehe!'

He didn't care for the motivations of the enemy before him. He was nothing more than a step that would lead to his success.

'Sorry, kid. I've seen what you're capable of. You're very strong. In my base, I probably won't stand a chance, but...'

Sloth slowly brought out an orb from the inner pockets of the suit he donned.

It glowed crimson, and it had a forbidden and ominous energy circulating around it.

He could see the surprised reaction the boy gave, as well as what appeared to be caution emanating from him.

"Hehe! That's right!" He desired the fear that came from the revelation of his power.

With the powerful item he wielded, this entire fight was tipped in his favor.

'As long as I have this Blood Stone... no mere Hunter can defeat me!'

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To be honest, I expected most of what happened here.

The kidnapping of Sung Han Soo was in line with what would happen in the newly established future.

They were bound to come to this location, but I still placed Shadow Demons in the shadows of the kidnapers while I waited here for them to arrive.

Even after they came, I had to wait for their leader to show up.

As expected, he was one of the two who were spying on Kuzon and I back when we fought those monsters in the Dungeon Break.

He most likely received a mission from their leader to eliminate us, so he thought the best first step would be to kidnap the grandson of the Chairman and obtain more information.

It was indeed a smart move, when looking at it from a particular angle.

However, all of these preparations and planning only worked on the assumption that he could defeat me when it came down to a fight between the two of us.

'The glowing rock he's holding makes him even more assured of his victory.'

'What's that?' I wondered to myself, looking at the crimson orb that glowed ever so brightly.

It seemed like a culmination of Mana, but it also had an unpurified, disgusting feel to it. I had a very horrid guess what it could be, but I decided to wait until I had emerged victorious in my inevitable fight with this Shadows Of Light Executive member.

'He looks raring to go, and it seems the sphere he holds is his jackpot that leads to his assured win.'

I was had a good theory about why that was.

'The crimson orb seems to function like a Mana Core. The people in this world don't have Mana Cores, so if he harnesses that power in conjunction with the Mana Particles in his body, he should be capable of immense feats.'

From the looks of it, all the Stars of the Shadows of Light had these Artificial Mana Cores, making them immensely powerful.

'In fact... too powerful.'

I would have to wait until I was done with my fight to judge, but from the looks of things, as a terrorist group, their members were certainly too powerful not to have committed more drastic atrocities.

'Just what is their goal? What is their true identity? I have a good idea, but... I'd like it to be revealed it to everyone.'

That way, these criminals would no longer be able to hide in the shadows.

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Chapter 960: Shadows Of Light [Pt 2]

"[Skill Activation: Gravity Press]!"

Sloth was grinning to himself, glad he choice his most brutal Skill at the get-go.

In as much as he was confident of his victory, he knew his opponent was powerful as well. He would prefer a much safer, easy-to-win brawl that would end in with him on top.

As a result, using the unstoppable force of gravity to completely pummel his opponent seemed like the best course of action to take.

However...

"W-what?!"

... The target seemed completely fine despite the immense weight he was supposed to be under.

'How is this possible?!' He was using an S Class Skill, amped up by his Blood Stone.

Hunters generally couldn't learn Skills beyond their Ranks, and based on their Ranks, the number of Skills they could learn was also limited.

F Class Hunters couldn't learn any Skills.

E Class Hunters could learn only one skill.

D Class Hunters could choose to learn two E Class Skills or one D Class Skill.

C Class Hunters could choose to learn three D Class Skills or one D Class Skill and one C Class Skill.

B Class Hunters could choose to learn four C Class Skills, or two C Class Skills and one B Class Skill.

A Class Hunters could also choose to learn four B Class Skills, or one A Class Skill and two B Class Skills.

As for S Class, they could learn as many as three A Class Skills and even an S Class Skill to boot.

However, Sloth was different from mere S Class Hunters

He had advanced to a much higher Rank—a rank that wasn't known in the scaling system.

The SS Rank!

'I abandoned all my puny Skills and only focused on S Class Skills!'

At this point, he had three S Class Skills in conjunction with his Special Ability.

'If [Gravity Press] isn't working, then maybe he's resistant to gravity. Then—'

"[Skill Activation: Absolute Sub Zero]!"

It was the strongest cold-based Skill. It was absolute, just as the name implied, and most targets would die from the instant damage it gave, though it continuously gave the 'cold' damage that went over time.

However...

'What?! It's still not working?!'

At this point, Sloth realized he had to use the one Skill he was trying to avoid.

Not only did it take up too much of his energy, but also because it was an area of effect Skill that would cause a lot of commotion and draw a lot of attention to the warehouse.

However, at this point, he was desperate.

His opponent was resistant to both gravity and cold. However, there was no way he would also be resistant to an element the opposite of cold

"[Skill Activation: Hellfire]" Purple plumes of flames rushed toward the opponent, like a massive flood seeking to consume everything in its path.

>BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMM!!!<

The roof of the warehouse was flung wide open, and the dark purple flames ascended to the sky thanks to the immense explosion it made.

Sloth had used a protective barrier—his Special Ability—to defend himself and the hostage he had from the attack.

Everything else in the warehouse was razed to the ground thanks to its intensity, however.

In the end, it seemed he had to go all-out just to defeat one of the two.

'Guess I underestimated them. The leader will reprimand me a little for going this far, but I'll also be praised for accomplishing my mission.'

Sloth smiled as he stared at Sung Han Soo, the hostage.

'Do I still need this brat? The partner of this one I just killed will come looking for me in order to exact revenge. When that time comes, I'll eliminate him too.'

Carrying a brat like this around was going to be troublesome, especially now that their cover was blown.

'I'll just kill him.' A wide, murderous grin spread all over his face.

"I was wondering why you were so confident of your victory..."

Sloth's eyes bulged the moment he heard the calm tone of his opponent emanating from behind.

'W-wha—?!'

"So this is all there is to it? How disappointing."

From the plumes of smoke emerged the one who was supposedly killed by the intense explosion.

Not only was he unharmed, but a very menacing grin formed on his face.

"Your subordinates got swept up in the explosion, though. I could have saved them, but since you wanted them to die so badly... I let that happen."

>VWUUUUUUUUSSSHHHHH<

A brilliant gust of wind suddenly swept away the stale smoke that had formed around them.

However, the wind did not eliminate the smoke. Rather, it formed a wall of it around Sloth, the stranger, and the hostage.

It felt like an inescapable wall that prevented any escape, even it was nothing but thick smoke and burned dust.

"I have to admit, though, you are absurdly stronger than the usual Hunters in this world. Even S Class. By my estimation, if the Shadows of Light want to take over the world, they could have already done so..."
The boy took a step forward, and with each step, a terrible sense of foreboding approached Sloth.

"Ah, there's the Zenith, I suppose. However, surprisingly, the Zenith are hardly involved with the Shadows of Light affairs, considering most of them are domestic matters. The Zenith only get called to resolve the aftermath once the situation has spiralled out of control... an example being the triple S Class Dungeon Break that happened in this country not too long ago."

Sloth's was trembling down to his core. This young man... just how much did he know?

"The Zenith... the Shadows of Light... they're one and the same, aren't they?"

"KEUK!"

It was at this point that Sloth realized that he couldn't do anything anymore. He had grossly underestimated the opponent.

And the only payment he could give for his severe error... was death!

'Leader Chad... forgive me for my incompetence!'

Before the enemy could take another step forward, Sloth bit the poison capsule locked in his teeth.

"F-forgive m-meee...." Whispering in a hollow tone, he passed away.

Death. One would think that was the end of this man's life.

However, the one who towered above him had other plans.

"You really think you can die without my permission?"

A crooked smile occupied the blonde's face, and a single word was uttered that changed everything.

... Even death.

"[The Hanged Man]."