Former Mastermind To Chaebol Son-in-Law

Chapter 2

I'll Take Responsibility

Kang In-hyuk got back into a taxi with a look of utter exhaustion on his face.

He considered going home to gather his thoughts a bit more, but Noh Dongjun's persistent phone calls forced him to change direction.

About 30 minutes later, he arrived in front of Anguk Station, where the building of Taeshin Asset Management—a subsidiary of the Taeshin Group—stood.

Originally, he had thought about visiting the Taeshin Group's security team, where he used to work at this point in time, but since even his phone number and address didn't seem to exist now, it felt pointless.

"Ah, my employee ID!"

He'd left home in such a rush that he only managed to grab his wallet and car keys from the dining table.

Besides, he didn't even know which car the keys belonged to or where he had parked it, which was why he took a taxi.

As he was gathering his thoughts in the lobby, In-hyuk hesitated, wondering if he should return home.

At that moment, someone shouted from behind.

"Team Leader Kang!"

When he turned, a man in a dark gray suit with a refreshing presence was approaching.

In-hyuk realized who he was with the memories that surfaced at home.

At the same time, even more scenes than when they'd spoken on the phone now flashed in his mind.

'... Noh Dongjun?'

Given the current situation, he was certain of one thing.

'So these really are the original Kang In-hyuk's memories, huh?'

By then, Noh Dongjun had quickly come up beside him.

"You came because of what I called about, right? But... are you alright?"

At that moment, In-hyuk was sweating coldly from a stabbing pain in his head.

Anyone could see he looked sick, and Dongjun's concern showed.

"... I'm fine."

"Then why are you standing out here instead of going inside?"

"I left in a rush and forgot my employee ID."

Dongjun glanced at the spot near his solar plexus where nothing was hanging.

"Then let's go in together. You came to handle the thing I mentioned, right?"

It was to check the current state of his situation. Of course, he couldn't say that outright.

"Well... That's right."

"Let's go in."

Dongjun tapped his own employee ID at the entrance, and they entered together.

They took the elevator up to the 5th floor, where the Equity Investment Team was located.

When they stepped into the hallway, a chilly mood and sharp glances all focused on In-hyuk.

A man soon approached and spoke up.

"Team Leader! You haven't been answering your phone; why are you only coming now? It's chaos right now!"

It was Deputy Manager Jung Jong-hyun from Equity Investment Team 3, one of Kang In-hyuk's subordinates.

Behind him were Manager Ahn Woo-chan, deputy Oh Min-seo, and Employee Seo Jae-young.

Like he had with Dongjun, In-hyuk's memories of these people flashed through his mind like sparks, and his forehead creased.

"Hrmph—!"

"I heard from Assistant Manager Noh that you're sick... Are you alright?"

"... I'm fine. More importantly, you said there's a problem?"

"It's the A2 client investment management case handed over from Team 1. The client called, saying there seemed to be an issue with the existing investment, and they want to withdraw their funds."

In-hyuk heaved a brief sigh and looked Jung Jong-hyun directly in the eye.

"How much money is involved?"

"The funds entrusted right now total 1.3 billion won."

It was quite a large sum for a personal client, though compared to other clients of a company that dealt mostly with corporate investors, it was on the smaller side.

"First, give me all the materials related to this. I'll check and get back to you."

After giving this instruction, he went to find his seat and sat down.

As the throbbing pain in his head slowly subsided, the client's documents arrived.

Up to this point, In-hyuk had been preoccupied with analyzing his current situation rather than the documents themselves.

Ever since he entered the office, he'd been struck by the cold glares coming his way.

It was clear they disliked seeing In-hyuk, at only 33, sitting in the team leader's seat.

As he had feared, the company people recognized him as Kang In-hyuk—the Taeshin Group family's son-in-law and Taeshin Ju-ha's husband.

'I went back to the past, so why did I become a different Kang In-hyuk rather than my original self?'

There were just too many things he needed to immediately face head-on.

Still, since he could not deny the reality, he kept thinking—trying to accept it as quickly as possible.

'But as I remember, this Kang In-hyuk...'

Was supposed to die by suicide this year.

Of course, now that he had become him, In-hyuk had no intention of killing himself.

But back then, there had been many strange rumors about the suicide.

When he worked on the security team, In-hyuk had heard various stories circulating among those around him.

'People said... he missed Taeshin Ju-ha, who died in a car accident, so much that he followed her? But looking at the current situation, that's hard to believe.'

Unless it was that he got too close to the Taeshin Group's dangerous secrets and was killed for it.

At that time, Kang In-hyuk was also working at Taeshin Asset Management.

He'd originally been in the Taeshin Trading subsidiary office, but after marrying Taeshin Ju-ha last year, he was transferred here.

'Ju-ha had outstanding management skills but was always held back because she was Tae Seok-hyun's illegitimate child. Even her marriage to this Kang In-hyuk was for that reason...'

If she ever ended up marrying one of the chaebol heirs, it was obvious she would gain the financial power and opportunities to show her ability.

'That's why there were rumors that Taeshin Ju-ha was killed. Moreover, that was supposed to be this year too...'

Right after her wedding with Kang In-hyuk last year, Ju-ha went out as head of the New York branch of Taeshin Asset Management.

She hadn't returned to Korea once until this year, when she died in a car accident soon after her homecoming.

According to the timeline, that was the situation In-hyuk remembered.

'Of all people, I had to become the guy in this damned scenario...'

In-hyuk still kept seeing Baek Si-hwan's face flickering before his eyes. He wanted to tear him apart if he ran into him now.

This was also one of the reasons he hadn't sought out the Taeshin Trading security team.

If everything else was the same as before—except for himself—then Baek Si-hwan would also surely be there.

If he really was back in the past, he needed far more thorough preparation and caution for his revenge than simply targeting Baek Si-hwan or his backers.

While caught up in such torment, In-hyuk finally focused on the documents handed over by Deputy Manager Jung Jong-hyun.

'The client's name is Jang Hyung-cheol. He owned land near Pangyo and became rich by coincidence when the New Town Development was announced in 2004. But every time he invests, he comes complaining after hearing strange rumors from somewhere. He's blacklisted—a notorious client. Other companies say bad things about him too...'

The memory surfaced with a mild headache—a not-so-large chunk of information.

He'd been a client managed by Equity Investment Team 1.

Since his investment wasn't large and he only ever complained, he'd been foisted off as a nuisance to Kang In-hyuk.

'If it were the old me, I would've struggled with this. And with Jang Hyung-cheol...!'

Suddenly, a memory came to him, and In-hyuk picked up the phone on his desk and dialed Jang Hyung-cheol's number.

[Who's this?]

"This is Kang In-hyuk from Taeshin Asset Management."

[What the—? Do you know how long it's been since I called, and you're only getting back to me now?!]

The voice was full of irritation.

"I apologize for the late response. I heard you contacted us because you were concerned about the fund product we recommended?"

[Everyone says it's dangerous! You pitch me that kind of product, then tell me it's a safe investment? If my money disappears there, will you take responsibility? And after all that, you go and switch the manager without even explaining?]

He had already read up on the fund product Jang Hyung-cheol was talking about.

It wasn't particularly dangerous. Long-term, it wouldn't be a bad stock investment product.

But Jang always heard odd things from somewhere and then never actually trusted those managing his money.

"Then, would you like me to recommend a stable blue-chip investment or a fund?"

[What's the annual rate of return there?]

"The place I want to recommend provides a maximum of about 130% annually."

Thirty percent on 1.3 billion won was about 390 million won.

But Jang Hyung-cheol's response was unimpressed.

[Only that much?]

"Then are you looking for a high-yield, short-term product? In that case, while the risks are high, you could secure up to 220% returns in a short period."

[How risky is it?]

"Depending on market conditions, the principal could not only be lost—it could go into a deficit."

This time, Jang Hyung-cheol exploded.

[Are you crazy? Are you telling me to lose all my money?!]

Even as his voice grew rowdier, In-hyuk spoke calmly.

"This time, why not trust me and invest? You won't regret it."

[Are you saying you'll take responsibility for it?]

In-hyuk pressed his temple with his free hand and replied.

"I will."

[...]

Perhaps due to his resolutely firm answer, Jang Hyung-cheol was rendered speechless for a moment.

"If you don't want to, you can withdraw your entire investment. What will you do?"

[Are you really going to take responsibility?]

"As I said."

[... Fine. I'll trust you. But if the investment fails, you'd better be prepared.]

"Do as you wish."

That concluded the call.

Meanwhile, the brows of those watching In-hyuk from nearby furrowed slightly.

Then Deputy Manager Jung Jong-hyun approached at once.

"Team Leader, how could you make such a promise to the client?"

"What?"

"Who can guarantee the investment's returns? And you said a maximum of 220%... twice what was entrusted. That's just not possible, is it?"

From what he knew, Kang In-hyuk was the quietly passive type.

Last year, when he moved from Taeshin Trading to Taeshin Asset Management, he'd turned a blind eye even as rumors of "Cinderella promotions" and "parachute hires" spread.

But just now, his demeanor had been nothing like that.

"Did I ask Deputy Jung Jong-hyun to be responsible?"

"... Pardon?"

"I said I'll take responsibility. So stop complaining and get back to your seat."

"But—!"

"Unless you'd rather handle it yourself?"

"...."

"And compile and send me all the files on the asset management cases Team 3 is handling so far. Email them."

"All of them?"

At this, In-hyuk stared hard at Jung Jong-hyun.

"Are you going to make me say it twice?"

In-hyuk's sharpened gaze pierced him. Jung Jong-hyun, meeting his eyes, flinched in surprise.

"I'm taking today as annual leave. I'll grab the necessary files and head home. Everyone else, finish up and head out when you're done."

Jung was unable to say anything further and returned to his seat.

In-hyuk looked away from him and moved his hand toward his drawer.

'... What's this?'

A scene that felt both unfamiliar and familiar overlapped before his eyes.

Instinctively, his hand opened the bottom drawer and groped along the surface underneath the upper drawer.

He carefully scratched off something stuck there with his fingernail.

A moment later, out came a black SD card, no larger than a fingernail.

'Something the original Kang In-hyuk hid?'

As expected, related memories began surfacing one after another.

Not long ago, he had been given this by recruiting a finance staff member from a company called H&T Fund.

Inside were records of the company's account transfers.

With a deeply furrowed brow, In-hyuk took it out along with other files from the drawer and tucked it into his wallet.

He wanted to check it right away, but since it was confidential material, using a company computer was dangerous.

'What the hell was this guy planning?'

Bzz bzz— Bzz bzz—

Just then, the phone lying next to his wallet began to vibrate.

【010—△△△△—△△△△】

It was an unsaved number.

No memories surfaced, unlike before.

"... Hello?"

He pressed the call button and spoke quietly. A voice came from the other side.

[It's me.]

As soon as he heard the voice, a headache hit In-hyuk hard.

At the same time, memories of having received similar calls before surfaced, telling him who it was.

'Lee Jae-jun...'

He didn't recognize him from the voice alone, but the face that came to mind was unmistakable.

At this point in time, he was both the second son of Taeshin Group's chairman Tae Gun-seung and the exclusive bodyguard to Tae Seokho, executive director of Taeshin Trading.

"What's the matter?"

[He would like to see you today. By 8 PM at the same place as last time. Please make sure you're not being followed.]

The place and even the conversation from back then came to mind.

"Understood."

The call ended.

Today, just after coming back to the past, things just kept hitting him like a storm...

As he double-checked his phone screen dimming, the pain in his head throbbed again.

'So Kang In-hyuk was supposed to be Tae Seok-hyun's man. Or was that not the case?'

It had been Tae Seok-hyun—Ju-ha's father—who originally arranged for Taeshin Ju-ha to marry Kang In-hyuk.

But unexpectedly, Tae Seok-hyun's younger brother, Tae Seokho, was now reaching out.

Judging from his memories, Kang In-hyuk had met with Tae Seokho occasionally.