**Part 0: Prologue[Daily Quest is now available.]**

An articulate voice of a young female.

This was definitely not a game. Of course, it wasn't a dream, either.

But, her voice definitely resounded within my head. h.e.l.l, I could even see the quest window floating in mid-air, too.

'Could it be... Even today?"

While fervently praying in my head, I cautiously opened the information window.

Ttiring....

[Daily Quest: Preparations to become strong]

Press-up, 100 times: Incomplete (0/100)

Sit-up, 100 times: Incomplete (0/100)

Squat, 100 times: Incomplete (0/100)

Running, 10 km: Incomplete (0/10)

※Warning: Incompletion of Daily Quests will result in appropriate levels of punishment.

As soon as I got to confirm the contents of the Daily Quest, I began cussing out reflexively.

"Awww... Just how many days has it been already?!"

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Part 1: Rank E Hunter

Rank E Hunter, Seong Jin-Woo.

No matter where he went, this t.i.tle always followed him around.

Jin-Woo's overall strength was almost the same as a regular human being. With the exception of being a bit stronger and his wounds healing slightly faster, Jin-Woo was about the same as regular people in every other aspect.

It was par for the course then, that he'd always end up getting injured. He nearly died several times, too.

Of course, it wasn't as if Seong Jin-Woo liked being a Hunter.

The work was dangerous, others made fun of him, and to confound the matters even further, the pay was pretty pathetic, as well.

If it weren't for the medical aid paid out by the Hunter a.s.sociation to the Hunters in their "payroll", he'd have turned in his hunter licence and quit by now, and live his life like a regular person.

Unfortunately, someone like Seong Jin-Woo, in his mid-twenties and lacking in any tangible job skills, there was no other way but to remain as a Hunter if he wanted to pay for his mother's hospital fee of millions of won every month.

Should one say that he had no choice in the matter?

That was why, even though he didn't want to, he simply had to partic.i.p.ate in the raid supervised by the a.s.sociation.

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Hunters operating within the same area tended to know each other pretty well. In the event of a Gate opening up, all the Hunters in that district would be asked to come, that's why.

The Hunters who had arrived early sipped on the cups of coffee handed out by the a.s.sociation's employee and shared cordial greetings with each other.

"Oh, hey. Mister Kim, Over here. Here."

"Oh? Mister Park, what are you doing here? I thought you were giving up on being a Hunter?"

"Well, that... My wife is pregnant with our second child."

"Hahahaha, is that so. Yeah, for a Hunter to earn big in one go, partic.i.p.ating in a raid is the best, isn't it."

Mister Kim jovially burst out in laughter. Mister Park followed suit with a sheepish chuckle, before asking Kim.

"By the way, why do I feel like that the a.s.sociation is calling on us less and less nowadays? Did the number of Gates decrease or something?"

"Eii, of course not. That's only because the Guilds are getting all worked up over clearing the Gates; it's got nothing to do with the a.s.sociation. I hear that various Guilds are jumping in with both feet since there is big profit involved in this whole thing."

"Well, in that case, since this raid is being supervised by the a.s.sociation, it should be safe, no?"

Mister Park took a glance around as if he was getting nervous.

If a Guild was not involved today, that meant there wasn't enough profit to be had, and if there wasn't enough profit to be had, then that could only mean that this particular Gate's difficulty would be low.

Of course, nothing in this world was 100% absolute.

It wasn't just Mister Park; other Hunters were nervously glancing around as well.

"Hmm. I wonder...."

Mister Kim finished the rest of his coffee while avoiding answering his friend, before spotting a certain someone and raised his hand in happiness.

"Uh! He's here. Hey, Mister Seong!! Mister Seong!"

Other Hunters also displayed joy at discovering that young man.

"Ah, h.e.l.lo."

It was none other than Seong Jin-Woo.

Jin-Woo performed a simple nod of the head at the joyous Mister Kim and walked by.

After making sure Jin-Woo was well out of earshot, Mister Kim began sn.i.g.g.e.ring while confidently speaking up.

"So, Jin-Woo showed up. Then it's going to okay today, too."

Mister Park's eyes widened up and he hurriedly asked Kim.

"What was that? Is that Hunter Seong Jin-Woo really strong?"

"Ahh. Right, of course, you wouldn't know who he is. He's a Hunter who started working shortly after you left, you see. However, every Hunter here knows who that kid is by now."

"He's really that strong? Wait, why is he working for the a.s.sociation, then? Why not for a Guild or as a freelancer?"

Kim sn.i.g.g.e.red some more before narrowing his eyes.

"You know what that guy's nickname is?"

"How should I know that? C'mon, man. Just tell me already."

"Humanity's weakest weapon."

"....Weakest? Not something like, the ultimate weapon?"

"Dude, that's the nickname for the rank S Hunter Choi Jong-In. That kid is the 'weakest weapon'. I'm pretty sure he's the weakest Hunter in the Republic of Korea."

"Really?"

Park began frowning deeply.

Why would other Hunters greet this Seong Jin-Woo if he was really that weak? After all, didn't they need someone to trust their backs if things went south?

Park couldn't really understand the reactions of other Hunters.

When Park's head tilted this way and that, Kim chuckled and poked the side of Park with his elbow.

"Eii! The raids Seong Jin-Woo partic.i.p.ates in will only have low difficulty because he's so weak. The a.s.sociation would never entrust him with a tough job, don't you get that? They don't want to see him get killed, right?"

Only then did Park's expression brightened up.

"R-right. Yeah."

His wife was deeply worried about him since this would be his first raid in quite a while. Honestly, even he himself was worried, too. However, now that he listened to Kim's words, he felt like a weight was lifted off his mind.

Kim continued on.

"That guy, there was a rumour not too long ago that said, he got injured partic.i.p.ating in a raid of a rank E Gate and spent a week in the hospital."

"A Hunter got injured by a rank E Gate?"

"That's right. No one expected to see a Hunter getting injured during a rank E Gate raid, so they didn't even bring along a Healer, apparently!"

"That's why he spent a week in a hospital?! Pu-hahaha!"

When Park began guffawing too loudly, Kim hurriedly hushed him.

"Stop it, man. Mister Seong might hear you."

"Aigoo. I didn't think of that."

Park cautiously checked Jin-Woo's reactions as he continued to giggle.

Thankfully, the distance was far enough and the youth didn't seem to have heard them.

Of course, they were mistaken.

'I can hear everything, you geezers.'

A bitter smile formed on Jin-Woo as he tried hard to ignore them. At times like today, he couldn't help but blame his unusually-acute sense of hearing.

It seemed that he arrived too early and the raid was yet to commence.

'Did I arrive too early?'

Jin-Woo looked around to while away the waiting time, spotted the a.s.sociation employee handing out warm coffee, and walked closer.

"Can I get a cup of coffee as well?"

"Oh. Seong Jin-Woo Hunter-nim... I'm really sorry, but we ran out of coffee just now."

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"......"

The cold Winter breeze brushed past the tip of his nose.

Jin-Woo quietly wiped his nose with his index finger.

What a sad day it was, for the coffee to run out as soon as it was his turn to get one.

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"Why do you persist on being a Hunter, Mister Seong Jin-Woo?"

"I'm sorry."

Jin-Woo lowered his head and apologised.

The young, beautiful girl using healing magic in front of Jin-Woo, Yi Ju-Hui showed how unhappy she was with a pouting expression.

"I'm not trying to get you to apologise, you know? I'm only worried about you. If you continue fighting this way, sooner or later you'll be faced with a truly dangerous situation."

Jin-Woo glanced past Yi Ju-Hui's shoulders and took a look at other Hunters fighting over yonder.

When one entered through the Gate, one would arrive at a place called 'dungeon'. The rank of this particular dungeon should be around D.

A dozen-plus Hunters were taking care of the monsters inside this dungeon without so much as breaking a sweat.

Unfortunately, for a rank E, such a feat was nearly impossible.

Normally, the job of healing the injured Hunters from the back fell on the Healers. Since he always got injured during raids, Jin-Woo was rather well-known among the Healers.

Yi Ju-Hui cautiously asked him.

"Perchance, is there a reason why you can't give up being a Hunter?"

Jin-Woo resolutely shook his head.

He didn't want to reveal anything personal to other people.

"I'm only doing this as a hobby. If I don't do this, I'll probably die of boredom, actually."

Yi Ju-Hui pouted even more.

"If you continue on with this hobby of yours, soon you'd be raiding a dungeon in the netherworld, you know?"

Jin-Woo was taken off-guard from her remark and ended up chuckling out loudly.

Thanks to that, Yi Ju-Hui's nagging intensified.

"Ah, ahh!! Don't laugh! Don't! Your injuries might get worse!!"

Jin-Woo giggled before asking her.

"Where did you even learn to say stuff like that?"

"What do you mean, where? It's from Mister Kim waaay over there."

"Aigoo, that ahjussi really went and did it, didn't he...."

As they chatted and laughed, his treatment was almost over.

It was already too late by then, though. It seemed that the raid was pretty much over now.

Jin-Woo's expression hardened.

'I only killed a single monster today.'

A rank E creature, no less. Seong Jin-Woo began fidgeting with the rank E magic crystal in his hand.

The lowest grade magic crystal from a rank E monster fetched less than hundred thousand won. For something he bet his life to earn, it was a pathetically small amount. (TL: Just over $88.)

'A magic crystal from a rank C monster can sell for over ten million won, though....' (TL: $8830+)

Too bad, a rank E Hunter such as himself couldn't even attempt to kill a monster with a rank as high as C.

Out of the blue, someone shouted out.

"Uh? Hey, there's another entrance over here."

The nearby Hunters rushed over there.

"Huh, it's true."

"There really is another path?"

Just as that Hunter said, there was an entrance hidden within the dungeon itself.

"A dual dungeon, is it... So, such a thing actually exists for real...."

Mister Song, possessing over ten years' experience as a Hunter, looked into the hidden entrance and displayed how surprised he was.

The interior of the hidden, cave-like pa.s.sage was dark and nothing could be seen. Mister Song activated his speciality, flame magic, and tossed it further forward into the pa.s.sage.

The flame flew forward and illuminated the interior. The pa.s.sageway seemed to go on forever. Soon enough, the flame lost its forward momentum, fell to the ground and smouldered for a bit before flickering out of existence.

The pa.s.sage was shrouded in darkness once more.

"Hmm..... Everyone, gather around. Let's have a meeting."

The unspoken leader of this raid, Mister Song, called for other Hunters to gather around. Jin-Woo's treatment was over by then, so he and Yi Ju-Hui also joined in.

Song spoke up while sweeping his gaze over the gathered Hunters.

"As you know very well, a Gate will not close unless the dungeon's boss is killed. Since the Gate itself is still intact even though we took care of all the monsters here, that can only mean that the boss is beyond that pa.s.sageway."

Song pointed towards the hidden entrance.

Hunters exchanged meaningful glances and nodded their heads. No one could disagree with that notion.

Song continued on.

"Now normally, we're supposed to relay this information back to the a.s.sociation and wait for their decision first, but... But, if we do that, we might end up handing over the task of killing the boss to other Hunters, and our takings for today's raid would decrease by a lot."

The expressions of the Hunters crumpled.

Park's face hardened more than anyone else since he needed a lot of cash for his wife's pregnancy.

'Postnatal care eats up so much cash nowadays, you know...'

At this rate, there'd be no meaning behind him risking his life to partic.i.p.ate in this raid.

"That's why I'd prefer if we took care of the boss before leaving this dungeon... So, what do you all think?"

Hunters fell into a deep contemplation.

"...."

"...."

The truth was, no one here could figure out the current situation and so, their safety could not be guaranteed. However, the difficulty of this particular dungeon proved to be very low.

So, the hidden dungeon within it couldn't have been that difficult, either.

"Hmm, hmm."

Song coughed to draw everyone's attention to himself.

"Since we have seventeen people here, let's put this to a vote, shall we? Once the decision has been made, no one complains. So? How about it?"

Others nodded their heads after hearing Song's suggestion. No one was disagreeing with him.

"I vote for going ahead."

Song raised his hand.

And then, other Hunters began raising their hands one by one.

"Me too."

"Count me in as well."

Park was the first to raise his hand, followed shortly after by Kim and a few other Hunters.

Of course, those disagreeing were plentiful, too.

"Let's go back."

"I feel that it'd be better to wait for the a.s.sociation's decision."

The two opposing camps were neck and neck and eventually, the final votes came down to Jin-Woo and Yi Ju-Hui.

"I'm sorry...."

Yi Ju-Hui bowed to Song and added her vote to 'retreat' camp.

And so, the vote count for 'go ahead' and 'retreat' was at 8:8.

A deadlock.

Song asked the hesitant Seong Jin-Woo next.

"And you, Mister Seong?"

< chapter="" 1=""> Fin.

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**Everything now depended on Seong Jin-Woo's decision.**

Jin-Woo's fingers grasped tight the rank E magic crystal in his hand as he took a glance next to him.

Yi Ju-Hui was shaking her head at him. It looked like she was deeply worried.

Actually, Jin-Woo was worried inwardly as well. Now normally, he would never try to take on any unnecessary risk. Not only did he lack the abilities to do so, but he was also not brave enough, too.

However, Jin-Woo had a younger sister who was about to become a university student in the coming months.

'I've no money saved up....'

Currently, Jin-Woo was twenty-four years old.

He was at an age where he should be concentrating on his academic pursuits, but he gave up on that dream because, well, he had no money. He sure as h.e.l.l didn't want his little sister to go through the same sacrifice, the same pain as he did.

Right now, every cent was precious to him.

It wasn't only Mister Park who needed a big score today.

Jin-Woo raised his hand up high.

"I vote for going ahead."

It was then, he heard a soft sigh of resignation coming from his side.

Part 2: The Dual Dungeon

The pa.s.sageway went on and on forever.

In front, Mister Song and other strong Hunters had taken the lead. Song had summoned a small flame on top of his palm to illuminate the way forward.

Mister Kim asked him as he walked alongside Song.

"We've walked really far, haven't we? Shouldn't we consider the time we need to escape from here as well?"

"How long have we been walking?"

Kim looked at his wrist.w.a.tch.

"Around.... forty minutes."

"A Gate shuts down completely one hour after the boss is killed, so we have a window of twenty minutes left or so."

"If we can't see the boss in the next twenty minutes, I suggest that we should just give up."

"I guess so."

Song nodded his head for a while, before pointing to his back with his thumb.

"Mister Kim? It's dark out in front, so why don't you position yourself behind me?"

Kim stared at Song's flames for a second or two, before he wordlessly pulled out his smartphone and switched on the screen.

And then, the pa.s.sageway got illuminated rather brightly.

"..."

Song alternated his gaze between his flame and the smartphone, before he too wordlessly began searching for his own phone.

\*\*\*

The very back of the group was the spot reserved for Seong Jin-Woo, who was injured pretty badly not too long ago, and Yi Ju-Hui, who didn't possess any combat skills whatsoever.

Jin-Woo scratched the back of his neck.

"Pardon me, I... I'm really sorry."

"About what?"

"About, you know, dragging you here against your wishes."

"I'm fine with it, so you don't need to mind me."

Jin-Woo cautiously studied Ju-Hui's expression. She definitely did not look fine at all.

Jin-Woo tilted his head this way and that while trying to read her mood better, before he asked her again, even more cautious than before.

"Are you... really fine?"

That prompted Ju-Hui to shift her gaze towards him.

"Of course I'm not. Are you of a sane mind?! If you were stabbed a couple of inches higher, you'd have a hole in your heart by now! And, what about those injuries on your arms and legs? I worked so hard to heal you somehow, yet you wish to throw yourself into yet another dungeon?? Plus, you don't even know where we're going, too!"

She spoke so quickly that Jin-Woo felt like his mind was getting numb from hearing her.

However, she was right about everything.

If it weren't for the presence of the outstanding Healer ranked B, Yi Ju-Hui, Jin-Woo wouldn't have been able to carry on living unaffected, never mind working as a Hunter. It was a small wonder why such high ranked and hard-to-find Healers were valued so greatly within the halls of the a.s.sociation.

'Wait, now that I think about it, I owe Miss Ju-Hui a lot, don't I?'

Ju-Hui was a Healer-type Hunter, a rarest of the rare breeds.

Not only that, she was a genius ranked at 'B' as well.

The a.s.sociation always asked her to heal the injured Hunters whenever a Gate opened up. And whenever Jin-Woo partic.i.p.ated in a raid, he'd almost always end up sitting down next to her.

"Are you in pain? Please hold on for a little while longer."

"Haven't I seen you before....? By any chance, are you the person from the last time?"

"You're injured again?"

"It's like, we're running into each other quite often nowadays, isn't it?"

"You said that your name is Mister Jin-Woo? Well, that... Is it going to be alright?"

"Maybe, uhm, this life of a Hunter doesn't really suit you...."

"....You're here again."

"Show me your arm. No, not that one. Use bandages on that arm. I meant the other one with the bone fracture."

At the moment, it was way past the point of Jin-Woo feeling grateful for everything she had done, and firmly into the territory of him being apologetic for inconveniencing her.

"..."

When Jin-Woo looked dispirited, Ju-Hui also felt a bit bad about scolding him just now and her att.i.tude softened up considerably.

"You're really sorry?"

"Yes, I am."

Ju-Hui fell into a deep contemplation for a bit, before she began gazing at him with the corner of her eyes and her lips slowly arched up.

"If you're really sorry, then... how about you buy me dinner sometime?"

Now that was a totally unexpected offer.

Jin-Woo looked at her with an expression of surprise and found a teasing smile etched on her face like a teenage girl.

'A teen girl, huh.....'

The truth was, Ju-Hui was still a young girl who had barely entered her twenties.

Didn't she say that she'd be twenty-one next year?

If her long hair was replaced with something shorter, and her current attire was swapped out for a school uniform, she'd completely look like high school senior.

His wandering mind pictured the image of Ju-Hui in a school uniform and his face reddened up somewhat.

When Jin-Woo hesitated with his answer, Ju-Hui's cheeks began puffing up like a balloon.

"What the... You don't want to buy me dinner?"

It happened, right then.

Suddenly, it became quite hectic out in front.

"We found it!!"

"It's the boss chamber!"

Jin-Woo and Ju-Hui's gazes automatically shifted to the front.

And they saw a huge stone door blocking the pa.s.sage.

Hunters immediately surrounded this door.

"What is this? Why is there a door at the end of the cavern?"

"Have we ever encountered a boss chamber with a door before?"

"This is definitely the first time, I'm sure of it."

"This... Doesn't this feel strangely dangerous?"

Hunters began to express their doubts and fears one at the time.

Since their own lives were on the line here, they had to be cautious and meticulous.

However, if one were to become too cautious, one would end up failing to grasp the heaven-sent opportunity in the first place. Mister Song figured this was one such case.

"Are you all planning to return empty-handed after coming this far?"

Song placed his hands on the door.

"If that's what you want, knock yourselves out. I'm pushing ahead, even if it means I'll be going alone."

Song was a rank C Hunter with ten years of experience.

If it weren't for his age, which was over sixty, he'd be making a killing in a big Guild by now thanks to his excellent skills.

And when a Hunter like that voiced his opinion with such confidence, others began to feel less anxious than before.

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"Wait a minute."

A couple of Hunters began recalling rumours of dual dungeons.

"I heard that there are incredible treasures hidden within dual dungeons."

"Yeah, I heard that a certain small to medium Guild found a dual dungeon and grew into a large Guild almost overnight."

"Monsters inside a dungeon always possess roughly the similar ranks no matter where they are located, so the hunt itself should not be too difficult..."

What if there were incredible treasures hidden with the dual dungeon just as the rumours said, and the monsters beyond this door were about the same difficulty as the rank D, E creatures they fought until now?

'I can't let that old man monopolise all the treasure.'

'No freaking way.'

'Postnatal care, the school fee for the first born kid, and let's not forget, this month's rent is almost due, too....'

The opinions of the Hunters were now on the same page.

Jin-Woo, too, steeled himself.

'I can't return home with just a single rank E magic crystal. At a bare minimum, I gotta kill a rank D, no, one more rank E monster!!'

It didn't even have to be a monster, too.

'If it's treasure instead....'

Treasures or rare loot found in a dungeon would normally be divided equally among all the partic.i.p.ants in a raid. It was quite a different way of sharing the rewards where one could only take possession of magic crystals one procured by themselves.

'If we score big today, then things might improve at home for a while.'

Jin-Woo nervously swallowed down his saliva.

Ju-Hui saw his determined expression and asked him.

"Is that how the expression of someone who's a Hunter as a hobby looks like?"

Jin-Woo shrugged his shoulders.

"Who'd bet their lives in their main line of profession nowadays? Unless it's a hobby, obviously."

".....Eh?"

Just as a dumbfounded expression formed on Ju-Hui's face, Song pushed the dungeon's door and it creaked open.

There must've been some sort of mechanism installed on the heavy-looking door, since the physical strength of a sixty-year-old man was enough to easily open it.

Slam!

Now that the door was wide open, the huge open interior revealed itself. Hunters hurriedly rushed in.

"Let's go in as well."

Jin-Woo feared that he'd fall behind, so he grasped Ju-Hui's hand and took the lead.

"Ah....."

Ju-Hui's face reddened slightly as she followed after him.

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As soon as Hunters sat foot inside, flames erupted on the numerous torches packed tightly on the walls all at the same time. Thanks to that, the interior brightened up considerably.

"What's the heck? The lights came on by themselves?"

"First time seeing a dungeon like this one."

"Something's.... different about this place."

Hunters cautiously studied their surroundings. The overall atmosphere of the place was similar to that of an ancient temple.

Not only that, an old and somewhat decrepit temple, something that might be buried and hidden beneath the ground; moss and weed could be seen sporadically on the floor, walls and the ceiling.

Several Hunters shrunk back and shuddered slightly.

"it's a bit creepy in here, isn't it?"

"Doesn't it feel like we're being watched by someone?"

Leaving behind the scared Hunters, the three, four strongest of the group went in deeper.

"Tsk! Don't say something that might jinx us, will ya?"

"Let's end this quickly and go home."

The interior was nonsensically huge. The chamber was shaped like a giant dome. It was as large as several Olympic stadiums, the one found in Seoul, were put together – no, maybe it was even bigger than that.

However, one couldn't help but feel that it was still inadequate.

The reason for that was rather obvious.

"That.... that thing over there...."

"N-no freaking way that thing's the boss, right?"

In the deepest part of the dome, something so logic-defyingly humongous sat on a throne just as big as itself. It was none other than a huge stone statue of a G.o.d!

"Oh, my G.o.d...."

"Wow."

Shocked gasps leaked out from the Hunters.

The first image popping up in Jin-Woo's head was of the Statue of Liberty in New York. If that statue sat down on a chair, wouldn't it be as big as that statue of the unknown G.o.d?

Well, Liberty was a woman, while the one sitting on the throne was a dude, though.

'No, hang on. Maybe it's even bigger than that...'

Hunters began nervously swallowing their saliva near the foot of the G.o.d statue. The taut and heavy apprehension and anxiety were clear to see on their faces as they worried about this statue being the dungeon's boss.

'…....'

However, the statue did not budge an inch.

What a fortunate thing that was.

"Whew...."

Even Song spat out a sigh of relief.

"Okay, everyone. Spread out."

Now that they found some leeway, Hunters split among themselves and began searching around the vicinity.

"I don't think there's a single monster in here."

"You think so, too?"

"Never mind a monster, I can't even see a single bug, too."

The chamber of the stone G.o.d statue might have been ma.s.sive, yet its actual inner structure was on the simpler side. On the walls, countless torches could be found there. And in front of these walls, more stone statues, slightly taller than a human being, stood tall and unmoving. There were lots of them here as well, found at a certain distance from one another.

"They are all rather beautiful, aren't they?"

"It's like, they are works of art, no?"

Objects held by each of the stone statues were varied and different.

Some held weapons, there was one with a book, some carried musical instruments, and even torches.

"It's as if...."

"They are like statues of a holy temple or something."

Song finished what Kim wanted to say.

"Mm?"

Then, Song found something beneath his feet.

"This... Isn't this a magic formation?"

He found a magic formation that he had never seen before located in the middle of this temple.

It was then.

"Excuse me, Mister Song? Ahjussi, something's written here. Can you come over here and take a look?"

One of the Hunters discovered a statue that was different from others and called out to Song.

Song stopped studying the magic formation and got up from the floor. Other Hunters all gathered around the statue Song was headed off to.

Only this statue featured a pair of wings and carried a stone slate. What the Hunters focused on was the letters carved into this slate. Song took a sweeping look at the slate and muttered to no one in particular.

"It's Rune alphabet."

The Rune 'alphabet'.

Words that could not be found anywhere on Earth, and found only within dungeons; only the Hunters who had 'awakened' the magic-related professions could decipher them.

"The laws of the Karutenon temple."

Song read the very first verse.

With a deeply nervous face, Jin-Woo listened to the contents of the slate, as read out by Mister Song.

However, someone suddenly tugged at his arm.

When he looked back, he spotted Ju-Hui and her deathly-pale complexion.

< chapter="" 2=""> Fin.

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**Ju-Hui's complexion was incredibly poor; Seong Jin-Woo was deeply taken aback by this sight.**

"What's wrong? Are you ill somewhere?"

"T-there. Over there."

Jin-Woo's eyes followed Ju-Hui's trembling pointing finger. She was pointing at the giant G.o.d statue. More specifically, she was pointing at the G.o.d statue's face.

Jin-Woo could only tilt his head in confusion because it looked pretty much the same as before.

"....?"

Ju-Hui stuttered some words out.

"The, the eyes... The eyes of the G.o.d statue moved towards us. Just now."

"Pardon me?"

Jin-Woo looked again several times, but nothing seemed to have changed. There was no visible change to the G.o.d statue.

"Eii... I'm sure you've made a mistake."

However, it seemed like Ju-Hui didn't hear him; her head stayed lowered, and as she held onto Jin-Woo's arm, her entire body trembled even harder.

'Hang on a sec here.'

Even Jin-Woo picked up on this strange but ominous sensation now. The world was eerily quiet. So much so, it felt just too bizarre.

'No sounds....?'

Even the sounds of the flames burning on the torches could not be heard anymore.

"First law."

In the meantime, Song's voice continued on as he read the contents of the slate.

"Worship the G.o.d. Second law. Exalt the G.o.d. Third law. Prove your piety. Those who do not keep to these laws shall not leave this place alive."

It was then.

SLAM!!

Everyone was jolted back to their senses at the sudden explosion of noise.

"What, what was that?!"

"Where did that sudden noise come from?!"

The first person to notice the change in the situation was none other than Jin-Woo. Because his senses were running at full tilt already, he could tell where the noise was coming from right away.

"The door!! The door is closed!!"

As soon as Jin-Woo shouted out, everyone shifted their gazes towards the doorway. The door they left open was now firmly shut close.

"G.o.d d\*mn it! I can't stand this!"

The Hunter who was the first to oppose the idea of continued exploration of the dungeon began spitting out cusses as he took large strides towards the door.

"I'm going home, so you all can have fun with a boss or treasures or whatever."

That Hunter glared at Song with an expression that contained all of his dissatisfaction before he spun his head around and angrily grabbed the door handle.

It happened, then.

Song's eyes grew extra large.

"No!!"

Splash!

The area above the Hunter's neck suddenly vanished. The headless body powerlessly collapsed to the ground.

"K, kkkkyaaachk?!"

"Uwaa?! Uwaak!!"

Hunters began screaming their heads off.

The stone statue that smashed a human's head apart with a steel mace returned to its original spot next to the door, as if nothing important had happened, its body completely covered in fresh blood.

"That, that thing can move?!"

"What the h.e.l.l?? Does that mean every statue in here can move, too?!"

"We gotta fight against these things?"

"I couldn't even see that d\*mn thing swing the mace, so how can I?!"

Unlike others here, though, Jin-Woo knew the truth.

….Their troubles only had just begun.

Didn't Ju-Hui say it earlier?

"The, the eyes... The eyes of the G.o.d statue moved towards us. Just now."

'If what she said is true....'

A chill rapidly ran down his spine.

Jin-Woo forced his stiff neck to turn around so he could look behind him.

"....Oh, sh\*t."

The stone statue of the G.o.d was looking down at him.

Part 3: Commencement of the attack

It was then, the G.o.d statue's two black eyes changed to red.

Was this the instincts of a Hunter?

No, the instincts of a living being were sending out urgent warning signals.

Something was coming.

Something none of them could contend with!

Jin-Woo turned towards the other Hunters and cried out as loudly as he could.

"Get down!!"

Almost at the same time, red beams of light shot out from the eyes of the G.o.d statue. Jin-Woo hugged Ju-Hui and threw their bodies to the floor.

BUZZZ!!

The beam shot right by the spot Jin-Woo had been standing.

A tenth of a second.

No, he survived by one-hundredth of a second.

That was definitely too close for comfort.

Unfortunately, not everyone was as lucky as Jin-Woo.

"Uwaaahk?!"

"Euh-ahahack!!"

Those who were swallowed up by the red light evaporated where they stood. Only the ashes of what used to be human Hunters remained where the beam flew past.

The screams came not from the dead Hunters, but those who witnessed their final moments from the sidelines, actually.

"What the f\*ck was that?!"

"Euh, euh-euh..."

"How, how can such a thing even be..."

The remaining Hunters began freaking out.

Out of the seventeen Hunters, only eleven survived.

Not one of them had ever experienced such a powerful attack before in their lives.

'I barely made it because he told me to get down.'

'If it wasn't for Mister Seong's shouts....'

Hunters stared at Jin-Woo while nervously swallowing their saliva. Jin-Woo turned out to be their unlikely saviour. Without his timely warning, they could only imagine what would've happened to them and that thought sent chills down their spines.

"....."

While still lying prostrate on the ground, Jin-Woo glared at the G.o.d statue.

Its eyes were still glowing in red, but it did not attack again.

'Is the attack... over?'

Jin-Woo looked underneath him. The scared-silly Yi Ju-Hui was trembling in his arms.

This was the reason why she worked for the a.s.sociation and not for a big Guild, and partic.i.p.ated in simple raids like this one, even though she was nominally an excellent Hunter with a rank as high as 'B'.

Ju-Hui's breathing was getting rougher by the second.

He couldn't let her be like this. He had to do something.

Jin-Woo was about to raise his body up, thinking that he gotta do something here, but then, someone grabbed his shoulders and pushed him back down, hard.

"Don't get up."

It was Mister Song, somehow next to the youth before anyone had noticed it. Jin-Woo was fl.u.s.tered, but still did as he was told.

Song then shouted at the other Hunters.

"n.o.body move! Stay exactly where you are!"

Song looked around before focusing on Jin-Woo.

"Only those that moved got killed. Those who listened to you and got down survived."

"It seems that way."

Song tilted his head slightly.

"I thought you warned us because you figured something out?"

"No, well, I just felt something dangerous was coming, so...."

A flash of light brushed past Song's eyes just then.

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'His instincts are pretty good, in other words. He's a rank E Hunter? If only his abilities were a bit higher....'

Just as Song stared at Jin-Woo with a rueful expression, Jin-Woo too found a little bit of leeway to check out the older Hunter's condition.

And the youth's eyes opened up wider after finding something pretty terrible.

"ahjussi, your, your... Your arm?!"

"This is nothing. I can still hold on."

"But, but, still...."

Jin-Woo swallowed down his saliva.

Song's other hand that wasn't pressing down on Jin-Woo's shoulder, his left arm, was gone.

"..."

Song studied Ju-Hui's conditions for a bit, before he took off the T-shirt he was wearing, and while not even showing the enormous amount of pain he must be feeling, he wrapped up what was left of his left arm.

"Help me tie up the end, please? It's difficult to so with only one hand."

Jin-Woo could only nod his head then.

They were able to somehow stop the bleeding for now.

Rather than a scream or a pained moan, Song let out a long sigh. It was a sigh containing ten years' worth of experience as a Hunter.

"Fuu....."

Now that the first-aid was over, Song's gaze became a level sharper as he studied his surroundings. Although the G.o.d statue stopped attacking them, their situation hadn't improved in the slightest.

And like so, seconds continued to tick by.

"Sob, sob...."

"Just why do we have to suffer like this, this....."

A few Hunters even began shedding tears now.

"We can't stay like this forever!!"

The patience of the other Hunters was running out as well. Jin-Woo agreed with that sentiment, though.

'Right, we can't stay here forever.'

But, what could he possibly do here? If Song's suspicion was correct, then the moment they moved, they'd get attacked.

And, even if they got lucky and managed to evade the beams and reach the door, there were the two stone statues guarding the doorway to worry about, as well.

They were a big problem too, actually.

The movements of the doorkeepers were so fast that he couldn't see it with his eyes. Could he or anyone else open the door and escape before those statues attacked them?

It sounded completely impossible.

Which meant that the annihilation of the Hunters was just a matter of time.

'Wait..... A matter of time?'

When his thoughts arrived there, a strong sense of disharmony filled him up.

An event that couldn't have happened, but it happened anyway.

But no one else seemed to have picked up on "it" yet.

'Something... We missed something here.'

Without a doubt, the answer to their salvation hid in that 'something'.

It was then.

"Don't move!"

Song shouted at Mister Joo, who was at the far end of the group.

"Shut up! Who knows when that thing will start attacking us again!! But you want me to stay here and wait?!"

Mister Joo was a close-combat type Hunter.

These types of Hunters possessed far, far superior physical abilities than regular human beings. On top of this, Joo was about to sign up with a big Guild after his skills were acknowledged by them not too long ago as well.

"I'll not die here today."

While keeping low to the ground, Joo put all his strength down to his legs.

His aim was at the doorway.

The muscles on his legs were swelling up fast.

"D\*mn it...."

Song could only mutter out to himself.

Right then, Joo kicked the ground and exploded forward.

Meanwhile, Jin-Woo hurriedly turned his head to look at the G.o.d statue. Just as he suspected, the eyes of the statue were fixed on the back of mister Joo.

And then, the chilling red ray shot out from those eyes.

BUZZ!!

The beam slammed on the back of Mister Joo.

"Kkyaaahck!!"

The female Hunter screamed at the top of her lungs.

She must've developed a leak, because a puddle of yellow liquid formed where she was squatting on the ground.

The expressions of the Hunters froze, hard.

"Oh my G.o.d...."

Mister Joo no longer stood where the red beam flew past. Only the pair of ownerless ankles could be seen now.

One of the men with a weaker const.i.tution began emptying the contents of his stomach.

"B-blergh!!"

Jin-Woo's expression also crumpled as well.

As expected, the G.o.d statue could easily finish them off if it felt like it. It'd be easier than stepping on squirming bugs, actually.

'If that's the case, then.... Why hadn't it?'

It could kill them, yet it hadn't done that.

This was a completely different pattern of behaviour compared to the monsters that attacked as soon as spotting human Hunters in their vicinity.

These statues only moved if certain conditions were met: the doorkeepers that only attacked if someone approached the door; the eyes of the G.o.d statue firing that red beam if someone moved.

It was like a game with a set regulation.

'Hang on... Could there be some kind of rules in this chamber?'

It was here that a piece of puzzle found its place in Jin-Woo's head. He began recalling the contents of the stone slate Song was reading not too long ago, that was why.

'The laws of the... Karutenon temple, was it?'

'Regulation' was 'rules', and 'rules' could be 'laws' as well.

The key to their safe escape from this camber had to be buried within those warnings found on the stone slate.

"....Worship the G.o.d."

That was the first law.

"Mm? Did you just say something?"

Song shifted his gaze back to Jin-Woo.

Instead of a reply, Jin-Woo simply placed his index finger on his lips. It was a sign asking for a bit of time to think.

'If my thoughts are right...'

Jin-Woo slowly rose up.

Song hurriedly tried to stop the youth, but Jin-Woo shook his head while carrying a determined expression.

'….Doesn't look like he gave up on living.'

Song nodded his head.

Jin-Woo kept his eyes trained squarely at the G.o.d statue and carefully stood up.

Almost right away, the eyes of the statue were fixed on Jin-Woo.

BUZZZ!!

And as expected, the red beam was fired in his direction.

If he got down to the ground a moment slower, it'd be his face melting away, instead of a few strands of hair on top of his head!

Lying face down on the ground, Jin-Woo breathed in and out quite heavily.

"Heok, heok, heok, heok."

He nearly died just then. The moment the statue's eyes met his, he thought he was going to die for sure. He somehow did dodge it, but his legs wouldn't stop shaking from the fear.

'Still....'

Still, he learned something important just now.

'It's not attacking someone who's moving around.'

As long as he was squatting low to the ground, he could go anywhere he wanted to and the statue's eyes would remain still.

However, if one stood up, then the red beam would be fired without hesitation.

'The d\*mn thing only attacks if we breach a certain height.'

That was why Jin-Woo bet his life on proving this theory right just now.

And now, he was sure of it.

The meaning behind the first law, that was!

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