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When I first saw the 'collector' message, I had a feeling that it might be true.

But the head that appeared beyond the swirling portal was not an unfamiliar one.

[What number is this? You really want to ruin the company, don't you?]

A dokkaebi with soft fur like a formless one. I had seen it at the 'Twelve Zodiac Ball'.

「Dokkaebi Yeonggi.」

The spirit giggled as it spun its head around in the air.

[Huh? Why aren't you answering? Are you thinking of not paying this time either?]

Looking at that Yeonggi, I thought of the setting of the main story.

This kind of collection work is usually given to low-level dokkaebis or demoted dokkaebis.

Even after 8 years, has he still not escaped being a low-level dokkaebi?

Even his personality was clearly different from the 'Yeonggi' I knew. If the original Yeonggi was a 'rookie' who didn't understand what was being said but worked hard, the current Yeonggi seemed like a guy who had met the wrong shooter and only learned strange things.

[You're not going to pay? You're not going to pay? You're not going to pay? You're not going to pay? You know what happens if you don't pay?]

Yeonggi's neck started spinning around and the atmosphere started to change like a horror movie.

"Didn't I tell you to wait a little longer!"

The one who said those words was Namgung Myung, who had hurriedly opened the door and came in.

Namgung Myung looked around at Kyung Sein, me, and Yeonggi who were standing there awkwardly, then hurriedly lowered his head and added.

"I'm, I'm sorry, benefactor. It's not the time for tax collection yet, so I didn't expect a tax collector to come by all of a sudden..."

Kyung Sein let out a light sigh and stepped forward to stop Namgung Myung.

"I'm sorry, but I still need time to prepare."

[I think I heard that last time too—?]

"Just give me a little more time. You won't get coins that didn't exist if you keep urging me like that."

Kyung Sein's voice was quite calm as she answered. If it were the Kyung Sein I remember, she would have made a fuss and hidden behind me, and said, "Dokja-ssi, try to do something."

[Huh.]

The spinning Yeonggi's neck stopped.

[What are you so proud of? What's there to brag about not being able to pay taxes?]

"..."

[The deferrals up until now were close to special treatment. How strange. Why would the higher-ups be interested in such a small business? Anyway, that special treatment ends today. I can't wait any longer.]

"Even if you say that, it's difficult right now—"

[No. If it weren't for another incarnation, you would have a 'way to pay', right?]

Kyung Sein's face turned pale. Kyung Sein, who had been staring blankly into space, soon opened her mouth with a face of resignation.

"Okay."

[Huh. Okay. Then shall we start collecting?]

I don't know exactly what 'collecting' Yeonggi meant, but judging from Kyung Sein's reaction, it didn't seem like a good thing.

"Wait a minute."

The moment a bright light appeared on Yeonggi's fingers, I stepped forward as if to protect Kyung Sein.

"I don't know what it is, but I will pay the tax instead."

[Huh? What is this?]

I was puzzled by Yeonggi's expression as he glared at me with a bad look.

[How long have you been there?]

He didn't recognize me?

That was odd.

A dokkaebi from the Management Bureau, who is not even another being, didn't recognize me?

[You seem like an incarnation I've never seen before, so don't meddle in things that don't concern you and just stay quiet. If you don’t want to get screwed.]

Not only that, the guy didn’t seem to remember me.

I thought it was a good thing.

"If I’m someone related?"

[What do you mean?]

"It’s my company’s business, so there’s no way it wouldn’t be related."

At those words, Yeonggi’s head suddenly turned toward Kyung Sein.

[Is this incarnation a new employee?]

Just before Kyung Sein shook her head urgently, I interjected.

"I just got hired. So I have the obligation to take on the company’s debt as well."

[There’s no way… There’s an incarnation that gets hired at a company like this? You’re joking, right?]

"Dokkaebi Yeonggi, does that matter now? You’re just going to collect taxes anyway, right?"

When I mentioned the guy’s name, Yeonggi’s expression changed once again.

[Huh, does a mere incarnation know me?]

"Uh."

[No, it seems like you don’t know. If you really knew me, you wouldn't act like that...]

Namgung Myung took a step toward me, perhaps sensing that the situation was taking a turn for the worse.

I raised my hand to him as a sign that I was okay, and continued to speak.

"You seem to be the one who doesn't know much. Are they teaching the dokkaebis at the Management Bureau to act like that these days?"

Yeonggi looked down at me with a blank expression for a moment, as if he didn't understand what I was saying, and then laughed in vain.

But I'm also dumbfounded.

[How dare a bug...]

He even brought out his 'bug' repertoire, as if he were a successor.

"Why, you'll make my head explode?"

[Do you think you can't?]

"Have you forgotten which scenario this is? Do you still think this is a tutorial?"

A faint anger began to form in Yeonggi's two eyes. The power of the Management Bureau was in the guy's eyes, shining faintly.

[You're very confident. If you think that killing a bug will cause trouble when there are no constellations to see—]

"Why do you think there are no constellations to see?"

[What?]

The next moment, I let out a blast. A loud noise shook the entire garden.

There it was.

Kyung Sein, who was startled, looked back at me, and Namgung Myung, whose face turned pale, slumped down. Of course, the most surprised one was dokkaebi Yeonggi.

[This is ridiculous…]

Yeonggi, who was startled, trembled and asked me.

[Oh, were you by any chance a constellation?]

In times like this, it's best to just laugh silently like Kim Dokja.

[What? Why can't I see the relevant information… And the modifier… What on earth are you?]

It's probably because of the [Fourth Wall] that he can't access my information.

Yeonggi must be perplexed. A mere incarnation has the status of a constellation, and it must be a situation where he can't even look up modifiers. I decided to help him out a little.

"If you're really curious, open the 'Dokkaebi Bag'."

Yeonggi listened to me obediently.

And after a while.

[H, how on earth?]

'Dokkaebi Bag' has a system that assigns 'membership levels' by referencing the constellation's item purchase history.

And as far as I know, the level of my former sponsor, 'Demon King of Salvation's' Dokkaebi Bag is...

[Diamond level...?]

Yeonggi's eyes widened and he looked back and forth between the screen in front of him and me, exuding shock.

As expected, it seemed that the 'Dokkaebi Bag' level of the 'Demon King of Salvation' had been transferred to me.

I guess I'm seeing the benefit of having a good sponsor here too.

[Demon King of Salvation? The owner of this modifier must have already disappeared? Why do you have the right to use it...]

"You don't need to know that. I think this is enough proof that I have the ability to pay."

Yeonggi groaned as if he didn’t want to admit it, then opened his mouth in a much more polite tone.

[Are you really going to pay your taxes in advance?]

"Yes. How many coins?"

Fortunately, I had quite a few coins.

However, the words that came out of Yeonggi’s mouth were somewhat unexpected.

[100,000 D coins.]

Namgung Myung, who was next to me, shouted in protest.

"Wait a minute! There can’t be that many! Last time, I’m sure…"

[You seem to have forgotten how much tax arrears there have been. All tax arrears accrue interest.]

"I know that, but…"

[The Management Office is not a poverty relief agency. And originally, you were supposed to pay 101,235 D coins, but since you, Diamond, specially agreed to pay in advance, I’ve reduced the rest.]

Yeonggi looked back at me and asked.

[Will you pay your tax arrears?]

"I don’t have any D coins. Can’t I just pay in coins?"

Then Yeonggi laughed.

[In this 'scenario area', only 'D Coins' are circulated.]

"Why don't you exchange the coins for D coins? What's the rate?"

Yeonggi's eyes started rolling at my words. Even at first glance, he had an expression that seemed to have an ulterior motive.

[If that's true, I'll exchange 10,000 coins for 1 D Coin.]

10,000 coins for 1 D Coin.

This kid must have learned how to catch people somewhere.

"Did we have coin inflation? The exchange rate can't be like that, right?"

[In principle, currency exchange is not allowed in this scenario area. This is also a suggestion I made because you are a Diamond member...]

No matter how much the coins rot, there's no way they would exchange them at that rate.

[Would you like to exchange them?]

"Would you?"

[Then let's just pretend that the tax payment never happened... ]

As if the results were visible, Yeonggi spoke with a shameless face.

I grinned.

Yeah, that’s how you come out.

"I’ll pay it. Before that, I have one question."

[Hmm? Go ahead.]

"What authority do you have to carry out this 'collection work'?"

Yeonggi tilted his head as if he didn’t understand what I was saying and asked back.

[What do you mean? I’m a dokkaebi in charge of the collection mission, so of course I have the authority to collect, right?]

"That’s talking about other companies. It seems like the higher-ups didn’t specifically issue a collection order to this company?"

The guy clearly said it with his own mouth.

The higher-ups are giving Kyung Sein's company a 'deferral close to special treatment'.

That meant that someone in the management office was 'looking after this company' so that they could defer their taxes.

[That’s… ]

"I don't know where the guy who couldn't even properly explain the scenario learned such bad things and is acting like this..."

Yeonggi looked like he was hit with a sharp look. Looking at him, I somehow felt like I knew who the 'dokkaebi who's looking after this company' was.

"Does Bihyung know that you're doing this here?"

At Bihyung's name, Yeonggi's face turned pale for a moment. I didn't miss the opportunity and continued to speak.

"It seems Bihyung doesn't know, does he?"

After hesitating for a moment, Yeonggi let out a faint sigh and answered.

[I don't know how you know that person, but even if you tell Bihyung, I can't give up on this collection.]

It was a stronger response than I thought.

Did he receive instructions from another high-level dokkaebi other than Bihyung?

I thought for a moment and then said.

"Then give me a little more grace."

[How much...]

"A week."

[A week is too long.]

"Instead, I'll keep it a secret from him."

[…]

"I don’t know why the management office needs something like D-coins, but I can pay the taxes. I just want a little more time."

After thinking for a moment, Yeonggi answered.

[Okay. Since you seem to be close with Bihyoung, I will accept your offer. However, if you still can’t pay after a week, I will force the company’s executives to 'collect' the money.]

Yeonggi gave Kyung Sein a fierce look, then turned to me and said.

[I don’t know why someone like you is here, but I hope you have the grace of the story.]

With those words, Yeonggi disappeared beyond the swirling portal.

Namgung Myung looked at me with a somewhat impressed expression, and Kyung Sein looked at my toes with a complicated expression.

"Inho-ssi, you don’t have to go this far."

"I did it because I wanted to."

Kyung Sein’s eyes were red.

"Inho-ssi… why?"

"Why? We're colleagues."

"Why, why did you come now…"

As she was saying that, Kyung Sein's breathing began to tremble.

"Why, why on earth did you come now… Are you making me expect…"

Kyung Sein, who had been muttering quietly, began to stumble.

"Sein-ssi?"

I hurriedly grabbed Kyung Sein, who was falling forward. Kyung Sein's entire body felt hot as if it were on fire.

"Inho-ssi, you shouldn't get involved in this scenario."

"Wait a minute. Sein-ssi, the incarnation…"

I realized the moment my hand touched her. Kyung Sein's condition was so serious that I couldn't understand how she could have talked normally in such a body.

"If that happens, Inho-ssi too…"

With those words, Kyung Sein lost consciousness.

I felt Kyung Sein's pulse as she fell and checked the state of her hair.

Kyung Sein's hair was deeply damaged.

No, it wasn't just 'damage'.

It was like…

「A wound that felt like someone had ripped a part of her soul off.」

I laid Kyung Sein down neatly and held her hand.

Just by holding her hand, I could tell what kind of life she had been through. I felt like it was becoming clearer little by little what I had to do here.

I looked down at Kyung Sein who was sleeping and slowly opened my mouth.

"Gungmyung-ssi, how can I get something called D-coins?"