

After Ten Millennia in Hell

Chapter 10 - Demonic Energy Accumulation Project (2)

"We're looking for a healer! We only accept people whose Trait is D-rank or higher!"

"Tanks! Are there any tanks here?"

"I'm... a rogue..."

"Oh, sorry. We don't accept rogues."

Many Players were looking for a party in front of an E-rank Gate located on the outskirts of Seoul.

'What's wrong with rogues?' Oh Kang-Woo remembered that he'd heard something similar before.

Usually, Gate hunting was done in parties, so it seemed like there was a certain formation that Players liked.

'Well, either way, I don't really care.'

Since Kang-Woo was planning to hunt alone, none of those things mattered to him.

He presented his newly acquired license to the soldier manning the Gate.

"Okay, confirmed," the soldier said.

'Are all soldiers like this?' Kang-Woo wondered inwardly.

Just like in Kang-Woo's first encounter with a soldier, this soldier manning the E-rank Gate returned Kang-Woo's license after barely looking at it.

Kang-Woo thought that even without using the Authority of Blindness, he would be able to enter the Gate just by showing his middle finger.

Whiiiiir.

'I still don't like how this feels.'

The sensation of crossing through Gates reminded Kang-Woo of the day he'd fallen into the Nine Hells.

After crossing the E-rank Gate, Kang-Woo entered the forest to hunt.

It was at this moment that he heard someone with a hoarse voice calling out to him.
"Hey, mister, are you alone?"

Kang-Woo turned his head toward the direction of the voice and saw a man with a giant shield who was accompanied by two other people. He was about two meters tall and ripped with muscles.

'Is he a bear?' Kang-Woo wondered inwardly.

The man with the shield was definitely a person, but with his large stature, he looked like a bear.

"Yes, I'm alone," Kang-Woo replied.

"Are you planning to hunt alone?" the man asked.

Kang-Woo nodded.

The man swallowed a short sigh and kept talking, "Have you gotten your Second Awakening?"

"No."

"Oof. It seems like you must not have received basic training. Did you perhaps awaken an F-rank Trait? If so, don't hunt alone. Although Goblins are small and look weak, they are still monsters," the bear-like man said worriedly. "If you're planning to hunt alone because you can't get a party, join us for a little bit and at least check out what the Goblins look like before you go off by yourself."

"Tae-Soo, why did you decide that on your own?" complained one of the bear-like man's party members.

"That's right. If he has an F-rank Trait, he probably won't even be of help. So, just leave him alone," another chimed in.

"Jeez! Don't you understand what situation this mister is in?!" Tae-Soo, the bear-like man, shouted with a scowl.

The party members shuddered, feeling intimidated by his fierceness.

"We're saving the life of a person. If you really don't want to, I'll give up my share of the mana stones. So, let him join," Tae-Soo insisted.

"Sigh."

"Well, as long as he doesn't bother us..."

After hearing that Tae-Soo wouldn't take his cut of the mana stones, the rest of his party members clicked their tongues but nodded to show their acceptance.

Tae-Soo looked at them miserably before turning around to face Kang-Woo.

"I'm Kang Tae-Soo. What's your name, mister?"

"My name is Oh Kang-Woo."

"Haha, you don't have to speak so formally with me. I may not look like it, but I'm twenty-four years old.

'Don't lie,' Kang-Woo thought.

At first glance, Tae-Soo looked like someone who was over thirty years old, so Kang-Woo naturally thought he was lying.

"Hmm? You don't believe me? Check this out! I was born in the year 2000! I, Kang Tae-Soo, was born at the beginning of the new millennium!" Tae-Soo shouted while showing his Player license to Kang-Woo.

It seemed like Tae-Soo had experienced situations like this many times.

'Woah... He's twenty-four with that face[1]?' Kang-Woo couldn't believe that Tae-Soo really was twenty-four years old. 'Is he cursed?'

Kang-Woo grinned and then shook his head. "Well, if you insist, I'll speak casually to you."

"Haha, you're fast, mister. How about it? Join our party to get some experience. You don't need to feel burdened by it."

"Thanks, but I'm okay. It's not like I was planning to wander around mindlessly," Kang-Woo said very calmly.

Tae-Soo took a deep breath in. "Well, if you say so, I guess there's nothing I can do. But be careful. If you happen to see a big brown Goblin, run. That's a monster called a Hobgoblin, the boss monster of this Gate."

"Thanks for the information."

"Stay safe!"

Then Tae-Soo turned around and went into the forest with his two party members.

Kang-Woo smiled while watching Tae-Soo leave.

'He's a good guy.'

Although Tae-Soo was a bit quirky, he had wanted to help Kang-Soo, even if that meant he had to give up his share of the loot. If Kang-Woo really were a newbie Player with an F-rank Trait, Tae-Soo would have been of great help.

"I should get going too." Kang-Woo turned around and left with a lighter feeling in his steps.

As he walked through the forest, Kang-Woo discovered a group of Goblins.

"Kiiiieekkk!!"

'There seems to be around five of them.'

Slash.

Kang-Woo focused his demonic energy on his left hand, and a black blade shot out.

Stomp!

Moving as fast as a wild beast, Kang-Woo leaped toward the Goblins. The Goblins were objects of fear for most people who hunted in this Gate, but in Kang-Woo's eyes, they were nothing but prey that increased his demonic energy.

"Kiiiieekkk!!"

Crack! Slash!

The blade made of demonic energy sliced the Goblins' necks in succession.

Kang-Woo had killed more than ten Goblins in the blink of an eye once before. Killing these five wasn't even enough to serve as a warm-up for him.

"Kiiieekk!! Krugh!"

"Kurrr..."

"Easy, as expected," Kang-Woo said.

It felt like fighting against a scarecrow.

Kang-Woo felt bored as he killed the last remaining Goblin. The Goblin's head dropped to the ground with a chilling thud.

Riiing.

[You have successfully defeated the E-rank monster Goblin.]

[Increasing EXP.]

[Your level has risen to 4.]

[Demonic Energy has risen by 1.]

'I leveled up.' Kang-Woo's eyes lit up.

He had been too distracted the first time he had leveled up, so he hadn't paid attention to the changes.

This time, Kang-Woo opened his status window immediately and checked his current stats.

[Status Window]

[Player Name: Oh Kang-Woo

Level: 4 (First Awakening)

First Awakening Trait: Authority of Predation (Rank: ???) *The majority of the Trait's power is currently sealed.

Strength: 9

Dexterity: 10

Health: 8

Mana: 0

Demonic Energy (Unique Stat): 14

Intelligence: 8

Wisdom: 7]

'Interesting.'

The status window, which reminded him of a game, surprised him no matter how many times he looked at it. The thing that interested him the most was the increase in stats.

'My demonic energy really went up.'

Kang-woo had not used his Authority of Predation, nor had the seal on the Ten Thousand Demon Core become any weaker. Yet, the amount of demonic energy he possessed had increased with his stats. It was as if additional demonic energy had been created out of nothing.

"This means I can also accumulate demonic energy by leveling up."

There was still one more reason for him to hunt monsters.

Kang-Woo approached the Goblins' corpses.

'I've already checked that demonic energy isn't in the mana stones.'

He had to find out where they held demonic energy inside their bodies.

"Predation."

Kang-Woo used his Authority of Predation to devour the Goblins' corpses. Black smoke emerged from his body and enveloped the Goblins.

Crunch!

There was a chilling sound of skin being torn and bone being chewed. Kang-Woo deliberately avoided consuming the mana stone, from which he could sense mana, and instead consumed the other body parts one by one.

Once again, he could feel a little bit of demonic energy enter his body. Kang-Woo closed his eyes and tried to sense where the demonic energy was coming from. It did not take him very long to find out.

'It's the body as a whole.'

More accurately, it was coming from the monster's soul embedded in the body. The souls of recently deceased beings remained in their corpses, and that's where the demonic energy was coming from.

"Which means..."

Kang-Woo could obtain demonic energy from monsters that he had just killed by using his Authority of Predation.

"Nice."

From what he'd heard, he could also obtain money by selling some parts of the monster's body, but the main source of income was the mana stone. He was willing to forgo selling the monster's bodies to gather more demonic energy.

After clearing out the Goblins' corpses using Predation, he picked up an E-rank mana stone the size of a finger and put it in his bag.

'It feels like I've just finished eating a fried chicken, and only bones are left.'

This was how he felt upon obtaining a mana stone after devouring the monsters' corpses with Predation.

'Speaking of chicken, I want to eat fried chicken.'

Kang-Woo drooled at the sudden thought of fried chicken. Kimchi stew was good, but now he really wanted to eat fried chicken.

'A freshly fried chicken with a cold beer...'

Just thinking about it gave him chills.

'Should I go now?'

He was tempted to go out of the Gate immediately, but he ultimately shook his head.

"I should keep hunting."

Kang-Woo had only just begun his demonic energy accumulation project. He really wanted to eat fried chicken, but he couldn't go back after killing just five Goblins.

'I should take Seol-Ah out later and go to eat fried chicken together.'

While thinking about food, Kang-Woo resumed walking through the forest.

'What's that?'

Kang-Woo's eyes lit up when he found some poorly built houses deep inside the forest. He then approached the area.

"Kiiiekk."

"Krrrr."

There were dozens of Goblins here.

This was a Monster Hideout, the number one place that newbie Players should avoid. It was where the various monsters that a Player might encounter in a Gate gathered. Furthermore, it was the location that had the highest chance of a boss monster appearing. If a Player wasn't careful, they could end up dying even if they were with a party.

However...

"Jackpot!" Kang-Woo shouted after looking at the dozens of monsters.

He saw this place, which was the object of fear for most Players hunting in the gate, as a golden land full of riches.

'Good.'

With that many Goblins gathered, it meant he could obtain many mana stones and a lot of demonic energy at once. Devouring the corpses would give him demonic energy, and he could sell the remaining mana stones for a profit, which was the most important thing to him now.

'Very nice.'

Once he had money, he would be able to buy what he was craving, and there was only one thing he wanted at this moment.

"Fried chicken, here I cooooooome!!!"

While drooling at the thought of fried chicken, Kang-Woo leaped toward the Monster Hideout.

"Half-fried and half-seasoned! Also, please give me lots of radish!!" he shouted as if he'd already entered a fried chicken restaurant.

Simultaneously, he slashed down on the Goblins' necks with his black blade.

1. Some of the astute readers might have noticed that he's 24 when he was born in 2000, and the year is currently 2023. Well, the Korean age system deems babies to be one year old at birth, so that is the cause of the discrepancy. 📧

