

# After Ten Millennia in Hell

Chapter 14 - Are You Sure You're Fine with Just That? (1)

Splash.

'So, this is a D-rank Gate.'

Oh Kang-Woo frowned at the discomfort that the wet environment gave him.

"So, the environment of each Gate is different."

The environment of this D-rank Gate was greatly different from the dense forest of the last Gate that he had entered. This place, where the Lizardmen lived, was a muddy swamp.

'It's a bad place for melee classes to hunt.'

Moving in this swampy area rapidly sapped one's stamina, unlike in a forest where you fought while stepping on solid ground.

Until then, Kang-Woo had been using the Authority of Blades to engage in melee combat, so this environment was unfavorable to him.

'Well, I'll just have to use a long-range offensive Authority.'

He had more than a hundred long-range offensive Authorities. Most Players were either specialized in ranged or melee combat, but Kang-Woo didn't have such limitations.

"Authority of Silence."

The Authority of Silence muted sounds of the caster's choice. This allowed Kang-Woo to move silently while looking for the Lizardmen, just like what Seol-Ah had advised.

'There are three.'

Kang-Woo saw three Lizardmen moving in a group not far from where he was.

The Lizardmen were almost as tall as an average person. They had sharp spears and were vigilant of their surroundings. They certainly looked more dangerous than Goblins.

'She said that they have bad eyesight, right?'

A Lizardman's body was similar to that of a lizard's, so instead of sight, they relied more on their auditory senses to hunt.

Kang-Woo used the Authority of Silence to get closer to the Lizardmen to test that information, but they weren't able to notice his presence at all.

'Good.' Kang-Woo situated himself behind them and smiled.

This would be an easy hunt, seeing as a one-sided ambush was possible.

'Authority of Hellfire.'

It was the Authority that the demon Andras had possessed. As expected from a high-ranking demon, it was an extremely destructive Authority.

Fwoosh.

A black flame appeared from Kang-Woo's right hand. This black flame was hellfire, which was far more destructive than regular fire.

Kang-Woo shot the hellfire in his hand toward the Lizardmen.

Fwoosh-!!

"Kiieekk!"

The hellfire was only the size of the palm of his hand. Yet, the moment it touched the bodies of the Lizardmen, it grew in size by devouring their bodies.

The three Lizardmen were surprised by Kang-Woo's ambush. They immediately turned toward Kang-Woo and tried to attack him with their spears.

However, Kang-Woo moved backward and easily dodged their attacks. Then, he patiently waited for the hellfire to devour their life force completely.

"Kiieekk..."

A few moments later, the Lizardmen collapsed to the ground. Although their entire bodies had been covered in fire, there weren't any burn marks on their bodies.

'Andras's Authority sure is strong.'

The hellfire made with Andras's Authority didn't burn the target's body. Instead, it stuck to their body and devoured their life force. That was the power of hellfire. Once its flame touched the target, the hellfire was impossible to extinguish. It could only be pushed away with either demonic energy or mana.

'I struggled quite a bit while fighting against him.'

While thinking of his battle against Andras, Kang-Woo trembled a bit. At the time, he wouldn't have been able to deal with the hellfire if he hadn't had a lot of demonic energy, which he had gathered using the Authority of Predation.

"Huu."

Was the power of the Authority of Hellfire too strong? The hellfire that Kang-Woo had produced was only the size of the palm of his hand, but even that had consumed quite a lot of demonic energy.

'If I hadn't awakened, I would've struggled to use it.'

He wouldn't have been able to hunt the Lizardmen so easily if the seal of the Ten Thousand Demon Core hadn't been weakened before the hunt.

"Hmm? Now that I think about it..."

Kang-Woo suddenly remembered something.

'Isn't the guild that Tae-Hyun's a member of called Andras?'

Among mid-sized guilds, the Andras Guild was on the higher end in terms of size and power. The name of the guild, which was surrounded by bad rumors, had the same name as the owner of the Authority that Kang-Woo was currently using.

'Well, the seventy-two demons of Solomon are famous even on Earth, after all.'

Kang-Woo didn't know why, but most demons who lived in the Nine Hells were quite well-known on Earth. For example, the seven princes of Hell were mentioned in the Holy Bible as the Seven Deadly Sins. The Nine Hells were where demons who were mentioned in all sorts of religions and myths lived.

He was intrigued by why the Andras Guild had picked the name of a demon that wasn't that well known, but he didn't think it was necessary to find the connection.

"First, I should absorb some demonic energy."

Kang-Woo used the Authority of Predation on the Lizardmen.

Crunch! Crunch!

'As expected, it wasn't just Goblins who had demonic energy.'

As he began devouring the bodies of the Lizardmen with the Authority of Predation, a small amount of demonic energy flowed into his body.

His theory that monsters would possess more demonic power as their rank increased turned out to be correct. The Lizardmen truly had more demonic energy than the Goblins.

'Although it can't be compared to the amount that demons have.'

Unlike demons, who relied on demonic energy to maintain and move their bodies, monsters moved purely with their bodies and mana. The demonic energy that they possessed was merely something that existed in their souls; it wasn't the source of their power. So, it was inevitable that demons would have far more demonic energy.

Riiing.

[Demonic Energy has risen by 1.]

"Well, it's still better than nothing at all."

Although gathering demonic energy from monsters was much slower than from demons, at least he still had a way of accumulating demonic energy.

Kang-Woo used the Authority of Silence again and went to hunt down more Lizardmen.

Fwoosh!

"Kiiieekk!"

Kang-Woo's hunting strategy was simple. He sneaked up on them with the Authority of Silence and then ambushed them with the Authority of Hellfire. He killed them so easily that he wasn't sure if he could call it a fight, but his strategy was very effective.

Kang-Woo only looked for groups of three or four Lizardmen since he could only use one hellfire attack to kill them.

'Why work hard when I can hardly work?'

There was a way to hunt easily, and he had the ability to take advantage of it. So, there was no need to engage in battle just for the sake of the thrill.

'Simple and easy is the best.'

He used their weakness, their bad eyesight, to his advantage and approached them silently. Then he shot hellfire at them from a distance and dodged their attacks until their lives ended.

From the point of view of the Lizardmen, Kang-Woo probably seemed like he was cheating.

Fwoosh.

"Kiiiekk!!"

Even while being burned by the hellfire, the Lizardmen attacked him desperately with their spears. However, they couldn't even get near him because he ran away as soon as he shot the hellfire at them. In the end, they just screamed and collapsed to the ground. Despite that, even their screams of despair couldn't reach the other Lizardmen due to Kang-Woo's Authority of Silence.

It was a way of fighting that couldn't possibly be called fair, and that was how Kang-Woo hunted.

'There's no such thing as fairness in hunting.'

Hunting consisted of taking the life of the prey and plundering the spoils. Such an act was far from what was considered fairness. Only people who had shit for brains pursued such ideals. Kang-Woo had learned in Hell that hunting desperately and thoroughly was the only way to survive.

After that, Kang-Woo kept hunting the Lizardmen with the same strategy.

Riiing.

[Your level has risen by 1.]

It made the hunt boring but effective. In just a few hours, he was able to level up three times.

'The leveling-up process has definitely slowed down.'

Compared to the beginning, when he leveled up two to three times by killing five Goblins, he was now barely able to level up once after killing twenty to thirty Lizardmen. It wasn't just his level; the speed at which his demonic energy stat was increasing had slowed down as well.

'Well, I already expected that to happen.'

After going through the information about Players on his smartphone, Kang-Woo had found out that a Player's level and stats were harder to raise the higher they became. Rather, his current speed of leveling up was actually abnormally fast compared to that of other Players.

Even with a carrying service, it was almost impossible for a Second Awakening Player to level up three times in just a few hours. If that fact were to become known, there would be a huge uproar within the world of Players.

Kang-Woo opened his status window while picking up the mana stones on the ground.

[Status Window]

[Player Name: Oh Kang-Woo

Level: 14 (First Awakening)

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

Second Awakening Trait: Insatiable Hunger (Rank: C)

Strength: 11

Dexterity: 13

Health: 11

Mana: 0

Demonic Energy (Unique Stat): 25

Intelligence: 9

Wisdom: 8]

His demonic energy stat was 25, which was way too high of a number for a Level 14 Player to have for any of their stats. Moreover, the stat did not include the demonic energy he was able to access through the weakened seal of his Ten Thousand Demon Core.

If he were to add the amount of demonic energy he could use from the Ten Thousand Demon Core, the Demonic Energy stat would probably be close to 40. Kang-Woo had reached a number on his Second Awakening that couldn't be easily achieved even by a Player who was about to achieve their Fourth Awakening.

'It still isn't enough.'

Kang-Woo wasn't satisfied with what he saw in his status window. Even though he was now overwhelmingly stronger than other Players of similar levels, his current level of power was still insignificant compared to when he was a demon king.

"Hmm."

Kang-Woo fell deep into his thoughts while crossing his arms. It was nice to level up safely, but he wanted to accumulate demonic energy and EXP even faster.

"Maybe I should horde-hunt."

Although it was a bit dangerous, it was the most effective way to speed things up. The reason why he'd managed to level up so quickly in the E-rank Gate was that he had horde-hunted at the Goblins' hideout.

While considering trying horde-hunting, Kang-Woo heard an arrogant voice come from behind him, "Hey, how's the hunting going?"

Kang-Woo turned his head and saw the young man with acne and his four party members.

'Isn't that...'

Kang-Woo scowled a little.

Chapter 15 - Are You Sure You're Fine with Just That? (2)

Earlier...

"Arrogant prick!" the young man covered in acne, Jeong Ho-Jun, said while frowning.

"Ho-Jun oppa, just ignore him. You know there are many arrogant people among the newbie Players."

"Sigh. That fucking newbie..." Ho-Jun cursed after listening to Seo Ye-Ri, who was trying to calm him down.

Ho-Jun had managed to achieve his Third Awakening after going through numerous near-death situations. However, after achieving it, he realized that he was a talentless Player.

The Trait he had unlocked with his Third Awakening was C-rank. His previous Trait ranks were E and D. Since his Traits were of a low rank, he couldn't join parties to enter higher-ranking Gates, and that's why he'd ended up staying at a D-rank Gate.

Ho-Jun had reached a point where he couldn't get any more experience points from monsters of D-rank Gates. So, he gave up on his dream of going to higher-ranking Gates and set up a carrying service instead. The Players that engaged his services were people with low or average-ranking Traits who couldn't move on to higher-ranking Gates.

'I'm not sure how good you are, but...'

Ho-Jun clenched his fists while biting his lip in anger.

When a newbie Player with no armor or weapons was that arrogant, it could only mean one thing. He had been lucky and unlocked a high-ranking Trait.

'I'll take this opportunity to teach him a lesson.'

Ho-Jun's eyes burned with envy as he looked at the Gate entrance.

Although Trait rank was important, one couldn't ignore the difference in level. A Player who had just achieved his Second Awakening should only have a B-rank Trait at most, even if he'd been really lucky. In that case, a difference of one Trait rank wasn't enough to compensate for the gap between their levels.

"Ye-Ri, it's the first time you've seen that guy. Right?"

"Yes. We've been here all the time lately, but I've never seen his face."

"Then he's definitely someone who just achieved his Second Awakening."

There was no reason for a high-level Player to come to a low-ranking Gate. Because of the difference in level, one wouldn't be able to gain experience points. Furthermore, there was a huge difference in the mana stone prices.

Some high-level Players went to low-ranking Gates from time to time to help a newbie member from the same guild level up. However, that guy had been alone, so that probably wasn't the case.

"Among the people who have completed basic training, there wasn't anyone who had obtained an A-rank Trait or higher, right?"

"Yeah. There was none, at least during the past month."

"Good."

Now that Ho-Jun knew that the opponent was someone who had average talent and was an arrogant newbie, there was nothing for him to be afraid of.

"The carrying service is closed for today."

"Oppa, you're not thinking of..."

"Let's teach that snot-nosed brat a lesson."



The rest of the party members smiled at Ho-Jun's words.

Ye-Ri laughed with her hands covering her mouth and then nodded.

"Sounds good. Finally, some fun."

"Come to think of it. It's been a while since we've had fun."

"I'm in too, hyung-nim."

The rest of the party members were in a similar situation to Ho-Jun. Because of their low-ranking Traits, they couldn't enter a higher-ranking Gate. Their envy of lucky Players was just as bad or worse than Ho-Jun's. They also had past experiences of teaching arrogant newbie Players a lesson.

"Okay, shall we?" Ho-Jun entered the Gate while smiling.

\* \* \*

"What do you want?" Oh Kang-Woo asked Ho-Jun, who had called out to him.

It wasn't the first time he'd seen Ho-Jun's face.

'It's the guy from before.'

Ho-Jun was the guy who had offered to carry Kang-Woo at the Gate entrance. He was looking at Kang-Woo somewhat mockingly.

"As someone more experienced than you, I was worried about whether your hunting was going well," Ho-Jun said with a shady smile.

Kang-Woo smirked at Ho-Jun's attempt to mock him.

'Cute.'

It wasn't hard for Kang-Woo to understand the situation. He could tell just from looking at their expressions why they had decided to approach him.

'Are they trying to play a prank on me?'

Trampling on the weak was a basic desire that all living things had, as it made them feel better about themselves.

'But...'

This group was wrong about something.

'I'm not weak.'

Kang-Woo wasn't a weak person who couldn't do anything by himself. He was the demon of demons, the predator of predators.

His lips curled up, and he opened his mouth with deep, sunken eyes.

He said, "As you can see, hunting is going well."

"Hmm." Ho-Jun looked around the area. "But there isn't even a single corpse."

Kang-Woo had said that hunting was going well, but there weren't any Lizardman corpses around him.

Kang-Woo shrugged and replied calmly, "I was just taking a break."

"Really? Hmm. But aren't you being too rude toward your sunbae?"

"That's because your meddlesome attitude is annoying, sunbae."

Ho-Jun frowned after seeing that Kang-Woo wasn't discouraged by the harsh atmosphere.

"Damn prick..."

He wasn't sure what rank Kang-Woo's Trait was, but Kang-Woo's attitude ground his gears.

'I'm sure his Trait is B-rank at most.'

If a Player managed to get a B-rank Trait in their Second Awakening, they were considered a talented Player. If that happened, they would receive lots of calls from different guilds and parties. Of course, there was a chance that they wouldn't be able to unlock a higher-ranking Trait in the future, but many people stayed arrogant until they found that out.

"Are you here to pick a fight or what?" Kang-Woo asked Ho-Jun with his arms crossed.

Even the other party members, who had been watching silently, picked up their weapons while frowning.

"Hah."

"For God's sake, this bastard..."

However, Ho-Jun extended his hand to gesture to his party members. "Stop."

"But Ho-Jun..."

"Don't worry. We're definitely going to teach this brat a lesson," Ho-Jun said with a smirk.

There was no need for them to get their hands dirty.

'There's a better way,' Ho-Jun thought.

After all, the scariest thing for newbie Players wasn't other Players. It was monsters.

"Hehe, I'll make you regret being so arrogant," Ho-Jun stated.

"You're getting my hopes up," Kang-Woo said.

"Hmph, let's see how long you can keep that attitude up."

Ho-Jun took out his shortsword. He smiled and extended his arms, which were covered with wrist guards.

It seemed like Ho-Jun's party members knew what Ho-Jun planned to do, and they looked at him expectantly.

"Did you know that Lizardmen are extremely sensitive to sound?" Ho-Jun asked.

"..." Kang-Woo didn't reply.

Nevertheless, that was information he already knew.

'I see what he's up to,' Kang-Woo thought.

When Kang-Woo realized what Ho-Jun was trying to do, he smirked.

Considering how Ho-Jun had brought his shortsword close to his wrist guard and mentioned Lizardmen being sensitive to sound, there was only one possible course of action that Ho-Jun could possibly take.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Ho-Jun used his shortsword to hit his wrist guard, producing a metallic sound that echoed throughout the swamp.

'I knew it.' Kang-Woo smiled at Ho-Jun's petty and predictable behavior.

Rush!

"Kiiiekk!!"

Kang-Woo could hear the screams of the approaching Lizardmen.

Ho-Jun said with a smirk, "The best way to teach a rude newbie a lesson is by using monsters."

After leveling up and getting used to fighting against monsters, most Players became more afraid of other Players. That was because monsters only tried to kill them, but other Players often inflicted pain worse than death.

However, newbie Players who weren't used to fighting monsters were usually more afraid of monsters than Players. After all, monsters were obvious enemies, a threat to humanity. They were creatures that tore apart the skin of humans and drank their blood. So, it was normal that newbie Players who had never experienced a real battle in their lives were scared of them.

"So, that's your play, huh?" Kang-Woo said.

"Why? Are you scared now?" Ho-Jun asked while laughing. "At least ten Lizardmen are going to rush over here. I don't know how amazing your Trait is, but will you be able to face all ten of them at once?"

"..."

"Haha. You don't need to worry. We'll help you if you're about to die. Although... you may get severely injured, and maybe you won't be able to use some parts of your body again. But it's a cheap price if you think of this as a life lesson."

Upon seeing that Kang-Woo was silent, Ho-Jun hit his shortsword against his wrist guard with a wider swing.

Clang!

A more distinct metallic sound spread throughout their surroundings.

Yet, Kang-Woo remained silent while watching Ho-Jun's actions. In Ho-Jun's eyes, Kang-Woo looked afraid.

"Why? Why aren't you acting as cheeky as you did before? Huh?" Ho-Jun mocked.

"..."

"Hahaha! You've frozen now that monsters are actually coming!" Ho-Jun laughed excitedly.

Kang-Woo smirked. "Are you sure?"

"Huh?"

"Are you sure you're fine with just that?"

"What the hell are you talki—"

"If you're gonna do that, you might as well go all the way."

Kang-Woo extended his hands and clapped with all of his strength while looking at the confused Ho-Jun.

Boom!!!

His hands produced an explosive sound.

'Authority of Sonority.'

It was an Authority that used demonic energy to make sounds loud enough to rupture eardrums.

"Gasp!"

"Wh-What have you done?!"

The faces of Ho-Jun and his party members turned pale.

Lizardmen were sensitive to sound. Making a loud sound like that in their territory was suicide.

Rush!!

"Kiieekk!!"

The sounds of Lizardmen rang out all around as the Lizardmen approached the source of the loud noise.

"Y-You crazy—"

Boom!

Booooooooooom!

Yet, Kang-Woo didn't stop at just one clap. He used the Authority of Sonority multiple times. Loud sounds similar to dozens of bombs exploding echoed throughout their surroundings.

"Hahaha! Yeah! This is more like it!" Kang-Woo exclaimed excitedly.

"Crazy son of a bitch!!" Ho-Jun's scream rang out along with the explosions of sound.

It was then that he realized that he had picked a fight with a lunatic.