

# World's Greatest Militia - Chapter 1 - Prologue –

## 1. Prologue

**Militia:** A power or group which controls a region on the basis of military strength.

**Warlord:** Someone who owns an individual/personal army.

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Kwang Hwi blinked, and the world disappeared.

Moments ago, he was knocking back drinks with his former subordinates, but as he closed his eyes and opened them again, they had disappeared completely — just like his house and everything else around him — leaving him alone in a blank, white space.

'*What is this place?*' As soon as the thought crossed his mind, a screen, like a hologram from a sci-fi movie, unfolded before his eyes.

『Merit Points: 100,000』

『By defeating monsters, you can earn Merit Points which can be used in the Merit Shop.』

'*Monsters? Merit Points?*' Kwang Hwi tilted his head, slightly confused at the bizarre announcement.

He chose to remain calm, carefully observing his new surroundings. Given his experiences, even a sudden change like this would hardly faze him.

"What's a Merit Shop?" he wondered aloud. A new alert instantly answered his query.

『From the Merit Shop, you can purchase weapons and equipment, which can be used to kill monsters.』

『The only category available at the moment is <Personal Weaponry>.』

『<Personal/Combat Gear> category is currently locked.』

『<Support/Crew-Served Weaponry> category is currently locked.』

『<Communications & Reconnaissance> category is currently locked.』

『<Logistics & Transportation> category is currently locked.』

『<Energy> category is currently locked.』

『<Armored Vehicles> category is currently locked.』

『This category can be unlocked immediately for 50,000 MP.』

『<Aircraft> category is currently locked.』

『<Navy> category is currently locked.』

『<Spacecraft> category is currently locked.』

『<■■■■■> category is currently locked.』

『<■■■■■> category is currently locked.』

“Personal weaponry, huh...?” he mused. As if in response, a black speck on the horizon grew as it drew closer. His vision flickered as a strong gust of wind blew his hair over his eyes, announcing the appearance of a small, simple rack. Kwang Hwi smiled as he looked over the items on display. He was intimately familiar with them.

*‘I haven’t seen you in a while.’* His hand gently brushed over the cold, black steel of an HK416C. It had been Kwang Hwi’s go-to weapon as an active mercenary; even now it had a familiar feeling.

『HK416C』

『A derivative of the HK416, introduced in 2011 and designed for 5.56mm NATO rounds.』

『Price: 158 Merit Points』

『Technical Specs』

Length: 690mm

Barrel: 9”

Bump Stock included.

5.56mm cartridge (30) included.

『Would you like to purchase?』

Kwang Hwi flashed a bitter smile as he nodded. He still wasn’t sure this wasn’t all just a dream. But it was mostly irrelevant; ever since he had quit being a mercenary, he hadn’t once touched the gun he used to use so often. He wanted that feeling again, even if it was just a momentary illusion.

『Purchase complete. 158 MP have been deducted.』

In an instant, the modest-size rifle was back in his hands. Although the gun was similar in size to an SMG, it was undoubtedly a full-blown assault rifle. Despite its small size, it proved perfect for its intended use.

He let the familiar, cold metal settle in his hands.

『If you kill monsters with weapons purchased from the Merit Shop, you will receive additional Merit Points.』

Kwang Hwi looked around. Nothing had changed. The gun rack was still standing in front of him, both he and it the sole occupants of this empty space. There were no monsters, as far as he could tell.

“Monsters? What monsters?” The words barely escaped his mouth before the world around him changed again.

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## 2. Fog

“Hahahaha!”

“Dude, some random weirdo came up to me asking when I graduated from the military academy, right? So I just—”

Kwang Hwi’s body trembled in shock as the white room and the solitary gun rack vanished without a trace. A familiar scene filled his vision once again. He was sitting in a circle, surrounded by his compatriots. In the center, there were a variety of snacks to compliment the soju and beer. He remembered now. They were reuniting over drinks, a year after the team had disbanded.

“Hey boss, what’s the matter? You look like you just saw a ghost.”

“Wait a minute boss. Where’d you get that gun?”

Silence engulfed the room in an instant, as Kwang Hwi felt everyone’s eyes move to his hands. Looking down, his face froze in a grimace.

The HK416C he had bought in that dream sat in his hands. He pulled out the magazine, just to check. 30 rounds of 5.56mm NATO, steel in brass casing, live. It hadn’t been a dream after all.

“Damn boss! How’d you get that gun?! Did you smuggle it in?”

“Man, I don’t know who, but wow boss, you must’ve made a deal with someone, huh? Please, boss! Get me one too! I wanna relieve my stress every once in a while; fire one, you know? Oh man, how about a .50 Barrett!”

His subordinates laughed and drank their beers. Whether it was the alcohol or just an acceptance of Kwang Hwi’s antics, they seemed entirely unperturbed by the fact he had found a gun.

Kwang Hwi winced as they spoke; their loud voices were giving him an ear-splitting headache. He was sure of it now. It definitely hadn’t been a dream.

“Quiet.” He raised his hand as he spoke. A tense silence quickly fell over the room and the previously smiling faces turned into grim stares.

Kwang Hwi looked around. Something felt off. Suddenly, it hit him.

“The fog,” he whispered.

“Eh?”

“Look outside.” Kwang Hwi jerked his head to the side.

They had been holding their reunion at Kwang Hwi’s house; on the 2nd floor, to be precise. Kwang Hwi had personally designed the home, and one of its walls was made entirely out of glass. As his former subordinates turned their heads and stared out the window, their voices rang out in surprise.

Outside, the warm sunshine had been suddenly replaced by a thick, gray mist, which made it impossible for anyone inside the house to see more than a few feet past the windows. It covered everything; the trees, the buildings, even the lot just outside the house and the cars parked within.

“What is with this fog?” As if sensing the danger from this incredibly bizarre scenario, the men jumped to their feet.

Kwang Hwi picked up the remote next to him and turned on the TV.

– BREAKING NEWS. An unusually thick fog appears to have covered the entire country, reducing visibility to only a few feet. Accidents have been reported across multiple freeways and roads. Local police departments have been quick to declare a state of emergency.

Kwang Hwi flicked through a few more channels, ignoring the culture and variety shows. Every single news channel was reporting on the unbelievable, country-covering fog. Some even reported that the Minister of National Defense had issued an order to immediately recall all foreign-deployed soldiers.

Inside the house, a nervous tension filled the air. “I’ve never seen fog that looked like this in my life.”

“Me neither. What about you boss?”

Kwang Hwi shook his head. “It’s a first.” Indeed, as Kwang Hwi stared uneasily into the void, he felt like calling it ‘thick fog’ was a massive understatement. It was like staring into a terrible abyss, a dark hole that could swallow everything in the world.

'... Is this related to the gun?' The thought occurred to Kwang Hwi quite suddenly. While he had been drinking, he had a dream. But it wasn't a dream – he had brought back a real gun from that place, and almost as soon as he returned, the fog appeared. He couldn't accept that as simple coincidence.

On a hunch, he opened a small window. As if it were a beast, simply waiting for an opportunity, the fog immediately leapt into the room.

The men nearby rushed forward to close the window, but Kwang Hwi waved them off. He watched with tense curiosity as the fog, like it truly did have a mind of its own, reached out a long, misty tendril and wrapped it around the HK416C on the floor. It trembled, every now and then, as it engulfed the rifle.

Kwang Hwi swallowed. It was abundantly clear that this was no ordinary fog. Instead of pouring in and filling up the room like a normal mist, it had chosen, in defiance of the typical laws of physics, to focus its presence on the rifle, ignoring everyone and everything else in the room.

Exactly 10 minutes passed, but the rifle appeared totally unchanged. Rather, Kwang Hwi noticed that the fog had started thinning out. Finally, as the fog disappeared entirely from the room, Kwang Hwi reached down and picked up the rifle again. He inspected it carefully, looking over its joints and hinges. It appeared perfectly intact.

"Why did the fog wrap itself around the rifle, and only the rifle?" He turned to the others.

One of his subordinates replied, "It had a purpose?"

"Yeah, it certainly did. The question is... what purpose?"

"Maybe it was trying to destroy the rifle?"

"Destroy?" Kwang Hwi thought about it. It was far too early to jump to conclusions, but this was the only reasonable hypothesis they could come up with. "Then, can anybody confirm this?"

Everyone's gazes landed on one person.

"Jackson, I heard you're still employed. Don't you have a pistol and a silencer with you?" asked Kwang Hwi.

"Y-yes. But I don't have them with me right now. They're in my car." His unusual name betrayed his foreign heritage, but he (perhaps surprisingly) spoke fluent Korean nonetheless. Jackson was a black American, but had joined Kwang Hwi's crew while they were still active; learning Korean to alleviate his difficulties communicating with the others.

“Your car? The sedan outside?”

“Yes.” He nodded reluctantly.

Everybody’s eyes darted towards the window, and one of the men gulped. Their cars were parked just beyond the dense wall of fog, but nobody wanted to chance wandering out there.

“Let’s go then.” Kwang Hwi stood up as he spoke, and raised his HK416C to chest level. “Everyone else, stay here. Only Jackson and I will go.”

“Understood. Please be careful.”

Kwang Hwi nodded. He could tell that his subordinates wanted to go with him, but in this case, it was dangerous to move as a group. In the thick fog where it was easy to lose one’s bearing, a large group would have a hard time staying together.

The duo carefully opened the door and stepped into the fog. As if it were waiting for their approach, the fog enveloped them instantly. A particularly dense patch arose around Kwang Hwi’s rifle, but to his relief, nothing seemed to happen to the gun itself.

“It should be somewhere around here....”

Jackson kept one hand on Kwang Hwi’s shoulder, while pressing his car keys with the other. A loud beep, and a brief flash of orange light greeted them. Kwang Hwi slowly moved towards the flash, careful to take note of his direction.

Amidst the fog, a pitch black sedan slowly came into view. It was barely visible, but it was enough for the two of them, who possessed finely tuned physical abilities and senses.

Jackson quickly jumped into the driver’s seat and Kwang Hwi moved to sit next to him. “Please wait,” he said, as he opened the hand rest between the driver’s seat and passenger’s seat. A few objects lay strewn about the storage space haphazardly: a capsule of anti-drowsiness gum, a notebook, and various pens amongst other things.

Jackson gently pressed the gum capsule, and a hidden compartment opened with a click. Kwang Hwi could clearly see a pistol with the silencer already attached, and 3 magazines sitting inside. He saw Jackson reach for the gun, then pause, and frown.

“Holy fuck!” Jackson exclaimed.

Kwang Hwi looked at the gun more carefully. His eyes narrowed. The gun that should’ve been well-maintained was completely covered in rust, as if it had been sitting in the ocean, decaying for years. Firing it was almost certainly out of the question. Similarly, the ammunition in the cartridge looked like it would explode if it was fired.

"It shouldn't have touched the fog..." Jackson muttered.

"Let's go back," Kwang Hwi said.

"Roger."

They left the car, stepping back into the cold, oppressive gray air. The all-encompassing fog was dizzying, but Kwang Hwi expertly retraced his steps as he worked his way back towards the house. Jackson followed without question. It had been a year since Kwang Hwi retired, but Jackson still believed in his boss's senses.

Suddenly, Kwang Hwi stopped.

"Boss?"

"Shh," he whispered in response, as he strained his ears. It was quiet earlier, but now Kwang Hwi could clearly hear heavy footsteps — from the side.

He swerved around.

### 3. Monster

Kwang Hwi carefully aimed his gun towards the faint sound he had heard in the fog. Jackson caught on fast and moved behind Kwang Hwi. As the footsteps grew louder, Kwang Hwi could hear the sound of gravel crunching underfoot.

'Gravel. That means...' Kwang Hwi quickly visualized his surroundings. The area he owned was a square piece of land, with a 2 meter-tall fence around the property. The ground in front of his parking lot, where the two men currently were, was full of gravel. With this knowledge in hand, Kwang Hwi readjusted his aim towards the sound's origin.

Suddenly, he felt a tap on his shoulder, and turned to find Jackson staring at him, maintaining silence despite the tense situation. Kwang Hwi knew he was waiting for orders and gestured towards the house in response. Jackson's pupils widened — obviously he was hesitant to leave his boss without backup, but Kwang Hwi simply nodded in affirmation. Despite his worries, Jackson trusted his boss's skills above all else. He silently vanished into the fog without complaint.

The footsteps continued to grow louder. Whatever was coming was getting a lot closer.

Kwang Hwi could make out a shadow moving in the fog. Slowly, he moved his finger onto the trigger of his rifle and took aim. He was prepared to open fire at any moment, but decided to risk waiting for whatever was out there to come into view. He wanted to see it clearly.

A low growl emanated from the shadow in the fog. It was becoming increasingly apparent that this thing was not human. As it lumbered out of the fog, Kwang Hwi finally got a clear view of the creature. It had a humanoid build, but the rest of its features could only be described as alien. Its skin was dark blue in color and its large frame was bulging with muscles. A single blue eye was present on its face, glaring viciously at Kwang Hwi. However, Kwang Hwi was more focused on what the creature held, a large, one-handed machete. The monster brandished this savage looking weapon as it rushed straight at him.

With his curiosity more than satisfied, Kwang Hwi pulled the trigger of his rifle. A burst of light and a sharp crack accompanied the bullet as it erupted from the muzzle. The impact of the shot caused the monster to shudder — but not stop.

In the face of the monster's inhuman vitality, Kwang Hwi kept his cool. If one shot couldn't stop it, he just had to keep shooting.

Four more bullets pierced its chest, causing the monster to spasm and collapse, like a puppet whose strings had been cut. Disgusting black blood oozed from the monster's wounds, seeping into the gravel beneath its body.

'Persistent bastard.' Kwang Hwi took careful aim at its head. Blood and brains exploded outward, leaving a gore-filled hole in the monster's skull. 'At least its head isn't as tough as its body. One bullet's enough, huh.'

『You are the first person in the world to defeat a Keku.』

『You have obtained 500 MP.』

"Boss!" Several voices called out in unison from behind, as the sound of urgent footsteps drew closer. "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine," Kwang Hwi replied. He watched as several of his subordinates appeared out of the fog as they rushed towards him. All of them recoiled in surprise once they saw the corpse at Kwang Hwi's feet. "Let's head back inside. Also, we're taking this thing with us."

"Yes!" His subordinates responded in unison once again.

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The monster's corpse was much heavier than Kwang Hwi had anticipated. He knew that the dead felt heavier than the living, but even then, the monster easily weighed more than two fully grown men. Luckily Kwang Hwi wasn't alone. He and his subordinates managed to carry the monster inside, where they were now examining its body.

"It doesn't look like a human." One of his subordinates said.

Another subordinate scoffed in response. “Obviously.”

“Has anyone seen something like this before?” Kwang Hwi asked while looking around the room.

Everyone shook their heads. Even with their vast combined experiences, nobody had so much as heard of a monster like this before.

“Why don’t we check the news again?” A subordinate suggested. “If we ran into such a monster, it’s likely that others have as well.”

Everyone nodded in agreement and they all moved to the TV in the living room, flicking it on and switching to the news channel. A news anchor wearing a grim, sober expression filled the screen.

– BREAKING NEWS! The appearance of the unexplainable fog is now confirmed to be a world-wide phenomenon. We have also received a small number of reports claiming that there are strange creatures lurking in the fog, attacking those who encounter them. Viewers are advised to take caution and remain indoors.

The group flipped to another channel. A Blue House spokesperson appeared onscreen.

– We want to make it clear that the rumors and reports of unidentified and hostile entities attacking people in the fog are indeed true and that their number is currently unknown. We strongly urge you to remain indoors as much as possible. You should also ensure that you have access to enough food and supplies to survive indefinitely. Also, please immediately take any defensive measures you can.

“Damn. This isn’t good.”

“Eh?” His subordinates turned to Kwang Hwi with puzzled expressions. It seems that they didn’t fully grasp the severity of the situation.

“It seems like the government has been rendered useless,” Kwang Hwi explained.

His answer only served to confuse the men further. They knew Kwang Hwi was serious — he didn’t joke — but what he was saying didn’t make any sense to them.

“But how, boss? Our country’s standing military is half a million strong and we’ve got 150,000 police officers on top of that.” Several of the men nodded in agreement. They had all served as mercenaries with Kwang Hwi overseas and they all knew that the South Korean military wasn’t to be taken lightly. If anything, the absurd military strength of neighboring countries like China made South Korea look weak simply by comparison.

“Did the government spokesperson say, ‘Wait to be rescued?’” one of his men asked.

“No.” Kwang Hwi answered. “They told us to take defensive measures if possible.”

“...What does that mean?” Someone asked in confusion.

Kwang Hwi let out a sigh. “Has the government ever, in its history, told us to arm ourselves?” At the very least, Kwang Hwi himself couldn't recall such a drastic measure ever being implemented. The South Korean government — or, more specifically, its high ranking officials, were heavily opposed to giving private citizens access to weapons. In all fairness, it was mostly to protect the people from themselves. There was also the fact that, since the people of South Korea couldn't arm themselves en masse the government didn't have to worry about a citizen's uprising, unlike gun-friendly countries such as America.

Which meant that if the government was now encouraging people to 'take defensive measures,' then the situation had indeed gotten very bad. Kwang Hwi turned to Jackson. “Jackson, tell them what happened in the car.”

“Yes, boss.” Jackson carefully explained how they had gone to retrieve his hidden pistol, only to find a rusted gun and useless ammunition.

“We can probably expect the same situation to have played out across the country, which means that all the guns the military have are now useless. At this point, we can't be certain that guns are the only things affected by the fog.”

His men all wore grim expressions now. Humans hadn't dominated the earth because of some superior physical prowess. No, the strength of humanity had always come from its ingenuity, the ability to create a tool for any and every situation. But what if all the tools that gave humanity its edge disappeared? What if something stronger than humans appeared after they lost their trump card?

Everyone looked down at the monster's corpse again with uneasy expressions. A single glance made it clear. This monster's physical capabilities surpassed humanity's by leaps and bounds. Few humans were trained in close quarters physical combat. Even if someone had trained to the extreme, this monster looked like it was on a completely different level.

Having realized all of this, one of his subordinates finally spoke. “The situation isn't looking too great for us.”

The tension in the air was palpable.

Kwang Hwi clapped his hands together, drawing everyone's attention. “Thankfully, I have a solution,” he said, lifting up the HK416C he had bought from the Merit Shop. Fortunately, the gun worked perfectly, even if he had no idea why. “Now, listen. This is going to sound crazy, but here's what happened...”

Kwang Hwi didn't bother hiding any of the details. The men gathered here were his comrades, people he could trust more than anyone else. "...Even I have no idea why this happened, or how I got this ability. What I do know is that it's essential to our survival."

"T-that's true..."

They couldn't be certain, but in the worst case scenario, the entire country of South Korea... no, the entire world had just lost all of their firearms.

'Only I can get a gun?' Kwang Hwi almost snorted in derision. It was like a bad web-novel title.

One by one, he looked each of his subordinates in the eye, and then spoke. "It looks like it's time to get the band back together, ya hear?"

At his words, surprise quickly changed into elation; excitement was written across their faces. Were they too used to life on the battlefield? Anxiety, concern, fear, all of these would have been more normal reactions. Yet these men looked excited more than anything else.

"As expected, boss. You're one wild mofol!" Jackson guffawed as he broke the silence. The others quickly chimed in.

"Hell yea, boss!"

"Ha! Never expected our one year reunion to end up like this!"

Their reactions were incredibly abnormal. But for them, it was to be expected. They'd always had a few screws loose.