

# MEMORIZE

## Chapter 11



Split in Half. Pt.(1/8)

“This again? If you stayed quiet, you could have just played along.”

Seeing the smart mouth lady coming to and fro, Park Don-Gul frowned again but didn't refuse her. Compared to before, he began speaking with a smoother voice.

“Didn't you hear what that Agassi just said? We shouldn't fight amongst ourselves. ”

“Why don't you think about your own actions before speaking?”

“Well, that's that. But right now, we are gathered here to share our opinions so why don't you hear my side first?”

People's winds were taken out of their sail, as they meekly acknowledged Park Don-Gul. As if thinking he ate something funny, the smart mouth lady's brows were slightly creased.

“First, I apologise for everything that happened at that clearing. My speech is rough, don't judge me on it. I am used to speaking like that, but it doesn't mean I hate you guys.”

Park Don-Gul looked around discretely before lightly stooping his head. While he still faced the disgruntled gaze, it had become slightly softer. Slowly moving to the centre of the party, he sought out the response from everyone.

He must have thought the mood was agreeable as Park Don-Gul went straight into the main subject.

“I agree with this bank lady’s words. Yeah. Arguing right now is wrong. Let’s bury our hate for each other and find a way to escape those monsters and live. Whatcha think?”

“.... Then continue.”

“It’s just like I said. I only agree with a part of it, not everything else. But if I go straight to the conclusion, everyone is going to criticise me. So I want everyone to realise the situation for themselves.”

“Which part are you unsatisfied about?”

As Lee Bo-Rim grumbled out her question, Park Don-Gul had a dreary smile as he replied.

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As Lee Bo-Rim grumbled out her question, Park Don-Gul had a dreary smile as he replied.

"Finding a way to survive is obvious, but this 'co-operation' I don't think so. Cooperate? It sounds nice, but look at the situation and search out your feelings. The only thing I hear is dogs sniffing grass."

"Just when I thought you were saying something intelligent. Just go. Escape alone and live on your own."

The smart mouth lady snorted out a laughter, but Park Don-Gul didn't move an inch. Rather, he gave an assenting look as he nodded his head.

"Obviously, I already thought of that."

"Then go."

"Just hear me out. To the end, hmm? Hear everything out."

As An-Hyun gave her a look, the hot-tempered, smart mouth lady close her mouth. Receiving the gaze of everyone, Park Don-Gul continued to speak at a leisurely pace.

"I am ignorant. And crude. But I don't know how to lie. Because I am simple. At that clearing when I was running for my life, I felt a lot of things and thought a lot of things. After that, cooperating sounds offensive to my ears."

At Park Don-Gul's words, everyone shivered as if it reminded them of what happened in the clearing. As if he was waiting for such response, Park Don-Gul's larynx moved slightly.

"Truthfully, I wasn't just afraid, I was beyond terrified. While it's quite embarrassing, my knee went numb and I almost wet myself. Think. Would you stay still when things that you saw only in TV and movies appeared right before your eyes? If that scout guy didn't act fast, then most of us would be monster chow by now. So I agonised and thought deeply. I am not going to boast or threaten, so don't misunderstand me. I know a thing or two about knives. Knives or whatever, right now whether it's human or animals I won't hesitate in killing them. Why? I don't want to die. What happened in the clearing was just so sudden. I was really surprised and bewildered but damn it, I want to live. So if it happens again, I am going to use this weapon so I can live."

Park Don-Gul's words were long. But, it hadn't ended yet. Though they were uncertain, the party began to gradually focus on his words. Having already

discerned his true nature, I clucked my tongue at this ploy, but for now, I decided to see where it would go. Park Don-Gul was still continuing on, as he pointed them out one by one.

“Others won’t see it, but I can. That thuggish looking brother over there looks like he worked out. He even brought a weapon and defeat some monsters, and.... You over there. If you could act as much as your big mouth, then maybe you could be of some help. The guy holding the crossbow, I don’t even need to say anything about him. And. Those four can definitely help out. What I am saying is that we can establish some kind of cooperation with the lots here. Don’t you agree?”

At Park Don-Gul’s words, An-Sol, Lee Shin-Wu and Lee Bo-Rim’s expression became dark. To simplify what he said, it meant those four were of useless. Soon after, Lee Bo-Rim gathered up her courage and spoke out.

“So you are saying you can’t cooperate with useless people?”

“Woh, woh. Calm down. I haven’t finished yet.”

“Just what....”

“Can you do what that guy did or maybe the crossbow guy? Do you think you can grab a knife or a stone and stab those monsters? All I see is a big fat no. Especially you, sticking next to him and squeaking whenever those bastards come out. That woman over there had the decency to keep her mouth shut. At least she didn’t hinder us, at that much, I don’t have anything say.”

The woman Park Don-Gul indicated was the person who just asked me why I was leaving my place. She still maintained her calm but cold exterior.

There was silence before Lee Bo-Rim spoke again with a shaky voice. Compared to before, her voice was quite dead.

“So in conclusion, we are going to abandon people who are useless....”

Lee Bo-Rim seemed unable to get over what was said, and this made me think what kind of person Park Don-Gul was. While I knew where he was leading this too, his current act did open up for deeper introspection. Early on I thought that his head was full of shit, but he had correctly discerned the current situation and spoke logically. Regardless of his ulterior motives.

Seeing the despondent Lee Bo-Rim, Park Don-Gul's confidence was restored as he showed his yellowish teeth and spoke.

"Why are you jumping ahead. I haven't spoke of such thing yet. Don't be so sensitive. The world is give and take. If we are going to cooperate, it just means that you will have to prove your worth. If we head out now with this vague cooperation, what do you think will happen? That thuggish guy will be too busy taking care of his girlfriend, and that kid will be frozen solid that he might drag us down. What I am saying is that I don't want to cooperate or protect idiots. For me, my life's the most important. Isn't it the same with you?"

That smart mouth lady didn't seem to have anything to say, as she only clenched her hand tightly. The bank lady's face was positively red, and I could see that her hand was clenched tightly in a fist. She was trembling but didn't say anything. Park Don-Gul leisurely observed the state everyone was in, and he must have felt it was time for the final blow as he spoke with great fluency.

"I am sure everyone feels the same, that their life is the most important. If you acknowledge that, then let's talk frankly. We can't cooperate with some people here. Just look at us now, we are flying blind. You there, kid. Don't you agree?"

Being pointed at, An-Sol looked to Hyun with an embarrassed face as her mouth moved up and down. Seeing her mouth mumbling, it seems she had something to say but words didn't come out as intended and she bowed her head again. Seeing that, Park Don-Gul lifted his two shoulders in an exaggerated manner as spoke again.

“This guy knows it as well, didn’t he tell the kid to walk on his own? If we did as the crossbow guy said, we wouldn’t have been in such situation. Mhmm? Why are you reacting like that? Am I barking some nonsense again?”

It wasn’t pure nonsense. Regardless of his intentions, Park Don-Gul’s evaluation was correct. The problem was that he threw a fastball at the people who needed help.

“If you think I am wrong, prove yourself. Go downhill and kill one or two of those monsters and drag it right in front of me. I will shut up right then.”

“.....”

It seems he said everything he needs to have said as Park Don-Gul moved back to his spot. I was curious about everyone’s response. I moved my gaze and slowly observed everyone’s expressions.

An-Hyun seemed deep in thought as he had his eyes closed, An-Sol was trembling lightly next to him. Though the most pitiful amongst them was Lee Bo-Rim and Lee Shin-Wu. They were definitely targeted early on by Park Don-Gul. I could see their teeth were chattering due to nervousness.

For a while, no one spoke up, but the first one to speak up again was An-Hyun.

“I understand what you are saying.”

While An-Hyun usually kept his silence, he glanced at his sister before speaking with a clear voice.

“Sol is not my girlfriend, she’s my sister. I don’t have the slightest intention to abandon her.”

“Oppa....”

Touched, An-Sol suddenly hugged An-Hyun. Seeing those two, Park Don-Gul didn’t seem to have known that as he rattled out a response.

“Siblings? I didn’t know that. Well, we can’t do anything about that, but nothing changes. Who can guarantee that what happened before won’t repeat itself?”

The situation was turning out to be quite fun. As he couldn’t target An-Hyun directly, Park Don-Gul had targeted the cumbersome An-Sol to pressure An-Hyun.

It looks like Park Don-Gul had chosen to leave by himself. However, he didn’t want to leave quietly as he had shaken everyone’s confidence. An-Hyun didn’t speak anymore, and the hill became silent. The atmosphere had become so silent I couldn’t even hear their breathing.

“Well, don’t think so badly of me. I droned on for a bit, but the situation too uncertain right now, it’s just lukewarm. Also, a lot of people already seems to hate me.”

“So what. What is it that you want....?”

Regardless, when the smart mouth lady asked with less bite than before, Park Don-Gul responded immediately.

“What I want, is for us to create a proper ‘team’ right now.”

## Chapter 12



Split in Half. Pt.(2/8)

No one spoke a word. Park Don-Gul’s words stabbed deeply into everyone’s hearts. Wetting his lips with his, Park Don-Gul continued.



“There is no need for trust when everyone thinks their own life is the most important. What I want is a team that helps each other and won’t drag us down. I only want people who are prepared for this.”

“That’s.... too much.”

Lee Bo-Rim replied in anguish, but it didn’t look like she would give in. Still, the people who kept Park Don-Gul in check, An-Hyun and the smart mouth lady kept their mouth closed. Lee Bo-Rim’s face was filled with hopelessness and she had responded in utmost desperation.

“Go ahead and call me selfish. It’s not like anything will happen. But mark my words, if this doesn’t seem like it will work, I will go alone. It seems like you guys hate me already.... And truthfully, I don’t think I am the only one that’s tired of this halfway attitude. That crossbow guy must have gotten frustrated so he left to go and keep watch. You guys, start using your brains.”

“Are you joking? Being useless. Or being absolute no help, how do you know without trying first?”

The smart mouth lady disputed immediately. However, there was no strength in her voice. Park Don-Gul looked like he just caught a prey, as he replied with a satisfied look.

“Know without trying first....? Are you joking with me?”

“What?”

“Do you still think this isn’t reality? Are you running around thinking you have extra lives? This isn’t a computer game where you can save and load. Wake up! If we bumble ahead and someone makes just one mistake....”

Halting for a bit, Park Don-Gul took his thumb and dragged it across his neck.

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Halting for a bit, Park Don-Gul took his thumb and dragged it across his neck.

“We all die.”

His last words seem to have been a great shock to everyone as they all looked shaken. Lee Bo-Rim just stared down at the ground with a vacant expression, and the smart mouth lady just chewed on her lips. Still, the only person who kept her composure was that icy woman.

“Don’t take it the wrong way. I already know you hate me. I understand why and I apologise again for that. But don’t act on useless nonsense. I haven’t said anything about abandoning anyone.”

Seeing their response, Park Don-Gul gave out a fishy laughter as he thumped his chest.

“Now that’s been said, let’s all decide. Anyone who agrees with what I said, come to my side. I will welcome anyone who is prepared.”

As Park Don-Gul concluded, there was a strained tension that lingered on the hill. Shaken by his words, everyone eyed each other. While I hate to acknowledge it, his words had effectively rattle their minds. Under his speech, Park Don-Gul had manipulated the people’s yearning to survive, and played on that instinct.

The repercussion from that backlash began to spread. An-Hyun and An-Sol were deeply troubled, even the smart mouth lady who constantly went head to head with Park Don-Gul was hesitating. In contrast, that good-for-nothing Park Don-Gul was playing around with his iron rod with a relaxed attitude.

Frankly speaking, I didn’t care as long as An-Hyun and An-Sol didn’t go to his side. Nevertheless, to prepare for the unknown I used my Third Eye on the smart mouth lady and the one other woman I had yet to analyse. I had to at least check on the Attributes. My first target, with quite an expectation, was the smart mouth lady.

[ Player Status ]

1. Name : Lee Yu-Jung(Year(s) 0) 2. Sex : Woman(22) 3. Height · Weight : 166.3cm · 51.7kg 4. Alignment : Good · Neutral

[Strength 32] [Resistance 38] [Agility 50] [Vitality 30] [Magic Power 48] [Luck 46] (Remaining attribute point: 0 point.)

“Hmm.”

I was wondering what stock she put into to confront Park Don-Gul like that, and looking at her Attributes, she definitely had what it took. While An-Hyun and An-Sol had ridiculously impressive stats, this early on her attributes were nothing to scoff at either. She was especially blessed with the high Agility and Magic Power, as it was like opened up two different branches of Magic. I decided to keep an eye out for Lee Yu-Jung.

Next, I turned my Third Eye to the last woman. She stirred up my curiosity as well.

[ Player Status ]

1. Name : Kim Han-Byeol(Year(s) 0) 2. Sex : Woman(21) 3. Height · Weight : 170.2cm · 48.5kg 4. Alignment : Lawful · Chaos

[Strength 28] [Resistance 32] [Agility 46] [Vitality 24] [Magic Power 68] [Luck 40] (Remaining attribute point: 0 point.)

[ Unique Ability ]

1. Charisma (Rank: F Plus)

“Huk.”

The moment I saw the Unique Ability, without me knowing, I exclaimed in surprise.

‘This is ridiculous. Charisma?’

The shock I received was similar to when I check An-Sol's information, and I was left momentarily speechless. I could now understand why Kim Han-Byeol reminded me of 'her' when I first saw her. She had the same Charisma ability as 'her.'

I was left with fleeting regret that I shouldn't have seen her status, but I shook my head to clear that thought. My thoughts became crowded. Based on my initial plan, both Lee Yu-Jung and Kim Han-Byeol were the right type of people I couldn't let go of.

My mind was uneasy, and out of habit I gathered sand in my hand and let go. Fear and doubt entered my heart. An-Hyun and An-Sol. Lee Yu-Jung and Kim Han-Byeol. These four exceeded the average starting Attributes in Hall Plain. Even if we were all completely scattered, with their Attributes, they could all survive.

'Is there something I overlooked?'

No matter how much I thought, I couldn't find an answer. Although I had several hypotheses, there was no definite conclusion. For now, I decided to put the matter aside. To observe the situation again, I activated my Third Eye once more. I was of the mind to drag the four of them with me, and I would have plenty of time to scrutinise them later.

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The very first person that stood up was Lee Shin-Wu. His Alignment was Lawful · Good, and while this indicated he was friendly, it also had it's disadvantageous. Most of the times, people with such Alignment didn't have a backbone and were led by others. While it was unfortunate letting someone go with such Luck Attribute, there was nothing to him other than that, so I sent off with a light prayer.

"I, I want to be part of your team!"

“Mhmm....”

Park Don-Gul evaluated Lee Shin-Wu with a critical eye before speaking in a rough voice.

“You will have to protect yourself. The moment you become a hinderance, I am going to throw you away without hesitation.”

“Yes! I understand! I will try my best!”

“... Good! If you fulfil your role, then I will do my best to support you. Let us do our best to survive in this hellish world. And.... I am sorry about before. I was too arrogant. Please forgive me.”

When he received Don-Gul’s positive response, Lee Shin-Wu ran toward him with a relieved expression. The scene of them drawing closer, was truthful, not a wholesome sight. For now, having recruited Lee Shin-Wu, Park Don-Gul’s next target was An-Hyun.

“You there. You should think carefully. If it’s you, I will welcome you anytime.”

That good-for-nothing idiot had deliberately and forcefully emphasised ‘us’ when he asked to join in a polite voice. An-Hyun’s face was full of worry. He was at a crossroad and the path was his to choose. Not only An-Sol, but everyone else swallowed heavily as they waited for An-Hyun’s decision. After a while, An-Hyun slowly opened his mouth.

“My answer remains the same. I am not going to abandon my sister.”

His voice didn’t fluctuate and had responded firmly. Immediately, An-Sol’s face brightened considerably and the bank lady seemed more reassured. Though, An-Hyun wasn’t finished.

“However.... That team you spoke of, if you will include Sol, than I might accept.”

‘Oh dear.’

With that, the ball was in Park Don-Gul's court again. This was an unexpected boon for Park Don-Gul, as the choice was now his to make. His slightly pained looked morphed into an unwelcome expression as he replied.

"That's a bit complicated. Truthfully, I don't know about you, but your sister Sol will be difficult to protect and we have no intention to either."

"You don't need to worry about that, as I can do the work of two people."

"No, it's not that simple. There are situations where it doesn't work.... Like in the clearing, if she drag us down it will just be more trouble."

"Then it can't be helped...."

"Just leave it for now. We will figure it out after all the team members have been decided."

Park Don-Gul had intentionally cut off An-Hyun to give himself a leeway later on. Under all his talk, there were minute calculations and manipulations. In truth, there was only me and An-Hyun that actively fought against the Deadman. Yet, I wasn't amongst them and the scale would tip in whichever direction An-Hyun went. Of course, there was a risk of not accepting An-Hyun, but Park Don-Gul had left himself rooms to manoeuvre and succeed in shaking the party once more.

"You.... Well, do whatever you want. Always point out to do this, do that, it's just troublesome to deal with you."

Park Don-Gul grumbled toward Lee Yu-Jung. She didn't say anything, but only frowned at that. He turned his head without regret and looked toward the still Lee Bo-Rim and Kim Han-Byeol.

"Then.... I want to hear from the rest of you as well."

"....."

“As I said, don’t misunderstand me. If I was going to abandon everyone, would I have accepted my friend over here? This kid said clearly that he won’t drag me down, he will protect himself and help out willingly. I didn’t take this role because I wanted to, I was really going to leave by myself. Anyway, I did this to survive. If you want to join this team, just promise in front of everyone just like the kid did.”

“How can I....”

The person who responded, in the end, was Lee Bo-Rim. Glancing at Kim Han-Byeol for a moment, Park Don-Gul replied immediately.

“That you won’t need blind protection and will help out the team however you can. If you won’t be any help at all, I will throw you away like trash. But if you are useful, we will help you out to the best of our ability. Those who are willing to harden their hearts, come to his team.”

Being useful to the team in any way possible. The nuance of his words was very strange and full of danger. Seems like Lee Bo-Rim had dimly realised such truth as she still looked hesitant. Kim Han-Byeol looked full of contempt. Licking his lips, Park Don-Gul spoke to Kim Han-Byeol this time.

“You as well.”

“.... Wait a minute.”

Kim Han-Byeol still had that icy exterior, but she closed her eyes as if she was in deep thought. I was slightly worried, but if I was right, then the chances of her withholding her decision were high. It seems Park Don-Gul allowed that much as he stepped back a bit and stood shoulder to shoulder with Lee Shin-Wu.

The obvious choice of rejecting the team was stuff that happened in novels or manhwa. In reality, a human’s emotion was a weak animal. Even more so



when their 'life' was on the line, they threw away their pride easily as if it was an everyday occurrence.

I wonder how much time had passed?

In the end, the first person to stand up was Lee Bo-Rim. She feebly nodded her head, and spiritless walked toward step by step next to Park Don-Gul. She looked like she was facing a deep inner conflict, but she dropped her head and joined next to Park Don-Gul and Lee Shin-Wu.

Park Don-Gul had a pleased smile on his face.

### Chapter 13



Split in Half. Pt.(3/8)

Under Park Don-Gul's suggestion, An-Hyun looked deeply troubled. If someone other than Park Don-Gul was making a team, then I am sure he wouldn't be this conflicted. An-Hyun's natural inclination could not allow him to trust Park Don-Gul. No matter the glossy speech, there was some unspeakable darkness that An-Hyun had sniffed out.

Regardless, Park Don-Gul had pronounced a just cause. No matter what he said, he was targeting those three (An-Sol, Lee Shin-Wu, Lee Bo-Rim) and had managed to grasp the two of them.

An-Hyun's anxiety had grown as large as it could. He couldn't abandon his sister, but the very action of said sister at the clearing already answered his dilemma. To make matters worse, he lost the privilege to choose. Having given that privilege to Park Don-Gul, he was stuck between a rock and a hard place.

If the advantage continued to roll toward Park Don-Gul, then the chances of An-Hyun, An-Sol and Lee Yu-Jung being left behind was high. Ironically enough, Park Don-Gul himself did not know that such action was leading him in digging his own grave. My perspective was completely different from others. I looked at the person's Alignment and their Attributes and judged if the person can survive. Park Don-Gul, however, did not care for such abilities or even wanted such things.

From the very beginning, the team I and Park Don-Gul wanted had different standards. I wanted companions that could help me after we arrived in Hall Plain, Park Don-Gul just wanted a team he could dominate.

This situation, if you see it in one way, was quite a boon for me.

Still, the power would slide in whichever direction Kim Han-Byeol and I went. As I wasn't there, the gaze naturally turned to Kim Han-Byeol. Speaking of her, she had been thinking for a while now. She looked around the surrounding for just a moment, shook off the dirt and stood up. Seeing her lightly biting her lips, it seems she hadn't made her choice yet.

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"I think we should bring the person keeping watch back here."

After thinking for so long, the words she spoke did not contain any choices. The party who had been anxiously waiting on Kim Han-Byeol's choice gave out a loud sigh.

Babbling something like, "Ah, yeah, right." Park Don-Gul gave out a vague acceptance.

“Well.... Bring him on board. On the way back, explain to him what happened and tell him to choose. We don't have all the time in the world, so stop with your setups. Ah. Wait a moment. ”

Park Don-Gul's words managed to latch onto Kim Han-Byeol from turning away. Fixing the best smile he possibly could, he continued on.

“You or he can be a big help. So when you are coming back, please speak well. I will make sure you won't regret it. Anyhow, seeing that....”

While speaking, he glanced hastily at An-Hyun and intentionally muddled his words.

“Anyhow, you two are welcome on my team. So I hope you make the right choice.”

Park Don-Gul's acting had reached its climax and was putting on the finishing strokes. Lee Shin-Wu seemed already reliant on Park Don-Gul, as he sent an encouraging signal to Kim Han-Byeol. The winner of this round was Park Don-Gul. No matter how distasteful it was, he had achieved the goal of his scam.

While he stumbled at the start, his age wasn't just for shit and giggles. Lee Shin-Wu and Lee Bo-Rim just knew yet that they were no more than meat shield or his plaything. Or maybe they did know but surrendered everything for the sake of living.

Seeing Kim Han-Byeol approaching, I slowly closed my eyes. I had a headache and on another side, I was quite lucky. If I was determined I could have impeded Park Don-Gul's plan, but then I would lose all purpose of leaving that discussion in the first place. Although it wasn't intended, this could become a win-win for me.

Park Don-Gul had grabbed the initiative and chased off An-Hyun and Lee Yu-Jung, allowing me to secure three of the four I had in mind. Before his

murderous intent was a hindrance, and it would be a complete stupidity in not letting him disappear by his lonesome.

While it was frustrating to see the people I had in mind hanging onto his ornate speech, it had come down to each of their own personal problems, so I didn't need concern myself with it. Now if I could lead the last remaining person in the right direction, I felt this debacle would solve itself quite quickly.

Sak Sak.

While my eyes were closed, I could hear the grass shuffling behind me. I didn't need to turn around to guess who it was. I immediately arose myself and mounted the crossbow on my left arm. Whenever I saw Kim Han-Byeol, it always created a weird feeling in me as it reminded me of 'her.' Pointing my crossbow in the general surrounding, I did my best in pretending I was hard at work in keeping watch. Soon, I heard a rather low voice calling for me.

"Excuse me...."

"Yes?!"

As I turned with a slight surprise on my face, I could see Kim Han-Byeol tranquil eyes staring back at me. I intentionally massaged my left arm as I tried to look pained.

"I did hear one or two roars, but I don't think they are near us yet."

"Thank you for the hard work. The discussion is almost over, so I think you should come back now."

"Then let's head back right now."

Looking as naturally as possible, I turned around to head back. As I predicted, Kim Han-Byeol caught me.

"Wait."

Turning around once more, I could see a hesitant Kim Han-Byeol opening her mouth to speak.

“Well.... The conversation went into a weird direction.”

“Weird direction?”

“Yes. It happened like this....”

Kim Han-Byeol nodded and explained everything that had happened. I wanted to discern what she was feeling inside as I listened to her story, but she was very objective and only spoke of the core issues. I was quite impressed by it as in situations like this, the person usually took a side.

“So presently, that is what happened. Well.... What will you do?”

After finishing her story, Kim Han-Byeol bit into her curiosity and asked which side I would take. I had already decided long ago, but I showed a worried face as I stooped around.

“I didn’t expect it would go in that direction. I am still undecided.”

“Me as well.”

“What do you think about this Ajussi’s words?”

Looking into my eyes, she spoke in a quieter voice than usual.

“I don’t think it’s wrong, but....”

“Is there something not to your liking?”

“...Yes. Whenever I see that Ajussi, I feel very uncomfortable. But strangely enough, I can’t find anything wrong with what he said.”

Lee Shin-Wu and Lee Bo-Rim had gone over to the other side. Seeing them, Kim Han-Byeol began to worry.

I realised then, for the first time, why she personally came to bring me back. Though I wanted to talk more, quite a significant amount had passed so I kept quiet and continued walking. Just confirming part of her worries and spreading seasoning over it should be enough.

Both of us were silent, but without a doubt, Kim Han-Byeol was following behind. After I thought this issue stewed enough between us, I opened my mouth to speak again.

“I don’t like what that Ajussi said.”

“.....”

“From the beginning, he mixed logic with loopholes. That’s why what he said can only be wrong. He wrapped these blindspots in logical reasoning, and made it sound advantageous for him.”

While there was no response, I felt a silent gaze telling me to continue. While Park Don-Gul pulled out all his stops, there was no way I could let Kim Han-Byeol go. So I decided to explain one by one what she was troubled with.

“There is one way to differentiate the truth from lies. Can the person keep his words? That Ajussi, does he look like a person who can keep his words?”

“No.”

Kim Han-Byeol answered immediately.

“Since the moment we met, I had a dirty impression of him and all his actions is trying to destroy the team. Rather than trusting in his uncertain words, it would be better to stick with the remaining people than joining his team. So I will remain.”

Taking a peek behind me, Kim Han-Byeol seems to be chewing on my words. Not a minute had passed, but from afar the party came into view and she whisper to my back.

“I am worried about the two people that joined.”

This was as good as a confirmation on Kim Han-Byeol;s decision. I thought it was good that I decided to go about a roundabout way describing my thoughts than throwing a straight ball. If I said from the beginning, “That bastard Park Don-Gul is trying to swallow Lee Bo-Rim and Lee Shin-Wu alive. So please don’t go, if you do, you are going to be taken advantage of” she would distrust me as well. She looked like a smart person, and from the small hint, she seems to have immediately grasped the meaning.

After a short while, I could clearly see the two separate groups on the hill. The situation was no different than the last time I view them from afar.

On one side was An-Hyun, An-Sol and Lee Yu-Jung. On the opposite side was Park Don-Gul, standing along with Lee Shin-Wu and Lee Bo-Rim.

When we reached the hill, all six pairs of eyes was focused on me and Kim Han-Byeol.

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“You came only now. Anyways, thanks for the hard work in keeping watch.”

Seeing Park Don-Gul spewing his nonsense already, disgust surge within me but I forcefully kept it down. An-Hyun had silent eyes. An-Sol had uneasy eyes. Lee Yu-Jung had nervous eyes. Lee Shin-Wu had trembling eyes. Lee Bo-Rim had helpless eyes. Seeing various emotions, I felt strange. I didn’t go straight to them but stopped my steps. Kim Han-Byeol followed suit and she also stopped.

“I thought you would come quick. Anyway did you at least hear what happened?”

“Yes, I heard.”



“Somehow it became like this. It’s difficult but try to understand. This is all so that we can survive.”

I could hear Lee Yu-Jung spewing profanity in a low voice. Regardless, Park Don-Gul strode toward me and opened his hand toward me.

“Come to our team. We can become friends. If it’s you, and that Agassi behind you are welcome.”

The atmosphere rose to maximum tension and everyone awaited my reply. Without a care for the other’s nervousness, I rejected his hand and answered in a cold voice.

“I can judge for myself who I can become friends with. Thank you for the invitation, but I must decline.”

Park Don-Gul didn’t even blink. He didn’t withdraw his hand but rather asked Kim Han-Byeol.

“... and you?”

“I can’t trust you.”

Of course, Kim Han-Byeol turned away from him. Looking at the two of us, Park Don-Gul made insidious remarks.

“Ha~. So that’s how it is. I don’t know what story that fox told you, but you will definitely regret this.”

“If you know the value of your own life than I hope that you would value to lives of others.”

“Stop with the bullshit. Even though I tried....do as you like. I have no plans to force people who hate me. Don’t bother asking to join the team later.”

“That won’t happen.”

“Shin-Wu. Bo-Rim. Let’s head out! If we stay with these hypocrites any longer, we won’t last the day!”

Seems like they already introduced themselves. Seeing him forcefully dragging out Lee Shin-Wu and Lee Bo-Rim, it felt like a huge burden has been lifted. I walked sedately toward the remaining people. In their eyes, I could see reassurance and unfamiliar kindness toward me. An-Hyun gave out a large sigh as he spoke to me.

“Thank you for the hard work. As you saw.... That happened.”

“Hmm. It’s good that it happened. We shouldn’t let this get us down. They are the ones that wanted to leave, so let them do as they like. Live or die, they will sort it out by themselves.”

I was surprised by myself as I laughed at Lee Yu-Jung thorny words. As she said, they had left. We weren’t the ones abandoned, rather, we were the ones that remained.

These two words, they held a huge distinction.

TL Note: Apologies for the late update. Really busy trying to finish my degree, need to submit a mini-dissertation in exactly 3 weeks. So this is quite rushed.

Also, the slow pace of the story is the largest comment that this story gets, so for the readers now you will see that every title now has Pt. numbers. On my side, I will begin stockpiling chapters and look for a new project to work concurrently.

## Chapter 14



“Rather than worrying about those who left, we should worry about ourselves. Won’t it be better to focus on get down this hill and leaving this forest?”

I pointed this out to An-Hyun, rather than speaking to everyone else. Naturally, Lee Yu-Jung and Kim Han-Byeol’s gaze gravitated toward An-Hyun. He must had some experience being the head bully in his neighbourhood, as he didn’t show any discomfort in the spotlight. Agreeingly pleasantly enough, he stood from his spot, bowed his head and look down the hill.

“Going down is a good idea, but I am worried about which direction we should take. We don’t even know where we are right now....”

Lifting his head back up, An-Hyun looked back and forth between the clearing swarming with Deadman and the path that Park Don-Gul and his group took. The path Park Don-Gul took was exactly the opposite direction from the clearing. It felt like Park Don-Gul thought this out before heading out, but in my opinion it was a foolish choice.

“I think this path is okay. ”

Like the first time, the silent Kim Han-Byeol suddenly pointed out a direction. Following her finger, she was indicating a spot roughly 90 degrees from the center of the clearing. Lee Yu-Jung looked a little uneasy at the closeness to the clearing.

“Won’t it be better to just go opposite the clearing? The distance from that path and the clearing is way too close.”

Here, add another person thinking the same as Park Don-Gul.

An-Hyun thought deeply, and exclaimed with a ‘Ah.’ He looked as if he had distanced himself from academics, but his thinking belie that. Seeing the slanted confusion of Lee Yu-Jung, Kim Han-Byeol explained calmly.

“It’s simple. Currently those things have gathered in masses at the clearing. If we assume those things are evenly distributed in this forest, than if one place is crowded than another should be as empty. That path has the highest chance of being such.”

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Split in Half. (4/8)

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“The monsters opposite the clearing might not have heard the disturbance so they could still be there. Rather, it could be even more dangerous.”

Kim Han-Byeol nodded at An-Hyun’s added explanation. While the ideas were not the same, it followed the same path. Still, seeing that it finally felt like things were going the right way, I smiled pleasantly to myself.

“That makes sense. Then doesn’t that means the way that bastard went might be the most dangerous?”

“Yes. Anyways, we should also head down the hill and leave the forest. Sol, get up.”

“Hmm? Hmm!”

An-Sol was like radish kimchi, she was sucking on her thumb as she looked on the conversation. She stood up hastily at An-Hyun’s command. As I and An-Hyun took the lead and began to make decision, I think people’s discontent settled. Rather, comparing now and when Park Don-Gul was still with us, everyone’s expression and the atmosphere seems much more

settled. Especially Lee Yu-Jung, she seems happy about Park Don-Gul's difficult path that she even had a smile on her face.

And that's how the remaining people, me and the party, went down the hill.

\*\*\*\*\*

Having chosen their escape path, two hours had passed since they had descend the hill. Lush trees were so tall they seems to pierce the sky, because of that the forest was darker now than what we saw on top of the hill. For two hours they traversed the dark forest without rest. With every single step, I heard the sound of mud and grass being grazed and maintained a regular breathing pattern as I followed behind An-Hyun who was taking the lead.

The gloomy forest was quiet and was terrifyingly bigger than expected. But according to my memories, if we kept our current pace, we would be out of this forest before evening. A thought floated passed, maybe the Angels intentionally dropped off people with superior Attributes on the highly difficult Forest center.

Right now, it was best to leave the forest before evening as the Preparation Room, didn't provide food or water, only clothes and weapons. These necessities were placed in different area. There were Rest Room where you could rest for half a day, or the Save Point where you could sleep overnight. Other methods was to plunder from other Players or steal from the village shops.

"... Oppa."

"Hmm?"

Currently An-Hyun and I was in the lead, right behind us was An-Sol and Kim Han-Byeol. With Lee Yu-Jung making up the rear, we headed out, being alert

to our surroundings. In the middle of this, An-Sol tugged tightly on An-Hyun's cloth and mumbled with a flushed expression.

"I need to pee...."

"....."

At An-Sol's shy words, everyone looked around awkwardly.

'Is she stupid?'

She looked like a feeble minded child, but to this extent? I began to wonder how she even survived the real world.

An-Hyun momentarily stopped walking, catching our eyes, he asked.

"Can we stop here for a moment? My sister need to see some business."

Fortunately, Lee Yu-Jung and Kim Han-Byeol gently agreed. There seems to be some kind of strange connection between women. An-Sol seems afraid to go alone as she stubbornly pestered her brother to come with her, but An-Hyun cruelly sent her off alone.

Lee Yu-Jung laughed silently seeing An-Sol being rebuked by her brother and walking shakily alone. She had quickly flopped to the ground, and was sitting there.

"Will she be alright? Those things could come at us anytime."

"We are keeping watch so it should be okay. Also, she nineteen, it's nonsensical if she can't go to the toilet alone at that age. By the way, how old are you to speak so roughly?"

"Me? Twenty two. You are also speaking without respect so what are you trying to get? But aren't you younger than me? No matter how closely I look, you look twenty or twenty one."

"I am also twenty two."

“Eh~? So we are equal. Well what’s done is done, so why don’t we introduce ourselves?”

As Lee Yu-Jung spoke with a more cheerful voice than before as she looked at everyone, it seems to wear down Kim Han-Byeol’s mental tension as she followed suit and cautiously sat down. Nodding along with An-Hyun, I sat down on the cold floor.

“We are going to leave immediately when my sister come back so let’s do this simple. My name is An-Hyun. Age, twenty two.”

“What did you do before coming here?”

At Lee Yu-Jung’s question, An-Hyun frown slightly but soon answered.

“I was just a neighborhood punk that lived off on part time jobs. You?”

“Me? Names Lee Yu-Jung. Same age as you, twenty two. I took a temporary leave from University and was preparing for the civil police exam.”

Civil police exam. Was that Yu-Jung’s dream? I felt that the police uniform would suit Lee Yu-Jung very well. The police and the punk that was sharing a conversation suddenly turned toward Kim Han-Byeol and I. Unable to withstand their curious gaze, Kim Han-Byeol spoke first.

“Kim Han-Byeol. Twenty one years old. University student.”

“A dongsaeng? What university did you attend?”

“I was attending Yonsei University.”

“Wa~! You must be clever. I am quite envious.”

With light of admiration in their eyes, the two turned their gaze on the me with Kim Han-Byeol following suit with a look of expectation. I felt awkward under these uncomfortable gaze, but with a calm face I faced their expectations.

“Names Kim Su-Hyun. Age, twenty three. I was a soldier.”



“Found an oppa~! Speak however you are comfortable oppa. Oppa, were you in the army or the air force or the navy?”

“Then hyung. Please speak as you wish. Hyung, what was your rank?”

Just before, I thought Lee Yu-Jung was simply a obstinate person but her character seems quite lively. An-Hyun had spoken at the same time as her, when they found out I was in the army.

“I was an army sergeant.”

“It’s really unfortunate. Just a little more and you would have been discharged..”

With a wry smile as I looked on at the laughing Lee Yu-Jung, I added a bit more.

“I was discharged. I was coming back from handing in my discharge papers when I landed here.”

“.....”

“.....”

“.....”

What was it? Those innocent eyes? This awkward atmosphere?

“Why are you all looking at me like that? It’s alright, it’s nothing much. So stop looking at me like that.”

Even though I said it was okay, that awkward silence hanged between us. Giving a cough, An-Hyun turned to look elsewhere, while Lee Yu-Jung looked on pityingly. Even Kim Han-Byeol look at me regretfully. I was perfectly fine.

To dispel this awkward atmosphere, Lee Yu-Jung spoke lively as she changed the topic.

“I still feel like we are in a dream. Usually I would be studying in the library, then close my books and run off and call my friends. I would be chatting at the rest rooms, then go eat something nice and while coming back home, I would promise myself that I would study seriously tomorrow. I would be doing something like that.”

Listening to that, everyone’s expression became dimn. An-Hyun gave a chuckle and joined in.

“Well, I would be at my part time job at the PC Bang and argue with customers trying to put more on their tabs. Get yelled at by that bastard of a boss for not cleaning properly. Tearing on the chicken that the Mrs gave me, and staying at the counter until finishing time where I go to fetch Sol. Hyung, what were you planning to do when you went home?”

“Me?”

When An-Hyun suddenly spun the arrow at me, I tilted my head thinking. Hmm. This being over 10 years, I couldn’t remember properly. Pondering for a moment, I decided to give a mediocre answer.

“Well, I don’t know. While heading home I would breath in the air of society and realize I was finally free. And when I reach home, I would bow down to my mother and give a call to my father. Then eat the delicious meal my mother made, then soak in a hot bath and then.... Wait, why are you looking at me like that again. Don’t look at me like I am those pitiful animals. I am really okay.”

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We safely finished our discussion as An-Sol came back from her business. In proper manners, she gave a small bow and said, “I am back.” She looked adorable. But her words were no different than a signal bringing us back to reality. For that small moment when we introduced and chatted with each

other, we forgot about this hellish place. Giving out a loud sigh, An-Hyun patted the dust off him as he stood up.

Tasting the brief honey that was our rest, we headed out once more into the dark forest. Even though An-Hyun and I was in the lead, it was me that was secretly leading. We haven't encountered a single Deadman yet, as I was sensing the area and deliberately leading our group to places with few Deadmans.

However it would soon become impossible to evade them completely. As they got closer and closer to the outskirts of the forest, the Deadmans would be more evenly dispersed. All I could do was to lead them in the direction of the least amount of Deadmans.

The most worrying of the group was An-Sol. Even though they were going through the safest route, but the further they went it was possible to come across dozens of Deadmans. In that situation Sol might not be able to calmly face them. Suddenly An-Hyun came to a sudden stop and made an urgent sound.

“Whats wrong?”

“Shhhhhhh”

As Lee Yu-Jung and I faced the direction that An-Hyun was pointing to, we could see three Deadman loitering around. With them flaring their nose and wetting their lips, without a doubt they had smelt our scent. I reflexively look at An-Sol, she clasped both her hands over her mouth, and her eyes were closed tightly. At least we had pass the first crisis.

“They can detect us not only through sight and hearing, but scent as well?”

“Well it looks like that. For now, keep low.”

Immediately An-Hyun hid himself behind the big tree, embracing An-Sol in his arms. Lee Yu-Jung, Kim Han-Byeol and I also quickly followed suit and hid, waiting for the beasts to pass us by. I saw An-Hyun lifting his shield, but I shook my head. It was better to train in killing Deadman later after leaving the forest. For what reason I couldn't remember clearly, but some of stories I heard in the past between all the Players mouths was to never enter the forest during the Rite of Passage.

According to my perception, if we walked half the distance we traveled, we would be out of the forest. Till now we evaded them quite well, but if we kill those beasts there was high chance that we would be surrounded again. If those Deadmans receive the signal and starting amassing, then at that point, there was no longer any solution.

Even if we try to clear them before they send off the signal, it was impossible to kill all three at once with only stones or the shield. The sword strap to my waist rattled weakly. In the middle of this, the Deadmans were sniffing their nose as they moved one step at a time toward our tree.

## Chapter 15



Split in Half. (5/8)

The Deadmen were sniffing heavily, as they were stalking us. They looked grotesque. Their skin was falling apart at the seams and rotting bones were sticking out of their faces.

Fear filled the eyes of the party upon seeing these monsters. They had lived an ordinary life just the day before. For them to be ready for Deadmen in less than a day was a far-fetched dream.

Gureurung. Gureurung.

The Deadman in the front howled in a low pitch. The monsters were moving slow, so it seemed that they hadn't found us yet.. I frowned when I saw the Deadman at the back turn away and howled. Taking care of three monsters at the same time was a fool's dream.

Gureurung. Gureurung.

I felt the trees tremble each time a Deadman howled. When I turned around, I found out it wasn't the howls but An-Sol who was responsible. Her whole body was trembling heavily against the tree.

Stomp. Stomp.

I heard the rustling of grass, and two Deadmen arrived in front of the tree. They stopped briefly, lowered their heads, and then began to advance again. We were currently hiding behind a considerably large tree. I was quietly signaling to the party. Each time the Deadman moved one step, we also moved one step to the left. If the Deadman turned its head, we would be instantly caught, but these bastards had a tendency to go only in a straight line so we had a chance to escape without being noticed.

One step forward. One step backward. One step forward. One step backward. One step forward. One step backward.

After were repeated this three or fours times, we had circled around half of the tree. The Deadmen had advanced to the point from where they could see our previous position.

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Our surroundings were dead quiet, so everyone tried to breathe as quietly as possible. The Deadmen shook their heads, as if looking for something. They let out a dissatisfied howl and continued to walk forward. I could see a slight relief on everyone's faces, but we needed to be a bit more patient. Just when we could all give a little sigh of relief...

Crack! SNAP!

"Gasp!"

An-Sol, whose whole body was trembling as she kept her eyes closed, had finally misstepped. When I looking down, I saw she had broken a small twig. She wasn't able to conceal her gasp after the unlucky encounter. The gasp had certainly reached the ears of the Deadmen. Speaking of the devils.

Gureurung! Gureurung! Gureurung!

The Deadmen howls became more frequent. The whole party froze at the sounds. The sounds of the monster's footsteps became faster, as they followed us around the tree we were hiding behind, and peaked their frightening heads towards us. We were found.

"Kyaaaaa!" "Gasp. Eeeeeeeeeee."

The Deadmen opened their mouths and showed their blood-red teeth before they ran towards us. An-Sol screamed. The scream was slightly muffled thanks to An-Hyun covering her mouth, but the three Deadmen still heard it.

In a moment of desperation, An-Hyun held the shield in his left hand to protect An-Sol and himself, while I aimed the crossbow. A Deadman ran and crashed head first into An-Sol's shield with a loud thud.

Plunk!

I heard the collision and saw An-Hyun wobbling. Although he had blocked successfully, he only repulsed the Deadman back by a single step. He had his attention split, as he tried to protect both, An-Sol and himself, so that was all his block did. I looked at the second Deadman that followed the first, and quickly prepared to release my crossbow. Worry passed through my mind for a moment, and I lowered my aim down from its head before I fired.

‘Just one or two shots won’t be enough.’

The bolt flew and, ‘Ping,’ went through the second Deadman’s chest. The Deadman reeled left, and I quickly drew my sword.

“An-Hyun! Send your sister this way! Also, use this sword!”

An-Hyun bit his lip when he saw the first Deadman violently charging at him again. He pushed An-Sol to me, and stretched out his right arm.

“Please take care of her!”

When An-Hyun smashed them with his shield, the Deadmen were sent reeling back a few step again. He had skillfully sent his sister towards at the same time. She was almost slipping as she ran into my arms, while I threw the sword towards An-Hyun. The long sword and An-Sol passed each other midway. Just when An-Sol was safely within my arms after her haphazard run, Lee Yu-Jung and Kim Han-Byeol called out urgently.

“Oppa, behind you!”

“Watch your back!”

‘I know.’

I glancing behind my back, and saw the Deadman that had turned away earlier running towards my back. It might have been just an instant for the



attacker, but my area of perception was far superior than the monster's. In two seconds, I had already loaded my crossbow and aimed. Then fired.

Puk!

I aimed at the middle of its forehead, and the arrow had no problems drilling through the Deadman's head.

“Hu... Sob... Soo~bb...”

I glanced at An-Sol and she seemed like she was about to have a fit. When I crouched down next to her, I saw tears pouring down her eyes. She began to infect me with her sorrow as well. Unknowingly, I began to pet her head, told her that everything was going to be okay, and felt her trembling lessen.

An-Hyun's eyes were filled with fear, even though he was equipped with a sword and shield, yet he didn't back down. He faced his fear and stood his ground firmly.. That was the fortitude I wished for in my party. It seemed that An-Hyun was mentally awakening to the situation.

An-Hyun lifted his shield to chest level. It was said that the best defense was a good offense. An-Hyun didn't bother swinging his sword, but he rather charged straight forward, with his shield lifted.

Bang! Kwang!

The charge must have been quite strong this time, I could hear something breaking. After I observed the scene, it seemed like the force of An-Hyun's charge had carved right into the Deadman's chest. When I saw a sword being lifted for a fast counter, I quickly gave him some advice.

“Aim for the head. Bastard's weak point is its head.”

An-Hyun, who was about to attack aimlessly, hacked through the Deadman's head after he heard my words. His form was a mess, but his strength was

sufficient enough that the Deadman's head crumbled without much resistance.

The fate of the next Deadman wasn't much different. In the same manner as the first time, An-Hyun blocked with his shield, and while the Deadman was still reeling from the shock, he aimed for its head. After a penetrating sound, the Deadman's body twitched a couple of times, and began to collapse with the sword still in its body. An-Hyun began to fall, dragged down by the Deadman's weight, but he quickly pulled out his sword and lifted his head with a numb look on his face.

An-Hyun breathed roughly and looked around. He breathed out explosively, relieving all his tension after he safely defeated the Deadman. He blocked with the shield, and stabbed with the sword. While his actions were simple, not everyone would be able to do it. People fared differently when a Deadman approached them. I was sure most wouldn't just freeze up like An-Sol did, but making off a neat combo against a Deadman like that would have been difficult for most as well.

An-Hyun breathed harshly, his arms were hanging by his side.

"Gasp... Gasp... It was easy when I threw rocks at it, but having to face it was rather difficult."

Obviously. In a situation where survival instincts take over, it would have been amazing if a person could maintain their calm and keep full control over their body. He must have felt a small tingling, because he soon relieved the tension on his arm. An-Sol flew towards An-Hyun and checked him all over.

"Oppa... Are you okay?"

"I'm not bitten anywhere. I'm alright."

"Sob... Sob... I'm sorry..."

“No need to cry.”

Tears flowed from her eyes as her brother was put in danger because of her. An-Sol’s tears didn’t stop even after she confirmed An-Hyun was safe. Lee Yu-Jung, with a shocked look on her face, trudged next to An-Hyun and slapped him on his back.

“We are alive thanks to you. You are pretty good.”

“It was nothing. If Su-Hyun Hyung didn’t give me the sword, I would be fail miserably. Ah, Hyung. Here, have it back.”

When I saw the regret of returning the sword, I shook my head and some colour immediately returned to his face.

“I think it would be better if you kept the sword.”

“Can I really keep it?”

“Yeah... I have a crossbow anyways. By the way, did you learn how to use a sword somewhere?”

Lee Yu-Jung helped An-Hyun, who was looking abashed, sheath the sword. I felt satisfaction when I saw An-Hyun and Lee Yu-Jung make some light banter between themselves. Just before, I was aiming for the Deadman’s forehead, but had shot at its chest on purpose.

‘I think everything ended just fine...’

“Just a moment.”

Kim Han-Byeol, who, by throwing a rock had successfully held back the Deadman, looked at us with an uneasy look. Because she kept quiet most of the time, I was curious about what she would say.

“At the clearing... After we killed one of them, didn’t they all suddenly start to flock towards us?”

“Um... Was it so?”

Lee Yu-Jung accepted the fact uneasily, and everyone’s expressions changed. An-Sol looked like she was going to have another fit. An-Hyun must have noticed that, because he lightly patted his sister’s back.

“Then, wouldn’t it be good idea to leave this place as fast as possible?”

“Yeah, yeah, we should do that. Then, should we go the other way from where these things came from?”

“Um... not really. We will continue from where we left off. If we change the direction now, we might end up sleeping in the forest tonight.”

I felt proud about how An-Hyun was pushing us to leave the forest today. If we were in a Master to Disciple relationship, I would have petted his head in praise, but now I just nodded in agreement. Even though we spotted several Deadmen in front of us, An-Hyun had spoken truthfully.

We quickly began to withdraw from the place after taking a moment to compose ourselves.