

# MEMORIZE

## Memorize Chapter 051 – Soo Hyun’s Change

Please continue reading on

They were stupid. Hyun and Yoo-Jung didn’t stay in formation. Thankfully, I was acting as Sol’s Protector. After fiercely glaring at Yoo-Jung I struck the tail that was flying towards us with the flat surface of the sword.

And after realizing what just happened, I had spaced out. Even though I did manage to strike the tail by gathering my strength, it was just a defensive skill to break its attacks. However, when the tail hit my sword, it started to scream and the tail shattered into little pieces. I came back to my senses after hearing the monster’s roar.

Apparently, I had activated a special swordsman skill or an undeveloped skill. Different thoughts passed through my mind, but I needed to focus on the current battle. I started talking with a good amount of mana still within me.

“This is a Dark Scorpion. Their tail contains deadly poison, so be careful. Their weaknesses are the eyes and their abdomen. Since it’ll be hard to get past their defenses focus your mana on your weapons and attack with all your might.”

Finished, I lowered my raised head. Sol still had a shocked expression, with her mouth open. She was still shocked that she could’ve died a moment ago. I thought that it was pretty pathetic, but I spoke to her in a low voice.

“An Sol. I don’t think it’s a good idea for a priest to stop casting in the midst of battle.”

“Oh....”

Perhaps she was terrified by my comment as she began murmuring a spell. After letting out a sigh, I looked back to the front.

This was just a brief lull in the battle. Dark Scorpions tend to travel in pairs, so they’re somewhat linked. Once the one I injured cried out loud, the one An Hyun was fighting stopped attacking.

It stopped attacking, but only for a moment. The angry scorpion screamed loudly and released a violent aura. Then, the two Dark Scorpions started to crawl out of the darkness. A shocked expression appeared on the others’ faces once they saw how big they were.

We were attacked first, so there wasn't much we could do. We were prepared now, but the Dark Scorpions were fast approaching. Both sides had their defenses up and it was hard to tell who would strike first.

After observing the earlier confrontation I realized that it was pointless to continue delaying the battle; my side will just run out of energy. I decided to attack first after judging for the right moment.

"Yoo-Jung and I will form one group. Hyun and Sol will pair up. Sol use Restrain on your scorpion's tail. In that moment, Hyun you will need to gather your mana and focus it on the tip of your lance, then stab its body. Their skin is pretty tough, so don't think about taking it out in one shot. Yoo-Jung stand behind me. I will attack it in a way that forces it to reveal its abdomen. You need to take that opportunity to attack. You should approach after it attacks with its tail."

No one answered, but they nodded their heads. The scorpions were approaching us. Soon, they were caught in my Sense; I took a step forward; the combat resumed.

The part of the tail that fell to the ground earlier was still twitching around; it still contained deadly poison. I ran straight ahead as it raised what remained of its tail.

Once again, the Scorpion screamed as it targeted me, blue blood seeping out of its tail. Dodging it wasn't difficult as the tail only attacked in one direction. Once I stepped to the side, the tail passed by and struck only air.

And during that time, I shortened the distance between myself and the monster. Feeling that Yoo-Jung was behind me, I slowly lowered my sword. In that moment the Dark Scorpion almost seemed to grin.

"Soo-Hyun! Behind you!"

I felt a chill. A Dark Scorpion's tail was long and flexible. Even though its first attack only allows them to attack in one direction, but it can move in whichever direction it wanted as it stretches. It was possible to attack in that window. It seemed like it wanted to attack the back of my head after u-turning. I smiled back at the scorpion and continued to run towards it.

Yoo Jung screamed as its tail was about to reach the back of my head. I shifted my head to the right, the tail grazing past my cheek. At the same time, I raised up my sword and placed it along the side of the tail, angling it so that its tail headed back towards its eyes.

The monster didn't expect me to dodge its attack right in front of its eyes. It was obvious that it didn't know that I was trying to change the direction of its tail. The skill that I just used was nothing more than an acrobatic skill.

The result was apparent. The Dark Scorpion stabbed its right eye with its own tail.

“Kyahhhhhhhh!”

Seeing the monster in pain made me smile. I kicked its face upwards as it raised its right pincer. Shocked, the scorpion’s body was thrown up into the air. Its claws extended out as if admitting defeat. I yelled out as I saw its abdomen.

“Now!”

It was hard to say if this was the best timing. I wasn’t sure what she was doing to prepare, but she took her sweet time coming forward to attack. She used the daggers in her hand and attacked the Scorpion’s abdomen in an X.

Seeing the monster cry in pain again, I put my hand on Yoo Jung’s shoulder and kicked the scorpion back into the air. I pointed my sword upwards as the scorpion’s body started to fall straight down. My sword pierced the center of my body, without the aid of mana. With just my strength, my sword cut through its thick skin. It hadn’t taken even 10 seconds to completely take down one of them.

There was still one left. When I turned my attention to the other fight I noticed Sol release a spell: a white light shot out from her staff. Sol listened to my plan and had targeted the monster’s tail.

“Shackles!”

Similar to a camera’s flash, the forest was suddenly filled with white light. Sol didn’t come off as a beginner because of her enormous amount of mana. Hyun instinctively closed his eyes, then attacked when he noticed that the tail wasn’t moving at all.

“Ha!”

With a loud yell, Hyun stabbed its body with his spear. The Dark Scorpion raised its claws as it noticed it couldn’t move its tail— but Hyun’s spear was longer. The spear ripped through its skin and entered the monster’s body. However, the Scorpion started to growl, seeming like it wasn’t really affected by his attack. Hyun had succeeded in breaking through its outer carapace, but the spear didn’t stab deep enough.

An Hyun was surprised and removed his spear. He tried stabbing it again several times, but it didn’t seem to feel any pain as it attacked Hyun with its tail, forcing him to dodge the monster’s attack. The scorpion’s tail was attacking Hyun violently which, at the same time, prevented Hyun from counterattacking.

“Wh-what is he doing? Why is he struggling so?”

I glared at Yoo-Jung as she made that comment, a confused look on her face. Sol was also just standing behind and watching. I felt really frustrated. What are they doing? Are they on a field trip to watch him fight? I clicked my tongue loudly and yelled at them as I ran forward.

“Did you guys come here to watch? Don’t just stand there and help!”

They came back to their senses as both of them nodded. An Hyun was doing his best to defend himself. He dodged the Scorpion’s constant attacks. When the monster attacked with his claws, An Hyun managed to block it. But that was all. Since he was so focused on defending, he didn’t have the courage to attack it.

That was the moment I realized my mistake. I had thought that they were ready just from their stats. Their actual skills could be seen in a life-threatening battle such as this.

They weren’t using their skills at all. It’s true that my expectations were high as I realized that they still had a long way to go. If they hadn’t trained their Sense, they wouldn’t have been able to even match the monster’s movements.

There were only two assailants before us. Yoo-Jung and I had taken down one of them. They were able to even just maintain the battle as it was a two vs one, but had it been a group ambush where we had been surrounded, they would’ve already been killed. I had a hard time just deciding on what weapon was right for them, but seeing them struggle against just one monster made me believe that there were other issues I should be concerned about. I attacked the tail, thus lessening the pressure on Hyun so that he could attack from the front.

“An Sol. Use Shackles again!”

“Okay! Shackles!”

She yelled out the spell as she received the command. A white light filled the forest and the scorpion’s tail once again stopped moving. An Hyun seemed to have been maddened after being forced to defend as his face turned red. Hyun seized the opportunity and jumped into the air to attack as Sol cast the spell.

“Damn bastard!”

Hyun stabbed its body as he shouted out profanity. He didn’t seem satisfied because he kept on stabbing the monster. He was probably utilizing his mana as the spear made noises whenever he attacked. It pierced through the monster’s skin. The scorpion was definitely in pain this time, as it fell forward and made a sad cry— as if it couldn’t take it anymore.

“Pant! Pant!”

Despite An Hyun's constant attacks, the Scorpion stood up and scuttled a few steps back. Its body was a mess, but Hyun was also exhausted. I let out a heavy sigh as I decided to kick this one too. As I took a step forward—

“An Hyun! Move!”

Yoo-Jung, who had been watching from the side, suddenly started to run. She held daggers in both of her hands and gathered mana, evident by the sound produced.

Seeing Yoo-Jung run towards itself, it raised its claws into the air. The spell probably wore off as the monster's tail started moving slightly. This time, however, Sol cast another spell instead of just standing there.

“Yoo-Jung! Protect!”

A semi-transparent shell appeared around Yoo-Jung after Sol finished casting. Hyun looked like he didn't want to stand still because he picked up his spear and started running to help Yoo-Jung. I felt relieved that they were able to work together, but I couldn't ignore the fact that they were all over the place.

With Hyun and Yoo Jung's joint attack, the Dark Scorpion fell swiftly after enduring for a while. The monster's corpse was gruesome; its outer carapace was shattered into pieces, black blood seeping out. I would have never imagined that anyone would be able to take down a Dark Scorpion so idiotically... I was at a loss for words.

Hyun and Sol put their weapons away after seeing the corpse of the scorpion that we took down. Not able to believe that they actually took down the scorpion, they observed the corpse while trying to catch their breaths.

This battle was a lot harder than any in the Rite of Passage, yet we just went for it. The others bit their lips as they turned their attention to me. Had they a brain, they would be able to realize how awful this whole situation was.

“You guys....”

I opened my mouth to say something, but I held it in. I wasn't sure if my expectations had been too high or if it was normal for them to act this way. What exactly did they learn from the User Academy? It was so different from when I was a beginner. To be honest, I wanted to go back to the city and teach them everything from the beginning.

“Soo, Soo-Hyun.”

“Soo-Hyun....”

Their attitudes changed and looked uneasy when they saw my disappointed face, but I purposely turned my back and ignored it. Thinking that they still had a long way to go, I let out a heavy sigh.

I smashed my sword hard against the ground. The blood on the sword sprayed all over the ground, creating a half-circle.

“Oppa, I’m sorry.”

Please continue reading on

“Oppa, Sorry...”

I could hear the voices of the kids behind me as we trekked through the forest. My face twitched as I walked in front, and while the kids couldn’t see it, it was obvious that the expression on it wasn’t good.

“Phew...”

The kids struggled with regret as I sighed. I turned my head towards the kids, and after maintaining my breathing for a while, I opened my mouth while maintaining this steady pace.

“The battle with the scorpions has caused a lot of thoughts. It was only two, not three, not four... I feel like the way I have been treating you guys up to now was a little wrong.”

“O-Oppa, that’s not...”

“I’m talking right now,” I snapped in a low voice, causing Yoojung to hurriedly close her mouth.

Her eyes quivered with nervousness, it seemed as if tears would emerge if I pushed a little more. However, it was necessary to make her heart stronger, unless they wanted to return to the city with no results.

“I always try to make the best judgment in any situation. I rejected countless clan offerings and chose you because I was confident in my judgment. But now, for the first time, I’m not so sure about it. I’ve always believed that the direction I’ve wanted you to go in was the best for you, but now I think that it was just my arrogance speaking.”

There was a seriousness in my voice that hadn’t been heard before. The kids listened to me silently after I told them to be quiet. Hyun concentrated on my words with a serious

look while Yoojung and Sol alternated between looking at each other and dropping their gaze towards the ground.

“I treasured you so much. Yoojung, when I first said that we were leaving the city, you were very happy. But I didn’t know then that my heart would come back to haunt me like this. No, maybe I was turning a blind eye to that thought. Of course, I have some responsibility, but I think your attitudes are also definitely a problem. The things I worried about after finishing the Rite of Passage are being revealed one after another.”

After hearing my words, An Hyun bit his lips and made a gloomy expression. But they couldn’t say anything. They were all well aware of their mistakes, so there was no need to explain separately. The formation was broken and Sol was in danger, they stopped chanting spells when the tail came flying in the middle, they stared blankly as their colleagues were fighting, they didn’t think about the distribution of power, and so on and so forth.

I stopped and turned back, seeing Yoojung and Sol looking at me with tearful expressions. I would tie the knot tighter. Because...

“Honestly, I feel like going back to the city right now. I want to pack a minimum amount in the caravan before retrying. But on the other hand, I still want to believe in you. Can you do it? Will you keep disappointing me?”

An Hyun was rendered speechless at my question. However, it was possible to see him gritting his teeth. An Hyun was certainly different from the other two: he didn’t want to apologize, and was rather feeling rage.

I spoke in a strong voice, “From now on, I will change the formation. This time, it will be a triangle around Sol. I will be the leader, with Hyun and Yoojung on either side.”

“.....”

An Hyun stood silently beside Sol, tightly gripping his spear. He looked at me before walking over to his spot.

Sol looked uneasy at the change in formation, but I spoke firmly, “I’ll give the explanation just once, so listen well. A triangle doesn’t exist without a keeper. In other words, each person making up a side is a keeper.”

“This triangle absolutely must not be broken.”

I turned and looked at the front. I could hear something moving slowly. After carefully looking ahead, I glanced at Hyun, who seemed to understand my signal, gently moved his spear in the pointed direction. I slowly started walking again.

“That’s right, don’t try to just evade. Read and accept the opponent’s sword and then focus on targeting them. Once this formation collapses, Sol will collapse as well. Don’t panic and maintain the formation. Help each other with linked attacks, or just do it alone.

“We will keep it in mind.”

“And one more thing: I won’t take the leader role, I’ll just be a guide. There are other reasons for it. What do you think?”

“I’m not sure,” replied Hyun as Yoojung and Sol cocked their heads.

At present, we were moving at half of our original speed. As we passed the surrounding trees and large rocks, I held my sword tightly.

“Right...this situation can come!”

I aimed at a huge rock that seemed filled with magic power. Shortly afterwards, the rock was split apart and blood emerged. An assassin class was good enough to avoid the kids’ detection, but it couldn’t fool my eyes.

“Fuck! Jongmin!”

“Crazy!”

After I swung the sword, three people suddenly appeared before us: two men and one woman. Based on their shabby clothing, it was clear that they were vagrants. They had wanted to ambush us; however, because I had handled one person beforehand, they had to emerge.

Yoojung and Sol were confused, but Hyun was relatively calm. This was because I gave my speech in advance. While he was perplexed at the fact that they were people, he still looked at Yoojung and Sol before slowly raising his weapon.

“Son of a bitch! How dare you kill Jongmin?! Waaah!”

“I thought they were new users! How did they notice the stealth?”

“Relax, you’re too sensitive. You there. How did you notice him hiding behind the rock?”

One female user spoke to me, but I didn’t respond.

I analyzed the vagrants and quickly communicated the information to the kids,

“These people are just vagrants. Do what you learned in the Academy. Don’t think they are the same as monsters. Think of them as users like you, but don’t show mercy. Feel



free to kill them. One shield swordsman, one axe warrior, one magician. We have the advantage in terms of numbers and classes.”

“Sol, what are you doing? The battle has begun. Do you know who to target?”

“Hah...? This guy. They’re just new chicks! Stick together!”

“Wait a minute...”

The axe warrior listened to me and rushed over. Shortly afterwards, the swordsman with the shield followed the axe warrior. The female magician behind them tried to stop them, but realized she was too late. She gritted her teeth and quickly cast a spell.

I looked at them with a pitiful expression. They might be just vagrants now, but they had already reached the Hall Plain. The shield would destroy our formation, while the axe warrior would pounce from behind him. It was clear to them that we were new users.

At that moment, the two users running over closed their eyes. I quickly opened my mouth and told the kids, “Light magic! Everybody close your eyes!”

At the same time, the female magician stretched out a shining hand towards us and shouted,

“Light!”

She completed the magic quicker than Sol did. I was able to see spheres of light that were created in front of the eyes of his group in order to obstruct our vision. The problem was that we had already detected it.

I turned my head and saw Yoojung and Hyun taking defensive postures with their eyes closed. At the same time, Sol was still chanting a spell. Yes, this was what I wanted.

I gazed at the kids for a moment before looking back at the vagrants. The sight of our group getting into formation was despite the fact that we were hit by light magic, so the axe warrior looked puzzled and slowed down. However, the shield swordsman was to the left and didn’t see it. He seemed to be aiming for Yoojung.

These guys were basically stupid assholes. The hiding assassin and female magician were technically skilled, but the two who ran ahead were young and reckless.

A long spear struck from the side as I was about to move my sword. The axe warrior turned with a desperate expression because he didn’t expect an attack from the side after the light magic was used. An Hyun closed his eyes and succeeded in blocked the warrior’s course with exquisite stabbing.

“This is ridiculous... How did they detect it...?”

“It is reasonable, actually,” I answered as I stabbed towards the warrior who avoided the spear.

*Puk.* There was the sound of leather being torn and the feeling of flesh being cut was transmitted to me through the sword. Attacking in conjunction with Light was fine, but their skills were too bad. I turned my head to the side as the warrior coughed up blood.

*Kakakang!*

There was the sound of iron and iron meeting each other in combat. Like An Hyun, Yoojung had also stabbed with her dagger, blocking the assault of her assailant with a stable posture. Her attacker, the shield swordsman, stared at Yoojung who had prevented his charge.

“...Nonsense...my strength is definitely...”

In fact, the user with the shield had higher strength. As they pushed forward with their weapons, Yoojung was pushed back little by little. However, this was without Yoojung’s magic power being taken into account. Yoojung’s eyes blazed with magic power as she opened them.

“Hiyah!”

Her lack of muscle strength was compensated with magic power. Yoojung steadily applied the basics she learned at the User Academy, her grip on the dagger strengthening as she supplemented her muscle strength and increased the cutting power of the weapon with magic. The swordsman tried to attack with the sword in his other hand, but a long spear passed between him and Sol.

I twisted my swing and slashed the neck of the axe warrior as An Hyun’s spear pierced the side of the wide open spear swordsman.

The shield swordsman looked at the head of the axe warrior on the ground and at the spear stuck in his side. Yoojung looked at the user in front of her with conflicted eyes, but soon bit her lip and pierced his body with her two daggers.

“Cough.”

I didn’t know where they heard that we were new users, but I thought that this group seemed like the new users. It was obvious that while they had been here for over six months, it was most likely for less than a year. I didn’t know how they became vagrants, but they were showing me that they couldn’t adjust to the Hall Plain. There were no skills or training and their efforts were pitiable.

Yoojung looked at the user and made a determined expression. Maybe she was examining herself, as the hands holding the two daggers in the user's chest were trembling enough that it was visible.

But there was no time to rest, as there was still one female magician remaining. It seemed like she was preparing another magic, but unfortunately, Sol had already completed her magic. Sol lifted her brightly glowing staff and aimed at the female magician without any hesitation.

“Shackles!”

As a flash of light filled the forest, the female magician snorted and continued chanting the spell. I became stunned at the next scene I saw. The woman was showing double casting, a method used to avoid casting interference, where the mouth chanted the spell while the hand resisted magic power.

It was something that needed a lot of concentration, which meant that the magician in front of me was a skilled user. But the woman overlooked one point: the value of Sol's magic power.

“Uh...uh? N-No way! My magic power exceeds 60!”

As her hand became imprisoned, the woman screamed and abandoned casting the spell in order to focus on resisting. It was a quick decision, but she couldn't be a match for Sol, who had 75 magic power from the very beginning.

The magician resisted for a while, but Sol's binding spell persistently grabbed onto her. Then Hyun and Yoojung quickly ran towards her to subdue her. This was because Sol was struggling with maintaining the magic power for the binding spell, as it was her first experience with using magic power in a combat situation.

The result was soon seen as the female magician was completely bound. Sol kept up her magic power until the end, but her whole body was stiff and her mouth hung agape in fatigue.

Author's Note:

Magic detection can be classified as a control ability.

Detection is a fundamental skill: it isn't a difficult spell to cast it, but detection isn't just spreading out mana in a radius around you. Let's look at the contents of the text for a moment.

The key is how neat and long-lasting the detection is. The user must be able to efficiently distribute magic power and maintain a constant flow at all times.

The User Academy teaches the principles of developing control abilities. The many types of abilities available, the ones that were useful and important. They didn't give the detailed facts that Soohyun did/knew.

The academy literally told them how to adapt to Hall Plain. Of course, both the overall background and class training were severe. However, the application of these techniques is done when the talented ones are recruited into clans and the teachings are deepened.

In the Rite of Passage, they were under Soohyun's protection. In the User Academy, they trained hard, but there were no potentially perilous situations, like the one in the battle with the scorpions. Thus, the kids became passive during the fight with the scorpions.

And they realized it this time. The thing I want to convey to you is that the kids aren't lacking in abilities. Soohyun just wants to fix their attitude of relying on him.

They didn't know how to reach in battle with the scorpions, but the battle with the users was done without difficulty. In other words, while they are skilled, they don't know how to cope in unfamiliar situations where unknown variables can appear.

Once Soohyun scolded them, they reflected on their mistakes and immediately corrected their attitude. Yoojung still hesitated, but she showed a different appearance compared to the one in battle with the scorpions.

Soohyun was the reason why she was able to do this, but she was still frustrated because she couldn't overcome all her obstacles.

An expression of disbelief crossed the female magician's face as she looked up at me with eyes full of fear. Looking down at her with nonchalant eyes, I exchanged gazes with her, noting her beauty with her typical cat eye makeup. I saw her trembling and could feel a sense of déjà vu.

Please continue reading on

I once dabbled in this line of work in my 1st time around. There weren't many people who knew me as a person in comparison to my activities, but those who knew me called me the 'Vagrant Hunter.'

Later, the boundaries between existing users and vagrants blurred. However, the original image of vagrants invoked negative connotations such as murder, robbery, and rape. As the activities of the vagrants became worse, the existing users made a secret clan: a group of users who hunted vagrants. Vagrant hunters referred to the clan of users who expertly hunted vagrants.

The clan didn't care what they did, as long as the opponents were vagrants. It didn't matter if they implemented slavery, human experimentation, murder, or rape. If the opponent was a vagrant, the clan member was entitled to forgiveness no matter what they did. Longtime existing users were aware of the situation and tended to avoid the hunters who were in the clan.

I participated in this activity for a while and completed jobs for the clan, drenching my past self's sword in the blood of vagrants. However, since she had some good skills, I was still curious about the information of the magician.

[Player Status]

Name: Lee Bomi (Year 0)

Abilities:

[Strength: 36] [Endurance: 28] [Agility: 42] [Stamina: 34] [Magic Power: 62] [Luck: 40]

As I expected, she was a user who was less than a year old, seeing as she had less experience as a vagrant. Looking at her stats, she could be classified as a magician. While Hyun, Sol, and Yoojung were outstanding, Lee Bomi's stats definitely exceeded the average. If I had met her in the Rite of Passage, I might've considered recruiting her; however, Lee Bomi was now a vagrant who had tried to kill us.

"Huaaaah..."

Lee Bomi let out a shriek as she felt my killing intent. The binding gradually loosened and her fingers trembled as I slowly raised my blood soaked blade.

The woman spoke in a desperate voice as she realized that death had come before her eyes, "S-Spare me!"

I looked at the kids who were watching blankly and said,

"Look, you can do it if you try. In any case, this battle was fine. You've had experience fighting with users, but this battle was different from what you were used to. Of course, there were some lacking parts, but... overall, it was okay."

"I'll do whatever you tell me to! Please! Aren't we both people from South Korea? Yes? I'm not like this because I want to. Please, please...!"

The faces of the kids changed subtly as Lee Bomi rambled on. They were glad to hear my praise, but their faces looked terrible as they heard the woman screaming. I continued to thoroughly ignore Lee Bomi.

“But you shouldn’t only be good with the familiar battles. Of course, this flaw will be solved once you build up some experience in the future. Just don’t panic and do what you usually do. As I said before, never show mercy when you deal with vagrants. If you leave such annoying people alive... ah. Wait a minute. It’s getting too loud.”

“I’ll give you everything! If you like, even my body, no, I will even be your slave...kueek!”

She closed her mouth as my sword was placed up against her neck. Lee Bomi screamed as the sword’s edge sliced across her neck, causing her to cough up blood by the mouthful.

“Ah...”

“Hat...!”

I lifted the sword and flicked the blood off of it as the kids’ surprised voices could be heard in the background. During the 1st round, I developed a habit from my time working as a vagrant hunter. This was just out of habit. While I only unthinkingly acted like I used to in the Hall Plain, I couldn’t help but feel a sense of distance from the kids.

I ignored the woman’s limp head and looked at the kids.

\* \* \*

The sun went down past the horizon, its light completely disappearing and the darkness gradually encroaching upon the surroundings. Judging from the distance, it was time to stop. It wasn’t a distance that could be covered in a day or two, but I decided not to be too hasty.

Certainly, the kids were growing as they experienced more combat. It was hard to be perfect, but they never made any mistakes similar to the ones they made in the beginning. Today, we experienced six battles in the forest. If it weren’t for the last battle, we could’ve moved further today.

“Cure!”

“Urgh...”

I looked at An Hyun, who was moaning on the forest floor. Above An Hyun was a sweaty Sol, who was chanting a healing spell. Hyun’s body was covered with the scars of wolf bites the result of a raid by 16 wild, black-forest wolves. Half of them, an entire eight wolves, had rushed at An Hyun. However, it was hard to blame him since it was a sudden attack. He thought they would break through to Sol, so he took desperate risks.

Wolves originally weren’t tough opponents, but the aggression and agility of these ones were different because they received the Black Forest’s buff. In the midst of their biting,

An Hyun showed appropriate battlefield coordination with the team, managing to knock down eight of them. But after the end of the battle, he couldn't avoid falling down, covered in blood.

I took out a healing potion and applied half of it to his body and half of it to his neck. Sol was shedding tears, so Cure was taking longer than necessary. Anyway, these wounds were normal in the Hall Plain. Because I took the appropriate measures with the potion, adding onto the fact that there was a priest, there was no fear that An Hyun would lose his life.

Anyway, after finishing the treatment, An Hyun sat up while Yoojung sighed with relief.

"Hoo... Fool. I'm glad."

"I don't know if you're praising or insulting me."

"Are you worried?"

"Hyung, did the sun set in the east today?"

Yoojung glared at An Hyun as she realized that he was teasing her. I looked at the two of them arguing and shook my head.

"How are you feeling?"

"...Recovered, I guess. There's still some residual pain, but I won't have any problems moving."

"Then the battles can't continue on for today. The sun has set, so maybe we should prepare a campsite here. Anyway, you've suffered. You did well."

"It was hard work. Without Hyung being there, I probably would've collapsed."

He seemed to have noticed that I was helping him, causing him to swing his spear without any hesitation. No matter how many wolves emerged, they weren't a big threat to me. Nevertheless, there was no reason to not let An Hyun deal with them.

If he was wounded in combat and recovered, he could increase his endurance stat. In addition, there was a possibility that it might awaken the latent ability 'Can't Fall Down.' An Hyun might be suffering now, but he would surely be rewarded in the future.

They had fought six times today, so I thought that was enough. At my words, everyone prepared for camping, save for An Hyun. He took the bag that Sol was carrying and rummaged through it for a magic power stone.

He swept up the leaves and grass on the ground, while Yoojung opened her mouth,

“Oppa, then are we sleeping in the forest today?”

“Yes, why?”

“Nothing. Isn’t it a bit risky? Monsters might attack at night. I will be nervous if I have to stand guard alone.”

“Yes, I bought a magic power stone for camping, so it will be okay.”

Fortunately, the kids didn’t show any reluctance to talk to me after I killed Lee Bomi. Of course, they might just be pretending. I had killed a person casually without a second thought, so it would be quite annoying if they were too scared. However, the User Academy had thoroughly trained them so the worrying atmosphere from the Rite of Passage didn’t emerge.

Yoojung’s face changed as she heard about the magic power stone. She looked between her weapons, her backpack, the water bottles, and the magic power stone before opening her mouth with a confused expression,

“O-Oppa.”

“What is it now? Is it urgent? If not, help me prepare the campsite.”

“Nothing. That’s not it. It isn’t urgent, just... where did you get all of this?”

“What?”

Yoojung spoke in a matter of fact tone as she pointed one by one.

“Weapon. Lodging expenses. Backpack. Magic power stone. Potions. And so on. The money we gave Oppa and your wage should only be around 10 gold or so? In addition, magic power stones are unbelievably expensive...”

“The magic power stone used for camping isn’t that expensive. It just has enough energy to drive away monsters. In addition, the quality isn’t that good.”

“Still, no matter how I think about it, all of this should be more than 10 gold. Where did you get the money?”

As soon as Yoojung finished, An Hyun and Sol also looked over. I wanted to roughly pass over it, but decided to answer when I saw their curious expressions. I opened my mouth and spoke in a nonchalant voice as I placed four magic power stones around the campground.

“The User Academy.”



“Academy? Did you receive extra money because of your excellent training results?”

“No, I got it when I received offers from the clans.”

“Huh? But Oppa refused. Yet you still got money?”

“Hyung, you still accepted the money despite refusing?”

Yoojung and Hyun asked alternately, making me sigh again. The kids flinched upon hearing it. It seemed that they still remembered when I first got angry. Yoojung stopped asking at my sigh and An Hyun scratched his head with worry.

I licked my lips and said,

“In a sense, it’s like a favor; it’s just in case I change my mind later. It’s a simple gift to them, so there’s no reason to refuse.”

“Ohu...”

What was with the ‘ohu’? It was a rough excuse, but the kids seemed to understand. I didn’t feel comfortable every time I lied to them. But I couldn’t talk about my past, so I just answered with a calm expression.

“You might think that it is better to not receive it. However, it isn’t like they can’t afford it—after all, they didn’t give that much anyways. If we don’t get any results compared to what I invested in this expedition, then we might not be able to eat meals or stay at inns in the future.”

“Yes, it is heavy. Yes, I don’t like it. However, take a closer look at the belongings of the vagrants. We have to do many things that we don’t like.”

The dark scorpions and wolves didn’t give those those killed them any money. Among the monsters, there were those who gave money and those who didn’t. Vagrants liked killing users because they could earn a lot of money in one shot, compared to the users hunting monsters. On the contrary, if the users killed the vagrants, then we could get a pretty good profit.

Honestly, if it weren’t for the kids, I would’ve stripped the vagrants down until they only had their underwear left. But the kids were watching, so I just took the things that seemed appropriate. It seemed that I couldn’t abandon the unconscious habits from my 1st turn at life so easily.

“Remember this: gold coins don’t grow on trees. Anyways, we’ll rest for the today and start again tomorrow. Get ready for camping.”

As An Hyun went to bed, I reached into my backpack. It seemed a bit heavier after I removed items from the vagrants.

I placed my hand inside and pulled out a sleeping roll while Yoojung and Sol prepared dinner. Both of them seemed exhausted, but they didn't receive a large shock. There were still many things to fix, but I thought that I could rest assured for now.

I felt somebody shaking my body as I was asleep and opened my eyes to see Sol staring down at me. The landscape of the Black Forest at dawn entered my sight. We were in the middle of a forest, so a cold chill hit my body. I circled my magic power in my body before getting up, clearing my head up enough to feel refreshed.

Please continue reading on

"The stars are gone?"

"Yes. There are none. Orabeoni had a good sleep."

An Sol called me oppa when we were all together, but now she strangely called me orabeoni. (TN: More formal version of oppa) It was a little disconcerting, and I got goosebumps from it, but I didn't say anything to stop her. Sol always bowed and spoke politely, so it seemed that she received a good home education.

I responded with a soft smile to Sol's greeting and felt a hand pulling my clothes when I turned around to wake Yoojung and Hyun up. I turned back and saw Sol biting her lip. It seemed like she had something to say to me.

I opened my mouth and spoke in my most sincere voice, "Yes, Sol? What did you want to say?"

"Orabeoni...I..."

After I asked the question, Sol looked at the ground and avoided my gaze. But then she bit her lip and raised her head with a determined expression. I didn't know what she wanted to talk about, but I braced myself and waited for her next words.

"...Pee...I need to do it."

"....."

"I'm scared to go alone so... Orabeoni, can you come with me?"

"...Go alone," I said, shaking my head.

This time, Sol didn't back down. Despite my direct refusal, Sol didn't let go of my clothes. Her innocent eyes were trembling, but there seemed to be a slight light in them.

In the end, I decided to step back. I couldn't help feeling doubt as I looked at An Sol. It had been over three months since we first entered Hall Plain, which meant that Sol was now 20 years old. Of course, she wasn't that much younger than me, but sometimes, her mental age made her seem like a child.

I wasn't the only one who found her behavior strange. It wasn't obvious at first glance, but after spending a long time together, even Yoojung also felt that Sol's behavior was strange. In the past, Yoojung had asked An Hyun about it once, but he avoided answering. It seemed as if there was something he wanted to hide about Sol. I vowed that I would ask again later if there was a chance, before stepping out of the camp with Sol.

"This place should be sufficient."

"....."

"Sol?"

"Orabeoni... can you go a little bit further away?"

"I'll stay still. Don't worry, I won't see anything."

"I'll believe you. Really. You promised."

Sol asked two or three times before taking off her clothes with an uneasy expression. I looked away from Sol, taking out a cigarette and putting it into my mouth. As I lit it up and sucked in, I could hear the sound of clothes being taken off. Soon after, I heard Sol squatting down and peeing, making me feel awkward. She wasn't ashamed to do this in front of a man. Or, maybe I wasn't seen as a man. Either way, it wasn't a pleasant experience.

As time passed by, the sound of urination gradually subsided and I now heard the sound of someone walking on grass. Sol smiled brightly when she saw me waiting in my spot.

"Thank you."

"Phew, this is really like managing a baby. Don't do this too often."

"Hehe. Sorry."

After saying those harsh words, I began to turn away when Sol suddenly grabbed my arm. I was abruptly spun around to face An Sol, causing my cigarette to fall. Why was she so aggressive all of a sudden? Sol smiled at my confused expression and brought her face to my chest.

“Orabeoni.”

“Y-Yes?”

“To be honest... Orabeoni was a little bit scary yesterday.”

“...Yes?”

Indeed. It seemed cruel to stab a sword into someone’s neck just because they were a little annoying. However, Sol currently wasn’t trembling, so I waited for her next words.

Sol enjoyed being near me for a moment before saying cautiously,

“But... Orabeoni is always strong and sweet. If it weren’t for Orabeoni, I would’ve...”

The words were difficult to say so she trailed off, closed her eyes, and sighed. But it was true that I felt odd holding her now.

The female user before me was a famous user who would awaken as the Brilliance Priest later on in life. There was a rumor that An Sol was taken into the Odin Clan, a gathering of top-level users from across the continent.

I worked hard in my own way, but my reputation and ability didn’t match hers. At the time, An Sol was a user at the peak, so it felt strange that she was relying on me so enthusiastically right now.

I was pulled into the atmosphere and placed my arms around her. Sol was startled by my action as her face slowly turned red. My left hand remained on her back as my right hand stroked her ebony hair.

Then I whispered softly, “Do you think I should’ve spared that female vagrant yesterday...? Are you afraid...?”

Sol wildly shook her head. It was ticklish, but I couldn’t help smiling at her reaction. Sol’s uneasy expression disappeared at the touch of my hand and the smiling face of a beautiful woman started to appear.

“Uhhh...no. I’m not afraid. Hyun oppa said this: ‘In order to survive, we have to be like Soohyun hyung... you should control your mental state. We would’ve died if it weren’t for Hyung...’ I might be unqualified to stick by your side but...I believe in Orabeoni. So Orabeoni... don’t abandon me.”

Yes. An Hyun said such praiseworthy things? In other words, I was definitely within the hearts of the kids. So far, the kid had blindly followed me. However, this changed into a firm belief in the Black Forest.

“I won’t. And Hyun is wrong. We can survive if we work hard together. This type of foolish...”

“I know, I’m aware of that. But... just let me stay like this for a moment.”

I wanted to hold her a bit longer but opened my arms at the thought of not being able to control myself. However, Sol nodded vigorously and rushed back into my arms again.

“I will work hard. I will work hard enough to make Orabeoni pleased... so...”

“So?”

“Can’t you do this a bit longer?”

“.....”

“Please stroke my hair. Quickly.”

Sol heard my unspoken agreement and buried her face in my chest again. I shrugged and lifted my hand again. However, from today on, I felt that Sol’s perception of me had changed significantly.

\* \* \*

“How are you feeling?” I asked Hyun.

“Good. When I got up today and checked, my endurance had increased by one. I really feel like my body has become more resilient. I also feel more flexible than before.”

“Huhu. Endurance is an important stat. Otherwise, you will have a glass cannon for a body.”

“Kukukuk.”

An Hyun laughed with satisfaction at the sight of his stats going up. Yoojung was pouting next to him, but she also looked good. I felt a little envious as I looked at Hyun. I would also like to raise my stamina...

An injury well beyond the limits of your stats was likely to cause your endurance to fall; however, receiving an injury just above or below the limit was perfect for increasing endurance, as long as the aftertreatment was perfect. It was like when bones were

broken cleanly: the body would adapt to the wound to some extent, and stick harder together when attached again.

I cleaned up the camp while An Hyun thrust his spear and showed off the steadfastness of his body. After a simple breakfast, we set off again towards the alchemist's dungeon.

I was convinced that the traces I saw at the beginning of the Black Forest didn't belong to vagrants. Now I was chasing their trail. It seemed they had entered quite deeply since the traces hadn't disappeared just yet.

From the beginning to the middle, the Black Forest wasn't a place that a lot of users could see. Nevertheless, there was a high probability that a group had entered. I guessed it had something to do with the dungeon of the ancient alchemist, Vivian.

"I feel a chill at the thought of being overwhelmed today."

An Hyun spoke from where he was walking on the right side. Maybe he was talking about the battle with the pack of wolves yesterday. He didn't slow down and watched the area carefully.

I opened my mouth and said, "Certainly, that battle was the most dangerous. However, it isn't common for such a pack to emerge. Anyways, once we finish this exploration and return, I will find some armoring for you."

"Armoring...? Ah, armor? I'm still wearing the basic armor received from the User Academy..."

"It's made of leather, so it's hard to expect a big defensive effect. A spearman should wear plate armor since that's more convenient for him than either chain armor or scaly armor."

"Aha. I know a little bit about weapons, and now I know more about armor. Indeed, thinking about the battle yesterday, it would be nice to have some armor. It is hard for me to defend myself when I swing the spear... but it will cost a lot of money to buy all those things at once."

I shook my head at Hyun's words. Armor with good defense was usually set at a price that novice users couldn't afford. They were too busy trying to live to worry about armor. The fact that we were on our first expedition and had new weapons would be a tremendous luxury to other novices.

"Maybe it won't be like that. Even the experienced users can't easily earn money unless they chance upon a big jackpot. In the end, we should collect money from now on and prepare it one by one."

"Well, there is no need to worry since I have the GP given at the Rite of Passage."

“No. As I said before, that is really a last resort. You should absolutely save your GP. You will clearly have to use it later. Let’s just try this for now.”

“Phew. Money is a problem everywhere.”

I smiled and nodded as Hyun spoke like an old man. Of the current group, Hyun was the one who adapted the most to the Hall Plain, so I could definitely count on him. His defense was weak in battle, so it was worth thinking about armor in the near future.

After spending a few moments with Hyun, I sensed something and activated Third Eye. The traces of the users who entered first became clearer. It seemed like we would catch up with them by the middle of the day.

Of course, I didn’t have the slightest intention of acting like them. If I was lucky enough to find it first, of course, I would claim rights to it. Existing users would know about the right of first discovery. However, there was no need to worry even if I didn’t find it first.

<I found it by chance and all those who entered it died. No, they didn’t die. Huh? A total of three people. No, it should be one person. What am I saying...>

Originally, the alchemist’s dungeon wasn’t revealed at this time. It was uncovered two years later in the Caves of Screaming, and only revealed a few months later. So what if the other group found the dungeon? If my prediction was right, they would soon be killed. They probably failed to capture the dungeon and were all wiped out.

If they found it first, I could just step back. I would wait a few days around the dungeon and eventually see their dead bodies. Rather, it might be easier if I let them enter first to handle some of the traps or monsters at the entrance. In addition, I would get a pretty good profit from the equipment they had.

After finishing the calculations, my feet became busier. I wanted to proceed with the dungeon and explore the Caves of Screaming. The kids sped up after me, despite not knowing why.

Despite a considerable amount of time flowing by, we were able to move without any interruptions. The darkness of the forest made the lush green of the leaves and foliage pale in color. We passed through more areas of the forest. The march rate was dramatically increased from yesterday, so it seemed like we could overcome the interruptions faster than expected.

Please continue reading on

“How strange, I dreamed about encountering a lot of monsters today.”

“*Pant pant* Dreams are the opposite of reality. Oppa, I’m sorry, but can we rest a little bit? It’s already been half a day and we haven’t rested yet.”

An Hyun cocked his head. Yoojung's breathing was rough. She didn't say anything, but her face was pale and her lips had many cracks from where she had bitten them. Everyone had followed me silently, but it seemed like they were bottling their pent up emotions inside. At this point, I also felt the slight need to take a break so I nodded and stopped. I heard the sound of people collapsing to the ground as soon I gave permission.

I looked around and clear traces of a caravan remained. The low frequency of monster encounters suggested that the distance between us and the caravan was decreasing. It was possible that the preceding caravan had already processed the monsters. There were just two questions.

If the group had information about the alchemist's dungeon, why would they go around taking care of all the surrounding monsters? Another question was: if the monsters were processed, why didn't I see any bodies? Of course, the questions asked were based on certain criteria that could be inferred.

I pondered on it for a while before shaking my head. The correct answer was to not worry about anything now. The bottom line was that as we followed the trail of this caravan, we would arrive at the alchemist's dungeon as quickly as possible. In the worst case, we would fail to clear the dungeon. But based on my memories, we were more likely to succeed than to fail. Moreover, we didn't have much to lose. If I thought of it as building combat experience, there was nothing to lose.

I cleared my head of all complex thought and heard a bit of a disturbance from the kids who were already sitting. When I turned my head to check what was going on, Sol was looking at me for help with an awkward expression.

"Why are you wondering about such a futile thing? Mind your own business."

"Crazy. Don't you know that knowledge is power? You really are an ignorant bastard."

"I know the saying that knowledge is power, but it just doesn't suit you. You won't understand things like that."

"What?"

An Hyun and Yoojung were in the middle of arguing. The topic was about the Golden Lion Clan and their expedition into the Steel Mountains. I agreed with An Hyun, but it wouldn't be bad to talk about it to the kids at least once.

"Stupid. Do you think we will have a chance to participate in the expedition? If you go there, won't you just be watching from the side while sucking your fingers?"

"Who? I'm just wondering why they are attempting the expedition. What are you saying?"



“I told you. Wondering is futile. Didn’t you hear from Soohyun hyung? We should worry about our current situation. Yes? Or do you have an inferiority complex towards Kim Hanbyul?”

“What? Look here, you fu...”

As the atmosphere became heated, I hastily sat down between the pair. Yoojung was just about to pour out some curses but hurriedly closed her mouth when she saw me. An Hyun scratched his head and avoided my gaze.

I glanced at the two of them for a moment and spoke in a calm voice.

“There is no problem with being curious, as information is vital to your survival in the Hall Plain. Of course, it would be a problem if you wanted to participate in the expedition instead of just feeling curiosity.”

Yoojung’s face brightened at my words. She was glad that I took her side. An Hyun pouted as his expression became grouchy. Yoojung sent him a triumphant smile and immediately opened her mouth.

“Oppa, why are the Steel Mountains so boisterous? I often heard users speak about it when we were staying at the inn.”

I gathered my thoughts at Yoojung’s question and replied,

“Currently, the Hall Plain is limited to the East, West, South, and North Countries. We need to advance into the Central Country, and in order to get to the Central Country, conquering the Steel Mountains is a must.”

“Then it can be occupied?”

“You idiot.”

An Hyun spoke the words that I wanted to. I smiled bitterly at Yoojung’s words.

“If it were that easy, then it would already be occupied. The monsters we’ve encountered so far are incomparable to the ones in the mountains, and there are unimaginably strong monsters.”

“Then you can only go to the Central Country through the Steel Mountains? And what is in the Central Country?”

I was forced to pause a little bit at Yoojung’s endless questions. I felt the need to answer carefully because An Hyun and An Sol also had curious expressions. However, we were on a break and the contents didn’t matter much, so I slowly opened my mouth.

“I don’t know the details. If we cross the Steel Mountains, then we’ll see the Central Country. But I heard that it’s confirmed in ancient literature that a big city called Atlanta exists in front of the North Country. It is from ancient literature, but the thought of a new and big city has lit a fire in the users’ eyes.”

“Atlanta... what’s so good about occupying a big city? Will we be able to return home after occupying it?”

“No. Nobody knows how to return home. Just.. Before that, let me ask you one thing. Yoojung, what do you think is the most important thing for an individual to survive in Hall Plain?”

Yoojung closed her eyes and ran her fingers through her hair as she thought about the question, before replying.

“Strength. Abilities. Stats.”

“That’s right. In other words, the power of the individual is the most important. It doesn’t mean that you will have the unconditional strength to survive, but it is true that you are highly likely to survive.”

“Yes, yes. Then can users gain strength in Atlanta?”

I watched Yoojung and replied,

“Something like that. The North Country is becoming increasingly saturated. The dungeons on the continent aren’t infinite. Most major expeditions have been done. Of course, Mule was discovered recently, but it’s nothing compared to the grandeur of the Steel Mountains. After the stabilization of cities like Mule are complete, there is nothing else to be done, and we’ll still have to catch the usual monsters. It’s the same for the other countries. Then the people in the North Country, who have completed their development and saturation, will no longer be able to grow their skills and stats. It’s unclear if we can go home, but people know what will happen if they have no strength. Moreover, there will be no power to raise the new users.”

The explanation was a little long, but it was still lacking some things. I stretched my neck as I watched the kids intently concentrating on my words.

“If we cross the Steel Mountains and start exploring Atlanta, we will have a place where we can develop. New monsters, new hunting grounds, new dungeons, new equipment, etc. Right now, we can easily raise our relatively low stats, but it will be hard once we reach the limit later on. When the big city of Barbara was pioneered a few years ago, I heard that all the users involved received rewards for the achievement and they increased their stats. It is said that the other rewards are also luxurious. Therefore, people want to cross the Steel Mountains for this reason.”

Of course, there was another mountain to overcome after occupying Atlanta. At that time, we would have to compete with users from other countries. Atlanta, called the New World, was surrounded by the continent's major cities, such as Ragnarok and Terra. I got goosebumps when I remembered the sacrifices I had to make to get the Zero Code in Terra.

Once I finished, the kids all stared at me, mouths agape in surprise. An Hyun blinked before asking in an urgent voice,

“H-Hyung. Then wouldn't it be better for us to stay in the big cities? Ah, of course, I'm not doubting Hyung's choice. Still, as Hyung said, the benefits are really terrific. If we develop in a big city like Barbara and participate in the expedition...”

“So... How arrogant must Kim Hanbyul think we are? Ah. Thinking about it makes me shudder.”

In the end, Kim Hanbyul's name emerged. An Hyun and Yoojung showed signs of agitation, but An Sol was looking at me with unwavering eyes. Her confidence in me had become unconditionally strong ever since our talk from earlier this morning. I was worried that she might become a fanatic, but on the other hand, I was also filled with expectations.

I cleared my throat, causing the kids to fall silent.

“Hum hum. Like I said before, it isn't like that. If you listen to the instructors from clans other than the Golden Lion Clan at the User Academy, you will hear that it is foolish to participate in the expedition right now. At least, in my opinion. Of course, I can't be sure, but I find them more credible.”

The kids seemed a bit relieved, but there were still some signs of agitation. Honestly, I was also a little bit frustrated. I wanted to let them know immediately about how the expedition was smashed and tell them about the fall of the Golden Lion Clan. I inwardly sighed but was forced to explain to the kids using logic and valid reasoning. The minimum amount was needed.

“Phew. Listen carefully. However, this is just my opinion, so don't cling too tightly to it. Right now, the Golden Lion Clan thinks the North Country has somewhat stabilized and are preparing for the expedition in haste. But I don't see it that way.”

“Oppa, then is an expedition possible after stabilization? Even if it is a little bit difficult, there will be a huge jackpot if they succeed.”

“That's right. The problem is that users are putting their lives up as collateral in the gamble.”

Yoojung fell silent the moment I said 'lives.' The atmosphere seemed considerably heavier than before.

"I was interested and read the records about the occupation of Barbara. My emotions after reading it were overwhelming. Will the Atlanta expedition be any easier than the one in Barbara? I don't think so. In order to succeed in the Steel Mountains expedition, the current country has to be saturated. Once it is completely saturated, it is impossible to extract the maximum amount of power from the users, as well as secure a certain amount of new users. The North Country isn't fully saturated yet. Just looking at Mule right now, I think the expedition is too early. There are many people who think so. The Golden Lion Clan seems to be losing their minds after the end of their lord.. tsk."

"Huh? The lord?"

I thought that I made a mistake for a moment. Fortunately, I put up a smoke screen by saying I read the records before, but I needed to be more careful in the future. I maintained a calm expression and nodded at An Hyun.

"He is the one who made the most contributions in founding the big city of Barbara. Haven't you heard about him at the academy? Great. He's the one who created the Golden Lion Clan, now called the best clan, and built up many achievements."

I inwardly sighed as I watched the kids.

"Originally, Hall Plain was based on the western city of Halo and the small town of Dorothy before Barbara was occupied. After the eastern cities were stabilized, he came to the big city of Barbara and died from wounds that couldn't be cured. Maybe if he were still here, they would've already entered Atlanta."

Bullshit. I barely stopped myself from spitting out that word. In fact, Atlanta was only occupied at the end of several civil wars after the dissolution of the Golden Lion Clan. That person managed to pioneer Barbara, but there was no guarantee that he could occupy the Steel Mountains if he were still alive.

Anyways, the power of an individual was important to survive in Hall Plain, but it was also important to have a variety of knowledge. The break was a bit long, but I thought it was beneficial for the kids. I stood up and said,

"Anyways, that's just a rough approximation of the situation. Right now, you don't have the qualifications to participate in the expedition, so just forget it. Now we should just do what we can."

This time, An Hyun was the one who looked triumphantly at Yoojung. Yoojung nodded with a stiff expression and stood up after me. The time to use the Third Eye was approaching. If my prediction was correct, we would be able to find the alchemist's dungeon in the next one or two days.

“Damn! Again... these wolf bastards!”

Please continue reading on

“Come quickly if you have time to grumble!”

I quickly moved in front of An Sol and formed the triangle formation by pulling An Hyun’s arm. A huge number of wolves had appeared in front of our eyes in a single moment. The sudden emergence of the feral canines caused my skin to tingle.

I bit my lip. All of a sudden, traces of the caravan had disappeared. The deeper we entered, the stronger the traces became, until it was suddenly lost at a certain point. I wandered around to find any other traces, but there were no clues, as if they were taken by ghosts. In the end, I was about to trigger Third Eye when I was attacked by wolves.

Even if there were over 100 wolves of the Black Forest, I was confident that I could handle them by myself. The problem was the kids. Last time there were around 20, but this time, there were a lot more wolves than that. There were at least 40 pairs of eyes watching us, so it was no surprise that the kids were frightened, when they were like freshly hatched chicks.

“O-Oppa.”

“Don’t retreat!”

Despite my cry, Yoojung couldn’t help stepping back. Then the wolves started to howl. An Hyun, An Sol, and Yoojung hesitated as they listened to over 40 wolves howling at once. I could hear An Hyun muttering by my side, but the wolves quickly narrowed the distance to us at once.

If it was like this, we would suffer. There was no time to soothe the kids. Both Yoojung and An Hyun were stunned, but they quickly put themselves together and grabbed their weapons. It was good that they regained their spirits, but the disadvantage of the present situation hadn’t changed. I raised my sword.

“An Sol. Stay behind and assist me with protection. From now on, I will leave the formation.”

“Y-Yes? Oppa? Oppa!”

I didn’t give her time to answer as I stepped forward with my sword. The wolves saw me coming and opened their mouths, revealing their razor-sharp teeth. There was a scream from behind, but this wasn’t a battlefield the kids could simply adjust to. There was no guarantee that the kids could match these numbers. In the end, the answer was to reveal a little more of my skills.

Not long after, my battle with the wolves began.

I entered the center of the battle with one step and wielded my sword that contained magic power. I was surprised by the result as the power of a Sword Specialist was fully revealed. My experience with the sword and the synergy effect with my potential was bringing out a different power. Blood poured from six wolves with a single slash.

“Protect!”

Sol used Protect on me with good timing. The charging wolves gazed at me with confused expressions, as if they didn't expect their kin to be cut by a sword. However, that only lasted for a short moment. They still had the advantage in numbers, and I was still surrounded, so the remaining 30 wolves started clinging to me in droves.

I immediately took care of two wolves charging from the side and turned around to slice at the body of a pouncing wolf. Its hot blood soaked my body. In the meantime, the kids were fiercely fighting the wolves on the outskirts. Nevertheless, there were still a lot of wolves remaining. In this unfavorable battle, I became excited as I swung my sword again and again.

“Kaeeng!”

*Surung!*

I didn't hit just one. By default, every swing caused a critical blow to two or three wolves, just like the six wolves earlier. As soon as I swung my sword, I was already flowing into the next linked movement. It was the activation of divine sword unity.

“Kaeeng! Keng!”

*Surung! Surung!*

My sword waved in succession and the bodies of the wolves in the front were neatly cut. The moment I tried to turn my body, I felt a tight feeling on my thigh. I looked down while swinging my sword, and saw teeth buried in my thigh.

“This isn't enough to penetrate my endurance.”

I whispered quietly and stabbed downwards. Then blood gushed from the wolf's head. I stepped on the head of the fallen wolf and attacked the ones jumping at me. I wielded my sword for a while before turning around as I felt the quiet.

It was a lull in the battle. The over 40 wolves had been reduced to just a few. In this short time, more than 30 wolves had been slaughtered. It seemed like I showed too much of my skills.

I smiled slowly and my killing intent caused the remaining wolves to step back. I stepped forward slightly and then wolves turned around and fled.

Where were they trying to run to? I was drunk on battle and going to chase after them when I heard an urgent call from behind me.

“Hyung!”

“Oppa!”

“Oppa!”

I returned to reality the moment I heard the cries of the kids. They weren't able to see my smile because my back was towards them, but I had acted too excessively in this battle. What should I do? What should I say? Thoughts filled my head.

At that time. I bowed my head and noticed my body that was soaked in blood. The moment I smelled blood, I thought of a good idea. I didn't want to do this but it couldn't be helped. My movements were certainly too excessive. Suspicion would just be a minor burden, but it was best to cut off the bud in advance.

“Ouch!”

“Hyung! Are you okay?”

As soon as I heard the kids running to me, I fell to the ground and pretended to be nauseous. Of course, I didn't forget to breathe roughly. It would be better if I was bleeding, but I hadn't thought about it in my frenzied state.

“Pant, pant!”

I started sweating and had a pained look on my face as the kids came to me. Hyun took out a potion from his bag and Sol quickly chanted a healing spell. And Yoojung tried to take off my clothes. W-What? What was she doing?

“Hyung! Hyung! Steady yourself!”

“Oppa! Oppa!”

“L-Loud. Don't be so loud...”

“Hyung. Drink this quickly!”

As An Hyun pushed a bottle of medicine towards my mouth, I shook my head and flapped my hands. Yoojung took off my jacket, pushed her face into mine and examined me closely.

“W-What? There is no trauma? Perhaps... is your lower body injured?”

“Ugh... please, everyone, just stay still...”

I slowly circulated my magic power and caused white smoke to rise from my body. Then Sol’s expression became urgent. It was probably obvious to a good student like Sol. Sol stopped chanting a spell as she looked at the white haze rising from my body and she turned pale.

“Get out of the way!”

“Kyak! Hey, what is it all of a sudden?”

“Get back!”

Yoojung flinched at Sol’s shout and stepped back. Sol placed her hand on my chest and slowly inserted her magic power into my body. She was looking at the situation of my body. I steadily raised my magic power at the same time. At first glance, it looked bad.

“N...no way!”

“What are you doing?”

“M...Mana is congested. This is the inversion phenomenon!”

“Inversion phenomenon? Then...”

“Aang!”

Sol burst into tears and hugged me. I could feel Sol’s warm tears and breath on my skin. An Hyun and Yoojung looked at me with pale faces, like they also knew about the mana inversion phenomenon.

“Damn...I shouldn’t have frozen...!”

“How...what should we...?”

“...Everybody, be quiet.”

At this point, there was only a little bit of smoke around my body. The tearful Sol, Hyun, and Yoojung stared at me. They looked at me like I was a superhero. I slowly got into the lotus position. The kids watched me in case I fell.

“Everybody... be aware of our surroundings.”



The kids nodded three times in one second, while I slowly started to meditate. I entered into contemplation, but didn't go too deeply. Now was the time to properly take advantage of Third Eye.

The trail had clearly become stronger before quickly disappearing. The most likely cause was a ward. However, there should be a reaction to the magic power on the surface, but I couldn't feel a ward.

I triggered Third Eye and slowly looked around the forest.

\* \* \*

“Huu...”

I sighed as the analysis was finished. It wasn't like looking at the past like he did in the Rite of Passage, but it was much harder than simply looking at information. I opened my eyes and saw two pairs of eyes blinking in front of me.

*Blink.*

*Blink blink.*

*Blink?*

*Blink blink?*

“.....”

“Oppa?”

“Orabeoni?”

An Hyun was holding his spear and looking around with a wary expression. He turned around as he heard the kids calling out to me. Then Hyun's lips slowly curved upwards. I was barely able to raise my body after pulling the kids away.

“Oppa. Your body? Is your body okay? Huh?”

“For now. There is no need to worry.” I replied.

“Hyung. Here. Come on.”

“Ah, no. Wasting a stamina potion just for mana inversion...”

I wanted to say that it was no use, but I couldn't refuse after seeing An Hyun's face. In the end, I accepted the potion with an awkward expression. Somehow, I was forced to drink this potion.

As I gulped down the potion, the kids looked me up and down. I shrugged and Yoojung opened his mouth.

"That...Oppa. We should go back."

"Don't talk nonsense."

"I heard about it from Sol. If Mana inversion isn't healed properly, it might reoccur again..."

"I have suppressed it. I can go to the city later and treat it properly."

"Still..."

"There is no time to worry about that... Sigh. No. I have something to say. Didn't you learn to never step back against monsters? It tells them that you are afraid of them."

Of course, it was a little unfair towards the kids. This was the first time they saw over 40 wolves at once. Anyway, Hyun and Yoojung were speechless at the reminder and bowed their heads.

They wondered why I jumped forward? It was because they didn't keep their formation. This thought was like an arrow in their hearts, indicating that they knew what they did wrong.

Despite my harsh words, the kids still looked worried about me. It was probably valid because my face distorted a few times when I used Third Eye.

I loosened my lips for a moment and noticed the kids watching my lips.

"Anyway, it isn't necessary to go back. It is especially true for me. So everyone, firmly maintain your spirit. This time I will let it go, but I will be really upset if you show the same attitude next time."

"H-Hyung. But... Sol said that mana inversion..."

"Stop it. I know the state of my body better than anyone. I can still go forward. Don't worry about me."

The kids' shoulders dropped at my confident tone. Their faces were sulky but the atmosphere gradually relaxed as they looked at the wolf corpses. I saw that their morale had fallen and rose from my seat.

I moved forward and could feel the gaze of the kids. However, I had no intention of going back. We had come this far. I turned back to the spot where the traces disappeared.

The reason I couldn't find any traces was due to a ward, as expected. It was a barrier that opened another world once someone stepped through. I felt excited at the thought of finally finding a clue to the alchemist's dungeon.

"I'd like to change the formation for a while."

Please continue reading on

"Yeah? Ah, yes. How.....?"

"One by one, stand behind me. The person behind catches the collar of the person in front. Once you hold it, never let go of it."

Once they were done questioning and being fussy for a while, they soon moved into position. Someone held onto my collar tightly. It was An Sol. Suddenly, I realized the order in which they all stood.

Behind me was An Sol, followed by Yoo-Jung, and An Hyun at the rear. After they took their positions, I spoke out in a calm voice.

"From this moment onwards, the place that we are going to enter is called the Course Barrier (進路 結界). The moment you make a mistake, you may be cut down. What I mean is, never take your hands off the other. Never let go of it. If possible step on the same footprint... And... Nothing else. Let's go."

I wanted to add that they must not be surprised by anything, but I deliberately avoided saying that stuff as it was unnecessary. I couldn't predict what kind of situation we would potentially encounter. We moved slowly, taking one step at a time.

They followed my steps, but they were doubtful about certain things and had question marks on their faces. I stepped ahead carefully while keeping third eye open.

One step, two steps, three steps... My gaze was towards the footprints that were down below, yet I was able to confirm that I was heading in the right direction. The pigmentation of the grass around us was regaining its original color. Voices of excitement came from behind.

However, the dungeon of the alchemist didn't appear immediately. The kids were following me without much effort, but I was walking on a trail while maintaining a high level of concentration. Maintaining the third eye for such long time was not an easy thing to do.

Quite some time had passed...

“Huh... you guys can release your hands now.”

We walked in a circle and reached our destination. After almost forty minutes of tracking, it seemed that all the weird air around me was gone. The sensation of touch of someone holding my collar disappeared after one breath. I was really annoyed when my collar was pulled from time to time.

I turned my head slightly and grabbed the backside of Sol's hand on purpose so that she would let go of mine. Warm, a warm sensation passed through my palm. As I grabbed her hand, An Sol looked at me with a frightened face and panted slowly. I was in the middle of letting go of her hands....

I tried to forcibly pull away from her hand but she wouldn't let go; I let it be and motioned towards the others. An Hyun and Yoo-Jung understood my signal and came to my side. Everyone directed their own lines of sight from my face towards the front.

“Wow....”

An Hyun was visibly surprised at the castle standing tall in front of his eyes that was built with white marble. As I lifted my finger and pointed towards the front, An Sol and Yoo-Jung looked at the castle and their faces blanked. There were at a loss for words after seeing the castle surrounded by the bushes. This was the light in this dull forest.

After watching for a while, An Hyun blurted out with a loud voice, “This castle is.....”

“This Dungeon's owner, is the Ancient Alchemist Vivian. I know that you want to go in....”

Seeing the kids who were lost in thought, I felt a little proud of myself. I had a lot of trouble when I had to choose my own abilities. Choosing the third eye over other great abilities was a difficult decision for me. This was probably the most extensive and efficient use on the Hall Plane. In the past, it was hard to find caves or dungeons even after going through a lot of hardships.

“Hyung.... I'm not sure how, but you really did find it.”

“I don't know either. I just followed the trail.... I guess it's beginner's luck.”

An Hyun was looking at me with big glistening eyes with great fervour, but I responded modestly. One usually encounters these kinds of things when they go out to explore. Surprised already? I don't think I can rejoice just yet. I'm resilient towards peaceful sceneries, but I'm very much aware of what kind of hell awaits us inside.

“Kyah! Oppa. The castle is so pretty. When you said a dungeon, I thought of a strange, dull and disgusting facility.”

That’s right. Go inside and continue down towards the basement. I just murmured to myself. I didn’t want to destroy this bright atmosphere. An Sol opened her mouth with a face full of excitement.

“I feel like I’m seeing a fortress... the one from the movies....”

I could see a bitter smile on An Hyun’s face as An Sol spoke in such a manner. I couldn’t comprehend it, but it looked like the word movie had a story behind it.

Yoo-Jung wanted to enter immediately, and An Hyun looked at me with expectant eyes. Just a while ago, the children wanted to go some place to rest, but now their behavior had changed completely. It seemed like the kids were feeling excited.

“Oppa is so awesome. When I passed here, I obviously couldn’t see it. How in the world did you find it?”

“Well, I’m just lucky.”

“Ae.....h. How is Oppa continuously lucky? Like they say, do you really have a pole star that shows you what you want?”

Once Yoo-Jung was done talking, I saw that she smiled a little. Suddenly, I was reminded of Kim Han-Byul. I don’t know what was happening, but if she could have come with us.... I shook my head. If I was alone, I would have to listen to her tremendously harsh responses. However, both of them were poles apart.

Anyway, that was an early sensation that came into my mind, but it was nothing. I moved towards the castle, while the kids followed right behind me.

“Wait a moment.”

I stopped in front of the gate. There were definite traces that were leading into the castle. That means that the caravan already had found their way inside. However, this time, I could see five pairs of footprints. It would have been five people in the first place, or one member could’ve died on the way here. I glanced at it for a moment and then opened the door that was blocking the entrance.

\*

“Wow!”

“Whoa, whoa....”

I entered the castle that I had long awaited for. As I walked into the castle, the kids were moving their heads as if making sure that they could enter inside. As it was empty, it was hard to recognize this circular room as the castle's lobby. Broken windows and chairs came to my attention. They were old fashioned, but they had a dark, gloomy aura.

Still, it was refreshing to see a ceiling made of white marble. The ceiling was circular in shape, like a dome, with marble pillars supporting it. In some ways, it was similar to a European church.

"What? There aren't any treasure or monsters? Has someone already taken them?"

"..."

Having thought she could find it that easily, Yoo-Jung was a little disappointed. I lifted her forehead with one hand and pointed towards the centre with the other hand. On the end of that direction was a wooden door with iron ornaments attached to the floor.

"Ah, a secret base."

"... A door that leads to the dungeon. Some dangerous secret facility."

"Chi. Whatever. Oppa always hates me."

Once I found the castle, I was again excited for some reason. The kids were like puppies; they were quite excited and moved around to see it. Once I got a look at it, I took a step back.

The original meaning of a dungeon is a dungeon. It was out of question to ask why there were no monsters in the lobby of the castle. But this wasn't enough to understand the intent behind it. Perhaps there aren't any monsters in the beginning or maybe the caravans had already taken care of it. However, nothing was certain, because there were no bodies or traces of battle.

"We are supposed to enter from here."

"That's for sure. It's not there just to see, after all."

I simply shook my head and held the handle. It seemed pretty heavy, but it couldn't be compared to my strength that was already around 94. When I lifted it, I heard the sound of the door creaking open. Soon, I saw a big square hole that had an identical square bottom.

"I don't think it's that deep. So, I will go first and you guys come along one by one."

After I finished speaking, I immediately jumped inside. The dimly lit end was getting closer and closer. At last, I was able to land on the ground with a thud. Seeing me get down without much difficulty, Hyun and Yoo-Jung nodded at each other and jumped in at the same time.

Once again, the dust flew around with the thump from landing. In the first place, the physically well-endowed An Hyun came down with a casual expression. But Yoo-Jung was holding onto her knee. When I approached her, I couldn't understand it, but Yoo-Jung lifted her head and opened her mouth with a pained voice.

"Uh... I landed wrong."

As I watched Yoo-Jung, An Hyun and I sighed after looking at each other. When I lifted my head, I saw a still An Sol. An Sol hesitated for a moment from the top, but was going to jump with a look which said that she didn't want to be alone after the hint of Hyun's, "Jump alone and the ghost catches you.". I looked at the lightly leaping Sol... But why is she closing her eyes?

"Please receive me."

Shit.

"Khyaaaaaaaaa!"

An Sol jumped down with her eyes closed and screamed. There was a soft crushing sound as she landed on the floor. She stroked her butt a few times and looked at us with a sense of betrayal. We stood there bending over and staring at her. Sol looked at us with disappointment in her eyes and breathed out. I sighed. I didn't realize that no one would catch her.

I looked at An Sol who was looking back at us and rubbing her face, but something felt wrong. She fell from the high ground to the bottom on her butt, but there was a soft thump and not a big thud. I quickly raised my magic power. And....

Chapter 58 Dungeon of Alchemist (2)

Please continue reading on

"Oh... It hurts. It's too much," cried Sol while rubbing her butt. While Hyun was laughing like a fool, Sol, who was dissatisfied, turned away from the group. Hyun was shocked with this. She was rubbing her mouth and she entrusted herself to me.

"Why... why did you do this to me?"

"Hung."

An Hyun came between me and a grieving An Sol, but his reaction was kind of calm and cold. Becoming a little frustrated again, I spoke in a stern voice.

“Sol-ah.”

“Why~?”

I don't know if she had a lot of complaints against me, but she spoke with a rather challenging tone towards me, than the usual 'pure' one. After seeing my face go stern, she immediately put her head down and continued mumbling. And. Suddenly, a scream could be heard by everyone.

“Huaaaat?!”

.... It resounded throughout the entire forest. If I couldn't make it, and I broke my nose, An Sol was a perfect partner to help me out.

“Calm down, calm down. It's all good.”

If there was anything that I needed to go over, I wondered if I would have escaped from it skillfully with the help of Hyun in front of me. Even then, I was surprised looking at Sol whose tears were streaming down, and my whole body felt disturbed as I bent down to look at what she saw.

Hyun and Yoo-jung, who bent along with me, had a strange expression on their faces and they backed off immediately. The identity of what was laying below Sol was nothing other than the corpse of a user. A bizarrely twisted and grotesque corpse.

“Eu euk....!”

Yoo-Jung eventually couldn't bear it anymore and puked. I couldn't help but frown after looking at the corpse that was lying there. This one used to be one of the bad guys amongst the murder brigades in the past.

I saw a bow that was broken in half; I assumed that he was perhaps an archer(Affiliation : Ranger). It seemed like the roots of the bones were pulled out after spinning them round and round, and the face and neck were in quite the distressed position. In any case, for one to go from the dark forest to the dungeon and make it back, they are supposed to be skillful Caraban members. I can understand the reason for them being wiped out in the dungeon from this corpse.

“Stupid... you can't even guide, yet you want to go to a dungeon? You're completely crazy. Or your eyes are blinded by greed.”

Though the situation is a little humiliating, I stayed silent and chewed on my lip after listening to the private conversation. I knew that the atmosphere on the ground and in



the underground would be complete opposite. This was a race against time from the very beginning. There was a sound of something being pounded hardly, so I slowly looked around.

It was literally a dark corridor. There was the direction to go forward as there was no way back. Firstly, from now on, there was no need to trace Caraban's footsteps. I'm sorry for those dead guys who were found after a few months past the two years, yet it was something irrelevant to me. With the activation of my Third Eye, I am able to look into things very clearly, hence my thoughts were well lined up. There is supposed to be an alchemist who is also capable of doing the same kind of thing. The Dungeon Mastery is quite common yet the possibility of spitting out decent equipment is quite dense.

While I was calculating the situation inside, I looked at the kids who were filled with excitement. And spoke after looking at their faces. Right at the beginning, they saw the huge body of the victim, but all of a sudden, I was worried about it. After watching it, Yoo-Jung wanted to go back to the city; there was a moody atmosphere around her. Looking at that kind of atmosphere around the kids, I opened my mouth with a sharp voice.

"First time seeing a corpse. You didn't know that these kind of things will appear in the Hall Plain? Don't fuss over one corpse of a rogue."

At my words, the kids began to move. And looking at their eyes, it seemed like there was still a bit of hesitation. This time, I spoke with a little more sternness in my voice.

"What is wrong guys? When I discovered a dungeon on our very first expedition, you guys were ecstatic. What am I supposed to do if you are being like this? Do you guys know how huge the reward is going to be once we come back from this expedition?"

"...."

This was the truth, even if it is seen as something vulgar. Seeing the kids in such a confused state, it gave me evidence that these kids still didn't reach my level of mentality. I wasn't the [modern person] that they saw in the Hall Plain. Whatever aspect they looked at me, they should see a [user].

"This is the first expedition to a dungeon that we have discovered, and it is very meaningful to be undertaking it, but it seems like it's meaningless to you. If you suffer this one time, how easy is it going to be for the future... What about the treasures in front of your eyes? Do you want to kick it away? Are we going to be satisfied with just the discovery and head back to the city?"

"No, no. Not at all. No, hyung. It isn't like that."

An Hyun was the first person to get himself together. He repeated his answer quite a few times after shaking his face vigorously and clapping his hands roughly as he got his

senses back. Seeing this, it was a little frustrating to my heart, but it wasn't a pathetic thing that he was doing. In the past, when I was under Han So-young and Yoo Hyun hyung, I just followed them. Of course, it cannot be compared to that but even then, I couldn't help but feel a little irritated.

"You guys are the same. It is said that for those Carabans who went into the expedition, they would be wiped out inside the dungeon. So, they have no chances of making it out alive. Surely, even I want you guys to live. I have no thoughts of getting us annihilated. However, it is difficult to go by oneself. So, I need your help."

".....uhm. I'm sorry. I get it. Oppa, I'm sorry."

Due to my continuous persuasion, they seemed to have retained their senses, and they had determined looks on their faces. Their legs were still trembling as they still didn't recover from the terrible shock that they received from seeing the corpse, but it was much better than any other kind of behavior.

"... hyu. Any... way. We need to go to the centre. Yes, yes. Hmmm. It sounds good. Let's start. Everyone, let's get our composure back."

At my words, the kids nodded their head, and seeing this, I released a huge sigh. From the back, Yoo-Jung spoke with a small voice, "Everyone loves only Sol," and was muttering stuff. Even though I heard the voice, I didn't know its reason.

Looking at this objectively. Subjectively. There was no mistake in what Yoo-Jung spoke.

\*

We slowly arranged ourselves in a triangle formation and were ready to move forward. This was a little different from the triangle formation that we formed in the forest. The left and right boundaries were covered by Hyun and Yoo-Jung who were 45 degrees from my location. The inside was pretty dark. However, we could see to an extent with the use of the Light spell.

As it was dark in there, we were cautiously watching everywhere. Of course, we couldn't detect any traps laid out by the monster till now. At times, there were monsters that were discovered who were turned into ashes and the traps were left open. And it seemed like the Caravans have handled most of the things. I am thankful to them for how unhindered we are moving at the moment.

The future will change for sure, and they wanted to get their share of rewards for coming into this expedition, but it didn't matter to me. It was enough if the kids take them, as I can always take it back later. I heard something which seemed like it was coming from the users who came before us, yet I didn't stop moving.

The light that was in my hand was a little unstable and the sphere of the light was also quite muddled. It wasn't staying still while providing the light; it was constantly flickering – going off and coming back on. Yoo-Jung, pretty disgusted with her surroundings, remained around me as she was getting nervous. She softly moved to my side.

I couldn't understand if she was having a mental breakdown. I was going to ask her about this, but first I expanded the detection range.

“Humm.”

How long have we been walking? All of a sudden, we stopped walking and the kids brought out their weapons as they felt nervous. I almost thought that I registered its shape and a little satisfaction rose in my heart. Sol also didn't come out of her place and was mumbling some spells. With one hand, I spread out the boundaries that were needed. After relaxing, I opened my mouth.

“It feels like there's something ahead. It feels a little weird. Whatever it is, let's take a closer look at it.”

At my signal to be alert, the kids held on tightly to what they were holding in their eyes. Looking at this, a faint laugh escaped out of my mouth. It was nice to look at this image of unity. Depending on the situation, the behavior of the kids also seemed to change drastically, just like mine. After sorting out my flow of thoughts, I perked up my ear to hear.

Though there was some distance left, the one approaching them by walk was not a monster but a user. Looking at the user, he seemed very huge but a small groan could be heard. I went towards the male user immediately after assessing the kids' reactions.

“Uh, uh...”

As the distance started to close, it was definite that we were hearing the groans of a user. By any chance, were all the members of the Caraban destroyed? No, could it be this easy to wipe them out? What I'm supposed to do is to first confirm if the person's life was worth saving or not. If that user is alive, I didn't know how much information I could suck out.

“Haaaa... euhh....”

I saw it. Right in front of my eyes was a single user. After I ran there, I immediately knelt down. The kids who came later than me looked at the user lying down and their words faltered. Well, for starters, it was an archer. The user was wearing an uniform. The problem was that upper body and the lower body were separated and lying on the floor.

“.... he seems to be alive.”

It looked like a faint white light was coming from the user, and the user seemed desperate to get a cure. Firstly, to be aware of the status of the user, I used the Third Eye to check his status.

[Player Status]

Name: Park Nam Hyun (4 Years)

Class: Normal Priest Expert

Nation: Barbara

Clan: –

Nationality: Korean

Sex: Male (27)

Height – Weight: 177.8cm – 79.1kg

Alignment: Moderate (Lawful – Neutral)

[Strength 36] [Resistance 57] [Agility 31] [Vitality 47] [Magic 81] [Luck 41]

\* There is a fatal wound.

\* Recovery spell of a great treatment level is needed. Life needs to be saved.

\* There is a need for a recovery elixir. Life needs to be saved.

Not worth saving. Four years of experience. It became clear the moment I checked his stats and other things. This male user painfully opened his eyes and watched us.

Only a person with the ability of a Priest will be capable of saving himself like this. If there is a self treatment spell or anything special, it seemed to be due to his potential. Even so, if one suffers such a fatal injury, there is no surety that they need to die, but...

“Us... User... how....”

“How did this happen? When did you enter into this dungeon? And what about your colleagues?”

“Such a... relief, good luck!”

“Oppa! First, let’s save him....”

He couldn't be saved. We can benefit by extracting the information that's in his possession without being sneaky. He was barely able to open his mouth a moment ago. I still need to be careful about what I ask. Sol had started to recite a curing spell, and Yoo-Jung was handing me the liquid medicines. The cure spell that was being recited was very weak, but I picked up the water and the liquid medicines to give.

"This is stupid. I came to the dungeon with some guidance to scour for a few things. Whatever, open your mouth."

While being very careful, I held the male user's face and poured the liquid medicine into his mouth. He drank a little in the beginning, but he started puking blood right after that. After seeing this, Sol lost her concentration and her spell got invalidated. She once again started to recite the spell, but the priest shook his head hard and refused. Knowing that he won't make it, he looked like he was ready to accept his death.

At that moment, something felt dangerous. This guy who was readily accepting death, somehow managed to survive. It looked like he wanted to stay a little longer. So, seeing us, the user wanted to take a chance at life again. If that is so, it means that there is something that he wanted to say to us. We heard something.

From the male user's blood-filled mouth.

"Trap... away."

Please continue reading on

"I was trapped. I ran away."

After a moment that he said it, the male priest had a devastated expression on his face. So I, already knowing it from his expression, was just following his words. Seeing this, an expression of relief was visible on his face. Perhaps, the user seemed he was fairly skilled and quite good at it, too.

The user nodded his head once, and then spoke the following words while stammering a little.

"A... colleague... taken away..."

"...."

"Help...!"

His eyes were constantly shaking and showed nervousness. Death was right around the corner, but it seemed like he was desperately enduring it. It seemed like the priest's energy was exhausted, but he gathered up the last of his strength to say 'help' and then spit and turned away his eyes. Barely being able to live further, he gazed at us. After

speaking, he was completely worn out. Looking at the priest who fell on my knees, the kids behind me gasped.

I closed his eyelids with my palms after his skin touched the floor of the dungeon. There was a sad, burdensome atmosphere that surrounded us. Sol's face went pale at that very moment. It was a problem that every time I saw a death, I couldn't respond for a short period of time. And we didn't have the luxury of time to stay in such a gloomy atmosphere to mourn. Firstly, we should understand the keywords left by the user and deduce the information of them. I slowly repeated the words that were spoken.

"Trap. Ran. Colleague. Betrayal. Kidnapped."

"Hyung. Isn't it something that is associated with the rogue?"

As An Hyun also heard what the user said, he tried to deduce it, but hearing it, I shook my head from left to right in denial. Though what he said could be possible, I, who knew the future, could also understand it precisely. After thinking about it for a moment, there were a few possibilities that could be brought together.

The kids had uneasy expressions on their faces. Their lips were soaked with saliva out of panic, and I felt that there was a need for explanation. When I opened my mouth, the kids seemed to have been waiting for some kind of explanation and went quiet. Finally, I spoke.

"In the beginning of the Dark Forest. Do you guys remember that I said that there were users who were here before us?"

"Yes. I remem... ber... then?"

The nervous eyes of Hyun who nodded immediately after my question gazed at me. This wasn't the look that I see from him everyday, this kind of gaze was markedly different. Even then, it looked like his head was spinning hundred times more than the basic count of head turns in any emergency situation. After sending him a signal of affirmation, I continued speaking.

"Then. Maybe the Caraban did come to this dungeon before us to explore... As a matter of fact, it is the Craban. And it looks like they were involved in some kind of accident."

"That.... That could be right, Oppa. What about the information the user gave a while back, what meaning could it hold?"

"Uhm...."

Trap. Away. Colleague. Betrayal. Kidnap. That was a good question, though asked in a small voice, for which I didn't have a detailed explanation. The one thing that I was sure

of was that they were the members of the Caraban; however, looking at this now, my forecast is totally out of sync.

The dead body's posture that I came across in the beginning came into my mind. Thinking clearly, there was no way he would have died right after entering. What kind of dangerous situation he came across, I couldn't foresee. That archer was alive when he came into the dungeon. Also, it is obvious that they caught up with the Carabans in the dungeon.

To say what I've deduced so far, I opened my mouth and spoke in a low voice.

"The Caraban went in the same direction that we are currently following. But, if you look at the direction of the user's body that we previously encountered and the direction of the face, it is the same way we that we are heading now. The lower body was torn and had a hole in it, as if something attacked him from the behind while he was running towards the direction that we came in from. In other words, the words 'Trap' and 'Escape' happened after he came into the dungeon, and some kind of huge accident happened once again in the place."

"Then... colleague, betray, kidnap?"

"The first person who came into the dungeon was the archer. Originally, he was the colleague of the Caraban. However, for some unknown reason, he betrayed them. And the word betray can be used in multiple manners. So, relating it with the dungeon... for getting out of here alive, he chose to betray his colleagues."

As the explanation for the keyword betray was done, the face of the kids showed a sign of rage. It was quite spectacular to see. And there was no more of the wary look that they were having at the beginning. Now, it was the time for explaining the last one.

"And for the last one... No matter how I see, it seems like a few Dungeon Master Caraban users were kidnapped."

"Is that also possible?"

I looked at Hyun whose head stopped rolling and answered with a definite expression that said 'of course'.

"Now, this isn't like the Hall Plain game. This is the real world. It is said that the alchemists are often out to experiment on the human bodies. Do you remember where the dungeon that we have come into is at?"

Once I was done talking, all the kids' faces changed sharply.

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Without even saying a single word, the kids continued to walk. If they were told that they were heading towards their doom, they would have returned to the city without even looking back. So, Sol and Yoo-Jung, who had the tendency to help, wanted to move in the direction that the users were kidnapped and taken. The male priest did say “Help” before passing away. When I came into the Morogado first, I was satisfied as there weren’t any complaints.

While going further into the passage, it was getting wider and wider. As it was endless, I stopped walking for a moment and raised my hand. Stronger than the usual, detected widely, and much more clearer – one by one. A battle cannot be guaranteed to become a victory inside the dungeon, but I thought that it would be better to go into battle since I have already acquired so many details.

“If we advance another 100 meters, an opening will come. In that opening, a monster crowd is present. The number is roughly around twenty.... Monsters are there with Renga as their king.”

“Renga?... oh....I have heard of it somewhere.”

“In 80 meters, there are monsters whose body will appear the same as a dog. Their movements are fairly quick with sharp claws on the tips of their paws.”

“To add to it, the Renga’s tail is a very strong weapon. Not as flexible as a scorpion, but its destructive ability is not inferior to its claws.”

I was laughing inside after seeing them considering this monster to be a strong one. The Rengas did have intelligence, and they had emotions, too – if I were to say these words, these kids would riot immediately. Without saying anything and being careful on how I responded, I just nodded my head. Even then, there was one thing to know beforehand.

“The problem now is that the Rengas seem to be a little different from the Rengarang. Different in the sense, their shapes do match... but some of them might walk?”

“Eheh? Is that so! Basically the Renga walks on foot. Are you sure that you aren’t misinterpreting them for some other monster? Ah, no way! Su-Hyun Oppa can’t be wrong. It must be me who’s in the wrong.”

I looked at Sol once again after she finished to speak, but didn’t know what to say. Seeing this kind of Sol, I took a deep breath.

“The hooks, tails, and body shape are all similar. However... well, you can judge it after going there. If we go a little further, we will have to pass through them.”

An Hyun and Yoo-Jung blankly watched the conversation between me and Sol. As they two met each other’s eyes, both of them just shrugged their shoulders. They need to



know the what and how in order to interject into this conversation. That is why we are usually asked to study.

The relaxed atmosphere turned into a tense one. As we approached the opening, the more closer we got, the more the tension was building up. I was slowly picking up the pace of my walk, in the past we approached the opening with the quickest pace.

Our opponent, the monster Renga turned its back. Its eyes were fast and were on fire; there was tactical movement. If possible, it would be better to turn these into defensive ones after attracting the angry gangs by handling them as much as possible.

The kids also ran right behind me. We were trying to figure out a way on how to avoid their potential attacks. If there was an archer and a mage, they could hurt it tremendously. They could first avoid them and do huge combined attacks towards them. Though my body seemed a little miserable, I need to look for a cover first.

“Hyung!! Is your body alright?!”

Hyun who noticed that I was running while breathing heavily, queried about my condition using a strong voice. As I entered the gap, there seemed to be a distinctive militancy when I was entering the battle. I lifted my hand up in order to raise a signal and gave out more detailed tactics.

“It won’t work if you won’t use strength above the limit. Don’t worry about me. Everybody, keep an eye out for each other. After entering the opening, first enter in to a visible position and rush rapidly, afterwards gradually retreat towards the wall. The Renga has a terrible sense of eyeing out humans, so once I kill anyone, their eyes light up, and you must run immediately. Their armors a bit weak, but they possess rapid movements and sharp claws and tails. And....”

“Yes.”

“These are the general things about the Renga, so keep them in mind. We are going to start now. Do not look at it when you find its existence.”

Normally, I would enter into the tactics only after thoroughly scouting the place, but this time we had to do things hastily. We would definitely be attacked if we procrastinate as long as the olfactory sense develops.

As I ran halfway through the path, I noticed that there was a square passage. Amongst the various passages, the square passage was dark. I crossed the aisle and entered the passage without uttering a single word from my mouth. Shortly afterwards, I saw numerous Rengas, over twenty in number, moving from one place to other, attacking the users...

Surely, my eyes caught a huge treat. At the moment I was going step back, a Renga caught a whiff of my scent and turned its head. After seeing those things who were shrieking on top of their lungs after getting a whiff of my scent, after I set up the place for the assault in a second, I ran up to the ground out of the square passage.

“Skut! Skut!”

Immediately, those guys in the front smelled the scent. When I was about to retreat, one of them sprang towards me at a thunderous pace. And not after a long time, the other Rengas broke out. Looking at the non-sticky, burnt, and dented face, I felt like it was some kind of illusion. It seemed like there wasn't a huge difference in my death when I saw the body that was falling down.

“One animal first.”

The main character was An Hyun. Seeing me head out, he immediately followed me here and reduced the distance between us. He seemed to have a lot of power, almost disappearing like a haze near the end.

An Hyun could take the chance of changing his ability, but I can't afford to lose the lead now. Suddenly, the Rengas made a change which made me get angry. Though it was a surprise, my experience of many years wasn't enough to melt away these guys.

The moment I try to fight one, two come onto me to eat. At that moment, I felt the same thing that I felt a few minutes back. Firstly, they have no blood. Moreover, it's not because of the taste that they cut into the necks, but to feel the cracking of the bones. This is... a Chimera.

“Kaaaaaah!”

The Rengas raised a big shriek out of confusion. Though we were recognized, even until now, I felt a sense of greed every time I saw someone or something that was terrified. In just a few seconds of time, the worried few people rushed to my side.

“Just....”

Yoo-Jung was about to lean forward as much as possible towards one of the three that was slightly distant than the other two. On top of that, she boldly pulled out her dagger.

Yoo-Jung's braveness is commendable, and I couldn't sense any sign of slowness. Looking at the Rengas who ran forward while being more cautious, I felt nauseous. A Renga was looking at Yoo-Jung's butt, and its tail suddenly went to her butt.

The tail that kept on rattling and moving within its limit suddenly bent and stretched forward. It moved bottom-up and hit the upper part of Yoo-Jung's bust; it seemed like it

was aiming for an instant death of its target. I was moving ahead hastily when I suddenly stopped and looked at Yoo-Jung who was in shock and replied,

Please continue reading on

“Shame!”

With a strange coherence, Yoo-Jung leaned onto the floor as if she slipped on the floor and almost hit the ground. Immediately, the tail retreated into the air as if it was trying to pierce her neck. Almost simultaneously, Yoo-Jung changed her position by sliding herself with one hand, and as she changed the course of her direction, she managed to get behind the Renga.

The Renga who was occupied with the targets behind, turned his hot-red face as he pulled his tail away from his front. And like that, Yoo-Jung moved towards the neck of the Renga with her dagger. Not a single sign of hesitation. She attacked the Renga, grabbed his neck, instinctively tore down his whole body and came back to the place where I was standing.

With her beaming face, Yoo-Jung neared and gazed at my blank face. An Hyun, who had followed me, left a huge scream after getting shocked by seeing this.

At that moment, Yoo-Jung didn't utilize her entire strength. Surely, Yoo-Jung used both her agility and magic ability. However, both their fighting styles were different. An Hyun, with his physical strength, durability, and stamina, was able to go beyond the norm while remaining faithful to the basics and retaining the authenticity.

However, Yoo-Jung uses agility and magic from the forefront by taking advantage of the gaps; it seems some sort of style has started to develop. I'm not sure, but if she had two short daggers with her in a general fight, it would be almost impossible to see her in a bright light.

In the meantime, if I were to compare the two of them purely based on their combat abilities, then An Hyun could be considered a notch above Yoo-Jung. However, on second thought, I might need to reconsider it. Tidy and simple movements. And the most efficient ones. Though it was just a split second, Yoo-Jung's deft maneuvers left a deep impression on me. If I were to see the same every time there is a fight....

“Siyiiiiiiii!”

The sound of the Renga's shriek could be heard. I looked at Yoo-Jung who came near and slightly nodded. Reading my facial expression, Yoo-Jung gave me a wide smile. Somehow, the atmosphere of this fight seemed to be good. This is the first time I was feeling satisfied after coming into the Dark Forest.

It was then.

Bang!

One of the Rengas, who were huddling together and spewing out in a total chaos, burst out into the air. It wasn't a simple jump – it was a 3-meter-high jump which made the monster go behind us. Seeing this, the kids' faces went blank.

Yoo-Jung, An Hyun, and I have all been killing the Rengas, but the most impressive user was Yoo-Jung. As the Rengas are animals of a clan, they directed their wrath towards those who killed one of theirs, so they were mostly aiming towards Yoo-Jung.

Seeing a Renga jump this high was the first time for me, too. The first thing I needed to do was to protect Yoo-Jung, the one they were all aiming for. If you do the leaf attack from down, the destructive power will be huge, so it was a matter of move without any damage due to the physical ability of Yoo-Jung.

During this time, our group isn't going to stay still; moreover, we had a momentum going on, too. During this event, Not crying for Oppa and Unnie, Sol held her staff and a dagger in front of her. We were waiting for the moment the Rengas would charge. The moment they came into our sight, Sol muttered a spell.

“Shackles!”

As soon as Sol's clear voice was heard, the body of the Rengas that were coming down onto us suddenly went stiff and went crashing to the ground. The kids and I who have managed to take them out one by one down all turned our eyes towards Sol. No matter what kind of order it was, it will be based on the ability of the User, and this was first designation, no second, but it increased to the third level for Sol, and this was the first time. Surely, the power of her order is weaker than the order that was delivered, but it was just enough to swallow the movements of the Rengas.

A pure face that wasn't compatible with her actions; we all immediately stared at Sol who took down the Rengas. Seven Rengas had attacked us right at the beginning. It was surprising as the number surpassed our imagination.

Even then, there are still ten left. The eyes of the remaining Rengas seemed to have received a certain amount of heat. All of them raised their arms and began to approach us rapidly. I stepped back into the path that we came in for securing the exit, and I set my sword high.

“Khyaa!”

The Rengas screeched at us and began to jump up. However, we were not so worried or surprised this time. Though this attack pattern was a bit different from the general Rengas, it seemed like we had become accustomed to this new pattern. An Hyun and Yoo-Jung were trying to keep up the momentum, but this time it was different – a bit bolder.

I split its head with my sword after diverting its claws away. That moment was the signal to resume the battle. This kind of movement was definitely different from the attack that a Renga usually does as this time, they were in direct offence. As they moved swiftly, the kids and I went forward with the utmost force possible to overcome their attack. As it could be a little dangerous, we immediately retreated a little once again.

I started off good and gave myself a little room, but within a few minutes, I got adjusted and set my mind straight on the fight. If the kids had their first battle at the beginning of the Dark Forest, they would have immediately fallen back. I could see that An Hyun has improved a little as he's coordinating the battlefield with appropriate actions.

Yoo-Jung was consistently defending herself and wielding her dagger aggressively, without even taking a break to counter their attacks. I could see a few minor injuries, but it seems that she has been trying to reduce them to a minimum. She was handling both the daggers in her hand with great skill, displaying a great amount of power.

While we were slowly going back, we heard An Sol's clear voice again.

"Shackles!"

"Yeah! This is it! An Sol! Awesome!"

The place where Sol pointed her staff was where the Rengas were surrounding Yoo-Jung. Yoo-Jung, who was waving her dagger like a crazy person, jumped and screamed out of joy as all the Rengas turned stiff. An Hyun and I looked at the sight of Yoo-Jung gripping her dagger tighter and rushing towards the Rengas.

I didn't use much of my power to deal with the Rengas. I swung my sword towards the guy who was running towards me with his sharp claws and cut his head off neatly like a tofu. It seemed like the sword could sense the amount of strength that it needed to attack.

It's like one receives an additional positive correction for all their swords actions. The advantage of this power is tremendous. Not only that, the new sword in combination with the EX rank is equally strong. Now, I am curious as to how much power it would release if I were to swing it in a rough manner and when I swing it with all my heart in it.

The Rengas started to fall down like leaves falling from a tree after I started to push forward the sword with a smashing sound. Understanding that we had the superiority, for the first time, An Hyun went out of his way and danced. Soon, Hyun retained his composure, and both of us moved to the centre and stood there when we heard the sounds of the Rengas approaching us once again.

"Light!"

Once again, we heard Sol's shout. This time, it was not the 'shackle' spell, it was the 'light' spell. As soon as the white spheres lit up, the leftover Rengas became visible to our eyes and sprang towards us with a sparkling light. To battle with these guys, it seemed like there's a need to use magic. And this time, the capacity of Sol's order was amazing.

Hyun and I hurried over to the Rengas blinded by the light, and Yoo-Jung joined us too, forming a triangle. Once again, I handled only two Rengas at a time. It seemed like their ears caught on to an intuition about their demise already.

Without concerning himself about that, Hyun's eyes glistened, and he opened his mouth.

"The right side is mine."

"Then, I'll take the left."

"...."

\*

After a while, we were done looking out for the Rengas. Hyun and Yoo-Jung had a lot of minor injuries, but after drinking the potion and receiving the treatment spell from Sol, their faces regained their previous shine. An abnormal thought surfaced in my brain, but I decided to close my mouth for now. I thought that it was not bad to go with the flow once, rather than to get hurt unconditionally.

Honestly, it was tough on these kids even though they did well in this fight. They didn't do so "good" as to going beyond their limits, but they did go past their original strength and their level users. Even then, if experiences like this accumulate, they can learn how to combine combat skills and can understand the harmony that is needed to be in a Caraban. This was the first time after leaving the city that I'm feeling a sense of achievement.

"I've got more than you did."

"That is because the length of your lance is long. On top of that, you attacked more. Considering that, I did much better."

"Thinking you've won, honestly."

"Isn't it the truth? Then, let's ask Oppa!"

It looks like these guys are fighting a lot these times. But, before long, the two of them directed their eyes towards me without speaking anything. Honestly, when it comes to

consider them overall, Hyun is better. We can see stability in his performance. But this time, Yoo-Jung seems to have found her skill and this was a point to be considered.

“Hmmm.”

When I showed them my intention that I was thinking over it carefully, and due to the complexity of their question, the kids' faces started to get nervous. They were pretty excited on whom I was going to pick. No. I was feeling more embarrassed as they were looking at me with such serious expressions. In the end, I decided to skip over the topic quietly.

“Both of you were good. What so ever, get your bodies recovered first.”

“Ah! Who is better? A little better. There is bound to be, right? Huh?”

Looking at Yoo-Jung, who was persistently asking, made me feel a little stiff. And as a penalty for their actions, I directed my gaze at Sol.

“Haha! How about Sol?”

“No, no way. All I did was just to concentrate and recite the spells.”

On my comment, Sol avoided my gaze by turning her head away slowly and spoke out of shock. I was trying to look for salvation out of this situation. Not knowing this, Sol looked into my eyes, being unaware that she was rubbing her feet and then turned her face to the ground.

“What? Hyung, I know the answer. It is me. I was better.”

“Gibberish!!”

“I'm sorry you were expecting something, but you were not the answer. Hehe.”

“What did you say? You're really something....”

They continued fighting for quite some time. Looking at Hyun and Yoo-Jung who were talking to each other, I felt like I could take a breath. We reverted to our original atmosphere after a period of time.