

MEMORIZE

Chapter 7



I Use My Privilege. Pt.(4/4)

How much time had passed?

“.....”

Barely managing to open my eyes, the ashen bricks that made the Room of Summoning came into view. Fortunately, it looked like there was some time left before I had to enter the Rite of Passage. If I close my eyes right now, I would go back to sleep. So with all my energy, I lifted my head off the ground.

As I imagined, there were message windows floating in the air. Lying on the ground didn't impede my view, so I rested my head back on the floor and started reading the messages.

You have received a shock that is beyond what the body is able to handle. Vitality decreased by 10 points permanently.

Congratulations. You have burned away all the waste and impurities within your body. Energy is circulating, the flow Magic Power has been greatly increased. Vitality 2 points, Magic Power 6 points, has been permanently increased.

The eternally blazing inferno, Hwajung has settled in your heart. Assimilation with Hwajung is current at 100%.

Dazed, I read the messages one by one. When I saw the info about my Vitality, it was like a cold water was dumped on me as I snapped back to reality. Reading the following messages, I munched on my lips. Seraph's voice streamed into my ears, soon afterwards.

"Player Kim Su-Hyun. Have you regained your senses? Are you alright?
Player Kim Su-Hyun!"

Well, I have at least recovered my hearing. At that annoying voice that was constantly interrupting my thoughts, I was about to retort that she should already know my physical state.

"____. _____. _____."

'Wha, what? Why is there only air....'

My voice didn't come out. Rather, my voice did come but it was only a harsh rattle. My voice was gone. My heart felt hollow. No matter how much I tried to speak, only air passed through my throat.

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My voice didn't come out. Rather, my voice did come but it was only a harsh rattle. My voice was gone. My heart felt hollow. No matter how much I tried to speak, only air passed through my throat.

‘Nothing left but wait for my body to recovered.’

Giving out a large sigh, I called up my Player Status. I decided to wait for my body to recoup by checking the status window with the privileges applied.

[Player Status]

1. Name : Kim Su-Hyun (Year(s) 0)
2. Class : Secret, Sword Specialist, Master
3. Affiliated Nation :
4. Affiliated Clan : –
5. Title · Nationality :

Principal who is required to validate his entitlement, a Spare Player · South Korean

6. Gender(Sex) : Male(23)
7. Height · Weight : 181.5cm · 75.5kg
8. Alignment: Lawful · Chaos

(Before Change)

[Strength 86] [Resistance 92] [Agility 98] [Vitality 78] [Magic Power 90] [Luck 88]

(After Change)

[Strength 94] [Resistance 92] [Agility 98] [Vitality 70] [Magic Power 96] [Luck 88]

(Remaining attribute point: 0 point.)

[Achievements (0)]

1. The Third Eye (Rank: S Zero)

Description: Beyond the concept of ordinary eyes, The Third Eye falls under the Mystical Class. Put it simply, it is the 'invisible eye' linked to the principal's instinct. Above the concept of simple 'sight,' all events in present state are discerned through higher order perception.

Originally, this ability allowed for the perception to leave the present state to observe the esoteric realm, but having forcefully gained this mysterious strength without training or attaining enlightenment, the ability declined by 2 ranks. Due to the effect of the permeating energy of the pure fire from Hwajung, the Ability has been adjusted upward by 1 Rank. In effect, nothing can fool Player Kim Su-Hyun's eyes.

[Special Ability (1/1)]

1. Blade Master (Rank: Extra)

The ultimate pinnacle of swordsmanship, a zenith where sword and man become one. The moment a blade is held, a corrective action is asserted onto every swing. Although the blade has awakened to its limitations, the Player has yet to reach the pinnacle of swordsmanship. However through the years of experience and hard work, a multitude of achievement and class selection, the Ability has been adjusted upward by 2 Ranks.

[Latent Ability (4/4)]

1. Close Combat (Rank: A Plus)

Description: An Ability that surpassed the extreme of what people can do with a melee weapon. At this point, it is no longer a simple battle ability but a skill that had reached the highest peak attainable for humans. In close combat, it is impossible to be pushed back. Due to years of experience and hard work, with the current Class selection, the Ability has been adjusted upward by 1 Ranks.

2. Last Man Standing (Rank : A Plus)

Description: Giving up a battle is a foreign concept. Defeat is unacceptable. With such will, even fatal injuries will not impede fighting ability. In the case of mortal wounds, battle is possible but the ability to maintain fighting power will be reduced by half.

3. Mind's Eye (Rank : A Plus)

Description: Seeing beyond the outward appearance, a mind's eye to see the target's inner being. Self-contemplation, the observation of all creation, the ability to detect or call forth similar phenomenon. With the heart governed by an iron fist, the principal can keep calm under the influence of mental pollution magic below S Rank.

4. Blessing of War (Rank : Extra)

Description: Athena, the Goddess of War and the Guardian of Peace. Only active on the battlefield, a single soldier can enjoy the Goddess's blessing on the field of battle. The player blessed with the divine protection receives the sight that spans the whole battlefield, and can pinpoint the location of any friendly forces in mortal peril. Having received a holy blessing, any damage caused by a magic ritual is always reduced. (This depends on the player's Luck Attribute and the Rank of the Ability. Player Kim Su-Hyun's Luck Attribute is at a respectable level, but this being a supreme divine protection, any magic ritual that is 1 Rank higher than the current Ability rank will receive some protection, magic ritual that is 2 Rank higher can still receive some damage reduction.

(Remaining Ability point: 0 points.)

Reading the player status, I was filled with both elation and regret. Close Combat and Last Man Standing had been received randomly so there was nothing I could do about it. Still, the Abilities weren't that bad and the Rank came out alright. More than anything, it should be as good as the Abilities I used in the past.

One thing that defied my expectation and blew up in my face was the reduction of my Vitality. This attribute was the attribute that propped up everything else and acted as the pillar.

Vitality, 70 points. I can pull the originally intended overall power, but 70 Vitality that propped it up was a very worrying problem. Using a car as a comparison, by design conditions everything was beyond outstanding, but the internals of the engine itself was very unsettling. In the case of engine overheating, there was a risk of burning or explosion. In the end, what Seraph and I imagined happened, both of us were half right.

The worry about Vitality whirled continuously in my mind, but there was no immediate solution. There was no certainty on how much I could increase it in the future, but I had to scrap and secure every free point I get.

‘I am at 0 year but I did load up a 10-year physique.... Increasing it through training will be difficult.’

Still, it was a characteristic I could not solve immediately. Pushing these complicated thoughts in a corner, I decided to dedicate my entirety in healing my body. Because Seraph’s glare was becoming hotter and hotter. Well, my Abilities are already dazzling as is, wanting more at this point is greed.

.....

I wonder how much time had passed. Maybe about 20 minutes, but I wanted to know the exact figure. I’m sure Seraph would provide it, but after I received all my privileges we didn’t seem to be on talking terms. All conversations became extinct. I closed my eyes, whatever will be will be.

Slowly time passed and my body became colder. No, it wasn’t a euphemism for death, the increased heat due to Hwajung’s energy was leaking out into the surroundings. The hot fire within me was gradually being reduced and I was regaining the lost sensations.

The Player Status Window checked out. With the remaining time, I quietly meditated on my internal situation.

This was a huge drawback, but seeing life was still attached to my body, I achieved my goals. Having overcome a difficult ordeal, the reward was tremendous as the difficulty. Every waste and impurities in my body was boiled away, and all the pathways were unclogged.

Not only that, the place where Magic Power didn't flow to, the minute acupoints within the hand and feet being pierced was an unexpected outcome. My energy flowed faster than before, the increased flow of my Magic Power and its efficiency could not be compared to its previous state. If a fight between two equal Player occurred and a minuscule difference decided who won, then I had several weapons hoarded within.

"Whew."

I felt some of the sensation returning and tried sending out my Magic Power throughout my body. From hand to foot, I let it flow to the very tip of my body. Bit more confident now, I gently pried my right arm and found that I felt a lot lighter. Every joint in my body still creaked and ached, but comparing to before when I couldn't even feel anything, I was a whole lot better.

After a while, with great difficulty, I raised myself up. Lifting my face toward Seraph, I met her eyes. She looked disinterested, her eyes remained tranquil as she looked blankly at me. My cloth was more miserable than rags, but I didn't feel any shame. Because the woman in front of me was an Angel and couldn't be seen as the opposite sex.

Shrugging my shoulder, I tapped my left wrist with my right hand, indicating I wanted to know the time.

"Time to enter the Rite of Passage has come. Please be ready."

Seraph's voice was cold and dry. She was definitely angry. The memory of her just now, rolling on her feet as she watched over me came to mind.

'.....'

I decided it was enough. I did not want any more quarrel with her. I got everything I needed anyways.

“I am ready. Transfer me.”

“Player Kim Su-Hyun. Is your condition alright?”

“Mhmm. It’s not bad.”

“.... Then I shall transfer you immediately. Time is short, therefore when you enter the Preparation Room, I advise that you act quickly as possible.”

“Sure, sure.” At my insincere response, Seraph’s beautiful brows were marred with a frown. However, she lightly lifted her fingers and flicked.

Snap!

With the sound of fingers snapping, my body became gradually transparent. How to explain it, like getting erased by an eraser?

“I shall give one advice, inattention in any situation is prohibited. Please pass the Rite of Passage safely, it would be a pleasure to see you once more. Player Kim Su-Hyun, good luck..”

“Seraph. Nagging is prohibited from now on. Next time I see you, please keep your mouth closed.”

Kkung, Kkeeeeung.

After the light banter, I heard the familiar sound of machinery again. I kept my calm and looked down. A third of my legs had already faded, and soon the rest of my body would follow. I slowly closed my eyes as I saw myself fade.

A new start that was 10 years in the making. A new future would be established. The future that will come, a future that I will establish. Where no one would be lost, where no one would fall into despair. A future that I, Kim Su-Hyun, would change. These thoughts filled my heart with emotions.

Chapter 8



Kim Su-Hyun, Beginning the Rite of Passage. Pt.(1/3)

The Preparation Room. A place I haven't seen for a long time. The room was well-appointed, any person who gazed on the Preparation Room without any context behind it would think it a perfectly replica of any room on Earth.

I came to a sudden epiphany, Angels really did like to focus on the most useless things. When I first came here, due to the sheer Earth-like environment, I tried to open the main door and leave. Of course, the door wouldn't budge and I remembered how I wallowed in despair. I wondered if this was done on purpose so the Angel's can poke fun at us.

Time remaining till the Rite of Passage: 03 Minutes and 26 Seconds.

"3 minutes and 27 seconds. I need to hurry."

I walked toward the large, eye-catching box that was dumped in the middle of the room. Sitting in its corner, I opened the box. Inside was various items and equipment necessary for the Rite of Passage. I smelled like crap, but right now the most important thing was finding cloth to wear. Seraph was Seraph so it didn't matter, but I was near naked and if I was to be transferred to the Rite of Passage right now, I would be labelled as a pervert forever.

Digging through the box I saw one skintight cloth and discerned instantly that it had extremely good stats. But I just didn't have the courage to wear something like that. Lifting this and that out of the box for a while, I went with simple clothes in the end. The underwear, socks, shoes, shirts and pants I

chose were all common variety. Though they were all dark colours as to prevent stains.

Though considering the standard of the Rite of Passage, I could take it on naked and finish it within the day. If I wanted to, I could destroy everything within and it wouldn't even be a workout. But I had no plans to leap through right from the beginning. The biggest reason I survived for 10 years in Hall Plain was that I always hid 30% of my skills. Except for the times when my life was truly at stake, I made sure to never reveal myself.

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'Which weapon should I go with....'

When I came to choosing my weapon, I pondered for a bit. Just with my bare fist, I could make mincemeat of the boss monster found in the Rite of Passage, but having one would come in handy. Still, I had a plan to enact in this Rite of Passage. So just in case, I picked one tall sword and a detachable crossbow, and packing as many arrows as I could I closed the box.

After picking up the mass of arrows, I looked up in the air. I manage to see the remaining time converge to 0.

Preparation Room time has ended. Player Kim Su-Hyun will now be summoned to the Rite of Passage.

"Okay. Was I the last one?"

Yes. Regardless, Player Kim Su-Hyun I wish you luck. I shall begin the process for the transfer.

It was then.

Uwung!

I could feel the Summon spell being chanted in the air and a sharp tug on my navel. The summon began.

Transfer complete. Rite of Passage is a test which will see if you have what it takes to earn the entitlement to enter Hall Plain. To pass the test, you must survive for 7 days or arrive at the central warp gate within the 7 days. Player, I wish you luck.

The transfer was complete. Breathing in the fresh air and I looked around. I could feel the fragrance of the air subtly changing. Trees, grass, dirt, seeing it all it seems like I was in a middle of a forest. The forest air was clean and the wind was refreshing, but there was this unpleasant sticky feeling engulfing the area.

‘Well, for now, why don’t I see which Players I started off with.’

I personally thought the Rite of Passage was extremely important. Hall Plain was not a place you could survive alone. A party was necessary, even if it was built to take advantage of each other.

The Rite of Passage was a place that took modern, everyday people from their routine and breaks them out of it, with a condition to ‘survive.’ Another point of the Rite of Passage was for ordinary people who knew nothing to band together and reach the goal. (I was a special case with this being my second time, so consider me as an exception for the time being.) A lot of the times the Player who banded together and survived the Rite of Passage formed close ties even after entering Hall Plain. So my plan was to search for members to form ties with during this Rite of Passage.

‘Of course, I can’t let just anyone become a comrade.’

The point I was summoned to was one of the place indicating the start of the Rite of Passage. Or in other words, the starting point. The 10-year veteran me could speak of this event with little affecting me, but when I had first entered this place knowing nothing, I thought it was evil personified. This place was so bad it was enough to instil trauma even after entering Hall Plain.

Slowly clearing up my heart, I began looking around. Clearly, I wasn't only me that was transferred here. I saw people sitting restlessly out in the middle of the clearing, apprehension filled on their faces.

“Oppa.... Did you just see that person materialise?”

“Sol. Be quiet.”

“What do we do.... We are not the only ones....”

“Keep still. That person does look our age.”

Hearing their conversation, it seems they are brother and sister. I walked toward the clearing where the people were gathered. The atmosphere had sunk into quietness. Well, if they were shoved into the Rite of Passage abruptly and were told to survive it would have been a total chaos. But every person here was debriefed by an Angel, even me in the past.

‘This is the starting point. This is the past so I must have met the same people the first time around.... So what happened afterwards? I don't recall....’

Counting the number of people in the empty lot, there was total of 8 sitting around. Was it possible to combine forces with these 8 for the remaining 7 days of the Rite of Passage? I can confidently say, ‘No.’

The conflict would come next. This wasn't Hall Plain, but a place you passed once and never came again. With the strength I have, saving everyone here was child's play. But truthfully, I didn't want to or thought to.

Flaunting my skills freely in front of these people and letting them enter Hall Plain with evidence of my skill was something that had to be avoided at all cost. Gossip had the biggest effect of making a person famous or well known. The Players in Hall Plain took an initiative in protecting their vested interests, and if they heard a Player who used Magic before passing the Rite of Passage or defeat an overwhelmingly powerful monster? If such rumours spread, there would be so many troubling incidents, let alone the possibility of getting killed by 'Rogues.'

Also, I wasn't a good samaritan. There were times that I performed a good deed in Hall Plain, but I also performed evil without reserve when it was necessary. Theft, plunder, rape and even murder. Hall Plain was a place where such was the norm and not one person existed who would argue about it.

Anyways, the most important thing in this place was choosing the right people. If I met a person who was a worthwhile comrade, them knowing or not, I would have to nurture them in becoming a proper Player for at least a year.

The first thing I set out to do after I had entered Hall Plain was to gather comrades. The Rite of Passage was a suitable place to execute my plan. There was a total of three standards I was looking for in my compatriots. First, Attributes and Potential. Second, Alignment. Third, Affinity. I have said a lot of things, but the gist of it is that if the person was worthy to be my comrade I would rescue them, if not, I didn't care if they lived or died.

'I guess it's time to use my Third Eye.'

In the clearing, everyone was separate from each other except for the siblings. After choosing a suitable place, I also sat down and quietly began to observe the people around me. If I was lucky, there is a chance I might run into a familiar face.

The first person that entered my sight was a woman who was wearing a bank uniform. Her overall impression was average, but her round eyes were twitching and her lips were trembling. It seems she still hadn't accepted this as reality. I could understand where she was coming from, but first I decided to activate my Third Eye. I only needed to choose people I needed....

[Player Status]

1. Name : Lee Bo-Rim(Year(s) 0) 2. Sex : Female(27) 3. Height · Weight : 164.7cm · 58.3kg 4. Alignment : Neutral · Chaos

[Strength 5] [Resistance 8] [Agility 11] [Vitality 7] [Magic Power 9] [Luck 11]
(Remaining attribute point: 0 point.)

'Huk.'

Forcing down a smirk, I collapsed her Player window. The initial Attributes were affected by the physique. More so, the potential that the Player had was multiplied and then shown. This meant that female might not necessary have a lower physique stat than a male.

However, even for a woman's potential, Lee Bo-rim was below average. Helping such Player survive and enter Hall Plains was absolutely good for nothing at my level.

I digress for a bit, but after entering Hall Plain and a Player begins training, the Attributes grew quickly at first. I having already reached my limits, made it difficult to increase my Attributes through training. But every Player that started normally had no such restrictions. Regardless, even taking such factors into consideration, it was only after they passed their first summit that the Player looked promising. But what the hell was up with this person....

Clicking my tongue, I turned my gaze to the others in the clearing. My next target was the siblings who were glued to each other. The brother looked quite young, but seeing the frown on this forehead he seemed sharp. He

looked younger than me, I wondered if he was one of those 'cool kids' as I noticed his trashy demeanour. Lying in front of them was a single pair of longsword and a shield. It was an acceptable choice.

The girl was stuck to him like glue, a sight that would disgust all singles.... Ah right, they were siblings. Carrying on, her head was bowed so I couldn't see her face clearly but she looks more well-behaved than her brother.

[Player Status]

1. Name : An-Hyun(Year(s) 0) 2. Sex : Male(22) 3. Height · Weight : 178.8cm · 73.2kg 4. Alignment : True · Neutral

[Strength 48] [Resistance 47] [Agility 52] [Vitality 51] [Magic Power 35] [Luck 56] (Remaining attribute point: 0 point.)

[Player Status]

1. Name : An-Sol(Year(s) 0) 2. Sex : Female(19) 3. Height · Weight : 160.1cm · 45.2kg 4. Alignment : Lawful · Good

[Strength 8] [Resistance 17] [Agility 15] [Vitality 21] [Magic Power 75] [Luck 100] (Remaining attribute point: 0 point.)

'That's insane, what is up with her? Magic Power 75? Luck 100? Right from the start?'

Attributes that was beyond common sense. I almost cried out in shock, but I closed my mouth shut and barely managed to prevent a fiasco.

Strictly speaking, An-Hyun is competent. That guy, as long as he doesn't suffer any unusual situations, could easily pass the Rite of Passage. He had enough potential to enter Hall Plain and live through it. While vexing to admit, his starting Attributes were higher than mine. Anyways, An-Hyun's Attributes were at a level that one would think, 'yeah it's possible.'

The reason I was truly shocked was when I glanced at that female, An-Sol, Attributes. It was truly bizarre. Not much to say about her Strength, Resistance and Agility. But starting off at 75 points of Magic Power and 100 points for Luck was completely preposterous in Hall Plain. I carefully sifted through my memories.

'I don't recall an An-Hyun.... An-Sol.... Wait, An-Sol? Sol? '

When the name Sol popped up, I suddenly recalled from the list of Secret Class I could choose with my privilege.

In my first run in Hall Plain, the Secret Class 'Priest of Brilliance' made its appearance. I think the other name for it was the final boss of all Priest Class? At that time a Player named 'Sol' had earned that Class, and soon after joined the Odin Clan, a Clan that was composed with only the best Players.

An-Sol, and Sol. Only the name was similar, but seeing An-Sol's Attribute, the chance of it being her was high. Seeing the two were a sibling, I probably had to make sure both of them lived through this. Compared to the bank clerk Lee Bo-Rim, these two had unparalleled Attributes. They were suitable enough to be my comrades.

With such strong impact from these two, this time around I decided to look counterclockwise. The two people that were selected with my Third Eye was the two guys.

On the left was a guy who looked fit, but he was short and looked old. His nose was a bit bent, his rough skin gave off a vulgar impression. His gaze was constantly shifting around, looking everywhere, I thought he was trying to grasp the situation.

Next, on the right was a male who was wearing a school uniform. Below his eyes I could see tear stains on his pale complexion, he looked quite young.

On the outside, he looked modest, but seeing his whole body crouched down with his arms around his legs, trembling, it was quite a sad sight to see.

'I can't recall.... What about his Player Status?'

[Player Status]

1. Name : Park Don-Gul(Year(s) 0) 2. Sex : Male(39) 3. Height · Weight : 179.4cm · 73.2kg 4. Alignment : Devil · Chaos

[Strength 31] [Resistance 26] [Agility 39] [Vitality 29] [Magic Power 29] [Luck 7] (Remaining attribute point: 0 point.)

[Player Status]

1. Name : Lee Shin-Wu(Year(s) 0) 2. Sex : Male(18) 3. Height · Weight : 170.7cm · 58.4kg 4. Alignment : Lawful · Good

[Strength 25] [Resistance 23] [Agility 21] [Vitality 27] [Magic Power 35] [Luck 57] (Remaining attribute point: 0 point.)

I am not sure if An-Hyun and An-Sol's stats were so shocking, but Park Don-Gul and Lee Shin-Wu's Attributes were not that bad. (But I am not saying it's that good either.)

With Park Don-Gul's basic Attributes he should be able to survive the Rite of Passage, the only problem was his Alignment. It was very rare for Devil and Chaos Alignment to show up together. It was most probable that Park Don-Gul was a criminal, and the chance of him becoming a 'Rogue' in Hall Plain was one and the same.

Lee Shin-Wu was the polar opposite to him, his Attributes slightly lacking to pass the Rite of Passage but his Magic Power made up for it. Considering his high Luck Attribute, this suggested that his potential was quite high. His character must be innately good as well, as Lawful and Good Alignment appearing together was also rare.

Except for me and that Park Don-Gul guy, everyone was busy searching out their neighbours. But unlike the others, there was this greasy, unpleasant craving in Park Don-Gul's eyes. His lecherous eyes were shifting and focusing only on the various women in the clearing. I had seen eyes like his a thousand times, even I had eyes like that once back then. I could roughly identify his transgression. Although it was pure guesswork, I think I know what crimes Park Don-Gul probably committed.

I was more convinced, after seeing how he was licking his lips looking at the girl sticking close to An-Hyun. With my past, I had no right, but even then I couldn't help but think of him as a miserable wretch.

Clicking my tongue, I was about to use my Third Eye on the remaining two women in the clearing.

“Ah, fuck.”

That moment, Park Don-Gul guttural voice resounded in the clearing.

Chapter 9



Kim Su-Hyun, Beginning the Rite of Passage. Pt.(2/3)

“Ha.... I can't stand it anymore!”

“Eek!”

Park Don-Gul, who had been looking around shiftily for some time, seemed to have found the right moment as he shouted at the top of his voice and walked to the centre of the clearing. Lee Shin-Wu seems shocked at his sudden use of profanity as he gasped. I didn't miss the instance where Park Don-Gul had

that satisfied smirk while looking down at Lee Shin-Wu. As they say, he beat everyone to the punch.

“Hey! You guys, are you not going to do anything in this fucked up situation? Mhmm?”

An-Sol had dugged into An-Hyun’s side and was trembling harder. An-Hyun and the two women I couldn’t check, all had different expressions. One of them was relatively composed, but the other seems to disagree with the raucous caused by Park Don-Gul. Her eyes narrowed as she scowled at him. I was hit by an urge to check the Player status of the two women, but for now, I decided to keep watch on Park Don-Gul.

“Are you all deaf? Don’t keep your mouth shut, say something already!”

‘The fool.’

Did he want to show off his temper to the world? Or flaunt his masculinity? Park Don-Gul gestured violently and gave a fist-size rock near him a hard kick. The rock flew with a strong momentum and disappeared into the forest. The people in the clearing settled in an awkward silence at his sudden outburst.

But I could hear it clearly. Or rather what I didn’t hear – the rock falling back onto the ground.

Gureurung.

A low cry echoed through the silent forest. While nobody seemed to have noticed the sound of the rock, they all had heard the sound. Anxiety floated passed their faces. All of this was 10 years ago so I couldn’t remember everything, but the fuzzy memory popped in quick succession.

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Kim Su-Hyun, Beginning the Rite of Passage. Pt.(2/3)

“Ha.... I can’t stand it anymore!”

“Eek!”

Park Don-Gul, who had been looking around shiftily for some time, seemed to have found the right moment as he shouted at the top of his voice and walked to the centre of the clearing. Lee Shin-Wu seems shocked at his sudden use of profanity as he gasped. I didn’t miss the instance where Park Don-Gul had that satisfied smirk while looking down at Lee Shin-Wu. As they say, he beat everyone to the punch.

“Hey! You guys, are you not going to do anything in this fucked up situation? Mhmm?”

An-Sol had dugged into An-Hyun’s side and was trembling harder. An-Hyun and the two women I couldn’t check, all had different expressions. One of them was relatively composed, but the other seems to disagree with the raucous caused by Park Don-Gul. Her eyes narrowed as she scowled at him. I was hit by an urge to check the Player status of the two women, but for now, I decided to keep watch on Park Don-Gul.

“Are you all deaf? Don’t keep your mouth shut, say something already!”

‘The fool.’

Did he want to show off his temper to the world? Or flaunt his masculinity? Park Don-Gul gestured violently and gave a fist-size rock near him a hard kick. The rock flew with a strong momentum and disappeared into the forest. The people in the clearing settled in an awkward silence at his sudden outburst.

But I could hear it clearly. Or rather what I didn’t hear – the rock falling back onto the ground.

Gureurung.

A low cry echoed through the silent forest. While nobody seemed to have noticed the sound of the rock, they all had heard the sound. Anxiety floated passed their faces. All of this was 10 years ago so I couldn't remember everything, but the fuzzy memory popped in quick succession.

The memory of what had happened in this clearing.

"Sh, Shit! Who the fuck was it? If you have a fucking problem, come out. Come and face me! Is it you? No? You?"

Park Don-Gul began to despicably pick out the weak looking opponents. Lee Bo-Rim and Lee Shin-Wu were deadly pale as they hurriedly shook no. Then suddenly, the woman that was glaring at Park Don-Gul stood up resolutely. She was breathing in quickly to keep her temper in check.

"Ajussi, stop. Act your age and stop this nonsense."

"What? What~? Stop? Act my age? Did you just said that to my face?"

"Sure, I did. What are you going to do about it? Aren't you ashamed? We are all in the same boat so what is with your high and mighty bullshit?"

"You are swearing now? Bitch, didn't your parents teach you to respect your elders? What kind of parents were they?"

"Bitch? Ha, let's see~ let's see.... Yeah, what did your parents teach you? Become a geezer and bully everyone? You piece of trash!"

I laughed heartily seeing the woman fighting back in equal measure without retreating one step back. Playacting as if he was initially taken back, Park Don-Gul chuckled. But soon anger overtook him as his face became pale and red. He breathed deeply from his nose and like a predator he stalked toward the woman.

Reaching the woman soon after, he stared down at her with a sinister look.

"Hey, Bitch. What did my parents do? Say it one more time."

When a man came this far, anyone would chicken out. I am not sure if she was just a strong person or just lacked fear, but she continued to look Park Don-Gul straight in the eye and sneered.

“This is funny. You think I am going to be scared of you? Yeah, did your mommy and daddy taught you like that~? Bastard!”

“This bitch really want’s to die....”

Park Don-Gul seemed really ticked off as his fists rose slowly in the air. Even then, the woman didn’t blink an eye. It was the moment that Park Don-Gul was posed to beat the woman.

“Hey, Ajussi. Enough already.”

An-Hyun, who was silent till now, spoke up for the first time. Park Don-Gul, who was about to smack the woman’s cheeks, turned around and looked at An-Hyun comically. I could see An-Sol tugging at An-Hyun’s collar. However, An-Hyun ignored it as he opened his mouth once more.

“She’s not wrong. We are all in the same boat like she said. So what’s her crime?”

“You.... You bastard....”

Shame seemed to creep up on Park Don-Gul as he bit tightly on his lips. It seems he finally felt the gaze of everyone on the clearing and he slowly lowered his fist. The faint sneer on the woman was visible, seeing that Park Don-Gul screamed out in frustration and just turned around from her. He went back and sat at his original position, wheezing out his pent up anger as nothing went as he planned.

“Fuck, what you looking at! Stop looking at me like that!”

Looks like Park Don-Gul couldn't keep it all down as he let off steam at the quietly sitting Lee Shin-Wu next to him. With the look of mortification at the mistreatment, Lee Shin-Wu moved away.

Then again.

Gureurung.

The cry we heard just before rang clearly in our ears once more, and from the depth of my faint memory, I could dredge up some details for the first time. While we were idly killing time, a surprise attack had scattered all of us. The cause was the rock that Park Don-Gul kicked and the raucous he created with that woman.

This was all the memories I had of these people. I don't know what happens afterwards, but seeing I never saw them again in Hall Plain....

'Does that mean they all die in the Rite of Passage? Ah, so An-Sol might not be who I thought it was.'

If we waste time like we did on my first run through, we could be repeating history. No, I am certain the exact same event would occur.

I decided to give a little push, though nothing so direct as getting personally involved. First of all, I would give them a chance to move and work together. But that would be the total extent of my help. So with that decided, I lifted up my crossbow.

Clink!

"Excuse me. What are you doing....?"

Seems like everyone had become super sensitive, as the tiny noise I had made caused everyone's gaze to focus on me.

The person who spoke up was the woman with quite a smart mouth. Though she seemed to have a general idea as she did not make any wisecrack

remarks right from the start. Looks like the hate was embedded toward Park Don-Gul.

“Don’t you feel uneasy?”

“I feel more uneasy because of your crossbow.”

“Well let me see.... Where do you think we are right now?”

“What?”

The woman’s eyes became wide. While her eyes were sharp, suggesting a fierce temperament, overall she had a pretty face.

“While coming to this place, I experienced a lot of outlandish things. Isn’t it same for everyone here as well?”

“Well.... Yes, but....”

Heads nodded as people recalled their memories. The Room of Summoning, the Angel, the Transfer. They definitely experienced and witnessed all of it. This might be impossible to accept right away, but the most important thing was for them to accept that this was reality and become proactive in trying to survive the Rite of Passage.

On the open slot of the crossbow, I began to insert an arrow. The crossbow was smaller than average, but I could attach and detach it from my wrist making it quite convenient. I am not sure if it was the shriek early or my actions, but one by one, they began to hold the weapon they brought personally.

Soon after, excluding the people who came empty handed, everyone was armed. Most of the preparation was done. Looking around, I began to think calmly.

We were currently located in a clearing in the middle of the forest. Trees and bushes were packed outside the clearing. I began to walk away from the direction where Park Don-Gul kicked his rock.

I had only moved a few steps away from the clearing, but I could definitely feel it becoming darker. The trees and grasses I saw in front of me reflected a melancholic light.

With the growling, they would feel insecure up to a point. I felt the number of people following behind me slowly increasing. When I thought my actions was well thought out, my plan crashed and halted right from then.

“Ya, An-Sol. Get up. We need to follow that Hyung.”

“I hate it.... I don’t wanna go.... It’s scary....”

“Then are you going to stay here forever? You told me before. This place isn’t safe. We shouldn’t stay here. Why are you doing this now?”

“Sob....”

Hearing the siblings talk, I felt my eyes tense up automatically. Seeing that her Luck Attributes was 100 points, there might be something she felt. But that was mere speculation on my part. Seems she couldn’t overcome her instinctual fear as she had no plan to get her bum off the ground.

Gureurung! Gureurung!

In between their arguments, I could hear the growl. The sound had become louder, it had definitely come closer. At first, the group had waited patiently for the two, but soon after, one or two began to fret.

“Ex, excuse me. Can’t we depart first? To be honest, my body keeps on, can’t stop shaking....”

“Ye, Yeah!! Let’s leave these trash and go! Wait what did you say after that....?”

Lee Shin-Wu's seems to have pulled whatever courage he had as his voice was cracked with sorrow. From Park Don-Gul, I heard immediate agreement.

I am not sure if he heard that, or if he felt as such as An-Hyun began to pull on An-Sol with greater desperation.

"Come on, stand up. I am right here. Please, just listen to me for once."

"Bu.... But my feet won't move.... Sob...."

An-Sol burst into tears at the end. Even in the midst of all this, Lee Shin-Wu and Park Don-Gul was giving them the look. It seems they want to leave this troubling place as soon as possible. Of course, I had no plans to abandon those two. Rather, ditching everyone else and travelling with those two had greater benefits.

"Let's go! Why are we just standing around!"

"Uh, yes, quickly...."

As the commotion became worse, An-Hyun's expression became hard. Then he suddenly slapped away the hand that was grabbing tightly onto his collar. An-Sol's eyes flew open as she mumbled.

"O, Oppa?"

"Sure. Then stay here. I am going to go somewhere else."

That was a load of crap, but his acting was kinda believable. After saying his piece, An-Hyun heartlessly turned his back on her. Armed with the sword and shield, he began to stride toward us. Seeing this An-Sol seems to experience a great shock as her mouth kept opening and closing. She shed fresh tears as An-Hyun's spoke, "Sorry to keep you waiting. Shall we go?" Regardless of that, An-Hyun intentionally pressed us to go as he took the lead and pretended to walk toward the forest.

"Sob.... Oppa.... don't go...."

“An-Sol, get up now. Can’t you understand the situation?”

“I was wrong.... Don’t leave me again..... Don’t go.... Sob.... Sob sob....”

“You.... Seriously, get up now!”

In the end, An-Hyun had to raise his voice with his eyes glaring fiercely. This seems to work a little as An-Sol stood up slowly, still crying her eyes out.

It was then.

Gureurung! Gureurung! Gureurung! Gureurung!

‘Oh dear, we dawdle for far too long.’

I felt dismayed. Not the one caused by fear, but the dismay caused by the uncertainty that I had changed the future and caused the death of An-Sol. The growl was a stone throw away from us, with the sound becoming all the more louder. The problem was, An-Sol seems to have lost it.

“O.... Oppa....”

We were gradually distancing ourselves from her, and seeing An-Sol dazedly stretching her hand for help, An-Hyun became even more resolute. No, it looks like he was pretending. The smart mouth lady gave in as she stepped into help, but An-Hyun held out his hand and stopped her.

“Just leave her.”

“Oppa! Don’t leave me!”

“Then come here by yourself. It’s not too late. If you can’t do this much, you definitely won’t survive.”

“Sob....”

With renewed vigour and confidence in his eyes, An-Hyun watched An-Sol intently. His sincerity must have been conveyed, as An-Sol clenched her

teeth. Just a bit more and she should be able to rise by herself, but unfortunately it was too late.

Gureurung! Gureurung!

‘This growl, it’s a Deadman.’

Deadman. While the name incited a monstrous image, in reality, it wasn’t much. In fact, in Hall Plain, the Deadmans were so weak, Players did not even consider them as monsters. They had some intelligence and had the ability to infect others, but infection, if treated in time, could be completely healed. (Of course, treatment here was impossible.)

Also, if they had one characteristic....

Gyaaaa!

They usually prowled about slowly, but when they found a prey, the Deadmans began to run.

Screeching with delight, the Deadman jumped out from the forest. It’s mouth wide open as it dashes toward An-Sol. This must have been completely unexpected for An-Hyun as he ran toward her, screaming.

“SOL!”

It wasn’t only An-Hyun that was screaming.

“Aa, aaak!”

“Kya!”

The scene closely resembled a Zombie film. The monster’s ripped flesh hanging from various parts of its body, pouncing and the party immediately descending into chaos. It’s innards could be seen through its chest, and a rock was embedded in it. That rock was definitely the one that Park Don-Gul

kicked just now. This monster must have been loitering around us after getting hit by that rock.

Gureurung! Gureurung! Gureurung! Gureurung! Gureurung! Gureurung!
Gureurung! Gureurung!

The Deadman seems to be responding to the screams of the party, as from the forest, it's growl increased.

“Aaaahh!”

“Sol! Snap out of it! SOL!”

An-Sol, who had just managed to stand up, lost it completely when she saw the Deadman. An-Hyun had swiftly run toward her, but the Deadman was closer. An-Hyun must have felt it as well as he pulled back the hand holding the sword, and swung it hard toward the Deadman.

Shiiiiing! Puk!

‘Oh? A hit?’

With a great momentum, the sword slashed cut off the Deadman’s left arm. But that was it. The monster shambled and reeled, but it quickly recovered and snapped its attention to An-Sol as it ran toward her. It had finally reached her.

“Nooooooooo!”

Deadman jaws wide open. An-Sol’s eyes agape. And An-Hyun, screaming in horror.

I knew for certain then. With my various actions, I had without a doubt, changed An-Sol’s future. Without hesitation, I fired my crossbow.

PING!

With a sharp striking sound, the arrow flew. With a PUK sound, the arrow cleanly pierced through the Deadman's head. The Deadman's weakness was its head. The rock had sliced into its chest, but it had no chance against the arrow to its head. With its mouth wide open, the Deadman fell.

Thud!

“Sh.... Shit....”

“Huk.... Huk....”

Everyone had the same reaction at seeing the monster. They all clutched at their weapons reflexively and have woken up to the realisation that this was not a joke. Sure, they knew the basics and had a vague feeling of what was happening, but it seems this showed them how serious it was.

In the midst of all this, An-Hyun acted swiftly. He dashed toward the still gaping An-Sol and lifted her up. And promptly returned back to our side. He must have been extremely surprised at the situation as his breathing was laboured.

Soon after, all eyes were on me. I shifted and faced forward. While it was only one, there would be more gathering soon enough. I could hear the surge in the growling. Without a doubt, more Deadman would be arriving here quite soon. If they managed to encircle us, it would be quite a pain in the butt.

Without a word, I continued walking.

Chapter 10



This suddenly reminded me a lot about the TV program I used to enjoy. The show was about your usual run-of-the-mill people being placed in life threatening situations. The show said the people in such circumstance only acted rationally for 15 minutes. After that time I think it said that their reasoning disappeared and the people ran on pure instinct or whatever. If what the show said was true, did the people I was leading pass this phase already?

We were currently catching our breath on the high hill within the forest. Rather than a gentle hill, it was more of a steep path that sapped everyone's strength. Breathing deeply, I turned around and look down from where we came from. It was just as I predicted. In just a short moment, the clearing we were in was packed with Deadman that crawled about.

Looking at the now fist-sized clearing, everyone was deep in thought. If we were just a step slower, it was self-evident that we would have become monster food. That energetic, smart mouth lady must be feeling the creeps as she was rubbing her arms.

They all had complicated expressions on their face. There were monsters about, and their lives were in danger. Having accepted such reality, their faces were dark with negativity and pessimism. But that was something I wouldn't be helping them with. Now it was time to stand back observe quietly. While I had their basic information, I needed to see how they reacted to situations.

"Huk! Huk! Shit.... What the fuck are those things?"

Having just climbed to where we were, Park Don-Gul was still breathing heavily. Looking at him, I shook my head in disapproval. If he just stayed quiet, he would have been somewhere in the middle of the group. But after all, the danger we were in previously was because of the rock he kicked. What I mean is that he was the source of the cause. If I was him, I would have stayed quiet in shame, but it seems he was thick-skinned and had no shame.

Kim Su-Hyun, Beginning the Rite of Passage. Pt.(3/3)

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the danger we were in previously was because of the rock he kicked. What I mean is that he was the source of the cause. If I was him, I would have stayed quiet in shame, but it seems he was thick-skinned and had no shame.

Giving out a sigh, I turned my head and saw that An-Sol was still crying on An-Hyun's chest. For a moment, I thought it was quite the pathetic sight. But I did learn one thing during this situation. If the crying An-Sol was the same person as the Brilliance Priest, her future was guaranteed to a point. Her Luck Attribute was 100 points, and that should certainly get her passed the Rite of Passage. However, the results spoke otherwise. What I just found out was that the future can change in the slightest different action.

Having felt my gaze, An-Hyun, who was wiping the tears off An-Sol, nodded in my direction. He seems to have realised that the person who fired the arrow at the Deadman was me. I could see the gratitude in his eyes. Nodding back in acceptance, I turned my gaze back down the hill we were on.

Gureurung! Gureurung!

“Gyah!”

“U-ang!”

I am not sure if it was some monsters near us or if it had followed us from the clearing, but there were two more Deadman trying to climb the hill.

Nonetheless, the Deadmans couldn't run at us full speed.

When they find a prey, the Deadman runs extremely fast in a straight line. Despite that, if they make a turn or on a high elevation, their rush speed becomes significantly reduced. They can still climb hills, but a knife to the head before they managed to get up and that's that.

While the panic was less than the initial reaction to seeing the Deadman, there were still shrill of shocks. I am really sorry Lee Bo-Rim, but I have no plans to save her if I absolutely have to. The duet of screams Lee Bo-Rim and

An-Sol performed still didn't sit right with me, also with her Player Status, I just couldn't find a use for her. She was blessed if she lived but was most likely doomed to die.

'I should be seeing a reaction from them about now.... To unite, separate or maintain the status quo.'

If they wanted to talk to their heart's content, taking care of the those Deadman coming up was a priority.

Then. An-Hyun began to move. It seems he left his sword in the clearing as he set An-Sol aside and picked up a fist-sized rock. I was in the middle of loading an arrow into my crossbow when An-Hyun started, I wanted to see what he would do so I stopped momentarily.

If given a knife, I wonder how many guys in South Korea could hit a target at a distance? I wanted to see if it was skill or fluke that managed to cut off that Deadman's arm back then.

Different than before, An-Hyun was discreet as he measured the distance and the direction and threw it with all his might. And the result....

Puk!

"Really, they are not such a big deal."

An-Hyun's stone throwing skill was impressive. With a Puk sound, the rock succeeded in breaking through the Deadman's head. Seeing the monster collapse haplessly, I saw a hint of realisation enter An-Hyun's eye as he finishes off the other rather simply.

"Yeah. They are not a big deal. So don't get a big head for killing those two."

However, it seems that Park Don-Gul was exasperated at the weapon An-Hyun grasped. Still, An-Hyun wasn't about to just let that go, he stopped walking and stared at Park Don-Gul.

An-Hyun's mouth gradually opened to speak.

"This is all due to you, Ajussi. So thank you."

"Eh? What are you talking about now?!"

"That monster that attacked our Sol just now, there was this heavy thing inside its chest. Thanks to that, I knew that a rock can go through the monster."

Park Don-Gul seems to have caught the sarcasm, as his face immediately became red. An-Hyun's words were blatantly stating that the cause of all the problem in the clearing was all because of the rock he kicked.

"Y'all think that because I kicked that rock we are in this situation? How do you know that rock was from me?"

"I don't recall saying. Just thank you."

Such impudence from An-Hyun seems to have drove Park Don-Gul mad. Yet, he seems to have realised something as he rather growled out his responses.

"Fuck you, you think you are all hot shit and stuff? Don't you know it's because of that girl that we almost died?"

"Girl?"

"Yeah, shithead, that crazy bitch next to you. Everyone is following just fine and dandy, and here she is, not even a kid but can't even stand up by herself."

An-Hyun's expression hardened. It seems he couldn't respond to this accusation and kept his mouth shut. Feeling sorry for the accusation that her brother was suffering, An-Sol gently dabbed at her tears.

"Ah, I hate pretentious pricks like you. Think and tell me who was at fault here."

Still, we had the smart mouth lady with us. Without a doubt, she did not stay still. As she immediately leaps in support of An-Hyun, Park Don-Gul's expression became twisted.

"Ya bitch. If you don't shut your pretty mouth, I am really going to kill you. Mhmm?"

"And you shithead. If you were like me, I would have kept my mouth shut out of shame. Causing such mess like you know shit. And trying to appease that pretty thing."

"These damn miserable idiots really want to die today...."

All three were in the wrong, but Park Don-Gul seems to breed hate inside. He seems to have realised that the mood was turning against him as he shut up once more.

Just as we were coming out of danger, we plunged ourselves back into a petty squabble. At this level, it wasn't simple animosity but full-blown vendetta. I once again felt that eroding heavy feeling rushing back inside. Out of habit, I groped for my cigarette but it was impossible I would such thing on me now. The idea of just cutting off Park Don-Gul to advance faster was slowly gaining ground.

Nonetheless, I decided right from the beginning to observe. It was still grating on me that after all the work I put into bringing them to this point, they had reverted back.

Whatever that had happened, in a small corner of their minds, they still remember what occurred in the clearing. What could I possibly do to make them into a single group? No matter how much I pondered, I didn't have a eureka moment. In the end, I decided we need to speed up and start moving. Strictly speaking, this place wasn't really a safe place.

Creek!

I intentionally made a loud sound loading my crossbow and without fail, everyone's eyes were on me. Waving off that everything was alright, I fitted the arrow into the crossbow and met everyone's gaze.

"For now, those Dead.... Hm. Those monsters, we should make it a priority to avoid them."

"Everyone knows that already. But what can we do?"

'This crazy bastard really wants to die.'

I barely kept my temper as I really wanted to stuff my arrow into Park Don-Gul's mouth. Still, if there were only two of us right now, I would smash his mouth in a heartbeat.

"Right now, even if we unite, I don't think it will be enough. So arguing amongst ourselves, I believe, is a waste of time. I will leave my place for a while. I think during that time it will be good for everyone to discuss and come to a consensus for our next course of action."

I laid out a sound argument without the need of repeating myself. Of course, there would be questions, but the thing that was really unexpected was the one who asked.

"Why are you leaving your place? If we are having a discussion, won't it be better for everyone's input?"

The person who asked was one of the two women who I wasn't able to observe the Player Status. She had a cold expression and looked about the same age, though one or two years younger. Without me knowing, she reminded me of another person with a familiar countenance.

'Stop pestering me and figure it out by yourselves.'

"... Those monsters could jump out at us like in the clearing. Just in case I shall keep watch. So once the discussion is over, please call me."

“... Please don't go too far out.”

I was a bit slow in responding but thankful, I managed to avoid causing needless suspicion. No one would argue against keeping watch in a dangerous area.

After saying so, I began trekking down to a spot I saw which looked like suitable concealment point. After having walked a fair distance into the forest and hiding myself, I activated my Magic. The senses on my whole body multiplied, and I could feel my vision and hearing becoming sharper. From where I was, they won't be able to spot me. Though right now I could even hear their breathing, and had no problem observing them.

Having left the party, a cold ambience returned on the hill. The dreary feeling those Deadman emitted down below the hill was more encouraging than the mood of the party. I am not sure if their mouth were glued shut as no one step forward. Everyone had different expressions on their face, but the one to see was Park Don-Gul. As if he was thinking something serious his face was scrunched up and then changed to a grin, and back again. Was he really not a psychopath?

Time flowed. In manhwa and fairy tales, the hero always appeared and everyone survived well and good. Though it looks like in this party, there was no perfect leader to trust in. Wasting time like this was not the best of plans. As more time flowed, the anxiety in people's heart grew, and it was likely that they would lose their rationality and act on instinct.

In that moment, two different women stood up.

Cautiously standing in the middle of the party was Lee Bo-Rim. Having stood up simultaneously, the smart mouth lady seeing her, sat back down on the ground. It seems like she was going to hear Lee Bo-Rim's stance first. With hesitance in her eyes, Lee Bo-Rim looked at everyone and spoke slowly.

“Eve, everyone, you all saw the monster just now. Truthfully.... I still thought this was a bad dream while the Assistant Angel was speaking to me, but I have no choice to accept that this is reality. I am scared. I am really scared, that I think I am going crazy. I am sure others are like me as well.”

There was no one who refuted her. Having felt everyone was focusing on her words, there was more confidence in Lee Bo-Rim’s speech now.

“Truthfully, it was all thanks to that person on watch that we managed to survive. Even then, he is the same situation and we can’t really rely on him forever. Right now, I think we should stop fighting, unite together and look for a path to survive.”

While it was a stereotypical speech, Lee Bo-Rim’s words held the core aspect of the Rite of Passage. Unite and act. It looks like her word held some persuasion as the dead atmosphere in the hill changed slightly. And the dead looking Lee Shin-Wu finally opened his mouth.

“Then Nunna, what do you think we should do from now on....?”

His last words were hard to hear, but everyone could grasp the intention. She had come far as what I had said before, and to say the plan that came after. However, Lee Bo-Rim didn’t seem to have thought so far ahead as she spoke hesitantly.

“That.... I don’t know really know.... Only that, from now on, we shouldn’t argue and exchange our opinions calmly.”

“I agree.”

Having preying on the morsel of an opportunity, Park Don-Gul found his chance and stepped forward.

Unlike before, Park Don-Gul was more gentle and composed. Seeing that, I immediately frowned. At first glance, he looked honest, but he couldn’t fool my

eyes. I recognised the expression for what it was, a very well practised act. Without a doubt, that guy was planning something devious.