

《Spirit King》

Chapter 3 - EXploration

"Huff! Huff!" A young man paused to catch his breath. The many beads of sweat that once covered his forehead began to fall onto the grass covered ground, as he crouched. This young man was naturally Niko, and for the last twenty minutes, he had struggled to run and walk, through this forest. In the beginning, he was just starting to get used to walking and running without any problems and enjoying his new body, however, the happiness turned into a strange feeling as the forest made it almost impossible to enjoy the experience.

"This forest... Is so difficult... To travel through..." Gasping for air every second, Niko murmured to himself.

Even Though his body was healthy again, it did not mean he was in good shape. Thankfully, hunger and thirst didn't seem to affect others in this world making traveling in this forest slightly easier.

"Ugh!" Niko picked himself up as he straightens his back, "Status!"

[Name: Niko Lazar]

Level: 1

Exp: 0%

[Status]

Strength: 1

Constitution: 1

Agility: 1

Intelligence: 1

Mana: 1

Mana Power: 1/1

[Unique Title]

None

[Skills]

“Sigh...” A disappointed look appeared on his face. He expected at least something to change. Usually, when playing the mainstream RPG games, the statuses of beginners would improve extremely fast whenever they did something. Game companies did this to keep the players interested, sadly those who created this world didn't feel the same, or rather couldn't care less.

From what Niko had read in the booklet, this world was a complete replica of an RPG game. The types of games that stereotypical, overweight thirty-year-olds played in their mom's basement, except for a few serious differences. Difficulty. It was like a super hardcore, hardcore mode. One life, pain, injuries, and actual physical effort.

When monsters died, they dropped loot and when someone did something outstanding or different they would be awarded. It was almost like he was truly inside of a game. He always dreamed of being inside of one, leaving earth with his sister to explore another world with magic and a healthy body, however, this wasn't exactly what he had dreamt of.

Niko looked at his surrounding with a dark face. He hadn't seen any other human beings for the last twenty minutes of running. Even the few who also decided to stay back and read the booklet, Niko couldn't find a single trace of them. “That orb said the forest was endless...” Niko began to think.

Suddenly, to his left, he heard a loud scream, “Ahhhh!!!”

The scream wasn't that of pain but surprise. The scream was extremely sudden and as quick as it came, it disappeared.

Niko quickly turned his head towards the direction of the exclamation, “A trap? The scream was that of surprise and nothing else... It was very close too... Surely someone was caught in a trap!” Niko cautiously moved towards that direction, brushing off vines and other greens.

After a few seconds, he was finally out onto an opening without the cluster of green.

What laid in front of him was a hole, about three meters deep with a man on the bottom just picking himself up.

The man was slightly muscular with an average build as he wore a gray shirt, blue jeans, and casual shoes. His hair was short and dirty blonde as well as covered in leaves and sticks. Below the man was a bed of leaves and sticks which should've been the camouflage that hid the hole from others.

Niko inspected the surroundings before anything. The hole wasn't too deep and for this reason, the man wasn't injured. The hole was a replica of a hollowed-out cube, made out of gray stone as the walls inside of the hole were filled with tribal patterns. Niko also noticed that not far away from the wall was a ladder, that allowed movement out and into the hole. The thing that caught Niko's interest the most was the open tunnel entrance on one of the walls of the hole.

"Maybe this is one of those places with rewards that the orb spoke about..." Niko murmured to himself as his gaze moved towards the man.

The man inside of the hole still didn't notice Niko standing above him as he himself began to look at the surroundings.

Niko's suspicion towards the man vanished as he didn't look to be anyone dangerous.

"Hello?" Niko called out from above, startling the man below as he took a few steps back and looked upwards. A surprised and uneasy look appeared on his face as he spoke, "Hey..."

Noticing that the man was cautious, Niko raised both hands, "Don't worry! I'm in the same position as you, I also haven't seen anyone around yet... How did you get down there?"

The man shook his head and sighed, easing up slightly more, "The hole was covered in leaves and I fell for it... But now that I look at it..." The man's eyes moved towards the open tunnel on the wall, "This might not have been so bad after all..."

"Indeed, this might not have been a misfortune for you... This could be one of the rewards that the orb spoke of... I'm Niko, by the way." Niko spoke as he walked towards the ladder.

"Ah! I'm Louis It's a relief finding another human again, I'm guessing you are Belgian as well?" Louis asked.

"Nope. This world has a system that allows us to understand one another. Like one common language amongst all. Hey, how come you're alone? You didn't stay back to

read the booklet..." Niko responded as he began to adjust himself to use the ladder.

"Like everyone else I just ran towards a direction. In the beginning, there were a few people near me, but as if they were teleported, they disappeared. One guy who was near me climbed trees and began going from tree to tree looking for anything he could find. I tried the same, however, I was not experienced in such a thing and became tangled in vines and other crap... I was only able to free myself moments ago... Wait, you stayed to read the booklet? What was in it?"

"Tap!"

"Crack!"

Niko landed on the leaves and sticks that littered the bottom of the hole and spoke, "Just a brief description of the world and a few useful techniques. The information wasn't enough for anything but to give us an idea that this was similar to an RPG game. Also other than status, you can call out the word analyze in your mind to check certain objects and their abilities. I haven't tested this yet. It has to be true, right?"

Niko couldn't trust this man in front of him, therefore, he did not speak of the full contents in the small booklet. Although the booklet was small, it possessed plenty of information, that allowed one to understand things much better.

As Niko spoke, Louis listened carefully as if he was memorizing everything.

Niko continued, "Also, there is an inventory, just like in the online games. If you hold anything on your hand and call out the word store, it will move it to a storage space somewhere else. This won't work in the preparation world as it needs a certain object that will be given once we are in the other world. It should be some kind of watch, but there is a limit to how much you can store... About the space of a closet."

Louis nodded with a smile and extended his hand for a handshake, "Thank you, my friend."

"No problem." Niko said while giving a handshake cautiously, then he moved his eyes towards the opened tunnel on the wall, "So... What about that tunnel over there? Should we go in?"

Louis was eager to enter as he wanted the same as everyone else. He wanted to survive.

"Wait!" Niko stopped Louis, "The orb also spoke of dangers, therefore, we should be careful while inside. We need to work together. The orb spoke as if this was a trial for humans, which means we must all stick together."

Niko spoke this, however, in the back of his mind he was always cautious. Humans were greedy. He himself was a greedy person, and there was not a person besides his sister that he trusted. Once greed filled the mind of a human, they would be unable to care about relationships. For this Niko was still cautious of Louis even after the friendly exchange.

“Right! Let us go then!” Louis said with a smile.

Niko smiled back and said, “After you.”

Both of them walked towards the open tunnelway slowly, as if checking for any defects around them or the tunnel.