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The Angel Does Not Desire the Sky - Chapter 01-03 Part 1

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Track No. 01 – Whisper of Angel (Opening)

Track No. 01 – Whisper of Angel (Opening)

Smash.

The sound of the phone smashing was duller than I had expected. I didn't know if it was because we were in a park where there weren't many people, or if it was just because it had hit a stone railing.

Either way, it was certainly different from what I had imagined.

In my imagination, the cause for the end of the phone would only be as extreme as me dropping it on the ground or in water, either as a result of my own mistake or a collision with another person. Of course, it wasn't like I had never thought about things like breaking it on purpose. However, I did not have the guts to do that. I couldn't just do it in the hopes that it would be reluctantly replaced for a new one if this one was gone. As a matter of fact, it was not difficult to find others who had lost or broken it and had to continue living just as is.

All I could manage was to be subtly harsh – merely placing it down on my desk with a tad more force, or habitually and repeatedly opening and closing it.

To complete my misfortune, the old-fashioned folder phone boasted a fantastic durability, fitting of its appearance. Sometimes I even wondered if mine was exceptionally strong.

Although smartphones were widely spread amongst the students, students who did not fall into that category, like me, also still existed.

'I'll replace it with a new model for you if you enter a good university.'

This sentence that seemed to be the parents' slogan against high school students caused no problem in understanding, even when the part about entering a university was changed into things like receiving a certain grade or achieving a certain something. Also, if one lost in this war that wasn't really a

war, they would have to uncomplainingly use an old-fashioned phone like me.

This push and pull, love-hate relationship was mercilessly crushed by the hand of a girl whom I had just run into.

“Hey.”

It took me a while to realise that that was my voice. Shock and rage tangled together to turn the inside of my head completely white. However, Kim Ahyoung cautiously looked around, without paying a single attention to my remark. After confirming that there were no signs of other human beings, she threw the remaining shards of the phone into the bush.

“I’ll buy you another one.”

The beautiful voice that was said to be incomparable to any musical instrument in this world grimly brought me back to reality. The brown eyes that shined amongst the tree shadows were looking down on me as if to ask: what’s the big deal about a phone?

It was me who felt almost daunted by her piercing confidence.

Kim Ahyoung walked past me while I scavenged for words, then spoke as if this whole situation was troublesome.

“Follow me.”

At first the bathroom, and then the desolate park. I couldn’t even guess where we would go and what we would do this time. I desperately opened my mouth.

“Now where?”

The oversized jumper spun its body around. As if a scarf fixed up high enough to cover her nose and a beanie pulled far down weren’t enough, Kim Ahyoung also had a mask on, and she stared at me as she pulled giant-lensed sunglasses out of her pocket. After glancing around once again, she spoke in a slightly angrier tone of voice.

“I didn’t think you couldn’t understand your situation. You’re smart, so I won’t be warning you again. So, since you are being threatened, how about following me without any complaints, like any other person would when they are threatened?”

After quickly finishing her sentence, Kim Ahyoung turned around while putting on her sunglasses. I had never thought that the word “threat”, a word that made people move regardless of their social status, would ever be associated with me.

The figure of Kim Ahyoung confidently descending the staircase, which was so steep that even the streetlights did not light it properly, with her sunglasses on was enough to drain the energy out of my shoulders.

People sometimes become impetuous and unbearably childish when facing their anxieties.

I thought I felt something smooth underneath my feet as I followed her back.

+ Author's comment : I have to resubmit this ;-;

Track No. 02 – Twinkle (1)

Track No. 02 – Twinkle

Something hard pressed onto my head. Was it time already?

The homeroom teacher often woke me up like this. A student would normally be yelled at if he was indulging in sleep right in front of the teacher's desk, but that also depended on who the student was. In my case, it was deemed as 'I guess he studied all night.' and was ignored to a reasonable degree. Good grades could also be used like this.

However, it had been a long time since I had been woken up like this. Usually, the dude behind me would wake me up beforehand. Could it be that he was also asleep?

I squinted slightly at the bright light and woke up my heavy body.

The sorry that I would always utter to put up a good front. That one word just refused to come out. What entered my sight was the young homeroom teacher, who was smiling so brightly that it was almost creepy –

– and the girl standing next to him.

Sleep ran away at her appearance, which was so unreal that it seemed as if she would ascend to the sky at any moment. Her blonde locks, abundantly wavy, were long enough to almost reach her waist, and delicate facial features that were like those of a doll's were positioned atop her pale skin. Her gentle brown eyes gazed upon me, who had just woken up, as if I had triggered her interest. Though, she averted her gaze as soon as my eyes met hers.

“Angel0?”

Somebody's soft question broke the silence within the classroom, speaking for everybody's feelings. She shyly drew in her shoulders, glanced at the homeroom teacher once, and lightly nodded.

The moment strength entered my fist, shrill screams and excited cheers

exploded.

One who continued to motionlessly stare at her, with his mouth wide agape. One who covered his mouth. One who pinched his own cheek. One who pinched it with him. It wasn't just one or two students who were taking her picture with their phones, and one kid was so excited that he was openly calling someone.

I also took out my phone at the sight, but had to put it away again when I remembered its low-resolution camera. Damn. The fact that, as far as the current situation was concerned, there would be many more chances to take photos was my only consolation.

The homeroom teacher was the first to hang up the call, his face still ruled by a smile, and he settled down the excited students, who had been banging on the table. It was quite obvious that he was looking forward to it as part of the younger generation. Perhaps the students had read his thoughts, since the ruckus toned down into a whisper. However, now the problem lay not within the classroom, but outside.

It seemed that the news had spread as it pleased. The hallway outside the classroom was packed with students who had come to look at Angel0. Various folk songs were obviously sung, and many voices let out unhindered announcements of love, regardless of gender. A few teachers were intervening in an attempt to send the students back, but it was useless.

Although, everyone hushed to listen when, at last, the homeroom teacher reached the limit of his patience and shouted "Let her introduce herself!".

The homeroom teacher lightly signalled with his hand from besides the teacher's desk while repeatedly clearing his throat. It looked like she was going to lightly bite her red lips, but immediately bowed her head in greeting.

"Nice to meet you. I'm Kim Ahyoung."

The resonance of her voice was different from other's. Kim Ahyoung's voice was gentle, yet it powerfully dug into one's ears. It could not possibly be thought of as a human's voice. It was in that moment that I could finally understand why she was "Angel0", and why she was tagged with the word "angel".

The angel moved a step away from the teacher's desk, with a surprised

expression on her face, as the cheers sounded once again. Her blushing, red-tinted cheeks stood out on her especially pale skin.

Then again, her reaction was not very different from any other typical human's.

Angel0, who stood shoulder to shoulder with internationally famous people and sang in front of tens of thousands of people, could not be found. She was fiddling with the ends of her blonde hair, which was like her own symbolic representation, and averting her gaze.

The homeroom teacher spoke while banging on the table once again.

“Now, now. I understand that you're happy, but keep it down. We shouldn't show her such a scene when our Ahyoung has just arrived for the first time.”

As the person sitting at the very front, I wanted to advise him to first do something about his crooning voice and manner of speech. Moreover, our Ahyoung?

Amidst the slightly settled down hubbub, Kim Ahyoung walked towards the back of the classroom, by the homeroom teacher's order. Every time she moved, the gazes of everyone in the classroom followed her movement. It seemed that the empty seat that somebody had placed in the classroom that morning was for her.

As the morning announcement had not progressed properly, the homeroom teacher had given up and exited the classroom after giving simple instructions. While the homeroom and other teachers quelled the commotion outside of the classroom, someone shouted “please give me your signature!”, and the population within the classroom instantly concentrated in the back of the room.

“How long are you gonna stay in Korea?”

“Could you also give me your signature?”

“I love you! Please marry me!”

“I want to listen to you sing!”

“Are there any new songs?”

The students gathered around Kim Ahyoung's seat like a flock of pigeons flying

to eat food, and each of them pulled out the words they had buried in their minds. As an upside amidst the downsides, the group seemed like a fairly good model of a self-governing crime prevention society, as shown by the voluntary handling of some of the kids who lost their minds and went overboard with their comments.

However, the teachers, who realised what the situation was like within the classroom, quickly rushed in, and a considerable amount of time was spent calming down the excited students.

Kim Ahyoung's seat, which was located next to the window at the very back, was still surrounded by people.

The students, who were initially swarming without holding back, regained rationality and began listening to the teachers when two men who seemed to be her bodyguards began standing in the hallway right outside of the classroom. The bodyguards might have been a little dejected. Really, all they did was just stand there. I supposed that what could be called the problem lay in their fashion, which consisted of short hair, sunglasses, and black suits, and was intimidating by itself.

The students of the class were now calmly and quietly engaging in conversation around Kim Ahyoung. The face of the one who was actually important, Kim Ahyoung, could not be seen, and only short words like "Yeah" or "Thank you" could occasionally be heard.

The classroom was divided into two of the following categories.

The enthusiastic ones who approached Kim Ahyoung, and the ones who observed from their seats like me. Although, most of the latter were measuring the timing to join them.

"Hey, can you believe this?"

I turned my head at the question that came from beside me. Before I had realized it, Kyungho was sitting on the chair next to mine, which had no owner.

"What?"

"It's really Angel0."

“I know. She’s behind there.”

He nodded at my lukewarm answer and shouted “Hey! Get out of the way, ‘cause we can’t see her!”. When he even lightly threw a rubber at them, countless pieces of stationery flew towards us, along with curses. I was keeping still!

I replied while throwing back the pen that had struck my head.

“It’s not a zoo or anything. ‘I can’t see’ my ass.”

“Says the one who frantically eyed her from the very front seat.”

Says the one who sat right behind me. The reason this bastard had not woken me up was probably because of this. Since Angel0 had appeared right before his eyes.

“Obviously. It’s not something you see oft.....,”

I shut my mouth without being able to finish my sentence. Shit, I was practically saying what I had just pointed out.

“Yeah. Yeah. I see you’re still a guy, even though you’re just studying all the time.”

A feeling of irritation rushed in as I looked at Kyungho, who made an benevolent expression that seemed to imply that he understood everything.

“Got a problem?”

When I snapped at him, he smiled approvingly and waved his hand.

“None. It’s Angel0, y’know? Anyone would be like that when they see her for reals. Seriously, I got chills when we walked into the classroom. How can a human be so pretty? Isn’t she really an angel?”

Angel.

Chunsa.

TL: Angel in Korean.

That was the common word that the whole world used when referring to Kim Ahyoung. Her concept, which had been inherited from pedigrees of many pop divas. However, he also wondered if he could consider it as just a concept. That

was how overwhelming Kim Ahyoung was.

Now, the sound of the kids whining, with one voice, for Kim Ahyoung to sing for them could be heard. They seemed desperate, since there was not much time left until the start of first period. Though, Kim Ahyoung was constantly refusing to do so.

Her appearance wasn't the only reason why she was called an angel. Her outstanding singing ability was also an important factor that had led her to her current self.

"Hey, don't you have a guitar?"

Kyungho tapped my arm and asked.

"Nope."

"You brought a guitar when we did our music practicals in tenth grade, dude."

This bastard only remembered completely useless stuff. I had only done that because the teacher said that they would give me a higher mark if I brought an instrument that I could play, other than a recorder.

"That's true, but why do you want to know?"

"No, I was just wondering if she would sing if she had accompaniment."

Considering his awkward smile, Kyungho seemed to be inwardly hoping for what the kids in the back were requesting. On the contrary, I shook my head.

"I don't think she'd sing, even if there was. And I don't have a guitar."

"Why? Did you sell it?"

"No. It wasn't mine in the first place."

"Then whose was it?"

I answered with a wave of my hand.

"Anyway, if you have time for such chitchat, hand over the question sheet that you said you were gonna bring yesterday."

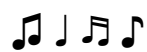
"Oi, how could you even ask me for the question sheet? Really, when there's Angel0 right in front of your eyes?"

“I can’t see her.”

Kyungho returned to his seat while grumbling and rummaged through his backpack. The clicking of his tongue seemed to be particularly loud.

Soon, Kyungho practically threw a few sheets of worksheets at me and joined the crowd at the back. At that moment, a loud cheer echoed, as if Kim Ahyoung had given some kind of an answer.

The ruckus at the back of the classroom continued until the old math teacher who was in charge of the first period class arrived.



If I had to speak at this point in time, after a few days had passed, the normal school life of the superstar seemed perfectly possible.

Bulky men in suits always roamed around the school, many reporters attempted to trespass into the school while avoiding their sight, and when school ended, a luxurious sedan drove into the school field to pick Kim Ahyoung up.

Making do with what they had, the reporters changed their target and turned their microphones to the students who were returning home. As the discontent of the students – and the teachers – became more prevalent, further in-school reporting was prohibited by Kim Ahyoung’s side after a short interview with a few newspapers, TV studios, and magazines that had public confidence. Though, they clearly weren’t free from the pressure of the media. Also, an autograph meeting was held in the assembly hall, for the students. It was an event that could properly soothe the students who were excited about this and that.

Even so, excluding the series of small incidents as stated above, she seemed to be leading the life of a typical student to anybody who watched.

Firstly, Kim Ahyoung easily befriended people.

+ Author’s comment : Since it’s completed anyway, I’ll submit it in parts...

Track No. 02 – Twinkle (2)

Track No. 02 – Twinkle (2)

Perhaps on the first day, she had just been intimidated by the atmosphere that she had encountered for the first time. Within a few days, she showed the side of a normal high school girl who was amiable and outgoing, and had created a natural talking relationship with the girls in our class.

On top of that, what took me by slight surprise was that Kim Ahyoung also showed considerable enthusiasm in her studies.

Although not even a week had passed since her transfer, and she had never properly attended school before, she could not be free from the term finals that were not far away, since she was also a student. However, Kim Ahyoung seemed to enjoy this situation that one could consider unfair. The sight of her sticking right next to the teacher or her classmates to ask questions was a sight that could be seen often, right from the day after her transfer.

If the situation above wasn't the case, Kim Ahyoung would put her earphones on and listen to music alone; this was the one moment when nobody in the class interrupted her. It seemed that everyone had agreed upon the fact that they should not bother an international pop star while she was listening to music. To be honest, when I saw that, I thought that maybe it wouldn't be too bad to become famous. It wasn't often that one could experience another person respecting one's private time.

Perhaps because I was exhausted by the commotion that continued for days, I oftentimes collapsed onto my bed when I returned home late from cram school.

Today as well, the finals practice questions that the homeroom teacher gave us to finish until tomorrow remained unfinished, but my fatigued body stuck to the comfortable blankets and refused to separate from them. Of course, yesterday, when I had to return from exercise, was more tiring than today, but the past was just the past. All I could do was stretch my arm to take out the CD player from the set of drawers beside my bed.

When I pressed the play button, grand orchestral music rolled out immediately. It seemed to fade out in an instant while the piano solo replaced it, and a girl's voice was quietly placed on top. It was a young voice, but it could be instantly recognised that it was the voice that I had heard today as well.

The voice whispered as if it was tickling somebody, then exploded powerfully at the refrain. The resonant singing ability held a different charm from the earlier voice. I licked my dry lips and took out a music album from one of the drawers.

The album that I had listened to just once, after receiving it as a gift four years ago, was still as good as new. Even though, of course, the lack of fingerprints on an object symbolised just that much ignorance.

On the album cover, a girl with a bright expression was smiling while her blonde hair hung loose. Underneath it, a brilliant cursive engraved in intaglio caught one's eyes.

Angel0.

A musical prodigy, born between a famous Korean composer father and a famous English pianist mother, who had been called a genius since young age.

It was the first album of Angel0, Kim Ahyoung.

She had been riding on fame even before her debut, being called a prodigy in her early days because of her beautiful appearance and outstanding skills. Although she received more attention from our country early in her career, as half of her blood was Korean, her multilingualism was not only limited to Korean and English, her appearance was said to be the advent of an angel, and her singing ability that the sky had gifted her with made her a worldwide star in a flash. Now, due to her endless activities, she had climbed up to a position where she was competing side-by-side against internationally recognised top singers.

In the beginning of November, the news that she was a fixed nominee for a few authoritative music awards this year as well was spreading quickly.

No more than two weeks ago, Kim Ahyoung announced a hiatus out of the blue.

Since it was Kim Ahyoung, who had held a concert the very day before, the announcement of her indefinite hiatus was enough to push the world into shock.

Soon, press interviews around the world relayed the news live, but Kim Ahyoung merely confirmed her hiatus by saying that she would take some time to recharge.

It was obvious that the mass media was stimulated by her transfer to our school not long afterwards. Meaningless speculative articles and rumours of all natures regarding her hiatus and transfer spread, but Kim Ahyoung's side did not pay a hair of attention. When many conspiracy theories circulated, our school merely replied by repeatedly saying that "her father wished to send his daughter to alma mater, which was our school".

As such, Kim Ahyoung was enjoying her school life as normally as possible. My normal and cozy school life would be maintained by concentrating on my studies, rather than taking an interest in gossip and laying about.

I once again organized everything into the drawers and sat in front of the desk. I was just looking through my bag and taking out a sheet full of questions when I suddenly felt my phone vibrating.

Why did these things only happen when a student decided to study?

I answered the phone with deploration.

"Hello?"

「Moi.」

It was a familiar woman's voice. However, she was talking jabber. When I stayed silent, subsequently once again.

「Moi.」

I was wondering how I should respond when that mysterious sound echoed again.

「Moi.」

"..... Moi."

「Whoa, awesome. As expected of my little brother! How did you understand a Finnish greeting?」

(TL: Koreans commonly refer to their cousins as if they are siblings. This also applies to co-workers.)

When I imitated her word like a parrot, a speech of praise towards me,

together with a cheer, came through the earpiece. When I checked the screen of the phone, I noticed that the arrangement of the telephone numbers were strange and unfamiliar to me.

Did this human really just call me from Finland?

I pretended not to feel anything and grumbled into the phone.

“Finnish or Danish or whatever – why should I care? Do you know what time it is now?”

「Where are your manners to your older sister, who even took the effort to call you via an international call from the hotel? Do you wanna get scolded?」

“Do *you* wanna get scolded by auntie because you called at 1 a.m.?”

「So petty! Don't tell on Mom!」

One could easily win when they seized the opposition's weakness.

“You went travelling in secret again, didn't you?”

「Yeah.」

Sangah-noona answered obediently, quickly disheartened by my criticising manner of speech. At any rate, she called for a good cause, and I didn't feel very good listening her respond with this kind of attitude either.

As a kind younger brother, I decided to cheer her up.

“So you wanted to boast about it? Finland is awesome?”

「Yeah! It's seriously like heaven here! This is the promised land of metal! The you in my fantasy!」

(TL: “The you in my fantasy!” is a reference to a well known 90's song by Seo Taeji.)

I really did not agree with the last statement.

I could tell how excited noona was from how the tone of voice rose rapidly. She was a high-tensioned person to begin with, but I could feel that she was having fun just from hearing her voice over the earpiece.

Finland was a place that was often mentioned when I talked with Sangah-noona. I was never the expert in it, but noona would always excitedly spill out an ode to that country of rock.

I quickly asked, in order to seal Sangah-noona's mouth as she started to rattle on and brag about her plans one by one.

“Are you travelling with your band people again?”

「Yeah. We met up with a few other band people over here and drank 'til dawn! Everyun's knocked out. I'm the first to wake up. Just now!」

Ah, my head. Though, it should be okay since she wasn't the type to show bad drinking habits – I knew since I had cleaned up after her multiple times – I offered a moment of silence for the people who had collapsed in front of Sangah-noona's drinking capacity, which was said to be undefeatable even by men who had a fair tolerance against alcohol.

Oblivious to my thoughts, Sangah-noona let out a silly laugh that seemed to show her happiness: 「Hehehe.」 It was clear that she was calling while she was still hungover. *Don't go all drunk-crazy on a minor, woman.*

“It's past midnight here. Time for good children to go to bed.”

「It's not even five over here. But it's already dark! So there ain't much difference from there. It's dark all the same.」

No, there are a lot of differences.

「So anyway, we've decided that we'll go see a dinosaur after lunch tomorrow!」

“A dinosaur?”

「Yeah. Apparently dinosaurs perform here.」

I changed my voice into one with a depressing tone.

“I'm sorry, noona. I didn't know. You sound like you've been through a lot.”

「Don't treat me like a madman! What I'm saying is that there's a band called Heavy Saurus here! Though, it's a project band!」

So, to summarise Sangah-noona's explanation that continued on and on, it seemed that famous musicians were gathering to dress up as dinosaurs and play rock music to children. They were also performing only during the day, and limiting the volume for the wellbeing of the children's ears.

The question *why?* automatically popped into my head, but it seemed like it was the country of rock, after all. They were even providing the children with prerequisite learning.

「It's so awesome here! I wanna live here!」

“Settle down well.”

Sangah-noona once again began to scold me with an agitated voice at my cold response. The current drift of world affairs this, kids these days that. To summarise again, she was complaining *how could you do this to me, your older sister.*

Sick of listening to Sangah-noona whine, I changed the subject with another question.

“Noona, didn't you say that you have a concert planned for next month?”

「So that old man..... Yeah! There's a month left.」

She was easy to deal with. Though, perhaps it was because I was her younger brother.

「It's like celebrating New Year's Eve, though it will be held on the 30th, which is three days earlier! You could call it a New Year's Eve's Eve's Eve celebration.」

You mean New Year's Eve's Eve.

“But, what *are* you doing in Finland?”

「Playing. No, watching performances. No, I'm studying! Musical studies!」

There was no use for fixing her answer three times.

Being consistent with my silence for a while, I shifted my gaze to the printout. Around the time I had finished solving question 2 in my head and provided an answer, she returned an apology in a depressed voice,

「Sorry.」

“So when are you coming back?”

「Next month?」

“I'm hanging up.”

「No! No! Don't hang up! I'm returning on the flight on the 1st! It's okay!」

I sighed deeply at Sangah-noona's desperate answer and continued.

“Noona. It's true that I don't know anything about concerts, but can you do that?”

「I came because it's all manageable. This noona ain't an amateur, after all. My younger brother doesn't have to worry about a thing! Plus, there isn't much difference since the last concert. The new song is also still in development.」

If my memory was correct, her last concert was held almost a year ago. The awkward laugh that followed concerned me.

「No, no. I didn't call you to be interrogated by you like this!」

Sangah-noona ceased her laughter and lowered her voice.

「I've got something to ask you.」

“What is it?”

「Angel0.」

“Oh, that.”

「What do you mean *that*?! Apologise to my love!」

Sangah-noona is Angel0's fan. She nicknamed her 'my love'.

She was always showing her passionate love by doing things like concentrating on propagation by always giving Angel0-related products to people around her, and singing Angel0's songs during her concerts, with personal remixes of various styles.

In fact, it was strange that she had only called now, when a few days had already passed, since even if she was in Finland, news of Angel0, which was worth top news material would have been around.

「I was just roaming around the hotel drunk, and guess what I find – my love on the newspaper that was written in unreadable letters! We actually came to Finland because of the shock of Angel0's hiatus. My gang wanted to wake me up. I guess nothing caught my eyes, since I've been drinking non-stop after coming here. So I just grabbed onto a random passer-by and asked in body

language. *Angelo in Korea? Yes, Angelo in Korea!*」

(TL: Italicized part was in English.)

Don't roam around drunk in a foreign hotel! No, don't drink for so long in the first place! You obviously couldn't see, because your eyes would've been filled with alcohol, and not tears! Also, English is the world's common language, not a body language! Are you a primary school kid?! Is that the best you could do?!

Which was shortened into,

“Great job.”

「Don't talk like my mom!」

A headache started up when I realised that this situation would be the trial version of my aunt. On the contrary, since she was a woman who hardly stayed in her house, I might have been the one who was suffering the most. Dammit.

“She's in my class.”

「I love you!」

“Why?”

「So you can do me a simple favour, right, oppa?」

“Why am I your oppa?”

「Bring her to our concert! Please!」

“If we *were* that close, I would've already received a signed CD and bragged to you.”

To be honest, I was just rubbing my chest in relief. Although it wasn't a CD, I had a poster that I had signed, to give Sangah-noona.

「Then *become* close to her by the end of this month.」

“Easier said than done.”

Without even knowing my good intention of secretly preparing a gift for her, Sangah-noona said something absurd without changing her tone. What would happen if noona met Kim Ahyoung in real life? I chuckled as I imagined noona running straight to her.

「Ah, I gotta hang up.」

Sangah-noona, who was saying things like I had no courage or that I was unmanly, suddenly changed her words. I could faintly hear someone calling noona over the phone. It seemed like other people were looking for noona.

「I think the other people woke up. I better wake Jinhee up, too. Whoa, I feel like the phone charges are gonna be high. Also, you gotta bring her to the concert, okay? I'll call you as soon as I arrive in Korea.」

She hung up without even waiting for my answer. After gazing at the screen, which showed quite a long call time, I folded my phone loudly and put it down.

I always felt exhausted after a chat with Sangah-noona. However, that feeling included a pleasant tiredness. Noona was the most free-looking person I had ever known, and whenever I listened to her playful voice, I felt as if I was being assimilated to it.

Though, I couldn't stop my sigh from escaping at the reality that I had not even touched question three, much less the rest of the questions.



Although it was a settled conviction, I was sure that the bastard called time was apathetic to human affairs. One could learn that from the fact that exam period had arrived, regardless of the various big and little things. Just because our class kids were together with a superstar did not mean that we would be freed from that pressure. After all, the superstar herself could not avoid it.

The fourth day of exams.

When I finished the sundry job that the homeroom teacher had asked me to do and returned to the classroom, only my backpack remained on my desk.

Our school did not enforce cleaning duties during exam period. Instead, the class rep and the vice class rep did a quick sweep, in turns, and today just turned out to be my turn. I recalled Kyungho leaving after the exam while smiling.

Although, normally, my irritation would have boiled a little when I saw this empty classroom, my mood today was not bad at all. More than anything, it was because I had done well on the tests today. On top of that, the fact that the remainder of the tests I had were only on the subjects that I was confident in made me even more positive.

I wiped the board and got rid of the pieces of paper that had fallen on the floor and stood out. As I looked around the classroom, something caught my eyes.

It was a pair of earphones that was sticking out of a desk.

These sorts of things happened sometimes. Cases when people accidentally just left their belongings there out of habit, in a seat that did not belong to them. Since we changed the seating plan every day during exam period, it took a little while for me to remember who had sat there today.

It was Kim Ahyoung.

+ Author's comment: Uyaeengg I can't wrwiiiiitteesmddke

Track No. 02 – Twinkle (3)

Track No. 02 – Twinkle (3)

When we were doing the morning seating check, she was definitely sitting in this seat. Now that I recalled it, those earphones also remained in my memory. They were undoubtedly the pair that Kim Ahyoung was using.

When I pulled out the earphones, a mp3 player followed, as if it was obvious. Although it was a famous product, it wasn't in a great state, since it was an old product that had been well-known since I was young. It also had so many scratches here and there that it automatically made me squint. The expectation that Kim Ahyoung's company would provide her with the newest product merely seemed to be a figment of my worldly imagination.

What kind of music does Kim Ahyoung listen to?

It was a sudden curiosity. Trending new songs like any other kids? Classical music from the influence of her mother? Or perhaps she only had her own songs in it.

I fiddled with the power button, which was worn out to the point that even its touch on my finger was faint. Thinking 'It's just out of curiosity', I turned on the mp3 player.

An unexpected aggressive timbre dug into my ears, which had been swollen with unknown anticipation, like that of a primary school child opening an encyclopedia full of pictures. I pulled out the earphones right away, but the sound was already filling up the silent classroom.

It was band music that could only be described as clamorous. The sound of the guitar shot up, oblivious to the height of the sky, and the drums also felt as if they were mincing the inside of my head. I could only just make out that the vocal, whose voice was husky as if it was being squeezed out of the throat, was in English.

There was no beautiful piano melody that could not seem to separate from her

voice, nor any brilliant orchestra tunes that had been based on famous classical music. There weren't many differences even when I tried playing other songs. The atmosphere of the song itself was the only difference; they were all rock.

I quit looking through her mp3 player. It was similar to the feeling that I had felt some time ago, when I had used Sangah-noon's laptop.

Why were these people so obsessed?

"It's Crimson Glory's 『Red Shark』."

A girl's voice reached my ears, together with the sound of the classroom door opening.

Kim Ahyoung's flourishing, long blonde hair fluttered as she entered the classroom, wearing a maroon coat. Although her face was flushed red and her breathing was jagged, her gaze was glued to my hand.

It was the first time I had seen her cold gaze.

"Since you learned the name of that song, I don't think you need to keep it on."

As I hurriedly turned off the mp3 player at her quiet words, she approached me before I could notice and snatched it from my hand. Although her earphones flew in a wide parabola and hit Kim Ahyoung's shoulder, she ignored it and held her mp3 player to her chest.

Shortly after putting it neatly away in her coat pocket, Kim Ahyoung took out her phone from her other pocket and contacted someone.

"I found it."

After finishing the short, one-sided call, she stretched her arm and closed the open door. In the classroom where only the two of us remained, I merely fiddled with my fingers, avoiding Kim Ahyoung's gaze. No sound came from the outside.

"No, er....."

Kim Ahyoung's gaze seem to turn even more fierce every time she blinked. I tried my best to think of an excuse, but the words just scrambled across my brain, unable to be arranged into a sentence that could be spoken. Perhaps she felt sorry for me, who was in a panic under the pressure of the atmosphere; Kim

Ahyoung opened her mouth first, smiling slightly.

“What was the first song that you heard?”

“.....I don’t know.”

Kim Ahyoung wiped the smile off her face at my answer.

“At least you’re honest.”

After mumbling dryly, Kim Ahyoung continued in a slightly more energetic voice.

“I’ll get straight to the point. What you have seen and heard in my mp3 player, do not tell anyone. If you do open your mouth, at that moment,”

Kim Ahyoung came closer without finishing her sentence. When she was close enough that our fields of vision were filled with each other’s faces, her breath reached me. I saw her eyes, which were turned up, disregarding the height difference between her and me. When her brown eyes, wrapped in those long eyelashes, captured me,

You’ll be finished.

Her slightly dry lips moved silently.

Tearing off her body, which had been glued against mine, Kim Ahyoung made a satisfied face. It seemed that she had enjoyed my stiffened expression quite a bit.

“I didn’t think that I’d be this stupid either. I was thinking that studying while competing was quite thrilling and enjoyable, but it seems like I was stressed as well. To think that I left this behind while thinking about tomorrow’s exam..... Though it is unbelievable, what am I supposed to do when it has already happened? Of course, it is my fault that I left it behind, but I guess it doesn’t matter since it’s your fault for looking through it without permission. That’s right. You might ask why I’m reacting like this for such a small thing – for listening to some music. But, I could also ruin your life, since that’s a small thing to me. Imagine how I could do that by yourself. Though, you won’t need to if you’re always silent, like you are now.”

“.....You don’t really need to tell me all that.”

“What’s that? So you *can* speak properly.”

I cut off her speech with my tongue which was still stiff and not working well. It was a rebellion that sprang out at her obvious threat. Did they call this sort of thing useless pride? Somehow entertained by my reaction, Kim Ahyoung laughed out loud.

“What I could do right now would be,”

Kim Ahyoung suddenly began to undo the buttons of her coat. When the front hem of her uniform was revealed, this time she moved her hands to the buttons of her blouse.

“What are you doing?”

Without even reacting to my bewildered voice, Kim Ahyoung undid the buttons on her blouse just like that. To my relief, she wore a white t-shirt inside. I slightly averted my gaze.

“Did you anticipate something? Don’t worry. I don’t go *that* wild.”

You are going wild enough. I clenched my teeth at her trick. Though, I would be lying if I said that I, as a male, wasn’t secretly anticipating something. My face flared up.

“Anyway, this is about as much as I could simply do right now. Though it’s not particularly a preferable measure, it’s not anything I can’t do. That’s how bad my situation is. Even if I do it, there could be solutions such as you transferring into a different school or running away overseas, but there won’t be much effect. Since you’d be the guy who tried to rape Angel0. If you really want to become infamous like that, I will hand it over.”

Kim Ahyoung mixed in the joke that was in trend on the internet, lightly pulling on the collar of her blouse. Although I would have to shout “*I don’t need it!*” in response to play along, my back was too wet to do so.

(TL: Famous Korean meme, referring to a manhwa drawn by Kim Sungmo.)

“Now that I think, isn’t this the first time that we have talked properly like this? But to think that it had to be like this.....I do feel a little sorry.”

No signs of regret could be found in the words that she spat as she adjusted her clothes. Regardless of my nerves, which were relieved in the atmosphere

that was now somewhat relaxed, Kim Ahyoung crossed her arms, thinking for a moment.

“Yeah. This doesn’t really feel right. I’ll explain it simply. You like studying, right?”

It was a suddenly introduced question, but a simple one at that. The answer came easily.

“No.”

When I answered concisely, Kim Ahyoung asked in a slightly surprised tone.

“You don’t like studying? You were always holding onto books, no?”

“I do it because they make me. There’s also no downside in doing it.”

Kim Ahyoung replied “I see,” and scanned me from top to bottom. What was up with this woman? However, that was only for a short while; she did not even allow me the time to say something.

“Still, you are able to say so to anybody. Do you like this? Yes. Do you hate this? No. But I can’t do that.”

I couldn’t understand the meaning of her words. When I kept silent, Kim Ahyoung added right away, probably realising that there wasn’t enough explanation.

“Because I’m a top star.”

Her eyes as she spoke were serious, but I made a dumbfounded face.

“Why? It’s the truth.”

Kim Ahyoung continued before I could say anything.

“There’s a thing called image, right? The more easily people like me are exposed to the public, the better we have to manage it. What you heard back then for sure wouldn’t fit the image of me that you normally had in mind.”

I nodded my head.

“See? I’m saying that that’s what’s dangerous. All the more so if you’re young or when you are direct with the public. Apparently, that’s what it’s like to be a public figure. An image that is different from usual undoubtedly creates

rumours, and at the same time, you can't know how a stretched imagination might change. It means that it is easy for the world to shake me."

Kim Ahyoung quietly stopped her words there. When I was about to say something to find out what was wrong, the sound of someone coming up the stairs could be heard in between delicate breaths. Though, it soon died down and disappeared.

It was something that I had not noticed before she stopped her speech. Could she hear such a noise, even when she was the one who was talking? After casually showing her monstrous auditory acuity, she breathed once and started again as if it was nothing.

"Anyway, this is also a policy that my dad decided. Of course, there is also my personal reason. There isn't a big difference just because I'm a top star. People all wish to protect what they have. I'm also like that. And that's why I'm threatening you like this."

Just then – perhaps somebody had dropped a mop – a lively sound that vibrated the floor rang out. I flinched and thought that it was some crappy timing, but it was possible that Kim Ahyoung had aimed for it. However, she had nonchalantly took out her phone and was operating it this way or that. It was a relief that she did not stop talking even while she did that, since I was too overwhelmed by this situation to say anything.

"Just now, I ordered some people to make it so that nobody could get out of the school. It's simple if I tell them that there is an important track that I am currently working on. It would also appear on the newspaper or on news channels, but I can always cover that level of mass communication. Do you think that I'm overreacting over just an mp3 player?"

I was unable to open my mouth. It didn't seem like Kim Ahyoung wanted my answer, either.

"I've already talked about image. And the ones who know about this mp3 is just the two of us. Since there is no way that I would say anything about this when not even my family knows about it, I will come to suspect you if there is any sort of a strange rumour. So you better be careful. I told you that this is a threat. Since it would look bad if I took too much time after calling them that I

had found it, I'll get going."

Quickly finishing her speech, Kim Ahyoung spun her body around. Just before she opened the door, I managed to open my mouth, after licking my dry lips once.

"Hey, you see, I'm sorry for listening to it on my own accord."

"It's not something that can be solved by apologising. It's also my fault for leaving it behind. Thanks anyway."

After flatly replying to my apology, Kim Ahyoung opened the door and stepped out of the classroom. Her last words seeped in through the open crack in the door.

"Do your best in your exam studies, Jun."

Kim Ahyoung in the screens, Kim Ahyoung that I saw in the classroom, and even Kim Ahyoung just now. To sparkle never meant only to shine.

I stood in the classroom for a while, dumbfounded, with my head in a state of chaos.

A few days later, an interview of Kim Ahyoung, explaining that she had caused a disturbance at school because she had lost a precious gift that she had received from a fan and apologising for the fuss, flowed out from the news. It was the first official interview in the two weeks since the high school transfer conference.

I closed my room door. The sound of the television that was coming from the living room could no longer be heard.

+ Author's comment: Yay Track 2 is done!

Track No. 03 – On the Melody (1)

Track No. 03 – On the Melody (1)

The end of term exams passed by safely. My marks weren't bad. Except for the fact that I had unexpectedly gotten a lot incorrect in English, which I was confident in.

The second day after the beginning of winter holidays, I hurriedly got out of the study space when my phone rang while I was solving some questions in my workbook. To my surprise, the person who called me was my homeroom teacher.

“Hello?”

「Jun. This is your homeroom teacher; can you talk now?」

“Ah, how are you? Of course I can.”

「I'm sorry if you were studying. It's just that...I was wondering if you had received any calls or something like that from Ahyoung.」

The homeroom teacher's voice sounded somewhat nervous.

“Kim Ahyoung?”

「Yes. Kim Ahyoung. Did you receive a call or hear anything from her?」

“I didn't get anything. Is something going on?”

「No, that's fine, then. It's nothing. Anyway, I noticed that your english marks had gone down in the finals.....」

Afterwards, the homeroom teacher dragged the call on and on with talk about my marks. Just about when irritation started to boil, the call ended with his request to call him right away if I had reached Kim Ahyoung.

Did something happen to Kim Ahyoung?

The day after the threatening incident, Kim Ahyoung came to school like

nothing had ever happened.

Once in a while, she would throw a glance towards me without anybody noticing, but her general attitude towards me also did not change. That would be evidence that I had acted with care. In the end, I could say that the whole thing had gone smoothly, considering the fact that I was threatened by an international star. At the very least, I would not have to be nervous during the holidays.

When I gave myself to the 200 won's worth of warmth that was dispensed from the vending machine, my phone rang once again.

(TL: 200 won is ~20 cents.)

“Hello?”

「Yo, Yu Jun. You got a call from Homeroom, right?」

It was Kyungho.

“How do you know that?”

「I also got it just now. I told him to try calling you, since you were close to Ahyoung.」

How about I just report this bastard to the police for dissemination of false information?

「So, you don't know anything? Really?」

“Why are you asking me? I've never been close to her.”

「What the hell are you talking about? It's not just a few times that I've spotted you and Ahyoung talk. I think during the exam period, from my memories. Didja lure her into studying with you, after pretending that you weren't interested? Didn't she also ask you questions often?」

“Kim Ahyoung just asked everyone who studied quite a bit. She went to you often, too.”

To confess, the frequency of conversation between me and Kim Ahyoung did rise after the day she threatened me. Kim Ahyoung was the one who approached me, perhaps to continuously pressure and observe me, but it might've looked different in the eyes of other people who did not know this inside story.

「I'm first place in this school and you're not, though.」

..... This rotten bastard was annoying me.

「So I even spread a rumour that you had probably clasped her weakness.」

“So it wasn't spread, but you spread it?”

「Is that the important thing right now?」

It is really important to me, y'know?!

However, I could not bring myself to interrupt him after hearing the serious words that followed.

「What's important now is that something's happened to Ahyoung. Otherwise, there's no way that Homeroom would be so secretive and call everyone individually. Is there really nothing that you've heard or anything?」

“No. I also told Homeroom that there isn't. Rather, didn't you get along with her better than I did?”

It seemed like his voice had diminished a little when I answered gruffly. Despite how he seemed, that Kyungho bastard excelled academically and had good social skills, so he was definitely closer to Kim Ahyoung than I was.

「That's true.」

“There's no way that you called to tell me your personality. So in the end, you don't know either, do you?”

「That's why I called, man. Who knows, maybe you're really her hidden boyfriend, though you pretend not to be at school.」

“Then. I will be hanging up.”

Ignoring Kyungho's desperate cry to not hanging up, I closed my cell phone. Cunt, saying useless stuff when he doesn't even have information. I took out the battery, as the vibration sounded before long.

I was kind of worried that he might spread even this as a weird rumour, but it seemed like there wouldn't be a huge problem, seeing how the person whom the rumour concerned did not notice the rumour going around the school.

Did something really happen to Kim Ahyoung? Like Kyungho had said, it made

no sense for me to receive a call when there was nothing happening.

I chugged down the lukewarm coffee in one go.

“Here, here!”

There was a hand held high up in the air. Unsatisfied by that, it was being spun around. The fancy accessories that hung from her wrist sparkled. Although it was probably an action done because of her acknowledgement of her own shortness, it was also an action that drew the eyes of the passersby.

I approached Sangah-noona with a dissatisfied expression. On the contrary, she jumped into my arms, smiling brightly. The guitar slung over my back lightly hit the back of my head, unable to withstand the rebound. Since I could feel how happy she was to see me, I loosened my scowl and lightly scolded her.

“Stop doing that embarrassing stuff when you’re always at the usual meeting place.”

When I subtly imitated Sangah-noona’s gesture, she frowned and stuck out her tongue. Her eyes became fierce when I flicked her forehead while she was off guard like that. The error was the fact that she wasn’t scary at all.

However, Sangah-noona quickly loosened her frown and rejoiced at the guitar that hung from my back.

“You brought it? What’s up with our Scaredy-Jun?”

“You told me to bring it with me.”

Noona narrowed her eyes once again at my gruff reply.

“What’s that attitude to your older sister, who you’ve just met after a long time?!”

“I didn’t tell aunt anything yet.”

“Oh, my sweet little brother. You devilishly pretty thing.”

I wondered if the word “devilishly” could be used as a compliment. However, I followed Sangah-noona without saying anything, as it seemed like the right thing to do as the younger brother to just overlook it, not to mention that she mellowed down right away.

“Is it okay for you to not be in the concert venue?”

“It’s just for a little while. I’ll just consider this as a break. Though, it seemed to be getting busier and busier.”

All the more reason you should help out.

I flicked her forehead once again, but this time she didn’t show much reaction. Instead, her pace became faster as she walked right beside me, perhaps feeling guilty at my words. I abruptly started a conversation with her back as she walked a little past me.

“Aren’t you cold?”

“Huh? Ah.”

Sangah-noona stopped, looked back at me, and looked down at her own body. Inside her black leather jacket was a glamorous tank top embedded with cubic zirconia that were arranged in an outrageous pattern; the neck was low-cut, emphasising her curvy torso. Her tight miniskirt was full of gaudy decorations, giving me an approximate idea of the atmosphere of today’s performance.

“Weather is not a problem to rock!”

(TL: Rock as in the genre of music, not an actual rock.)

Although Sangah-noona rolled her hands into a small fist and said that with vigor, it probably wasn’t only because of her small figure that she looked pitiful. I undid my scarf and wrapped it around her.

“What are you gonna do if you catch a cold, when you have to perform soon?”

“Rock stays together with the cold, too. It doesn’t abandon anyone. Hehe. It’s warm.”

Sangah-noona buried her nose into the scarf I gave her and laughed with satisfaction. See? It would be weirder if she wasn’t cold, since it was January the day after tomorrow.

“My little brother grew up enough to worry about his older sister. This older sister is very touched. My little brother must be popular, too! Right?”

“Well, apparently I’m rumoured to be a jerk who holds onto girls’ weaknesses.”

Though it was doubtful as to whether or not that rumour was properly spread.

I knocked on her head again as Sangah-noona made a commotion, screaming and squealing things like “Those bitches! I’ll never let them eat up my little brother! Not before I get dirt in my eyes!”

Don’t call people you don’t know bitches. Nobody tried to eat me up. And what does holding onto somebody’s weakness have to do with me being eaten? Should I actually spray dirt at her? Moreover, don’t do that in the middle of the street and embarrass me.

Before those countless nagging words, I realised that I had said something unnecessary. More than anything, you don’t have the luxury to act so relaxed, woman.

As she rambled on noisily about how women were dangerous creatures and that I must never live my life enslaved, I half dragged her and hurried to the performance venue.

[Club MM]

I pushed Sangah-noona into a building with a familiar sign. When we stepped into the entrance of the venue after a long walk into the basement level, I could see people moving busily about in the still frigid air.

“You pass as a manager. Good job dragging the escaper back here.”

A giant shadow approached us first, but before anything else, I refuted what he said, since it did not please me.

“I’m not her manager...”

Anyway, I see this person really sneaked out secretly.

Myungjoo-hyung ruffled my hair and turned up the corners of his lips at my edgy answer. It was something that only this guy, who well exceeded 190 centimetres, could do casually, as I wasn’t on the short side, either. Due to his height, it was a great sight to behold when he stood next to the somebody who was hopping beside me.

“Don’t act so stiff when we’ve met after such a long time, man. Come and show yourself more often.”

“I’m in twelfth grade now. I can’t hang around all that freely.”

“Wow— really? Y’ ain’t human.”

I am human.

“Then is it all right for you to come out like this? Don’t you have to be stuck in the library or at school?”

“That’s why I came secretly. I told them that I was going to the library. I figured I sometimes need a little change of pace and some pocket cash.”

Myungjoo-hyung’s eyebrows twitched cheekily at the word “sometimes”, but I decided not to pay attention to it. His mouth seemed to itch, wanting to somehow tackle my words, but it would be the correct answer for me to just take it at my pace and ignore him. I was taught that I would lose if I was bothered by every petty little thing.

However, it was Sangah-noona, who was sticking tightly by my side, who tackled me in the end. Noona pointed her finger at me and laughed craftily.

“I’m gonna tell youngest aunt! Auntie~ Jun~ said that he was going to the library~ and came to play~.”

Sangah-noona began to tease me with gestures that were cute in their own ways. However, in my eyes, all I could think was that it was unseemly, and in front of so many others, too.

“What do you say? If you plead for my forgiveness, I’ll at least think about lessening it to filling her in with just a few bits and pieces.”

I answered Sangah-noona, who was posing proudly with her arms crossed.

“Then I’ll tell her that I couldn’t help it, since it was your earnest request.”

“When did I ever?!”

“Let’s see, the text that I received last night.....”

“Sorry.”

Sangah-noona quickly admitted her defeat.

“Hey, over there! Stop goofing around and get to work!”

Angry scolding rang out from inside. It was Jinhee-noona, who was working diligently as usual. We all raced to the stage head-to-head at the angry voice that echoed through the venue.

A loud cheer filled the building when the splendid lights turned on. Sangah-noona's resonant voice followed the rough echo of the guitar. Her high-heeled boots, which emphasised the beauty of her curves, hit the ground in rhythm, and her short hair that shook repeatedly awoke the liveliness onstage.

I was enjoying her performance, sitting on the short flight of stairs right beside the stage that connected the stage and the waiting room. Although, the audience would only be able to see black fabric.

This place that Sangah-noona showed me was one of the best locations in [Club MM]. Although there were two drawbacks in that I couldn't make a loud noise and that I had to twist my body back, it was a place that allowed me to watch and feel the heat of the stage more clearly than anyone else. The vibrations of the bass drum that Myungjoo-hyung played caused a numbness to run up my hips.

+ Author comment: Start of chapter threeeeeeeeeee