

Debuff Master

#Chapter 1 –

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Prologue

I asked, “I cannot get any stronger than this... I do not have any talent, money, or even luck just like you said, Master. How am I supposed to become stronger, then?”

My master replied, “Being stronger than your enemy is not the only way to win in a fight.”

“*Huh?* What do you mean... by that... Master?” I could not help but ask in response.

“*Tsk tsk!* How stupid and foolish can you be? You can just make your enemies weaker than you! Weaker! It’s as simple as that! Just make them become weaker than you!” my master replied with a hint of frustration in his voice.

‘*Weaker... than me...?*’ I thought.

It felt as if I was hit by a hammer on my head the moment I heard my master’s words.

I would just have to make my enemies weaker than me if I couldn’t become stronger than them—I had never even thought of doing that.

“You just have to make them weaker than you, and then...” My master paused for a moment before he continued, “Kill them in one blow. It wouldn’t look cool if you have to hit them twice, so it has to be in a single blow.”

That day, I was reborn as a being who made my enemies weaker than me before killing them in a single blow.

I became renowned as the ‘Debuff Master’.

Brave New World, otherwise known as BNW, was an MMORPG open-world game that boasted the largest scale in the history of video games.

Brave New World was a game where the user's freedom was guaranteed.

It had a humongous thirty million square kilometers world map and more than two billion NPCs along with almost endless content to be explored.

The game perfectly replicated the graphics of the real world on top of the realistic replication of the human senses.

In short, BNW was not a game but another world.

Thanks to that, Brave New World managed to attract more than one hundred million users in its first year, and it captivated the entire world.

I was also captivated by BNW, and I jumped headfirst into this otherworldly game.

The reason was simple—money.

I started due to the fact that one could make money by simply playing BNW, but when I discovered my hidden talent within the game, I started playing purely to make a living.

I was good at the game.

I reached Level 151 as an 'Elemental Mage,' which was just a normal class, and I became the guild master of the 'Beamer Guild,' which boasted around two hundred active members, in my first year of playing the game.

'This is it,' I thought the moment I decided to stake my entire life on this game.

There was no way for me to make a decent living since I was born in a poor household, and the only diploma I had was my high school graduation certificate.

I concluded that this game was my only chance at living a decent life.

Another year had passed since then...

I reached Level 201, and I was standing at the pinnacle of the game.

However, it did not take long for me to realize that someone like me was an insignificant being in this game.

I realized my limitations when the 'Genesis Guild,' which was one of the largest guilds in the game, decided to invade the territories of my Beamer Guild.

I was helplessly beaten and trampled before their absolute strength; I could not even retaliate against them.

The Genesis Guild possessed things that I did not have.

The first one was luck...

There was no way I could defeat someone with luck. For example, those bastards who obtained better items out of pure luck or those who managed to get a rare class by luck.

There was no way that I—who had mediocre items and a normal class—would win against those who possessed better items and hidden classes.

The second one was talent...

I could not defeat those who were talented. The ones with an innate talent for this game were on an entirely different playing field. I was nothing more than a sandbag in front of their battle sense and godly physical abilities.

The third one was money...

I lost to those who had a lot of money.

Those so-called 'wallet warriors' made up for their lack of luck and talent by pouring in huge sums of real money, and it was impossible for me to overcome the huge wall they had created by being overgeared.

The fourth one was timing...

As absurd as it may sound, I lost to those who were at the right place at the right time.

There were quite a few of those bastards, which by the way were much weaker than me. However, they managed to defeat me because of their unbelievable timing.

To sum it up, what I believed to be my talent turned out to be nothing more than the petty tricks the average person possessed, so I was nothing special in the end.

However, I refused to accept this.

I was an insignificant trash in real life, and this game was my everything. I had been living with a single goal in life, which was to become the best in this game. As such, defeat was something I could never live with.

In fact, I could say that losing in this game made me doubt my own existence.

Even more shocking to me was the fact that those who won against me weren't scum or trash like me in real life.

Some of them were doctors...

Some were successful businessmen...

Some were the sons of the chairmen of conglomerates...

I could not stand the fact that those who were doing well in real life were doing well in the game as well. After all, I had to risk everything on the line for this game, and this game had long become the sole purpose of my existence.

Why did they have to come and sit on top of me when they already had it all in real life?

Just why?

How come?

Just what did I do to deserve this?

"Wait and see..." I muttered while gnashing my teeth.

I used my inferiority complex as fuel to feed my desire to become stronger than anyone else.

I spent all of the money I had saved up to buy expensive weapons, and I invested everything I had to enhance them.

I immediately went on the move without hesitation when I heard rumors that an NPC that gave out rare skills were spotted somewhere.

"I just have to become a bit stronger... Just a little bit..." I told myself over and over again as I immersed myself in the game.

I was purely driven by my desire to defeat those bastards who had it all.

In fact, I did not hesitate to take out hundreds of millions of loans in real life just to buy game items.

That was how obsessed I was with this game. After all, this game was the only way I could prove my worth as a human being.

I wanted to become the best even if it was only in this game.

However, after investing excruciating efforts akin to grinding my own bones down, I soon came to realize that there were some things one couldn't achieve through hard work alone.

The realization opened my eyes, but I had already lost everything.

Ironically, I did not manage to defeat those I desperately wanted to beat. In fact, they just trampled me in an even more brutal way than before.

I really wanted to beat them... I really wanted to...

However, I soon realized that this was a common occurrence.

Whether it was in a game or in real life, there were people one simply couldn't defeat, regardless of their desire to beat those people.

Perhaps I was destined to lose in the end.

Perhaps this was the limitation of someone who only worked hard with neither talent nor backing...

Fshwaaaa...!

There was a heavy downpour somewhere in the woods.

"Haa..."?

Tae-Sung was leaning against a beautiful tree while staring off into the distance with his lifeless eyes.

Ding!

A message popped up in front of him.

[Warning: 47 hours have passed since you logged in to Brave New World.]

[Excessive gaming can be detrimental to your mental health and may affect your daily life.]

[Alert: Your connection will be forcefully terminated after an hour due to excessive gameplay.]

It was a message warning him that his game connection would be forcefully terminated due to excessive gameplay.

"I don't even have anywhere to go... where do you want me to go then...?" Tae-Sung weakly muttered.

He had nowhere to go since he had just lost everything he had twenty-four hours ago.

The Beamer Guild he had invested everything he had in just had their castle burned to the ground, and the guild members had all scattered. In fact, a few of them even stabbed Tae-Sung in the back.

On top of that, his last remaining treasure, which was an expensive item called 'Elemental Buster,' was taken away by the enemy guild leader.

The only items he had left with him were...

[Overly Dried Jerky × 3]

[Ripped Cape × 1]

[Treasure Map Ripped in Half 2 × 1]

[Discolored Magic Staff × 1]

These were items others would not take even if he offered them for free.

What was going to happen to Tae-Sung if he logged out in this state?

"Is committing suicide the only option I have...?" he muttered.

He was ruined.

The only thing waiting for him in reality was his empty, stinking moldy half-basement room with only a single old worn-out VR capsule as its furniture—plus his hundreds of millions of debt.

He was dreaming of making it big in the game and triumphantly returning to reality, but he only ended up kicking the can and coming back empty-handed.

Tae-Sung was afraid.

He was afraid that he would end up taking his own life.

His life in the game was a living hell, and the same was true for his life in reality.

This was the reason why he could not bear to log out as he aimlessly wandered around the game, but even the game was now forcing him to return back to the reality he was desperately trying to avoid in less than an hour.

"Why..." he muttered to himself in a voice filled with self-resentment.

"Why is it impossible for me? Why is it impossible for me to beat those bastards? Why am I the only one who can't become stronger? Why me? Why? I tried so hard, and I

risked everything on the line for this, but why can't I win against them? Just why?" Tae-Sung said as the pent-up resentment inside of him started to come out bit by bit.

"I put everything I had on the line..." he weakly muttered.

He felt as if the world had wronged him.

"Why do I have to lose? Why... just why does it have to be me...?" he lamented in despair.

He would never defeat them in a faction war, but he also couldn't defeat them in PVP.

He felt aggrieved.

He thought placing his life on the line would suffice, but he had never expected that someone abandoned by the real world would be abandoned by a game as well.

The current reality for Tae-Sung was excruciatingly cruel. After all, the game he poured his heart and soul into had betrayed him.

"That is because you are weak..." someone suddenly said to Tae-Sung, and the person continued, "The survival of the fittest dominates and is the law of this world. Weak people like you are bound to get trampled on. So, why are you playing the victim?"

Tae-Sung turned his head in the direction where the voice came from.

There was an old man with white hair and white eyebrows standing there. He had a long white beard that came all the way down to his abdomen, and he was wearing an expensive-looking silk robe with a similar black-and-white theme.

The old man that gave off a celestial atmosphere approached Tae-Sung.

"Hey, elder," Tae-Sung called out to the old man in a rude manner, and then he said, "Just mind your own business and go about your way."

"What did you say?" the old man glared at Tae-Sung before he said, "You should bow down in front of your teacher if you meet him, but what did you say? Go about my way? *Haha*, it seems that some discipline has to be instilled in you..."

The old man suddenly stopped talking.

"So this guy was here..."

"*Keke!* You still haven't logged out?"

"Isn't it time for you to stop playing this game after being hunted down so badly?"

The members of Tae-Sung's archenemy—the Genesis Guild—appeared one by one as they each made a snarky comment.

“And who the hell might you be?” the old man asked while raising his white eyebrow, and then he said, “Why don't you go about your way since I am busy right now? Do so before I end up killing all of you.”

However, the Genesis Guild members weren't the type to easily back down.

“What the hell is this NPC?”

“Isn't he just a wandering old man?”

“Since you have the time to cackle with your dentures, why don't you go look for a coffin?”

The Genesis Guild members slowly started to approach the old man.

“*Hoho*, look at these foolish punks,” the old man said with a laugh as he looked at the Genesis Guild members before adding, “It seems that I will have to dispose of these idiots before I can continue with my business.”

When the old man raised his fist, the air seemed like it was vibrating.

Wooooong...!

“Die,” the old man said before he swung his fist toward the Genesis Guild members.

Baaaaam!

Then, something unbelievable transpired right in front of their eyes along with a thunderous boom.

Baaaaaam!

When the old man swung his fist in the air, Tae-Sung managed to get a glimpse of what the word 'strongest' or 'invincible' meant.

“...!”

A flurry of messages appeared the moment the energy wave from the old man's fist made contact with the guild members.

[999,999,999,999 Damage!]

[999,999,999,999 Damage!]

[999,999,999,999 Damage!]

[999,999,999,999 Damage!]

[999,999,999,999 Damage!]

Damage counters people normally referred to as 'pigeons' appeared above the guild members' heads and disappeared shortly after.

Max Damage—also known as MAX DMG.

The system's damage counters showed never-before-seen values of 999,999,999,999, and it went without saying that the Genesis Guild members disappeared without a single trace.

However, they would inevitably return after a week since they were players anyway.

'What was that...?' Tae-Sung thought in surprise as he doubted his eyes for a moment.

'Was that real just now?' he wondered while still doubting his own eyes.

Tae-Sung instinctively activated his 'Rune of Insight' tattooed on the back of his left hand to check the old man's information.

The old man's level appeared only to Tae-Sung.

However...

'There's something weird with his level...' he thought in surprise.

The old man's level was...

[Wandering Old Man]

[Type: NPC]

[Race: Human]

[Level: 999]

His level was an astounding 999.

1. These are rooms used by the poorest of the poor in Korea, and some of you might recognize these rooms from the movie 'Parasite'.

2. This is a Korean game slang that doesn't make any sense in English, but I decided to keep it anyway. The sound a pigeon makes in Korea is '????' or 'gugugugu' in English, and the number nine in Korean is read as '?' or 'gu'. That's why a max damage counter is referred to as a pigeon.