

# Debuff Master

## Chapter 11

“What is this?! What the hell are you doing?!” Antoinette screamed at Siegfried after seeing that the place where Siegfried had run over to was a narrow ravine.

“Are you trying to get us killed?! Why did you run here of all places?!” she screamed once again, furious.

Siegfried continued to ignore her ramblings.

*Rumble... rumble... rumble... rumble...?*

The herd of Mutated Bisons was now right in front of them.

*‘I’ll set up my circle first,’*?Siegfried thought as he cast Circle of Mortality.

*Wooooong!*

The scarlet circle that debuffed the enemy’s defense appeared around Siegfried.

*“Mooooooo!”*?A Mutated Bison mooed as it charged at Siegfried.

*‘Evade it first...’*?he thought as he evaded the charging bison.

*Bam!*

The Mutated Bison ended up slamming itself into the rock wall behind Siegfried.

*‘Now it’s my turn...’*?he thought and used Smite to slam his steel rod into the bison’s body.

Siegfried had no time to check how much damage he dealt to the bison.

*“Mooooooo!”*?Another Mutated Bison mooed as it charged at Siegfried.

*‘It’s narrow here so they can only come two at a time. I can be at ease and fight to my heart’s content,’*?he thought in relief.

The overwhelming number advantage the bisons had was no use in this terrain, and Siegfried no longer had any reason to be afraid of them.

*'Evade it and counter-attack...?'*

Siegfried evaded the second Mutated Bison's attack and smacked his steel rod into its body.

[95 Physical Damage!]

*'Look at the damage loss...'* he inwardly grumbled when he saw the number on the damage counter.

Siegfried could feel the gap between the Attack Power of Smite and his basic attacks.

A Mutated Bison had 1,300 HP, and it would take him more than ten hits to kill a bison if he were to attack them without Smite. And this was only if most of his attacks landed as a critical hit, which would deal 142.5 damage each.

*'When will I kill all of them like that?'* Siegfried complained.

The Mutated Bisons numbered over thirty. His stamina would certainly be depleted, and he would be incapacitated even before he could finish them all off.

*'Let's use Circle of Weakness to cut their HP down...?'*

Siegfried remembered the other skill he still hadn't used just yet.

*Wooooong...!*

Siegfried cast Circle of Weakness.

[5 True Damage!]

[5 True Damage!]

[5 True Damage!]

The Circle of Weakness reduced the Mutated Bisons' HP by 5 every second.

*'Alright...'* He nodded with satisfaction.

Siegfried decided that he would evade and counter-attack whenever he could while letting Circle of Weakness chew the bisons' HP away.

*'I think I will be able to power level once I level Circle of Mortality up since most weak mobs will die in a single hit after their defenses are shredded,'* Siegfried thought as he instinctively realized how to maximize his class' abilities to rapidly grow stronger.

*“A strong person is someone who rules over the area around him. You will be able to swallow the entire battlefield if you slowly expand your area of influence around it.”*

Siegfried recalled the teachings Deus bestowed upon him in those days he spent training with the latter. The ninety-nine days he spent with Deus might seem like a short period of time for most people, but for Siegfried, it had been a time filled with nothing but hellish training, torture, verbal abuse, and violation of his human rights.

Siegfried finally realized that Deus had been drilling his teachings into Siegfried's mind through the violent and abusive teaching method. However, every single thing Deus had done was for the benefit of Siegfried.

*‘Master was right. A Debuff Master is someone who rules the area where he stands, and I am currently ruling over this area,’* Siegfried thought as he remembered his master's teachings while fighting against the Mutated Bisons.

The tides of the battle soon shifted in Siegfried's favor.

The Mutated Bisons could not use their numerical advantage in the narrow space, and Siegfried went on a rampage, swinging his steel rod and killing the bisons one by one. However...

[You have successfully hunted a Mutated Bison!]

[Experience Points +180]

[You have successfully hunted a Mutated Bison!]

[Experience Points +180]

[You have successfully hunted a Mutated Bison!]

[Experience Points +180]

[You have successfully hunted a Mutated Bison!]

[Experience Points +180]

Siegfried was not getting the full 200 experience points he was supposed to get from the Mutated Bisons. He was only getting 180 experience points from killing them.

He was suffering a ten percent loss of experience points for some odd reason.

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*“Kyaaaaaahk!”*

The culprit behind the experience point loss was none other than the woman wildly swinging a stick against the Mutated Bisons.

“Go away! Get away from me!” Antoinette screamed while evading the Mutated Bisons’ attacks.

She was leeching Siegfried’s experience points away since the party play system gave her a portion of the experience points in exchange for making negligible contributions to the battle.

And that was not all...

[Antoinette has successfully hunted a Mutated Bison!]

[Experience Point +180]

She even had the nerve to deal the final blow to a Mutated Bison Siegfried had injured.

*‘Is she kidding me...? Look at this freeloading leech...’* Siegfried thought as his expression crumpled.

This woman had just reached the pinnacle of being a nuisance.

In addition to dragging the herd of Mutated Bisons toward him, she even had the nerve to steal kills from him.

“Hey!” Siegfried shouted toward Antoinette.

“What?” Antoinette said in response.

“Can you please go away and not steal my experience points?” Siegfried said.

“When did I steal your experience points?” Antoinette brazenly asked in response while glaring at him, and then she added, “What do you mean by that? I’m just getting my fair share for helping you out!”

“Sure you are...” Siegfried responded sarcastically.

“What did you just say...?” Antoinette muttered. She was seemingly taken aback by his words.

“What do you mean by helping when you aren’t even doing a rat shit’s worth of work? Like I said, can you please go away and not steal my experience points? You are being a nuisance.” Siegfried grumbled.

He was actually in the right here since Antoinette wasn't contributing anything aside from luring the herd of Mutated Bisons to him.

"*Ha!* Don't make me laugh!" Antoinette exclaimed with a loud scoff, and then she let out a condescending laugh before adding, "You call yourself a man when you're so petty?"

"What did you just say?" Siegfried asked with furrowed brows.

"Will you die or something if you share? You petty little fart!" Antoinette retorted.

"..."

Siegfried did not say anything in response, but something was boiling inside of him.

"What? Cat got your tongue? Can't you help someone out and share some experience points while you're at it? I mean, how much will you lose by sharing?" Antoinette said while looking at him with disgust.

Siegfried's eyes turned cold as he made up his mind.

*'I can't just let this slide now, can I?'*

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Siegfried was currently very sensitive when it came to experience points.

He was riddled with debt back in reality.

On top of that, the thought of his enemies growing stronger as they farmed in high-level dungeons made his blood boil. As such, every second and every single experience point was precious to him right now.

To leech experience points off of Siegfried, considering his situation was a huge disservice to him.

*'I'm sure she'll demand her share of the hides and horns too, '?*Siegfried thought.

The bisons' hides and horns were an excellent source of income for Siegfried, who was both dirt poor and without anything to his name at the moment. As such, he had no plans to share a single patch of hide or a single piece of a horn with the freeloader.

*Grip...!*

Siegfried gripped the steel rod in his hand tightly.

Antoinette was a thieving rat gnawing away at his experience points, and she would definitely not be satisfied with just his experience points. He was certain that she would brazenly demand her share of the loot as well.

There was only one solution to Siegfried's pest problem.

*Whack!*

Siegfried smacked the thieving rat on the head with his steel rod.

He would gain bad karma if he killed her, but he did not mind getting some.

The karma a person would get from killing another player would increase the higher the victim's fame. As such, nothing serious would happen if he killed a classless Level 9 player.

And there were no witnesses in this place...

"*Kyahk!*"?Antoinette screamed before she collapsed to the ground.

"W-What are you... doing right now...?" she asked while stuttering in fear.

"I'm killing a rat, can't you see?" Siegfried replied.

"Rat...?" Antoinette muttered in confusion.

"Yes, a thieving rat that entered my granary," Siegfried explained.

"Are you calling me... a rat right now...?" Antoinette asked.

"Yes, I am. What else can I call you when you are stealing my experience points without contributing even a tenth to the hunt?" Siegfried asked.

"You crazy bastard...!" Antoinette muttered while glaring at him.

Siegfried did not even bother to listen to her ramblings as he mercilessly swung his steel rod over and over again.

*Puk! Pukeok! Pak! Pak!*

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A message popped up in front of Siegfried when Antoinette's HP reached zero.

[You have killed the player 'Antoinette']

[Experience Points +120]

[Your Karma has increased by 1!]

The 120 experience points she gave were significantly less than what the Mutated Bisons should give, but it was enough to cover the experience points he had lost.

And his karma only rose by a measly one point, so it did not bother him at all.

“That wasn’t bad at all...” Siegfried muttered with a cold, satisfied smile.

It was a smile that revealed his resolve to kill anyone who would dare to hinder him.

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[Your level has risen!]

[Your level has risen!]

[Your level has risen!]

Siegfried leveled up three times while fighting against the herd of Mutated Bisons, and he was now Level 5.

“I’ll invest everything into Strength for now. Then, I’ll equally level Smite and Circle of Mortality up... I’ll invest just a bit into Circle of Weakness...” he muttered while distributing his stat and skill points according to his master’s advice on the book.

Afterward, he took his dagger out and proceeded to harvest the hides and horns of the dead bisons in a cautious and diligent manner.

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“Y-You... are you really a novice...?” asked the guild receptionist named Jericho.

“Well... yeah,” Siegfried muttered in response.

“Y-You hunted all these alone...?” Jericho asked in disbelief.

“As you can see...” Siegfried replied.

“Oh my god...” Jericho muttered in shock.

The novice standing in front of him right now was definitely not a novice, and it was evidenced by the bloody and fresh hides and horns of the Mutated Bisons the novice had brought over.

“Wow... You don’t seem like a normal novice. This is really amazing. It seems that you are someone pretty skilled at hunting back in your own world, too,” Jericho said.

The world NPC Jericho was referring to was the reality where people lived, Earth.

“You are free to think as you like,” Siegfried nonchalantly replied.

“*Hmmm...*” Jericho muttered.

“Anyway, what about the result of my qualification test?” Siegfried asked.

“Of course, you pass!” Jericho exclaimed before adding, “Give me a moment. I will issue your license right now.”

Ten minutes later....

“Here you go,” Jericho said as he extended Siegfried’s license toward the latter.

“Thank you very much,” Siegfried replied.

He had finally obtained the license which would allow him to officially receive quests from the Mercenary Guild.

[Mercenary Guild License]

[Name: Siegfried]

[Type: Adventurer]

[Tier: Bronze I]

[Class: No Class]

[This license proves that the Adventurer above has passed the rigorous tests of the Nürburg Continent’s Mercenary Guild.]

[This license has been issued by the Branch Manager of the Mercenary Guild in Biermann Territory. (Signed)]

However, there were a few errors on the license issued for Siegfried.

The first error—Siegfried’s class was specified as ‘No Class’ when he actually had one.

The second error—his tier was Bronze I.



The Mercenary Guild tiers were divided into eight—Bronze, Iron, Silver, Gold, Platinum, Diamond, Master, and Grand Master. The tiers were further divided into three divisions represented by the roman numerals III to I.

“Why is my tier Bronze I? Doesn’t it usually start at III?” Siegfried asked.

His class being unspecified was understandable since an NPC like Jericho did not possess the Rune of Insight, which all players possessed. However, the fact that he was starting off at Bronze I was definitely an error.

“Well, it’s a given that you will start there, no?” Jericho replied.

“*Huh?*” Siegfried muttered in confusion.

“Look at the achievements you made,” Jericho said. He pointed at the pile of Mutated Bison hides and horns before continuing, “Didn’t you hunt twenty-seven Mutated Bisons, even though you’re just a novice? I can’t place someone like you at Bronze III.”

“*Hmm...*” Siegfried muttered while trying to process Jericho’s words.

“Our Mercenary Guild gives special treatment to those with bright futures,” Jericho explained.

“I see. Then, thank you very much,” Siegfried replied.

“Don’t mention it! Just work hard from now on, and don’t forget this branch where you started if you ever became a hero who would shake the continent up in the future!” Jericho exclaimed.

“*Haha...*” Siegfried awkwardly smiled at the receptionist’s words.

‘*So, a special treatment actually exists...*’he thought.

Siegfried couldn’t recall receiving any special treatment in the past.

However, getting the license had been a breeze after becoming the Debuff Master. Climbing the ranks seemed to have become easier as well since he normally would have had to start off at Bronze III and slowly claw his way up the divisions and tiers.

‘*As expected... a person has to be strong for them to be treated with respect...*’Siegfried thought with a bittersweet taste in his mouth.

*Chapter 12*

“*Ugh...*”Tae-Sung groaned after logging out from the game.

“I should get a new capsule or something... The stench is giving me a headache...” he grumbled with a grimace.

The capsule he was using was so old it was already giving off a dank smell.

“Have I used it for too long? No... it’s not supposed to stink this bad just because it’s old...” he wondered for a while before the stench suddenly gave him another bout of migraine.

“It could be because I have been sweating a lot these days...” He suddenly remembered that he would always be drenched in sweat while playing the game for the past three months, and the reason was none other than the tempering and quenching process he had to undergo under his master.

It was inevitable for him to sweat so much since the tempering and quenching Deus had put him through made him experience the maximum pain threshold allowed by the capsule in real life, and his body reacted to the pain by excreting sweat from every single pore on his body.

“Yeah... I think it’s because of my sweat. I should get a new capsule as soon as I make some money...”

He found it surprising that the capsule could stink so badly just because of his sweat. Nevertheless, he still decided to purchase a new capsule as soon as he had the money for it.

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*Fwaaaa!*

The stench clinging onto Tae-Sung’s body was finally washed off.

“*Ah*, that feels good...”

The cold shower made him feel cleansed for the first time in a while.

“But...” He tilted his head in confusion as he looked into the mirror.

“Did I become handsome...? My complexion looks better, too...” he muttered, seemingly deluding himself.

It seems that even Tae-Sung was no exception when it came to men looking in the mirror after taking a shower, thinking that they were handsome.

“I only look good right now. There’s no way I look good at all, *keke*.” Tae-Sung chuckled.

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Tae-Sung went to the nearby convenience store an hour after taking a shower to purchase his daily provision of triangle kimbap and noodles.

“That will be 17,600 won,” Kim Young-Hee said.

“Here you go,” Tae-Sung replied.

“I received your card...” Kim Young-Hee said upon receiving Tae-Sung’s debit card.

For some reason, she was smiling after receiving his debit card, and she was treating him a bit differently today.

*‘I thought he was just a nuisance, but he can look pretty good, too. But how did this happen? I don’t recall him being so good-looking...’*she thought while staring at him.

*‘Did he get plastic surgery? I don’t think so... hmmm... his skin looks too good. Haa... I want to touch his face... should I ask him for his number?’*she wondered.

Tae-Sung suddenly looked handsome in her eyes, and the way she looked at him changed had changed at some point.

“I have received your payment of 17,600 won,” Kim Young-Hee said.

“Ah, okay,” Tae-Sung replied.

“Excuse me...” she muttered.

“Yes?” he responded.

“Uhm... do you live around here...?” she carefully asked.

“Yes, why?”

*‘What the hell is wrong with her? She is giving me the creeps...’*he thought.

Tae-Sung could still remember the way she glared at him with contempt and disgust, and she had always been treating him like a cockroach at the side of the road.

“Ah, I see...” she muttered.

“Why do you ask?” he asked.

“Ah, it’s nothing. I just thought that you come by quite often so...” Kim Young-Hee paused before continuing, “Uhhh... if it’s alright with you—”

Tae-Sung immediately cut her off. "Please give it to me."

"Huh?" she muttered in confusion.

"I said, please hand it over," he repeated with his hand extended toward her.

"Ah! Yes!" Kim Young-Hee exclaimed. Her face brightened up as she proceeded to give her phone to him.

"H-Here you go..." she muttered with a shy look.

"...?"

"You can save your number here..."

"Not that," Tae-Sung said with brows furrowed before continuing, "My card. Give me my card back."

It turned out that he was asking for his debit card, and it also seemed that he wasn't at all interested in the phone number of someone like Kim Young-Hee.

"I-I'm sorry..." she said as she returned the card.

A different type of embarrassment made her face flush red.

This was a classic case of an extremely embarrassing misunderstanding.

"Then, have a nice day," Tae-Sung said before leaving the convenience store.

"Oh my god... that was so embarrassing!" Kim Young-Hee exclaimed while pulling on her hair.

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Tae-Sung went home and ate the food he had purchased from the convenience store while sitting in front of the TV. The channel he was watching was 'G-TV,' which was a gaming channel he patronized.

*「The Genesis Guild is attacking the castle of Premier Guild!」*

Of all things, G-TV was broadcasting the battle between the Genesis Guild and the Premier Guild.

"This is making me lose my appetite..." Tae-Sung grumbled.

However, he did not let go of his chopsticks. After all, there was no reason for him to starve just because his arch-nemesis was doing well. In fact, he had to sleep well and eat better so that he could become stronger and avenge himself sooner or later.

*Slurp... Slurp...*

Tae-Sung's eyes were fixated on the TV while he was slurping his noodles.

*「Amazing! The Genesis Guild! They are known as the weakest among the top ten guilds, but will they finally climb up to Rank 9 after toppling the Premier Guild today?!」*

It seemed that the Genesis Guild had a high chance of winning the war.

*「The Genesis Guild is dismantling the Premier Guild's castle walls as we speak! They are truly amazing!」*

*「Yes! They are putting up an amazing display of power!」*

The broadcasters started shouting in an effort to incite their viewer's excitement.

*「Their buffs are really powerful! Isn't this all thanks to the Guild Master of the Genesis Guild, Desire?!」*

*「That's right! Desire's buffs are truly astounding!」*

*「This would have turned out entirely different if it weren't for Desire's buffs! There would have been no way the Genesis Guild could have beaten the Premier Guild if it weren't for the buffs they were getting! Desire is truly the Buff God!」*

The broadcasters seemed to have simultaneously agreed that the main reason why the Genesis Guild was winning was due to Desire's buffs, and they were correct.

Player ID Desire—real name Chae Hyung-Seok.

He was a Priest and Knight Templar hybrid who could dish out powerful buffs, and he was ranked 49th in the World Ranking.

Wide Area Buff.

Desire could provide buffs to all of his allies in a 1-kilometer radius, and he led the Genesis Guild, which used to be nothing but an empty shell, to consecutive victories.

"It seems they are doing pretty well... Tae-Sung muttered while glaring at Desire on the television screen.

"Just wait a year. I will crush you and your guild in a year," Tae-Sung declared.

It was serendipitous how buffs could be countered with debuffs.

Tae-Sung would be capable of getting his revenge against Chae Hyung-Seok if he managed to grow at least eighty percent as strong as the latter. However, that was only if he were going to fight one on one without taking the Genesis Guild into consideration.

"I'm sure there's a way," Tae-Sung said as he steeled his resolve to take revenge.

He took his anger out on the noodle he was eating by slurping it as hard as he could.

"Master's skills are the very definition of invincibility. I'll just have to trust in them and move forward..." he muttered.

Deus' skills debuffed his enemies to allow him to beat them in a single hit.

The combat style his master had passed onto him was the very definition of perfection itself.

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After getting enough rest, Tae-Sung logged in to BNW the next morning. He was now ready to devote himself as Adventurer Siegfried on the Nürburg Continent.

However...

*Ding dong...!*

His doorbell rang.

*'I wonder who that is...?'* he wondered. He was not expecting anyone, and there wouldn't be anyone who would visit him either.

Was it a friend of his? No, they had left him a long time ago.

The only people who would find him were debt collectors, his landlord, or religious folks.

*'Is it a debt collector? No, it can't be. I already paid this month's interest. I also paid the rent already...'* he thought.

He couldn't repay the principal just yet, but he had been religiously paying the interest.

As such, he could not help but wonder who it might be because he couldn't think of anyone paying him a visit.

He opened the door.

"*Huh?* Who are you?" he asked.

A woman wearing a formal suit was standing in front of the door.

"Are you Han Tae-Sung?" the woman asked.

"Yes, and who are you?" he replied.

"Hello, my name is Cha Hye-Mi from the User Supervision Department of Hive Games Entertainment," the woman introduced herself.

"Hive? Do you mean beehive? The one that's running BNW?"

"Yes, that is correct," she replied.

"Why would Hive come and visit me...?" he muttered in confusion.

However, when he was about to ask the woman what business she had with him, a thought suddenly came to his mind.

*'Don't tell me...?'* he thought as nervousness started to creep up on him.

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*'Monitoring?team...? Then, is she here because they discovered my meeting?with Master...?'*

Hive was the industry leader when it came to virtual reality games, and there was no way that such a multinational corporation would randomly come and visit someone like Tae-Sung.

The only reason he could think of why they would bother to come and visit him had to be his meeting with Deus.

"What business... do you have with me...?" Tae-Sung asked carefully.

"That is because you, Tae-Sung, have inherited the Epic Code 007," Cha Hye-Mi replied.

"007...?" Tae-Sung muttered in confusion.

“That is correct,” Cha Hye-Mi replied with a smile.

“What is that...?” he asked.

“007 is the codename given to the one chosen by the Hidden NPC, Deus,” she explained.

“Oh... so you knew about it...” Tae-Sung muttered nervously.

*‘Don’t tell me... I’m sure it’s not... there’s no way...’* he thought as he bit his lips.

The reason why Tae-Sung was so nervous right now was due to the possibility that his meeting with Deus could have been a ‘bug’ from the developer’s side. If that were the case, then they might revoke his class, the Debuff Master.

“Of course. We, Hive, are always monitoring our users. Did you really think that we will be unaware of you activating 007?” Cha Hye-Mi asked.

“So... what is the reason for your visit? Don’t tell me it’s because my meeting with my master was a bug...?” Tae-Sung asked slowly and carefully.

Tae-Sung found himself unknowingly clenching his fists.

“A bug?” Cha Hye-Mi muttered. She seemed taken aback. Then, she smiled and chuckled before saying, *“Hahaha! You are more innocent than you look.”*

*“Huh?”* Tae-Sung muttered with a confused look.

“Mr. Tae-Sung, BNW is a perfect game,” Cha Hye-Mi elaborated with a smile.

“...?”

Tae-Sung couldn’t keep up with the conversation anymore.

“There are no bugs in the game, and it is impossible for a bug to occur as well,” Cha Hye-Mi said with a hint of pride in her voice.

“T-Then, that means...?” Tae-Sung asked with a hint of hope in his voice.

“Yes, your meeting with the Hidden NPC, Deus, was not a bug, and it is a perfectly normal part of the game,” Cha Hye-Mi said.

*“Phew!”* Tae-Sung finally let out a sigh of relief.

“Boy, am I glad to hear that... *haha...*” he said before letting out a weak chuckle.



He felt his lifespan decrease by ten years at the thought of possibly losing his class.

“Well, I guess it’s understandable for you to have thought that way,” Cha Hye-Mi said with a smile before adding, “The meeting with the Hidden NPC, Deus, is an event that will shock any gamer out there, and I am sure that they will even be more shocked when they realize how glorious it is to become his disciple.”

“Yes... I completely agree.” Tae-Sung nodded in agreement.

Cha Hye-Mi was absolutely right. Tae-Sung was flabbergasted when he first met Deus, and he suspected that the old man was a bug or a glitch. At that time, the only other explanation he could come up with was that he was being pranked by the moderators.

“So, you do not have to be worried. I did not come to visit you today to revoke your rights as the Debuff Master,” Cha Hye-Mi said, reassuring him.

“So why did you come here?” Tae-Sung was confused.

“The reason I visited you today is...”

### *Chapter 13*

“I am here because of that,” Cha Hye-Mi said. She pointed behind Tae-Sung and added, “That thing is too old, you see.”

“Oh... that one...” Tae-Sung nodded in agreement when he saw what she was pointing at.

Cha Hye-Mi was pointing at none other than Tae-Sung’s VR capsule—Virtual Sports 3. The VR capsule Tae-Sung was using was an old model that came out nearly ten years ago, and Cha Hye-Mi was right when she said that his capsule was too dated.

“It is quite old like you said, but it is still—” Tae-Sung started.

However, Cha Hye-Mi cut him off. “It’s trash.”

“Who uses a 3rd generation capsule these days? I have never imagined someone is still using that piece of junk in this day and age. It has already been a year since the 6th generation capsule was released,” she added.

“It’s still usable... it’s not really broken as well. I’m aware that it is an old model. I’m just using it because I cannot afford to buy a new one,” Tae-Sung explained with a hint of bitterness in his voice.

It was exactly as he said. Tae-Sung did not have the luxury of purchasing a new capsule.

“But what business do you have with my capsule? Is there something wrong with it by any chance?” he asked.

“Of course, there is,” Cha Hye-Mi replied.

“*Huh?* What is the issue with it? It’s still running and lets me connect to the game.” Tae-Sung grumbled.

Cha Hye-Mi shook her head and said, “When you obtained the Epic Code 007, we, Hive, decided that we cannot let you use such an old VR capsule any longer.”

“*Huh...?*” Tae-Sung muttered in confusion.

“Let us go together,” Cha Hye-Mi said.

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“Where...?” he asked in response while tilting his head.

“Our company, Hive, will sponsor you with a new VR capsule,” she explained before dragging him out of the house.

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“Get in,” Cha Hye-Mi said while pointing at the Benz S-Class parked in front of Tae-Sung’s house.

“What do you mean, get in?” Tae-Sung asked.

“Please hurry up,” Cha Hye-Mi urged.

“*Ah, yes,*” Tae-Sung obediently replied and hopped into the car.

Cha Hye-Mi hopped into the backseat of the car along with Tae-Sung.

The car had no driver. Instead, it was being driven by the AI navigation system equipped in the car.

「Welcome, Manager Cha Hye-Mi-nim. Where is your destination?」

“To V-Lounge, Gangnam branch,” she replied.

「We will depart at once. Please fasten your seatbelt.」

The car started moving as soon as Cha Hye-Mi gave the destination.

“Are we going to V-Lounge?” Tae-Sung asked, seemingly surprised.

His surprise was understandable since the Gangnam branch of V-Lounge was where the latest VR capsules were displayed.

“That is correct,” Cha Hye-Mi replied.

“But that place is...” he muttered, seemingly burdened.

“Are you going to say that we cannot enter without a reservation?” Cha Hye-Mi asked.

“Yes...” Tae-Sung replied with a nod.

“Do you know who owns and operates V-Lounge?” Cha Hye-Mi asked in return.

“Ah...!” Tae-Sung exclaimed. He finally understood why they were going there.

V-Lounge was the flagship store of Hive Games Entertainment, which was also the developer of Brave New World. As such, Cha Hye-Mi, who was a manager at Hive, would not need a reservation to enter the shop.

“But... Why does Hive want to sponsor me with a VR capsule...?” Tae-Sung asked cautiously.

“I told you a while ago...” Cha Hye-Mi paused. She smiled before continuing, “You inherited the codename 007 after becoming the disciple of the Hidden NPC, Deus.”

“So, what exactly is 007?” Tae-Sung asked.

“A player that has the potential to become the protagonist,” Cha Hye-Mi replied.

“The protagonist...?” Tae-Sung mumbled in confusion.

“Yes.” Cha Hye-Mi nodded and said, “The players who have inherited the 00 codenames have the potential to become the protagonist of the main storyline of BNW, the Nürburg Saga.”

A thought suddenly flashed across Tae-Sung’s head upon hearing that.

*‘The players who have inherited the 00 codenames...? Doesn’t that mean I’m not the only one?’*

He realized from Cha Hye-Mi’s words that there were other players who had inherited the 00 codenames.

“The Nürburg Saga, which is the main storyline of BNW, is an event that with the potential to impact the entire progression of the game greatly. With that said, isn’t it just natural for us to gift a new VR capsule to someone with the potential to become the protagonist of such a grand event? It is in Hive’s desire to let the inheritors of codenames play in a good environment if it were possible,” Cha Hye-Mi explained.

“I see...” Tae-Sung muttered in response, seemingly trying to process her words.

“We were able to confirm that the VR capsule you have been using is an old model—a very old one at that. Our head office sent a memo asking us to sponsor you with a new VR capsule,” Cha Hye-Mi said.

This was the reason Cha Hye-Mi visited Tae-Sung.

「You have arrived at your destination.」

The AI navigation announced their arrival at their destination.

“Let’s go.” Cha Hye-Mi urged.

“Alright,” Tae-Sung replied and followed her out of the car.

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“Welcome, Manager Cha Hye-Mi-nim,” a man greeted.

A middle-aged man wearing formal attire greeted Cha Hye-Mi the moment she stepped into the store.

“Hello, Branch Manager-nim,” Cha Hye-Mi replied.

Surprisingly, the middle-aged man turned out to be the branch manager of V-Lounge’s Gangnam branch.

“What brings you here?” asked the middle-aged man.

“We received a memo from head office to sponsor this person with a VR capsule,” Cha Hye-Mi replied before pointing at Tae-Sung.

“F-From the head office?” the branch manager muttered in surprise.

“Yes,” Cha Hye-Mi replied.

“Oh my god...” the branch manager gasped in surprise and looked at Tae-Sung. “N-Nice to meet you. My name is Oh Jun-Hwan, and I am the branch manager of V-Lounge’s Gangnam branch.”

He bowed toward Tae-Sung and extended his business card with both hands as if Tae-Sung were a VIP customer.

“Nice to meet you, too. My name is Han Tae-Sung,” Tae-Sung replied.

“*Ah!* Han Tae-Sung-nim! It is my honor to meet you!” Oh Jun-Hwan exclaimed.

“I don’t think it’s an honor...” Tae-Sung muttered.

“No! Please don’t say that. It is truly an honor to meet you! It is rare for the head office to sponsor an individual with a VR capsule!” Oh Jun-Hwan excitedly added.

“*Haha...*” Tae-Sung let out an awkward laugh.

“Please, come this way. I will show you only the best capsules we have!” Oh Jun-Hwan said while politely guiding Tae-Sung.

“Don’t mind me. Feel free to take your time. I’ll stay here in the meantime and enjoy a cup of coffee. Don’t feel too pressured and just choose whichever you like,” Cha Hye-Mi said before sitting down on an expensive leather sofa in the shop.

*‘How can I not feel pressured?! These things are worth a fortune!’* Tae-Sung inwardly exclaimed.

Tae-Sung could feel himself shrinking back from the luxurious interior of the V-Lounge.

V-Lounge’s Gangnam branch boasted a modern, antique, and luxurious interior design befitting of their title as a flagship store, and Tae-Sung could tell that more than a billion won had to have been spent in the interior alone. However, what really intimidated him were the rows and rows of premium VR capsules lining up the shop.

It was inevitable for Tae-Sung to be intimidated by the premium atmosphere since he had been living a life that was anything but premium.

At that moment, Deus’ words flashed through his mind.

*“My disciple...”*

*“I might have taught you how to walk like a strong person, but you are still lacking in many ways. However, you will be able to compensate for it as long as you keep your composure. Do you understand?”*

Tae-Sung’s movement slowly changed when he remembered Deus’ teachings. His steps became lighter, his eyes no longer darted around nervously, and his face relaxed.

*'I'm not here to beg for a capsule. I'm here to be served. Let's not shrink back. I should take my time to look around and find the VR capsule that suits me the best...'*Tae-Sung thought as he calmed down.

Tae-Sung was initially unable to properly check the specifications of the premium VR capsules because he was intimidated by the expensive machines. But after calming down, he could finally gauge the VR capsules properly.

"What model is this?" Tae-Sung asked while pointing at a red VR capsule.

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"That is the V-Iron 6th Generation Model," Oh Jun-Hwan replied before he politely explained the capsule's specification, "The interior seat is made out of Napa Leather so your body will be less burdened despite sitting for an extended period of time inside. It is also pretty good at regulating its temperature as well. Would you like to take a seat and test it out?"

"Sure, why not," Tae-Sung nonchalantly replied.

After Oh Jun-Hwan opened the unit for him, Tae-Sung stepped into the V-Iron 6th Generation Model capsule and ran a simple VR game.

However, a problem occurred.

*Beep!*

A warning suddenly flashed when Tae-Sung was about to log in to the VR game.

[The compatibility of the user and the capsule is low.]

[It is advised to use another capsule.]

[Compatibility: 67%]

The compatibility showed how much the players would synchronize and adapt to virtual reality, and the average figure for most players was 74% to 78%. A premium capsule provided 80% compatibility to the player even if they had absolutely atrocious talent.

However, Tae-Sung's compatibility was at 67%, which meant that his compatibility with the V-Iron 6th Generation Model was terrible, even when compared to his VR capsule, the old Virtual Sports 3, as he had 77% compatibility with it.

"Oh..." Oh Jun-Hwan muttered with an awkward look on his face before politely saying, "It seems that your compatibility with the V-Iron range of products is not that good, customer-nim."

This was a frequent occurrence since VR capsules worked by analyzing the brain waves of their users, and people's brains had a different affinity with different models.

"Let us try a different model," Oh Jun-Hwan said and politely showed the way.

"Sure," Tae-Sung calmly replied.

It did not really bother Tae-Sung that much since he was aware of the compatibility issues players had with certain models.

"What do you think of this? This is the model that I usually recommend to the customers who are not compatible with the V-Iron model," Oh Jun-Hwan said while showing another capsule.

"Ooh..." Tae-Sung was in awe at the capsule the branch manager had shown him.

"This looks cool," Tae-Sung remarked.

"This capsule was built with the concept of a stone casket, and each and every one of these engravings that you can see here was engraved by hand by Italian master craftsmen. In addition to being a VR capsule, it is also a work of art," Oh Jun-Hwan explained.

"What about its specifications?" Tae-Sung asked.

"All our premium models have pretty high specs, so there is not that much difference between them. Any differences will be a minuscule one percent difference. However—" Oh Jun-Hwan paused.

Tae-Sung finished the branch manager's sentence. "I only have to consider the exterior design and the comfort it offers. Is that what you were going to say?"

"You are correct," Oh Jun-Hwan replied with a smile.

He opened the VR capsule and said, "Then, shall we give it a test?"

Tae-Sung stepped into the stone casket-like VR capsule.

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"What's taking so long...?" Cha Hye-Mi grumbled.

She grimaced after checking the time and grumbled once again. "He just has to choose a design that he likes..."

Cha Hye-Mi was aware that the difference in specs among premium VR capsule models was less than one percent, so Tae-Sung only had to choose a capsule with a design he liked.

However, it had already been two hours since he left to see the VR capsules.

“*Hmm...* did a problem occur?” Cha Hye-Mi wondered.

She decided to put down the coffee cup she had been fiddling with for the past two hours and stood up. She felt nervous that an unexpected issue might have occurred, so she made her way into the shop to look for Tae-Sung and Oh Jun-Hwan.

It was then...

“W-What the hell...?” Cha Hye-Mi was stupefied.

Cha Hye-Mi was looking at a sight she would never expect to see, even at the V-Lounge’s Platinum Boutique, which was a place where only the best models were displayed.

“M-Mr. Tae-Sung!” she exclaimed.

Cha Hye-Mi was stupefied because Tae-Sung and another guy, more specifically, the scoundrel grandson of a large corporation’s chairman, were glaring at each other with their hands on each other’s collars.