

# Debuff Master

## Chapter 2

Forget about the MAX DMG, but there were no precedents of a player or an NPC dealing damage in the hundreds of millions on the damage counter.

There was no way that Tae-Sung, who had staked his life on this game, would not know about it if it ever happened in the game.

However, the old man in front of him had done just that with a single swing of his fist.

In fact, he even made it look too easy since his fist did not even touch the Genesis Guild members.

*'Did the damage counters overlap each other?? I think I recall seeing once on the forums that a Level 44 was thought to be a Level 444 because of the text overlapping each other,'* Tae-Sung thought.

He suspected that what he had just witnessed was most likely a bug. After all, it was logically hard to believe that a mere Wandering Old Man was Level 999.

*'What the hell is Bee Hive doing?'* Tae-Sung grumbled inwardly.

Bee Hive was the term Korean gamers used to refer to the developer and distributor of this game, Brave New World.

*'Let's take a screenshot at least,'* he thought.

Tae-Sung remained true to his instinct as a gamer because he tried to keep a record of the old man despite the chaos that happened around him just now.

However...

[Warning: It is impossible to take a screenshot of a Hidden NPC.]

[Warning: It is impossible to film while in the same field as a Hidden NPC.]

[Warning: It is impossible to livestream while in the same field as a Hidden NPC.]

The system didn't allow him to keep any records of the old man.

*'Don't tell me it's a hacking user posing as an NPC...? Maybe it's a Moderator?'*?Tae-Sung thought.

He could not make heads or tails of the old man's identity.

However, he was sure of one thing despite the confusion. The man was not an ordinary being.

"Wait for a moment," the old man said.

"*Huh?*" Tae-Sung muttered in response as the old man's words snapped him out of his thoughts.

"Let's talk after I get rid of the trash," the old man said while pointing at the Genesis Guild members.

It did not take that long for the old man to get rid of the 'trash'.

"R-Run for now!"

"Damn it!"

"Run faster you bastards!"

The remaining Genesis Guild members scampered away like a bunch of cockroaches when a green aura rose up from the old man's body.

"*Hohoho...*"?The old man let out a leisurely laugh as the green aura around him grew stronger.

The green aura that rose up from the old man's body was a disaster equivalent to the detonation of a nuclear bomb, and the result was the same as a while ago.

[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!]

The old man once again proved his strength by raising the damage counters to MAX DMG as the Genesis Guild members disintegrated one by one when the green aura made contact with them.

It was an understatement to call it a massacre since they perfectly disappeared without a single trace.

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“You...” the old man said as he pointed at Tae-Sung before he continued, “I have been watching you for a long time.”

“*Huh...?*” Tae-Sung muttered in confusion at the old man’s words before asking, “Are you talking about me?”

“Of course I am,” the old man replied.

The old man was telling the truth. He had been roaming around the continent in search of someone worthy to become his disciple, and he stumbled upon Tae-Sung warding off the Genesis Guild by coincidence.

He decided to observe Tae-Sung, and he observed him for a long time before he finally made his decision.

*‘I think I should?accept that punk as the disciple of this great me,’*the old man thought.

Of course, this was something Tae-Sung had never imagined even in his wildest dreams.

“But why...?” Tae-Sung muttered in confusion.

“That’s because...” the old man said before he continued, “You are an unsalvageable piece of trash.”

“Huh...?” Tae-Sung muttered in response.

“Are you deaf? Didn’t I just tell you that I had been watching you because you were a piece of trash?” the old man said.

Tae-Sung grimaced in response to the old man’s words.

The truth was bound to be harsh, but calling someone trash even though they were *technically* a piece of trash was going to end up offending the piece of trash even though it was true.

“And what do you mean by that?” Tae-Sung respectfully asked with a hint of anger in his voice.

“You lack four things. Ah, you lack manners too, but that’s not one of them,” the old man replied.

“Huh?” Tae-Sung muttered in confusion.

“You don’t have luck,” the old man said.

“...” Tae-Sung could not retort at the harsh truth the old man said.

“You don’t have talent, you don’t have money, and you don’t even have timing on your side. The only thing you know how to do is to toil away like an ox,” the old man said.

Every single word the old man said stabbed Tae-Sung’s chest like a dagger.

“You have a grand dream, but you are nothing but sewer trash in reality,” the old man added.

Then, the old man raised his voice and continued, “You are ambitious but incapable of achieving anything.”

“...” Tae-Sung remained speechless.

“A buffoon who keeps trying even though you’re obviously going to lose, no, a buffoon is too much of a praise for you,” the old man continued with his onslaught.

“...” Tae-Sung was still silent.

“The only thing you have that is a cut above the rest is your competitiveness. You are probably the best in the world when it comes to that,” the old man said.

Tae-Sung could not retort to any of the things the old man said since they were all facts even he was aware of.

“That is why...” the old man said.

He dropped a bombshell.

“I have taken a liking to you,” the old man added.

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

“I won’t explain any further. Bow down to me nine times,” the old man said.

When the old man finished his words, a message popped up before Tae-Sung’s eyes.

*Ding!*

[Alert: Epic Quest: ‘Master Disciple Relationship’ has appeared!]

[Alert: Do you wish to accept this quest?]

It was the rare appearance of an epic quest.

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An epic quest appeared out of nowhere.

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*'Let's give it a shot for now,'* Tae-Sung thought as he decided to accept the quest.

An epic quest was a very rare mission that most people could never come across, and Tae-Sung, who had to grab onto any hope he could find, had no reason not to accept it.

[YES.]

[Alert: You have accepted the Epic Quest: 'Master-Disciple Relationship']

Then, the quest details popped up in front of his eyes.

[Master Disciple Relationship]

[Type: Epic Quest]

[Details: Bow down nine times to the Wandering Old Man.]

[Progress: 0% (0/9)]

[Reward: ?]

[Caution: You will have to sincerely bow to the Wandering Old Man. The Wandering Old Man might beat you to death if he notices you bowing insincerely.]

The quest was pretty simple, but it came with a chilling word of caution.

*'I will die if he as much as grazes me... Let's do this as sincerely as I possibly can,'* Tae-Sung thought.

He thought of the power the old man had shown against the Genesis Guild members just now.

*'Bow as sincerely as possible...'* he reminded himself once again.

Tae-Sung started to bow toward the Wandering Old Man as sincerely as he possibly could, and he made sure that every single movement of his body was oozing with sincerity and respect.

One time...

Two times...

Then, five times...

"That's right, you are doing well. You are doing quite well," the old man said as he nodded in satisfaction.

It seemed he was quite pleased with Tae-Sung bowing down to him.

It was at that moment that Tae-Sung bowed for the ninth time that a message appeared before his eyes.

*Ding!*

[Alert: You have completed the Epic Quest: 'Master-Disciple Relationship'!]

A bright light surrounded Tae-Sung's body as soon as the message popped up.

'*What's going on??*' Tae-Sung thought in confusion as he was taken aback by the sudden light.

[Alert: Congratulations! You have become the disciple of 'Deus'!]

[Alert: You have successfully changed classes! Your class has been changed from 'Elemental Mage' to 'Disciple'!]

It was a message that did not make sense to him.

'*What the hell is going on...??*' Tae-Sung wondered.

He bowed down nine times to a Level 999 Hidden NPC, and he not only became the Hidden NPC's disciple, but his class also changed into 'Disciple'.

"You are now..." the Level 999 Hidden NPC, Deus, said as he looked at Tae-Sung, "You are now the disciple of this great me."

"Your... disciple...?" Tae-Sung muttered in response.

"That's right," Deus replied while nodding, and then he said, "I shall open..."

“...?” Tae-Sung wondered what the Hidden NPC would say next.

“Your path to becoming invincible!” Deus exclaimed in a grandeur manner.

And that was how the Master-Disciple Relationship between Tae-Sung and Deus started.

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Meanwhile...

There was a department in Hive Company, which was located in Oakridge, Tennessee, the United States of America, where even the board of directors could not intervene with their operations.

This department was called the ‘Hexagon’.

Hexagon was the most important department in the company, Hive Games Entertainment, and this was the department in charge of managing the epic story within Brave New World. In other words, Hexagon was the department managing the Grand Epic of Brave New World, which was the main story of the entire game.

The operator of Hexagon said in a trembling voice, “A-As of this time... The Epic Code 007 has... been activated.”

The operator’s announcement sent shockwaves throughout the entire department.

“007? Oh my god!”

“Finally?”

“Has Deus finally found his disciple?”

“Who is it? Who got chosen as his disciple? Is it that pro gamer from last time?”

“Oh my god! To think that 007 will be activated!”

The members of Hexagon noisily murmured among themselves.

The leader of the entire Hexagon department, Oppenheimer, finally opened his mouth and asked, “Who is it? Who is the player who activated the Epic Code 007?”

In addition to being Hexagon’s leader, he was also the Vice Chairman of Hive.

He was staring at the screen while seated in the back seat of Hexagon’s control tower.

“Is it that pro gamer Deus was eyeing?” Oppenheimer asked.

“No, it’s not,” the operator replied.

“Then, is it someone new?” Oppenheimer asked.

“Yes,” the operator replied.

“Who is it?” Oppenheimer asked with his eyes filled with curiosity.

“T-That’s...” the operator muttered as he hesitated for a moment before continuing, “It is a gamer from South Korea.”

“So that’s how it turned out,” Oppenheimer muttered and nodded.

He was well aware that the South Koreans were innately talented when it came to video games and that they were one of the best in the world.

In fact, there was even a saying that the racial trait ‘gaming’ would appear if the South Koreans were turned into video game characters.

“What is 007’s level, no, I mean, ranking?” Oppenheimer asked.

He was certain that the gamer Deus had picked as his disciple was a ranker since the gamer was bound to be talented if the Hidden NPC, Deus, had picked him. Moreover, the gamer was from South Korea, a country renowned for producing talented pro gamers.

Oppenheimer was confident in his deduction because this was the only logical outcome if he narrowed it down to these two points.

However, the operator’s response was the complete opposite of what Oppenheimer was expecting to hear.

“The gamer is Level 91,” the operator replied.

“Level 91? Has the gamer only started playing recently?” Oppenheimer asked.

“No,” the operator replied.

“No?” Oppenheimer muttered in disbelief.

“The gamer, 007, registered two years ago and is classified as a heavy user who plays more than ten hours a day,” the operator reported.



“Are you asking me to believe what you said just now...?” Oppenheimer asked in response with a look of disbelief before muttering in stupefaction, “A mere Level 91 is a heavy user...?”

“It might be difficult to believe, but it is true... I mean—that is his current level, but the highest level this player reached is Level 201,” the operator clarified.

“That is a relief... but the gamer is still way below what I had expected...” Oppenheimer said with an awkward look.

It was understandable since Epic Code 007 was a key component that would affect the main story of Brave New World, and it was an event that would have severe repercussions for the entire game.

The gamer who activated Epic Code 007 and was chosen by the Hidden NPC, Deus, would become one of the main characters of Brave New World’s main story plot. In fact, there was a possibility that this gamer would end up becoming the protagonist of the Grand Epic of Brave New World.

“Establish a special monitoring team to monitor this player within twenty-four hours,” Oppenheimer said before he added, “But that is if he can even last more than a day...”

These words seemed to foreshadow something.

1. The Korean gamers were actually calling the company that created the game ‘??’, which literally means ‘Bee House’ in Korean.

### *Chapter 3*

“Did you just say... invincible...?” Tae-Sung muttered in surprise.

The word ‘invincible’ was stuck in his mind as he recalled the overwhelming power that Deus displayed moments ago.

Tae-Sung agreed. That power was definitely worthy of the word ‘invincible.’

“That’s right,” Deus replied as he nodded.

“Is that right... elder?” Tae-Sung asked.

“Hey!” Deus exclaimed as he grimaced. It seemed that being called elder did not sit well with the old man.

“What do you mean by elder? You are to address me as master from now on, you got that?” Deus said.

“Ah, yes,” Tae-Sung replied.

“Who am I?” Deus asked.

“You are my master,” Tae-Sung responded.

“That’s right. I am your master, and you are the only disciple of this great me,” Deus said.

“Yes, Master!” Tae-Sung exclaimed.

Tae-Sung resolved to serve Deus as his master without any hesitation.

It was not an exaggeration to call the Level 999 Hidden NPC, who was capable of dealing 999,999,999,999 damage in a single hit, a supreme being.

Tae-Sung concluded that someone like this old man was not only a master worthy to be served, but it was Tae-Sung’s honor to serve him as well.

“You will learn how to become an invincible being underneath this great me. It is going to be a very difficult journey. You will wish for death in every minute and every second of the day. Are you prepared for it?” Deus asked.

“Yes, Master,” Tae-Sung confidently replied.

His master warned him of the difficulty awaiting him, but he remained unfazed. After all, he had been about to check the temperature of the Han River with his own body. He was prepared to drink even a bottle of lye water if it meant receiving a second chance.

“Alright,” Deus said with satisfaction as he looked at Tae-Sung’s resolute expression.

“Since it’s just our first day, go back to your hometown for today. Come find me tomorrow. *Ah*, and...” Deus said before he started to rummage through his clothes, looking for something. He then took something out and extended it to Tae-Sung. “Take this. You look so pitiful right now. Go ahead and sell this, then get yourself some decent clothes and eat something nice. This is my first gift to you as your master.”

“What is this...?” Tae-Sung asked as he looked at the item in Deus’ hand.

It was just a small necklace.

The problem was...

‘*Blessing of Persia?!?*’Tae-Sung exclaimed inside.

It was a necklace being sold for a hundred million won in real-life money.

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「Web Message」

「117,000,000 won has been deposited to your account from 'Trade Mania Co., Ltd.」

「Thank you.」

「Woosan Bank」

That evening...

“This is awesome...” Tae-Sung muttered to himself.

It was only after the item 'Blessing of Persia' was sold on the item trading site, Trade Mania, that he finally acknowledged that he had truly met his master, Deus.

“Is he really an NPC, and not a moderator...?” Tae-Sung said to himself.

It still seemed surreal to him.

A Level 999 Hidden NPC suddenly appeared and gave him a quest to become the former's disciple. The former even gave him an item on top of that.

Who would believe him?

“I hope the developers are not playing with me...” Tae-Sung said with a hint of skepticism in his voice.

“Still... there's no way that the developers would bother with someone like me...”

That thought was totally eliminated from his mind when he recalled what the vice chairman of Hive, Oppenheimer, said in an interview.

*「There is no such thing as a 'balance patch' in Brave New World. BNW is not just another game, it is another reality as well.」*

*「The game scenario, 'Nürburg Saga' coupled with the Artificial Intelligence program, 'Doppelganger Algorithm' is perfect. As such, we are not going to get involved with the game. We are simply going to observe quietly from the sidelines.」*

They would observe without getting involved.

This was Hive's policy and motto when it came to Brave New World, and this showed the level of trust they had for the game they had developed.

“Let’s see how it goes for now...” Tae-Sung muttered. For now, he decided to stop doubting the entire situation.

There was a saying that a person would receive three opportunities in life, right? It could be possible that meeting Deus was one of the opportunities he rightfully owned.

A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to escape from this shithole of a life.

He had to grab this opportunity no matter what.

Of course, there were a few things he had to settle first before anything else.

“First...” Tae-Sung muttered as he booted his computer and accessed his Internet Banking. “Let’s pay this month’s interest first.”

He made the smart choice of servicing his debt before anything else as soon as he earned money.

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Tae-Sung was in debt.

A bit of debt was something like a passive life skill for those born dirt poor.

To make it worse, Tae-Sung took even more debt to buy all sorts of expensive items only to become empty-handed in the end. His debt naturally evolved into a monster that amounted to hundreds of millions of won.

He was able to earn a huge sum of money after selling the item his master gave him as a gift, but after paying whatever he could pay, what he had earned was reduced to almost nothing in the blink of an eye.

Debt...

Utility bills...

Phone and internet bills...

Months of rent due...

Game account fee...

Other miscellaneous costs...

After settling his urgent debts and bills, he only had three million won left.

Tae-Sung took fifty thousand won from the three million and wired the remaining 2,950,000 won to his sister and mother living in the province.

He decided to call his mother after a long while.

“Mom,” Tae-Sung said over the phone.

—Why didn’t you call back? You didn’t even answer your phone. I was worried.

“I’m sorry. I’ve been a bit busy these days,” Tae-Sung said.

—Are you having a tough time these days? It has been a while since you visited as well.

“Not at all,” Tae-Sung replied and put up a front.

—I’m sorry.

Tae-Sung felt like tearing up when he heard his mother’s trembling voice.

His mother had been suffering throughout her entire life. Her life took a turn for the worse after meeting his father, who was a violent, irresponsible, and patriarchal man. However, she did not give up on Tae-Sung and his sister. She withstood all the abuse for more than thirty years.

This was the reason why Tae-Sung prioritized sending money to his family whenever he made any money.

—I’m sorry that you have to suffer because I’m lacking...

“I’m not. Don’t say that,” Tae-Sung replied, and then he added, “You did nothing wrong, Mom. You did everything right. You did everything you can, and you did not abandon Tae-Hee and me. You raised us as best as you can.”

—Son...

“I’m not struggling at all so don’t worry about me. Oh, I sent you some money just now,” said Tae-Sung.

—You didn’t have to do that, Tae-Sung. You... you have to save up and get married, too.

“What do you mean by I didn’t have to? It has been three months since I last sent you anything so you guys must be struggling there. Just use that for now,” Tae-Sung said.

—Tae-Sung... if things get too difficult for you—

Tae-Sung noticed that his mother was about to suggest that he return to their hometown, so he immediately cut her off.

“Mom, I’ll have to hang up now. I’m busy, so I’ll call back next time,” he said before one-sidedly hanging up.

He had to end the call, as he felt like he would not be able to control his emotions if he spoke with her any further.

“*Hoo...*” Tae-Sung exhaled as he composed himself.

“Let’s not become weak and do something stupid again. My family is going to suffer if I fall down now. Mom and Tae-Hee can live comfortably as long as I work harder...” he said as he steeled his resolve once again.

He vowed not to ruin himself ever again and put his family in jeopardy.

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The next morning...

Tae-Sung woke up early and went to the convenience store nearby.

He purchased a bottle of water, noodles, a lunch box set, and some other things with the fifty thousand won he still had.

He could have splurged and bought some meat after earning a huge sum, but he had his priorities.

The part time worker at the convenience store, Kim Young-Hee, scanned the items Tae-Sung had brought to the counter.

“That will be 50,100 won,” Kim Young-Hee said in a cold voice.

“Here,” Tae-Sung replied as he extended his debit card to her.

「Insufficient Funds」

His card was declined.

“Ah... please remove this,” Tae-Sung said.

He took out a bowl of instant rice out of the plastic bag after realizing he was short by a hundred won.

*'Is this guy a beggar? Geez... I wish I won't see this damned junkie bastard anymore. I'm sure he played games all night again,'*?Kim Young-Hee thought as she glared at Tae-Sung with eyes full of disgust.

Kim Young-Hee hated Tae-Sung, who frequently came to the convenience store. She hated seeing his disheveled hair, his messy beard, his worn-out shirt, and his pants riddled with holes.

The only saving grace about him was the fact that he did not stink like an old man or of cigarette, but Tae-Sung was still the very definition of someone a woman would hate to talk with.

*'She's looking at me with those eyes again,'*?Tae-Sung thought.

He knew very well that Kim Young-Hee's eyes would always be filled with disgust and contempt toward him, and he also knew very well that he looked quite detestable right now.

*'Does she really think I want to live like this?'*?he grumbled inwardly.

It was inevitable for him to live like this.

How could it be possible for someone riddled with debt and at the lowest point of his life to even have the luxury of thinking about dressing up and grooming himself?

Still, there was no way anyone would not be offended after being glared at with those contemptuous and disgusted eyes just because of their appearance. Of course, the one looking at him with those eyes could be uncomfortable with his presence, but Tae-Sung couldn't help but feel that he was being wronged here.

*'Please... let's not live while being stared at by those eyes anymore. Let's live with dignity...'*?

Tae-Sung steeled his resolve after leaving the convenience store.

He might not become the person everyone would look up to, but he vowed to work hard and strive not to be looked down on by anyone anymore.

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Tae-Sung ate a triangle kimbap and a cup noodle before going inside the VR capsule and accessing the BNW client.

[Loading...]

[Connection Established!]

The message disappeared as quickly as it appeared, and Tae-Sung found himself inside a dark cave.

“I live in a cramped room in real life, and I’m in a cave in the game, too...” he grumbled.

Other people lived an entirely different life in the game compared to their real lives, but that was not the case for Tae-Sung. After all, there wasn’t that much difference between the life he had been living in the game and his real life.

*Ding!*

A message popped up in front of him.

[Alert: Your master, Deus, is waiting for you deep within the forest.]

A message alerted him that his master was waiting for him.

“Let’s get moving,” Tae-Sung said as he left the cave to go to his master.

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It took Tae-Sung thirty minutes before he finally met his master deep in the forest.

“So you have finally arrived, my disciple,” Deus said.

“Yes, Master,” Tae-Sung replied.

“But...” Deus inspected Tae-Sung from head to toe before he grimaced and said, “Does your stomach hurt and you want to take a shit or did you choose to become a girl from now on?”

“Huh? I do not understand what you mean...” Tae-Sung muttered in response.

“Why is a man walking without an ounce of confidence in his steps?!” Deus shouted.

His thunderous voice reverberated throughout the forest.

“*Aah!*” Tae-Sung exclaimed. The thunderous boom felt like it would pop his eardrums.

He tried to cover his ears, but that was nowhere enough to block off his master’s thunderous voice. His master’s shout just now was not simply a loud sound, but it was similar to a shockwave that shook Tae-Sung’s brain.

Tae-Sung felt as if his brain was shaken. His heart felt like it was being pressured as well, and his legs trembled from the shout. The hair throughout his body all stood on end.



His master's shout could be classified as an attack rather than a rebuke.

In fact, that single shout had reduced his HP by ninety percent.

[HP: ??????????]

'*Crazy...! How is this even possible?!?*' he exclaimed inwardly.

He had never imagined that a single shout could deal so much damage.

"Try walking again," Deus commanded. However, he grimaced when he saw that Tae-Sung was still in a daze. As such, he exclaimed to get the latter back to his senses, "Get moving!"

"Eh...? Ah, yes!" Tae-Sung replied.

He started walking while fearing for his life.

*Gulp...! Gulp...! Gulp...!?*

He did not forget to hurriedly drink a healing potion while he was at it.

1. Han River is the main river of South Korea, and there are many bridges connecting both sides of the river. "Checking the temperature of the Han River" basically means people committing suicide by jumping into the river.

2. Yes, we do have instant microwaveable rice in Korea.

3.