

Gourmet 121

Chapter 121: Evolving Ellie's Swordsmanship

[The Cooldown of Ellie's Swordsmanship has been reduced by 20%.]

[The Mana Required for Ellie's Swordsmanship has been reduced by 20%.]

[The additional attack power has increased to 60% for stabs and lunges of Chapter 1: Sword of Fury, a successful stab at a vital point will give an additional 100% damage.]

[An additional 35% attack power has been added to the flurry of swords created by Chapter 2: Rampant Sword. The duration has also increased from 6 seconds to 7 seconds.]

[Chapter 3: Scattering Sword has been added. One strike would result in six attacks with 30% additional damage to each attack.]

[The increase in all stats for Chapter 4: Ellie's Swordsmanship has increased to 20%. The duration has also increased from 6 minutes to 8 minutes.]

[The steps for Chapter 5: Step has been modified. Attacks are now allowed within those two steps. Each step lets you travel a one meter distance.]

The evolution was jaw-dropping. Chapter 1: Sword of Fury had now become much more powerful. There was even an additional skill, Chapter 3: Scattering Sword, that gave Minhyuk the power to attack one target six times in a row with one strike. Even Chapter 4: Ellie's Swordsmanship had a 3% increase in all stats while the duration had increased by several minutes. As for the final chapter, Chapter 5: Step... Step was originally a skill that did not allow attacks while moving. This meant that Minhyuk could only evade and close the distance with this skill. However, it was different now. He could now freely attack and evade with those two steps.

Then, Varen summoned a monster in the dreamscape.

“Grrrrrrr!”

It was a giant ogre. Generally, ogres were mob monsters at Level 300. Varen had only one reason why he summoned an ogre. He thought, ‘I don't know how powerful he is.’

In other words, Varen did not know Minhyuk's level. So, he wanted to confirm how much strength Minhyuk had. After all, even a Level 10 foreigner would not be able to exert enough power with Ellie's Swordsmanship. However, if Minhyuk was stronger than he thought, he would be able to exert a stronger power.

“This place is in our dreams and quite a lot of things are possible here. Let me see your skills.”

Minhyuk nodded as the furious ogre rushed to where he was. Its steps were so heavy and aggressive that each step was accompanied by a loud bang. Minhyuk quickly used Step.

[Step.]

[You can attack while instantly travelling a distance of one meter twice, allowing you to quickly narrow or widen your distance from your target.]

Minhyuk used the first step to dodge sideways and chop the ogre's leg off.

Spurt!

“Graaaaaa!”

Then, he used the second step to move forward and slash its chest.

“Grroaaaaar!” The angered ogre roared loudly as it swung its ax heavily in Minhyuk’s direction.

Fwoooooom!

Clang!

Minhyuk might only be at Level 210, but he still had monstrous stats that could easily surpass other players at his level. Minhyuk quickly used a skill to stop the heavy ax from falling down on him.

[Scattering Sword.]

[A single attack will deal six additional damages with each instance dealing additional 30% damage.]

Sparks flew from the collision of Minhyuk’s sword and the ax.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Minhyuk’s sword was suddenly covered with a bright red force as he swung it fiercely towards the furious ogre.

Slash, slash, slash, slash, slash, slash!

The ogre’s body was littered with slashes from the six powerful attacks that came from a single strike from Minhyuk.

Thud!

The ogre collapsed on the ground!

Fwoooosh!

Minhyuk felt some movements behind him. He turned around only to see another ogre! Minhyuk quickly evaded the charge.

“There’s still some time left.”

“Why can’t you just tell me about it first?!”

Varen shrugged, while his eyes narrowed sharply. He thought, ‘I can’t believe it...’

Of course, Varen knew that Scattering Sword was a skill that could inflict six additional damages consecutively. However, no matter how strong the skill was, it would not be able to finish an ogre in a single shot. This only meant one thing...

‘He’s not just a simple chef.’

Minhyuk was strong. Varen’s expectations of him were rising. He felt like he was seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. It was as if his hope was coming back to life.

[Sword of Fury]

[Additional 60% attack power for strong lunges and stabs, if a vital strike is successful, the bonus will be 100%.]

Stab!

Minhyuk's sword stabbed the ogre's stomach. The energy that was condensed at the tip of his sword exploded.

Bang!

The explosion from the huge force condensed in his sword blew the ogre up in a single strike.

Splat, splat, splat—

“Phew,” Minhyuk sighed as he sheathed his sword. He had looked at Ellie's Swordsmanship earlier and saw that its rank had changed to ‘Legendary’, although its level had reverted back to 1.

‘Ellie Noona told me that she will teach me more of Ellie's Swordsmanship once I cook for her but...’

Did that mean that the skill would become even stronger?

“Let's go now.”

Clap!

Varen's clap returned them back to the carriage.

“How did it go? Did your skill evolve?”

“Yes. It's not that bad. I have to get to the Valkyrie Kingdom fast.”

“Why?”

“I have to eat sushi!” Minhyuk said. It was a very Minhyuk thing to say that his evolved skill was not that bad, while being more excited about eating sushi. Then...

“Ack!”

...They heard a distressed cry from the person manning the carriage, Root. Then, the carriage shook heavily before stopping.

Bang!

As the carriage ran fast, Root thought, ‘I wish we could get away from our enemies and meet with Ellie soon.’

The place where Ellie and Varen were supposed to meet was not that far away from them right now. If they continued at this pace, they would be able to meet with them safely and complete the quest easily.

‘If we meet enemies...’

The only one that looked reliable was the woman who was sitting in the carriage.

‘His Highness Varen, is not that good at fighting. His redeeming quality is his special ability...’?Root thought. But then...

Swoooooosh!

...An arrow that was as big as a spear flew towards them and pierced through the two horses all at once.

Spurt!

“Ack!”

Both horses could not even let out a scream as they fell down helplessly on the ground, making the carriage shake loudly as it stopped in its tracks. Root hurriedly pulled his bow and raised his awareness.

[Scan.]

[Your eyes can easily spot enemies near you.]

Although they were in the middle of the forest, Root was still able to see their enemies lurking behind the trees with his skill. The enemies were marked red.

‘Damn it. There’re a lot of them.’

It seemed like there were at least ten people after them. In particular, there were a lot of archers pulling their bows and aiming at them. From what Root could see, there was also a player among their enemies.

The player Red was aiming his great bow at Root and his party. The great bow was a very gigantic bow with an arrow the size of a spear. Red loaded an arrow and aimed carefully. Red was a player that stood among the top 100 in the Archer Rankings. He was well known for his wildly destructive arrows that could break and destroy anything on its path. Now that he had found their enemies, he could already imagine the enormous rewards that he would receive. So, he slowly aimed at the door of the carriage.

[Party Chat | Red: As soon as another person comes out of the carriage, I will shoot all of them down except for the king. You guys should keep that archer player in check!]

Red hurriedly closed the party chat window and took a deep breath.

Meanwhile, Root hurriedly took out an arrow and aimed at Red on his seat in front of the carriage.

[Aimed Shot!]

[An arrow that can hit a vital point.]

Twang!

The arrow flew in a straight line. However, white-colored arrows rained down from between the trees as soon as his attack fell.

[Induced Shot!]

[An arrow that can counteract an enemy's arrow.]

The arrows that were flying straight at Root fell down helplessly on the ground. Then, the door to the carriage opened as a man appeared.

“What’s wrong?”

The man had a frying pan hanging on his back. Red hurriedly adjusted his bow and aimed it at the man.

[Power Arrow!]

[A powerful arrow that can easily penetrate the enemy all at once.]

Vwoooooom!

Red grinned darkly. His Power Arrow was a very powerful skill, even Level 400 players would have a hard time dealing with this skill. Once they got hit with this skill square on, they would receive a huge amount of damage.

“Goddamn!”

Root quickly pulled his bow tight.

[Triple Induced Shot!]

[Three arrows that can counteract an enemy's arrow.]

He pulled the bow hurriedly and shot the arrows but it was still countered by plenty of arrows from the enemy. Red's arrow flew unimpeded towards the heart of the player with the frying pan. In other words, his arrow flew straight at Minhyuk's chest.

“Gotch...”

Before Red could finish his words...

Ting!

The arrow hit the armor and fell down in vain. Then, a strong force bounced back to where he was. The attack ended up being useless.

[Physical Damage Reflection! Returns double the damage received.]

At the same time...

“Keuuuack!”

...Red shrieked in pain as a strong force penetrated his chest.

[Your HP has fallen below 20%.]

[You were struck by a heavy blow. You will be stunned for 3 seconds.]

‘W...what in the world is that damned armor!’

Red was astounded. The arrow fell down uselessly the moment it reached the man's armor. He even took double the damage in reflection.

“Ho.”

Minhyuk rubbed the part of his armor where the arrow struck. He said, “Isn’t this quite good?”

Minhyuk grinned at the effects of the Armor of Immortality. Then... Genie popped out of the carriage. Her hand was holding a bright red whip.

Shwaa!

Genie swung the whip around and it caught the neck of one of the hidden archers.

Pull!

Genie pulled hard and the archer that got entangled with the whip was dragged out.

Crackle!

[Fire Whip]

[A strong flame that can easily incinerate the enemy.]

The flames that sprouted out of Genie’s whip immediately devoured the archer.

Crackle, fwoosh!

The archer was forced to log out after being subjected to a very strong flame. Genie was also a holder of a Legendary class, the Whip Conjuror. Each time Genie’s whip lashed out, another archer would be dragged out from their hiding spot.

[Party Chat | Red: Damn it, she’s strong. What the hell is this woman?!]

[Party Chat | Voltno: Crazy...! A damned whip can be used like that?!]

The person that was most surprised by the situation was none other than Root. He thought, ‘Im... impossible...!’

The enemies that were surrounding them were all at least at Level 300 but the woman easily entangled them. She could even drag them out in pairs and groups. That was not all... There was also the chef player, Minhyuk! The arrow that struck straight at his chest just bounced off and fell down uselessly.

‘These people... Who in the world are they...?’

Even though Root was surprised, he was still able to promptly come back to his senses and pull at his bow.

Twang!

As soon as he let go of the arrow loaded on his bow, the arrow flew swiftly and lodged at Red’s neck.

“Keok, keok!”

Root forced the player to log out and rushed to the carriage’s door.

“Minhyuk and Root should protect His Highness!” Genie shouted hurriedly.

Root turned to Varen and said, “Your Highness, we should run!”

“I understand.”

Just when they were about to move, Root felt it...

‘The enemies are coming...!’

...Their enemies emerged one by one at a speed visible to the naked eye and their numbers were not small.

“Don’t worry. Just run!” Genie said. She smiled at him as if it was just a piece of cake. Root nodded as he turned around to run with Varen and Minhyuk.

Swoosh!

Root quickly countered the arrow that was flying towards them.

“Wow...” ?Minhyuk exclaimed in admiration.

“Haha. Even though I look like this, I’m used to shooting arrows quickly.” Root said and laughed at the thought. He felt that if he did not try to smile in the situation that they were in, Varen would be overcome with a crippling sense of anxiety and fear. The three of them ran as they left Genie alone behind. However, what they heard was not her screams but the shrieks of their enemies as they fell down one by one under her hands.

“Keuack!”

“Ugh, keuaaack!”

“Ack!”

Then, at that moment...

Vwooooooooooom!

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

...The enemies began to blow their trumpets. It was a signal. A signal for the rest of them to flock to this place. Root was overwhelmed. He was panicking. He thought, ‘What should we do? How can we get out of this?’

Could he do it alone? Could they even escape from here with a chef with outstanding armor and Varen that could not fight? He did not know. All he knew was that they had to run.

Athenae’s Public Relations Team was moving urgently behind the scenes. They had been working tirelessly as they answered phone call after phone call.

“The live broadcast will begin soon!”

“Wait for the appropriate timing!”

Among them was the team leader of the Public Relations team, Lee Taejin. He thought, ‘Before the update, a live video of Varen and his escorts who are trying to fend off the attack of their pursuers will be broadcasted. I’m sure that we will get plenty of good responses for this.’

This was a unique way of promoting their content. However, he was still unsure of the effect. The attackers were one of the top four guilds in the country, Ares Guild. On the other hand, the escorts were also quite formidable. One is the guild master of Legend Guild, Genie, and the other was the currently trending Frying Pan Killer.

‘Really interesting.’

Team Leader Lee Taejin’s hands were sweating just as he watched the monitor. He did not know how this coincidence could happen that two opposing guilds would meet in this quest for the update. However, he was sure of one thing. They would be able to capture the best footage and garner the best response among the populace.

At that moment, Team Leader Park Minggyu of the Special Players Management Team and Team Leader Lee Seokhoon of the Development Team entered the room together.

“When will the broadcast begin?”

“We will start at the most exciting time.”

“The most exciting time?”

“Look over there?”

Team Leader Lee Taejin pointed over at two monitors. One of the monitors was displaying Varen, Root and Minhyuk’s situation as they continued to run quickly. The other monitor displayed six people chasing after them. Team Leader Park could see that the person leading them was someone that he was familiar with.

“Iris’ Kohei?”

“Bingo!”

Kohei was a gamer that Iris Guild spent billions of won just to bring him directly to the country from Japan. He was a pro-gamer in the same league as the number one gamer Rovin. However, what was more interesting was...

“Just like Player Minhyuk, he also has a god class.”

...He had the Cursed Knight class, a god class like Minhyuk’s class.

“A story about the Frying Pan Killer and the Cursed Knight. It’s a very interesting sauce. I hope the Frying Pan Killer will be able to put up a fight,” Lee Taejin said. His tone showed that he believed that Player Minhyuk would lose unconditionally.

Team Leader Park grinned at him. He said, “What are you saying? I hope the Cursed Knight will put up a bit of a fight.”

Lee Taejin looked at him in confusion. Team Leader Park should know that the gap in their level was very wide. The Cursed Knight was at Level 300, but he was pretty much under the spotlight for

his video hunting a Level 400 player just recently. On the other hand? Player Minhyuk was just at Level 221. However, Team Leader Park's expression looked like he was saying?‘We’ll see about that.’.

“I’ll bet a month’s worth of coffee that Player Minhyuk will win.”

Chapter 122: Reunion

Anyone that met Imperial Sword Rumad would think of him as a giant. He was around two meters tall, with short and messy hair, and an intimidating aura. He wore a glaringly red armor and carried a greatsword. A child would definitely burst into tears at the mere sight of him. This very scary-looking man was one of the ‘Pinnacle Strong Men’ in the continent. Although he was considered to be the weakest out of the eight, he could still easily overwhelm and trample all of the current Rankers.

Rumad was looking at the distant scenery as loud sounds rang loudly from the direction that he was looking at.

Vwooooooong!

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

It was the sound of trumpets and drums. It meant that the target enemy had been found. However, before Ares could make a move, the guild chat popped out with notifications.

[Guild Chat: Red has been forced to log out.]

[Guild Chat: Carman has been forced to log out.]

[Guild Chat: Coso has been forced to log out.]

The notifications that he never imagined to hear were heard!

'...What the hell?'

Ares was quite taken aback. There were five troops led by five players who were supported and backed by the empire in that search team. The average level of the troops was Level 300 and all of the players were between Level 300~600. Red was the leader of the search team. Yet somehow, all of the players sent there were forced to log-out? ?This meant that all of the troops had been taken down.

'What's this? Don't tell me...'?Ares thought with a frown. There had to be something unusual with the players that they had picked up from Raven Village. Right then, the guild members that had been forced to log out flooded their guild chat.

[Guild Chat | Red: GM, there's this guy who's cosplaying as the Frying Pan Killer. The guy's totally extraordinary. My Power Arrow bounced off of his armor!]

"The Power Arrow?" ?Ares asked aloud. He was quite surprised. The Power Arrow was a powerful skill that could insta-kill a Level 350 player if it hit their vital point. Yet, there was an armor that easily bounced off that Power Arrow? The surprise did not end there...

[Guild Chat | Ran: GM, we were beaten by a woman with a whip!]

[Guild Chat ?] Brae: GM, we couldn't even touch her! She's extremely strong. I don't think that she's normal, she's at the standards of a high ranker!]

Ares' expression turned solemn in a blink of an eye. Then, one of his guild members approached him and said, "GM, don't you think this player who bounced off the arrow is the same as the Frying Pan Killer from before?"

"Frying Pan Killer? It's just a high-leveled cosplayer," Ares said, his brows furrowing deeper in thought. He had seen countless videos about this Frying Pan Killer just recently. At that time, he believed that the Frying Pan Killer would become a powerhouse once he matured and grew. However, it was impossible for him to have obtained such strength in just a short amount of time.

'It just doesn't make sense for him to be over Level 200 so fast...'

However, the guild member dispelled his doubts and proved it to him, saying, "A screenshot of the Frying Pan Killer was posted a few days ago. It was ranked quite high on the official website. And, it was in the Salov's Land which was near Raven Village."

"...Goddamn crazy."

A player whose level was at most Level 200 easily bounced off Red's arrow. It was truly an impossible feat but at that moment, an absurd notion flashed through Ares' mind.

"Wait... A whip?!"

The Frying Pan Killer killed his guild members off together with Roan. At that time, he assumed that he was a part of the Legend Guild. And then, there was the whip! Once he put two and two together, he could clearly tell that the woman was Genie. ?The woman that was seen together with the Frying Pan Killer was the Legend Guild's guild master!

'Finally...!'

The time had come for Ares to kill Genie! He had been waiting for this moment for quite a long time. Ares was also a top ranker, so he believed that he could take her down easily. At that moment, he would definitely post a video stomping on her and he would definitely trample on the Legend Guild.

"Rumad, let's go!"

"Boy. You look chipper, don't you?"

"Yes. There's game I want to hunt together with King Varen."

"Is that so? Keuhahahaha. Sounds fun. Interesting!" ?Rumad laughed crazily as they began to move towards the direction where the sound rang.

Then, a whisper came in...

[Kohei: We've found King Varen. He's currently running away with two players. An archer and someone wearing a horned helmet.]

Kohei was wearing a black armor with a bloody sword on his waist as he ran along. Since he hated being dragged down by plenty of people, only the minimum number of people were assigned to follow him. There were six people following behind him to support him.

As he ran along with his troops, they finally saw people running ahead of them. There was a tall man wearing bone armor and a frying pan on his back, and another man with a bow on his back. Varen was running together with them looking all tired and ragged with his dusty clothes. A small smile curled on his lips as he immediately informed Ares of the current situation.

[Kohei: We've found King Varen. He's currently running away with two players. An archer and someone wearing a horned helmet.]

[Ares: Please be careful. The player with the frying pan on his back is believed to be the player that's the talk of the town just recently. It's an unexpected surprise for us.]

“Ho?”

Kohei grinned.

‘The Frying Pan Killer? Isn't he the one that defeated Rovin, the player that was famous in Versal?’

Kohei's interest was piqued. The fight that he thought to be just some boring chase suddenly became interesting.

Even so, while he believed that it had become interesting, the gap between his level and the Frying Pan Killer's level was still too wide. In addition, he also had a god class. ?Cursed Knight.? The Cursed Knight class was so powerful that it could let him narrow a 100-level gap with his enemies. Even if they blocked his attacks, their arms were bound to rot in an instant with his curse. In other words, just a brush from one of his attacks could easily reduce the power and strength of his opponents. His debuff abilities were beyond anyone's imagination.

‘I'll just play with him,’ Kohei thought, giggling. He liked watching other players flounder and get flustered with his debuffs. At that moment, a set of notifications rang...

[For the latest updates, a Live Broadcast will be broadcasted.]

[For players who do not want their face to be exposed, your face will be blurred out and mosaiced as soon as you refuse.]

[You can also choose to remove the mosaic if you wish to in the future.]

‘Ho?’

It unexpectedly became something fun. Kohei was someone who loved to hog all of the attention! He quickly accepted the notification as he narrowed the distance between him and the fleeing Varen. His bloody sword glowed red as an energy force was fired out from it. Red gas-like energy floated in the air which closely resembled blood. As quickly as it was cast, it exploded. The red energy struck the backs of Varen and his escorts.

[A Blind Man's Despair.]

[The sight of those who got in contact with the blood of despair will be limited.]

Kohei's magical attack was so high that it was very difficult for regular mages to reflect or debuff it. Just like he expected...

“Huh?”

...The archer who was running suddenly rolled around on the ground. Even King Varen fell down and tapped the ground with his hands.

“Wh...where are you? Root! I suddenly lost my sight!”

“Your Highness, it’s me! Where are you?”

‘Keuhahahahaha! Look at that King and those uncivilized Koreans!’?Kohei thought. He giggled at the sight of them blindly looking for each other.

“Hmm?”

Just as he was enjoying watching them floundering, Kohei suddenly tilted his head in confusion. The Frying Pan player was trembling as his eyes looked down. There was a soboro bread in his hands that was tainted by the Blind Man’s Despair.

‘What the hell?’

Kohei’s head remained tilted as he tried to figure out the man.

“Ugh. Waaaaah. My...my eyes! I can’t see.?Hwiiik!” The man moved in a hurry as he fell down. For Kohei, this sight was quite ridiculous and funny. He walked slowly towards them as he talked to the soldiers behind him.

“Kill the archer player and capture King Varen. I will kill that guy.”

Kohei gripped his sword tightly as he took one step closer towards the man. He lifted his sword as he prepared to strike down.

‘The Frying Pan Killer isn’t such a big deal. That frying pan looks good, I hope it drops,’?Kohei thought as he activated his attack skill.

[Powerful Blow.]

[Immediately inflicts a huge amount of damage to the enemy.]

Swooooooosh!

But then...

Claaaang!

...The Frying Pan Killer quickly lifted his sword and parried his strike. His eyes that looked like they lost focus earlier suddenly gained clarity as he glared fiercely at Kohei. He spat, “Does this look fun to you?”

Kohei could not understand the situation that he was in. He thought,?‘H...he was clearly... a moment ago...!’

Kohei was sure that the Frying Pan Killer was struck with his debuff earlier. So, how did he move and parry his strike? He did not even drink or eat anything. In other words...

‘He was never caught in the debuff! He was just acting!’

What was more surprising to him was the fact that someone below Level 200 could escape his debuff.

“You damn bastard! Who the hell are you?!” Kohei snarled fiercely.

Hyo-Nam came out of the capsule room in disappointment just as his friend, Hyun-Soo, came out of his capsule. Hyun-Soo said, “Hey, let’s skip college today!”

“Shit. I can’t! Last time, my mom almost chased me out of the house in just my underwear. I’ll be in huge trouble if I do it again.”

Hyo-Nam also wanted to have a lot of fun in Athenae but he had no choice. That was when they saw a crowd gathered in the capsule room’s rest area. Hyo-Nam tilted his head in confusion as he followed the flow of the crowd. The moment he entered the rest area, he saw a man projected on the huge TV screen. The man’s voice boomed loudly as the phrase that he just uttered appeared on the screen.

[Athenae. Northern Continent Update!]

“Oh?”

“Wow...”

The people around him were staring at the screen intently. When he turned his head around, he heard the owner of the capsule room saying, “I saw the live broadcast on the internet and I cast it on the TV right away.”

The owner looked quite cute as if he was asking for a ‘good job’ from the people in the rest area. Hyo-Nam turned his head back on the screen as subtitles appeared while the Northern Continent flashed on the screen.

[An Unknown Part of the World!]

[Two Conflicting Empires!]

[A Battle for Survival!]

[And...]

A man’s face appeared on the screen.

[The man who needs to survive. Varen, the King of the Northern Continent’s Valkyrie Kingdom!]

[And the chasers who are after him, trying their best to capture him!]

The attention of the people was focused on the word 'chasers' as the situation on the screen changed and another man’s face appeared. It was Kohei.

“Huh, that f*cking bastard!”

“That shitty head is a stinking punk!”

“Omg... Just looking at the video on the screen... he’s ugly! Even his pores are ugly!”

“Can’t they just cover his face or something?”

“Look over there. There’s a small text saying?‘We have asked for the player’s consent, the players can choose to mosaic their faces before the broadcast starts’?was what it said.”

The capsule room was suddenly filled with insults and criticisms. They had no choice but to just do it. Even Kohei himself said that he was an abomination. He even uploaded videos of players who were affected by his debuff abilities and giggled as he said ‘Bakaaa~’ in Japanese. Plenty of Korean netizens frowned at his actions. Even if he was considered a local player right now, he still did such atrocious behavior without any care in the world. However, there was one thing that they could not deny.

“Didn’t he kill Maestro not too long ago?”

Maestro was one of the players with the legendary class! He was at Level 400 when Kohei hunted him successfully. He even stood in front of him and said ‘Bakayaro!’ and laughed maniacally. Despite his abominable actions, they had no choice but to admit that he was strong. Soon, the video panned and showed another man’s face.

[And there are those that want to protect! This is a bloody battle between those who want to protect and those who want to take away!]

The screen changed again, it showed the forest in a third-person perspective. It showed Varen, an archer player, and a player with a frying pan on his back as Kohei chased them down. The archer player looked like he was mosaiced, while the player with the frying pan had his face covered with a helmet. On the contrary, since Varen was an NPC, his face was shown clearly. They did not need to get any approval or rejection from him after all. Then, they saw Kohei shoot a bloody?energy? towards the three of them.

Bang!

The glaringly red bloody energy exploded bringing confusion and panic among the king, the archer and the frying pan player.

“Ah...! No! No way!”

“That bastard! He’s smiling again! Awoooo! I’m so angry!”

Everyone was left speechless at his atrocious actions. Even the players who did not belong to Eivelis Empire frowned at his actions. They believed that both the players would be forced to log out and King Varen would be taken away.

“Ah. I don’t want to watch anymore!”

Even though Athenae was just a game, it was still so vivid that it could give the people the chills. Hyo-Nam closed his eyes tightly to avoid such a gruesome scene. He did not want to watch Kohei play around with them as they struggled to survive. Then, a sound was heard loudly and clearly in the capsule room.

[Claaaang!]

It was definitely the sound of a sword being parried. When Hyo-Nam opened his eyes, he could see his friend Hyun-Soo shaking his fist as he shouted in excitement, “Waaah...!”

The man who blocked Kohei’s words said...

[Does this look fun to you?]

It was exactly what everyone in this room wanted to say! Kohei looked at him in surprise as he shouted.

[You damn bastard! Who the hell are you?!]

The man did not answer but just showed him through his actions.

[Spark, spark, spark!]

The man’s sword pushed against Kohei’s and created countless sparks. Tension suddenly sparked between the two of them. The tension was so great that it seemed like even the air and the dust were flying and vibrating tensely around them. Then, the man uttered coldly...

[Scattering Sword.]

Chapter 123: Reunion

Minhyuk was running with Root and Varen when he saw a cloud of blood rushing towards them. It then exploded and tainted their bodies.

[Blind Man's Despair.]

[The sight of those who got in contact with the blood of despair will be limited.]

[You have an invincible body that can ignore and resist all kinds of abnormal states.]

[You have resisted an abnormal state.]

The first dish from God’s Dishes! Minhyuk was able to receive an invincible body that could ignore and resist all kinds of abnormalities when he ate the Pig Trotter Set. Minhyuk watched as Root and Varen fell down as they lost their sight. Then, another player appeared, giggling weirdly not too far away from them. Minhyuk’s brows furrowed at the sight. Then, he took a look at the soboro bread that he had taken out a bit earlier because he was hungry.

'Gasp...!'

Minhyuk was left in shock. It was the last piece of his ‘crispy-on-the-outside-but-soft-on-the-inside’ soboro bread! However, his soboro bread was now covered in blood! His body trembled. He gazed at the bread for a moment and thought, ‘My precious soboro... bread...!’

Unaware of the tragedy and grave mistake that he had committed, the man continued to laugh and giggle at them. Minhyuk’s anger reached its peak when he heard the man’s atrocious laughter. That was when he made up his mind.

‘I will take revenge for my soboro bread!’

There seemed to be only one method to kill the person that had defiled his soboro bread. Minhyuk was sure that he and Root could easily deal with the rest of the troops once he had dealt with this person. So, Minhyuk began acting. When the man looked like he wanted to go in for the kill, Minhyuk blocked his sword. The moment the man asked him in disbelief, he answered with all his might!

Slaaaaash!

Ellie's Sword was covered with a red energy as a strong force gathered around it. The ground even vibrated loudly with the strength of the force. The man, Kohei, had a gut feeling. He thought, 'It's dangerous...!'

Then, Ellie's Sword deflected Kohei's sword.

Clang!

Minhyuk quickly narrowed the distance as he attacked Kohei fiercely.

'I have to stop him!'

Kohei thought, quickly using his defensive skills.

[The Cursed Shield.]

[Creates a shield made out of cursed beings.]

Crack, crack, crack!

Bones sprouted out from the ground! The bone fragments quickly formed into a square shield. Kohei finally breathed a sigh of relief after hiding behind the shield. But then...

[Scattering Sword.]

[A single attack will deal six additional damages with each instance dealing additional 30% damage.]

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

The first blow shook the shield strongly. The second blow created a small crack in the shield. The third blow widened the small crack. And in the fourth blow, Kohei could hear an ominous sound.

Crack!

And by the fifth blow...

Crumble!

The bone shield was broken into pieces!

Thud!

"Ack!" Kohei was struck dumb! A sword squeezed through and struck him on his abdomen, bringing in consecutive damages!

"Ugh!"

Blood spurted out of Kohei's mouth. Before he could be pushed back any further, Kohei moved his hand that was holding his bloody red sword.

Shwaaaaa!

[Curse God's Greed for Blood.]

[Exchange your HP with your opponent's HP.]

[Using Curse God's Greed for Blood has a risk, all stats decrease by 1.]

However, before Kohei could celebrate, the next notification made his brows furrow further.

[Curse God's Greed for Blood has failed.]

Curse God's Greed for Blood could only be used thrice per day. It was both an effective and risky skill. Kohei once again tried the skill on the Frying Pan player in front of him.

[Curse God's Greed for Blood.]

[Exchange your HP with your opponent's HP.]

[Using Curse God's Greed for Blood has a risk, all stats decrease by 1.]

[Curse God's Greed for Blood has failed.]

'What the hell!'

Right now, Kohei was finally sure that all abnormal status and conditions were laid to waste in front of Minhyuk.

'How in the world...!'

Kohei was not sure what he would do after, but there was one thing that he was sure about. If he did not recover now, then he would die with a single slash. When Minhyuk moved to attack him again, Kohei made a split-second decision and turned his skill towards the soldier beside him.

[Curse God's Greed for Blood.]

[Exchange your HP with your opponent's HP.]

[All of your stats have been reduced by 1.]

[The exchange was successful.]

"Keuuaaaaack!" The soldier beside him screamed and rolled on the floor while Kohei's wounds recovered at a speed visible to the naked eye.

"F*cking shit..." Kohei said, brows furrowing as he made a decision. In the future, he would need to find a way to fight without the curses. His 'The One Who Corrupts' skill was a skill that would rot his opponents' skin the moment he touched them. And his 'Curse God's Roar' skill was a skill that would reduce his opponents' attack power and hit rate by 40%. However, even though he had these great skills, all of them were useless in front of Minhyuk. In other words, Minhyuk was the worst enemy to match up against.

'No, I can still win...!'

In fact, even though all of Kohei's skills were taken out of the equation, his strength would still be at least at that of a Level 280. In truth, his sheer force should be at Level 300, but the Cursed Knight's skills needed a lot of MP, so he invested in his WIS for quite a bit. Even so, his raw power was still at Level 280. It was more than enough for him to overpower a man with just his physical strength and skills.

'What's more, he's still low-leveled...'

If he lost to him, then Kohei would be deeply shamed.

"Phew!" Minhyuk took a deep breath. Varen and Root were looking straight at him. Before they knew it, they were already released from the Blind Man's Despair. Then, he said, "You should go first."

Root was left speechless when he saw Minhyuk fight. He thought, 'W...what kind of chef is this....?!'

As soon as he regained his sight, Root saw Kohei the Cursed Knight. He was quite a well-known figure but Minhyuk was trampling him.

'I...I am being accompanied by some ridiculously strong people...!'

Genie could hold back more than ten archers all on her own, and Minhyuk could easily overpower Kohei!

"I understand!" Root said. Root was also someone that could be considered a high-leveled player. In addition, not many people could follow his arrows and his accuracy was top-notch. He quickly ran away with Varen as the soldiers moved to pursue them.

The moment Minhyuk tried to attack the soldiers...

Clang!

...Kohei moved to stop him. When Minhyuk took a step forward...

Shwaaaa!

...Kohei's sword quickly slashed at him.

Swoosh!

Vwooom!

A gap was created and Kohei's sword was able to strike down at him from above. Kohei knew the moment Minhyuk was in his range. He thought, 'I caught you...!'

Kohei's sword was the epic grade Sword of Destruction! A direct hit on an armor would even create an armor break effect. However, this effect would only be triggered if the player had a higher attack than the defense of the opponent. However, Kohei believed that he had enough power to break the defenses and destroy any armor to pieces.

Once I break his armor, his armor will fall down into pieces and I'll be able to kill him all at once!

But...

Scratch, scratch, scratch!

...To his dismay, the armor did not break apart, instead, only a small line was created on top of it.

'...How high is this armor's defensive power?!' Kohei thought, eyes widening in disbelief.

“Step.”

Minhyuk quickly narrowed the distance between them. Right now, he could take two steps and attack at the same time. Kohei was caught in surprise when he saw Minhyuk move a meter in a blink of an eye. What was more surprising to him was the sword that stabbed through him in a flash.

Clang!

The first strike was blocked with his amazing reflexes, but the second strike was an entirely different matter.

Stab!

“Ugh!” Kohei groaned and staggered.

‘Crazy... Why does he have these excellent skills?!’

He fought Rován quite often before, so he believed that Minhyuk who had defeated Rován was someone easy to trample on if they ever fought. Yet, now that Minhyuk was fighting him, he realized how great Minhyuk’s talent and skill were. However! He would not be called Kohei if he faltered here! A powerful force slowly gathered in his sword.

[Curse God’s Roar!]

[A powerful Ghost’s Curse will pressure the enemy and explode once the attack is successful.]

Huge skeletons popped out behind Kohei, flying up in the air, before shooting straight towards Minhyuk. Every skeleton had a weapon in its hands, things like swords, axes, and spears.

[Kihehehehehehe!]

[Kihihihihihihihihihih!]

Clang, clang!

Clang, clang!

While preventing their attack, a sword flew past Minhyuk’s defenses.

At that moment...

Baaaaaang!

...A powerful explosion erupted that caused Minhyuk to fly back.

“Kgghk!”

Almost 20% of Minhyuk’s HP was cut down in a flash. The skeletons approached him once again as Kohei narrowed the distance between them.

Baaang!

Another strike flew past Minhyuk’s defense. He rolled on the floor and negated the explosion as he hurriedly used Rampant Sword.

[Rampant Sword.]

[A flurry of rampant swords with additional 35% attack power will be created for 7 seconds.]

Slash!

Slaaaash!

Slaaaaaash!

The flurry of swords passed through the skeletons. The power behind the sword was so huge that the skeletons could not withstand it. In the end, the skeletons broke down into pieces, before scattering in the air and disappearing. Minhyuk hurriedly took a chocolate bar out of his inventory and ate it.

Fwiiiish!

[Absorption Conversion]

[You can recover 30~40% of your HP.]

Minhyuk's body recovered rapidly as he ate the chocolate bar. Then, he exhaled and thought, 'I should finish this fast.'

Minhyuk's Absorption Conversion would not be available for the time being. Besides, he did not know when the enemies would come in droves. He knew that the longer their fight dragged on, the more disadvantageous the situation he was in. Kohei also realized the same thing.

Right now, their fight was broadcasted all over the country with plenty of real-time comments flooding in.

[lkvkjk313: Wow, Kohei's being volleyed! So refreshing! Kyaa!]

[glfqada: ??? Isn't Kohei winning?]

[BestSight: Hehehehe. I think he is. But, I think that person is the Frying Pan Killer.]

[bqwdl3: F*ck. The Frying Pan Killer was just in Shrieking Hills a few days ago. How is he fighting with Kohei now? Can you raise your level by over 80 levels in just a few days?]

While the Ares Guild was quite confident in their victory, the other players watching the live broadcast were debating over whether they would win or not.

[bdfklfgfgl: Now that I've read what other people thought, I think he really is the Frying Pan Killer. Right?]

[TingtingTaengTaeng: Yep. I think he's the Frying Pan Killer too. There was a screenshot of him being in Salov Land near Raven Village just earlier. I think it was him since he used that Bbiiiii cry in there.]

[PoopyAnt: Hehehehe, Frying Pan Killer? I think he's just a high-leveled player who's cosplaying as the Frying Pan Killer. Does leveling up that fast in a short amount of time even make sense? If he's really the Frying Pan Killer then I'll delete my character right now. Hehe. Take a ss right now.]

[Calcal: Oh. I'm taking a ss of the going-to-be-deleted character.]

[OleCole: I'm also taking a ss!]

Back to the two men who did not know anything about the bet...

Kohei prepared for his last strike. Black energy blew out of his body as his veins slowly expanded, and they began to fill with black blood. His sword also slowly became black. He slashed his sword and a black current flew straight towards Minhyuk. This was one of Kohei's most powerful attacks.

[Curse God's Battle]

[A powerful curse that can destroy everything.]

Shwaaaaaaa!

Minhyuk keenly felt that he would not be able to dodge the speeding black current. He quickly took out the frying pan hanging on his back!

'If I can't avoid it, then I will stop it!'

[Frying Pan Gigantification.]

[You can adjust the size of your frying pan depending on the mana that you will input.]

Minhyuk's frying pan turned large enough to cover his body. The moment the black current and Minhyuk's frying pan collided...

Baaaang!

...A loud sound shook the heavens and earth as a thick amount of dust flew in the air!

Kohei thought, 'Crazy! I can't believe that Curse God's Battle can't even break through his frying pan...!'

Usually, once Curse God's Battle struck an artifact, the artifact's durability would drop to zero all at once. However, the man in front of him successfully defended himself with a frying pan. The moment the black current disappeared...

Shwaaaa!

...Minhyuk's sword pierced through the thick dust flying around and stabbed at Kohei's abdomen. Kohei looked down at his bloody abdomen and spat out...

"...F*cker?!"

Then, his body crumbled down. The battle was finally over. Minhyuk quickly turned around to follow behind Varen and Root.

Back to the real-time comments section!

[dgsfad: The frying pan of the Frying Pan Killer becomes gigantic. Certification, done! Yeye.]

[gadfb24: PoopyAnt, you have to delete your character. (Photo)]

[zzdwaql235: Here's a receipt too! (Photo)]

[Kellog: Congratulations~ Delete character~ Congratulations~ Congratulations on your character's deletion~]

[CurryTheBest: Character deletion. Congrats, congrats. Receipts needed! You are quite bra.... No. I'll slap you on the knee! I'll hit it for you!]

[PoopyAnt: ...OMG?]

The player with the nickname PoopyAnt looked like he was left speechless.

Chapter 124: Reunion

Varen and Root both looked like they were about to keel over.

“Huff, huff,” Varen tried to calm his breath, his body shaking in anxiety. He thought of the woman that accompanied them, and the chef named Minhyuk sacrificing themselves just to protect him. The woman, Genie, was clearly someone strong, but she would not be able to deal with a lot of enemies alone. And there was Minhyuk...

‘No matter how strong he is...’

The man named Kohei looked like he possessed a very strong ability. Varen could not help but bite his lips hard in worry.

“Please don’t worry too much. Your Highness.”

“...?”

“We, foreigners, are immortal. We can come back to life even if we die.”

“...Ah. That’s right!” Varen said, a small smile gracing his chapped lips.

‘I will repay them and do anything I can do for them if I ever make out of this alive!’

At that moment...

“Your Highness!” Root shouted, quickly flying to his side and protecting him as five arrows flew towards them. Root quickly whipped the dagger out of his waist and split the incoming arrows.

Slash!

Tak!

Bang!

However, one of the arrows flew towards Varen’s shoulders. Root hurriedly pulled Varen behind him.

Thud!

“Kgghk!”

“B, boy...!” Varen shouted. He felt distressed as soon as he saw Root groaning in pain. Root quickly snapped the arrow from his shoulders.

Spurt!

“Phew!”

Root knew that a fight was inevitable now. There were five soldiers right on their tail! He quickly pulled his bow out, nocking an arrow on it and glaring fiercely at the incoming enemies.

Swoosh!

Swoosh!

Swoosh!

The arrows flew in the air once more.

‘My MP is gone now.’

There was only one way left for them.

‘I only have my own skills and talents left...!’

Root pulled his bow hard as he shot his own arrow against the flying arrows.

Twang!

Bang!

Root’s arrow countered the first arrow! Then, he quickly took a step back, nocked an arrow again and pulled the strings of his bow!

Twang!

Bang!

An incredible hit rate and a quick reload!

Bang!

The remaining arrow struck one of the trees surrounding them. Root could easily and quickly analyze the trajectory of the arrows. He did not waste any breath on those that he deemed would miss or be easily broken by the wind. He never stopped nocking arrows on his bows as he ran.

Two arrows flew out at an astonishing speed...

Twang!

... one pierced through a soldier hiding in the thickets.

Stab!

“Keuaaaack!”

And then, another one...

Twang!

Stab!

“Keuuaaaaa!”

Root easily shot two people in one breath. He calmly scanned his surroundings for more danger while Varen looked at him with surprise.

‘Root is someone who just came to us not too long ago.’

This was the reason why Varen did not know much about him and his skills. Although Root did not have a special class in?Athenae, he was someone that once had a splendid career in reality. He was

a former gold-medalist in archery and was once a hopeful Olympic athlete. However, after an accident, he was left feeling like a dead man after being paralyzed from the waist down. He was only playing Athenae to feel alive once more. For him, Athenae was a different world that could allow him to let his arrows fly once more.

Twang!

One of the strongest arrows, the fire arrow, flew straight at them. The fire arrow was an arrow that was engulfed in blazing flames and could deal a lot of damage to any opponent. However, Root confidently pulled his bow and shot these arrows. The fire arrows were destroyed right in front of them!

Crackle!

The remnants of the fire arrow fell down uselessly. What an amazing ability! Root quickly nocked an arrow on his bow with a solemn and fierce look on his face.

‘My MP is only enough to use one skill. I should kill one with my skill and the other with just my sheer force.’

If Root used his skill to pierce the neck of his enemy, he could kill them in one breath.

[Vital Shot!]

[An arrow aimed straight at a vital point.]

The arrow whistled through and pierced the enemy straight on his neck!

Spurt!

The enemy could not even shriek before he died. As soon as one enemy died, Root quickly stretched his bow and aimed.

Twang!

An arrow flew once more. This arrow also skillfully penetrated another enemy’s neck.

Swoosh!

Suddenly, an arrow came flying straight towards Root’s head.

‘...Damn it! I can’t avoid this one.’

Root’s brows furrowed as cold sweat dripped down from his forehead. He said, “Your Highness, make sure that you return home alive!”

Root firmly believed that he would be forced to log out once he finished his words to Varen. Then...

Crackle, fwoosh!

...A huge flame burned the arrow that was flying straight at him.

“...Gasp?!” Root gasped in surprise. It was because the blazing flame that stopped his arrow was a man.

Not long after, the fire that engulfed the man slowly diminished until the fire was put out. The man turned around, raised his straw hat with the tip of his index finger and grinned at him. The man said, "Oooooooooooh! I was like the real Ace just now!"

"Tsk, tsk, tsk. Is that really our Ace?"

Mysterious and unknown people slowly began to emerge one by one. They were wearing a dazzling array of artifacts. Then, the man who looked like he was a fighter said, "Wow. Hey, aren't you very talented with the bow? You've only used your skills once. How did you do that?"

"I agree. That was really cool."

All of them were praising him and giving him admiring glances.

"Ah, aaaaaah. Yes. Th...thank you," Root said, not letting his guard down.

'Who in the world are they? Are they our enemies or are they our allies?'

This was the question that was running through his head. Then, the man who looked like a fighter, Khan, spoke once more, "Where's Genie?"

"Genie?" Root asked in confusion.

'Genie? Who is Genie?'

He did not know of anyone that went by that name, but there was a player with a similar nickname around him.

"Are you talking about Ronny?"

"Yes. The one who laughs a lot and will like you if you throw her something to eat. The crazy lady with the whip."

"Ah... The crazy lady with the whip... It seems like it really is Ronny but..."

"Ronny is the Genie that I was talking about."

Genie would always use the nickname "Ronny" whenever she wanted to hide her identity. Root finally understood. He thought, 'Are they Genie's comrades?'

He just heard it in passing a while back, but he did hear Genie tell Varen that she would call her guild members!

"Ah. What about the guy with the frying pan?"

"Ah. Are you talking about Minhyuk?"

"Yes. That damn... No, that friend."

When Khan smiled at him, Root pointed behind him and said, "He's fighting with Kohei over there."

"Aha!"

Then, another man spoke up, “A friend of mine just sent a whisper to me. They said that Minhyuk just won against Kohei?”

“...Is that the truth?!” Root reacted first instead of Khan.

“For real?!”

“Ah. Yes.”

Root smiled and breathed a sigh of relief as the man nodded to confirm the news.

‘I...I can’t believe Minhyuk won against Kohei...!’?Root thought, clenching his fists tightly

Then, Khan said, “Please wave your hand over here and say hello.”

“Yes? Are there more enemies?”

“No. We’re doing a live broadcast right now.”

“Ah. Right. That’s right. Wait...”

Root wanted to have his face mosaiced but since the situation was very urgent and hectic, he completely forgot that they were in a live broadcast.

“I think the real-time comments are going crazy right now.”

“Why?”

“I’m pretty sure all 20 million?Athenae?players across the country will be amazed with your superb archery skills.”

Root felt a bit confused but Khan’s words was the truth. The comments section was really all over the place.

[gaddl3: Wow. Did you see him shoot those arrows? That was so sick...!]

[ChubbyBrothers: Kya! Have you seen him hit that Level 300 soldier class boss at the neck and kill them instantly?!]

[HeavenlyArcher: ...How can he even counter and offset those arrows by hitting them with his own arrows... So cool...]

However, Root just looked around blankly as he asked, “But, when are the rest of your guild members going to arrive?”

“The rest of our guild members?”

“Ar...are these all of you?”

“Yes,” Khan answered him confidently as the others behind him piped up.

“Ah. Are there too many of us?”

“I think ten of us are enough. I’ll take a nap so wake me up when you need me.”

Khan grinned and said, “Ah. Don’t worry. We’re good enough.”

“What’s your guild name, by the way?” Root asked, wondering if they were one of the top guilds since they were confident with their strength.

Then Khan said, “Legend.”

“...!”

Team Leader Lee Taejin almost shrieked out in excitement. The live broadcast was spreading through the internet and his view counts were rising rapidly. It was because of what the King of Fists, Khan, said a while ago.

[Legend.]

It was a word that created huge waves. It was an even greater wave compared to when all of the Ares Guild refused to mosaic their faces. All of the members of the Legend Guild also refused to mosaic their faces!

[zkkdl3: Legend?! Th...they really came out!]

[blkad313: What’s this? Will Ares and Legend play against each other? Sounds fun. Hehehehe.]

[LegendNumberOne: OMG, OMG? Aren’t the two of them at odds with each other? The GM of Ares was so anxious to catch and kill off Legend, right.]

[Enjoyable: Wow... One of the Four Greatest Guild’s Ares vs. the Unofficial Rankers Guild...! This is gonna be sick!]

Then, Team Leader Park said, “But, why are you so quiet?”

“...What?”

“We bet on coffee for a month, so Team Leader Lee should buy us a cup of coffee for a month starting now.”

“OK. I’ll buy you a cup of coffee for a month. But, is that even important right now? Look at everyone’s reactions!”

This was the victory of the Frying Pan Killer that no one even expected! And the archer’s brilliant talent, ability and skill in archery! At the same time, the guild members of the Legend Guild appeared one after the other! He believed that this would bring forth a huge promotional effect for them. Right now, there was only one real clash that was left. Team Leader Lee Taejin’s eyes swiftly turned towards the monitor. The monitor was showing the Ares Guild and their guild members along with the troops from Cordis Empire surrounding Genie.

Ten minutes ago.

Genie was collecting the blood of all of the hidden archers and players swiftly. Her speed was so fast that no one could even keep up with her even if they were using the terrain as their cover.

Swish!

Her whip lashed off, splitting and hitting several soldiers hidden behind a bush in one fell swoop.

Slash!

Slash!

“Keuaaack!”

“Ugh, aaaaack!”

At that moment, her guild chat popped out.

[Guild Chat | Khan: We’re almost there.]

[Guild Master Genie: Come quickly. This Noona is dying!]

[Guild Chat | Locke: Noona? Did you say Noona? Which one?]

[Guild Master Genie: Oppa^^ can you please come quickly?]

[Guild Chat | Locke: Y...you must really be in a hurry. We get it. We’ll be right there. But more importantly this is live. Do you want us to reveal who we are?]

Genie thought deeply after seeing his message. In all honesty, she did not expect them to suddenly have a live broadcast for the update. But she believed that this was an opportunity.

‘It’s an opportunity to show the people what Legend Guild is made of.’

Of course, it was still a double-edged sword. If they fail, people might laugh at them and say...?‘Ah, Legend? They weren’t much, huh?’. However, if they succeeded, they would be able to garner a huge amount of respect and a great response towards their guild.

[Guild Master Genie: Reveal. Let’s show them who we are.]

[Guild Chat | Khan: OK. Huh? I think we found King Varen. And he’s together with an?archer player. I think we have to save them first before we come to you. We’ll be right there.]

Khan ended their guild chat after leaving those words.

‘Our guild members will take good care of Root and His Highness Varen.’

It was a relief to see them work. Then, she suddenly realized something.

‘Where’s Minhyuk?’

Root and Varen were there, but where did Minhyuk go? Just as she was about to move forward, she saw a huge force blocking her way. Genie quickly triggered her skill and her whip was covered with a bright white glow.

[Sword-like Whip.]

[Your whip can cut down your enemies in one fell swoop.]

Swish!

Swoosh!

“Keuaaaack!”

“Aaaack!”

The people that had been slashed by her whip fell down with blood spurting from their bodies. They looked like they were slashed by a sword with the injuries that they sustained.

Right at that moment...

Bang!

...A man suddenly appeared out of thin air and fell down right in front of Genie. The impact when he landed was so powerful that the ground even cracked. Genie was so startled that she could not help but take a step back.

The man was at least two meters tall, with short hair and a shaggy beard. He was wearing leather armor and a rusty greatsword on his back. As soon as the man landed, a notification rang in her head.

[The Pinnacle Strong Men. Rumad has appeared!]

[You have met one of the Pinnacle Strong Men as your enemy.]

[Abnormal State. Extreme Fear has been triggered.]

[Extreme Fear has reduced all of your stats by 20%.]

[Extreme Fear has reduced your attack hit rate by 20%.]

[Whoever hunts and kills one of the Pinnacle Strong Men will gain plenty of rewards.]

Chapter 125: Reunion

“...P...Pinnacle Strong Men,” Genie mumbled, her body trembling slightly. This was not because of the abnormal status, Extreme Fear, but because one of the eight most powerful men was in front of her! As long as she hunted this man, she would be able to receive and gain tremendous reputation and fame, as well as an abundant EXP to level up quickly! There might even be plenty of artifacts!

Athenae?once released information about the continent’s Pinnacle Strong Men. The Great Mage Arfield. The Imperial Sword Rumad. The Iron Blooded Monarch, Overlord and the likes. Among these men, Rumad was placed last among the Eight Pinnacle Strong Men, and was considered to be the weakest. However, despite being tagged as the weakest, he was still an overwhelming powerhouse. Encountering one of the eight Pinnacle Strong Men meant only one thing.

‘We don’t know yet, but he will definitely drop an epic artifact at the very least, and possibly even a legendary artifact.’

The name ‘Legend Guild’ would also resound loudly and rise to fame as long as they could successfully hunt this powerhouse. Genie gripped the handle of her whip tightly.

“Hey, pretty lady. Are you trying to fight against me?” Rumad asked. It was as if he and his gigantic figure was telling Genie that he would still live even if he stood still and did nothing to block her attacks.

Genie grinned and said, “Don’t you know that a pretty lady can also be strong!”

Shwaaaaaaa!

Genie’s whip elongated as she activated one of her skills.

[Howling Whip.]

[A whip covered with blazing flames. Can melt anything down.]

Shwaaaa!

She brandished her whip as she retreated. The whip swayed strongly as it sent a blazing flame that turned into a firebird, threatening to burn everything.

Crackle!

Rumad took out his greatsword and held it with both of his hands as he exerted a huge force in the blade.

“Ha!”

Rumad struck the whip that was flying around wildly with his sword.

Slash!

His power was so great that the phoenix-like incarnation fell down to the ground without putting up any fight at all.

“...!”

Genie staggered in surprise. She thought, ‘Hi...his strength is really overwhelming!’

What was worse was that Rumad did not use any swordsmanship skills. He just used his sheer strength to break and block her skill.

Rumad quickly narrowed the distance between the two of them. He said, “Lady, you’re using some pretty rough whip there. It might be good to use it at night!”

“This perverted bas...” Genie tried to shout but she was already sent flying from Rumad’s kick, before she could finish her words.

Bang!

“Urk!” Genie groaned as she rolled on the ground. Her HP dropped by 15% in an instant!

‘Crazy...!’

Rumad’s damage was completely unbelievable. And in a blink of an eye...

Dash, dash, dash!

Rustle, rustle, rustle!

Dash, dash, dash!

...Genie was surrounded. However, there was one person among them that she could recognize. It was none other than Ares.

Ares was grinning broadly. His mouth was quirked so wide that it almost looked like it would rip apart. Finally! The time has come for him to kill Genie! He even brought Ares Guild's first, second and third best offensive captains to this fight.

"Kill her!" Ares ordered. He was never one to play fair or square. Rumad turned around as if he had lost interest once Ares and his guild members had arrived.

"Tch!" Genie clicked her tongue as she swung her whip fiercely.

Shwaa!

Shwaaa!

Ares only brought 50 of his guild members since there was a limit to how many people could accept the quest. With those that died earlier out of the question, there were still at least 30 people left. He also has a 50-man squad accompanying him on this quest.

Genie had no choice but to use her most powerful skill, knowing that she would not be able to deal with the number of enemies in front of her.

[Scattered Whip.]

[Dozens of whips will fly and slash at a rapid pace!]

Shwa, shwa, shwa, shwa, shwa, shwa, shwa, shwa, shwa, shwa!

Her whip crackled wildly in the air, leaving only afterimages as she cut down her enemies one after the other. Even Ares and his offensive captains could not approach her easily.

'This skill definitely eats a lot of MP...?' Genie thought, looking at her almost zero MP.

Shwa, shwa, shwa, shwa!

Genie sighed?the?moment her skill ended. The dust settled only to show the terrible scene of corpses of both players and soldiers littering everywhere.

"Ho," Rumad let out an exclamation as he looked at Genie with a bit of admiration.

Meanwhile, Ares quickly narrowed the distance between him and Genie after suffering from little to no injuries.

[Lightning Kick.]

[Quickly attack the enemy six times with a fast kick.]

Ares' feet glowed blue as he jumped up to deliver a powerful kick. The other offensive captains also jumped in to join the fray. Valk, the offensive captain that could transform into a beast, transformed into a lion and shot forward with a kick of his foot.

[Beast Roar.]

[Tear your enemy apart with your strong front paws.]

That was not all. The other two offensive captains triggered their skills as well.

[Quick Draw!]

[Cut your enemy down with all of your strength.]

[Death Scythe]

[A powerful scythe will cut down your enemy in one breath.]

Shwaaa!

Vwoooooom!

Hwaaaaa!

Looking at the incoming skills, Genie felt...

‘It’s the end for me.’

But then, a man suddenly appeared in front of her. The man was none other than...

[Frying Pan Gigantification.]

[You can adjust the size of your frying pan depending on the mana that you will input.]

...Minhyuk! Minhyuk was nearby when he heard Genie’s voice so he ran to her right away. He quickly used the Mahava’s Ring’s Absorption skill on Ares’ attack.

[Absorption]

[You have a 50% probability of successfully absorbing the skill.]

[Lightning has been successfully absorbed.]

[You can only use the absorbed skill once and only within ten minutes of absorption.]

“Hmm?” Ares hummed in confusion as he landed on the ground, his katana colliding with Minhyuk’s frying pan.

Claaang!

“...?!”

“Crazy...! How can a frying pan have such a high defensive power?!”

There was only a slight dent where the katana collided with the frying pan. However, what was so surprising was the fact that he used 80% of his attack power in that attack. Usually, one would need at least two frying pans to block that attack. Then, Minhyuk heard a notification.

[The Frying Pan’s durability has dropped below 20%.]

Minhyuk frowned. He thought, ‘He’s quite strong...’

It was made clear to Minhyuk that rankers were different. They brought him to the point where he would not be able to use his frying pan in the meantime. Minhyuk quickly hung the frying pan on

his back. Then, the transformed lion, Valk, charged at Minhyuk, slamming his huge paws at the latter.

“Oops!”

Thanks to Minhyuk’s natural reflexes, he was able to tilt his head away, only allowing Valk’s paws to hit his Armor of Immortality.

[Physical Damage Reflection! Returns double the damage received.]

Bang!

“Keuaaaaaah!” Valk screamed. The burning pain in his chest made him aware that his chest was torn. Blood gushed out from the chest of his lion form. Minhyuk did not miss the opportunity presented to him.

[Lightning Kick.]

[Quickly attack the enemy six times with a fast kick.]

Minhyuk jumped up as his legs glowed blue. Then...

Vwooom!

...a spinning kick landed on the still shrieking lion. Minhyuk attacked Valk!

Bang!

Valk was already brought into confusion and dizziness by a single kick but the skill did not end with just one kick. Five more kicks followed that.

Kick!

Bang!

Thud!

Slam!

Each kick fractured Valk’s bones neatly.

[Your HP has dropped below 10%.]

Valk could not move at all. And the final kick...

Baaang!

...was sent cleanly across the face of Valk, who then flew backwards and was forced to log out.

“What...!” Ares shouted in shock. He could not believe his eyes. The skill that forced Valk to log out was his own skill, Lightning Kick!

A lapse of Genie’s attention allowed the scythe-wielding player to land a powerful attack using the gigantic scythe of the giant reaper behind him.

“Ugh!” Genie groaned, her body staggering as she lost more than 40% of her HP from the attack. Minhyuk quickly went back to her side.

“Wh...what is this... You’re quite strong,” Genie said, deeply shocked by Minhyuk’s formidable strength.

“Ronny is strong too.”

However, there was nothing else that Minhyuk could show right now. There were a lot of enemies surrounding them and he was even the lowest in terms of level. To be honest, he could only withstand it thanks to his artifacts’ effects!

“Damn bitch!” Ares shouted as he gritted his teeth in anger. In the end, he still was not able to kill her.

Float!

Ares suddenly felt his body slowly float in the air.

“Hey. Heyo!”

.

A man that lifted his foot up appeared in his sight. Then...

[Giant’s Step.]

[A huge foot will crush your enemies all at once.]

...the man’s foot suddenly grew to around three meters in size.

“Ack!” Ares shouted, instinctively crossing his arms to defend himself, body still floating in the air. Then, the man’s foot stomped down on Ares!

Baaaaaaaaam!

Ares was flung straight down towards the ground.

“Ack!”

He vomited a mouthful of blood. Then, people began to pop out one after the other.

“Keuhahahahaha. Bring them down! Bring them down!”

“Sigh.?This crazy punk. He went batshit crazy again...”

Crazy Priest Locke laughed wildly as he rushed towards Luma. Luma was Ares Guild’s second offensive captain, the person that launched the Quick Draw skill on Genie.

“Keuhahaha! You’ve never seen anyone like me before, right? Let this Hyung heal you!” Locke shouted as he slammed his ax down on the man.

Puhaaaaa!

[Crazy Priest’s Heal.]

[Continuous Bleeding has been triggered.]

“Argh!” Luma moaned as blood continuously flowed from his arm. This was the injury inflicted on him by the ax and the weird heal that he received from the Crazy Priest.

[You’re bleeding.]

[You will be temporarily dizzy.]

Luma suddenly felt his head fog up and go fuzzy. Seeing Luma engulfed with a burst of dizziness, Locke took the opportunity to strike him with his ax on the head.

Slash! Smash! Slam!

“Heal, heal, heal! How is it? Do you think you’re healing? Keuhahahahahaha!”

“Noona, are you alright?”

Crackle, fwoosh!

The still-flaming Ace approached Genie and said, “I bought you a potion!”

It was a top-notch potion that cost about 10 million gold! Ace handed the potion over to Genie and watched her gulp it down before moving away.

[Hell’s Flame Horse]

[The horse covered in blazing flames from hell can easily burn down all of your enemies in one fell swoop.]

“Neigh!” A huge fire horse sprang up from the ground and neighed loudly, charging at the enemies fearlessly. The flames on its body licked the enemies and burned them down to ashes.

“Aaaaaack!”

“Keuaaaack!”

Their enemies agonized screams rang loudly in the background as the members of Legend Guild surrounded Genie.

“Where did our flower piggy get hurt?”

“You damn bastard! Who’s your damn flower piggy? I’ll make you into a flower piggy, stab a knife in your body and throw away your pork belly!”

“Aaaaaah. Wait. Our pretty GM’s face is ruined!”

The guild members of Legend Guild that popped out from all over the place started attacking the soldiers and player enemies. Ares was left in shock.

‘Damn crazy...!’

He knew that Legend Guild was a place where unofficial rankers were gathered. Even so, he thought that it would not make any difference since he brought his elite force with him, but it was not the case at all. Each one of them was at least in the top 100 of their chosen class.

Twaang!

An arrow pierced the neck of the soldier that was standing next to Ares.

‘Th, this is a live broadcast... those sons of bitches!’

Ares was aware that what he planned would be impossible if this continued like this... he only had one hope! He turned his head around and looked at the Imperial Sword Rumad. Rumad was now slowly beginning to move.

And Minhyuk...

“...What the hell. You.”

...was flustered when he saw the faces of Khan and Locke. They closely resembled the faces of his friends back in middle school. Minhyuk quickly shook his head to clear out the messy thoughts in his head. If that was the case, then who was Ronny? Looking back, he realized that her voice was a bit familiar. He turned around to look at Genie with confusion plastered on his face. Then, he saw Genie grinning at him widely.

“That’s right. I’m one of the two great pigs in the mountains. The wild boar.”

“...Gasp!” Minhyuk gasped. He was so shocked that he fell down on his bum.

Genie frowned and asked, “What? What’s wrong with you!”

“C...can a person even change so much like this?!”

Genie’s eyes narrowed sharply. She asked, voice bordering on dangerous, “Is that a compliment or a curse...”

At that moment, Locke, who was easily cutting down soldiers one after another, looked back at Minhyuk. He said, “Keuhahahaha! Every time we see each other, we also get surprised.”

Minhyuk slowly turned his head and said, “Jisoo, you...”

“That’s right, you shithead. I’m also really stro...”

“You really look ugly just like what Genie said in her message...!?Hiiiiik!”

“...”

For a moment there, Locke pondered if he should just split Minhyuk’s head with his ax instead of his enemies.

Then, the King of Fist, Khan, said, “Let’s congratulate each other on our reunion later. Let’s take care of these guys first.”

He grinned at Minhyuk while Minhyuk looked at him with wide eyes.

At that moment...

“Yeah. Have fun meeting again in the afterlife.”

...someone slashed Minhyuk with a greatsword.

Slaaaaash!

[You have been struck by a greatsword. Your defenses have been ignored.]

[Your HP has dropped below 10%.]

[You have been struck with a powerful blow, you are bleeding and currently struggling.]

[If you don't recover your HP quickly, you will be forced to log out due to excessive bleeding.]

Minhyuk's body dropped forward.

“Minhyuk!”

“Ack!”

“Hiss!”

Bang!

Rumad smashed his greatsword on the ground with all his might. He said, “Isn't it a bit sad that you forgot about me?”

The members of Legend Guild turned to glare at him as he laughed maniacally.

Chapter 126: Reunion

Genie and Locke's eyes met. Both of them felt that it was fortunate that Minhyuk was not forced to log out. However, he was bleeding all over and even vomited blood. It seemed like his HP was almost running out just from that single attack alone. What kind of happy reunion was this?

“Khan, Ace. Lead three of our guild members to deal with the rest of Ares Guild.”

“OK!” Khan answered, rushing forward to strike the still staggering Ares.

“And for the rest of the guild members...”

Genie finally gave an order.

“...let's start hunting this Boss Mob.”

“Yes!”

“Roger, flower piggy!”

“Go! Flower piggy! Lightning bolt!”

The guild members were looking at Rumad playfully, but inwardly, they were also very nervous. This was because they were all subjected to ‘Extreme Fear’ the moment they arrived in this place. And what was very surprising was...

‘The Frying Pan Killer... In just one hit...’

...Rumad's tremendous power. Genie's eyes met with the spearman, Crow.

Nod—

The members of Legend Guild had known each other since Versal. Some of them were even foreigners that came to Korea to find Genie just to play games with her together. These people had been together for quite a long time and were now showing off their teamwork.

Crow stomped on the ground as his spear aimed towards Rumad.

Vwoooooong!

The spear thrust was so powerful that it sounded like the space was being ripped!

[Spear Pistol!]

[A powerful strike that penetrates the enemy's vital point!]

Fwooooooosh!

A powerful force flew out of the spear like a bullet fired from a gun. Rumad easily blocked the force with his greatsword as he ran towards Crow with his huge body.

‘Fast...!’

Contrary to his size, Rumad was extremely fast. Genie quickly launched an attack in an attempt to slow him down.

Shwaa!

Shwaaaaaa!

“Annoying pest!” Rumad said. He grinned darkly as he quickly evaded the whip and grabbed it with his bare hands. Then...

Hoooooong!

...Genie's body was dragged by the whip. Her body swayed and flew in the air. Rumad quickly dragged the whip down as he aimed his greatsword towards the falling Genie. That was when Ascar, the Goddess of the Battlefield moved. Her silver bob swayed with the wind as she gripped both of her swords tightly. She moved so fast that only an afterimage of a cold and lofty woman was left behind.

Clang!

The distance between Ascar and Rumad disappeared in a blink of an eye. She quickly raised her swords to block the greatsword that was aimed at Genie. And....

Dash!

...sidestepped to jump off of the ground and attack Rumad's back.

“Ghost Sword.”

[A ghostly sword that can't be followed by the naked eye!]

Ascar's sword moved at a speed that could not be followed by anyone so easily.

Slash, slash, slash, slash, slash, slash, slash, slash, slash!

"Hmph!" Rumad snorted, letting go of the whip and slamming his fist into Genie's body.

Punch!

"Urk!"

Genie flew back in an arc. Then, Rumad turned around and easily blocked the incoming sword attacks.

Clang, clang, clang, clang, clang, clang, clang, clang, clang!

'Crazy...!'

Genie was shocked. Ascar's Ghost Sword was a very fast attack that none of their guild members could stop! She was also ranked 64th in the Global Swordsman Rankings. To be honest, Ascar was also surprised. In fact, Rumad was not even blocking all of her attacks.

[Your attack has failed.]

It seemed like the 20% reduction of attack and defensive power from the abnormal status was a much bigger blow to them than what they expected. That, and the fact that Rumad's defenses were strong. Even if they had successfully attacked him, he had only spilled a little bit of blood.

"Ha!" Rumad shouted as his greatsword was once again filled with strength. Ascar did her best to distract Rumad as her guild members dashed behind him. However, the moment Ascar's sword collided with Rumad's greatsword...

Spark!

...sparks flew. Then, Rumad ignored her attack and struck the ground with his sword strongly.

Baaaaang!

The ground shook and trembled from the impact of the strike. The force that Rumad released was tremendous. It was to the point that the Legend Guild members staggered and struggled to keep their bodies upright from the shock. Ascar, the person that took the brunt of the attack, was shocked.

[Ghost Armor]

[The ghosts in the field will protect you.]

In just an instant, ghosts armed to the teeth with armor swarmed and clung to Ascar's body. She watched as a powerful blow aimed for her body as the ground shook and cracked, trying to swallow her down.

Baang!

Baaaaam!

Spikes even appeared one after the other.

"Arghhh!"

Despite wearing her ghost armor, Ascar still took a huge amount of damage.

"Ack!"

In the end, Ascar was rendered immobile, vomiting a mouthful of blood. Rumad did not miss the gap. He narrowed the distance between them and swung his greatsword.

Slash!

Rumad slashed at her with the sword and...

[You have been struck by a greatsword. Your defenses have been ignored.]

[Your HP has dropped below 30%.]

[Due to the severity of the attack, all of your stats had been reduced by 70%.]

...Ascar's body swayed before she collapsed to the ground.

"Haaaaa... Haaaa... Damn! His greatsword ignores all defenses!"

"...F*ck?!"

"We'll be forced to log out in one strike!"

Ignoring all defenses was a much greater ability than anyone could think of. They did not know whether it was a skill attached to the greatsword, or if it was a passive skill that Rumad himself had. However, all of the attacks that came their way would automatically reduce all of their defenses. Once the damage comes in, it would then reduce their HP. With this ability, the members of Legend Guild were like novices wearing shabby armor in front of Rumad. That was how defenseless they were right now.

"Interesting. I can't believe that there are strong foreigners here." Rumad said, smiling coldly at them. The guild members of Legend Guild suddenly paused in their tracks when they saw his chilling smile. Rumad quickly rushed to where they were. Meanwhile, Khan and the other guild members of Legend Guild were dealing with the rest of the forces.

Swoosh!

Kick!

Khan was quickly greeted with a series of sharp kicks. Then he stepped back calmly and smiled. He said, "That was a pretty sharp kick."

"Shut up, you bastard!" Ares shouted, quickly narrowing the distance between them. In fact, Ares truly did have a pretty sharp kick.

[Sharp Kick]

[A kick that could cut down your enemies.]

Swish!

Ares' legs were covered with a white glow as he kicked towards Khan. Khan covered his face and upper body with his arms and escaped with just a few steps. If Ares' fighting style was akin to taekwondo, Khan's was akin to boxing.

Khan avoided Ares' kicks. Then, he suddenly found a gap. With great strength, he punched at the opening. And at that moment...

"Caught you," Ares said. He grinned widely as he turned his body around. He used his most powerful kick to deal a blow towards Khan who willingly went for the trap that he had dug for him.

Baaang!

Khan was hit on the jaw and flew back.

"Ack!"

Ares took the opportunity to leap forward and say, "This is my answer to your attack earlier!"

His legs were suddenly covered with a sharp light.

Bang!

Ares kicked his abdomen with a powerful kick.

"Ugh!"

Khan fell down to the ground as he vomited a mouthful of blood.

"Ack!"

He felt that his stomach was twisting in pain. In just one attack, his HP fell by 30%.

"A guild's GM should be able to do at least this much."

Khan spat out the blood in his mouth and clicked his tongue. He said, "Ah, that's right. Did you see what's behind you?"

"Behind me?" Ares asked, his face suddenly turning ugly.

"Your guild members and soldiers... almost all of them are dead."

"...!"

Ares glanced furtively behind him. He saw his guild members fighting fiercely against the members of Legend Guild. However, only a few of them were missing. It was not true that almost all of them were dead.

"How can you tell such a lie with such a straight face..."

"Yeah. It's a lie," Khan said as he closed the distance between them and slammed his fists that were charged with power towards Ares.

[Bash of Fury!]

[Additional 20% damage to ten consecutive blows to your enemies.]

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

“Ack! Ugh!”

Khan bashed Ares’ chest, his armor was even dented and crushed due to the impact of the blows. And the final blow...

Baaaang!

...made Ares fly back. He was even forced to log out before his body fell down!

“A man should fight with their fists,” Khan said. He grinned brightly as he joined his other guild members to clear the remnants of the Ares Guild.

Meanwhile, the bounty hunter and spearman, Crow, helplessly flew back after he received the direct brunt of Rumad’s attack. Genie braced her body and intercepted Crow to reduce the force that he received.

“Kgghk!”

“Kyaaaak!”

The two of them were rendered immobile for a short while. Meanwhile, Crazy Priest Locke approached Rumad with a crazy smile on his face. Even though his class was a healer, he was considered to be the strongest in terms of strength and stamina among all of his guild members so he at least had great confidence in his power.

“Oryaaaaa!”

Locke swung his ax towards Rumad with all his might in an attempt to block his way and give at least a few moments of reprieve for his guild members.

Swooosh!

Swoooooosh!

“Keuhahahahahah! Do you also want to taste my heals? Heal, heal, heal!”

However, the bleeding effect of his heals would only work if his attacks were successful.

Slash!

Rumad smacked his ax away with his greatsword. The ax was embedded on the ground. Locke quickly forgot about his ax and hugged Rumad’s waist tightly.

“I’ll hold on to him so focus your attacks on him...!”

Let’s just die together!

This was Locke’s intention. To let his guild members focus all of their attacks while he tried to hold Rumad in a deadlock. However...

“Annoying.”

...Rumad easily removed Locke’s tight grasp.

“Urk!”

Then Rumad kicked Locke hard.

Bang!

Roll, roll, roll!

The situation had suddenly turned incredibly dire. Legend Guild was a guild that was composed of members that could rival official rankers. However, there was a reason why they were struggling this much. Ten kindergarten students would not be able to defeat an adult after all. Their situation was exactly like that. The Legend Guild members were like ten kindergarten students while Rumad was the huge adult. In addition, he was like an adult who was well-versed in fighting too.

[Guild Master Genie: As soon as I send the signal, launch an all out attack. We don't have any other choice. Use all of your skills including the risky ones. We're going all out!]

[Guild Chat | Locke: OK!]

[Guild Chat | Huren: Yes!]

Genie waited with bated breath. Rumad swung his greatsword with great fanfare. With every swing of his sword, her guild members would fly away in a sorry state.

“Kgghhkh!”

She tried to swing her whip to block the attacks but the force was so large that it engulfed her.

[You have been struck by a greatsword. Your defenses have been ignored.]

[Your HP has dropped below 50%.]

[Your AGI has been temporarily reduced by 40%.]

Genie was finally sure that Rumad had an ‘ignore all defenses’ passive skill.

“This is much easier than what I thought,” Rumad said. He walked around leisurely while stroking his beard. The moment he walked within the range she had set, Genie's eyes gleamed brightly.

[Sword-like Whip.]

[Your whip can cut down your enemies in one fell swoop.]

The rest of Legend Guild members also activated their skills.

[Great Spear Boom!]

[Ghost King Decas' Sword!]

[Dragon Arrow!]

[Carla's...]

Those were the most powerful attacks of the ten guild members! Rumad finally sensed danger when he saw all of their incoming attacks.

‘I can't avoid it.’

Rumad immediately infused his greatsword with his force.

Spark, spark, spark!

The greatsword was suddenly covered with a red glow. He swung his bloody red greatsword at the incoming attacks.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

The powerful strike from the glowing sword collided with the Legend Guild's attacks which resulted in a huge and tremendous impact.

Baaaang!

Baaaaang!

However, some attacks still struck Rumad. Once his movements were restricted, Ascar's most powerful skill, the Ghost King Decas' Sword flew quickly and wrapped all over Rumad.

Fwish, fwish, fwish!

"Aaaaarghhh!"

For the first time, Rumad shrieked in pain.

Crow also used an attacking skill with a three-meter radius that would only be extinguished once it landed on his target.

Bang!

An explosion occurred near Rumad while an arrow flew at a fast pace. The arrow turned red and was covered in flames. It roared with a threatening sound, just like a dragon using dragon breath. Dragon Arrow was the best skill in Root's arsenal! He sent it out together with the rest of the attacks that the Legend Guild had sent.

Shwaaaaaaaaaaaa!

"Ugh!" Rumad groaned. He was forced to take a step back.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

The attacks coming from the members of the Legend Guild came pouring down! Once all of the attacks ended, a thick layer of dust covered the whole area.

"Ha... Ha... Ha...!"

"I can't fight anymore..."

"Ah. The risk of my skill is really too much...!"

"I can't even get up even if you beat me to death..."

The members of the Legend Guild really gave it their all, they even used their most risky skills. However, this was still better than dying helplessly. Death for rankers was much different compared to death for ordinary players. The penalty for being forced to log out would let other rankers overtake them. This would lead to their place being snatched. All of her guild members fell down and relaxed. However, Genie did not do so.

“...Did anyone get the notification for successfully hunting Rumad?”

“No, No!”

“I don’t have one either.”

“But, I don’t have it too?”

“...!”

Genie’s brows furrowed. This was strange, why hasn’t anyone heard the notification? This only meant one thing, They were not able to kill him off.

“Everyone, get up...!”

The moment Genie said so...

Shwaaaa!

...Rumad walked out of the thick layer of dust and grabbed Genie’s neck.

Grab!

“Y...you...!”

Chapter 127: Reunion

Step, step—

"Kghhk, ugh!" Genie groaned as she struggled in Rumad's hold.

When Rumad walked out of the thick blanket of dust, he looked absolutely terrible. One of his arms had disappeared and he was covered with blood. However, he still looked energetic and ready to fight.

"How dare...how dare you!" Rumad shouted, eyes bloodshot and dripping with blood and tears. The sight was completely horrific, especially with him holding Genie by the neck.

At this moment, Genie thought that it was over.

'All of the guild members have exhausted their energy... In the end, this raid is a failure, huh?'

However, it was a relief that two of her guild members were escorting Valen to where Ellie was.

'It's a relief. We were still able to keep King Varen safe.'

Genie turned her eyes downwards. She saw Minhyuk spitting out blood from the damage he received from Rumad.

'Minhyuk. You should run away, you got it?' She thought, expecting her neck to be broken soon. However, all of a sudden, she watched as the wounds on Minhyuk’s body recovered rapidly. Minhyuk stood up the moment his wounds healed.

'H...how...?!'

The injury that Minhyuk received looked like it was impossible to recover from! No, how could he even stand up so fast?! Once Minhyuk stood up, he looked like he was brand new. With no wounds and injuries at all. Then, he stood behind Rumad with his sword that was filled with sparks.

This was the first time that Minhyuk allowed an attack on his body. At that time, he thought, 'That's right, I should just log out like this.'

Then, he would naturally be able to run away and hide from his friends again. However, he realized that it was very selfish of him. Minhyuk's friends seemed like they had always been looking for him. Genie even kept on sending him messages.

However, it still did not take away the fact that he was afraid. Back in middle school, he was considered to be an honor student and a good friend. However, he suddenly became fat! Would his friends still accept him like they used to, when he was struggling with this rare disease? Minhyuk ran away before because he was terrified. He was terrified that they would think that he was not the same Minhyuk as before.

However, when Minhyuk met them again, he realized that he had been extremely selfish. At the very least, he could have told them the truth. If he had to be honest with himself, he was afraid of their reactions, so he ran away. Minhyuk continued to lie down on the ground as he thought about a lot of things. 'Then, Rumad grabbed Genie's neck. That was when Minhyuk decided to finally stand up.

'Yeah. If not now...'

If Minhyuk did not do it now, then he knew he would not be able to show himself in front of his friends anymore. Perhaps he would remain a coward forever, and they would avoid him in the future. So, he used the special ability of the Armor of Immortality.

'Restore all of my HP and MP.'

[You have used the special ability of the Armor of Immortality.]

[Your HP and MP are recovering at a fast pace.]

Minhyuk's wounds began to heal and recover at a speed that was visible to the naked eye. Then, he slowly stood up just as Rumad was trying to wring Genie's neck.

'I have to protect one of the two great pigs in the mountains!!!'

Minhyuk used Ellie's Swordsmanship, his sword surging with power. The skill that had evolved and became legendary!

Scattering Sword!

Minhyuk slammed his sword on Rumad's back.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

Unaware of his presence, Rumad remained defenseless as he received the powerful attack from behind. The attack was so painful that he was forced to release his hold on Genie's neck. Locke took the opportunity to catch her in an embrace and throw their bodies away from Rumad.

Stagger!

Rumad swayed and staggered as blood spurted all over his body. It seemed like his body was still trying to hold on despite receiving such a tremendous blow.

Fwish!

Swiiiish!

Fwoooooosh!

Spurt!

“Graaaaaaaa!” Rumad screamed roughly. However, amazingly enough, his body still remained standing. He used all of his strength to reach his remaining hand out and grab his sword.

Shwaa!

His sheer force and determination allowed him to recover his sword. Despite his body being covered with blood, Rumad still turned around and swung his sword at Minhyuk.

[Rumad’s HP has fallen below 30%.]

[Rumad’s Skill: Roar has been triggered.]

[Rumad’s stats will temporarily increase by 1.4x.]

“...Waaa!”

“Goddamn!”

The guild members were struck dumb. Shit! They did not expect that Rumad would have such an ability! Then, Rumad finally struck his sword down on Minhyuk.

Baaaaang!

Claaaang!

Minhyuk held his sword with both hands as he defended against the attack. However, Rumad’s greatsword suddenly let out a violent explosion.

Bang! Bang, bang! Bang!

The bangs of the explosion resounded loudly in the clearing! Minhyuk’s arms trembled as black sword lights poured out from Rumad’s sword.

Shwaaa!

The black sword lights exploded at a close range!

Fwish!

Minhyuk received a horizontal slash on his chest, his body almost cut off in half! Blood started to spurt out from Minhyuk’s chest, but Rumad still continued to attack.

Swish!

Slash!

Fwoosh!

“Urgh! Ack!” Minhyuk groaned loudly, his body trembling and shaking. He was even forced to kneel on one knee from the pain.

Rumad was now sure that the bastard in front of him was going to die. In fact, even the Legend Guild members that were witnessing the scene were also sure that Minhyuk would die. They might not know what Minhyuk’s exact level was, but they knew that it was not high enough. In fact, it was already surprising that he was able to endure Rumad’s strike for that long. But then...

Thud!

...Minhyuk suddenly straightened his folded knee as he stood up straight.

[He Who Overcomes.]

[Your HP has increased to 1. You are now invincible for 3 seconds.]

[All of your abilities will increase by 30% for 3 seconds.]

“Gasp!”

“...C, crazy!”

“Is, is he really a person?!”

The members of Legend Guild did not know about the special skill attached to Ellie’s Swordsmanship, that was why they were very shocked.

“Die, die! Goddamn it, for God’s sake, die!” Rumad shouted. He looked like he had seen a ghost as he used all of his strength to attack.

Bang, bang, bang, bang!

Rumad used all of his remaining strength, smashing on Minhyuk, but Minhyuk still did not fall down. He even used his most powerful skills but none of them left a scratch on Minhyuk’s body. For the first time in his life, Imperial Sword Rumad felt ‘fear’.

“I...I’m begging you, please die!”

That was when Minhyuk used Step. And...

[Sword of Fury]

[Additional 60% attack power for strong lunges and stabs, if a vital strike is successful, the bonus will be 100%.]

...A strong force gathered at the tip of Minhyuk’s sword.

“Ugh, aaaaaack!” Rumad screamed as Minhyuk stepped forward and stabbed him in his stomach. Minhyuk moved so fast that only his afterimage was left.

Stab!

[You have succeeded in stabbing a vital point.]

[100% additional damage!]

Along with the notification, the force that was concentrated on the tip of Minhyuk's sword exploded.

Baaaaaaaang!

Rumad's body burst from the powerful explosion as...

Stagger!

...Minhyuk's body fell down. His remaining HP was exactly 1. He looked up at the sky as he breathed deeply. Then, he spoke slowly, "Phew. You game geeks can't even hunt him."

Then he grinned. Genie, Locke and Khan laughed at his absurdity.

Then, Locke asked him, "What's your level...?"

"221."

"..."

Everyone around him was left speechless. Then, a series of notifications rang in Minhyuk's ears.

[You have hunted the Imperial Sword Rumad.]

[You have acquired the Title: The Man Who Hunted One of the Pinnacle Strong Men.]

[You have gained 200 REP.]

[You have leveled up.]

[You have leveled up.]

[You have leveled up.]

[You have leveled up.]

[You have leveled up.]

[You have leveled up.]

[...leveled up.]

The sound of the notifications rang continuously in Minhyuk's ears. However, it did not register at all. He was not really interested in leveling up, after all, it was hard, and his life was going to be at risk. All Minhyuk did was take out a chocolate bar out of his inventory and nibble on it.

[Absorption Conversion]

[You can recover 30~40% of your HP.]

Minhyuk's wounds began to heal rapidly. None of the people present had seen such an absurd recovery ability. The healing and recovery speed was completely insane!

"Wow. It's a human troll..." Ace mumbled to himself as he looked at Minhyuk.

Then, Minhyuk sat up and began bandaging himself.

"Bandage!"

[The bandage has been wrapped perfectly.]

[You have received an additional 5% injury recovery.]

[The recovery time has become faster.]

Minhyuk wrapped his wounds in a bandage and peeled it off after a while. Most of his wounds had already healed the moment the bandage came off. The members of the Legend Guild shook their heads in defeat as if they had no more energy left to spare to feel surprised.

Then, Minhyuk saw the gold and artifacts that fell near Rumad. He approached it and picked them up.

[You have gained 50.2 billion gold.]

[You have acquired the Skill Book: Intangible Sword.]

[You have acquired Rumad's Demon Sword.]

[You have acquired Rumad's Golden Treasure Box (Event).]

[Everyone who participated in Rumad's raid will receive the Golden Treasure Box.]

"Huh?! A golden treasure box!"

"Ooooooh. Shut the f*ck up!"

"Kyaaa!"

"I think it's a reward for all of the raid participants?"

Then, Khan said, "I...I also got it!"

Perhaps the standard for receiving the treasure box was being subjected to Rumad's Extreme Fear. In other words, it was everyone who was considered to be his enemies.

Genie approached Minhyuk who was already healed and properly stretched. She said, "Hey!"

"..."

"You damn punk."

"...Yeah."

Minhyuk nodded in shame. Even if he had ten mouths with him, he still would have nothing to say. Then, Khan and Locke approached them. Khan sighed as he looked at Locke.

'This punk...'

Khan wondered if Locke would say something bad again? After all, Locke was the one that always told them to stop looking for Minhyuk. He even said that he would not care if Minhyuk had been trapped deep underwater. Khan watched as Locke clenched his fists tightly and stomped towards Minhyuk with great momentum.

'No way. Is he going to beat him up?!'

Then, large droplets of tears fell from Locke's eyes.

“Waaaaaah. Minhyuk. It’s been a long time. Hwiiiiik!”

“OMG?”

“Eh?”

Khan, Genie and Minhyuk all tilted their heads in confusion. Then, Locke suddenly hugged Minhyuk tightly, soaking his armor in tears!

“Keuhuhuhuhuk!” Locke sobbed loudly and stretched his hands out.

“Ah. Give me your hand Minhyuk.”

“...?”

Minhyuk gave Locke his hands. Locke used Minhyuk’s hands to blow his nose on. He said, “Ah. That feels better.”

“This bitc...”

“Waaaaaah!” Locke began crying again. Minhyuk patted Locke on the back. Of course, he did not forget to rub the mucus on his back.

“Wow. Look at Locke crying...”

“He looks ugly when he cries. So ugly... I hate it.”

Locke stopped crying when he heard those words. He looked at his guild members and harrumphed. Khan, Genie and Minhyuk grinned at this unexpected twist. The air around them had become lighter.

“Let’s check the artifact’s information first and have a reunion later.”

They were not the only ones in this place after all since there were also the other guild members. Minhyuk nodded as he checked the information. He first clicked on the skill book.

(Intangible Sword)

Passive Skill

Rank: Legendary

Requirements: 500 STR, 500 AGI, 400 STM

Mana Required: None

Cooldown: None

Effects:

?The skill allows you to ignore any restrictions and requirements for learning skills.

?The skills can allow you to ignore the limits in numbers.

?The skill gives you a 7-12% chance of ignoring the enemy’s defenses when you’re attacking.

After checking the skill book, Minhyuk also checked the blood-red sword that he had acquired.

(Rumad's Demon Sword)

Rank: Legendary

Requirements: Warrior, 400 STR, 400 STM

Durability: 40,000 / 40,000

Attacking: 716

Special Abilities:

?An increase of +10% in STR and +12% in STM.

?A greatsword is a large and bulky sword. However, it will become as light and easy to use as a regular sword when equipped.

?Skill: Extreme Fear

?Has a 10%~14% chance of dealing double the damage.

Chapter 128: Joining a Guild

It was another legendary artifact! It seemed like the skill Extreme Fear was automatically applied before, when they fought Rumad. From what Minhyuk saw, anyone with more than ten levels in gap with Rumad would receive the skill's effects. However, what was disappointing was that it was an artifact for warriors.

Minhyuk approached Genie and offered her a handshake. Then, the transaction window popped out showing the legendary artifact and the skill book that Minhyuk had obtained.

"A...a legendary artifact and a legendary skill book!"

There were no legendary artifacts that were officially released yet in the country. Still, there were many unofficial ones. Nevertheless, none of the members of the Legend Guild had a legendary artifact in their possession. Even the skill book was legendary. This was the biggest merit and reward of the raid.

'You can ignore the requirements and learn any skill.'

Between the skill book and the artifact, the skill book was the one that had a higher value. First, the skill book could ignore the number limit effect. Everyone in Athenae knew that swords, armors, boots and even helmets could never be worn in duplicates, but with this effect, it could be ignored. There was even a much more powerful effect in this skill book. It was the 'ignore all defenses' that they had experienced when they were facing Rumad earlier.

'How do I even distribute this?' Minhyuk thought, worried. He knew that all of the members of Legend Guild had their HPs at almost zero. This was because they did their best to hunt Rumad. However, the one that received the ownership of the drop was not them, but him.

After a moment, Genie asked, "...How about the gold?"

"50.2 billion gold."

“Minhyuk will get the skill book, while the rest of the guild and I will divide the 50.2 billion gold among us. Then, we will sell Rumad’s Demon Sword, and we’ll each take half of the profits. How about that?”

“...?!”

Minhyuk could not help but be surprised. Genie was basically giving him a free meal. 50.2 billion gold was still less than the amount of gold that they need to buy potions for the whole guild. Even the Legend Guild members were shocked. If you randomly picked one among the members and asked them, they would tell you that they earned around 1-10 billion each month. Furthermore, in today’s context, Athenae was not just a simple game. The virtual reality game Athenae could well become a business opportunity if someone did well in the game. However, Genie was willing to abandon their greed and let go of a ‘Legendary’ skill book in exchange for the gold.

“Why are you doing it like that?”

“No, it’s not just like that. When I first encountered Rumad, it said that the person who successfully hunted him would get the rewards and the person who dealt the final blow to him was Minhyuk. If he wasn’t able to kill Rumad, then we would have been wiped out already.”

If all of the members of Legend Guild had been wiped out, they would really receive a huge blow. All of them had spent a tremendous amount of time just to get to their ranks, and it would take them a long time to achieve their placings again if their levels dropped.

“Besides, we have more to gain from this than what you think.”

In fact, the Legend Guild was more likely to receive good territory from King Varen. If that happened, then, they would be able to collect taxes from their territory and they would be able to receive huge benefits and profits from the NPCs in their territory. They did not lose any money at all. It was just because they felt that Genie gave in too easily.

“Does anyone have a problem with it?”

“None!”

“How dare we disobey the orders of the flower piggy!”

Genie smiled at them as she said, “As for Rumad’s Demon Sword. We will get the price for a legendary artifact, and you will also receive the same price.”

“Huh?”

“Did you forget?”

Genie smiled and continued to say, “King Varen promised that he would buy all our artifacts at twice the price if we escorted him to Ellie safely.”

“...Ah!”

Genie was right. Minhyuk would be able to receive the price for the legendary artifact and the same would also be true for the Legend Guild.

“What are you going to do with it?”

“Well, I...”

Minhyuk smiled widely and said, “I’m going to buy something delicious.”

“...?”

Genie and the rest of the guild members were taken aback by his choice, but it was his own decision so they did not say anything about it. At that moment...

“Keuaaaaack!”

...Locke suddenly screamed loudly.

“...?”

“...”

Minhyuk, Genie, and the rest of the members of Legend Guild turned their heads to look at him.

“This is impossible...! What kind of golden treasure box would only give 417 gold?!”

“...Oh. Uhm... Cheer up.”

The golden treasure box laid open in front of him!

The treasure box was an item that could be obtained during events that were held from time to time. This treasure box was literally a lucky draw.

Normally, old treasure boxes would give something between 1~50 million gold, E~D ranked artifact materials, or normal~rare artifacts. Regular treasure boxes would also give something between 10~500 million gold, C-A ranked artifact materials, or unique artifacts. Then, there were these golden treasure boxes, they would usually give something between 100 million~5 billion gold, A~SS ranked artifact materials, and unique~epic artifacts. In fact, the higher the level of the treasure box, the higher the chances of the player receiving better artifacts, artifact materials and even gold.

And Locke, who had no luck at all, managed to get only 417 gold after opening his treasure box. One by one, the people started opening their treasure boxes. They were able to draw artifacts from their treasure boxes too.

“Kyaa! An epic artifact!”

“Oooooooh. 47 billion gold!”

“Wow! Wow!”

“...It would be good if everyone were quiet!”

“Kyaa. An epic item!”

“Hey. Ace! Be quiet!” Locke shouted. He swung his ax in irritation each time a member of his guild drew greater items than him. In the end, only Minhyuk was left with an unopened golden treasure box.

“You?”

“I haven’t opened it yet.”

“Open it and let’s see.”

Minhyuk nodded, He closed his eyes and prayed intently.

“What are you praying for? Are you asking for a good artifact?” Ace asked in confusion.

Then, Minhyuk opened his eyes and clicked on the golden treasure box in his inventory. The golden treasure box popped open in front of everybody.

Clatter, clatter!

The treasure box suddenly shook furiously. Minhyuk cried in anticipation, “Come out! Something delicious, please!”

“...Huh?”

“OMG?”

The members of Legend Guild looked at him in surprise. You’re telling them that you wanted something delicious instead of 50 billion gold, or an epic artifact? Ace twirled his finger beside his head. Seeing this, Khan smacked him on the head.

Slap!

“You punk! That’s Hyung’s friend!”

“Ouch! That hurts!”

[Please open the treasure box.]

A hologram appeared out of the treasure box together with the notification. Then, Minhyuk heard another set of notifications.

[You have picked the best golden treasure box.]

[You have acquired the Heart of the Basilisk.]

[You have acquired 50 billion gold.]

‘Oh?’

Minhyuk was quite surprised. He heard before that the DEX would have a slight effect whenever there were lucky draws. However, he did not believe that it was true, until now. Minhyuk even won two rewards at the same time.

“Heart of the Basilisk?”

“Gasp?!”

“...Keuaaaa! Why am I the only one with 400 gold?! Why?!”

Minhyuk took out the heart-shaped stone, the Heart of the Basilisk, and a pouch carrying 50 billion gold.

“W...what was that just now... There were 2 rewards in the treasure box?”

“I have never seen anything like this before...”

This was the first time that they had seen something like this. After all, Minhyuk’s DEX was at 1,200 so this was their first time seeing such a thing. Then, Minhyuk checked the information on the Heart of the Basilisk.

(Heart of the Basilisk)

Material Grade: SS

Special Abilities:

?Defense between 500~900.

?Magical Defense +300

?You can imbue an artifact with a power that can turn your enemies into stone.

Description: The Basilisk, the ruler of the desert, is a legendary monster. Its heart, which is a noble and grand existence, has the special ability to turn anyone into stone.

“How is it? Wow. Minhyuk, you’re so lucky. How can you get the Heart of the Basilisk in just one draw?”

“...Huh? Uh... Y...yeah.”

“Huh? Minhyuk, why aren’t you happy?”

Minhyuk promptly placed the Heart of the Basilisk into his inventory. He looked like he was throwing out some piece of junk with how nonchalant he was.

“I can’t eat something like that right?”

“...Huh?”

Genie was taken aback. What was this punk saying?

Then, at that moment, another set of notifications rang.

[You have completed the?Kingdom Quest: Bring Varen, the Valkyrie Kingdom’s King, to the place where he is supposed to meet with the Imperial Army of the Eivelis Empire.]

[One of the people who had received the quest will be able to receive the title of a Baron.]

[You can use Varen’s Treasure Trove once.]

[The Eivelis Empire has won the quest related to the Northern Continent Update.]

[The EXP Acquisition Rate of all players in Eivelis Empire will increase by 30% for three days.]

[The skills and abilities of all players in Eivelis Empire will increase by 10% for three days.]

It was on fire. The internet was on fire.

The video showed the members of Legend Guild fighting against Rumad. It also showed the scene of Minhyuk using Step and stabbing Rumad's abdomen, eventually killing him. Then, the screen switched, showing two members of Legend Guild running away with Varen and meeting Ellie and the Phoenix Knight Order. The scene showed Varen sighing in relief as Ellie welcomed him.

Then, all of the players in Eivelis Empire all heard the same notification.

EXP acquisition rate will increase by 30% and skills and abilities will increase by 10% for 3 days!

This was literally their chance to bomb their way to higher levels. A 10% increase in skills and abilities would naturally mean that they would have an easier time hunting monsters that they would originally have a harder time hunting before. It was also natural that the fame of Legend Guild would rise and improve among the players. Even the young students were making a ruckus.

"Hey, hey. Isn't the Frying Pan Killer so cool? When Legend's GM's neck was being strangled, he suddenly stood up and?kyaaa! So cool!"

"...Shut up! I'm a Collodis Empire player."

"Huh? Oh. Y...yeah... Hey, so do you admit that he's cool?"

"...Y...yeah."

Even office workers could not help but talk about it. They spent their entire lunch breaks talking about?Athenae.

"Did you see the video?"

"The?Athenae?video? Of course I did! If you didn't watch it, you're not an?Athenae? player. Wow, Legend Guild is the best."

"I saw it too. I suddenly felt my heart thumping and burning with a fighting spirit!"

A new employee even clenched his spoon tightly as he declared, "Korea may be a ruined gamer country! But Legend Guild appeared! And even the new strongest man, the Frying Pan Killer appeared here in our country!"

"Kghhk!"

"Boy, aren't you eating?" Department Head Park asked. His words made the rest of the people turn as quiet as a mouse.

Then, the new employee whispered, "Wasn't Department Head Park a guild member of Ares Guild?"

"The Ares Guild is being flooded with curses right now... A lot of people have left too."

It was not just them. Even the country's top rankers were paying attention to them. This was from an interview with the second-ranked player on the Swordsman Ranking, Baran.

[Reporter: How did the Legend Guild and the Frying Pan Killer do in this Northern Continent Update?]

[Baran: They weren't too bad. Especially that Frying Pan Killer, he even beat that god class, Cursed Knight, Kohei. I even felt a bit of joy when he did that.]

[Reporter: Can you evaluate their fight comprehensively?]

[Baran: I'm afraid the Frying Pan Killer was just lucky. When he said that his level was only 221, I wondered if what he said was true. Of course, I'm not trying to shoot down the Frying Pan Killer. (Smile)]

[Reporter: Why do you think so?]

[Baran: The Curse God's Power that Kohei wields can cast a tremendous curse. But, the Frying Pan Killer was able to resist all of the curses using an unknown force. In fact, Kohei's ability to control his curse among people at the same level as him is quite limited, however, his physical abilities are no joke at all. If it was a different god class player at Kohei's level, perhaps the Frying Pan Killer would have lost.]

[Reporter: It seems that you have the same opinion as the other rankers.]

[Baran: Yes.]

[Reporter: How about the battle with Rumad?]

[Baran: It was surprising. It's the rise of Legend Guild. Each and every one of them was as strong as the rankers. They also have strong skills. In fact, I believe that the rankers right now could take on one of the Most Powerful Men in half a year. Of course, I believe that they also had great luck when they fought with Rumad. As for the Frying Pan Killer... He's an unknown player. He has great strength, abilities and potential.]

[Reporter: What do you think of his potential and growth?]

[Baran: I think this is the birth of a new strong gamer who can lead our country to fame.]

[Report: Well, I am looking forward to that. Finally, what do you think about the Legend Guild's move this time?]

[Baran: It was amazing. I believe their power is on par with the four great guilds. But, I don't think that they're the best. As you know, Legend Guild has always remained tight-lipped... And you know, once the world server has been stabilized and connected, there would be more powerful and monstrous players that would pop out. We'll never know but they might be comparable to our country's Legend Guild.]

The situation was the same especially for the players who were living with Minhyuk.

"Wow. Is Minhyuk really that strong?"

"He actually raided one of the Pinnacle Strong Men with Legend Guild!"

Then, Minhyuk came out of the capsule. Strangely enough, he looked serious and troubled. He was even sighing deeply.

“Why, what’s wrong...?” Changwook asked curiously. Was it because he did not want to become famous?

Minhyuk finally opened his mouth and said, “You know about Genie, Khan and Locke, right?”

“Yeah. Ah! The Legend Guild’s GM, the guy who killed Ares and the crazy ax-wielding guy, right?”

“Yes. They...they’re my middle school friends.”

“...!”

“...!”

“Ack!”

Everyone was surprised. They had missed the part where the four of them reunited since the video had switched views. They were Minhyuk’s friends? However, the surprise did not end there.

“They’re coming to see me.”

“Pfffffft!” Changwook spat out the coffee that he was drinking.

Chapter 129: Joining a Guild

Everyone inside the room was shocked and frozen. They were not so surprised that Minhyuk’s friends was coming to visit, as compared to the fact that Minhyuk wanted to finally try to get back out in the world again, after hiding for a long time.

“Minhyuk...!” Changwook shouted in delight as he grabbed Minhyuk’s hands. Even the others were sporting the same delighted expression. To them, it felt like, ‘My child is finally changing for the better!’ or something like that.

“I can’t stay alone in my room forever!”

Minhyuk had made up his mind back when he attacked Rumad.

‘Let’s be confident from now on.’

Changwook nodded and said, “That’s right, you punk!”

“Wait. This is not the time for us to do this!” Hyejin, Minhyuk’s dietitian, said, running wildly.

“Minhyuk, we have to decorate the place and fix you up! You’re going to meet with your friends, is the place going to be like this?!”

“Ah!”

Everyone began to move busily.

A white Bentleisa sports car stopped in front of a beauty salon located in Cheongdam-dong.

“Hey, hey. Isn’t that a sports car manufactured by Bentleisa? The one that has only 200 of its kind?”

“Gasp??That single car is worth over one billion...”

It did not matter whether Cheongdam-dong was a place for the rich, anyone that saw this spectacular car released by Bentleisa Corporation would admire it. Then, a woman got out of the car. She was at least 165 centimeters tall with sunglasses covering more than half of her face and a voluptuous, sexy body. Once she took off her sunglasses... Pure. Beauty. All of the men in the vicinity could barely keep their eyes off of her.

“W...wait. That person. Isn’t she...!”

“Legend Guild’s guild master?!”

The?Athenae?players in the area immediately recognized her. Rankers had more popularity than celebrities these days. Besides, she was the most talked about personality these past couple of days. It was none other than Genie, or rather, Im Jihye.

“Kyaaaaa! Unnie, you’re so pretty!”

“Wow. She’s really pretty!”

“She has a lot of money, a pretty face, and is the master of Legend Guild... she even plays well... she has everything in the world. How envious.”

Jihye entered the salon. Despite being a salon that was frequented by celebrities, Jihye’s appearance still drew the attention of most of the people inside.

“What can I do for you?”

Jihye tapped her lips with the tips of her sunglasses as she smiled and said, “I’m going to meet someone special today.”

“Ah. Perhaps it’s your crush?”

“...Yes.”

The woman smiled at Jihye as she moved her hands to arrange her hair. Jihye made sure to ask Minhyuk to meet outside of the game before they logged out.

‘We just want to hear your story... Minhyuk, we even forgive you for hiding from us for all these years.’

Minhyuk looked a bit conflicted, pondering deeply about her request before finally nodding and saying,?‘It’s a bit difficult for me to go out right now. So... would it be fine for you guys to go to my house?’

‘Your house?’

‘Yup.’

‘Is that so. Okay.’

‘If you meet me there then you will know my story,’ Minhyuk said, giving them his address.

Just then, Jisoo and Seoktae entered. Jisoo immediately sat down on one of the chairs and said, “Do it like Kang Dongwonbin.”

“Ka...Kang Dongwonbin...? T, that... Customer... you know... you’ll need plastic surgery for that,” the hairdresser stuttered and flailed around, embarrassed by the sudden impossible request!

“How can they turn you into Dongwonbin when your face looks like a stone on the street...”

“Sh...shut up!”

Seoktae and Jisoo were quarelling again. Then, Jisoo asked, “But, Minhyuk’s house address... It’s in Gapyeong in Gyeonggi-do? Isn’t that a very remote place?”

“...I know, right? Does he have a lodging business?”

Then, Jisoo said, “Isn’t Minhyuk’s family condition a bit on the difficult side?”

“...Yeah.”

“Ah. That’s right...”

“Uhhh...”

They had a reason to think that way. Jisoo had once seen Minhyuk enter the orphanage before. In fact, a lot of their classmates had seen Minhyuk go to class with the children from the orphanage. Minhyuk also never wore branded shoes. They even heard that his mother had passed away.

When Jisoo, Jihye and Seoktae asked about his parents, they were humbled and at a loss. They thought that Minhyuk’s parents were gone since he was always at the orphanage. Surprisingly, Minhyuk told them that he still had his father with him. Because of that, they assumed that Minhyuk’s family was facing financial difficulty. After all, Minhyuk stayed in the orphanage while his father worked hard.

When asked about his father and his father’s work, Minhyuk looked at them and said seriously, ‘He does this and that. He does a bit of construction work, and sells food and also electronics. It seems like he’s also selling milk these days...’

The three of them finally realized... ‘Ah! Minhyuk’s dad is doing everything to make a living!’? They thought that the construction work Minhyuk’s dad was doing was manual labor, and that the selling of food was him selling meat in the corner of the food section. They also thought that his father had a part-time job as a salesperson, while being a milk delivery boy in the morning.

‘Ahhhh! He’s the most sincere house head! His father will do everything just to make ends meet!’

That was when they knew that Minhyuk grew up with such a righteous father! Since they were friends, they never ignored the ‘poor’ Minhyuk.

“Can we just drive an expensive and foreign car over?” Seoktae asked, approaching Jihye.

They had not seen each other for a long time, so Jihye wanted to present her most beautiful self but...

“I...is that so? If we came out so fancy...”

“Hey. Minhyuk made a lot of money this time, right? He would be rich if he sold that.”

“He even said that he was going to buy something delicious.”

“Hmm...”

Jisoo tilted his head in thought then nodded in agreement. Then, Jihye said, “That... I’m sorry, Unnie.”

“Yes.”

“Can you do it less fancy... What do you call it? Normal look?”

“...?”

“Just make it look like I’m going for an interview.”

“Yes? B...but you’re going to meet with your crush?”

“L...let’s just do it this way.”

Even if she did not look that beautiful, Jihye thought that it would be better if Minhyuk felt comfortable with them. Would they even drag a foreign sports car and a fancy look just to dig on their friend’s sore spot? There was definitely no need for that.

Then, Jisoo also said, “Shit. Do it like I’m someone who’s unemployed. Please.”

“Y...you already look like...”

“OMG? Noona! Why do you think that I look like I’m unemployed...!” Jisoo said.

However, he was forced to nod his head in shock after looking at the mirror.

“I don’t need makeup.”

“He, hehe...”

This way, all of them changed their makeup to look like they were a bit poor just for the sake of Minhyuk. After getting their?normal?makeup done, they went out of the salon.

“Well then, shall we go?”

“Ah. What about the car?”

“Let’s just call for a taxi.”

“Yeah.”

At the same time, a text message arrived on Jihye’s phone.

[Minhyuk: I’m sorry. Can we change the meeting place? My father wants to see you all and he also wants to talk to you so he’s going to pick you guys up.]

“Guys. The meeting place has changed.”

“Really? More than that, I’m a bit nervous to meet with Minhyuk’s father.”

“Yeah. A man like Minhyuk’s dad is definitely a cool man.”

He was the one who raised Minhyuk while doing all the hard work alone! He was a truly great and awesome dad. They had quite a good idea of how he would look, and they believed that he would be a not-so-rich, but cool person. Then, they climbed into a taxi.

“Uncle. Can you please take us to this address?”

The taxi driver took the address.

[The route navigation has started.]

The navigation app showed the destination as? ‘Ilhwa Group Headquarters.’

“Ilhwa Group Headquarters? Isn’t that the largest building in the country? Why are we going there?”

The three of them were quite confused.

Then, Jisoo said, “Usually, when you go to Gangnam, wouldn’t you say? ‘Let’s meet in front of Ilhwa Group.’?right? I guess they chose it because it’s easy to go meet there?”

“Aha,” Jihye said, nodding along.

Just like that, the three of them rode the taxi without knowing about the person waiting for them.

Minhyuk hummed. His Hyejin-noona had definitely fixed him up nicely. She trimmed his hair and sprayed perfume on his wrists, even dressing him up in stylish clothes. However, when he looked in the mirror, all he could see was a fat guy in a suit. Then, he recalled something. He said, “Ah, that’s right. I’m not fat anymore, right? I’m just chubby, so let’s be confident. Let’s go!”

Minhyuk still believed that fact as he looked in the mirror.

Then, Changwook whispered to Hyejin, “What kind of outfit is that? Why is he wearing a suit... Why didn’t you put on sunglasses then...!”

“...”

Hyejin was left speechless after suddenly being tagged as a sinner.

Then, Minhyuk grumbled, “Aaaaah. Wait. Dad too! My friends are just coming over, why is he making such a fuss?”

Minhyuk’s dad contacted him right away when he learned that his friends were coming over. Only Minhyuk, Lee Jinhwan, Oh Changwook and the other medical personnel were living in Minhyuk’s 1600-square meter house in Gapyeong. They recently moved here since the staff believed that this was a better place for treatment.

“Haha. I’m sure your dad is just happy. After all, our Minhyuk is finally meeting with his friends after five years!”

Minhyuk nodded at Jinhwan’s words. He had lived his life alone and trapped in the darkness all those years, not knowing when he would die. He believed that he had no more hope. But now, Minhyuk was slowly letting himself out in the world again. He was even willing to meet with his friends too. As a father, Kang Minhoo would definitely be delighted.

“Why did he say that he would give them a ride...”

“He wanted to meet with your friends first. It’s your father’s showing care for you, I’m sure you understand.”

Minhyuk was a bit sulky, but he still nodded.

The chairman of the Ilhwa Group, Kang Minhoo, was, in fact, more excited than Minhyuk.

“Secretary Park, how do I look?”

“Extremely handsome, Chairman!”

“I’m really nervous. I’m meeting my son’s friends. Haha!” Kang Minhoo said, smiling happily.

His son was finally willing to meet his friends, so Kang Minhoo was feeling a bit happy. This was common for any parent. Some parents would say? ‘Don’t play with them anymore, they will disturb your studies!’?but Kang Minhoo was different. His son was finally willing to let his friends visit him. As someone who lived alone for too long, was there anything more delightful than this? Kang Minhoo was so happy that he took time out of his busy schedule just for this! Then, his phone rang.

“Ahem, ahem,” Kang Minhoo cleared his throat and answered the call.

[Hello. Uncle! I’m Minhyuk’s friend, Im Jihye.]

“Haha. Yes. Hello, Miss Jihye.”

[I’m calling you right now because we’re almost there.]

“Ah. Is that so? Then, I will be right down.”

[Yees. We’ll see you at the front door, Uncle.]

Kang Minhoo hung up the phone happily. He boarded his exclusive lift and pressed the first floor. He was going down from the 78th floor, the top floor of this huge building.

Jihye, Jisoo, and Seoktae looked up at the majestic and tall Ilhwa Group Building when they arrived.

“Every time I come near here, I always think that the building is so nice.”

“Is the building the only thing that looks nice? Kang Minhoo, the chairman of Ilhwa Group, is also cool!”

“A man of integrity, the chairman that has never had any bad gossip and has never been talked badly!”

They all burst out in admiration. Then, Jihye suddenly thought about something. She asked, “But, don’t you guys think that Minhyuk’s father sounded familiar?”

Jihye thought about it but shrugged it off, thinking that it was not that big of a deal. Meanwhile, Jisoo and Seoktae were busy clamoring in shock.

“Gasp!”

“Ch...Chairman Kang Minhoo!”

“Wow. He’s really cool. Wow, wow! Did you see that? It’s the six billion dollar limousine that Benza sold to the 50 richest people in the world!”

Jihye, Seoktae and Jisoo were all rich people, but if they were compared to Kang Minhoo, then they would only be comparable to his foot, no, his toenails. They watched as Chairman Kang Minhoo walked out of the building in style, took out his phone and called someone. Then, at that exact same moment, Jihye’s phone rang.

Dududududu. Baby Shark~ Dududududu. Mommy Shark~ Dududududu. Daddy Shark~

“What kind of ringtone is that?”

“None of your business,” Jihye snorted at him as she answered her phone. She said, “Yes. Uncle. We’ve already arrived. Ah. Yes, yes. A description? I’m wearing some jeans and a cardigan, while my other friends are wearing casual suits. Can you see us?”

Jisoo and Seoktae straightened their clothes and buttoned up their shirts to make themselves presentable. They were finally going to meet with Minhyuk’s father!

“Where are you?” Jihye asked, looking around to see if the man was already there.

Then, Seoktae suddenly said, “Hey, hey. Jisoo. Why... Why is Chairman Kang Minhoo coming this way and waving his hand? Hey. What is this... Why is he smiling widely at us?”

“Gasp... W...what’s this? Did we do something wrong? O...or maybe the chairman of Namhwa Group is standing behind us?”

The two of them were flustered and confused, looking around -- until Chairman Kang Minhoo stood in front of them.

"Yes. Uncle. Where are..."

[I'm right in front of you. Haha.]

Jihye, Seoktae, and Jisoo were all rendered speechless. Kang Minhoo hung up the call and flashed a soft smile, as he reached his hands out for a handshake.

"Nice to meet you. I'm Minhyuk's dad."

The three of them were frozen stiff. That was when Jisoo finally realized, 'Th...the manual labor is Ilhwa Construction. The milk delivery is Ilhwa Distribution. Selling electronics is Ilhwa Electronics. And the selling of food was a restaurant franchise...? WHAT?!'

Chapter 130

"Ah. Yes. Hello, Uncle!" Jihye quickly spoke after gathering her senses back together, as she shook the hand that was stretched in front of her. Kang Minhoo grasped her hands tightly and shook them before shaking the other two's hands.

"I won't wash this hand for the rest of my life..."

"You don't wash them often to begin with," Seoktae said, making Jisoo glare at him.

Kang Minhoo smiled softly as he watched them. He said, "You get along well, huh?"

"Yes, well," Jihye answered, smiling a bit awkwardly. She did not know what to do with herself since there was such a big shot in front of them.

"Shall we go?" Chairman Kang Minhoo asked as he led them away.

Since it was lunch time, a lot of people were rushing in and out of Ilhwa Group Headquarters. All of the employees bowed politely and greeted Chairman Kang Minhoo as they passed by him. Seeing them arrive, Secretary Park hurriedly opened the rear door of the limousine. This limousine was made by Benza and only ten of its kind had been produced globally. Kang Minhoo first boarded the car, before Jihye, Seoktae and Jisoo followed him inside.

'Wow... The inside is...'

The three of them looked at the inside of the car in awe. They felt like they had boarded the first class seat on a plane. This was a very rare experience, they had to admire every bit of it!

"You're our Minhyuk's?middle school friends, right?"

"Yes, that's right. Uncle."

"I heard that you kept on sending our Minhyuk messages. I'm truly grateful that he was always in your thoughts," Kang Minhoo said. He looked extremely grateful. No, he was truly grateful that they reached out to Minhyuk.

"You can let me know if you need anything."

The car rapidly moved towards Gapyeong. Silence enveloped the car for a moment until Kang Minhoo spoke again. He said, "I hope you take care of Minhyuk and show him plenty of love."

"Wow..."

"Uwaaaaah..."

"OMG...?"

The three, Jihye, Jisoo and Seoktae, were all left speechless after arriving at Minhyuk's residence in Gapyeong.

"Y...you'll definitely get lost in this place."

The mansion was large and luxurious, a scale that one could only see on TV! Several guards greeted the limousine as it entered the gate. There was even a wide lawn and a large fountain in the middle!

All four of them got off the car.

"I hope to see you again next time," Kang Minhoo said, smiling softly at them as he boarded the limousine again and disappeared from their sights.

The three of them marveled at the palace-like feeling of the place once Kang Minhoo disappeared. Then, a man suddenly came out. They could tell that the man exercised a lot with how bulky his body was.

The man said, "Are you Minhyuk's friends? I'm Oh Changwook."

"Ah. Yes."

"Let's go. This way," The man, Changwook, said as he led the three inside.

As they walked through the place, the three saw another large mansion behind the huge one up front. Oh Changwook guided them and told them about the mansion and its amenities.

"This is a building that used to cater guests. Right now, it's being used as the employees' and staff's living area. This was supposed to be a place for Minhyuk to play, but he doesn't use it often."

"P...play?"

"Yes. We have arcades, theaters, karaoke rooms, and even a?disco pang pang."

Changwook kept on talking as he introduced the place.

Meanwhile, Jisoo mumbled to himself, "So, this is the diamond spoon that I have heard of..."

"You guys are very popular and rich too, huh? I'm also an?Athenae?player, so I know."

The three of them immediately shook their heads at Changwook's words. It might be true that they were rich and had a lot of money, but it also cost a lot to keep their guild up and running. They needed to invest their money on artifacts, skill books and potions to keep themselves from dropping in the rankings. In actual fact, there was not much left for them in real life.

Not long after, they arrived in front of a room. Changwook said, "Please take a deep breath."

"Phew. Huh? But, why do we need to take a deep breath?"

"...I thought that you might need to prepare yourselves," Changwook said, smiling awkwardly as the three of them looked at him in confusion.

"Minhyuk is inside. Well then, I'll be off."

Changwook turned around and left while Jihye stood in front of the door.

.

'What the hell was that about?'

They found out for the first time that Minhyuk was very rich. However, they did not know anything about him after he had gone under the radar for five straight years. He also said that it was inconvenient for him to get out of the house. Everything was confusing.

Then, Jihye slowly turned the doorknob.

Changwook immediately headed out to guide Minhyuk's friends when he heard that they had arrived. Minhyuk was left sitting on an extra large chair in front of a round table to wait for his friends. Then, he heard some sounds from outside.

'...I'm nervous.'

Minhyuk took a deep breath to calm his thumping heart. Then, the doorknob slowly turned. Minhyuk quickly stood up in trepidation. Jihye, Jisoo and Seoktae came inside the room. As soon as they entered, they discovered Minhyuk.

"..."

"..."

"..."

Minhyuk had an embarrassed look on his face as he said, "You're here?"

The three of them remained silent for a moment while Minhyuk fell down in a spiral of thoughts.

'As expected... I've changed too much...'

Was he that hideous? Well, it was true that it was hard for anyone to see someone weighing 160 kilograms outside. Even the shape of his face was completely covered with his fat and had made him unrecognizable. Minhyuk slowly became dejected thinking, 'It's the end...'

Then, Jisoo spoke bluntly, "We're here. Do you think we'll leave just like that?"

Jisoo naturally slid on the chair beside Minhyuk as he continued to say, "Phew. You always wanted to be a fat man who could connect with the wild boars. Have you turned your dreams into reality?"

Jihye smiled lightly as she sat down with Seoktae. Then, Seoktae said, "Hey. Aren't I still handsome?"

"Wow. Just like what Jihye said, you're still a narcissistic jerk."

"Hmph. What did you say about me?"

Jihye chuckled awkwardly as she swiftly changed the subject. She asked gently, "What happened to you?"

Minhyuk looked completely different from the past. So, Minhyuk began to tell his story. He described his eating addiction and everything that he had been through. The three of them were shocked and speechless after hearing about such a rare disease.

“Now, it seems like I’m starting to get better.”

“That’s a relief.”

“Oh. So you will eventually come back to what you used to look, no, to what you look like in?Athenae, right?”

Jisoo and Seoktae had not seen Minhyuk in-game, but Jihye was able to see his face since he took off his helmet when he was with Boroto. Jihye could still recall how handsome and cool Minhyuk was. It was to the point that anyone that saw him would be impressed and amazed.

“Ma...maybe...?”

Then, Jihye suddenly opened her phone. She said, “Ah, that’s right. What time is it now?”

Jihye quickly looked at the clock. The clock showed that it was already four minutes past one in the afternoon.

“I heard that the?Athenae?update will open at one o’clock today.”

Jihye quickly clicked on the update. Then, she placed her phone on the center of the table.

[Athenae Update

1. 100 million gold will now be converted to 1 platinum and will become a silver-like coin just like the image below.

2. Your nickname will now float above your head. Can be turned on/off.]

It seemed like they had modified the game and catered to the countless player complaints. The fact that 100 million gold would now be converted to one platinum was very convenient for players. Right now, they had tens of billions of gold with them, to be exact, they had around 57.2 billion gold. It was much more pleasant and convenient to have 572 platinums, than numerous pouches of gold. The second update about having the nickname float above their head was also convenient. Of course, Minhyuk and the rest of the people here would always have it turned off.

Then, the next part of the update...

[There will be a higher drop rate for ingredients and artifact materials in the Northern Continent. There will also be better cooking ingredients, more effective medicines, new fields and dungeons, and plenty of quests!

1. You will have a higher probability of obtaining better and superior artifact materials in the Northern Continent. In other words, materials that can be used to make epic artifacts will be in abundance. There is also a rare chance of acquiring artifact materials for legendary artifacts.

2. Special cooking ingredients will also be released in large quantities. A new class of medicine will also be released.

3. ?New field dungeons will be opened! Inside one of these dungeons, there will be a new artifact and a way to transfer to a special class. In addition, events will randomly occur in certain dungeons in the whole continent including the Northern Continent.

4. SS ranked quest! The Northern Continent has a hidden SS ranked quest! The rewards are definitely amazing ^^!]

Jihye nodded after checking all the contents of the update. She said, "We have to keep up and increase our speed as the level of players increases."

Jisoo and Seoktae both nodded in agreement.

"The epic and legendary artifact materials are rare, but with the increase in drop rates, a lot of supplies will be released. And since a lot of high-leveled players will go to the Northern Continent, it's only natural that there will be epic artifact drops."

All of them nodded. As rankers, whether official or not, they had to move quickly and adapt to the changes.

"A new class of medicine?"

It was Minhyuk who reacted to these words.

"I know right? What do you think is the new class of medicine?"

"You'll find out when you get it."

Minhyuk looked excited when he saw that update. He grinned. There was only one thought flashing in his head and that was, 'I wonder if the new class of medicine is something delicious?'

Minhyuk chuckled. That was when he suddenly felt the pangs of hunger. He held back from eating his salad and cherry tomatoes since he was with his friends. However, his stomach was already complaining and cold sweat was already starting to drip from his forehead. He said, "I'm sorry, but I have to step out for a bit."

"Huh? Where are you going?"

"The bathroom."

Minhyuk stood up and went out of the room. He saw Changwook waiting for him with his air-tight box filled with salad and cherry tomatoes. Minhyuk hurriedly went to the room next door and ate his food.

"What did your friends think?"

"I don't know," Minhyuk said. It was the truth. He still did not know what they thought of him. Perhaps it was because they could not speak out in front of him, or because they felt that they should not frown in front of Minhyuk? However, it did not stop Minhyuk from feeling heartbroken.

'This bloody hunger. Just for today, please....!'

Minhyuk felt anxious as his stomach continued to complain in hunger. All he could do was inhale his food crazily. Just like that, thirty minutes had already gone by. His friends were waiting for him, but his damned hunger kept him from going there. Another thirty minutes went by. Finally, his stomach calmed down to some extent. Minhyuk stood up and slowly went back to where his friends were.

"Minhyuk."

“Yes?”

“Your friends look like they’re good people,” Changwook said, smiling softly at him. It was like he was telling Minhyuk to not be nervous and just be his usual self. Minhyuk knew that that was what Changwook meant, but it was still hard for him to do so. He was curious, anxious even, about what his friends thought of him in their hearts.

Then, he heard the voices of his friends from inside the room.

“Why isn’t Minhyuk coming?”

“Yeah. I wonder what’s wrong?”

It was Jihye and Seoktae’s voices of concern. Then...

Bang!

...a loud noise suddenly came from inside. Minhyuk looked at the door with confusion on his face.

“Jisoo. What’s wrong with you?”

“Ah. I don’t know. I suddenly feel so annoyed.”

“...What?”

“Ah. That fatty!”

“...!”

Minhyuk’s body stiffened in shock. In the end, were they not going to accept him after his change?? Minhyuk trembled in fear, he was so nervous that he swallowed rapidly, even though his mouth had already run dry.

“No. I mean, what does being a piggy have to do with being friends with us? Does he think we’re going to hate him since he became fat? Was that all there was to us?”

“Yeah. For us, I think he was the same Minhyuk as before, but when we first came in, he was very awkward.”

“But the fatty Minhyuk, don’t you think he looks cute? I want to touch his fat tummy.”

“I want to put my head on his fat tummy and make it my pillow... I wonder if it’s like a water pillow...”

“...”

Minhyuk finally understood. He was the only one who was worried about his appearance. It didn’t matter to his friends whether he was fat or not.

“Phew...” Minhyuk sighed in relief. That was right. He should be proud and confident. Then, he went inside and proudly said to his friends, “Let’s go play now!”

“Play? Where? In Seoul?”

“No. In this building?”

“Ah...!”

The three of them recalled that this building itself was filled with things that could entertain guests. Minhyuk first guided his friends to the movie theater. Even though it was just a movie theater, it was still unbelievable to them.

Jisoo turned his head to look around. He said, “There’s pop...”

Then...

Step, step, step, step—

...A man suddenly appeared. It was Changwook. Changwook said, “It’s absolutely forbidden to talk about popcorn here. Remember this. Octopus legs, caramel popcorn and cola are prohibited here.”

“Ah. Oh... Yes.”

Changwook quickly whisked away and disappeared, the sound of his steps echoing in the hallway. It had been a long time since Minhyuk had watched movies with his friends, but instead of munching on popcorn, Minhyuk was munching on his cherry tomatoes.

Then, they went to karaoke. Jihye searched for ‘Spring Chicken Soup’ with the remote, but it did not come up. She came out to ask but she saw Changwook standing by the door. She said, “There aren’t that many songs in the karaoke machine. I think you need to update this with the latest songs. There’s no Spring Chicken Soup~”

Spring Chicken Soup was a song that was released five years ago, but it was not even in the list of songs. However, Changwook looked at her with a solemn expression and said, “Songs like? Spring Chicken Soup, My teeth are so cold because of naengmyeon, Naengmyeon, Bingsu and Patbingsu,? are strictly forbidden.”

“...Huh. Ah... I...is that so?” Jihye said, nodding blankly.

After singing, the three of them came out and admired the building.

“Wow. There’s even a cafe in this building!”

The cafe had a nice terrace. The four of them stood together in front of the cafe. The employee manning the counter was also Changwook. The moment Minhyuk turned his head to look somewhere else as he munched on his cherry tomatoes, Changwook quickly signalled to Minhyuk’s friends. He mouthed, “You can only order tomato juice here! Tomato juice! Without any sugar! It’s healthy!”

“...”

“...”

“What would you like to drink?” Minhyuk turned to the three of them and asked them what drink they would like to order.

“To...tomato juice... The one without any sugar... For all of us... Ha, haha! I really like tomatoes...”

“Me, me too... I, I really love tomatoes!”

“Ha, hahahahaha! Tomatoes are the tastiest in the world!”

“...Your taste buds are weird. I’m eating it reluctantly.”

The truth was, it was only Minhyuk who was unaware of the taboo and the rules in this place.

“...”

Jisoo, Jihye and Seoktae all thought the same thing...

‘Are we in a strange country where all of the food is controlled?’