

Gourmet 341

Chapter 341: The Ruler of the Forest

Special Players Management Team.

Team Leader Lee Suk-hoon shouted out despite himself as they watched the situation unfold on the monitor, “Hey! You son of a b*tch!! No!!”

They had continuously worked overtime! Their foxy wives and rabbit-like brats would get angry once again saying that they never came home! Lately, Team Leader Lee Suk-hoon had always been worn out by working overtime, thanks to Player Minhyuk. However, he believed that they would not be forced to work overtime this time around. No, he vehemently denied it!!!

Just then, Team Leader Park suddenly became aggressive as he shouted back, “Boy, did you just call our Player Minhyuk a son of a b*tch? Aren’t you being too harsh, huh?!”

“...?”

“That’s right! You can’t say that to our Player Minhyuk! He did everything with his own power. How can you curse him like that?!”

Even Lee Minhwa added her two cents making Team Leader Lee Suk-hoon gape in astonishment. He thought, *‘Has the Special Players Management Team also been bewitched by him?’*

Since when did Minhyuk become ‘our’ Minhyuk?! To be honest, Team Leader Park and Lee Minhwa had both gained affection for Minhyuk without realizing it. After all, they had been watching over him and his progress for a long time now.

In Team Leader Park’s case, his ‘fanatic heart’ had already bloomed after watching Minhyuk’s countless incredible plays and his high playing IQ, just like with this incident. On the other hand, Lee Minhwa respected Minhyuk’s mukbang.

‘I’m going to eat like that someday too!’

Then, Team Leader Lee thought, *‘If you work overtime, we’re also working overtime. Don’t you know that?!’*

However, those words just silently echoed in his head. Then, Team Leader Park said, “Even if he had those artifacts, we still don’t know if he would be able to clear the trial.”

Although this was unexpected, they still did not know what would happen, since this trial was set to be extremely hard.

Chomp, chomp, chomp!

Bite, bite, bite!

Gulp, gulp, gulp!

Minhyuk immediately made toast and fresh fruit juice after temporarily receiving the sword and armor from Arakhan. After receiving the food, Arakhan began to eat as if he was possessed.

Meanwhile, Minhyuk checked the artifacts’ information.

?A 16% increase in STR, AGI and STM.

?Passive Skill: Sun God's Blazing Flames

?Passive Skill: Sword Explosion

?Active Skill: Sun God's Authority

?A +50 increase in Defense against Fire-attribute attacks

Artifact Skill

Effects

: There's a 50% probability of setting the opponent ablaze upon successful attack. The damage incurred by the flames will be 1% of the user's attack power every two seconds.

Artifact Skill

As for the Sun God's Authority, it was a great AOE skill that made use of an explosion to create a ring of blazing hot flames. The radius was ten meters, and it could cut off any access for five straight minutes. Unfortunately, because of Minhyuk's temporary stat degradation, the skill was currently unavailable to him. After all, the MP requirement was enormous.

Then, there was Phrakan's Armor.

?An 8% increase in STR, AGI and STM.

?Active Skill: Reinforced Steel Armor

?Passive Skill: Absorption

The skill Reinforced Steel Armor was an active skill, so Minhyuk was also unable to use it. On the other hand, the passive skill, absorption, had a 10% chance of absorbing an enemy's attack once it hit the armor. Once absorbed, the damage that the wearer had received would immediately be recovered. Even the HP would be recovered to 10% of the damage received.

'Not bad.'

The artifacts that Arakhan had temporarily let him borrow were quite good. After finishing his preparations, Minhyuk told Arakhan that he would start the trial. Then, the notifications rang.

[The Third Trial has now begun.]

[Successfully hunting the first monster will let you obtain Arakhan's Sword Mastery. Your previous Sword Mastery will be deleted and replaced once this has been obtained.]

[The first monster is a werewolf.]

[With the influence of the Wishing Stone, you will be able to get 'Native Chicken' once you successfully hunt the werewolf.]

'Native chicken?'

As usual, Minhyuk did not pay much attention to the other rewards. However, his eyes were sharply trained on the words ‘native chicken’. Native chickens were commonly seen in the valleys where families go for vacation. They were usually sold in shabby, yet amiable and comfortable, shops. The shops were usually given the same name, ‘Sky Garden’. Even their menus were the same— native chicken samgyetang, green onion pancakes, buckwheat pancakes, and acorn jellies.

‘Gulp.’

Minhyuk swallowed down the saliva that pooled in his mouth. He used to go to the valley and visit the Sky Garden with his parents when he was younger. After they were seated in a small room and served their food, his father would always tear off a big chicken leg and place it on Minhyuk’s plate. Even the greasy soup was very, *very* delicious! Minhyuk trembled. His eyes glinted in determination as he vowed to hunt the first monster!

Then, he looked ahead of him. However, strange as it might be, the monster did not appear in front of Minhyuk. After a moment, another notification rang.

[You will now be warped to Torr Village in Eiderr Continent, the place where the werewolf is currently located.]

Conir was a little surprised as he thought, ‘*He managed to win over Arakhan and made him lend him his sword and armor.*’

Minhyuk used his skills to his advantage, creating a favorable situation for himself. It was unexpected, but it worked. However, what Conir was more surprised about was the average abilities and stats of the man.

‘*For an ordinary human, his abilities are very remarkable.*’

No, they were actually ridiculous. STM, STR, and AGI, all of these stats were well beyond the range of an ordinary human.

Conir might not be aware of it, but Minhyuk was a 120 kilograms giant in reality. The power that he packed was naturally strong. In addition to his strong and large physique, his speed and stamina had been honed after more than three hours of exercise every day.

The *Athenae* capsule was equipped with a built-in status checker that could monitor the player’s health and status. It was through that built-in function that they were able to make a status corresponding to the player’s physical condition.

However, this trial would still prove to be difficult. This was simply because Minhyuk was only around Level 10 at most, with his current physical condition. In fact, when it came to stats, ordinary people could only show the power of someone at Level 3~4 at best and someone at Level 1~2 at worst. That was why Minhyuk was already considered to be beyond the ordinary human range.

And yet, even if his stats were considerably higher than most ordinary humans, it still did not change the fact that the trial tested the challenger’s personal skills. The person’s control and motor skills in reality would have a great impact on this trial.

This trial would test one’s own skills and not their stats. This was the intention of the *Athenae* Production members. Could a normal person win against a goblin if they ever encountered one in

real life? Inside the game, it would be possible, since the goblins were known to be weak and dimwitted. However, if it was in real life, it would be nigh impossible. After all, a person would be overcome with fear, right? But if the person had impeccable control and amazing skills, it was possible that they would be able to overcome this hurdle! Only players that overcame this trial and gained such a mindset would be able to continue challenging the ‘Pinnacle’.

In fact, this trial was something that Conir had prepared since he thought that it would be entertaining. The place where the werewolf would appear was a place where players of the same level as Minhyuk’s average ability would appear. This could bring about plenty of variables. Minhyuk could choose to request the cooperation of the players around him, or take the last hit after the players had exhausted the werewolf from their hunt. However, the latter was almost impossible.

‘Because werewolves are considered as disasters in the Novice Zone.’

Since they were considered as disasters, it would be nigh impossible for novice players to chip off a huge chunk of their HPs.

Eiderr Continent’s Torr Village!

Eiderr Continent was literally the American Server. America was unilaterally agreed to be the number one among the strongest countries in the *Athenaean* world view. They had overwhelming military forces, a staggering number of global rankers, and an even terrifying number of unofficial rankers that had yet to show themselves to the world!

However, there were still novice zones and novice villages in this very same American Server. Among these villages was Torr Village. Players usually hunted rabbits in Torr Village to level up. All of the novice zones inside *Athenae* were very similar in format. They would only have subtle differences from each other.

One of the men in this novice zone thought, *‘This is the place where my hyung hunted a werewolf.’*

The werewolf would occasionally appear in novice villages in the Eiderr Continent. They just appear ‘occasionally’ and would disappear after an hour of their regeneration. The werewolf was a kind of an event monster in the novice zone and in the event of a player’s death, they would usually not incur any penalties. However, the werewolf would drop unique~rare artifacts if they got hunted. The appearance of the werewolf was like a golden opportunity for the novices so none of them ever complained to the *Athenae* Production Team.

However, the number of people that could hunt the werewolf was close to zero. The average level of players in this zone was usually at Level 4~7. On the other hand, the level of the werewolf was around Level 20. The level of this opponent was too much for the novice players that only had ‘dulled swords’ and ‘rusty armor’ as their weapons.

However, there was one man that had successfully hunted a werewolf by himself. And that man was the ‘Battlefield’s Ghost, Alexander’, the older brother of the player hunting rabbits right now, Player Marvin. The unofficial ranker, Alexander! He used the opportunity given to him after being the sole person to have ever hunted a werewolf and used it to accumulate a huge amount of wealth in *Athenae*. However, he remained as an unofficial ranker and had always moved about secretly.

Marvin wanted to be like Alexander. He thought, *‘Big bro was born like that.’*

Marvin knew that his brother was born a fighter. When Alexander was still a student, he had beaten five other students until they were all black and blue, with just his bare hands alone. But was that the end of it all? No, no one could go against him after he learnt all kinds of martial arts. However, despite trouncing over his peers, he was never interested in them for too long. The only thing that piqued his interest was *Athenae*. Marvin believed that his hyung would definitely be able to win a gold medal if he ever stayed focused in a sport. Marvin, however, was completely different from Alexander. He was timid and had close to no athletic bone in his body.

'Control isn't everything in Athenae!'

It would be the same as long as he had a God Class! Marvin believed that he would be able to overcome the gap in his abilities as long as he obtained something like that. So, he continued to hunt rabbits with that dream in mind.

Stab!

"Hwiik!"

Marvin hurriedly took the gold and item that dropped from the rabbit once it died.

'I don't need big bro to carry me. I can grow stronger by myself.'

Just as the thought crossed Marvin's mind...

"R...run...!"

"It's a werewooooolf...!"

"Uwaaaaaaack!"

"Kill it!!! If we kill that, we will be able to get good items from the drops!!!"

...screams rang loudly in the area. Marvin immediately turned to look at the source of the commotion. There, he saw a werewolf slash and bite the novices with its long claws and sharp teeth, killing them. The werewolves' main weapons were their swift feet, strong bite, and sharp nails.

'W...werewolf...?'

Marvin watched as the players rushed towards the werewolf. However, just one swipe of its long, sharp nails was enough to log out six players at once. The werewolf swiftly dashed forward as it ripped open the novices' necks and slashed their bodies.

"Kggghk! How can we even kill something like that?!"

"Cra...crazy! Run!!!"

The werewolf was quick on its feet as it chased the escaping novice players and bit on their necks. At this moment, Marvin recalled the words of his elder brother, *'There's only one way for ordinary players to kill the werewolf. They needed to be brave and someone has to lead them. If dozens of players joined forces, they would be able to hunt werewolves, no matter how many they were.'*

Of course, those words did not work for his big brother that hunted the werewolf alone. So, Marvin valiantly rushed forward, despite the fleeing players.

“Gather together!!! We can kill it if we stick together!!! Don’t be afraid!! This is a game at best!!!” Marvin said. However, none of them listened. After all, they were just novices that had still not yet adapted to the vividness of the game that looked strikingly similar to reality.

Marvin jumped in after seeing the werewolf bite the neck of one of the female players. He thought, *‘Big bro has mentioned before that I can kill monsters that are far stronger than myself, as long as I strike their vital point correctly.’*

To be honest, Marvin was also very frightened. He was also a novice, after all. However, he had always been compared to his brother.

‘Your brother has always been strong-willed and brilliant, so why are you very timid, Marvin? Ha...’

This was their parents’ sigh!

‘Your brother is good at studying and sports. But what about you, Marvin? What are you good at??’

His friends’ ridicule!

Marvin believed that he would not be able to break free from this life if he ran away at this point, so he plucked up his courage and ran towards the werewolf’s neck.

“Uwaaaaaaaah!”

Marvin was able to land a strike on the werewolf, who was biting the female player’s neck, with his sword.

Ping—!

However, the sound that rang loudly was not the sound of a blade cutting through flesh, but the sound of a blade hitting something hard. Marvin’s sword was akin to a stick that had no sharpness in front of the werewolf.

The werewolf, with blood dripping from its mouth, rushed towards Marvin.

“Grrrrrrr!”

Marvin tried to send another attack, but his attempt was swiftly knocked down by a single sweep of the werewolf’s hand. And when the werewolf jumped towards him...

‘I’m...I’m done for...’

But he did not have any regrets. At the very least, he did his best inside the game. At that moment...

Spurt!

...blood gushed out from the werewolf’s chest as it shrieked, “Graaaaaaaaaa!”

Then, a man kicked the werewolf away. Marvin looked at the man in front of him as the werewolf rolled and swiftly got back on its feet.

“Big bro...?”

For a moment, the figure of the man overlapped with the figure of Marvin’s brother. The man was 185 centimeters tall and had a golden proportion that most Westerners did not have. However, the man was different from his brother. His brother had blond hair, but the man in front of him had black hair. The man was also holding a sword with the image of the sun and had beautiful armor.

‘An...an Asian...?’

The man was wearing a white mask, but the mask could not hide the man’s shining, yet pitch-black eyes.

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The Asian man’s mouth was curled into a smile as he said, “Hiyaaa. You’re amazing! If I were a novice, I would also be scared shitless! But, it’s cool to see you rushing forward alone when everyone’s running away!”

‘Cool...?’ Marvin thought, an awkward smile plastered on his face after hearing the word.

“That’s right. Hunting is not always cool, but I can assure you that you’re really amazing!!”

Marvin could hear the sincerity in the man’s voice which made him feel awkward and embarrassed. However, underneath those emotions was also a faint sense of happiness. Marvin felt happy that someone had recognized his courage and efforts!

“And that werewolf...”

Marvin unknowingly listened carefully to the man’s words.

“...doesn’t the breast part look delicious?”

“...What?” Marvin asked dumbly, wondering if he heard right. The man just shrugged as the werewolf dashed towards him. Then, a splendid sword dance unfolded in front of Marvin.

‘Wow... C...crazy...!’ Marvin gasped in awe. He thought, *‘H...he wouldn’t lose in a match against big bro!’*

‘Wait... what’s up with the fancy?armor and sword?’

However, it seemed like it also was not easy for the man to hunt the werewolf by himself. Then, the man’s sword pierced through the werewolf as...

Crackle, crackle—

...flames suddenly flared up and engulfed its body.

“Keuaaaaaack!” The werewolf shrieked and trashed as if it was going on a rampage. Then, a notification rang for both Marvin and the man.

[Werewolf’s Frenzy]

[AGI increases by 20%.]

This was the werewolf’s trickiest ability! Marvin’s elder brother had told him that he almost died when the werewolf went on a frenzy back then. However, the man in front of him was not losing any ground as he continued to fight against the frenzied werewolf.

‘W...what... I heard that big bro was the first player to ever hunt a werewolf alone...’

Marvin even heard that Alexander had met with several deadly crises throughout the hunt. But the man in front of him was overwhelmingly powerful. For the second time, someone was trying to hunt a werewolf alone in the American Server, the strongest server in *Athenae*. Marvin looked at the man in admiration.

However, the werewolf was not an easy opponent. It repeatedly closed in using its speedy legs, swiped its sharp nails, then retreated. In fact, the reason why werewolves were tricky opponents, was because they were intelligent. The difference between a mindless monster and an intelligent monster was like the difference between heaven and earth. Just then, the man allowed an attack on his arm! The werewolf quickly latched on the man’s arm.

‘Aaack... D...dangerous...!’ Marvin thought, leaping to his feet in a bid to help, using his meager power.

Alas, his help was not needed. The man’s arm that was bitten was not his dominant arm. The werewolf bit the man’s arm, choosing to fight directly against the man. As proof, the monster sent an onslaught of attacks and did not retreat. But, this was what the man wanted.

Ping—!

The man’s sword slashed at the werewolf’s chest, painting it with streaks of blood. Then...

[Sword Explosion]

[Creates three consecutive explosions with an attack power that’s 200% of your basic attack power.]

Bang, bang, bang!

...explosions rang loudly on the werewolf’s chest.

“Keuaaaaaack!”

The werewolf was forced to take a few steps back from the impact. The man did not miss the opportunity as he raised his gleaming sword and stabbed the werewolf’s neck.

Stab!

The werewolf fell down. Marvin could barely hide his excitement as he thought, *‘Godly Control...?!’*

No, Marvin was still unaware of this, but the term 'Godly Control' was bestowed to gamers that could use the appropriate skills at the right time, while taking into account the harmony and synergy of the skills. Players that were hailed to have Godly Control often calculated their opponent's skill cooldown, as well as the time that it would take for them to attack, down to the very seconds. But the man in front of him showed a godly control that was far beyond an athlete's godly control.

'This... this is the second time that the werewolf has been hunted alone!'

Marvin bowed his head down to his chest as he said, "H... how can I become as strong as you? P... please teach me!"

Looking closely, the man was just a novice player. Like him! However, Marvin clearly knew that the man would be able to rise to the position of the strongest, and could even rival his own brother, Alexander!

The man smiled and said, "You already have it all. Courage, passion and effort."

"...!"

Marvin's pupils shook wildly. Did the man just acknowledge him? Then, the man chuckled as he continued to say, "And, this is a game, it's all good as long as you have fun. Right?"

"..."

Marvin felt like he was struck on the head with this revelation. He was right. Games were made for them to have fun. It seemed like the man in front of him was truly a cut above the rest. He was completely different from those that crave the rankers' position and only pursued after others, hoping to be the best!

Then, the man said, "Oh and... you should always eat well, exercise well and sleep well."

"...What?"

Really? For a moment, Marvin thought that he had hearing problems. But the man's expression was very serious.

"Ah, wait. The werewolf was killed thanks to your first strike. It had already become weak. Take this sword as a gift."

When the werewolf died, it dropped a sword. From what Marvin could recall, this was the 'Wolf Bone Sword', a unique artifact that had a rare chance of dropping. With that Bone Sword in hand, Marvin was sure that he would be able to grow faster than the rest of the players here.

The man in front of Marvin gave him advice and even gave him this item. Just then, the man was suddenly covered in light. The man said, "Ah, it's time to go back."

"A, aaaack...! B... by any chance, can I have y... your name...?!"

Marvin was very curious about the man's name. Then, the man's mouth opened...

"Min... H... Ch.. cken... sou... oooh... ooooh~"

...as he disappeared. The man had a strange look of excitement by the end. Marvin tilted his head in confusion. He said, "His name is *Chicken Soup*~ oooooooh~...?"

Minhyuk heard the notifications while he was talking to Marvin after he had hunted the werewolf.

[You hunted the first monster.]

[You have completely overwhelmed the werewolf.]

[You have received the recognition of the Innocent Hero.]

[You gained +1 on all your five basic stats.]

[Arakhan's Sword Mastery Skill will now be created.]

[You have gained 10,000,000 EXP.]

[With the influence of the Wishing Stone, you have acquired a Native Chicken.]

[With the recognition of the Innocent Hero, the hunt for the second monster will be skipped.]

[You have gained 12,000,000 EXP.]

[Arakhan's Sword Mastery Skill level has increased by one.]

[With the influence of the Wishing Stone, you have acquired Abalone.]

Minhyuk was in awe. Then, the foreigner asked for his name. He said, "My name is Minhyuk. *Kggghk*~ I'm going to eat abalone soup now~ Fufufufu. Chicken soup~ ooooooh~"

However, Minhyuk was left unaware that the first part of his sentence had been omitted due to the influence of the warping, and Marvin had only heard the last part!

To be honest, Minhyuk had two reasons why he gave the sword to Marvin. The first reason was Marvin's passion and intelligence. Minhyuk had already played *Athenae* for quite a while, and he could recognize those with talent, to some extent. He thought, '*He's going to climb high.*'

The second reason was because the unique artifact that came from a novice zone would not be of any help to Minhyuk at all. He would also not be able to acquire the item since he was undergoing a trial.

On the other side, Arakhan was shocked to see Minhyuk being warped back. Arakhan thought, '*This is unbelievable.*'

Minhyuk achieved an overwhelming victory during his first monster hunt. His strength was even recognized by the trial, to the point that he was allowed to skip the second monster hunt and receive the rewards for that trial directly.

'He's really strong...'

Of course, Arakhan was aware that his artifacts played a huge role in that victory. However, even if a person was overgeared, they would not become the best in this world. After all, control played a huge role in the virtual reality game, *Athenae*, something that was completely different from the RPG games played on computers in the past.

Just then, Minhyuk, who shocked him with his strength, suddenly began cooking. He said, "Hiyaaaa. This chicken is really tough!"

He had pulled out a huge cauldron, lit up a fire underneath it, and poured in some water, as well as the cleaned native chicken inside! Then, he added a whole head of garlic, a ginseng, some green onions, jujube and the abalone inside the cauldron, before covering it with a lid and letting them boil.

After a while, Minhyuk lifted the lid of the cauldron to remove the broth scum, causing the hot steam to escape immediately.

Shwaaaaaa—

Green onions and the ginseng were seen floating in the thick soup boiling inside the cauldron. Then, Minhyuk poked the chicken with his chopstick to check if it was cooked, before taking the cauldron off the fire.

‘Kggghk~ Cauldron is really the perfect match for chicken soup.’

It was strange, but whenever someone made rice or chicken soup in a cauldron on TV, the food looked much more delicious when it was in the cauldron! Minhyuk took out the chicken from the cauldron and placed it on a plate. The chicken was still dripping with the thick soup!

Gulp—

Drool began to drip from his mouth! The addition of abalone, ginseng and jujube in the soup was superb! Then, Minhyuk spread open an aluminum table that was often used in the past, before placing the plate of chicken and another plate with a different dish. This was because Minhyuk had prepared another dish while he was cooking the chicken soup, which was none other than ‘seasoned acorn jelly’.

“Mmm! I feel healthier already just by looking at it!”

It was a proper dish that was good for the body! Then, Minhyuk began to rip the large chicken leg from the chicken. Steam rose from the chicken as the heat passed through the pads of Minhyuk’s fingers. Thankfully, the pads of Minhyuk’s fingers were a bit thick so it did not matter that much. Then, he bit on the chicken leg.

“Aaaaaah!”

The juices of the chicken flowed in Minhyuk’s mouth the moment he took a bite. Even the texture of the chicken was chewier than regular chicken. Then, he dipped the leg in the salt and pepper that he prepared earlier and took another bite.

“Delicious. Really delicious.”

The salt perfectly complemented the greasiness of the soup, creating a perfect balance that was pleasant to the tongue. Then, Minhyuk grabbed the ginseng and chewed on it.

‘I did not like the flavor of this when I was young, but I feel like it’s getting more and more to my taste.’

The ginseng had a slight tangy bitterness towards the end! However, this bitterness was very addictive. After eating the chicken, he took a spoonful of the greasy chicken soup and took a sip.

“Kgghk~ This feels refreshing,” Minhyuk exclaimed as he tore a piece of kimchi and placed it on top of the chicken, before placing it in his mouth.

Minhyuk nodded in satisfaction as he stretched his chopsticks out to taste the seasoned acorn jelly. The seasoned acorn jelly was a dish that could stimulate anyone’s appetite with its bright red color and savory aroma. There were even sesame seeds that piqued one’s interest sprinkled on top of it, you know?

Minhyuk quickly mixed the sesame seeds into the dish. Then, he lifted the acorn jelly together with some chives, lettuce, perilla leaves and onions and placed the combination in his mouth. The savory and authentic flavor of the vegetables quietly spread in his mouth with every single bite. A bit of spiciness appeared and tingled his taste buds the more he chewed, which was a perfect accompaniment for the slightly greasy chicken soup.

After eating all of the chicken and abalone soup as well as the seasoned acorn jelly, the notifications rang in Minhyuk’s head.

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[Food God’s Greatness.]

[You have eaten an Abalone Soup.]

[You have gained 70 STM.]

It seemed like the ingredients that he could obtain from the Wishing Stone could possess random special abilities. He surmised this because he did not receive any special ability after he finished eating the first dish.

Alexander was a player that stood tall and high as an *Athenae* powerhouse, like the unreachable sky, even in America,. He was now watching several reruns of the Korean and the Chinese’s Soldier’s Great Battle on the TV in his luxurious mansion.

‘The Korean NPCs are very outstanding. No, is it safer to say that Food God Minhyuk’s territory is very outstanding?’

A lot of information had already been released about the young boy, the demon, the old man and even Saintess Loyna. And these NPCs had actually acted for the Food God alone.

‘Isn’t that amazing?’ Alexander thought, refreshing his views about Korea, a small and weak country that he thought was something that could just be ignored before.

Then, his brother, Marvin, came out of his *Athenae* capsule. Marvin said, “Big bro, I just saw something amazing.”

“Something amazing?” Alexander asked nonchalantly, believing that his brother’s words were just nonsense. After all, Marvin had always exaggerated his words because he wanted people to pay attention to him. He once told them that he killed a ‘beastly and rabid rabbit’ when all he did was hunt a rabbit. However, the following words that his brother uttered made Alexander focus on him.

“Another person followed after your steps. I saw that person hunt the werewolf alone. I even greeted him and talked to him.”

“What...?” Alexander asked, pupils trembling in disbelief.

The public knew Alexander as an unofficial ranker. However, there were several legends that accompanied his name. One of these legends was the story about how he hunted the werewolf alone. But, that was not the truth.

‘I was the only one left after all of the other players had been killed and forced to log out.’

Alexander did not technically hunt the werewolf alone. However, he felt that he did not need to deny the public’s praise and compliments for him. Right now, Marvin told him that he had seen someone hunt the werewolf by himself.

“The man is Asian. He had a white mask on his face so all I can see is his eyes, but I’m pretty sure that he’s a Korean player.”

“...Are you really sure, Marvin?”

Marvin nodded fiercely.

‘Another point of interest.’

Alexander’s interest towards the country called Korea was growing over time. Someone from that country really hunted a werewolf alone? So, Alexander asked, “How can you be so sure when he’s wearing a white mask? Ah, right. What’s his name?”

Marvin had immediately searched the portal site with the man’s name the moment he terminated his connection to the game. That was when he knew which country he was from.

Alexander’s ears perked up attentively as Marvin said, “His name is *Chicken Soup~ Ooooooh~.*”

“...”

Alexander immediately thought that the name was unique.

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Thud—

The sound of something falling down rang loudly in the area. It was the third monster, Caeris, a rodent that could be easily dealt with by novices around Level 25. It usually had a small trident in its hands and quick feet. However, with Minhyuk’s current stats, it was already very surprising that he was able to hunt them. Even if he had the Sun God’s Sword and Phrakan’s Armor equipped, it was still not an easy task.

‘Ho. That’s really amazing,’ Arakhan thought, slight admiration evident on his face.

Then, Minhyuk heard the notifications.

[You hunted the third monster.]

[You have completely overwhelmed Caeris.]

[You have received the recognition of the Innocent Hero.]

[You gained +1 on all five of your basic stats.]

[Arakhan's Sword Mastery Skill Level has increased by one.]

[You have gained 15,000,000 EXP.]

[You have leveled up.]

[With the recognition of the Innocent Hero, the hunt for the fourth monster will be skipped.]

[You have gained 20,000,000 EXP.]

[Arakhan's Sword Mastery Skill Level has increased by one.]

Minhyuk smiled in satisfaction. The Innocent Hero's Trial was truly giving him a lot in terms of rewards. First, it gave him additional +1 to all five of his basic stats. Of course, it was because he had received the recognition of the Innocent Hero. After all, this was a bonus that could only be obtained if the challenger cleared the trial with a very high score.

Since it was a bonus, the rewards were extremely great. A +1 in all five basic stat was equivalent to the stat points that one could get once they leveled up. On top of that, there was also an enormous amount of EXP, which allowed Minhyuk to increase his level quickly. Finally, there was also Arakhan's Sword Mastery.

Passive Skill

?There will be an 8% increase in both basic sword attack and speed.

?There will be an 8% increase in basic attack when slashing and stabbing an opponent.

?There will be a 4% increase in attack for skills related to swordsmanship.

In fact, ordinary players would be equipped with various passive mastery skills, like Sword Mastery or Bow Mastery. However, Arakhan's Sword Mastery was different from that.

Sword Mastery was divided into the novice grade, intermediate grade, advanced grade, and mastery grade. Achieving the mastery grade of the Sword Mastery skill would increase the player's basic attack and speed by 1.5%. On the other hand, Arakhan's sword mastery would increase the basic attack and speed by 2% for every increase in level.

Once the mastery grade of the Sword Mastery skill reached Level 9, the player would not be able to level up anymore. Only the acquisition of special skills would give the player the possibility of leveling the skill further. This limitation had made it impossible to further improve the effect of the Sword Mastery skill. However, Arakhan's Sword Mastery would increase in effect the higher the level.

The most surprising part about Arakhan's Sword Mastery was the part where the % attack of the skills related to swordsmanship would also increase. It was a special effect that was not even in mastery grade of the Sword Mastery skill.

"This trial is very generous. The Sword Mastery has already increased by four."

Arakhan vehemently denied the fact about the trial being generous, however, he never voiced it out. He was very much aware that his Sword Mastery was brilliant and amazing, but this Hero's Trial would only allow it to increase up to Level 5. Once Minhyuk left this place, he would have to increase his proficiency on his own to increase the level of the skill. But this was only the case for the 'general' score. Minhyuk had always cleared the trial with an 'overwhelming' score, that was why he had already reached Level 4 for the Sword Mastery.

Then, additional notifications rang for Minhyuk.

[You have accomplished an outstanding feat in hunting monsters.]

[The Fifth Monster Hunt will be held in a different way. You will have to hunt two monsters at the same time.]

[If you fail the Fifth Monster Hunt, you won't be able to enter the Hero's Trial once again.]

[You can move forward to the next trial without taking the challenge.]

Arakhan had also recognized Minhyuk's strength.

'Unbelievable. Will this guy really become my and Conir's successor?'

Arakhan was shocked. This was because anyone that could reach the final trial in this level could already be considered to be a part of the continent's legendary figures. The prime examples were both him and Conir. However, the truth was neither he nor Conir expected anything from Minhyuk. Becoming a *Legend* and gaining that name was not an easy task.

'That's amazing...!'

The Innocent Hero's Trial had a total of 25 stages. The truth was that Conir himself believed that the limit was at the 15th stage. In fact, reaching the 15th stage would allow the person to already reach the Half-Pinnacle.

However, as long as Minhyuk did well, he might actually be able to reach the 25th stage. If that was the case, then there was a high possibility that he would reach and acquire the true pinnacle skill of the person hailed as the Sword Saint.

Then, Arakhan thought, *'He will definitely be stopped by the frustration in this trial.'*

It was too bad. Arakhan thought that it would have been better if Minhyuk did not score overwhelming scores during the previous trials. In that way, he would not need to go through this special Fifth Monster Hunting Trial. Truth be told, neither he nor Conir could break this trial. The worst part was that failure in this trial meant total failure. Of course, there were still trials where Minhyuk could try to challenge again upon failure, but that was not the case for the monster hunting trial. Once this trial failed, Minhyuk would be immediately ejected from this place, never to return again. That was why Arakhan selfishly wanted Minhyuk to skip this challenge.

However, Minhyuk said, "I will challenge it."

"..."

Arakhan felt that it was a shame that a strong candidate for their successor would not be able to go any further than here. However, Arakhan still had a duty. So, he explained, "The Fifth Monster Hunt will take place in a forest."

Arakhan waved his hand to present a hologram of a huge forest.

“You have to hunt the monsters in this forest. You need to take advantage of the topography of this place to hunt these monsters since the difference in your levels is vast. There’s also a variety of wildlife in this area, so a momentary lapse in attention might cause you to lose your life and become prey to these beasts and not the monsters... *mumble, mumble...*”

After listening to Arakhan’s explanation, Minhyuk bowed his head in thought before asking, “What kind of monster will appear inside?”

“You have to check it out yourself.”

It was something that Arakhan could not disclose. Then, Arakhan continued to say, “The Fifth Monster Hunt has a time limit. You are only allowed to stay inside for half a day. If you fail to hunt the monsters within that time frame, then the trial will be deemed as failure. This is set to prevent you from hiding and not hunting the monsters.”

Minhyuk nodded as he got warped away and disappeared.

After appearing in the forest, Minhyuk looked around. He could see that he was alone and was surrounded by thick and lush trees.

“*Awooooooooooooo~*”

Falter!

Minhyuk froze, his senses going on full alert. He made sure to maintain his calm as he looked at his surroundings. He was trying to assess the topography of the forest and analyzing if he could use them. Since he was given half a day to hunt, it meant that he could retreat once he failed an attack and try again.

Holding his breath to conceal his presence, Minhyuk finally spotted a monster after walking quite a distance. Then, the monster turned around. Minhyuk made eye contact with the monster bearing only one eye.

‘*Crazy...?!*’

Minhyuk was very shocked to see that the monster that appeared was none other than a cyclops. It was a monstrous giant that wielded a club!

[Weakened Cyclops, Level 45.]

Fortunately, the cyclops that appeared was not the normal cyclops. However, even if its level was lower, it was still at Level 45.

‘*What kind of trial is this...?*’

The operators' will to not give anyone the Pinnacle Skill was very evident in this trial. However, it did not end there.

Thud, thud, thud, thud.

Loud thumping footsteps rang loudly from the other side of the forest. Minhyuk turned to look to the other side, only to see a gigantic drake. The drake was a monster that was of a lower hierarchy than a dragon. However, it was still an existence that was originally at Level 600.

[Deteriorated Drake, Level 54.]

“...”

Minhyuk was speechless.

He could still consider the cyclops as a conventional monster to hunt. However, adding the drake to the trial made the difficulty of this trial clear to him. Drakes were aerial monsters that were quick on their feet even when they were on the ground.

Minhyuk quickly analyzed the situation that he was in. He thought, *‘Both the cyclops and the drake have poor hearing and smell. Only their eyesight is good.’*

Despite these drawbacks, the two monsters were given an overly outstanding and keen vision.

“...”

Minhyuk quickly took a step back after analyzing the situation.

“Kiyaaaaaack!”

“Kiyeeeeeeee!”

Then, the monsters roared and started to run after him. So, Minhyuk began to run away.

Dash, dash, dash, dash, dash!

The best choice for him right now was to not stand out or show himself in front of these monsters.

Arakhan met with Conir after a *very* long time.

“It’s been hundreds of years.”

“That’s right.”

“I’m very happy to see you again.”

Conir smiled slightly at Arakhan’s words. Arakhan had always been very kind to Conir. Arakhan thought, *‘If it wasn’t for you, then I’d...’*

He might not have realized things by himself. However, Conir just smiled at him.

“An excellent person that can become our successor has appeared.”

Conir nodded and said, “I know, I have been watching. He’s very amazing. And, he also knows who I am.”

“Could it be that he knows your alter ego?”

The alter ego that they were talking about was none other than the young boy, Conir.

Then, Conir said, “It might be my alter ego, but he is also me. Although he might not be the complete version of myself yet.”

Arakhan nodded and said, “It’s a pity, I had hoped that he wouldn’t challenge this Monster Trial...”

Conir looked bitter after hearing Arakhan’s words. After watching Minhyuk throughout the trials, he could tell that Minhyuk’s power was enough to successfully finish the trial, if only the cyclops had appeared. Although the cyclops was at Level 45, the terrain and topography of the area was readily available for Minhyuk to take advantage of. He could also use unconventional ways like letting a gigantic rock roll over the cyclops, or setting the forest on fire. Of course, these were just strategies and tactics that Conir and Arakhan had come up with. The problem was the drake.

‘Drakes have immense speed and resistance.’

Although the drake had deteriorated, its resistance was enough to survive a forest fire.

“I don’t think I will be able to think of ways to clear the trial if I was placed in the same position as he was.”

Conir agreed with Arakhan’s words. After all, the trial was so ridiculous that a person could panic and not perform well. However, they did not have any say on the matter. *God Athenae* had intervened himself during the creation of the Innocent Hero’s Trial. He was the one that placed this additional trial himself. Even though they wanted to deny it, this Monster Hunt would be Minhyuk’s failure.

Then, Conir’s body started to become translucent.

“How about going to the River of Eternal Life?”

“That’s right. You’ve been here after death in your spirit form, and I’m in a state of being neither alive nor dead.”

Conir’s alter ego was still alive and well, that was why the original Conir was in a state of being neither alive nor dead. All he could do was walk to the River of Eternal Life, close his eyes, and breathe. Meanwhile, Arakhan sat in front of the River of Eternal Life. The two of them closed their eyes and mouths and focused on maintaining their bodies. After a bit of time, Conir opened his eyes. Arakhan opened his eyes after the moment he sensed Conir coming out of the River of Eternal Life.

“I see, the trial is not over yet.”

“There’s only an hour left from the half-day time limit.”

The two chatted as they moved to check the crystal ball. When they peered through the crystal ball, they saw that the cyclops and the drake were still very much alive. What was more problematic was the fact that the two were together. But then...

[Awoooooo~]

The howl of a wolf rang loudly through the crystal ball. One of the reasons why this trial was very difficult was because of the wildlife living in the forest. There were wolves and bears which made it all the more difficult for Minhyuk, whose level had been reduced.

The two of them did not pay much attention to the wolf's howl. However, they had no choice but to wonder what was happening after hearing continuous howls.

[Awoooooo!]

[Awoooooo—!]

[Graaaaaaaa—!]

Not only the wolves, but even the bears and other wild beasts began to howl.

“Are the wild beasts vying for territory?”

“I know. I wonder why they are howling at the same time?”

The two were both puzzled. Then...

Dash, dash, dash, dash—

Dozens of wolves suddenly dashed forward from behind the thickets as they rushed towards the cyclops and the drake.

[Grrrrrrrrrr!]

[Roaaar!]

[Keuwaaaaaa!]

[Graa, graa, graaaa!]

Dozens of wolves suddenly launched an attack! However, no matter how much they overwhelmed the cyclops and the drake with their numbers, the dozens of wolves were no match for them. Still, more wolves appeared.

“W...what the hell is happening?”

Then, another howl rang loudly through the crystal ball.

[Awoooooo—!]

Conir and Arakhan both looked at each other after hearing the howl. It was the howl of a wolf. However, it was clearly the sound of a person imitating the howl of a wolf. Then, hundreds of wolves, bears and other wild animals appeared on the top of the hill overlooking the cyclops and the drake. Among them was a gigantic wolf carrying a man with his sword raised high up in the sky.

[Awoooooo!]

The man, Minhyuk, howled once again. The wild beasts howled in answer to his call. And when he lowered his sword...

Dash, dash, dash, dash—

...hundreds of wild beasts ran. In the lead was Minhyuk. The wolf that he was riding on was moving the fastest. Then, he said...

[Bossam, run!]

“...?”

“...?”

The expressions on both Arakhan and Conir’s face were indescribable.

[Chicken, don’t fall behind!]

[Pizza, are you not going to run faster, huh?!]

[Curry, don’t rush ahead of us!!]

[Grilled Pork Belly, run next to us!!!]

[Gomtang! Why are you lagging behind?!]

[Gomguk, you! Why are you so slow?!]

“It seemed like the names of the wolves were Bossam, Chicken, Pizza, Curry and Grilled Pork Belly. While the bears are named Gomtang and Gomguk... It seemed like he named them with the food that he wanted to eat.”

“...”

The two legends watching the scene were both left speechless.

Chapter 344: The Ruler of the Forest

Witnessing the birth of weird and unusual names from Minhyuk’s absurd naming sense brought the two people standing in front of the crystal ball in a daze. The first one to gather their senses back together was Conir. He said, “I believe that’s not the main point.”

“That’s right.”

They were wondering how Minhyuk led hundreds of wild beasts to attack the cyclops and the drake.

“How in the world did this happen...?”

Arakhan had told Minhyuk that he could use the topography and the terrain however he wanted, but he had never imagined that Minhyuk would make use of the wild beasts in the forest. Then, as if recalling something, Arakhan said, “Ah, from what I recall, that boy’s class is a ‘chef’.”

“I see...”

Conir and Arakhan were once again dumbfounded. For a chef, such an outstanding performance in the past trials was simply shocking. How could he be so strong when he was just a chef? And that was not all—how could a chef be like a monster tamer and tame those ferocious wolves and bears, making them follow his command?

On the other hand, Arakhan, who had tasted Minhyuk’s food before, felt like he could sympathize with what the beasts felt. He thought, *‘That’s really amazing. Everything is...!’*

The strongest contender to become their successor was not a knight, a swordsman, or a warrior, but a man whose main class was non-combatant: a chef.

“Maybe, with this...”

Conir and Arakhan looked at each other.

“...he might really awaken.”

Much earlier.

Minhyuk immediately escaped deeper into the forest after being spotted by the cyclops and the drake. He quickly found a cave and hid himself within its depths, concealing his presence as much as possible. While he was busy trying to hide himself, his head was already hard at work and had already thought of plenty of methods to deal with the two monsters.

‘Should I set the forest on fire?’

The method was feasible. With the help of the Sun God’s Sword, he had a high probability of creating flames with a slash. Using those flames to set the forest on fire was not that difficult. However, Minhyuk shook his head and dismissed the thought.

‘The drake has a ridiculously high speed and high resistance. It would be able to survive the forest fire.’

Minhyuk had studied a lot about *Athenae* in search of ways to eat as much delicious food as he could. With the amount of his research, he was confident that he knew more about the game than anybody else. That was why Minhyuk was sure that it would be impossible for him to hunt the drake, even if he set the forest on fire. Also, there was the chance that he would burn himself instead, dying an ironic and stupid death.

‘My skills are also not available.’

With his MP significantly reduced, Minhyuk could only use a few of his skills. Even his stats were in the same state. After taking everything into account, Minhyuk finally came to a conclusion.

‘I’ll just have to do what I’m best at, right?’

What was the thing that Minhyuk was good at? It was none other than food! He had incredibly high DEX and cooking skills to begin with, and even with his DEX reduced, there was no way that his body would forget how to cook.

After making that decision, Minhyuk did not fall into frustration even after knowing that he could not use his Create a Recipe skill as usual. He had memorized countless recipes, so he could easily make one of those.

Minhyuk quickly took out the beef’s ‘eye of round’?cut and drained its blood. Then, he took out his Super-Large ‘Food Dehydrator’ that he always brought with him.

‘Fufufu. This really is the Super-Large Food Dehydrator.’

A food dehydrator was an appliance that was used to dry fruits and meat. It was also used by many pet owners to make snacks for their beloved cats and dogs. The best thing about Minhyuk’s food dehydrator was its large capacity and the ability to shorten the time needed to dry the food. Minhyuk quickly filled it with slices of eye of round, then started the dehydration process.

While he was waiting for the meat to dry, Minhyuk went outside to survey the wild beasts in the area. From what he saw, wolves were the majority, with the occasional bear and snake.

The dehydrator made beef jerky for six straight hours. After the jerky was finished, Minhyuk scattered some pieces around the cave. Then, he hid himself and waited with bated breath.

Dragged in by the tempting smell, a few wolves approached the cave. The wolves were very cautious at first as they looked around and sniffed before taking a bite of the scattered jerky. And then...

Chomp, chomp, chomp.

...they started eating with relish, as if they were dogs presented with snacks. It seemed like they were also having a conversation, with how they were growling back and forth.

“Grrrrrr! *(Th, this is delicious!)*”

“Grrrrrrr?! *(Delicious? How delicious?)*”

Chomp, chomp.

“Grrrrrrr!! *(Extremely delicious...!)*”

Then, the wolves began to gather one after the other. Of course, Minhyuk had deliberately added some ‘Sea Honey’ to the seasonings that he had used to coat the beef jerky earlier. That was the reason why the wolves looked like they were craving for more of that heavenly taste. After a few moments, Minhyuk silently approached one of the wolves that had strayed away from the pack.

“Grrrrrrrr!”

The wolf naturally showed its aggressiveness! But then, Minhyuk raised the jerky in his hands.

“Stop!”

“Grr, grrrrr? *(Th...that’s...?)*”

”

The wolf began to drool as it thought of ways to take the piece of jerky away from the man.

Minhyuk said, “Well then, I will give you this beef jerky if you listen to me.”

“Grrr?”

Minhyuk started to train the wolf, just like that. When the wolf tried to approach him, Minhyuk hid the jerky. When the wolf stopped moving, Minhyuk would take it out again and throw it to the wolf. And before he knew it, the wolf was already wagging its tail at him. Seeing this, Minhyuk smiled in satisfaction.

“Well, from now on your name will be Chicken. Chicken, I will give you this jerky if you call your friends over.”

Chicken immediately showed an aggressive stance, firmly rejecting Minhyuk’s proposal. It was showing Minhyuk that it wanted to eat the delicious jerky on its own!

However, Minhyuk said, “If you bring your friends over, I will give you twenty more pieces of jerky.”

Dash, dash, dash!

Chicken disappeared in a flash. My goodness! A wolf dashed away in an instant to sell out its friends! Not long after, the wolves gathered in front of Minhyuk.

Minhyuk lifted the jerky in the sky and said, “Catch the bears and snakes alive. The first one to bring back one will get a piece of jerky~”

The wolves immediately went to work, catching bears, snakes, and other wild beasts, while Minhyuk fed them. Then, Minhyuk shouted, “You see that giant chicken over there? And the giant? The first wolf to kill them will get three pieces of jerky!!!”

Minhyuk climbed on top of the largest wolf in the pack as he started hunting the cyclops and the drake.

“Grrrrrrrr! (*Beef jerky!!!*)”

“Grrrrrrrrrr! (*I will be the one to eat the jerky!!!*)”

The bears and the wolves dashed forward together with Minhyuk, who was sitting on top of the largest wolf, named Bossam. Hundreds of wolves pressured the cyclops and the drake as they jumped up and bit on their necks while scratching them with their claws.

“Graaaaack!”

“Grrrrrrrrr!”

Injuries also began to show up on the bodies of the wolves.

Slam—

“*Whine, whine!*”

“*Whine!*”

However, despite their efforts, the gap between the cyclops and drake and the wild beasts was just too wide. The wolves hit by the cyclops’ club flew away and rolled on the ground.

“Grrrrrrr! (*I! Will! Eat! Jerky!!!*)”

“Grrrrrrrrr! (*If we fall here, then?we will not be able to eat beef jerky...!!!*)”

“Graaaaaaaa! (*The beef jerky is mine!!!*)”

Despite the glaring gap in strength, the wolves showed their unwavering spirit. They might be bleeding and exhausted, but they would fight to the death for their beef jerky!

Minhyuk also stormed the chaotic battlefield for these weary and injured wolves. He shouted, “Wolves! Attack the cyclops’ lower body!!!”

“Grrrrrrr!”

Minhyuk's AGI was very low right now. However, the wolves could run as fast as fifty kilometers per hour, and the wolf that he was riding on was special to boot! In other words, Minhyuk was covering his shortcomings by making full use of the wolves.

"Grrrrr!"

"Graaaaaaa!"

Unfortunately, the truth was that just one attack from either the cyclops or the drake could kill these wolves.

Minhyuk quickly used one of the wolves as his springboard as he jumped up and stabbed the cyclops' one and only eye!

Stab!

Crackle!

[Sun God's Blazing Flames]

[There's a 50% chance of triggering blazing flames that will cover the opponent's entire body while dealing 1% of the user's attack every two seconds.]

With perfect timing, the Sun God's Blazing Flames burned the cyclops' eye. The cyclops grabbed its face and roared, "Graaaaaaack!"

Having lost its vision, the enraged cyclops swung its huge club indiscriminately. With the opportunity presented to them, the wolves immediately dashed forward and attacked it. Dozens and dozens of wolves clung to the desperate monster. In the end, the cyclops could not withstand their fierce assault and fell down in a heap. The wolves quickly bit on the cyclops' collapsed body until it breathed its last.

After dealing with the cyclops, Minhyuk focused their attention towards the drake. The drake had a very high HP and defense. However, the attack that had been divided between the cyclops and the drake was now only focused on the latter.

"Kieeeeeeeeeeeck!!!" The drake shrieked loudly as the wolves bit on its wings. Its wings were the weakest part of its body in terms of defense! In the end, the drake also collapsed and succumbed to the attacks.

"Awooooooooooooo! (Jerkyyyyyyyyy!!!)"

"Awooooooooooooo! (I can eat?jerkyyyyy!!!)"

"Awoo, awoo, awoooooooooooo! (Ooooooooooh!!!)"

The wolves howled in joy as Minhyuk threw the beef jerky towards them. The wolves immediately jumped forward to munch on their much awaited treat.

"Bossam, you did a good job! That's right, Chicken too!!!"

Minhyuk waited for the trial completion notification as he fed the wolves jerky. Then, Genie's whisper suddenly came in.

Genie was with Haze as they looked at Berdk attack base located in the distance. After the end of the Soldiers' Great Battle, several rankers launched attacks to try and recapture Berdk. Genie had told them that this was a hasty operation, but all of them ignored her. The result of their stubbornness was complete and utter defeat.

Berdk was fully equipped with 800 Kharamis soldiers and siege weapons! It was already an uphill battle with those things alone, but the Chinese players had also joined in the fray, making it more difficult for them.

Then, Haze said, "We have seen how useful and effective the siege weapons are during this battle. We must take Berdk."

Haze was also well-versed in reading the flow of battle, which was why Genie had always kept her by her side.

"Do you have a plan?"

"We do. The members of the Let's Eat Sect and the rankers should work together and launch an attack."

"But that will bring us a lot of casualties."

Haze agreed with Genie's words. Once they died, they would not be able to re-enter the Continent Cloud, so they had to be careful. So, she said, "Seems like we can't find the answer on our own. Why not contact Master?"

Genie nodded. She knew that Minhyuk had gone somewhere to become stronger. Although they were in the middle of the continental war, Genie knew that this was something that Minhyuk had to do. She was confident that Minhyuk was the only one that could kill the Chinese rankers, which included Hu Yitian.

Then, Genie sent Minhyuk a whisper.

Genie explained the situation that they were in. She told him that the chances of Korea winning this Continental War would increase once they recaptured Berdk. Even their morale would increase tremendously if they succeeded in this feat. Although they had won the Soldiers' Great Battle, the public still expected that they would be defeated. However, Genie was sure that this would change once they recaptured Berdk.

Minhyuk went silent for a moment after hearing Genie's explanation. He only sent a reply after a while.

Genie was confused. She unconsciously blurted, “Set fire to the food storage warehouse...?”

Haze, who was standing beside her, looked as if she had been enlightened. She said, “I think Master wanted to make the soldiers of Berdk hungry and decrease their morale. As expected of Master...!”

Genie was in awe. She thought, *‘It’s not that hard to sneak into their food warehouse.’*

They might be caught if a large number of troops moved, but they would be able to sneak in if only a small number of assassins went in to infiltrate. Thinking that she had gotten the gist of it, Genie sent a whisper back.

However, Minhyuk’s reply was shocking.

Genie could understand up to this point. So, what did Minhyuk mean when he said ‘no’?

The next reply that Minhyuk sent brought her a far greater shock.

“Make them... our allies...?” Genie mumbled in confusion.

Chapter 345: Spectacular Recapture

After Minhyuk finished explaining how to make the Kharamis soldiers into their allies to Genie, the notification about the completion of the trial rang in his ears.

[You have completed the Fifth Monster Hunting Trial using a unique method.]

[You have received the recognition of the Innocent Hero.]

[You have gained +4 to all five of your basic stats.]

[Arakhan’s Sword Mastery Skill Level has increased by three.]

[You have gained 150,000,000 EXP.]

[You have leveled up.]

[You have leveled up.]

[You have leveled up.]

Since the rewards that he could obtain from this trial were not mentioned in the beginning, Minhyuk had to carefully examine and read every notification. After all, he had completed it with a unique method, so there had to be something worthwhile for him. However, no matter how much Minhyuk went back and forth in the notifications window, no sight of his most cherished, most desired rewards could be seen.

‘There’s... there’s nothing that I can eat...?!’

In the end, all Minhyuk could do was sigh ruefully. This meant that he lost more than he had gained, since he had willingly filled the stomach of those wolves! However, Minhyuk had to admit that the rewards that he had received this time were tremendous. He had obtained +4 on all five basic stats, which was equivalent to gaining twenty stat points. In other words, it was like he had increased his level by four. Even Arakhan’s Sword Mastery had increased by three levels!

Passive Skill

?There will be a 14% increase in both basic sword attack and speed.

?There will be a 14% increase in basic attack when slashing and stabbing an opponent.

?There will be a 7% increase in attack for skills related to swordsmanship.

?There will be a 15% reduction of physical and skill damage of sword-related attacks.

There was even another special effect added to the skill! The additional effect simply meant that Minhyuk would receive 15% less damage from any sword attack, whether a skill or pure physical damage. Moreover, Minhyuk's level had also increased by four. The amount of rewards that he had received this time was overall no different from a ten-level increase.

Minhyuk was wrapped in light once again. When he opened his eyes, he was already in front of Arakhan. Seeing him, Minhyuk grumbled, "I have something to do, so I'll be right back..."

Min-*disappointed*-hyuk had appeared!

"Al...alright," Arakhan said in confusion. However, he did not stop Minhyuk from leaving. After all, the Innocent Hero's Trial was a trial that allowed the challenger to go outside after clearing the trial and come back once they were ready.

Just like that, Minhyuk left the Innocent Hero's Trial.

Berdk Attack Base.

There were currently 770 Kharamis soldiers stationed at Berdk. They had lost around thirty people not too long ago during the sudden raid by the Korean rankers. There were also around four hundred players and more than six hundred ordinary NPC soldiers in the base. In total, they numbered close to two thousand!

The attack base was being guarded and led by a Chinese player by the name of Arohan. He was ranked ninth in the Chinese Rankings and was the owner of a fairly prestigious territory, although admittedly not as great as Nam Gungho's territory. He also ranked first in the Chinese Archer Rankings, and was quite good in strategies and tactics.

"How dare these Korean rat bastards covet Berdk?! Keuhahahahahaha!" Arohan guffawed as he admired the greatness of Berdk.

They had been suddenly attacked by the Korean players a few days ago! In fact, the latter had even brought a considerable number of NPCs with them. However, Berdk was not hailed as the strongest attack base for nothing. The overwhelming siege weapons mounted on the walls of the base were enough to inflict enormous damage to their enemies.

That was not all. The general level of the Kharamis soldiers stationed in the base was above four hundred, far superior to Nam Gungho's NPCs. The only disadvantage was the fact that they were NPCs that lived in the Continent Cloud. In other words, they would truly die if they perished here. The Kharamis soldiers were also very difficult to command. One had to have a decent REP and high

CHA. This was the reason why Arohan had been unable to make them follow his orders when he had tried to recapture other attack and defense bases. They did not listen to him at all!

As such, they had decided to just let them stay here in Berdk. However, the power that the Kharamis soldiers had shown them a few days ago was beyond their imagination. They felt like they were holding a golden treasure after acquiring Berdk here in the center!

The Cairon Continent's momentum was at an all-time high. Of course, it was only natural for their players to ride this wave and attack other bases around the center. With this, the gap between the Cairon and Asgan Continent had widened further. They even had a 6:4 ratio with just the base distribution alone.

Just as Arohan was smiling at the thought...

"C...Commander! There's trouble!"

A soldier rushed to him. Arohan looked at the soldier in doubt as he asked, "What's the matter now? Did you see signs of the Asgan bastards trying to attack us again?"

"Th...that's not it. The, the food warehouse is... is on fire."

"What did you say?" Arohan asked, jumping from his seat in shock.

Berdk's food warehouse had been filled with enough food to last them two months when they had first recaptured the base. But the soldier was telling Arohan that it was now on fire?

"Let's go and take a look," Arohan said, rushing there only to see a huge fire devouring the food warehouse.

"What are you all gawking about?! Still not putting out the fire?!!"

'Is this an error on our side or an enemy attack?'

Arohan did not know which of the two was the answer, but what he knew was that they needed to put out the fire as soon as possible. It would become very troublesome if the food in their warehouse was completely devoured by fire.

That was right. Arohan thought that this matter was just 'something troublesome and annoying'. After all, all they needed to do was transport a new batch of food supplies here.

The mages rushed forward and tried to use their magic to put out the raging fire. But then...

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

The food storage warehouse was suddenly engulfed in huge explosions.

"What, what the hell...?!"

By now, Arohan had already come to the conclusion that this was their enemy's trick. Based on the results, it was highly likely that they had set up this trap to explode the moment they used magic to put out the fire.

Black smoke continued to rise from the burning warehouse. Knowing that this was an enemy trick, Arohan quickly informed the other rankers about the situation. Players from the same country were

in an alliance inside the Continent Cloud, which gave them a separate chatroom to discuss tactics and plans.

Arohan completely agreed with Koden's words. If that was the case, then they needed to deal with it quickly. The gears in his brain turned as he pondered over this matter.

Arohan ended the conversation with a grin. He said, "They're all doing the same thing. Why do they keep on using methods that won't work anymore?"

Then, Arohan unfolded the Continent Cloud map that showed all of the places that had been pioneered and explored. He thought, '*There are three possible routes.*'

Just like what Arohan thought, there were three routes that the players of the Cairon Continent could use to send food rations to Berdk. However, the chances of the enemy troops trying to concentrate their strongest forces on a single route were almost zero. They were most likely just trying to intimidate them. After all, none of their forces would be able to return to the Continent Cloud in the event of their death.

'The NPCs from the Soldiers' Great Battle?'

Arohan recalled those NPCs, but he thought that they would most likely be spread out, since they were going to divide their forces between those that would attack Berdk and those that would block their supply routes. If they truly split their forces, then there was no way that they would be able to stop the Cairon Continent forces. In other words, this tactic of their enemy was completely meaningless in front of their overwhelming forces.

Arohan giggled to himself, completely unaware of the impending disaster.

The Chinese divided their troops into three to deliver the food rations to Berdk. They moved along three separate routes. The person in charge of the troops aiming to take the third route, which was the fastest to Berdk, was none other than the talk of the town, Hu Yitian, the Ranker Destroyer.

As they moved, the Chinese commentators began to talk.

[The players of Cairon Continent are telling us that they won't show any gaps.]

[The moment Berdk's food warehouse got burnt down, they immediately deployed their troops to transport food. There are 2,000 troops on the first and second routes, and 3,000 troops on the third route.]

[From what I heard, the troops will be stationed in Berdk after transporting the rations, in case of emergency.]

[It seems like the Korean players will block their supply routes.]

[But if that's the case, then the players from South Korea will be split into two groups. One to attack Berdk and another to block the supply routes.]

[I think it's a meaningless tactic. If Berdk's food storage warehouse was burned down, then it's only natural that the players of Cairon Continent would send supplies. As is the case right now.]

[This tactic shows how foolish the players of Asgan Continent are.]

Yes, this was the natural response after seeing the Koreans' tactic. If the food warehouse was set on fire, then the players of Cairon Continent would most definitely transport food to Berdk. And once they transported the food to Berdk, the troops that transported it would be able to strengthen and enhance the defenses of the base.

'What can they even do with this strategy that's so easy to disrupt?'

And there was also another thing. The players of Asgan Continent did not have the power to stop the players of Cairon Continent. That held even more true if their forces had to be split in two. So, why did they do something this irrational?

'Even if they block the supply routes with their rankers, they will just be forced to log out, never to set foot on the Continent Cloud.'

'What the hell are they thinking?'

The troops continued to march, lost in their thoughts, when they were suddenly plunged into a buzz.

"What? Black Mage Ali? Four Hyenas?"

"Yes! Black Mage Ali, the Four Hyenas, Lucia, Carr and Alicia are blocking the first route."

"Why are there so many rankers?"

Whisper, whisper, whisper—

Hu Yitian's brow furrowed at the voices of his troops. He thought, *'Have they lost their minds, what the hell?'*

From what he heard from their conversation, there were also a lot of troops stationed on the first route. Hu Yitian had also heard that the combined number of NPCs and players was around two thousand. Even the top rankers stationed there numbered quite a few. Then, what about the second route? The third route?

Then, another commotion broke out among their ranks.

“Hey, they said that the members of the Let’s Eat Sect are blocking the second route. Is that true?”

“Let’s Eat Sect? Ah, the former Legend Guild? But, Genie is the only one that transferred to High Class among them, right? Can they even show their power there?”

Hu Yitian’s brows furrowed deeper at the words of the people around him.

‘What in the world are they thinking?!!!!’

Based on the current situation, it seemed like the enemy had concentrated a huge amount of their troops and forces on the first and second route. Hu Yitian decided to check the alliance GC for news. However, as he opened the window, he could see that the chat was in a huge uproar.

Hu Yitian also agreed. It was definitely idiotic. Even if they fought for the transportation routes, they would eventually be pushed back and destroyed once the additional troops from Cairon Continent arrived. In the first place, the players from Cairon Continent were far superior to the Asgan rankers. This meant that the Asgan Continent was in a very disadvantageous situation.

‘It seems like they have given up on the Continental War...’

Just then...

“...!”

The eyes of Hu Yitian and the other players from Cairon Continent widened in shock.

“M... more than half of the Let’s Eat Sect have transferred to High Class?”

“Is... isn’t that something... impossible?”

“The... the troops going through the second route are currently being wiped out by the Let’s Eat Sect!!!!”

“...”

Hu Yitian gritted his teeth and thought, *‘They... tried to bait us...?’*

He could tell the reason why they had hidden their power. They wanted to catch their enemies off guard and create a huge impact. Just like that, the troops sent out in the second route had been wiped out. However, it did not end there.

‘What kind of strategy is this...?!’

Hu Yitian could not understand, because he had only thought of one possibility. He had assumed that the other party was aiming to block the supply routes, starve the soldiers in Berdk, and recapture the base with the rest of their forces.

The problem was the Asgan Continent’s action did not comply with their assumed strategy. What they did was use most of their forces to control the supply routes. Their actions only meant one thing...

‘They never intended to attack Berdk...? No, that’s also weird.’

If that was the case, what benefit could they gain from that? Increasing their casualties? Showing off their hidden cards? No matter what they did, there was no benefit that could be reaped from this. So, why were they doing this?

Then...

“O... over there!”

“Hu... Hu Yitian!!!”

The troops that accompanied Hu Yitian began to shout.

The third supply route was the most dangerous route. This was because the troops had to brave through a route winding through canyons. Even so, it was the shortest and fastest route to Berdk. That was the reason why Hu Yitian and several of their strongest rankers were among the troops that were trying to pass through using this route.

The soldier was pointing at the top of a canyon wall. When Hu Yitian looked over, he saw a man with his sword raised high, brimming with a powerful aura.

“M...Minhyuk!!!”

“It...it’s the Food God!!!”

“It’s South Korea’s top ranker!!!”

This was the first ever appearance of the Food God in the Continent Cloud.

Chapter 346: Spectacular Recapture

ATV PD Kim Dae-Guk's heart started to thump wildly when the Food God appeared on the monitor. This was the first ever appearance of South Korea's top ranker after the opening of the Continent Cloud! He was standing on top of the canyon while looking down at his enemies. However, Kim Dae-Guk and the other ATV directors could not figure out what the Korean rankers wanted to do.

“What the hell are they thinking? Why did they focus their core forces on the first and second routes? Once the third route gets breached, South Korea will lose.”

War was a battle of push and pull. It was not wise to send all of their troops at one go. Often, both sides had to use their wits and battle it out, one step at a time. That was the reason why they could not understand what Minhyuk and the rest of the rankers' current strategy was. But more than that...

“Hu Yitian...”

Grind—

PD Kim Dae-Guk gritted his teeth as he recalled the arrogant words of Hu Yitian in one of the interviews. After all, PD Kim was very patriotic, so he could not help but get angry at Hu Yitian's words.

‘Food God? I'll finish him within 20 seconds if he ever appears in front of me.’

It was an outright mockery. That was why all of Korea's citizens were furious at him. Even some of the Chinese players criticized his arrogance. However, they were only the minority. The majority applauded Hu Yitian's lofty aspirations.

‘We'll see...’

Player Minhyuk appeared on the station's official broadcast during Barach's hunt. According to an anonymous post from a global ranker, the overwhelming skill that he had shown back then was a Pinnacle Skill. However, according to the ranker's analysis, the Food God's skill was only a temporary power. This could be concluded from the sudden dramatic increase in his stats and skill back then. Because of that, they had concluded that he had not yet reached his peak. If they compared Player Minhyuk's strength to Hu Yitian's, Hu Yitian might overwhelm him.

‘However...’

Player Minhyuk was a player that had always created variables. Even though he believed that to be the case, PD Kim was still worried. He was currently looking at the first and second routes on the other monitors. Most of their country's rankers and NPCs were on those routes. As for the third route?

‘I can't see anyone aside from Player Minhyuk.’

Of course, the troops that he led were the strongest, but the Chinese's side had Hu Yitian and several other rankers too. They even had the Beijing Ghosts, a group of unofficial rankers, working with them.

The ‘Beijing Ghosts’ was a group of four extremely strong unofficial rankers, their levels at around Level 530 and higher. To put it simply, they were like the Four Hyenas of Korea.

Instead of worrying over those matters, PD Kim Dae-Guk decided to focus on the video that was being aired first.

A smile appeared at the corners of Hu Yitian's lips.

'Food God Minhyuk.'

He was hailed as the strongest ranker in South Korea after he defeated the unofficial strongest ranker, Carr, in *Athenae: Korean War*.

However, Hu Yitian had beaten Carr. Besides, Hu Yitian was aware that Minhyuk did not even have a Half-Pinnacle skill in his arsenal. He had compared himself to Minhyuk when he had hunted Barach and knew that he was far stronger than Minhyuk back then.

The Chinese commentators began to give their two cents.

[Not too long ago, Hu Yitian declared that he would make Player Minhyuk log out within 20 seconds. This caused a huge issue over the internet.]

[It may sound a bit arrogant, but if you look at it the other way, you can consider it as a statement of confidence. After all, Hu Yitian has defeated a lot of Korean rankers.]

[In fact, many rankers from all over the world raised their hands in support of Player Hu Yitian's statement about fighting Player Minhyuk.]

[Player Hu Yitian can avoid most of his opponent's attacks with his high Evasion Rate. From what we have seen so far, it seems like his defense is extremely high too.]

[There are also the Beijing Ghosts working together with Hu Yitian this time. Although our players have failed to transport the food rations on the first and second routes due to the unexpected move from the Korean players, it seems possible for us to breach through the third and fastest route.]

[As long as they succeed in one route, the Korean players will face defeat.]

Just like what the commentators had said, plenty of rankers from all over the world were placing their bets on Hu Yitian's victory.

While they were busy discussing Hu Yitian's supposed victory, Minhyuk had already swung his sword brimming with power as he jumped down from the canyon. Then, the soldiers standing on top of the canyon began to shoot their arrows and magic spells.

"Get in the defensive formation!"

"Great Shield!!!"

With Hu Yitian's cry, Ghost Mage, who was one of the Beijing Ghosts, stepped forward and created a huge shield, comparable to a barrier due to its large size.

Clang, clang, clang, clang, clang!

At the same time, the golden leaves that fluttered around Minhyuk's sword began to fly towards them.

'During Barach's hunt, I recall that he created a barrier and ate some food to boost his abilities. And the skill that he used after doing all that, was that skill with the golden leaves.'

From what Hu Yitian had gathered, the skill with the golden leaves was something that Minhyuk could use during the short duration of the buff that he had received. And its power...

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang—

...hit the Great Shield continuously until it was completely broken. Hu Yitian immediately dashed forward to where Minhyuk had landed. But before he could even reach him, a woman wearing a black robe suddenly appeared behind Minhyuk.

'Who's that woman?' Hu Yitian thought in doubt.

Hu Yitian was sure that the woman was not Saintess Loyna. Even if she was hailed as the Saintess, she was very vulnerable in battles. In fact, her steps were unusual as she went down the canyon.

However, the woman did not run towards Hu Yitian. It was actually Minhyuk that weaved through the arrows and magic spells to dash towards Hu Yitian.

'Come, I'll show you who's the strongest!'

At the same time, the people of China and South Korea, as well as the rest of the world, were all paying attention to this fight.

[From what it looks like, it seems to be true that Player Minhyuk would not last 20 seconds against Hu Yitian. Hu Yitian is one of the few players that have learnt the Pinnacle.]

[Hu Yitian's Evasion Rate and defense are extremely high. Player Minhyuk's attacks won't work.]

Hu Yitian immediately activated his skills after seeing Minhyuk dash towards him.

[Pinnacle Defense Arts]

[Your defense will increase by 250% and your Evasion Rate will increase by 600% for one minute.]

A skill that could increase one's defense by two hundred and fifty percent, and Evasion Rate by six hundred percent, was a remarkable skill. With the increase in Evasion Rate, Hu Yitian could easily ignore half of his opponents' attacks. And that was on top of being an assassin, a class that was well-known for their good evasion. For someone like Hu Yitian, who only needed to evade or defend easily, fighting another opponent was an easy job. He continued to cast his skills leisurely while Minhyuk ran towards him.

He had vowed to finish Minhyuk off in twenty seconds! For him to do that, Hu Yitian needed to use his strongest one-shot kill skill. The skill had no cooldown, but it could only be used once every month. It also had a huge penalty that decreased all five of his basic stats by three points.

[Pinnacle Assassination]

[Launches a successful attack towards the enemy within two seconds, shaving off 95% of their HP and leaving them stunned for five seconds.]

It was a very shocking skill that could overwhelm anyone in a PVP! In fact, it was this skill that allowed Hu Yitian to be arrogant and make conceited remarks. On the other hand, a strong current of energy wrapped around Minhyuk's sword. It was the telltale sign of a skill being triggered.

Hu Yitian counted in his head, *'One, two...'* as they both ran towards each other. By the four second mark, Hu Yitian watched as Minhyuk tried to swing his sword. However, the scene just brought a smirk to Hu Yitian's face.

'Heh! You won't be able to use that skill at all!' Hu Yitian thought as his dagger turned red, looking like it was dyed with blood. It was a sign of him executing the skill Pinnacle Assassination.

Fwooooooosh—

The dagger equipped with the skill, Pinnacle Assassination, flew swiftly and accurately pierced through Minhyuk's neck.

"Keheok!" Minhyuk groaned as blood dripped from his mouth, but he continued to run.

'So, it's true that stun does not affect him?'

Hu Yitian had also investigated Minhyuk. From the videos and information that he had gathered, he assumed that Minhyuk had the power to ignore abnormal states. However, even without the stun effect, it would still be alright.

Hu Yitian believed that Minhyuk's HP would be at 5% at most, after the strike. He could tell that Minhyuk had the skill to restore his HP and MP, as well as another skill that could revive himself. So, he knew that Minhyuk would immediately use his HP and MP recovery skills.

To counter those, Hu Yitian used two skills of his own. Once he used that, only ten seconds would be left. However, he would be able to focus and concentrate on killing Minhyuk.

Hu Yitian immediately dashed forward after the successful attack. Minhyuk, who seemed to have staggered, sent out his skill.

'Six...'

That was the amount of seconds that had passed since the two of them saw each other.

Hu Yitian watched in confusion as Minhyuk brandished his sword. He suddenly could not understand the situation at all. Minhyuk raised his sword high up in the sky as dozens of sword lights covered with lightning began to rain down on them.

'Pinnacle...?' Hu Yitian thought in disbelief.

The Pinnacle Skill that Minhyuk had used before was definitely temporary. He also obviously did not receive the buff that could rapidly increase his strength. In other words, he did not have the power to use the skills that he used back then. So, how come he was able to use it? No, when Hu Yitian looked back, he found something strange. There was a woman that went down together with Minhyuk. Hu Yitian immediately turned his attention towards the woman, only to see a bright and white light covering the tips of her fingers.

‘...!’

The Pinnacle Skill, Sword of Lightning!!!! It suddenly poured down on Hu Yitian’s body.

‘It doesn’t matter, my defense and Evasion Rate will be enough...’

But then...

Baaaaaaaaaang—

[Your defense has been ignored by the sword attack.]

“...?”

For a moment, Hu Yitian could not understand what the notification meant. In that moment of daze, his HP had already been cut down by twenty percent. And it did not end there.

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

Dozens of sword lights covered with lightning rained down on Hu Yitian. Hu Yitian swiftly weaved through the attack, running around as he evaded the sword lights. But at that moment...

[Goddess’ Shackles]

[Strong shackles will appear and restrict your movements.]

[Your AGI has decreased by 20%.]

‘...!’

Hu Yitian’s resistance against abnormal states was already beyond anyone’s imagination after he had reached the Pinnacle. In fact, no other ranker could make him suffer from an abnormal state.

‘That woman... what the hell...?’ Hu Yitian thought, eyes widening in shock.

By the eight second mark, Minhyuk’s sword was already approaching Hu Yitian.

‘It’s a normal attack! As long as I get out of its range...!’

Hu Yitian firmly believed that Minhyuk would not be able to cast a skill within that short period of time. Unfortunately, contrary to his expectations, a skill was cast.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

Strong wind blew and tore through the surroundings, as a red current appeared and surrounded the sword in Minhyuk’s hand. Just when Hu Yitian tried to block the sword with both of his daggers...

Stab—

The tip of Minhyuk’s sword was initially two meters away from him, but it suddenly pierced through his chest.

“Urrrk!”

Nine.

At the same time as Hu Yitian’s vital point was pierced through and he collapsed...

“D...die!!!”

“Attack that woman!!!”

“Focus on the Food God!!! Don’t let your guard down against the robed woman!”

The mysterious woman appeared behind Minhyuk and stood back to back with him as they both glared at their enemies.

Shiiiiing—

The crisp, clear sound of the sword being drawn from the sheathe hanging on the woman’s waist rang loudly in the surroundings.

Slaaash!

The sound of Minhyuk cutting through Hu Yitian and the Ghost Knight, one of the Beijing Ghosts that tried to intercept his attack, also rang loudly.

Slash, slash, slash, slash!

After the first attack, ten more attacks followed right after. And the attacks did not stop there.

Bang, bang, bang!

A huge lightning bolt fell from the sky and struck the man thrice, forcing him to log out. And when the woman brandished her sword, countless gigantic golden spears appeared in the sky and attacked the Ghost Mage, another member of the Beijing Ghosts.

Stab, stab, stab, stab!

“Kyaaaaaaack!”

Sixteen.

That was the amount of seconds it took for two Beijing Ghosts to die. Minhyuk looked at the remaining Beijing Ghosts that were rushing towards him as he stabbed his sword into the ground. At the same time, the woman placed her hand on Minhyuk’s shoulder and granted him a buff.

Flash, flash, flash, flash—

Hundreds of blooming sword lights appeared on the ground and engulfed the two Beijing Ghosts and the troops behind them.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

Not long after, a huge explosion swept the entire area. The woman that appeared with Minhyuk was none other than the Bread Shuttle, Mei Wei.

Twenty.?

That was the amount of seconds it took for them to dispose of the four Beijing Ghosts and Hu Yitian.

[...]

[...]

[...]

Chapter 347: Spectacular Recapture

The Chinese commentator Lin Tao gulped dryly.

Exactly twenty seconds.

Hu Yitian had arrogantly declared that it would take him only twenty seconds to finish off Food God Minhyuk. However, in that very same amount of time, Minhyuk, together with the mysterious woman, had finished off Hu Yitian and the four Beijing Ghosts.

The experts on the various sites and communities around the world, who claimed that Player Minhyuk would be logged out within twenty seconds, all became silent. Even the chat windows in the Chinese community and portal sites were all frozen.

'What... what the hell...?'

Lin Tao could not believe what he saw, even after he rewatched the scene again. He wondered if it was really possible. And that mysterious woman? What was her identity? A hidden unofficial ranker?

Lin Tao, as well as the countless Chinese citizens, never imagined that Mei Wei, the official number one player in the Global Rankings and China's pride, was actually working as Minhyuk's bread shuttle.

Then, a message was posted on the frozen, silent Chinese community chat window.

[South~~~ Korea! Clap, clap! Clap, clap, clap!]

Minhyuk was fully aware that once the Korean players set Berdk's food warehouse on fire, the Chinese would immediately set out to send food supplies and rations using the three supply routes. He also knew that others would find it difficult to take advantage of the situation.

However, Minhyuk racked his brains and predicted several situations that could spring from this course of action. For one, he was sure that Hu Yitian would appear during the supply transport. He was also sure that Hu Yitian would choose the fastest, which was the third supply route.

As for Hu Yitian, he had been confident that he would be able to finish Minhyuk within twenty seconds. However, he was unaware that the number one player in the official Global Rankings, Mei Wei, had become Minhyuk's ally. After all, this was something that they had kept under wraps, and was only known to the members of the Let's Eat Sect.

So, Minhyuk decided to block the route that Hu Yitian would take, together with Mei Wei. Minhyuk wanted to show them that in war, it was morale, not strong soldiers, nor amazing artifacts, that often played an important role. Minhyuk wanted to boost the morale on their side.

After all, he had Mei Wei, the strongest buff player. Back when they hunted the Grim Reaper, the targeted buff that she used was limited, after using plenty of buffs on the hundreds of soldiers from Atlas.

But now, her MP was full, so she had plenty of targeted buff skills available for use. Some of those included buffs that dramatically improved the skill, as well as buffs that could have a high probability of ignoring the opponent's defenses, or dramatically increasing attack.

Thanks to Mei Wei's buffs, Minhyuk was able to temporarily reach the Pinnacle state once again, even without using the Food God's Recipe or the Berserk skill. With Mei Wei's help, Minhyuk was able to kill Hu Yitian, as well as the four Beijing Ghosts.

The entire battlefield was plunged into silence the moment Hu Yitian and the four Beijing Ghosts died. After all, five of China's strongest members had died at once.

"Ah... ah..."

The players and the NPCs under Hu Yitian's command could not move forward. No, it even looked like they were slowly retreating. But before they could do so, hundreds of arrows rained down from above the canyon.

"Aaaaaaack!"

"Keuaaaaaack!"

"Save me!"

Minhyuk and Mei Wei both took advantage of the chaos, as they slaughtered the enemy troops that were on the third route.

[Breaking news! Most of the troops sent out to bring food supplies to Berdk have been wiped out!]

[South Korea, the country said to be the weakest in Athenae, has gained a landslide victory during their fight over the food supply routes.]

[Let's Eat Sect Members, who are they? And just who is their Guild Master, Food God Minhyuk?]

Countless articles on the battle over the food supply routes towards Berdk had been released all over the world.

Meanwhile, the Korean rankers that gained victory in the first route scuffle remained stationed where they were. Seeing this, a lot of people voiced their disagreement.

[Why are the Koreans only guarding the food supply routes?]

[Perhaps they aren't interested in recapturing the Berdk attack base in the first place?]

[Ah, then, does that mean that they only wanted to bait the Chinese players by blocking the supply routes?]

[That sounds most likely. They won't get anything by guarding the supply routes, but they don't seem to have any intention of attacking Berdk.]

The Chinese players all came down to one conclusion.

'The Koreans were not interested in Berdk in the first place.'

They just went there as a pretext to bait them. Because of this, the Chinese players started to move with more caution. After all, they might be able to regain control of the food supply routes, as long as they were able to deal with the Koreans successfully. However, they also expected that the resulting damage that they would receive would also be great.

So, the Chinese players just kept an eye on the Korean rankers that guarded the supply routes. It became a war of nerves. However, there was one person that aimed for the exact result, and that person was none other than Minhyuk.

'It's the third day today.'

The Chinese and Korean players had not moved an inch for three days, as they continued to monitor each other. So, what would happen now? The forces stationed in Berdk would definitely be complaining of hunger by now.

Then, Minhyuk sent a whisper to Kaistra, who was stationed at Atlas Territory.

Kaistra, together with the soldiers left in Atlas territory, began to move quickly. They were currently packing the dishes that Minhyuk had made a few days prior, into stainless steel lunch boxes while making sure to seal the boxes properly, to stop the contents from spilling.

"No matter what I think, it's really amazing," Haze said in admiration.

Haze was a girl that was adept at strategies and tactics, but she was still in awe of Minhyuk's strategy. She recalled the words that Minhyuk told her.

'What do you think will happen if we block the supply routes? China will believe that we did not have any intention of attacking Berdk at all, and they will monitor the situation until we are at a standstill. If that happens, the soldiers stationed in Berdk will definitely suffer from hunger.'

That was right. If the soldiers could not eat anything for two to three days, then they would start to complain about their hunger.

'In fact, the Kharamis soldiers are not like your regular NPCs. They are not the subordinates of the players of Cairon Continent, and are only on the Chinese's side, because they captured Berdk first.'

Haze smiled and thought, *'Their allegiance to their commander is superficial at most.'*

As for the lunch boxes that they were making right now...

Locke, who was also packing the lunch boxes, said, "Don't you think that it's completely like that?"

"That?"

Locke kindly explained to the confused Haze. He said, "In the foreigners' world, Korea is divided into North Korea and South Korea. However, the people of our country dislike the leaders of North Korea, and not their citizens. So, we try to help them in our own ways."

Haze listened attentively to Locke's words.

"So, volunteer organizations would often put rice in water bottles and stuff some USB sticks in them, before letting them flow down the river for those that are suffering

from food shortage over on that side. Then, they would take those plastic bottles filled with rice and eat it. This is our people's way of telling them that '*We don't hate you.*' It also shows them that there's a different world that they could experience together with us, through the dramas, music, and movies on the USB."

"I see."

Haze smiled. The strategy that they were using was truly similar to that. They were announcing that there was a new world out here. Meanwhile, Great Sage Aruvel also began to write snippets of 'Why Did the Prince Go Out Tonight?' on the back of the lunch boxes.

"What are you doing?"

"Promoting my work," Aruvel said, grinning.

Locke rubbed his chin and thought, '*Hooo? Isn't that genius?*'

Just like that, hundreds of lunch boxes were packed.

At Berdk Attack Base.

Complaints began to ring out from one place to another.

"H...hungry...!"

"I'm so hungry, I feel so weak."

During exhausting training or war, the only thing that the soldiers looked forward to was meal time. These soldiers also consume a lot of food, usually around twice or thrice that of a normal person. Unfortunately, they had run out of food and were in a terrible state of hunger.

"If...if only I can just take a sip of some warm soup... I won't wish for anything more...
"

"Me... me too...!"

"Kgghk~ I also want to eat some well-baked garlic bread with that!!!"

Because of that, notifications rang for Berdk's commander, Arohan.

[The soldiers are suffering from hunger.]

[All of the soldiers' stats will be reduced by 10%.]

[The soldiers' morale has decreased.]

[The soldiers have started to complain.]

Even the reports of the centurions and the knights kept on coming!

"If you don't feed them quickly, our troops will starve to death!"

"Wait. Just wait a bit more, the food will come."

However, even if Arohan said that, the other rankers seemed to have given up on transporting food.

From the tone of their voice, it sounded like they were not worried at all. But a few more days? That was not the problem. The Kharamis soldiers were starting to become more violent as their hunger intensified.

Also, the food that the players had was already used up. After all, which player would carry dozens of kilograms of food like Minhyuk? Regular players would only carry food that would last them two or three days. Some would even just bring rations and easy to eat food when hunting.

However, Arohan still hoped. He thought, *'The food that I asked for is coming.'*

He had asked for the assassin rankers to stock up on food and bring it to Berdk. They were on their way, so it would definitely be a good solution to their problems! However, the whisper that he received gave him a shocking blow.

The South Korean assassins did not allow the Chinese players to enter the vicinity. Everything was in a total mess.

Eisden, one of the soldiers in Berdk, had a huge appetite. He usually ate a lot more than the others. As part of the Kharamis soldiers, their workload was intense. He would get dizzy if he missed even a single meal.

With his hungry and complaining stomach, Eisden wandered around the city walls in the middle of the night to distract himself.

'I'm starving.'

Just as the thought flashed in his head...

Plop—

...something fell down from nearby.

"Wh... who's that?!" Eisden shouted, turning his head quickly to look at his surroundings. However, all he saw was something glittering under the glare of the light.

Eisden cautiously approached the glittering object. A delicious aroma wafted to his nose as he lifted the object. It was none other than a lunch box. When he opened the lid, there was fried shrimp, fried rice, fried kimchi and karaage inside. Overcome with hunger, Eisden hurriedly ate up the food in the lunch box. He did not even bother to check where it came from.

'My... my goodness! I have never tasted a more delicious lunch box than this...!'

It was a lunch box that fell from the sky when he was famished! And it was delicious! Smacking his mouth, Eisden finally found a note that was attached to the lunch box. He failed to notice it earlier because of his hunger.

[Did you enjoy the lunch box? This lunch box is specially prepared for you, who's very hungry. We would like to give you this lunch box every day. Please make sure to share this with your comrades. We will make sure to send enough to you every day. But, there are conditions. Please don't let the foreigners know about it.]

"...!"

Eisden pondered for a moment. Their commander, Arohan, was a foreigner. He wondered if he should report this or not? Just when Eisden fell into a dilemma, the pads of his fingers felt the texture of paper attached to the back of the lunch box. He quickly flipped the lunch box and read the paper.

Tonight was a sleepless night for the Prince. He had been thinking about her desperately and had no choice, but to sneak out of the castle in the middle of the night again to go to her house.

She did not sleep. It was as if she knew that he was coming, that was why she waited for him. The two of them shared a fierce and passionate kiss as they headed towards the bed. The bed creaked, her moans ringing loudly in the darkness of the night as sweat dripped down her body...]

"Gulp—"

Eisden gulped unconsciously as he read through the note, concentrating deeply on the words! But, why did the text end there?!

"...?!"

'No! How could you stop there?! What did they do for the bed to creak violently? I'm hungry! And curious!'

He was very curious about the things that made the bed creak loudly. Eisden had completely fallen for the food and the story!

Chapter 348: Spectacular Recapture

Eisden was very, very curious! As if to pique his curiosity further, there were additional words on the note.

[If you don't divulge this to the foreigners, I will send you the next part along with the lunch boxes. —From the best-selling author, Aruvel.]

Eisden hurriedly left the place and jumped inside his sleeping bag to get to sleep.

“I’m hungry...”

“I feel like I will die from hunger...”

The voices of Eidsen’s comrades-in-arms rang loudly throughout the base, making him feel guilty. The note had told him that they would give them lunch boxes everyday, in exchange for not telling the foreigners about it. Eidsen agonized about the choice that he should make.

‘No. I have to let them know. Ha. This might be an enemy trying to sow discord,’ Eidsen thought. He vowed to report that the enemy had employed a strange strategy the first thing tomorrow, when the sun rose. So, he tried to sleep, but failed to do so.

‘That perfectly warm karaage... The crunchy skin and the juicy meat inside... they complemented each other perfectly... the taste inside my mouth was divine.’

This thought flashed in Eidsen’s head as he tossed around.

‘Aaaaah. That fried rice too, how can it be like that...’

His lips smacked unknowingly at the thought.

‘I’d rather not say anything about the lunch box...’

‘No! That’s a very dangerous thing to do.’

That was what Eidsen told himself as he shook his head vehemently! So, he swept it out of his mind and tried to sleep again. However, this time, something else floated in his mind.

‘The creaking bed... the two people sweating on top of it... I wonder what happened there?!’

Eidsen could not sleep from the curiosity and thoughts running wildly through his mind. This went on until the next day befell upon the base.

Meanwhile, inside Eidsen’s dream...

‘Ooooh, Prince Eidsen!!!’

‘My love is only for you, Benjamin!’

‘Prince!’

‘Benjamin!’

...that he became the protagonist of the story ‘Why Did the Prince Go Out Tonight?’. Eidsen dreamed that he was hugging Benjamin tightly. The bed creaked loudly as they made love all night long.

Blink—

When he opened his eyes...

“...”

...Eisden immediately ran to the bathroom after glancing at his pants.

'Ugh! Doing this at my age...!' Eisden grumbled as he crouched down to hand-wash his underwear.

While washing his underwear, Eisden thought, *'Whoever that was, they really know how to drive one crazy...!'*

He originally wanted to report to Commander Arohan at the break of dawn but right now...!

'Let's just look at the situation first and read the next part of the story!'

That was right. This was the lunch box filled with Minhyuk's cooking and Aruvel's novel 'Why Did the Prince Go Out Tonight', that fascinated and hooked Eisden successfully!

That day, Eisden did not inform his higher-ups about the lunch box. He waited and loitered around the walls, in both hunger and curiosity.

Plop—

Just like yesterday, a lunch box filled with food was sent over from the wall.

'I think there's less food than yesterday?' Eisden thought as he gulped down the food in a hurry. Then, he flipped the lunch box over to check the contents of the note written on its back.

The two of them shared a night of hot and passionate love and welcomed a sweet and blissful morning. They felt happy to welcome the sunshine in each other's arms. However, it was time for the Prince to go back. He reluctantly kissed her forehead and made his way back to the castle.?

At that moment, the Emperor, the Prince's father, noticed his abnormality. He immediately sent the knights to her house.]

'...Aaaaah! This is really driving me crazy!' Eisden roared, jumping in anger.

'Look at this massive cliff hanger?! My goodness, is this what you wanted to do with your readers?! Isn't it only right for the writer to send more content to satisfy the readers' curiosity?'

As those thoughts flashed in his head, an additional note caught his attention.

[Starting today, we will deliver lunch boxes for all the soldiers to eat. Let your comrades know about it so they could satisfy their hunger. We will also make sure to send you a lunch box tomorrow. Remember, do not tell the foreigners about this. EVER.]

'The curiosity is killing me...!'

What happened to Benjamin when the knights went to her house?!! With this curiosity driving him, Eisden hurriedly informed his comrades about the lunch box. When they appeared next to the dark walls, lunch boxes began to drop down from the sky.

The next morning, the bathroom was crowded with people.

Tap, tap, tap, tap—

Hundreds of Berdk soldiers stood in line with their underwear in hand! They chatted with each other as they hand-washed their underwear.

“I wonder what happened to Benjamin?”

“The Emperor must not like the fact that the Prince, a noble existence, fell in love with her, a commoner. Maybe he’s going to kill her on the spot?”

“No way! The novel hasn’t reached its climax yet!”

The soldiers were curious. However, none of them reported this incident to the foreigners. All they did was wait for the next night to come.

Commander Arohan was filled with doubt. He thought, *‘It seems like the faces of the Kharamis soldiers are full of vigor these days. But, they’re definitely suffering from hunger. What’s going on?’*

Something has changed among the soldiers. It was evident on the smiles constantly plastered on their faces. Arohan felt like he was looking at people that had their eyes opened to a new world after going to a bar as an adult!

However, their hunger still remained. This was because Minhyuk and the Atlas soldiers reduced the amount of food that they sent over by a very small margin. Besides, they only delivered food once a day, so the Berdk soldiers were still hungry. This was to make them hunger for more. As a result, no Kharamis soldier reported to Arohan about the current situation. Still, how could there be hungry, yet happy, soldiers?

‘Did they all go crazy?’ Arohan thought, doubt lingering on his face.

This was the fifth day since China and Korea’s clash over the supply routes.

In the middle of the night.

The soldiers hurriedly chowed down the food in their lunch boxes. They divided themselves into two groups. One group would guard, while the other group would eat and read. They would switch after. In a way, they were thorough and meticulous about the whole process.

After eating his lunch box, Eisdan hurriedly turned over the box.

The knights forced Benjamin on her knees.

*“You b*tch, do you know the person that you dared to love?!”*

However, Benjamin did not falter in front of the knights.?

“Is love a sin?”

“Your love is equivalent to high treason.”

“Then I will die for it. But I have no regrets. He loves me and I love him. Even if I die, that truth will still remain.”

Her love was not something that death could stop. Even if she died, her love for him would remain steadfast.

‘I love you, my Prince.’

She slowly closed her eyes and accepted her imminent death. But just when the knight’s sword was about to fall...

Claaaaaaang—

A sword suddenly appeared out of nowhere and parried the knight’s sword. A man had appeared in front of her.

“Stay behind me. Benjamin.”

It was her Prince.]

“N... no...!”

“D... don’t cut it here!!!”

“A...aaaaaack!”

The soldiers all lamented. They could not believe that there was a novel that always kept them hooked everyday!

“This writer is a genius!!!”

“I know! I know exactly how you feel!!!”

The soldiers were all in awe at the writer’s skill. And just like the other days, there was an additional note attached to the box. However, the contents of the note brought a whole new level of shock to the soldiers.

[Will you lend us your strength?]

“...?!”

“...?!”

The soldiers stared at the note in horror.

‘How dare you try to bewitch us?!’

‘This is bullshit!’

And yet, they kept on reading the note. After all, they knew that they would not be able to read the next part of the story anymore if they ignored this!

[If you come to our side, we promise to give you three delicious meals a day. Also, there are two completed books by Author Aruvel entitled 'Today, the Wild Horse Runs' and 'The Princess and Ondal the Fool' that will be given to you for free.]

"I will volunteer to be your strength right now!" Eisdan shouted unknowingly, his heart pumping in excitement.

'Ah! I really wanted to see his completed works 'The Princess and Ondal the Fool' and 'Today, the Wild Horse Runs'!

However, that was just something that he said in the heat of the moment. The soldiers still analyzed things rationally.

"But, can we really do that?"

"In the first place, we aren't on the side of any continent. Right?"

That was true. They really did not belong to either of the two continents. They were just supporting whoever that captured Berdk first for a while.

"In fact, Commander Arohan just sees us as tools. But, if we work under these people, then we will be able to continue eating these delicious meals and reading the fascinating works of that author named Aruvel."

"Th... then, will I be able to get an autograph?"

"I think so?"

"Oh... ooooooh!!!"

The fans of Aruvel's works were burning with determination!!! Their decision was slowly setting in stone. So, they kept on reading the note.

'It's going to be tomorrow...'

'Tomorrow...'

The soldiers double-checked the word 'tomorrow' written at the end of the note.

Arohan was suddenly put in a flustering situation. There was a change between the Chinese and Korean players that were engaged in a battle of nerves! According to the Chinese players keeping watch on the situation, the players of Asgan Continent that blocked the supply routes had started to retreat.

'Perhaps...'

They were most likely going to attack Berdk. As the commander, he hurriedly gave his order for his men to prepare for battle, while the Kharamis soldiers were sent to man the siege weapons and be on standby.

Arohan kept on monitoring the situation through the words of their allies in the chat window.

The Chinese players were delighted. They immediately gave chase the moment the Korean players pulled back from the supply routes. The Korean players would definitely be hit with Berdk's siege weapons once they reached Berdk. Once that happened, the Chinese players that were chasing them from behind would be able to finish them off. They were very confident that South Korea would finally face their defeat in this fight.

Arohan, who was standing on the ramparts, looked at the Korean players flocking to Berdk from all over the place.

'Morons!!!'

Arohan smiled menacingly as he gave his orders, "Send orders for the Kharamis soldiers to use the siege weapons."

"Yes, sir!"

There were more than three thousand Asgan troops dashing forward in a reckless manner. In this situation, the siege weapons would definitely play a huge role and show their ridiculous might! Despite the siege weapons' tremendous power, they were so complicated and difficult to operate, that only the Kharamis soldiers could use them.

In an instant, the Korean players had already reached their vicinity.

"Fire! Fire!" Arohan shouted loudly to the point that the veins in his neck popped as he covered his ears in preparation for the loud booming sounds that would erupt, spelling the downfall of their enemies! However, the siege weapons did not fire, even after quite some time had passed.

'D... don't tell me...?'

Arohan wondered if the soldiers had passed out from hunger. After all, there was a huge possibility of that happening.

'Were they aiming for this?'

However, even if that was the case, Arohan was sure that the Korean players would be slaughtered by the Chinese players that were chasing them from behind.

In a blink of an eye, all three thousand Asgan troops arrived at Berdk.

"Men, load your bows and shoot the enemy troops! Mages! Let your magic run wild!" Arohan ordered his men as he watched the Cairon players and troops advancing

from behind their enemies. From his estimate, there were at least four thousand of his allies coming towards Berdk!

'Fufufufufu!'

Arohan chuckled at the thought of his enemies' defeat. Just then, an ominous sound rang loudly in the surroundings.

Creak, creak, creak, creak—

It was the sound of creaking machinery as the ground vibrated. Arohan thought that the siege weapons were being activated. However, that was not the case at all! It was the huge gate located at the center of Berdk's ramparts! The gates had opened on their own!

"...?!"

Arohan looked at the gates in disbelief as thousands of Asgan troops rushed inside the base.

"Heook!"

The nightmare was far from over. Even the siege weapons also began activating. Just a single attack from any of Berdk's siege weapons was comparable to a falling meteor. Then, the magic catapult was triggered.

Vwoooooong—

A gigantic flaming stone, akin to a falling meteor, soared through the air. Its size seemed to increase in the eyes of the Cairon forces, and as the meteor fell...

Baaaaaaaang!

...death and screams were everywhere!

"Wh... what the hell?" Arohan asked dumbly, unable to comprehend the situation in front of him.

Creak, creak, creak, creak!

Minhyuk, together with the Korean rankers, rushed inside Berdk the moment the huge gates opened.

All of the rankers were looking at Minhyuk with awe and admiration. They could not believe that it only took him 12 minutes and 30 seconds to recapture Berdk.

Then, Minhyuk raised his sword high up in the sky as he shouted. His voice rang loudly for the people watching the broadcast on their screens. He said, "We have recaptured Berdk!!!"

"Waaaaaaaaah!"

"Waaaaaaaaah!"

Thunderous roars shook the ground as they cheered.

Meanwhile, the rest of the world were all dumbstruck, not understanding how the gates of Berdk could open on their own for the Asgan forces to enter.

Chapter 349: Spectacular Recapture

South Korea had successfully recaptured Berdk, the largest attack base in the Continent Cloud! The thing that made the commentators from both the Chinese side and the Korean side shocked was the fact that they only took less than 13 minutes to take over.

After getting over the shock, the Korean commentators shouted excitedly...

[Th...they have successfully recaptured the largest attack base under Player Minhyuk's lead!!!]

[My goodness!!! Something incredible just happened in front of my eyes. Did you see that?! Berdk opened their gates by themselves!]

[What the hell! I don't even have the slightest clue about what's going on right now!]

It was only natural that the whole world was shocked and dazed by the events that unfolded.

Meanwhile, Minhyuk led the other players inside Berdk with a small smile hanging on his lips. They had controlled the supply of food to Berdk by blocking the supply routes. This made the Kharamis soldiers suffer from hunger. The Chinese players had no choice but to fight against the Korean players to get through the supply routes.

However, while they were busy trying to pierce through the supply routes, the Koreans were already seducing the Kharamis soldiers with their lunch boxes. The most important part of this strategy was slowly reducing the amount of food that they sent over every time. If the amount of food in their lunch boxes decreased over time, the Kharamis soldiers would still remain hungry. In fact, they would feel even worse than not eating anything at all.

The note that Minhyuk sent to the Kharamis soldiers informed them to open Berdk's gate and attack the Chinese players with their siege weapons if they wanted to help them. This was because Minhyuk had predicted that the Chinese players would chase after the Korean players.

'There's no way that they'll give this opportunity up.'

If the players from Asgan Continent ran to Berdk, the Chinese players believed that the Koreans would be attacked with Berdk's siege weapons. Once the players of Cairon Continent gave chase and hit them from behind, then the Chinese would be able to kill everyone in one fell swoop. But, what if the tables had turned?

'We can gain a complete victory.'

Minhyuk advanced with the rest of the Korean rankers. Soldiers with their heads bowed lined up in the streets and greeted them. They were the Berdk soldiers that decided to side with Minhyuk. This sight brought infinite shock to the Korean rankers that were walking with Minhyuk.

'How did this happen...?' Alicia thought. She had always been slightly skeptical of Minhyuk's plans. After all, no matter how hungry the soldiers were, would they willingly give up their castle just like that? What more if they asked the soldiers to be on their side? Seeing this, Alicia felt that Minhyuk's back looked very wide and reliable after seeing everything that he planned come to fruition.

Minhyuk, together with the people that came with him, began to drive out the Chinese players that were stationed inside the base.

“Load!” The Centurion shouted loudly as the Kharamis soldiers began to load their siege weapons.

These siege weapons were magical tools! These weapons were created by Blacksmith Ruka, a blacksmith known to have a transcendental power. At the same time, he was an accomplished mage, and was known to be the best at creating siege weapons among the blacksmiths that existed during his time. However, there was one problem. The siege weapons that Ruka had created were very difficult to activate. Only the Kharamis soldiers, who had devoted themselves to Berdk’s defense at a young age, were able to learn how to activate and use Ruka’s siege weapons.

“Fire!”

Puhaaaaaaa—

Huge stones, loaded with Ruka’s magic, were fired from the catapults, one after the other. The stones grew larger as blazing flames covered their surfaces, before falling in the midst of the enemies.

Baaaaaaaang—

And that was not the end of it. Twenty soldiers groaned as they loaded what seemed to be a gigantic spear into the siege weapon. There were around twenty volleys of these gigantic spears, that had as much power as an AOE magic skill of quite a few rankers.

Shwoooooooooooooosh—

The Kharamis soldiers loaded the spears and fired them all at the same time.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

The huge spears flew sharply through the air, before landing in the middle of the enemy camp.

Rip, rip, rip, rip—

“Euaaaaaack!”

“Keheok!”

“Urk!”

Instead of stabbing the enemies, the spears launched from Berdk’s siege weapons would tear and rip apart the enemies. A single shot of this spear laid dozens of their enemies to waste.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

Gigantic spears flew towards the area where the majority of the troops from Cairon Continent had gathered, effectively ripping the soldiers’ bodies into pieces as screams rang loudly in the area.

Airen, the current strategic commander, could not understand the situation. He thought, *'Berdk was recaptured...?'*

Even the Kharamis soldiers stationed in Berdk were targeting them with the siege weapons mounted on the walls of the base. The Chinese might have chased after the Koreans from behind, but they were now being overwhelmed in terms of firepower. Arohan also told them that their enemies were coming to kill him in the alliance chat.

'W...we're in trouble.'

Berdk, located in the center of the Continent Cloud, was both a key offensive and strategic base. What would happen if their enemies took over that place? The future might be dark for them.

However, the question now was whether they could break through Berdk's siege weapons to recapture the base. Airen concluded that it was impossible. Perhaps, it would be possible if all of the Chinese players present in the Continent Cloud joined forces. But that was impossible. Even the four thousand troops that they brought along had already dispersed. It was obvious that they would be wiped out even before they could step foot through the gates of Berdk castle.

"R... retreat!!!"

"Retreat!"

Airen was one of the unofficial rankers in China, standing strong at Level 561. He had long finished transferring into a High Class and was very confident of his strength. Airen was sure that the Chinese people would definitely cheer as long as they killed and annihilated the Korean rankers. However, the situation that they were facing right now was completely different.

Airen was now wondering how much of his troops could get away safely. The moment he issued his orders, the Chinese players immediately dispersed and ran back to where they came from.

Unfortunately, the route that they had taken safely previously was altered by Smooth, the Poison Master, and Roadol, the Trap Specialist. They were lying in wait for the players of Cairon Continent to pass through so they could trigger the huge amount of explosives and poison that they had set up. The worst part about this was the fact that Smooth and Roadol had collaborated! Just like that, the retreating Cairon Continent players were engulfed in a huge explosion the moment they stepped on their path of retreat!

Baaaaaaaang—!

A huge mushroom of smoke bloomed in the sky. To the horror of the troops of Cairon Continent, the smoke was green.

"...!"

Airen quickly turned to look at the situation. There were around 2,900 Chinese players remaining. He thought that he should at least save 2,500 out of that number, but a huge explosion suddenly engulfed them!

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

The players of Cairon Continent stepped on Roadol's planted mines one after the other, triggering a series of explosions.

There was a player lying in ambush, and he muttered, “Wind.”

The wind blew strongly and carried the green smoke brought about by the huge explosion through the air, and entered the lungs of the unsuspecting players of Cairon Continent.

[You have inhaled the poison of a Poison Master.]

[You will experience a 40% decrease in AGI, and a 30% decrease in magical defense and physical defense.]

[Your mind is starting to waver and lose focus from the extreme poison.]

[Your HP drops by 0.8% every second due to the effects of the extreme poison.]

“Keheok!”

“Urkkkk!”

The players of Cairon Continent grabbed their throats as they desperately tried to cough out the poison that entered their systems. Their speed dramatically decreased as they continued to run away. Some even drank their antidotes in a hurry.

However, even if they drank the antidotes, the poison still floated in the air, which turned their vision hazy. Then, someone used Wind again, helping the poison infiltrate the Cairon players’ systems more deeply.

The player that used Wind was none other than Black Mage Ali, who was sitting on top of the gigantic Predatory Snake! When he transferred classes and became the descendant of the Great Mage Moldoron, he gained the Predatory Snake as his subordinate, as well as a new spell, called ‘*Snake’s Amusement*’.

[Snake’s Amusement]

[Hundreds of snakes will appear and bite your enemies, consuming their HP to convert into your own HP and MP.]

[If the snakes succeeds in biting ten consecutive enemies, the cooldown for all of your magic spells will be reduced by 1%.]

[A 70% decrease in physical defense and magical defense, as well as a 50% decrease in HP will be incurred as a penalty.]

Snake’s Amusement was a very valuable and useful skill during a large-scale war. It was somewhat similar to Mana Drain, a skill that could take away the enemy’s mana. The difference was that while Mana Drain was a skill that would only target a single person, Snake’s Amusement was a skill that would release hundreds of snakes, which meant that it could target hundreds of enemies.

Ali swung his staff wildly, each swing accompanied by dozens of snakes. In the blink of an eye, hundreds of snakes slithered around in search of prey.

“Chwiiiiik—!”

“Chwiiiiik—!”

Bite!

Bite!

The snakes swiftly crawled on the ground, biting the thighs, calves, sides, and even the faces of the Cairon troops that bent down to wash away the poison from their bodies.

[Converting your enemy's HP to your MP.]

[Your snakes have successfully bitten ten enemies, cooldown has been decreased by 1%.]

The cooldown for Ali's spells was already significantly shorter than other mage players, and with this, he could easily go on a rampage with his magic spells. So, he went wild.

“Hell Fire!!!!”

Each of Ali's hands held and created a hell fire that he immediately sent towards the fleeing Cairon Continent players.

Baaaaaaaang—

Baaaaaaaang—!

The huge hell fire engulfed the Chinese players and wiped them out. However, Ali's attacks never stopped.

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

The battlefield was rife with the desperate shrieks of the players from Cairon Continent! Airen, who watched this scene, was caught in a dilemma. Right in front of them were huge siege weapons, while behind them was Black Mage Ali, mines and poisons. However, worthy of being a strategic commander, Airen quickly collected himself.

“Summoners! Summon your weakest monsters and make them march forward to clear a path to retreat!”

“Yes!”

Summoners were players that could summon monsters. Whenever there was a large gap between the levels of the summoners and their monsters, there would be a significant decrease in the MP consumption, which could allow them to increase the number of summons.

The summoners immediately summoned the gremlins! They might be at the bottom of the food chain, but they were still quick with their feet. Hundreds of this monster appeared and ran towards the Cairon players' path of retreat.

“Kiyeeeeeeck!”

“Kyahaaaaack!”

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

Airen's plan was simple. He wanted to remove the land mines by using the monster summons. Just like he expected, the hundreds of gremlins triggered countless land mines and helped them reopen a path for their retreat.

“Archers, mages. Focus on Black Mage Ali!”

“Yes!!!”

The archers fired more than five hundred arrows, while the mages created countless magic spells, enough to cover the sky.

“Shield! Shield! Shield! Shield! Shield!” Black Mage Ali shouted, quickly super-imposing the shields that he had created. However, the assault of the arrows and the magics made the small snakes disappear one after the other.

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

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

The arrows and magical attack spells kept on crashing into Ali’s shields. Even the skills of the talented archers and stronger mages had been added to the mix.

It did not matter how strong Black Mage Ali was, it would still be too much for him to block all of those attacks. Besides, his HP had decreased by fifty percent, and his physical and magical defenses were lowered by seventy percent, from the Snake’s Amusement penalty. He was a mage with a significantly lower HP and now, his HP was even further reduced. Just allowing one or two attacks to land on his body would result in death.

Crack!

Just as the rain of arrows and magical attacks were about to land on Ali after his shield broke...

“Kuhaaaaaaaaaak!”

...the gigantic Predatory Snake opened his mouth widely and swallowed Ali. The rain of arrows and spells landed on the Predatory Snake’s body.

“Kieeeeeeeeeek!” Predatory Snake shrieked as he writhed all over the place, his body bleeding. However, he only let Ali outside after the baptism of arrows and spells had been over.

Ali immediately crouched down to check on Predatory Snake’s condition. He had formed a strong friendship with Predatory Snake to the point that he also had the mark of a friend on his back. As a sign of his love and care for Predatory Snake, Ali even gave him a name...

“C... Cupid-chan!!!”

Cupid. This was Predatory Snake’s new name.

“...”

Predatory Snake looked at Ali helplessly wondering if this was the time for him to call out such a cringy and ticklish name. It was the shame that brought him endless pain, not the wounds on his body!

“Cupid-chan... You’ve worked hard...” Ali lamented as he hugged Predatory Snake before sending him to the summoning room. When he turned around, another baptism of arrows and spells were waiting for him.

Airen smiled. Even the Chinese commentators sighed in relief.

[We finally found a way out.]

[It's truly a relief. Thankfully, Airen's excellent commanding skills have helped us overcome this crisis.]

[We still have more than 2,000 troops alive. We have to make plans for our future moves.]

At that moment, Ali did something strange. People in China were unaware that Black Mage Ali was an otaku among all other otakus!

Black Mage Ali raised his left hand and shouted, "Frieeeeeeeeeeeeeend!"

And the place where he was looking... was where his friend was, flying over to save him. That was right. He was literally flying.

[Wh...what's that?!]

[There're, there're wings!!!]

The camera panned over the ramparts to show a guy with a pair of white wings flapping behind his back. This man was none other than Minhyuk. He flew swiftly before stopping in front of Ali. Then, he took out his mixer and bowl and began to stir it.

[...?]

[...?]

"...???"

All of the players and commentators looked at Minhyuk in doubt. The man with angel wings was whipping something in a mixing bowl while in the midst of the battle? But then...

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

...the hundreds of magic spells and skills disappeared in an instant.

[...?]

[...?]

"...?"

"...?"

The situation was so absurd that everyone on the scene became speechless.

'If you take out a mixer and bowl and mix something, the spells and skills will be dispelled?'

While everyone was looking at the scene in a daze and confusion...

Swoosh!

"Frieeeeeeeeeend!!!" Minhyuk shouted as he raised his left hand and flapped his wings vigorously.

“Y...you’re so cool, Minhyuk,” Ali said excitedly as Minhyuk flew up in the sky.

Minhyuk’s sword, which was already raised high up in the sky, was radiating an immense amount of energy. Sparks began to appear all over his sword.

“Sword like Lightning.”

Fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh, fwoosh!

Sword lights that looked to be shrouded in lightning, their length fifty meters each, covered the sky above and fell down on the players of Cairon Continent.

Chapter 350: Spectacular Recapture

Ali was a very precious existence to Minhyuk. He was the one who never turned his back on Minhyuk, willingly taking the risk of sacrificing everything when everyone else disdained him back in Beas Village.

He had taken on the task of stopping the enemies from retreating.

On the event of Berdk’s successful recapture, the players of Asgan Continent were all tasked to annihilate all of the retreating enemies. Minhyuk had already driven out all of the players from Cairon Continent, and captured Commander Arohan alive inside Berdk Castle. However, despite standing with Mei Wei on the ramparts, Minhyuk was still very restless. This was because he could see that his friend, Ali, was in danger of being logged out.

That was when Mei Wei offered a solution, “I have the ability to fly.”

Just like that, she sent a buff to Minhyuk.

[Archangel’s Wings.]

[The Archangel’s wings will grow on your shoulder blades and allow you to fly in the sky at high speed.]

Flap—

Huge white wings sprout out of Minhyuk’s back, which allowed him to fly! Mei Wei also continued to give him buffs while he was on his way to save Ali.

[God’s Bestowed Abilities]

[Increases all skill levels by +2.]

[God’s Weapons]

[Increased the physical attack power by 20% and the critical hit rate by 40%.]

[God’s Shield]

[Increases the physical and magical defense by 30%.]

Minhyuk flew quickly, while dispelling all of the incoming attacks with the help of his mixer and bowl. Then, he flew up. They were already in a situation where most of their enemies were on the verge of successfully retreating. However, Minhyuk never had intended to keep even a single one of them alive.

“Berserk.”

With his words, the figure of a demon appeared above his head before being sucked inside his body.

[Berserk]

[All abilities will be increased by 16% and all stats would have a +2 increase.]

[Your HP will decrease by 3% per second. By the end of the skill, your HP will fall below 10% while your defense will fall below 20%.]

[Ellie’s Swordsmanship has temporarily reached the Pinnacle.]

[Ellie’s Swordsmanship’s cooldown has decreased by 30%.]

[You can temporarily use the evolved Ellie’s Swordsmanship.]

[Chapter 8. Sword Like Lightning.]

Even though he did not utilize the buff effect from ‘Let’s Have a Meal’, he was still able to temporarily reach the Pinnacle, thanks to Mei Wei’s buff.

[Sword Like Lightning]

[Several sword lights akin to lightning strikes will fall from the sky, dealing 400% damage to your enemies.]

The moment Minhyuk swung his sword down, more than fifty gigantic sword lights were created, shooting towards the enemies that were attacking Ali from below.

Shwaaaaaaaaa!

Spine-chilling and electrifying thunderbolts and lightning sword strikes fell upon the Cairon Continent forces.

Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping—

The lightning sword strikes devoured more than a hundred enemy troops, which either rendered them immobile or killed them.

‘Ho? It feels quite nice to be able to fly in the sky, huh?’

The biggest advantage of flying in the sky was being able to avoid attacks from melee players. However, it also made Minhyuk an easy target for archers and mages.

“Ali! Please make sure to kill the troops that are further away.”

“Alright!” Ali answered, stepping up to support Minhyuk.

Hundreds of energy bolts appeared around Ali. The hundreds of sparking energy bolts looked like raindrops frozen in time as they floated in the air. Then, these energy bolts flew and attacked the archers and mages that were trying to target Minhyuk.

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

“Keheok! Wh...what kind of energy bolts are those?!”

“Keuaaaaaaack!”

“A...aaaaaaaaaaaaack!”

The players that tried to attack Minhyuk all screamed in pain. Then, an oven timer started to ring loudly in the air.

Tick, tick, tick, tick, tick—

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

The enemies that stepped foot within a twelve meter radius of Minhyuk were all swept away like autumn leaves on a windy day. However, the number of enemies left were still around two thousand.

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

Most of the Chinese players who were outside of the range were not even affected by these AOE attack skills. One of them shot a spear that tore through one of Minhyuk’s wings. With one wing torn, Minhyuk naturally lost his balance and fell down to the ground. The enemies took this opportunity to flock to where he was.

Spearman Everon, the number one player in China’s Spearman Rankings, was the one that shot the spear at Minhyuk earlier. He firmly believed that Minhyuk would be killed by his spear right then and there.

‘Only through that will we be able to relieve some of the public’s dissatisfaction and criticisms.’

The current situation that the Chinese were in was very bad. Minhyuk had prevented them from retreating, which left them with only one choice, to flock towards him. However, it could also be considered to be a potential turnaround for them.

‘How can he kill us by himself...’

Everon did not know how Minhyuk would be able to kill them when they had the advantage with just their numbers. However, he did not care about that. With plenty of enemies, Minhyuk would definitely show a gap, and Everon was targeting that gap. After a moment, Everon finally saw a gap, and he prepared another spear with a powerful force.

[Phoenix’s Spear]

[The Phoenix will devour your enemy’s entire body as your spear pierces through them.]

Shwaaaaa—

‘Critical hit!’

Everon’s spear flew sharply towards Minhyuk, passing through the gaps between the troops. The part that he was targeting was the pit of Minhyuk’s stomach. Once the Phoenix’s Spear pierced through that part, it would break Minhyuk’s ribs and penetrate deeper. And it would not end there, a huge phoenix would appear and cover his entire body to turn him into ash.

However, Everon finally noticed that there was something strange after he stabbed his spear through.

Clang!

One of the Chinese players slammed his hammer on Minhyuk's back.

Vwoooooong!

The hammer struck uselessly on the ground. However, Everon believed that his attack should have been successful. He carefully looked at Minhyuk's location and movement as he stabbed forwards. However, the sound that he expected to hear did not ring in his ears.

Claaaaaang—

“...?!”

‘That’s impossible.’

Everon's Phoenix's Spear would temporarily increase his attack power by four hundred percent. With his insane speed, it was impossible for him not to pierce through Minhyuk's stomach. There was only one possibility, and that was if Minhyuk's defense was enormous.

‘H...how high is his defense...?’

Just as the thought crossed Everon's mind...

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

“Kuhaaaaaaack!”

Pain suddenly bloomed in Everon's chest. He felt as if his ribs had been broken and crushed. The worst part was that this damage made his full HP go down to zero in an instant.

‘Wh... what the...!’

This was something that was witnessed by the other Chinese players and commentators.

[H...how high is his defense for him to fail to pierce through his chest?]

[Hundreds of players have been trying to attack Player Minhyuk, but he either avoids or blocks their attacks.]

[The Cairon Continent players continue to send their attacks to the ground.]

[Ho? What in the world is that armor?]

[There are more players being forced to log out than players successfully landing an attack on him!]

The amount of defense would depend on the damage the enemy's attack dealt. However, if the player's defense was leagues higher than the enemy's attack, there would not be any direct damage, instead, it would only shave off some of the player's armor's durability.

The Monarch's Armor was also an armor with a special ability that increased Minhyuk's evasion rate by three hundred percent. That was on top of various factors, like the enemy's level and attack, Minhyuk's own defense, HP volume and level, all added up together. With Minhyuk's increased evasion rate, normal players would not be able to pierce through his body.

Stab!

“Ugh!”

However, it was also true that Minhyuk could not stop all of the attacks that came his way. An arrow sent by the Chinese rankers, flew over Minhyuk's shoulders.

Physical damage reflection was a skill that would only be triggered by chance. Besides, having a high defense did not mean that Minhyuk would be invincible, the same way a high evasion rate would not allow him to avoid everything that came his way.

Attacks continued to be unleashed on Minhyuk. Most of them had been avoided, but some still dug into his flesh. Minhyuk did not hesitate to use the Fluttering Sword that he 'saved' before.

Shwaaaaaa—

Minhyuk and Ali had successfully eliminated the enemies that blocked them upfront.

'But, there's still around 1,800 people left.'

Minhyuk's vision was slowly turning dark. It seemed like he was getting exhausted. Just then...

[Jeffrit's Net]

[A red net will penetrate through the ground and drag in everything hostile within an eight meter radius.]

Dozens of enemy troops flocking in front of Minhyuk were suddenly trapped inside a red net. When the man that sent over the net leaned back, the enemy troops were dragged back towards where he was. The man was none other than Locke, who had just finished transferring to a High Class. And it was not just him. There was also another man that was flying through the sky.

[Giant's Consecutive Kicks]

[The Giant's gigantic feet will continuously attack the enemies. Kicks have an additional 600% attack power.]

Khan's feet, which became huge, split into dozens of images as he kicked away the enemies surrounding Minhyuk. And there was more. Informant Abel had continued to work as an informant for Let's Eat Sect, but he still remained an outstanding assassin. He moved like a ghost, reaping the lives of the enemies in front of him, with a swift jab to their vital points.

The guild members of Let's Eat Sect had quickly organized the situation in Berdk and joined the fray. Even Alicia, Carr and Ruwan also joined them. Of course, Aruvel and Conir were also among them. Aruvel swung his huge spear.

[Demonic Dragon's Spear Arts Chapter 5]

[Exploding Spear.]

Huge explosions swept away the enemy troops as Conir dashed forward with his sword with a scream. Just when Aruvel was about to cut down the enemy...

"By any chance, are you Aruvel? The author of 'Why Did the Prince Go Out Tonight???'"

"...?"

Aruvel pulled his spear back for a moment, as he looked at the foreigner that was staring at him with a twinkle in his eyes.

“That’s right?”

“I’m, I’m your fan! Please give me your autograph!”

“Ho?” Aruvel hummed in interest as they briefly stopped their fight to sign the paper that was handed out to him by the excited foreigner.

“I, I’m truly in awe of your ingenuity!”

“Really? Thank you. But...”

Aruvel looked at the man suspiciously. His works had only been distributed in Asgan Continent, so how could this man read them?

“...how did you get your hands on my book?”

“Pirate site...”

Stab!

Aruvel swiftly pierced the man’s neck. He clicked his tongue and said, “I don’t know what *pirate site* means, but I don’t feel good hearing it.”

Then, he turned around and continued to swing his spear as the members of Let’s Eat Sect and the Korean rankers dashed forward to help! Because of this, the retreating Cairon Continent players went further on the defensive. Furthermore, the gates of Berdk opened as Asgan troops came out in droves to kill the Cairon players and troops.

One of the Chinese commentators sighed and lamented...

[Th... they have been wiped out.]

China, and the *Athenae* players from all over the world, were left in shock.

Sword Emperor Ellie was smiling in satisfaction. She said, “Minhyuk will like this.”

“Yes. He will definitely like it,” Ruth answered as he showed a warm smile, after seeing Ellie’s expression.

Placed in front of Ellie were raw beef ribs, an ingredient that she gathered after asking Ruth to inquire about it. It was the meat of the deep sea cow living ‘deep’ under the sea, a very, very, very precious meat. According to the legends, the texture and juices of the meat were extremely excellent.

“I’ll give it to the rascal once he learns the Pinnacle.”

“You look pleased.”

“Do I look that happy?”

“Yes. Whenever you talk about Minhyuk, you always smile.”

Ellie smiled a bit after hearing his words and said, “I see.”

For some reason, Ellie always felt energized whenever he thought about the rascal, Minhyuk. She was looking forward to the day of his return after learning the Pinnacle.

‘Black Dragon Order’ was a group built by dark gamers. They were currently in the middle of a discussion.

“Hu Yitian, that bastard, kept on acting up, but he ended up like that.”

“It seems like Player Minhyuk is much stronger than we thought. We can see it during Berdk’s recapture.”

However, there was a small smile on the member of Black Dragon Order that said those words. Minhyuk might be strong, but for them, he was still considered to be weak.

Plenty of the members of their group had awakened to full Pinnacle, completely different from Hu Yitian, who was like a wriggling worm to them. They were actually hiding in the Continent Cloud to try and find another Pinnacle Skill. In other words, their continent still had not shown their real colors.

Then, Belleck suddenly came inside. Belleck was the man in charge of collecting information for Black Dragon Order. He smiled in delight as he said, “We found where Ellie is hiding!”