

Gourmet 351

Chapter 351: The Food God's Territory

Berdk, the largest attack base, had been successfully recaptured by the players from Asgan Continent! They had also slaughtered nearly four thousand Cairon Continent troops and players in the battle! Four thousand might be a small number in a large 'war', but the fact that many of the players who died were in the top 10,000 of the Chinese Rankings, came as a huge blow to the players of Cairon Continent. Even the eight hundred Kharamis soldiers had been taken away by the Asgan Continent.

[Asgan and Cairon Continents might be currently hostile towards each other, and even as a player of Cairon Continent, I have no choice but to acknowledge the brilliance of Player Minhyuk's strategy.]

[My God! Who would even think of bringing the Kharamis soldiers to their side?]

[The tides have turned in this war thanks to the appearance of the Food God.]

Berdk was considered as the best attack base, not only because of its outstanding Kharamis soldiers and siege weapons, but also because of the extraordinarily high Rampart Level. The Rampart Level was dependent on the durability of the castle itself. Simply put, it depended on the physical and magical defense of the base. Berdk had the highest durability among all of the fortresses and bases in the Continent Cloud. Berdk's Rampart Level was already at Level 7. This meant that the walls would only collapse if several rankers unleashed dozens of AOE attacks and magic skills, more than a dozen times in succession.

With Berdk's and the Kharamis soldiers' successful recapture, Minhyuk's status in the hearts of the citizens of South Korea rose to that of a hero.

[Kggghk~ I won't wish for anything more, as long as I can hold the hands of our Lord, Food God.]

[Isn't our Lord, Food God very handsome? His proportions are out of this world too!]

[I like our Lord, Food God, but my long time wish is to pet Beanie's plump and chubby belly.]

[Kyaaa~ I agree about Beanie.]

In a single night, the members of Minhyuk's fan cafe jumped from 550,000 to 900,000. Articles that praised Minhyuk were also being published non-stop in the country.

Meanwhile, Minhyuk was sitting and having a discussion with his guild members. After all, he still had to go back to finish the Innocent Hero's Trial.

"I'm sure that there's a lot of people that haven't shown up on the other side yet. Like Da Zhuang, they still have him."

Informant Abel had given them the information about Da Zhuang. He was an NPC that had learned the Pinnacle. Despite being Hu Yitian's master, he did not reveal himself, even after his disciple had been forced to log out. That was why Minhyuk had to grow stronger.

'If I run across someone that has completely awakened and learned the Pinnacle then...'

When that happened, the only conclusion would be Minhyuk's complete and utter defeat. He might be able to raise his level to Pinnacle with his power now, but that was just a temporary feat. There

was a vast difference between having the power permanently and having it temporarily. In fact, he could only maintain the Pinnacle state for about forty seconds. That was about it. After the time was up, Minhyuk would definitely be defeated. Before such a situation happened, Minhyuk had to awaken to Pinnacle. So, Minhyuk quickly headed back to the Innocent Hero's Trial to awaken the Pinnacle.

Atlas Territory.

Locke was running swiftly somewhere. Although Locke looked rugged, and had a big and scary head, he was someone that had a soft spot for cute and lovable pets. He was even taking care of three puppies at home!

Locke immediately ran off after hearing that Minhyuk had made a dog house for Love, Happiness and Hope near the entrance of Atlas Territory. He thought, *'I wonder what kind of pups they are? Are they poodles? No, pomeranians? Heok! What, what if they're Welsh corgis?!'*

Locke was very excited. He was looking forward to seeing the 'pets'. He firmly believed that dogs were all angels sent by God. There was not a dog in the world that would not behave cutely and listen well to their owners! If the dog behaved badly, that meant that the owner was bad and trained them wrong! Whether it was a husky, a doberman or a hunting hound, as long as they let Locke pet their bellies, he would love them.

So, Locke ran like that, only to stop in his tracks.

"...?"

[?Love, Happiness, Hope?]

The dog house was painted as if it was the replica of a rainbow! However, that was not the surprising part. Locke was very shocked to see the gigantic kennel in front of him. Was there really a need for such a huge kennel? It was even larger than he was!

'Huh? Maybe there's a special breed that only exists in Athenae?'

Locke's expectation grew further. A special breed! Just the thought of stroking the soft fur of such a special puppy was enough to make Locke feel happy. He looked at the closed kennel door, took out a pet snack and used the voice that he specially reserved for dogs and said, *"Chu, chu, chu~? Will our Love, Happiness and Hope come out to have some snacks~?"*

Creaaaaaaaak—

The image of golden retrievers happily bounding towards Locke appeared in his head as the door slowly creaked open. He could already tell by their names that they were very sweet and kind! But...

"Grrrrrrrrrr!"

"Grrrrrrrrrrrr!"

"Graaaaaaaa!"

"...?"

Locke's head tilted in confusion. What appeared in front of him was not the golden retrievers that he imagined, but a three-headed dog from hell, with sharp, pointed teeth that were as big as three of his fingers combined. Even the saliva that dripped down from their mouths...

Sizzle—

...corroded the ground.

"..."

Locke was left speechless at the sight. Then, the three-headed dog rushed towards the snack in his hands.

"A... aaaaack!" Locke shrieked. But Cerberus did not pay him any heed. Their attention was solely directed at the snacks in his hands. All three heads turned to sniff at Locke.

Sniff, sniff.

"Grrrrrr. (He smells?like Master. He must be Master's friend.)"

"Grrrrrr! (Master's friend. Take us out for a walk! Otherwise, we'll tear your body apart and throw you to the pits of hell!)"

However, Locke could not understand the situation at all. He thought, 'What the hell is that punk, Minhyuk, doing? How can he call a monster like this... with the names Love, Happiness and Hope?'

Just as the thought flashed in Locke's mind, a window suddenly appeared in front of him.

"...?"

Locke was in disbelief. He only had to take them out for a walk, but he could increase his Fire Attribute Resistance by forty and gain 50,000,000 EXP?

'Is this for real?'

"Grrrrrrr..."

However, he understood it right after looking at Love, Happiness and Hope's faces.

"K... kids... W... would you like to go on a walk with me?"

“Grrrrrrrr!!!”

“Grrrrrrrr!!!”

“Graaaaaaaa!!”

“That, I... I think we might need a lea... leash...”

“Grrrr!!!”

“...”

The speechless Locke, without any leash in hand, went on a walk with Love, Happiness and Hope.

Meanwhile, Love, Happiness and Hope all thought that they should at least soothe the fear of this man. From what they knew, there was a very common greeting among dogs, just like the human’s handshake. They greet each other by smelling the butt!!!

“Sniff, sniff, sniff! (*Uhm... this is a man’s butt’s smell~*)”

“Sniff, sniff, sniff! (*But this human, his butt smells worse than other dogs!!!*)”

“Sniff, sniff, sniff—?(*He must have eaten some banana today. Sniff, sniff—*)”

Not knowing that they were giving him a friendly greeting, Locke wept tearfully. His voice trembled as he said, “...K... Kids, don’t eat me... I... I don’t taste good...”

A week had gone by since Minhyuk returned to the Innocent Hero’s Trial. Over the course of the week, he had successfully cleared 14 of the 25 trials and was well on his way to the 15th trial. He had also increased his level by 20 and had finally crossed the Level 500 mark.

However, in comparison to the members of the Let’s Eat Sect, whose levels were well above 500, his speed was considered to be not that fast. In fact, even Bread Shuttle Mei Wei’s level was at Level 580, a level that far surpassed Minhyuk’s level.

However, Minhyuk’s strength did not come from his ‘level’. His strength and power stemmed from the countless superb medicines that he had eaten, his Food God skills, his Demigod skill: Ellie’s Swordsmanship, as well as his excellent artifacts.

Minhyuk received these stats over the course of the Innocent Hero’s Trial: STR 60, STM 70, AGI 20, WIS 10, INT 5. These were numbers that could only be received by someone that had leveled up thirty times! Even his Arakhan’s Sword Mastery skill had reached MAX after he finished clearing the 14th trial.

Passive Skill

?There will be a 22% increase in both basic sword attack and attack speed.

?There will be a 20% increase in basic attack when slashing and stabbing an opponent.

?There will be a 15% increase in attack for skills related to swordsmanship.

?There will be a 25% reduction of physical and skill damage of sword-related attacks.

‘Even I can tell that this is something amazing.’

The numbers on the skill were truly too ridiculous. In fact, the word ridiculous was not enough to describe it. It was literally a jaw-dropping boost to his power. On top of all that, the enemy’s attack would need to pass through his Monarch’s Armor, an armor with high defense that could sharply decrease damage, before the damage could reach him. This meant that it would be hard for Minhyuk’s enemies to deal much damage to him.

Then, Arakhan said, “You will now undergo the 15th trial. After this trial, the Innocent Hero’s Trial will be closed.”

“Closed?” Minhyuk asked suspiciously.

But Arakhan just nodded and explained, “The Innocent Hero’s Trial has a total of 25 levels. However, anything beyond this trial is something that you can’t challenge yet.”

“Ah...” Minhyuk hummed. He could easily understand what his words meant. Simply put, the management had blocked the system beyond the 15th trial.

Minhyuk recalled that Ellie had told him that he could only learn a Half-Pinnacle skill in here. She had also told him that he would be able to awaken to complete Pinnacle by learning her own Pinnacle skill.

“As for the 15th trial... Boy, I don’t know what trial you’ll face once you challenge it.”

“What do you mean?” Minhyuk asked in confusion. Arakhan had accompanied him all throughout the trials and told him about the contents of the trial that he took. However, the trial in front of him was something that even Arakhan did not know.

“It’s because the final trial is a trial that is tailored specifically for the challenger.”

“Ah, I see,” Minhyuk said, nodding his head in understanding. In other words, the final trial would be influenced by the challenger’s class, stats, or other various factors.

Seeing Minhyuk nod, Arakhan said, “I wish you success and good luck. One more thing, you will get the reward over there, not from here.”

Minhyuk disappeared in a flash of light by the end of Arakhan’s words. As he closed his eyes, he thought, *‘I will get the reward over there...’*

Albero Territory was once a village that existed in the Asgan Continent over hundreds of years ago. However, it had long disappeared in the currents of history. This place was like a territory and haven for chefs. The best chefs of the world could be seen in this place, and with the grace that the Food God had bestowed upon them, the dishes that they cooked used to hold a special, strong power. Now, the Albero Territory, which had disappeared hundreds of years ago, had reappeared.

No, it would actually be more correct to say that Minhyuk had gone back in time.

A man was sighing deeply. This man was none other than Lucaro, a person that served under the Food God. Albero Territory might not have disappeared as of yet, but it had already been two years since the Food God fell into his eternal slumber.

However, the bunch of rascals that were jealous of the Food God had spread bad rumors about him and had been doing it for decades already! Because of that, the Food God's status had fallen immediately after his death.

Still, there was one person that respected and loved the Food God, and that was Lucaro! There was only one reason why Lucaro respected the Food God deeply... He was once a child orphaned by the war. Without any pillar of support, he was forced to beg people for food. However, people would kick and curse him for the stinking smell that covered his body.

One day, a very nice man approached him and asked, *'Are you hungry?'*

'Yes. I'm very hungry. I haven't had a meal in days!'

The man smiled softly at Lucaro as he handed him a piece of bread and a bottle of milk. The man said, *'This milk is directly harvested from the legendary sheep, Cerdo. I only have one piece of bread left too, but I'll give it to you.'*

The man handed over his last piece of bread and last bottle of milk over to Lucaro, despite his own grumbling stomach.

Rumble—

The young Lucaro immediately gobbled up the bread!!! However, the man that handed over this meal to him was also hungry, so Lucaro handed the remaining half of the bread back to the man with a complaining stomach.

'Thank you.'

The two of them shared the bread and the milk in an enjoyable manner.

'I can't forget the taste of the milk and bread back then...' Lucaro thought, eyes reddening from tears that he fought to hold back.

The bread and milk that he had eaten back then had given him a surge of energy that allowed him to walk and search for another territory. But it was not just that, he did not feel hungry nor thirsty at all. Lucaro knew that it was because of the bread and milk that the man had given him. Thanks to that, he was able to reach the chef's territory.

When he arrived there, he saw the man that had given him the bread and the milk. To be exact, it was the man's statue and the people of the territory called him *'Food God'*.

Lucaro had asked the man before they went their separate ways, *'Why did you show me, a beggar, kindness and mercy?'*

'It's not your fault that you became hungry. I don't want to see you, me, or anybody else get hungry.'

The Food God was a great man. But after he fell into eternal rest, bad rumors about him began to circulate wildly. The rumors said that the Food God forcefully took away crops from other territories to fill his own stomach, while taking the women and children as his slaves, that he was an evil person, and many more slanderous remarks.

However, Lucaro knew that the Food God was a man that has devoted himself to the goodness of the world, more than anybody else.

'I miss you very much, Food God,' Lucaro thought as he kneaded the dough in his hands with tears in his eyes.

Lucaro owned a bakery. However, it was very shabby and desolate, with not a single customer in sight. It was also surrounded by transparent glass so anyone outside could see how he made the bread. When he turned his head to look outside, Lucaro made eye contact with a drooling man, whose face was pasted on the other side of his bakery's transparent glass.

"A...aaaaack!" Lucaro shrieked in fright.

Lucaro quickly calmed himself down and looked at the man. He could see that the young man's eyes were trained solely on the bread in his hands. The man looked extremely hungry. He was even dressed poorly.

'Wh...what?'

The sight of the man reminded Lucaro of the past, so he beckoned to the young man, who swiftly entered the store. And just like what the Food God did for him, Lucaro also gave the man a piece of bread and a bottle of milk.

Looking closely, the young man was handsome and tall. But, the most eye-catching feature was his smile. The young man had the happiest smile plastered on his face when he ate the bread that Lucaro had given him.

"Hohohoho. Eat slowly."

"Wow! This bread is really delicious!"

"Thank you."

"But, I don't have any money..."

"It's alright. I just don't want to see anyone go hungry. So what if you don't have money? Haha!" Lucaro laughed happily.

The young man stared at Lucaro in a daze. He looked like he had been hit on the head with something. Then, the young man smiled softly and said, "Your values and views are really good. Uncle, can you please tell me your name?"

"My name is Lucaro. I'm this bakery's owner."

The young man smiled and introduced himself. He said, "My name is Minhyuk. I'm a traveler."

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The notifications regarding the 15th trial poured into Minhyuk's ears the moment he got warped into Albero Territory.

[You are not allowed to equip any kind of armor or protective gear inside Albero Territory. Your currently equipped armor will be temporarily removed during the trial.]

[You will only be provided with rag-like clothes.]

[You cannot use any gold in your possession.]

[You cannot open your inventory and use the items inside.]

[You cannot disclose about your 'Food God' class unless the system allows you to.]

Minhyuk could tell at a glance that Albero Territory was a territory that used to be under the Food God of the past. To understand the trial better, he went around Albero Territory to investigate. To be exact...

Growl—!

...he went around with his grumbling, hungry stomach. Albero Territory was like heaven on earth, a paradise for someone like Minhyuk. There was a long line of stores in the territory! The best part was that they were mostly stores related to food! And since this was a chef's territory, it seemed like their cooking skills were superb.

However, Minhyuk was presented with a very huge problem. He could not use his money! Even the items in his inventory were currently unavailable to him. What kind of absurd scenario was this?!

With his hungry stomach, Minhyuk quickly moved to find out what he needed to accomplish so he could fill his empty stomach. To put it simply, Minhyuk wanted to try and receive quests from the people here. Doing so would most likely give him a hint, or a link to his trial.

With his plans set, Minhyuk set out and went into one of the restaurants in the street. The restaurant was large, with a huge, majestic signboard that said, '*Paradise Restaurant*'.

"I'm so hungry. Please give me some food! I will do any chores for you, be it washing dishes or cleaning!" Minhyuk said, bowing politely to show his firm will to do anything for food, despite looking shabby with his rag-like clothes.

Minhyuk was completely unaware of the fact that this restaurant housed the best chef in Albero Territory. The head chef, Balza, had reached the master craftsman level in cooking. Head Chef Balza came out, and looked at Minhyuk from head to toe, before pinching his nose and saying, "My god, this smell! It stinks! Get out of my Paradise Restaurant! I will never let a beggar and bum like you work for my restaurant. And even if you have the money, I will never sell you my food!"

Minhyuk was left in disbelief after hearing his words. This restaurant was considered to be quite luxurious! It seemed like it was a restaurant that would even screen its customers before accepting them inside. So, he asked, "What do you mean that you won't sell me your food, even if I have the money?"

"Look at yourself. You're a beggar. The food of my Paradise Restaurant is something that someone like you can never taste."

“So, you’re telling me that the people that can eat your dishes will depend on their status?”

“Of course! A bastard like you only deserves the cheap ingredients sold in the market!”

The head chef was telling Minhyuk that only those wearing luxurious and good clothes and had a lot of money could eat at his restaurant. This principle was completely absurd in Minhyuk’s point of view. People could be picky with their food, but the food could never distinguish the people that would eat them. However, the tone of one of the chefs of Albero Territory had turned out to be conceited and arrogant.

Minhyuk left this restaurant. He had a reason to be angry, but he needed to be patient, since this might be a part of his trial. If he acted rashly here, he might never be able to find the clue to his trial. Minhyuk kept on walking around and trying his luck with other restaurants, but most of the chefs from these restaurants had the same thoughts as Balza. Minhyuk truly could not understand why they were like that. He thought, *‘Why? Why are they like this? This is clearly a territory under the Food God of the past... so why?’*

Minhyuk had the chance to meet the Food God of the past and he could tell that he was a person that was like him. He did not want to see others become hungry. However, the people that served him and continued his legacy did not have the same views at all. No, they were more like the run-off-the-mill restaurants.

‘This is like...’

For Minhyuk, this felt more like a premium restaurant. They served under the Food God and used his name to produce excellent delicacies, only to let people with money and power to taste their dishes.

‘This is not what the Food God’s territory is supposed to be.’

Then, the fragrant scent of fresh bread wafted towards Minhyuk’s nose. The scent was very appetizing, that his body moved on its own and followed it to its source. The scent brought Minhyuk in front of a shabby bakery. Inside, he saw a man baking bread. The man looked to be lost in thoughts as he waited for his bread to be baked. From what Minhyuk could see, the man also did not have a left hand.

‘Smells, smells delicious...’

The bread was completely baked not long after. The appetizing and fragrant scent of the bread intensified as the man took it out of the oven. Just as Minhyuk started drooling, the man made eye contact with him. The man shrieked when he saw his figure outside of the transparent glass. The man quietly patted his own chest, before smiling kindly and beckoning to him. Minhyuk swiftly rushed inside and ate the bread that the man gave him.

‘I’ve... I’ve never tasted a bread that’s as delicious as this one!!!’

Minhyuk was in awe. Then, he realized that he did not have any money. When he told the man that he did not have money to pay him, the man just laughed and told him, “It’s alright. I just don’t want to see anyone go hungry. So what if you don’t have money? Haha!”

His words made Minhyuk's keen intuition ring. He could tell that this man was related to the trial. He was definitely the hint that he was looking for. Besides, even after he saw the state that he was in, the man still smiled gently and naturally at him. He was a man that definitely did not want anyone to go hungry! This man had the same values as Minhyuk. The owner of this shabby, old and desolate bakery had a value and principle that could not be bought, even if someone gave him billions of money. However, there was something that Minhyuk could not understand...

'Why? How come it's like this...?'

Why was this bakery without a customer? Minhyuk had roamed the entire Albero Territory and found that there were more than 80 restaurants, bakeries, and food related stores. Minhyuk had already played *Athenae* for quite a long time now, and he could proudly say that the bread that this man made was the most delicious bread that he ever had. So, why were there no customers in this delicious bakery? Was it because it was expensive? No, it did not seem to be the case. And, there was also his missing left hand!

'There's clearly a story behind this,' Minhyuk thought, as he decided to stay here for a while.

He introduced himself and said, "I will help you with the chores here! I have to pay for the bread that you gave me!"

"Ho, hoho?"

To Lucaro, it sounded like this, *'I will live here and help around. Haha!'*

However, Lucaro just smiled kindly at him.

Albero Territory's Lord's Castle.

Lord Anton, the one hailed as the *'New Food God'*, was a chef that was bestowed with the title of a Count. He was currently examining his kitchen knife as he listened to the reports of his personal aide.

"Lucaro has also applied."

"Is that so?" Anton said with a nod.

"He applied for the Gourmet Dragon's Banquet. The last descendant of the previous Food God."

Anton burst out in laughter after hearing his remarks.

The previous Food God was already dead. His body, his glory and honor, even all of his followers. Everything was dead. However, there was one man that tried to carry the burden of that pride and honor by himself. That man was none other than Lucaro, the owner of a small bakery in town.

Meanwhile, Anton took over and became the new Food God after his death. He immediately came here once Food God Allen was laid to rest. Anton had always been trailing behind the Food God. He might be hailed as the best chef, but he could never go beyond the Food God.

However, after his death, Anton finally got the title *'Food God'*.

Anton immediately took over the territory, slandered the Food God, and showed the chefs here what money was. Over the years, the chefs here became greedy for money and had changed rapidly.

“He doesn’t have money to buy ingredients. His left hand is also broken, and won’t be able to bake properly. He will be eliminated in the preliminaries.”

The Gourmet Dragon Banquet was a very important occasion. The Gourmet Dragon would visit this place every few decades. He would then go back after eating the dish created by the best chef in this place. Up until now, the only person that could satisfy the Gourmet Dragon was the previous Food God. But now, Anton was confident that he would be the one cooking for him. After all, Lucaro would be easily eliminated in the preliminaries.

“Pfft,” Anton tried to hold in his laughter. This was Anton, whose original class was the Twilight Chef.

Minhyuk had been working for Lucaro for a few days now. He did not mind the hard work that he did in the bakery. Minhyuk learned one thing over the course of his stay. Everyone in the territory hated Lucaro. There were plenty of people who would stop in front of his bakery to spit or curse at him. Among the curses that they used to swear at him, the most common was ‘Get out of here!’. The reason? Minhyuk did not know yet, because Lucaro always avoided telling him the whole story.

Today, Lucaro was working hard in making bread today. From what he said, it was in preparation for his participation in the Gourmet Dragon Banquet.

‘Gourmet Dragon...’

From what he heard, this territory would often invite the Gourmet Dragon for a meal every few decades or so. The Gourmet Dragon was a dragon that was strong enough to easily mess around with the ordinary dragons. They would be able to gain ‘*peace*’ by offering a banquet to the Gourmet Dragon. If the Gourmet Dragon was not satisfied with their food, then he would lay waste to the territory. The Gourmet Dragon was powerful enough that even Food God Allen could not stop him!

‘Don’t tell me...’

Minhyuk knew that this territory did not exist in the future. With that knowledge alone, Minhyuk could already tell that the territory was destroyed by the Gourmet Dragon.

Lucaro groaned lightly and said, “N...no... I won’t be able to pass the preliminaries at this rate...”

Unfortunately, cooking needed a lot of different ingredients. However, the poor and unfortunate Lucaro could only afford the cheapest of ingredients.

“The Delicate Mountain Goat’s Milk...! If I only have that...!”

“The Delicate Mountain Goat’s Milk?”

“That’s right. Delicate Mountain Goat,” Lucaro said, smiling bitterly at Minhyuk.

Lucaro’s affection for Minhyuk grew over the days that they had been together. Minhyuk might be a poor man without a cent on his body, but he willingly became Lucaro’s left hand. When Lucaro

woke up in the morning, he would see him cleaning the store front. Even the interior of the store was very shiny. He would just laugh awkwardly at the swearing people whenever he went outside to shout ‘*Come and buy Lucaro’s fantastic bread!*’ to promote the store. Lucaro grew to like Minhyuk.

“Delicate Mountain Goats are much bigger than ordinary mountain goats. They are very picky and fussy creatures by nature. Their bodies are also very sensitive to the point that they would kick people with their hind legs if touched just a bit wrongly. There have been only three people who have successfully extracted milk from these Delicate Mountain Goats. The previous Food God Allen, the current lord Anton, and me.”

“Oh...” Minhyuk said in admiration. Lucaro was the only other person that has extracted milk from the Delicate Mountain Goats, aside from the previous and current lords of the territory. That was very amazing.

“However, to do so, I need to gently and softly squeeze the goat’s tits with both of my hands, but I can no longer...” Lucaro said, looking at his missing left hand with a sigh. He knew that he could no longer milk the Delicate Mountain Goat.

“The Delicate Mountain Goat’s Milk tastes completely different from the milk of ordinary mountain goats. It also has an amazing ability that can keep the bread from going stale and becoming spoiled. If I use that to make bread, I believe that I would be able to pass the preliminaries but...”

‘But, it’s impossible.’

Lucaro knew that Lord Anton would never milk the Delicate Mountain Goat for him. No, he was already lucky that Anton did not kick him out of the preliminaries.

Minhyuk pondered deeply. He thought, *‘These three people have something in common.’*

He wondered if it was their excellent cooking? That was a given, but he knew that there was something else. Minhyuk could tell that Lucaro had a high DEX. After all, he could still knead bread excellently even though he only had one hand. As the current Food God, he knew that the previous Food God would definitely have a high DEX too. The same must be true for Lord Anton, the person hailed as the second Food God. If that was the case, then...

“I will extract the Delicate Mountain Goat’s milk for you.”

...He might just be able to extract the milk himself.

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Lucaro’s smile was gentle as he listened to Minhyuk’s words. He had long accepted the fact that he was singled out in the territory, just because he had served the Food God of the past. Still, the words of this visiting traveler were very precious to him.

Even so, the Delicate Mountain Goat were considered legendary beings in this territory. There were even rumors that those that could successfully extract fresh milk from the Delicate Mountain Goat would become the next Food God.

‘But, it’s because of that very same reason that my hand...’

It was because of that reason that Anton took his hand away. It was to keep the fact hidden that someone serving the previous Food God could milk the Delicate Mountain Goat.

“I’m very grateful for your words but...”

“You don’t have to worry! I will definitely bring you some mountain goat’s milk!”

Startled, Lucaro looked at Minhyuk’s bright and clear eyes. He already knew that Minhyuk was a clever young man that easily understood the things that were taught to him only once. He even did other things without being asked to. Of course, that was only in the confines of this bakery, but Lucaro could still tell that the young man in front of him was one of a kind.

‘If I could take in a disciple then...’

If that was the case, then Lucaro wanted to take this young man as his disciple. But fate was fickle and cruel, he could never take in anyone as his disciple, with his broken left hand.

Lucaro laughed and nodded at Minhyuk. He said, “Then, I will ask this favor of you.”

Anyone from the territory could try and milk the Delicate Mountain Goat. However, anyone that wanted to take on the challenge had to take into account the fact that they could be severely beaten by the Delicate Mountain Goat.

Then, a quest window popped out in front of Minhyuk.

Minhyuk learned the location from Lucaro and immediately set out. Behind him, Lucaro whispered, “Thank you.”

Lucaro had thought that he would have to give up his right to participate in the Gourmet Dragon Banquet. That was why he was very grateful to Minhyuk. However, milking the Delicate Mountain Goat was a different matter altogether. After all, the chefs that had reached the master craftsman level had tried and failed in milking this Delicate Mountain Goat. Lucaro was able to succeed in milking this picky and fussy Delicate Mountain Goat, thanks to his surprisingly high DEX. To put it in player stats, Lucaro had around 2,000 points in DEX. That was how high it was.

Paradise Restaurant was hailed as one of the top three restaurants in Albero Territory. It was a restaurant that had been passed down from one generation to another, and had been around for hundreds of years.

The Head Chef, Balza, was one of the chefs that had reached the master craftsman level in Albero Territory. However, it had not been that long since he reached this level. And he was not just a *'master craftsman'*?chef, he was also a chef that was preparing to take part in the Gourmet Dragon Banquet.

'As long as I can milk the Delicate Mountain Goat...!'

If that happened, then Balza would become Anton's protege. It was a simple task, all he needed to do was to milk the Delicate Mountain Goat. However, from what he heard, anyone that milked the Delicate Mountain Goat could rise and take the position of Food God!

Food God! It was an honorable and sacred title! However, rumors had plagued the previous Food God after his death, making him out to be an evil and vicious man. According to the rumors, the previous Food God destroyed villages and slaughtered innocents to fill his stomach. Rumors also said that he stole people and food to pad his empty and hungry stomach.

However, Balza was one of the few that knew the truth. The previous Food God was not that kind of man at all. Everything had been fabricated by Anton. The previous Food God held no desire for anything, aside from food. On the contrary, Anton was a person that was greedy by nature. He did not want this territory to remain free from greed and desire, like the territory of the past.

Even so, Balza also denied the previous Food God. He wanted to be Anton's protege because he also wanted to seize money, power, honor, everything!

Balza brought his disciples to climb the mountain where the Delicate Mountain Goat lived. They arrived at a vast expanse of land, with green grass swaying around and mountain goats prancing around along the mountain walls. Many chefs, as usual, tried to take on the challenge of milking the Delicate Mountain Goat! Balza let out a slight groan as he looked at the area where the Delicate Mountain Goat were resting.

*'How should I go about this...?'*Balza thought as he looked at the sheer height of the cliff wall in front of him.

Mountain Goats were creatures that mainly lived on rocky mountain walls, and the Delicate Mountain Goat lived on precarious and dangerous cliffs, which made it a very challenging task to get to where they were. There was a high chance of falling to their deaths if they stumbled while climbing these cliffs. However, despite the danger, the chance of successfully milking the Delicate Mountain Goat was still worth the challenge!

Balza's eyes wandered around before spotting a Delicate Mountain Goat sitting on an inconspicuous corner by the edge of a cliff. Unlike other mountain goats that tended to gather around in groups, this goat preferred a solitary life. It was also around three times larger than ordinary mountain goats, with larger curved horns and sharp teeth. To put it simply, it looked more like a beast than a mountain goat.

"Euaaaaaaaack!"

One of the chefs that tried to climb the cliff slipped and fell down to the ground.

“Keuk!”

In the end, the chef broke his leg. Some of the chefs watching to the side eventually gave up and returned to their restaurants. However, there were a few willful ones that decided to challenge and approach the solitary mountain goat. The moment one of the chefs reached out to milk the goat...

Bang!

“Aaaaaaaaack!” The chef shrieked as he fell down the cliff.

Fortunately, Lord Anton had assigned three knights to monitor the situation here. If a chef fell down from a height that could endanger their lives, these knights would move quickly to save them.

Meanwhile, Balza had tied a large, empty milk can on his back, as he began to climb the cliff walls. He thought, *‘I’m different from these regular chefs! I have been constantly exercising while practicing my cooking skills since I was young!’*

Besides, he was a chef that had reached the master craftsman level! He could easily climb a cliff like this, with skill as well!

“As expected of Mister Balza!”

“Wow! He’s really a cut above the rest that tried to climb these cliffs!”

His disciples exclaimed in awe. However, unbeknownst to them, Balza’s throat had already gone dry. The Delicate Mountain Goat was extremely terrifying up close.

However, he had to get that coveted milk! As long as he could get his hands on it, he would be able to use milk of a different level! Balza was sure that he would be able to get that milk. After all, he was second only to the territorial lord in terms of DEX. Actually, he could be considered second to the lord only if Lucaro, the man with a broken left hand, was excluded.

Balza slowly approached the Delicate Mountain Goat, then carefully reached out his hand to grab the Delicate Mountain Goat’s tit.

“Phew.”

“W... wow...”

“H... he succeeded in milking the goat!”

“My goodness! This is the Delicate Mountain Goat that no ordinary chef can milk!”

His disciples were once again in awe. Balza’s lips curled up in a smile. He would be able to create another legend today! Then, he moved his hand to gently extract the milk from the goat’s tits. But...

“...?”

...not a single drop of milk came out. Balza gently moved his hands again to try and extract the milk. But there was still nothing. In fact, what he did only made the Delicate Mountain Goat’s mood turn sour.

“Meeeeeeeeeeh!” The Delicate Mountain Goat cried loudly as it raised its hooves and kicked Balza away.

“Keheok!”

The force of the kick was so powerful that Balza was sent tumbling down the cliff. Fortunately, he was able to quickly come back to his senses, grabbing a tree’s hanging root.

“Huff, huff, huff!”

His situation, where he was hanging by a tree root, looked very precarious.

“Head chef!”

“Head cheeeeeeeef!!!”

Balza heard the urgent and worried voices of his disciples. However, he did not care one bit about the danger to his life. If he fell, the knights would definitely save him. However, the shame that he would receive was something that was far more painful than falling from a cliff.

‘I...I’m... the best chef in Albero Territory...!’

He could not even extract milk from a mountain goat! Then, at that moment...

“Huh? Huuuuuuh?!”

“Wh...who’s that?!”

“He, he’s so fast!!! Looks like a wolf!!!”

Dash, dash, dash, dash!!!

A man was scaling the cliffs swiftly, as if he was the wind.

“Is... is he trying to save the head chef?”

“That must be right! I’m sure that mysterious guy has recognized Mister Balza!!!”

The man, with his extreme climbing speed, came to a stop beside the hanging Balza.

“Q...quick! Come and save me! You should know that I’m Albero Territory’s best chef...!”

Alas, the man just passed by Balza and continued to climb up the cliffs. It seemed like he was climbing to where the Delicate Mountain Goat was!

“Y... you impertinent fool!!! Do you not know who I am?!! How dare you leave me behind... huh?”

That was when Balza realized something. He thought that the face of the man looked very familiar. However, his once shabby clothes had been changed into the white uniform of someone working in a bakery. This was the man who came to his restaurant not too long ago.

“You, you’re that beggar, aren’t you?! Come and save me!!! If you don’t save me right now, I swear I won’t leave you alone!!!” Balza shouted, the veins on his neck popping from the stress.

The man, who had climbed up higher in the cliffs, looked down at him for a moment. Then, the man grinned and said, “Why should I?”

“...?!”

“I’m just a shabby and unworthy beggar. Besides, weren’t you the one that argued with me about the qualifications to eat at your restaurant? You even told me that you wouldn’t sell me anything from your restaurant, even if I had the money, right?”

“...”

Balza’s mouth turned shut. Even if he was in this situation, it was something that he would never change.

“It looks like you’re not showing any remorse at all, huh? Based on your expression, it seems like your thoughts will not change. You actually cook with that thought in mind? Was cooking something that’s just for power, honor and money?”

“Is, isn’t that obvious?! Those are things that everybody wants!”

“That’s right. Everyone has their greed and desires. But, even if you harbor those desires, as a chef, shouldn’t you think about the person who will eat your food? When the person that eats my food becomes happy, I will also become happy. Isn’t that what a chef is?”

Balza thought that his words were ridiculous. What did a beggar like him know about cooking? Compared to Balza, a chef that had reached the master craftsman level, the beggar was nothing! In the entire continent, chefs that had reached this level could only be counted on one’s hands. How dare someone like him talk about cooking to someone like Balza!!!

“I will climb up on my own. You bastard, I won’t let you go!!!” Balza shouted as he tightened his grip on the root, and pulled himself up to climb the cliffs again.

When he arrived where the Delicate Mountain Goat was, he saw the man crouched down with an empty milk container.

“Ha!” Balza barked out a laugh. How dare a beggar like him challenge and milk the Delicate Mountain Goat?!

Balza immediately shouted to the knights below, “Don’t save him if he falls down the cliff!”

“B... but...”

“Didn’t you see how this bastard ignored me?! Does this beggar’s life even matter?! And you... you guys look a bit down these days, make sure to pass by my restaurant!”

The knights’ faces brightened. That was right. It did not matter if this beggar died! Who cared about these kind of things? They were people that served under Anton after all, and were just as greedy as him.

Then, the man’s hand reached for the Delicate Mountain Goat’s tit.

‘Fufufufu.’

Balza grinned maniacally. He was sure that the bastard would be mercilessly kicked down the cliff and die the moment he touched the goat’s tit.

‘How dare someone like you talk about cooking with me?’

He was just a beggar after all.

Then, Minhyuk gently reached out and petted the goat’s teeth to extract the milk. At that moment...

“Me, meeeeeeeeeeh~?”

“...?”

A strange bleat came out of the Delicate Mountain Goat’s mouth. Minhyuk moved his hands once again.

That movement!

‘What, what is this? He... he looks like he’s playing an instrument, gentle yet skillful. The way his hands caresses the goat’s tits are like a gentle and delicate touch towards his own lover!’

And what about the Delicate Mountain Goat? This creature was very vicious and ferocious, but in front of Minhyuk, it looked gentle and loving. Its gaze was so sweet that it seemed like honey would drip from its eyes! It even moved closer to Minhyuk so he could touch its tits easily!

“...!”

What kind of nonsense was this? Once again, Minhyuk moved his hands.

Pat, pat, pat, pat, pat—

His touches were gentle and soft as he patted the goat’s belly and tits. In the end...

Fwooooooosh—

The Delicate Mountain Goat let out its milk.

Chapter 354: The Food God’s Territory

Minhyuk hurriedly took out his milk container and collected the goat’s milk.

“Thank you. I’ll drink it well.”

“Meeeeeeeeeh~?”

“I know, everyday was hard for you, right? People came to grab your sore teats for your milk. You’re delicate and sensitive, but they grabbed them roughly, right? I won’t hurt you.”

“Meeeeeeeeeh~”

In fact, it was only Minhyuk that treated this ferocious Delicate Mountain Goat like this. He treated it better than anybody else that tried to get its milk. He was so gentle to the point that hearts

appeared in the eyes of the Delicate Mountain Goat. What the Delicate Mountain Goat exactly felt was...

‘Th... thrilling...!’

The mountain goat felt a pleasure that it had never experienced in its entire life the moment Minhyuk’s hands touched its teats. This was because Minhyuk’s DEX of more than 3,000 had far surpassed the previous Food God, the current Food God Anton, and even Lucaro.

Minhyuk quickly filled his milk containers. He filled as many as five 2L bottles of milk. Balza trembled at the sight. Then, the Delicate Mountain Goat leaned down in front of Minhyuk.

“You want me to ride on your back?”

“Meeeeeeeeeh~”

Minhyuk looked at the Delicate Mountain Goat’s back. It seemed like it wanted to take him down the cliffs safely.

“How...how can this be...?”

“That... that ferocious mountain goat actually let a man ride on its back?!”

“This is ridiculous!”

While Balza’s disciples and the knights below were in shock, Balza said, “How, how... how can a beggar like you do that?! How can you milk the mountain goat!!!”

Hearing his words, Minhyuk, who was about to ride the Delicate Mountain Goat, turned to look back at him coldly and said, “People like you...”

Minhyuk’s cold voice pierced through Balza as if it was a cold and ruthless dagger.

“...will never understand it your entire lives.”

“...!”

Balza’s face turned red from shame. This was his first time experiencing humiliation in his life. However, he was frozen in place. At that very moment, he could feel an unparalleled power emanating deep within the man’s body.

‘J...just who in the world is that beggar?’

Then, the Delicate Mountain Goat jumped down the cliff to go down the mountain. Seeing Minhyuk getting farther away from him, Balza came back to his senses. He shouted, “K...Kill that man!!! I will give you plenty of rewards if you kill that bastard!!!”

Balza was one of the most powerful and influential people in Albero Territory. He had plenty of power to wield. The knights quickly drew their swords and tried to approach Minhyuk. However, the Delicate Mountain Goat glared at them with its ferocious eyes.

“...Ugh, urk...”

Delicate Mountain Goats might be goats, but they wielded a tremendous amount of force. In fact, they could rival monsters at Level 500 and were like the guardian deities of Albero Territory. This very same Delicate Mountain Goat was protecting Minhyuk.

Minhyuk made eye contact with Balza as the knights stepped away from him, allowing him to climb on the back of the Delicate Mountain Goat.

Grin—

The corner of Minhyuk's lips curled up slightly. At that moment, Balza felt his heart sink. The man looked at the sky above them and chuckled. Balza believed that this was an obvious mockery. Then, the Delicate Mountain Goat disappeared into the distance with the man on its back.

“Aaaaaaack! You bastard! I'm going to kill you!!!”

The man did not cause any harm to Balza, instead, he spoke to him, smiled and chuckled. However, Balza was agitated. It was because the man's existence was proof that Balza had been beaten.

The notifications rang after Minhyuk extracted the milk from the Delicate Mountain Goat.

[Lucaro's favor has reached the highest level.]

[You can drink 2L of the Delicate Mountain Goat's Milk.]

Minhyuk was able to extract 10L of milk from the Delicate Mountain Goat, and was now even allowed to drink 2L out of it. However, the notifications did not end there. There was even an additional quest window that popped up in front of him.

‘Legendary Sun's Wheat...?’

Sun's Wheat was the reward that he had received when he joined the Goblin Subjugation Forces in the past. It was an ingredient that was far more delicious than regular wheat. To think there was an ingredient called Legendary Sun's Wheat? Minhyuk quickly clicked on the detailed information.

[Legendary Sun's Wheat was literally the Sun's Wheat that became legendary. This was because it had disappeared at the same time that the Albero Territory had disappeared. In fact, the Sun's Wheat is a lower quality variety of the Legendary Sun's Wheat. The Legendary Sun's Wheat has an amazing power. You can confirm this once you have obtained the Legendary Sun's Wheat.]

Minhyuk was surprised. He recalled that the food that he made using the ordinary Sun's Wheat already tasted good. However, according to this information, it was actually considered the lowest quality.

'It's definitely because of the amazing power that it carries,' Minhyuk thought as he decided to ask Lucaro about it.

Then, Minhyuk looked down at the Delicate Mountain Goat that carried him on its back and asked, "...Why aren't you going home?"

"Meeeeeeeeeh~" The Delicate Mountain Goat cried as it smiled abashedly at Minhyuk, with its eyes filled with love.

Minhyuk instinctively felt something. He said, "Y...you... Don't tell me..."

"Meeeeeeeeeh~"

That was when Minhyuk knew that the Delicate Mountain Goat wanted to stay with him. For a moment, Minhyuk was in despair. There was another mouth to feed! However, he immediately calmed down at the thought of being able to extract milk continuously from the Delicate Mountain Goat. And...

'Emergency food ration. Fufufufufufu!!!'

The Delicate Mountain Goat had become Minhyuk's emergency food!

Lucaro desperately prayed that Minhyuk would return safely. While he was praying desperately, he felt a vibration behind him.

Turn!

Lucaro turned his head, and saw a red-haired man with impressive and handsome features.

"Mister Kardeon."

The man was called Kardeon and his real identity was extremely shocking. That was because he was the Gourmet Dragon, an existence that had lived for more than 5,000 years. He was considered as the greatest dragon of all time, with power that far surpassed the chief of the Dragon Lords. Black Dragon Vormon, who appeared at a much later time than him, was actually no more than a trifling speck of dust in front of him. And, he was also the highest judge in the Gourmet Dragon Banquet.

"Why aren't you leaving, Food God's descendant?"

Unlike Lucaro's warm and gentle welcome, Kardeon's expression was frosty and as hard as stone. No, he looked like he did not understand Lucaro.

"I have to protect the Food God's territory."

"Do you think that it's still possible for you to protect this territory?!!"

"..."

The people believed that the Gourmet Dragon, Kardeon's fury would calm down as long as he ate the Food God's dish. In other words, the Food God was just a weak and feeble existence in front of him. However, this was not the truth. The Gourmet Dragon Kardeon was the Food God's close friend. Before the Food God succumbed to eternal rest, he told him, *'There will be a lot of people who will disgrace, destroy and defile the things that I have cultivated. This is only natural. But, if things go out of control, can you please guide them in the right path? Do me this favor, huh?'*

Kardeon accepted the Food God's request. However, he interpreted his words differently and thought that he was referring to a violent approach. What the Food God wanted him to do was for him to tell them off and guide them towards the correct path. But, after watching these greedy humans, Kardeon had a completely different idea.

They were the ones that had laughed, mocked and sullied his friend, after being blinded by greed. They did not know and cared to know what true cooking was. If that was the case, then he should just punish them.

The Gourmet Dragon Banquet was just a pretext. Gourmet Dragon Kardeon was sure that none of these greedy humans' dishes would be able to satisfy him. Once that day arrived, the fallen land, Albero Territory that was once hailed as the Food God's territory, would disappear from the currents of history.

Kardeon had informed Lucaro, the only person that continued to respect and love the Food God. He told him to leave, but Lucaro never did.

"I will save this territory with my own hands. I will show them what true cooking is, and what the previous Food God truly was like. I will proudly show them that I am his successor."

"..."

Kardeon saw something in Lucaro's bright and determined eyes. He said, "You won't have any regrets, even if you die fighting for him?"

Gourmet Dragon Kardeon was hell bent on destroying everything. The only one that he wanted to keep alive was Lucaro. However, he saw in Lucaro's eyes that he did not want mercy. Kardeon wanted to tell this to the Food God over and over again, *'For you to have such a loyal follower, you must be a very happy person.'*

Even after his death, someone still loved and cared for him deeply. On the other hand, Kardeon also felt grief. Lucaro only had his right hand left, but the dishes that he needed to prepare for the Gourmet Dragon Banquet should be a lot. After all, he had to prepare a meal for a dragon.

The chefs from other restaurants would compete, with the aid of their disciples, but Lucaro was alone. No matter how good his cooking was, he would not be able to get over this hurdle by himself.

However, Kardeon was reluctant. He did not want to wound his purity and pride anymore than this. So, all he did was smile.

"May you have boundless glory, honorable and noble Dragon Kardeon."

With his words, Kardeon disappeared in a flash of light.

Seeing him disappear, a bitter smile crept on Lucaro's face. He already knew that this territory would disappear. However, he wanted to protect it until the very end. The thought alone brought joy to Lucaro. He thought, *'I might die, but I'm sure that another successor of yours will take over and continue your pride and legacy.'*

Lucaro smiled as he looked at the sky. Then, a voice suddenly broke him out of his reverie.

"Mister Lucaro~ Please come outside!"

"Huh?"

Minhyuk, the person that Lucaro was waiting for a long time for, was finally back. Lucaro quickly went outside only to see the boy smiling broadly at him while shaking a container filled with milk. Right next to him was a Delicate Mountain Goat bleating, *'Meeeeeeeh~'*, coquettishly.

'What, what is happening...?'

Lucaro was shocked. However, Minhyuk just smiled as he gulped down a cup of milk in one shot! He even said, "Kyaaaa~! The Delicate Mountain Goat's milk is very delicious! Please have a drink, Mister Lucaro!"

Minhyuk smiled and Lucaro chuckled too. He said, "Boy, I told you to milk the goat, not bring the goat to me! It seems like you're a tamer, huh!"

Lucaro thought that Minhyuk's class was a legendary tamer. Otherwise, there was no explanation as to how Minhyuk could make the Delicate Mountain Goat follow him, right?

Then, Lucaro said, "I believe I will be able to pass the preliminaries and it's all thanks to you. Well then, let's go. I will show you how to make bread."

"Yeeees~!" Minhyuk answered happily.

The two of them entered the shabby bakery with bright smiles on their faces. However, Lucaro remained unaware of the fact that the true successor of the Food God was right here beside him.

Chapter 355: Two Food Gods

Minhyuk followed Lucaro inside the kitchen as they both wore their cooking caps and chef's uniforms.

"Tamer boy, I will tell you something. The first thing that you need to take into account when cooking is hygiene."

"I understand," Minhyuk answered in the affirmative for now, despite being surprised that he was called a tamer.

Meanwhile, Lucaro had started boiling his pre-soaked red beans. After letting the beans boil, he discarded the water and replaced it, before starting a new round of boiling. His movements were very careful, precise, and accurate.

'That's amazing.'

Minhyuk looked at Lucaro in awe. He was just making some red bean paste, but he was completely showing the aura of a master craftsman. There were no gaps or errors, despite not using any

measuring instrument. He was able to pour the exact amount of water and turn off the heat on time, even without using any timer.

Then, Lucaro started to mash the red beans with his remaining hand. However, since he could only use his right hand, it proved to be a difficult task.

“Please let me do it.”

“Will you, please?” Lucaro said, smiling lightly.

Then, Minhyuk began to mash the perfectly boiled red beans. Lucaro’s smile never left his face as he looked at Minhyuk, while he started to make the dough of the bread for the red bean bread.

“They said that the territory will buy the dishes that had passed the preliminaries at twice the price. They will also distribute the purchased bread for free to the citizens of the territory.”

Lucaro was very pleased to hear that they would distribute the bread for free and feed the hungry. He was so happy that the smile never left his face as he did his best in cooking to pass the preliminaries. Lucaro looked just like Minhyuk whenever he saw something delicious and wanted to eat it. He looked completely delighted at the thought of other people being able to eat his bread.

Finely ground flour scattered like falling snow whenever Lucaro’s hands patted the dough. He would also make sure to wipe the sweat that dripped down his forehead with a handkerchief so that it did not interfere with his work. He was truly doing his best and giving it his all, even though he was only making red bean bread. Lucaro was literally the figure of an outstanding master craftsman. Minhyuk let out a gasp in awe after seeing him work.

‘How can he do that with just one hand...’

Then, the sweet red bean bread, made with mountain goat’s milk and perfectly boiled red beans, finally entered the oven and began to bake quickly. Lucaro was smiling like a child as he monitored the bread inside the oven.

While Minhyuk continued to admire Lucaro, notifications suddenly rang in his head.

[You have witnessed how a True Master Craftsman Chef cooks.]

[Your understanding of cooking has increased dramatically.]

[You have gained 100 DEX.]

[The flavor of the dishes that you will make in the future will increase by 30%.]

Lucaro took out the red bean bread from the oven. Steam rushed out from the bread the moment he tore it in two. Minhyuk unknowingly gulped at the sight, wondering about the taste of the red bean paste inside the torn red bean bread.

After tearing the bread in half, Lucaro handed one half to Minhyuk. This was freshly made bread! The only ones that could taste this flavor were the ones that made the bread themselves.

The warmth of the freshly baked bread spread out in Minhyuk’s mouth when he took a bite. There was also the slightly hot red bean paste that teased his tongue in between bites. A smile slowly

curled up at the corners of his lips at the sweetness that enveloped his mouth when he rolled the bread in his mouth.

“It’s really delicious...!”

“Here. Try it with some mountain goat’s milk.”

Gulp, gulp, gulp—

Minhyuk quickly gulped the mountain goat’s milk, while he continued to chew on his red bean bread. The red bean bread that he was chewing melted completely the moment the milk entered his mouth. The feeling was so soft and light that he let out a satisfied sigh.

[You have eaten the Amazing Sweet Red Bean Bread that a Master Craftsman Chef had made with all his might.]

[Your hunger will disappear for a week and your vitality (VIT) will increase by 20%.]

[You have eaten a Sweet Red Bean Bread made by someone of a higher level than you.]

[You can now choose what kind of buff you want in your dish.]

“...!”

Minhyuk was very shocked before turning to look at Lucaro.

“It’s definitely important to have excellent cooking skills, but more than that, I hope that the hungry people of the territory that will eat these sweet red bean bread will be happy.”

The reason why Minhyuk was shocked was because he could choose whatever buff he wanted to put in the dish which effectively brought him to a new level. And this happened just because he ate Lucaro’s dish.

‘It’s only possible because I’m the Food God, right?’

Minhyuk could tell that there would be no enlightenment with regards to cooking if ordinary people ate this bread.

Meanwhile, Lucaro packed his sweet red bean bread in a pretty packaging and headed to the Lord’s Castle.

Gourmet Dragon Banquet.

There were a total of eight judges that would judge the participants for the competition’s preliminaries and finals. Seven of these eight judges were rumored to have excellent palates. They were said to be culinary researchers on par with master craftsmen, actual master craftsman chefs, explorers of culinary ingredients, and eccentric gourmands. The remaining one was both a chef and a contestant, Lord Anton.

As for the Gourmet Dragon Banquet’s preliminaries, the chefs that created the dishes submitted for their perusal would remain hidden. This was to make sure that the judges judge the food, and not the person that cooked the dish.

Anton lifted the best dishes served in front of the seven gourmands. Lord Anton looked at the four dishes presented in front of him.

“What’s the dish that you liked the most?”

The seven gourmands answered Anton’s question without any hesitation. They said, “The sweet red bean bread.”

Although this was just the preliminaries, there were a variety of colorful dishes served to these gourmands. There was a crab meat soup that was made after hunting a kraken, a lollipop made from sugar that has been preserved for hundreds of years, and even pilaf made from beef. These dishes were the epitome of splendor and delicacy itself. However, it made Anton irritated to know that the dish considered to be the best was the most ordinary and insignificant sweet red bean bread.

Although Anton and the seven gourmands were all judges, they were different from each other. The seven gourmands were people that Anton could not control!

‘What the hell happened to these people’s palates?’

Anton thought that their amazing palates had gone to waste over the years. After all, it was very uncharacteristic of them to say that the best dish was the red bean bread. Anton laughed silently as he took a bite of the sweet red bean bread.

“...?”

However, he was left speechless. The texture of the bread was soft, a tell-tale sign of bread having the correct amount of flour in the dough. There was also the sweet red bean paste inside the bread that was just moderately sweet. Any sweeter than this and it would be too repulsive. However, the red bean paste inside had the right amount of sweetness that it could make anyone feel good with just a bite.

“How is it? It’s delicious, right?”

“The chef used ordinary ingredients, but was able to produce the best dish. It’s like we’re looking at the dish made by the Food God of the past.”

Anton, who unknowingly closed his eyes to savor the flavor of the dish, instantly opened his eyes at the sound of the gourmands’ discussion. He also caught the slight hint of mountain goat’s milk towards the end.

‘W...who the hell was able to milk the mountain goat?!’

Anton did not show his shock and maintained his expressionless face.

“Do you think the head chef of Paradise Restaurant is the one that made this bread?”

“We will know who made these dishes soon. Just wait for a while.”

The gourmands continued to talk, while Anton tasted the dishes laid in front of him one after the other. That was when he realized why the other judges deemed the sweet red bean bread as the most delicious dish.

‘Aside from their colorful and showy appearance, their taste is just so-so. However, the bread is not showy or colorful. It’s just plain delicious.’

Once the evaluation of all the dishes had been finished, the identities of the chefs were revealed. Anton had also given the sweet red bean bread the highest score that he could give.

The soup made from kraken meat was made by Paradise Restaurant’s head chef. The other outstanding dishes were also dishes created by the best chefs of Albero Territory. And the sweet red bean bread...

[Lucaro.]

“...?!”

Anton was horrified. The sweet red bean bread was made by Lucaro, the previous Food God’s successor! He felt very flustered, as if his conscience had been stung.

“Lucaro’s hands shouldn’t have become like that.”

“That’s right. I don’t know who it was, but someone broke the hands of such a talented man as Lucaro.”

Then, one of the gourmands asked, “Who could have done something like this?”

“*Cough!*”

The gourmands were well-known figures in the entire world. They were not citizens of Albero Territory in the first place. Anton coughed to dispel the discomfort. He wanted to deny their words, but what could he do? He himself had given a high score to the bread that Lucaro had made.

‘Goddamnit.’

The finals for the qualified contestants would be held tomorrow. It was the day when the Gourmet Dragon would appear.

There were countless people gathered in front of the plaza for the announcement of the qualified contestants. Lucaro and Minhyuk were also among these people. Just like usual, there were plenty of people that criticized Lucaro.

“To work under such trash, get out of our territory!”

“Lucaro!!! You’re a disgrace to our territory!!!”

“Do you think losing one hand is not enough?! Do you want me to rip apart your other limbs?!”

These were the words that the corrupt and fallen chefs shouted at Lucaro. However, Lucaro never lost his pride and dignity.

Then, someone shouted, “You will never be able to pass the preliminaries!!!”

However, Minhyuk snickered in between his words. He thought, *‘Aren’t they just jealous of his talents?’*

They were spouting nonsense out of their jealousy. They were just using the excuse of him serving the Food God to swear and curse at him. They were cursing him out and swearing loudly because of their inferiority complex. That was why they did not need to fight back.

Then, the official announcement of all qualified contestants was posted. And the dish with the highest score as well as the chef that created the dish was...

[Lucaro. Sweet Red Bean Bread.]

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

All of the chefs presents were shocked and horrified. How could he do that when he only had one arm left? What was more shocking was the fact that he only made the most ordinary dish, a sweet red bean bread.

However, something unexpected happened.

“The dishes of the contestants that passed the preliminaries will be distributed free of charge. However, the sweet red bean bread will be excluded.”

“...?!”

Lucaro looked at the announcer in shock and confusion.

“H... how come?!”

“The sweet red bean bread has the power to alleviate someone’s hunger for a week. This power does not fit this place that’s hailed as the Chefs’ Territory. If everyone feels full for a week, the sales of all of the restaurants will drop significantly. This consideration had led to that decision.”

“...!”

Lucaro was not able to savor the joy of passing the preliminaries. All he wanted was to give out his bread to the hungry! Then, Lucaro thought, *‘Things will just continue to be like this.’*

It did not matter if it was in the competition or not. Perhaps, he would even suffer from a sudden raid tonight too.

Then, Minhyuk, who was standing next to him, said, “They won’t share the red bean bread that we made? What does that mean?”

“...What do you mean?”

Lucaro’s face turned stiff as he turned to Minhyuk and said, “What do you mean by ‘we’? I made it?”

“...?”

Lucaro's expression was cold as he said, "Don't be mistaken, mister tamer. I'm the one that prepared that dish, not 'we'."

Then, Lucaro continued to say, "I'm so disappointed in you! How can you be this shameless?!! Get the hell out of this territory right now!! This is how you pay me back, huh?!! You beggar!"

"..."

Minhyuk was speechless. He could not say anything. In the end, Lucaro's spiel ended.

'Tomorrow. Albero Territory will disappear from the world, just as scheduled.'

Lucaro would die, and so would everybody else. This was the end that Lucaro had guessed. He knew that the Gourmet Dragon would not be satisfied. And this ending would never change, unless someone stopped him. At the very least, Lucaro wanted Minhyuk to get away from this place and save himself from the fate of this place.

"I won't listen to you! Go away!!!" Lucaro said, his words filled with barb, but his chest was filled with sorrow and his eyes with grief.

That was when Minhyuk realized. He thought, *'Is this the trial? Does it want me to save Lucaro and this territory?'*

There was also the Legendary Sun's Wheat.

"Ptew!? That's so disgusting! So shameless!!!" Minhyuk said, pretending to spit. He was clear that Lucaro was trying to push him away. He chose to go along and put his mind at ease for now. Still...

"I've worked with you for so long! At least tell me where the Legendary Sun's Wheat is!"

"H...how did you know about the Legendary Sun's Wheat...?"

Lucaro was shocked. How did Minhyuk know about the wheat that was only passed down in the legends? However, instead of pondering deeply over the matter, he thought that it was best to tell him. After all, the place where the Legendary Sun's Wheat was located was further away from Albero Territory.

'Minhyuk, you're a traveler. You shouldn't stay here and die. If you go there, then you will be able to live.'

So, Lucaro angrily said, "Go past that boulder and go to the place closest to the sun, that's where you'll find the Legendary Sun's Wheat! Now that you know already, go away!!!"

At his words, Minhyuk turned around and left without looking back. He disappeared within the crowd of people. As he left, Minhyuk thought, *'I'll be right back, Mister Lucaro.'*

Meanwhile, Lucaro thought, *'Go, go further away and survive, boy.'*

The two people with different thoughts separated ways. And when the next morning came, the curtains for the *'Gourmet Dragon Banquet'* had opened.

Chapter 356: Two Food Gods

Originally, knights and gladiators would be the ones parading inside the magnificent coliseum, but what was present inside instead, were large tables and cooking utensils. The name of each of the seven qualifiers were listed on top of each table, while tens of thousands of spectators filled the seats of the coliseum.

Today, most of the residents of Albero Territory took a break and flocked to the coliseum to witness the competition. They were here to lay their eyes on the Gourmet Dragon, for whom the Food God of the past made a satisfying dish! However, the Food God of the past was now dead, it was now the time for a new Food God to sit on the throne. And this Gourmet Dragon Banquet was the perfect competition to choose the person that would take on the mantle of the previous Food God!

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaa!”

“Waaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

“Food God!”

“Food God!”

Anton, the Territory Lord and Twilight Chef, entered the coliseum amidst the calls of ‘*Food God*’? from the citizens.

He had immediately rushed to Albero Territory after news of the Food God’s death. He was considered to be a man of wealth and power, especially with his restaurants scattered all over the continent. That was why it was not difficult for him to win the favor of the citizens of the Food God’s territory. All he had to do was reduce the tax of the citizens for them to be fond of him. Then, he found some gossipers to spread bad rumors about the previous Food God.

As the lord of the territory, Anton could not be considered to be a bad person. For one, he could just be considered to have bought the title of ‘*Food God*’?with money. However, while he might not be a bad example as a lord, the same could not be said of his capacity as a chef.

He was the one that hired someone to break Lucaro’s left hand, in order to eliminate his rival and the only remaining person that served the previous Food God. He also kept sending people to Lucaro’s place to try and chase him out of the territory. As a chef, it was very unbecoming. In fact, instead of calling him a chef, it was more apt to call him a ‘politician’.

The citizens of the territory that were unaware of his dirty tricks, sang praises to his name. They shouted in joy the moment he entered the coliseum. And the voices of the citizens of the territory exclaimed...

“Our Food God will definitely satisfy the Gourmet Dragon!”

“My goodness! The dragon is the strongest creature in the world! Anton’s the only being that will satisfy the palate of such an existence!!!”

“He said that he would cook what he made today for everyone!!!”

“His dishes have excellent buffs! If you eat his dishes, you won’t feel tired for a few days!!!”

Not long after Lord Anton took to the stage, harsh winds fluttered in the coliseum. The spectators immediately held down their hair as a black shadow fell down on them. The black shadow casted upon them made them look up in the sky.

“The... the Gourmet Dragon!!!”

“The dragon that’s more ferocious and more powerful than any dragon in existence!!!”

“Uwaaaaaaaah!”

“Sc...scary...!”

The Gourmet Dragon stopped in the sky. Surprisingly enough, despite not flapping his wings, he could stay in the sky and look down at them comfortably. He was supporting his tremendous weight and colossal body with the magic Fly! This was an aspect of the dragons, an existence hailed as the king of magic.

Then, the other participating chefs began to appear one after the other.

“Paradise Restaurant’s Balza and his disciples!”

“Sunset Restaurant’s Korean Chef Ager and his disciples!”

“If the Paradise Restaurant is on the glamorous and showy side, the Sunset Restaurant is on the clean and neat side.”

“Kgghk~ So, is it a battle between steak and rice?”

“That’s true!”

The chefs participating brought their disciples and kitchen assistants. After all, the Gourmet Dragon was a dragon of an enormous build! It was not easy for anyone to cook a large amount of dishes alone.

And finally, Lucaro arrived on the stage alone. No cheers and shouts rang out for him. He did not have any colleagues, disciples, nor assistants beside him. He just walked silently by himself. The spectators tried to curse and swear at him, but they could not bring themselves to do so.

‘Wh...what’s this?’

‘He looks quite cool?’

‘He looks confident.’

It was because of the pride and dignity that overflowed from Lucaro’s body. Despite being alone, he exuded a lofty pride and dignity that made the audience fall into a trance. However, the fact that Lucaro came alone would not change. It would still be difficult for him to make a lot of food by himself.

“There will be no time limit set for cooking. The chef that received the highest score from the eight gourmands and the Gourmet Dragon will be the chosen winner. The winner will also receive five legendary ingredients from the *‘Five Legendary Boxes’*.”

“The five legendary ingredients that God sent down to earth!!!”

“They’re the ingredients that the Gods eat in their own world!”

“The best part is that the ingredients that will come out will be entirely dependent on what you want!!!”

“Its value is astronomical!”

The spectators and the chefs were in awe.

The same was true for Paradise Restaurant’s Balza, who thought, *‘The ingredients bestowed by God. The five legendary ingredients. What’s more, we can pull out whatever ingredient we wanted from the box. Every single one of those ingredients is priceless.’*

Balza’s eyes went green with greed. All of the chefs present here were aware that anyone that could win over Anton would be able to become his successor. In other words, once they won, they would be able to grab the position of the lord’s successor. Albero Territory was a territory that could especially appoint the king of a kingdom! Their biggest strength here was cooking. If Balza won this competition, he wanted to make franchises of Paradise Restaurant all over the continent through the king he appointed to make a lot of money. The same was true for the other chefs.

‘I’ll be able to make a lot of money!’

‘Perhaps, I’ll be able to buy several castles and mansions too.’

The chefs were so filled with greed to the point that they were practically drooling from their imagination. All they wanted to do was to fill their own pockets. They never had the desire to see the happiness and pleasure that the others would feel once they ate their cooking.

Among them, a man stood in reverence as he silently paid his own tribute. The man thought, *‘Please grant me the strength so I can raise my head and maintain my pride, my dignity. I sincerely ask this of you my Lord, Food God.’*

The Gourmet Dragon Banquet began just as Lucaro slowly opened his eyes.

Clack!

The chefs brought out their knife roll bags made out of superb monster leather and unfurled them to reveal glittering and colorful kitchen knives. The chefs’ assistants and disciples began to wash and clean their top-notch ingredients, as the chefs grabbed their knives and began to slice, cut and chop.

Tak, tak, tak, tak, tak, tak!

The taste and flavor was very important in cooking, but so was the shape and cut of the ingredients. Even when the chefs were only slicing a carrot, there was not even a single margin of deviation in their movements. Their splendid and showy hand movements were enough to bring out sounds of admiration from the spectators!

“W... wooooooooow!”

The chef from Sunset Restaurant took out a huge cauldron and reached his hand out under it. Then...

Crackle—

A huge fire bloomed under the cauldron.

“The Sunset Restaurant’s head chef has learned Second Tier Magic. According to him, he learned magic just to incorporate it into his cooking. This is a really great feat!”

“The fire will not go out as long as he has his mana. Even the way he controls the fire is excellent.”

Everyone in the audience exclaimed in awe. Meanwhile, Anton, the current territorial lord and the fake Food God, had the territorial castle’s main chefs helping him.

“From what I heard, he only brought SS-grade ingredients.”

“There’s also the Siren’s Tears included among his ingredients, an ingredient that is comparable to the five legendary ingredients.”

“Amazing ingredients! Spectacular skills! Kgghk!”

Among them, a man continued to knead silently with one hand. His movements were very slow which made the audience, who once got fascinated by his momentum, disappointed.

“What can you do alone?!!!”

“Can you even feed the Gourmet Dragon with that?! Why don’t you just go and feed that beggar assistant of yours!!!”

.

“Hahahaha!”

Lucaro’s beggar assistant had stayed with him for a few days, but it seemed like he also grew tired of Lucaro and his pathetic nature!

“Shut up! The competition has no time limit! Don’t disturb them with your noises!”

‘Everyone else’s in a hurry. But, it seems like he doesn’t feel the urgency. His hands continue to move cautiously.’

‘How can he show great kneading skills despite only having one hand? Every time his hand moves, the water and the oil that usually doesn’t mix, comes together. It’s like an art.’

‘He chose pizza as his dish. This dish does not require stir-frying or any other cooking technique except baking. It seems like this is one of his strategies.’

‘However, there’s one problem...’

Compared to others, he made one dish at a time. And every time he made a pizza, he would add it together to create a larger pizza. However, with this process, the pizza would cool down. Pizza was a dish that would become tasteless once it cooled down. The stretchy cheese and toppings would go hard over time and could make anyone that tasted it frown.

For the pizza to be called delicious, it had to have enough heat for the cheese to stretch and for the mouth to feel warm the moment someone ate it. What Lucaro was trying to cook was a double-edged sword.

The gourmands lamented after they watched Lucaro finish his dough.

‘How will he slice and chop his ingredients?’

‘Can he even slice and chop those ingredients properly and neatly with just one hand?’

‘Both the taste and shape of the ingredients in the dish are important.’

The audience were also looking at Lucaro as he stood in front of his rinsed and washed ingredients. He stood out, not only because of his pride and dignity, but also because he was the only participant that participated alone.

Not long after, Lucaro pulled out something from his shabby and worn out bag. The item that he pulled out was none other than his *‘left hand’*.

“...!”

“...!”

The left hand that Lucaro took out was a magic tool. It would move like it was his real hand and would even provide the same warmth as a hand the moment he placed it on top of his missing left hand. This was something that Lucaro had bought with all of his remaining wealth. However, everyone knew that this fake left hand moved slowly and more roughly than a person’s hand! However, the moment Lucaro put it on, something surprising happened...

Tak, tak, tak, tak, tak, tak!

Lucaro’s movements were quick and light, as he began to chop and slice his ingredients skillfully!

“Un... unbelievable...”

“H... how can he do that... with a fake hand too...”

“He practiced a thousand, no, tens of thousands of times by himself!!”

There were limitations to the amount of times that Lucaro could use the fake hand in a day. He used that limited amount of time to practice and grind himself to become skillful with that hand.

‘This is the dish that I’m making, Food God.’

Lucaro’s hands moved swiftly as he chopped and stir-fried his ingredients. His skills did not fall behind Lord Anton, which effectively made everyone watching him shut their mouths. Finally, he placed his pizza in the oven for baking.

“He might be slow... B... but he’s really good...”

“Wow... I have never seen Lucaro cook with both hands until now.”

“H... how can he do it like that?”

The chefs and the citizens of the territory all recognized Lucaro's superb skills. They had always cursed and swore at him, but they finally realized that they had to acknowledge his skills and abilities.

Finally, the pizza came out of the oven.

"G... gulp..."

"Looks, looks delicious..."

"I have always cursed at Lucaro, but I won't deny the fact that the bread he makes is the best of the best. I've tasted it once... the taste is something that I can never forget."

"Wow, look at that bubbling cheese!"

Under everyone's amazement, Lucaro was able to finish six pizzas in under two hours. Lucaro hovered his hand on top of the pizza to check its temperature.

"..."

The temperature of the pizza had fallen. The once-warm pizza had now cooled down, while the other chefs were still preparing their own ingredients. The chefs were aiming to create a warm dish by cooking a large portion in one go. But, that was something that was only possible if there were plenty of people. For Lucaro, who was all by himself, it was nigh impossible.

Lucaro thought, *'If only I had the Legendary Sun's Wheat...'*

What was the Legendary Sun's Wheat? It was an ingredient that grew under the direct, glaring heat of the sun and could produce food that would never cool down, nor get soggy. It was a legendary ingredient that would maintain the best temperature suited for the dish, or for human consumption. As long as he had that ingredient... For some reason, he suddenly remembered the boy, Minhyuk, that he kicked out.

'Go farther away from here. Never look back.'

Lucaro smiled bitterly at the thought.

Tick, tick, tick, tick, tick—

The time was up for Lucaro's left hand. The once swiftly moving hand lost its power and stopped moving according to his will. However, he was Lucaro and he would never give up. He continued to spread his pizza dough and sprinkle it with toppings. His feet moved swiftly taking him from one end of his table to another. The chefs standing on the same stage looked at Lucaro in awe when they saw how he was moving.

"A true master craftsman..."

"He doesn't know the words *'giving up'...*"

"He hasn't given up yet! His eyes are still burning with the will to win!"

They looked at Lucaro in awe, the person that they had cursed all their lives. However, Lucaro was already reaching his limits. Cooking was a task that required a lot of energy after all. Lucaro continued to move swiftly until...

“Ugh!”

He tripped on something!

The biggest setback that could happen was his right hand, the hand that he used to cook, was bent awkwardly in order to support his falling body. Tremendous pain shot through Lucaro’s right hand. However, he just shakily stood up as he hurriedly moved again, completely ignoring the pain in his body.

Lucaro placed the pizza on a wide iron plate and tried to put it in the oven with his right hand alone. However, another shot of tremendous pain spiked in his right hand, causing him to lose his grip on the tray.

“N... no!”

All Lucaro could do was lament the fact that he would lose this pizza. Just then, someone supported his right hand...

Grab—

...and helped him place the pizza in the oven. Lucaro slowly turned to look at the person that helped him.

‘Who is it? Is there anyone here that’s even willing to help me like this?’

The man that helped him smiled widely at him and said, “Head chef! How can you cook without your assistant! You’re really too much!”

The man was completely covered in dirt with obvious signs of burns all over his body. It would not even be strange if the man were to fall down right away, but he was still smiling brightly in front of Lucaro.

Murmur, murmur—

The audience began to murmur. Surprisingly, someone came to help Lucaro. However, the appearance of the person that came to help him was very unusual. He looked burnt, but his face was very familiar.

“He... he’s the beggar that used to live with Lucaro, right?”

“He’s the one that came to our restaurant to beg for food!”

The murmurs grew louder.

Meanwhile, the man, Minhyuk, looked at the pizza that Lucaro made. The pizza had grown cold. Then, Minhyuk said, “Head chef, I got you the ingredients that will help you make food that will never grow cold.”

Minhyuk took a bag out of his inventory. The moment he opened the bag...

Crackle—

...a pillar of flame burst out.

“Urkl!” Lucaro groaned as he took a step back in shock. However, he felt something strange. He thought, *‘It doesn’t feel hot?’*

Then, the flames that shot out of the bag were sucked back into the ingredient. The ingredient was none other than wheat, wheat that devoured the red sun as it lit up the entire coliseum.

Chapter 357: Two Food Gods

Crackle—

The blazing flames brought a red tint to the wheat!

“No... no way...” Lucaro said in disbelief.

The Legendary Sun’s Wheat was something that he himself, and even the territory’s Lord Anton, could not harvest. No, to be exact, it was something that no one had ever harvested yet. The only one that had ever harvested this wheat was the true, genuine Food God. The tales about the amazing dishes that he created with the Legendary Sun’s Wheat had surprised the world and were still widely spread. In fact, it was not just Lucaro who was surprised by this feat.

“The... the Legendary Sun’s Wheat...?!”

“That superb ingredient that would never cool down...?!”

“That, that’s impossible...! H... how can a beggar like that obtain the Legendary Sun’s Wheat?!”

The audience was in a buzz. Even the gourmands jumped to their feet to get a glimpse of the shining red Sun’s Wheat.

Anton, on the other hand, was trembling. He said, “H...how can this be...?”

The Legendary Sun’s Wheat was an ingredient that the Sun God had gifted to Albero Territory after tasting the Food God’s delectable dishes. However, this ingredient was something that only one person could harvest and that person was none other than the true Food God. The Legendary Sun’s Wheat was known for its divine flavor, its ability to maintain the most suitable temperature at all times, and its ability to not let any food spoil forever. These special abilities were what made it deserving of the name *‘Legendary’*. However, surprisingly enough, the man that was burnt black and was standing next to Lucaro, was actually able to get and bring the Legendary Sun’s Wheat!

“L... Lord... It’s the Legendary Sun’s Wheat...!”

“What should we do?”

Anton bit his lips and reluctantly shook his head at the words of the castle chefs. He said, “The Legendary Sun’s Wheat is not an ingredient that anyone can cook.”

The Legendary Sun’s Wheat was a very sensitive ingredient. Just one mistake in cooking would make it lose its flavor. The wheat would even go so far as devour itself and burn the entire dish. Whether it was in the past or the future, the only person that could cook the Legendary Sun’s Wheat was none other than the Food God. There was no way that the crippled Lucaro and his beggar

assistant would be able to achieve such a feat. In fact, Anton's mouth was already curled into a hideous grin.

'No. I might be able to cook the Legendary Sun's Wheat.'

From what Anton could see, the young man had an unknown power that allowed him to harvest the Legendary Sun's Wheat. If that was the case, then?

'I have to get that young man to my side and make him harvest the Legendary Sun's Wheat for me.'

That alone would allow Anton to gain a lot of things. Money, honor, power. He would even receive a baptism and be reborn as the chef that successfully cooked a dish with the Legendary Sun's Wheat. The thought alone made a smile appear on Anton's lips.

It only took Anton a split second to finish the plot in his mind that he needed to play out, in order to take everything away from Lucaro. He smiled as he looked at the young man, Minhyuk, who was smiling while standing next to Lucaro and spreading the Legendary Sun's Wheat.

Minhyuk realized what he needed to do in this trial after being scolded by Lucaro in the plaza and told to leave the territory. What he needed to do was to harvest the Legendary Sun's Wheat, help Lucaro obtain victory, and reveal the fact that Anton was a fake, and did not deserve the title of 'Food God'.

After a while, Minhyuk was able to reach the place that Lucaro said was where the Legendary Sun's Wheat was located.

Shwaaaa—

A blast of hot steam engulfed Minhyuk's entire body. The place was located near an active volcano. Minhyuk's eyes darted around and saw the Legendary Sun's Wheat spread out in a six meter radius, while blasting off hot steam. It was as if it was lava, with how hot the air was around it. The sight was very spectacular. The Legendary Sun's Wheat glowed a reddish light from the flames that frolicked around it. It was an ingredient that was very hard to come by.

'I want to have a taste of the Legendary Sun's Wheat.'

On top of being a hard to come by ingredient, it was also wheat that could only be seen in *Athenae*. Still in awe at the greatness of the *Athenae* Production Team, Minhyuk took a step forward. The more steps he took, the stronger the heat that licked his skin. Minhyuk's body was already soaking with sweat, even though he was still three meters away from the Legendary Sun's Wheat. When he was only a meter away from it, he felt like his body was on fire from the heat that the Legendary Sun's Wheat was emitting.

[Your HP has dropped by 2%.]

[Your HP has dropped by 3%.]

[Your HP has dropped by 3%.]

[Your body has sustained a huge burn.]

[Your movements have been restricted.]

[The damage from the burn has become higher.]

[Your HP has dropped by 5%.]

[Your HP has dropped by 5%.]

“Urk!” Minhyuk groaned as he hurriedly retreated.

He only stood a meter away from the Legendary Sun’s Wheat for around three seconds at most, but his HP had already decreased by 18%. The heat from the flames of the wheat was so strong that it could make his HP drop in percentages. The fact that this damage was only caused by the residual heat emitting from the wheat, and not from direct contact with the flames inside the wheat, was very frightening. In fact, Minhyuk’s shabby clothes were already burnt black just by the heat alone.

‘Once I get there...’

Minhyuk could not imagine what would happen to him once he went inside the six meter radius to harvest the wheat.

‘There’s not much information available about the Legendary Sun’s Wheat. However, I know that most of the chefs have given up on harvesting them because they can’t bear the heat and can’t get close to it.’

At least 90% of those that tried to harvest the Legendary Sun’s Wheat had fled from the heat. So, what about the remaining 10%?

‘They died after being devoured by the fire of the Legendary Sun’s Wheat.’

If that was the case, how did the Food God harvest the Legendary Sun’s Wheat?

‘The harvesting process doesn’t seem to be that difficult.’

Farming in *Athenae* was very difficult compared to reality. One needed to have a high DEX and excellent farming skills to be able to do so. However, harvesting the Legendary Sun’s Wheat became an almost impossible feat, since only those with skills above master craftsman could do so. But, even if there were master craftsmen available to harvest them, it would still take them a lot of time to do so. In other words, this place was the perfect burial for the slow master craftsmen that dared to harvest the Legendary Sun’s Wheat.

Based on those facts, Minhyuk confirmed that he would be able to harvest the Legendary Sun’s Wheat as long as he went inside that area. However, the problem still stood.

How could he overcome those flames and heat to go inside and harvest the wheat? Minhyuk had a high magical defense and high fire attribute resistance. Even his STM was high enough that it could surpass ordinary chefs several times over.

‘What do I have in common with the original Food God?’

What Minhyuk needed to do was to find his and the Food God’s common ground.

‘Maybe use God’s Cooking Skills? No. Cooking and harvesting are two completely different skills. If that’s not it, then what? Ignoring the penalty when eating? No. This has nothing to do with that either.’

Minhyuk pondered deeply about this matter until he finally reached a conclusion. He thought, *‘I can increase my fire attribute resistance.’*

He did not need to last longer than an hour inside that area, all he needed was a scant few minutes. But for him to last those few minutes, he needed to increase his fire resistance. The pieces of the puzzle were finally in place. Thanks to Lucaro, Minhyuk learned and acquired the power to choose the buff that he wanted to focus on in a dish.

‘I’ll use all my buff to increase my fire attribute resistance in this dish.’

Originally, buffed dishes were dishes meant to increase various abilities and powers in the consumers’ body evenly. After all, a dramatic increase in STR would not result in a good outcome if the one that ate the dish did not have the speed (SPD) to hit the enemy with that STR. The only outcome would be failure.

The same was true for AGI. A dramatic increase in AGI would mean nothing if they could not deal enough damage from their quick attacks. That was why it was always recommended to have a balanced, even buff to dishes. However, Minhyuk’s situation right now would be an exception.

“Let’s Have a Meal!”

Minhyuk was done thinking. Now, he needed to try and execute the plan. He also made sure to use his skill *Let’s Have a Meal*, since he would be able to have a higher chance of getting a higher grade dish inside the barrier. Minhyuk continuously ate to increase his fire attribute resistance. Then, the notifications rang.

[You have eaten the Tonkatsu with Capsaicin Sauce.]

[Your Fire Attribute Resistance has increased by 52%.]

From what was seen from the notifications, the buff increase for resistances was much higher compared to stat increases. No matter how intense someone ate to increase their STR stat, the highest that they could get would be at around 30%. However, it was different for resistances. Minhyuk was able to increase his fire attribute resistance by 52%. After seeing the increase in his resistance, Minhyuk immediately stood up and jumped into the ring of heat.

Crackle—

A huge flame burst out and engulfed his body the moment he entered the area. However, Minhyuk thought that it would be worth it as long as he could endure the heat. He was willing to use all of the skills that he could use to harvest all of the wheat around him. Now, the only question was whether harvesting the wheat was as easy as what he heard. So, Minhyuk reached his hand holding a sickle out and tried to harvest the Legendary Sun’s Wheat.

Slash—

[You have successfully harvested 1 kilogram of Legendary Sun’s Wheat.]

[You are the first person to harvest the Legendary Sun’s Wheat.]

[You have gained 200 DEX.]

[Your Fire Attribute Resistance has increased by +10.]

“...!”

Minhyuk felt relieved. Thankfully, harvesting the Legendary Sun's Wheat was truly easy. The game system was even generous enough to allow him to harvest in kilograms with every slash. It was not a small amount at all.

Minhyuk quickly moved to harvest the Legendary Sun's Wheat. Although the heat was scalding and had engulfed his entire body, he endured and persevered through the task.

‘*There's someone who believes in me,*’ Minhyuk thought as he recalled the warm smile on Lucaro's face. The chef that had the same values and beliefs as himself. Someone that also did not want to see anyone go hungry in this world. Minhyuk endured the harsh and scalding heat and continued to harvest the wheat for this man.

Slash— slash—

[You have successfully harvested 1.2 kilograms of Legendary Sun's Wheat.]

[Your Fire Attribute Resistance has increased by +5.]

Slash—?

[You have successfully harvested 0.9 kilograms of Legendary Sun's Wheat.]

[Your Fire Attribute Resistance has increased by +5.]

The amount of wheat that he could harvest after the first few harvests became smaller subsequently. But it did not matter. Anyone that would eat a dish made from the Legendary Sun's Wheat would be able to receive a tremendous effect.

Minhyuk continued to harvest the Legendary Sun's Wheat and was able to harvest everything by the time his HP reached below 4%. Then, something amazing happened. The blazing flames that emitted a scalding heat as it surrounded the Legendary Sun's Wheat got sucked inside the wheat that Minhyuk harvested.

Crackle—

The flames burned brightly, but Minhyuk did not feel the heat at all. Then, the notifications began to ring in his ears one after the other.

[You have successfully harvested all of the Legendary Sun's Wheat.]

[You have gained +15 to all five of your basic stats.]

[You have gained 200 DEX.]

[The Legendary Sun's Wheat is an ingredient that can only be cooked by those that possessed the God's Cooking Skill and the One Acknowledged by the Food God.]

[You have harvested one of the Five Legendary Ingredients.]

[What are the Five Legendary Ingredients? Please check the book.]

[You have acquired the Truth Droplets.]

[You can now reveal that you are the Food God in Albero Territory.]

[You have acquired the Sacred Drink for the One Acknowledged by the Food God.]

[Find the One Acknowledged by the Food God and give him the Sacred Drink.]

Minhyuk immediately ran to where the Gourmet Dragon Banquet Competition was being held the moment the notifications ended.

Lucaro could not say anything. Minhyuk had come back. He could not understand why he did so, but he could see that Minhyuk was still smiling softly at him. Then, he looked at the Legendary Sun's Wheat that was spread out and shining brightly before mourning, "Why did you come back?! Look at you getting all injured like this! Your body is even black all over! Boy!!"

Minhyuk's smile turned even softer after hearing Lucaro's words. The man was more concerned about his state than the competition right now. He did not even give another glance at the Legendary Sun's Wheat that was spread out in front of him after seeing the state of Minhyuk's body.

Then, Minhyuk handed the Sacred Drink to Lucaro. He thought, *'The Sacred Drink for the One Acknowledged by the Food God.'*

Minhyuk could tell who this drink was for. That person was none other than Lucaro. He said, "Mister Lucaro, this drink is left by the Food God for you."

"...?!"

Lucaro could not understand the words that Minhyuk told him. What did he mean by that?

"I received this after harvesting the Legendary Sun's Wheat. He already expected this to happen. Everything that happened in this territory, the greed, the chaos, the disaster, he had anticipated everything."

Lucaro's hands were trembling as he accepted the drink from Minhyuk. The contents of the drink inside the transparent glass bottle was shining mysteriously with various colors.

"It seems like the Food God loves you dearly," Minhyuk said as he smiled brightly at Lucaro.

However, Lucaro just looked at him as if he could not understand what was happening.

'How can this boy in front of me harvest the Legendary Sun's Wheat? How can he bring this drink that was left behind by the Food God? How can this young beggar, who loves food more than anyone else, and has a pure and innocent laugh, do such things?'

Minhyuk saw the questions flashing in Lucaro's eyes. So, he opened his mouth and answered, "Because, I'm the Food God. And just like the previous Food God, I care deeply about you too, Lucaro."

"...!"

Lucaro's heart thumped wildly.

The man that he longed to meet once again. The man that he placed his trust and faith in. That man was now standing in front of him, with a bright and wide smile on his face.

Chapter 358: Two Food Gods

Lucaro had been fighting an uphill battle all by himself, for a long time. This was the case ever since the rumors about the original Food God being an evil and vicious person started circulating. Rumors about how he looted, pillandered, and killed other races to fill his stomach and eat their food for himself, surfaced one after the other. However, Lucaro denied the claims every time.

'He's a good person. He's someone that doesn't want anyone to go hungry in the world.'

But Lucaro's words were met with curses and stones. The people swore at him, pointed fingers at him, and spat at his storefront. Nevertheless, his belief remained firm. He protected the Food God's legacy by himself. He was truly alone. He was the only one that believed in the Food God.

Oftentimes, he would wonder if Allen was not the God that he thought he was, but because of the piece of bread that he handed over to him, Lucaro was able to remain steadfast in his trust towards him, as he continued to stand by him and think about him. And right now, his God had responded to his pride and dignity. Lucaro gulped down the drink that Minhyuk had handed over to him without any hesitation.

Then, Anton approached them. He wanted to bring Minhyuk over to his side, thoroughly bringing despair upon Lucaro. He acted as if he was astonished with the sudden turn of events and said, "H... hey! The Legendary Sun's Wheat will burn a normal person's hands the moment they touch it! Even if this competition is very important, you shouldn't risk something like that!!!"

Anton acted as if he was concerned, but Minhyuk could tell what he wanted to say.

'Stop acting pretentiously. This is an ingredient that the likes of you can't touch.'

The same thought ran through the minds of everybody else. Then, the gourmands began to speak one after the other.

"We are very grateful that you allowed us to see the light of the Legendary Sun's Wheat, stranger. We can see yours and Lucaro's will. This is more than enough to spread your name to the future generations."

"We hope that you don't try to go any further. We do not wish to see any more of your sacrifices. A chef's hands are his most important assets, and it could burn away from your willful sacrifice."

"You should stop cooking, we still need talented people like you!"

There were also the spectators!

Clap, clap, clap, clap!

"You did well enough, Lucaro!!!"

"Thank you for showing us the Legendary Sun's Wheat!!!"

“Please stop now!!! We don’t wish to lose someone like you!!!”

“Please stop!!!”

The spectators and the gourmands applauded their bravery and contributions.

‘*Morons...*’ Anton thought, as he watched the scene unfold.

Why did they sing praises for Lucaro? What did he even do? Anton firmly believed that Lucaro did not deserve those applause. After all, he was not someone that could cook the Legendary Sun’s Wheat. On the other hand, Anton might have a chance to do so. So, they should stop applauding him! The person that they needed to applaud was him!

Anton really could not understand the thoughts of the people. Instead, he said, “It’s not an ingredient you can handle.”

Right at that moment, something strange happened. The place where Lucaro’s left hand should be now had a left hand made of light. Then, the notifications rang for Lucaro after he finished drinking the drink that Minhyuk handed to him.

[You have drunk the Sacred Drink for the One Acknowledged by the Food God.]

[Your latent and dormant potential is being drawn and raised.]

[You have opened your eyes to a new level.]

[You can now cook the Five Legendary Ingredients.]

[As the One Acknowledged by the Food God that drank the Sacred Drink, you have temporarily acquired God’s Cooking Skill.]

Then, Lucaro made eye contact with Minhyuk. He said, “Boy, you’re really a chef, huh? No. You’re truly the one that has succeeded the Food God of the past.”

“Yes. I’m not a tamer.”

Then, the two of them both raised their hands towards the blazing red Legendary Sun’s Wheat, which evoked an extraordinary scene.

Shwaaaaaaa—

The flames that covered the Legendary Sun’s Wheat were sucked in both of their hands.

Minhyuk was the Food God. He was someone that had learned and mastered ‘*God’s Cooking*’ skills. On the other hand, Lucaro was the One Acknowledged by the Food God. He was someone that had ‘*temporarily acquired God’s Cooking skill*’ and was the person that could cook the ‘*Five Legendary Ingredients*’. These two people began to grind the burning Sun’s Wheat until its texture became fine and smooth. The movements of their hands were very illusory and worthy of the title of a master craftsman.

The ever-burning Sun’s Wheat had soon turned into white flour. However, the two of them did not stop. The temperature of the Sun’s Wheat flour remained hot, yet not as scalding as the burning flames when cooking, as they added water and began to knead. They both kneaded at the same rhythm and in cadence, with their fantastic and illusory skills. It was as if they were dancing to a tune that only they knew.

Not long after, the dough, which was once as round as a ball, spread out gently in a wide circle, while emitting a dazzling red light. The dough was like a peacock showing its beautiful feathers for everyone to see.

Then, the two of them both grabbed their knives at the same time. Minhyuk was using the Food God's Kitchen Knife, the item that he attributed to Beanie, while Lucaro used the kitchen knife that he used in the past, as they both sliced and chopped the toppings.

Tak, tak, tak, tak, tak, tak—

Tak, tak, tak, tak, tak, tak—

The two men stood facing each other as they sliced, chopped and cut the ingredients on their respective chopping boards. Lucaro and Minhyuk's gazes met in the air.

'Even if I die now, I wouldn't have any regrets. After all, he responded to me and my faith in him.'

'You have to live longer. Let's save this territory together.'

The various ingredients for the toppings, like cheese and the likes, were sliced and chopped nicely before getting sprinkled evenly on top of the dough twinkling with a red light.

Both of their hands moved swiftly and accurately. After they finished chopping the ingredients, they immediately washed their hands and dried them, before proceeding with the next steps. Even if they were in the midst of a hectic cooking competition, they did not forget the most basic and most important part of cooking... 'Cleanliness'.

"Ah, aaaaaaaaah...!" A woman from among the crowd could not help but burst out in awe and admiration, after witnessing their fantastic cooking skills and tandem.

'Two Food Gods!'

More than that, what she felt as she watched the Food God and the One Acknowledged by the Food God cook, was actually warmth. Of course, she knew that Lucaro was just a shabby bakery owner, and the other man was just a ragged young beggar, but for some reason, she felt as if tears would fall down her cheeks as she watched the two cook.

Then, Lucaro asked, "Boy, what do you think cooking is?"

"Something that anyone, whether they are a man or a woman, rich or poor, sad or happy, without any distinction at all, can eat. That is cooking."

"Then, what do you think a chef is?"

"Someone that will give his all to cook for you, for me, or for anybody else.

Sometimes, they will smile when they see someone eat their dishes, sometimes they will feel disappointed whenever they see someone grimace at the food that they made, and tell them that it barely fits their taste. Although that might be the case, they are still the creators of one of the most amazing and greatest things in the world," Minhyuk said as he wiped off the water from his kitchen knife before moving

again. His kitchen knife moved swiftly as a bright light scattered from its movements. He continued to say, "That's what a chef is."

Lucaro smiled softly. Those were the words that Anton would never understand in his life. Meanwhile, the gourmands were all in awe.

"The sound of their movements sound just like a fantastic performance made by superb performers."

"The sound when they slice the ingredients, the sound of the water dripping, even the sound of the oven heating up. All of these sounds put together creates a harmony! It's practically music to our ears."

"Their movements are faster, more sophisticated, more elegant than any other chefs that I have seen before."

"Lucaro is one thing, but who is that stranger?"

While the gourmands were in awe, there was a man that felt hurried. That man was none other than Anton.

'Crazy bastards!'

Anton quickly went back to his place and began to cook again. He was in disbelief. He could not understand the reactions of the gourmands and the people in the stands.

'What food can they even make?'

It was just 'pizza', a food that was commonly enjoyed by ordinary people. It was a very common dish where they place plenty of toppings on bread, sprinkle it with cheese and bake it in an oven. What was that compared to the food that he was making? The dish that he was making was a luxurious dish that only consisted of awe-inspiring ingredients that could never be bought, or eaten, by anyone easily, even if they had the money. These were the delicacies that the former Emperor, Adron, enjoyed! However, the people around him only cared about the pizza. They did not even pay attention to the delicacy that he was making!

Then, the chefs finished their dishes one after the other.

Ager, Sunset Restaurant's master of Korean dishes, made bibimbap. The enormous bowl where the dish was placed was much larger than the large pot that companies usually used in their canteens. The ingredients inside the bowl were beautifully laid out with a surprisingly large yolk placed in the center. This yolk was from the drake's egg.

The Gourmet Dragon was a monster. That was why they made delicacies with ingredients that were enticing for monsters.

Balza, Paradise Restaurant's head chef, cooked steak together with his disciples. A large slab of meat was placed on top of a gigantic plate, coupled with countless grilled and roasted cherry tomatoes, onions, and well-chopped, stir-fried garlic.

Anton, on the other hand, made a delicacy that was usually enjoyed by Emperors. Foie gras. It was a dish that was made with goose liver, an expensive ingredient with high fat content that could not

be normally enjoyed by ordinary people. The fact that Anton and his disciples created it together gave it an astronomical value.

The chefs had finished their dishes, but there were still some other people cooking. They were none other than Minhyuk and Lucaro, these two people. Cooking was something that could not be hurried, even if they were skillful.

While the two of them continued to cook, the Gourmet Dragon transformed himself into a hatchling. With his somewhat smaller size, he slowly landed in front of the dishes. He looked at the dishes in turn, while the gourmands also turned to look at the dishes.

“*Gulp*,” Paradise Restaurant’s Balza gulped when he met with the snake-like eyes of the Gourmet Dragon that landed in front of him.

Not long after, the Gourmet Dragon slowly lowered his snout to taste the plate of steak placed in front of him. He began chewing slowly. However, his expression soon distorted into a grimace. He said, “That taste is very fancy.”

“Haha. Of course. It’s a dish that we made for Your Excellency Gourmet Dragon.”

“It’s not good enough.”

“I’m sorry?”

“Cooking is not just about getting the best ingredients. Sometimes, cheaper ingredients can help you achieve a better flavor for your dish. Somehow, you made something like this, with those expensive ingredients.”

“...”

Balza trembled. The Gourmet Dragon’s words meant that his dish was worth 70,000 reeked of money alone. Then, the gourmands also tasted his steak.

“It doesn’t taste like the steak the Balza usually makes.”

“I can’t believe that he made something taste this fancy and showy for the banquet...”

Rather than serving something delicious, Balza served something that tasted worse. This was because they were trapped with the notions of ‘*ingredients*’ and ‘*fancy*’.

Meanwhile, the bibimbap.

“*Ptew!*” The Gourmet Dragon spat the dish without any scruples. He said, “Monster ingredients and human ingredients are ingredients that taste differently. However, one can find a way to make them complement each other properly. For some reason, this dish tastes like trash.”

“...!”

The chefs panicked. Who were they? They were the best chefs of Albero Territory, the chefs that have reached the ‘*Master Craftsman rank*’! But the Gourmet Dragon had deemed their dishes to be trash.

Just like that, most of the chefs' dishes had been shunned by the Gourmet Dragon. These were dishes that the gourmands had praised as delicious, but once the Gourmet Dragon tasted them, all he would say was that it tasted bad.

That was right. He was the '*Gourmet*' Dragon. He was a very picky dragon, especially with the food that passes through his palate. Not only did he take into account the taste and flavor of the dish, he also took into account the heart and soul of the chef that they imparted in their dishes.

In a blink of an eye, the Gourmet Dragon has arrived in front of Anton. Anton looked very nervous, his eyes darting to one place. That was the place where Minhyuk was placing the pizza on the gourmands' table. The gourmands had asked to taste the pizza that Lucaro and Minhyuk had made, while they were waiting for the Gourmet Dragon. Anton hurriedly looked back only to meet with the eyes of the Gourmet Dragon.

"I heard that you call yourself '*Food God*'."

"It's just flattery on their part."

Contrary to his seemingly humble answer, Anton's back was straight and proud. No, he even looked arrogant. It seemed like he was telling them that they should not compare him to the Food God of the past. He was a far better person than him!

The Gourmet Dragon lowered his snout and tasted the foie gras that Anton made. The food passed through his big mouth and went down his throat. With his eyes closed, the Gourmet Dragon said, "How... how... How can it taste like this..."

"...!"

Anton was very delighted to hear his words. He was the Twilight Chef and the lord of Albero Territory! Just one taste of his food and the Gourmet Dragon was filled with admiration!

The spectators and gourmands turned to look at the scene. The Gourmet Dragon slowly opened his eyes and said, "How can your food taste and smell like this? It has the flavor of greed and a very vile stench..."

"..."

What made Anton devastated were the words that the Gourmet Dragon uttered next.

"This is a dish of someone that wants to take power. You must have trampled on a lot of people to make this dish. Just how many did you drag down?"

Anton could not understand his words. His dish was reeking with greed? The Gourmet Dragon's words also implied that his cooking was not delicious. He completely denied these words.

However, at that moment...

"Ah, aaaaah... aaaaaah...!"

Someone exclaimed from somewhere. Anton and the Gourmet Dragon both turned their heads to the direction of the sound. The one that made a fuss was none other than one of the seven gourmands. He was the man standing in the center of all the other gourmands. The name tag attached to his chest said '*Lonesome Gourmand Arcay*'.

Who was the Lonesome Gourmand Arcay? He was well-known among the humans to be the most difficult to please, and had quite the picky palate. He was someone that could completely grasp the essence of the food and taste the true flavors inside the dish. He was also very famous for being strict.

The Lonesome Gourmand Arcay was such a man. However, tears started to flow down his cheeks the moment he took a bite of the pizza that was served in front of him.

“Aaaaaaah...!”

Arcay’s tears kept on flowing down his cheeks as his cries echoed inside the coliseum.

Chapter 359: Two Food Gods

The gourmands were left in confusion after watching Arcay burst into tears when he tasted the pizza in front of them.

‘Arcay, that Arcay... burst into tears...?’

‘He’s the most picky among all of the gourmands. So, how come...’

The audience sitting in the stands were in a buzz.

“Did, did you see? He’s definitely smiling, but tears keep on dripping down his cheeks!”

“Maybe they’re tears of joy?”

“He ate something delicious, so it’s definitely tears of joy!”

The people in the audience began to wonder what the pizza tasted like. As if wondering the same thing, the other gourmands hurriedly took a slice of pizza and took a bite of it. The moment they took a bite...

Crunch—

...the crispy, crunchy texture of the pizza greeted their mouths. It was immediately followed by a chewy texture which became more evident the more they chewed the pizza in their mouths.

‘How? How did they do this?’

It was very difficult to both incorporate the crunchy and crispy texture in the first bite, and the chewy texture right after. In fact, the warm bread was both crispy and moist. All in all, the bread was amazing.

What about the toppings? Putting too much cheese on a pizza might make it feel too greasy in the mouth. To counter this, the tomato sauce should be added in perfect ratio with the cheese. This would complement the greasiness of the cheese. The tomato sauce’s slightly tangy flavor, with a hint of sweetness, should be able to catch the cheese’s greasiness and create a perfect harmony.

However, when compared to other pizzas, this pizza’s cheese was not too greasy, and even its tomato sauce was perfectly flavored. It was flawless. And then, there were the other toppings that they had sprinkled on top of the cheese and tomato sauce.

The pizza made by Minhyuk and Lucaro differed across the sections. There was a bulgogi portion, Hawaiian portion, cheese portion, pepperoni portion, and many more. Dozens of these portions gathered together and created one round and whole pizza for the Gourmet Dragon.

“Aaaah... How, how can someone achieve such harmony in just a slice of pizza?”

“D... delicious! It’s really delicious! This is the best!”

Rush, rush, rush—

The audience were once again agitated. The gourmands were all noble men. They were people that usually maintained their noble aura and dignity, having served as an empire or a kingdom’s representative under the title ‘Gourmand’. And these very people were now hastily grabbing the pizza with their own bare hands, not minding the fact that they forgot to maintain their prestige or image.

Gulp, gulp, gulp—

The gourmands even enjoyed a refreshing and cool cola with ice to go along with the pizza, which made them completely satisfied.

“I... I want to eat more...”

“Just, just one more slice and I won’t wish for more.”

The gourmands were filled with infinite longing. They felt that just having another slice would make them wish for nothing else anymore. But, as for the audience that watched them eat...

“We... we want to eat too...”

“It looks delicious...”

“I wonder how good that is?”

“Heuooooook!”

These were the voices of countless people in the audience. But Minhyuk and Lucaro, both sporting nice and bright smiles on their faces, continued to cook under their scrutiny. The Gourmet Dragon also turned his back completely from Anton, as he gazed at the two people that were still cooking.

Meanwhile, Anton trembled at the sight. He thought, ‘*That’s just bread...!*’

Anton firmly believed that pizza and foie gras were two fundamentally different dishes. His foie gras was a dish that was very difficult for ordinary people to come by. But, pizza was just an ordinary dish. It was a common dish that anyone could eat. Was such a trivial dish better than his foie gras?

Anton thought that everyone was crazy. However, there were things that he did not know. For one, whenever people had the thought of eating, the first thing that they would think of was usually ordinary and readily-accessible dishes. People that were experiencing hunger would rarely think of ‘foie gras’ or ‘caviar’, luxurious dishes that they rarely came across.

Anton still did not show any signs of remorse as he went back to where his disciples were. Then, he ordered, “As soon as the competition ends, once that man and Lucaro comes out of the coliseum, kill them.”

“Huh? But... but...”

“Kill them. I don’t want to say it twice. Use any means necessary.”

It was not just their hands, Anton had ordered to take their lives away. He was showing the epitome of filth and ugliness.

Minhyuk and Lucaro were still cooking as the Gourmet Dragon, the gourmands, the other chefs, and the rest of the audience looked at their dishes. There was a huge fuss around them, but they looked like they could not hear them at all. The two of them could only see each other. With joyful smiles plastered on their faces, the two of them continued to knead, sprinkle the toppings, and bake their pizza.

Minhyuk was completely immersed in a state of happiness, one that was brought about by cooking! There was a time when he found pleasure and happiness only in eating, but after becoming the Food God, he also found such happiness in cooking. And for Minhyuk, cooking with Lucaro, someone that had been waiting for his existence for a long time, brought a great deal of happiness in him.

The two of them had been baking pizza for more than five hours already. But for some reason, the two looked like they were not tired at all. It was also because of their tireless actions, that a welcome notification rang for Minhyuk.

[The Skill: Will has been triggered.]

[All skills and abilities related to DEX will temporarily increase by 24%.]

Minhyuk had received the passive skill ‘Will’ during his early days of playing *Athenae*. It was a skill that could only be triggered, if someone continuously exerted their best effort and showed their greatest passion towards something. Whenever this skill got triggered, the fatigue weighing down on Minhyuk’s body would disappear in an instant. Even his head would become clear and his DEX would also temporarily increase. With the 24% increase in DEX, Minhyuk’s hand movements became even more skillful.

The Gourmet Dragon Banquet placed a huge importance on the taste and flavor of the dish. However, the ability to place ‘buffs’ and reaching a higher ‘grade’ were also important. This was because the Gourmet Dragon Banquet was also a competition to select the best chef of the territory. Naturally, the two of them would do their best.

Six hours had already passed by, but the two of them were still kneading, placing toppings, and baking pizza. An hour after that, the two finally baked their final pizza.

The largest pizza ever baked as recorded in the Guinness Book of World Records had a diameter of 37.4 meters. Although it was far below that size, the pizza that Lucaro and Minhyuk made was still large, with its nine meter diameter. It was the size of five grown men lying together in a straight line.

The moment Minhyuk placed the last pizza at the end...

Shwaaaaaaaaa—

...a huge pillar of flames burst out from the pizza. It was the final manifestation of the Legendary Sun's Wheat's power. The blazing flames soared high in the sky, before scattering and falling like drops of snowflakes in the ground.

"It's... it's beautiful..."

"Uwaaaaaaaaah!"

"My goodness! I never thought that I would be able to see such a scene in my life!"

The audience gasped and shouted in awe, which was followed by the loud gulp of the gourmands in front of the pizza. Even the chefs that participated in the competition could not help but look up in a daze.

The notification about the dish's grade and the buffs rang loudly for Minhyuk and Lucaro. The two looked at each other and smiled happily. Then, the Gourmet Dragon took a huge step and landed in front of the finished pizza.

Thud—

Minhyuk and Lucaro moved quickly, pouring the contents of the two liter bottles of cola in a huge stainless steel cup. In fact, the cup was so huge that they needed to climb a ladder to pour the cola in it. After pouring at least 300 liters of cola in the cup, Minhyuk hurriedly took out his frying pan and cast ice magic. This was the refreshing cold cola with ice!

All that remained was for the Gourmet Dragon to have a bite of their food. The Gourmet Dragon looked alternately between Minhyuk and Lucaro. He thought, *'I acknowledge your dignity, pride and bravery.'*

The two of them had exhibited the greatest dignity and pride among all of the chefs present in this competition. The Gourmet Dragon could see their pure hearts. Just one glance and he could tell that the two of them wanted to become the best chefs, in order to cook delicious food for others. They were completely different from the other chefs that only participated in this competition for money, power and riches.

The Gourmet Dragon closed his eyes and slowly lowered his snout to taste the outermost section of the giant pizza. He savored the flavor before opening his eyes. He did not say anything. The audience, the chefs, and the gourmands all turned to look at the Gourmet Dragon with bated breaths. Then, the Gourmet Dragon took another bite of the pizza. No, the words 'another bite' were not enough to describe the actions that the Gourmet Dragon took next.

Chew, chew, chew, chew—

Crunch, crunch—

Chew, chew, chew, chew—

Crunch, crunch—

The Gourmet Dragon did not even pause in his tracks. He was like a dog that had been starved for a long time as he lowered his head and continued to devour the pizza. It seemed that he did not even bother maintaining his pride and noble aura.

Crunch—

The Gourmet Dragon kept on shoveling the pizza into his mouth.

Chew, chew, chew—

A satisfied smile bloomed on his face as he continued to chew on the pizza.

‘I think it’s a complete waste to swallow it down my throat and not chew it for a long time...’ The Gourmet Dragon thought, before burying his head into the cup filled with the refreshingly cold cola and gulping it down.

The brain-freezing cola perfectly complemented and washed away the greasiness of the pizza. Then, without wiping his mouth, the Gourmet Dragon buried his head into the pizza again. After eating the last piece of pizza...

“Buuuuuuuuuuuuurp—”

“Kyaaaaaaaak—”

“What a shocking burp...!”

“Huh? Why do I think that the burp smells good...?”

It was literally a dragon’s burp. The Gourmet Dragon failed to withstand the effects of the cola’s carbonation and burped loudly, which effectively blew the hair and the clothes of the audience in the stands into a mess.

“Hoooo,” the Gourmet Dragon sighed in satisfaction as a smile lingered on his mouth. He looked like he was a starving person that had finally achieved satisfaction and comfort after eating a lot of delicious food in a hurry.

“Thank you, Lucaro. Thank you, stranger. No, it should be Food God.”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

“...!”

The Gourmet Dragon’s words had an explosive effect.

“Did... did he say Food God?!”

“Food God?!!!”

“That... that man is the Food God?!”

The Gourmet Dragon already knew this fact from the moment Minhyuk brought out the ‘*Legendary Sun’s Wheat*’. The previous Food God had told him that there was a chance that his successor would save Albero Territory if it fell completely into the abyss. Back then, the Gourmet Dragon thought that it would be Lucaro. Of course, it was a fact that Lucaro also saved Albero Territory.

However, it was also true that the current Food God came to save the territory too. The two Food Gods had stepped up and satisfied the Gourmet Dragon.

With the previous Food God gone from the territory, the Gourmet Dragon thought that it would be better if the territory stained with greed disappeared. This was something that he had decided on, since he was also a cold-blooded being. However, the Gourmet Dragon felt that he did not need to fulfill the previous Food God’s request anymore. The Albero Territory now had someone that could be hailed as their new Food God. He was sure that ‘*Lucaro*’ would be able to lead them onto the right path.

Then, the notifications rang for Minhyuk.

[You have brought satisfaction to the Gourmet Dragon.]

[*You acquired 300,000,000 EXP.*]

[You have leveled up.]

[You have leveled up.]

[You have leveled up.]

[You have leveled up.]

[You have leveled up.]

[The Gourmet Dragon wishes to give you a special gift.]

[You have acquired the Gourmet Dragon’s Special Scale.]

[Your resistance to all attributes has increased by 40%.]

[You have won the Gourmet Dragon Banquet.]

[You have acquired the Five Legendary Ingredients Box.]

Minhyuk was very shocked by the 300,000,000 EXP that he gained through this trial. However, right at that moment...

“I don’t accept this!!!”

...a voice rang loudly from somewhere. They saw Anton striding along from the direction of the voice. Seeing this, Minhyuk stealthily sprinkled a few drops of a mysterious liquid in the remaining pizza slices.

“Can an ordinary pizza like that be even superior to foie gras?!!!”

“Lord Anton, are you trying to question my choice right now?” The Gourmet Dragon asked, murderous intent flaring out from his body. He was a dragon, on top of that,

he was an existence known as the greatest and strongest among all the other dragons.

The words of the Gourmet Dragon brought unease and discomfort to Anton. There was a chance that the huge mouth in front of him would swallow him up.

“But, this is completely unbelievable! There’s a chance that the Gourmet Dragon favored them because the previous Food God asked him to do so, right?”

Anton’s words made the Gourmet Dragon’s brows furrow in annoyance, and his fierce and vicious intent increased ever so slightly. In a way, his words were true. He had been tasked by the previous Food God to do this. However, the current situation was very different from his task. After all, he thought he was tasked to bring ruin to the greedy and corrupted Albero Territory.

“If that’s the case, then this competition...!”

“Then, why don’t you try one?” Minhyuk interrupted.

Anton’s glare was fierce and stinging as he turned to look at Minhyuk. This was the shabby young beggar! Anton fiercely strode to where Minhyuk was as he thought, *‘Even if it’s delicious, it doesn’t matter. As long as I deny that fact, they would never know.’*

He wanted to deny the fact and tell the people that everything had been scripted under the guidance of the Gourmet Dragon. So, Anton took a bite of the pizza. The moment he chewed on the pizza, the taste of the crispy and chewy bread, together with the warm cheese and toppings, burst out in his mouth. His frivolous and vicious thoughts changed right at that very moment.

‘I have to frown and spit the food out of my mouth!’

If he did that, he could then tell the people that everything was a scam. Alas, his mouth kept on moving despite himself. No, in fact, he was hurriedly shoveling the food in his mouth. And finally...

“Sob, sob, sob, sob!”

...he shed tears. He could feel the ‘God’ level in this pizza, a level that he could not reach. This level was completely unattainable to him, the Twilight Chef that posed as the fake ‘Food God’. This was the heavenly and divine flavor that he could not replicate, no matter how hard he tried!

However, that was not the end. Anton suddenly opened his mouth and said, “I... I was the one that ordered someone to destroy Lucaro’s hand!”

“...?!”

“...?!”

“...?!”

The audience were in an uproar at his sudden confession! Meanwhile, Anton was in disbelief and confusion. Why did he suddenly spit these words out? He hurriedly tried to shut his mouth, but he could not prevent the words that continued to spill out of his mouth.

“I instigated the gossipers to spread bad rumors about the previous Food God and bought the other chefs with money. Then, I pretended to be the real ‘Food God’, even though I’m originally the Twilight Chef. *Hi...hiiiiik!*”

Anton’s face turned pale at his own words.

Seeing this, Lucaro turned to look at Minhyuk in contemplation. That was when he saw the small bottle in Minhyuk’s hands. The bottle contained the ‘*Truth Droplets*’, an item that Minhyuk obtained after harvesting all of the Legendary Sun’s Wheat.

Without missing a beat, Minhyuk approached Anton and said, “You’re not a Lord. You’re a XXX trash bastard, right?”

Chapter 360: Ellie’s Pinnacle

The Truth Droplets were something that Minhyuk had obtained after successfully harvesting all of the Legendary Sun’s Wheat. Just one drop in any food would make the person speak the truth. The previous Food God had judged that this Truth Droplets would be useful. No. To be exact, the *Athenae* Management Team had placed it there so that the person taking the Gourmet Dragon Banquet Trial would be able to complete the trial in a clean and excellent manner.

‘*This... this goddamn...!*’?Anton thought, face turning red at the curses that Minhyuk threw at him.

‘*Who the hell are you?*’

Compared to him, the lord of Albero Territory, the territory hailed as the chefs’ territory, and a man of great wealth, who was he to say ‘*XXX trash bastard*’ to him?

Anton tried to grab Minhyuk’s collar, but he was quickly horrified by the fact that his mouth did not stop moving. He said, “I wanted to become the Food God. So, as the Twilight Chef, I bought everything, the name of the Food God, and even the hearts of these pigs, with money.”

“Pig... pigs?!”

“That goddamn bastard!”

The people in the stands roared indignantly as the Gourmet Dragon looked at his surroundings. He said, “What’s the difference between you and this guy?”

“...”

“...”

The Gourmet Dragon’s eyes passed by the chefs and the audience, effectively shutting their mouths. Perhaps they already knew about this. However, they had chosen to shun the Food God and everything related to him, in exchange for the vast amount of money that was being supplied to the territory, as well as an abundant and luxurious life.

What about the chefs? They were blinded by gold and only moved to pursue money and power. Among them, only Lucaro was not misled by these things.

“I’m sorry. Lucaro...”

“I’m very ashamed of my actions!!!”

“I’m very sorry for throwing stones at you!!!”

These were the voices that rang from the audience. This time, it was Paradise Restaurant’s Balza. He said, “I’m sorry. You were really cool during this tournament. You truly are the best chef in our territory.”

Balza was a proud man. He always believed that he and the Paradise Restaurant were the best in the territory. This very same person actually bowed his head and swallowed his pride.

However, Lucaro was not a naive person. He said, “Do you think such an apology can win my heart over?”

“...I will try my best to change.”

It seemed like Balza was finally enlightened after hearing Lucaro’s words. Lucaro did not nod or acknowledge him at all, but for some reason there was a faint hint of satisfaction at his remarks. Just like that, plenty of chefs came and bowed their heads in apology to Lucaro.

On the other hand, the Gourmet Dragon approached Anton, who was still spitting out confessions. Anton said, “I did everything. I cursed and swore at the previous Food God, and punished the chefs that had the chance of becoming better than me in the future... Hoo, aaaaaaack!”

Anton screamed as the gigantic Gourmet Dragon lifted him with his mouth. Then, the Gourmet Dragon threw him high up, before opening his huge maw.

“N...nooo! Aaaaaaack! Save, save me!!!”

Then, Anton fell into the Gourmet Dragon’s mouth and...

Crunch—

...a chilling sound rang loudly in the coliseum, as blood dripped down the Gourmet Dragon’s mouth. The people in the stands and the chefs that participated in the competition turned their heads and trembled at the sight that they saw. The blood dripped down the Gourmet Dragon’s chin and stained the floor red.

‘The Gourmet Dragon killed Lord Anton?’

However, none of them dared to speak up and seek justice. The Gourmet Dragon was an existence that sought peace. As long as his bottom line was not touched, he would maintain friendly relations. Even kingdoms and empires would not dare to fight against the Gourmet Dragon. Besides, there was a living witness here.

The Gourmet Dragon slowly trudged and approached someone. This person was none other than Minhyuk. He said, “Food God’s Successor, you have rectified all of the wrongs that happened in Albero Territory.”

As the Gourmet Dragon was tasked with this responsibility, it was only right that he thanked Minhyuk for doing it on his behalf. Also, it was because the pizza that he made was far superior to the dishes that the Food God of the past had made for him.

These were the notifications that Minhyuk heard after he finished cooking the pizza:

[Trance. This is a dish that has your 'happiness', 'passion' and 'efforts for Lucaro' poured into it.]

[Due to the effects of Trance, the buff effect and the dish grade became better.]

[The dish is graded Legendary.]

[You have gained 30 DEX.]

[You have gained 200 REP.]

[You have gained 2,000 AP.]

[You have gained +2 on all five of your basic stats.]

[You have succeeded in a new attempt that was never tried before.]

[You have completed a Legendary Grade Large Pizza.]

[Your buffing ability will improve together, with an additional +2 on all five of your basic stats.]

[Perhaps there's a chance that you can make an even better dish.]

The buff effects in the large pizza were a 28% increase in the five basic stats, a 50% reduction in the Gourmet Dragon's magic casting time, and an unconditional first class growth. It also had a 40% increase in magic attack power.

'If things are like this then... it's literally legendary...'

In fact, the dish could already be considered as a God-grade dish, but the reason that the God grade did not come out was because only Minhyuk's buffing ability increased during his cooking process after his success in a special attempt. The probability of getting a higher dish grade did not increase. However, Minhyuk faintly realized something.

'I have taken a step closer to the God grade.'

At this moment, Minhyuk realized that there was a chance that he might be able to cook God-graded dishes in the near future.

Then, the Gourmet Dragon turned to him and said, "Is there anything that you wish for? I will do whatever I can for you."

The audience gasped in shock and awe at the Gourmet Dragon's words. Even the chefs next to Lucaro looked at Minhyuk with envy. Who was the Gourmet Dragon? He was an existence rumored to have mountains of treasures that no human had ever seen, in his lair! According to those rumors, the Gourmet Dragon had more money and treasures than a king of a kingdom.

'I'm... I'm so jealous...'

'Oh... oh my God! The Gourmet Dragon wants to fulfill his wish!'

'I wonder what he will wish for?!'

Amidst everyone's envious and jealous stares, Minhyuk looked to be extremely excited. He was so excited to the point that he could not calm his wildly thumping heart. Then, he shot a sneaky glance at the Gourmet Dragon.

"Go on, tell me. Whether it be gold or silver or artifacts, I can give them to you."

Minhyuk hesitated for a moment, before taking something out of his inventory. It was a seven meter long skewer jam-packed with pork bellies, cut sausages, shrimps and bell peppers, onions, and button mushrooms, looking exactly like the skewers prepared for barbecue.

Then, Minhyuk smiled cheerfully and said, "Mister Gourmet Dragon, I want to eat barbecue made with your breath!!! I really, really want to eat it!"

"...?"

"...?"

"..."

"..."

The people in the audience, the chefs, and even the Gourmet Dragon himself, were stunned silly with his words. The Gourmet Dragon blinked slowly, as he looked dumbly at Minhyuk with his yellow eyes.

"Is... is that the only thing that you want?"

"Do I even need something else? Kgghk! Barbecue made with Mister Gourmet Dragon's breath! This is already my lifelong dream coming true!"

My goodness! A person wanted barbecue made with dragon breath, instead of gold, silver or artifacts!

"Keuhahahahahaha!" The Gourmet Dragon guffawed as he blew a small breath of fire.

Shwaaaaaaa—

Then, a warm energy seeped into Minhyuk's body.

[The Gourmet Dragon's Breath.]

[This is a blessing that the Gourmet Dragon could only bestow once in his life.]

[Your Physical Defense has increased by 10%.]

[Your Magical Defense has increased by 10%.]

[Your Physical Attack has increased by 10%.]

[All of your stats have increased by 3%.]

This was the Gourmet Dragon's gift to Minhyuk. Then, the Gourmet Dragon casted Fly on Minhyuk, making him fly high in the sky! The Gourmet Dragon, who was flying right behind him, aimed his snout at the seven meter long skewer. After properly controlling his strength, he let out the strongest breath that he could, to cook Minhyuk's barbecue.

Puhaaaaaaaaaak—

On that very day, Albero Territory witnessed the rare sight of barbecue being grilled with Dragon's Breath. When Minhyuk finally stepped down on the ground again, his body started to become translucent.

[You have completed the 15th Trial.]

[You can now learn Sword Saint Conir's Sword of Pinnacle.]

Lucaro appeared in front of the now translucent Minhyuk. Lucaro had always been a man that was grateful for the things that were given to him. So, Minhyuk smiled at him and said, "Now, you're the Food God."

Lucaro was the One Acknowledged by the Food God, and he would now be the Food God and the legend of Albero Territory.

Sword Emperor Ellie had left the Continent Cloud briefly to check the overall situation of Eivelis Empire. However, that did not mean that she went back to the Imperial Palace. She needed to be able to get back to the Continent Cloud and take the Commanding General's position anytime, if something ever happened inside.

"Minhyuk is later than I thought."

"Yes, Your Majesty," Ruth answered her with a smile as Ellie looked into the distance. Ruth could see that her face was filled with a lot of mixed emotions.

'Her Majesty's very happy right now, but she's also blaming herself.'

Ruth's smile turned bitter. He knew that Ellie hated herself for failing to awaken to Pinnacle. However, she also felt joy that her dearly beloved younger brother Minhyuk, could do so. And, she blamed herself for putting such a heavy burden on Minhyuk's shoulders.

Ellie caressed the red necklace that she wore around her neck. She said, "I hope that Eivelis' grace and blessings are with Minhyuk..."

The necklace was a gift given to Ellie by the late Emperor when she turned twelve. Seeing the scene, Ruth smiled and thought, *'Sword Emperor Ellie, you should not feel sad and sorry for yourself. You have already reached the Pinnacle. It's just that His Majesty sealed your powers to protect you.'*

A long time has passed since she turned twelve. Back then, the late Emperor already knew that Ellie could reach the true 'Pinnacle'. The late Emperor had told Ruth, an aide that had been with her since her birth, *'This child's power might destroy her. Besides, an overwhelmingly strong power can breed arrogance. With this jewel, my child will remain stagnant, but safe.'*

She was the only child that could reach the Pinnacle of Ellie's Swordsmanship. However, the cost of such a feat and the fear that it could bring was too much for her to bear. So, the late Emperor decided to seal her power with that jewel. As of now, Ellie was still unaware of the true power that she wielded.

Then, at that moment...

“The... there’s trouble!!!”

The Knight Commander rushed inside the room.

Black Dragon Order was a group of dark gamers. In fact, Hu Yitian, the one that Minhyuk recently defeated, was also part of the Black Dragon Order. However, he only ranked tenth among the thirteen members of the group.

Currently, the 2nd to the 5th ranked members of the Black Dragon Order finally used their ‘*Cloud Tickets*’ to set foot in the Asgan Continent’s land. They were all talented individuals that could either awaken the Pinnacle, or step into the ranks of the official Chinese rankers. However, none of them were well known, since they only focused on making money under the cover of the darkness. Now, they came here to make a fortune and find a way to become even stronger.

Sword Emperor Ellie was a woman that knew the path to another Pinnacle. She was also someone that had reached the Half Pinnacle state. From what they had gathered, Ellie would leave the Continent Cloud and return to Asgan Continent every few days or so, to monitor and reorganize her Empire. They all came to Asgan Continent for that.

Da Zhuang, together with three members of the Black Dragon Order, came with them. Their comprehensive power was enough to crush a large territory.

Xu Jiaqi, the person leading their group, looked around and said, “How can we even find Ellie here?”

They were sure that Ellie was back in the Asgan Continent. However, finding her was like finding a needle in a haystack. It seemed like she did not go back to the palace as a countermeasure for plans like theirs.

“...I know, right?” Arcas, with his huge build, nodded in agreement. His entire body was rippling with muscles to the point that he looked like he could break down walls with his bare fists alone.

Then, their eyes caught sight of a small carriage heading somewhere else. The small carriage was led by a shabby-looking man with his wife and child.

“We might be able to find a small town or a territory if we follow them, right?”

“That’s about right.”

All of them nodded at the question. Meanwhile, Xu Jiaqi licked her upper lip and said, “I have a good idea.”

“A good idea?”

“Yeah. Let’s follow them to the town and kill the people there one by one, until Ellie shows up.”

It was a brutal and disgusting idea. However, someone asked, “They’re just trivial NPCs. The Empress should only move if we killed at most tens of millions of people, right?”

The plan was actually next to impossible. After all, most Emperors would decide to abandon their people in exchange for their safety.

“Do you have any other ideas?”

“None. Well, we’ll find out once we start killing them anyway.”

Meanwhile, a woman standing to one side shook violently at their words. She was none other than China’s famous BJ, Luo. For a moment, Luo thought that she misheard them.

‘They’re going to slaughter the NPCs...?’

Although they knew that they were just artificial intelligence, the people that played *Athenae* regarded them as people too. No. They were just the majority of the players. There would always be exceptions to the rule. Although rare, there were still some people that would willingly and indiscriminately kill these NPCs.

Still, the people that Luo came with gave her a sense that they were just killing ants with their fingers, even though they were talking about killing NPCs. Luo felt ecstatic after she heard that they would allow her to film *‘Empress Ellie’s Hunt’*. But right now, the initial joy had turned to great terror.

Just like that, they all walked behind the carriage.